

Rhythmically Centered

State and Relate

In the specific type of melodic development that is being referred to in this paper, the “response” and the “call” are tied together with one or more characteristic, while other characteristics differ. When the melodic development is rhythmically centered, the rhythm is the constant variable between phrases. What changes are the other elements mentioned in the previous paper.

We are going to start by looking at the easiest explanation of A, B, C, D melodic development with rhythm being the constant variable.

Example A.1



In this example, you can see how each phrase takes place on a different bar. In analyzing this melody, you can see that the A, B and D phrases all have the same rhythm, yet they all have different notes. The C phrase acts as a complete differentiator that leads the melody back to the home rhythm.

This next example is still A, B, C, D phrasing, but it is laid out a little differently. The rhythm is still the constant variable but the order in which the phrases are located is different.

Example B.1

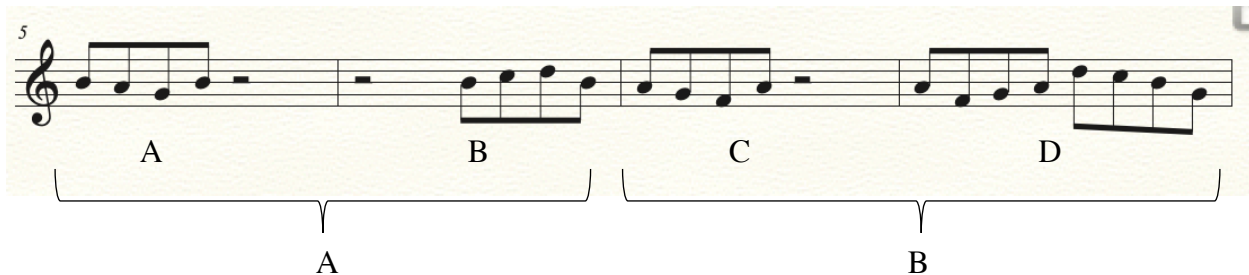


In this example, you can see that the A rhythm and the C rhythm are the same. You may be wondering, how do B and D fit? If you look at B, the second half of the bar is a call back to the previous phrase. If you look at D, the first half of that bar is call back to the first half of B. A and C are directly related, and B and D are directly related.

BUT WAIT! A and B are directly related too, as I mentioned before. Which means B and C are directly related as well! Isn't this cool? Let's look at more examples!

This next example will demonstrate a more spacious version of the last concept. It also begs the question, “what really is the phrase?”.

Example C.1



So, what do we know about example C? The A phrase and the C phrase are directly related. The B phrase is the differentiator, and the D phrase is the combination of the A/C and the B. Sure! This also brings us to general A/B phrasing, where the A is 2 bars, and the B is 2 bars. Why not look at the first two bars as being one phrase (the statement) and then the last two bars as being the next phrase (The relation).

The context of the song, including tempo, genre and feel, also contribute to what is considered a phrase. If you play this example at a very fast BPM, it is clearly A/B phrasing. When played at a much slower tempo, the A/B/C/D phrase is more apparent.

This next example is a 16-bar example. What do you consider to be the phrasing pattern?

Example D.1



Example D is a fantastic indicator of a few different topics. The first is, what is the phrase. It seems to me that the bars 1-2 are the A phrase and bars 3-4 are the B phrase. Looking at the next line, I believe the same to be true about bars 5-6 and 7-8...

BUT, looking at the example from a macro v micro context, it can be argued that the first 4 bars are phrase A, and the next 4 bars are phrase B. This is apparent in the fact that the whole 8 bars repeat again.

Let's look at the masters at work...

Pat Metheny's solo on Have You Heard is an amazing example of A/B phrasing. His, however, is hidden in the lines. Before I go into a thorough analysis of his solo, put on Have You Heard from the album Letters from Home. Skip to 2:05. Listen to the first 4 bars of his solo a few times and see if you can pick out the call and response.

Example E.1 – Pat Metheny – Have You Heard¹

The musical score is for an electric guitar (E-Gt) in 4/4 time, featuring a Cm7 chord. The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble clef staff and a three-part guitar tablature (T, A, B) below it. The first system (bars 1-3) starts with a *mf* dynamic and includes a triplet in bar 3. The second system (bars 4-6) features an Fm7 chord in bar 5. The third system (bars 7-9) includes Cm7 and Ab7 chords. The tablature uses numbers 1-12 and includes various fretting techniques like bends and slurs.

¹ Have You Heard Transcription – www.LeviClay.com

First step: let's look at his phrasing patterns. At first you may think that nothing connects, but you would be wrong! Look at the ending of each bar for the first 4 bars. Bar 1 directly relates to bar 3. This is apparent in beats 2, 3, and 4. Now, in comparing bars 2 and 4, you will see the same to be true (not 100% true but one 16th note away). This is a clear example of Rhythmically centered “state and relate” in 1 bar A/B phrases. Bars 1-2 are the A phrase and bars 3-4 are the B phrase.

Next, let's talk about how he hides his phrases. He does so by only directly connecting part of the phrase. See how bar 2 and bar 4 have vague commonalities in the first half of the bars? That vague commonality is space. The direct relation only takes place in the last six 16th notes. You can also see that the direction in which the notes are going is the same. This is called the **ARC** of the line. A big commonality in players who use rhythmically centered melodic development in stretches of 16th notes is the use of this arc.

Speaking of utilizing the arc of the line as the motivic connector between 16th note stretches, let's look at the king of this: John Coltrane.

Example F.1 – John Coltrane - Countdown²

The image displays a musical score for John Coltrane's 'Countdown'. It consists of two staves. The top staff shows a melodic line in 4/4 time, spanning measures 45 to 52. The line is characterized by a continuous 16th-note arc that connects the end of one measure to the beginning of the next. The bottom staff shows the corresponding chord changes for each measure. The chords are: Em7, F7, BbMAJ7, Db7, GbMAJ7, A7, DMAJ7, Dm7, Eb7, AbMAJ7, B7, EMAJ7, G7, and CMAJ7. The measure numbers 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, and 52 are indicated below the staff.

Ok... A lot of notes. Let us look at the patterns of the arc. This could be as micro or as macro as you wish to analyze. Looking at this from a micro lens, each bar is split up in two halves. Starting on bar 48, the first four quarter notes have an arc that is mimicked by the next four quarter notes. This pattern is seen all the way up till bar 52. On a very macro scale, the whole selection that we just looked at could be seen as one long extended phrase.

Rhythmically centered melodic development (as I like to call it), takes on a lot of forms. Every example that I have given to you is practically an oversimplification of a much larger subject. If you disagree with me on anything that I have talked about so far, that is great! The more different perspectives I am shown, the more I learn. Reach out. Let's talk!

² Countdown Transcription – saxophoneistpro.com