

There are two choruses of piano voicings shown for the F minor blues. The piece calls for some dense chords and some alterations that may not be familiar. The first eight measures are in close position. Close position is when the upper voices are ‘close’, within an octave, of each other. The left hand has only the roots. Notice that all the voices resolve by steps – there are not large leaps needed to connect these chords. There are some interesting dissonances in the inner parts of the chord, like the D# against the E♭ in the C7 chord. (In m.18, the dissonance is spread over an octave – and the D# is written as an E♭.)

In m.9, the voicings are in open position. Open position is when the upper voices are spaced beyond the octave. Compare the voices in m.1 and m.13. The pitches are exactly the same. The spread has changed from close to open by dropping the second voice from the top an octave. The D is moved to the left hand. With these open position voicings, the left hand is usually responsible for the root and third or root and seventh of the chords.

There are no rhythms shown for this voicing etude. Practice playing stylistic rhythms when playing them (swing, funk, latin). (There is a link to comping rhythms in a jazz style). Comping is a jazz word for accompanying. I like to think comp is also short for complimenting. In any style, choose rhythms that compliment the primary melodic activity. If the band is playing the melody or someone is improvising a line, you could place the chords in the spaces as you would in a conversation with a friend. When your friend tells you a story you punctuate the conversation with “really?” “cool,” “dude, I can’t believe it, that’s awesome!”, etc. Think of playing the chords in that way. You have to listen to know when to play, and you have to be ready to play the right voicing.

If you have trouble with some of the voicings, isolate 2-3 and find the notes that stay the same and the notes that change. Practice to a resolution, don’t just play an isolated chord.

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