

Shape Exercise

The Idea

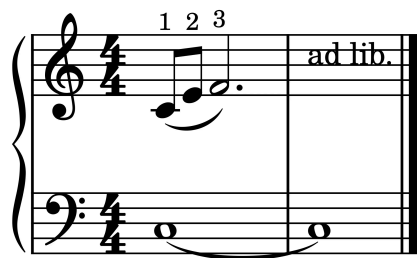
Improvisation relies on mindful listening and reacting. This exercise strips away the distractions of technique and visuals to allow you to focus all your attention on the sound.



Scan for video example

Basic Method

1. Choose a drone note for your left hand (the bass) to repeat from time to time. You can use whatever finger you want.
2. Form a fixed shape with your right hand (the melody). For example, using fingers 1, 2, and 3 on C, E, and F.
3. **Close your eyes!**
4. Now, establish the drone with your left hand. When you're ready, play the shape broken as a melody (in 1-2-3 order). A 'short-short-long' rhythm works well.
5. Move the shape around by keeping your fingers in the same shape, but moving your arm so that your thumb starts on a different white key. Then play the shape broken as a melody again.



Focus on the sound. Be intrigued by how different starting notes create different effects against the same drone note.

Extensions

- For more **expressive variety**, experiment with qualities like dynamics and articulation.
- For more **rhythmic variety**, try changing the rhythm in the right hand from 'short-short-long' to a different combination. Incorporate spacing/silence more.
- For more **harmonic variety**, try using a different drone note.
- For more **melodic variety**, try a different shape in the right hand (e.g., C, D, G). This may require a different finger (e.g., for C, D, G, use 1-2-5, not 1-2-3). Use what feels comfortable.

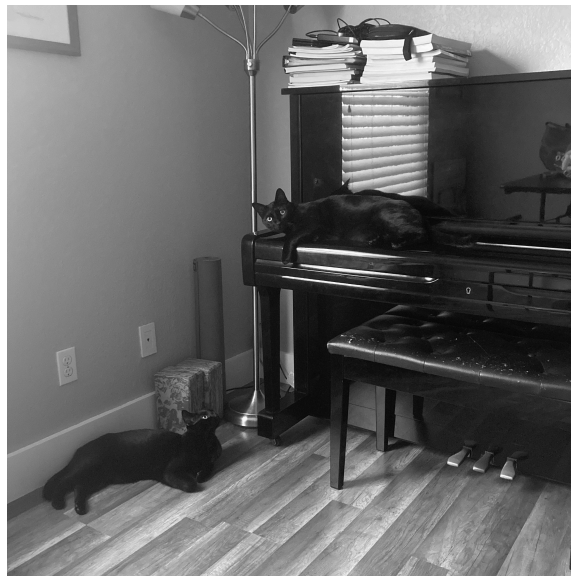
Reflection Questions

Did closing your eyes make you uncomfortable? Did some moments feel 'wrong?' Try to release your judgment of the sound. Your goal is to accept the sound as it is and simply move it forward to the next sound.

Musical Influences

This kind of playing loosely resembles the Indian classical tradition of a *raga*, where musicians introduce specific shapes and gestures against a steady drone.

Studio Demby



Have an idea for a collaboration, or just want to jam?

Contact me at aaron.demby.jones@gmail.com.