

Dave Kikoski's Solo on Chick Corea's "Steps"

Dave Kikoski is an exciting and talented pianist on the New York jazz scene who performs with his own trio, recording several albums including the recent *Dave Kikoski* and the more pop-oriented *Persistent Dreams*. He also works with other artists, such as Bob Berg and Roy Haynes, including the recently released Haynes albums *Te Vou* (featuring Pat Metheny, Donald Harrison, and Christian McBride), *True or False* (with bassist Edward Howard and tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore), and *Homecoming* (with drummer Haynes, bassist Howard, and saxophonist Craig Handy). It is on a previous Haynes release with the latter personnel, *When It's Haynes It Roars* (Dreyfus Jazz, FDM 36556-2, 1992), that his solo on "Steps" appears.

The Tune

Chick Corea's "Steps" is a twelve-bar tune suggesting a minor blues. The changes are:

I C minor | | | |
 I F minor | | C minor | | |
 I Ab (Lydian) | E Maj7 | Db (Lydian) | B (Lydian) ||

The performer may also freely vary the quality of the chords, particularly in the last four measures. For example, in Chick Corea's original solo on *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* (Blue Note CD B [2]7 90055-2) as well as in Kikoski's solo either one of the last two chords (Db Lydian and B Lydian) occasionally appears as a minor-eleventh or as a suspended chord.

The Solo

What makes this particular solo compelling and exciting are a number of features, including the following:

- an interesting mix of melodic (single-note, right-hand lines) and harmonic (chordal) approaches to the solo;
- the use of a variety of approaches to the melodic material including pentatonic, diatonic, diminished, and chromatic scales;
- the use of octaves and other percussive figures to accentuate phrases and areas of climax;
- the use of the first four bars of the form, i (C minor), to "set up" the move to the iv (F minor);
- the use of real, diatonic, and tonal sequences.

Theme and Variation

The opening two-measure phrase establishes the pentatonic quality that is prevalent in the solo. While there are many pentatonic phrases and motives throughout, much of the solo is built around a basic pentatonic figure such as the one found in measure 168. The figure is varied rhythmically and melodically, becoming a consistent thread that holds the solo together motivically.

Examples of variations of this basic figure include measure 16 (melodic variation: the opening interval is a diminished fifth); measure 22 (the figure shifted so it begins on the third beat of the measure); measure 33 (first note

missing, different intervallic content); measure 34 (interval expansion); measure 35 (different opening interval and intervallic content); measures 45 and 46 (first note missing, phrase ends differently with quarter notes); measure 47 (first note missing); measure 70 (similar contour but different interval content); measure 93 (interval expansion, phrase shortened); and measures 95, 96, 97, and 98 (different interval content). Other variants of this basic motive can be found in measures 101, 105, 108, 109-112 (here played as a sequence), 115, 117, and 118-120. Variants of the basic figure continue to dominate the solo to its end.

Another melodic phrase that appears throughout the solo is the bop-oriented phrase that appears at measure 42. This figure and its variants can be found in measures 43, 49-50, 63, 75, 78, 86-87, 87-88, 125, 169-170, 185-186, and 210-211.

Fourths (both perfect and augmented) dominate the sound of the solo both melodically and harmonically. Melodically, many phrases begin and end with the perfect fourth as an interval or contour. The opening measure, for example, begins with a perfect fourth. Furthermore, many phrases end with a falling fourth, such as in measures 6, 10-11, 19, 34, 97, 106, 116, and elsewhere. Left-hand chord voicings are regularly comprised of fourths: usually two perfect fourths or a perfect fourth and an augmented fourth. Additionally, Kikoski ends many of his phrases with two salient melodic devices: repeated notes (measure 6) and a "falling off" figure that makes use of repeated notes (measure 91).

Repeated notes end phrases at measures 6, 19, 55, 79, and 94. The "falling off" figure (or a variation of it) is prevalent throughout the solo as a phrase ending and appears at measures 91, 102-103, 106, 115-116, 138-139, 187, 189-192, 199-200, and 239-240. Many phrases also end with triadic figures: measures 24, 26, 31, 79, 127, 149 (harmonic), 151-152, 199-200, 262, 274, and 279.

Sequences appear throughout the solo and are often punctuated with octaves. The bop-oriented phrase in measure 42 is immediately followed by a variant (transposed down a perfect fourth) in measure 43. Sequences using the



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basic pentatonic motive (measure 168) or a variation of it appear at measures 45-47, 167-168, and elsewhere throughout the solo. An ascending diatonic sequence that is closely related to this basic pentatonic motive appears at measures 109-112. Triadic sequences appear at measures 95-97 and 125-128. Two diatonic sequences that end with the "bop" phrase appear at measures 73-75 and measures 84-86. A sequence of major triads with a major second (1-2-3-5) ascends in half-steps in measures 144-148, while the same figure appears in measures 203-204 descending in minor thirds-and a related figure appears in measure 244 descending in half-steps. Triadic (or seventh chord) sequences punctuated with octaves appear at measures 171-172, 194-196, 219-220, 251-261 (sequence-like patterns), 269-272, 282-283, 290-294, and 295-298. Sequences based on triads derived from the diminished scale appear at measures 273-277 and 279. A descending melodic sequence using a version of the "ambichord" (1-4-5) appears at measures 285-288.

Harmonic Interaction

As mentioned above, the most salient feature of Kikoski's solo on "Steps" is his extensive use of pentatonic scales and pentatonic scale fragments. Pentatonic figures are frequently used in sequences and in sequential transpositions including those in measures 22-23 (first two beats of each measure), 45-46, and 166-168. What makes many of these transposed fragments interesting is the way they interact with the descending bass line of the last four measures of the form. A particular pattern, if it is

shifted upward, will have a different relationship with each note of the descending bass line.

Kikoski often uses the first four measures of the form (C min) as an opportunity to create an embedded harmonic progression. For example, at measure 73 he takes us through $i - viio^7 - i - V^7/IV$. At measure 109 the solo begins an ascent upward through a diatonic chordal progression based on C Dorian. At measure 193 a melodic pattern is moved upward chromatically. Additionally, the last measure of these four bars frequently appears as an applied dominant to iv and serves as a springboard into the iv chord in the fifth measure of the form (measures 4, 16, 124, and elsewhere).

Rhythmic Features

One interesting feature of Kikoski's phrasing is the way he ends many phrases in a similar manner: dotted quarter, eighth, and two quarter notes at the same pitch (measures 55, 79) and similar variations (measures 19, 100, and 199); this motive is later developed beginning at measure 187. In general, Kikoski tends to end his phrases in this solo with quarter notes (for example, measures 38, 45, 91, 108-11, 113, 132, 140, 149, 151, and elsewhere). This works to shape the phrase naturally toward a cadence.

While the rhythms contained in the solo are based primarily on eighth notes, Kikoski frequently works with syncopation (see measures 23-4, 133-34, 148-49, 154-55, 159-160, 218-24, 239-40, and the entire section beginning at measure 251) and quarter-note triplets (measures 3-6 and 295-300). The left hand is almost consistently syncopated and continually interacts rhythmically with the right hand in a complementary manner (for example, the section between measures 225 and 231).

Summary

It is interesting to compare Dave Kikoski's solo here with Chick Corea's solo on the original recording of "Steps" (with Roy Haynes the drummer on both recordings).¹ Both artists take a similar approach to left-hand chord voicings; and there are other motivic, textural, and rhythmic similarities. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Dave Kikoski knows this recording well.

Footnote

¹ Chick's solo has been transcribed by Bill Dobbins and is found within the book *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs—Chick Corea* (1988), available as item # 09000 from Advance Music (Germany) or via Sher Music Company (California). There is also a discussion of this solo (pp. 315-317) and the whole album (pp. 313-319) in Mark Gridley's *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 4th edition, (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey).

Dave Kikoski's Solo on Chick Corea's

STEPS

Transcribed by: Bob Hinz • Copyist: Xavier Chavez

1 $d = 144 - 152$
Cmi Fmi

6 Cmi Abmaj. E

11 Db B 13 Cmi

16 Fmi Cmi

Words & Music by Chick Corea

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2. 21 Cmi / Ab E Db B

25 Cmi Fmi

30 Cmi Ab

34 E Db B 37 Cmi

38 Fmi

42 (Fmi) Cmi Ab

46 E Db B Cmi

49

50 (Bve) Fmi

54 Cmi Ab E

59 Db B Cmi

61

63 (Cmi)

Fmi

67 Cmi

Ab

E

71 Db (bre)

B

73 Cmi

75

Fmi

79 Cmi

bre Ab

E

Db

84 **B** *15 ma* **Cmi** *85* *ave*

88 *(ave)* **Fmi** **Cmi**

93 **A^b ave** **E** **D^b** **B**

97 **Cmi**

101 **Fmi** **Cmi**

105

Ab E Db B

109

Cmi

113

Fmi Cmi Bre

117

Ab E Db B

Bre

121

Cmi

125 Fmi Cmi

Musical notation for measures 125-128. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: Fmi, Cmi. Includes a fermata over measure 128.

129 Ab E kb D^b B

Musical notation for measures 129-132. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: Ab, E kb, D^b, B. Includes a fermata over measure 132.

133 Cmi 15ma

Musical notation for measures 133-136. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chord: Cmi 15ma. Includes a fermata over measure 136.

137 Fmi Cmi

Musical notation for measures 137-140. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: Fmi, Cmi. Includes a fermata over measure 140.

141 Ab E kb D^b B

Musical notation for measures 141-144. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: Ab, E kb, D^b, B. Includes a fermata over measure 144.

145

Musical score for measures 145-149. The score is written on two staves. The upper staff contains a melodic line with various notes, including slurs and accents. The lower staff contains a bass line with chords and notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 145 shows a complex rhythmic pattern in the upper staff. Measure 149 ends with a double bar line.

Musical score for measures 150-152. The score is written on two staves. The upper staff contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The lower staff contains a bass line with chords and notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 150 shows a complex rhythmic pattern in the upper staff. Measure 152 ends with a double bar line.

153

Musical score for measures 153-157. The score is written on two staves. The upper staff contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The lower staff contains a bass line with chords and notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 153 shows a complex rhythmic pattern in the upper staff. Measure 157 ends with a double bar line.

157

Cmi

161

Fmi

Cmi

ave

165

(ave) Ab

E

Db

B

169

Cmi

173

Fmi Cmi

177

Ab E Db B

(bre)

181

(bre) Cmi

185

(bre) Fmi Cmi

189

(bre) Ab E Db B

193 Cmi 8ve

197 (8ve) Fmi Cmi

201 Ab E Db B

205 Cmi

209 Fmi Cmi (8ve)

213 *Ab* *8ve* *E* *Db* *B*

Musical notation for measures 213-216. Treble clef with a dashed line above. Chords: *Ab*, *E*, *Db*, *B*. Bass clef with chords and rhythmic markings.

217 *Cmi* *(8ve)*

Musical notation for measures 217-220. Treble clef with a dashed line above. Chord: *Cmi* *(8ve)*. Bass clef with chords and rhythmic markings.

221 *(8ve)* *Fmi* *Cmi*

Musical notation for measures 221-224. Treble clef with a dashed line above. Chords: *(8ve)*, *Fmi*, *Cmi*. Bass clef with chords and rhythmic markings.

225 *Ab* *8ve* *Db* *B*

(straight 8's)

Musical notation for measures 225-228. Treble clef with a dashed line above. Chords: *Ab*, *8ve*, *Db*, *B*. Bass clef with rhythmic markings. Note: (straight 8's)

229 *Cmi*

(str. 8's)

Musical notation for measures 229-232. Treble clef with a dashed line above. Chord: *Cmi*. Bass clef with rhythmic markings and triplets. Note: (str. 8's)

233 F mi 13. C mi
8ve

(Swing 2/4)

237 8ve Ab E Db B

8ve

241 8ve C mi

8ve C mi

245 F mi C mi

F mi C mi

249 Ab E Db 8ve B

Ab E Db 8ve B

253 *grve*
Cmi b \hat{z} + \hat{z} - \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z} . b \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z} - \hat{z} b \hat{z}

253 *grve*
Cmi b \hat{z} + \hat{z} - \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z} . b \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z} - \hat{z} b \hat{z}

257 (8ve)
Fmi # \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} Cmi b \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z} - \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z}

257 (8ve)
Fmi # \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} Cmi b \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z} - \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} b \hat{z}

261 (8ve)
Ab b \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} E Db B

261 (8ve)
Ab b \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} + \hat{z} E Db B

265 Cmi

265 Cmi

269 Fmi Cmi

269 Fmi Cmi

273 *Ab* *Bve* *E* *Db* *B* *Bve*

Musical notation for measures 273-276. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: *Ab*, *Bve*, *E*, *Db*, *B*, *Bve*. Includes a dashed line above the staff.

277 *gre* *Cmi*

Musical notation for measures 277-280. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: *gre*, *Cmi*. Includes a dashed line above the staff.

281 *(Bve)* *Fmi* *Cmi* *Bve*

Musical notation for measures 281-284. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: *(Bve)*, *Fmi*, *Cmi*, *Bve*. Includes a dashed line above the staff.

285 *Ab* *Bve* *E* *Db* *B*

Musical notation for measures 285-288. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: *Ab*, *Bve*, *E*, *Db*, *B*. Includes a dashed line above the staff.

289 *Cmi* *gre*

Musical notation for measures 289-292. Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords: *Cmi*, *gre*. Includes a dashed line above the staff.

293 *8ve* F_{mi} C_{mi}

297 (*8ve*) A^b E D^b B

301 (*8ve*) C_{mi} $15ma$

305 F_{mi} C_{mi}

309 A^b E D^b B C_{mi}

(26 CHORUSES)