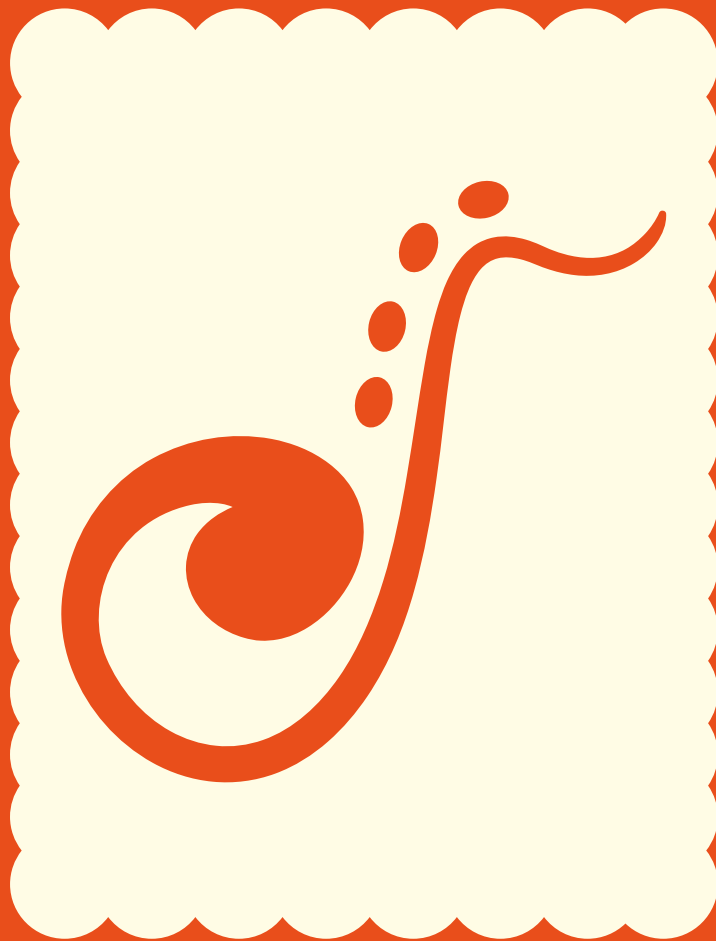


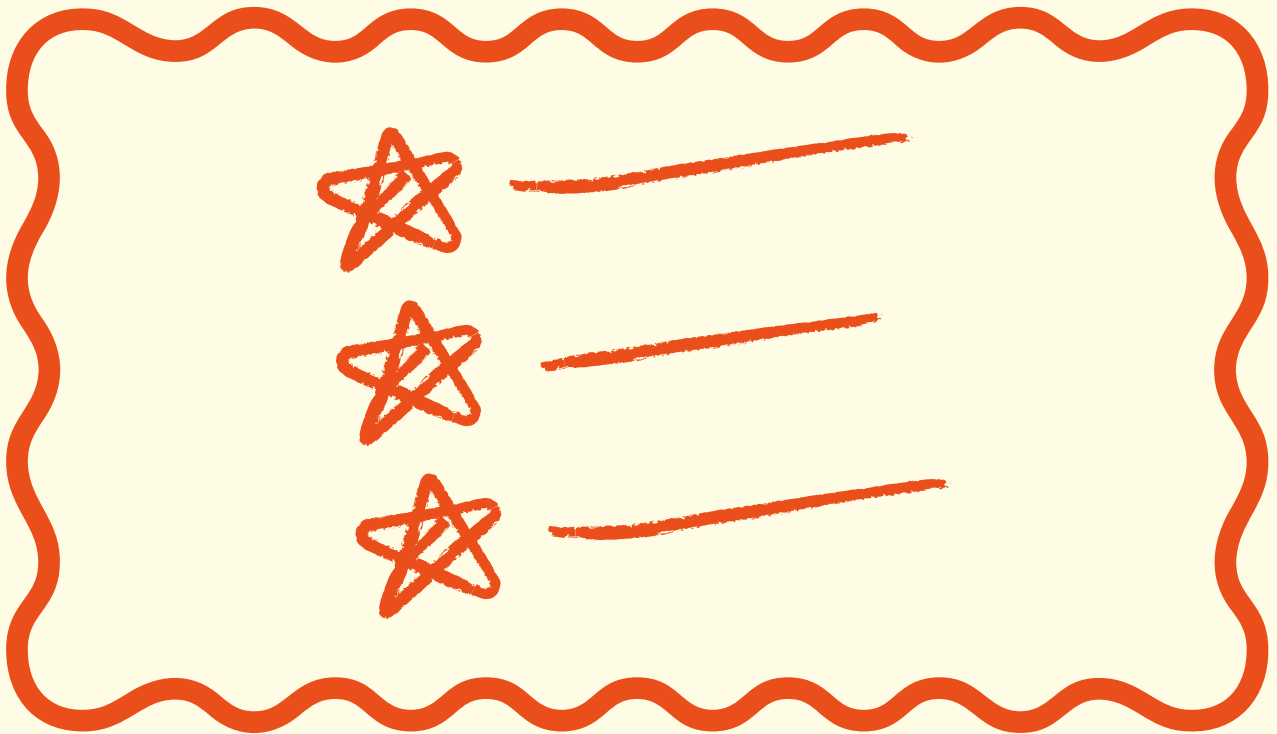
NYJO

Advanced Improvisation



CREATED BY RALPH PORRETT

Learning Objectives



Strengthen your control of phrasing and melodic design in improvisation.

Develop a more intentional and structured approach to melodic storytelling.

Explore a technique for playing "outside" harmonically, using inspiration from John Scofield.

Improvisation is more than just playing notes, it's about crafting a musical story. Through the following activities, we will explore how to develop a deeper sense of **melodic presentation** during an improvised solo, enhancing your ability to shape phrases with greater **lyricism and a sense of storytelling**.

The activities, which focus on **phrasing**, and **creating tension**, will help you to sustain and refine melodic idea over time, enabling you to **think like a composer in real time**.

The Activities

1. **Design-Focused Melodic Improvisation** - Through three exercises, you will be challenged to shape phrases deliberately, focusing on structure, pacing, and contour.

2. **"Outside Playing"** - A Way In -Through transcription-based learning (using John Scofield as a reference), you'll explore how we can use melodic language from the diminished scale as a technique for stepping outside the traditional harmonic framework.



Approach



These exercises should be applied to harmonically open pieces of repertoire. We will be investigating John Scofield's "Do Like Eddie," although our work could be easily applied to other **modal jazz** standards such as So What (Miles Davis), Footprints (Wayne Shorter), Vierd Blues (Sonny Rollins), or Impressions (John Coltrane).

Each activity involves **sustaining a single melodic concept** over a timed **improvisation segment**, with the goal of maintaining **focused narrative development** throughout your solo.

By the end of these exercises, you will have a stronger command of **melodic phrasing, motivic development, and harmonic freedom**, equipping you with tools to elevate your improvisational voice.

Design-Focused Melodic Improvisation

In this exercise, you will develop **greater ownership** of your improvisation by focusing on **melodic phrasing** and **design**. Through a structured approach, you will refine your ability to shape phrases with intention, reinforcing your personal jazz language.

These three specific exercises are designed to help you have **better control over phrasing, develop stronger melodic storytelling skills, and cultivate greater awareness in your improvisation.**

You will need: your instrument, a metronome, a backing track or a partner to play a groove, a timer (for structured practice rounds), and optionally, a recording device for self-evaluation.



The Three Exercises



1. Short-Short-Long

Play two short phrases followed by a longer one. (Limit yourself to four pitches only).

Focus on contrast - make the long phrase feel like a development or response to the short ones.



2.Additive Improvisation

Build on each previous phrase, gradually expanding your melodic idea.

Structure: A → A+B → A+B+C → A+B+C+D...



3.Play-Rest (Space Control)

Deny the impulse to play continuously - pause deliberately between phrases.

Wait longer than feels comfortable before playing your next phrase.



Practice Routine

Each section should be played for **60 seconds per round**, followed by a freer round incorporating the essence of the exercise.

- 1.Establish your **Bb7 practice vamp**
- 2.**Short-Short-Long** → 3 rounds (60 sec each)
- 3.**Freer round incorporating Short-Short-Long principles**
- 4.**Additive Improvisation** → 3 rounds (60 sec each)
- 5.**Freer round incorporating Additive Improvisation principles**
- 6.**Play-Rest** → 3 rounds (60 sec each)
- 7.**Freer round incorporating Play-Rest principles**
- 8.5-minute break

Taking It Further

Record Yourself - Listen back and analyse your phrasing choices.

Peer Feedback (if in a group) - Discuss what works, what could be clearer, and how control can be improved.

Get Creative - Design your own phrasing focused exercise.

Self-Reflection Questions

1. Which phrasing approach felt most natural to me?
2. Where do I need more control or clarity?
3. How has my approach evolved from my first practice cycle to now?
4. How am I balancing structured ideas with expressive freedom (during the freer rounds, and in a performance scenario)?



“*Outside Playing*” - A Way In

In this exercise, you will explore “**outside playing**” using techniques inspired by **John Scofield**. By focusing on **triad pairs within the diminished scale**, you will develop control over harmonic tension and release, learning how to step outside the traditional harmonic framework with fluidity, and logic.

Through transcription-based learning, you will analyse a phrase from Scofield’s solo on *Do Like Eddie* (from *Hand Jive*, 1994). This exercise will help you expand your harmonic vocabulary, develop confidence in outside playing, and strengthen your ability to resolve tension effectively.

You will need: your instrument, a metronome, a timer, the attached transcription of *Do Like Eddie*, and a way to listen to the track (*Do Like Eddie* - John Scofield).

The Exercise: Exploring Outside Playing Through Triad Pairs

1.Listen & Analyse

Listen to *Do Like Eddie* and follow along with the transcription.

Pay attention to Scofield’s use of outside playing - where do you hear unexpected harmonic moments?

Notable “**outside**” sections to listen for:



- Bars **73-76**
- Bars **89-92**



Our focus: **Bars 26-31**, where Scofield outlines a **G and Db triad pair**, creating a more sophisticated Bb13(b9) sound.



2. Learn the Phrase (Bars 26-31)

Play Scofield's phrase slowly and **internalise the sound of the triad pairing (G & Db)**.

Observe how these triads create **harmonic tension** over Bb7.

Reassign octaves to suit your instrument if necessary.

3. Apply the Concept: 4-Bar Loop Exercise

Set up a **4-bar loop of Bb7** (either using a backing track or a pedal tone).

Improvise using **both the G and Db triads** for **bars 1 and 2**.

Resolve to a more inside sound in **bar 3** (chord tones).

Rest in **bar 4**.



Practice Routine

1.5 minutes - Repeat the 4-bar loop exercise, focusing on smoothly transitioning between inside and outside playing.

2.3 minutes - Improvise freely but maintain the **spirit of the exercise** (playing with tension & release).

3.2-minute break

4. Repeat cycle 3 times



Taking It Further

Extend to Other Tonalities - Try applying the same concept in different keys.

Explore More Triads - What happens when you add the **Bb** and **E** triads (completing the diminished cycle)?

Analyse How Each Triad Feels Over Bb7 - Which ones create the strongest tension? Which resolve most naturally?

Self-Reflection Questions

1. How comfortable do I feel stepping outside the harmony?
2. How can I increase fluidity throughout the resolution of my phrases?
3. How does this exercise change my approach to improvising over dominant chords?



Mini Quiz



IN THE "SHORT-SHORT-LONG" EXERCISE, WHAT IS THE MAIN AIM?

- To increase technical speed
- To contrast shorter phrases with a longer, more developed phrase
- To focus only on rhythmic variation

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES "ADDITIVE IMPROVISATION"?

- Expanding each phrase by adding new material sequentially
- Repeating the same phrase multiple times without change
- Playing different scales randomly over a backing track

THE TRIAD PAIR OF ___ AND ___ IS USED IN THE SCOFIELD-INSPIRED OUTSIDE PLAYING EXERCISE.

Answers

*To contrast shorter phrases with a longer, more developed phrase,
Expanding each phrase by adding new material sequentially, G and Db*

THE GOAL OF MELODIC DESIGN EXERCISES IS TO DEVELOP STRONGER PHRASING AND STORYTELLING IN IMPROVISATION.

- ☒ True
- ☐ False

IN OUTSIDE PLAYING, USING LANGUAGE FROM THE DIMINISHED SCALE ALLOWS FOR CONTROLLED TENSION AND RELEASE RATHER THAN RANDOM DISSONANCE.

- ☒ True
- ☐ False

RECORDING YOURSELF CAN BE A VALUABLE TOOL FOR EVALUATING PHRASING, STRUCTURE, AND MELODIC DEVELOPMENT.

- ☒ True
- ☐ False

Answers

True, True, True



Key Words



Diminished Scale: An eight-note symmetrical scale built by alternating whole and half steps (or vice versa). It is commonly used in jazz for creating tension over dominant chords.

Triad Pair: A harmonic concept where two triads (three-note chords) are used together to create melodic lines that outline different tonal colours. In the Scofield-inspired exercise, the G and Db triads create tension over a Bb7 chord before resolving back inside.

Outside Playing: A technique in jazz improvisation where a musician intentionally plays notes or phrases that exist outside the established harmony. This is often achieved using chromaticism, altered scales, or triad pairs.





If you have any questions about the content within this worksheet, please contact us on projects@nyjo.org.uk.

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