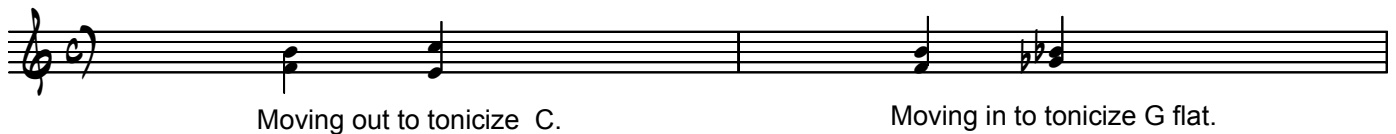


Tritone Substitution

The three main functions of harmony are:
 pre-dominant - harmonies leading to the dominant
 dominant - harmonies leading to the tonic
 tonic - chords of resolution

In this discussion we will focus on Dominant harmony. Dominant chords provide tension - suggesting movement toward resolution. The most important notes within the dominant are the 3rd and 7th. The interval between the 3rd and 7th is a tritone. The tritone is a symmetrical interval, it is exactly one half of an octave. Because of the symmetry there are only six tritonal relationships in the chromatic scale. This symmetry is the main reason for its effectiveness. Traditionally, resolution occurs in contrary motion by second either in or out. See example below:



In jazz history harmonically advanced musicians (Tatum, Hawkins, Ellington etc...) began to experiment with alterations and extensions of chords that provided increased tension. Let us take a look at the G7 chord and some common tension producing alterations and extensions:



Early jazz musicians found that by increasing the use of altered pitches the closer they were to a completely different chord but with the same dominant function. Finally, they discovered that by moving the root by a tritone it would create this new chromatic chord "substitution".



The G7b9 with the root moved to Db.
 The chord created is the Db7.
 Resolving to CMaj7

The G7 #5b9 chord respelled
 enharmonically
 with the root moved to Db.
 The chord created is the Db9.
 Resolving to CMaj7

*the 3rd and the 7th
 (the tritone) remain
 f and b.

The "new" or substitute chord functions exactly the same as the G7. The advantages of the substitution are:

1. Smooth voice leading, every voice moving by minor second to resolution.
2. Smooth bass line movement. Often chord substitution is implied by chromatic bass line movement (walking bass lines).
3. New ways of selecting pitches (scales, arpeggios etc.) for improvisation.
4. Variation and improvisation. New ways to harmonize well known progressions.

Standards such as "Autumn Leaves," "A Night in Tunisia", "Girl from Ipanema", and "How High The Moon", utilize the principle in their compositional structures.

the concept is also a valuable tool for improvising variations over traditional chord changes such as blues and rhythm changes forms.