

## CHAPTER 2

## Bass Parts

Jazz pianists often play a bass part in the left hand and melody/chords in the right hand. Bass parts should be simple, favoring the root, octave, and fifth.

Here are three common bass parts, with increased activity in each.

## BASS PART 1: Root Only (1)

Fig. 2.1. Bass Parts with Roots

## BASS PART 2: Root and Fifth (1-5)

Fig. 2.2. Bass Line with Roots and Fifths

## BASS PART 3: Root, Fifth, and Octave (1-8-5-1)

Fig. 2.3. Bass Part with Roots, Fifths, and Octaves

## BASS PART 4: Root, Fifth, Octave, and 9 (or $\flat 9$ )/3 (1-5-8-9[ $\flat 9$ ]/3)

To increase activity, try this variation. Play eighth notes 1-5-8 followed directly with major or minor 7th or augmented 2nd ( $\sharp 9$ ), for more dissonance. With  $-7\flat 5$ , it's 1-5-8- $\flat 3$ -11.

The musical notation consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff contains four measures with chords B-7 $\flat 5$ , E7, A-7 $\flat 5$ , and D7. The second staff contains five measures with chords G-7 $\flat 5$ , C7, F-7 $\flat 5$ , B $\flat$ 7, and E $\flat$ Maj7. Each chord is followed by a melodic line of eighth notes.

Fig. 2.4. Bass Variation

## PRACTICE

Practice the lead sheets in appendix A with a variety of bass lines. Practice different options, to help you determine the level of activity that best suits your desired arrangement.

### Exercise 2.1. Root, Fifth, Octave

Practice with the root, fifth, and octave. Play block chords before melodizing the chords (exercise 2.2), as in the example below. The numbers below the staves are suggested fingerings.



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The musical notation consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff contains five measures with chords B-7 $\flat 5$ , E7, A-7 $\flat 5$ , D7, and G-7 $\flat 5$ . The second staff contains four measures with chords C7, F-7 $\flat 5$ , B $\flat$ 7, and E $\flat$ Maj7. Fingerings are indicated below the bass line: 5 1 2 3, 1 2 5 2, 3 1 2 5, 1 5 2 1, 5 2 1 4, 5 2 1 2, 1 5 2 1, 5 1 2 5, 1 2 5.

## Exercise 2.2. Broken Chords in Right Hand and Root, Fifth, Octave

Practice with the root, fifth, and octave, but melodize the chords, as below.



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B-7b5                      E7                      A-7b5

*simile*

5    1    2    3                      1    2    5    2                      3    1

## Exercise 2.3. Variations

Vary the note order of the root, fifth, and octave in exercise 2.2. For example:  
5-1-8-1, 1-8-5-1, 1-5-8-1, 8-1-5-8.

## Exercise 2.4. Melody and Bass Line

Play several melodies of your choice with all the different bass line types presented in this chapter. (Try the lead sheets in appendix A.) Which lines seem most effective for each melody?