

EXAMPLES ON IMPROVISATION

APPLICATIONS OF IMPROCHART

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INTRODUCTION

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- **Improvisation** generally consists in creating a **Melody** suitable for a given **Chord Progression**.
- On each chord, the melody is composed, in most cases, by notes of a **Scale** related to the chord.
- Logically, the scales related to a given chord are those containing the notes of the chord.
- **IMPROCHART™** is an **Improvisation Chart** that automatically gives us all the scales related to a given chord.

IMPROVISATION – BALLAD

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- Next, the score (lead sheet) of a Jazz Ballad is shown, on which we want to perform an improvisation. (You can listen to this piece by clicking on the “loudspeaker” symbol).
- The song consists of 4 phrases, each one having 8 bars. Phrases 1, 2 and 4 are very similar. Phrase 3 is different.
- If we represent each phrase by a letter, we will say that this song has the AABA form.
- AABA is one of most common forms in Jazz Standards. Part B is called the “bridge”.

SCORE (LEAD SHEET)

5

AFTER THE RAIN



C Instruments

Play Head, Solos and Head

Ballad

Luis Nuño

Lento (♩ = 70)

B \flat Δ

C m7

F m7

F \sharp $^{\circ}$

A

1

5

Chords: G m7, C m7, F7(9), B \flat Δ , F7(b13)

A

9

13

Chords: B \flat Δ , C m7, F m7, F \sharp $^{\circ}$, G m7, C m7, F7(b9), B \flat Δ , C7(b9)

SCORE (LEAD SHEET)

6



B

17 $Fm7$ $Bbm7$ $Eb7$ $A^b\Delta$

21 A^c $Bbm7$ Dbm $Cm7$ $F7(\circ 9)$

A

25 $B^b\Delta$ $Cm7$ $Fm7$ $F\#^c$

29 $Gm7$ $Cm7$ $F7(\flat 13)$ $B^b\Delta$ $F7(\circ 13)$
FIN D. C.

IMPROVISATION PHASES

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- In order to improvise on this song, we have to mentally remove the melody and keep just the chords. That is, we begin with a score like the one shown in the following two slides. For those people not knowing how to read music, a simplified score is included after them.
- Anyway, now we have to create a melody that “fits” or “sounds well” with this chord progression.

IMPROVISATION PHASES

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AFTER THE RAIN

C Instruments

Ballad

Luis Nuño

Solos

Lento (♩ = 70)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It consists of four staves of music, each with a measure number and a list of chords above it. The notes are represented by black squares on the staff lines.

Staff 1 (Measures 1-4):
Measures: 1, 2, 3, 4
Chords: B^bΔ, Cm7, Fm7, F[#]°

Staff 2 (Measures 5-8):
Measures: 5, 6, 7, 8
Chords: Gm7, Cm7, F7(b9), B^bΔ, F7(♭13)

Staff 3 (Measures 9-12):
Measures: 9, 10, 11, 12
Chords: B^bΔ, Cm7, Fm7, F[#]°

Staff 4 (Measures 13-16):
Measures: 13, 14, 15, 16
Chords: Gm7, Cm7, F7(b9), B^bΔ, C7(b9)

IMPROVISATION PHASES

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17 F m7 B \flat m7 E \flat 7 A \flat Δ

21 A $^{\circ}$ B \flat m7 D \flat m C m7 F7(\flat 9)

25 B \flat Δ C m7 F m7 F \sharp $^{\circ}$

29 G m7 C m7 F7(\flat 13) B \flat Δ F7(\flat 13)

The image shows four staves of musical notation in treble clef, each with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The notation consists of horizontal lines with small black squares representing notes. Above each staff are labels for chords and their durations. The first staff (measures 17-20) has four measures with chords: F m7, B \flat m7, E \flat 7, and A \flat Δ . The second staff (measures 21-24) has five measures with chords: A $^{\circ}$, B \flat m7, D \flat m, C m7, and F7(\flat 9). The third staff (measures 25-28) has four measures with chords: B \flat Δ , C m7, F m7, and F \sharp $^{\circ}$. The fourth staff (measures 29-32) has five measures with chords: G m7, C m7, F7(\flat 13), B \flat Δ , and F7(\flat 13).

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IMPROVISATION PHASES

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C Instruments

AFTER THE RAIN (Ballad)

Luis Nuño

B \flat Δ	Cm7	Fm7	F \sharp ^o
Gm7	Cm7	F7(\flat 9)	B \flat Δ F7(\flat 13)
B \flat Δ	Cm7	Fm7	F \sharp ^o
Gm7	Cm7	F7(\flat 9)	B \flat Δ C7(\flat 9)
Fm7	B \flat m7	E \flat 7	A \flat Δ
A ^o	B \flat m7	D \flat m	Cm7 F7(\flat 9)
B \flat Δ	Cm7	Fm7	F \sharp ^o
Gm7	Cm7	F7(\flat 13)	B \flat Δ F7(\flat 13)

IMPROVISATION PHASES

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- The most common procedure for improvising consists of 2 Phases:
 - 1) For each chord or group of chords we need know which scale or scales are suitable for improvising on them.
 - 2) After choosing one of these scales, we have to form a melody with its notes (development of the solo).

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

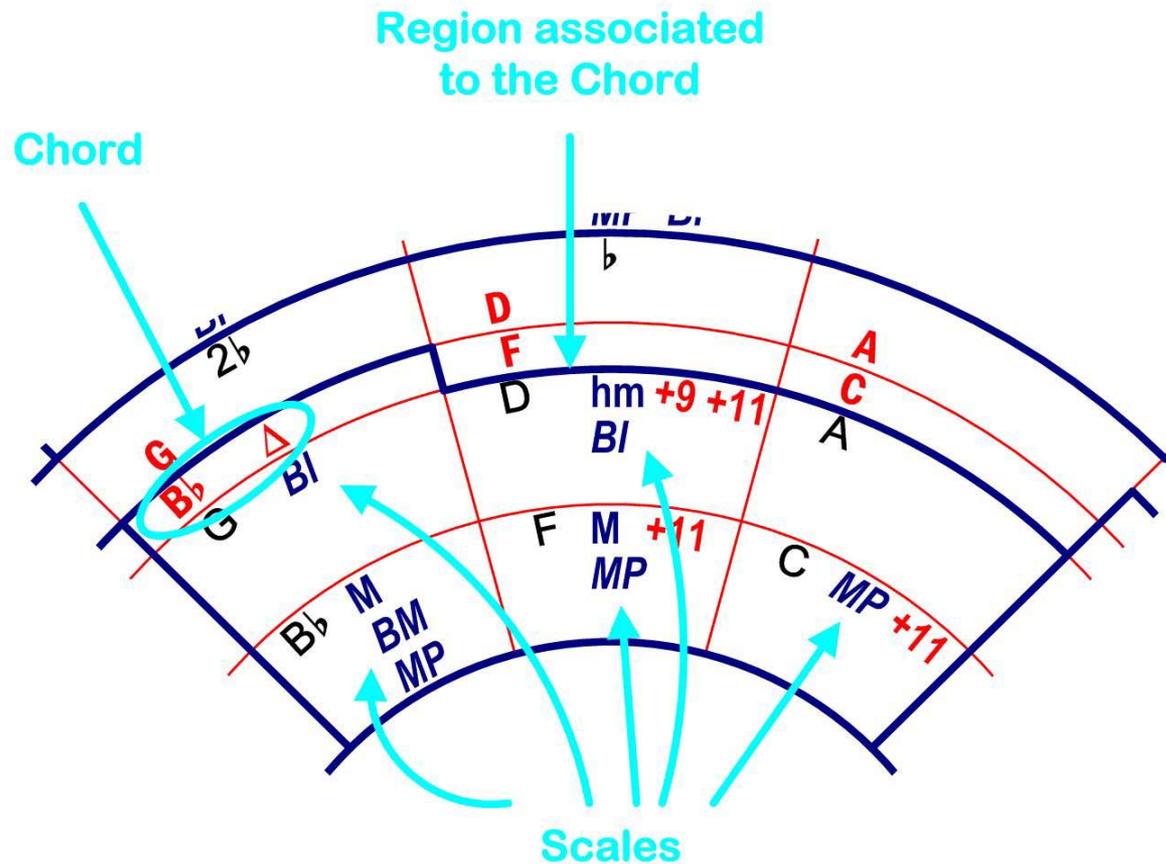
12

- Let us start with **Phase 1**. The first chord in the score is $B\flat \Delta$. Which scales can we use for improvising on it?
- The Improvisation Chart or **IMPROCHART™** gives us the answer.
- Firstly, we have to find the symbol Δ on the **plastic** disc, which is printed in **red**.
- Then, we rotate the discs until symbol Δ is placed just after $B\flat$ on the **cardboard** disc, also printed in **red**.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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- This is the result:



SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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- This way we obtain a region defined by blue lines, which inside contains the following scales:

G *Bl*

D *hm*

Bl

B \flat *M*

F *M*

C *MP*

BM

MP

MP

Abbreviations: *M*: Major, *hm*: harmonic minor,
BM: Bebop Major, *MP*: Major Pentatonic, *Bl*: Blues.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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- These 9 scales are suitable for improvising on $B\flat \Delta$ chord, each one in a different context.
- In this example, we are going to consider just Major Pentatonic (*PM*) scales, since they are very common in Jazz and, moreover, they do not contain avoid notes. They are the following:

$B\flat$ *MP*

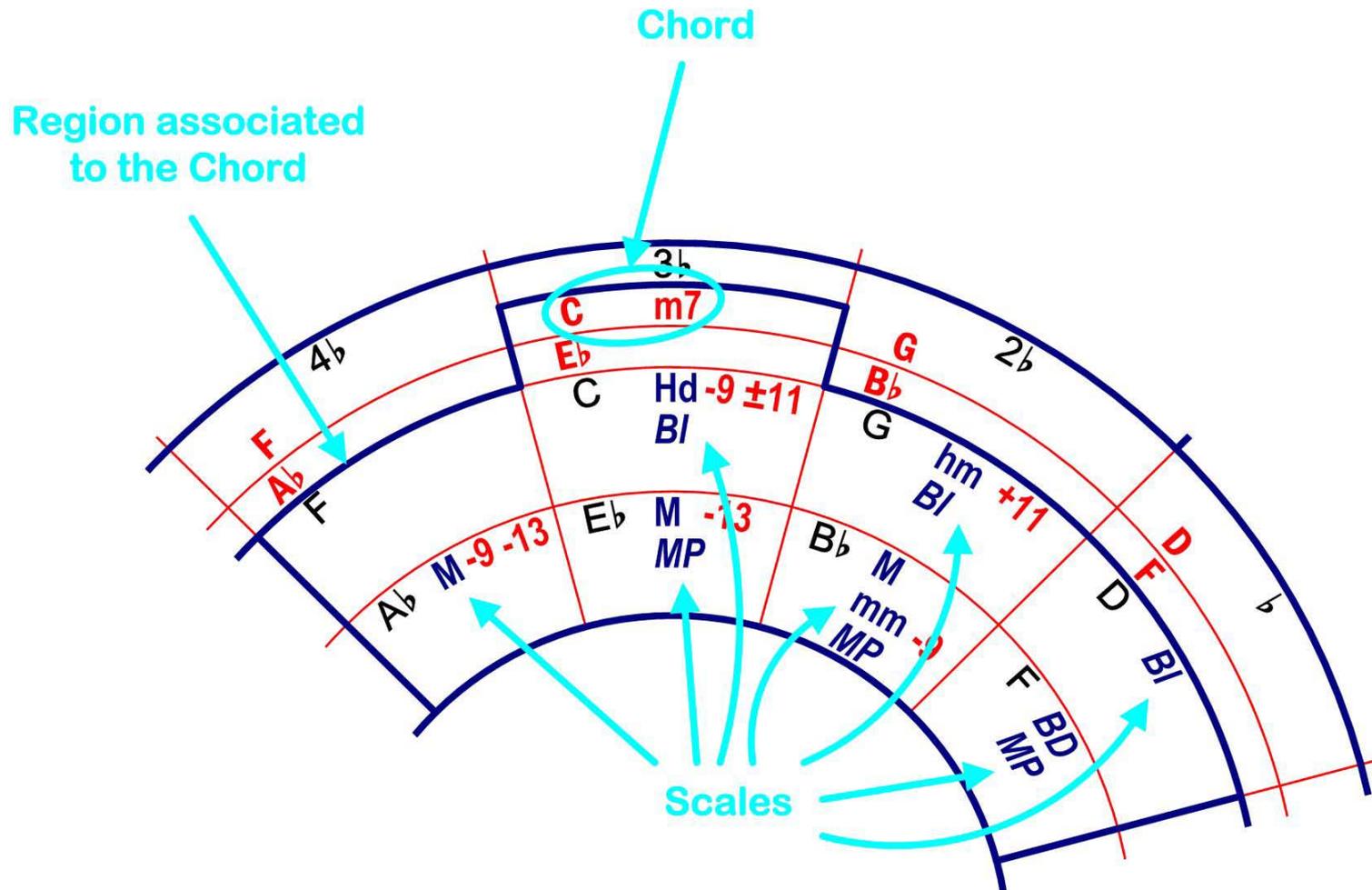
F *MP*

C *MP*

- The second chord in the score is $Cm7$.
- So, we find the symbol **m7** on the plastic disc of IMPROCHART™ and place it just after **C**. The result is:

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

17

- Here we find other types of scales, such as mm: melodic minor, Hd: Half-Whole diminished, and *BD*: Bebop Dominant.

- As we focus on *MP* scales, we select:

E♭ *MP*

B♭ *MP*

F *MP*

- In the same way, we find all the *MP* scales related to each chord in the score.
- Next two slides show the result for the first 8 bars (phrase A) in a table. The key signature associated to each scale is also shown.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

18

I

B \flat Δ C m7 F m7 F \sharp ^c

Phrase A	1	2	3	4
Key Signature	B \flat Δ	Cm7	Fm7	F \sharp ^o
4 \flat			A \flat <i>MP</i>	
3 \flat		E \flat <i>MP</i>	E \flat <i>MP</i>	
2 \flat	B \flat <i>MP</i>	B \flat <i>MP</i>	B \flat <i>MP</i>	
\flat	F <i>MP</i>	F <i>MP</i>		
0	C <i>MP</i>			
-				(Arpeggio)

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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5

Gm7 Cm7 F7(♭9) B \flat Δ F7(♭13)

Phrase A	5	6	7	8
Key Signature	Gm7	Cm7	F7(♭9)	B \flat Δ F7(♭13)
5#			B <i>MP</i>	B <i>MP</i>
6#·6♭				
5♭				
4♭				
3♭		E♭ <i>MP</i>		
2♭	B♭ <i>MP</i>	B♭ <i>MP</i>		B♭ <i>MP</i>
♭	F <i>MP</i>	F <i>MP</i>		F <i>MP</i>
0	C <i>MP</i>			C <i>MP</i>
-			(Arpeggio)	(Arpeggio)

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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- As can be seen, the B \flat *MP* scale is the most common to these chords, since it appears in bars 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and the first half of bar 8. Therefore, this is the most suitable scale for improvising in this context.
- In bar 4, we do not have any available *MP* scale, so we can simply use the notes of F \sharp ^o chord, that is, F \sharp , A, C, E \flat . It is possible to play just one of these notes, or even not to play (rest). Another option is to make an anticipation of the next chord with a scale related to it.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

- In bar 7 and the second half of bar 8, we can use the B *MP* scale, but the changes between B \flat *MP* and B *MP* would produce a large contrast, since their key signatures are quite far apart. For simplicity, in this example we will use, in these cases, the notes of the corresponding chords, which now are F7(\flat 9) and F7(\flat 13). We can even not to play (rest).
- Bars 9 to 16 contain the same chords as bars 1 to 8 (except the last chord), so we can repeat everything said for the last ones.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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- For bars 17 to 24 (phrase B), the available *MP* scales are the following :

17

F m7 B \flat m7 E \flat 7 A \flat Δ

Phrase B	17	18	19	20
Key Signature	Fm7	B \flat m7	E \flat 7	A \flat Δ
5 \flat		D \flat <i>MP</i>		
4 \flat	A \flat <i>MP</i>	A \flat <i>MP</i>		A \flat <i>MP</i>
3 \flat	E \flat <i>MP</i>	E \flat <i>MP</i>	E \flat <i>MP</i>	E \flat <i>MP</i>
2 \flat	B \flat <i>MP</i>			B \flat <i>MP</i>

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

23

21

A^o B^bm7 D^bm C m7 F7(^b9)

Phrase B	21	22	23	24
Key Signature	A ^o	B ^b m7	D ^b m	Cm7 F7(^b 9)
4#			E <i>MP</i>	
5#			B <i>MP</i>	B <i>MP</i>
6#·6 ^b			G ^b <i>MP</i>	
5 ^b		D ^b <i>MP</i>		
4 ^b		A ^b <i>MP</i>		
3 ^b		E ^b <i>MP</i>		E ^b <i>MP</i>
2 ^b				B ^b <i>MP</i>
^b				F <i>MP</i>
-	(Arpeggio)		(Arpeggio)	(Arpeggio)

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

- In this case, the $E\flat$ *MP* scale is the most suitable for improvising, since it appears in most of the bars.
- In bar 21, we do not have any available *MP* scale for improvising, so we will use the notes of A° chord.
- In bar 23, we have a $D\flat$ *m* chord, without specifying the seventh. So, we will look for the *MP* scales related to the $D\flat$ *m* Δ and $D\flat$ *m*7 chords. They are those indicated in the previous table.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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- Anyway, both the *MP* scales in bar 23 and in the second half of bar 24 have their key signatures quite far apart the $E\flat$ *MP* key signature. So, as explained before, in these cases we will simply use the notes of the corresponding chords; as well, we can even not to play (rest).
- Finally, bars 25 to 32 contain the same chords as bars 1 to 8 (except the next to the last bar), so we can repeat everything said for the last ones.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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- Therefore, we can perform the improvisation by only using 2 scales: B \flat *MP* and E \flat *MP*, plus some arpeggios.
- Next slides show the score with the suitable scales and arpeggios for improvising.
- In case you do not know the *MP* scales, you can use the Table of Scales given with IMPROCHART™.
- Anyway, the following slides show the notes of the scales and arpeggios we are going to use.
- A suitable score for those people not knowing how to read music is given, too.

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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AFTER THE RAIN

C Instruments

Ballad

Luis Nuño

Solos

B \flat Major Pentatonic

(Arpeggio)

Lento (♩ = 70)

B \flat Δ

C m7

F m7

F \sharp $^{\circ}$

1

5

G m7 C m7 (Arpeggio) (Arpeggio)

F7(b9) B \flat Δ F7(\circ 13)

9

B \flat Δ C m7 F m7 (Arpeggio)

F \sharp $^{\circ}$

13

G m7 C m7 (Arpeggio) (Arpeggio)

F7(b9) B \flat Δ C7(b9)

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

E \flat Major Pentatonic
Fm7 B \flat m7 E \flat 7 A \flat Δ

17

(Arpeggio) (Arpeggio) (Arpeggio)
A $^{\circ}$ B \flat m7 D \flat m C m7 F7(b9)

21

B \flat Major Pentatonic
B \flat Δ C m7 F m7 (Arpeggio)
F \sharp°

25

(Arpeggio) (Arpeggio)
G m7 C m7 F7(b13) B \flat Δ F7(b13)

29

SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

29

C Instruments

AFTER THE RAIN (Ballad)

Luis Nuño

B♭ Major Pentatonic

B♭ C D F G

(Arpeggio)

F# A E E♭

B♭Δ	Cm7	Fm7	F# ^o
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(Arpeggio)

F G♭ A C E♭

(Arpeggio)

F A C D♭ E♭

Gm7	Cm7	F7(b9)	B♭Δ F7(b13)
-----	-----	--------	-------------

(Arpeggio)

F# A E E♭

B♭Δ	Cm7	Fm7	F# ^o
-----	-----	-----	-----------------

(Arpeggio)

F G♭ A C E♭

(Arpeggio)

C D♭ E G B♭

Gm7	Cm7	F7(b9)	B♭Δ C7(b9)
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SCALES FOR IMPROVISING

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E♭ Major Pentatonic

E♭ F G B♭ C

Fm7	B♭m7	E♭7	A♭Δ
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(Arpeggio)

A E E♭ F♯

(Arpeggio)

D♭ F♭ A♭

(Arpeggio)

F G♭ A C E♭

A ^o	B♭m7	D♭m	Cm7 F7(b9)
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B♭ Major Pentatonic

B♭ C D F G

(Arpeggio)

F♯ A E E♭

B♭Δ	Cm7	Fm7	F♯ ^o
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(Arpeggio)

F A C D♭ E♭

(Arpeggio)

F A C D♭ E♭

Gm7	Cm7	F7(b13)	B♭Δ F7(b13)
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DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOLO

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- Let us move on to the **Phase 2** of the improvisation, which consists in creating a melody with the notes of previous scales and arpeggios.
- Although this phase is highly creative, the following directions can help:
 - 1) Memorize every scale and arpeggio you are going to use.
 - 2) Divide the solo into phrases of 2 or 4 bars.
 - 3) Compare the different effect obtained when starting a phrase before, after, or just on the first beat of the bar.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOLO

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- 4) Divide each of those phrases into two parts, with the form Question-Answer or Tension-Release (Antecedent-Consequent).

Elements producing TENSION	Elements producing RELEASE
Increasing Volume	Decreasing Volume
Ascending Lines	Descending Lines
Alternating directions	Uniform directions
Big intervals	Small intervals
High rhythmic density: Short-duration notes, few rests	Low rhythmic density: Long-duration notes, rests
Hard articulation (staccato)	Soft articulation (legato)
Disonances (Chord Tensions)	Consonances (Chord Tones)

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOLO

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- 5) Anyway, the Antecedent and the Consequent must be consistent between them.
 - 6) Use the Repetition and the Sequence to give structure to your solo, as well as to facilitate the interaction with the other musicians and the audience.
 - 7) Listen to the masters and try to imitate them. As well, listen to other soloists and analyze their solos.
 - 8) Try to be creative and use your imagination. There are always new possibilities.
- Next slides show an example of a Solo.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOLO

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AFTER THE RAIN



C Instruments

Ballad

Luis Nuño

Solos

Lento (♩ = 70) B♭ Major Pentatonic

1 Cm7 Fm7 F#°

5 Gm7 Cm7 F7(b9) B♭△ F7(b13)

9 B♭△ Cm7 Fm7 F#° (Arpeggio)

13 Gm7 Cm7 F7(b9) B♭△ C7(b9) (Arpeggio) (Arpeggio)

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOLO

35



E \flat Major Pentatonic
F m7 B \flat m7 E \flat 7 A \flat Δ

17

(Arpeggio) (Arpeggio) (Arpeggio)

A $^{\circ}$ B \flat m7 D \flat m C m7 F7(b9)

21

B \flat Major Pentatonic
B \flat Δ C m7 F m7 (Arpeggio) F \sharp°

25

(Arpeggio) (Arpeggio)

G m7 C m7 F7(b13) B \flat Δ F7(b13)

29

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOLO

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- The following files are given:
 - ▣ Score with the *Melody* and the Chords (Lead Sheet)
 - ▣ 2 Scores with the Scales and Arpeggios for improvising
 - ▣ Score with the Example of a Solo
 - ▣ Audio File with the Accompaniment
 - ▣ Audio File with a full Performance

- You can see a performance of this song on www.youtube.com/ruedaarmonica or on the link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urSlzSgQRxU>

IMPROVISATION – BOLERO

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- As an exercise for the reader, another score in a very different style is included: a Bolero.
- This piece is, actually, the second part of the “Example of a Composition” included in this Website. It consists of a 4-bar introduction and then four 8-bar phrases.
- The 4 phrases contain the same chords (except the last 2 bars), so we can say that this piece has the AAAA or A⁴ form.

IMPROVISATION – BOLERO

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- Use IMPROCHART™ to obtain the most suitable scales for improvising. In this case, use Major and minor (harmonic and melodic) scales, instead of Pentatonics. There are many options.

- The following files are given:
 - ▣ Score with the Melody and the Chords (Lead Sheet)
 - ▣ Audio File with the Accompaniment
 - ▣ Audio File with a full Performance

IMPROVISATION – BOLERO

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- You can see a performance of this song on www.youtube.com/ruedaarmonica or on the link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwPasYIWBCE>
- In this performance, a different procedure for improvising was followed. Although simpler, it is far less versatile than the previous one. It consists in:
 - 1) Playing the Head.
 - 2) Playing Embellishing Notes on the chord tones.
 - 3) Combining the Head with the chord tones.