

LCC for Guitar - Foreword

Back in the mid 20th century, jazz musician and composer George Russell came out with his vitally important book “The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization.” Its introduction literally set the modern jazz world on its head. It was a totally new concept based in very old ideas which originated as far back as Pythagoras. Many musicians were very intrigued by the Lydian Chromatic Concept and many diligently studied it with devotion and almost all who have learned it’s concepts and principles and who have integrated it into their own personal musical concepts and thinking have been able to achieve writing and improvising goals that far surpassed the ideas and imaginations of any musicians that came before them. Almost all of the top jazz players of the latter half of the century have either been overtly or covertly influenced by the ideas and tonalities presented within the Lydian Chromatic Concept. It contains some unusual theoretical ideas that fly in the face of traditional music theory, but as one digests and interprets the concept and begins to explore it for themselves, it makes more and more sense both harmonically and theoretically and logically. After you think about the concepts for a longer period of time, it starts to take on a new meaning and become a new and exiting realm for the exploration of new musical ideas.

There have also been equally as many detractors and debunkers of Russell’s theory as there are supporters of it. The internet is full of blogs claiming that it’s the most innovative idea that has ever been invented while simultaneously the debunkers argue against its practicality and like to criticize it and toss it aside in favor of their well worn traditional theoretical principles. This it itself always seems to be the case whenever a new advanced idea is presented to the world. Rather than investigate it and explore the possibilities, many are afraid to leave the music theory comfort zone and step “outside the box” and examine Russell’s magnificent work, even if only a little. Many of these same debunkers are quick to criticize its usefulness, but at the same time, the Lydian Chromatic Concept is always there waiting for you and it quietly beckons your mind to come closer for another look. Once you start thinking for yourself about it and start working with and exploring it, many other musical ideas begin to start “clicking” and things start making sense and appearing to you. Some of which can become as simple as just an “ah ha!” in your mind with every new understanding. Or you can also experience something along the lines of a deep emotional response and reaction to nothing less than a personal internal musical revelation. One thing is for certain – John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Jan Garbarek, Herbie Hancock and Keith Jarrett cannot all be wrong. These are only some of the long list of players who have embraced Russell’s ideas and who have integrated it into their own writing and playing.

One of the main obstacles to having many more musicians, especially guitarists, learn Russell’s theory and develop their own relationship with it is the fact that however brilliant the ideas are, as the original book is written; these ideas can also be confusing and difficult to understand. My only goal here is to help all musicians (mainly guitarists as that is my instrument) understand this concept in a more step-by-step manner and uncover and examine ways to look at it and integrate it into your own musical knowledge.

-Pebber Brown, Feb 2009