

Tools of the Trade

The Boys of Summer, Part II

By Chris Buono

Welcome back to the second installment of this two part series showcasing just a few of the great educators I work alongside at the National Guitar Workshop. Last issue (No. 49, November 2006) the JJG readership was introduced to the teachings of Christopher Morrison and George Muscatello—two of NGW's finest jazz educators and amazing players in their own right. Up next is New York City based jazz guitar phenom Chris Parrello with an ingenious approach to implementing an otherwise disregarded symmetrical scale over an infamously treasured set of changes.

Barely thirty years old, Chris Parrello already possesses qualities and skills as both a player and a person that are far beyond his years. Not surprising considering the people Parrello aligns himself like seeking knowledge from such jazz masterminds like Bob Ferrazza, Gene Bertocini, and Paul Bollenback as well as the brilliant theorists Shaugn O'Donnell and Joseph Straus. With his trusty 1977 Guild Artist Award Model in hand and a Harry Kolbe modified reissue Fender Deluxe fashionably strapped to a luggage cart you can catch Parrello with some of his other cronies like Barry Greene, Bob Mintzer, or drummer Aaron Scott delivering one incendiary performance after another. In fact, over the years this writer has shared many inspiring musical moments with this exceptional artist in impromptu gigs that were to die for. Recently receiving a Masters degree from City College of New York that augments his B.A. and B.M. from Oberlin Conservatory, Chris stands out as one of NGW's most valuable Jazz instructors. In his time there Chris has taught much of the upper level Jazz curriculum including classes on composition, free improvisation, and odd-meter and polyrhythms. His debut CD *Still Undefeated* recorded with his group Chris Parrello's Homemade Parachutes has been a top seller since it's release in 2002. To keep up with this ever-evolving artist, be sure to bookmark www.chrisparrello.com.

Chris Parrello - Taking Giants Steps with the Augmented Scale

To the modernist, the Symmetrical or Dominant Diminished (1-b2/b9-b3/#9-3-#4/b5-5-6-b7) and Whole Tone (1-2-3-#4-#5-b7) scales are invaluable tools for sophisticated melodic expression. Both these scales have repeating or cyclical interval structures that make up the scale—Symmetrical Diminished with a half step/whole step pattern and the Whole Tone with a whole step pattern—which is referred to in musical terms as being *symmetrical*. These scales also have the capacity to produce symmetrical harmony. Like the set of four °7 tetrads derived

from the Symmetrical Diminished scale that repeat their chord tone content, albeit in a different order, every minor third (three frets) or the three Augmented triads from the Whole Tone scale that repeat in the same manner every major third (four frets). Digging beneath the surface, symmetrical scales can also elicit some intriguing concepts as well. In this lesson I will introduce you to a recent discovery I made while exploring another symmetrical scale that unfortunately doesn't receive as much attention—the Augmented scale.

The Augmented or Hexatonic (six-tone) scale can be thought of as the merger of two Augmented triads (1-3-#5) separated by a half step (one fret)—the first starting on the root, the other starting on the very next degree a minor 3rd away. In scale form—also known as linear form—its symmetrical properties lie within the half step to minor 3rd pattern that stays consistent throughout the scale. It's important to note that Augmented scales can be spelled from either a half step to minor 3rd pattern or, as shown below in **Figs. 1A-B** through two different fingerings marked #1 and #2, a minor 3rd to half step pattern. Play through these scales to get the sound of the Augmented scale in your head and the feel under your fingers.

Figs. 1A

C Augmented, Fingering #1

Fin. 4 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 3 2 4

Figs. 1B

C Augmented, Fingering #2

Fin. 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 3 4 3 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1

While the Augmented scale may often be used as a tool for producing ear-catching melodic flourishes that create “outside” tensions, a closer look actually reveals many consonant sounding triads embedded in the scale. For instance, a C Augmented scale (C-D#-E-G-Ab-B) would produce the following triads: C major, C minor, E major, E minor, Ab major, and Ab minor (*Note: Some enharmonic respellings are required*). Even more interesting is the underlying half-step transitional sequence found within the voice leading of these triads as heard in **Fig. 2**.

Fig. 2

The figure shows a musical staff in 7/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff are seven chords: C, Cm, Ab/C, Abm/Cb, E/B, Em/B, and C. Below the staff is a guitar fretboard diagram with strings T, A, and B labeled. The fret numbers for each string are: T (8, 8, 9, 9, 9, 8, 8), A (9, 8, 8, 8, 9, 9, 9), and B (10, 10, 10, 9, 9, 9, 10).

Going through the transitions step by step the half step movements start at 3rd (E) of C major moving down a half step becoming the b3rd (Eb) of C minor. Next up is the 5th (G) of the C minor moving up a half step to Ab becoming the root of the Ab/C triad. From the Ab/C you have the 3rd (C) go down a half step becoming the b3rd (Cb) of Abm/Cb. After moving the 5th (Eb) of Abm/Cb to an E natural and enharmonically respelling the Ab to G# and the Cb to a B natural, you have the E/B triad which has it's 3rd (G#) make the move down a half step to become the b3rd (G) of Em/G. Completing the full symmetrical voice leading cycle, the 5th (B) of the Em/G moves up a half step to become the initial voicing of the root position C major triad.

Here you might find yourself saying ‘Sounds like something I’ve heard before’. Your instincts serve you well—remarkably this bears a striking resemblance to a set of chord changes known as the “Coltrane Cycle” that can be heard in the John Coltrane classic, *Giant Steps*. To get started, play through this simple arrangement of voice led chords derived from the original changes in *Giant Steps* found in **Fig. 3**. While providing you with a solid foundation of the harmonic flow of the Coltrane Cycle, it will lay the ground work for you to fully understand the connection between these changes and the Augmented scale’s triadic sequence. (Note this arrangement of *Giant Steps* was transposed up a half step to the key of C major to stay consistent with the material presented throughout this lesson.)

Fig. 3

Chord sequence for Fig. 3: C, Eb7, Ab, B7, E, Bbmin7, Eb7, Ab, B7, E, G7, C, F#min7, B7, E, Bbmin7, Eb7, Ab, Dmin7, G7, C, F#min7, B7, E, Dmin7, G7.

Tablature for Fig. 3:

	15	11	13	9	9	8	8
T	15	12	12	8	9	6	6
A	14	11	11	7	9	6	5
B							

	8	11	7	8	8	7	9
	8	10	7	8	8	9	9
	6	9	6	9	7	7	7
				8			

	7	7	11	13	11	11	15
	7	5	9	12	11	9	13
	6	6	11	11	10	10	15
							17
							16
							15

	15	13	14	12	12	12
	15	12	13	11	10	10
	14	12	12	11	10	10
					10	

Fig. 4 is an arrangement of the same set of changes but now with the Augmented scale derived triadic sequence substituting the original Coltrane

changes. Note that the harmonic rhythm (duration of each chord) does not mirror Coltrane's exactly, but rather progresses in consistent half notes until the final two measures of the form where there are whole notes. To get the full effect, comp these chords as an accompaniment underneath another person playing the head and listen how the Augmented triadic sequence, amazingly, supports the melody. That's because much of Coltrane's melody falls within one Augmented scale, in this case C Augmented. Even more interesting, if you substitute all the minor triads in the Augmented scale's triadic sequence with their relative major triad counterparts—C minor to Eb major, Ab or G# minor to B major, and E minor to G major—you'll end up with the triadic reduction of a Coltrane Cycle!

Fig. 4

The figure displays three systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble clef staff with chord symbols and a three-line guitar tablature staff. The first system is in C major and contains the following chords and fret numbers:

C	Cm	A ^b	A ^b m	E	Em	C	Cm
15 13	11 12	8	9	9	8	8	8
14	10	8	9	9	9	9	8
		11					

The second system is in Eb major and contains the following chords and fret numbers:

A ^b	A ^b m	E	Em	C	Cm	A ^b	A ^b m
8	11	12	8	5	8	8	9
9	9	9	8	5	8	8	9
8	9	11	7	5	10	6	9

The third system is in B major and contains the following chords and fret numbers:

E	Em	C	Cm	A ^b	A ^b m	E	Em
7	7	12	13	11	11	16	12
5	5	12	12	9	9	16	12
6	5	10	13	10	9	14	12

C	Cm	A ^b	A ^b m	E	Em
15 13	11	8	9	7 5	7 5
14	12 10	8 6	9 6	6	5

This concept fully blossoms when you use it to create lines that can be played against either set of harmonies. In **Fig. 5** I laid a one chorus solo with lines directly correlated to the Augmented scale's triadic sequence. At first, the triadic lines are loyal to the rhythm of the sequence, but later in the chorus they are expressed more freely, providing another interesting color against either harmonic background. In **Fig. 6** you'll find a chorus of lines treating the Augmented scale as a tool to horizontally (one melodic idea played over a set changes) improvise over the changes more akin to a modal approach. Playing over Coltrane's changes with such lines will sound a little out there, but with practice it can be done convincingly. Good luck!

**** Go to next two pages for Figs. 5-6**

Fig. 5

The musical score consists of four systems, each with a treble clef staff, a bass clef staff with tablature, and chord diagrams. The first system is in C major and includes chords: C, Cm, Ab, Abm, E, C, Cm. The second system is in E minor and includes chords: Abm, Em, Abm. The third system is in C major and includes chords: Abm, E, C, Ab, Cm, E. The fourth system is in C major and includes chords: E, Cm, E, C, Cm. The tablature for the first system is:

9	10	9	8	8	8	8
9	8	10	11	9	8	9
7	9	9				
9	8	8	8	8	11	

