

# Lesson 213 — “Autumn Leaves” — Harmony and Melody

## Warm-Up – Tone & Harmony Builder

Prepare the tonal and harmonic material used throughout *Autumn Leaves*.

Play the **E natural minor scale** (concert G major for some transposing instruments) slowly:

- once in whole notes
- once in half notes
- once in swung quavers

Focus on:

- centred tone
- clean connections between notes
- relaxed swing feel

Next, practise the two essential **ii–V7–I progressions** found in the piece:

**ii–V7–I in E minor:**

F#m7 ♭ 5 → B7 → Em7

**ii–V7–I in G major:**

Am7 → D7 → Gmaj7

Play each progression first as **long tones** (4 beats per chord), then as **broken-chord arpeggios**.

Listen for how smoothly each chord leads into the next.

## Score Study — Melody & Harmony Overview

# Autumn Leaves

(Les Feuilles Mortes)

Music by Joseph Kosma  
English Lyric by Johnny Mercer

Med. Swing

**A**

The fall - ing leaves drift by my win - dow, The au - tumn

leaves of red and gold; I see your

lips, the sum - mer kiss - es, The sun - burned

hands I used to hold. Since you

**B**

went a - way the days grow long, And soon I'll

hear old win - ter's song, But I

miss you most of all, my dar - ling, When

au - tumn leaves start to fall.

## Music Theory (Part 1: Harmony & Melody)

*Autumn Leaves* relies on **Circle of Fifths movement** and repeated **ii–V7–I** progressions, creating smooth harmonic motion.

The melody outlines this harmonic descent clearly, especially in the opening bars.

### Key Concepts

- The piece is usually performed in **E minor** or **G major**, a relative key pair.
- The harmony moves mainly **down a fifth**, creating smooth voice-leading.
- The melody outlines this descending harmonic movement, especially in the opening phrase.
- The minor ii–V7–I uses a **half-diminished ii chord (m7 ♭ 5)**, standard in jazz minor harmony.

### Lesson 213 Tasks: Harmony & Melody

1. What is the home key of the version your class is using?

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2. Write the ii–V7–I progression in E minor.

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3. Write the ii–V7–I progression in G major.

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4. Label the chords in bars 1–8 with their harmonic function (ii, V7, I, III, VI, etc.).

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5. Describe the shape of the melody in the opening phrase (stepwise? descending? outlining harmony?).

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### Reflection (Lesson 213)

How clearly can you hear the harmonic motion in the melody?

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