Abstract: Saxophonist Mark Turner represents one of the most influential and original modern improvisers on the saxophone. This thesis identifies and typifies a body of recurring intervallic relationships in his improvisations as examples of chromatic thirds relations. Establishing his lineage from both John Coltrane and ‘cool school’ saxophonists Warne Marsh, it shows his adaptation of Coltrane’s major third cycles into more direct polytonal superimposition via the augmented scale and related structures through chromatic voice leading.

The analysis is categorised by harmonic background, demonstrating Turner’s application of chromatic thirds cycles through the following contexts: solo improvisation, major, minor, dominant chords and harmony relating to the augmented scale. It uses a new system of nomenclature combining elements of set theory and traditional jazz chord symbols to denote relationships between the melodic improvisation and the underlying harmonic context. Subsequently, the thesis demonstrates Turner’s systematic and thorough use of chromatic third relations, particularly major third cycles, as melodic vocabulary through a variety of harmonic contexts. The system developed in this thesis enables a practical analysis of Turner’s harmonic concepts and melodic vocabulary, and the application of his harmonic concepts to improvisation.