

Robbin's Nest - Session 2 (Bb)

This workshop addresses the A section again - exploring the melody in more detail and how we can use it while improvising through the harmonic sequence. As promised in the previous workshop, the decorative 'pick up' into bars 1 and 3 has now been introduced, shown below:

Musical notation for the first part of the exercise. It shows a triplet pick-up into bar 1 (Eb^Δ) and bar 3 (B7^{#11}).

Let's begin by analysing and extending the triplet section of the pick up, initially disregarding the first note, which comes before the triplet. The three notes leading into bar 1 can be described as the diatonic triad on the 3rd of the chord. Similarly the triplet pick up into bar 3 can be described as the diatonic triad on the root of the chord.

The exercise below shows the diatonic triad on the 3rd and then on the root of each chord through the sequence:

(This can be simplified to begin with by only dealing with the triad from the root, then only from the 3rd.)

Musical notation for the second part of the exercise, showing a sequence of chords and their corresponding triplet pick-ups. The chords are Eb^Δ, B7^{#11}, G⁻⁷, F^{#o}, F⁻⁷, Bb¹³, Eb^Δ, C⁷, F⁻⁷, and Bb¹³.

This exercise can now be loosened, leaving room for improvisation. One way to do this would be to play the triplet cell at the start of each new chord, followed by an improvisation for the remainder of the time spent on that chord. The outline of this is shown below, improvise in the gaps to join them up:

This can of course be loosened further to allow for rhythmic variation, different permutations of the triad and decoration.

Musical notation for the third part of the exercise, showing a sequence of chords and their corresponding triplet pick-ups. The chords are Eb^Δ, B7^{#11}, G⁻⁷, F^{#o}, F⁻⁷, Bb¹³, Eb^Δ, C⁷, F⁻⁷, and Bb¹³.

Returning now to the pickup as found in the melody, the triplet figure is preceded by a chromatic approach note (one semitone below). This idea can be applied not only to the triads on the 3rd degree and root of the chord, or on any other triad within the chord. The example below shows a practice exercise using chromatic approach notes (one semitone below) on triads from the root, 3rd and 5th degrees of each chord (1st 4 bars only):

To make full use of this figure in our improvisation it's useful to practice it throughout the entire mode. This is shown below for the first two modes:

I major 7:

bVI7:

The examples above take the figure through the mode ascending in diatonic steps, or 'the cycle of diatonic 2nds. As with any cell it's great practice to play it both ascending and descending through all the diatonic cycles: 2nds/7ths, 3rds/6ths, 4th/5ths.

The example below shows an improvisation built on the figure explored within this workshop. Practicing in this way helps the exercises become part of your vocabulary and come out naturally in your improvisation.