

Call & Response Notes and Phrases

by Michael Lake

This ebooklet contains exercises that strengthen your ability to repeat on your instrument the notes you hear around you - from your fellow musicians, the band, or anywhere else notes and music are playing.

These exercises contain multiple audio tracks of single notes and three to five note phrases. Your challenge is, upon hearing them, to play those notes and phrases on your instrument as accurately and quickly as you can.



Is this an exercise for developing perfect pitch? Well, I'm not sure one can learn perfect pitch even though a study conducted at UChicago a few years ago found positive results when training people with varying amounts of musical experience to develop perfect pitch.

Let's call these relative pitch exercises since as you go through them, your recognition should become easier. I believe relative pitch is an important attribute for improvising musicians. I don't believe perfect pitch is at all necessary in order to become a good jazz musician.

■ How to use these exercises

The following four exercises consists of single notes and short phrases played alone, and single notes and phrases played over chords.

The instructions are pretty straightforward. Just play the audio file and as the first note or phrase is heard, play that note or phrase on your instrument.

I created the exercises for notes and phrases with and without a rhythm track. I think it's helpful to hear the context of the note or phrase within a harmony. In fact, as you play the single notes, sense what part of the chord that note represents. Don't over-think it, just listen to the note within the harmony and try to assign it a function within the chord.

I think the phrase exercises are more beneficial since they are more likely to build your relative pitch. Just like Jazz Patterns For Ear, you are building your sense of tonal relationships rather than just picking notes out of the air.

I do think there is value in the single notes because any type of ear training tends to strengthen the connection between mind and instrument. Consider exercises like these to be excellent warm-ups before any jazz playing you might do that day.

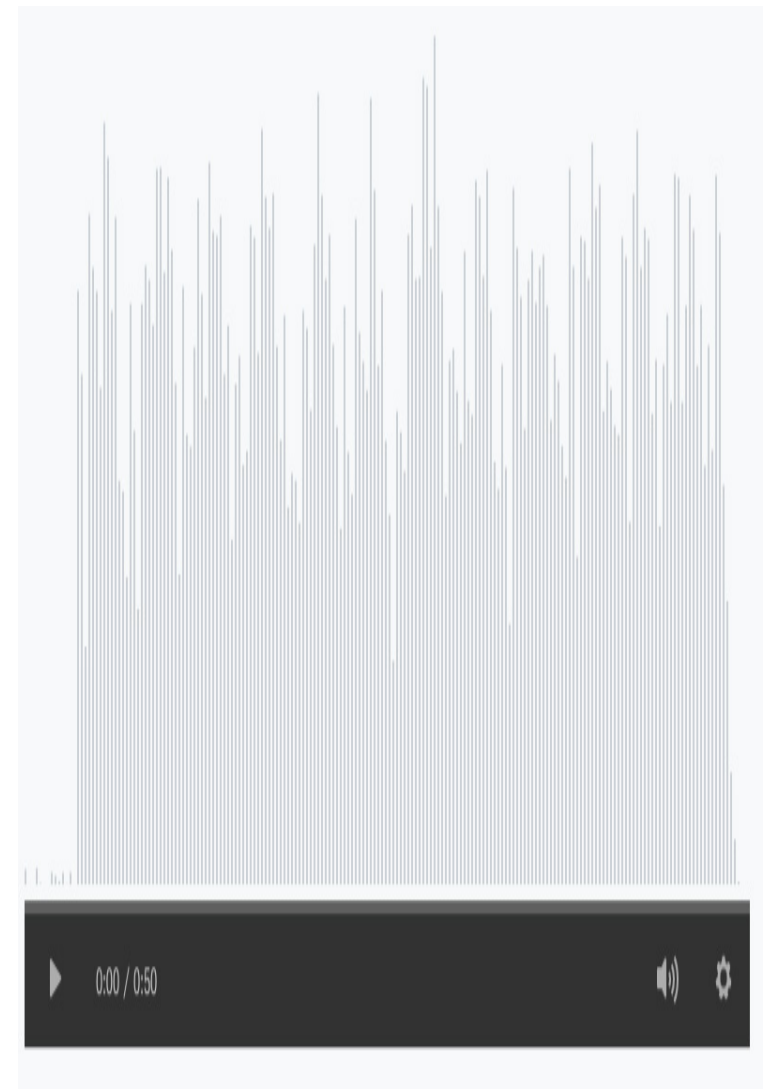
■ The Audio Files

Each exercise in the book is associated with an audio file containing the rhythm track.

Simply click or tap the icon associated with the file to bring it up in a Dropbox audio player window. The audio files stream from Dropbox. Play the files in your browser by tapping play, stop, pause and repeat. Download each file as you wish from Dropbox.



The note or phrase audio track icon plays the call and response notes and phrases associated with each exercise.



Single note exercise

Tap to play the audio file



Single note audio file

This two and a half minute file contains 40 single notes from a wide variety of sound sources. You'll try to match the sounds of a trumpet to oboe to saw tooth synthesizer to a whole bunch of odd sounds. I created this variety of timbres deliberately to stretch your pitch recognition beyond your instrument and many of the traditional instruments with which you play.

You'll have 3-4 seconds to play the note you just heard before the next note sounds. You of course can pause the playhead after hearing a note, but if you need that much time, you're probably thinking about it too much.

Go with your gut, and as I've mentioned previously in the course, part of the value of exercises like these is to turn off your analytical mind and instead, experience your musical reactions. They WILL improve if you do these and the other ear training exercises.

Phrase exercise

Tap to play the audio file



Phrase audio file

This five and a half minute file contains nearly 45 patterns ranging from three notes to five. The patterns are arranged by degree of difficulty. By the time you reach the end, you'll be responding to some challenging patterns.

As I wrote in the introduction, these patterns are designed to build your relative pitch. Much like Jazz Patterns For Ear, as the patterns go on, the intervals within them become wider, both up and down.

Single note exercise over chords

Tap to play the audio file



Single note over chord audio file

This audio file of single notes over chords is considerably longer than the file of a Capella single notes. The reason for the longer exercise is mainly because I think there is more ear training value in hearing where a note fits within a particular chord.

As you react to the source pitch, hear it within the harmonic context. No need to over-think the role the note plays in the chord. Just watch to see if you sense it's the major third or the fifth or the root.

Phrase exercise over chords

Tap to play the audio file



Phrase over chord audio file

I believe that this exercise is the most valuable of them all. The nearly sixty patterns covers a wide range of harmony, note timbre, and difficulty. You get a cool eight minutes of ear exercise!

The patterns begin as three notes, then four, then five. As the patterns progress, they become more difficult because of the wider intervals.

Be aware of the point at which the patterns become too difficult. I don't recommend plowing through more. Instead backup and find those where you missed one or two notes. Start earlier by a few patterns and see how far you make it. It's like trying to run up a hill. At the point you cannot run, go back and try again and work on building more momentum that will take you further in the pattern difficulty.