

## CHAPTER 14

# Rhythmic Displacement

*Rhythmic displacement* is an improvisation technique in which a motif is played by a rhythmic unit (an eighth note, quarter note, sixteenth note, etc.) earlier or later. By shifting the beginning of a phrase from a weak beat to a strong beat or a strong beat to a weak beat, a phrase can be given a fresh new sound.

Below, the motif in the given top line is displaced in four ways: an eighth note later, an eighth note earlier, a quarter note later, and a quarter note earlier.

TRACK 39

Original Melody

♩ later

♩ earlier

♩ later

♩ earlier

Fig. 14.1. *Rhythmic Displacement*

Rhythmic displacement can be applied to any type of motif. Here is an example of a melodic line with delayed resolution displaced an eighth note later.

Melody with Tension

Displacement

A-7<sup>b5</sup> D7 G-7 C7 C-7 F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 E<sup>b</sup>6

Figure 14.2 shows a melodic line in a 4/4 time signature. The chords above the staff are Ab-7, Db7, Gb6, Cb6, C-7(b5), F7, and Bb6. The melodic line consists of eighth and quarter notes. A bracket labeled "Scale Material" spans the first two measures. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and flats (b) for accidentals.

Fig. 14.2. Tension Resolution and Displacement

Grasping rhythmic displacement takes some practice. Practice by shifting motifs or scales to different beats in a measure to get comfortable with this technique. For example, start on beat 1, then start on 1+, then start on 2, etc. It can be easier to plan a rhythm that you will play, as in the following example.

Figure 14.3 is a 4/4 time signature exercise. The top staff shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure. The bottom staff shows a bass line with chords: G-7b5, C7, F, D7, and G-7. The exercise demonstrates how a motif is displaced across measures.

Fig. 14.3. Planned Rhythmic Displacement

## SKIPPING NOTES

Another easy method to rhythmic displacement involves skipping notes, or replacing notes with rests. This technique is effective when playing arpeggios, like broken chords with tensions.

Here is the first melody from figure 14.1, and then a version of it with skipped notes.

Figure 14.4 shows two staves of music in 4/4 time. The top staff is a melody with eighth and quarter notes. The bottom staff is the same melody but with some notes replaced by rests, demonstrating the "skipping notes" technique.

Fig. 14.4. Melody from Figure 14.1

## PRACTICE

Practice these exercises, and then apply the techniques used to your own improvisations of the lead sheets in appendix A.

### Exercise 14.1. Rhythmic Displacement

This exercise provides two rhythmically displaced versions of exercise 13.4. Exercise 14.1(a) is an example of skips, and exercise 14.1(b) has been displaced using various rhythmic units.

(a)

A-7(b5,11) D7(b9,13) G-7(9) C7(b9,13) C-7(9) F7(b9,13) Bb6(Maj7,9) Eb6(Maj7,9)

Ab-7(9) Db7(b9,13) Gb6(Maj7,9) B6(Maj7,9) C-7(b5,11) F7(b9,13) Bb6

(b)

A-7(b5,11) D7(b9,13) G-7(9) C7(b9,13) C-7(9) F7(b9,13) Bb6(Maj7,9) Eb6(Maj7,9)

Ab-7(9) Db7(b9,13) Gb6(Maj7,9) B6(Maj7,9) C-7(b5,11) F7(b9,13) Bb6

## Exercise 14.2. All Techniques Combined

This exercise combines all techniques discussed.



TRACK 40

Chord symbols for Exercise 14.2:

- Staff 1: E-7, A7, C-7, F7
- Staff 2: F-7, Bb7, Eb, Ab7
- Staff 3: Bb, E-7b5, A7, D-7, Bb-7, Eb7
- Staff 4: F, G-7, C7, A-7b5, D7
- Staff 5: G7, C-7
- Staff 6: Ab7, Bb
- Staff 7: E-7b5, A7, D-7b5, G7
- Staff 8: C-7b5, F7, Bb

## Exercise 14.3. Application

Add rhythmic displacement to the melodies in appendix B. Then listen to the full band tracks, and focus on the melody. What rhythmic displacement techniques can you identify? Generally, the first time each melody is played, it is fairly true to the written lead sheet. The second time features more rhythmic displacement of the written melodies.