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# Carnival

My composition "Carnival" represents a mixture of calypso and subtle samba influences. Calypso is a style of Afro-Caribbean music which originated in Trinidad and Tobago. Calypsos are played year round, but are particularly prominent during the time of Carnival. Steel drums, or pans, are often used in calypso, and it is possible to emulate this sound on a guitar either with palm muting (as I did in the introduction), or by preparing the guitar by placing objects such as paper or metal on the strings or bridge. Calypso lyrics have an interesting history of political dissent and have ties to the reggae tradition of *toasting* which could be considered an antecedent to rap music. Calypso became known worldwide with the success of the "Banana Boat Song," a traditional Jamaican folk song recorded by Harry Belafonte on his 1956 album *Calypso*.

"Carnival" was originally written as just the A section in the key of G as a very easy piece for my students. I later transposed it to C and wrote the bridge section so it could function as a 32 bar AABA form for my own use.

Example 1 shows the clave pattern that the percussionist and drummer (Aaron Serfaty) plays at the beginning of the piece. It's a "Calypso del Callao" rhythm from the eastern side of Venezuela which is very close to Trinidad and Tobago. This

is a different pattern from the standard Cuban claves and is difficult to play against at first. It could also be notated in 2/4 with 16th notes.

Example 2 is an easy, muted arpeggio pattern that I played against the clave as an introduction to the piece.

Example 3a shows chord voicings for the A section that have a G melody note in all 3 voicings.

Example 3b shows chord voicings for the A section that use a pedal tone and lower voicings.

Examples 4a and 4b show upper and lower register chord voicings for the B section. 4a is what I might play as a chord melody line, 4b as a lower register comping pattern.

Example 5 shows some scalar options for soloing over the B section. While the A section is diatonic to the key of C, the B is actually quite challenging and interesting to improvise over. I suggest first practicing the scales in a rubato context over the individual chords before looping the progression in real time (see the video excerpt for an example of this).

A measure-by-measure analysis:

-A Minor 7, Scale: A Dorian, (1,2,b3,4,5,6,b7). A Aeolian, (1,2,b3,4,5,b6,b7) could work here as well.

-Ab diminished 7, Scale: A Harmonic Minor, (1,2,b3,4,5,b6,7). I think of the Ab (or G#) Diminished 7 chord functioning as an E7b9. The A Harmonic Minor scale works well in this context functioning as the 5th mode of A Harmonic minor, E Mixolydian b2 (b9), b6, (1,b2,3,4,5,b6,b7).

-G Minor 7, Scale: G Dorian, (1,2,b3,4,5,6,b7).



## Joe LoPiccolo

### EX. 1, CLAVE PATTERN

1 + (2) + (3) 4 (1) 2 (3) 4

### EX. 2, ARPEGGIOS

PALM MUTE THROUGHOUT

C F C G7

C F G7 C

EX. 3A. (A) SECTION VOICINGS

EX. 3B. (A) SECTION VOICINGS (LOWER)

EX. 4A. (B) SECTION CHORD MELODY VOICINGS

EX. 4B. (B) SECTION VOICINGS (LOWER)

-D/F#, Scale: G Harmonic Minor, (1,2,b3,4,5,b6,7). I think of the D/F# chord functioning as a D7b9. The G Harmonic Minor works well in this context functioning as the 5th mode of G Harmonic minor, D Mixolydian b2 (b9), b6, (1,b2,3,4,5,b6,b7).  
 -F Minor 6, Scale: F Melodic Minor, (1,2,b3,4,5,6,7).  
 -C/E, Scale: C Ionian, (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).  
 -Dm7, Scale: D Dorian, (1,2,b3,4,5,6,b7).  
 -G7, Scale: G Diminished (Half, Whole) (1,b9,#9,#11,5,6,b7).  
 There are many other choices here as well, a more basic choice would be straight G Mixolydian, (1,2,3,4,5,6,b7).

Example 6 is the lead sheet to "Carnival." The fingering for the B section corresponds to the chord melody voicings in Example 4a. The companion Fingerstyle CD contains the entire track (including the improvisations) from my 2009 CD, *Night*. It features me on guitar, Andy Suzuki on sax, Larry Steen on bass, and Aaron Serfaty on drums and percussion.



EX. 5. BRIDGE SOLOING SCALES

A DORIAN A <sup>M</sup> 7	A HARMONIC MINOR (E MIXO b2, b6) A <sup>b</sup> o7	G DORIAN G <sup>M</sup> 7	G HARMONIC MINOR (D MIXO b2, b6) D/F#
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F MELODIC MINOR F <sup>M</sup> 6	C IONIAN C/E	D DORIAN D <sup>M</sup> 7	G DIMINISHED (HALF, WHOLE) G7
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EX. 6

CARNIVAL

JOE LOPICCOLO

**A** C F/C C G7

C F/C C G7 FINE

**B** A<sup>M</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>o7 G<sup>M</sup>7 D/F# F<sup>M</sup>6 C/E D<sup>M</sup>7 G7

D.C. AL FINE

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The provided examples are, of course, only the beginning; try experimenting with different chord voicings and soloing scales and getting comfortable playing against the clave. Thanks to Aaron Serfaty for his help with the clave and Jun Ohnuki for his help with

the historical information. Watch the enhanced CD content to see me illustrate the examples in a more musical context.

Thanks for reading.

Please feel free to contact me at [www.joelopiccolo.com](http://www.joelopiccolo.com).

