Five Essential 7th Chords Practice Sessions
Practice Session 1

**Play the Bill Evans Transcription**

**Objective**
To inform your intuition and develop your musical instincts by playing the transcription and imitating the recording.

**Task**
Listen to the recording and play the transcription as written.

**Procedure**

1. Listen to either the source recording of Bill Evans soloing over the tune "Night and Day" or the introduction this lesson. The transcription of "Night and Day" is taken from Bill Evans' recording "Everybody Digs Bill Evans" and is available on Amazon.com and starts at about 1:24, his first solo chorus.

2. As you listen, read along with the music notation below. Pay attention to the details of how the right hand notes are played: phrasing, articulation, rhythmic feel and the overall expressive inflection. Also note the left hand: how and when the chords are played.

3. Play the transcription using the playalong. Imitate his playing by emulating the elements of his recorded performance that you noted from listening to his solo. Play four choruses (32 measures x 4 times).
Transcription of Bill Evans Improvising over “Night and Day” from his album “Everybody Digs Bill Evans.”
Self Assessment

1. Record your performance and compare it to the original recording. If the playalong is too fast you can download the playalong source files from the onscreen version of these practice sessions and load the files into a MIDI sequencer or Band-in-a-Box to change the tempo.

2. How does your recording compare and contrast with the original recording with respect to phrasing, articulation, rhythmic feel and the overall expressive inflection?

3. Record your playing multiple times and listen to them again several days later. Letting time pass between recording the solo and listening to it can give you perspective on your playing that is more objective than when you are in the midst of making the recording.
Practice Session 2

Major Scale Refresher

Objective
To learn the major scale in all 12 keys.

Task
Play the major scale through the cycle of fourths.

Procedure
1. With the fifth finger of your left hand on the C two octaves below middle C and the first finger of your right hand on middle C, play one octave of the C major scale in parallel. See the fingerings below:

   ![Fingerings](image)

2. Play the scale smoothly and evenly. Try to envision the notes of the scale in your minds eye. This is not a technical exercise but instead a way for you to become intimately familiar with the notes of each major scale so that you can eventually manipulate them in your head to form chords.

3. Continue playing the major scales through the cycle of perfect 4ths. After C play F, then Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F#, B, E, A, D and G. Fingerings are provided below.
F, Bb and Eb Major Scale
Ab, Db and F# Major Scales

\[\text{Ab Major Scale:} \quad \{\text{C}, \text{Eb}, \text{G}, \text{Ab}, \text{Db}, \text{F}, \text{A}\}\]

\[\text{Db Major Scale:} \quad \{\text{A}, \text{C}, \text{E}, \text{G}, \text{Bb}, \text{Db}, \text{F}\}\]

\[\text{F# Major Scale:} \quad \{\text{Bb}, \text{Db}, \text{F}, \text{G}, \text{B}, \text{C}, \text{D}\}\]
B, E and A Major Scales
D and G Major Scales
Self Assessment

1. If you can play the scales in eighth notes at about 40-60 bpm then move on to the next practice session.
Practice Session 3

Five Essential 7th Chord Drill

**Objective**
To memorize the five essential 7th chord types in all 12 keys.

**Task**
Play the 5 essential 7th chord drill through the cycle of fourths.

**Procedure**
1. With your left hand, play one octave of the C major scale starting on middle C.
2. Play 1, 3, 5 and 7 of the scale together to form the C major 7th chord.
3. Alter 7, 3, 5 and 7 again by half steps in that order to build the remaining four chords:
   a. Lower the 7th by half step to get C7
   b. Lower the 3rd by half step to get C-7
   c. Lower the 5th by half step to get C-7♭5
   d. Lower the 7th by half step again to get C⁰7
   e. Repeat the drill in reverse:
   f. Raise the 7th by half step to get C-7♭5
   g. Raise the 5th by half step to get C-7
   h. Raise the 3rd by half step to get C7
   i. Raise the 7th by half step to get Cmaj7
4. Continue the drill through the cycle of 4ths (F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, B, E, A, D, G) until you reach C again. Start each scale in the mid-range of the piano right around middle C where chords sounds best. Name each chord out loud as you play it. Feel free to ask questions about anything you don’t understand.

5. Repeat the drill through all 12 keys three more times, then, using a metronome, try to play the drill at 40 bpm, one chord per click. Continue to practice the drill until you can play it at 60 bpm.
Major Scales and Five Essential 7th Chords for C, F, Bb, Eb and Db

C Major Scale

F Major Scale

Bb Major Scale

Eb Major Scale

Ab Major Scale

Db Major Scale
Major Scales and Five Essential 7th Chords for Gb, B, E, A and D

Gb Major Scale

B Major Scale

E Major Scale

A Major Scale

D Major Scale

G Major Scale
Self Assessment

1. If you played all the chords correctly and in time with no mistakes, move on to the next practice session.

2. If you played most of the chords correctly and in time with a few mistakes, try it again at a slower tempo, say 40 bpm. Once you can play it with no mistakes at 40 bpm, increase it until you can play it with no mistakes at 60 bpm, then move on to the next practice session.

3. If you were unable to play any of the chords in time review the lesson and ask questions about anything you don’t understand. Try it again at a slower tempo, say 30 bpm. Once you can play it with no mistakes at 40 bpm, increase it until you can play it with no mistakes at 50 bpm, then 60 bpm, then move on to the next practice session.
Practice Session 4

Playing the Chords to “Night and Day,” “Softly” and “There is No Greater Love”

Objective
To learn the chords to three tunes “Night and Day,” “Softly” and “There is No Greater Love.”

Task
Play the chords to “Night and Day,” “Softly” and “There is No Greater Love” using the five essential 7th chord drill

Procedure

1. As you read each chord symbol of the tunes below play through the drill to find each chord. For example, the first chord of the tune is F-7b5. Follow the steps of the drill as described below to find the chord:
   a. With your left hand, play the major scale that is the same as the root of the chord. In this case F. Play the scale in the mid-range of the piano where chords sound best.
   b. Play 1, 3, 5 and 7 of the scale together to form a chord. This forms the major 7th chord, Fmaj7.
   c. Alter 7, 3, 5 and 7 again by half step in that order to find the chord you are looking for.
   d. Lower the 7th by half step to get F7
   e. Lower the 3rd by half step to get F-7
   f. Lower the 5th by half step to get F-7b5 (you would stop here for F-7b5).
2. Continue to play each chord of the tune in this way. As you play each chord try to memorize the notes of the chord. Pay attention to what each chord sounds like and looks like, e.g. the chord is all white notes, all black notes, pattern of black and white.

3. When you have played the whole tune while using the drill go back and play the tune again three more times. With each chorus you should try memorize more of the chords to the tune.

4. Play the chords to the tune again but this time with the playalong at 80 bpm. Play 2 choruses (48 measures x 2 times).

5. Continue to use this drill in the same manner by playing through the chords of “Softly as in a Morning Sunrise” and “There is no Greater Love” included below. Play 4 choruses each (32 measures x 4 times).
Chord Changes to “Night and Day”

F7b5         Bb7      Ebmaj7

A7b5         Ab7      G7      G707      F7b5         Bb7      Ebmaj7

F7b5         Bb7      Ebmaj7

A7b5         Ab7      G7      G707      F7b5         Bb7      Ebmaj7

G7maj7       Ebmaj7

A7b5         Ab7      G7      G707      F7         Bb7      Ebmaj7
**Self Assessment**

1. Check your chords with the answer key on page 25. If you played all the chords correctly and in time with no mistakes, see next steps, below.

2. If you played most of the chords correctly and in time with a few mistakes, try it again at a slower tempo, say 60 bpm. Once you can play it with no mistakes at 60 bpm, increase it until you can play it with no mistakes at 80 bpm, then move on to the next practice session.

3. If you played few of the chords correctly and with several mistakes try it again at a slower tempo, say 60 bpm and write out the notes of the chords that you had trouble playing on the lead sheet. Read those chords while you play it again. Erase them as you learn them on the keyboard. Once you can play it with no mistakes and without reading the notes of the chords at 60 bpm, increase it until you can play it with no mistakes at 80 bpm, then move on to the next practice session. Alternatively, you can play the written out chords in the answer keys with the playalongs to help you get a feel for the chords.

4. If you were unable to play any of the chords in time review the lesson. Play the written out chords in the answer keys with the playalongs. Feel free to ask questions about anything that you don’t understand. Try it again at a slower tempo, say 60 bpm and write out the notes of the chords that you had trouble playing on the lead sheet. Read those chords while you play it again. Erase them as you learn them on the keyboard. Once you can play it with no mistakes and without reading the notes of the chords at 60 bpm, increase it until you can play it with no mistakes at 80 bpm, then move on to the next practice session.
Chord Changes to “Softly as in a Morning Sunrise”

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Chord Changes to “There is no Greater Love”

\[
\begin{align*}
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A^7_{MA7} & \quad E^7 & \quad A^7 & \quad G^7 & \quad C^7 & \quad C^7 & \quad F^7 & \quad B^5_{MA7} \\
A^7_{MA7} & \quad D^7 & \quad G^7 & \quad A^7_{MA7} & \quad D^7 & \quad G^7 & \quad A^7_{MA7} & \quad D^7 & \quad G^7 & \quad C^7 & \quad F^7 \\
B^5_{MA7} & \quad E^7 & \quad A^7 & \quad G^7 & \quad C^7 & \quad C^7 & \quad F^7 & \quad B^5_{MA7}
\end{align*}
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Next Steps

Continue to read through tunes from the Real Book by playing the chords with your left hand and using the drill to figure them out. Start at page 1 and work through the entire book. When you reach the end of the book you will have all 60 chords memorized and will be ready to watch the Rootless Voicings with Added Tensions series of lessons.

Tips and Exceptions

As you read through the Real Book you will encounter chords that weren’t covered in the lesson. Don’t panic! They are in the minority and easy to figure out. For now, focus on learning the 5 Essential 7th chords. In the meantime beware of these exceptions:

1. Ignore any chords that you don’t recognize (for example, C6, Cmaj6, C-maj7, C+7, Cmaj7b5, C7sus4, etc.) Write them down or circle them in the book so that you can work on them later. In some cases you may be able to infer their spelling from your current knowledge. For example, Cmaj7b5 is a Cmaj7 chord with a flatted 5th. C6 or Cmaj6 is a C major triad with an added 6 instead of a 7th. C+7 is a C augmented triad with a minor 7th. C7sus4 is a C dominant 7th chord with a 4 in place of the 3.

2. Ignore the bottom note of slash chords. If you see Db7/Ab just play the Db7. The bottom note is used to indicate the bass note of the chord.

3. Ignore tensions. Tensions are the 9, 11 and 13ths of chords. They are often preceded by sharps or flats as in this chord: C7#9. Don’t worry about them yet. Play that chord as a C7. Tensions are covered in the Rootless Voicings with Added Tensions lessons.

4. Triads are chords without a 7th. These are built from the first 5 notes of the major scale. 135 for major, 1b35 for minor, 1b3b5 for diminished, 13#5 for augmented and 145 for suspended (sus). That’s all of them! You can figure these out from the major scales.

Forge Ahead

When you begin reading through the Real Book it will be slow and difficult and it will be a lot of work. Keep at it! This is important work. Eventually you will find that playing the chords will get easier and faster and you will rely less and less on the drill. As it gets easier for you to play the chords, add the melody to the tunes in your right hand. By the time you reach the end of the book you will be enjoying learning the tunes and will be unaware that when you started the book you couldn’t play any of these chords. You will feel very triumphant when you reach this stage!
HELP!
This is a lot of work. If you get stuck, confused, frustrated or need help for any reason email me and I will get you through it.

bill@jazzpianoonline.com
"Night and Day" Answer Key
"Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" Answer Key
"There is No Greater Love" Answer Key