

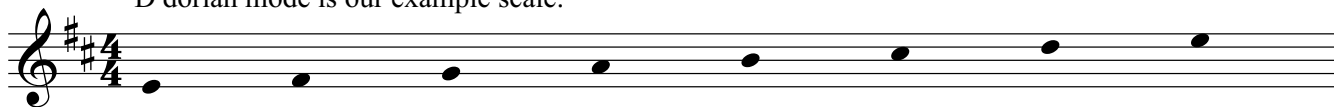
Basics of improvisation and developing ideas.

Trumpet in B \flat

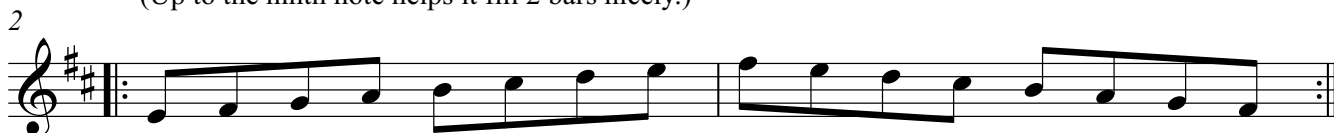
Lachlan Davidson

1. Start with a scale. (Any group of notes.)

D dorian mode is our example scale.



2. Learn to play it fluently straight up and down in time with a metronome, (or just by yourself.)
(Up to the ninth note helps it fill 2 bars nicely.)



3. In crotchets, (1/4 notes) Play up and down, changing direction when you feel like it.
Get good at this and keep it in time. (Improvise your own piece after playing each of my examples.)
You might like to gradually increase your tempo but stick within the rules.
You'll get the chance to break out later.



4. Add some long notes and rests. These create phrases and musical sentences.
Have fun with how long and short your phrases are, and your rests or long notes.



Trumpet in B \flat

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4. Can you add some leaps (skip a scale note)?

Yes you can, but not too many at once as you'll start to not-make-sense.

Do try to make sense.

Listen to where each note is leading you. Do you follow or not??

Initially you should play the things that occur to you first, and the most obvious, simple things.

You can get more clever later.

24



30



34



5. What you played first can give you an idea for what to play next and later in your story,

..I mean improvisation. You can repeat a phrase, either exactly or with a bit of a variation at the end.

Don't necessarily repeat every bar or two bars. Hmm...Interesting.

39



45



50



6. You've probably already added some quavers by mistake. Well, now you have permission. Remember to keep part of your mind focussed on staying in time while the other part of your mind is deciding what to play, remembering some of the things you've done in the earlier exercises. What were they again?

55



61



66



7. By now the randomness factor has probably made your music sound very confusing. Here is a 2 bar rhythm which will allow your notes to be random but the rhythm must remain the same. A good trick is to just change one note each time you repeat the rhythm. (Make up your own rhythm.)

70



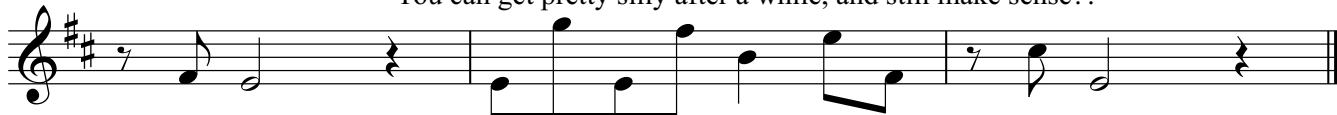
75

Or two notes.



79

You can get pretty silly after a while, and still make sense??



Trumpet in B \flat

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8. Rhythmic variation. Now we concentrate on rhythm and leave the note choices aside for a while. Lets take a simple rhythm and see what we can do with it, bit by little bit.

82

Musical notation for measure 82, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The rhythm consists of eighth notes and quarter notes.

87

Musical notation for measure 87, continuing the rhythmic pattern from the previous measure.

92

Yes. We've left some notes out

Musical notation for measure 92, showing some notes omitted (indicated by rests) in the original rhythm.

97

Musical notation for measure 97, further varying the rhythm with more rests.

Now lets add a few extra notes plus some variation in the rhythm and notes.
I could do this forever. Things are freeing up.
Your choices get broader but look out for too much randomness.
Simplicity is strength.

102


Musical notation for measure 102, adding more notes and rhythmic variation.

106

Musical notation for measure 106, continuing the development of the rhythmic variation.

9. Accents. A brainteaser is to play the same phrase but move the accents around.
Play each one two or three times so you really hear the difference it makes.

110

Musical notation for measure 110, showing the same phrase with different accents.

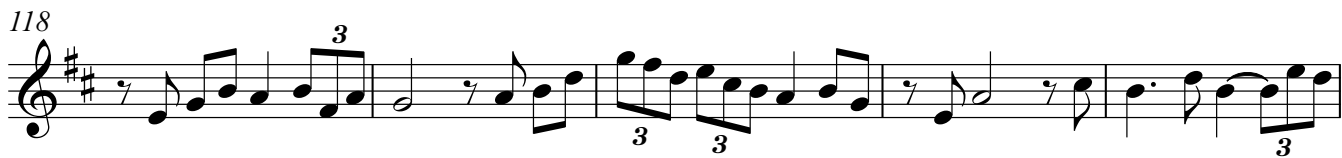
114

Musical notation for measure 114, showing the same phrase with different accents.

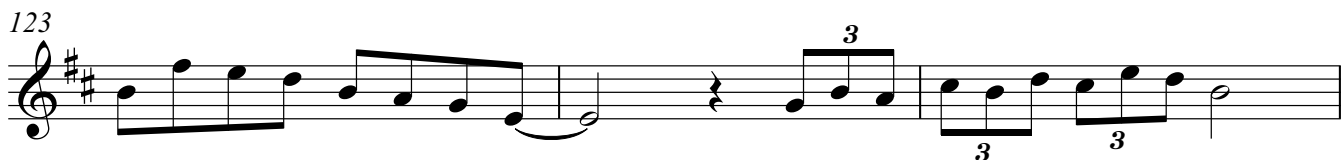
Trumpet in B \flat

10. Add some triplets. I like them because they break the rhythm up, and give you a lot more syncopation possibilities. Don't feel too tied to the original theme. You're on an exploration.

118



123



126



11. Now lets look at some little shapes and then transpose them. It's a way to create a sequence.

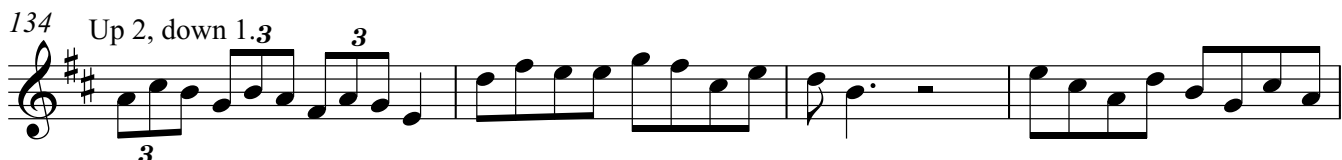
130

Going up three. Going down three, with a slight change of rhythm.

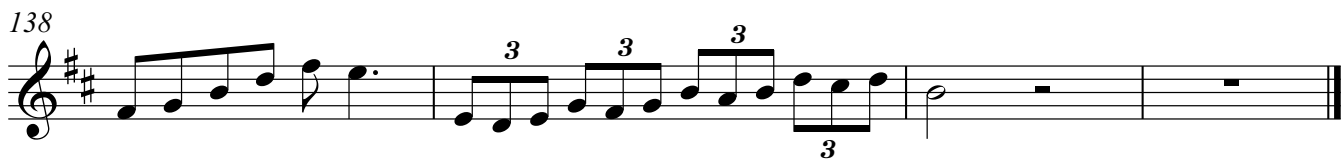


134

Up 2, down 1.3



138



Trumpet in B♭

6

11. A start on outlining chords. Very simply, put scale note between two chord notes every now and then. Play just chord notes the rest of the time. You can keep using some of the ideas from earlier exercises. In fact you'll get bored if you don't.

142 Em⁷ A⁷ Em⁷ A⁷ Em⁷

147 A⁷ Em⁷ A⁷ Em⁷

151 A⁷ Em⁷ A⁷

154 Em⁷ A⁷ Ah! A repeated note. Good idea. Em⁷

12. Playing with themes. Lets take an idea and mess with it. We'll turn it upside down, back to front, stretch it up, alter it, transpose it, displace it, but not in that order. See if you can spot the method. Of course we could do two things at a time, but maybe later.

157

162

165

13. Fitting themes to chords.

Using the method from 11. with some slight variations, but still using mostly chord notes we can adjust a theme to fit some different chords.

Of course you would add rhythmic and thematic variations in real life.

You also need to have some idea about chords to make best use of this method.

168 Em⁷ A⁷ Dmaj⁷ Gmaj⁷

172 F#m⁷ Bm⁷ Em⁷ A⁷

14. Slow melody ornamentation and extrapolation. Big words but it simply means that if you have long notes in mind you can wander around them with little notes. Auxiliary notes and stuff like that. This is a very useful method if you have a tricky chord progression. You can focuss on one note per chord and add your frills.

176

182

187 Still lots of E's.

191 Variations on a melody.

195

199

201

Trumpet in B♭

8

15. Cyclical line development.
 Cycle 3 or 4 notes, changing one at a time. Careful, it's addictive.

203

207

212 With a few variations. Can you work out what is going on?

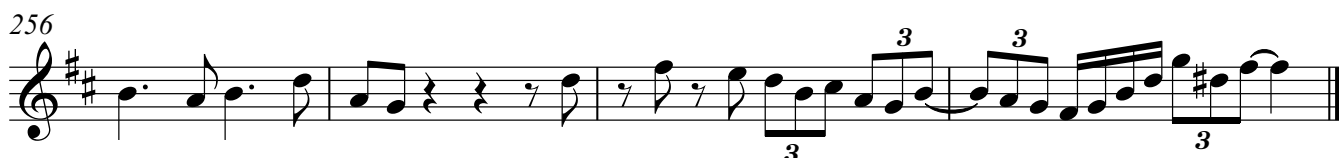
216 a random break-away.

Fitting the theory into chords.

219 Em⁷ A⁷ D^{maj7} Bm⁷ Em⁷ A⁷ D^{maj7} Bm⁷

223 D⁷ G⁷ A⁷ D⁷

16. To avoid getting too boring it's good to be able to start phrases at different points in the bar.



Now is the time for you to break free and use the ideas from this small sample of possibilities to proceed on your search for musical stuff you like to play and would like to explore further. Don't be too tempted by complexity or cleverness. You and your audience will lose the plot. Take your time and enjoy the journey.

Lok