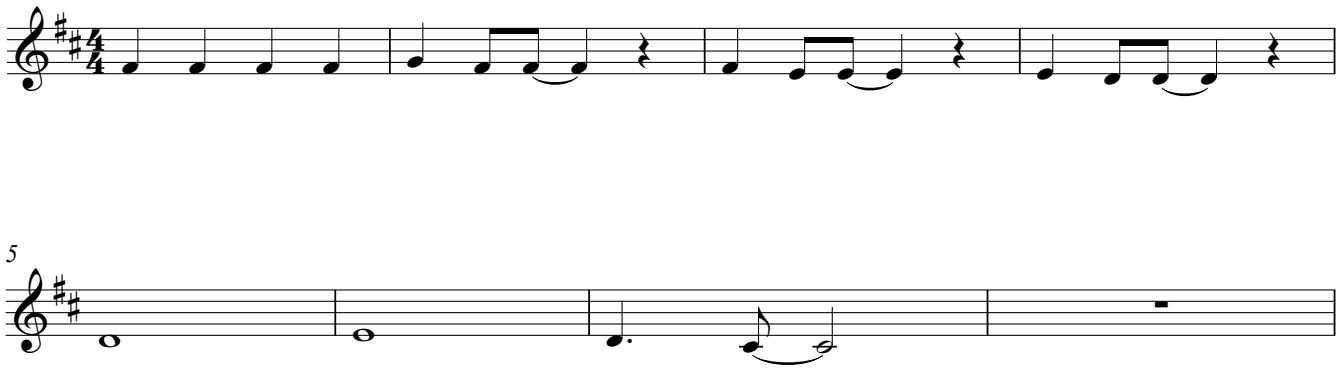
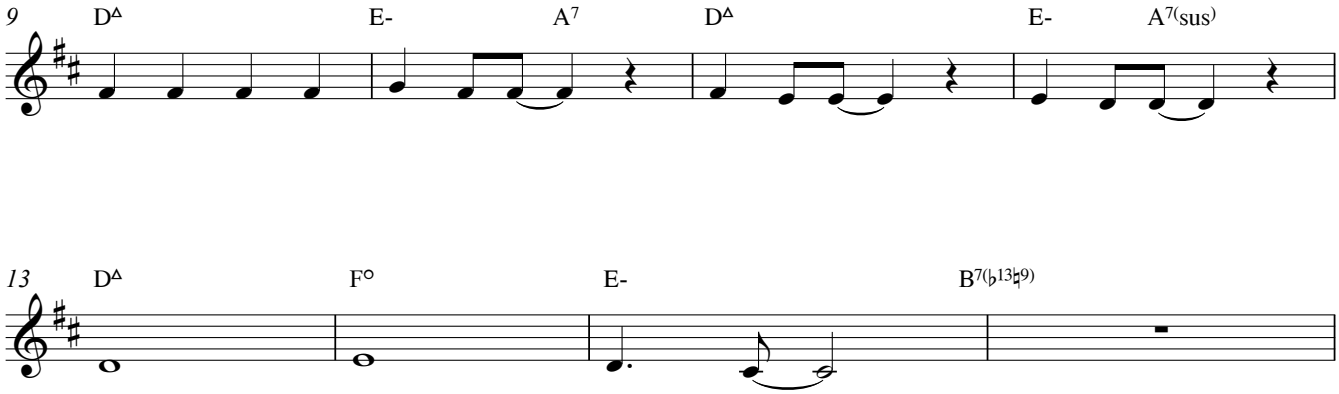
Bye Bye Blackbird - Session 1 (Eb)

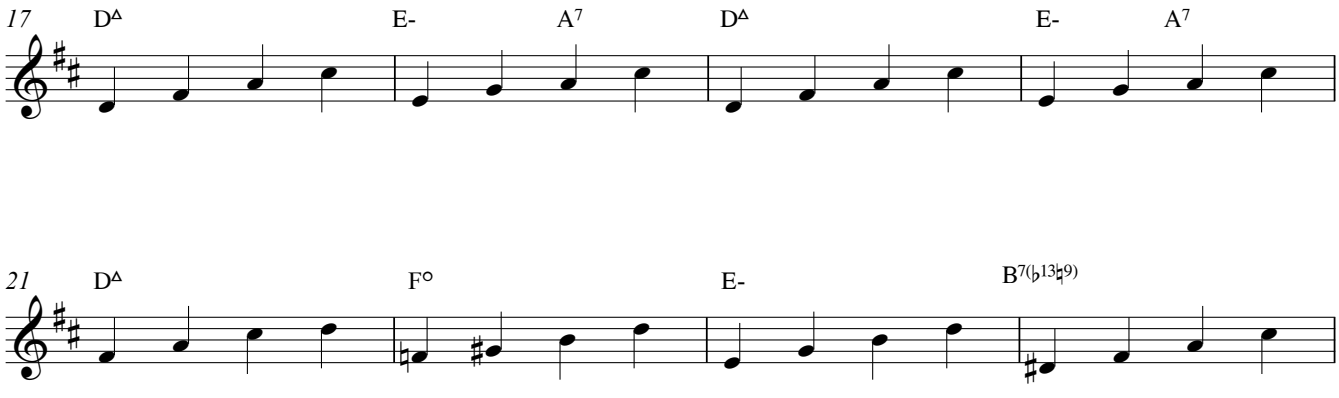
Session 1 addresses the opening 8 bars. I think of this piece as an AABA form. Although each A section is different, they are clearly related. The simple melody which we hear in the opening 8 bars (shown below) is developed throughout the song, so it's a good idea to really internalise it before moving on.



Becasue the melody is so diatonic, there are many interpretations for the harmony of this piece, particularly the opening section. I have outlined a progression below which is commonly used, however it is always worth investigating other possibilities and conventions. Practice in pairs, or by recording yourself, playing the root notes alongsde the melody so you can hear how they match up.

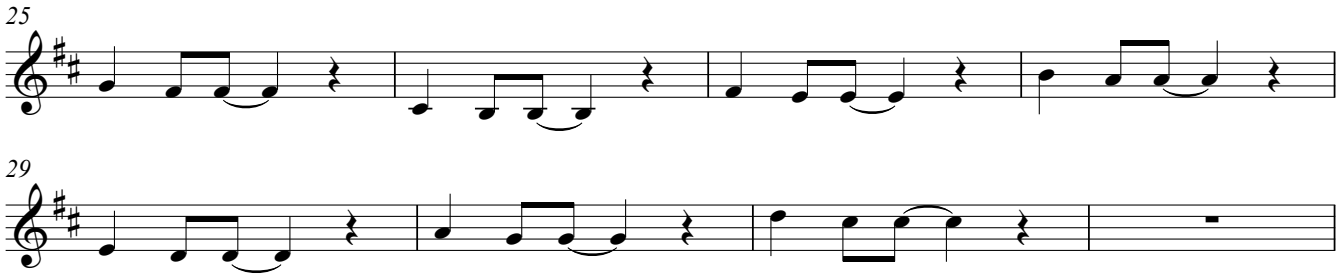


To help internalise the sound of these changes, and develop fluency, practice a continuous line of crotchets. Start with a fixed exercise with specific rules as shown in the example below. Throughout the opening 4 bars I have restricted myself by using only chord tones 1, 3, 5 and 7, aiming for as subtle a transition between chords as is available. Through bars 5-8 I have adjusted an arpeggio to fit each chord, again with minimal alterations to create smooth voice leading.

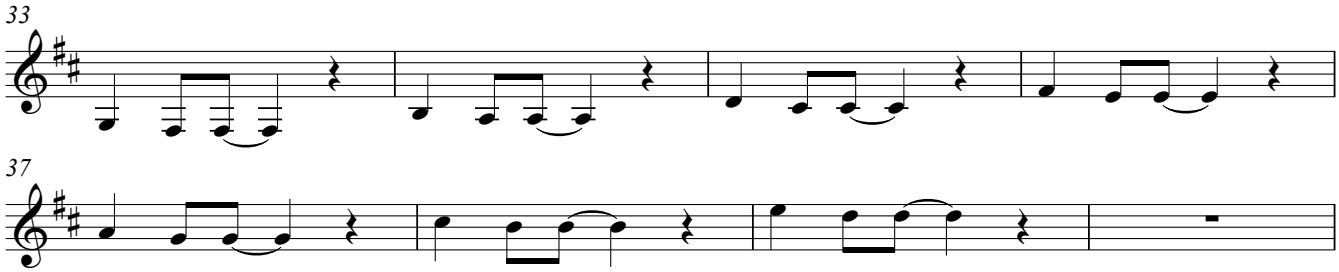


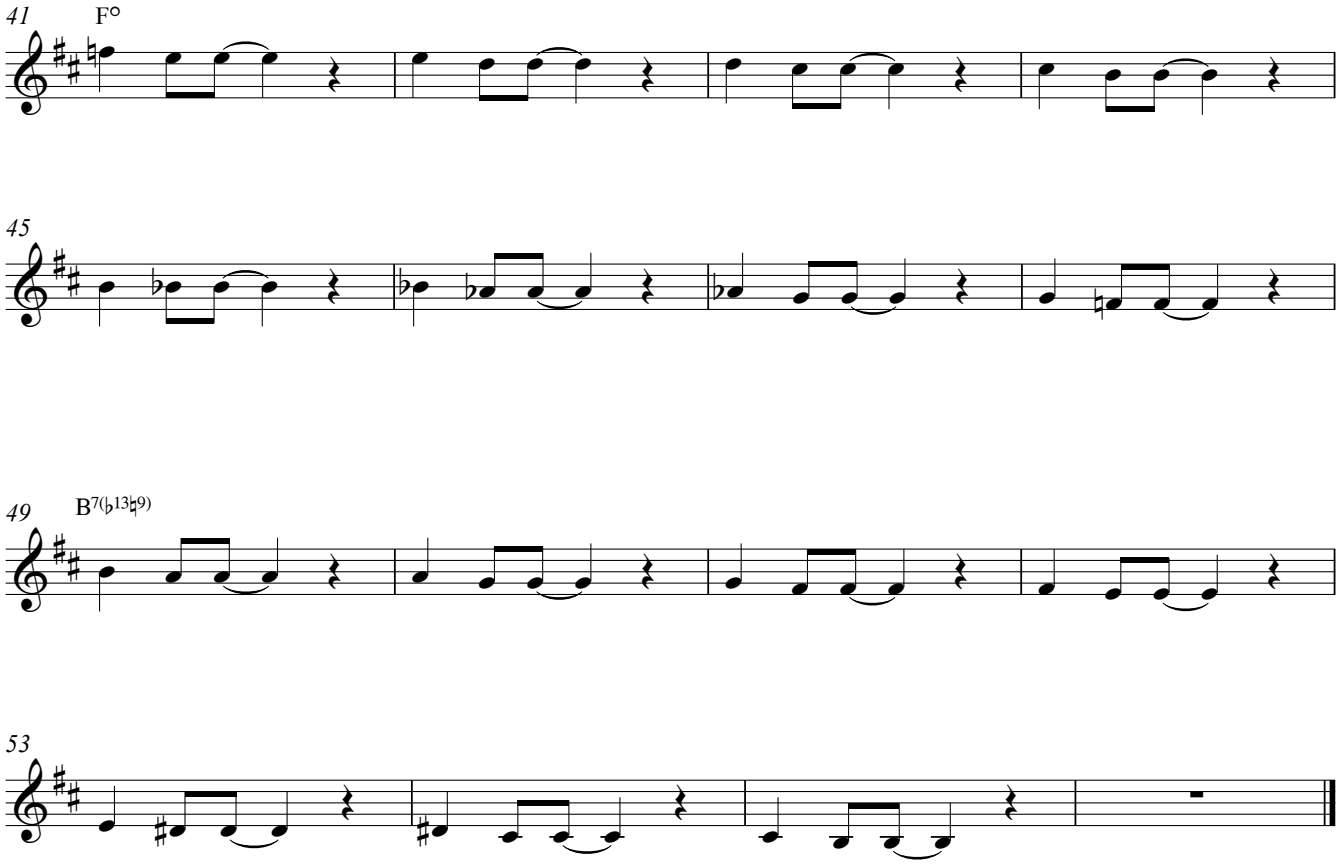
2 Finally, I suggest exploring some ways in which the melodic material introduced in this section can be developed and applied across the harmonic sequence. The melodic figure in bars 2, 3 and 4 is a defining feature of the composition. This short cell uses diatonic stepwise motion and note repitition, the phrase is then transposed through the home key, with the starting point descending diatonically. Here are a few suggestions on other ways to practice and develop the cell:

Cell transposed through diatonic cycle of 4ths:



Cell transposed through diatonic cycle of 3rds/6ths:



Above are just two examples of alternative transpositions for the phrase, note that the phrase can of course be transposed through all diatonic and non diatonic cycles.

As well as different ways to transpose the cell through the home key, it's useful to be able to apply the cell to the other sounds in the sequence (the bIIIo and VI7b13natural9). These are shown below: