

## How to Play Solo Jazz Piano: LH for Beginners (page 1)

Michelle Grégoire presents a brief tutorial on how to get the left hand going for playing solo piano, specifically how to navigate the left hand on non-ballad swing type tunes. These quick techniques allow you to work up a more automatic accompaniment so that you can focus on melody and improvisation in the right hand.

We'll be working with **Autumn Leaves in G minor** (see leadsheet).

LEADSHEET Autumn Leaves

Med Swing ♩ = 112

The lead sheet for "Autumn Leaves" in G minor is presented in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked "Med Swing" with a quarter note equal to 112 beats per minute. The music is divided into measures, with measure numbers 1, 9, 17, and 25 indicated in boxes. Chord symbols are placed above the notes to indicate the harmonic structure. The melody is written in a simple, accessible style suitable for a beginner's left hand accompaniment. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

1 C<sub>m</sub>7 F7 B<sub>b</sub>ma<sub>7</sub>7 E<sub>b</sub>ma<sub>7</sub>7

A<sub>m</sub>7(b5) D7 G<sub>m</sub>7 G7

9 C<sub>m</sub>7 F7 B<sub>b</sub>ma<sub>7</sub>7 E<sub>b</sub>ma<sub>7</sub>7

A<sub>m</sub>7(b5) D7 G<sub>m</sub>7

17 A<sub>m</sub>7(b5) D7 G<sub>m</sub>7

C<sub>m</sub>7 F7 B<sub>b</sub>ma<sub>7</sub>7 E<sub>b</sub>ma<sub>7</sub>7

25 A<sub>m</sub>7(b5) D7 G<sub>m</sub>7 C7 F<sub>m</sub>7 B<sub>b</sub>7

E<sub>b</sub>ma<sub>7</sub>7 A<sub>m</sub>7(b5) D7 G<sub>m</sub> G7

*How to Play Solo Jazz Piano: LH for Beginners (page 2)*

**1- Use the root in a good range** in the LH (generally somewhere below the D3 or D below middle C). Work out a logical root line and play just one note per chord (not a walking bass line at this point), and get used to navigating this along with the RH melody and improvising.

**2- Use roots and fifths.** The fifth will be right above the bass note (not as part of anything the RH is doing at this point).

**3- Use roots and 7ths.** There are 3 sevenths to choose from. Keep the 7th tone above the D3 and somewhere below the melody (close to middle C range, ideally). You'll play the root with the 5 finger and pull one of the sevenths in your thumb (It's almost like playing octaves).

- a) maj7 (you must see the maj in symbol for it to be a major 7)
- b) b7 (referred to as flat seven, and is seen in chord symbol as just a 7)
- c) 6 or bb7 (diminished chords have bb7, same note as 6)

**4- Use roots and thirds.** Keep the 3rd tone above the D3 and somewhere below the melody (close to middle C range, ideally). There are 4 thirds to choose from:

- a) 3 (all chords have major thirds unless otherwise specified)
- b) b3 (referred to as minor third), seen in symbol as m or mi, or -
- c) sus4 (4 instead of 3)
- d) sus 2 (2 instead of 3)

**5- Use 3rds and 7ths** where you use the 1 and 3.

- maj 7 = 3 and maj7
- 7 = 3 and b7
- mi7 chords need b3 and b7
- mi6 chords need b3 and 6
- mi7 chords (and also mi7b5) need b3 and b7
- mi (maj7) chords need b3, maj7

**Thirds and sevenths Rules:**

Keep the voicing in the middle C area UNDER the Melody and Away from bass range.

No third or seventh below the D below middle C.

These are normally played with the LEFT HAND.

**Learning thirds and sevenths: -Play these in every key and learn both inversions.**

	A Voicing Seventh at the bottom	B Voicing Third at the bottom
Cmaj7	7, 3	3, 7
Cmi7	b7, b3	b3, b7
C7	b7, 3	3, b7
Cmi(maj7)	7, b3	b3, 7

**6- Combine roots and 7ths with 1 and 3, or also 3rds and 7ths, in progressions like the ii-V-I.**  
Learn these in all 12 keys.

## ii-V-I LH rooted voicings

Piano

Using 1-3 for the ii chord

Musical notation for LH rooted voicings using 1-3 for the ii chord, measures 1-24. The notation is in bass clef with a common time signature. It shows a sequence of chords with their roots and 7ths indicated by flats or sharps. The chords are: 1. Cm7 (C, Eb), 2. F7 (F, Ab), 3. Bbm7 (Bb, F), 4. Fm7 (F, Ab), 5. Bb7 (Bb, F), 6. Ebmaj7 (Eb, G, Bb, D), 7. Bbm7 (Bb, F), 8. Ab7 (Ab, F), 9. Dbmaj7 (Db, F, Ab, C), 10. Abm7 (Ab, F), 11. Db7 (Db, F), 12. Gbmaj7 (Gb, F, Ab, C), 13. C#m7 (C#, E), 14. F#7 (F#, Ab), 15. Bmaj7 (B, D, F#, A), 16. Bm7 (B, D, F, A), 17. Em7 (E, G, B, D), 18. A7 (A, C#, E, G), 19. Am7 (A, C, E, G), 20. D7 (D, F#, A, C), 21. Gmaj7 (G, B, D, F), 22. Dm7 (D, F, A, C), 23. G7 (G, B, D, F), 24. Fmaj7 (F, A, C, E).

Using 7-3 for the ii chord

Musical notation for LH rooted voicings using 7-3 for the ii chord, measures 25-48. The notation is in bass clef with a common time signature. It shows a sequence of chords with their roots and 7ths indicated by flats or sharps. The chords are: 25. Cm7 (C, Eb), 26. Bbmaj7 (Bb, D, F, Ab), 27. Fm7 (F, Ab), 28. Bb7 (Bb, F), 29. Bbm7 (Bb, F), 30. Abmaj7 (Ab, G, Bb, D), 31. Bbm7 (Bb, F), 32. Ab7 (Ab, F), 33. Dbmaj7 (Db, F, Ab, C), 34. Abm7 (Ab, F), 35. C#m7 (C#, E), 36. Bmaj7 (B, D, F#, A), 37. F#m7 (F#, Ab), 38. B7 (B, D, F#, A), 39. Bm7 (B, D, F, A), 40. Amaj7 (A, C, E, G), 41. Em7 (E, G, B, D), 42. A7 (A, C#, E, G), 43. Am7 (A, C, E, G), 44. Gmaj7 (G, B, D, F), 45. Dm7 (D, F, A, C), 46. G7 (G, B, D, F), 47. Gm7 (G, Bb, D, F), 48. Fmaj7 (F, A, C, E).

**7- If you can reach the 10th, use it.** The 10th is same as 1 and 3 except the 3rd is up an octave. If you cannot reach the 10th in your LH (don't force it), share the two notes by adding the 10th as part of something you're doing in the RH.

**8-Combine roots with LH rootless voicings in a stride-like fashion** without doing an ongoing bass/chord/bass/chord pattern/. Try the following:

bass chord chord bass  
chord chord bass  
chord chord chord bass  
etc

**9- Add stuff on the inside using the Right Hand.** Keep the melody and roots on the outside, and extra harmony and other stuff on the inside. Use two-handed voicings language as part of your strategy.

**10-Write up an arrangement** that works under your hand and memorize it. Create a LH arrangement on each tune that you are working on and work with that as a starting point.