



Chromatic for Diatonic Players

Multiple Embouchure, Part 5: The Overlapping Leap

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First, let's demonstrate what cool things you can do with overlapping leaps:

Pretty – Click here to listen <14demo1.mp3> (Note that all of these MP3 files can be downloaded from www.HarmonicaSessions.com)

Funky – click here to listen <14-demopretty.mp3>

Did you notice two or more consecutive wide leaps going in the same direction, either up or down? With a single embouchure point it would be very hard to make them smoothly, or with any certainty about where you're likely to land. Even with left-right switching you really get only one smooth leap, so how do you get two or more in a row?

That's where the overlap comes in. Listen more carefully and you'll actually hear:

1. An upward leap
2. A small step downward
3. Another upward leap

That small step downward is where the overlap happens. Here's the embouchure sequence illustrated. Click here to hear it played with all draw notes <14-01.mp3>

1: First Upward Leap

Tongue action moves note from left to right.



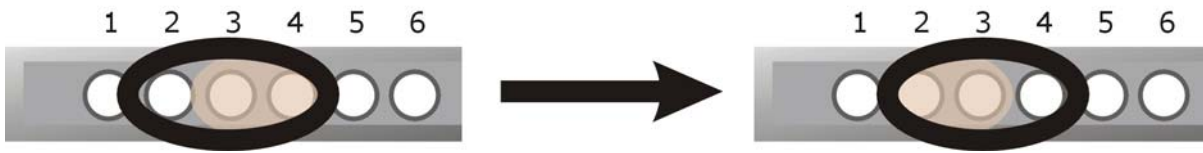
2: Overlap between Upward Leaps

Embouchure moves one hole to right, while tongue moves note back to the left side



3: Second Upward Leap

Tongue action moves note from left to right.



Here it is notated and tabbed.

Notation and Tab: Tab appears below the notes. Notes played from the same embouchure location are grouped with a bracket under the tab. A new bracket indicates a shift in the location of the embouchure. The “L” and “R” under the brackets show whether a note is played from the left (L) or right (R) side of the embouchure.

In a descending direction, we simply reverse all the steps:

1. A downward leap
2. A small step upward
3. Another downward leap

Again, that small step upward is where the overlap happens. Here's the embouchure sequence illustrated. Note that it's moved one hole higher than the previous exercise so that the notes will be easier to hear intuitively. [Click here to hear it played with all draw notes <14-02.mp3>](#).

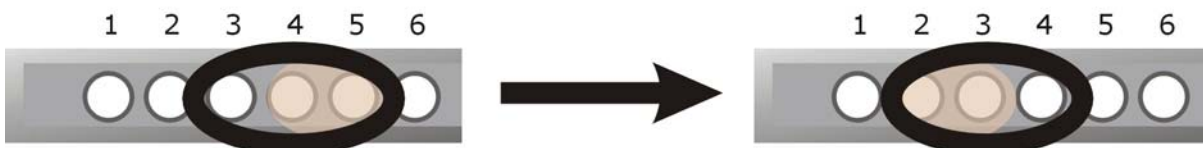
1: First Downward Leap

Tongue action moves note from right to left.



2: Overlap between Downward Leaps

Embouchure moves one hole to left, while tongue moves note back to the right side



3: Second Downward Leap

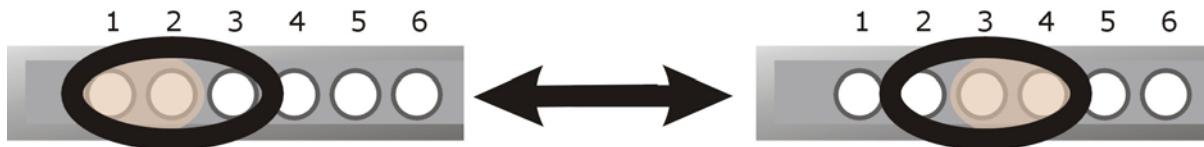
Tongue action moves note from right to left.



Here it is notated and tabbed. <14-02.mus>

The Overlap Move

The crucial thing is to get the embouchure overlap that connects the two left-right tongue flicks. The isolated embouchure move illustrated:



Here's an exercise that works this move as illustrated above and one hole to the right.

IMPORTANT: Keep your mouth shape locked. You need to be aware of the width of your embouchure so you can size it to the desired leap. For now, the embouchure always covers three holes. (Click here to listen <14-03.mp3>):

Let's use the overlap move to creep a short distance up the harp, then come back down by reversing our steps (click Here to listen <14-04.mp3>):

1 3 2 4 3 5 4 6 6 4 5 3 4 2 3 1
 L R L R L R L R R L R L R L

Let's try extending this action farther along the harp (click [Here](#) to listen <14-05.mp3>):

1 3 2 4 3 5 4 6 5 7 6 8 7 9 8 10
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

10 8 9 7 8 6 7 5 6 4 5 3 4 2 3 1
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Adding the Slide

So far we've been outlining a chord of D minor 6th – D, F, A, B. By playing every second embouchure position with the slide in, we can alter this chord to D7 – D F# A C (click here to listen <14-06.mp3>):

1 3 2 4 3 5 4 6 5 7 6 8 7 9 8 10
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

10 8 9 7 8 6 7 5 6 4 5 3 4 2 3 1
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

By using the slide on a different set of notes we can get an F7 arpeggio. In the first measure, we use the slide on the notes played from the right side, while in the second measure we use the slide for the notes played from the left side. These two patterns alternate each measure as we go up, and reverse when we come down (click here to listen <14-07.mp3>):

2 4 3 5 4 6 5 7 6 8 7 9 8 10 9 11
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

11 9 10 8 9 7 8 6 7 5 6 4 5 3 4 2
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

We can also mix blow and draw notes. Here is an E minor 7 chord arpeggiated. Note that the blow-draw breath sequence alternates every measure. In the first measure it goes Blow-Draw-Blow-Draw. In the second measure it reverses to Draw-Blow-Draw-Blow. These two patterns keep alternating as you go up, and reverse as you come down (click here to listen <14-08.mp3>):

2 4 3 5 4 6 5 7 6 8 7 9 8 10 9 11
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

11 9 10 8 9 8 9 7 8 5 7 4 5 3 4 2
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

Here's an E Major 6 chord, played with mixed breath and slide-in notes. Every second embouchure position is slide-in blow notes (click here to listen <14-09.mp3>):

This only scratches the surface of possibilities, both for arpeggiated chords and for things that go beyond arpeggios. But this is enough to get you started.

Leaping to the Overlap – the Four-hole Spread

With a total spread of three holes, when your embouchure moves for the overlap, it's never more than one hole. But with a four-hole spread, your embouchure has to leap two holes before you do the overlap:



Here the embouchure moves two holes so that the overlap can move from Hole 4 to Hole 3. Now you may think that we've been doing this left-right switching stuff to avoid making any leaps. You would not be wrong.

However, even though you are switching sides and moving the embouchure itself more than one hole, the overlap itself moves between two adjacent holes. The first note in the overlap becomes a strong reference point. Your next note is in the adjacent hole, so move to the hole beside that point.

To get the hang of this, go back and practice the isolated overlap move. But this time, *do it with a locked four-hole spread*. This is what will carry you through this leap between embouchure positions.

Here's an exercise on all draw notes with no slide. It outlines a D minor 6 chord. Note that the brackets have dotted lines to distinguish the four-hole spread from a three-hole spread (click here to listen <14-10.mp3>):

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 1 4 3 6 5 8 7 10 10 7 8 5 6 3 4 1
 L R L R R L R R L R L R R L R L

Whenever we play a four-note arpeggio this way, some combinations are left out. Here's the other half of the exercise, starting one hole higher <14-11.mp3>:

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 2 5 4 7 6 9 8 11 11 8 9 6 7 4 5 2
 L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L

If we push the slide in only on the right-side notes, we can make this sequence outline a D7 chord (click here to listen <14-12.mp3>):

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 1 4 3 6 5 8 7 10 10 7 8 5 6 3 4 1
 L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L

If we start one hole to the right and push the slide in for only the left-side notes, we can play the other notes in the same chord that were skipped over (click here to listen <14-13.mp3>):

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 2 5 4 7 6 9 8 11 11 8 9 6 7 4 5 2
 L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L

We can do the F7 chord in all-draw notes.

First version. Note that whenever the overlap occurs, the notes on both sides of the handoff will either be all-slide-out (F and A) or all slide-in (C and E-flat). Click here to listen <14-14.mp3>:

Second version. At the first embouchure location, both notes are slide-out. On the next they are both slide-in. This alternation continues through the exercise (click here to listen <14-15.mp3>):

If we convert that E minor 7 arpeggio to a four-hole spread, we also get predictable action patterns.

In the first version the two notes involved in the overlap are either both blow or both draw (click here to listen <14-16.mp3>):

In the second version, each embouchure position alternates between two blow notes and two draw notes (click here to listen <14-17.mp3>):

If we do the E Major 6 chord with a four-hole spread, again we get help from predictable action patterns.

First version. The note on the *right* is always a slide-in blow note (click here to listen <14-18.mp3>):

Musical notation for the first exercise, showing a chromatic scale in C major. The notes are: C, C#, D, D#, E, E#, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, B, B#, C. The notes are grouped into pairs of four-note chords. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 2-5 for the right hand and 4-7 for the left hand. Breath marks are indicated by arrows pointing up (inhalation) and down (exhalation).

Second version. Now the note on the *left* is always a slide-in blow note (click here to listen <14-19.mp3>):

Musical notation for the second exercise, showing a chromatic scale in C major. The notes are: C, C#, D, D#, E, E#, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, B, B#, C. The notes are grouped into pairs of four-note chords. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 3-6 for the right hand and 5-8 for the left hand. Breath marks are indicated by arrows pointing up (inhalation) and down (exhalation).

Again, the chords presented here as examples of overlaps with a four-hole spread are only a tiny sample of the many different possibilities.

Before going on, get comfortable with playing overlaps with exercises using all three-hole spreads and all four-hole spreads. In addition to the chords already shown, work out ways to play other four-note chords. Leave three-note chords alone for now; they can't be played with a single type of spread. Instead, look at 7th chords – minor 7ths, Major 7ths, Major 6ths and minor 6ths – built on every note in the chromatic scale.

Mixed Spreads

So far we have worked with either a three-hole spread or a four-hole spread. However, moving back and forth between them can be very useful. For instance, simple three note chords require the use of mixed spreads.

Up to this point I've avoided focusing on the blow plane. Due to the presence of two blow Cs (or C#s) in adjacent holes (Holes 4 and 5 and again in Holes 8 and 9). If we try to play a simple C major arpeggio with a three-hole spread, the two Cs in adjacent holes disrupt the expected tonal pattern (Click here to listen <14-20.mp3>):

By mixing three-hole and four-hole spreads you can get rid of the unwanted appearances of the duplicated C (Click here to listen <14-21.mp3>):

However, the double Cs do have one advantage: they make for consistent overlaps in the action pattern. With some three-note chords, not all embouchure shifts will involve overlaps. D minor is a good example. In the exercise below, the non-overlap shifts are marked with an asterisk. However, note that at least in this example, when these shifts do occur, the spread size stays the same and simply moves one hole – something you’ve already dealt with in previous installments (click here to listen <14-22.mp3>):

Let's end this session with a somewhat free-form example of using mixed spreads on a D7 chord. Here we're mixing in connecting notes between the chord notes.

This allows you to access chord notes at will, as in this ramble over a D7 chord (click here to listen <14-23.mp3>):

I doubt you would attempt – or even think of – such a line without the use of double embouchure and overlaps.

Next time we'll look the pivot, another way of linking embouchure locations and unlocking the power of multiple embouchures.

Notation Key

Please visit <http://www.harmonicassessions.com/feb05/ChromaticTab.pdf> for a notation key.