

Session 1

Syncopation and ragtime

Syncopation is a rhythm which is played off the main beat(s) of the bar.

Style spotlight

The ragtime era began in the 1890s and made a feature of syncopated rhythm. Pieces were usually in $\frac{2}{4}$ or $\frac{4}{4}$, with a left-hand pattern of bass notes on strong beats (1 and 3) and chords on weak beats (2 and 4), accompanying a syncopated melody in the right hand. The name ragtime came from describing the syncopation as 'ragged' rhythm.

1 Performance piece **Rocket rag!**

Listen to track 1 and clap the right-hand rhythm before playing this piece.

Not fast

The musical score for 'Rocket rag!' is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It is marked 'Not fast'. The piece consists of 14 measures. The right hand plays a syncopated melody, and the left hand plays a bass line. The score includes dynamic markings (*mf*, *f*), articulation (accents), and repeat signs with first and second endings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3 in the right hand and 2, 4 in the left hand.

Filling in the gaps

Improvise over the left-hand chords, using notes from the pentatonic scale given.
Start off by improvising over the backing track given.

29 Pentatonic magic 1

With sparkle $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$



Exercise 29: Pentatonic magic 1. The piece is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment of chords in the left hand and a melody in the right hand. The melody starts with a triplet of eighth notes (A-B-C) marked 'mf' and 'With sparkle'. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: A major, D major, E major, and A major. The exercise is divided into two systems, with the first system ending at measure 4 and the second system ending at measure 8. The melody continues with a triplet of eighth notes (D-E-F) and then a quarter note (G).

30 Pentatonic magic 2

Dreamily (straight)



Exercise 30: Pentatonic magic 2. The piece is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment of chords in the left hand and a melody in the right hand. The melody starts with a quarter note (A) marked 'p' and 'Dreamily (straight)'. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: A major, D major, E major, and A major. The exercise is divided into three systems, with the first system ending at measure 6, the second system ending at measure 10, and the third system ending at measure 12. The melody continues with a quarter note (B) and then a quarter note (C).

Improvising over chords

Try to fit a simple melody over these accompaniments. Use the suggested openings to give you ideas and make up your own titles.

**Do not fear mistakes –
there are none!**

Miles Davis

47

With sadness

Am Dm/A E/G# Am

mp

48

Lively

C F/C G/B C

f

5 C F/C G/D C/E

49

Peacefully

D D/C# Bm D/A

p

3 1

5 Em A7 D D