Ted's Plans for Teaching the V-System
By James Hober

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"*After all, the whole idea in music is to find beautiful sounds, right?, not to play intellectual games to show how much we know or how clever we are.*"

—Ted Greene, *Harmonic Improvement Concepts*, Feb. 20, 1975

There's little doubt in my mind that Ted Greene would have presented his V-System in a more musical, less theoretical way than I have. Or perhaps, he would have presented more musical examples **in addition** to a rigorous theoretical explanation. The main reason I prefer his book *Modern Chord Progressions* over *Chord Chemistry* is that the former has more great sounding chord sequences to play and less reference material. It's less theoretical.

But it's not my place to inject my musicality onto the V-System. For that, we have Ted's own teaching sheets on V-System chords, which continue to be released on tedgreene.com. We also have his arrangements and body of work as a whole, which naturally include many V-System chords. My job has been to explain the theory. Ted's material can make it swing.

Nevertheless, as a bridge between V-System theory and practical, musical usage, this chapter presents some of the ideas Ted was exploring for organizing and teaching his V-System. His personal notes show that he was always rethinking his material, planning new presentations, investigating different angles.

Ted's Notes to Himself about Teaching V-2

Here's an example of Ted weighing the teaching of V-2 chords on one string set versus crossing over between two or three string sets:

5-18-85

Reflections after a year or two of trying both: 1) V-2 one set at a time
2) V-2 all sets at once

Why teach "one string set" at a time when you actually uses crossovers more?

1)   The crossovers feel so good that the student may never learn to go up and down each set, one at a time, which he or she'll need at the top and bottom of the board.

2)   You can't give most students all the chord forms at once of any one type (say V-2 dom. 7) since they can't process this much information for quite a long time (and it may drain a sizable portion of them emotionally and enthusiasm-wise).

2a)   The other alternative is to give them small sections of the neck with crossovers but many will feel less responsive to the SEEMING lack of an overall system to this. At least with one set at a time there is a general acceptance and good feeling and results. (But even then, they need lots of review, application, and the like for real long-term absorption.)

[Handwritten note reproduced as written:]

REFLECTIONS AFTER A YEAR OR 2 OF TRYING BOTH: ① V-2 ONE SET AT A TIME ② V-2 ALL SETS AT ONCE 5-18-85
WHY TEACH ONE "SET" (STRING) AT A TIME when you actually use crossovers more?

★ ① The crossovers feel so good that the student may never learn to go up & down each section, one at a time, which he or she'll need at the top (and bottom) of the board.

② You can't give most students all the chord forms at once of any one type (say V-3 dom. 7) since they can't process this much information for quite a long time (and it may drain a sizeable portion of them emotionally) — (not enthusiasm-wise). ②a The other alternative is to give them small sections of the neck w/ crossovers, BUT many will feel less responsive to the SEEMING lack of system (overall) to this. At least w/ one set at a time, there is a general acceptance and good feeling about AND results. (But even then, they need lots of review, application and the like for real (LONG TERM) absorption).

And here's Ted again re-evaluating his V-2 presentation.

Realization:
The V-2 frag of 3 notes (& at least the important 2)
and the 4-note V-1 (and their frag.) types
(with SOPRANO ORGANIZATION!) must
be given earlier than I thought
because of resolution tendencies
of so many V-2 dominants (& others I'm sure).

["Frag", short for "fragment," probably
 means a "nucleus" of two or three notes
that are the same among several chords.
More on Ted's "nucleus" concept below.]

[Handwritten note reproduced as written:]

REALIZATION:
The V-2 frag of 3 NOTES (& 2)
and the (4-NOTE) V-1 (and their frag.) types
(with SOPRANO ORGANIZ.!) must
be given earlier than I thought
because of resolution tendencies
of so many V-2 dom's (& others I'm sure)

Elsewhere, on the same page as the above, Ted mentions his "quiz format." In lessons, he gave out many V-2 pages where his students had to complete the chord grids at home. Ted would write out an initial pattern on several grids and the student, understanding the logic, would finish the page and practice it. Most students would ink in the dots, but a few students, if they were advanced or reviewing already covered material, might only mentally fill in the grids while practicing. As V-2 pages continue to be released on tedgreene.com, quiz format sheets will be included.

Plans, Plans, and More Plans

I count at least nine (!) organizations of V-System material, for teaching and for research, in Ted's notes:

- by bass
- by soprano
- by outer voices
- by nucleus
- by "old, larger friends"

- intervals
- family
- diatonic to scales
- choice voicings

We're going to look at examples of these from Ted's personal notes. Remember that the notes Ted kept for himself were rougher and sloppier than what he ultimately presented to his students. No doubt he wanted to get his ideas down fast. Evidently, he worked from exploratory jottings, to rough drafts, to finished teaching sheets. Since he did not complete and publish his V-System, we will be looking at his embryonic personal studies, sketches of his compelling and prolific ideas. Look for full transcriptions of many of the following examples at tedgreene.com.

By Bass

Organization by bass was probably Ted's first V-System approach. Traditionally, four-note chord inversions are understood with reference to the bass: root position, first inversion, second inversion, and third inversion. I've already discussed some of Ted's bass organization of V-System chords in *The (Early) Fixed Bass Tour.*

By Soprano

In *The Fixed Soprano Tour,* I discussed some of his soprano organization. Since top down thinking grew tremendously in importance to Ted, let's look at an additional example of it from his personal notes. Here's a listing of V-2 and V-3 major type chords by soprano, beginning with the root in the soprano, then the ninth, then the third, and so on:

By Outer Voices

Sometimes Ted explored holding **both** the soprano and bass fixed and varying the inner voices:

By Nucleus

Ted's "nucleus concept" apparently meant holding two or three notes of a chord constant and varying the remaining note(s). Here's the top part of an example "nucleus" page, where the bass and two other tones are held constant. Ted indicates the fixed bass (root, ninth, flat third, etc.) for each numbered section:

Notice, above, Ted's reminding himself to organize the material in multiple ways. He also places red dots next to those chords he felt should be taught first.

"Old, Larger Friends"

In a similar vein, Ted organized chords by comparison with an "old, larger friend." He first shows a common, familiar chord.   Then interesting, related fingerboard shapes emerge from changes to the "old, larger friend" prototype:

Intervals

Thinking in terms of outer voice and adjacent voice intervals - à la Method 3 - was particularly important to Ted for organizing V-1 chords. The tightly spaced V-1 chords always span less than an octave. The placement of the left hand on the fingerboard can be viewed as an embodiment of the intervals:

Family

Ted separated out the eight very dissonant qualities from the 43 total four-note qualities to arrive at 35 regular qualities. These 35 can be looked at from the perspective of family: major, minor, or dominant. All of the 35 have homonyms, so as a rule they fit into more than one family. But if we want to look at, say, major types, certain of the 35 can be pulled out for study.

Here's the beginning of a page where Ted lists the V-2 A Major "15 basic extensions" on the top four strings:

What are the "15 basic extensions" for the major family that Ted is gridding out above? Besides the list of chord tones (1 2 3 5, 1 2 3 6, etc.) that he shows here, he enumerates their names in red in the last example below (under **Choice Voicings**):

> There are 15 regular no alt, no 11 or #11, Major Family chord types in 4 voices.
> They are:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | 1) | 6 |
> | 2) | Δ7 |
> | 3) | 6/9 no R |
> | 4) | Δ9 no R |
> | 5) | Δ9 no 5 |
> | 6) | 6/9 no 5 |
> | 7) | /9 |
> | 8) | Δ13 no R, 5 |
> | 9) | 6/9 no 3 |
> | 10) | Δ9 no 3 |
> | 11) | Δ13 no 3, 5 |
> | 12) | Δ7/6 no 5 |
> | 13) | Δ7/6 no 3 |
> | 14) | Δ13 no R, 3 |
> | 15) | Δ7/6 no R |

That's 15.

Diatonic to Scales

Ted was interested in discovering which of the 35 regular V-System qualities were diatonic to certain scales. If a four-note chord can be formed using only the notes from a particular scale, it can be used in a series of similar inversions spaced the same way, known as a diatonic chord scale. (Ted describes diatonic chord scales in chapter 5 of his book *Modern Chord Progressions*.) Also, the scale, or arpeggios drawn from the scale, can be used for single-note soloing over the chord. Both chord scales and single-note soloing were important areas of study that Ted taught. So it makes sense that Ted wanted to integrate the teaching of his V-System with the teaching of these other areas of study. But also, I think he was just curious to know how many V-System qualities were diatonic to a particular scale.

Below Ted tries each of the 35 regular qualities against the overtone dominant scale and finds that 27 of them fit. The circled numbers on this page refer to the 35 qualities in Ted's preferred order, the same order in which I listed them in my chapter *The 43 Four-Note Qualities*. As an aside, Ted also does a quick mental tally to find that 20 of the 35 are diatonic to the major scale.

While the main principle of organization here is diatonicism to the overtone dominant scale, within the pages that follow Ted also uses some of his other principles. He explores setting fixed outer voices and gradually varying the inner. He groups chords by "large color," very similar to family: dominants with root, dominants without root, and non-dominants. And he organizes his grid page by soprano. Probably the stars next to some of the grids indicate "choice voicings." [See the full transcription of these pages, *V-2 Structures in the Overtone Dominant Scale* at TedGreene.com/Teaching/V-System.]

P.1
3-23-01
late, mi.
7 in. mi.

ALL V-2
STRUCTURES in the
OVERTONE DOM. SCALE
(LYD. DOM.)

① LIST SEED CHORD after trying on all 12 frets where necessary
② NEXT TRY ITS 3 INVERSIONS
③ later, TRY A DIATONIC CHORD SCALE (to find the best, useable sounds) and / or verify
from each of the above
④ try the same in V-1 and V-3 thru V-14
⑤ A few other keys should be looped

Key of Bb7

yes, that's E NATURAL
See my impending book on the new key signatures!

SHOCKER! This scale type has 27 of the 35 natural chord rows in it !!!! Doing a somewhat challenging mental/visual survey of the same thing in the MAJOR SCALE, I find that this scale has numbers ②③④⑥⑦⑭⑮⑯⑱⑳㉒⓪㉔㉕㉖㉗㉙㉚㉛㉜④ which "ain't bad" TOTAL = 20

⑥ Do a 'FILTER' (or start from scratch) to see which of all this is useable + beautiful in at least the 9th PENTAT.

now: SYSTEMATIC INVERSION ROWS
the scale by the way contains the following intervals : 2nd, 3rd, #4, 5, 6, b7 {4th, b6th; b3rd, b5; b2nd, b4(!); b6th, Δ7th(!); #5 {from and 5} (flat7th)

the 13th chor. PENT at least one 13 #11 PENT

⑦ Please try an occasional Eb for E, 'specially in a chord scale like [V]

⑧ Don't forget to look for HOMONYMS in the SAME KEY !!!!!!

ex.
②⑧a Bb9#11 no R, no5
Same shape as 28, different fret, same key

HOMONYMS : ㉖ 9/9#11 (no5)
㉗ Bb6/9#11 no R, 5
㉘a Bb9#11 no R, no5
㉙ Bb6/9 #11 no5
㉚ Bb6/9 no5
㉛ Bb6/9#11 no5
㉚ Bb7b5 Type 2 OPT.
㉛a Bb6/9 #11 no3

HOMONYMS: Ab Bb C D E F G (Ab)
Just to add scale: already friendly alphabet, with b5 on the A + D letters

Choice Voicings

Often Ted would mathematically generate huge complete lists of chords for himself. But quite a few of these might not sound particularly good to him. So he would cull the "choice voicings" from his lists. He placed colored dots or stars next to the crème de la crème as he transferred them to other pages. These transfers might involve up to seven or eight intermediate "steps" or phases, each on its own page, each with the material reworked or reorganized. Finally, he would neatly prepare a sheet with the distilled essentials for his students.

Here is Ted commenting on choice voicings during a lesson with Mark Levy:

Ted: We're not going to run systematic inversions when we play music if two—if even one of them is unwieldy for the ear, if it doesn't sound right—we're not going to use it. So we're just going to end up using choice voicings…. Just start from the simple and work toward the complex and eventually you find things that you like, you know. You don't like every chord as well as every other, although this—it's hard to find fault with any of these [*referring to Mark's notes*] if the fret's right, if it's a high enough register. Some of these babies [*referring to a different section of Mark's notes*] you might, you know, not love them.

Mark: But theoretically…

Ted: Theoretically, they're there.

[*Ted Greene lesson with Mark Levy on May 18, 1992 at 11:55.*]

The Bottom Line

Ted envisioned myriad teaching strategies for the V-System. The main thing behind all of them is to get good chords under your fingers, into your ears, and singing in your heart. The bottom line is to discover sounds you really love. Then put them together, in comps, arrangements, and original compositions, both Ted's and your own.

May you find gems among V-System chords and may you make music you love.

– James