



Nicholas Slonimsky

and the expanding Tonality of

John Coltrane

BY DENNIS BELISLE

Nicolas Slonimsky

- Born in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1894, to a family with a long line of scientists, musicians, and brilliant inventors.
- Before reaching the age of three, the family had confirmed that Nicolas acquired the gift of “perfect pitch.”
- His maternal aunt, Isabelle Vengerova, later a founder of Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, was his first piano teacher.
- He studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory until 1914
- In 1918 he began touring as a vocal accompanist, then worked his way through Turkey and Bulgaria as a pianist in theaters and silent movie houses, arriving in Paris in 1921.



Nicolas Slonimsky

- ▶ He came to the United States in 1923 to work as an accompanist in the newly created opera department at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, where he continued his composition and conducting studies
- ▶ He also taught music theory at the Boston Conservatory and the Malkin Conservatory
- ▶ Slonimsky was a formidably gifted musicologist and lexicographer who also made his mark as a conductor, pianist and composer
- ▶ He died on Christmas day in 1995 at the age of 101

Nicolas Slonimsky – the author

- ▶ His first book, "Music Since 1900," appeared in 1937. A day-by-day chronology of important as well as amusing but trivial events in 20th-century music
- ▶ He wrote his Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns in 1947
- ▶ Other books written by Slonimsky include:
 - ▶ Lexicon of Musical Invective (1953), a collection of scathing reviews of musical masterpieces
 - ▶ Music of Latin America (1945)
 - ▶ The Road to Music (1947)
 - ▶ A Thing or Two About Music (1948).
- ▶ His autobiography (which he wanted to call 'Failed Wunderkind') was published as "Perfect Pitch" in 1988.

Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns

- ▶ This Thesaurus is an extension of several different theorists' concepts on suggesting the possibility of forming entirely new scales based on the division of the octave into several equal parts
 - ▶ Domenico Alaleona (1911)
 - ▶ Italian musician proposed such scales
 - ▶ Alois Haba (1927) in *neue harmonielehre*
 - ▶ *classified several scales based on equal intervals and suggested harmonization*
 - ▶ Joseph Schillinger in *Schillinger System of Musical Compositions*
 - ▶ *Classified new tonal progressions in the chapter 'Theory of Pitch-Scales'*

Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns



- ▶ The scales and melodic patterns in the Thesaurus are systematized in a manner convenient to composers in search of new material
- ▶ The Thesaurus is arranged in the form of piano scales and melodic studies
- ▶ The notation throughout is enharmonic and all accidentals affect only the note immediately following
- ▶ The title's use of the word 'Thesaurus' is chosen advisedly

Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns

- ▶ The term 'Scale' refers to a progression, either diatonic or chromatic, that proceeds uniformly in one direction, ascending or descending, until the terminal point is reached
- ▶ The term 'Melodic Pattern' refers to any group of notes that has melodic plausibility

Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns

- ▶ There are scales of 4 notes, scales and patterns of 12 different notes
- ▶ Counting repeated notes in different octaves, a scale may have as many as 48 functionally different notes as with the Disjunct Major Polytetrachord (No. 958)



- ▶ As with melodic patterns, there is virtually no limit to the number of such tones

Before I get ahead of myself

- ▶ There is some terminology that must be presented in order to explore the Thesaurus fully

Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns

- ▶ The Thesaurus is arranged according to principle intervals broken up into different chapters
- ▶ To avoid association with definite tonality, intervals are referred to by Latin and Greek names
- ▶ In addition, new terms have been coined for intervals not in the system of historic scales

Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns

▶ The prefix sesqui designates the addition of one-half of a tone giving us the following table:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| ▶ Semitone..... Minor Second | Tritone..... Augmented Fourth |
| ▶ Whole Tone.....Major Second | Diapente..... Perfect Fifth |
| ▶ <u>Sesqu</u> itone..... Minor Third | Quadritone..... Minor Sixth |
| ▶ Ditone..... Major Third | <u>Sesqui</u> quadritone..Major Sixth |
| ▶ Diatessaron..... Perfect Forth | Quinquetone.....Minor Seventh |
| ▶ <u>Sesqui</u> quinquetone..... Major Seventh | |
- ▶ Septitone....Interval of Major 9th indicating 7 whole tones

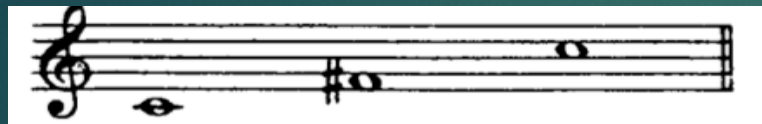
Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns



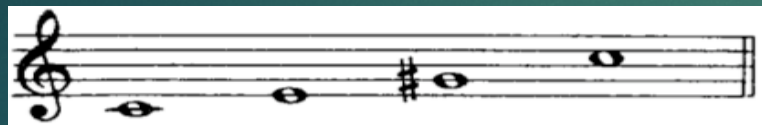
- ▶ These basic intervals are regarded as fractions of one or more octaves and are broken up in the Thesaurus as follows
- ▶ For each of these intervals to divide evenly, the use of multiple octaves is necessary in some cases

Intervals divided over ONE octave

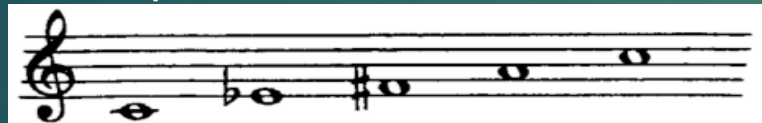
- ▶ Tritone Division – ONE octave into 2 equal parts



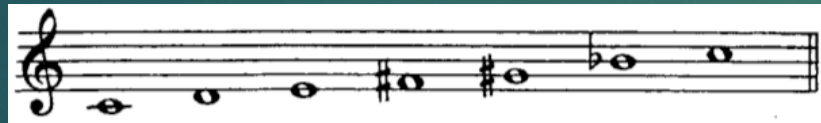
- ▶ Ditone Division - ONE octave into 3 equal parts



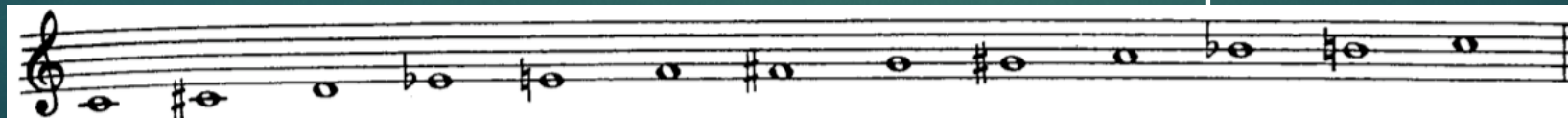
- ▶ Sesquitone Division – ONE octave into 4 equal parts



- ▶ Whole-Tone Division – ONE octave into 6 equal parts

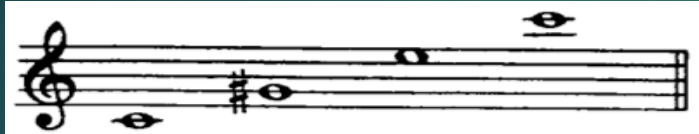


- ▶ Semitone Division – ONE octave into 12 parts

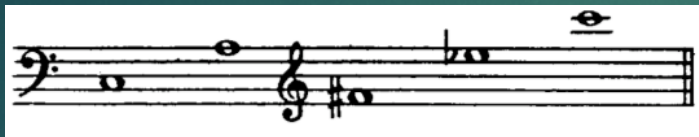


Intervals divided over multiple octaves equally

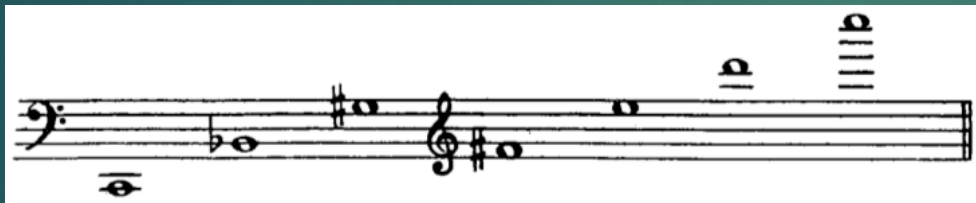
- ▶ Quadritone Division – TWO octaves into 3 equal parts



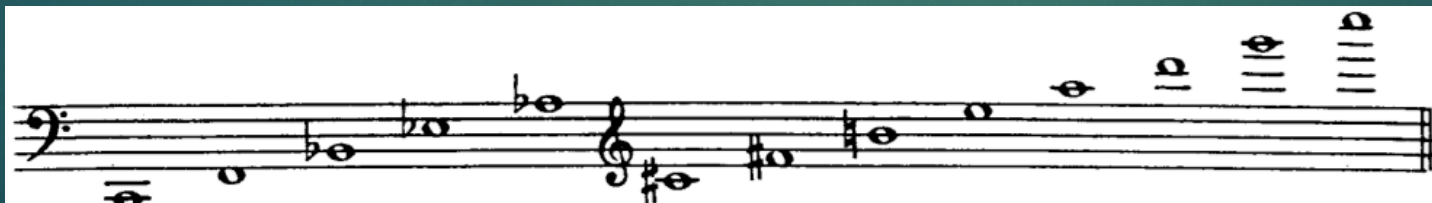
- ▶ Sesquiquadritone Division - THREE octaves into 4 equal parts



- ▶ Quinquetone Division – FIVE octaves into 6 equal parts

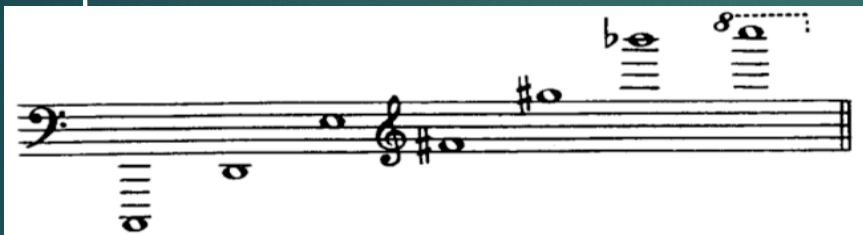


- ▶ Diatessaron Division – FIVE octaves into 12 equal parts

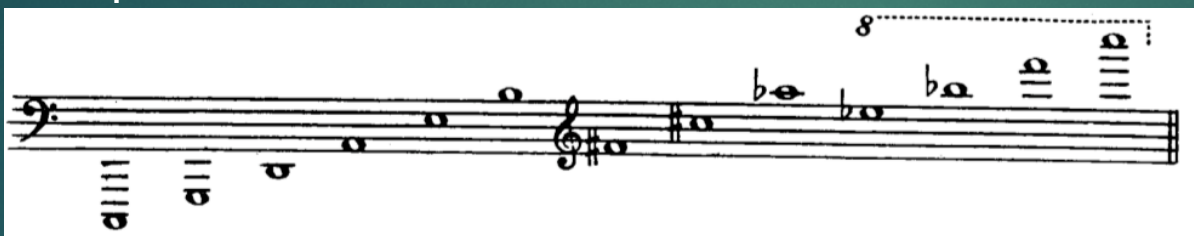


Intervals divided over multiple octaves equally

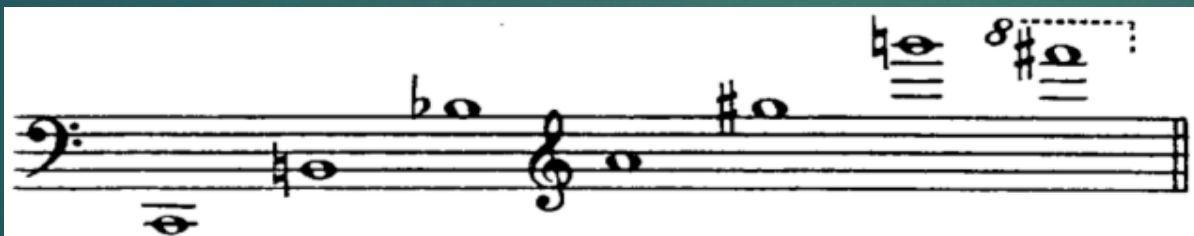
- ▶ Septitone Division – SEVEN octaves into 6 equal parts



- ▶ Diapente Division - SEVEN octaves into 12 equal parts



- ▶ Sesquiquinquetone Division – ELEVEN octaves into 12 equal parts



Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns

- ▶ Scales and melodic patterns are formed by the process of Interpolation, Infrapolation, and Ultrapolation

The image displays two musical staves in treble clef, illustrating different processes for forming scales and melodic patterns. The first staff is divided into four sections: 'Principal Tones' (a simple scale), 'Interpolation' (a scale with inserted notes), 'Ultrapolation' (a scale with notes shifted further apart), and 'Infrapolation' (a scale with notes shifted closer together). The second staff is divided into three sections: 'Infra-Interpolation' (a scale with inserted notes and some shifts), 'Infra-Ultrapolation' (a scale with shifted notes and some inserts), and 'Infra-Inter-Ultrapolation' (a complex scale combining all three processes).

Progressions and patterns – unequal division

▶ SCALES

▶ Heptatonic Scales (7-tone scales)

▶ Major, minor, church modes

▶ Pentatonic Scales

▶ There are 49 variations in the Thesaurus

▶ 8-tone scales

▶ These are the whole/half & half/whole diminished scale

▶ ARPEGGIOS

▶ Heptatonic Arpeggios – Spread out in thirds

▶ Bitonal Arpeggios – C major arpeggio combined with arpeggios in all 23 major and minor keys

12-tone patterns

- ▶ Patterns stacked on intervals

1214a Thirds




Musical notation for 1214a Thirds, showing a sequence of notes stacked on thirds intervals. The notes are: C4, E4, G4, Bb4, D5, F5, Ab5, C6, Eb6, G6, Bb6, D7. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef.

1215a Fourths



Musical notation for 1215a Fourths, showing a sequence of notes stacked on fourths intervals. The notes are: C4, F4, Bb4, Eb5, Ab5, D6, G6, Bb6, Eb7, Ab7, D8. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef.

1220a Fifths



Musical notation for 1220a Fifths, showing a sequence of notes stacked on fifths intervals. The notes are: C4, G4, D5, Ab5, Eb6, Bb6, F7, C8. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef.

12-tone patterns

- ▶ Mutually exclusive chord combinations that generate 12-tones
 - ▶ 2 major & 2 minor chords

Two Major and Two Minor Triads



A musical staff in treble clef showing four triads. The first two are major triads: C major (C4, E4, G4) and F major (F4, A4, C5). The next two are minor triads: B minor (B3, D4, F4) and E minor (E3, G3, B3). The notes are arranged in a sequence that covers all 12 chromatic pitches.



A musical staff in treble clef showing four triads. The first two are major triads: C major (C4, E4, G4) and F major (F4, A4, C5). The next two are minor triads: B minor (B3, D4, F4) and E minor (E3, G3, B3). The notes are arranged in a sequence that covers all 12 chromatic pitches.

12-tone patterns

- ▶ Mutually exclusive chord combinations that generate 12-tones
 - ▶ 4 augmented triads



12-tone patterns

- ▶ Mutually exclusive chord combinations that generate 12-tones

- ▶ 4 different triads combined

Augmented, Major, Minor, Diminished Triads



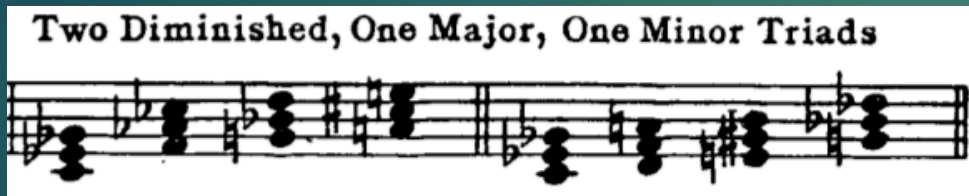
A musical staff in treble clef showing four triads: augmented (F#4, A4, C5), major (C4, E4, G4), minor (C4, E3, G3), and diminished (C4, E3, G#3).



A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of 12-tone chords: F#4, A4, C5, C4, E4, G4, C4, E3, G3, C4, E3, G#3.

- ▶ 3 different triads combined

Two Diminished, One Major, One Minor Triads



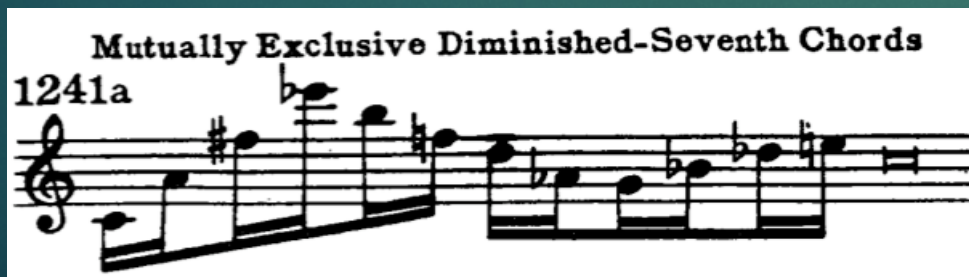
A musical staff in treble clef showing four triads: diminished (C4, E3, G#3), major (C4, E4, G4), minor (C4, E3, G3), and diminished (C4, E3, G#3).



A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of 12-tone chords: C4, E3, G#3, C4, E4, G4, C4, E3, G3, C4, E3, G#3.

- ▶ 3 diminished 7th chords

Mutually Exclusive Diminished-Seventh Chords
1241a



A musical staff in treble clef showing three mutually exclusive diminished-seventh chords: C#7b9, E7b9, and G7b9.

11-interval technique



- ▶ Austrian musician Fritz Klien introduced the idea in 1921
- ▶ In his composition *Die Maschine: Ex-Tonal Self-Satire*, Klein introduced a Mother Chord which contains 11 different intervals and 12 different notes

Mother Chord

1317

10

11-interval technique



- ▶ Slonimsky further elaborated on the Mother Chord
 - ▶ He arranged the chord in an invertible 11-interval, 12-tone chord that he introduced as the Grandmother Chord

Grandmother Chord

1318

The image shows a musical score for the Grandmother Chord, labeled '1318'. It consists of three staves. The top staff contains a sequence of notes with fingerings 1, 10, 8, 3, 5, and 6. The middle staff contains notes with a '6' marking. The bottom staff contains notes with fingerings 11, 2, 9, 4, and 7. The notes are arranged in a spiral pattern across the staves.

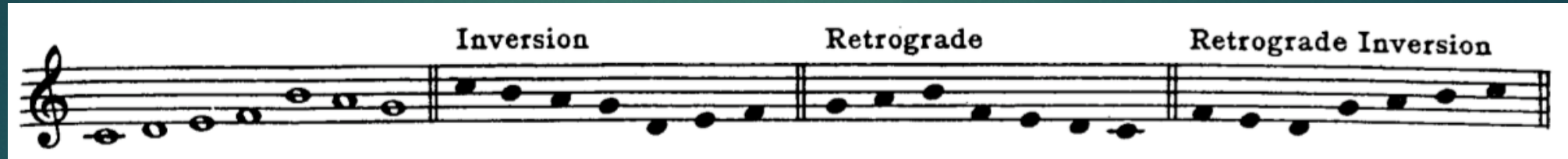
12-tone Spiral Patterns (GM Chord)

1232a

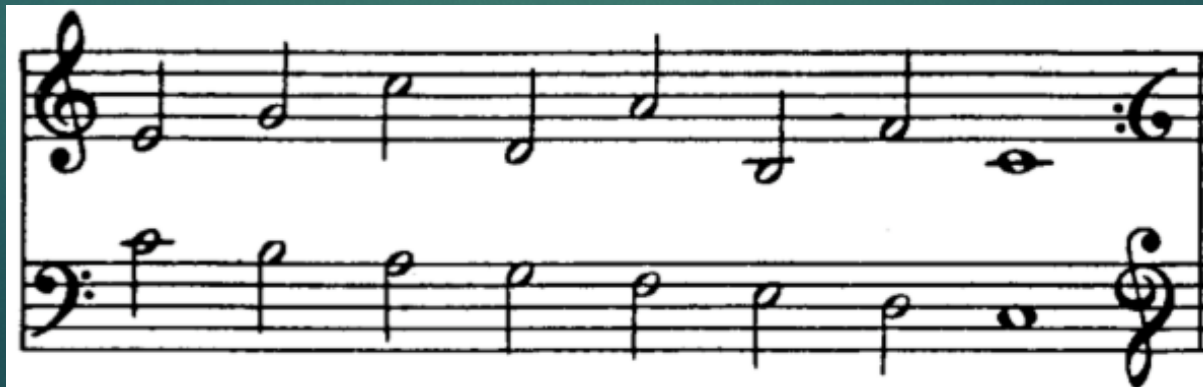
The image shows a musical score for the 12-tone Spiral Pattern (GM Chord), labeled '1232a'. It consists of a single staff with a treble clef. The notes are arranged in a spiral pattern across the staff, with various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and a double bar line at the end.

Pandiatonic

- ▶ Pandiatonic denotes the free use of all 7 tones of the diatonic scale (both melodically & harmonically)
 - ▶ Pandiatonic progressions



- ▶ Pandiatonic counterpoint
 - ▶ The use of 7 different notes in each voice, with no vertical duplication



Pandiatonic

▶ Pandiatonic Harmony

- ▶ 20th century counterpart of classical harmony
- ▶ Used by Ravel, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Milhaud and Copeland to name a few
- ▶ *Pan-diatonicism* harmony sanctions the simultaneous use of any or all seven tones of the diatonic scale, with the bass determining the harmony. The chord-building remains tertian, with the seventh, ninth, or thirteenth chords being treated as consonances functionally equivalent to the fundamental triad.

4-part harmony

Musical score for 4-part harmony, showing two measures. The first measure is marked *Lento* and the second *Andante*. The score includes dynamics such as *pp*, *rit.*, *p*, and *espr.* (espressivo).

5-part harmony

Musical score for 5-part harmony, showing two measures. The score includes dynamics such as *pp* and *espr.* (espressivo).

Harmonization of the scales & patterns

- ▶ There are 2 formulas used
 - ▶ By common triad
 - ▶ By seventh-chords

Harmonization of the scales & patterns

▶ Triads

- ▶ Only root positions of major triads in close harmony are applied
- ▶ Either the root, third or fifth may appear in the melody
 - ▶ Root (octave or 8)
 - ▶ Third (tertian or 3)
 - ▶ Fifth (quintan or 5)

Harmonization in Major Triads
(Figures Indicate Intervals Between the Melody and the Bass)

The image shows a musical score for a piano, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff (melody) and a bass clef staff (bass). The score is divided into three measures by double bar lines. Each measure contains a major triad in the treble staff and a single note in the bass staff. Below the bass staff, numbers (8, 3, 5, 3, 8, 8, 5, 8, 5, 8, 3, 8, 5) are placed under each note, indicating the interval between the melody and the bass. The first measure contains the C major triad (C-E-G) with intervals 8, 3, 5, 3, 8. The second measure contains the F major triad (F-A-C) with intervals 8, 5, 8, 5. The third measure contains the Bb major triad (Bb-D-F) with intervals 8, 3, 8, 5.

Harmonization of the scales & patterns

- ▶ This type of harmonization is found in the works of Debussy, Mussorgsky and other composers of the French and Russian schools

Moussorgsky: *Boris Godunov* Puccini: *Tosca* (Whole-Tone Scale in the Bass)

The image displays two musical examples side-by-side. The left example, from Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, shows a scale in the bass clef with a complex, chromatic harmonization in the treble clef. The right example, from Puccini's *Tosca*, shows a whole-tone scale in the bass clef with a corresponding whole-tone harmonization in the treble clef. Both examples include fingering numbers (5, 8, 5, 8, 3) written below the bass line.

Harmonization of the scales & patterns

▶ The MASTER CHORD

- ▶ These chords are dominant 7th chords with the fifth omitted
- ▶ These chords are indicated for ascending scales and patterns in the Thesaurus by numbers within circles

Harmonization with Master Chords

The image displays three musical patterns, each consisting of a scale in the treble clef and its harmonization in the bass clef. The patterns are labeled as follows:

- Pattern №53:** The scale starts on G4 and ends on B4. The harmonization in the bass clef features a dominant 7th chord with the fifth omitted (G7b5) in the first measure, indicated by a circled number 1.
- Pattern №186:** The scale starts on G4 and ends on B4. The harmonization in the bass clef features a dominant 7th chord with the fifth omitted (G7b5) in the first measure, indicated by a circled number 5.
- Pattern №393:** The scale starts on G4 and ends on B4. The harmonization in the bass clef features a dominant 7th chord with the fifth omitted (G7b5) in the first measure, indicated by a circled number 11.

The Thesaurus in use

The permutations of all the different scales and patterns along with the harmonization of such patterns, specifically with the Dominant 7th chord...

The Thesaurus in use

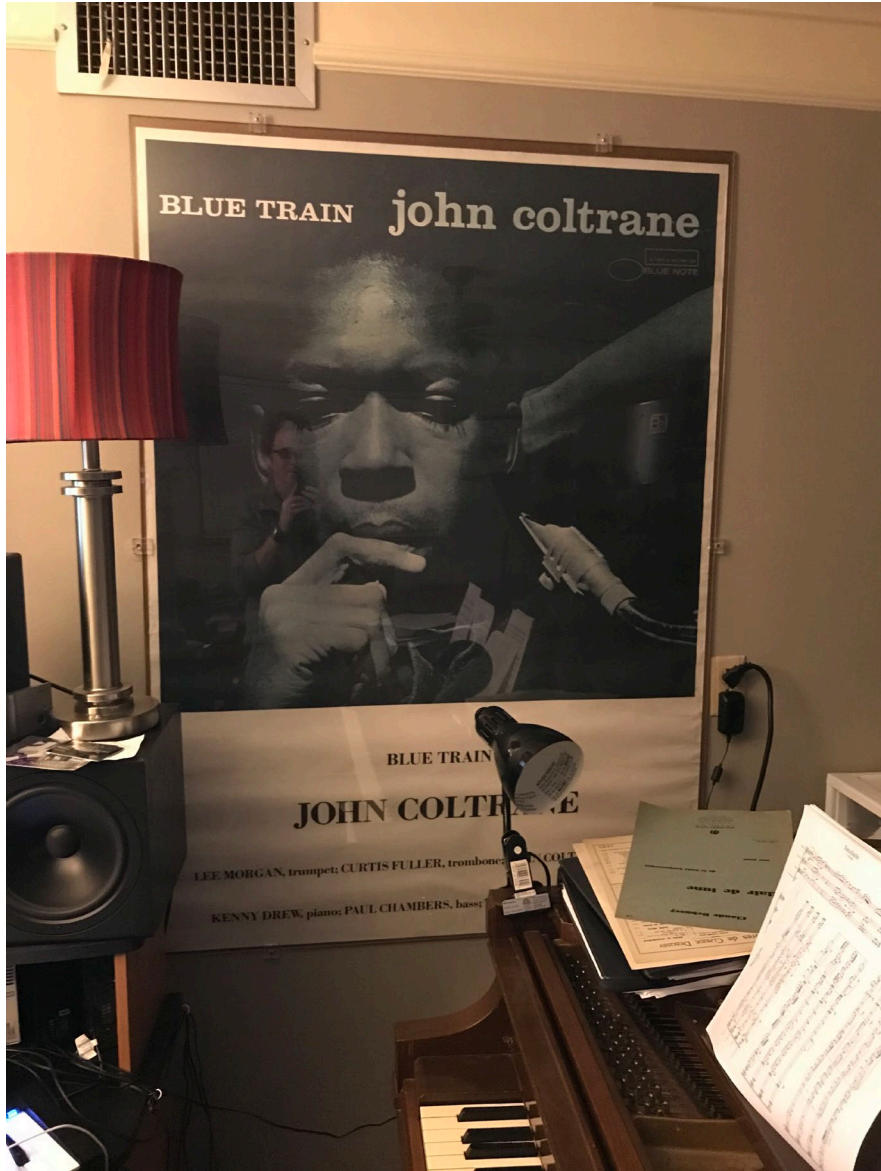
Along with the extended use of interval cycles within the patterns of the Thesaurus began to attract the attention of serious jazz musicians wanting to expand their vocabulary

John Coltrane



John Coltrane

- ▶ Due to time constraints, I will assume everybody knows who Coltrane is.
 - ▶ If not, I will gladly do my best to give you more information if you ask



John Coltrane – 4 periods of creative activity

- ▶ 1955-57: Miles Davis Quintet
 - ▶ 1957-59: Thelonious Monk/Miles Davis Sextet
 - ▶ 1960-64: Coltrane quartet
 - ▶ 1965 until his death: Coltrane's quest (abstract period)
- ▶ Although converging influences were present with Miles, Monk and saxophonist Ornette Coleman which led up to Coltrane's quartet and the use of chromatic third and interval cycles as well as the Thesaurus, the focus of this presentation will be on the 3rd and 4th periods

John Coltrane – Giant Steps

- ▶ Released in 1960 alongside Davis' *Kind of Blue* and Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*
- ▶ The title track Giant Steps, as well as the track Countdown, were ground breaking in the world of jazz for their use of major third cycles

Example 1: John Coltrane, chord progression of *Giant Steps*, transcribed by Andrew White

Handwritten chord progression for "Giant Steps" by John Coltrane, transcribed by Andrew White. The progression is written on two staves of music paper in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The chords are: G, D7, G, Bb7, Eb, A-7, D7, G, Bb7, Eb, Gb7, Cb, F-7, Bb7, Eb, A-7, D7, G, Db-7, Gb7, Cb, F-7, Bb7, Eb, C#-7, F#7.



John Coltrane – Giant Steps

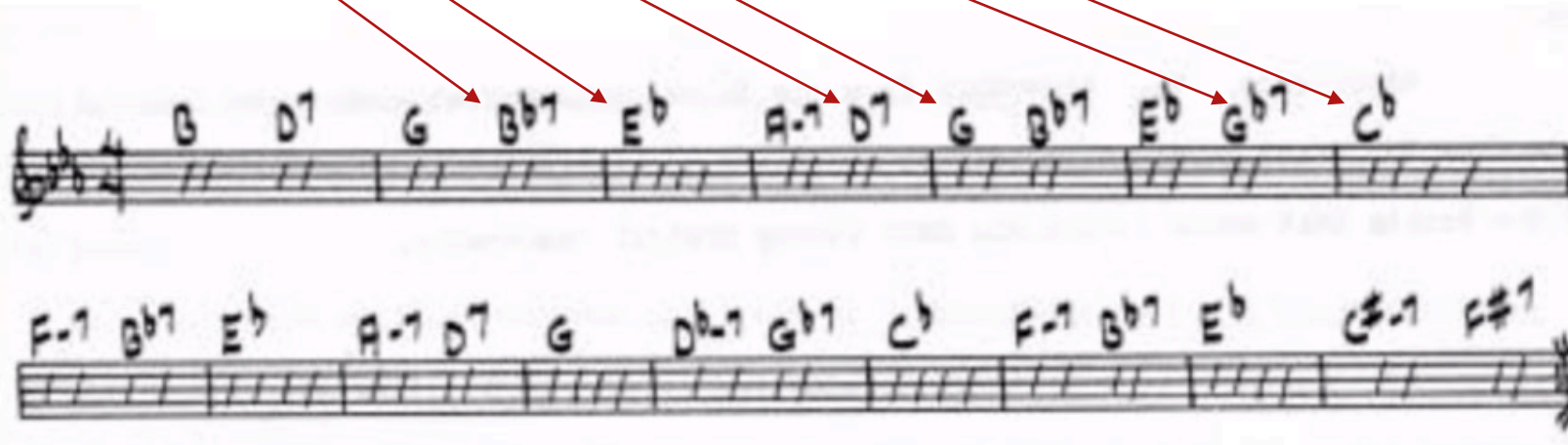
- ▶ Coltrane would begin to use this cycle of thirds in his improvisation
 - ▶ Known today as the “Coltrane Changes”, Coltrane would substitute a series of V7 – I cadences descending by major thirds; i.e. between the d minor and G7 chord for example
 - ▶ D minor – Eb7 – Ab major – B7 – E major – G7 – C major
 - ▶ What David Demsey called ‘tonic prolongation’ in his article *Chromatic Third Relations in the Music of John Coltrane*
- ▶ But what was his inspiration?

John Coltrane – Giant Steps

Example 3: Nicolas Slonimsky, *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, #286



Example 1: John Coltrane, chord progression of *Giant Steps*, transcribed by Andrew White



John Coltrane – Giant Steps

- ▶ In an example from the Thesaurus of applying dominant-tonic harmony to a 12-tone pattern to impart a sense of tonality, Slonimsky chooses for his example a cadence forming a major thirds cycle, exactly like the type used by Coltrane in “Giant Steps”

A harmonization of the Dominant-Tonic type will impart a feeling of tonality even to a 12-tone progression.

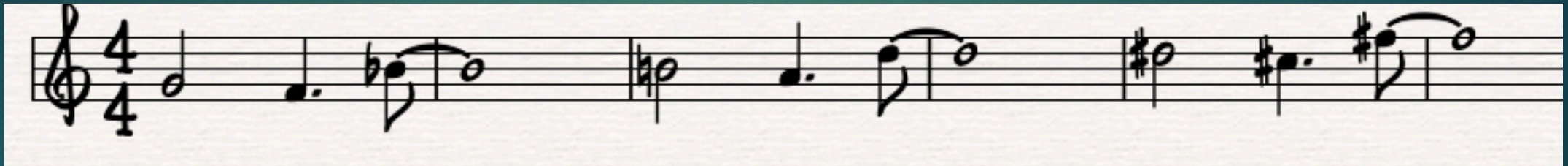
Tonal Harmonization of a 12-Tone Pattern

Pattern №646

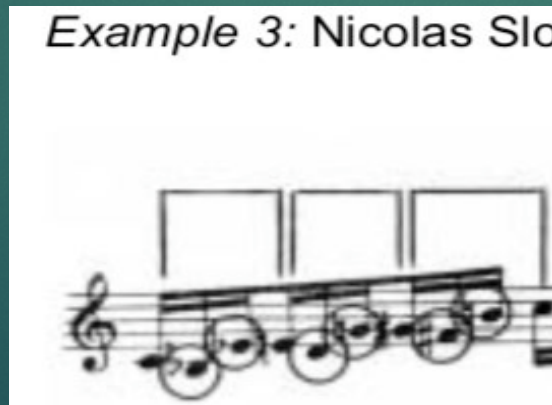
The image displays a musical score for a 12-tone pattern and its tonal harmonization. The score is written on two staves, with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower staff in bass clef. The upper staff contains a 12-tone melodic pattern, while the lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The pattern is labeled 'Pattern №646' and is titled 'Tonal Harmonization of a 12-Tone Pattern'. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals, illustrating the relationship between the 12-tone pattern and the dominant-tonic harmony used in the harmonization.

John Coltrane – Giant Steps

- ▶ As it happens, this is exactly the sequence of pitches (transposed up a P5) that Coltrane uses in the second half of the melody to “Giant Steps” as well



Example 3: Nicolas Slo



Andrew White Transcriptions

- ▶ Saxophonist who has transcribed and published over 600 transcriptions of recorded improvised solos by John Coltrane
 - ▶ “Around the beginning of 1965, the music started to take on more abstract tones.”
 - ▶ This cyclic pattern that first showed up on “Giant Steps” would be applied broadly throughout most of the compositions of Coltrane in the 4th period of creativity between 1965 and his death.
 - ▶ “These patterns appear to be a regular part of Coltrane’s improvisations all the way up to his final recording.”

Coltrane's late period

- ▶ On the surface this material from Coltrane's late period may appear random and haphazard. However, a detailed analysis of the melodic vocabulary relating to interval cycles reveals a structure of the highest order and detail.
- ▶ Demsey states "Coltrane likely developed his awareness of three-key cycles through practicing this material (the Thesaurus) in all keys
- ▶ Slonimsky labels one particular group of patterns included in the Ditone progression portion of the Thesaurus as "Miscellaneous Patterns"
 - ▶ Included are 16 patterns constructed using dominant 7th chords progressing by the interval of a major 3rd

Coltrane's late period

- ▶ Pattern #372 in Thesaurus



Coltrane's late period

- ▶ Eb: V7 – I / B: V7 – I / G: V7 – I

Example 5 : John Coltrane, *Brasilia*, transcribed by Andrew White

The image displays a musical score for John Coltrane's 'Brasilia', transcribed by Andrew White. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a complex harmonic structure. The key signature is E-flat major (three flats). The score is annotated with several red circles and arrows pointing to specific notes and chords. The annotations include:

- Red circles around the notes (Eb) and (B) in the second staff.
- Red arrows pointing to the notes (Bb7) and (Eb) in the third staff.
- Red arrows pointing to the notes (G) and (B) in the fourth staff.
- Red arrows pointing to the notes (Eb) and (B) in the fifth staff.

The score includes various chord symbols such as Eb:V7, B:V7, G:V7, (Eb), (Bb7), (F#7), (D7), (G), (B), and (Eb). The notation is dense, with many notes beamed together, characteristic of Coltrane's late period style.

Coltrane's late period

- ▶ Bb: V7 – I / D: V7 – I / Gb: V7 – I

Example 6: John Coltrane, *Brasilia*, transcribed by Andrew White

The image displays two staves of handwritten musical notation for John Coltrane's piece "Brasilia". The notation is annotated with several chords, some of which are circled in red. The first staff features a circled "Gb: V7" chord, a circled "(Db7)" chord, and a circled "D: V7" chord. The second staff features a circled "(D)" chord, a circled "Bb" chord, and a circled "Gb" chord. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals, along with some handwritten annotations like "1" and "5".

Coltrane's late period

- ▶ Db major, A major, and F major

Example 7: John Coltrane, *Brasilia*, transcribed by Andrew White

The image displays a musical score for John Coltrane's piece "Brasilia". The score is transcribed by Andrew White and is presented in four systems of music. The first system features a circled annotation "Db:V" below the staff. The second system has a circled annotation "A:" below the staff. The third system has a circled annotation "F:" below the staff. The fourth system has a circled annotation "Db:" below the staff. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Coltrane's late period

- ▶ E major, C major, and Ab major

Example 8: John Coltrane, *Brasilia*, transcribed by Andrew White

The image displays a musical score for John Coltrane's piece "Brasilia," transcribed by Andrew White. The score is presented in three systems, each with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music is written in a key signature of one flat (Bb major). The score is annotated with red arrows and red circles highlighting specific harmonic elements.

System 1:

- Chord symbols above the staff: (B7), (E), (G7), (C), (Eb7).
- Chord symbols below the staff: E:V7, C:V7, Ab:V7.
- Red arrows point to the notes G4, B4, and Eb4 in the treble staff.
- Red circles highlight the chord symbols E:V7, C:V7, and Ab:V7.

System 2:

- Chord symbols above the staff: (Ab), (B7), (G7), (C).
- Chord symbols below the staff: E:V7, C:V7.
- Red arrows point to the notes G4 and C5 in the treble staff.

System 3:

- Chord symbols above the staff: (Eb7), (Ab).
- Chord symbol below the staff: Ab:V7.

Coltrane/Slonimsky Connection

Example 26: John Coltrane, *Jupiter*, transcribed by Andrew White



Example 27: Nicloas Slonimsky, *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, pattern #892



Coltrane/Slonimsky Connection

Example 28: John Coltrane, *Saturn*, transcribed by Andrew White



A musical score for John Coltrane's "Saturn" in 4/4 time, transcribed by Andrew White. The score is written in B-flat major and consists of four staves. The first staff shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The second and third staves show a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. The fourth staff shows a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. The score includes various musical notations such as accidentals, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Example 29: Nicolas Slonimsky, *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, pattern #827



A musical score for Nicolas Slonimsky's "Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns", pattern #827. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The first staff shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff shows a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. The score includes various musical notations such as accidentals, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Coltrane/Slonimsky Connection

Example 30: John Coltrane, *Venus*, transcribed by Andrew White



Coltrane/Slonimsky Connection

Example 65: John Coltrane, *Untitled Original 90314*, transcribed by Andrew White



Example 66: Nicolas Slonimsky, *Theaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, pattern #30



Coltrane/Slonimsky Connection

Example 73: John Coltrane, *Nature Boy*, transcribed by Andrew White



Example 74: Nicolas Slonimsky, *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, pattern #40



In Conclusion

- ▶ Most of the patterns utilized by Coltrane out of the *Thesaurus* are derived from intervallic progressions that divide one octave into equal parts. Given John Coltrane's penchant for the interval of the fourth, it is not surprising that several of these patterns are utilized as well.
- ▶ Specific passages from John Coltrane's improvisations show that the influence of Nicolas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* on the developing melodic vocabulary of John Coltrane was profound.
- ▶ John Coltrane successfully changed the established direction of jazz style without abandoning the traditional tenets of that style. This qualifies Coltrane's unique contribution to jazz melodic vocabulary as innovative.
 - ▶ With a little help from Slonimsky!!!

References

- ▶ Bair, Jeff. *Cyclic Patterns in John Coltranes Melodic Vocabulary as Influenced by Nicolas Slonimskys Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns: An Analysis of Selected Improvisations*. 2003.
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- ▶ Slonimsky, Nicolas. *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947.