

Let's Slide Those Sevenths

BY MARIENNE USZLER

All pianists like to play sevenths. They sound lush, full, sophisticated, easygoing—in a word, suave.

For younger pianists, playing sevenths is often more comfortable than playing octaves. And this piece is “seventh heaven.”

Left Hand

Play the left-hand jazz warm-up as suggested, with pedal. Notice how the hand shape needs to adjust, depending on the key-color combination.

When the seventh is:

- Two white keys: fingers 1 and 5 pair easily
- Two black keys: fingers 1 and 5 play near the bottom edges of the keys
- Black key bottom, white key top: thumb plays close to the black keys
- White key bottom, black key top: Finger 5 slides up to play almost in the middle of the white key.

Adjusting the hand shape is important. You never need to twist your wrist.

This prepares you to play all the measures in the piece with open sevenths.

Block the sevenths with second-finger “fill-ins,” as in Mm. 6-9.

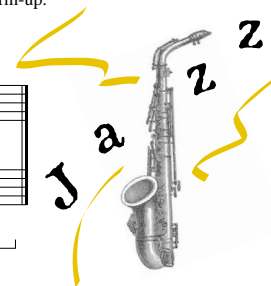
Again, adjust your hand shapes as the outer notes play on black/white keys.

Then, whether the sevenths are played blocked or broken in the piece, your hand will be ready and it will be comfortable.

Review Piece

Sevenths are commonly used in jazz. Practice left-hand 7ths with this jazz warm-up.

Jazz Warm-up



Jazz Reflection

N. Faber

Freely, with expression (♩ = 100-108)

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FF1093

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Right Hand

Block the lowest and highest notes in Mm. 1-4. You'll discover that they're sevenths, too!

Adjust your hand shapes as you did for the left-hand sevenths. Stay comfortable ... don't twist your wrists.

Now block everything but the second eighth-note in Mm. 1-4. These are also sevenths with second-finger “fill-ins.”

Keep your comfortable hand shapes!

Melody

Play Mm. 5-12 (begin with the pickup in the preceding measure) with the right hand and pedal.

DISCOVERY Point out a pattern and sequence in this piece.

FF1093

Compare the LH in Mm. 1-5 and Mm. 13-17.

What's the same? What's different?

There's a great deal of slipping and sliding going on! The more you really slide from position to position, the "cooler" you'll sound.

Your Own Reflection

Slide your left hand down in 7ths, from C to C.

Play rather slowly, changing the pedal after you play each 7th. (See example 1 below)

Add a fourth above your LH thumb. Slide both hands from C to C, playing and pedaling in the same way. Can you do this with your eyes closed? (See example 2 below)

Now add an upper (or lower) neighbor to the RH note. Play as if you were improvising a quiet meditation. Create your own reflection! (See example 3 below) III

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Wherever there is a chord, voice only the top note as the melody. Play Mm. 17-19 the same way.

Throughout the entire piece, make sure the top notes in the right hand (including both eighth notes) sing out over the harmonies that are blended by the pedal per measure.

Slip and Slide

Jazz Reflection is loaded with patterns and sequences.

Compare the RH in Mm. 1-5 and Mm. 13-17. What's the same? What's different?

Compare the LH in Mm. 1-5 and Mm. 6-9. What's the same? What's different?

Example 1

Example 2

Example 3