Chapter IV

The Mastery of Voice Leading - Suspensions

Mark explains his approach to voice-leading in regards to suspensions. He discusses how to practice the most common suspensions, 4-3 and an alternate version.
The Mastery of Voice Leading - Suspensions

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter, Mark supplements the exercise from Chapter 3 by adding a suspension to every chord in the cycle of dominants. Suspensions add an extra layer of tension in your music, and by extension, an extra layer of expectation. Mark explains that especially with single-note instruments such as the saxophone, creating an extra layer of expectation can help control the “speed” of your melodies and help elaborate the harmony surrounding them. The suspensions also effect how the band will interact with you by virtue of the fact that they add a sense of “speed” to your lines which will in turn change the rhythmic flow of the band.

Mark also points out that suspensions maximize the harmonic effect of your lines without adding much extra information. Mastering the subtle tools which help maximize the harmonic effect of your lines will make you a more compelling improviser overall.

The fundamental structure of the exercises that Mark demonstrates in this chapter are identical to those demonstrated in chapter 3. Singing through the voices is once again a crucial element. An additional detail Mark points out is how interesting intervals can appear depending on the type of suspension you’re using. For example, when you resolve to the #4 in one chord, that #4 makes a b9 interval between the root note of the following chord in the cycle. However, because this b9 occurs organically in a musical sequence, Mark argues that its effect is much stronger than if you were to artificially inject a flat nine into a chord or a line. This is the power of voice leading.
The Mastery of Voice Leading - Suspensions

SUSPENSION 4-3
(begins 1:35)

• Play the 4th note of the chord before every 3rd - this is the suspension

• Switch between singing the root, 4-3 movement, or the 7th while playing the other note on the piano

• Translate this exercise onto your saxophone

Refer to the next section for transcriptions.
Suspension 4-3: Transcriptions

[02:14]

Piano

A7sus4 A7 D7sus4 D7 G7sus4 G7 C7sus4 C7 F7sus4 F7

[03:27]

B7sus4 Bb7 Eb7sus4 Eb7 Ab7sus4 Ab7 Db7sus4 Db7
The Mastery of Voice Leading - Suspensions

SUSPENSION 4-3

Homework

• Practice the 4-3 suspension as demonstrated by Mark

• Apply the 4-3 suspension to other chord qualities i.e.: minor, major, diminished, augmented, etc.

• On the next page, create your own progressions where you may be able to apply the 4-3 suspension as well

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Suspension 4-3: Create
The Mastery of Voice Leading - Suspensions

SUSPENSION 4-#4
(begins 4:14)

- Play the 4th note of the chord instead of the 3rd and resolve it to the #4
- Switch between singing the root, 4-#4 movement, or the 7th while playing the other note on the piano
- Translate this exercise onto your saxophone

Refer to the next section for transcriptions.
Suspension 4-#4: Transcriptions

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The Mastery of Voice Leading - Suspensions

SUSPENSION 4-#4

Homework

- Practice the 4-#4 suspension as demonstrated by Mark

- Apply the 4-#4 suspension to other chord qualities i.e.: minor, major, diminished, augmented, etc. Some of these chord qualities may lend themselves better to this suspension than others

- On the next page, create your own progressions where you may be able to apply the 4-3 suspension as well

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Suspension 4-#4: Create

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