

Robbin's Nest - Session 1 (Bb)

This session addresses the A section of the tune - with a view to using the melody as a template for improvisation. Below is a simplified version of the melody. Notice how the decorative pickup into bar 1 and bar 3 are missing - this will be expanded on in a separate session.

Musical notation for the first two lines of the simplified melody. The first line contains bars 1 and 3, with chords Eb^A and $B7^{\#11}$ above them. The second line contains bars 5 through 8, with chords $G-7$, $F\#^o$, $F-7$, Bb^{13} , Eb^A , $C7$, $F-7$, and $Bb7$ above them.

The phrase in bar 1, which is repeated (and transposed) in bar 3 is made up of a common four note cell, with the first two notes repeated to end the phrase. It's useful to analyse this as a four note cell, discounting the repeated notes at the end of the phrase initially, and then reintroducing them later as we will in another session.

The cell often appears in it's simplest form: 1,2,3,5 (shown below) - as in the melodies of 'Out Of Nowhere' and 'Beautiful Love' and employed to great effect in John Coltrane's improvisations during the 'Giant Steps' period.

Musical notation showing the simplest form of the four-note cell: notes 1, 2, 3, and 5 on a staff.

This pattern can be applied to each chord, through the sequence, as shown below:

Musical notation for the third and fourth lines of the simplified melody, showing the four-note cell applied to the chords Eb^A , $B7^{\#11}$, $G-7$, $F\#^o$, $F-7$, Bb^{13} , Eb^A , $C7$, $F-7$, and $Bb7$.

There is a large, but finite, number of permutations of this cell, the one present in the melody can be described as: 2,1,5,3. Shown below:

Musical notation showing the permutation of the four-note cell: notes 2, 1, 5, and 3 on a staff.

Practicing this permutation throughout the sequence introduces two concepts. Over the opening four bars, this can be viewed simply as a rhythmic variation of the melody. Using this cell in bars 5-8, we are now 'improvising' with melodic material from one section of the composition while outlining the harmony of another section. This is notated below. Try altering the rhythm, mixing out, repeating and decorating notes to add an improvisation element to this exercise.

Musical notation for the fifth and sixth lines of the simplified melody, showing the permutation of the four-note cell applied to the chords Eb^A , $B7^{\#11}$, $G-7$, $F\#^o$, $F-7$, Bb^{13} , Eb^A , $C7$, $F-7$, and $Bb7$.