The

AARON SHECHET AMATEUR JAZZ METHOD FOR PIANO

For people who want to play jazz piano pretty good.

A practical method for pianists who can already kinda play, but want jazz to finally feel reachable under the hands.

By AARON SHECHET, ESQ.

The Aaron Shechet Amateur Jazz Method for Piano

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A practical method for pianists who can already kinda play, but want jazz to finally feel reachable under the hands.

Author

Aaron Shechet, Esq.

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Author Note

Why this book exists

Jazz is often described as “music for musicians” or “a musical language.” Traditionally, it has been learned the way people learn a language: through immersion. Most jazz method books and courses I tried — and I bought a lot of them — start there. First you learn the alphabet: theory, fundamentals, scales, modes, and chord symbols. Then you start putting things together into words and phrases, like the ii-V7-I progression. Along the way, you are told to memorize a lot of information, listen constantly, and eventually “internalize it.”

To me, it feels like trying to learn how to crack a safe from a master thief. Obviously, the instructor knows what they’re doing. But they’re so good at what they do that they take for granted the foundational skills. I can’t crack a safe if my fingers are not sensitive enough to feel the tumblers moving!

That approach did not work for me. It especially did not work for the part of me that just wanted to be Good Enough. Good enough to sit down after work, relax, read a lead sheet, and make something that sounded like jazz.

I could not find a method that gave me that path, so I started making my own drills. These drills are more crowbar than lockpick; more brute force than finesse. And they worked. For the first time, I could actually play jazz (or maybe, more accurately, “jazz”). A lead sheet became useful instead of intimidating. I was no longer stuck applying block chords or stumbling through memorized patterns.

I also found myself finally internalizing the theory. Not because I memorized it harder, but because my hands kept meeting the same sounds, shapes, and resolutions in small repeatable steps. Instead of broad advice like “practice ii-V-I in every key,” I broke the work into bite-sized layers that could actually be practiced. Doing so led me to notice little “cheats” that no one ever told me!

It worked well enough that I decided to put the drills under one cover and give them away for free (or you can buy a printed copy).

I am not a jazz pedagogue who studied with the greats. I do not have a PhD in piano performance. I have not taught thousands of students. I do not even enjoy listening to all that much jazz. I am a self-taught amateur pianist who enjoys pushing keys on a piano and having it sound decent. So I built a plan that finally made the genre reachable for me.

This is not how you are “supposed” to learn jazz.

But it works!

How To Use This Method

An exercise-first path into jazz piano

Knowledge Comes From Doing

Most jazz methods begin with explanation: chord-scale theory, modes, substitutions, voicing categories, and harmonic analysis. That knowledge can matter, but it does not automatically make your hands able to play jazz.

This method starts from the other direction. You build small, repeatable actions until the sound, shape, and movement become physically familiar. The theory is not *completely* ignored. It is attached to things you can actually play: roots, guide tones, shells, resolutions, rhythm cells, and simple melodic targets. It is also only referenced where directly relevant. It's nice to remember "a minor triad is three half steps and then four half steps," but it's better to just be able to play it without having to do mental calculations (which I will teach you to do).

The goal is not to avoid understanding. The goal is to make understanding arrive from experience instead of abstract memorization. The drills are designed to create small, useful realizations: you notice the theory because your hands just did it. Then you notice the patterns and connections between the different exercises. Then your brain fills in the blanks, and suddenly you find yourself understanding the theory.

This is not a theory textbook. If you expect deep – or even cursory – explanations, you will be disappointed. It assumes you can find notes on the piano even if you can't play the called-for chords quickly (*e.g.,* if you see Cmaj7, you can find a C somewhere on the piano, if you see D#m7b5, you can find a D#). The explanations are here to support the drills, not replace them. As you repeat the drills, the theory should start to feel less like something to memorize and more like something your hands recognize.

Daily Use

Work through the levels in order. Do not skip ahead just because a page looks simple. Simple is the point. Boring is good. If you can play the exercises while watching TV, you can move on.

At the start of the book, you have the full Fall Flowers lead sheet. This is an original, short piece. Each level gives you a modified Fall Flowers page that shows the new skill in context. The practice lessons demonstrate and isolate the skill needed for that level's Fall Flowers variation. Play through your level's Fall Flowers variation at the start of each session, then do the drill, then review and experiment with the full Fall Flowers lead sheet. Change the rhythm, add notes… boom! Jazz!

Practice one small page at a time. Go slowly enough that you know what you are doing before your hands move.

It is usually better to practice with a metronome, but only after you can competently make it through the page.

Definitions

Just a small definitional note because it will come up: in this method, "guide tones" means the 3rd and 7th of the chord. These are the notes that define the sound and function of a seventh chord. "Shell" means the

small voicing shape made from those guide tones. A shell can be played as 3-7 or 7-3. When the root is added underneath, the result is the basic jazz piano frame: root, 3rd, and 7th.

So the guide tones are the notes. The shell is the playable shape. The root tells you where you are. Together, they give you the essential chord without the extra notes.

How To Advance

Move on when a drill becomes predictable, repeatable, and physically boring in a useful way.

If you're not sure what to do, or having trouble advancing, do each page prior to the one you're at three times in a row (including all prior lessons), and then do the new page twenty times in a row. That should help you advance quickly.

Lastly, don't think too hard. Thinking can come later, but will generally get in the way of learning. Just play.

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- Level 20: Color Tones
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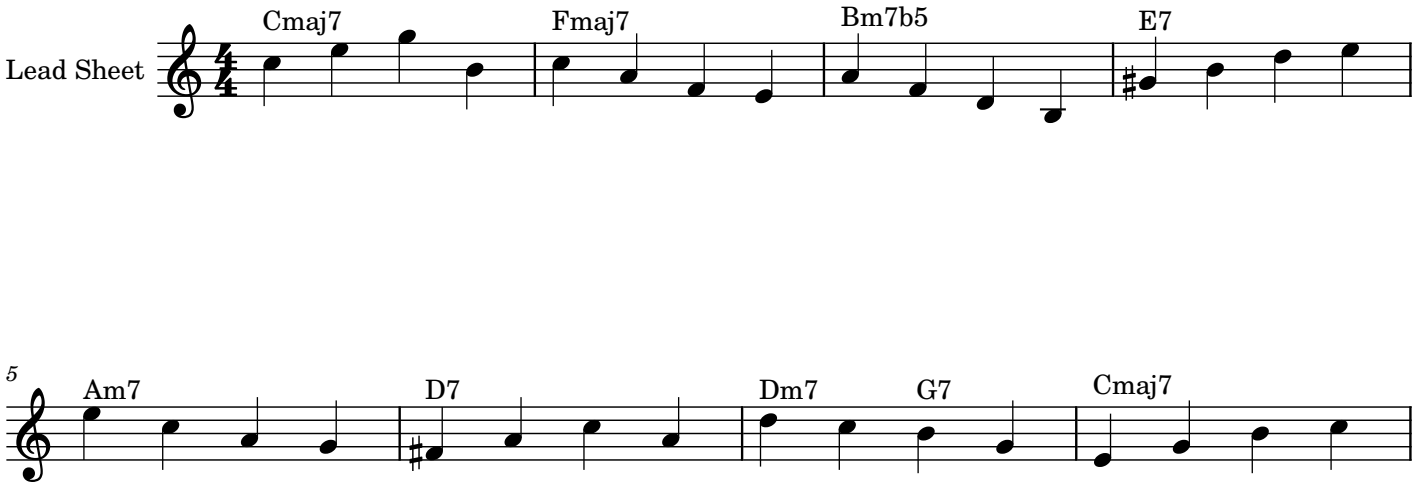
Prelude

Fall Flowers

Lead Sheet Etude

Prelude - Fall Flowers - Lead Sheet Etude



Level 1

The Fourths Road

Chapter Instructions

The Fourths Road

C-F, flat BEAD-G, natural BEAD-G

What this teaches: This section teaches the root road used throughout the method. A drawn circle is not the goal. The goal is to say and play the roots until fourth-motion feels like a route you can pick up from anywhere, instead of a diagram you have to picture in your head first.

Memory hook: “see-ef, flat bead-gee, normal bead-gee."

How To Practice

- Say the whole root road out loud three times before playing: “see-ef, flat bead-gee, normal bead-gee."
- Play the route slowly with the left hand, using any comfortable fingers.
- Keep the root road in order, but change the physical direction on the keyboard of each note. For example: play C up to F, then F down to Bb, then Bb up to Eb. Also try the reverse: C down to F, then F up to Bb. The root order stays the same; only the keyboard direction changes.
- Once that feels comfortable, choose the keyboard direction by musicality (whatever sounds good to you in the moment) while keeping the road in order.
- Repeat with left-hand finger 2 only.
- Repeat with left-hand finger 5 only.
- Start from random places on the road.

What To Notice

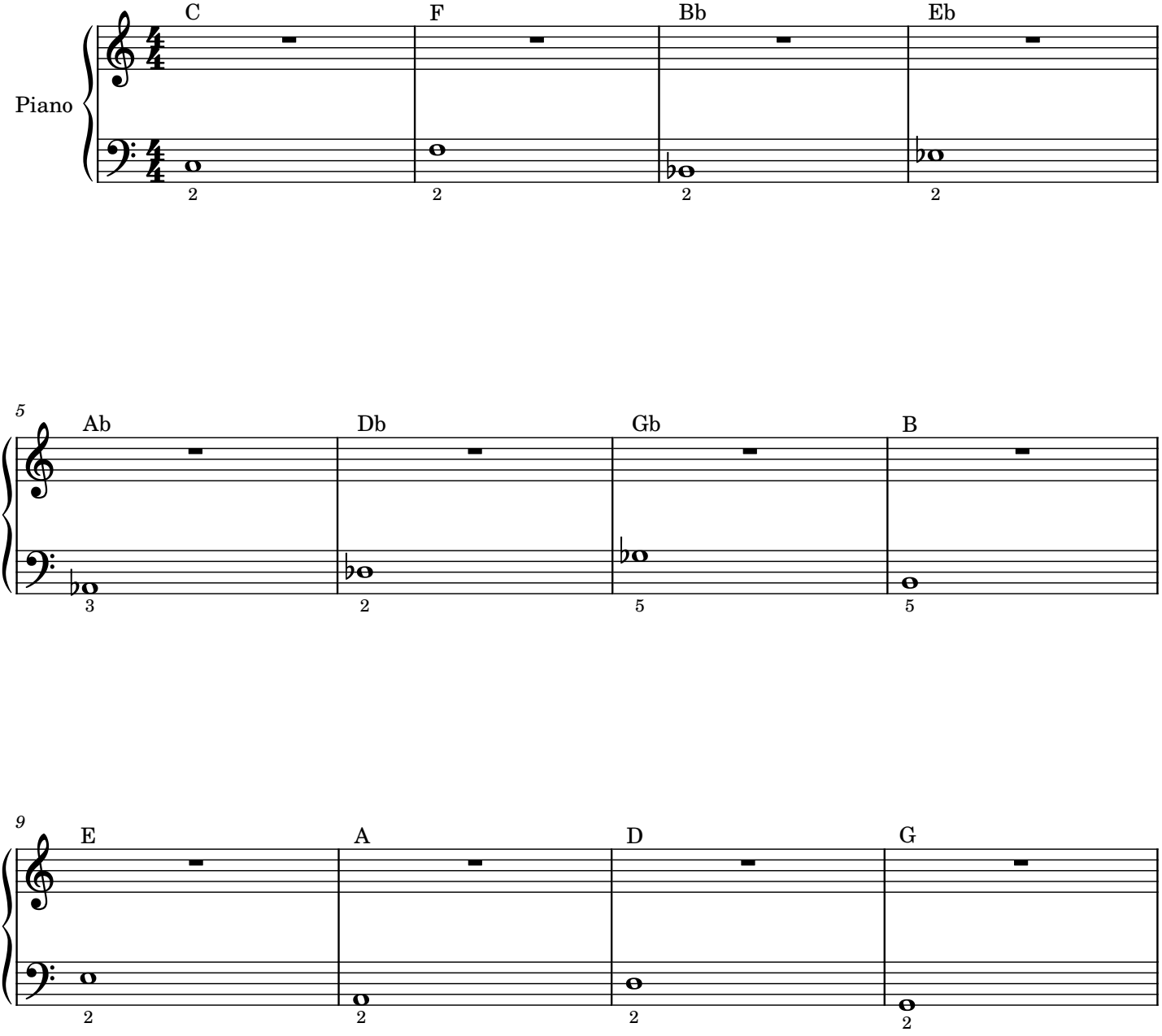
- This is a root road, not a key-signature lesson (see below).
- The default starting order is C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, B, E, A, D, G, but you can start anywhere.
- A ii-V-I progression is just two moves along this same road: D (ii) to G (V) to C (I), G (ii) to C (V) to F (I), and so on.
- A “ii” is just a fifth of a fifth. In other words, ii-V-I is just V-I twice. Since the fifth naturally resolves to the tonic (for reasons), it sounds good to do resolution to resolution.

Important

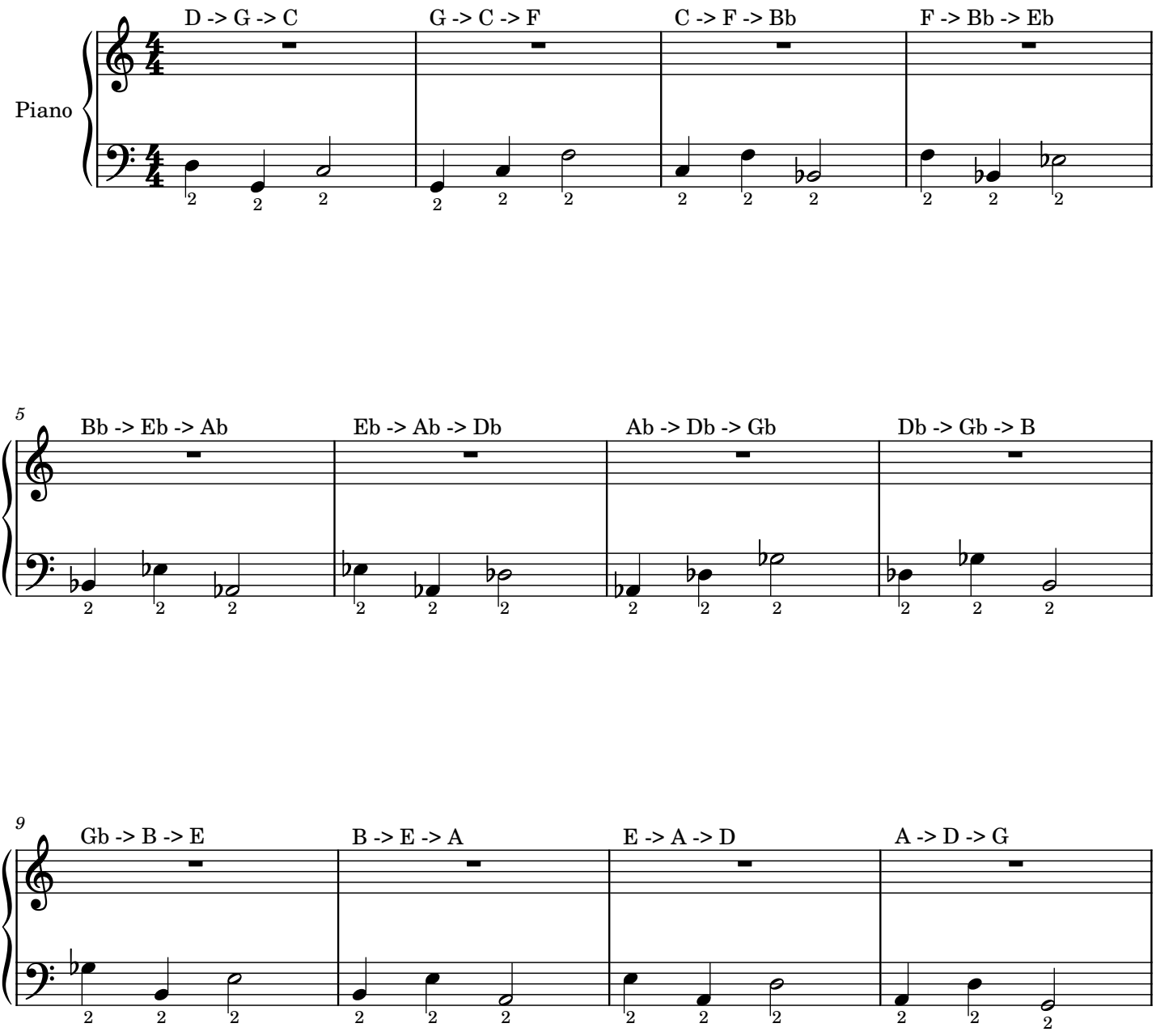
- This method does **not** teach key signatures, and you **don’t** need to know them. The only thing you need to know by way of key signatures is if they exist, then play those notes as sharp or flat unless there’s an accidental changing it. In other words, if you see two flats in the key signature, you don’t need to know “this piece is B-flat major or g-minor.” You just need to know “play all Bs and Es as flats.”

Cheat: You don’t need to know what the chord symbols mean! I purposely am not trying to teach you what the chord symbols mean, because then you end up trying to memorize them and having to calculate half-steps before playing the chord. As you will see in later chapters, you don’t need to understand the chords! You just need to be able to identify the root on the keyboard.

Level 1 - Fourths Road



Level 1 - Fourths Road - Two-Step ii-V-I Roots



Level 2

Fall Flowers Daily Root Warmup

Chapter Instructions

Fall Flowers Daily Root Warmup

Memorize the harmonic map before adding harmony

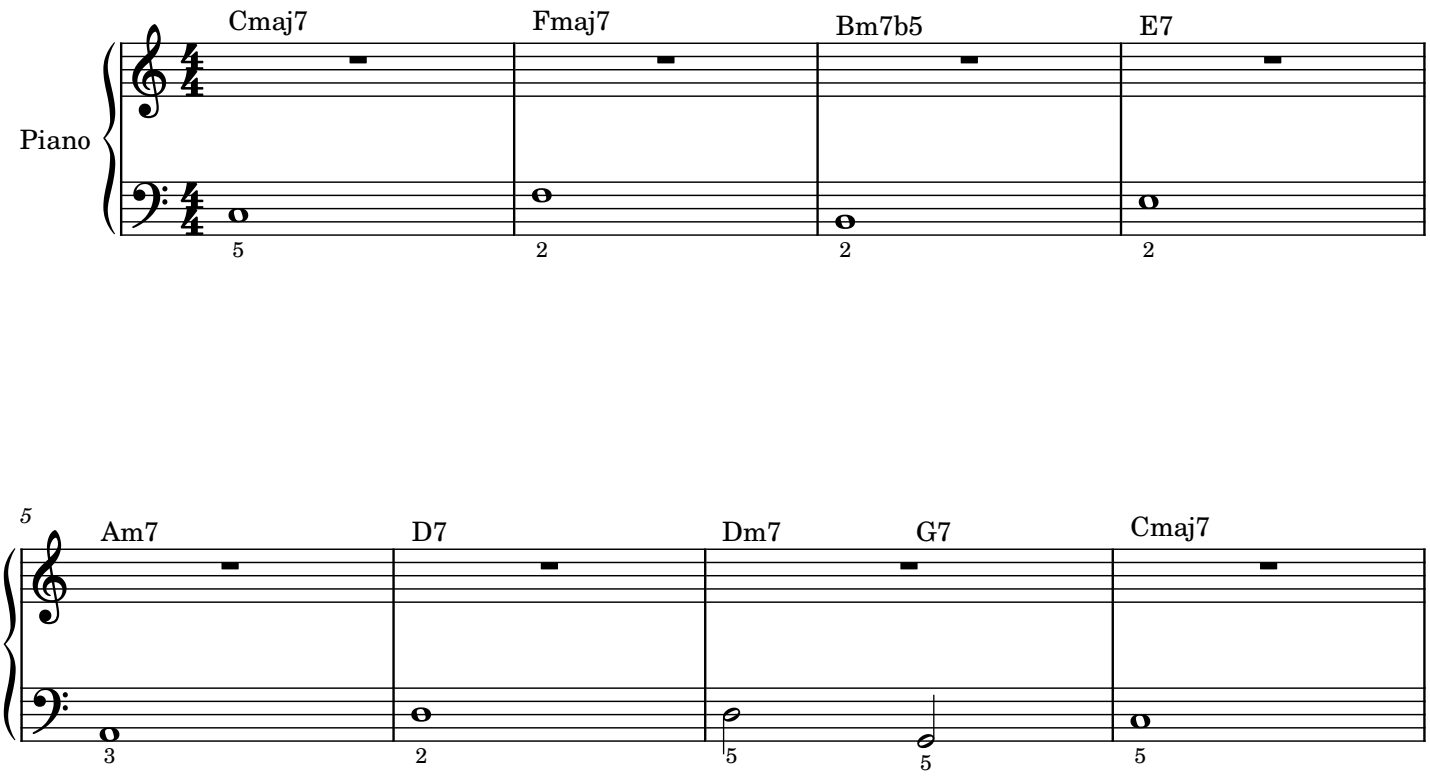
What this teaches: This section teaches the left hand to know the progression of Fall Flowers as a root path. The roots come first because every later version depends on knowing where the harmony is going without searching.

How To Practice

- Practice the progression with left-hand finger 2 only (C-F-B-E-A-D-D-G-C)
- Practice the same progression with left-hand finger 5 only.
- Use the practical shifting page to find the fingering that can survive later shells.
- Play the Fall Flowers lead sheet once with both hands to hear the whole etude.

Checkpoint: Play the full progression from memory at a steady pulse, using different fingers.

Level 2 - Fall Flowers - Roots Practical Shifts



Level 3

Root + Guide Tones

Chapter Instructions

Root + Guide Tones

The core three-note jazz piano shape

What this teaches: This section drills the left hand on roots and the right hand on only the 3rd and 7th. The goal is instant recognition of the two notes that define each seventh-chord quality (major 7, minor 7, dominant 7, and minor 7 flat 5).

How To Practice

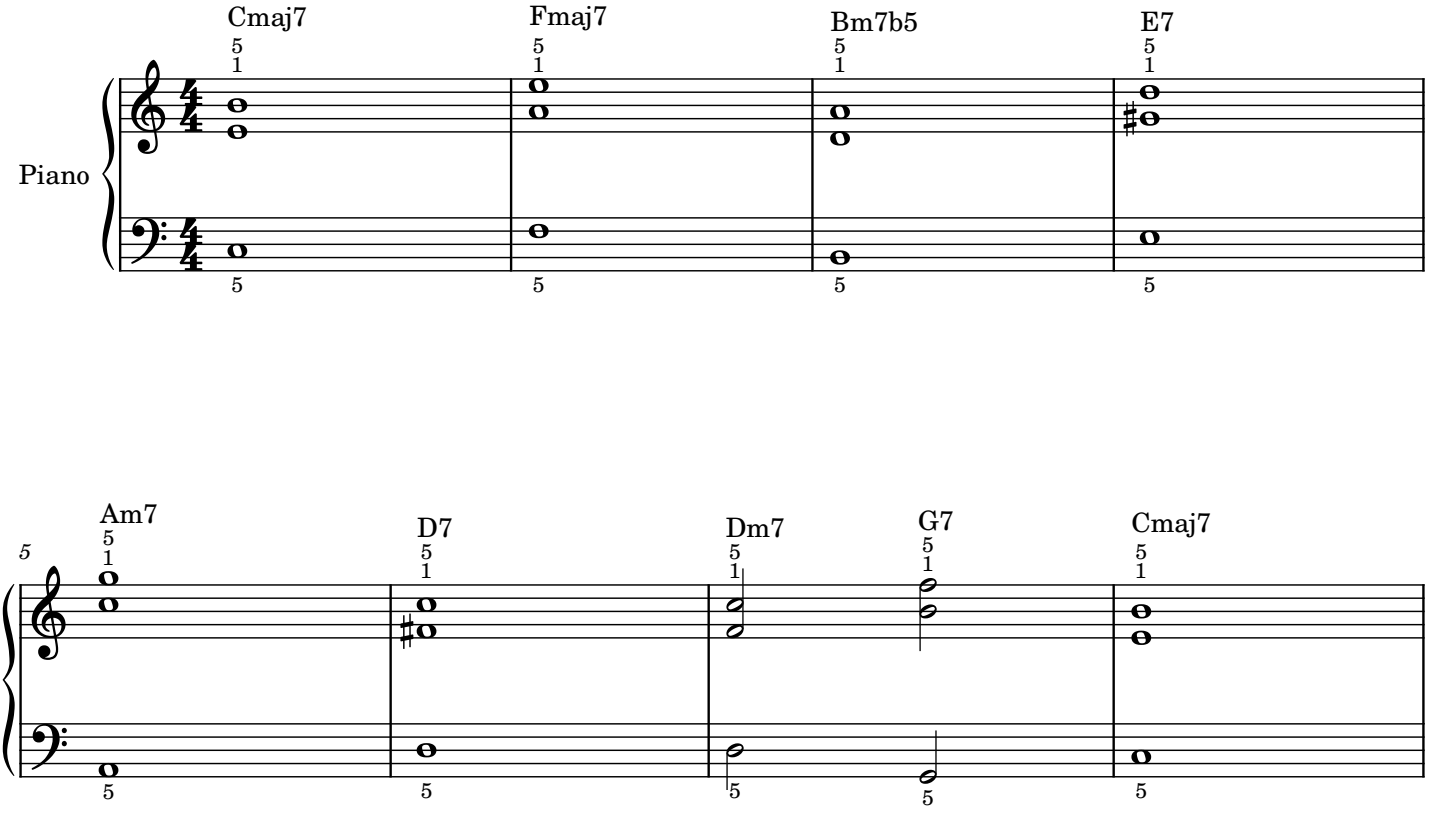
- Play one quality at a time around the Fourths Road.
- Practice 3-7 before 7-3.
- Say the root, the 3rd, and the 7th before each chord.
- Check the 7th against the root: major 7 is a half step below the root; flat 7 is a whole step below the root. Example: For Cmaj7, the 7th is B. B is a half step below the next C. For C7, Cm7, and Cm7b5, the 7th is Bb. Bb is a whole step below the next C. Do the same check in every key. Fmaj7 uses E, because E is a half step below F. F7, Fm7, and Fm7b5 use Eb, because Eb is a whole step below F.
- Keep the tempo slow enough that you never guess, and also that you are keeping the tempo even.

What To Notice

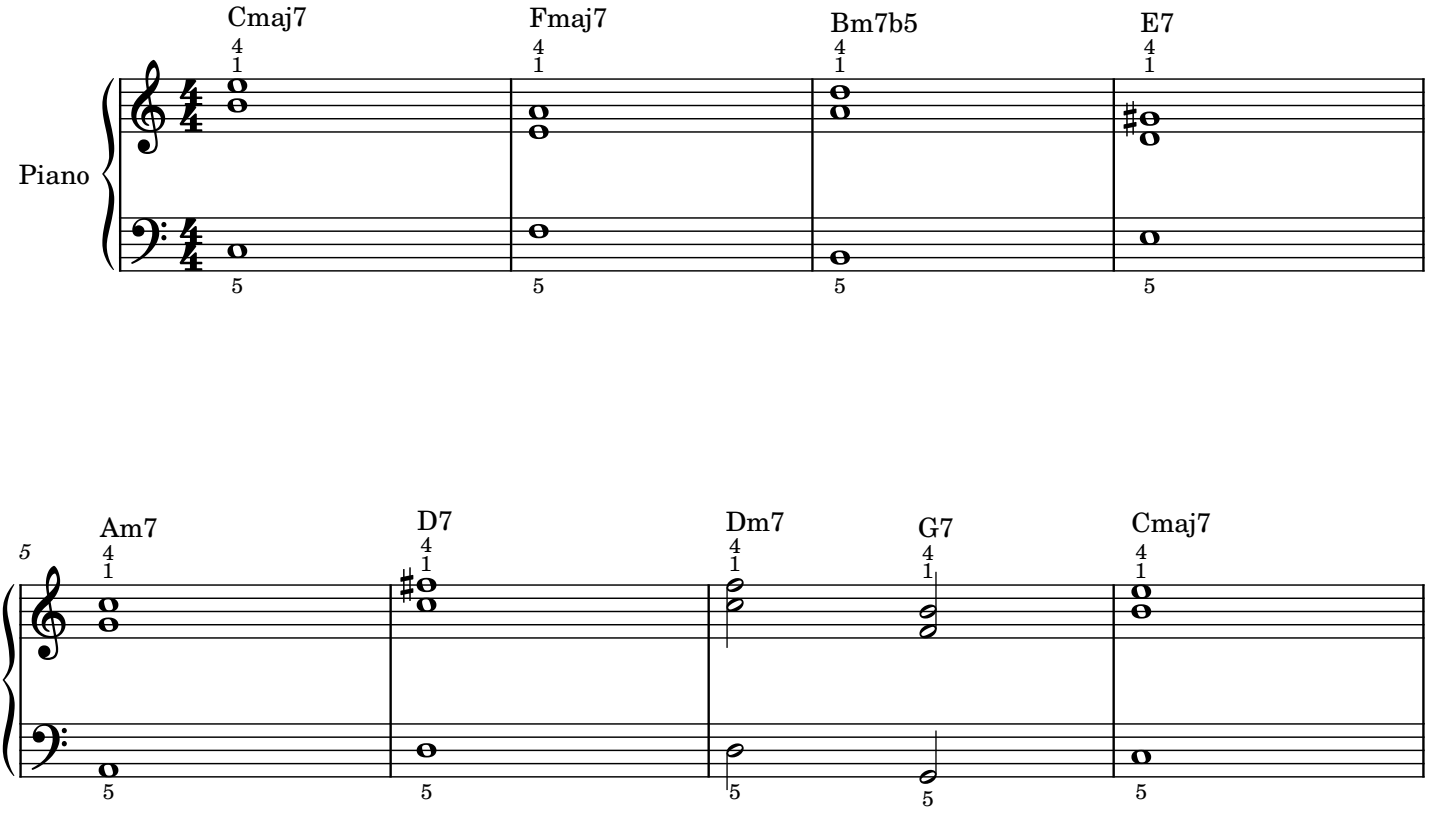
- Major 7: 3-7 is a perfect fifth; 7-3 is a perfect fourth.
- Major 7: half-step lean. The 7th wants to resolve up to the root.
- Flat-7 chords: whole-step lean. Dominant 7, minor 7, and m7b5 all use the same flat 7.
- Dominant 7: both forms are tritones (3-7 and 7-3).
- Minor 7 and m7b5 use the same guide tones, but the symbols mean different jobs. This is because with guide tones you don't usually play the fifth. So if a piece calls for a m7b5, then it wants you to play the b5. But, you usually don't even need to worry about this because you can still leave it out and call it your own "interpretation" (it will still sound fine and no one will notice). Also, the melody will almost certainly have the b5 in it, so you will play it anyway.

Checkpoint: Play all four qualities in both directions without stopping.

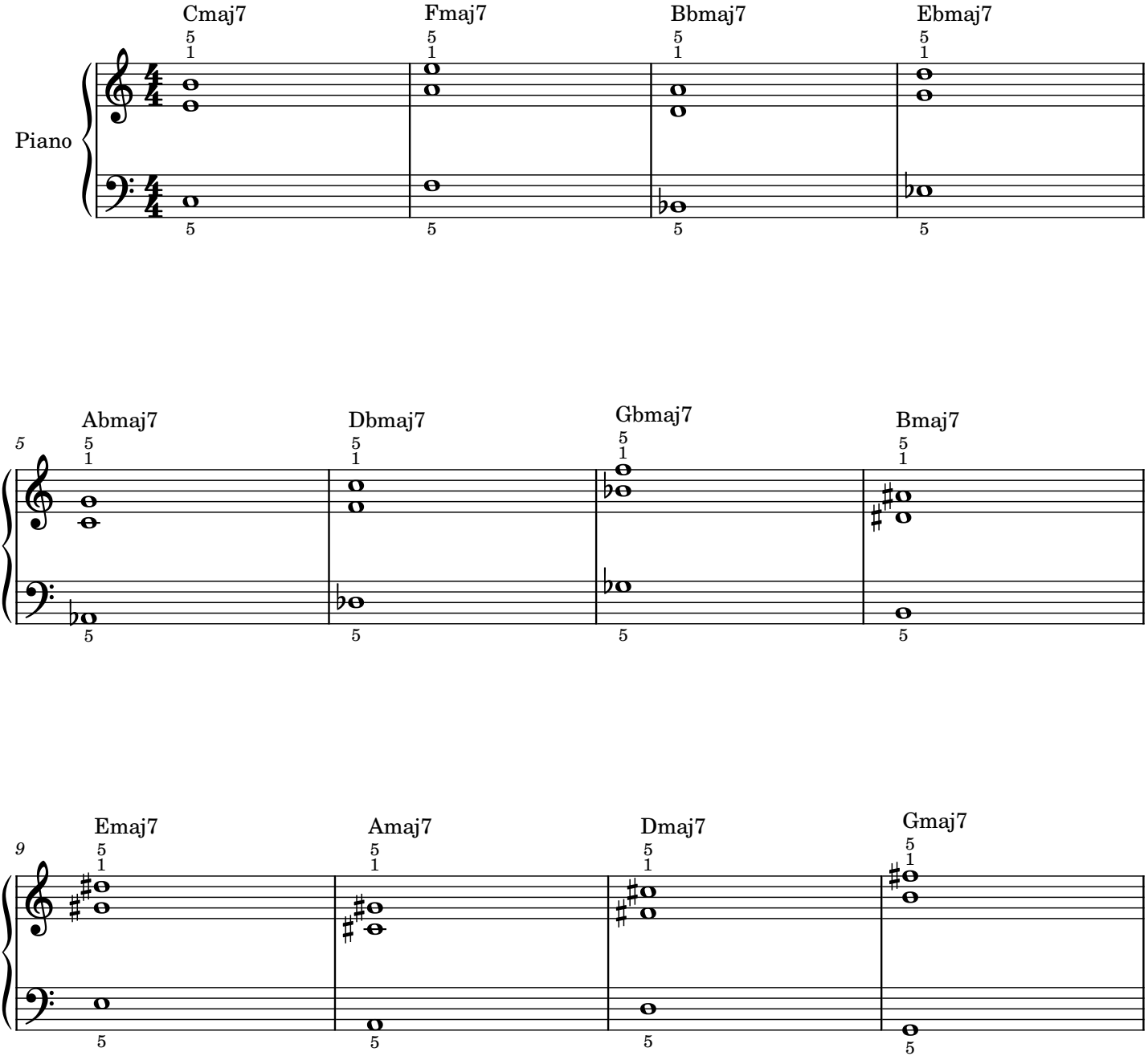
Level 3 - Fall Flowers - Guide-Tone Map 3-7



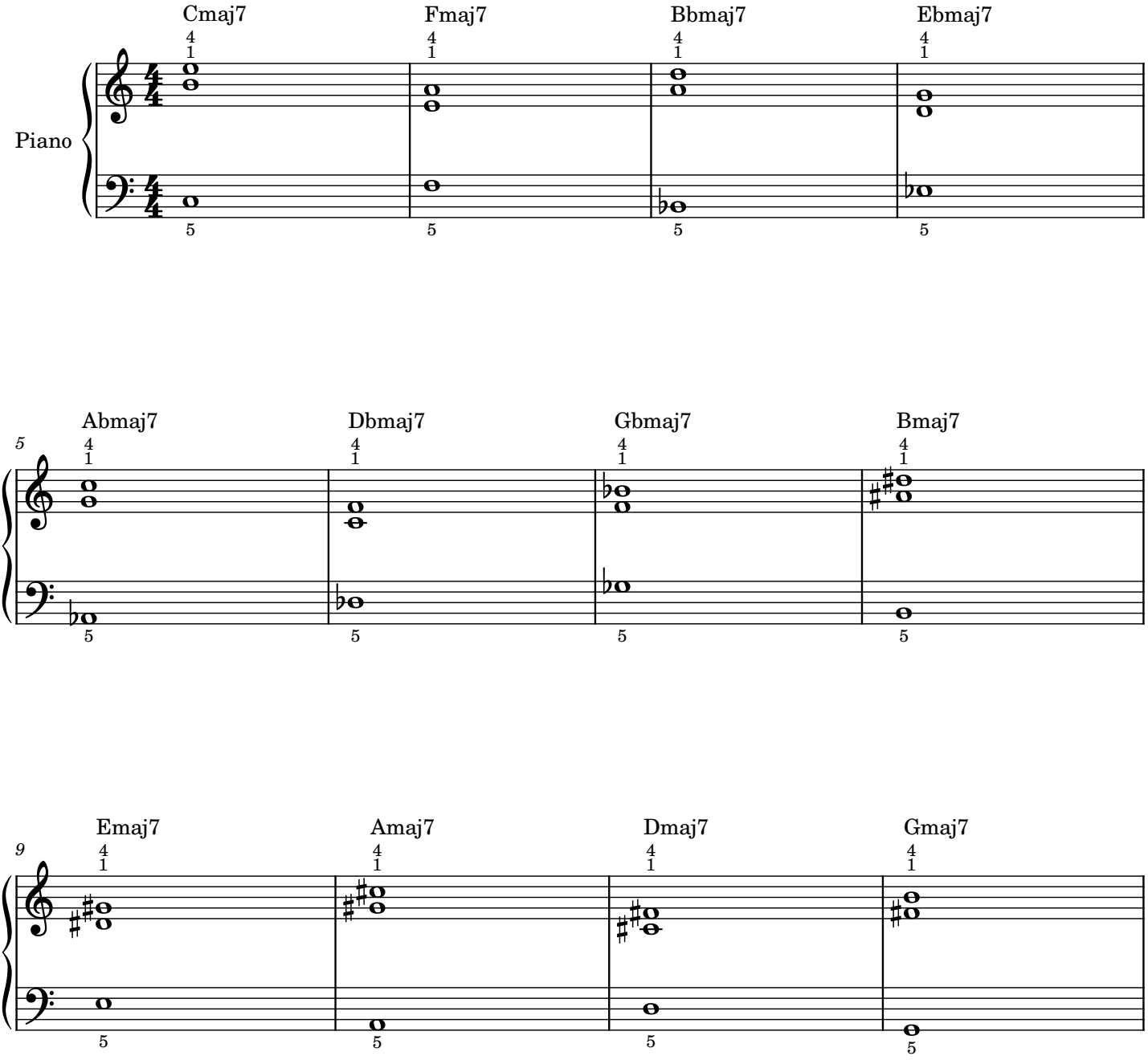
Level 3 - Fall Flowers - Guide-Tone Map 7-3



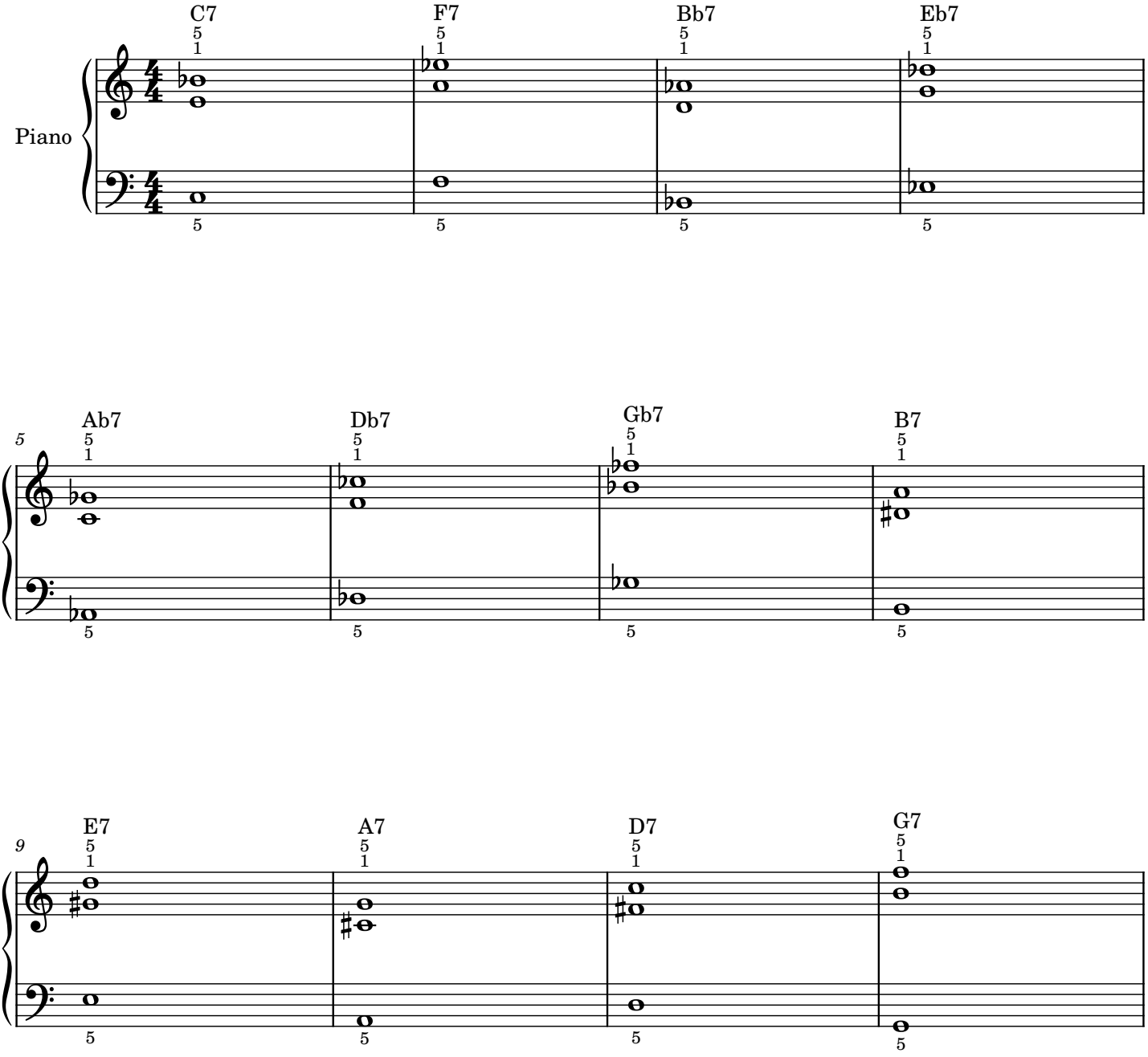
Level 3 - major7 circle of fourths 3_7



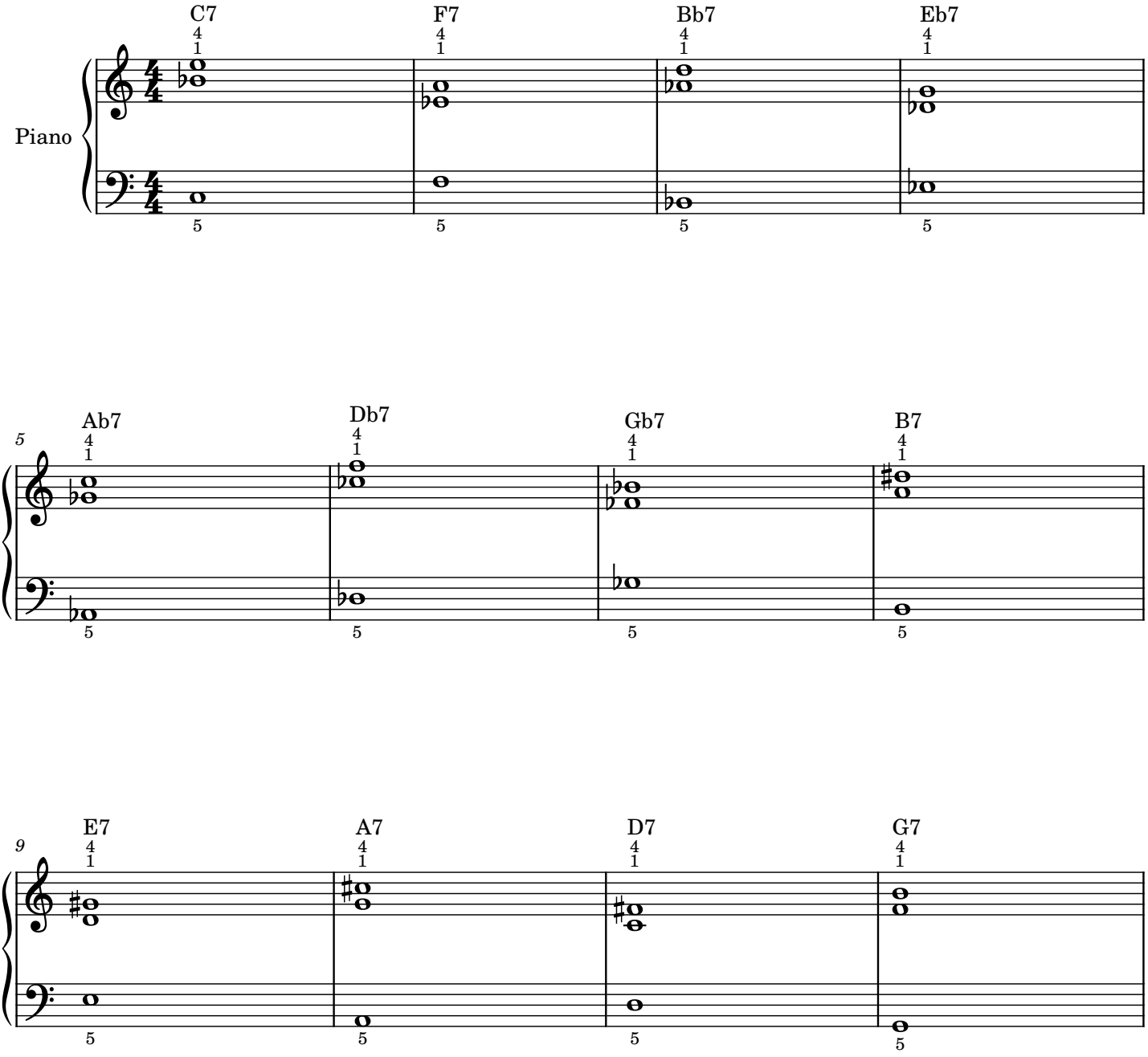
Level 3 - major7 circle of fourths 7_3



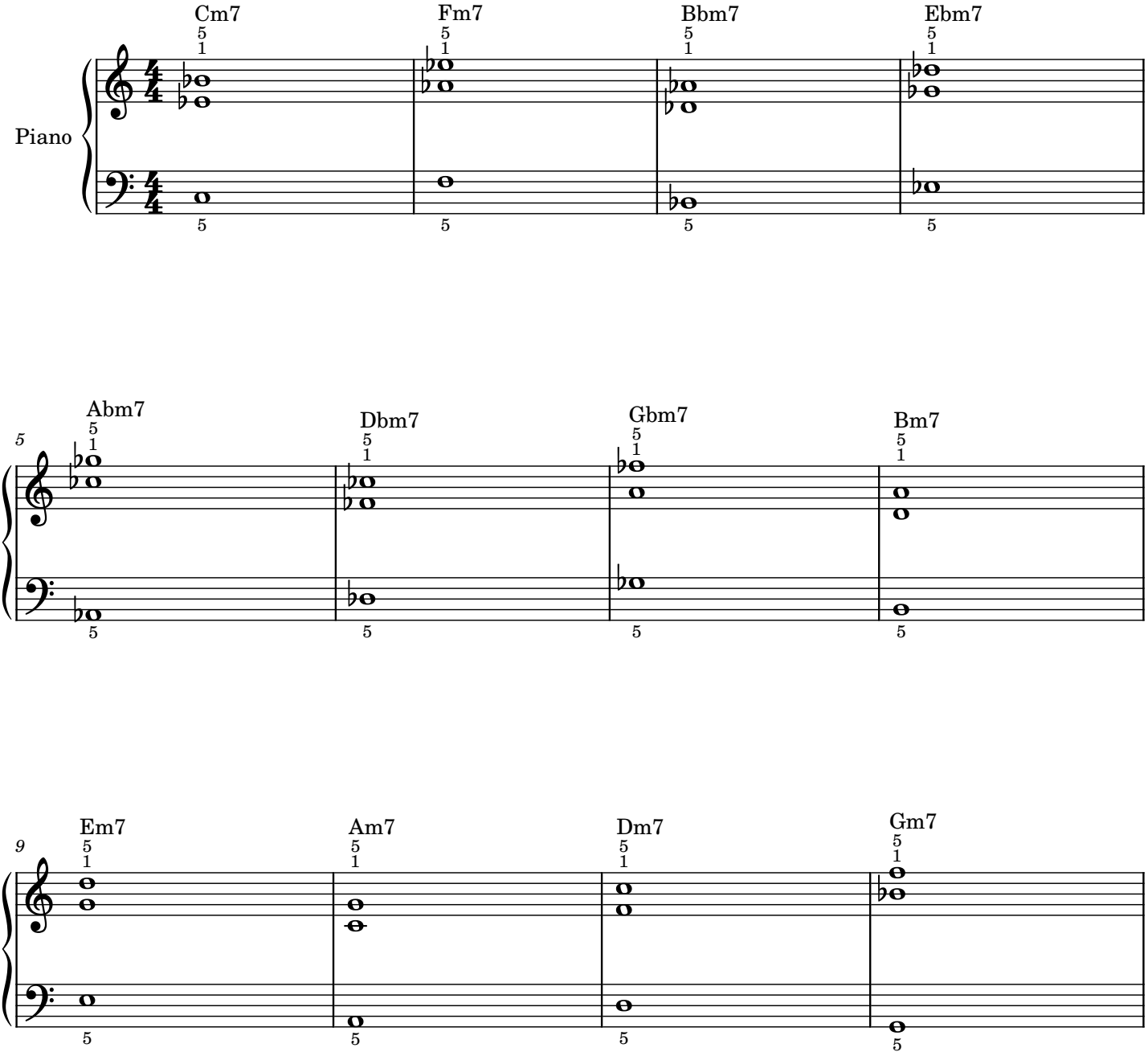
Level 3 - dominant7 circle of fourths 3_7



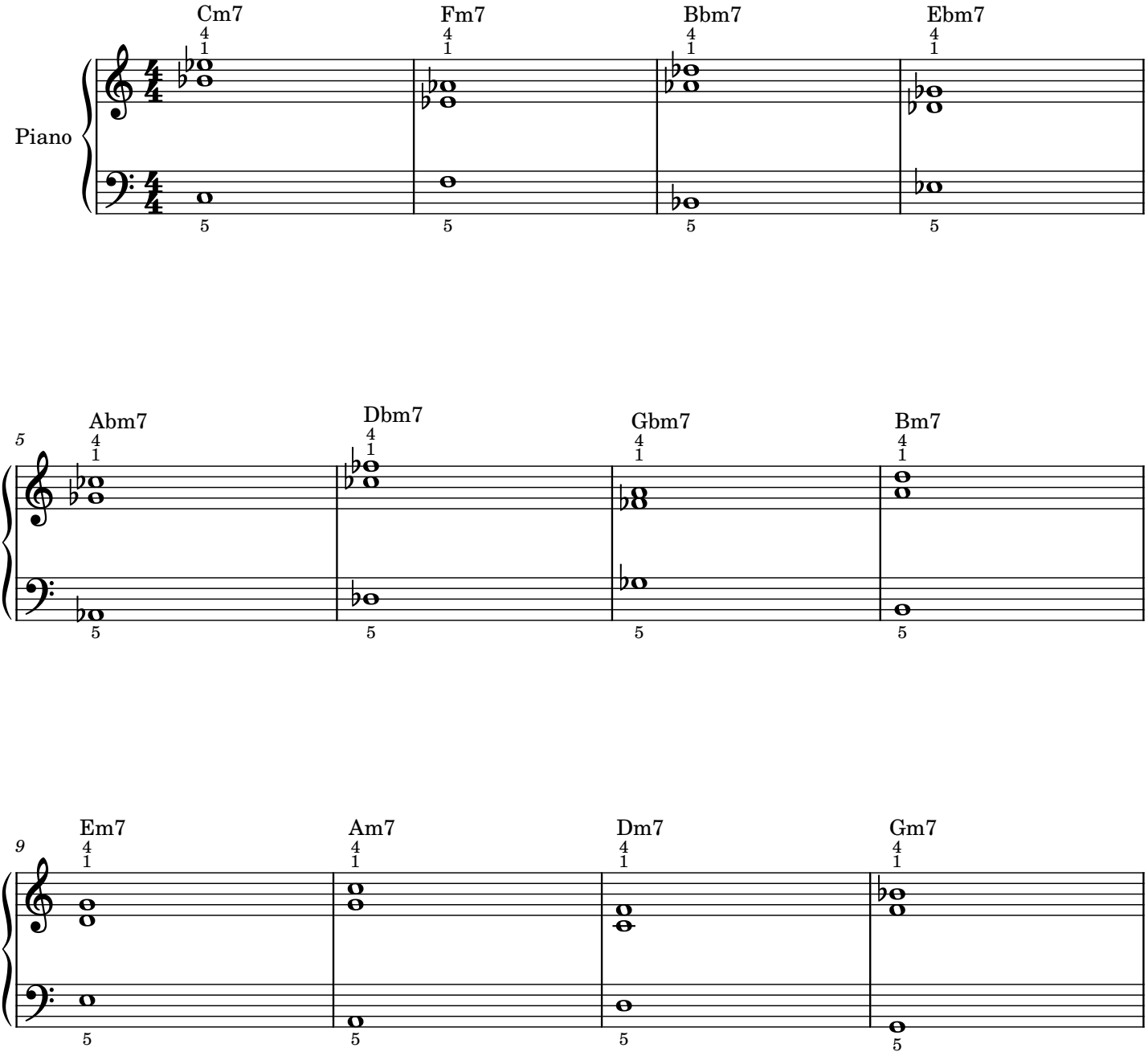
Level 3 - dominant7 circle of fourths 7_3



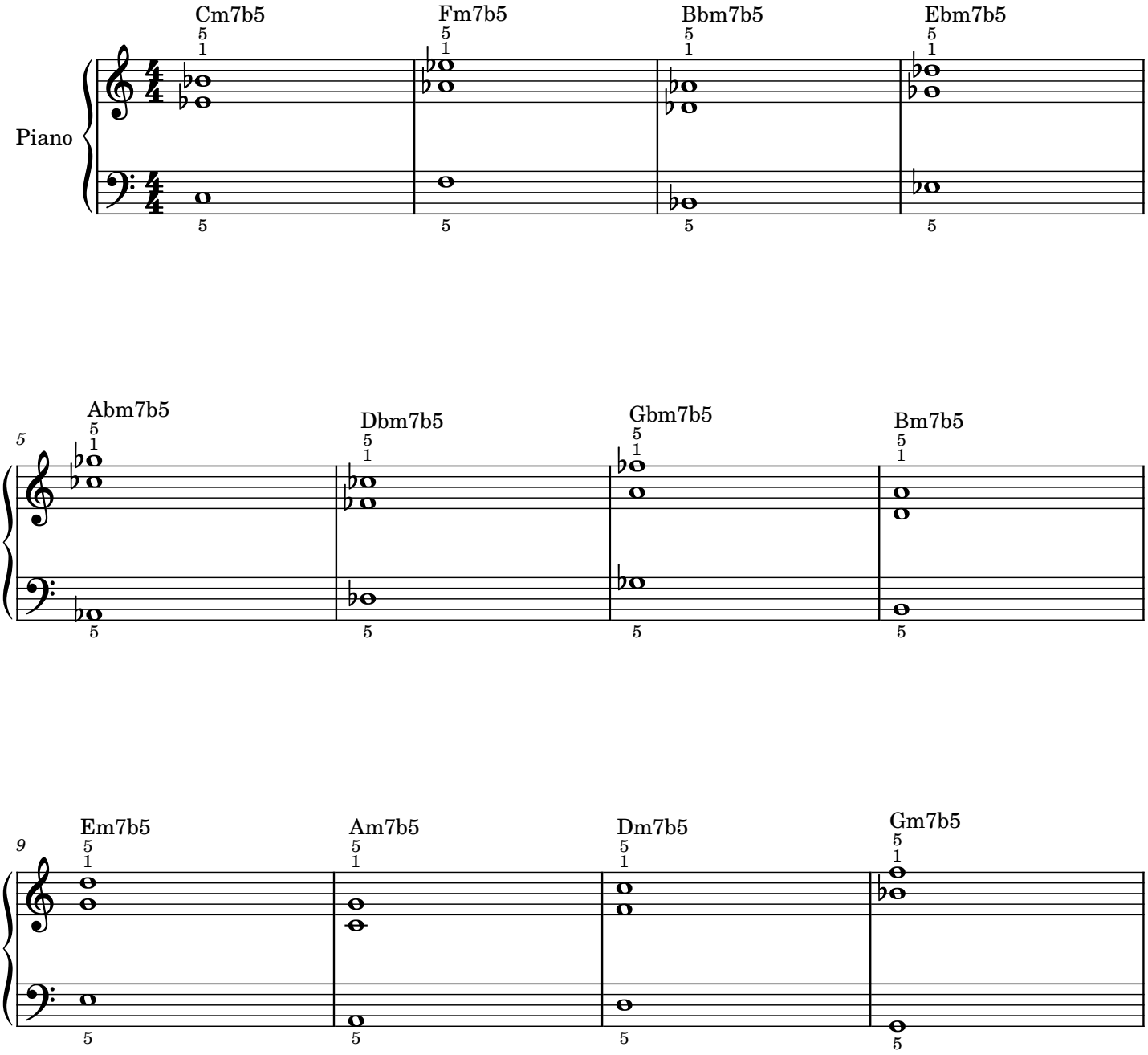
Level 3 - minor7 circle of fourths 3_7



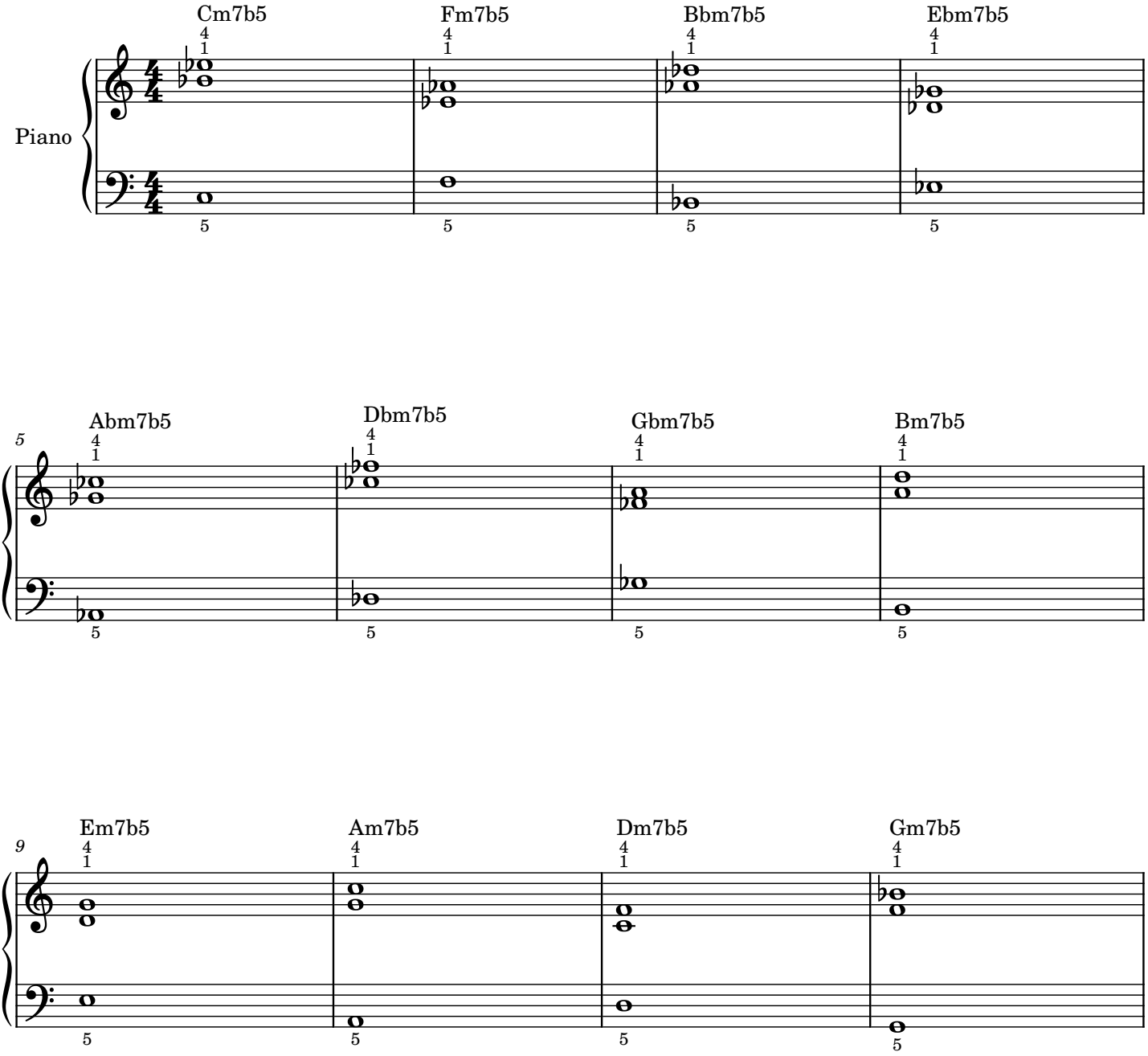
Level 3 - minor7 circle of fourths 7_3



Level 3 - minor7b5 circle of fourths 3_7



Level 3 - minor7b5 circle of fourths 7_3



Level 4

Root-Held Inversion Switch

Chapter Instructions

Root-Held Inversion Switch

Switch 3-7 and 7-3 while the root stays known

What this teaches: This section makes the two guide-tone inversions feel like one chord identity. Instead of treating 3-7 and 7-3 as separate problems, you hold or re-strike the root and switch the right hand from one shape to the other in the same measure.

Memory hook: “3-7 checks the top finger. 7-3 checks the thumb.” The way to use this memory hook: in the 3-7 shape, the 7th is the top right-hand note. Check that top note against the next higher copy of the root: major 7 is one half step below the next root; flat 7 is one whole step below the next root. In the 7-3 shape, the 7th is the bottom right-hand note. Check the thumb the same way. For Cmaj7, the thumb/check note is B, which is a half step below the next higher copy of the root. For C7, Cm7, and Cm7b5, it is Bb, which is a whole step below the next higher copy of the root.

How To Practice

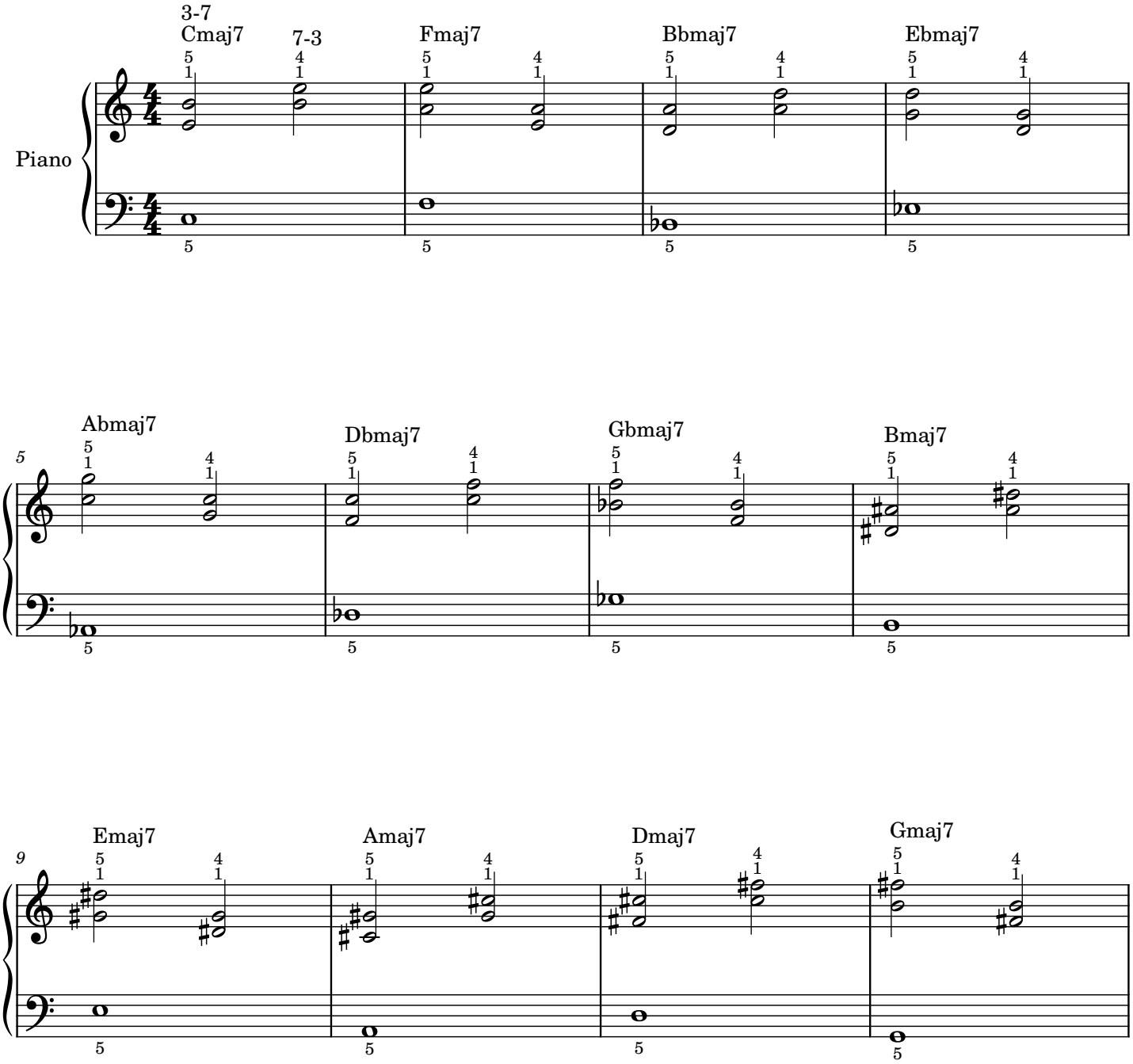
- Start with the held-root version so the left hand feels like an anchor.
- Play the 3-7 shape as a half note.
- Without changing the root, switch to 7-3 as the second half note.
- In 3-7, check the top finger against the root. In 7-3, check the thumb against the root.
- Use the re-struck-root version when you need the beat-3 reset.
- Say the two guide tones before the first shape, then say them again before the switch.
- Play each individual bar twenty times before moving to the next. You do not have to finish the entire page in one practice session! The point is to learn, not to get through the book.

What To Notice

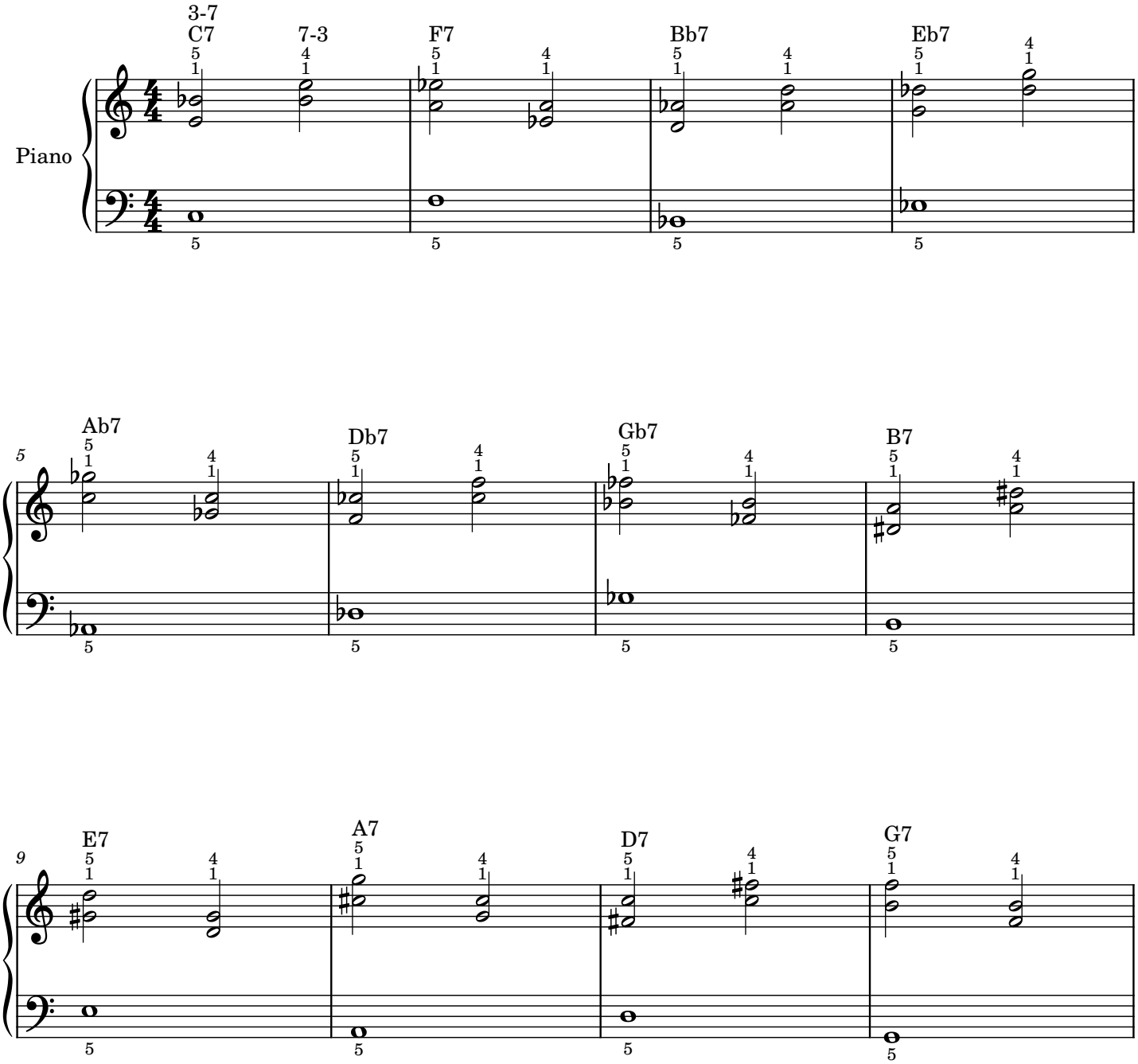
- Listen carefully so that you can *eventually* recognize when the 3-7 and 7-3 are the same chord, but inverted.

Checkpoint: Go around the Fourths Road in one quality and switch both inversions without losing the root.

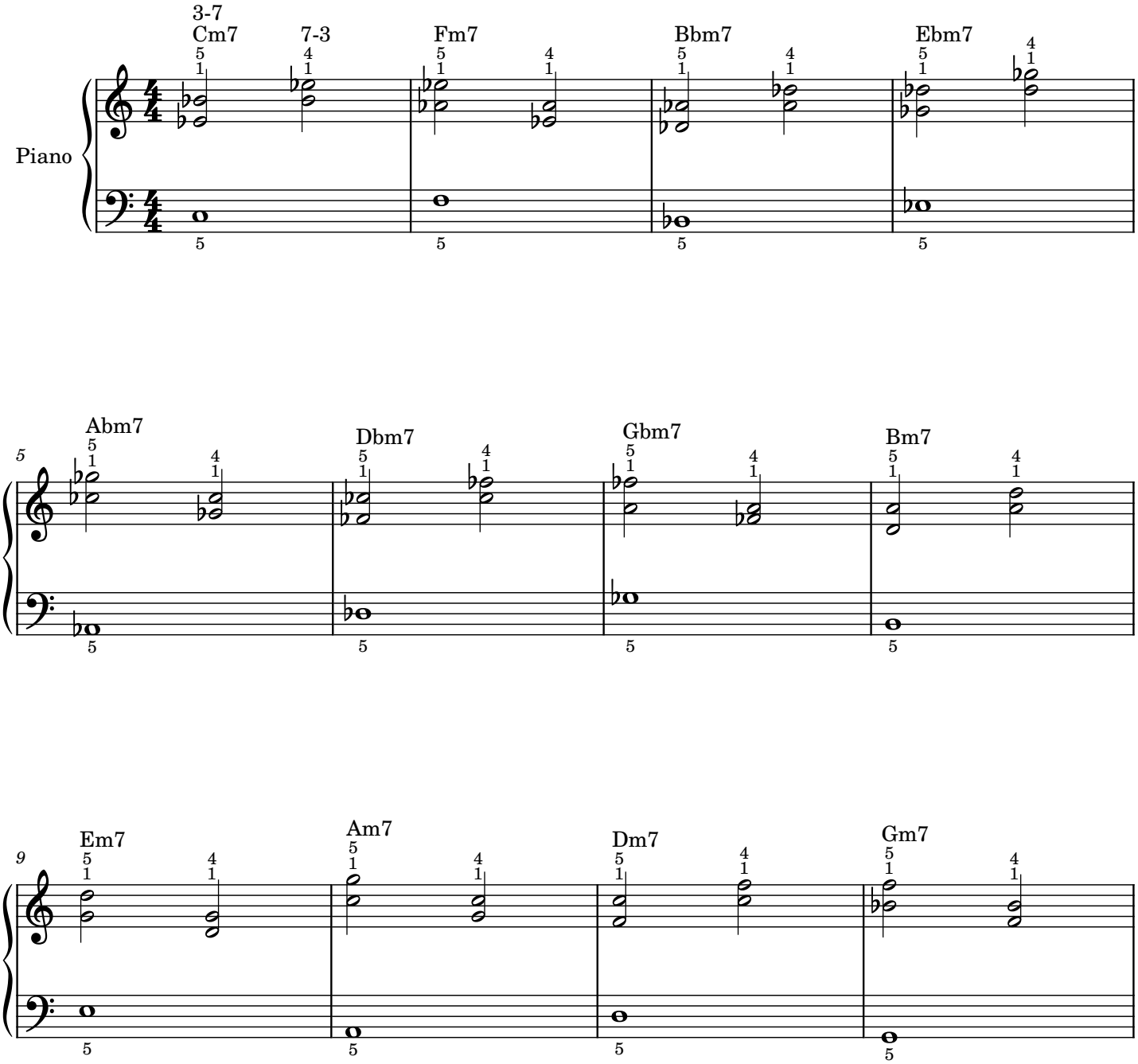
Level 4 - Major7 Held Root Inversion Switch



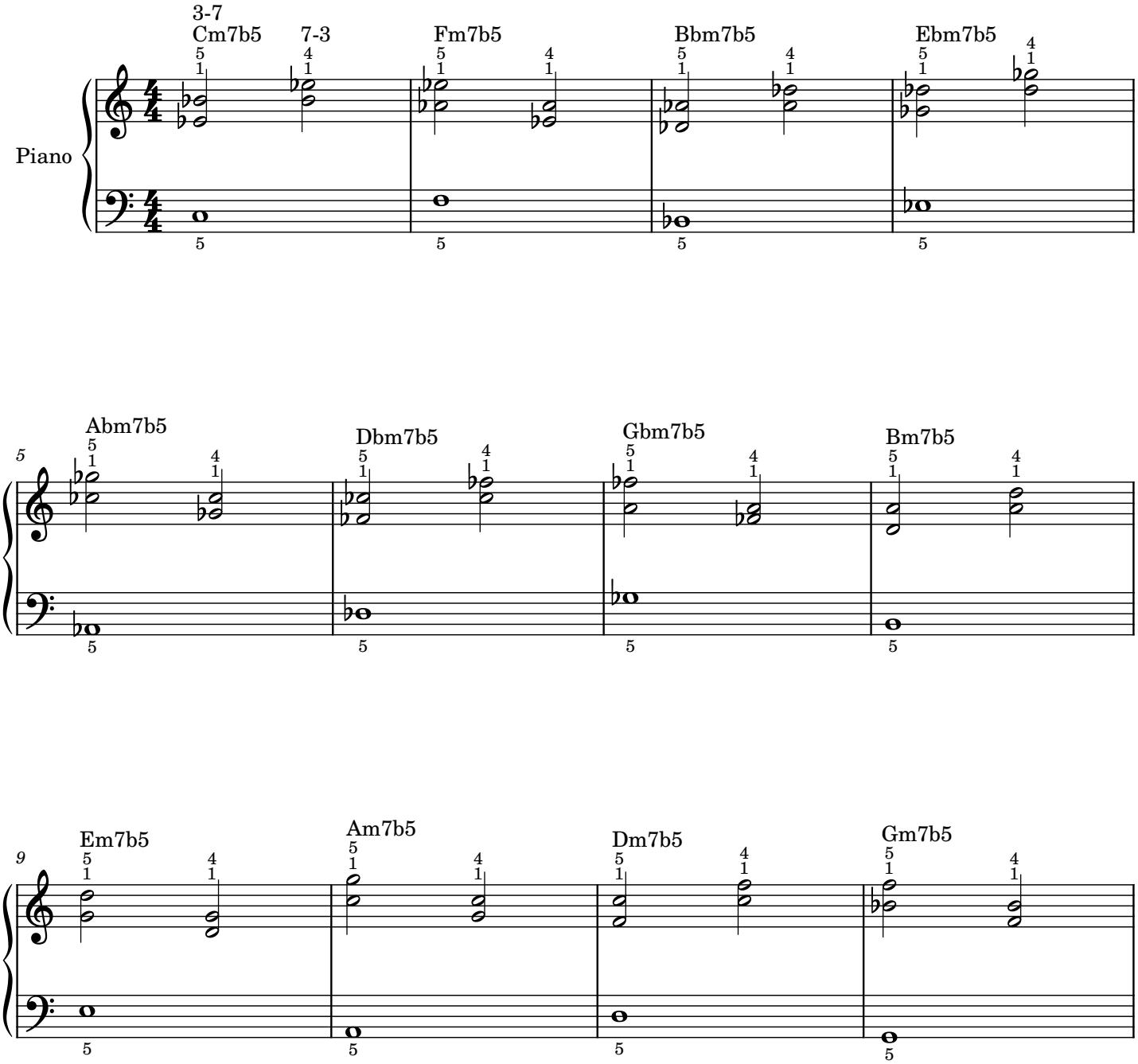
Level 4 - Dominant7 Held Root Inversion Switch



Level 4 - Minor7 Held Root Inversion Switch



Level 4 - Minor7b5 Held Root Inversion Switch



Level 5

Same-Root Quality Contrast

Chapter Instructions

Same-Root Quality Contrast

Hear one note change the chord quality

What this teaches: This section keeps the root still while the chord quality changes. It trains the ear and hand to feel how major 7, dominant 7, minor 7, and minor 7 flat 5 differ by small guide-tone movements.

How To Practice

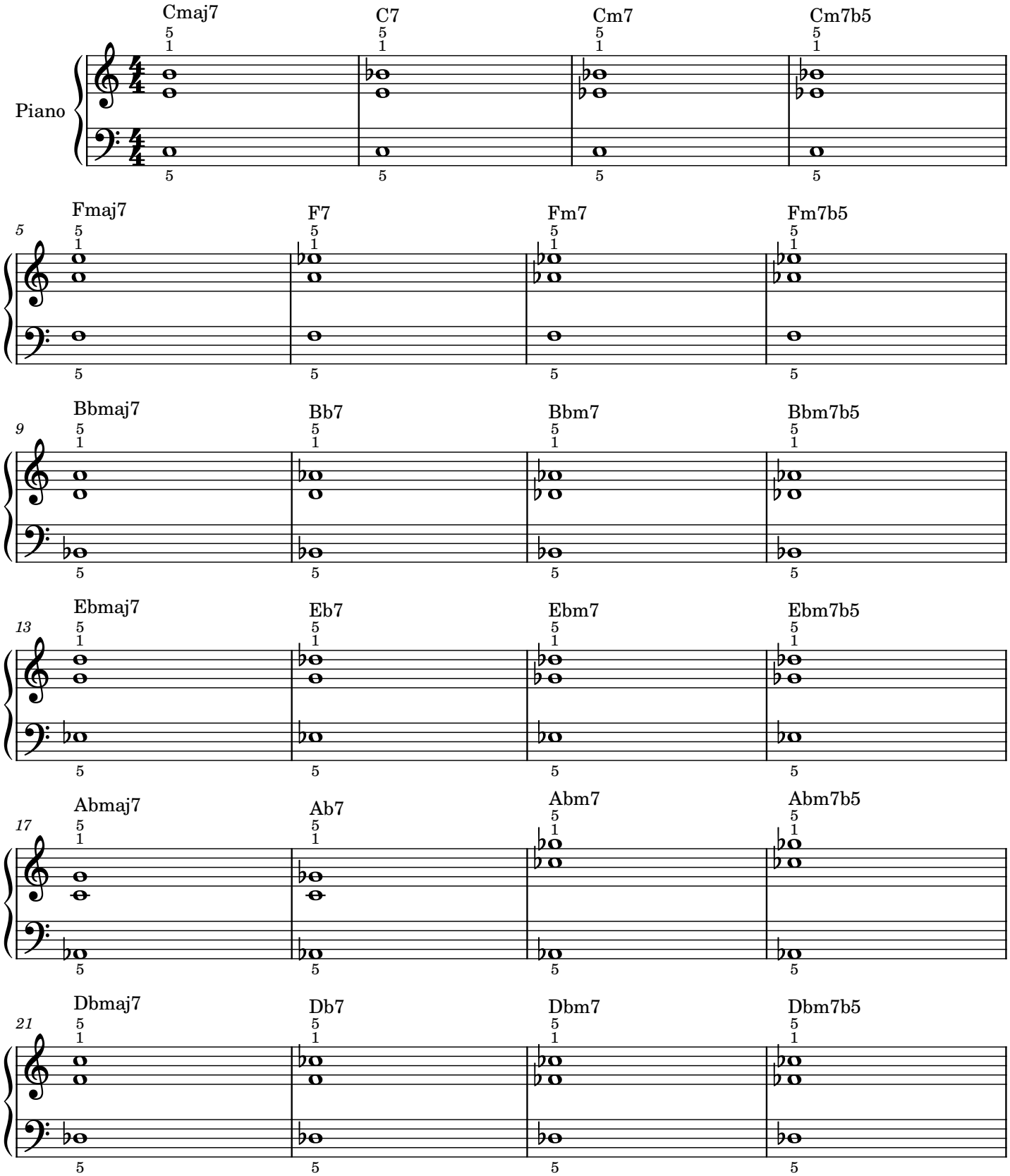
- Stay on one root through all four qualities.
- Name which guide tone changes: the 3rd or the 7th.
- Then move to the next root on the Fourths Road.

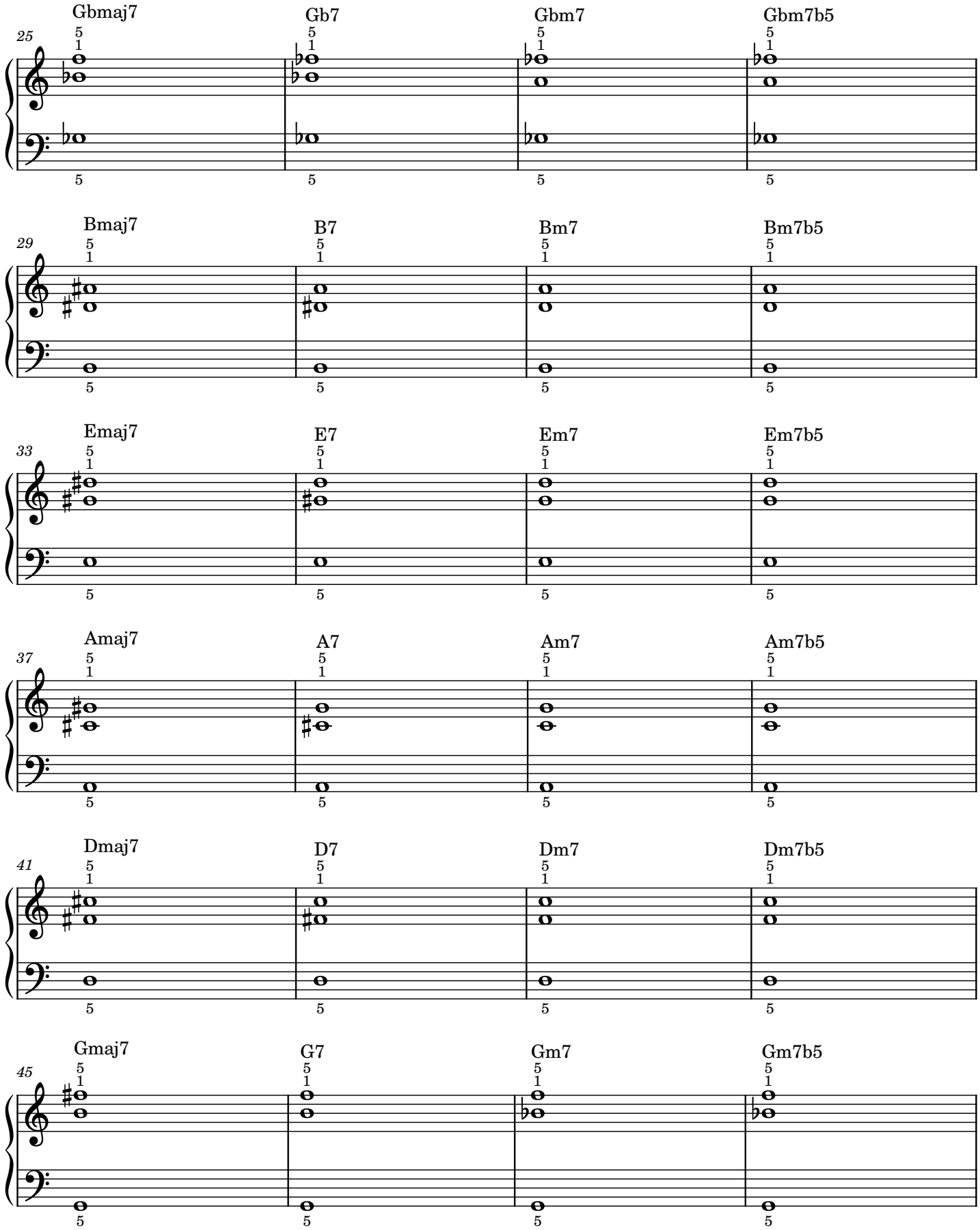
What To Notice

- Major 7 to dominant 7 lowers the 7th.
- Dominant 7 to minor 7 lowers the 3rd.
- Count the half-steps between the 3 and the 7 in each quality. You want to associate the number of half steps with the chord quality, whether the 3 or the 7 are on top.

Checkpoint: For any root, explain what changes from Cmaj7 to C7 to Cm7 to Cm7b5.

Level 5 - Quality Contrast - 3-7

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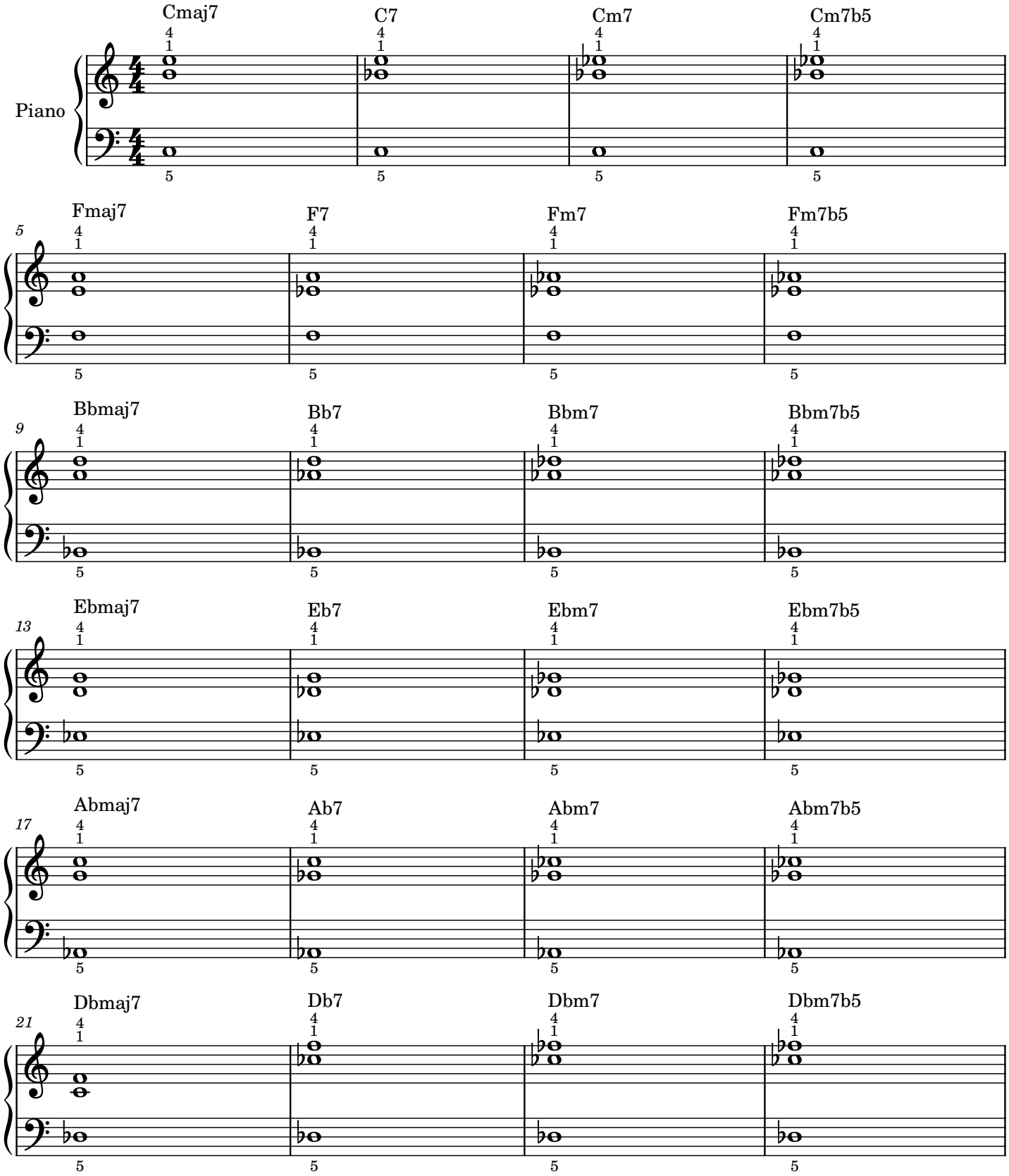
Gb7
Gbm7
Gbm7b5
25
Bmaj7
B7
Bm7
Bm7b5
29
Emaj7
E7
Em7
Em7b5
33
Amaj7
A7
Am7
Am7b5
37
Dmaj7
D7
Dm7
Dm7b5
41
Gmaj7
G7
Gm7
Gm7b5
45

Level 5 - Quality Contrast - 7-3



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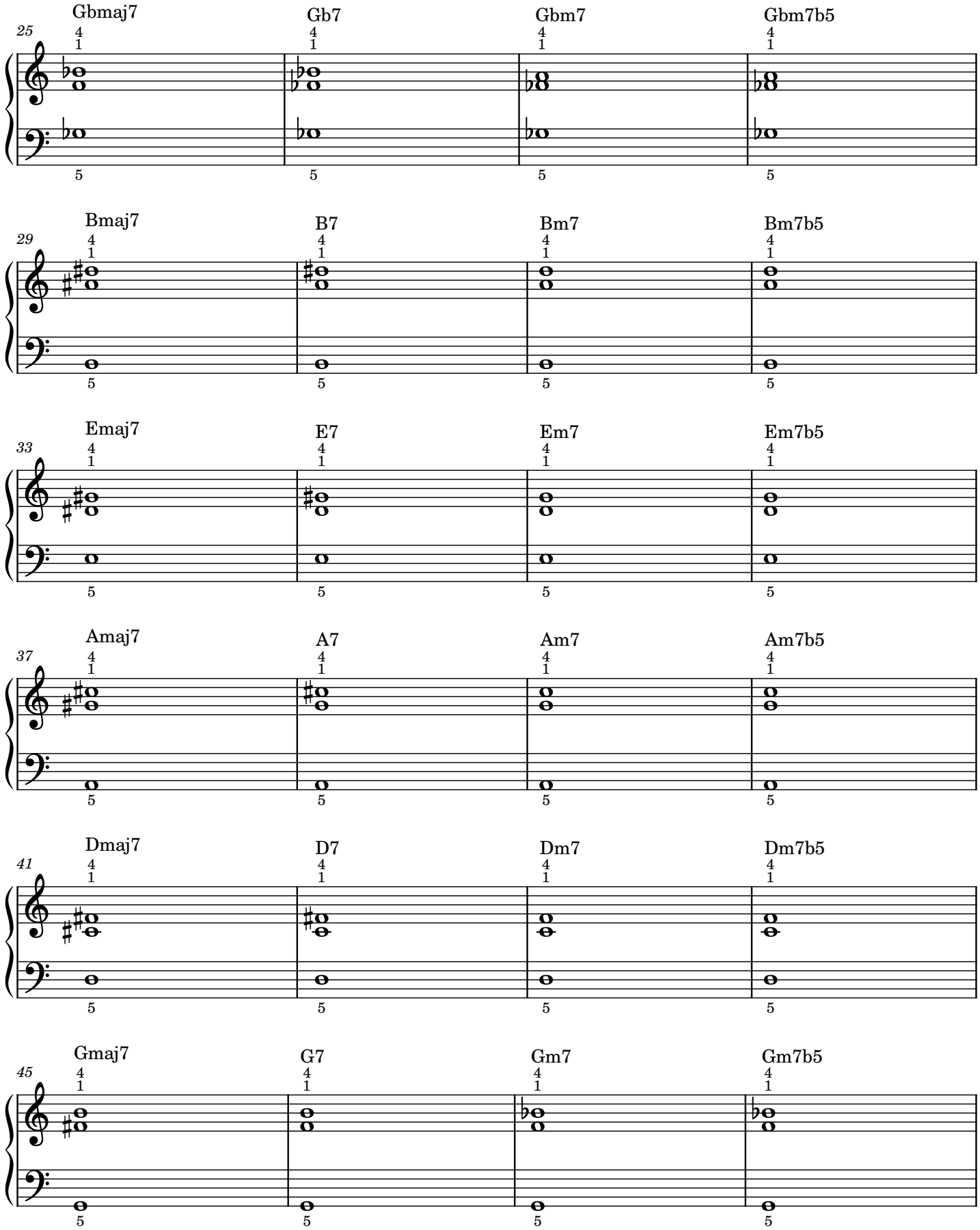
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Gb7
Gbm7
Gbm7b5
25
Bmaj7
B7
Bm7
Bm7b5
29
Emaj7
E7
Em7
Em7b5
33
Amaj7
A7
Am7
Am7b5
37
Dmaj7
D7
Dm7
Dm7b5
41
Gmaj7
G7
Gm7
Gm7b5
45

Level 6

Fall Flowers Melody Memory + Fingering Bridge

Chapter Instructions

Fall Flowers Melody Memory + Fingering Bridge

Memorize the melody in fingerings that can survive later harmony

What this teaches: This section solves a common blocker: learning a melody with a fingering that has to be rebuilt once harmony is added. These pages give several fingerings so the melody becomes flexible instead of locked to one memorized solution.

Important: You don't truly know a melody until the fingering can change. If you're stuck playing it with a single memorized fingering, then all you know are memorized key pushes. That is a very important piano skill, but it's different than what you need to train for this lesson (it's helpful in the left hand though).

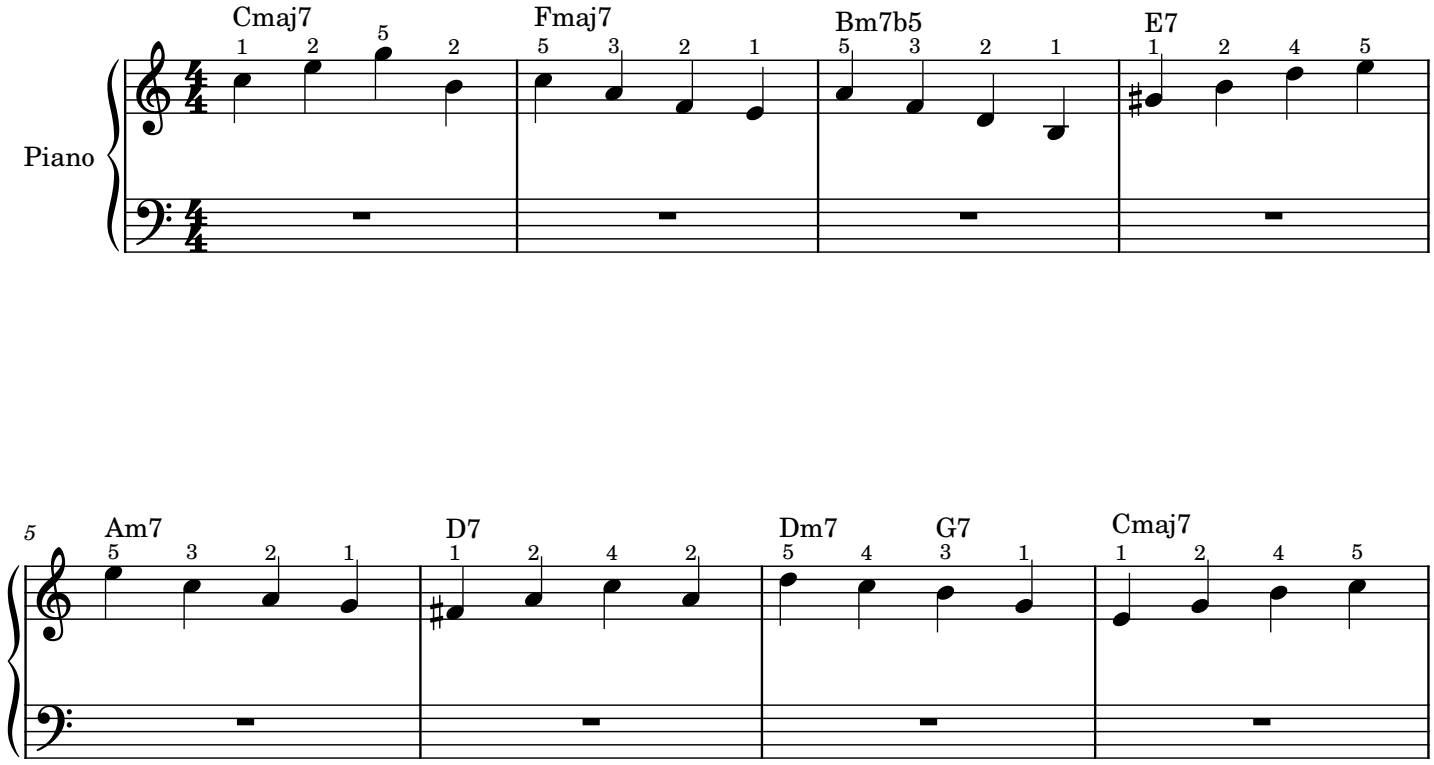
How To Practice

- Learn the "melody-only" fingering first.
- Practice the "harmony-prep" and "shell-prep" versions slowly.
- Compare the versions and mark which shifts feel natural.
- Learn, and practice, all three versions extensively so that you don't get "locked in" to a single fingering.

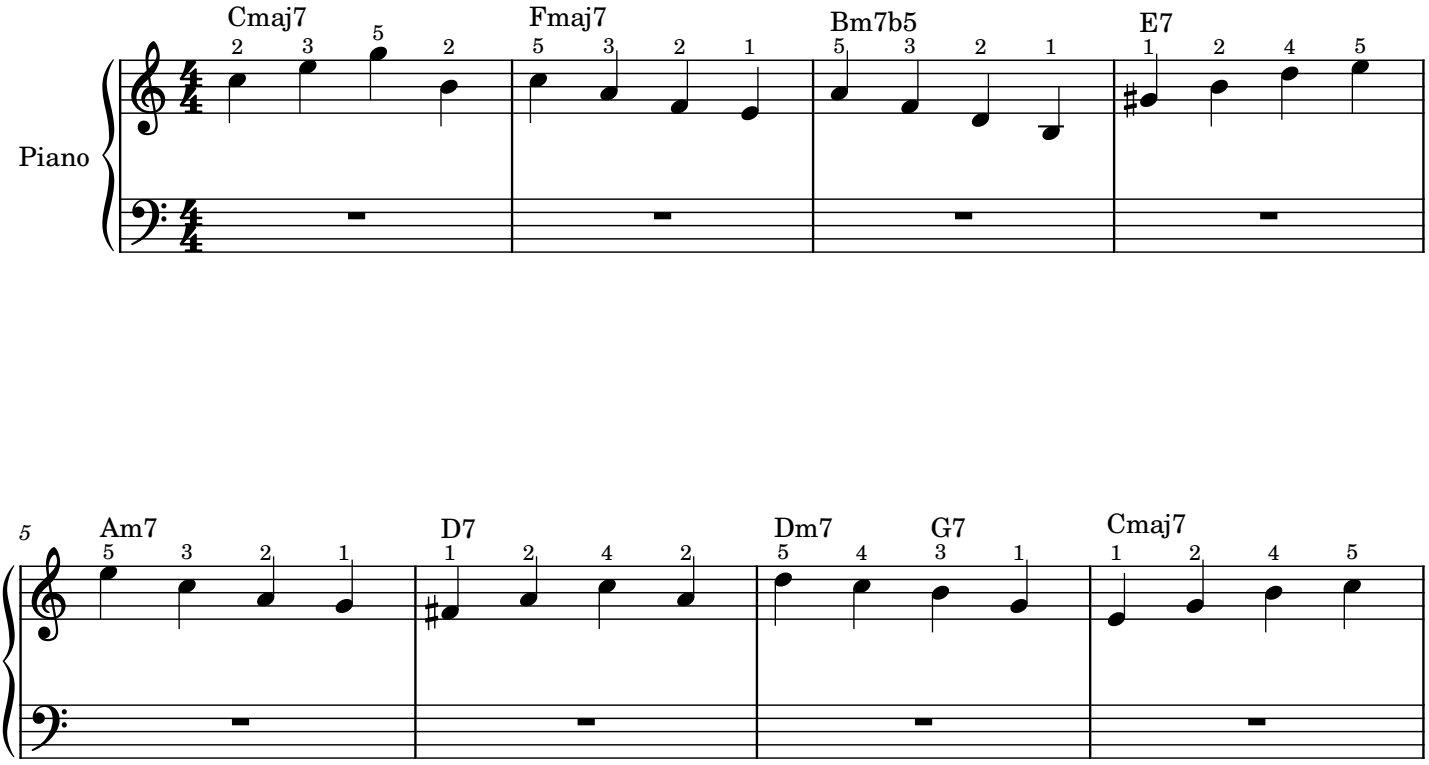
What To Notice

- Which fingers are free for future harmony?
- Where does the melody cross a hand-position boundary?
- Which fingering keeps the hand calm when the left hand is active?

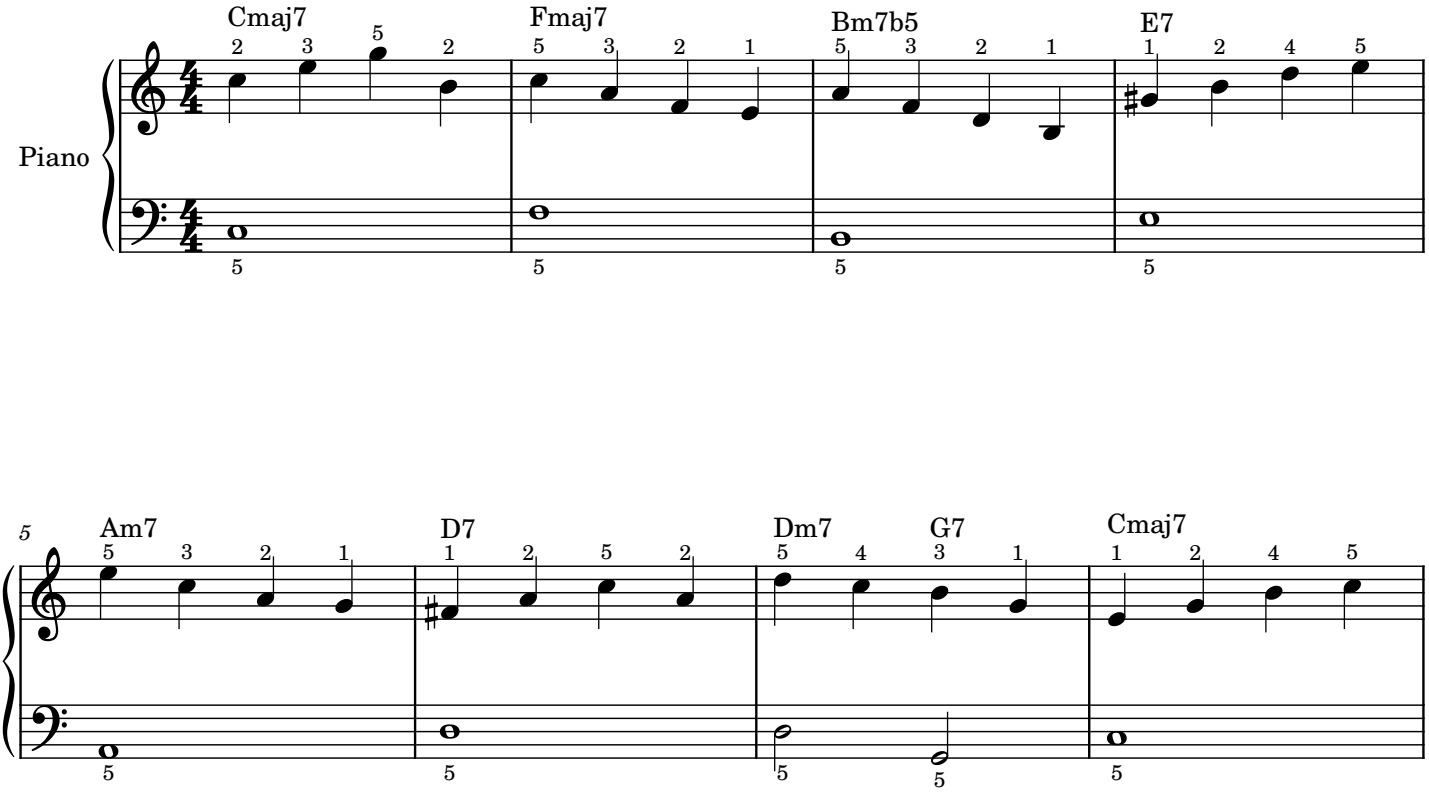
Level 6 - Fall Flowers - Melody Memory



Level 6 - Fall Flowers - Melody Harmony-Prep Fingering



Level 6 - Fall Flowers - Root Plus Melody Fingering



Level 7

Right-Hand Split

Chapter Instructions

Right-Hand Split

Separate the singing fingers from the support fingers

What this teaches: This section names a physical job that jazz piano often assumes without teaching. The upper fingers carry the melody and small lines. Thumb and index stay available for one or two support notes underneath, so adding harmony later does not force the melody fingering to collapse.

Memory hook: Top three fingers sing; thumb and index support.

How To Practice

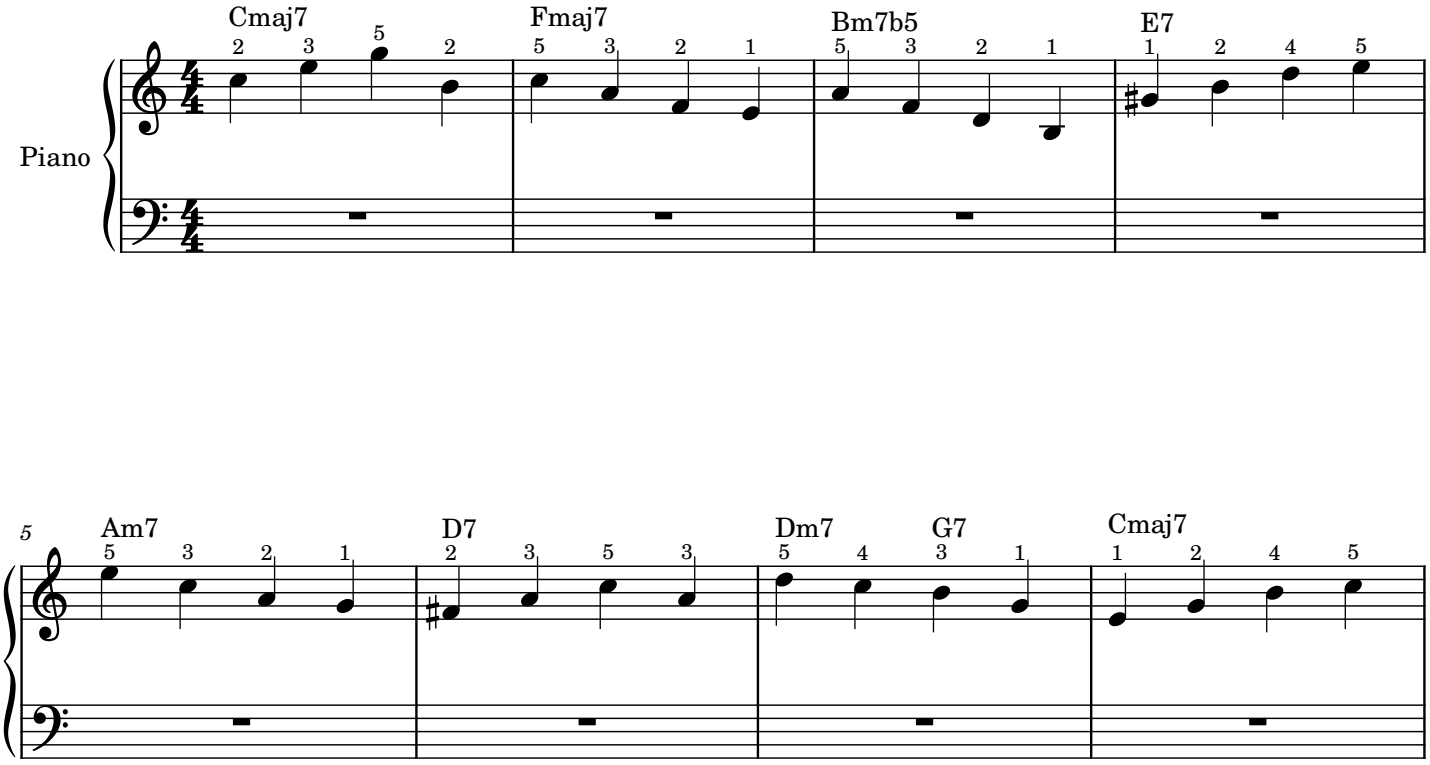
- Play the top-fingers-only page slowly and keep fingers 1 and 2 relaxed near the keys.
- Practice the 1-2 support, 3-4-5 top page without squeezing the hand. Focus on relaxation and avoiding tension.
- Play the Fall Flowers top-fingers map and notice which melody notes can stay in fingers 3, 4, and 5.
- Use the support-finger bridge page as the first step toward right-hand harmony under the melody.

What To Notice

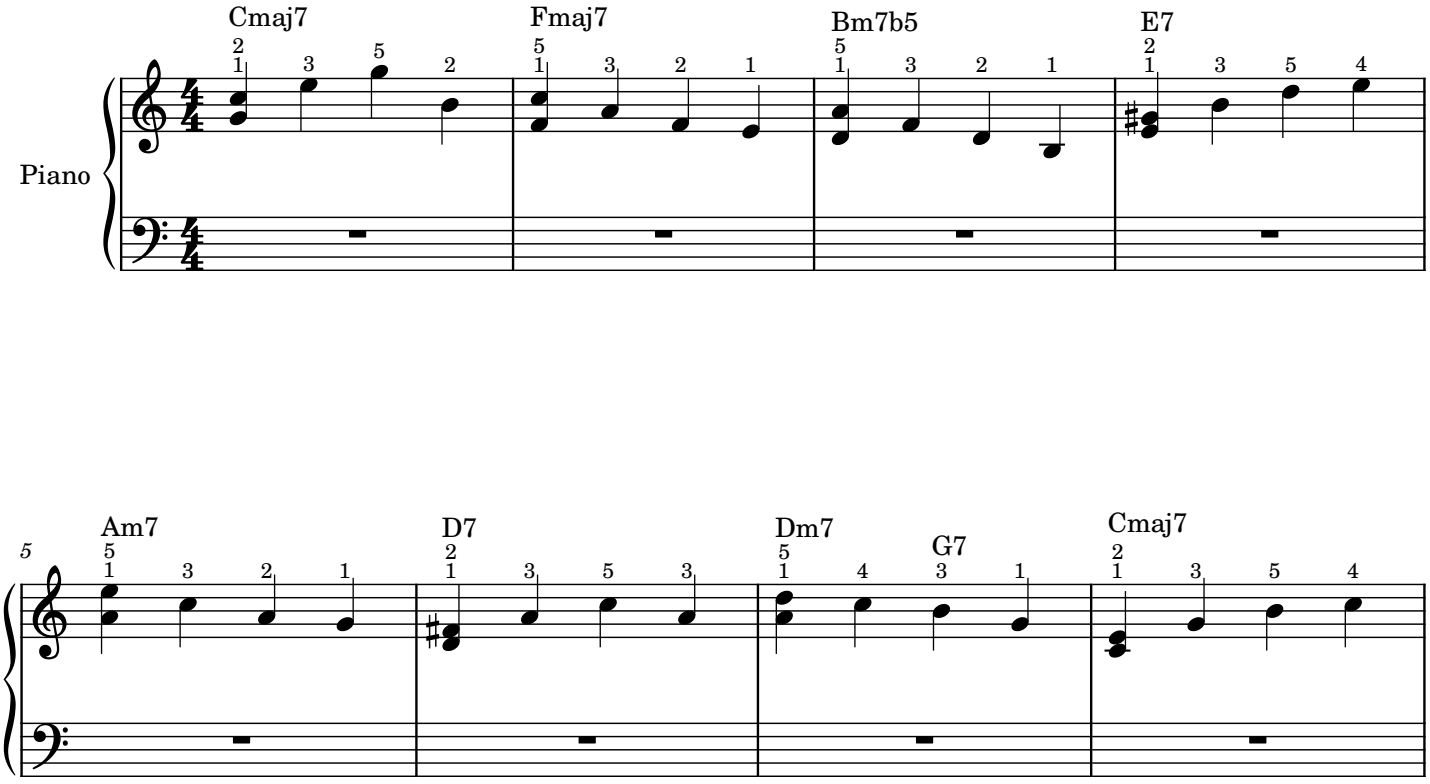
- Can the top note stay clear when finger 1 or 2 plays below it?
- Can you control dynamics, or does the volume jump around?
- Which melody spots still need a shift?
- Does adding one lower note change the shape of the top-finger melody?

Checkpoint: Play the Fall Flowers top-fingers map, then add only the written support notes.

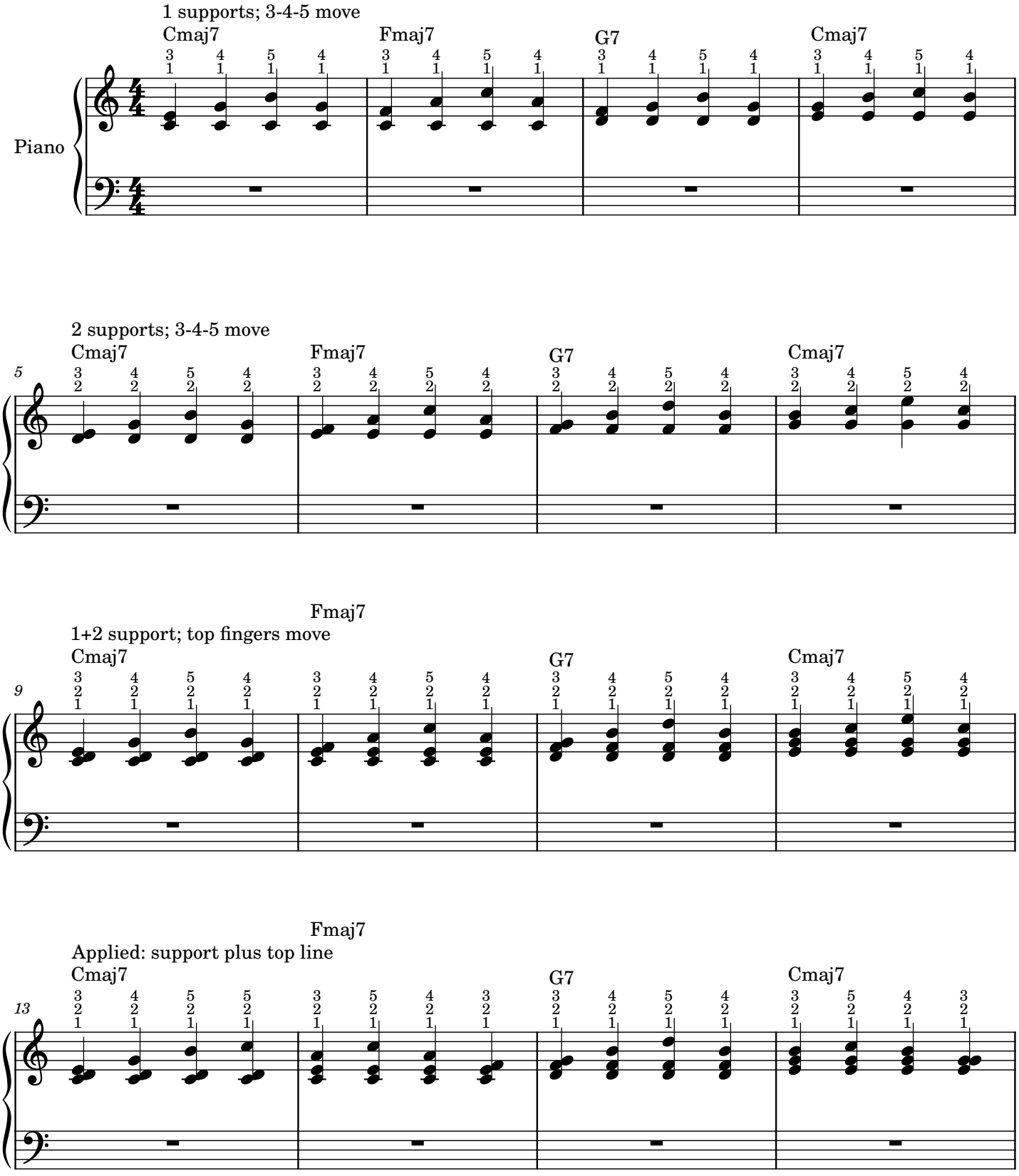
Level 7 - Fall Flowers - Top Fingers Map



Level 7 - Fall Flowers - Support Finger Bridge



Level 7 - RH 1-2 Support, 3-4-5 Top



Level 8

ii-V-I Guide-Tone Motion

Chapter Instructions

ii-V-I Guide-Tone Motion

Learn one voice-led path before adding alternatives

What this teaches: This section turns static guide-tone shells into the basic jazz motion used in ii-V-I progressions. For now, use Path A only: ii7 uses 3-7, V7 uses 7-3, and Imaj7 returns to 3-7. The goal is to feel one note stay while the other note resolves by a small step.

How To Practice

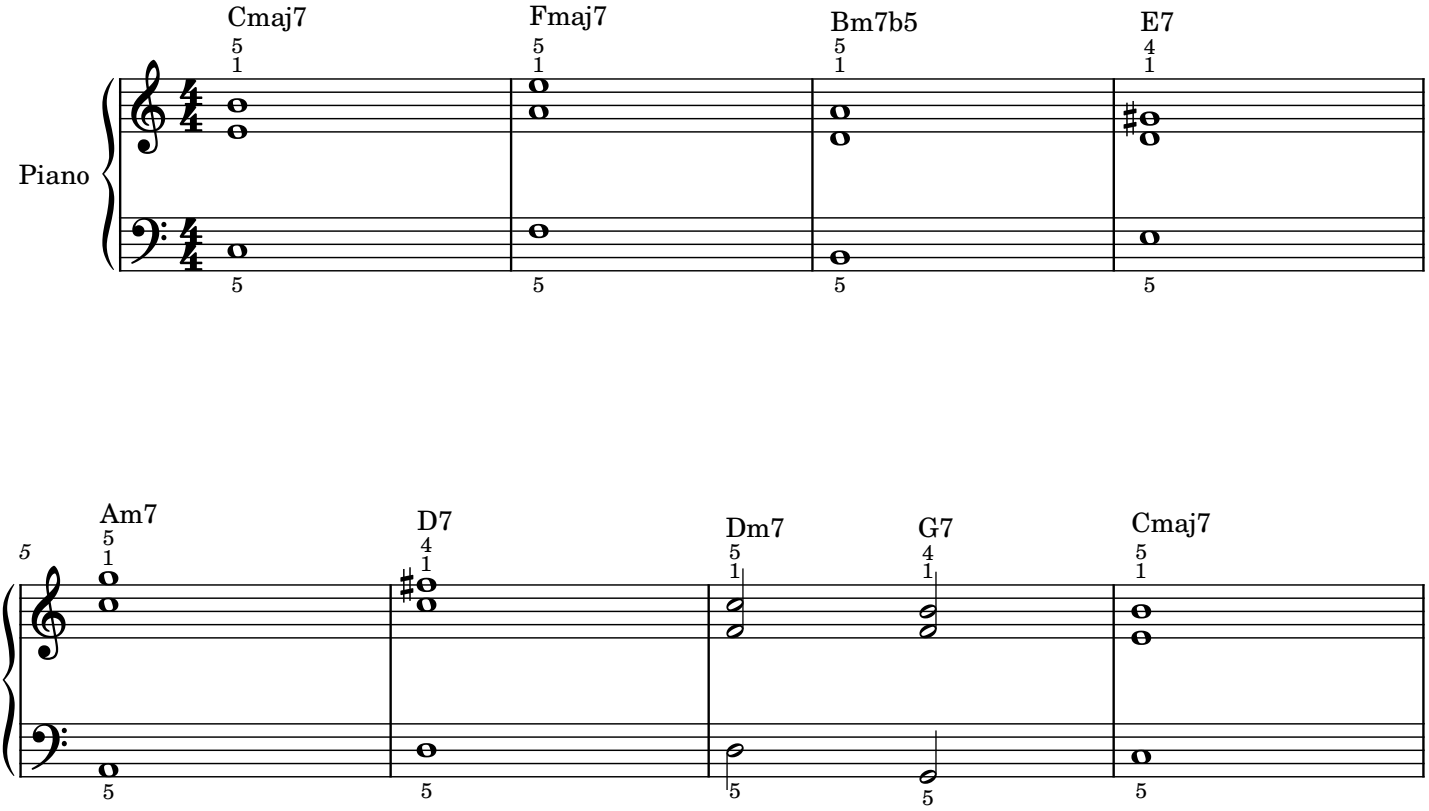
- Start with the Fall Flowers cadence page. It shows the Dm7-G7-Cmaj7 motion from the etude in the same Path A shape.
- Practice the resolution-pair page slowly. First play ii to V; then play V to I. Notice which note stays and which note moves.
- Play the all-keys Path A page one line at a time. Each line is one complete ii-V-I. Do not rush the circle.

What To Notice

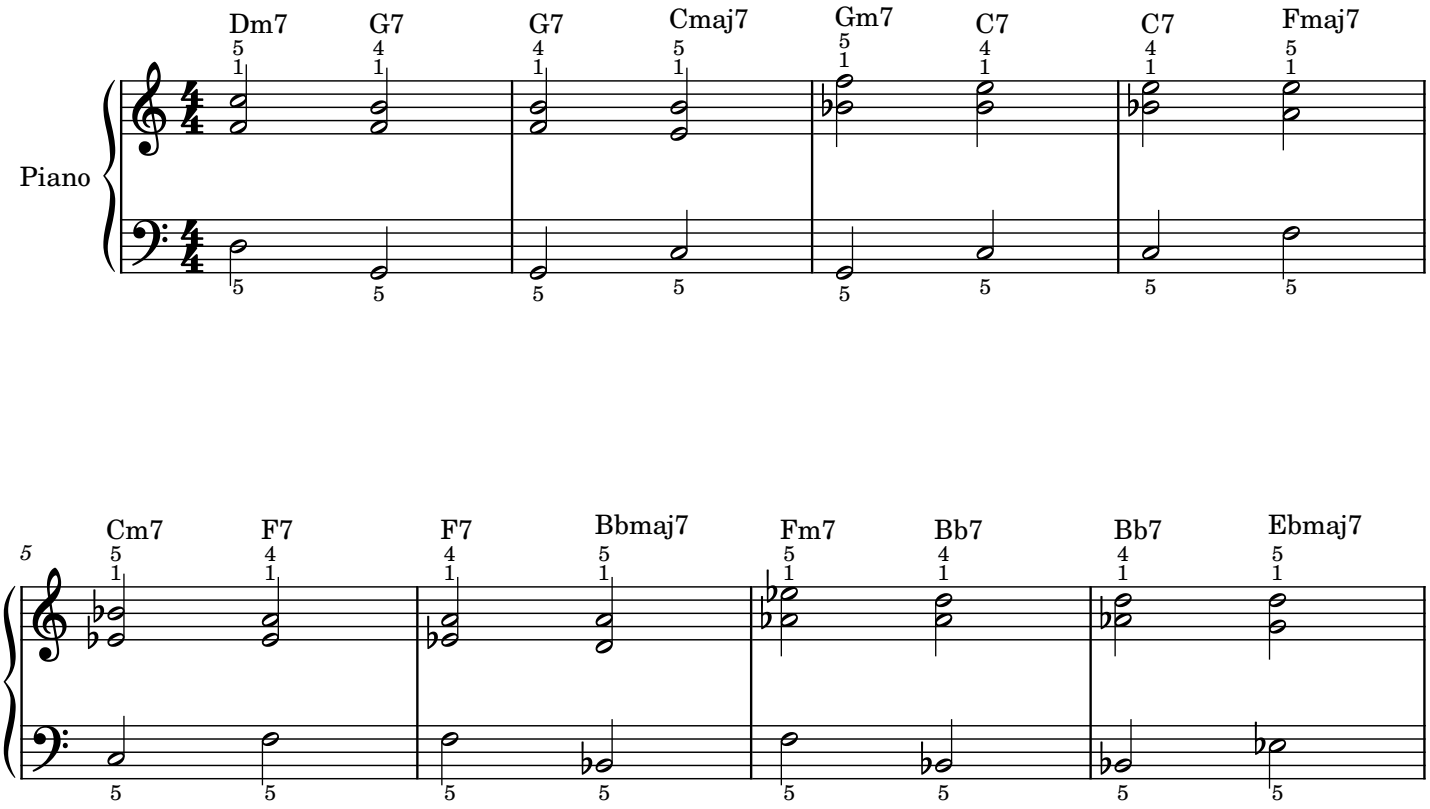
- The hand should feel a small voice-leading motion, not three unrelated chord grips.

Checkpoint: In your right hand, play Dm7 to G7 to Cmaj7 as F-C, F-B, E-B without looking at the page. Path B can wait until Path A feels automatic.

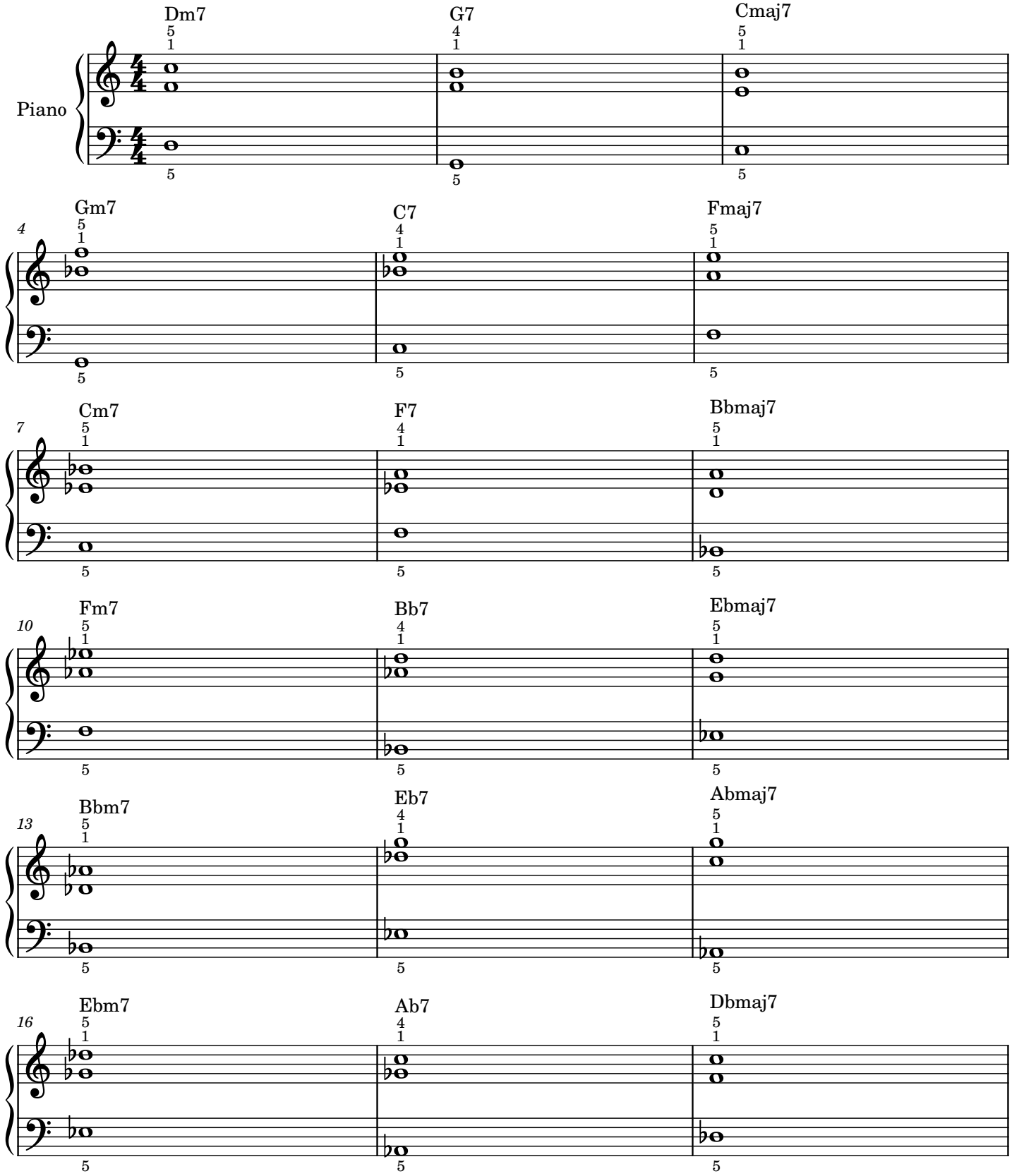
Level 8 - Fall Flowers - ii-V-I Cadence Path A

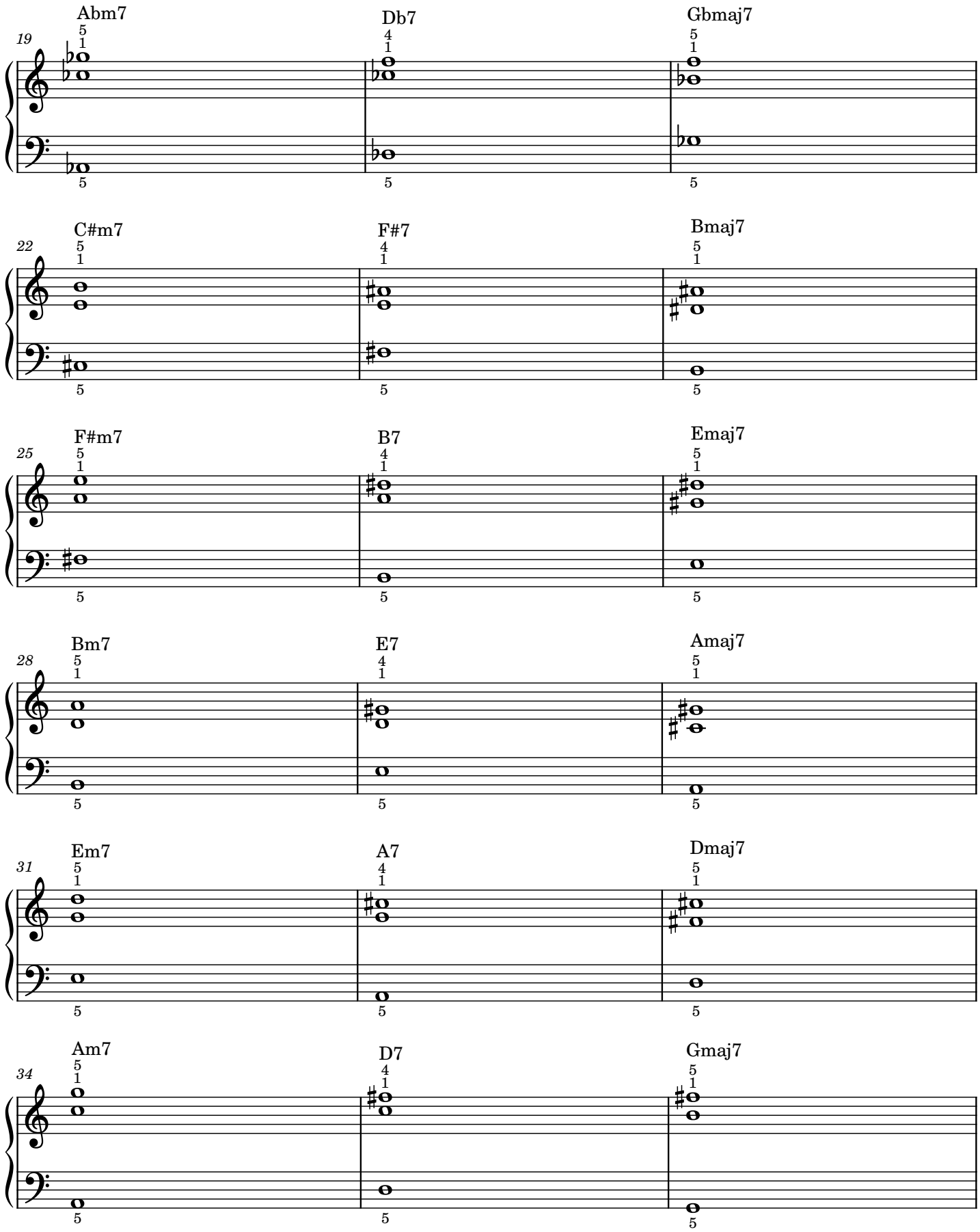


Level 8 - Resolution Pairs - Path A



Level 8 - ii-V-I Path A - All Keys

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Abm7
Db7
Gbmaj7
22
C#m7
F#7
Bmaj7
25
F#m7
B7
Emaj7
28
Bm7
E7
Amaj7
31
Em7
A7
Dmaj7
34
Am7
D7
Gmaj7

Level 9

Basic Improvisation With Left-Hand Roots

Chapter Instructions

Basic Improvisation With Left-Hand Roots

Improvise before adding left-hand shells

What this teaches: This section keeps the left hand on roots only so the right hand can start improvising without too much coordination. The vocabulary is deliberately tiny: chord tones, small cells, targets, blues sounds, and pentatonic sounds.

How To Practice

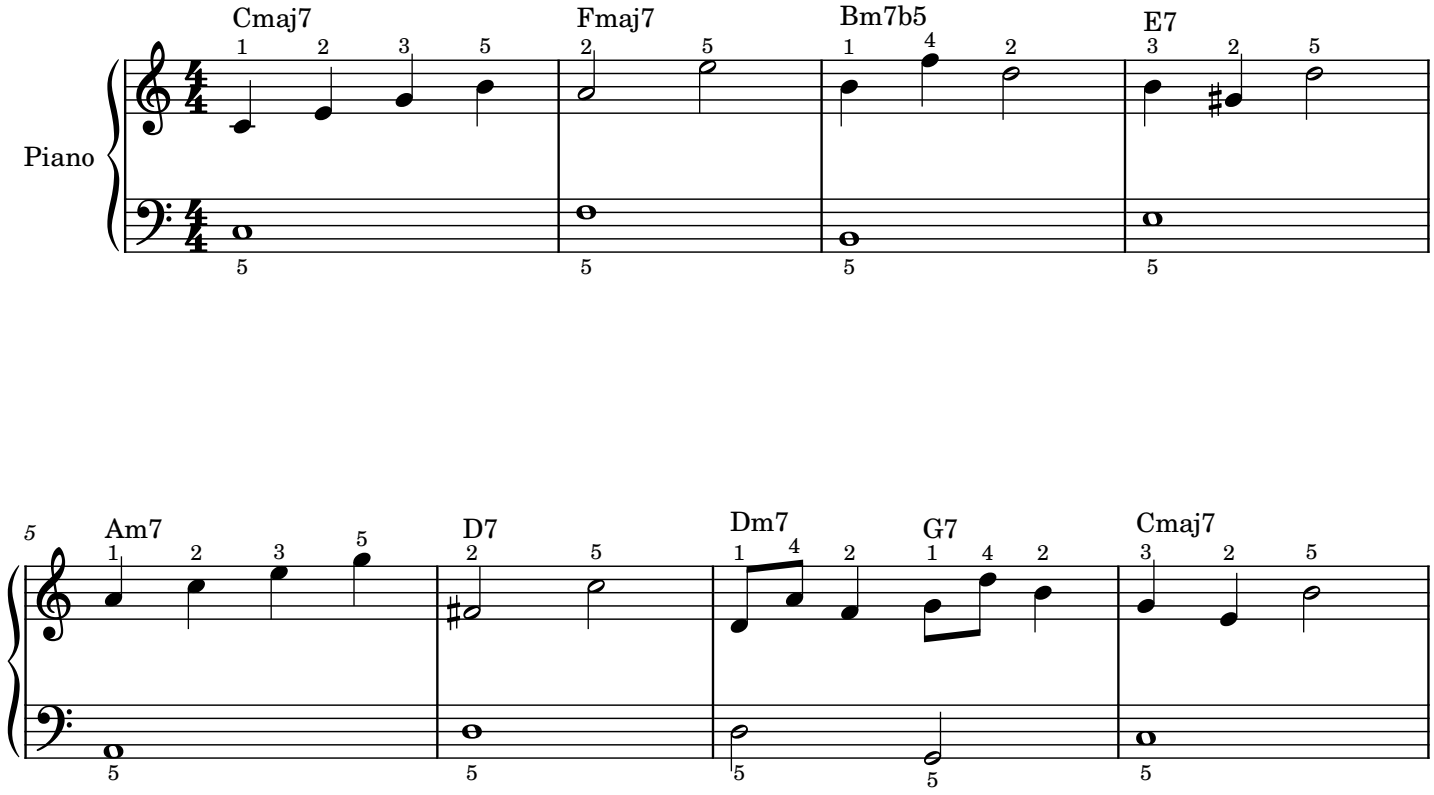
- Start with chord tones only.
- Limit yourself to two-note and three-note cells.
- Aim phrases at the 3rd or 7th.
- Add one simple blues or pentatonic sound only after the targets feel clear.

What To Notice

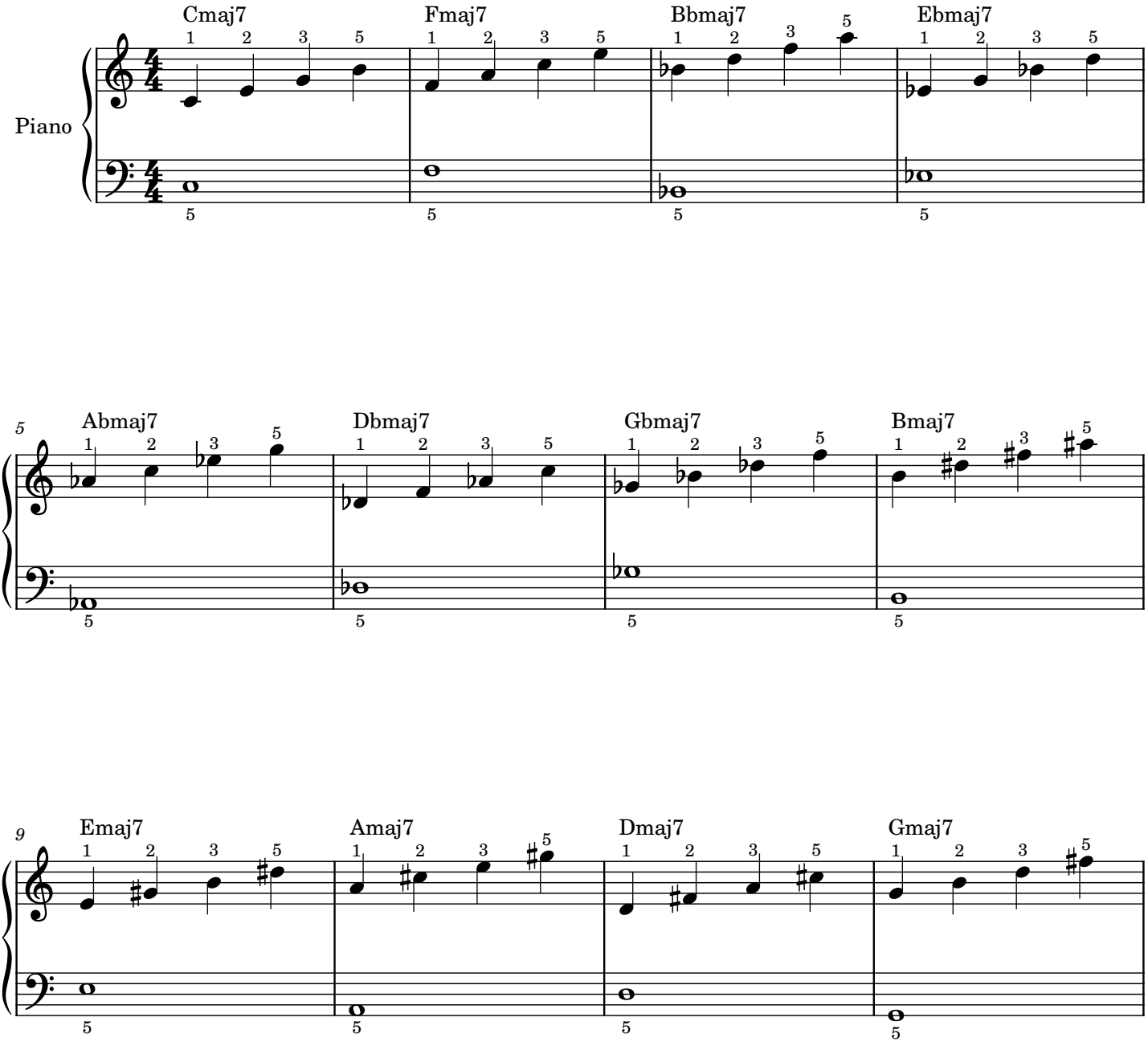
- Can you end on a chord tone on purpose?
- Does the line sound more settled on the 3rd or 7th?

Checkpoint: With C in the left hand, make a short right-hand phrase using only C, E, G, and B. Then make an even smaller phrase using only E and B. Finally, play a phrase of any length, but constrained to C, E, G, and B, that ends on E or B on purpose. Make sure the landing is intentional. In other words, assuming quarter notes and 4/4, a one bar measure like C, G, C, E and not an interrupted measure like C, E (oh! I hit the note, I'll stop). But, C (half note) and E (half note) – if intentional – is ok.

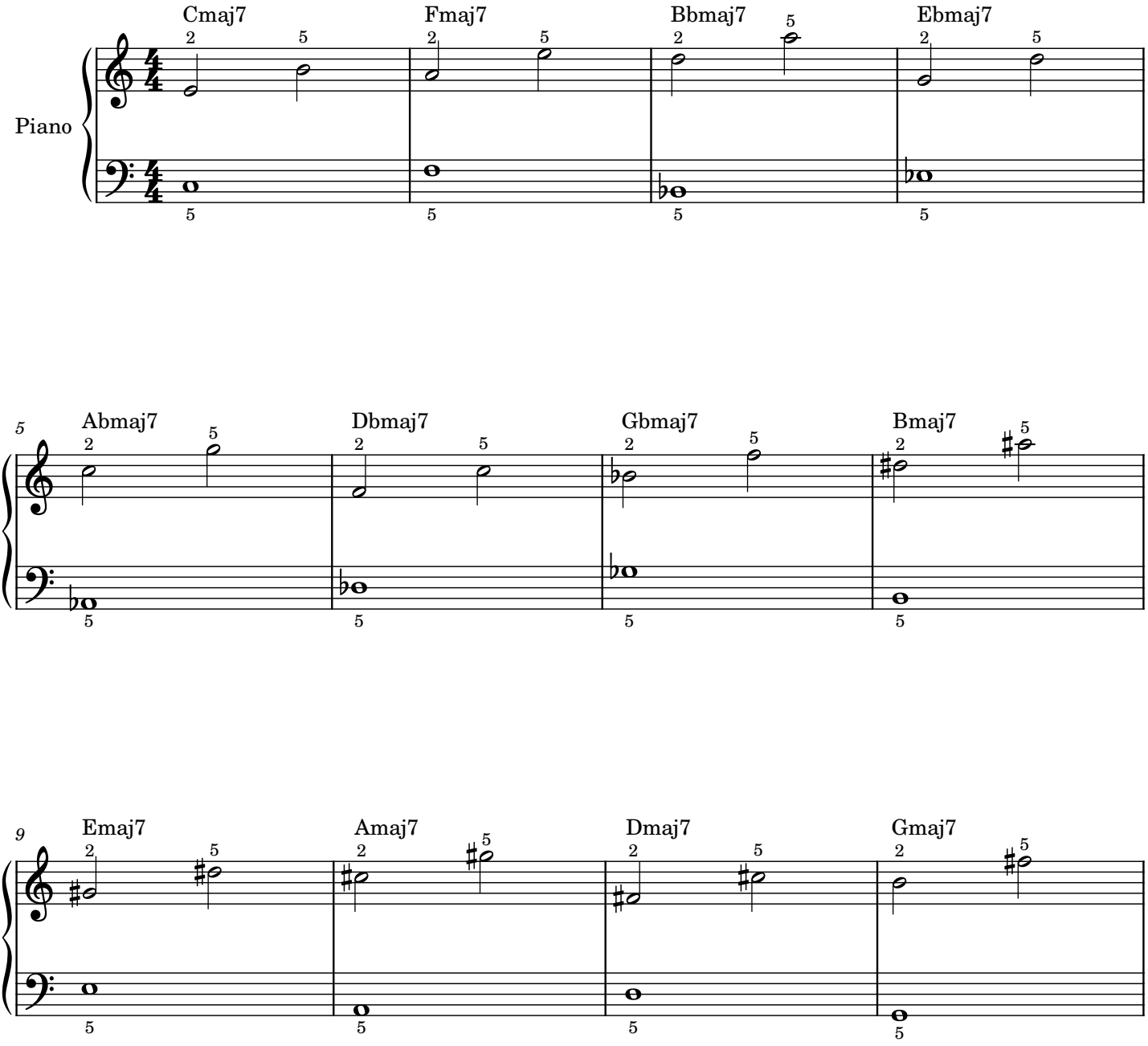
Level 9 - Fall Flowers - Roots + First Improv Cells



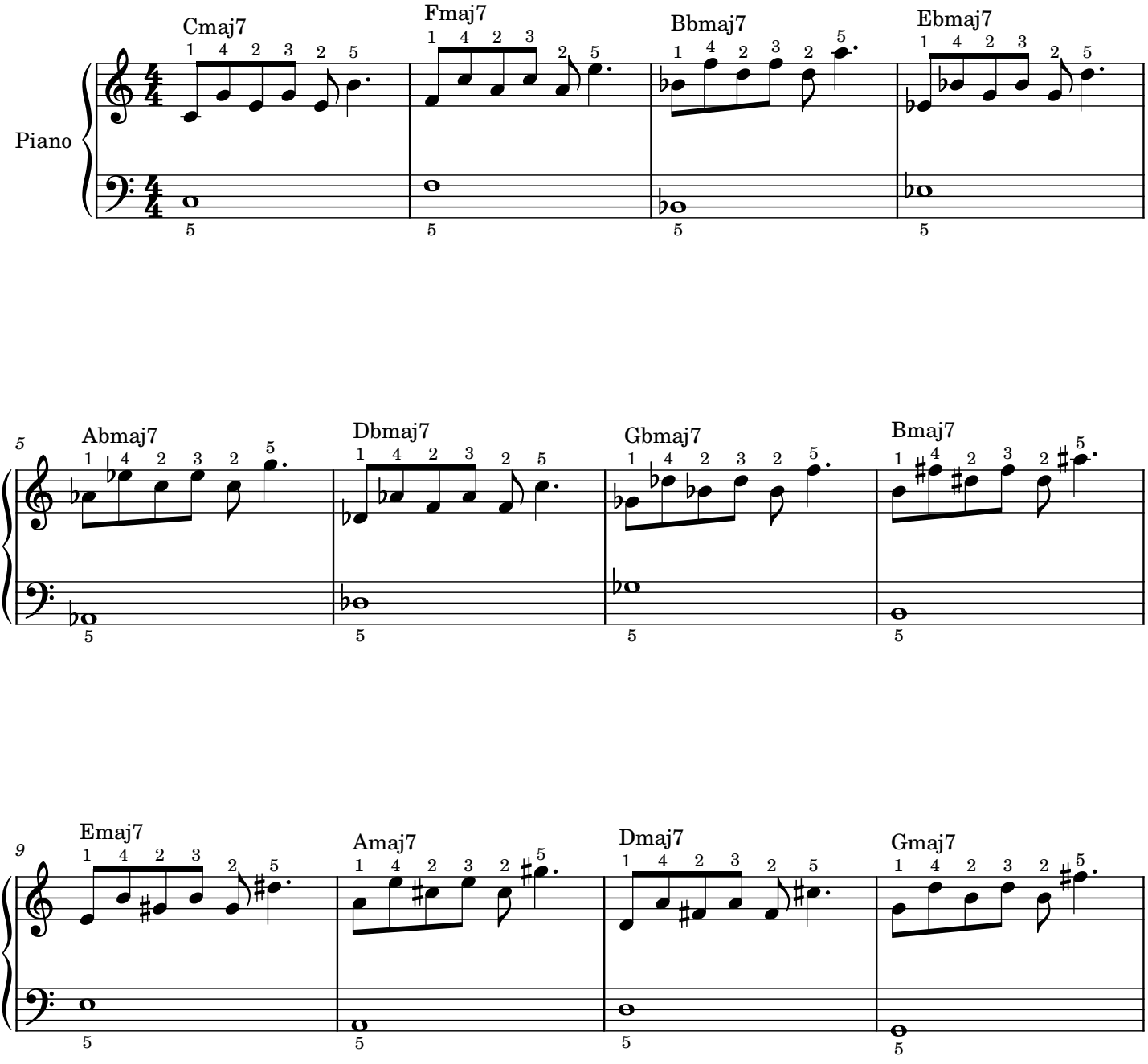
Level 9 - Chord Tones Over Roots



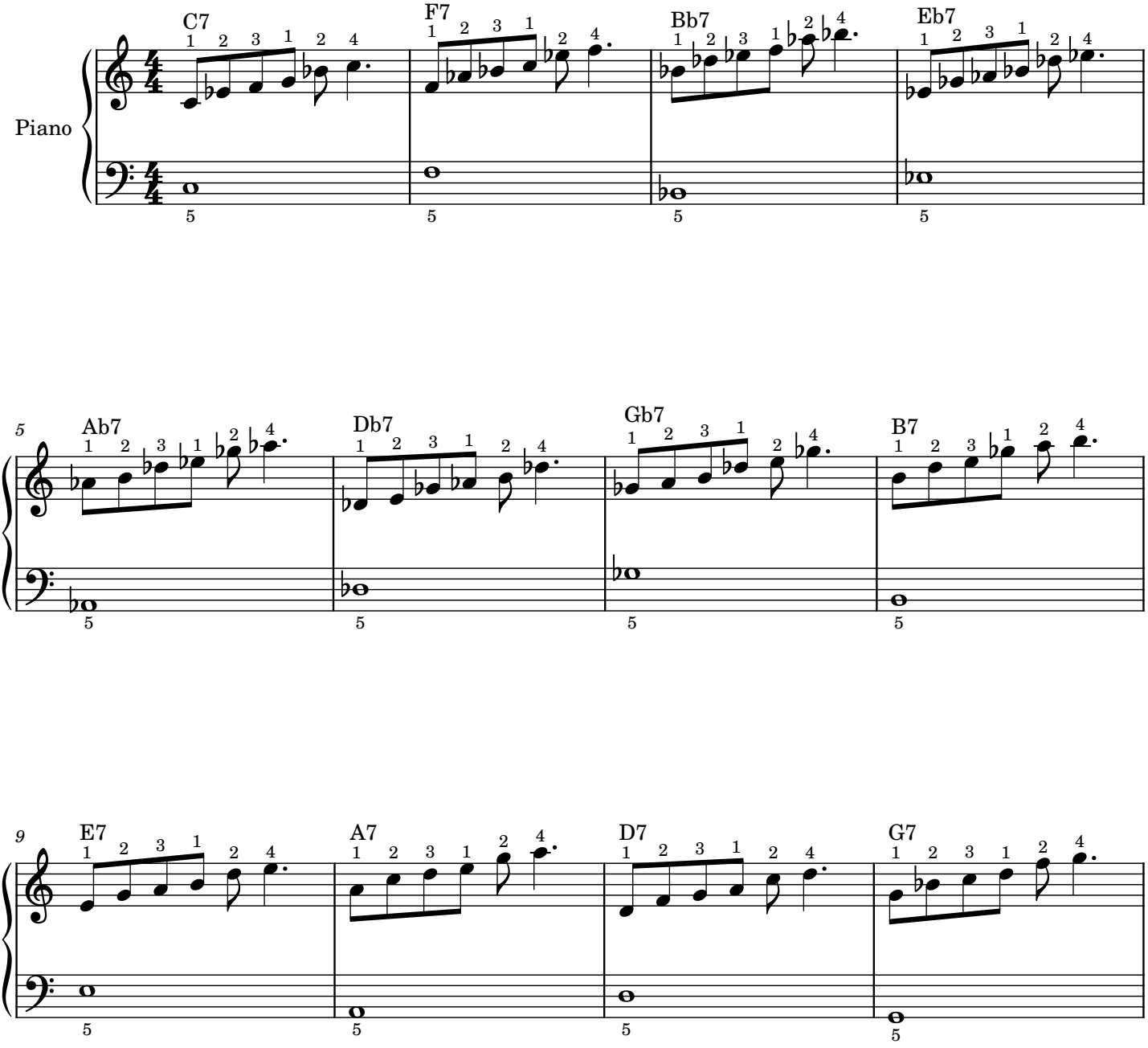
Level 9 - Two-Note Cells Over Roots



Level 9 - Target 3rds and 7ths Over Roots



Level 9 - Blues/Pentatonic Color Over Roots



Level 10

Rhythm Cells Over Roots

Chapter Instructions

Rhythm Cells Over Roots

Make time feel physical before adding shell coordination

What this teaches: This section introduces rhythm as its own small habit. The notes stay deliberately simple so you can feel Charleston, anticipation, space, and response before those rhythms are attached to shells, melody, or progressions.

How To Practice

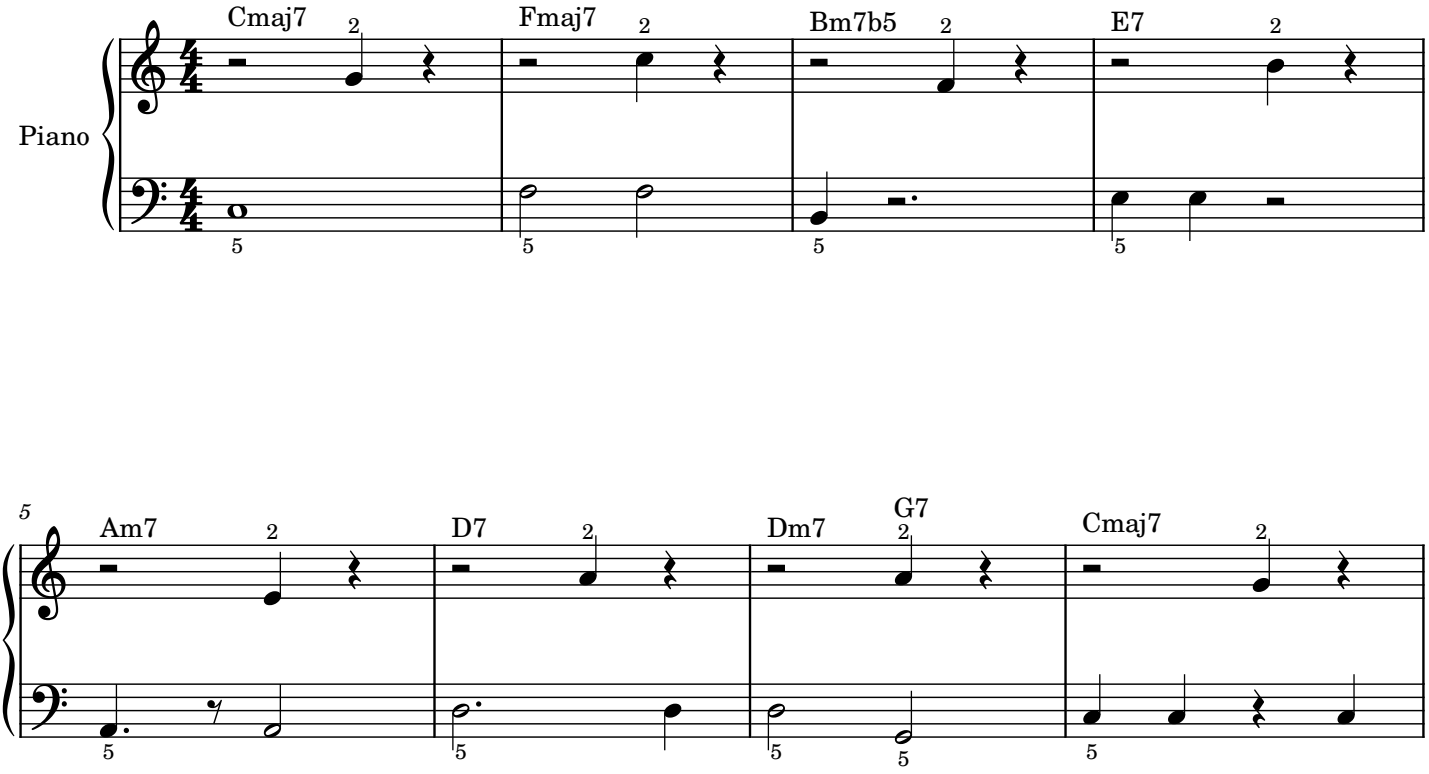
- Tap or count the rhythm before playing it.
- Play the rhythm with the right hand on one note only.
- Play the same rhythm with the left hand on one note only.
- Put both hands together only after each hand feels steady alone.
- Move one rhythm around the Fourths Road with left-hand roots.

What To Notice

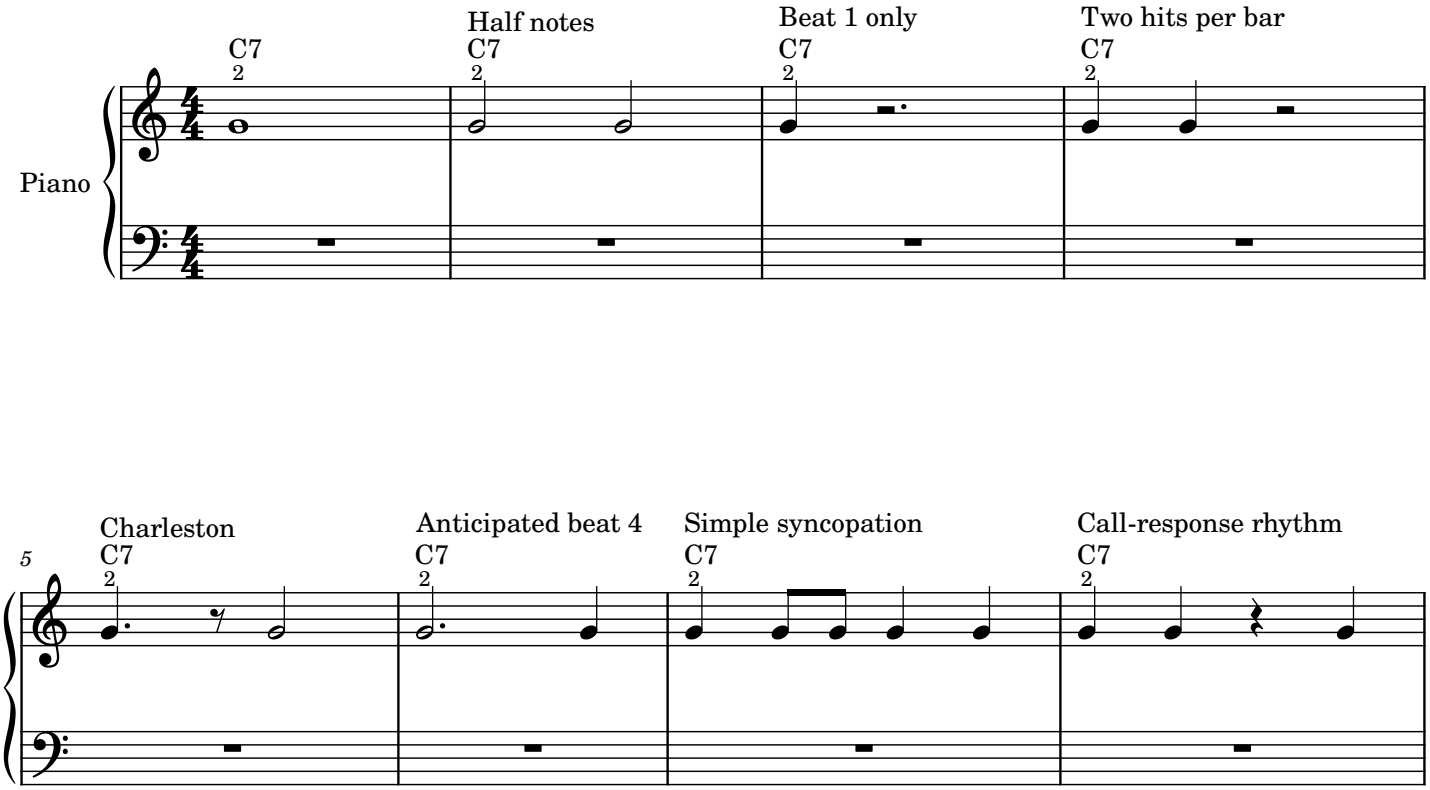
- Can you keep counting through the rests?
- Does the “and-2” Charleston hit land early or late?
- Does the right hand answer the left hand without rushing?

Checkpoint: Play the Charleston on C with LH 5, answer with RH 2, then move that same physical rhythm to F and Bb.

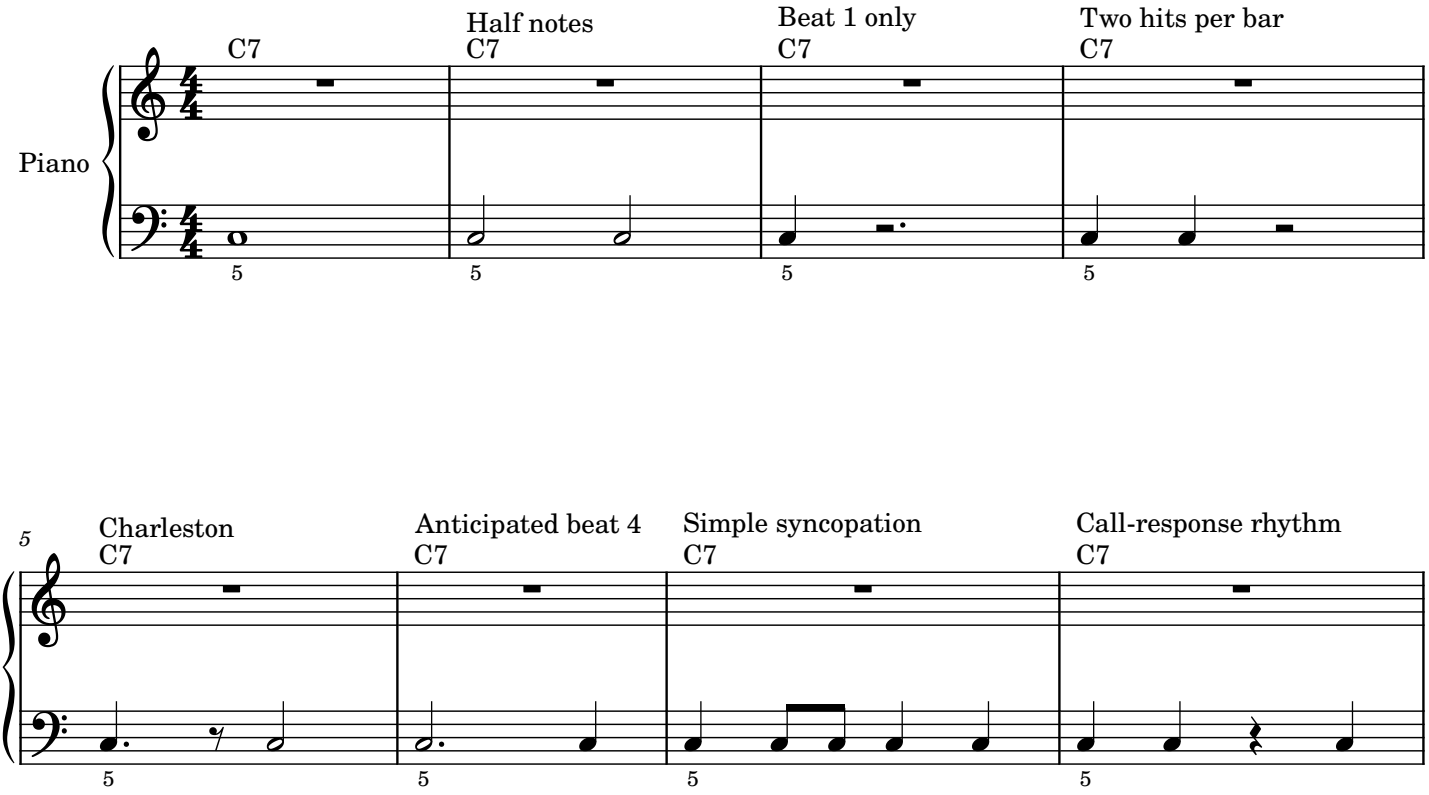
Level 10 - Fall Flowers - Roots Rhythm Cells



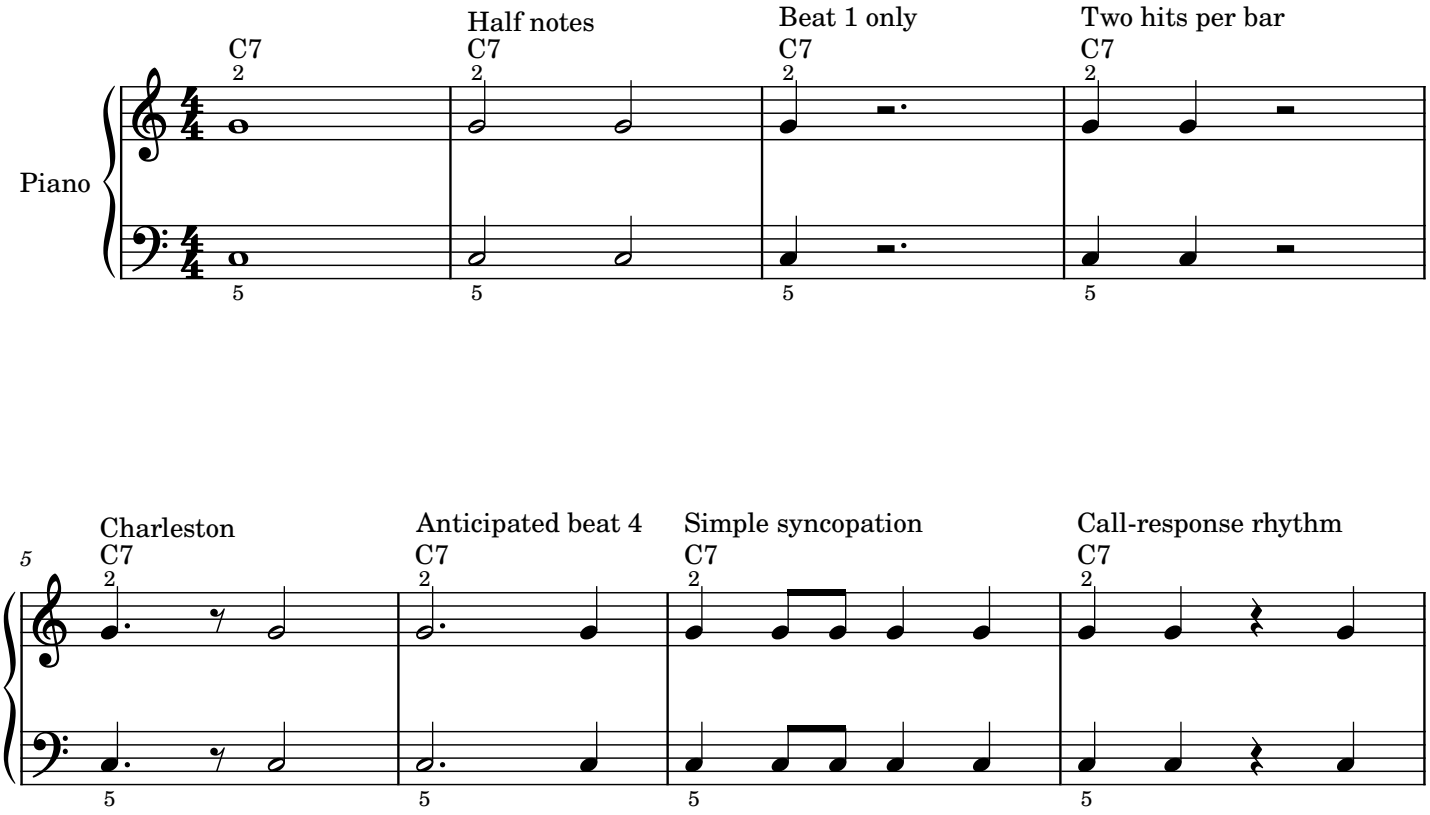
Level 10 - Rhythm Cells - RH One Note



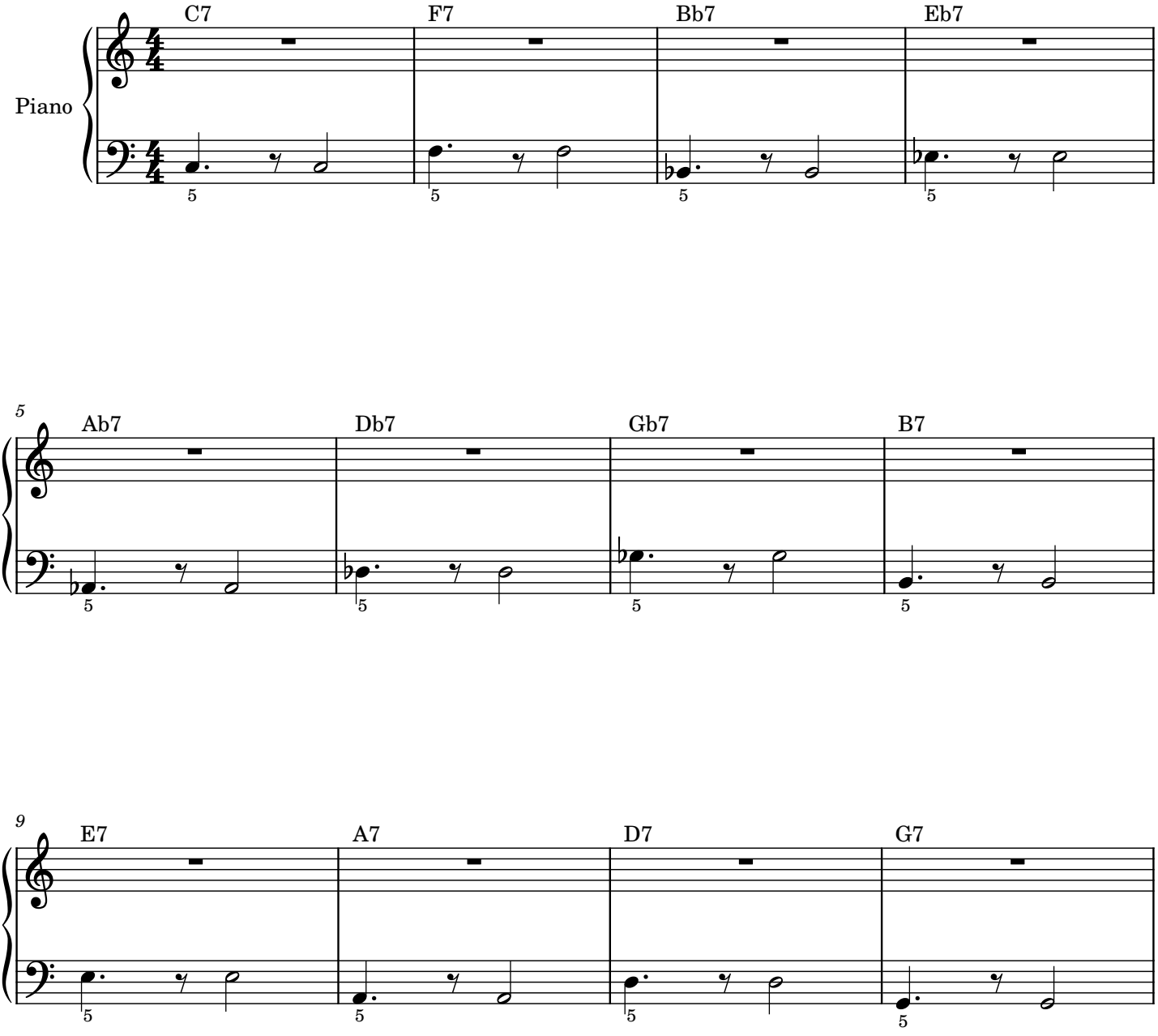
Level 10 - Rhythm Cells - LH One Note



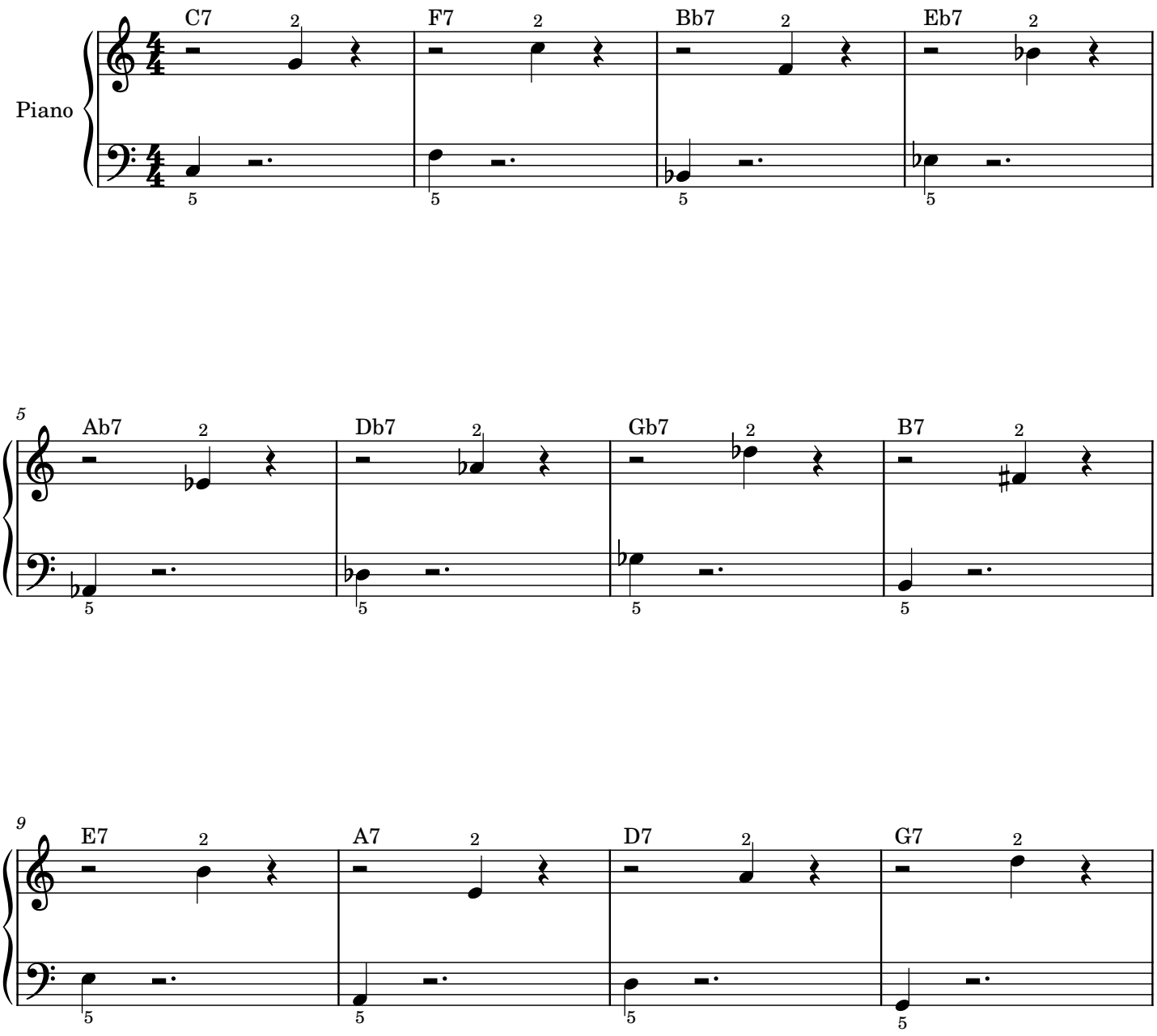
Level 10 - Rhythm Cells - Hands Together



Level 10 - Rhythm Cells - LH Roots Circle



Level 10 - Rhythm Cells - Roots Call-Response



Level 11

Continuing Basic Improvisation, Now On Common Progressions

Chapter Instructions

Continuing Basic Improvisation, Now On Common Progressions

Move the small vocabulary into real harmonic motion

What this teaches: This level does not introduce new right-hand vocabulary. It takes the small ideas from Level 9 and moves them through common progressions. The goal is to keep the improvisation simple while the harmony changes underneath.

Basic improvisation is purposely placed halfway through the method, instead of it being the final boss. It is actually much easier than you might think, and learning it here crystalizes the concepts learned to this point so you have a solid foundation for what can be considered more intermediate or advanced material.

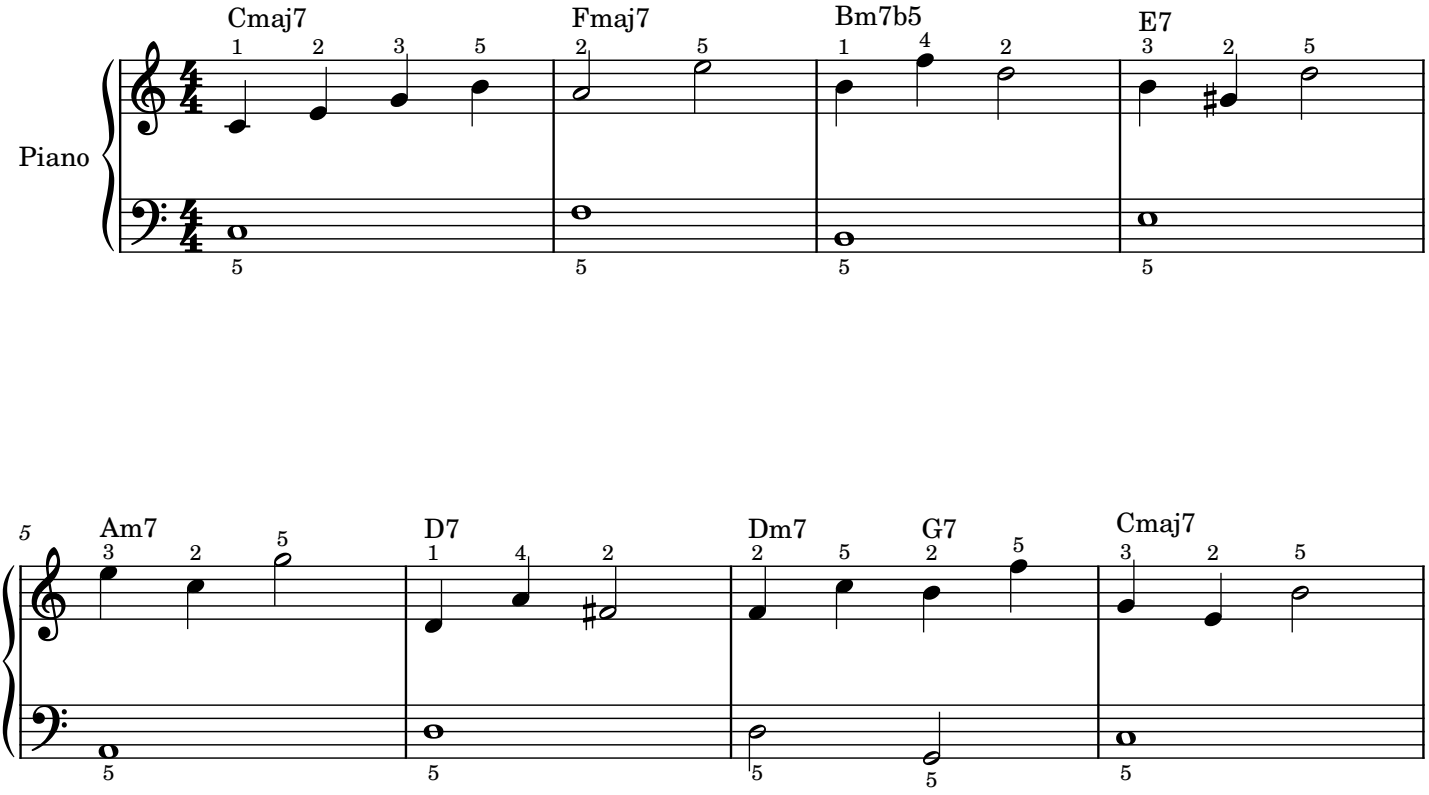
How To Practice

- Use chord tones over ii-V-I.
- Repeat two-note cells through the progression.
- Target 3rds and 7ths at resolution points.
- Practice isolated ii-V and V-I pages before full progressions.

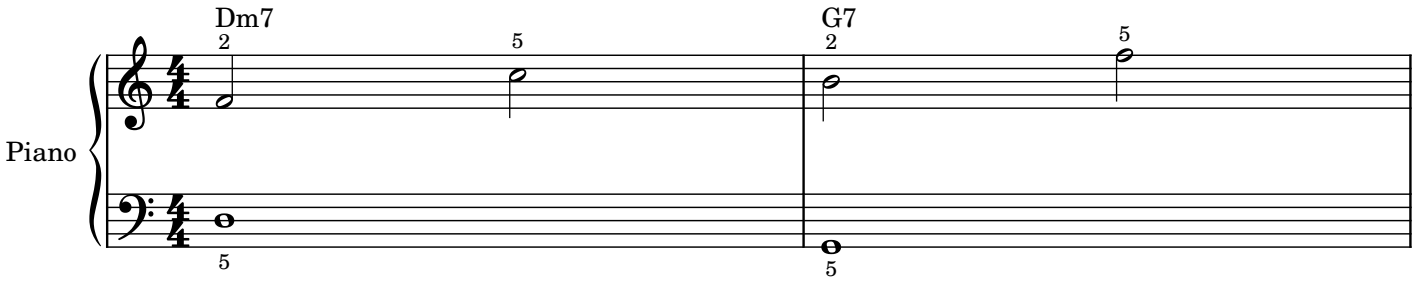
Cheat: If you want to internalize improvisation quickly, start as simple as possible. Try using just one note in the left hand and the third in the right hand (C and E for instance, or Eb if you want to be fancy). Then using just those two notes experiment with rhythm. Start with whole notes in the left, then quarter notes, then syncopate. It doesn't really matter, just experiment with rhythm. Then add a second note in the left hand. Start with the fifth. For instance, go C-G-C-G, etc. and in the right, try just the E, then incorporate the B. Then you can expand from there in the right hand. Add one note at a time while focusing on experimenting with rhythm. Don't worry about harmony. Just play very simple experiments.

Checkpoint: Play a ii-V-I phrase that lands on the 3rd of the I chord.

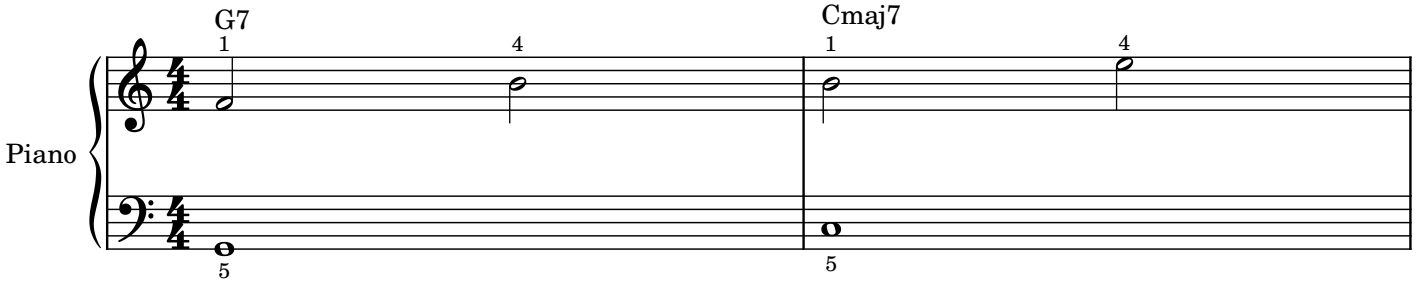
Level 11 - Fall Flowers - Roots + Common Progression Cells



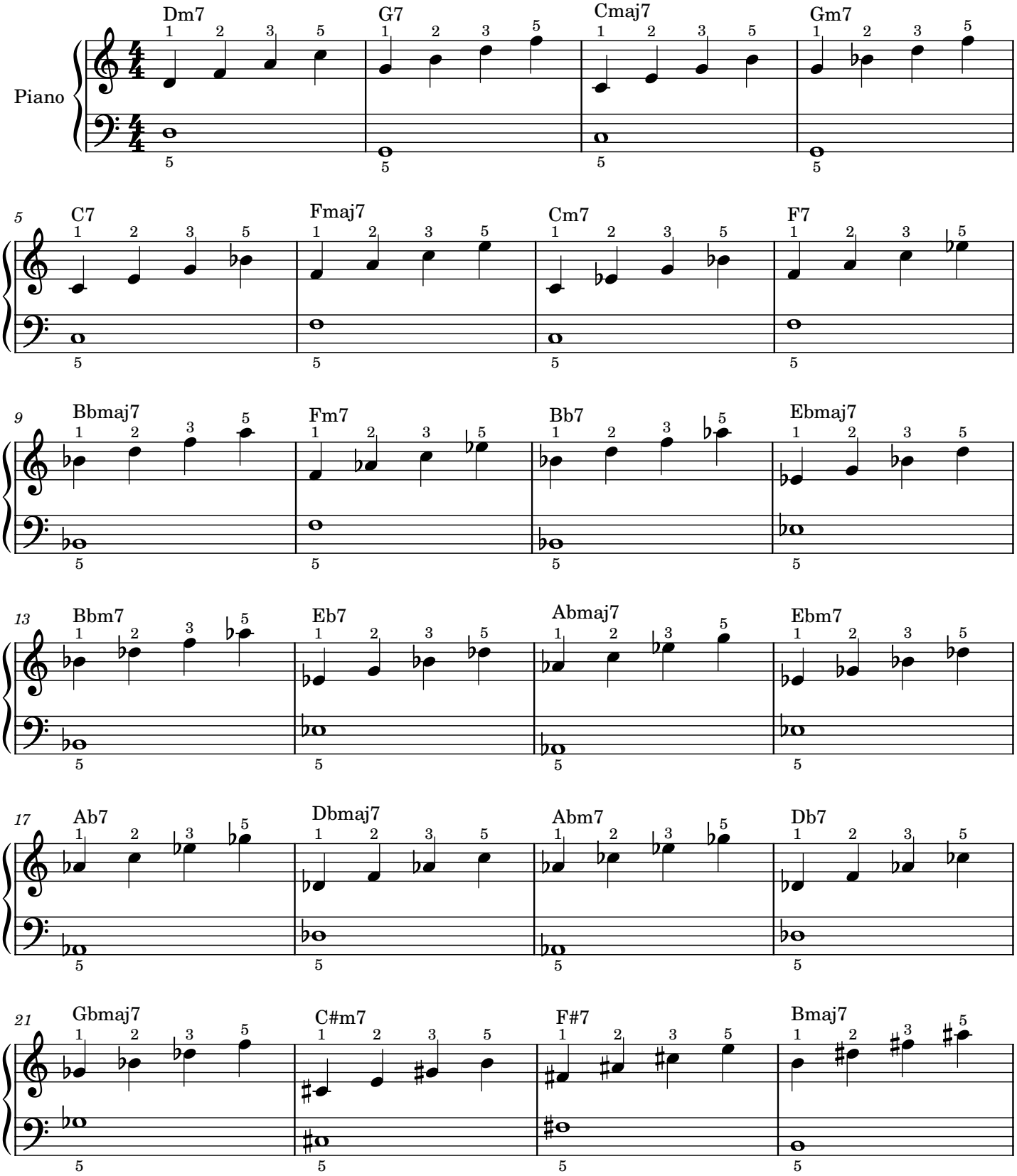
Level 11 - ii-V Mini Cadence



Level 11 - V-I Mini Cadence



Level 11 - ii-V-I Chord Tones



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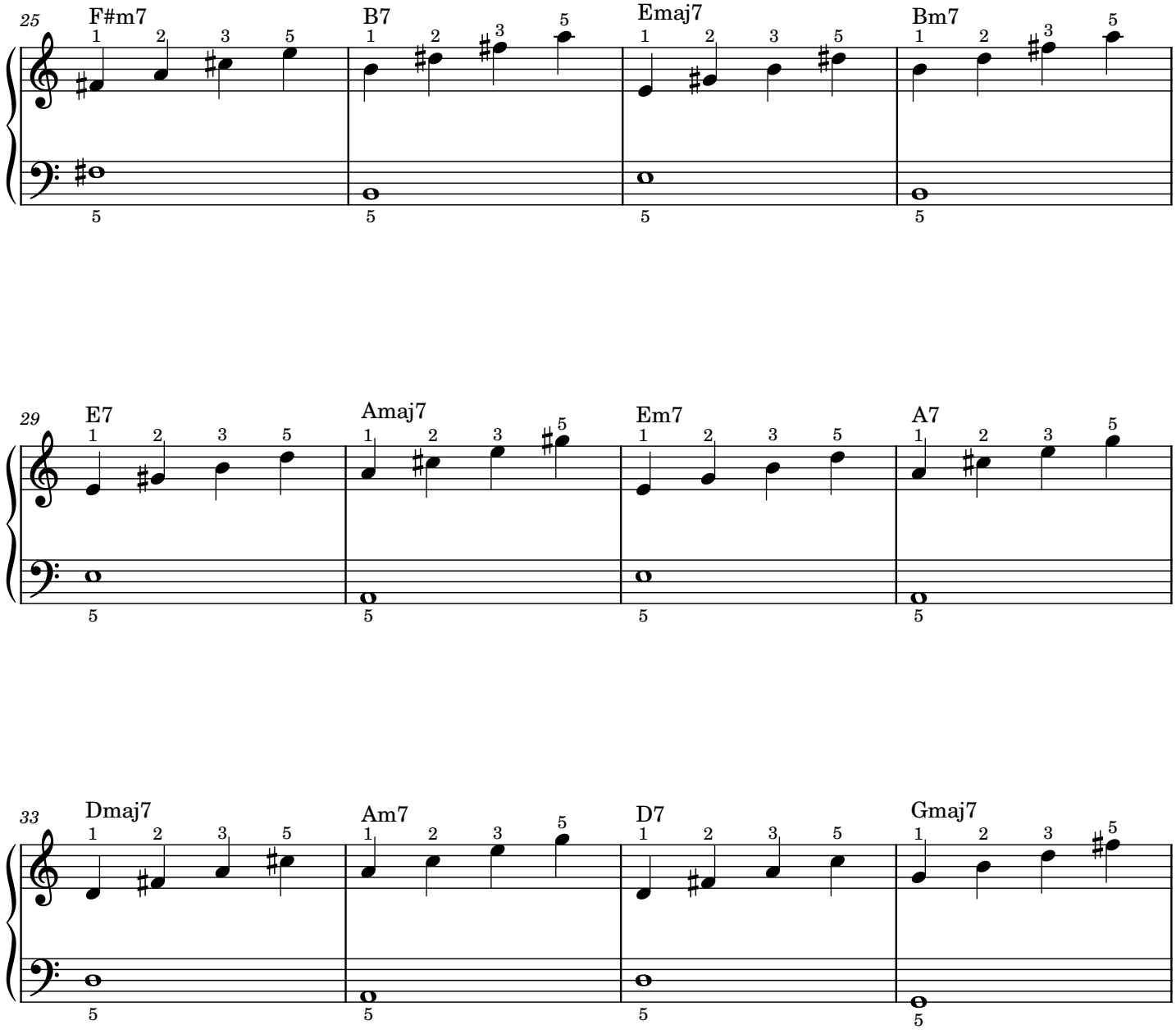
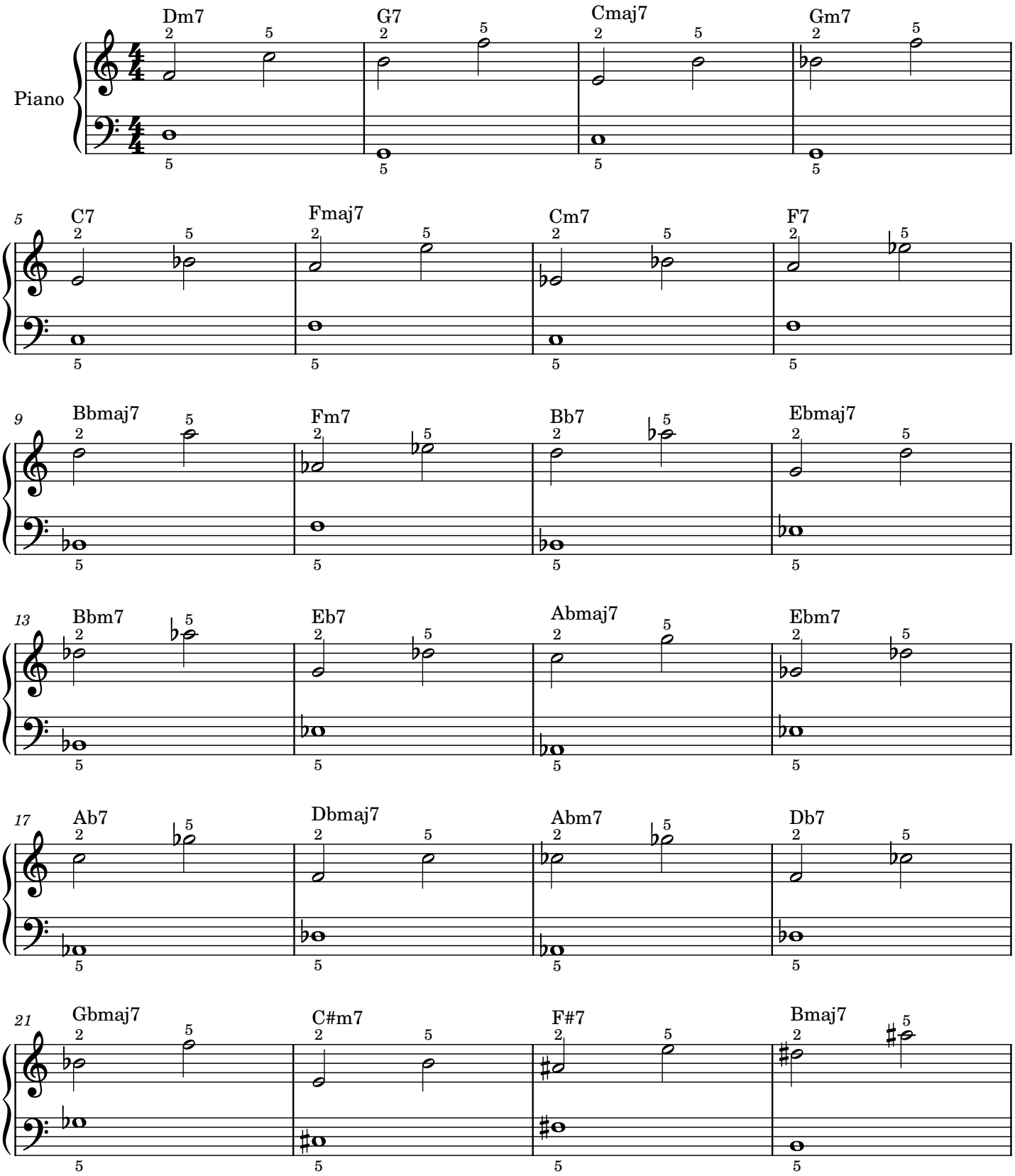
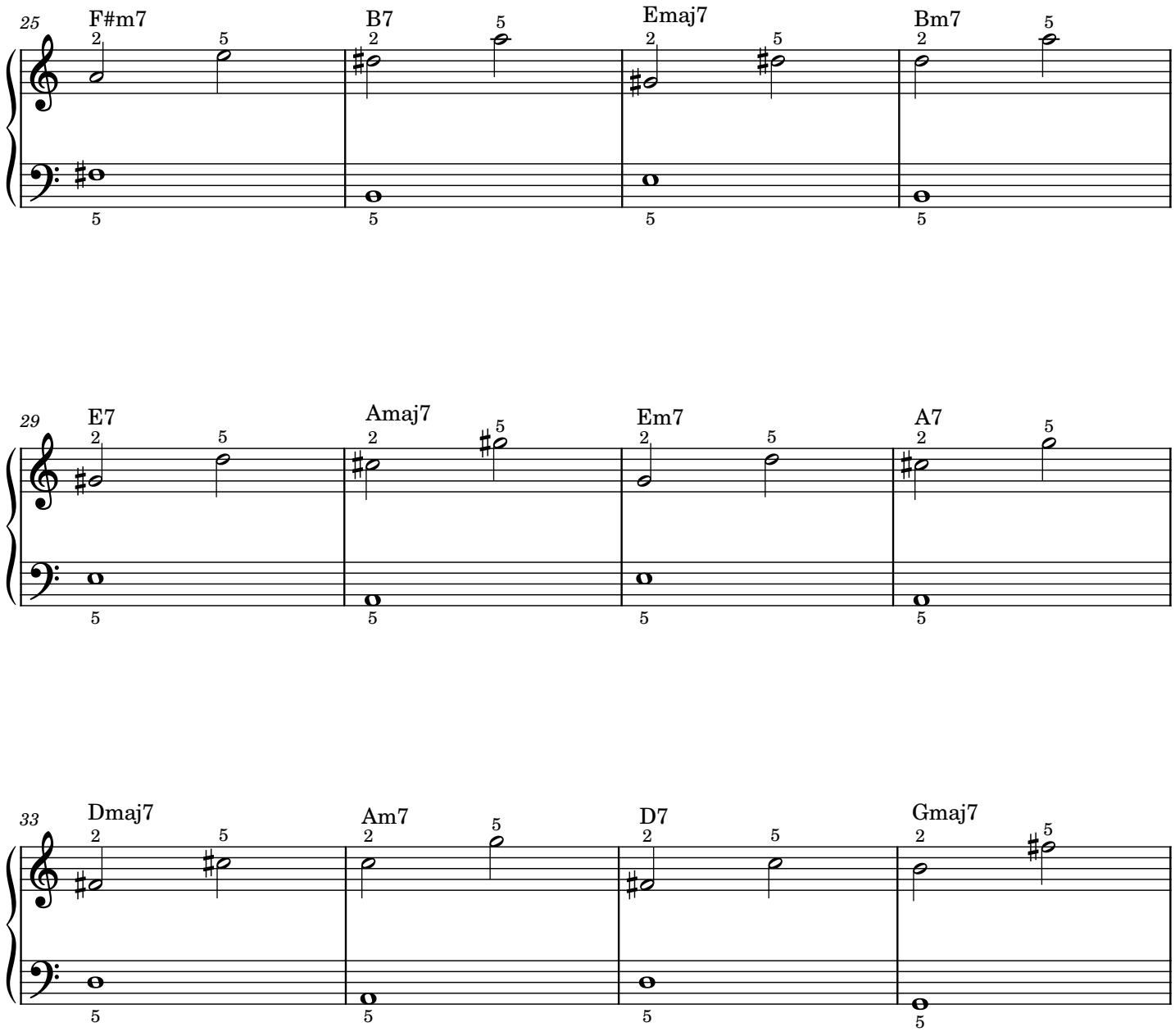


Level 11 - ii-V-I Two-Note Cells

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F#m7
B7
Emaj7
Bm7
29
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Em7
A7
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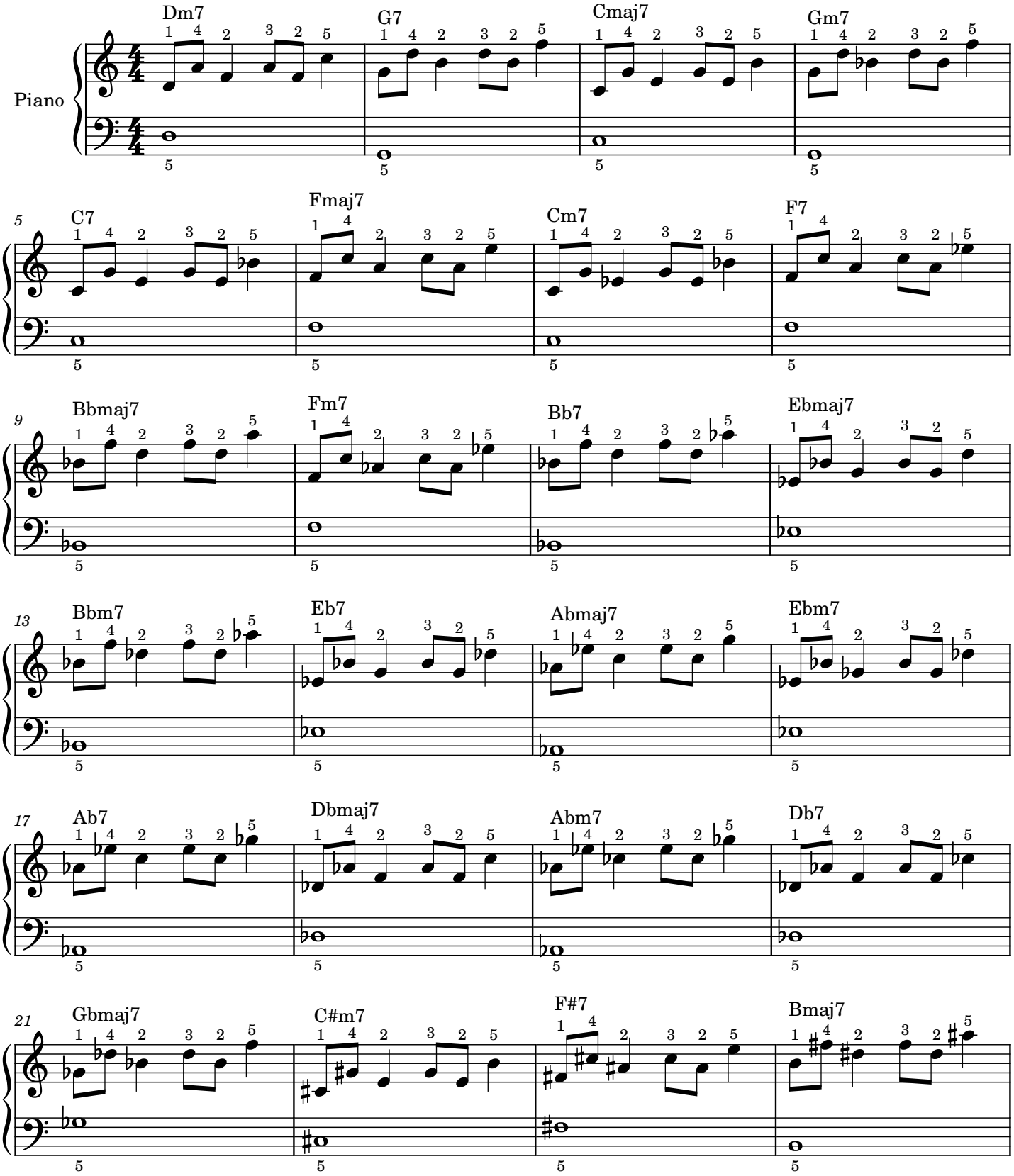
Dmaj7
Am7
D7
Gmaj7

Level 11 - ii-V-I Target 3rds and 7ths



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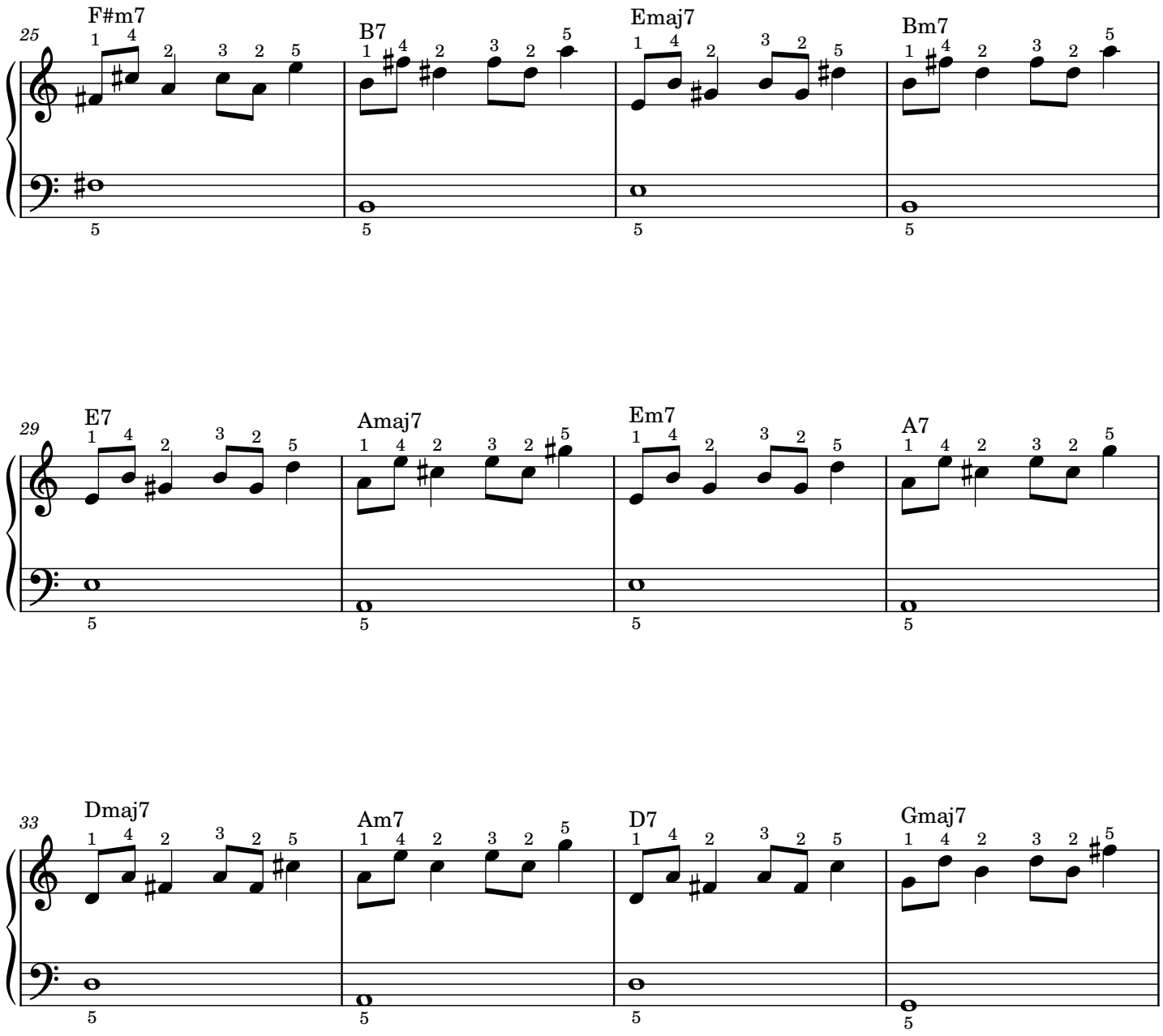
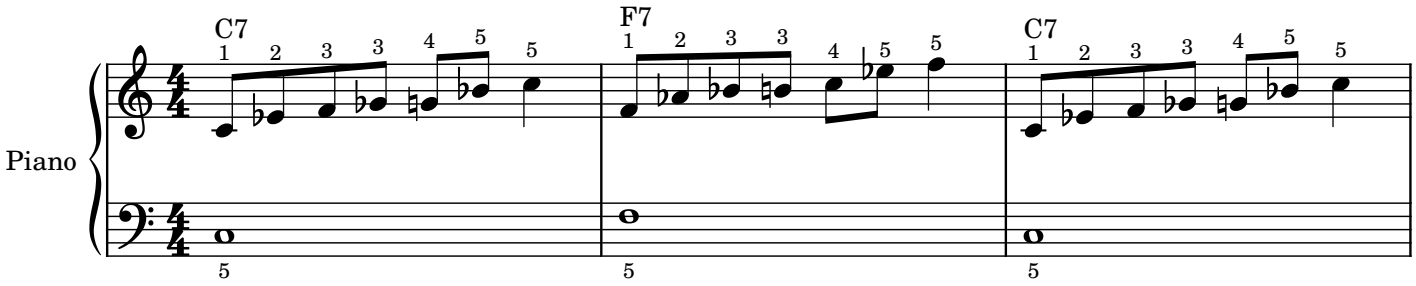


Level 11 - Blues Fragment



Level 12

Left-Hand Anchor + Define

Chapter Instructions

Left-Hand Anchor + Define

Teach the left hand its own split before full shell transfer

What this teaches: This section prepares left-hand shells by giving the hand two separate jobs, just as we did for the right-hand. Finger 5 finds the root or bass anchor. Fingers 1 and 2 find the chord-defining notes above it. Only after those jobs are clear does the hand combine root and shell into one coordinated shape.

How To Practice

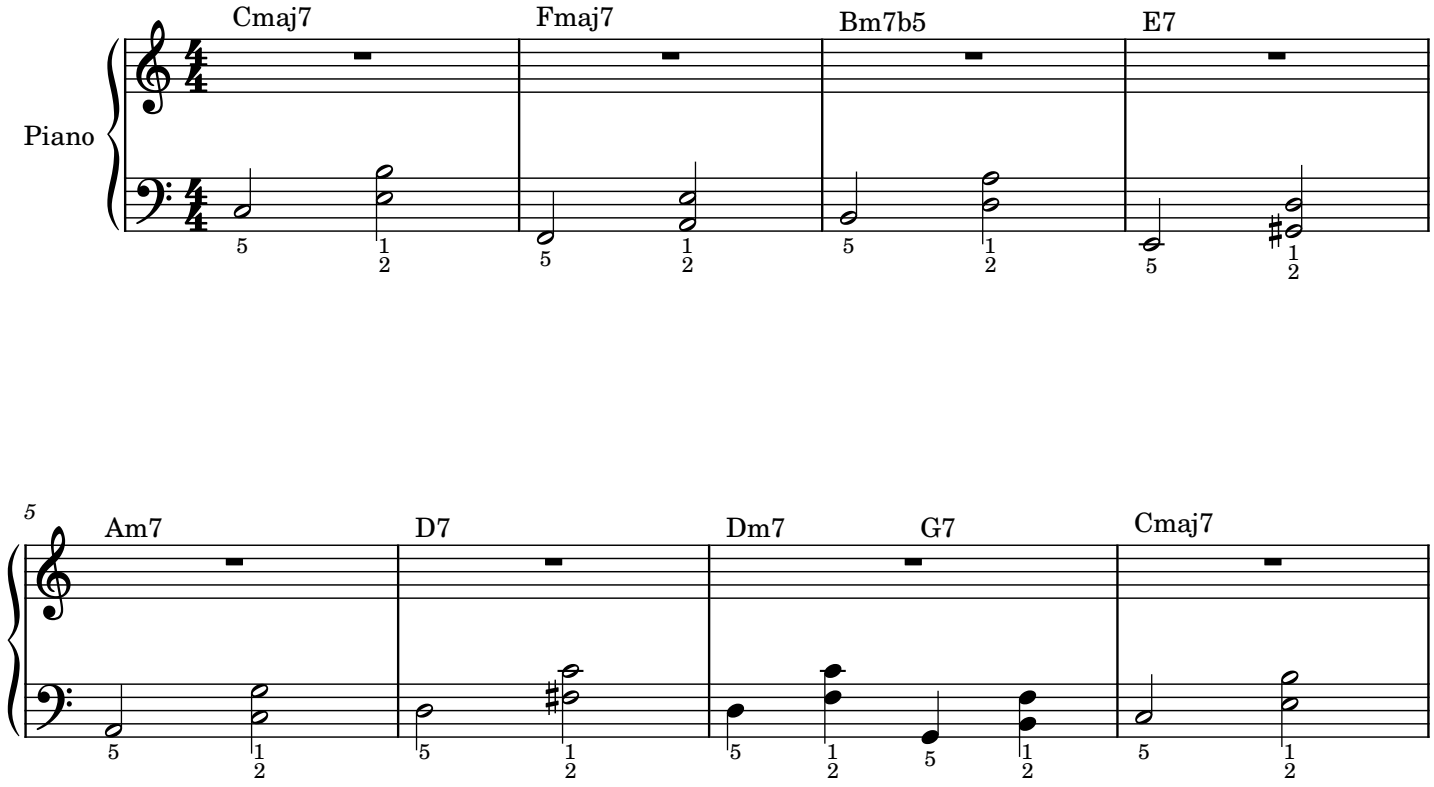
- Play root to 3rd with finger 5 then finger 1.
- Play root to 7th with finger 5 then finger 2.
- Add the root-plus-shell page only after the separate motions feel easy.
- Practice the shell-only finger map so the left hand can play the shell without leaning on the root.
- Use the mini-stride page as a bridge from root-only playing into shell comping.

Fingering Rule

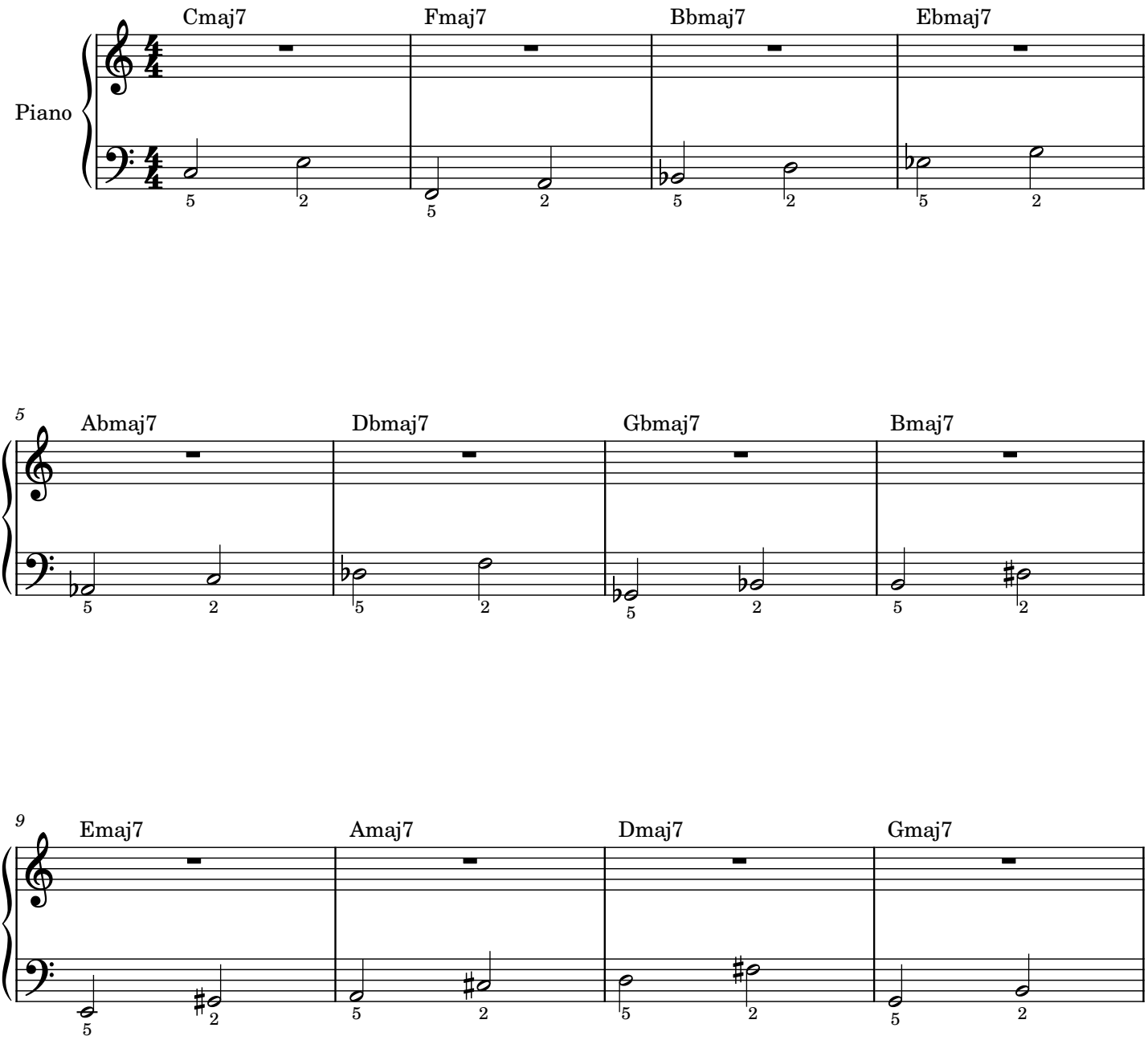
Use finger 5 for the root or bass anchor. Use finger 2 for the lower shell tone and finger 1 for the upper shell tone. The chord degree may be a 3rd or a 7th depending on the shape, but the physical job of each finger stays the same.

Checkpoint: Play root to shell through one ii-V-I path without changing the hand shape at the last second.

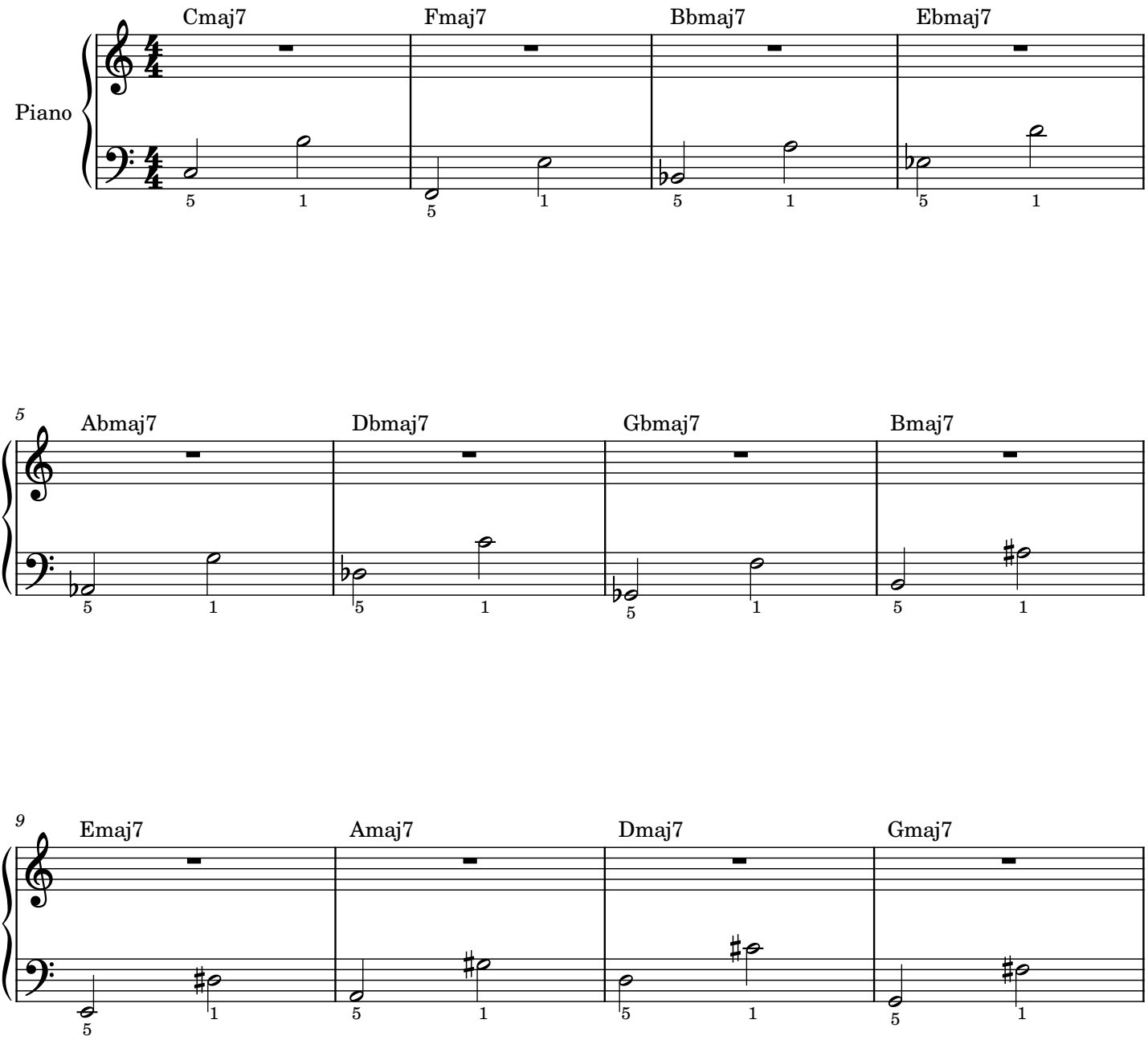
Level 12 - Fall Flowers - LH Anchor To Shell



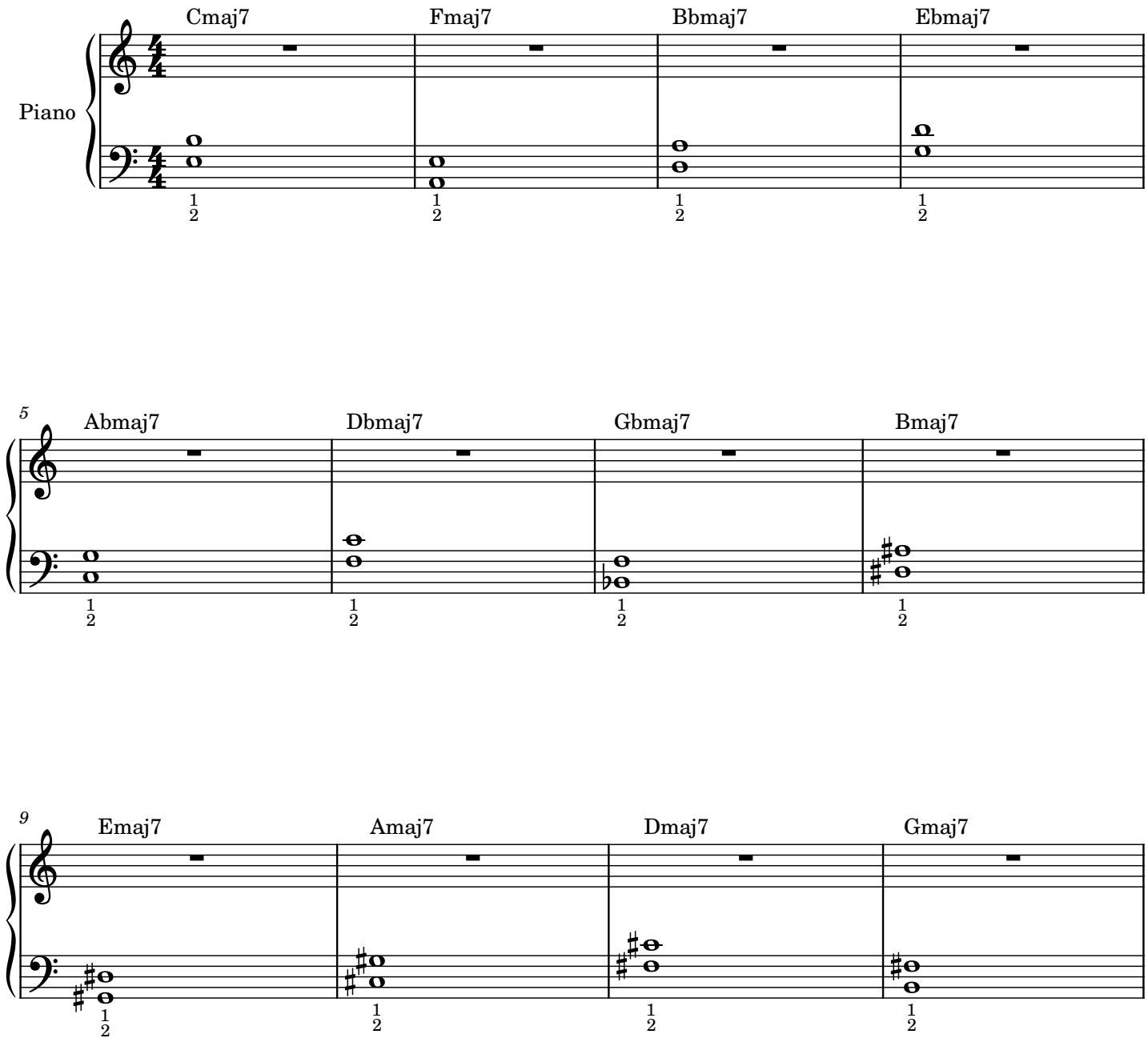
Level 12 - LH 5 To Lower Shell Tone



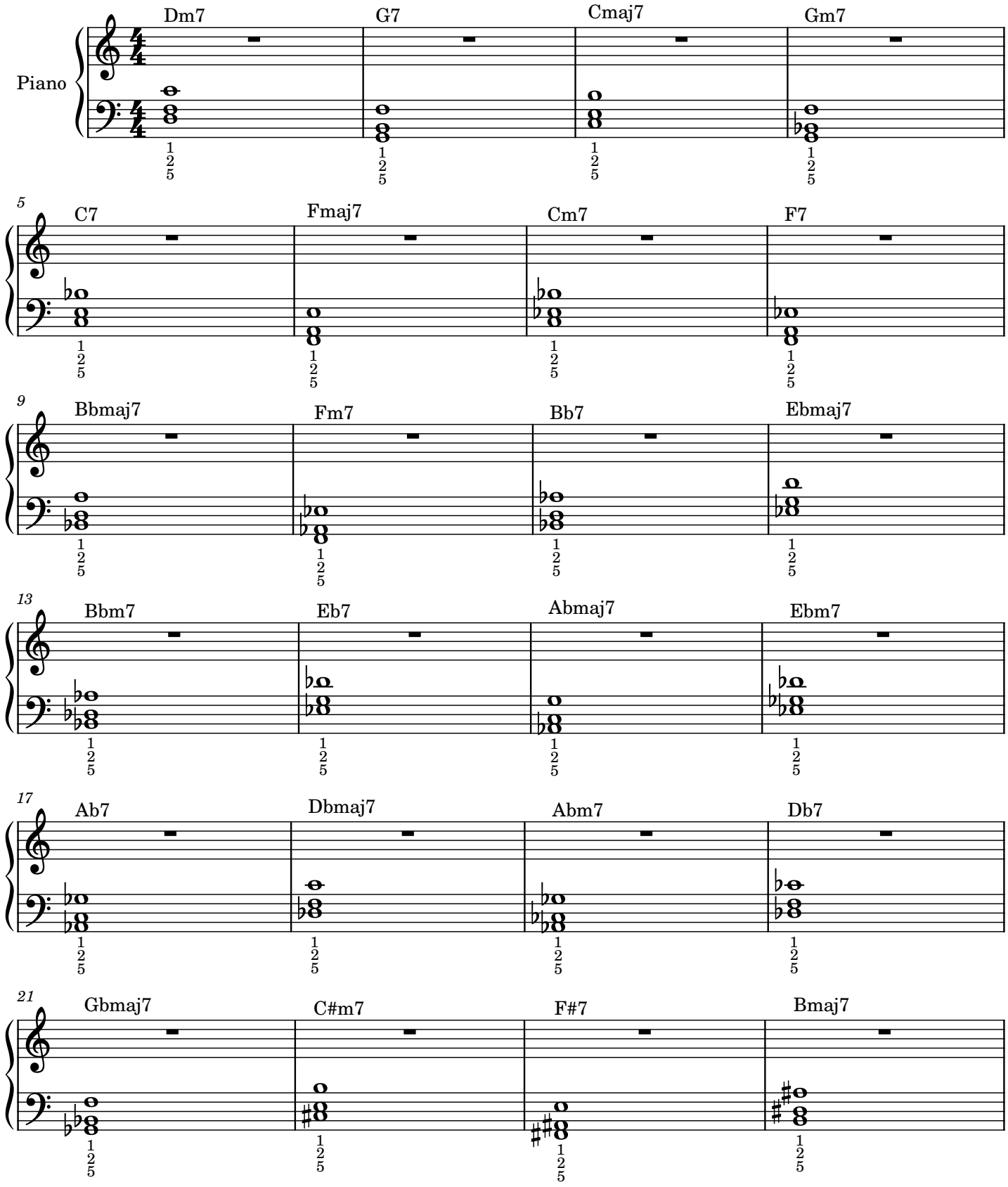
Level 12 - LH 5 To Upper Shell Tone

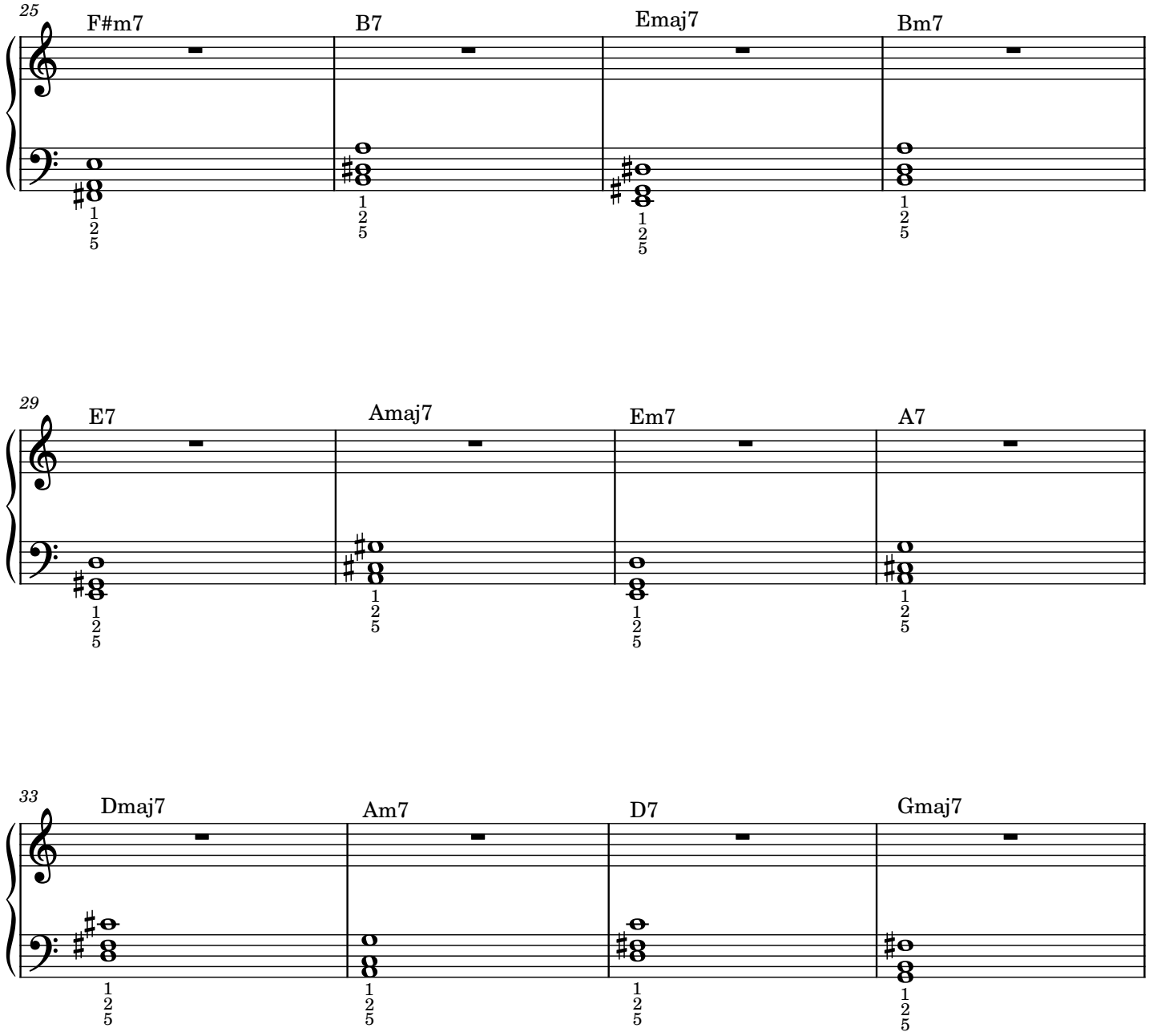


Level 12 - LH Shell-Only 2-1 Map



Level 12 - LH Anchor Plus Shell - Path A

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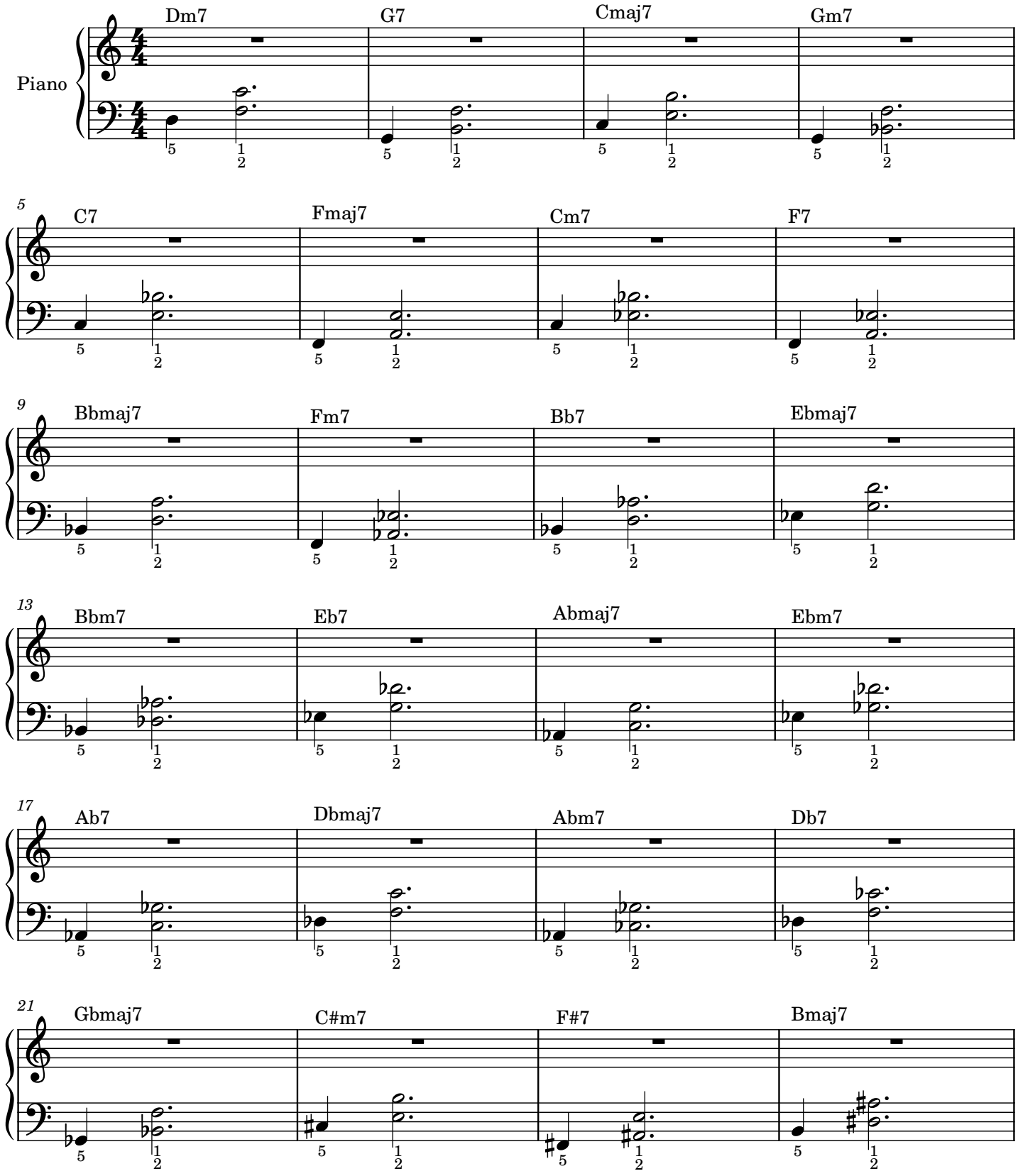
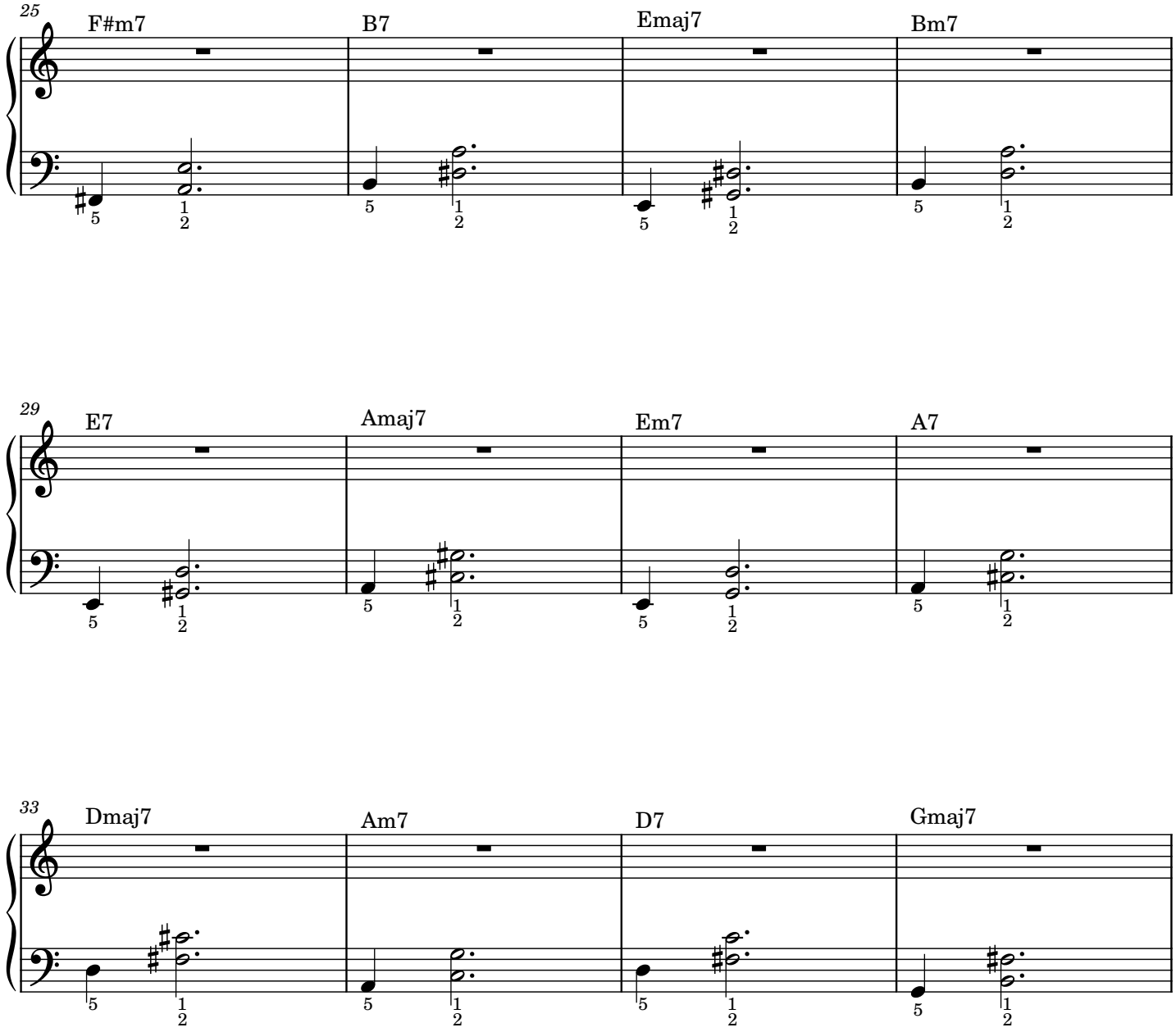
F#m7
B7
Emaj7
Bm7
29
E7
Amaj7
Em7
A7
33
Dmaj7
Am7
D7
Gmaj7

Level 12 - LH Root Then Shell Mini-Stride - Path A

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Emaj7
Bm7
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E7
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Em7
A7
33
Dmaj7
Am7
D7
Gmaj7

Level 13

Left-Hand Shells + Right-Hand Roots

Chapter Instructions

Left-Hand Shells + Right-Hand Roots

Move the shell responsibility into the left hand

What this teaches: This section transfers the guide tones into the left hand while the right hand plays roots. It is not yet full comping; it is a controlled hand-role switch that lets the left hand own the shell shapes.

How To Practice

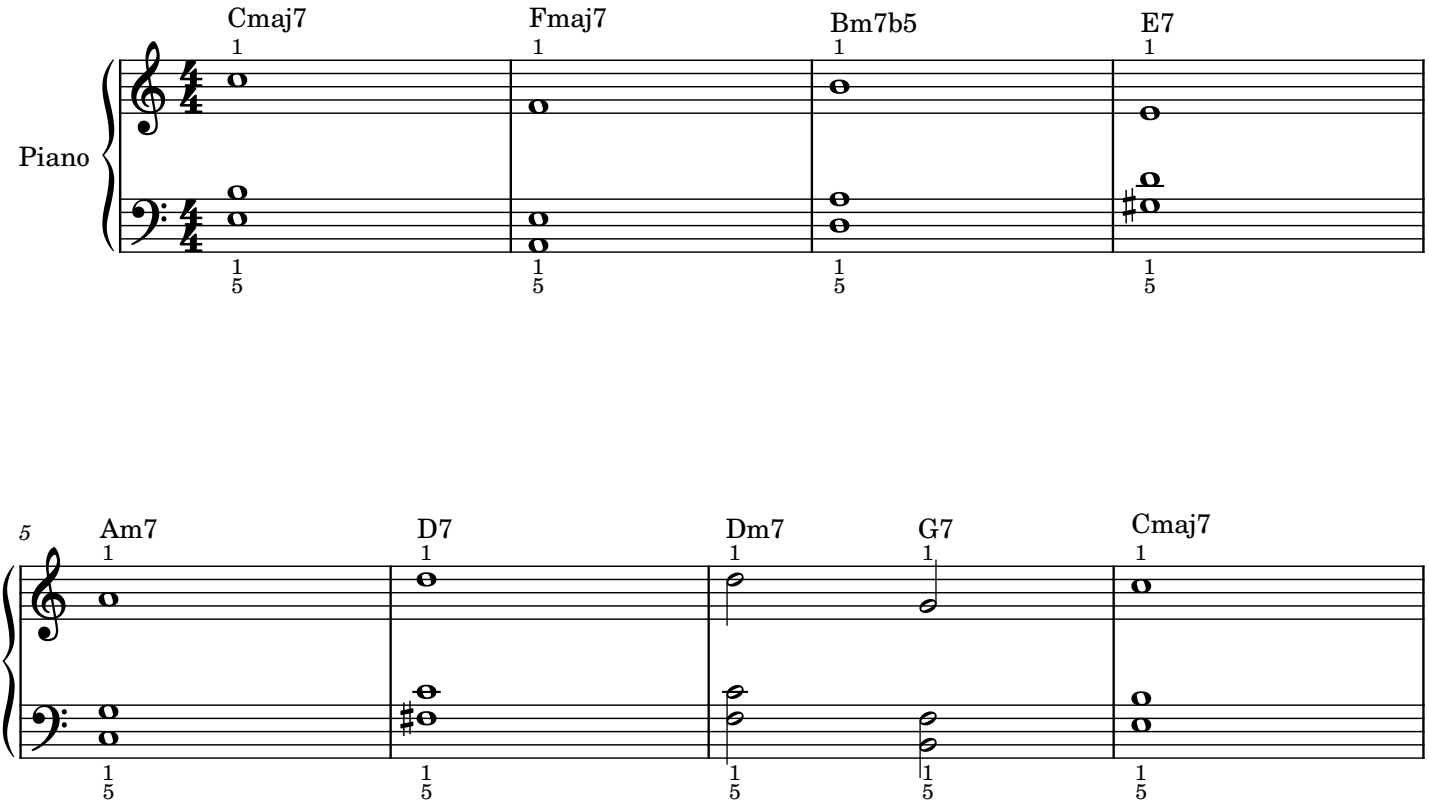
- Start with Fall Flowers shells plus right-hand roots.
- Repeat the circle drills by quality.
- Practice quality contrast with left-hand shells.
- Apply Path A and Path B to ii-V-I.

What To Notice

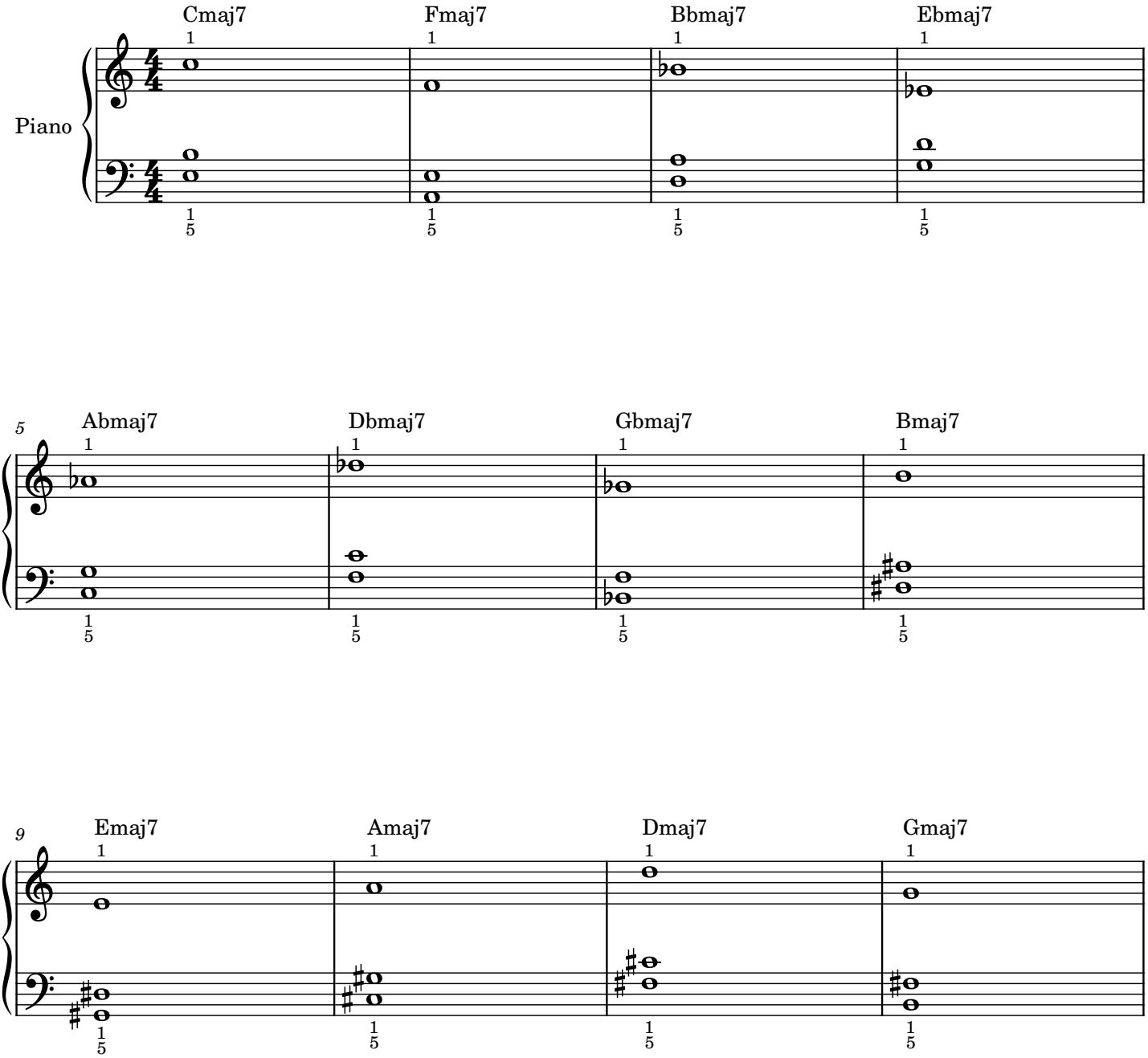
- Does the left hand know 3-7 and 7-3 without help?
- Can the right hand root stay light?
- Which shell direction feels more natural in the left hand?

Checkpoint: Play one full quality around the circle with left-hand shells only.

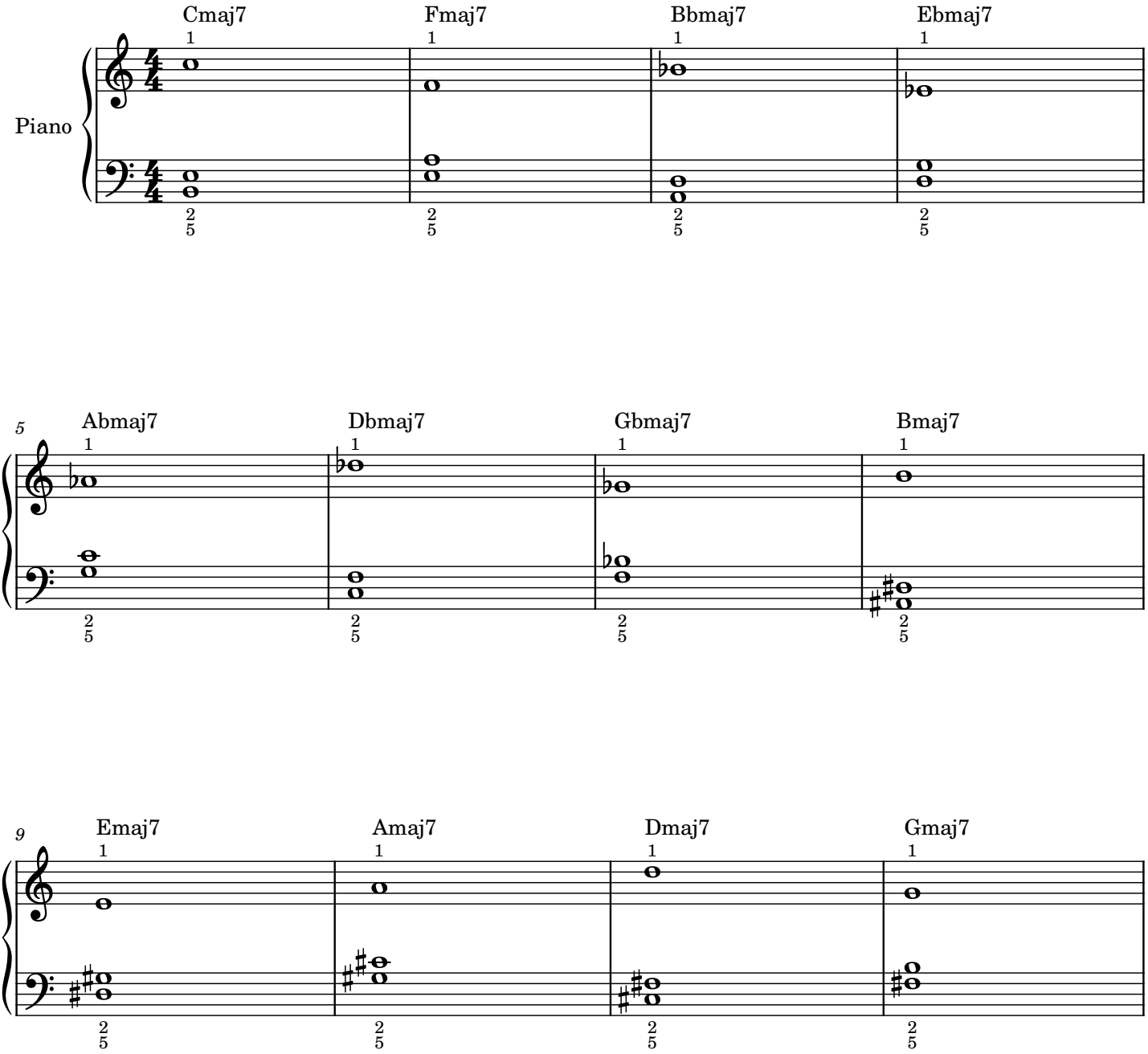
Level 13 - Fall Flowers - LH Shells + RH Roots



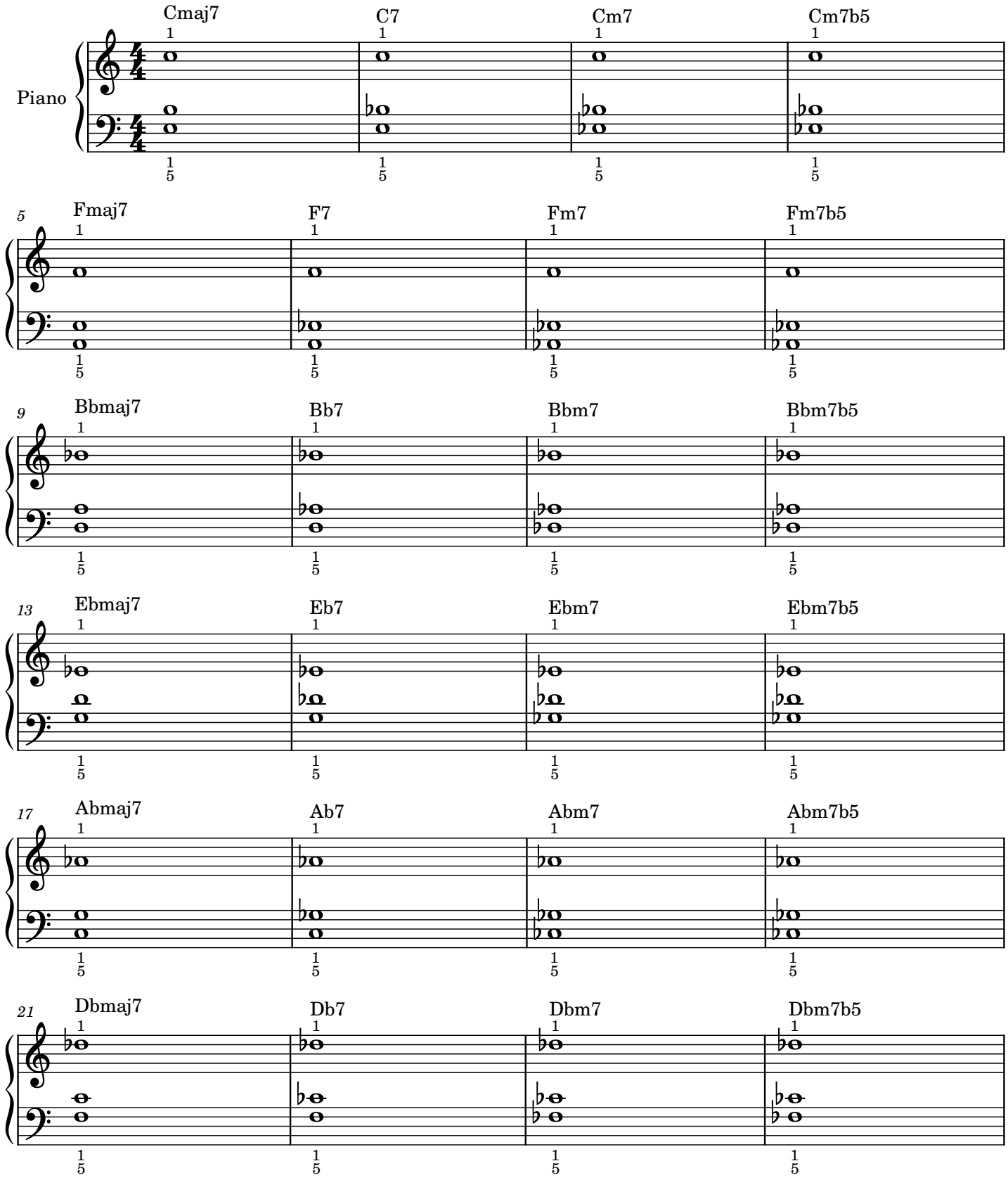
Level 13 - Circle - LH Shells + RH Roots - 3-7

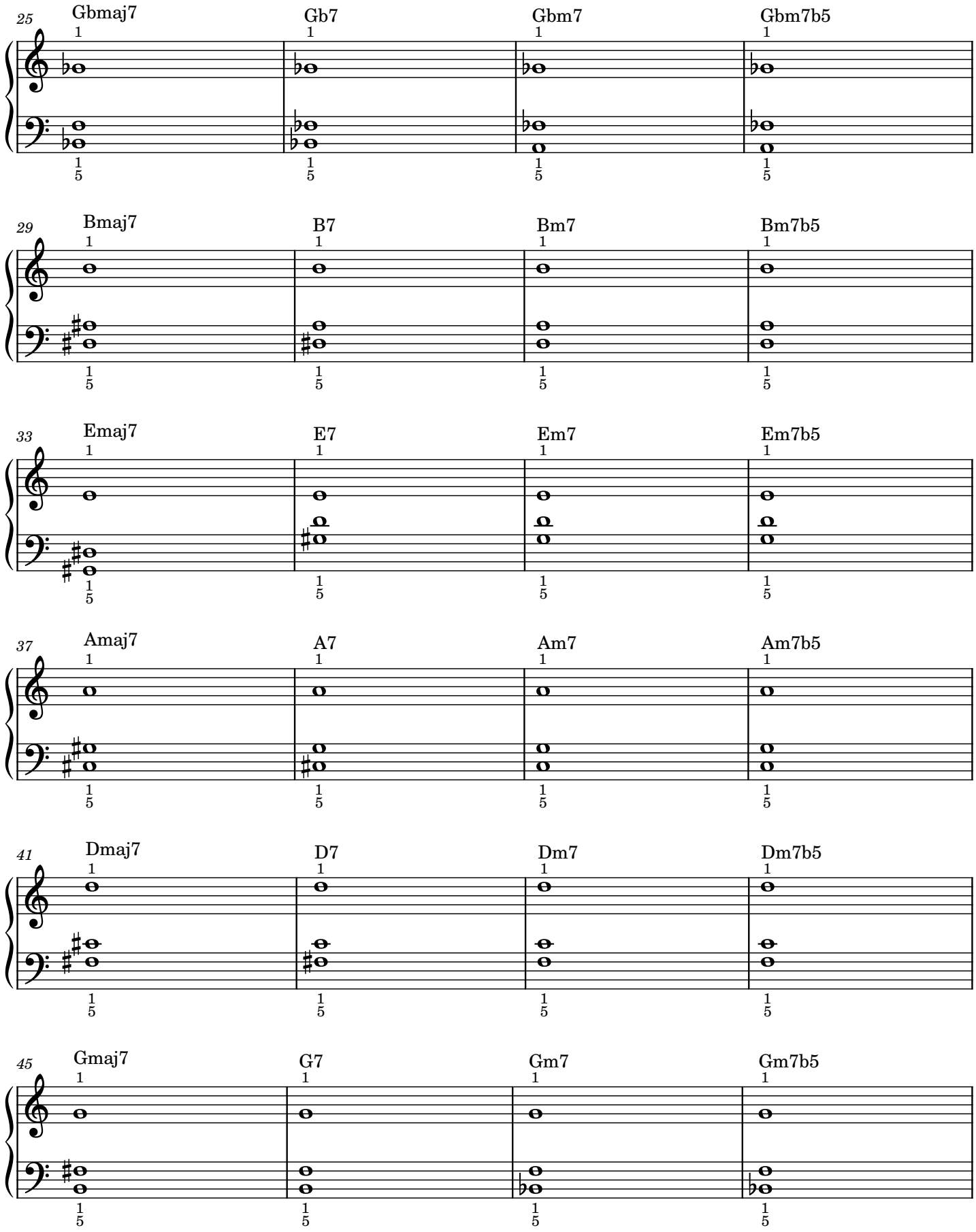


Level 13 - Circle - LH Shells + RH Roots - 7-3



Level 13 - Quality Contrast - LH Shells + RH Roots - 3-7

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Gbm7b5
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Bm7b5
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Em7
Em7b5
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Amaj7
A7
Am7
Am7b5
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Dmaj7
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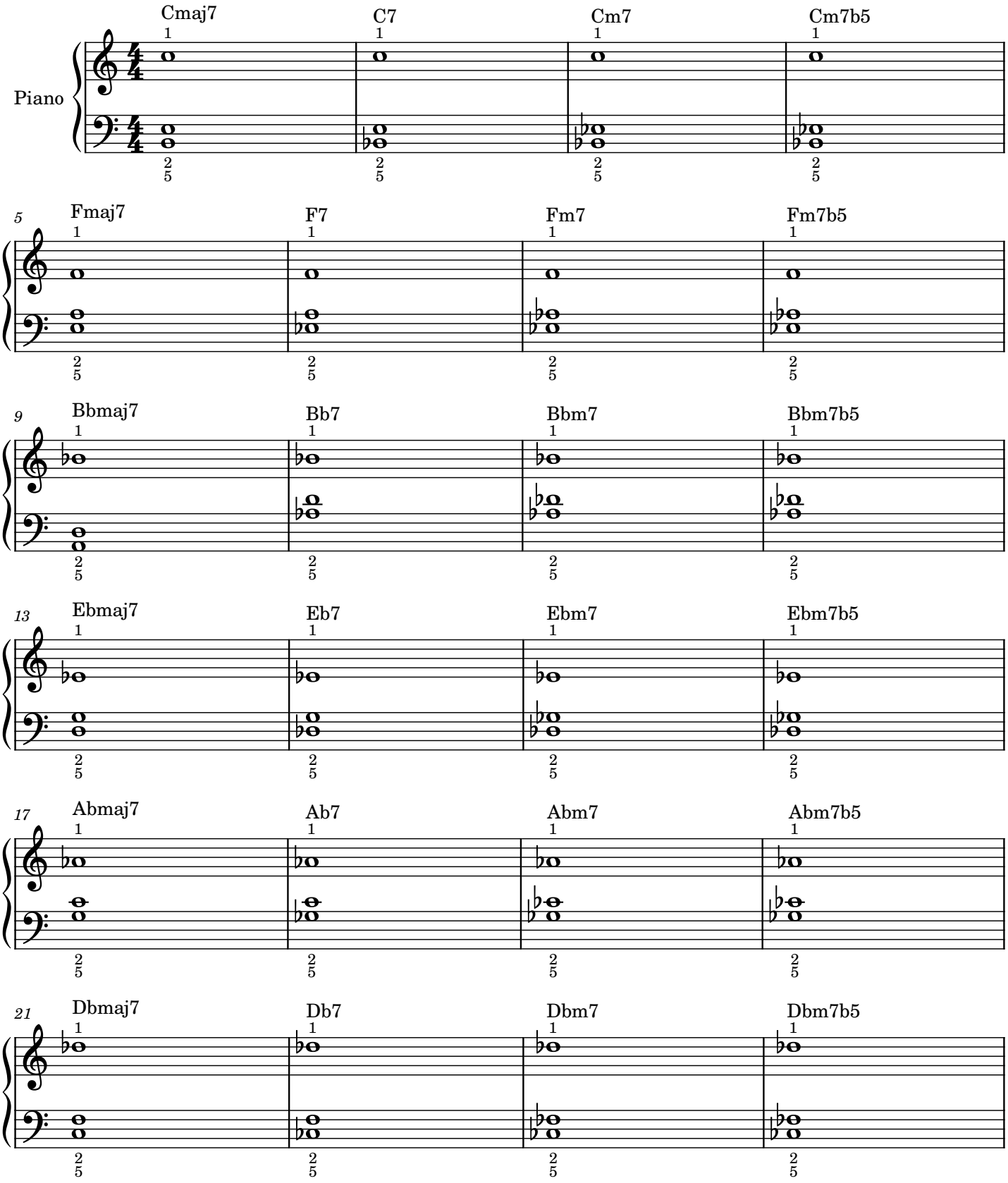
Gm7
Gm7b5

Level 13 - Quality Contrast - LH Shells + RH Roots - 7-3



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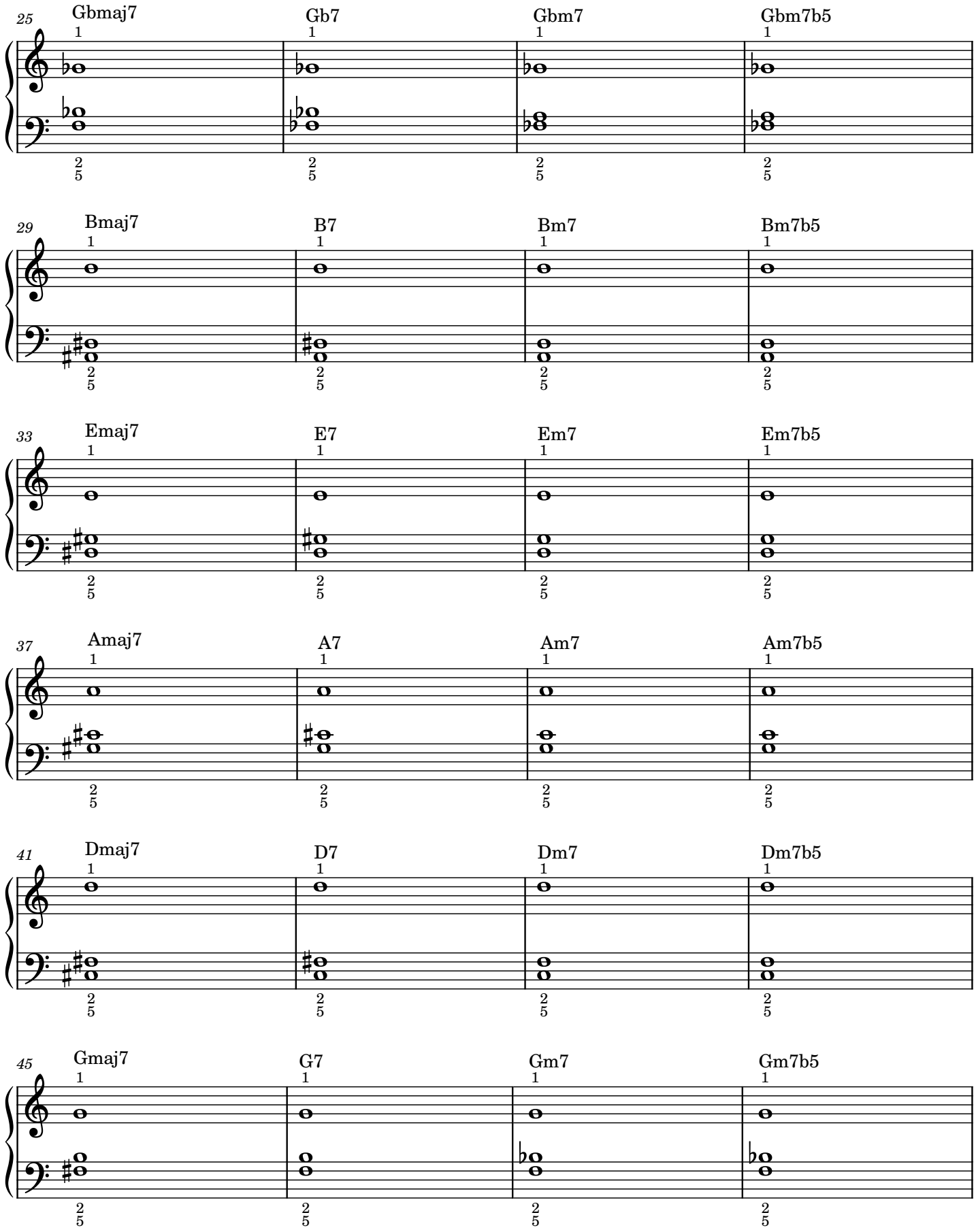
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Em7
Em7b5
37
Amaj7
A7
Am7
Am7b5
41
Dmaj7
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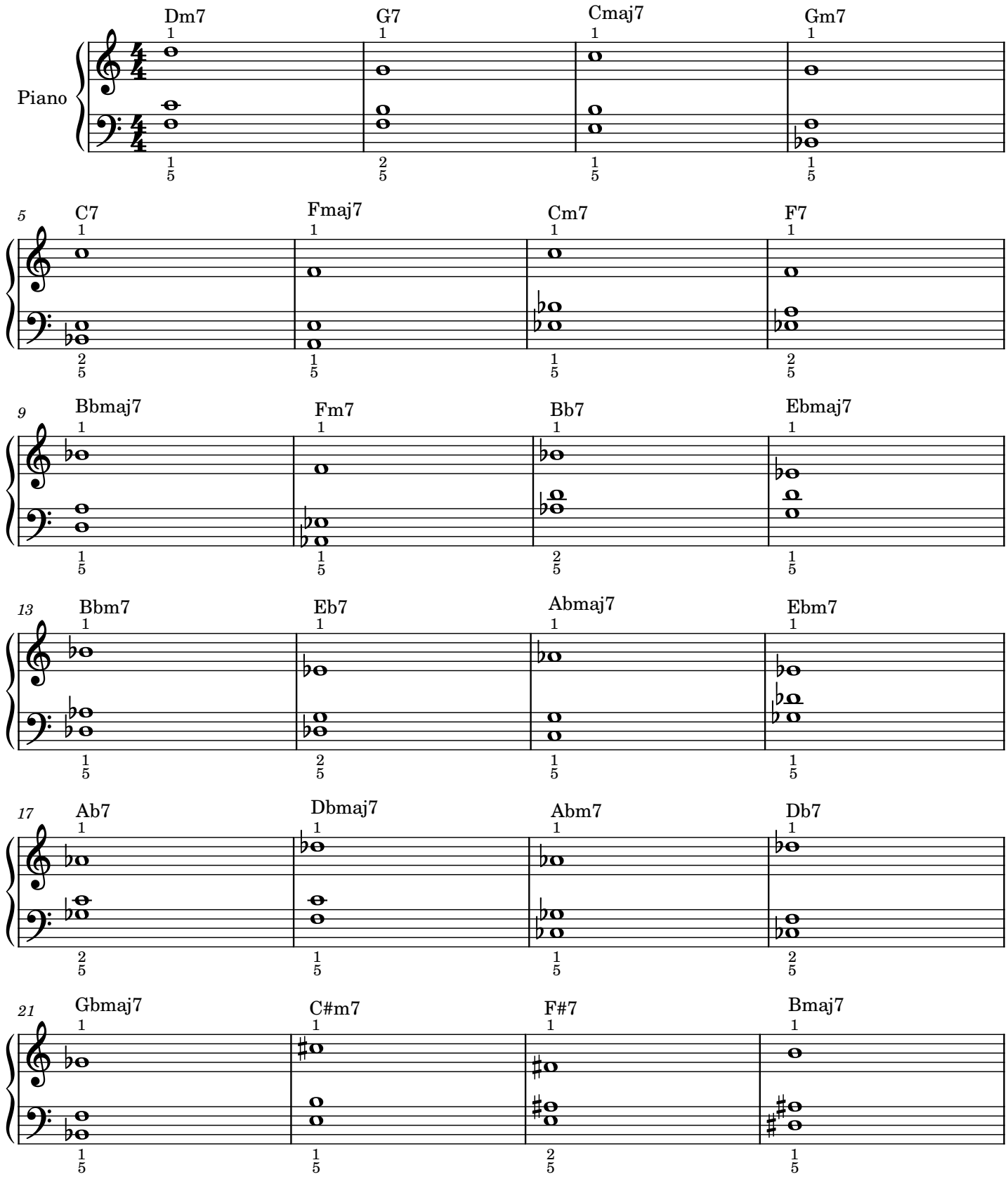
Gm7b5

Level 13 - ii-V-I Shells + RH Roots - Path A



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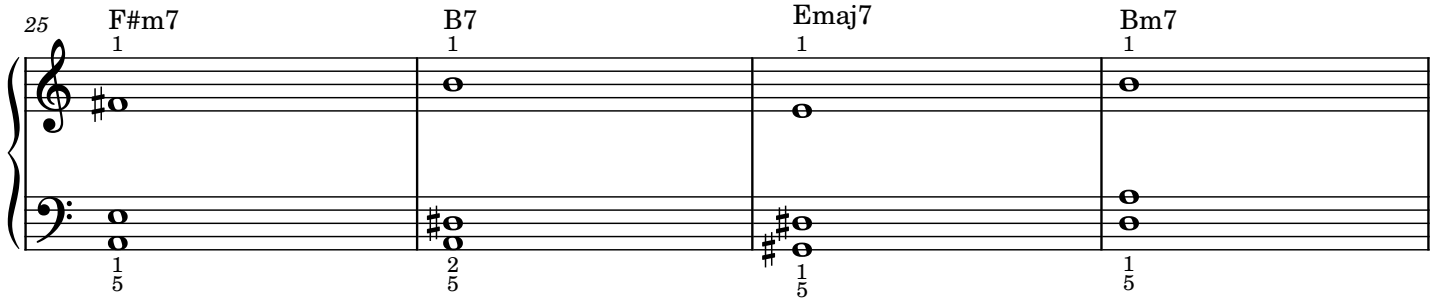
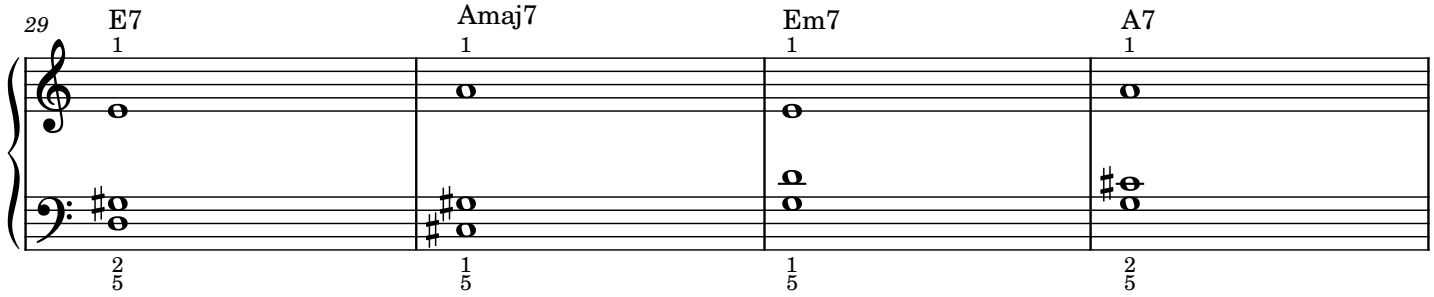
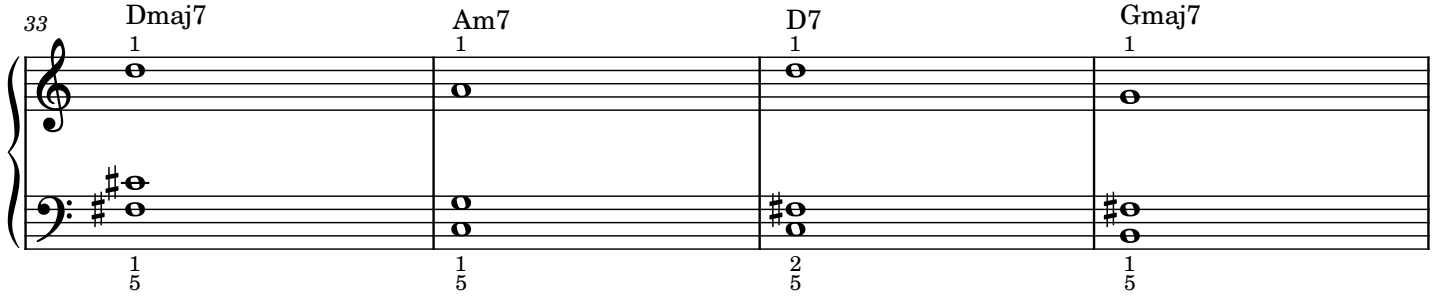






Level 14

Left-Hand Shells + One Right-Hand Harmony Note

Chapter Instructions

Left-Hand Shells + One Right-Hand Harmony Note

Add harmony without adding a full melody yet

What this teaches: This section adds one right-hand harmony note above left-hand shells. The root and fifth are the first added notes because they are common, useful, and easy to hear against the shell.

Memory hook: Root names it. Fifth stabilizes it. Shell defines it.

How To Practice

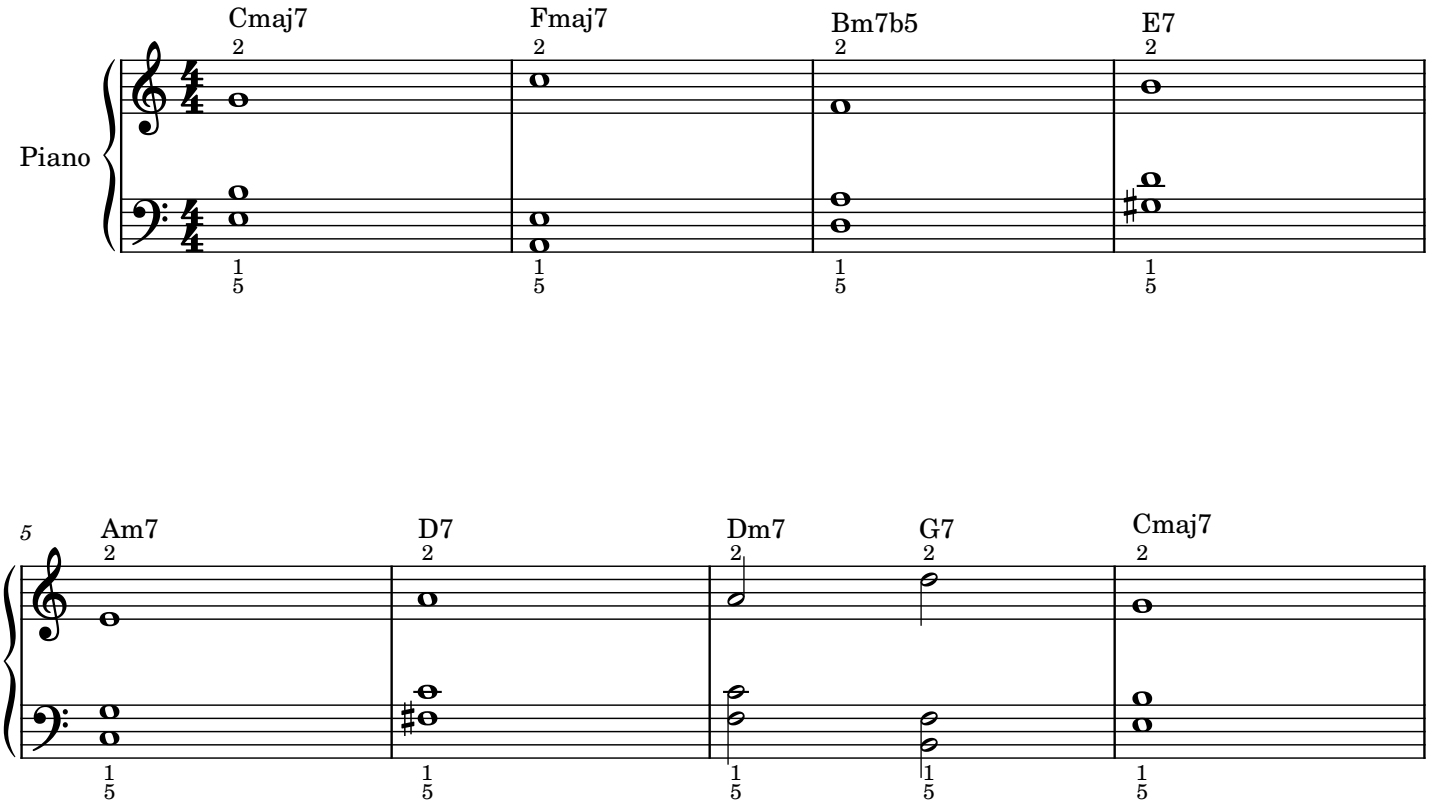
- Start with Fall Flowers shells plus root.
- Repeat with shells plus fifth.
- Practice circle drills by quality.
- Use beat-one-only and phrase-ending pages before busier rhythms.

What To Notice

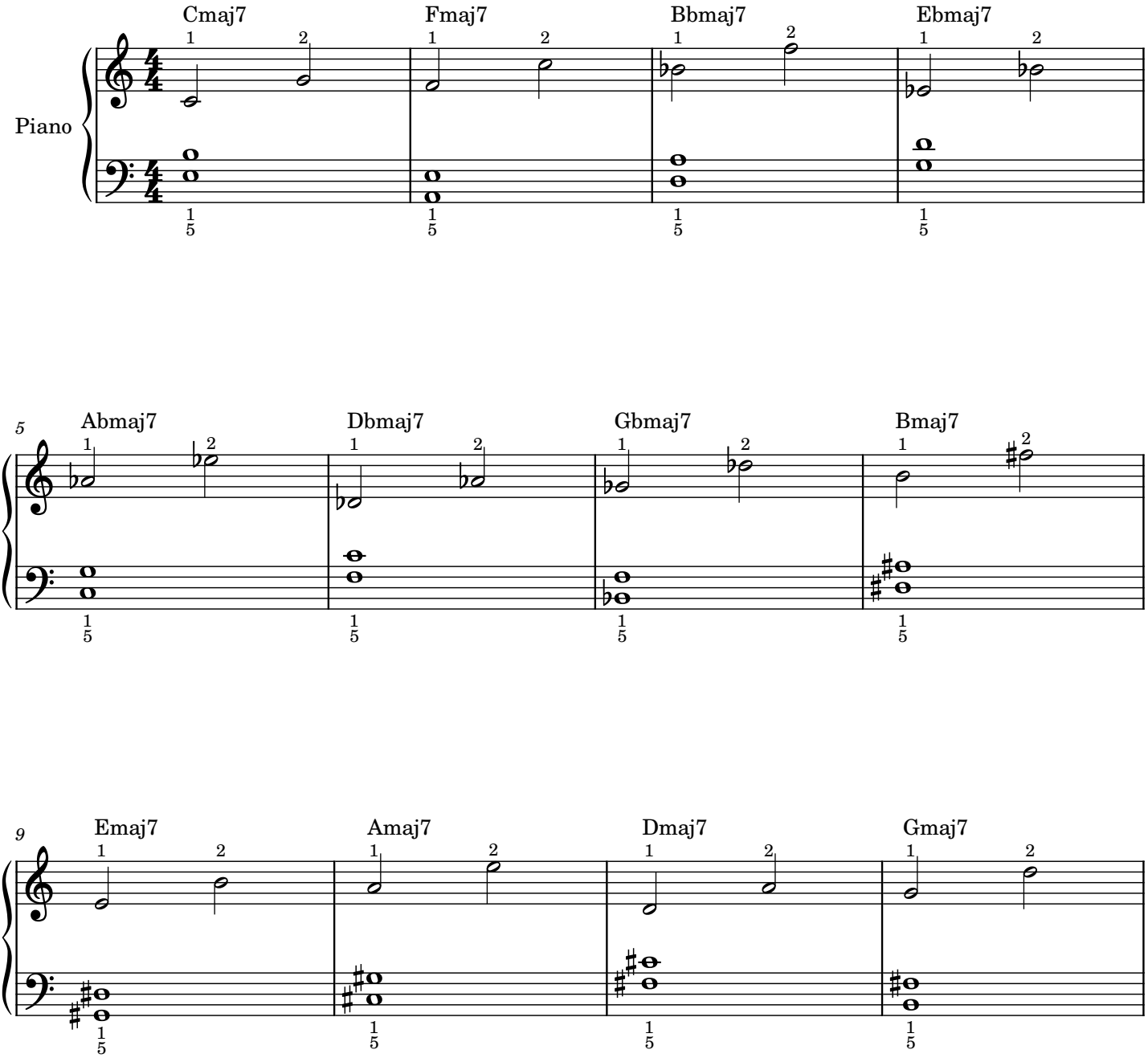
- Does the added right-hand note clarify or clutter the sound?
- Where does m7b5 make the fifth matter?
- Can the right hand stay relaxed above the shell?
- Play m7 with and without the fifth. Listen carefully to how it sounds with and without the fifth. Then compare it to the m7b5. The difference is subtle, but it's important for you to be able to hear the quality different between m7 with the fifth, m7 without the fifth, and m5b5. So play these three many times with different roots and different inversions so you can start to notice the difference.

Checkpoint: Play a left-hand shell and add only one right-hand note on purpose.

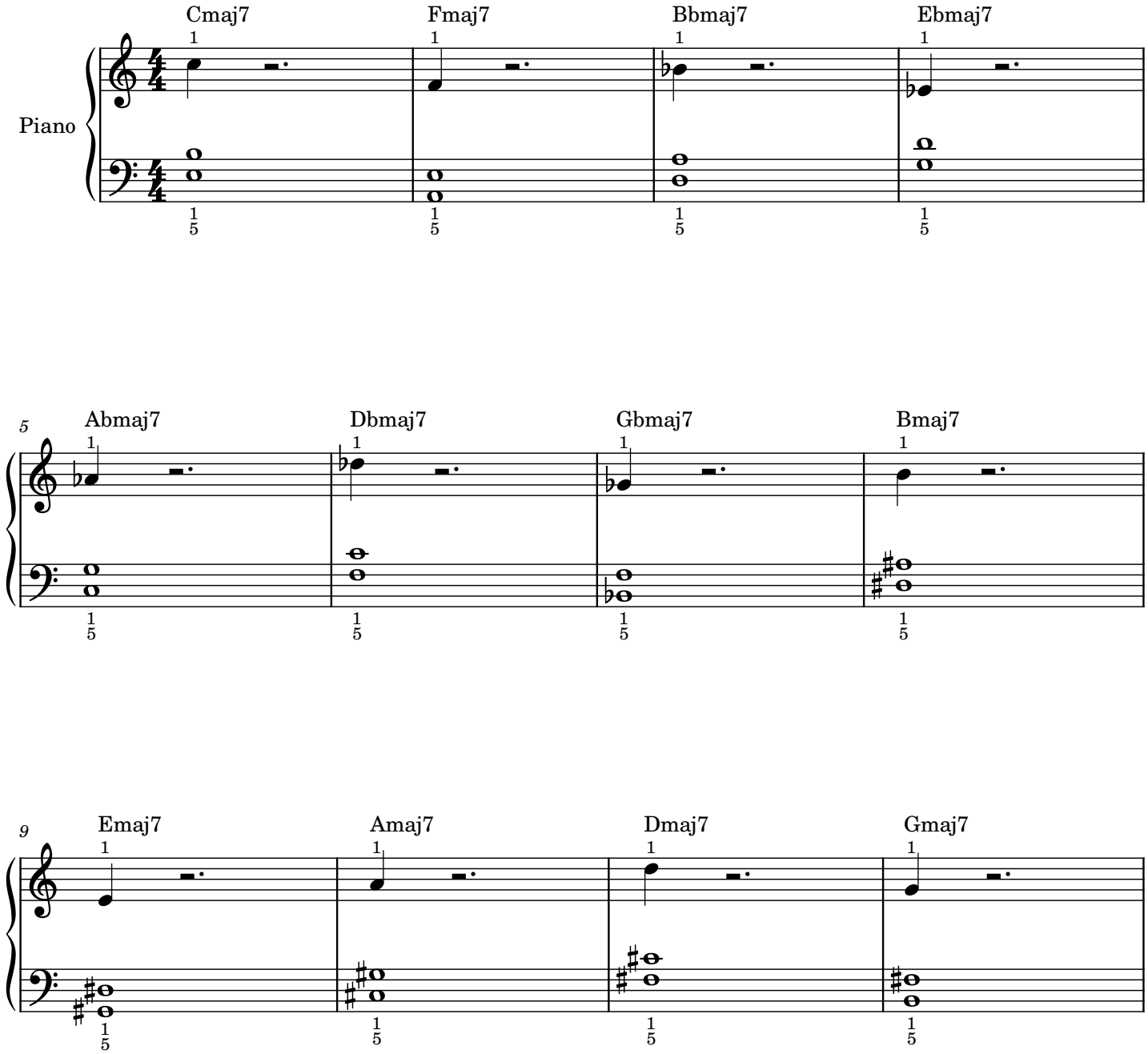
Level 14 - Fall Flowers - LH Shells + RH Fifth



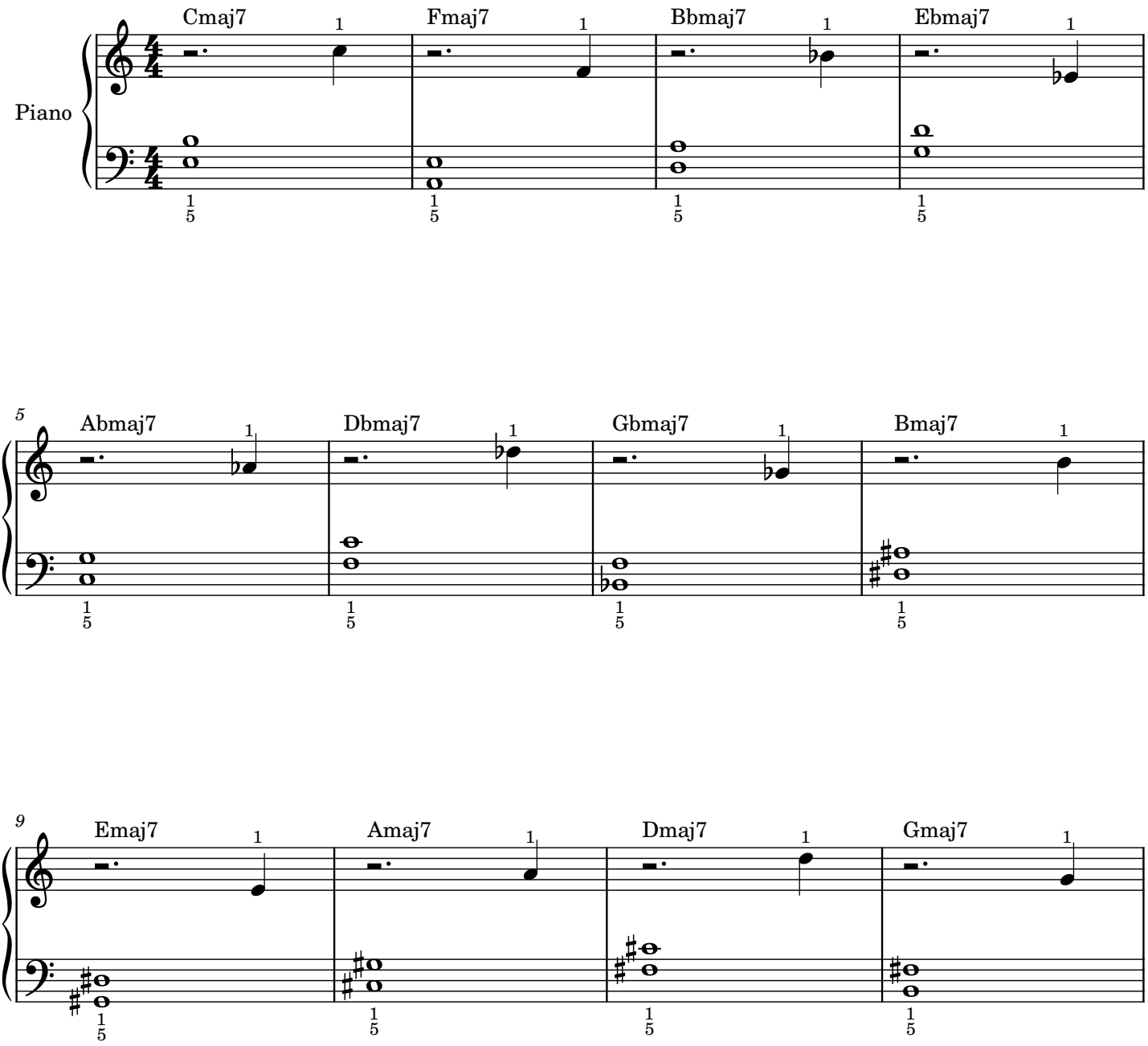
Level 14 - Alternating RH Root and Fifth



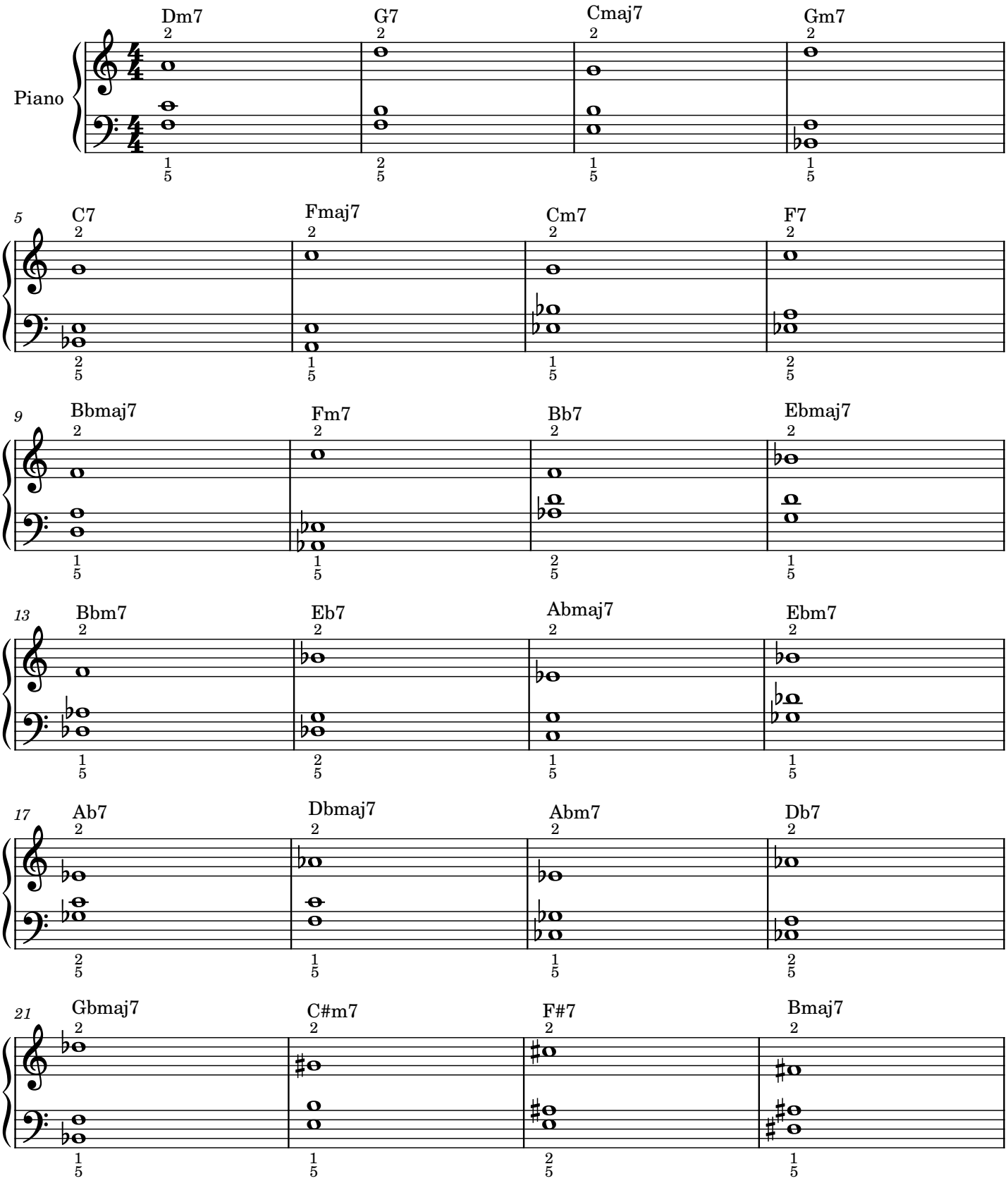
Level 14 - RH Root on Beat 1



Level 14 - RH Root at Phrase Endings



Level 14 - ii-V-I - LH Shells + RH Fifth - Path A



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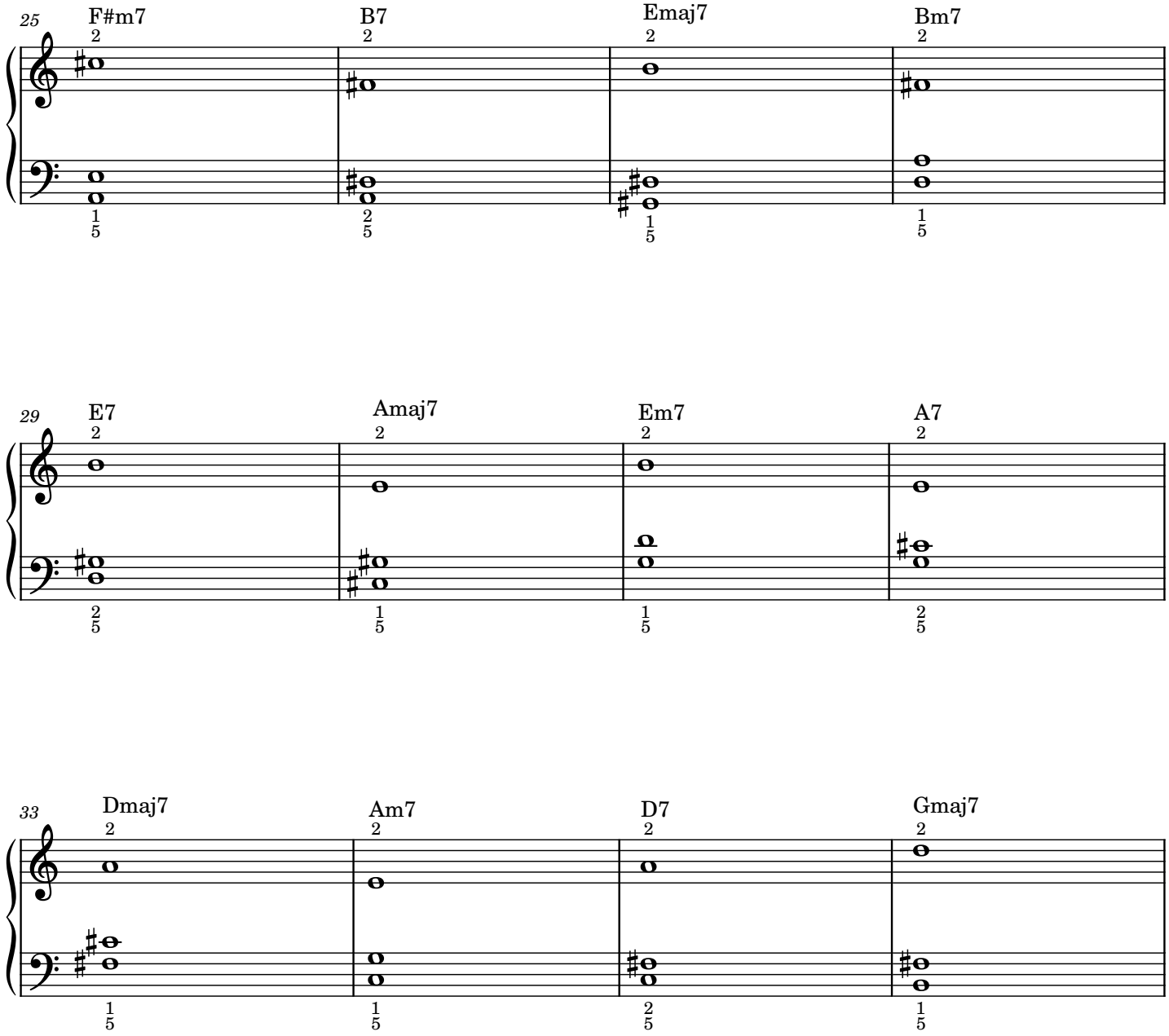


Level 15

Fall Flowers Shells + Melody Fingering Upgrade

Chapter Instructions

Fall Flowers Shells + Melody Fingering Upgrade

Test the melody fingerings against left-hand shells

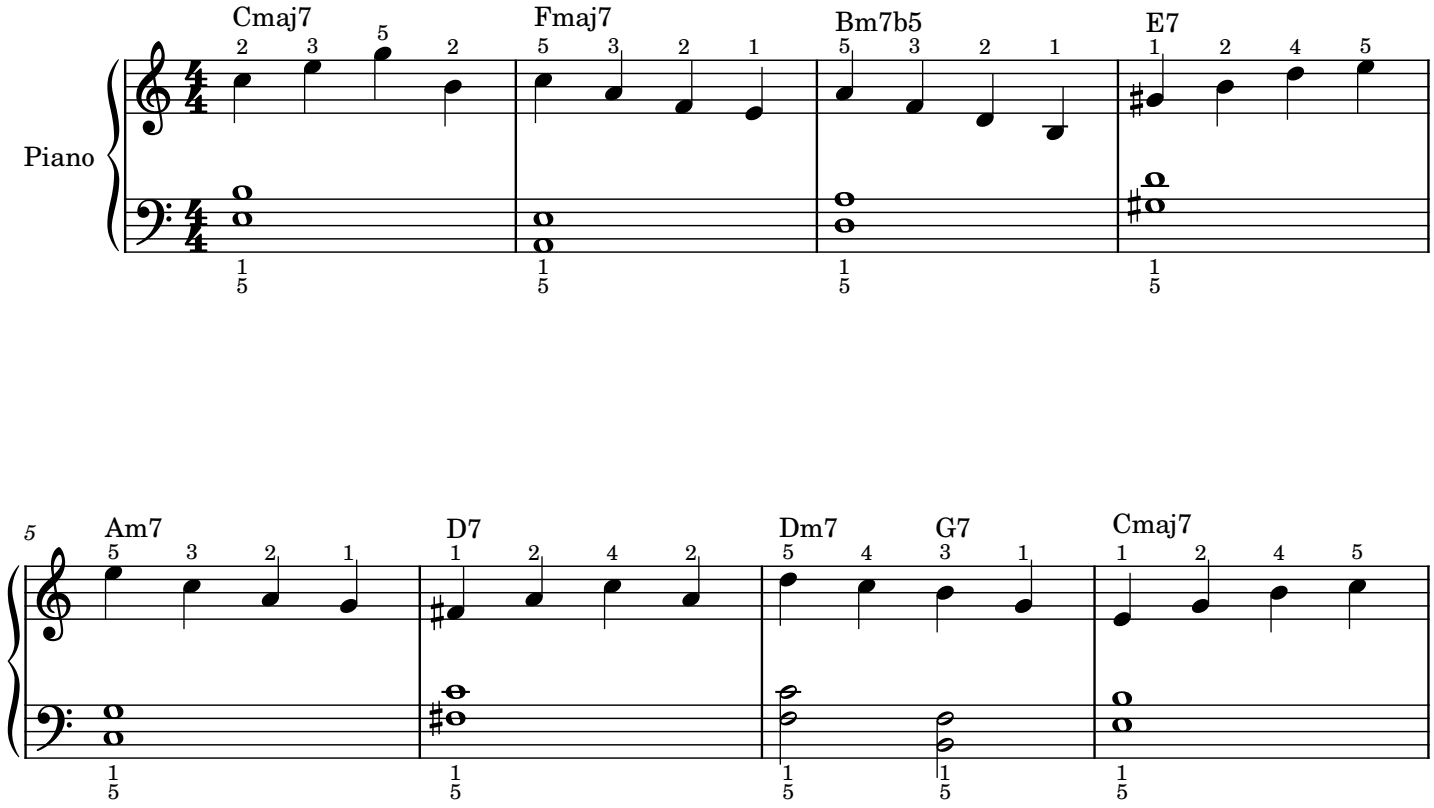
What this teaches: This section returns to the Fall Flowers melody from the melody-fingering level. The point is to find out which fingerings still work once the left hand is playing shells instead of roots..

How To Practice

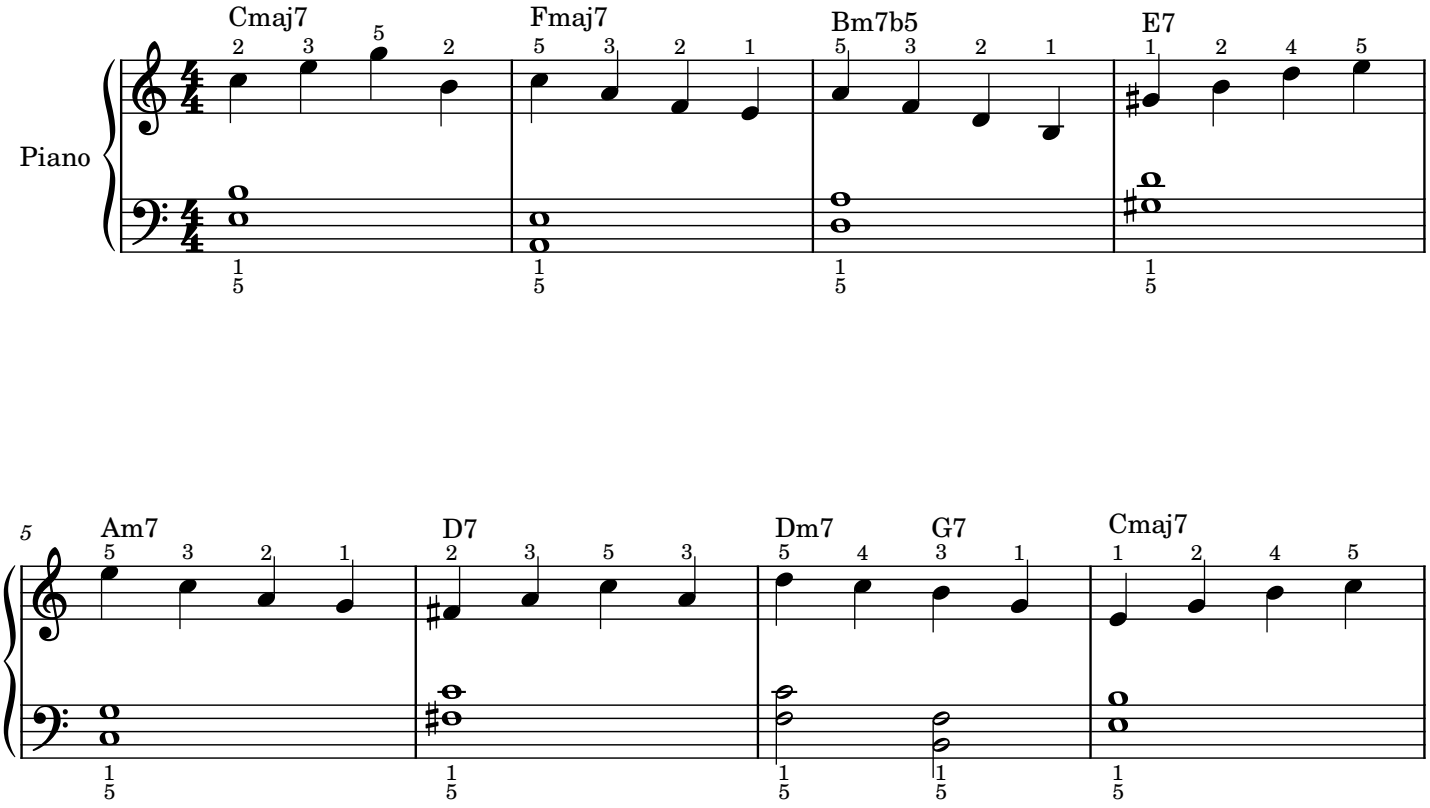
- Play the melody alone with the harmony-prep fingering.
- Add left-hand shells slowly.
- Mark any spots where the melody fingering breaks.
- Try the alternate fingering from the melody-fingering level at those spots.

Checkpoint: Play the full Fall Flowers melody with left-hand shells at a slow steady tempo.

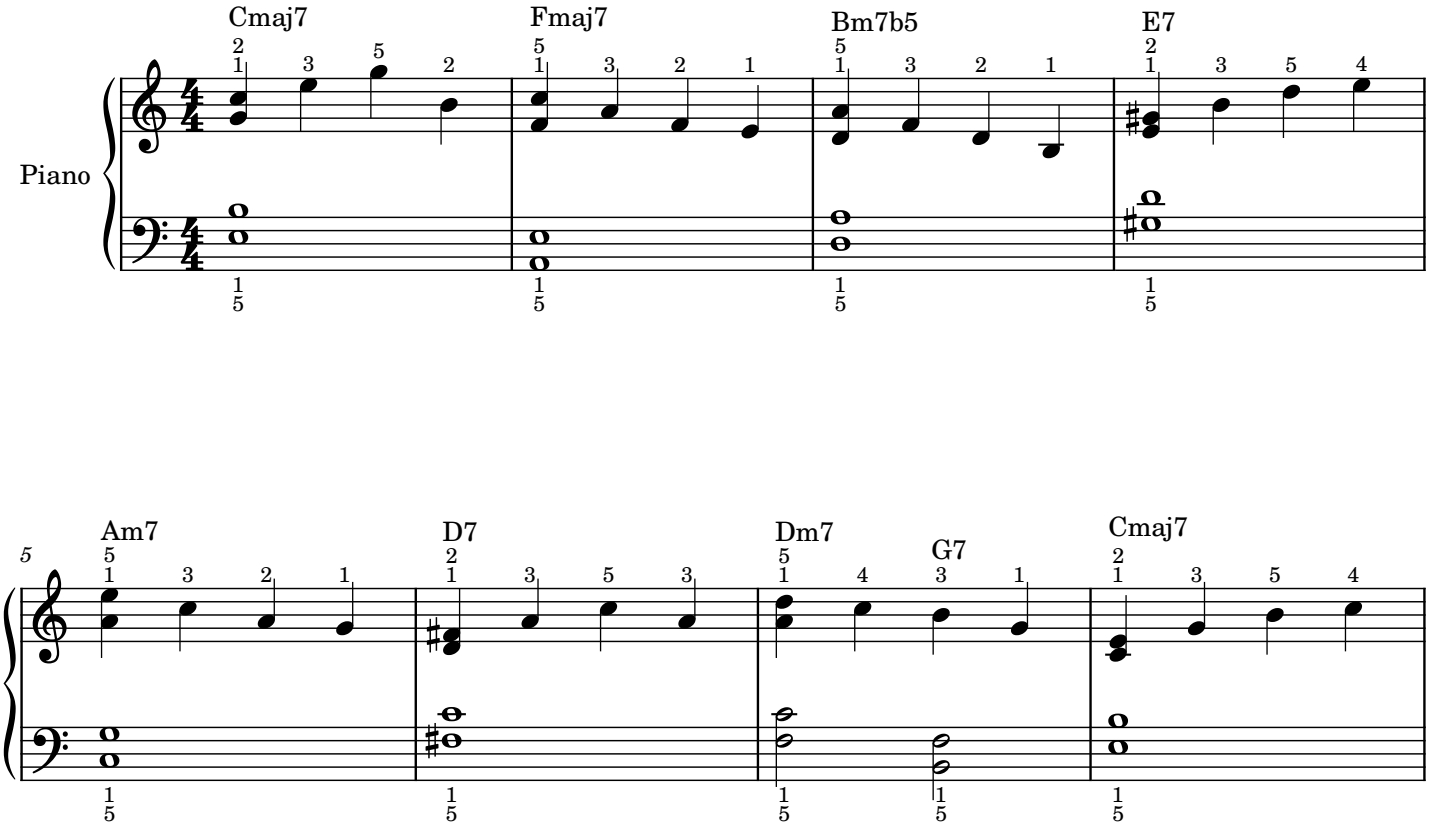
Level 15 - Fall Flowers - Shells + Melody Fingering



Level 15 - Fall Flowers - Shells + Melody Hand Split



Level 15 - Fall Flowers - Shells + Support Note



Level 16

Shell Rhythm Cells

Chapter Instructions

Shell Rhythm Cells

Turn shells into comping rhythms before adding more notes

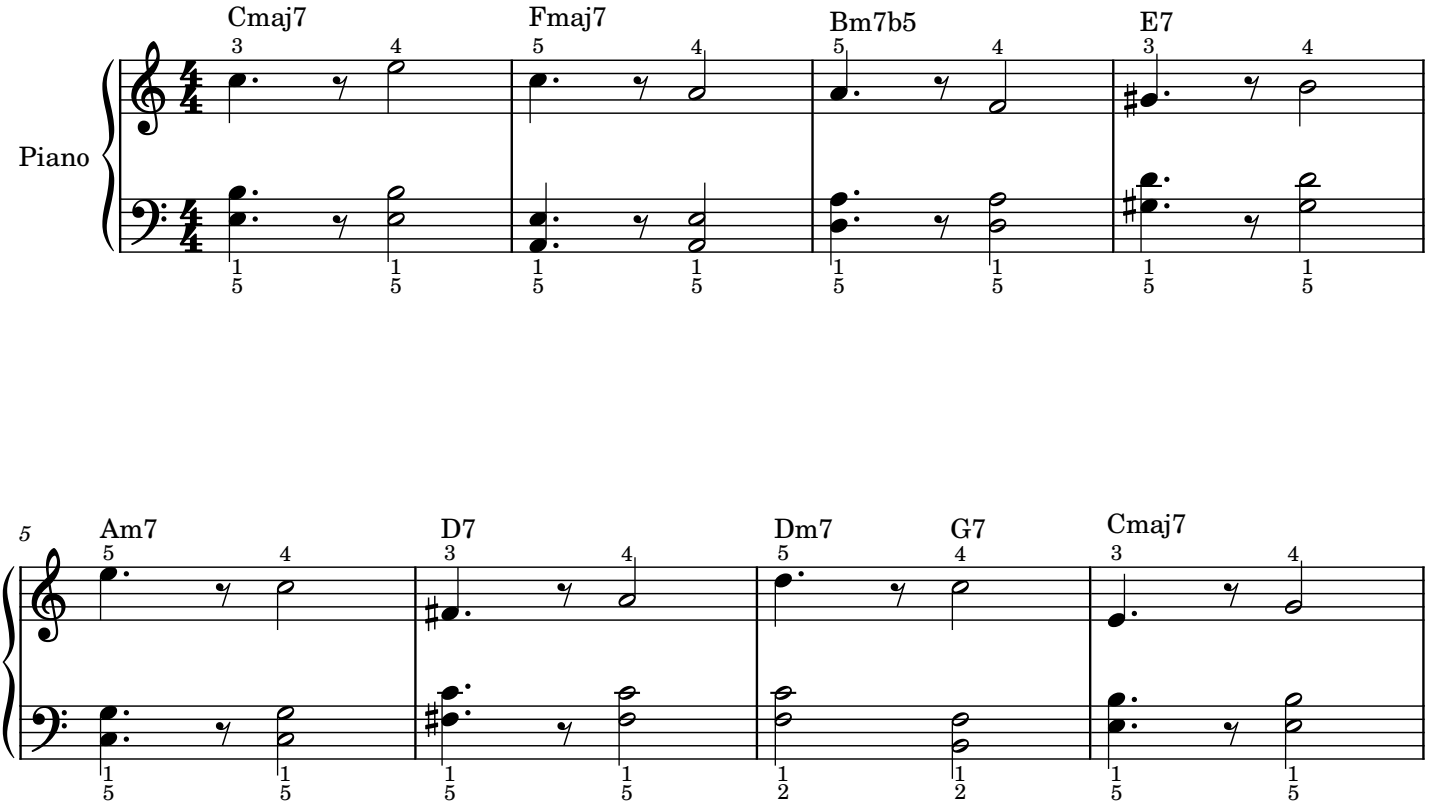
What this teaches: This section applies the rhythm cells from the earlier rhythm-cell level to left-hand shells. The right hand adds only one harmony note at first, then a tiny melody fragment, so rhythm becomes part of the shell texture without turning into open improvisation yet.

How To Practice

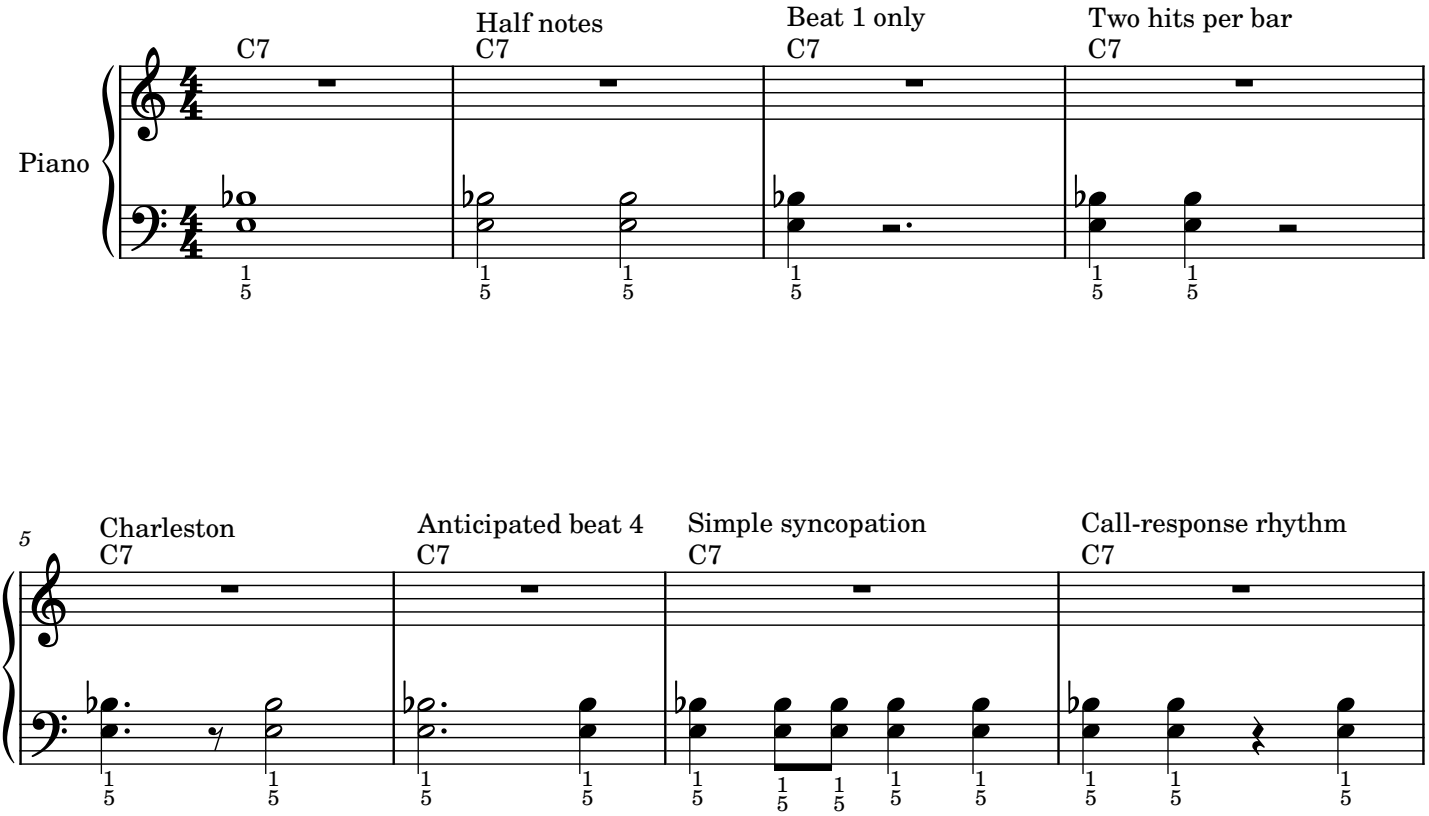
- Play left-hand shells through the rhythm ladder.
- Practice Charleston with shells around the circle.
- Add only a right-hand root on beat 1.
- Repeat with only a right-hand fifth.
- Use the melody-fragment page as the bridge into tune rhythm.

Checkpoint: Play a Charleston shell pattern while adding one right-hand note on purpose.

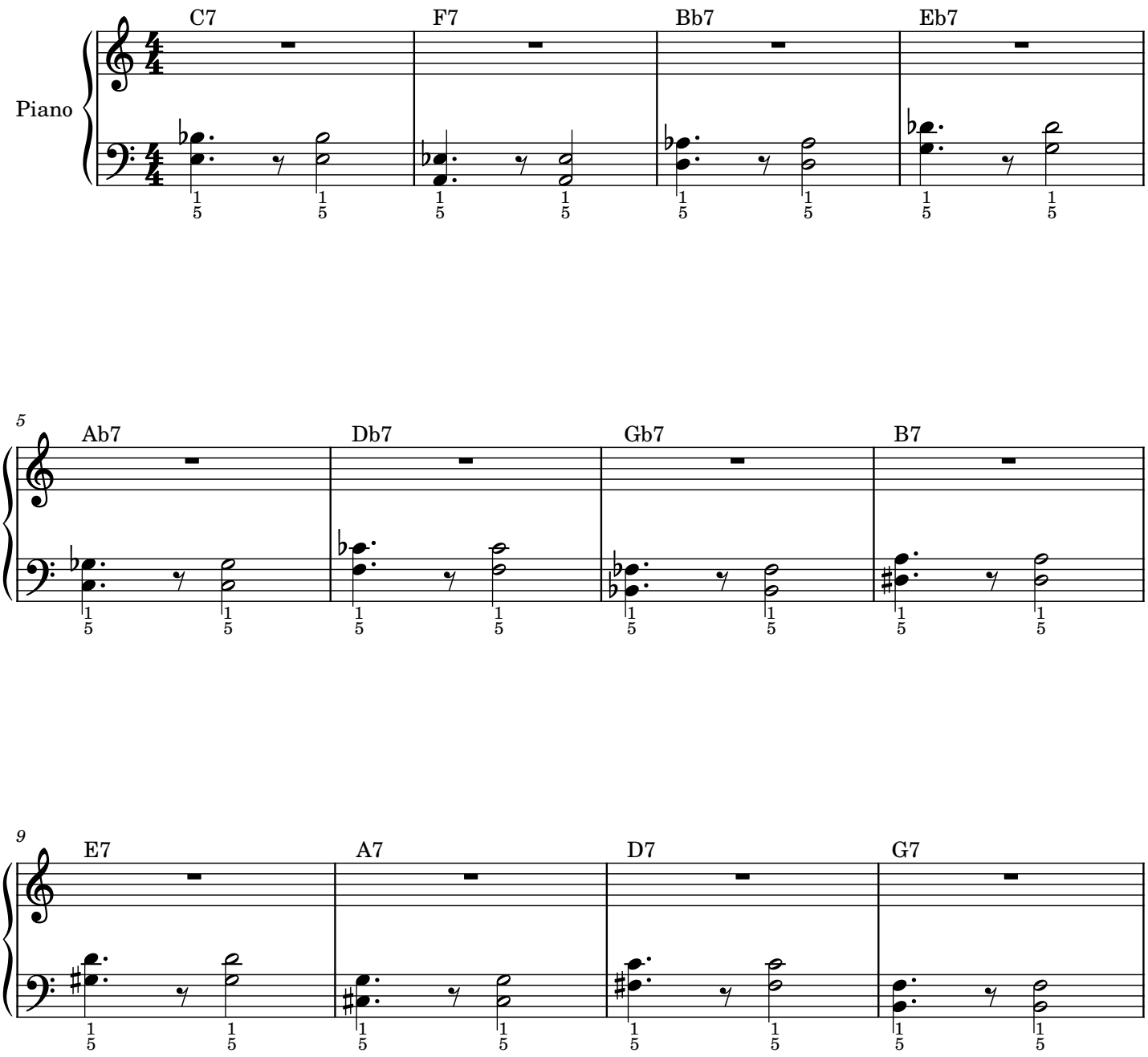
Level 16 - Fall Flowers - Shell Rhythm + Melody Fragment



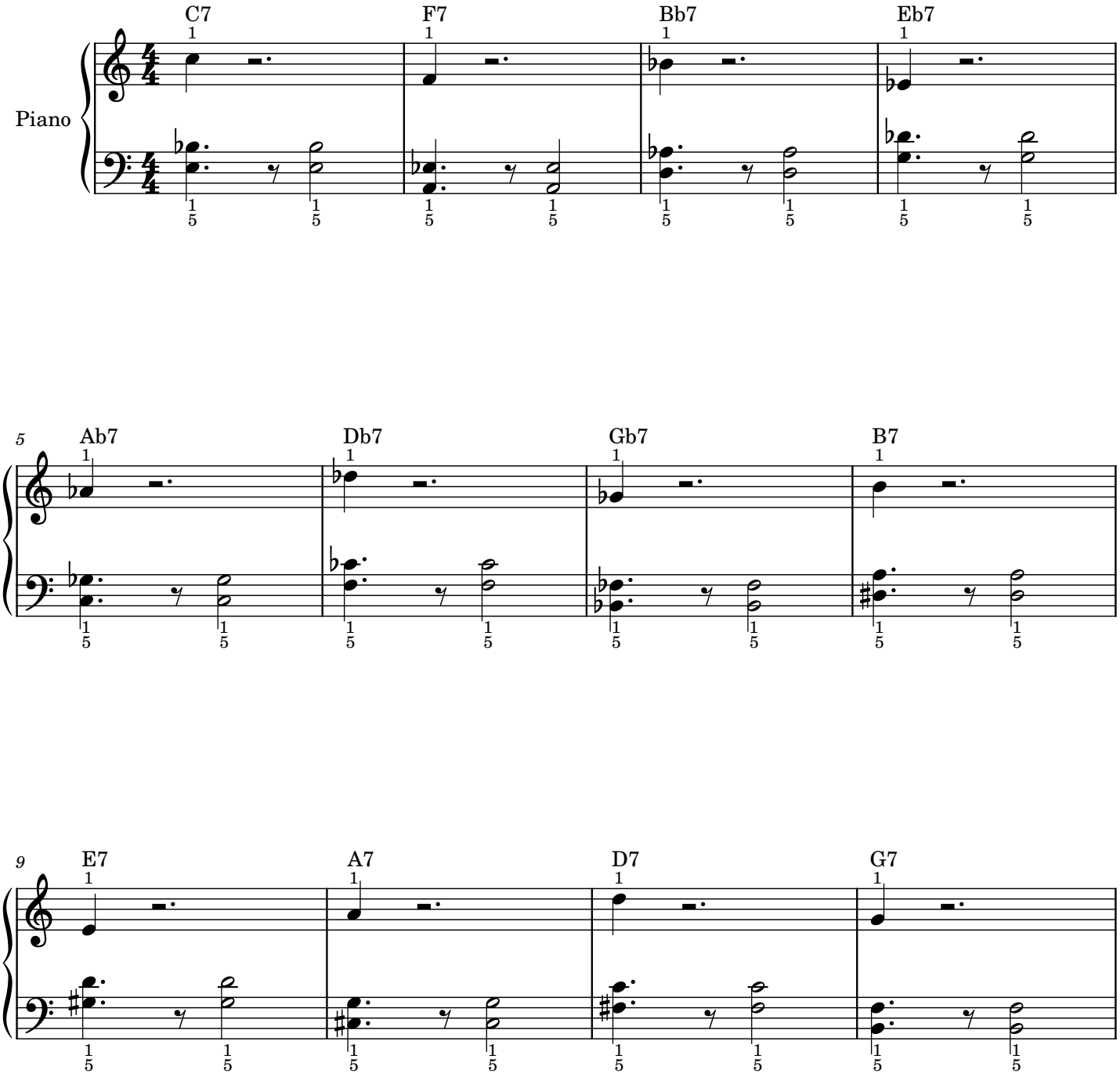
Level 16 - LH Shell Rhythm Ladder



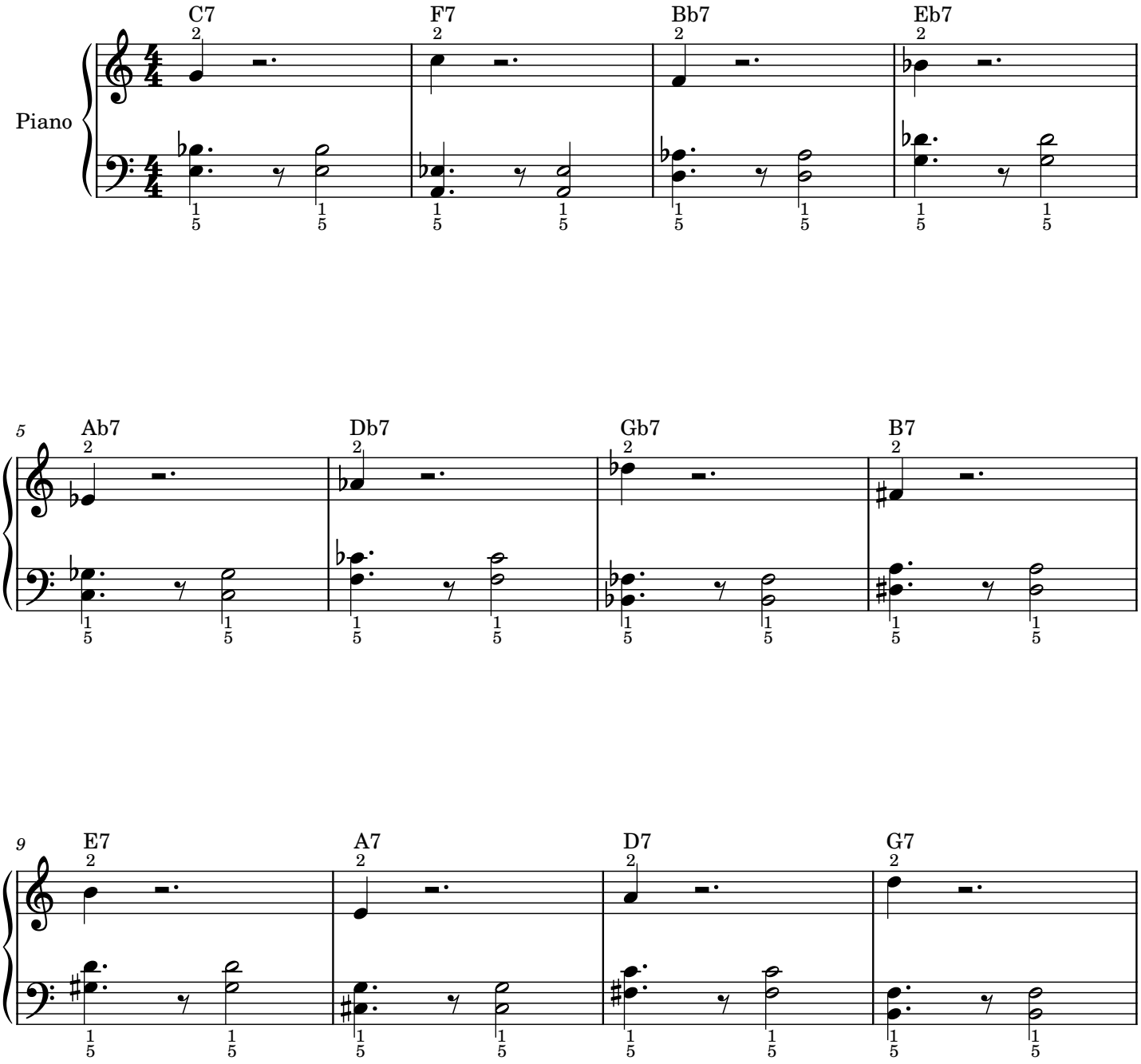
Level 16 - LH Shell Charleston



Level 16 - Shell Rhythm + RH Root



Level 16 - Shell Rhythm + RH Fifth



Level 17

Left-Hand Shells + Right-Hand Useful Scales

Chapter Instructions

Left-Hand Shells + Right-Hand Useful Scales

Combine shells with a small jazz vocabulary

What this teaches: This section adds simple right-hand scale colors over left-hand shells.

How To Practice

- Begin with chord tones over shells.
- Add minor blues and major blues as separate sounds.
- Use pentatonic pages for clean, playable vocabulary.
- Treat Dorian and Mixolydian as optional colors, not a mode marathon.

Cheat: Modes are not as hard as they seem! Dorian is like playing all the white keys starting on D, Mixolydian is like starting on G, and Minor (also known as Aeolian) is on A.

If you want to know "what Dorian only has one sharp" all you have to know is that Dorian is like playing all white keys starting on D (two half-steps up from C). Here's the process:

- How many half-steps up is Dorian from the relative Major? Two (we're always comparing against C Major, so C# + D = two half steps.).
- What Major scale has only one sharp (we're asking for the Dorian with only one sharp, so we're finding the relative Major)? G Major (F#).
- What note is two half-steps up from G? A (two-half steps come from answering question one, and G comes from answering question two).
- That means A Dorian has one sharp, and that sharp is F (same order as the keys, which is just a fifth's road: F, C, G, D, A, E, B).

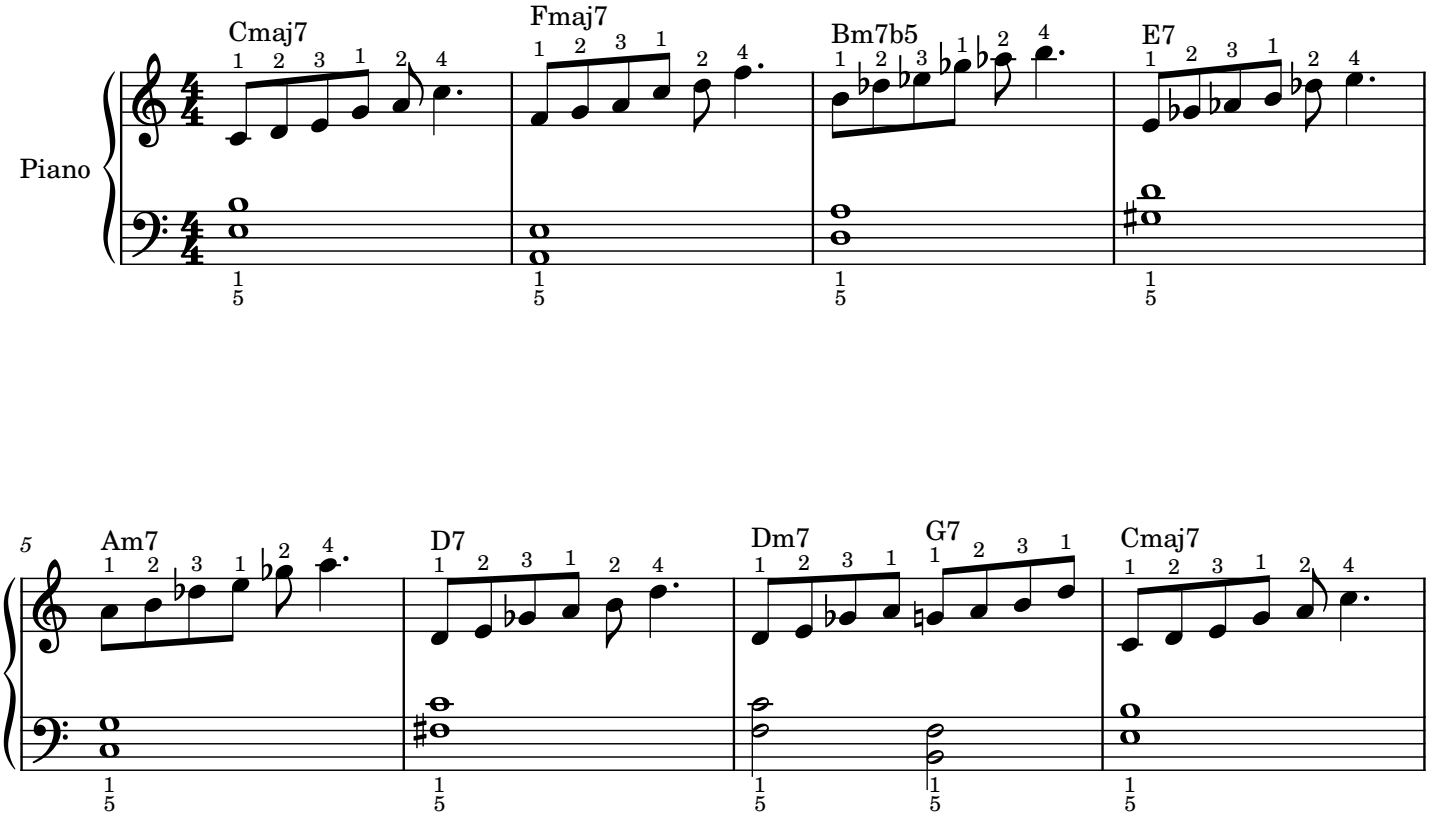
So if you want to know "What Mixolydian mode has three flats" you would do a similar process:

- How many half-steps up is Mixolydian mode from Major? Seven (G Mixolydian vs. C Major).
- What Major scale has three flats (we're asking for the Mixolydian with three flats, so we want the relative Major)? E-flat Major (Bb, Eb, Ab).
- What note is Seven half steps up from E flat? Bb.
- That means Bb Mixolydian has three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab).

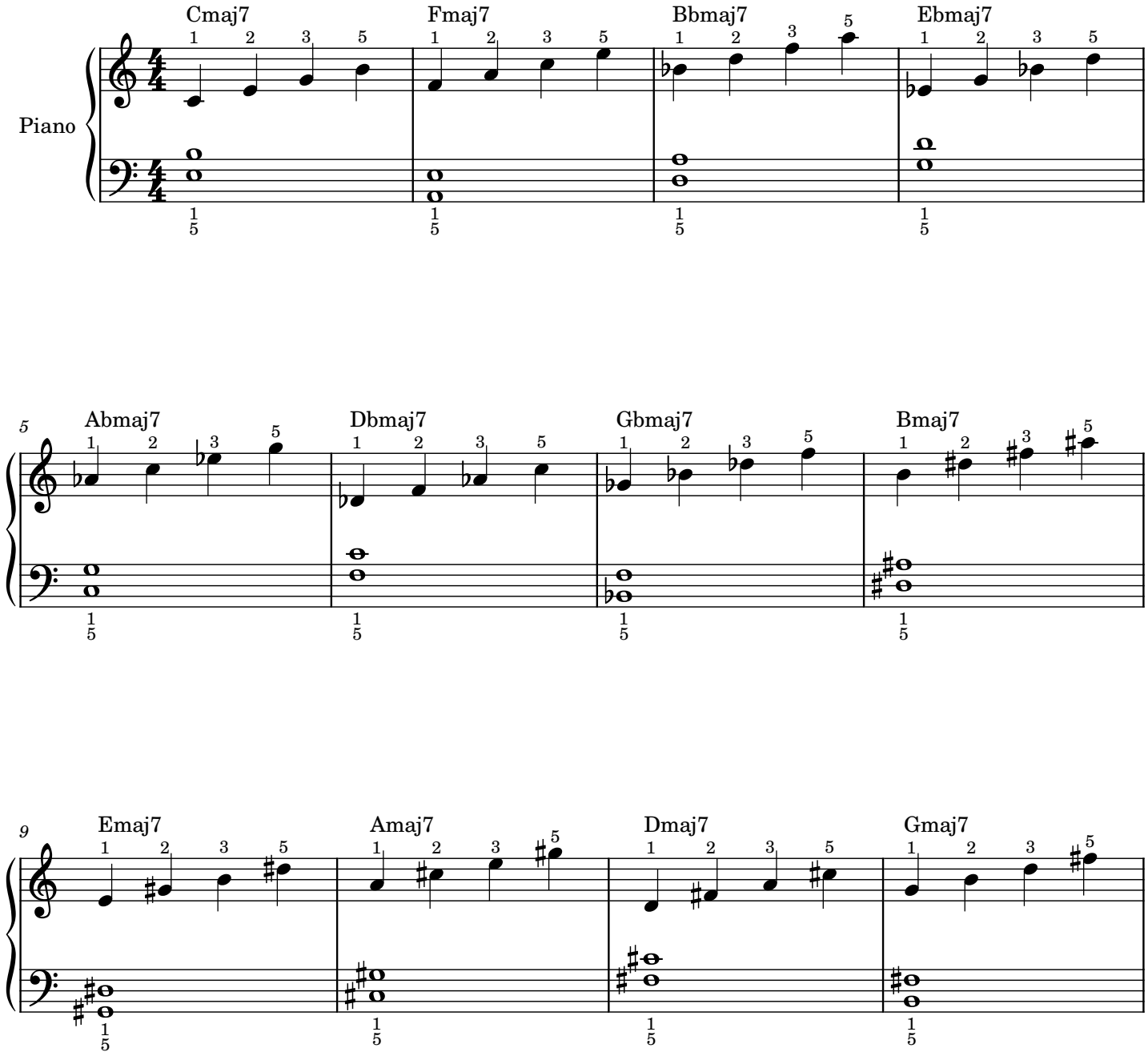
Eeeeeeassssy!

Checkpoint: Play a four-note scale fragment and resolve it to a guide tone.

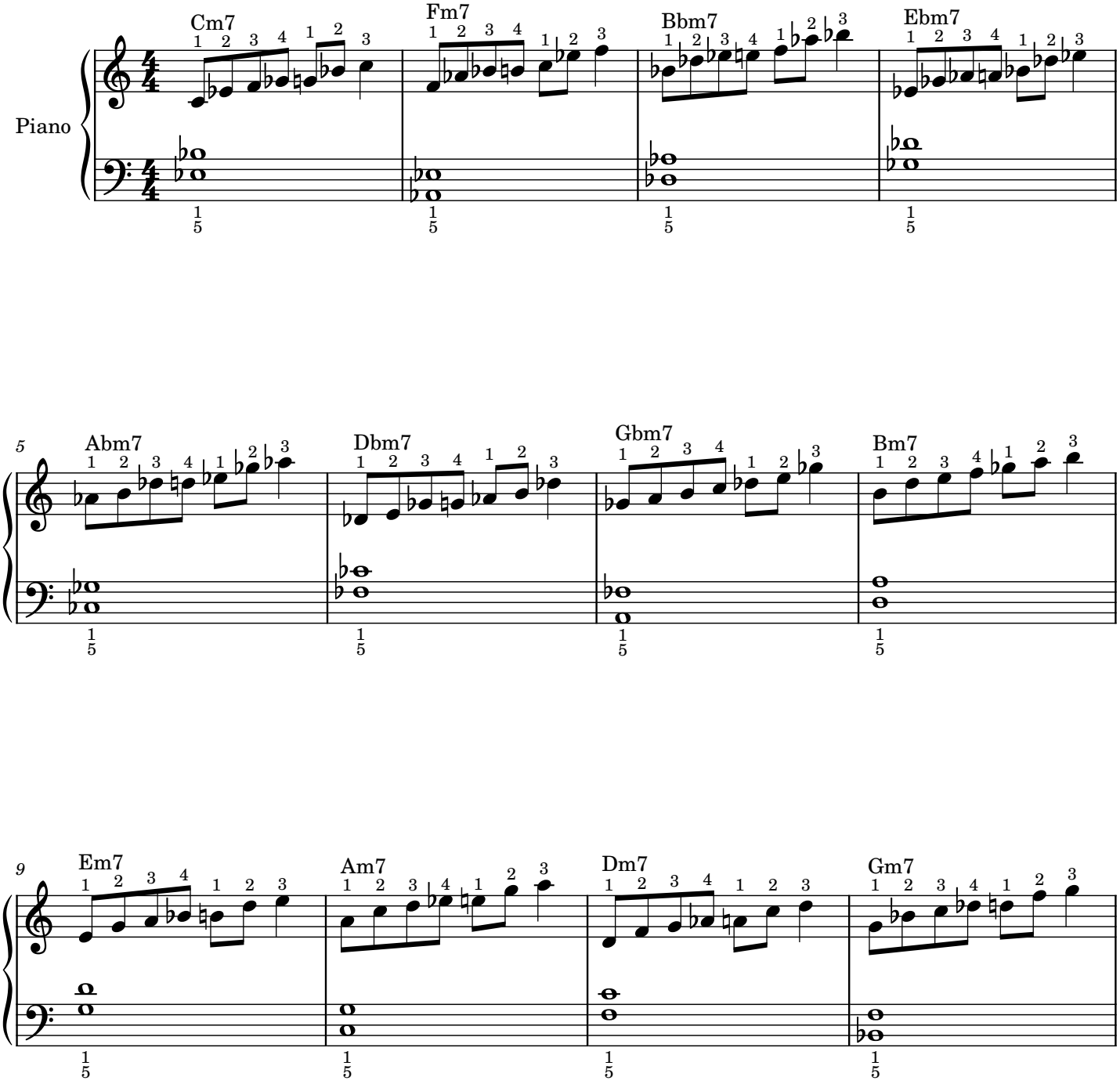
Level 17 - Fall Flowers - Voice-Led Shells + Scale Fragment



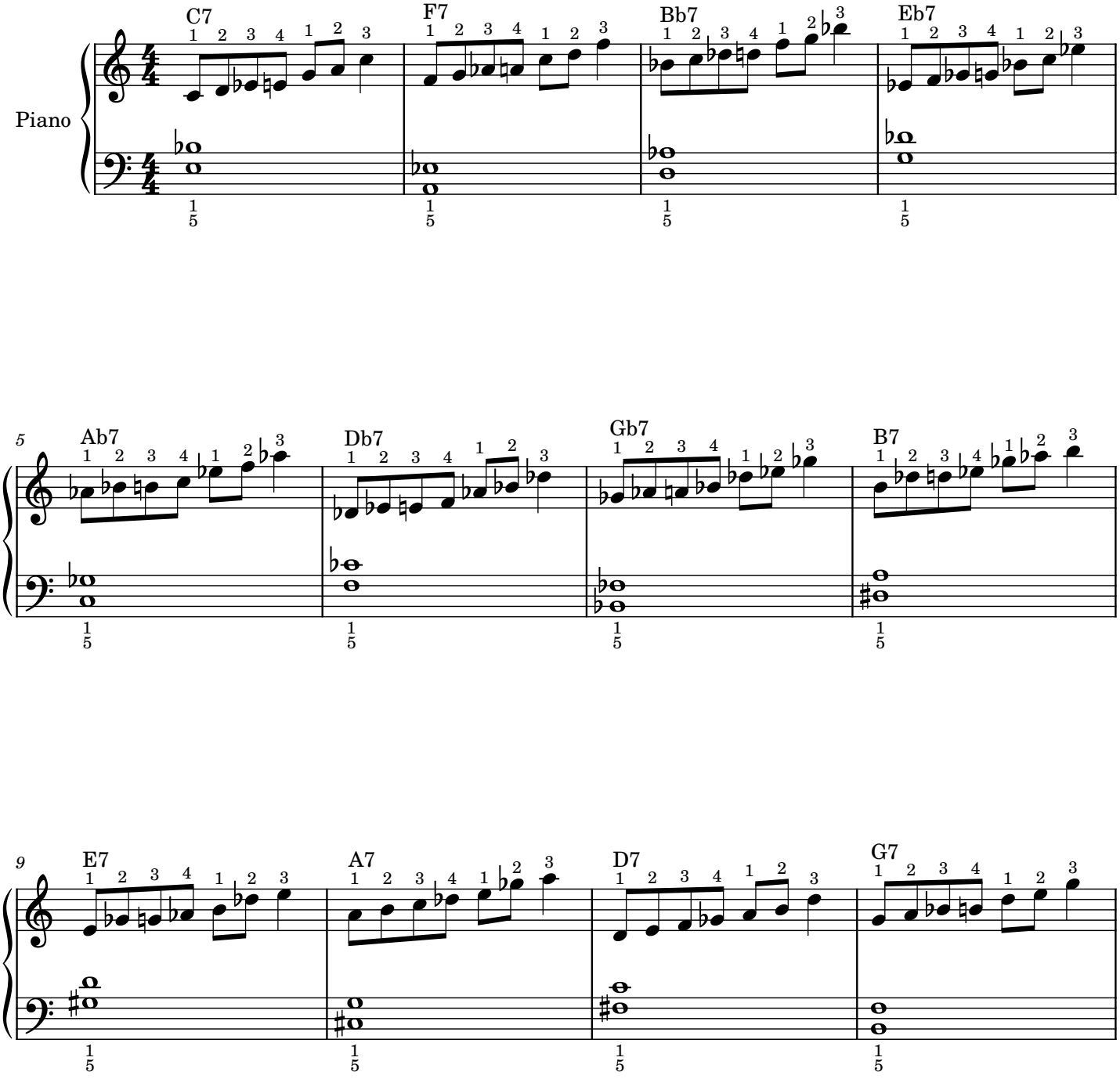
Level 17 - Shells + Chord Tones



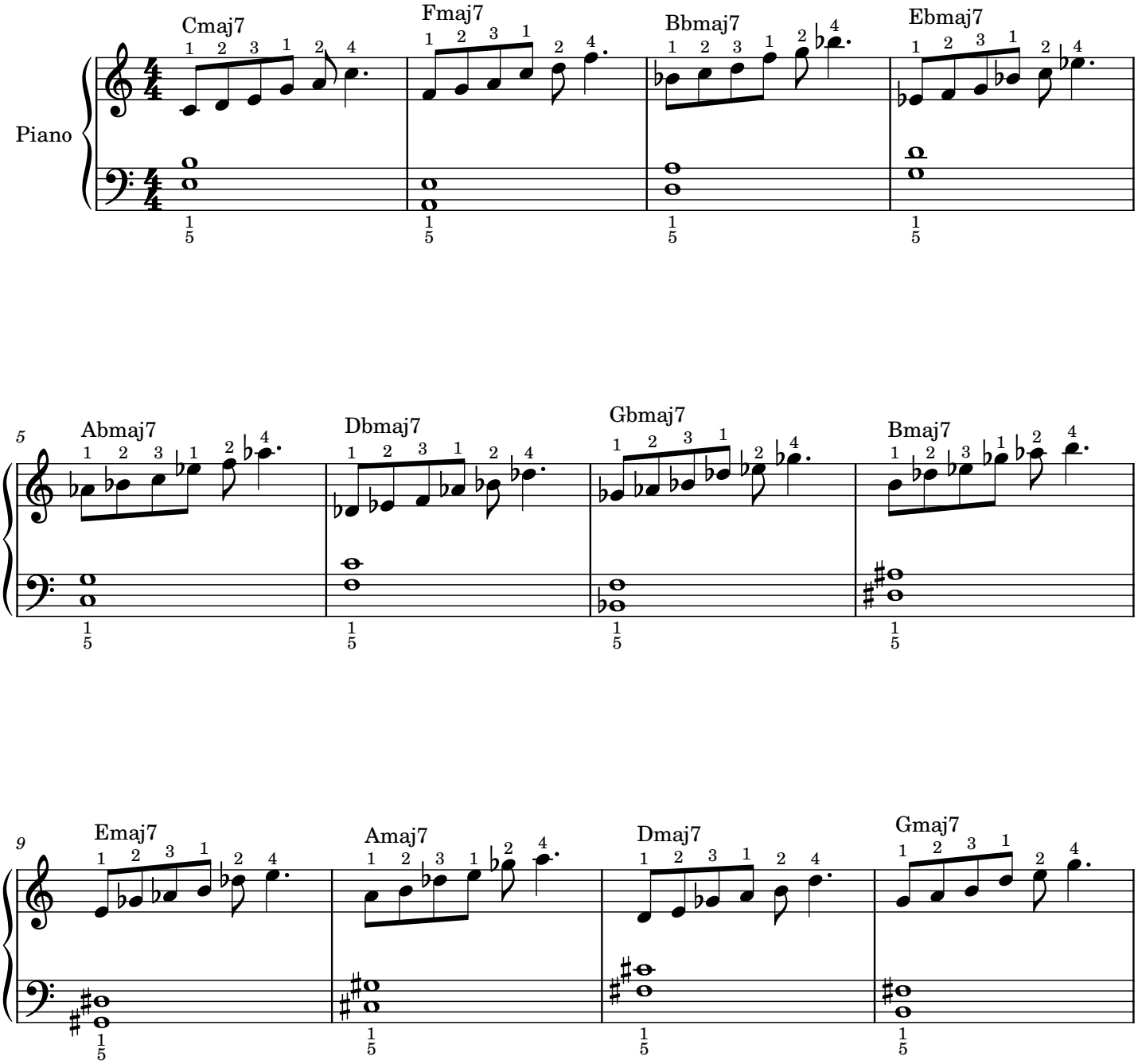
Level 17 - Shells + Minor Blues



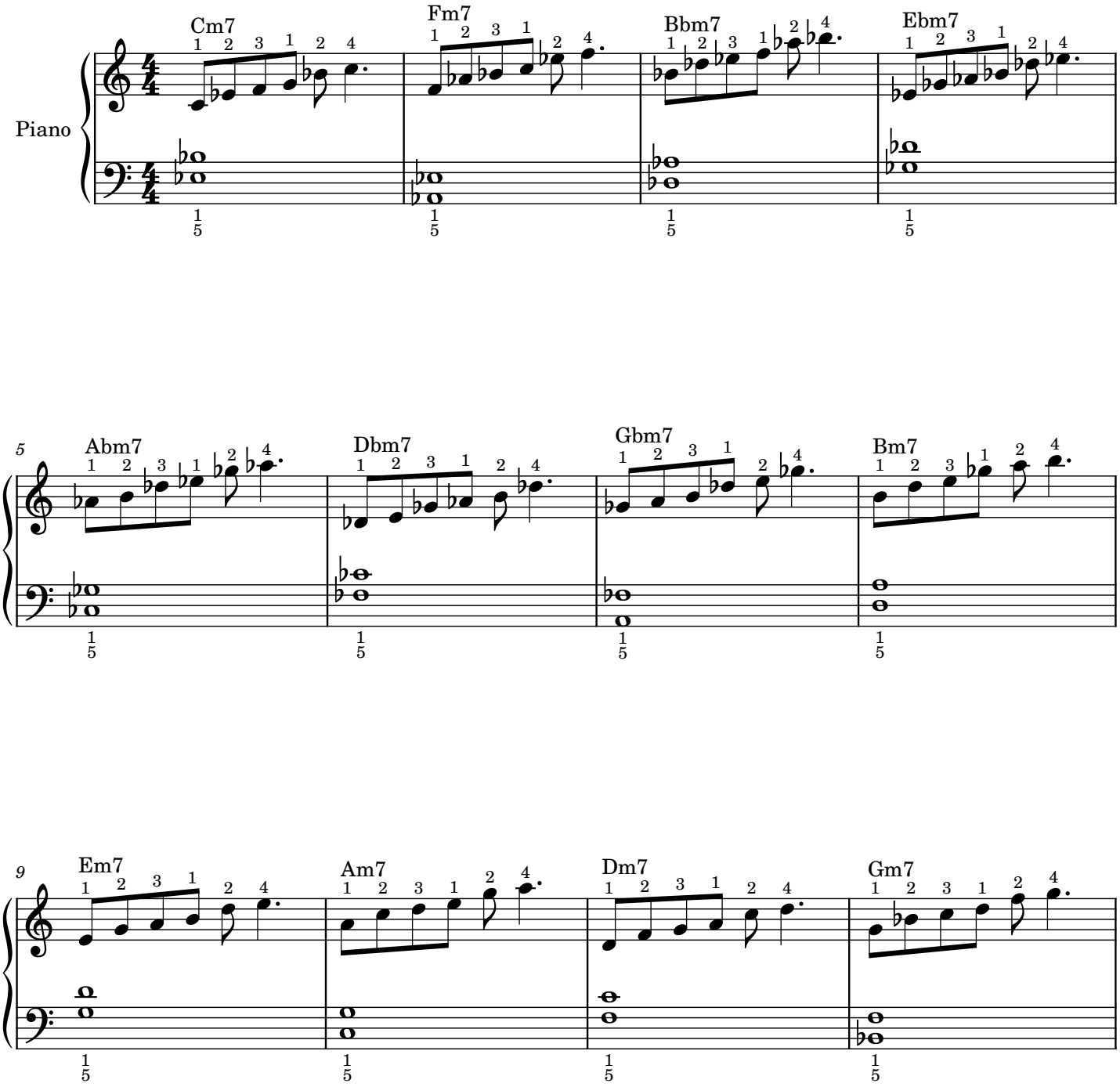
Level 17 - Shells + Major Blues



Level 17 - Shells + Major Pentatonic



Level 17 - Shells + Minor Pentatonic



Level 18

Rhythm Ladder Through Progressions

Chapter Instructions

Rhythm Ladder Through Progressions

Carry the rhythm cells into ii-V-I and Fall Flowers

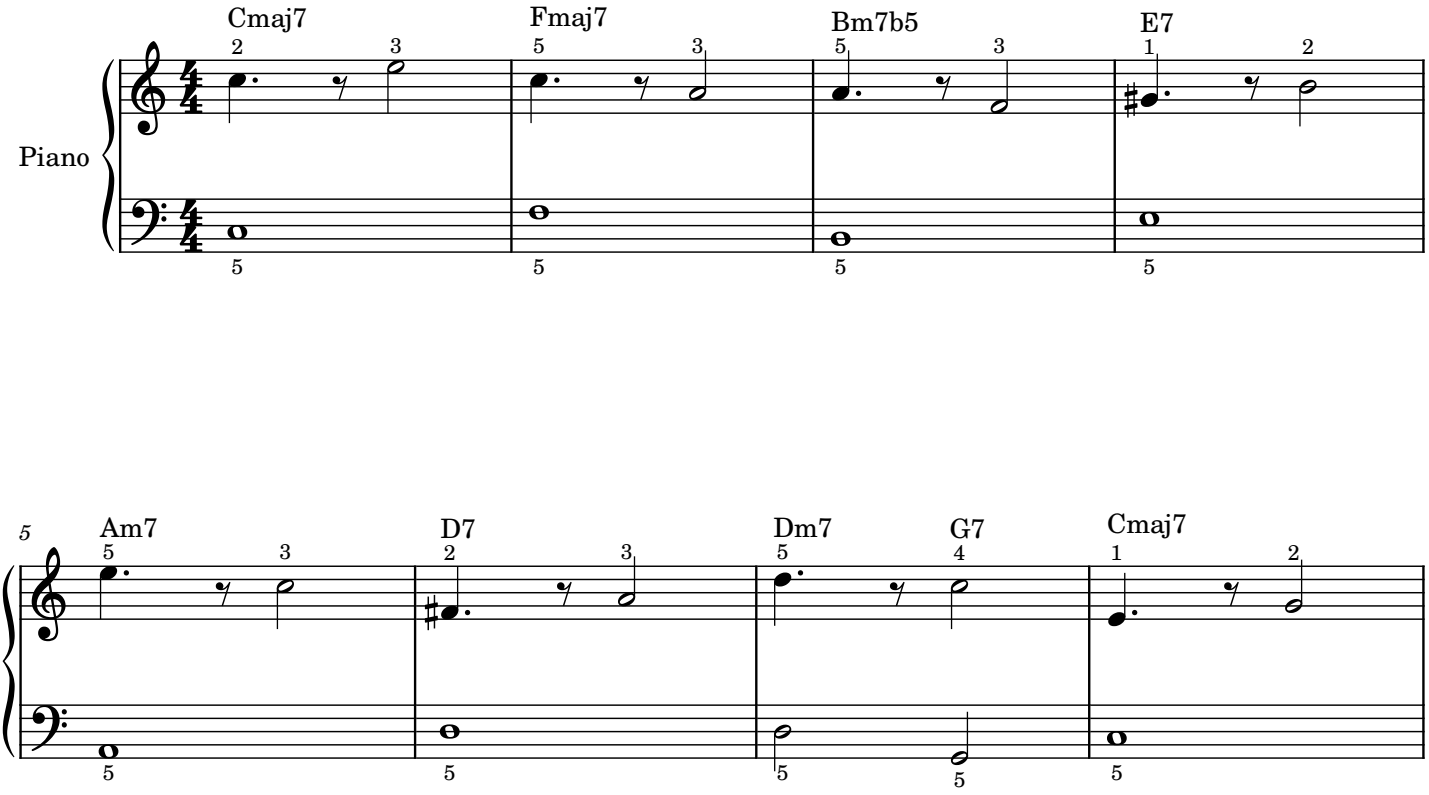
What this teaches: This section is the rhythm integration checkpoint. Earlier rhythm cells taught one note, roots, and shell comping. Now the same small rhythms move through ii-V-I paths and Fall Flowers without adding new pitch vocabulary.

How To Practice

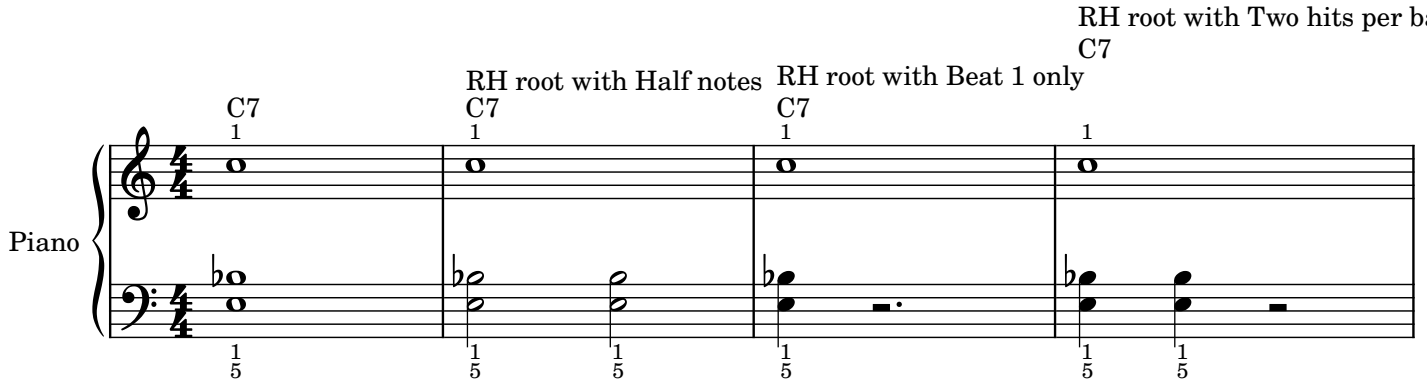
- Review roots and shells with the rhythm ladder.
- Move one rhythm through ii-V-I roots.
- Repeat through ii-V-I shells.
- Apply one rhythm to Fall Flowers before trying another.
- Use melody fragments, not full improvisation, until the time feels steady.

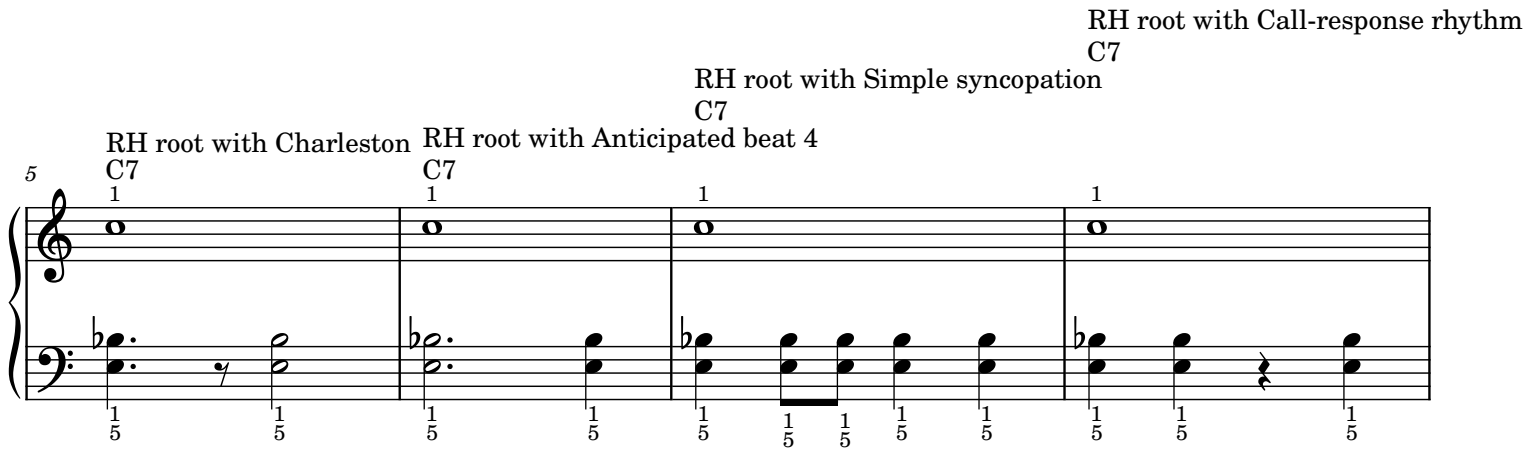
Checkpoint: Play one rhythm through Fall Flowers without changing the notes.

Level 18 - Fall Flowers - Rhythm Ladder Melody Fragments

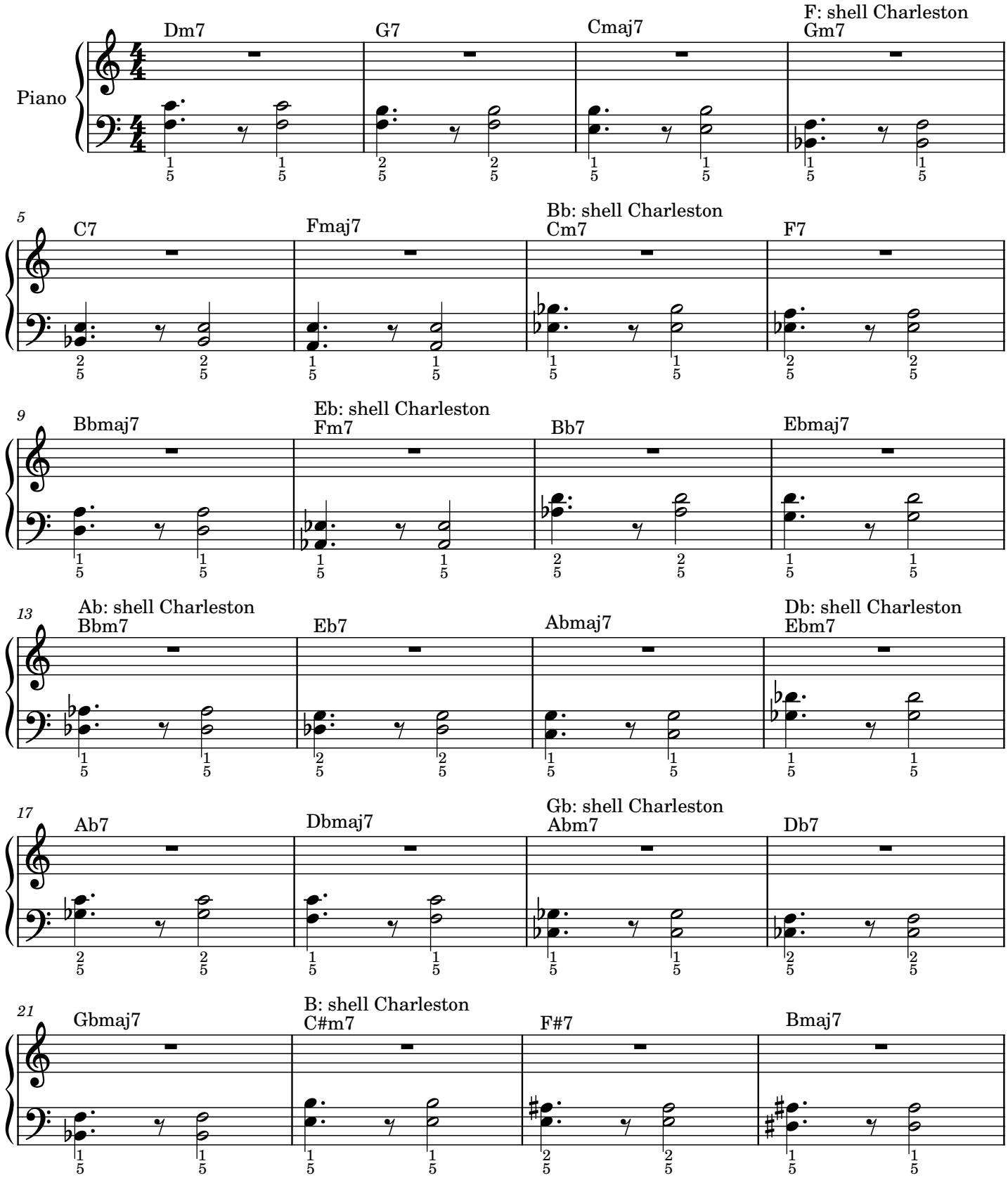


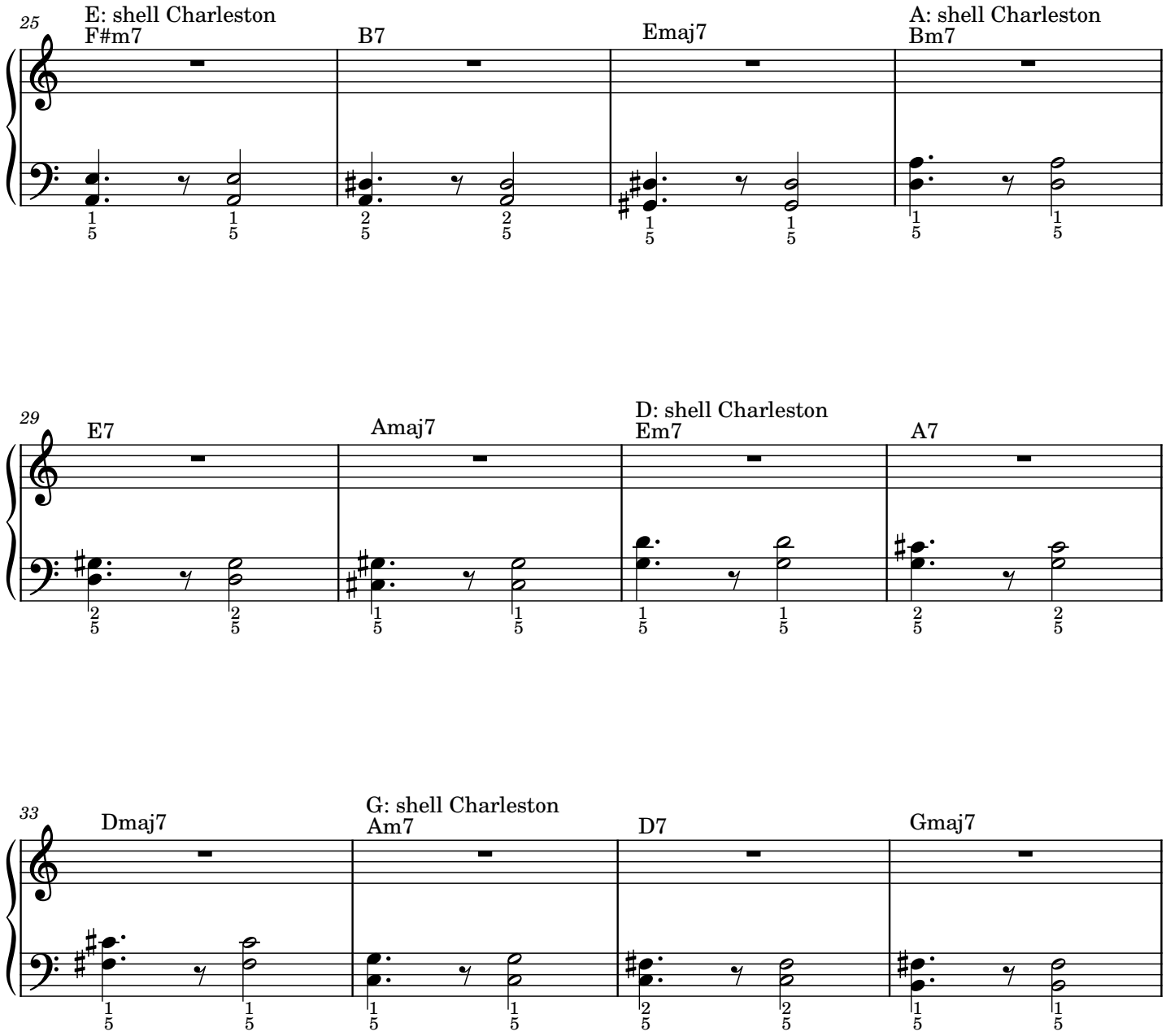
Level 18 - Rhythm Ladder - Shell + One RH Note





Level 18 - ii-V-I - Shell Charleston - Path A

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E: shell Charleston
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B7
Emaj7
A: shell Charleston
Bm7
29
E7
Amaj7
D: shell Charleston
Em7
A7
33
Dmaj7
G: shell Charleston
Am7
D7
Gmaj7

Level 19

Call-and-Response With Shells

Chapter Instructions

Call-and-Response With Shells

Answer phrases while the harmony is present

What this teaches: This section returns to call-and-response, now supported by shells. The ear should hear the phrase and the harmony together, but the right-hand answers are still intentionally short.

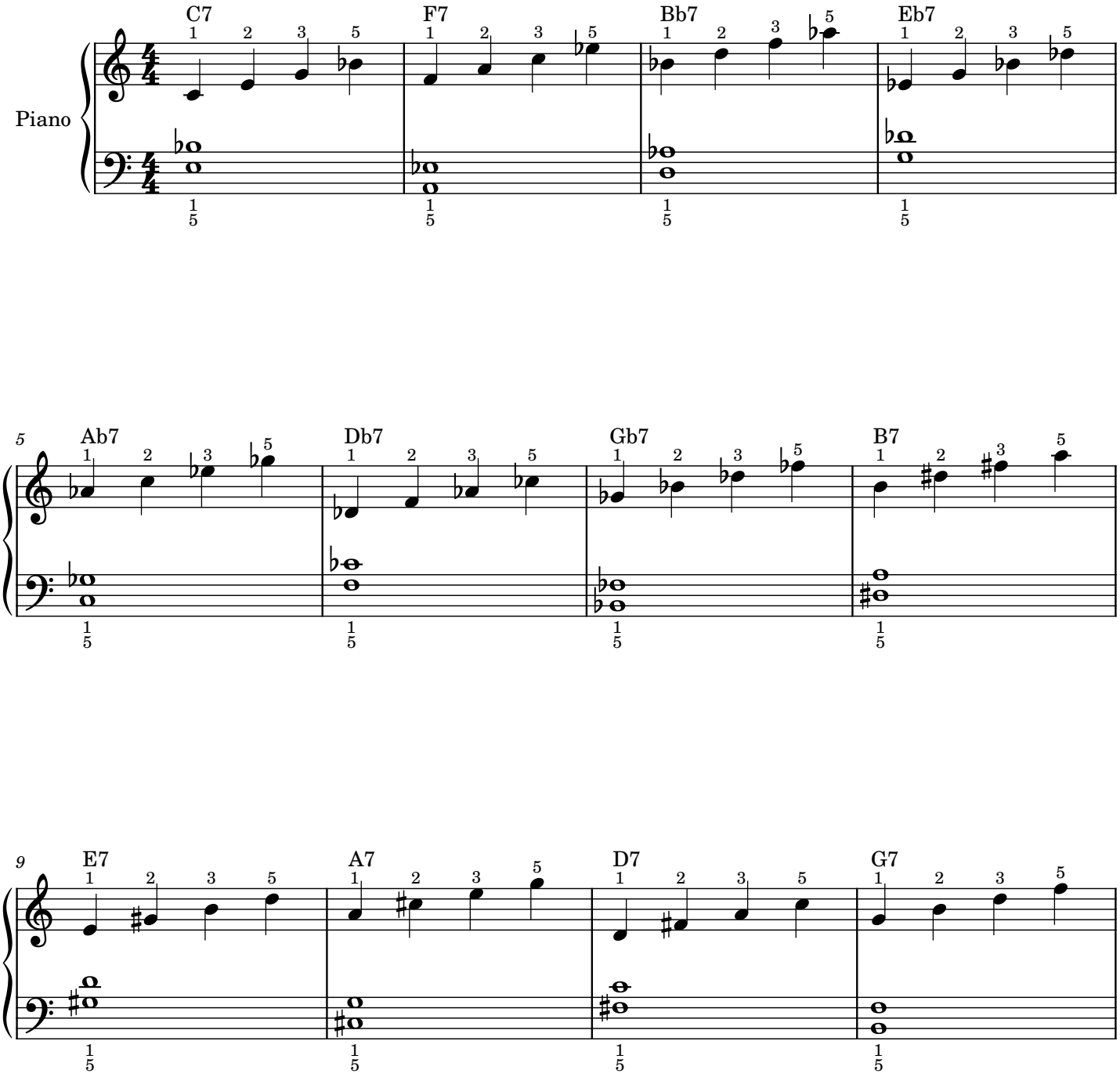
How To Practice

- Play the written shell-supported calls.
- Answer with two notes.
- Answer with three notes.
- Try longer answers only after the basic call-response is stable.

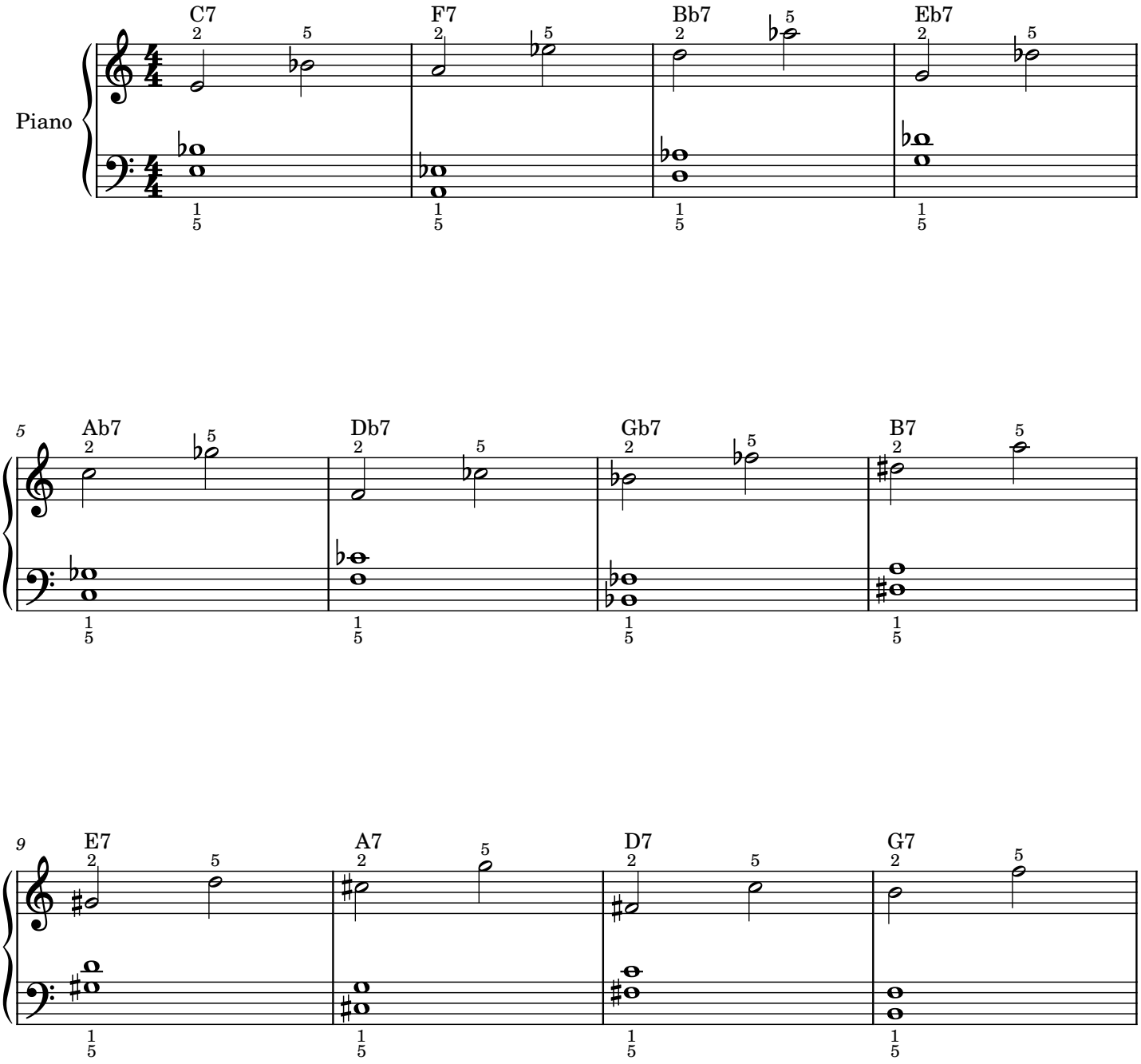
What To Notice

- Does the shell make the answer sound more intentional?
- Can you leave silence after the response?
- Does the answer land on a clear chord tone?

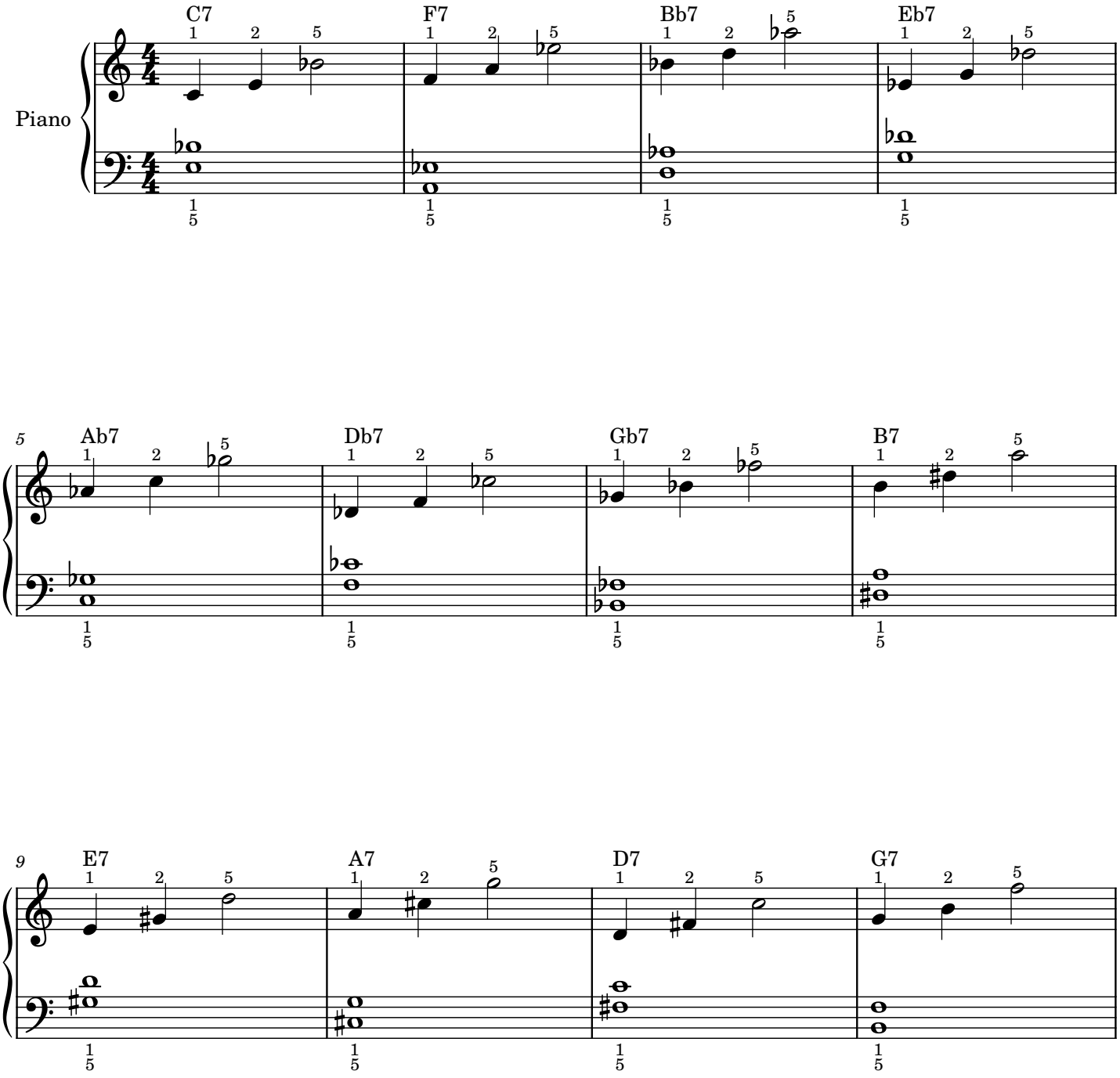
Level 19 - Shell-Supported Written Calls



Level 19 - Shell-Supported Two-Note Answers



Level 19 - Shell-Supported Three-Note Answers



Level 20

Color Tones

Chapter Instructions

Color Tones

Add color only after the shell is stable

What this teaches: This section introduces 9ths and 13ths as small additions to an already stable shell. Color tones should feel like extensions of a known sound, not new chords to memorize from scratch.

How To Practice

- Add the 9th above a shell.
- Add the 13th above a shell.
- Practice dominant 9 and dominant 13 sounds.
- Resolve color tones back to stable chord tones.

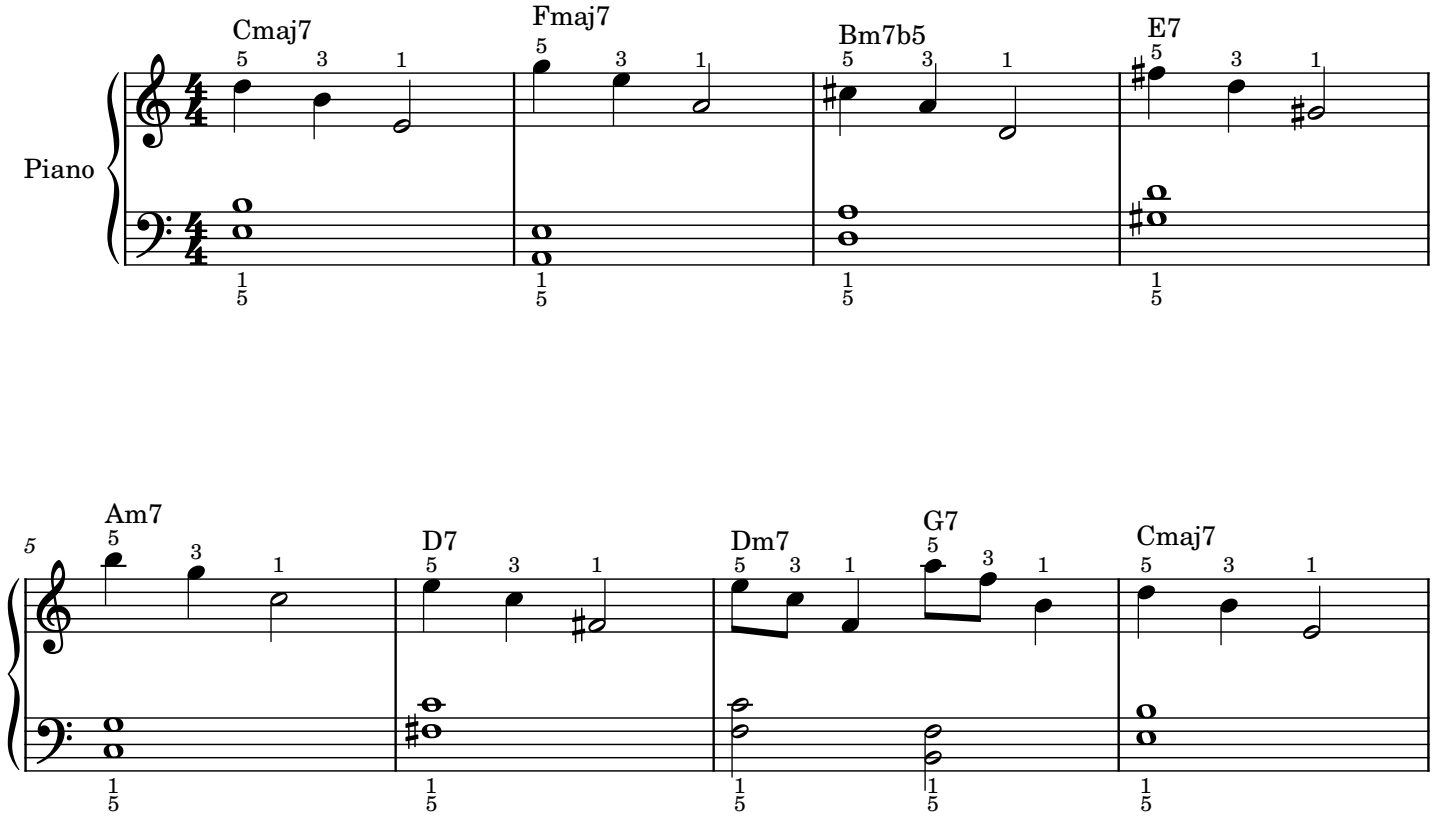
What To Notice

- Which colors sound stable on major or minor chords?
- Which colors create more tension on dominant chords?

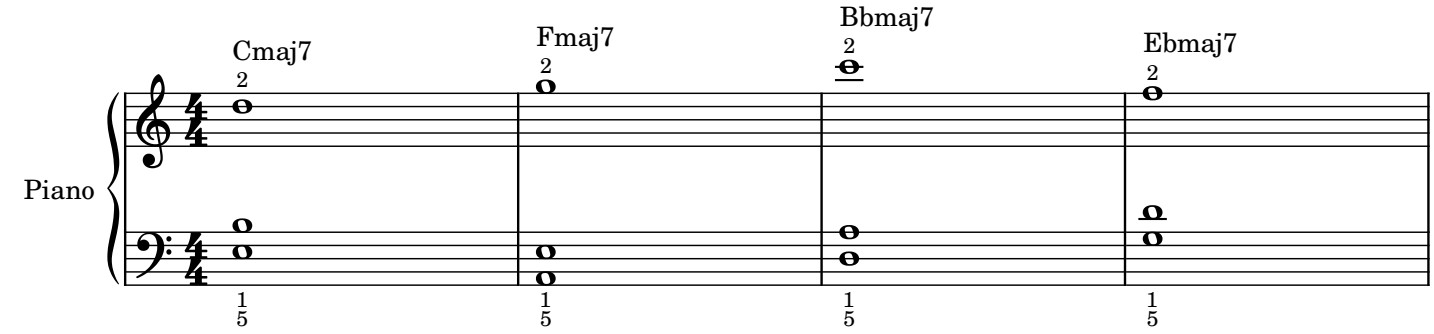
Cheat: It's just the 2nd and the 6th. These are naturally dissonant when played with the root, 3rd, 5th, or 7th because they are so close together. So if you play them some distance apart (as a 9th or 13th), then they are still dissonant, but slightly less so because they are farther away. That's why it adds "color." Dissonance creates interest, but too much clashes. Think of it as a dial – add just the right amount and it sounds interesting, too much and it sounds bad. Learn how to control the dial and you will be able to add the right amount of interest according to taste.

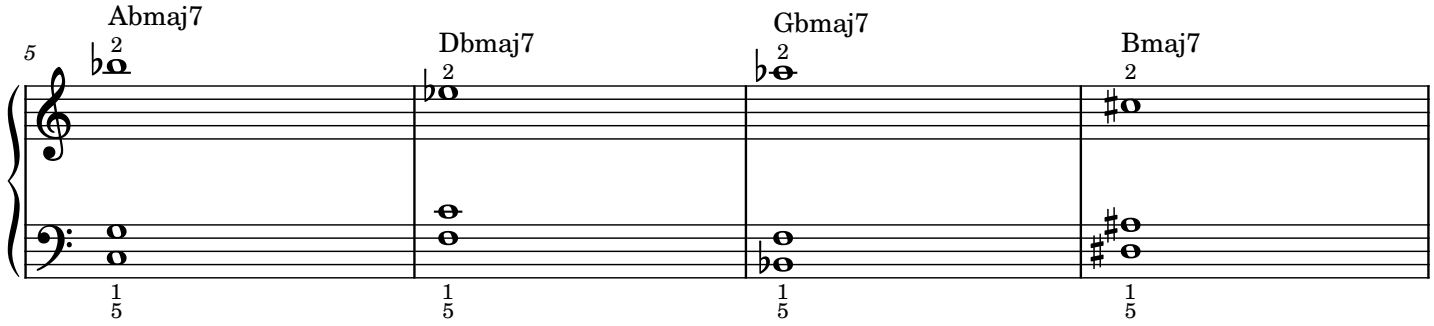
Checkpoint: Play a shell, add one color tone, then resolve it by step up or down.

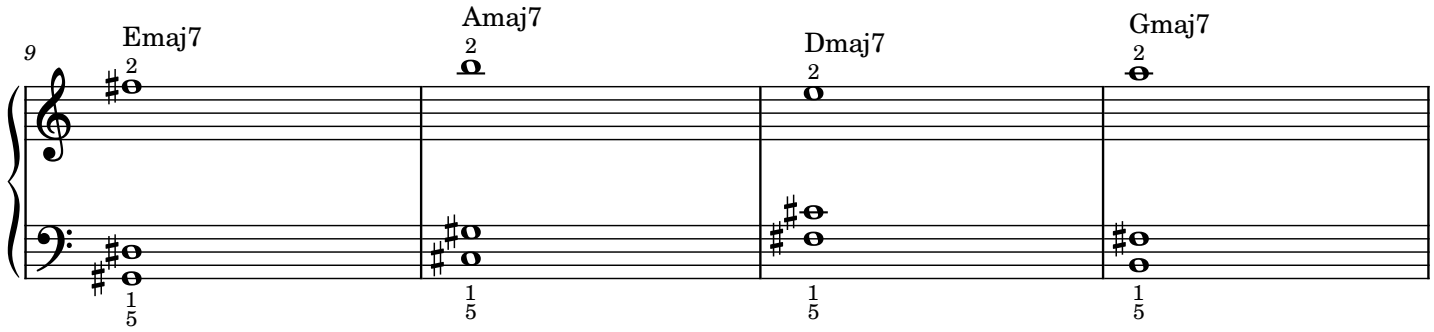
Level 20 - Fall Flowers - Target Color Then Resolve



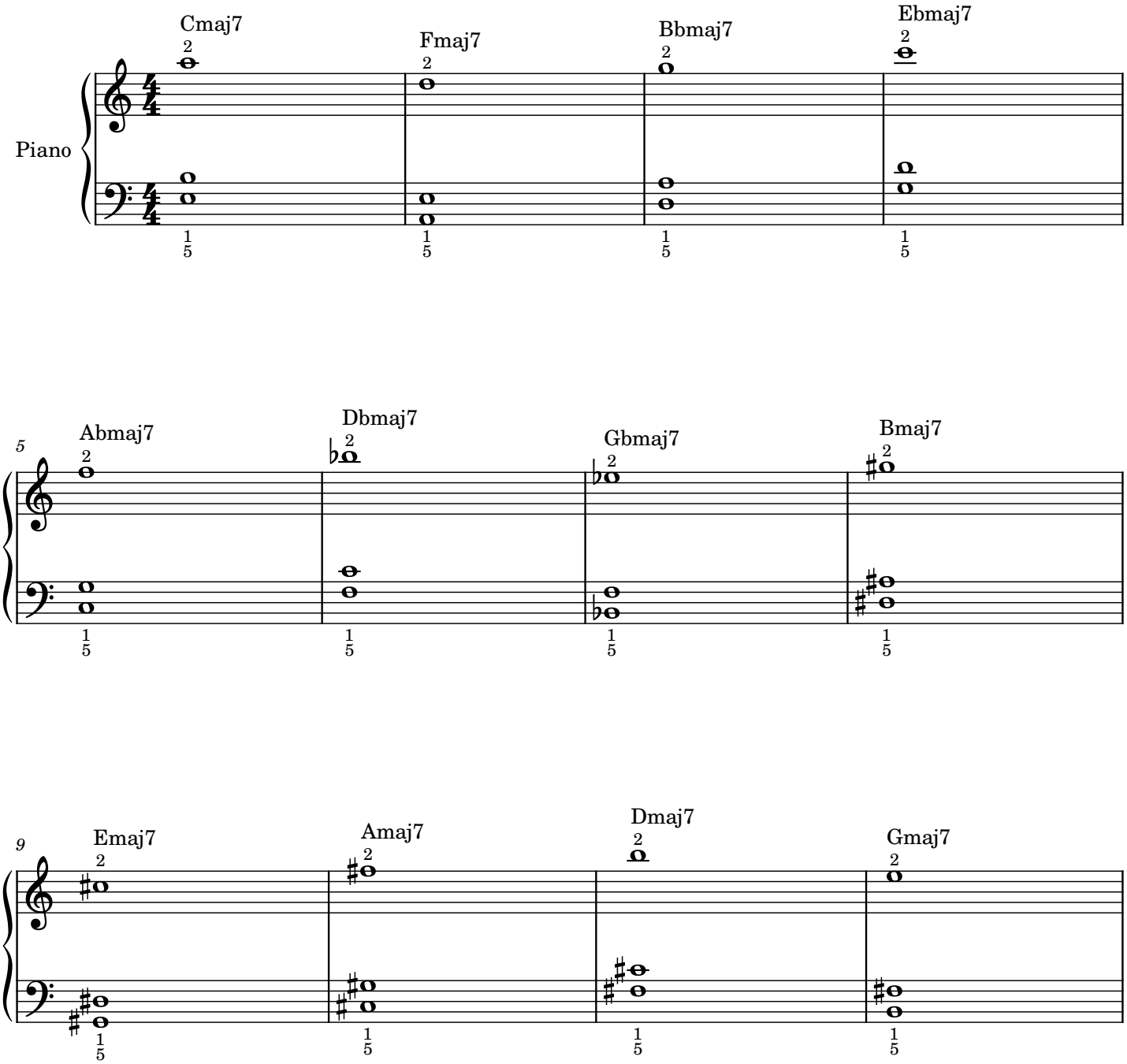
Level 20 - Shell + 9th



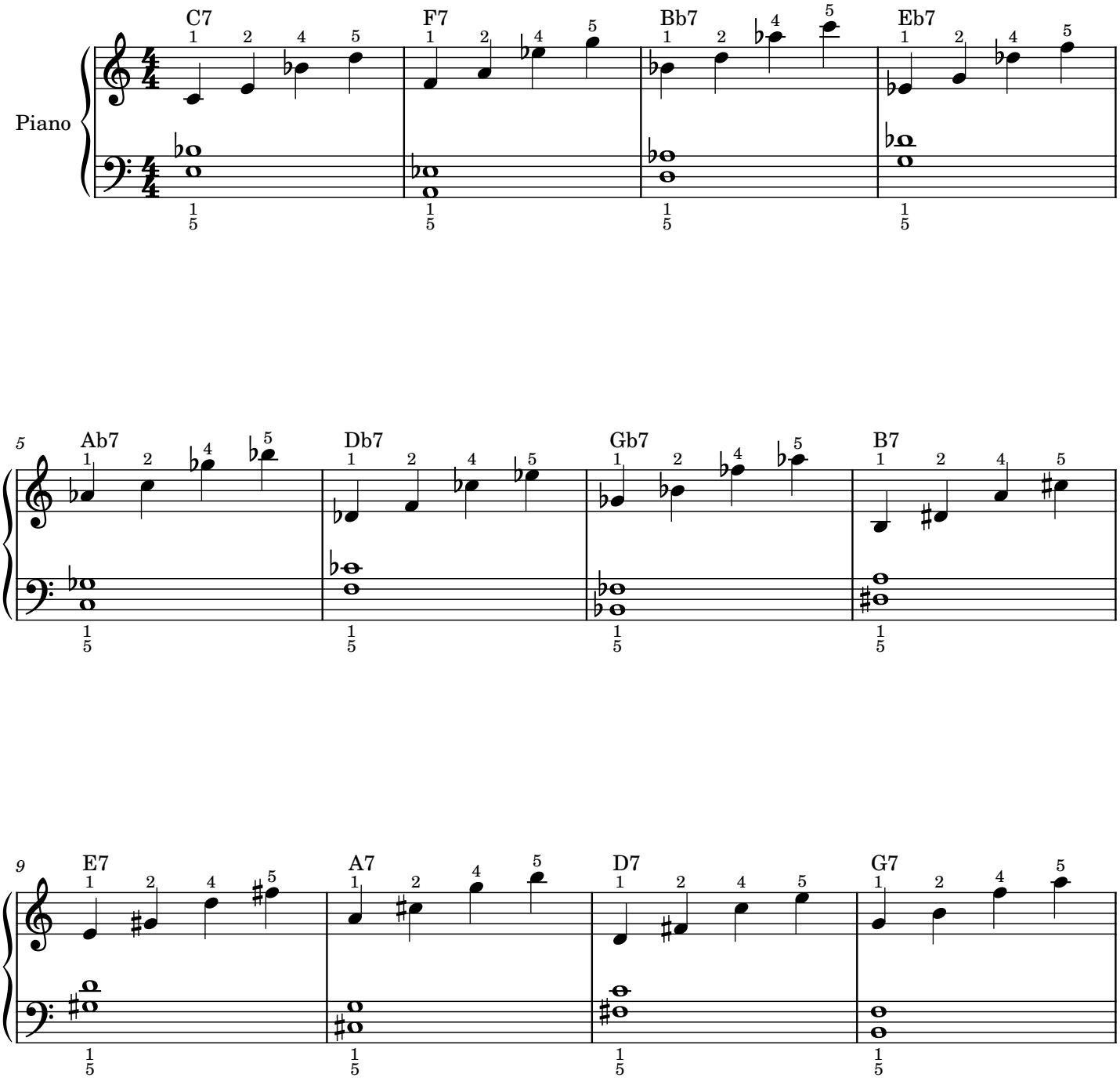




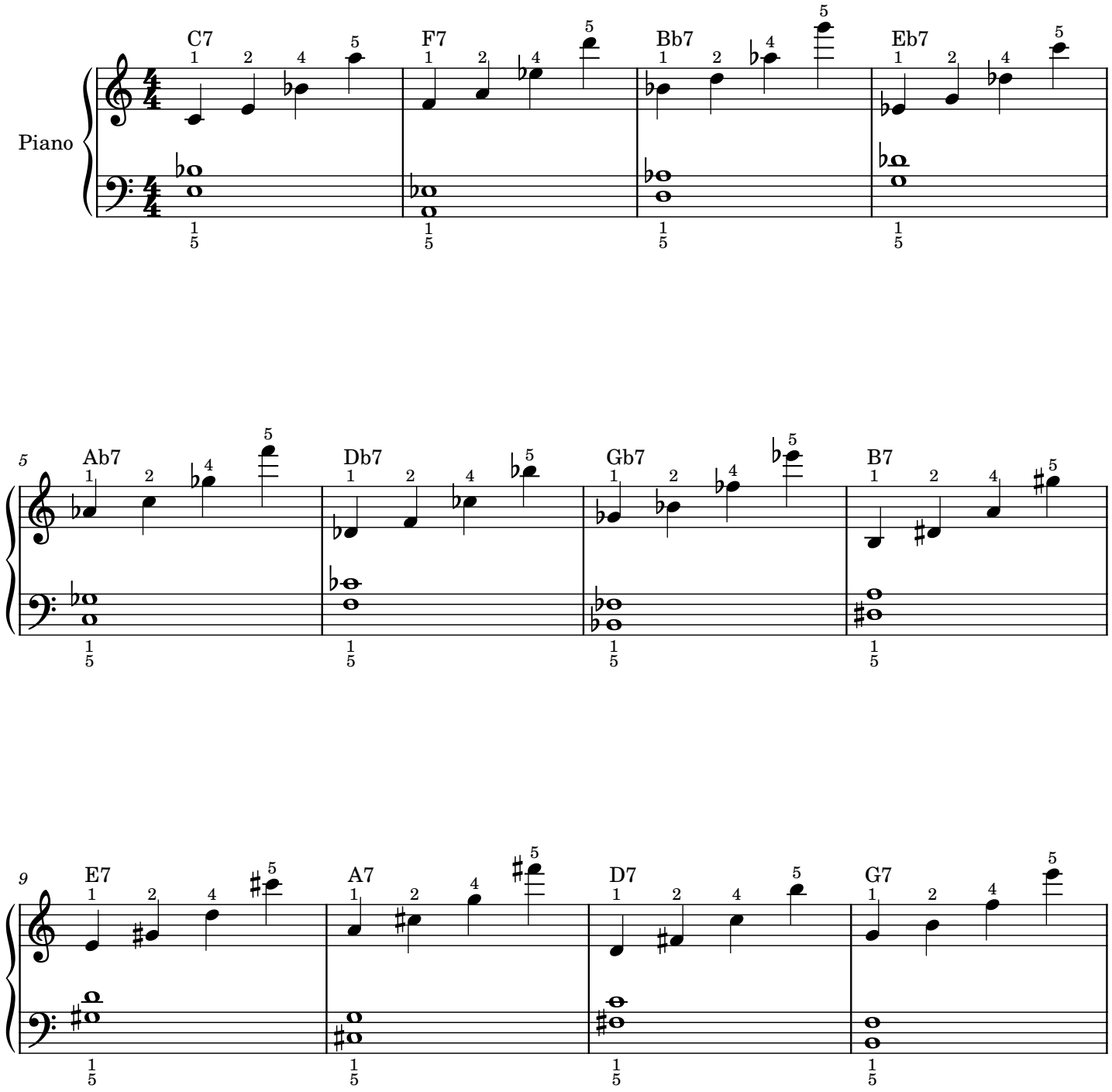
Level 20 - Shell + 13th



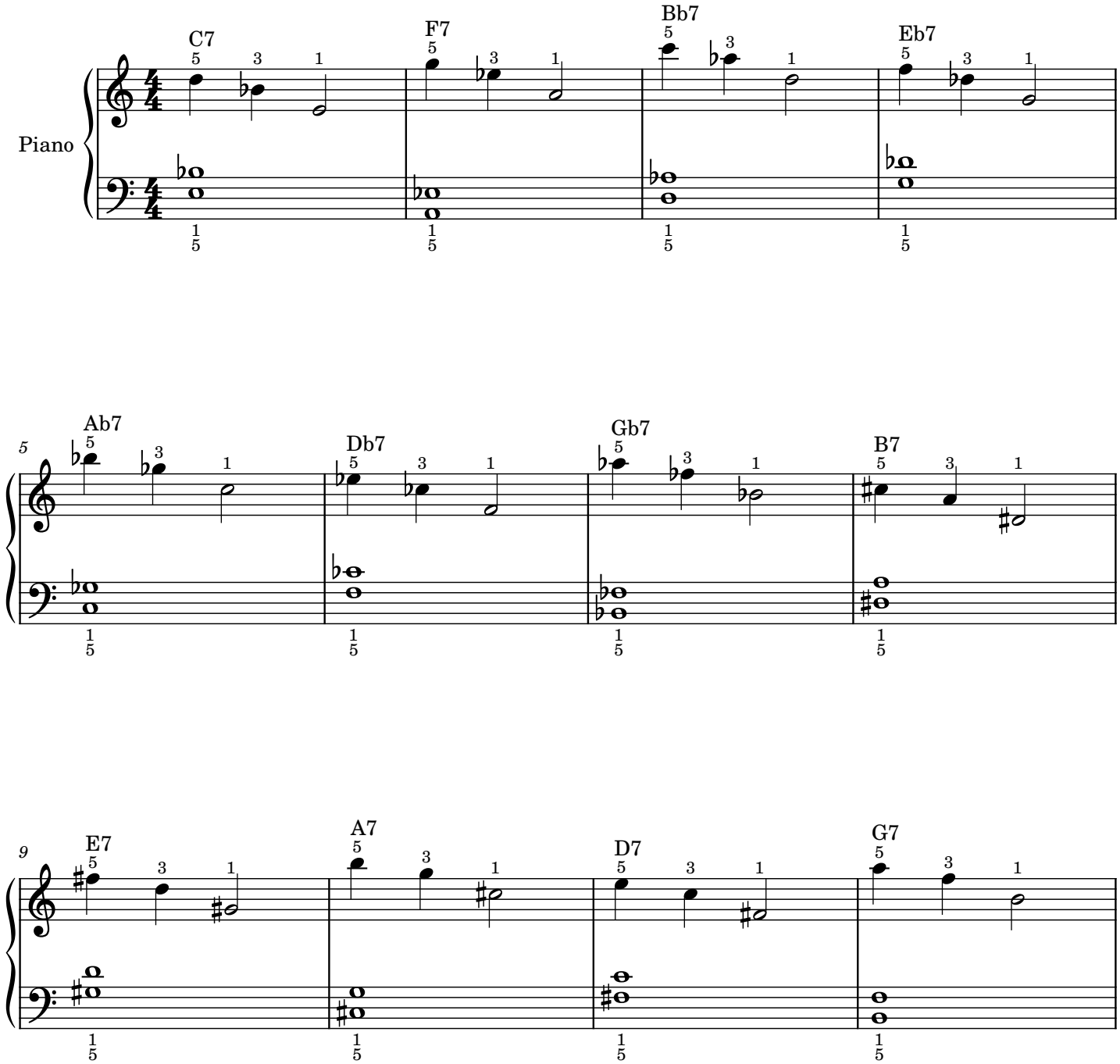
Level 20 - Dominant 9



Level 20 - Dominant 13



Level 20 - Target Color Then Resolve



Level 21

Tune Application

Chapter Instructions

Tune Application

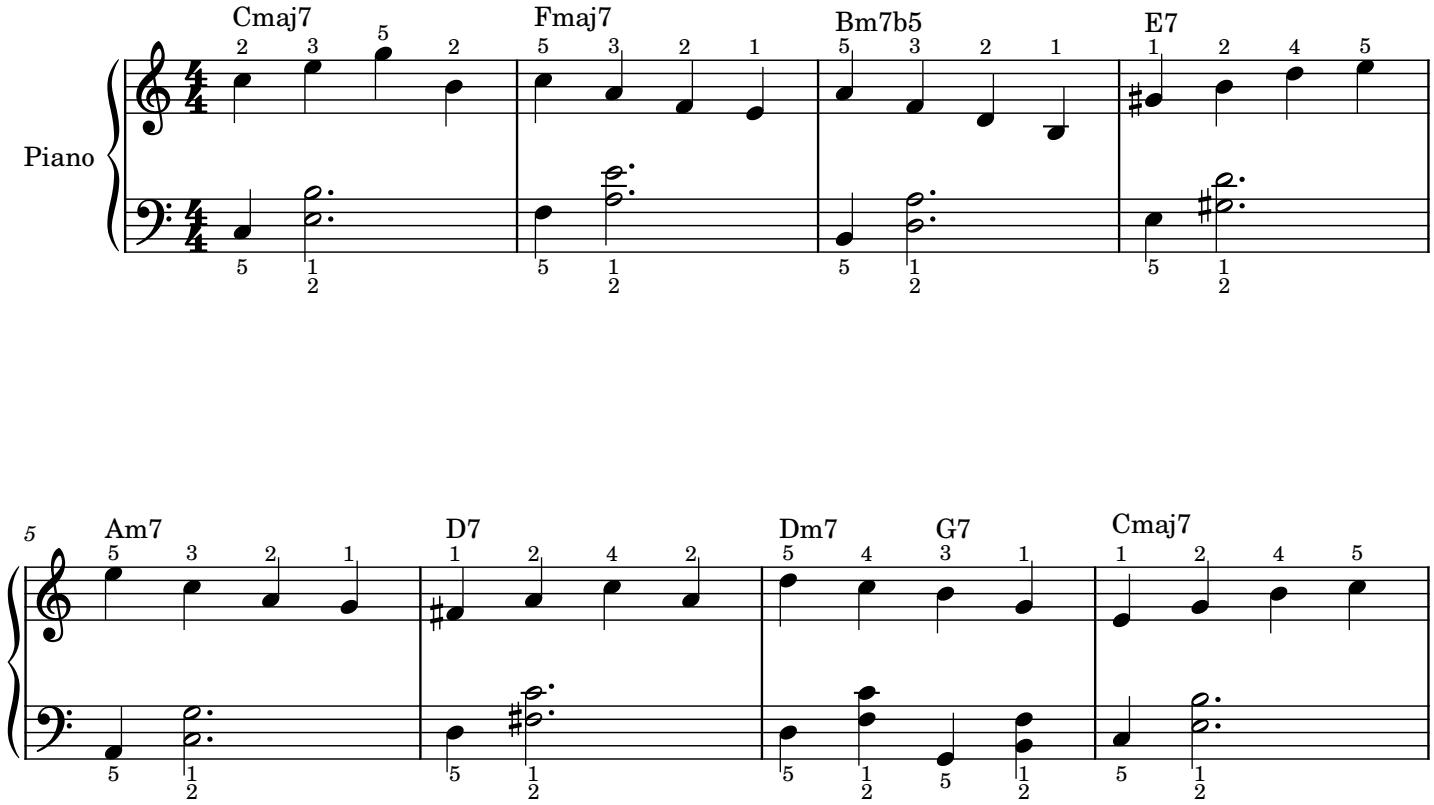
Turn the method into a reusable tune-learning path

What this teaches: This section brings everything together. Any tune can be reduced to roots, guide tones, shells, melody, small improvisation vocabulary, rhythm, and finally color.

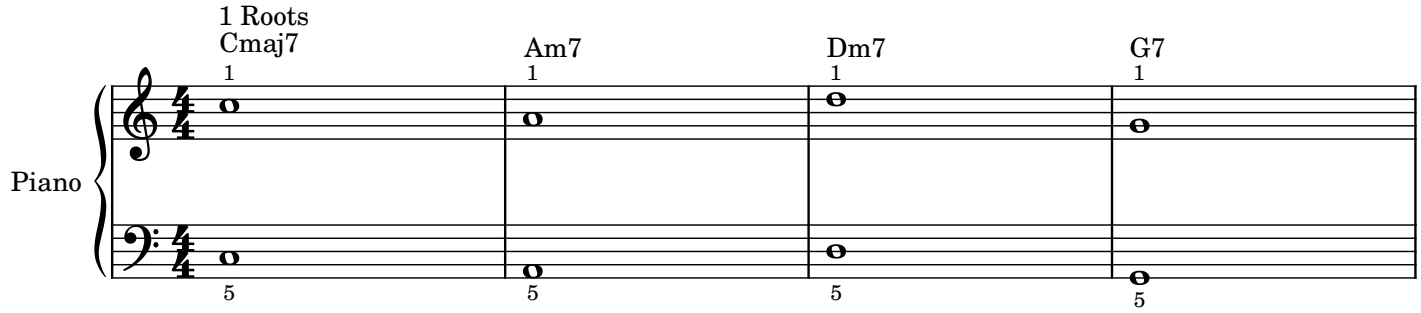
How To Practice

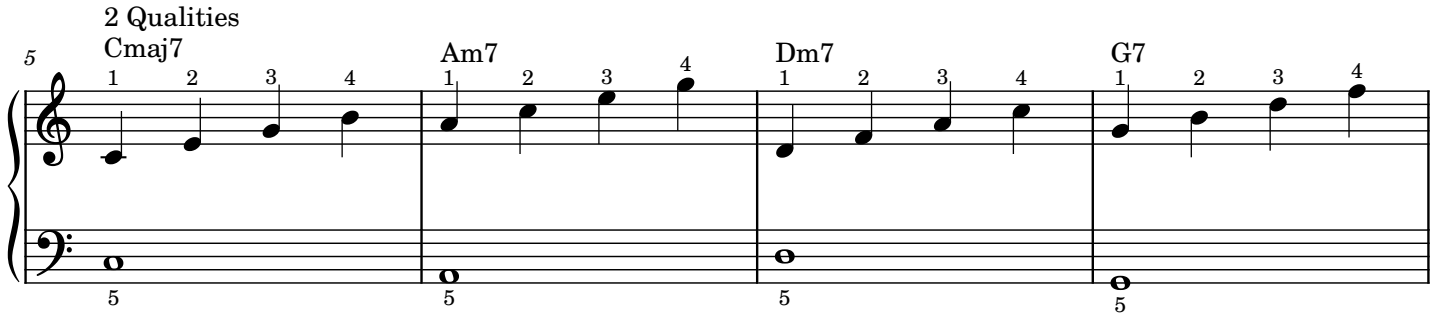
- Map the roots.
- Add guide tones in the right hand.
- Move shells into the left hand.
- Add melody with workable fingering.
- Add small improvisation vocabulary.
- Add color tones last.

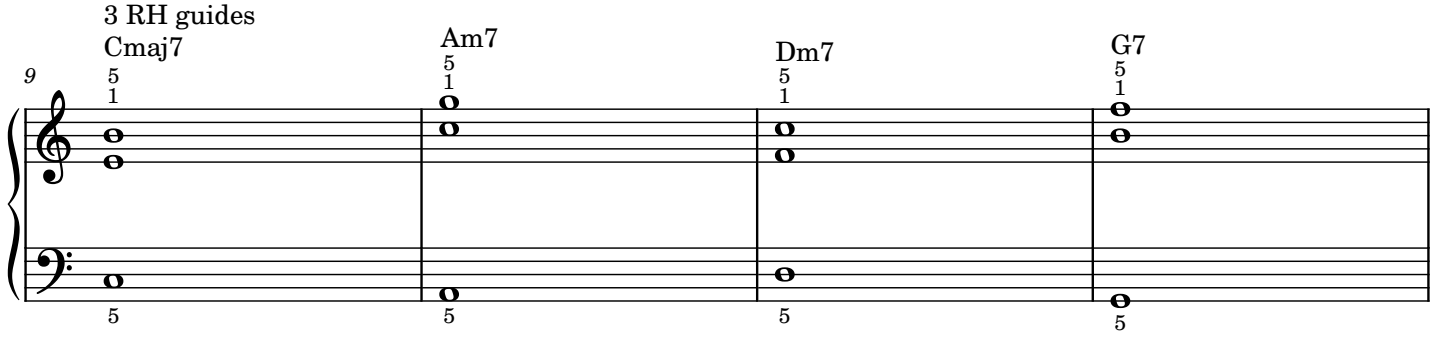
Level 21 - Fall Flowers - Full Path Summary

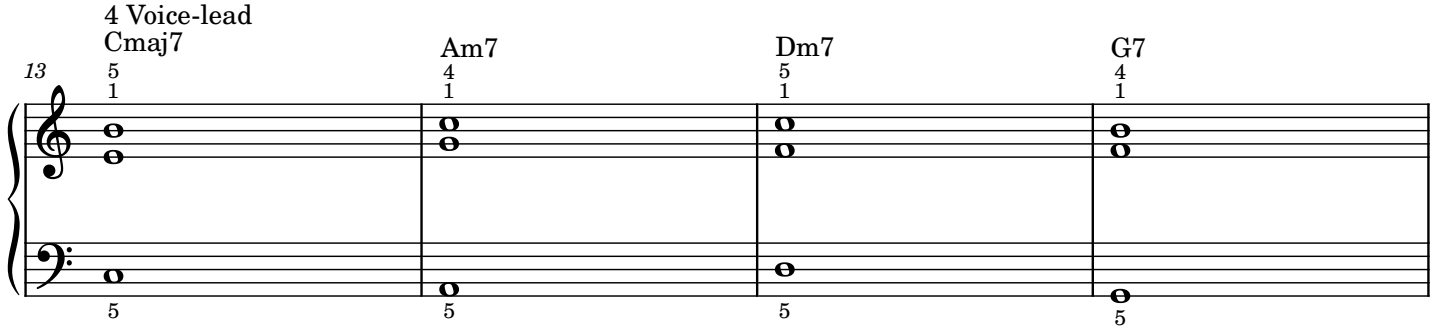


Level 21 - Reusable Tune Path Template

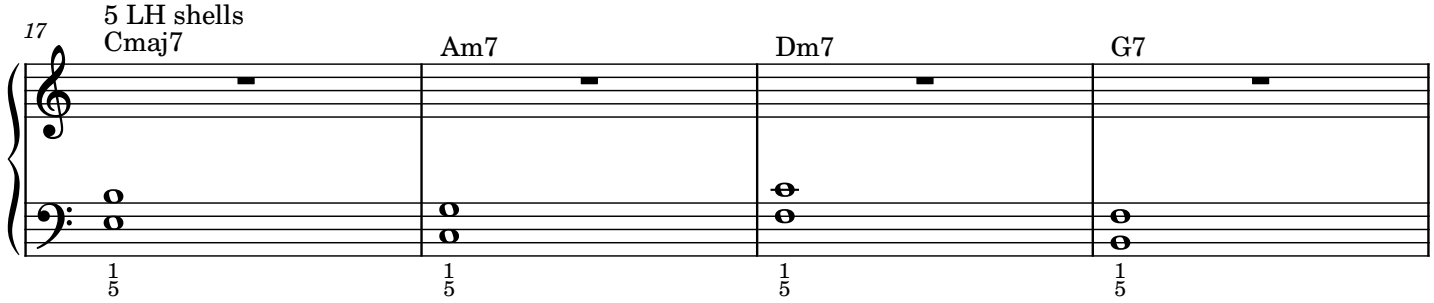




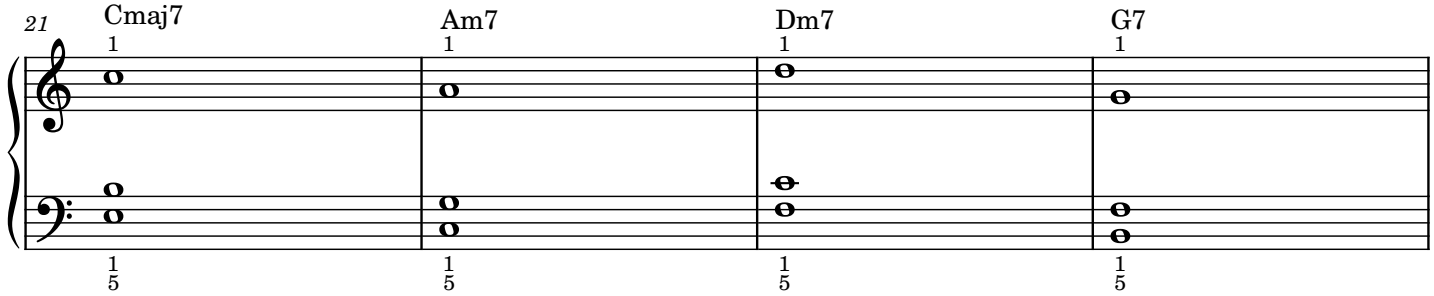




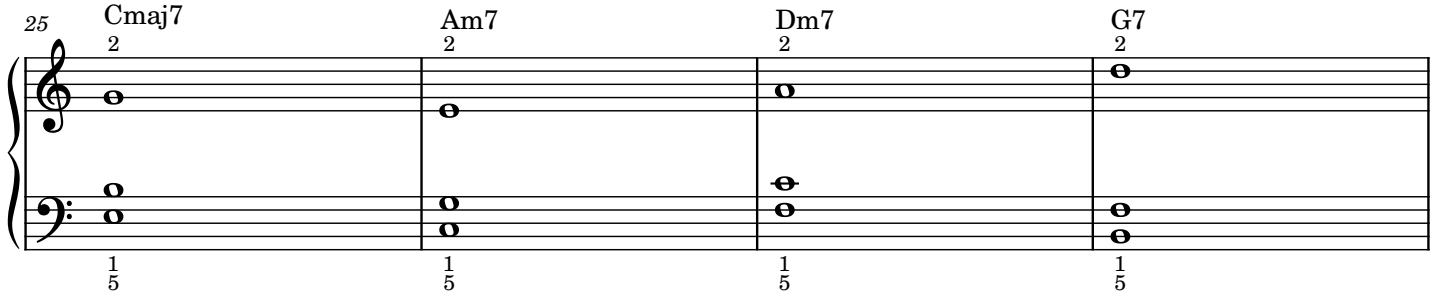
5 LH shells



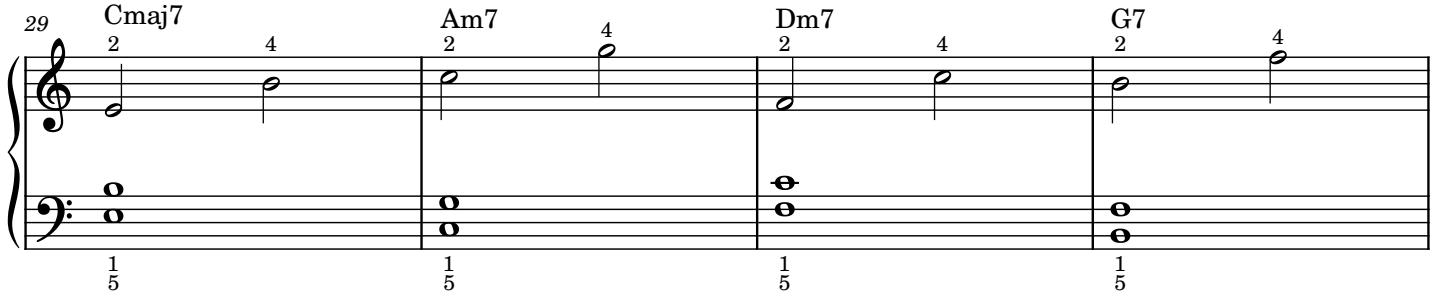
6 RH roots



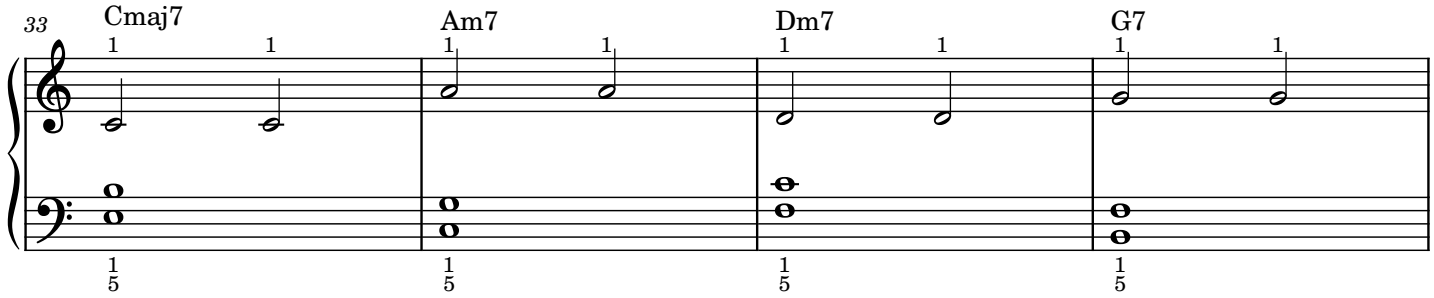
7 RH fifths



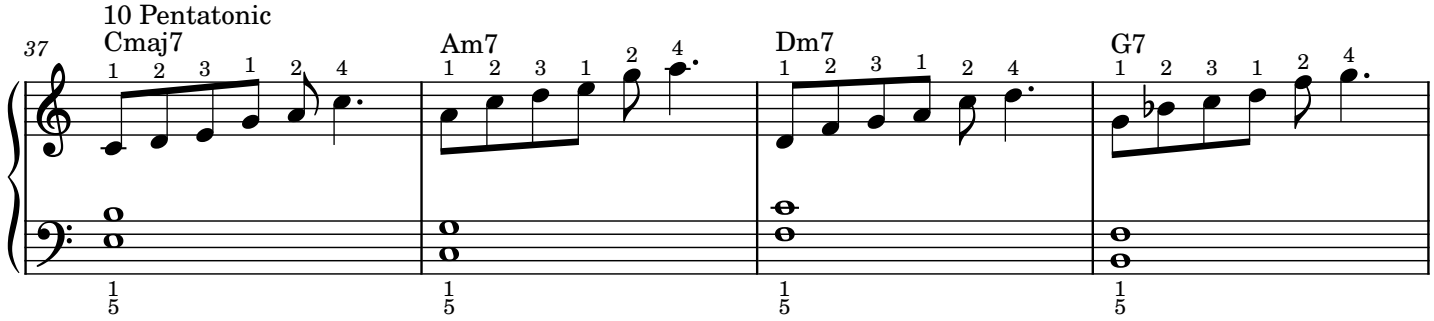
8 Target 3/7



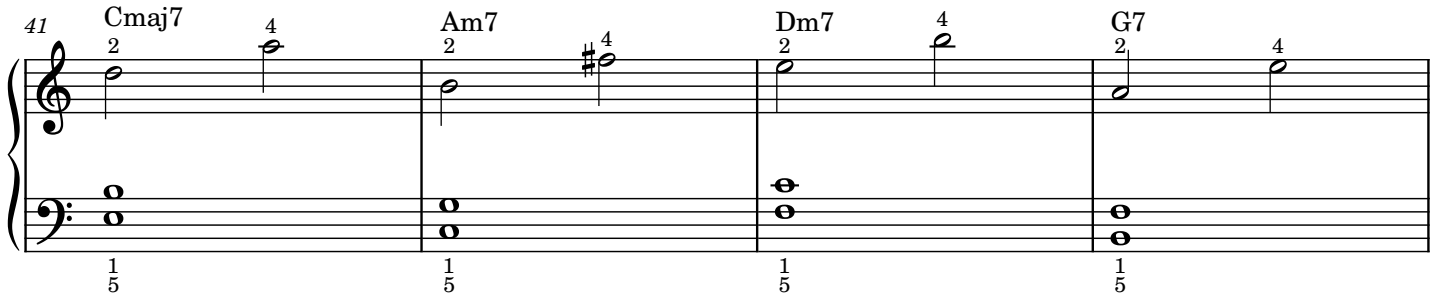
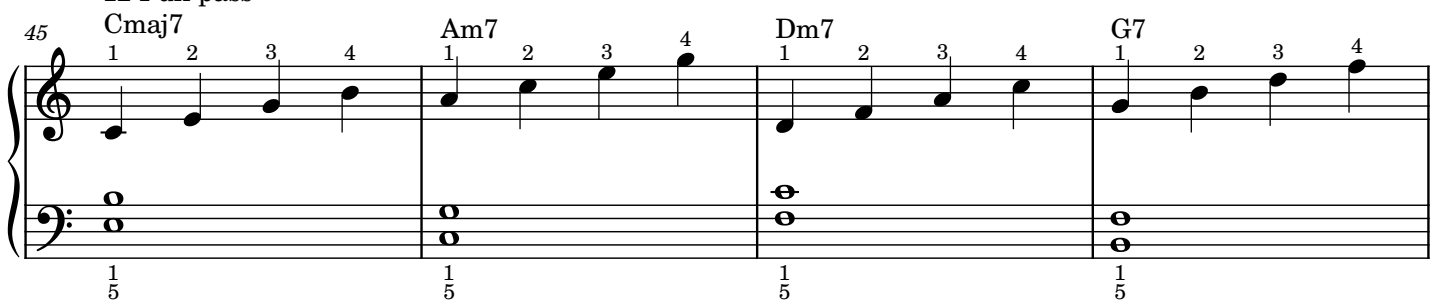
9 Rhythm



10 Pentatonic



11 Color



12 Full pass