

Take The A Train - Session 3 (Eb)

In session 3, I am looking for ways in which we can develop material which can help us reflect the melody in our improvisation. Aside from the ever applicable devices of interpretation and a augmentation of the melody its self, there are a number of devices in this melody which can be isolated and applied as improving techniques.

One strongly identifiable feature of this melody is the use of the 6th interval, as highlighted below:

The first staff of music shows the initial part of the melody in G major (one sharp). Above the staff, the chord 'A' is indicated. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. A box labeled 'Ascending major 6th' is placed over the interval from G4 to A4. The second staff starts at measure 5. Above the staff, the chords 'B-' and 'E7' are indicated for the first two measures, and 'A' for the next two. The notes are B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. A box labeled 'Descending major 6th' is placed over the interval from B4 to A4. Another box labeled 'Ascending major 6th' is placed over the interval from G4 to A4. A final box labeled 'Descending major 6th' is placed over the interval from B4 to A4.

A great practice task to help make use of this interval in our improvisation is to play the two scales we identified in session 1 in these intervals, both ascending and descending. This is shown below:

The first exercise is labeled 'C major - Ascending 6ths' and starts at measure 9. The notes are C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The second exercise is labeled 'D Lydian Dominant - Ascending 6ths' and starts at measure 13. The notes are D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5. The third exercise is labeled 'C major - Descending 6ths' and starts at measure 17. The notes are C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The fourth exercise is labeled 'D Lydian Dominant - Descending 6ths' and starts at measure 21. The notes are D5, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4.

The melody in bars 6 and 7 make use of a pattern which alternates ascending and descending 6ths through the scale. This idea is extended through the opening 4 bars below:

25 A

27 B7#11

To develop this idea further, there are a number of ways in which the melody decorates, disguises and approaches the use of the 6th interval. One such device is the chromatic descending approach, playing two notes, one a scale tone above, and one a semitone above the target note before playing the target note and then ascending a 6th. This forms a four note 'cell' or 'lick' based on the last four notes of bar 6. This pattern is shown below, transposed through both the I major and II7#11 Scales:

I major - Ascending 6ths with two note approach

29

31

II Lydian Dominant - Ascending 6ths with two note approach

33

35