

# Stop-Harmony Progressions for Musical Anticipation and Flow

by Michael Lake



Being able to “hear” forward as you improvise is a critical skill. Specifically, it’s important to possess a clear sense of the upcoming changes, modulations, and sections.

This ebook contains exercises for assessing your ability to hear forward and for building that skill. There are also ways in which you can create your own versions of this exercise and in the video of which this ebook is part, I explain how.



I think that in part, this skill comes from experience. After all, stop and imagine in your mind the sound of your best friend’s or partner’s speaking voice. Can you hear it? You probably can because you’ve heard it so often.

But this musical skill can be learned and the exercises within this book will go a long way toward exercising that skill that will make you a much better improviser.

## How to use these exercises

**Step one** to using these files is to have the changes firmly ingrained in your head. Start by listening to the tune recorded by a variety of people. Listen also to the full rhythm tracks for each tune.

**Step two** is to play the melody throughout the stop tracks. If you stumble playing the melody through these stop tracks, you will have a hard time improvising through them. Try singing the melody through the stop tracks if playing them proves difficult.

**Step three** occurs once you can easily hear the melody flowing through the gaps in the chordal rhythm section. Improvise through the two choruses of each tune. You might also try improvised singing throughout the stop tracks as an intermediary step before playing over the track with your instrument.

The gaps are different within each of the two times through the form of each tune. That difference provides you with the experience of hearing the missing changes in different parts of the song. For example, in the first time through the changes of Have you Met Miss Jones, bars two and three of the bridge have been removed. The second time through the form, bars one and two have been removed.

As an advanced exercise, set the playhead at a random place within the stop track to see how quickly you can pick up where in the form you have found yourself.

## ■ The Audio Files

Each exercise in the book is associated with an audio file containing the rhythm track.

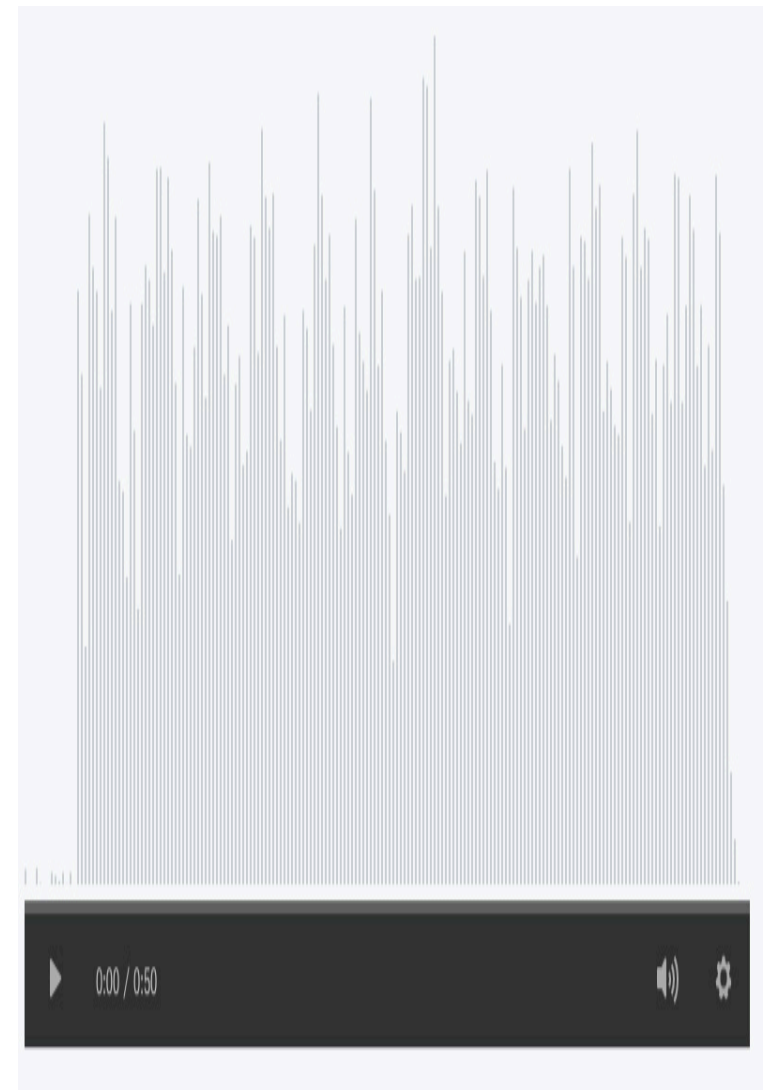
Simply click or tap the icon associated with the file to bring it up in a Dropbox audio player window. The audio files stream from Dropbox. Play the files in your browser by tapping play, stop, pause and repeat. Download each file as you wish from Dropbox.



**The full rhythm track** icon plays the full rhythm track without any stops.



**The stop track** icon plays the track containing stops, or gaps, of the chordal instruments.



# Bb Blues

Tap to play the audio files



Bb Blues full rhythm track



Bb Blues stop track

Within the two choruses of Bb blues, six sections of piano, bass, and guitar have been removed. This is the same track as demonstrated within the video.

Start by just listening to the stop track, or the full track if this Bb blues is not sufficiently in your “ear”.

As you listen to the stop track, can you hear where the rhythm section resolves in bars 3 and 4? Your musical mind should be hearing the I chord, or Bb7. Do the same for both choruses, hearing the missing harmony.

Next, improvise over the track and let your ear guide you through the missing harmony sections. Refer to the video if you are having difficulty.

# Rhythm Changes

Tap to play the audio files



Rhythm Changes full rhythm track



Rhythm Changes stop track

These tracks consist of two full choruses of rhythm changes. Remember that the form of this common progression is A-A-B-A.

Different sections have been removed for each time through the form. For example, the first time through the bridge, the third and fourth bars are removed. These are the second chords or key of the bridge.

The second time through the bridge, however, the first two bars are missing. This is an important part of the lesson since flowing into the bridge from the end of the prior A section is important to do well and is an aspect of rhythm changes that tends to trip players up.

# Chords to All The Things You Are

Tap to play the audio file:



All The Things full rhythm



All The Things stop track

We looked at these changes pretty extensively in the theory module so your ear should be pretty well tuned to them. If not, go back to that video and listen again to the analysis of the form.

Like the blues and rhythm changes, the two choruses of the form have different sections removed. In the first chorus, you are challenged to play the Db major chord leading into the modulation to C major. How smoothly can you do that?

Just one bar is removed through most of the first time through the form. The second time through, two and three bars have been removed. The missing bars are not predictable so it really becomes a test of your fluency over these standard changes.

# Chords to Have You Met Miss Jones

Tap to play the audio file:



Have You Met Miss Jones full rhythm



Have You Met Miss Jones stop track

We've also looked at these challenging changes earlier so they should be somewhat in your "ear".

As suggested in the introduction to this material, play the melody through the stop track before improvising over it if the rhythm section gaps make things initially too challenging for you.

The first gap is in the last two bars of the first A section in order to challenge you to flow back into the top of the second A section.

The gaps in the bridge give you the opportunity to test your hearing of the tune in different places between the first and second times through the form.

# Chords to Bye Bye Blackbird

Tap to play the audio file:



Bye Bye Blackbird full rhythm



Bye Bye Blackbird stop track

We've worked on these changes earlier as well, even though it only involved the bridge. Here is the entire song form.

Again, you have two complete 32 bar forms with gaps cut into the bass and piano in various places at various lengths.

The cuts begin with easier chord resolutions such as bars seven and eight. Bars 23 and 24 then cut out at the tri-tone substituted dominant chord leading back into the final A section. A little more challenging to hear. Listen to the full track if the sound of these chords are not clear in your mind.

Two four-bar segments of the A section on the second chorus are removed in order for you to get the feel for those static harmonic sections. It's sometimes harder to play over static harmony than moving chord changes.