Intervals

A good definition of an interval is “the space between two notes.” Figure 1-1 shows the intervals from the half step/minor second up to the octave, all based on middle C. The most commonly used term is shown above each interval, along with any alternate terms.

The chart that follows shows all the intervals, both ascending and descending, as they occur in tunes from the standard jazz repertoire. Unless otherwise noted, the interval in question is the first two melody notes of the song. Play each example and sing the interval. If you can sing an interval accurately, it will be easier to play when improvising. Listen carefully to all the voicings in the examples. All of them will be covered in this book. A footnote reference after each song title lists a great recording of the tune—in many cases, the original recording.
Intervals by selected tunes

1. G7b9 CΔ
   ascending minor second
   Bob Haggart’s “What’s New?”

2. F7b9 Bb-
   descending minor second
   Duke Ellington’s “Sophisticated Lady”

3. Bb-Δ
   ascending major second
   Billy Strayhorn’s “Chelsea Bridge”

4. G-7 A7alt.
   descending major second
   Miles Davis’ “Blue In Green”

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4 Miles Davis, *Kind Of Blue*, Columbia 40579.
Intervals and Triads — Review

ascending minor third
Thelonious Monk’s “Evidence”\(^5\)

descending minor third
Chick Corea’s “Mirror, Mirror”\(^6\)

ascending major third
Chick Corea’s “Windows”\(^7\)

descending major third
John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps”\(^8\)

\(^7\) Stan Getz, *Sweet Rain*, Verve 8693.
\(^8\) John Coltrane, *Giant Steps*, Atlantic 1311.
A₀  D7alt  G₉sus

ascending perfect fourth
McCoy Tyner’s “Search For Peace”

G-7  C7

descending perfect fourth
Thelonious Monk’s “Ask Me Now”

C7

ascending tritone
Joe Henderson’s “Isotope”

GΔ  E-7  A-7  D7  GΔ  G#°

descending tritone
bars 18 and 19 of
Duke Ellington’s
“Sophisticated Lady”

9 McCoy Tyner, *The Real McCoy*, Blue Note 4264.
12 Duke Ellington and Ray Brown, *This One’s For Blanton*, Pablo 2310-72I.
ascending perfect fifth
Wayne Shorter's “Angola”

C-7        Gb7Δ

descending perfect fifth
intro to Wayne Shorter’s “Black Nile”

ascending minor sixth
Woody Shaw’s “In A Capricornian Way”

descending minor sixth
intro to Freddie Hubbard’s Happy Times

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Wayne Shorter, *The Soothsayer*, Blue Note LT-988.
The Griffith Park Collection, *The Griffith Park Collection #2*, Elektra/Musician 60262.
Thelonious Monk’s “Misterioso”

Dizzy Gillespie’s “Ow!”

Duke Ellington’s “Sophisticated Lady”

Billy Strayhorn’s “Chelsea Bridge”

Thelonious Monk, Live At The Jazz Workshop, Columbia 38269.

The Gifted Ones, Pablo 2310 833.

Duke Ellington And Ray Brown, This One’s For Blanton, Pablo 2310 721.

Joe Henderson, The Kicker, Milestone 9008.
ascending major seventh
2nd and 3rd notes of Joe Henderson's “Serenity”\textsuperscript{21}

descending major seventh
bar 17 of Wayne Shorter’s “This Is For Albert”\textsuperscript{22}

ascending octave
Billy Strayhorn’s “Daydream”\textsuperscript{23}

descending octave
2nd and 3rd notes of Freddie Hubbard’s “Birdlike”\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} Joe Henderson, \textit{In ’n Out}, Blue Note 4166.
\textsuperscript{22} Art Blakey, \textit{Thermo}, Milestone 47008.
\textsuperscript{23} Steve Lacy, \textit{Soprano Sax}, Fantasy/OJC 130.
\textsuperscript{24} Freddie Hubbard, \textit{Ready For Freddie}, Blue Note 4085.
Melodic intervals greater than an octave in tunes are rare, but a few examples are shown here:

**Ascending minor ninth**
bars 53-54 of Wayne Shorter’s “Wild Flower”

**Descending minor ninth**
bar 18 of Benny Golson’s “I Remember Clifford”

**Ascending major ninth**
2nd and 3rd notes of Duke Ellington’s “I Got It Bad And That Ain’t Good”

**Descending eleventh**
15th bar of Joe Henderson’s “Inner Urge”

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27 Donald Byrd, *Mustang*, Blue Note 4238.
Inverting intervals

One of the skills a pianist must have is the ability to invert intervals quickly. When you invert an interval, you take the bottom note and put it on top, or vice versa. A new interval results, and the rules for inverting intervals are simple.

When you invert an interval:
• major becomes minor
• minor becomes major
• perfect remains perfect
• tritone remains tritone

and the old and new intervals add up to “nine.”

Look at figure 1-2. If you invert a major third, C with E on top, it becomes E with C on top, a minor sixth. Major becomes minor, and three plus six add up to nine. In figure 1-3, a minor second inverts to a major seventh. Minor becomes major, and two plus seven add up to nine.

Now look at figure 1-4. A perfect fourth becomes a perfect fifth. Perfect remains perfect, and four plus five add up to nine. In figure 1-5, a tritone inverts to another tritone. Because a tritone is right in between a fourth and a fifth, you could say it is “four and a half,” and four and a half plus four and a half equal nine.

Practice tips
Practice singing the intervals, both ascending and descending. Sing the melody, or “head,” of standards, bebop, and other jazz tunes while listening to records.

29 Joe Henderson, The Kicker, Milestone 9008.
Triads are formed by stacking one third on top of another. There are four possible combinations: major third and minor third, minor third and major third, two minor thirds, and two major thirds. A major third with a minor third on top of it forms a major triad. A minor third with a major third on top forms a minor triad. Two minor thirds make up a diminished triad. Two major thirds form an augmented triad. All four triads are shown in figure 1-6.

Play figure 1-6 and listen to the effect each triad has. Be aware of your emotional response to each triad. In program music (music for TV, movies, the theatre) harmony is used to enhance whatever emotional response a scene demands. A major triad sounds happy, strong, or triumphant. A minor triad may sound sad, pensive, or tragic. A diminished triad suggests tension, agitation. An augmented triad has a floating quality, suggesting, among other things, Bambi emerging from the mist at dawn (seriously). Although these have become clichés, they still work, otherwise TV and movie composers wouldn’t continue to use them. These emotional responses apply to seventh chords as well, the next chords you will learn about. It’s no accident that sad tunes such as Benny Golson’s “I Remember Clifford,” John Lewis’ “Django,” and the Raye-DePaul standard “You Don’t Know What Love Is” are written in minor keys, or that Bix Beiderbeck’s “In A Mist” uses augmented chords. As you play, you elicit an emotional response in your listener, your fellow musicians, and yourself. Be aware of it.

Figure 1-6

C major triad
C minor triad
C diminished triad
C augmented triad

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30 Freddie Hubbard, Sky Dive, CTI 6018.
Triads are often inverted. An inversion is a chord with a note other than the root on the bottom. Figure 1-7 shows both a C major and a C minor triad in their three possible positions: root position, as the term implies, with the root on the bottom; first inversion, with the third on the bottom; and second inversion, with the fifth on the bottom.

Practice tips
Play the major, minor, diminished, and augmented triads in all keys and all inversions.