

**SAXOPHONE SCHOOL**

**Basics of the Triadic Chromatic Approach**

The triadic chromatic approach is a conceptual theory that I've been working on for the last 25 years teaching at schools between Boston and New York. A lot of this was put together on the blackboard to improvise freely in the way I would like myself and the students to improvise.

I took the four groups of triads—major, minor, augmented and diminished—and figured out a way how to improvise with them using random inversions with a half-step coupling in between each triad. By doing that, you borrow from the 12-tone row. If you repeat yourself by playing two first position, two root position or two second inversions, you will cause the triad to shut itself down, and you start to cause repetition.

You should work through these triads slowly, using random inversions with a half-step in between. This coupling is the only hold I have on you to make you play in this way.

There are two basic principles to the triadic chromatic approach. First, the triads must be connected with a half-step in between. Second, the same inversion cannot be repeated back to back.

To begin, select any major, minor, diminished or augmented triad to begin. Example 1 shows the C major triad.

**Example 1**

After playing C E G ascending, play either one half-step up to A $\flat$  (Example 2) or one half-step down to G $\flat$  (Example 3) as starting notes of the next triad.

**Example 2**

**Example 3**

The next triad can be any triad except A $\flat$  major root position (Example 4) if A $\flat$  was chosen as the starting note or G $\flat$  major root position (Example 5) if G $\flat$  was chosen as the starting note.

**Example 4**

**Example 5**

Appropriate triad choices are given in Examples 6 and 7. The best result could be achieved by using a triad that goes in a different direction than the preceding one. Notice that Example 6 uses a displaced permutation of the D $\flat$  major triad.

**Example 6**

**Example 7**

**Displaced Permutation**

The sound of a triad can be affected by a displaced permutation of that triad. This idea is illustrated by using the C major triad (C E G) in Examples 8 and 9.

**Example 8**

**Example 9**

Examples 8 and 9 are considered starting root positions of C major as they both begin with the root of the chord and contain the notes from the C major triad. However, the sound of the C major triad is affected in Example 9 (C G E) as the third (E) and fifth (G) do not sound in the traditional order that we see in Example 8.



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& THE TRIADIC CHROMATIC APPROACH

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Example 9 (C G E) is described as a C major triad root position with displaced permutation. Once the triad is permuted, it is treated as a different inversion in this concept. Therefore, the same inversion can be repeated back to back as long as one of the two triads uses a displaced permutation.

Example 10 shows the improper method of the random triadic approach, while Example 11 illustrates the proper method of the random triadic approach. Due to the chromatic nature of this concept, if an example has no time signature, all notes are natural unless there is a sharp or flat. **DB**

Example 10

2 Consecutive Root Positions      2 Consecutive 1st Inversions      2 Consecutive 2nd Inversions

Ascending C Major Root Position    Ascending Gb Major Root Position    Descending D Major 1st Inversion    Descending G Major 1st Inversion    Ascending F Major 2nd Inversion    Ascending Db Major 2nd Inversion

Example 11

Ascending C Major Root Position    Ab Major Root Position w/ Displaced Permutation    Ascending G Major 1st Inversion    Db Major Root Position w/ Displaced Permutation    Descending C Major 2nd Inversion    F# Major Root Position w/ Displaced Permutation

The following solo over the changes of "Have You Met Miss Jones" offers an example of combining the random triadic and chromatic approaches.

Example 12

A F#7    F#7    G-7    C7

A-7    D-7    G-7    C7

B F#7    F#7    G-7    C7

A-7    D-7    C-7    F7

C Bb7    Ab-7    D7    Gb7    E-7    A7

D7    Ab-7    D7    Gb7    G-7    C7


D F#7    F#7    G-7    C7

A-7    D7    G-7    C7    F#7    G-7    C7

One of the foremost jazz saxophone teachers in the world, George Garzone currently teaches at the Berklee College of Music, New England Conservatory, Longy School of Music, New York University and the Manhattan School of Music. A long-time member of the group The Fringe, he most recently released *Night Of My Beloved* (Venus). To contact him, go to [georgegarzone.com](http://georgegarzone.com).

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