ACE Review-2 The Melodic Developers

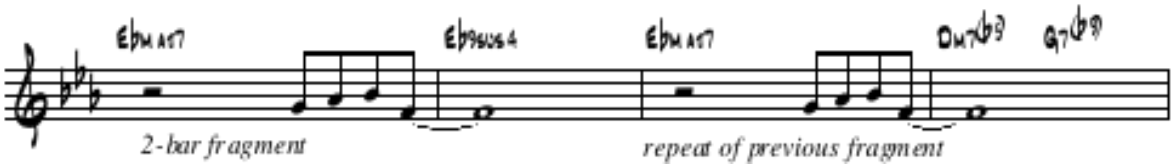
Developers are the primary tools used in jazz composition to lengthen a short fragment of melody into a coherent phrase, and then to combine phrases into longer sections. By utilizing these devices, the composer is able to stretch a good idea into a memorable and interesting length of melody.

Developers are indispensable – without the lengthening and answering that come from their use, original music can quickly become busy or too densely filled with good ideas that don't relate to each other compositionally. After a little experience using these tools, the writer finds that they become rather automatic, and their use becomes second nature. *This is good.*

The most common developers are **repeat**, **sequence**, **answer**, and **mirror.**

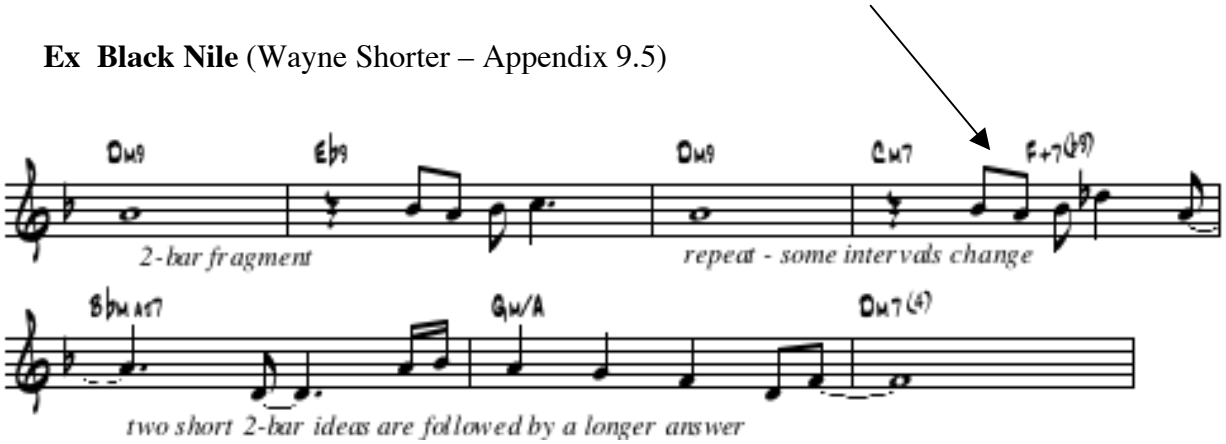
- **REPEAT** A **repeat** is just that: the reuse of a figure using most of the same notes and rhythms. When a fragment of melody repeats verbatim, chords in the accompaniment are expected to change. Compare measures two and four in the beginning of Dolphin Dance.

  Ex Dolphin Dance (Herbie Hancock – Appendix 9.1)



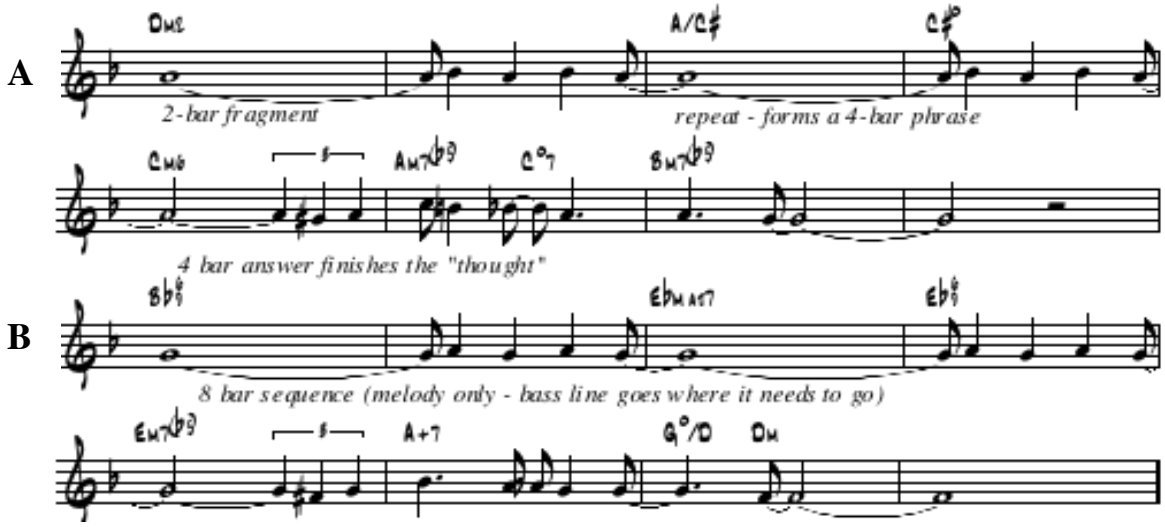
  The **repeat** need not be verbatim, keeping every note the same. A note or two as well as minor changes of rhythm work just as well, as in this next example.

  Ex Black Nile (Wayne Shorter – Appendix 9.5)



- **SEQUENCE** The sequence is a reuse of four to eight bars of melody, transposed up or down, usually by one step. Only the melody sequences, though: the changes will move somewhere else to help the feeling of development.

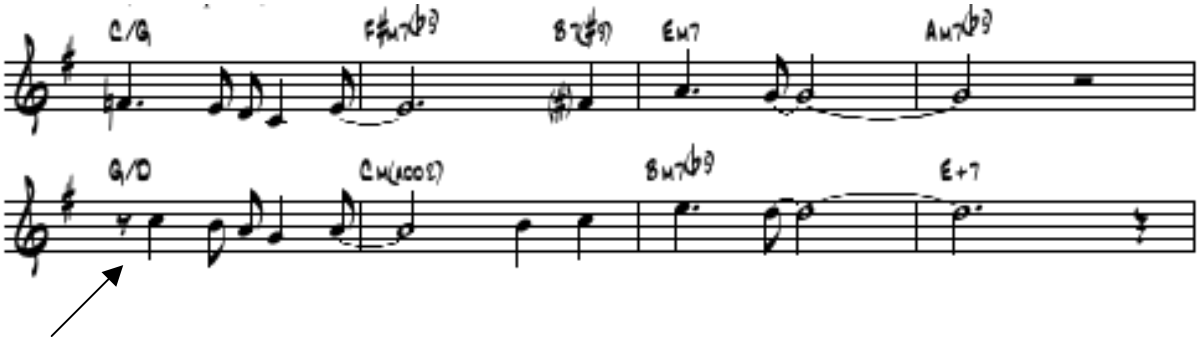
Ex. **How Insensitive (Jobim)** *Note the different changes in the second period – [B]*



Important -- As the melody sequences (either direction) different chord changes can form a second "layer" of development, and the sequence itself is protected from being just a transposition of a few bars of music.

The direction of a sequence can play a major role in the development of a melody. When music sequences upward the interest (or tension) is instantly higher than for the sequence that moves downward. *For that matter, a sequence of more than one step (a third or more) raises the interest level even higher yet.*

Ex **Stella By Starlight** (Victor Young)

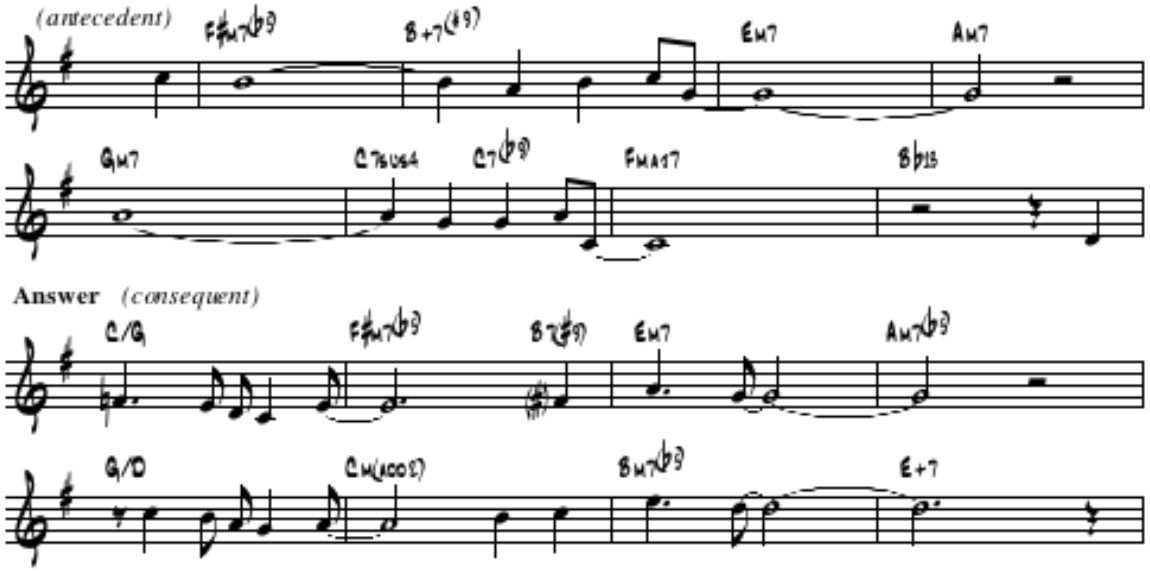


This four-bar sequence occurs at the 5th above the previous phrase. By the next phrase, the level of expectation is extreme! *Try this if you can!*

- **ANSWER** The answer is a section of melody that *completes the thought from* a previous phrase or period. The relationship is exactly the same as between the *antecedent* and *consequent* in good sentence construction, and brings a personal note to music, one that draws the listener to relate with thoughts of personal experience.

  It is this unspoken bond between writer and performer/audience that makes composing and arranging one of the most fascinating endeavors on earth!

Ex. **Stella By Starlight** (Victor Young, again)



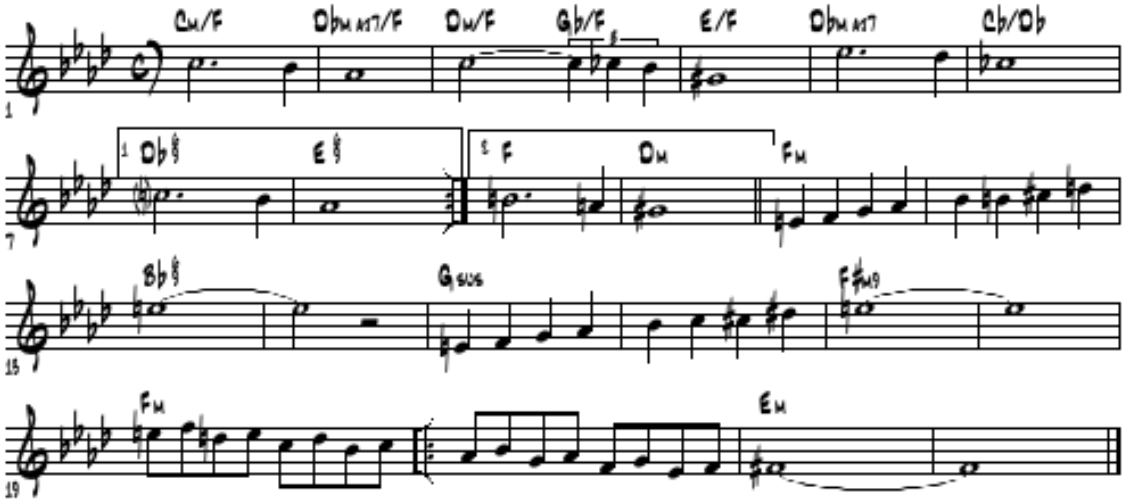
In the above example the **four bar ans**wer (C/G) contains an incomplete upward sequence (Em7), then a full upward sequence of those four bars (G/D) which completes the eight bars. The point here is that developers work well singularly, in pairs, in any combination that your ear learns to appreciate. *Also, it's no coincidence that the incomplete sequence (at the Em7) just happens to resemble the first two notes of the tune. This is reuse at its best!*

> *In the early days of learning to compose, there are those very creative players who feel somewhat restricted by four and eight bar forms. This is understandable. However, the experience of conquering the 32-bar song form helps in the building of writing discipline that is unavailable when no restrictions exist.*

More on ANSWERING

Herbie Hancock's ***King Cobra (Appendix 9.16)*** has a three part construction: eight bars repeated, with a third section providing the **answer**. The feeling of being answered comes from hearing the music move in a different direction and with more rhythm. And, like most answering phrases, this one provides a sense of completion, especially with the four bar repetition sitting on different changes, and having an answer of its own!

Ex. King Cobra

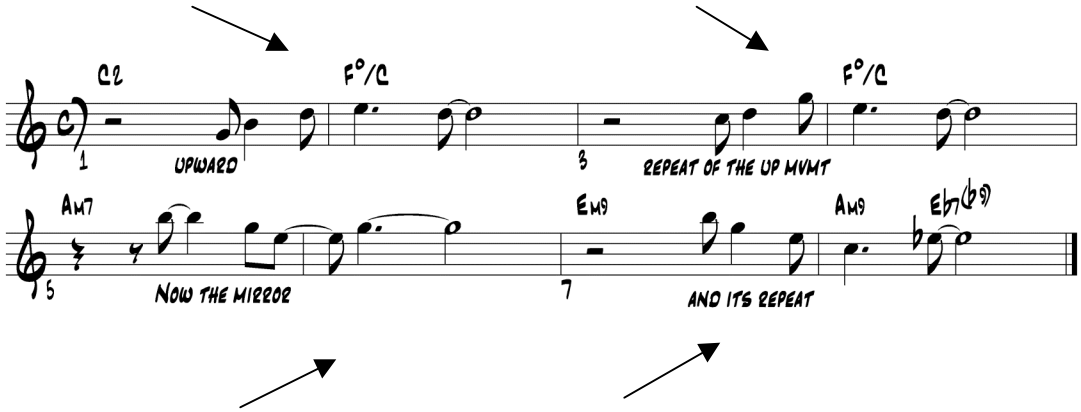


- ## MIRROR

  The **mirror** is a reuse of melody in which the intervals are inverted (mirror) or reversed (retrograde). When not overused, this reuse can be very subtle and effective.

  Ex: **Almost Home** (Chris Potter – Appendix 9.19)

  Bars 1 and 3 feature upward movement, and the repeat of a good idea.



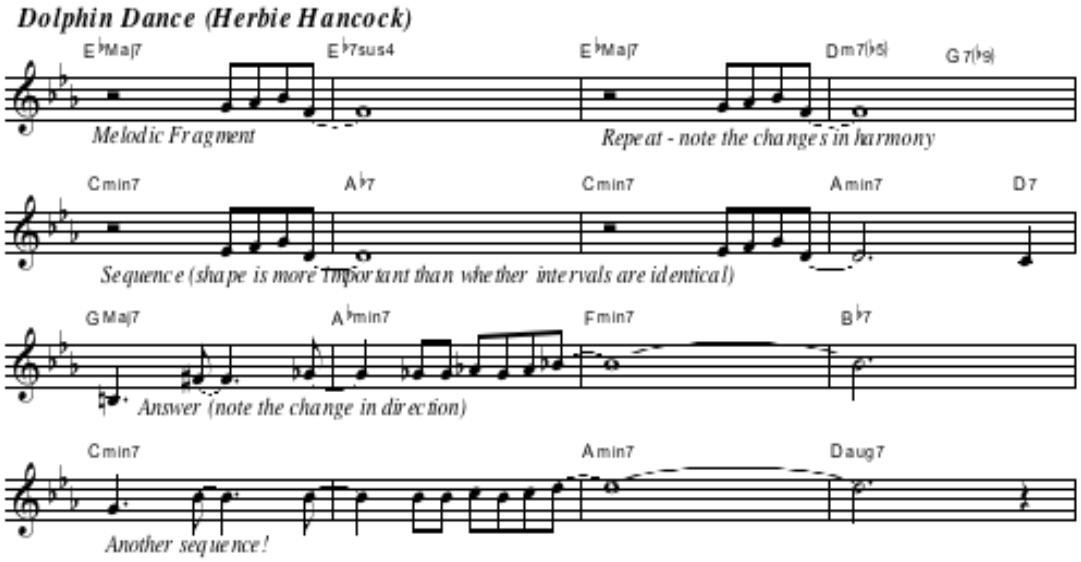
Bars 5 and 7 also use a repeat, but this time with downward motion. One idea used artistically in a way to occupy eight bars of clock time. ***Very good!***

DEVELOPERS USED IN PAIRS

- **Another look at Dolphin Dance** reveals a special relationship of developers to each other. They seldom work alone, but are used together to build longer thoughts by developing and stretching the ideas already at work.

  The importance of this cannot be overstated. So many times, we tend to load our original music with too much interesting "new material" - yet too little of the actual development of that material that permits the music to survive!

Example – Appendix 9.1 (see also 9.1A, with the Arranger's Piano voicings)



From the above example (Dolphin Dance), two perspectives on developing tune ideas:

1. Short ideas can follow short ideas for a limited period of time before the need for a longer (and answering) phrase must be met.

   From Dolphin Dance: four two-bar ideas are then answered by two four-bar phrases. ***Question****: what causes the two longer phrases to feel like they answer the shorties?*

2. Stepwise melody soon develops a need for a leap, without which the melody becomes overbearing, no longer interesting.

From Dolphin Dance: the initial 2-bar sounds include escape tones. Only two bars out of sixteen (#10 and #14) have stepwise melody that doesn't end with (or include) a leap. ***The message****: beware of too much stepwise melody in your writing*