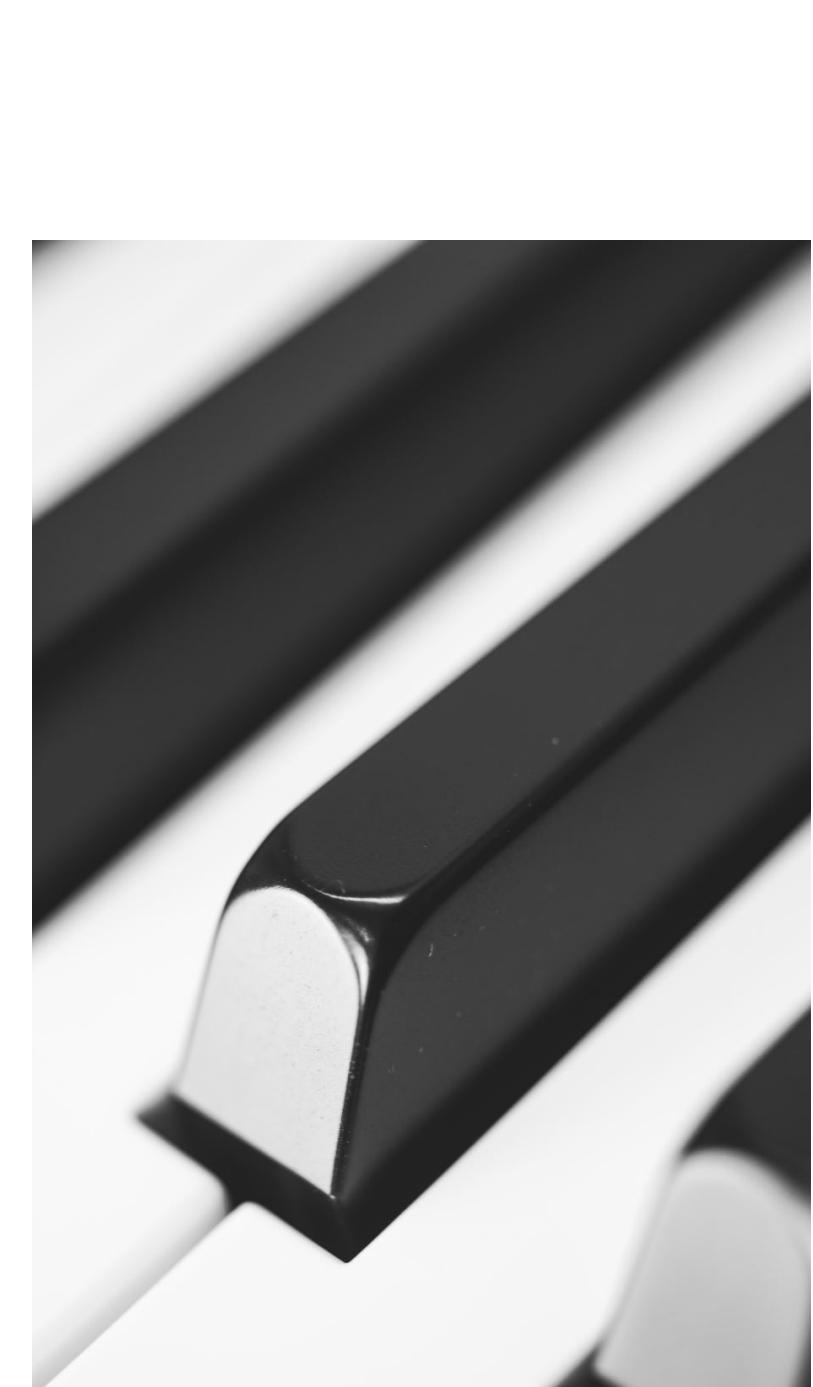




8 Things Every Piano Teacher Should Know About the Blues

By Jeremy Siskind
(Fullerton College)



The 8 Things

1. The blues is a style and a chord progression.
2. You can add chords...and even create a “Bird Blues.”
3. It’s 12 bars...and that’s weird.
4. It focuses on dominant chords...and that’s weird.
5. It only uses one scale...and that’s weird.
6. You can “bend” and “reach” for notes on the piano.
7. You can use notes outside the blues scale.
8. The blues isn’t necessarily sad.



1) The blues is a style
and a chord progression



Stripped Down Blues Progression

1 | I | | | | |

2 | IV | | I | | |

3 | V | | I | | |



IT DON'T MATTER IF YOU'RE
BLACK OR WHITE

Taken from the album 'Dangerous' (1991)





Ba ba ba ba Barbara Ann
Ba ba ba ba Barbara Ann



I GOT YOU (I FEEL GOOD)

I Can't Help It (I Just Do-Do-D-o)

**JAMES
BROWN**



George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

3 Preludes for Piano
Prelude N^o 2

für 12 Violoncello

Arrangement
Wilhelm Kaiser-Lindenmann

– Partitur –

Beschreiber: Adelmar Böhlke

Komponist:
George Gershwin

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Andante con moto e poco rubato ($\text{♩} = 88$)

A musical score for piano in 4/4 time, treble and bass staves. The key signature is A major (three sharps). Measure 1: Treble staff is silent. Bass staff: C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A ; C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A . Measure 2: Treble staff is silent. Bass staff: C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A ; C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A . Measure 3: Treble staff is silent. Bass staff: C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A ; C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A . Measure 4: Treble staff: D , F^{\sharp} , A ; D , F^{\sharp} , A . Bass staff: C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A ; C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A . Dynamics: **p** legato over the first three measures, **p** at the end of measure 4. Performance instruction: *Rit.* *simile*.

1

A continuation of the musical score. Measures 5-8 show a melodic line in the treble staff with eighth-note patterns: D , F^{\sharp} , A ; D , F^{\sharp} , A ; D , F^{\sharp} , A ; D , F^{\sharp} , A . The bass staff continues with chords: C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A ; C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A ; C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A ; C^{\sharp} , E^{\sharp} , A . Measure 8 concludes with a fermata over the bass staff.

I chord

8

A piano sheet music excerpt in G major (three sharps). The treble clef is on the top line, and the bass clef is on the bottom staff. The key signature is three sharps. The melody consists of eighth-note patterns. The first two measures are labeled 'IV chord' and the next two are labeled 'I chord'. Measure 8 ends with a half note on the fourth line of the treble clef staff.

IV chord

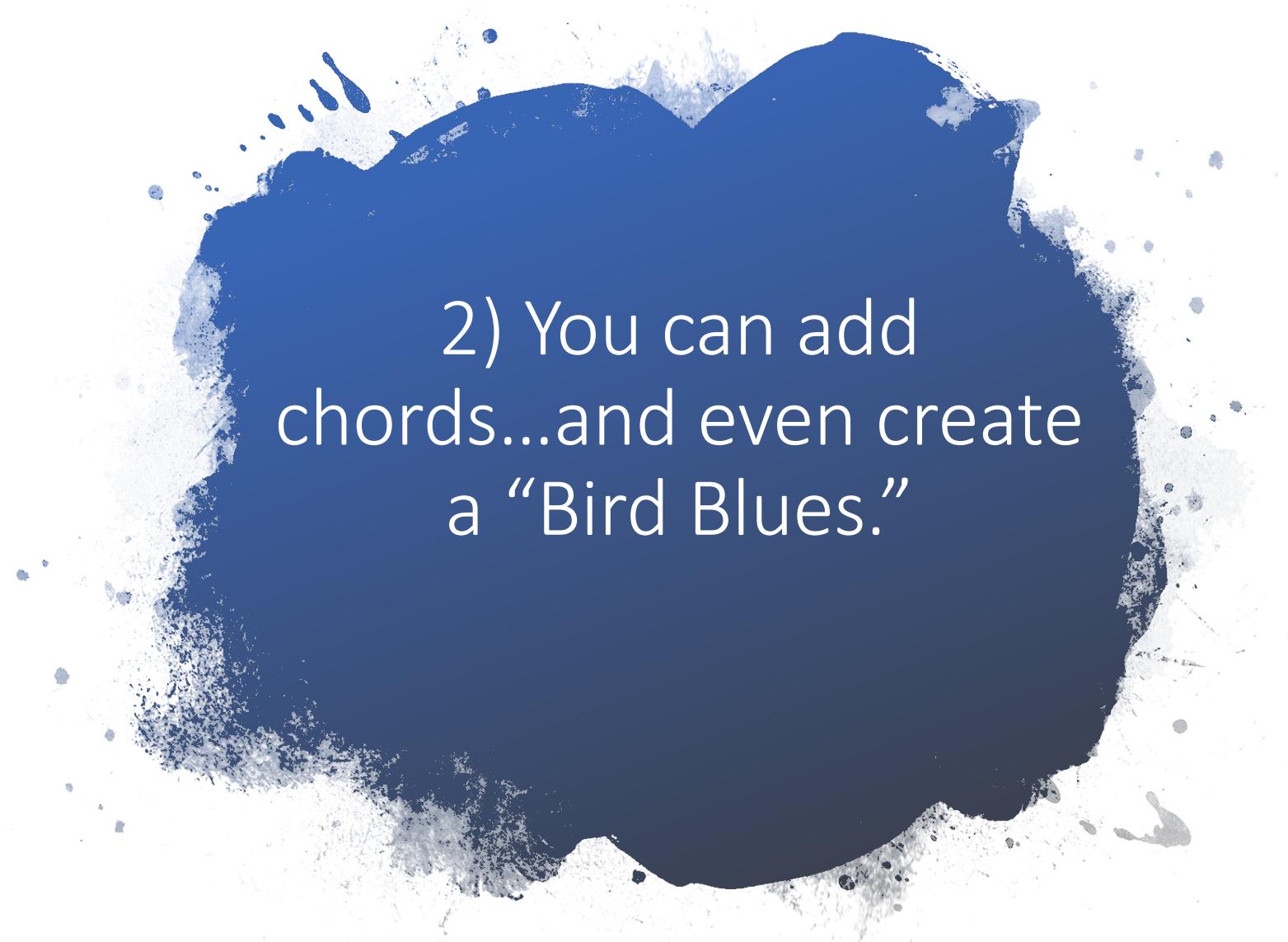
I chord

12

A piano sheet music excerpt in G major (three sharps). The treble clef is on the top line, and the bass clef is on the bottom staff. The key signature is three sharps. The melody consists of eighth-note patterns. The first two measures are labeled 'Cadence' and the next two are labeled 'I chord'. Measure 12 ends with a half note on the fourth line of the treble clef staff.

Cadence

I chord



2) You can add
chords...and even create
a “Bird Blues.”



~~ROCK~~ Blues Progression

1 | I | IV | I | | |

2 | IV | | I | | |

3 | V | IV | I | | |

Blues Progression

1 | I | IV | I | $\frac{\text{ii-V}^7}{\text{IV}}$ |

2 | IV | $\frac{\text{vii}^07}{\text{V}}$ | I/V | $\frac{\text{ii-V}^7}{\text{ii}}$ |

3 | ii | V⁷ | I | (ii-V⁷) |

JAZZ Blues Progression

1 | C⁷ | F⁷ | C⁷ | Gm⁷-C⁷ |

2 | F⁷ | F^{#o7} | $\frac{C^7}{G}$ | E^{ø7}-A⁷ |

3 | Dm⁷ | G⁷ | C⁷ | Dm⁷-G⁷ |



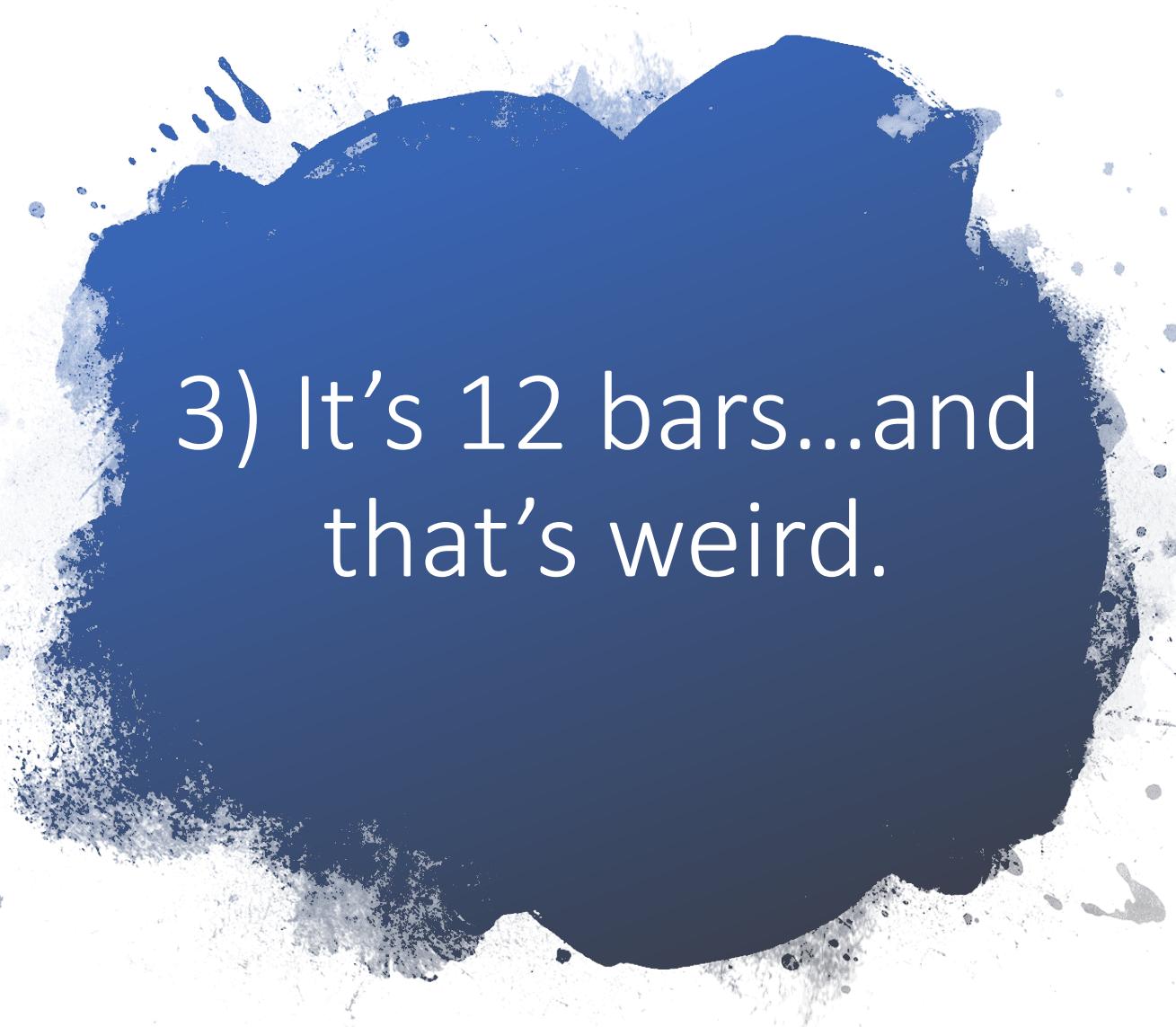
Blues Progression

“BIRD”

1 | C⁷ | B^{∅7}-E⁷ | Am⁷-D⁷ | Gm⁷-C⁷ |

2 | F⁷ | Fm⁷-Bb⁷ | Em⁷-A⁷ | Ebm⁷-Ab⁷ |

3 | Dm⁷ | G⁷ | C⁷ | Dm⁷-G⁷ |



3) It's 12 bars...and
that's weird.





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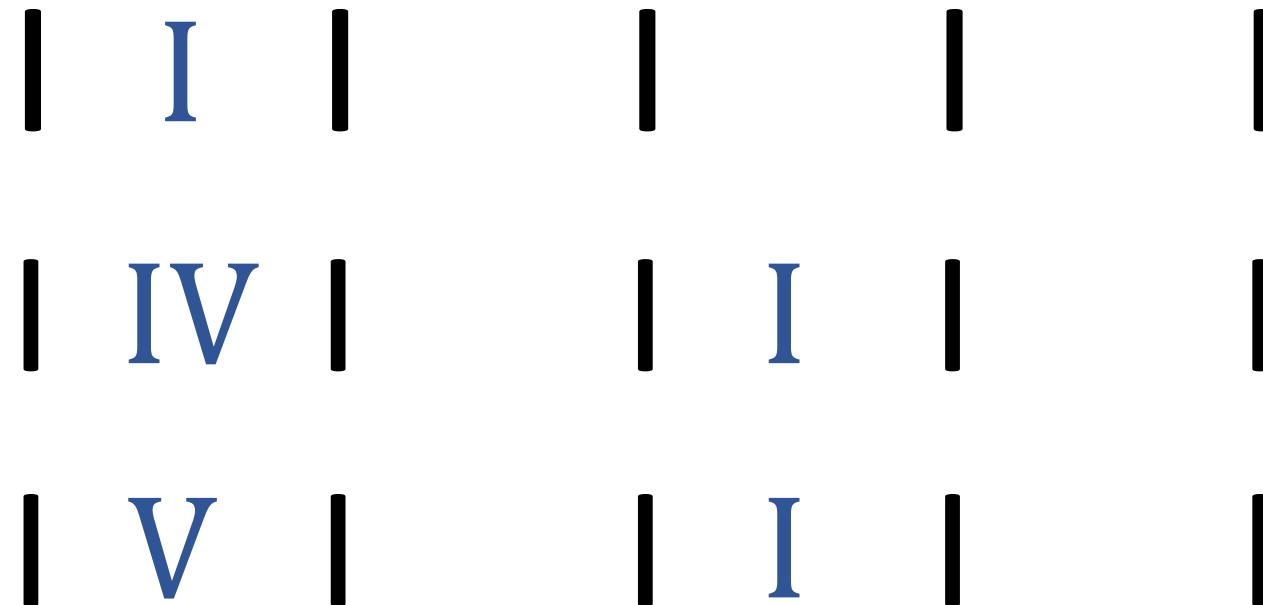




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AAB Blues



AAB Blues

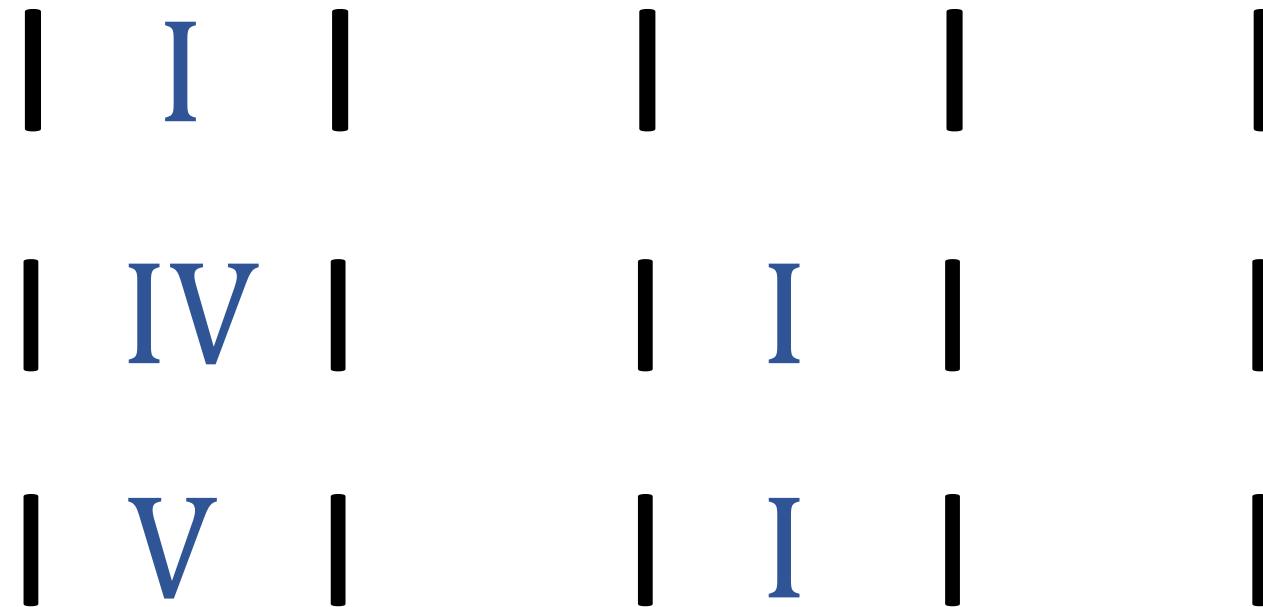


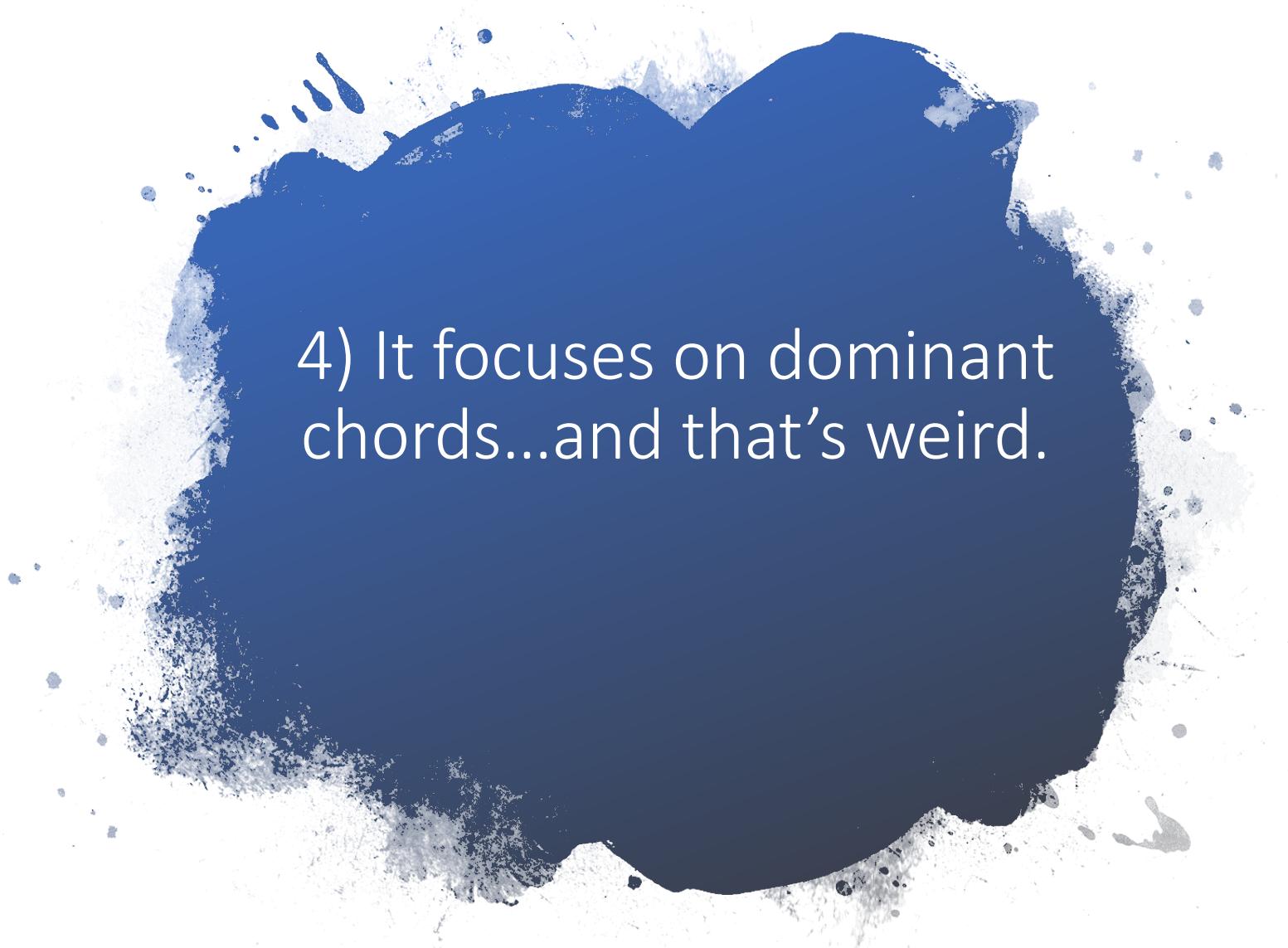
Oh, my baby left me. She left me yesterday.

Oh, my baby left me. She left me yesterday.

You know that my sweet baby, left me to join MTNA.

AAB Blues





4) It focuses on dominant chords...and that's weird.

V-I

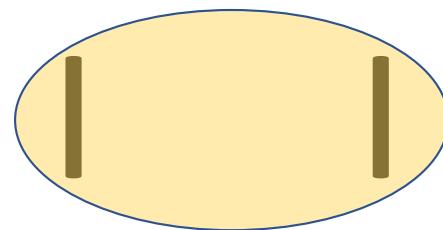
G⁷ C

A musical staff for bass clef. It features a bass clef symbol on the left. In the first measure, there is a vertical bar line followed by three eighth notes: the first is open, the second is solid, and the third is open. Above this measure is the label "G7". In the second measure, there is another vertical bar line followed by one eighth note, which is solid. Above this measure is the label "C". The staff consists of five horizontal lines.

Blues Progression

| C⁷ |

|

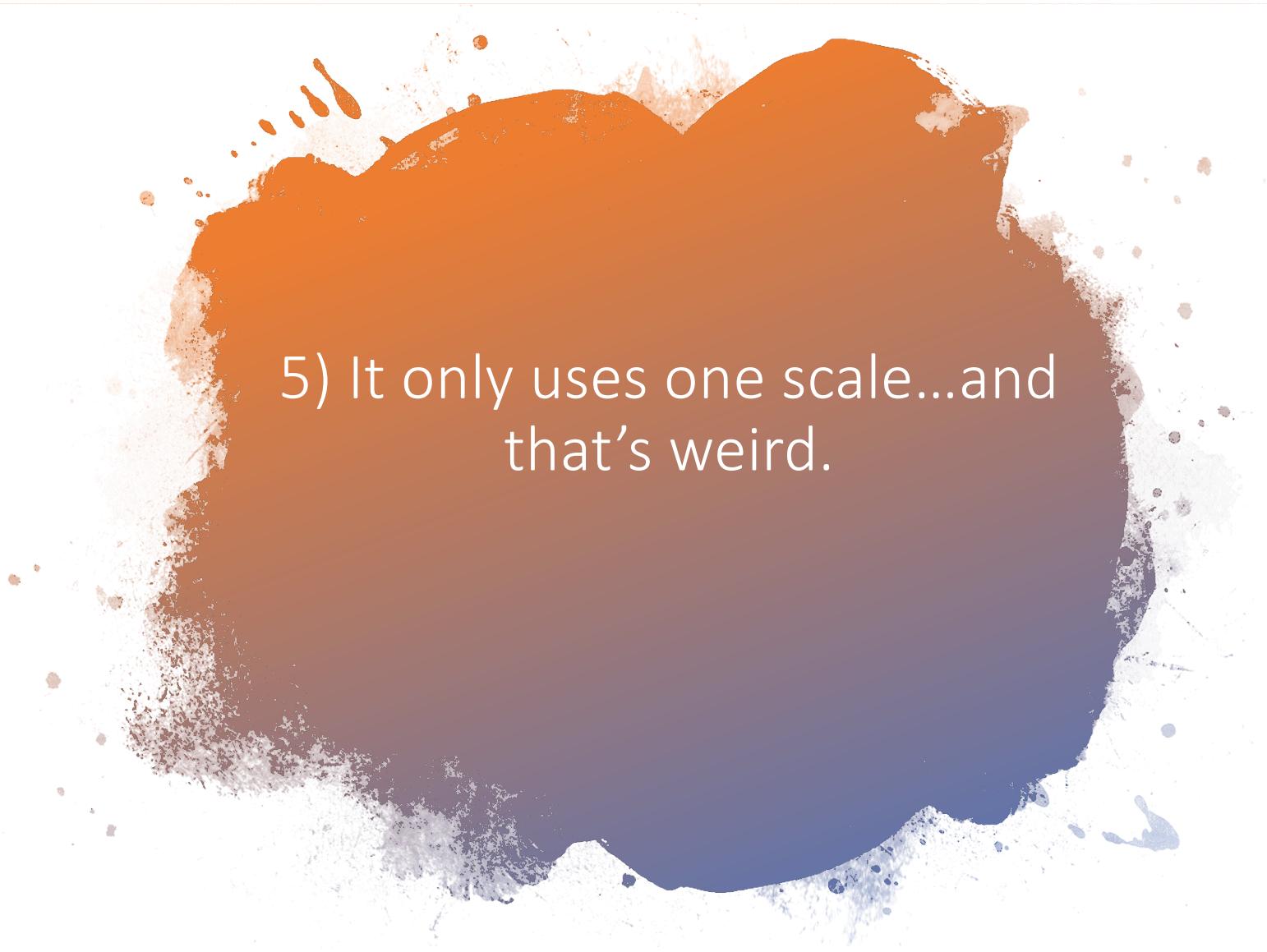


| F⁷ |

| C⁷ |

| G⁷ |

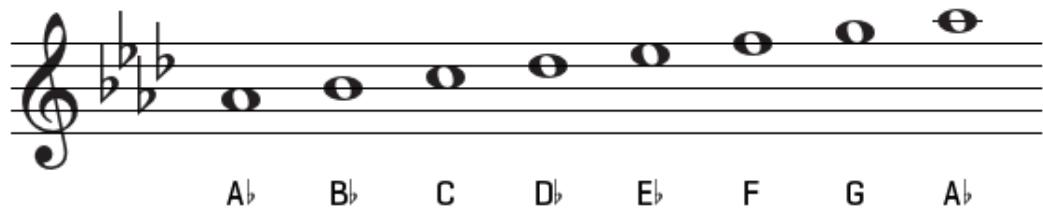
| C⁷ |



5) It only uses one scale...and
that's weird.

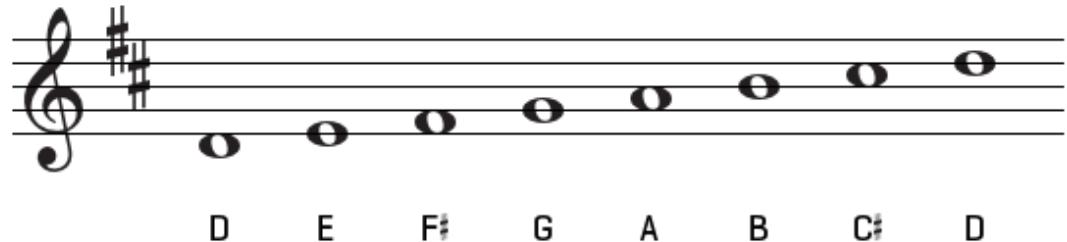
Abmaj7 chord =

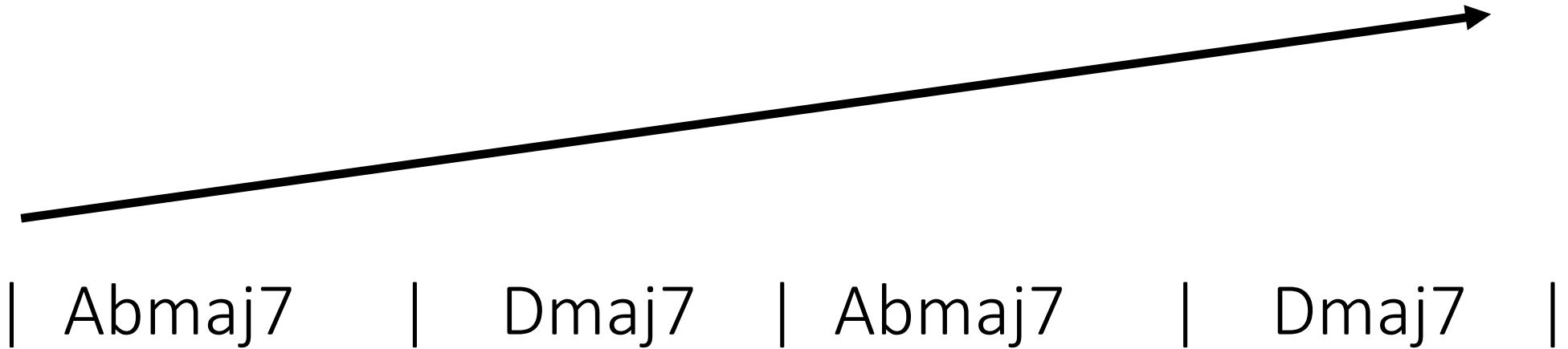
A flat major scale



Dmaj7 chord =

D major scale (treble clef)





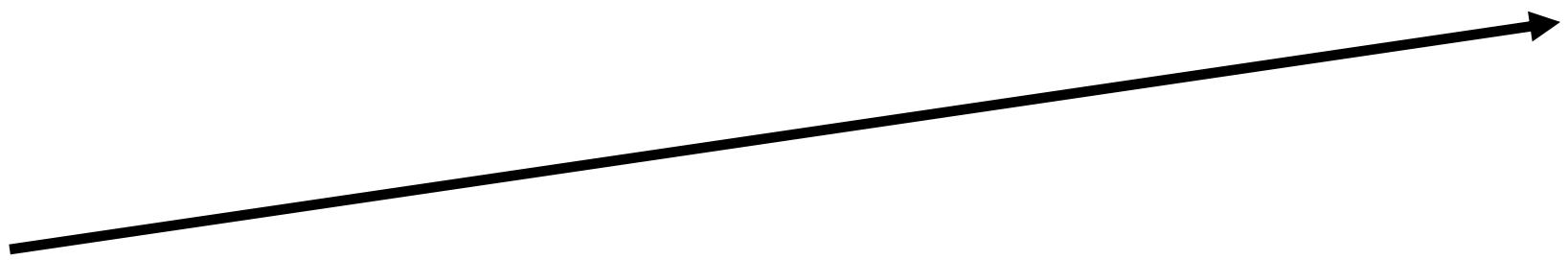
| Abmaj7

| Dmaj7

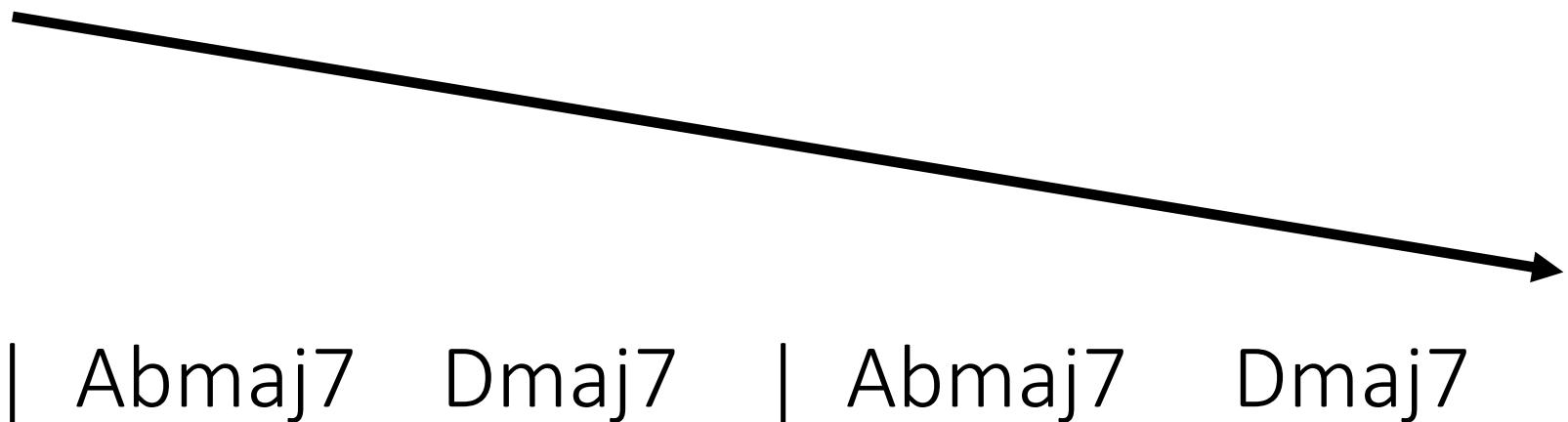
| Abmaj7

| Dmaj7 |



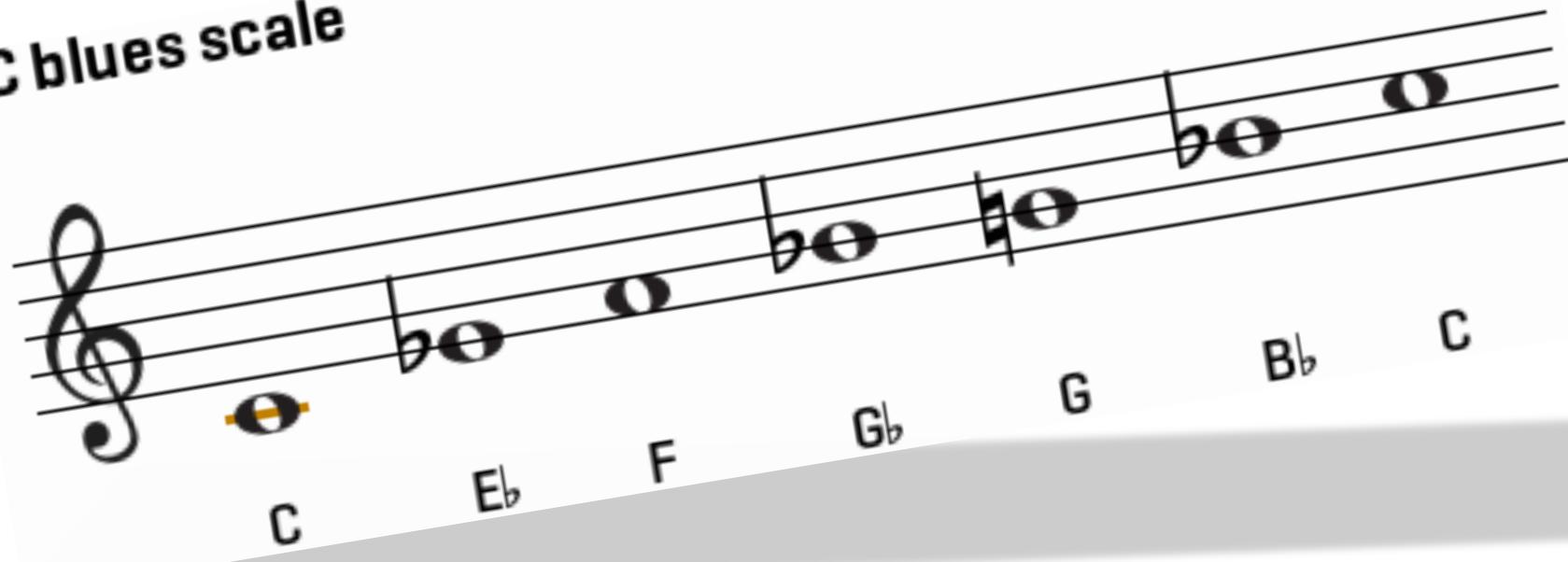


| Abmaj7 Dmaj7 | Abmaj7 Dmaj7 |



| Abmaj7 Dmaj7 | Abmaj7 Dmaj7 |

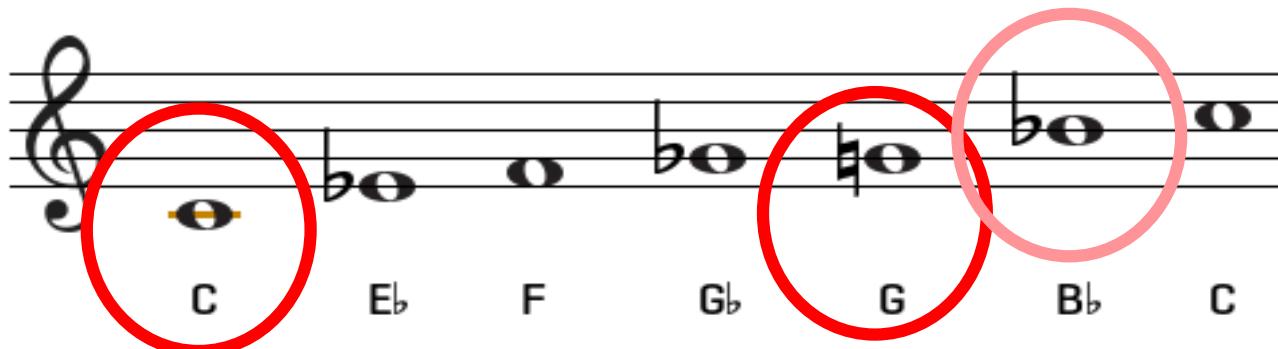
C blues scale



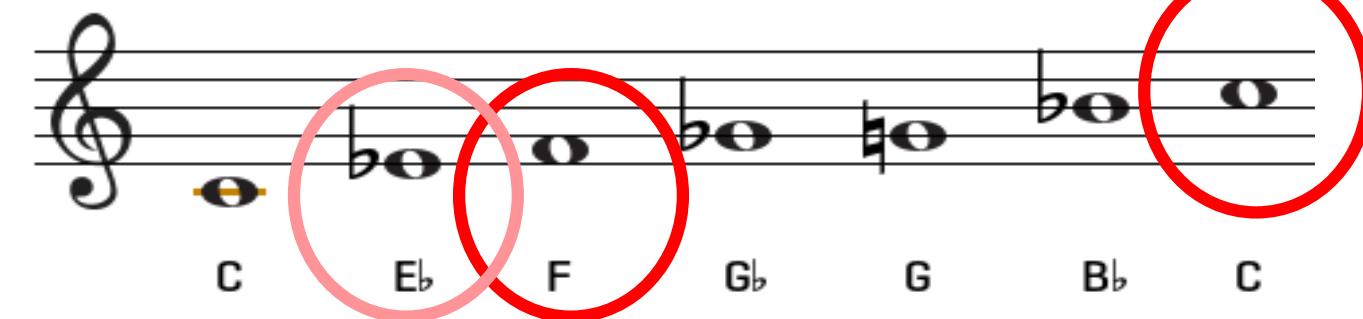


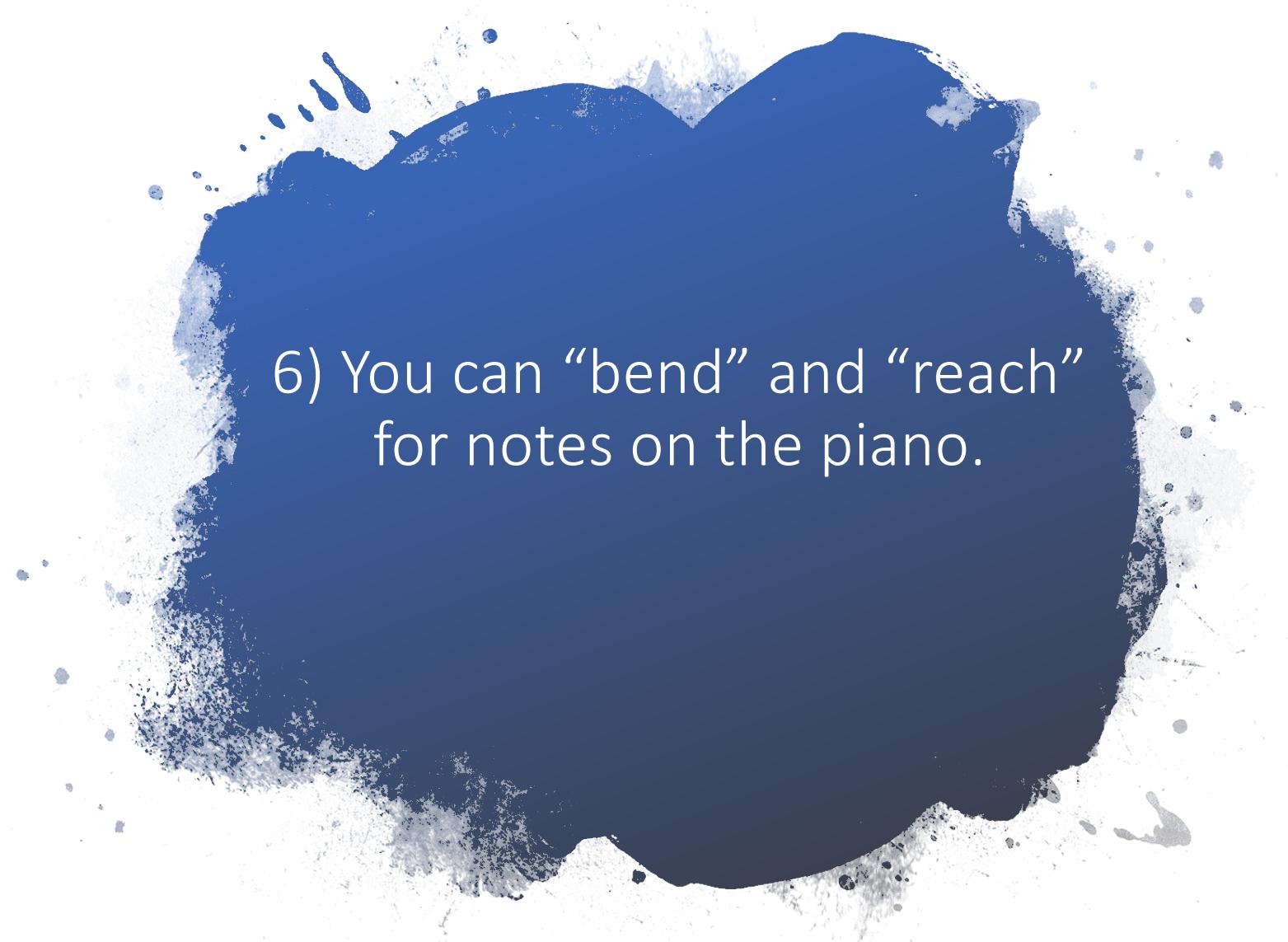
Don't change scales.

C⁷



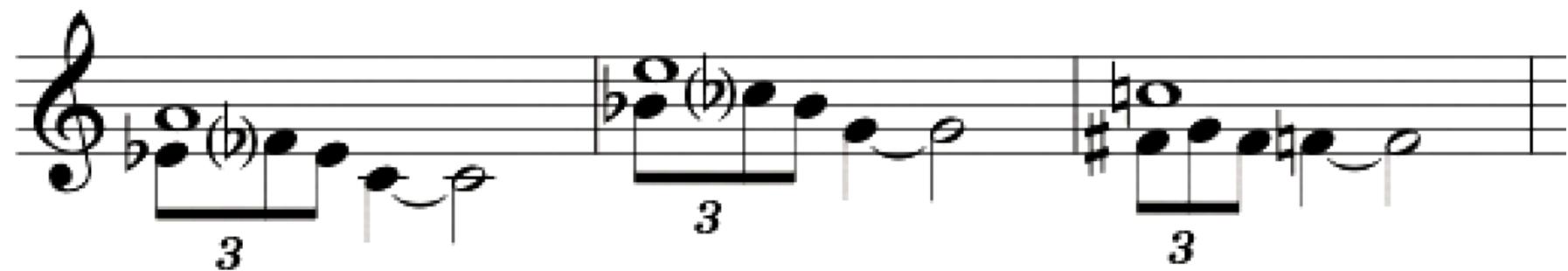
F⁷

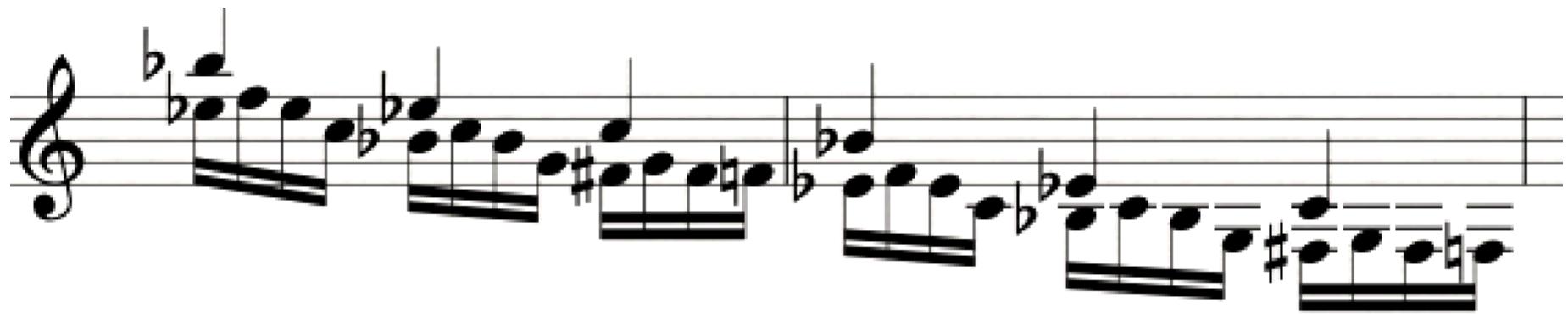


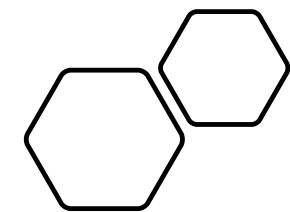


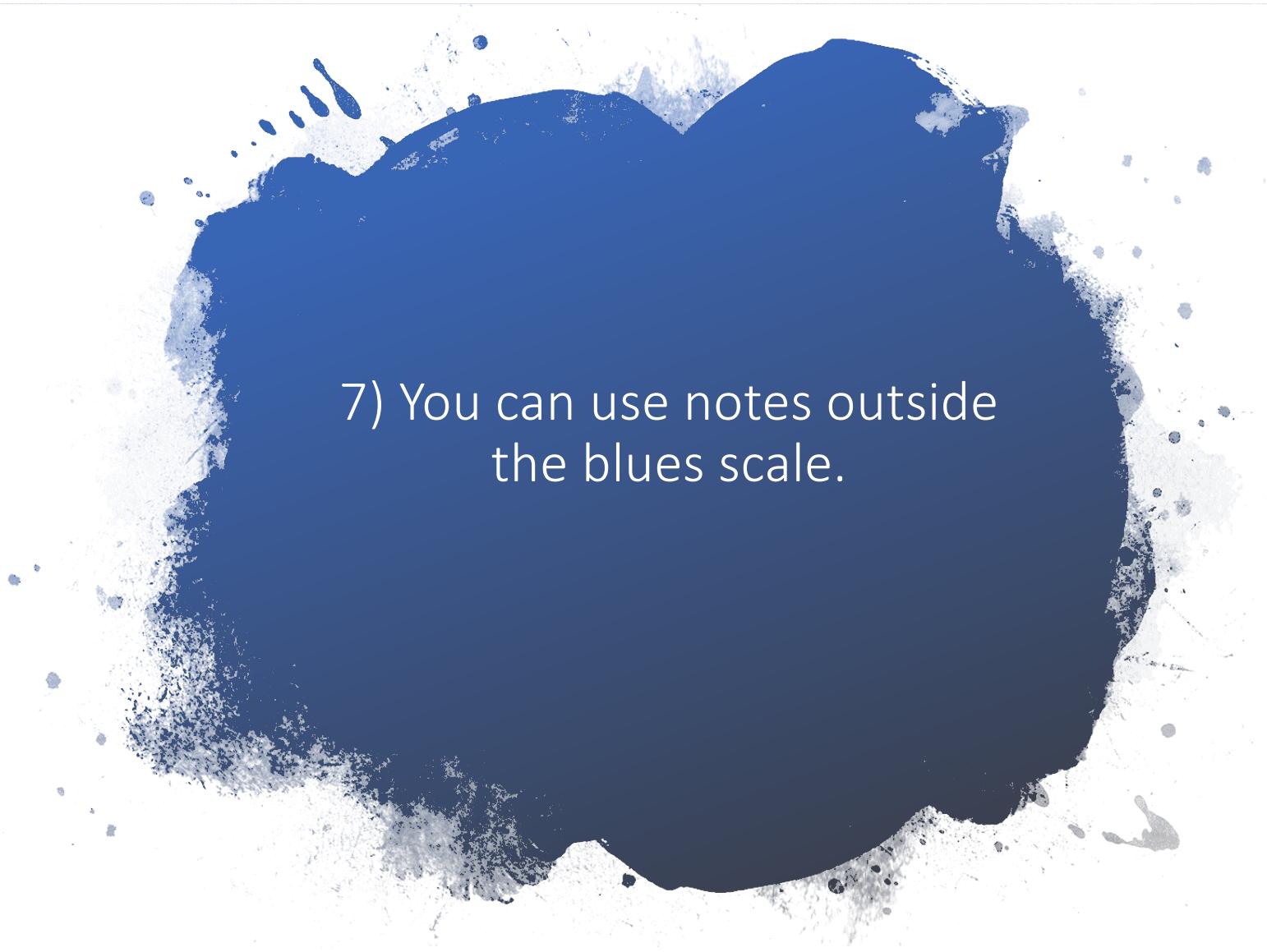
6) You can “bend” and “reach”
for notes on the piano.











7) You can use notes outside
the blues scale.

“Systems” of Improvising

Blues Scale

Arpeggio (Chord Tones)

Scale/Mode

(Plus
chromatic
notes)

For C⁷

C Blues Scale (C, Eb, F, Gb, G, Bb)

C⁷ Arpeggio (C, E, G, Bb)

C Mixolydian (C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb)

C arpeggio C blues scale C Mixolydian Mode

1 2 3

Chorus 1: Blues Scale only

Chorus 2: Arpeggios only

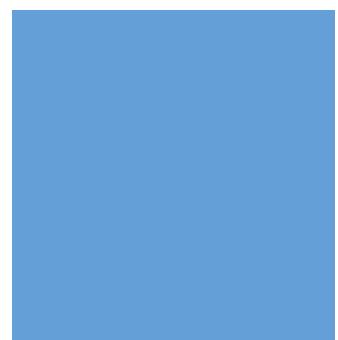
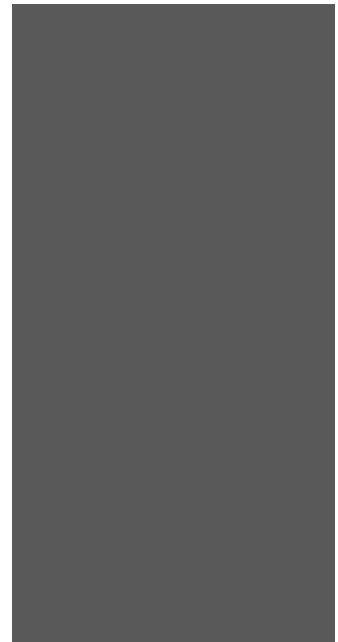
Chorus 3: Mixolydian modes only

Chorus 4: Mix of all 3



8) The blues isn't necessarily sad.







catharsis

(kuh-thahr-sis) noun.

(1) THE PURGING OR RELEASE OF EMOTIONAL TENSIONS, ESP. THROUGH KINDS OF ART OR MUSIC.



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The 8 Things

1. The blues is a style and a chord progression.
2. You can add chords...and even create a “Bird Blues.”
3. It’s 12 bars...and that’s weird.
4. It focuses on dominant chords...and that’s weird.
5. It only uses one scale...and that’s weird.
6. You can “bend” notes on the piano.
7. You can do more than just use the blues scale.
8. The blues isn’t necessarily sad.