

Long Ago And Far Away - Session 1 (Eb)

This workshop focuses solely on the opening A section (8 bars) of the composition, taking a look at the melody and harmony separately.

Below is the melody notated in it's most simple form.



One way to develop improvisation skills is to play a set melody like this one, and 'improvise' simply by choosing which notes to play and which ones to omit, without adding any extra notes or even adjusting their rhythmic placement. This is a surprisingly difficult exercise, but one which greatly develops your ability to play a controlled improvisation, using restraint and space. A couple of examples are given below:




This exercise can be extended now to include repetition and/or decoration of some notes, as well as applying the same principal but also allowing for rhythmic alterations. As well as being hugely beneficial to your improvisation skills, these exercises often highlight how we don't know the melody as well as we think we do, and just how much attention needs to be given to the melody when studying improvisation.

The A section is now shown again, this time with the chords added:

25 D^Δ B⁻ E⁻ A⁷ D^Δ B⁻ E⁻ A⁷



29 D^Δ B⁻ E⁻ A⁷ D^Δ B^{7#9} E⁻ A⁷



With the slight exception of bar 7 To be discussed in another workshop, this entire section takes place over a repeating I VI II V sequence - all with their diatonic qualities: Imaj7, VImin7, IImin7, V7.

The result of this being that the section feels fairly static harmonically, with the four corresponding modes for each chord being derived from the same parent scale. To avoid improvisations over this chord sequence losing a sense of direction, or gravity, i suggest some of the following exercises:

Stating the root note of each chord on beat 1 - joining them up with an improvised line:

(for the purpose of practice I have expanded the sequence so each chord lasts for a full bar rather than 2 beats)
Each example is shown here over a four bar sequence, but can be practiced across a much longer period

33 D^Δ B⁻ E⁻ A⁷



Stating the 3rd of each chord on beat 2 - joining them up with an improvised line:

(for the purpose of practice I have expanded the sequence so each chord lasts for a full bar rather than 2 beats)
Each example is shown here over a four bar sequence, but can be practiced across a much longer period

37 D^Δ B⁻ E⁻ A⁷



Stating the 5th of each chord on beat 3+ - joining them up with an improvised line:

(for the purpose of practice I have expanded the sequence so each chord lasts for a full bar rather than 2 beats)
Each example is shown here over a four bar sequence, but can be practiced across a much longer period

41 D^Δ B⁻ E⁻ A⁷



These exercises can be simplified and/or developed as appropriate. They are intended to develop the improvisor's ability to clearly outline the harmonic movement within this sequence.