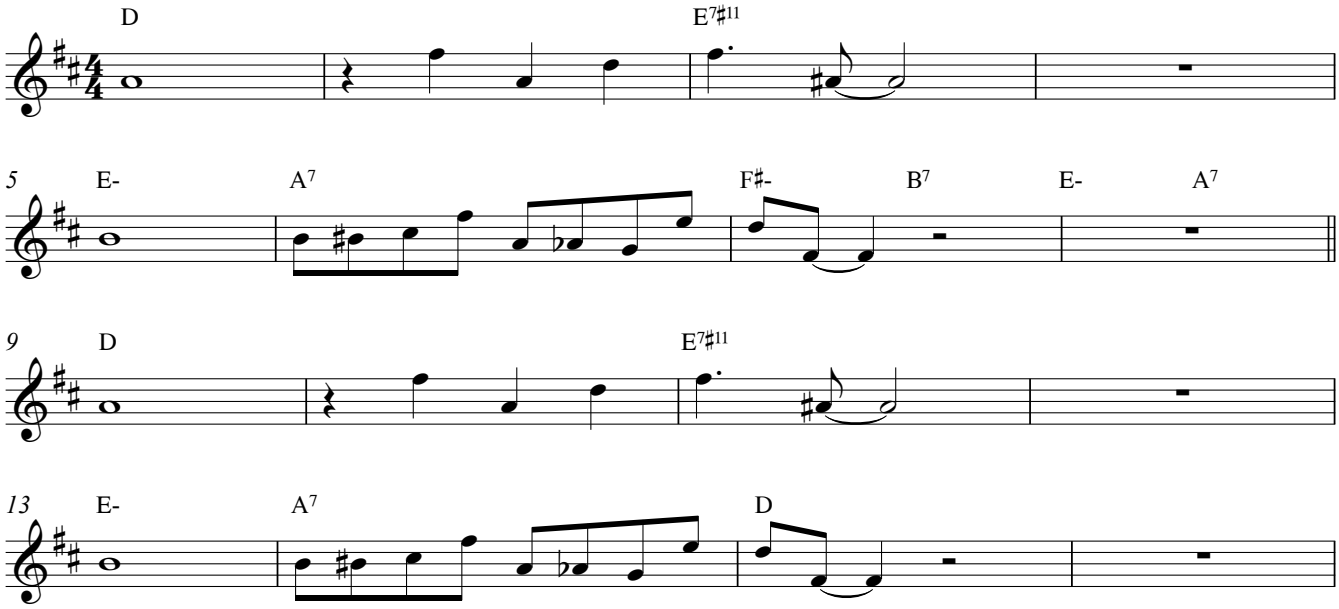
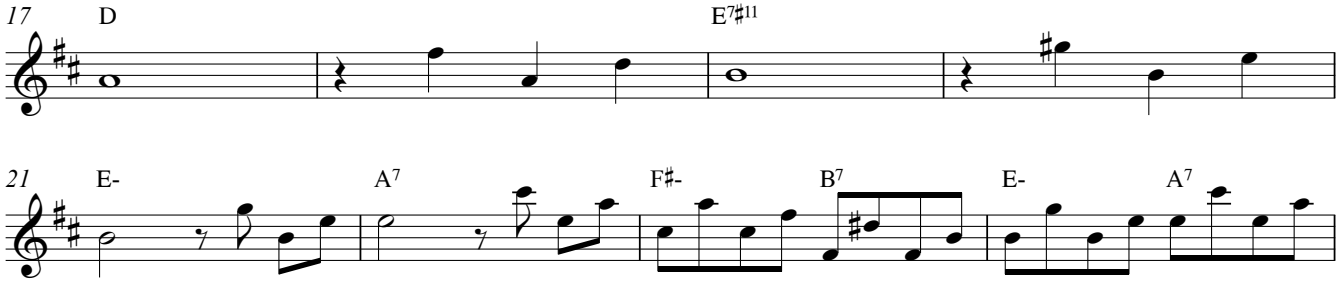
Take The A Train - Session 1 (Bb)

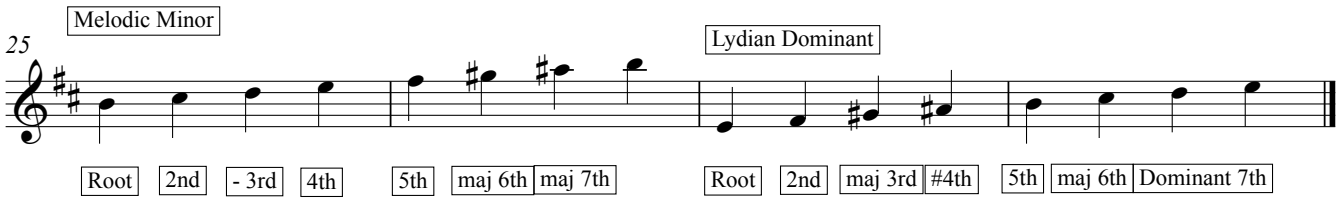
In session 1, we focus on the A section only. The melody is shown below. Notice how the melody remains the same but the chords are slightly different towards the end of the second A section. The form for the whole piece is AABA.



When learning the melody, it's useful to approach it analytically as well as aurally. Considering the intervals, melodic structures, theme, repetition and development amongst other things can be useful tools we can apply to our improvisation. Looking at a melody in this way is also helpful for memorising material - as most of us have better analytical memories than aural memories.

For example, thinking of the opening phrase as the triad of the chord, playing degrees 5, 3, 5, 1 is a more transferable piece of information. We can then apply this same pattern to various other arpeggios in the chord sequence (as shown below) and/or develop, embelish or simplify the pattern to create an interpretation of this phrase.



One particularly notable melodic device here is the chromatic runs in bar 6. These three consequetive chromatic notes are sometimes known as 'filling the tone' - as they place a chromatic passing note between two diatonic scale notes are tone apart. This is a common feature of compositions and improvisation of this period. It is particularly effective here as each chromatic figure ends with a large interval in contrast. Also note how the chromatic figure appears ascending the first time and desending the second time. This is explored further in session 2.

Although the harmonic movement appears relatively simple, one area stands out. This is bars 3 and 4, where we hear the II chord not as a Minor (dorian) sound but as a Dominant 7 #11 (Lydian Dominant) sound. Ths is sometimes referred to as a secondary dominant. The distinguishing feature of this chord is the G#, which is outlined in the melody. This chord (and scale) comes from the melodic minor of the relative minor key, or the relative minor a 4th below the secondary dominant chord.
The scales and chord tones are shown below: