Introduction

In virtually any genre of music, triads are a fundamental element of melodic material. They so directly indicate "shape" and tonality (especially in the case of diatonic triads), that it's no surprise that many of the most memorable melodies are composed primarily with this tonal organization. Triads have been a part of the jazz language from the very beginning, and "triad pairs" (combining two triads that share no common tones) have been, and will most likely continue to be, a staple of the modern jazz lexicon.

Despite its title, this book is not an exhaustive look at triad pairs, and I'd never claim that it covers all the possible combinations of pairing triads together to form melodic material. But I do believe it is a comprehensive entry point into forming triad pairs and applying them over dominant 7^{th} chords.

The four qualities of the triads I use are: major, minor, diminished and augmented, and are paired in the following ways: major/major; major/minor; minor/minor/; minor/major; major/diminished; minor/diminished; major/augmented and minor/augmented. I've purposely avoided combining diminished and augmented triads together with themselves or with each other. I did this because these symmetrically shaped triads, in of themselves, typically don't definitively indicate any specific tonalities. **My aim with this book is to show how triad pairs express tonality, as well as how they relate to and provide tensions over dominant chords.**

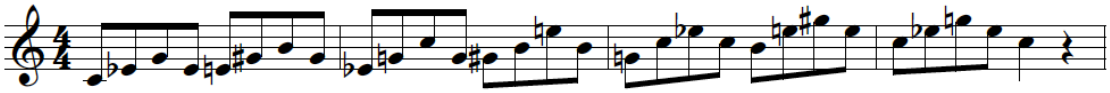
Most of the triad pairs in this book are formed from diatonic scales, specifically, major, harmonic major, melodic minor, harmonic minor and Hijaz (a major scale with a flatted 2^{nd} and 6^{th}, which is both a staple in Middle Eastern music, as well as an emerging color in modern jazz). I also use major and minor triad pairs extracted from the diminished scale and augmented scale. I've chosen to do this because both of these scales are part of the modern jazz lexicon, and I wanted to demonstrate the asymmetrical relationship between the diatonic triads found within these scales.

I introduce and present the triad pairs based upon intervallic differences. For example, the first triad pair in the book is major triads a half step apart (C Major/Db Major, etc.) I then present the other triad pair combinations within this interval (a half step), based upon the criteria listed above (major/minor; minor/major, etc). Once these possibilities are exhausted, I then move on to triads a whole step apart, and so on, increasing the intervallic differences all the way up to a tritone. **I don't go beyond the tritone,** as that would create redundancy. For example, a triad pair composed of a major and minor triad a minor 6^{th} apart (C Major/Ab Minor) is the same as combining a minor and major triad a major 3^{rd} apart (Ab Minor/C Major), which has already been covered in the book.

I've aimed at making as few redundancies as possible, but there are some that I purposefully left in because they fill out the format of the exercise. (This is particularly true in all the triad pair combinations a tritone apart.)

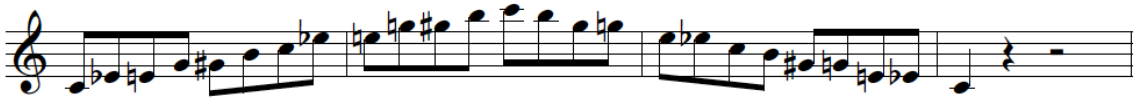
Each triad pair is presented as a separate chapter in the book, and every chapter is listed (and can be accessed) through the table of contents. The last chapter of the book is a Scale Reference, labeling the scales from which the triad pairs could be extracted. **I present each triad pair with five iterations.**

The first iteration presents the triad pair in sequence, starting in root position, and then moving through its inversions:



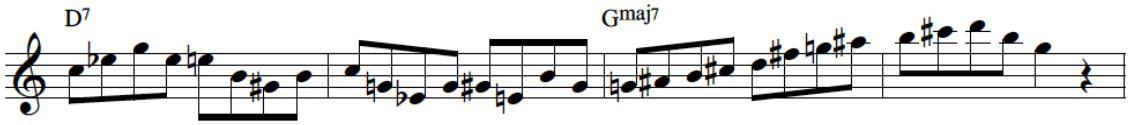
As you can see from the example above, I'm combining a minor triad and a major triad that are a major 3rd apart (C Minor with E Major).

In the next iteration, I organize the notes of this triad pair in a linear manner, to form a six-note mode (which in this case happens to be an augmented scale):

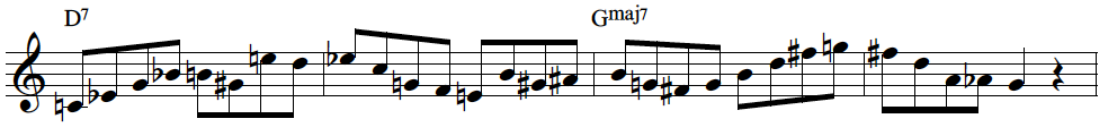


Being able to form six-note modes from all these triad pairs is an excellent way to explore and develop even more melodic "tools" for you to use as an improviser. I suggest taking the mode itself and improvising with it over a rhythm track or with a metronome (or just freely and melodically "out of time", maybe with a drone).

In the third iteration, I demonstrate how that triad pair can be applied to a dominant 7th chord resolving to tonic:

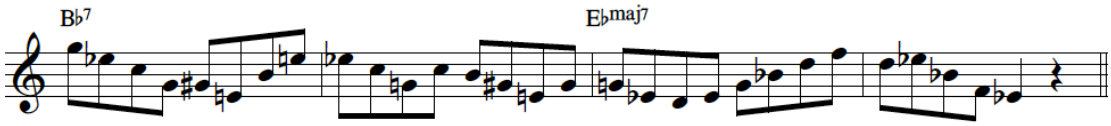


The fourth iteration uses the triad pair over the same dominant chord, but with chromatic (or otherwise non-chordal) passing tones to form what I call a four-note triad "cell":



As you can see from the example, I've added a Bb, then a D natural at the end of the triads in the first measure, and an F natural, then an A# at the end of the triads in the second measure. This adds a slightly more "bebop language" quality to the triad pair.

In the final iteration I return to the unaltered triad pair, but this time apply it to a different dominant 7th chord:



I present each of these five iterations in all 12 major keys. I start the first exercise in every chapter with the first triad being some version of "C" (either C Major or C Minor). I then transpose each group of the five iterations around the circle of keys. The third iteration, in which I apply the triad pair over a dominant 7th chord, is not always the most "logical" choice, but rather, the one that comes most readily to my ears. The fifth iteration, in which I apply the triad pair over a different dominant chord, is just one suggestion. As you play around with each specific triad pair, you'll discover other dominant chords on which you can apply it. (As I mentioned earlier, the book is not meant to be exhaustive.)

Also, in each of the third iterations throughout the book, I've chosen to use the same melodic pattern for the tonic chord, with the triad pair always voice leading to the root of the tonic. I've done this to make it easy to hear the contrast between the triad pair and the tonic chord (which I basically spell out with chromatic passing tones). **All of the tonic chords are major,** but many of these triad pairs can be applied readily over dominant chords leading to minor, as well. That's up to you to explore.

And you can also discover many other possibilities simply by reversing the order of the triad pair (which I've not done in any of the iterations). Once again, my aim is to simply offer a comprehensive "entry point" for you to explore.

In notating the exercises, I've made very specific choices about using accidentals. In the first iteration of every exercise, I label the triads in a way that most accurately represents their labeling. So for example, when I combine C Major with F Diminished (Triad Pair 16: Major and Diminished Triads a Perfect 4th Apart), I express the F Diminished triad as having a Cb instead of a B natural. Though the B natural most simply represents the tonality of the scale from which the triads are extracted (in this case, the C harmonic major scale), it doesn't give an equal "visual" representation of the diminished triad as a series of thirds.

I also purposely change this in the middle of the exercise, as it moves into different keys, especially when issues of reading accessibility arise. My aim is to balance “readability” with tonal organizational accuracy, but also to challenge you to think more flexibly about the triads: **In other words, to be able to think of each triad pair is being part of a specific tonality, as well of being able to conceive of it as a “stand alone” tonal entity.** As you’ll see, I use enharmonic equivalence a good deal. I apologize in advance if it seems unnecessarily difficult, as not following “engraving standards”, or lacking in uniformity.

The range of the exercises (almost 3 octaves) is from Bb (or A#) below the staff in treble clef, up to double high “A” above the staff. With some of the transpositions I purposely make some octave displacements in order to keep it within this range, or to make it otherwise seem more “playable”. Of course, you should feel free to take any liberties with transposition to best suit your needs.

I strongly suggest that you sing at least the first two iterations (the triad pair in its inversions, and the triad pair organized as a mode) of one key of each triad pair you study. Getting the sound into your ear is indispensible to becoming flexible and creative with the work, allowing you to explore, discover and develop your own personal language with them. Move around the chapters of the book in any order you wish. Follow your interest and curiosity. And above all, enjoy!