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Improvising in the style of Herbert Howells

- a student's guide

1. Herbert Howells's style:

- H.H. rhapsodized on a single theme and the form was governed by melodic ideas and the moods
- "complex moods"
- 'remoteness'
- impressionistic harmony (modal, pentatonic, inversion of chords, plagal cad.)

2. First steps: The ARCHFORM

BACKGROUND → FOREGROUND → EPILOGUE
(soft) (loud) (dying away)

Model: 'Like as the Hart'

Background (on G): *piano*

The musical notation shows a piano background in 4/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of eighth notes, with some intervals labeled as 'min. 3rd' (minor third) and 'tritone'. The accompaniment consists of chords in the bass. The chords are labeled G, E flat, G, C, and G. A bracket under the first three chords is labeled 'harmonic pendulum (mediantic)'.

The musical notation shows the end of the background section. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of eighth notes. The accompaniment consists of chords in the bass. The chords are labeled E flat and G.

Linking bar: VIIb - I

The musical notation shows a linking bar in 2/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of eighth notes. The accompaniment consists of chords in the bass. The chords are labeled d minor, b dim. (VIIb), and C major (I).

FOREGROUND (on C): *forte*

The musical notation shows a foreground section in 4/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of eighth notes. The accompaniment consists of chords in the bass. The chords are labeled e minor and D major.

EPILOGUE (on E): *dying away*
use Background scheme.

CODA (on E): 'last chord embellishment'



Pedal: Howells Scale on E

3. The Howells Scale

What is it? A major scale with a raised 4th and flattened 7th.

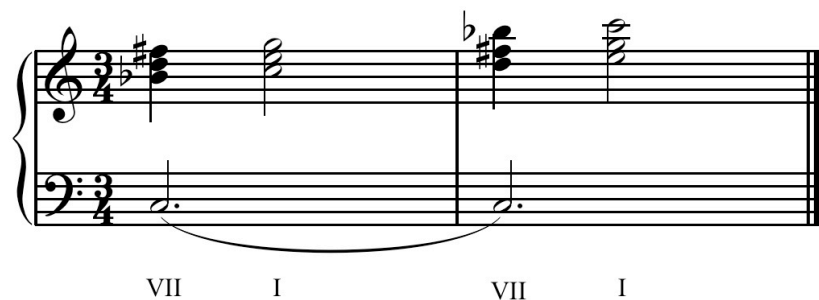
THE HOWELLS SCALE ON C

WHOLETONE SCALE

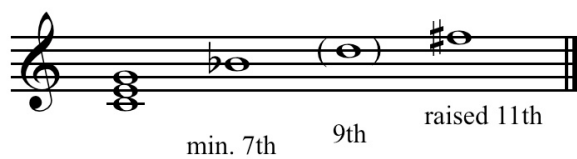
(G sharp omitted)

4. Howells's Signature Chords

4.a. Augmented Triad

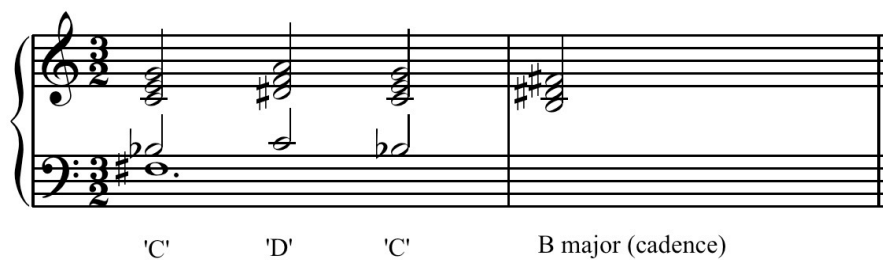
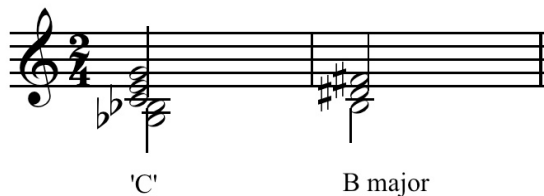


4.b. Augmented Eleventh Chord

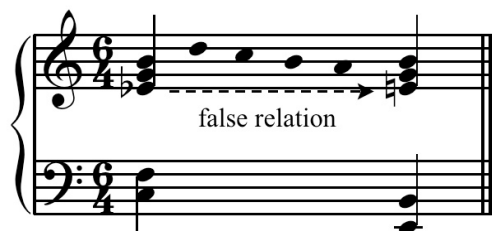


C major triad

Aug. Eleventh Chord in 5th inversion:

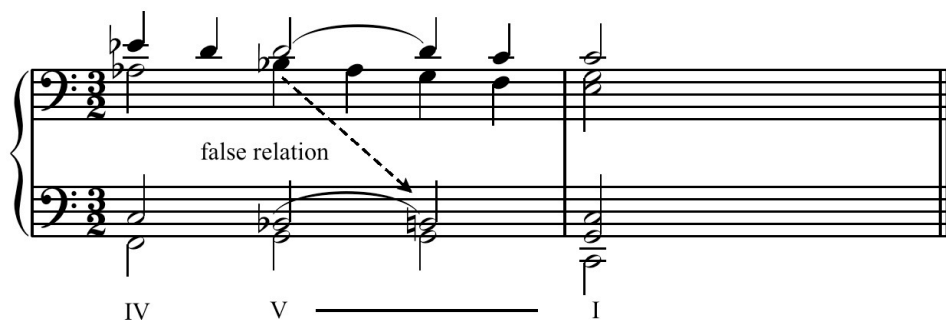


4.c. Eleventh Chord (non-augmented)



5. Cadences

5.a. Howells's English Cadence:



5.b. Other Cadences:

Plagal Cadence 5th Phrygian Cadence 5th 'Mediant Cadence' 5th

Aø on C G Aø on C D major Aø on C e minor

IV I I III

6. Motifs

a. b. c.

7. Practical tips

- think in "tonal centres" – they should ideally be in thirds apart (d minor – b flat minor)
- therefore, long held pedal notes are desirable
- if stuck, use this as a back up:

'phrygian'

Manuals

Pedal IV I

IV I