

CHAPTER 12

Approach-Note Harmonization

To enhance a chord progression, any chord of that progression can be approached by an additional chord. There are five types of “approach” chords: diminished, altered dominant, chromatic, stepwise diatonic, and parallel.

DIMINISHED APPROACH CHORD

Diminished approach chords are diminished chords based on a root a half step below the target chord root. They can approach any type of chord.

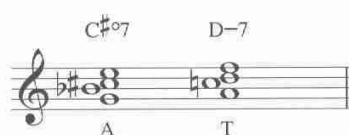


Fig. 12.1. *Diminished Approach* (A = Approach Chord, T = Target Chord)

In the following excerpt from “Limehouse Blues,” the diminished approach is used to approach the D \flat 9. Though G isn’t a half step below D \flat , the tension 9 of the D \flat 9 chord converts the chord to A \flat 6 and F-7 \flat 5. Therefore, G $^{\circ}$ 7 works since its root is a half step below A \flat .



Fig. 12.2. “Limehouse Blues”

ALTERED DOMINANT APPROACH CHORD

Altered dominant approach chords are the altered dominant-7th chords (dominant-7th chords with altered tensions) of their target chord. They are especially effective when the melody moves from 13 to 5, 5 to 13, 5 to $\flat 13$, or $\flat 13$ to $\flat 5$.

Here, an altered V7/V approaches V (key of F) while the melody moves in various ways.

Fig. 12.3. Altered Dominant Approach

Here, the melody moves from 5 to 13 on $B\flat 7$. $C\flat 7$, the substitute dominant of $B\flat 7$, is used to approach $B\flat 7$. It contains tensions 9 and $\flat 5$.

Fig. 12.4. Melody Notes 5 to 13



In the second measure below, $F7(\flat 9)$ approaches $B\flat 7$.

Fig. 12.5. Applied Altered Dominant Approach

CHROMATIC APPROACH

Chromatic approach chords are based on a root a half step away from any chord tone (or tension) of the target chord.

Fig. 12.6. Chromatic Approach

This type of approach chord is most useful when the melody moves chromatically.



Fig. 12.7 Applied Chromatic Approach

STEPWISE DIATONIC APPROACH

Stepwise diatonic approach chords belong to the key of the progression. Use them to harmonize a melody moving by step.

If the target is a tonic chord, the approach chord should have a subdominant function. If the target is a subdominant chord, the approach chord should have a tonic function.

E-7 FMaj7 D-7 E-7 CMaj7 FMaj7 FMaj7 E-7

Tonic Subdominant Subdominant Tonic Tonic Subdominant Subdominant Tonic

Fig. 12.8. *Stepwise Diatonic Approach*

In a stepwise diatonic approach, only use a dominant chord as the approach chord if you alter it into a sus4 chord.

G7sus4 CMaj7

A T

Fig. 12.9. *Dominant-7 Sus4 Chord Approaches Tonic*



D-7 E-7 D-7 G7 E-7 F#-7 E-7 A7 D7

1. 2. 3.

Fig. 12.10. *Applied Stepwise Diatonic Approach*

PARALLEL APPROACH

Parallel approach chords occur when all the voices of an approach chord move the same interval to the target. Below, all voices in beat 2 move by parallel approach the same interval—one half step—to B \flat 7 (beat 3). It is thus also a chromatic approach.

Fig. 12.11. Parallel Approach

The first measure of the following excerpt from “Limehouse Blues” displays an example of the parallel approach method. Each note of the A \flat Maj7 chord is moving up the same amount, one whole step, to the B \flat -7 chord; each note of C-7 moves up one whole step to the A \flat 6 chord.



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Fig. 12.12. Applied Parallel Approach

PRACTICE

Exercise 12.1. Applied Approach-Note Harmonization

Apply all the approach-note harmonizing methods to the lead sheets in appendix A. “Theme for John” is particularly a good model for approach-note harmonization.

Exercise 12.2. Applied Diatonic Approach

Practice the arranged version of “Sapphire” in appendix B. It contains a good model of the diatonic approach method.