Higher Grounds by Ingrid Jensen
Barnaby Dickinson’s Teaching Notes

1. Emphasize that students must actively listen to all improvised music, especially this tune. Don’t assume they already do. Listening to various versions of *Higher Grounds* is key before they improvise themselves.

2. This isn’t a tune you just jump into. Break it down into sections first. Listen to the backing track and Ingrid’s versions, counting the bars—3/4, 4/4—so that when you improvise, you’re not counting numbers—you just feel it.

3. Build confidence by starting with what they can do. Establish beat one clearly, as there are many anticipations and time changes. Count through the 3/4 bars, and only play on the 4/4 bars.

4. While Ingrid plays beautifully and freely over the form, we need clarity. When improvising, focus on strong, complete phrases. Use call-and-response: you play a phrase, they echo. Any key or time is fine, but ensure each phrase has structure—start, middle, end. Avoid meandering.

5. Now do the same phrase-building exercise, but limit it to specific keys or notes. For example, use F major pentatonic—the 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 (F, G, A, C, D). Create strong phrases and patterns within that scale (See pentatonic sheet music). The relevant pentatonic keys for this piece are C, F, E, B, and A-flat.

6. Practice switching between two pentatonics. For the first two bars, use C major pentatonic over A minor, and Ab major pentatonic over F minor. Improvise slowly: one bar of C, one bar of Ab, back and forth. Get used to where notes resolve up and down the horn.

7. An Ab diminished major 7 chord over G is essentially an E7b9 with a different bass note. E7 wants to resolve to A minor—so it's a five-one movement. The scale to play over that chord is the diminished scale. The diminished scale is built on minor thirds, meaning there are only three to learn. Conveniently, in this piece, that same diminished scale fits other chords too. When playing over a diminished chord, start whole-half-whole-half. When playing over a dominant seventh with a *b*9, start half-whole-half-whole. Therefore, in this case, the diminished scale you play over that chord in bar three, and also over the B section (Bb11b9), is:Ab, Bb, B,
C#, D, E, F, G, Ab (See sheet music on diminished patterns).

8. Horizontal improvisation is a great approach. It helps you recognize when multiple chords are within the same key. Instead of seeing chords vertically, you improvise with a pentatonic or a scale that fits across several chords. Of course, we must do both—vertical improvisation, knowing the root, third, fifth, seventh, and horizontal improvisation with scales or pentatonics. Mastering both allows the student more freedom—the better you are at both, the better you'll improvise.

9. Now it's time to play along with the backing track. Establish where beat one is and don't let anticipations throw you off. Don't improvise over the 3/4 bars yet—count through them. Focus on strong, simple phrases using the pentatonics or diminished scale, depending on the chord, over the 4/4 bars.

10. Now start improvising over the 3/4 bars—but use them as a lead-in to the 4/4 bars. Since the chords move quickly, start blending. Let the end of a 4/4 bar overlap into the 3/4 bar, and practice blowing out of the 3/4 into the 4/4.

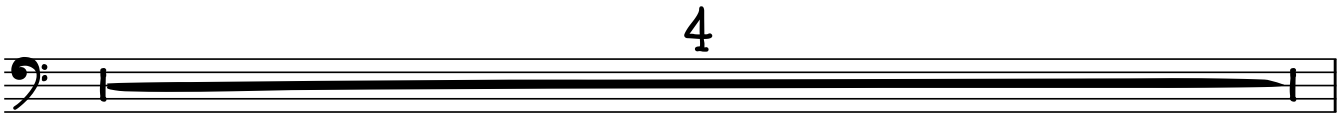
The more you enjoy playing, the more you'll grow and get out of it. So keep having fun and good luck!

Trombone

10 OF THE BEST DIMINISHED LICKS

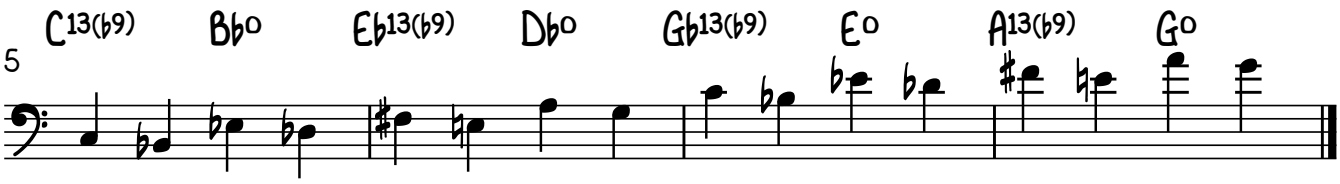
Important. The Diminished scale is build up of Half-step, Whole-step, Half-step, Whole-step etc...
You can play this scale over a Diminished chord STARTING WITH A WHOLE-STEP
Or a Dominant 7th Chord STARTING WITH A HALF-STEP. (Natural 13 flat 9)
The great thing about diminished, is that you only have 3 scales to learn
because everything transposes perfectly up a minor 3rd
Including the chords that you are playing it over.

Barnaby Dickinson



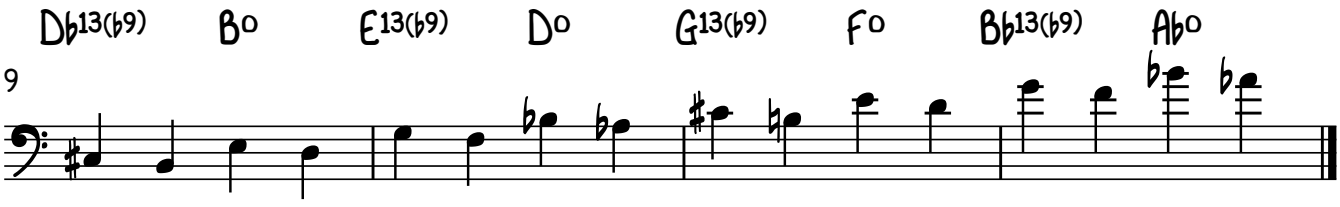
1-4

Lick 1

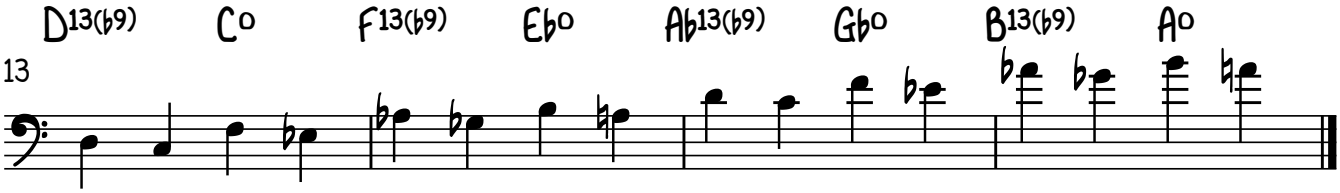


This scale fits over any of these chords

Lick 1 Transposed up a Half-Step



Lick 1 Transposed up a Half-Step again



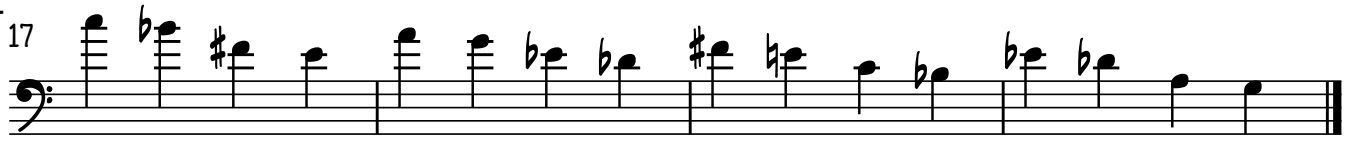
TROMBONE

Lick 2

2

C13(♭9)

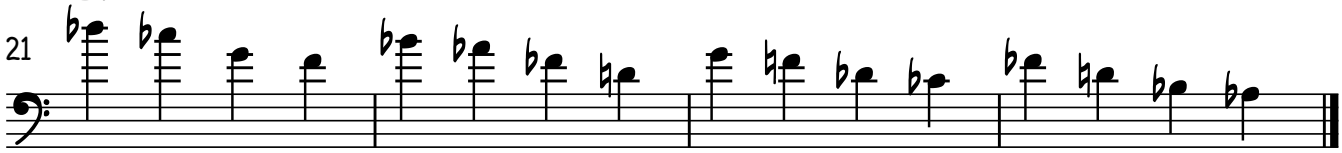
17



Lick 2 Transposed up a Half-Step

D♭13(♭9)

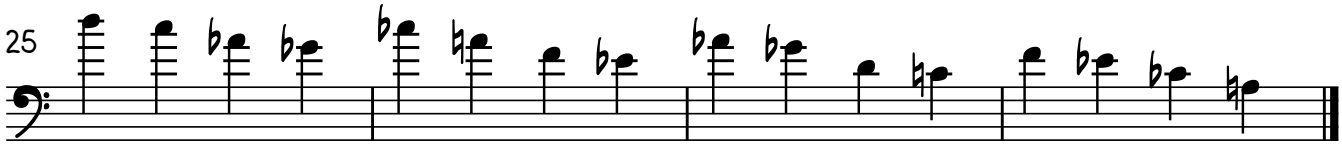
21



Lick 2 Transposed up a Half-Step again

D13(♭9)

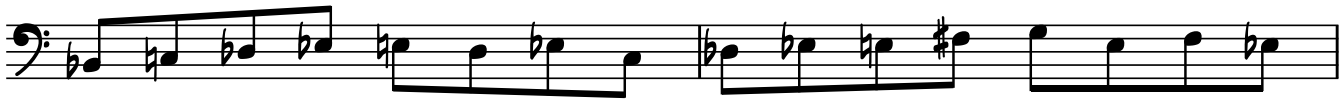
25



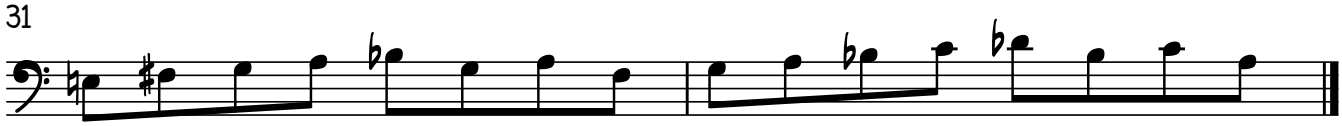
Lick 3

C13(♭9)

29



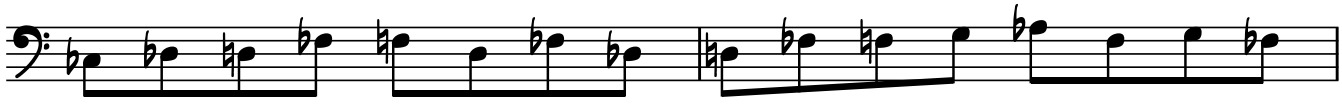
31



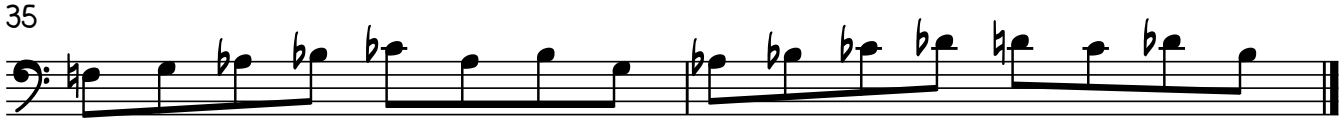
Lick 3 Transposed up a Half-Step

D♭13(♭9)

33



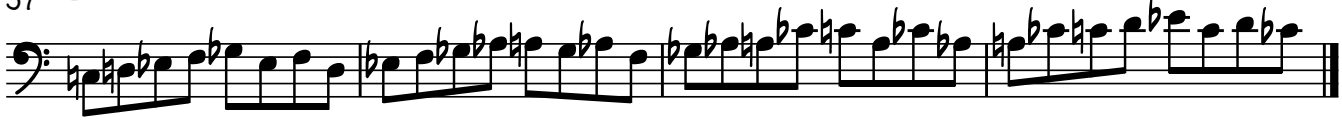
35



Lick 3 Transposed up a Half-Step again

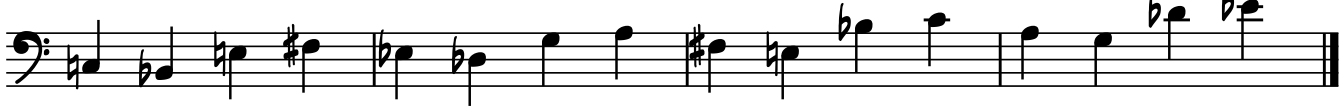
D13(♭9)

37



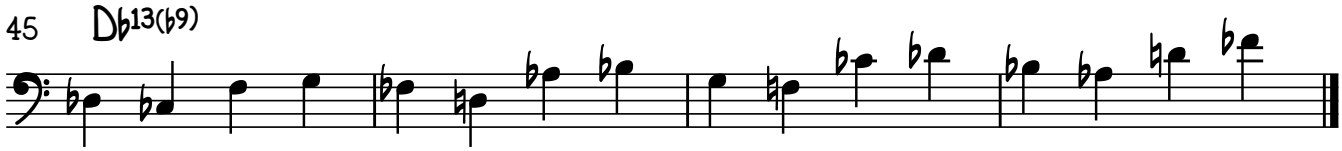
Lick 4

41 C13(b9)



Lick 4 Transposed up a Half-Step

45 Db13(b9)

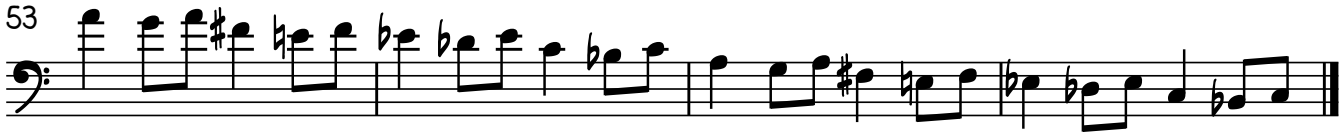


Lick 4 Transposed up a Half-Step again

49 D13(b9)

Lick 5

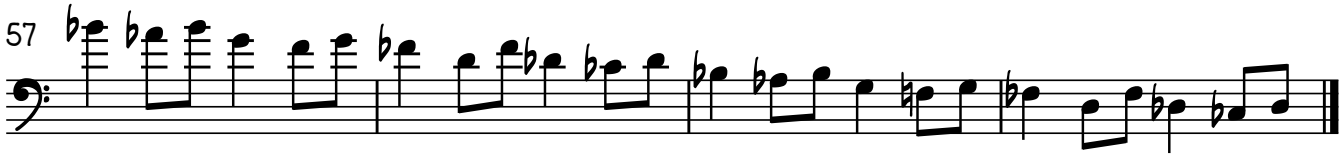
53 C13(b9)



Lick 5 Transposed up a Half-Step

Db13(b9)

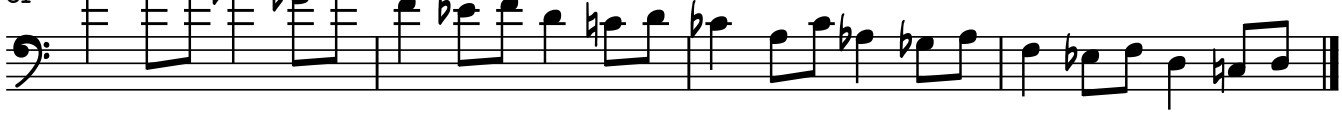
57



Lick 5 Transposed up a Half-Step again

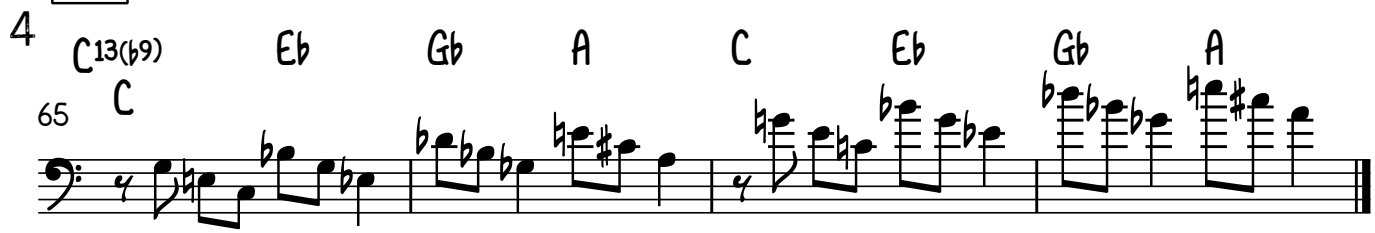
D13(b9)

61



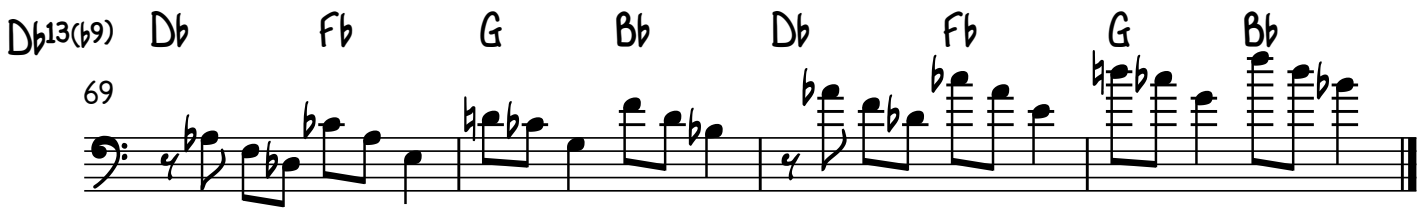
TROMBONE

Lick 6

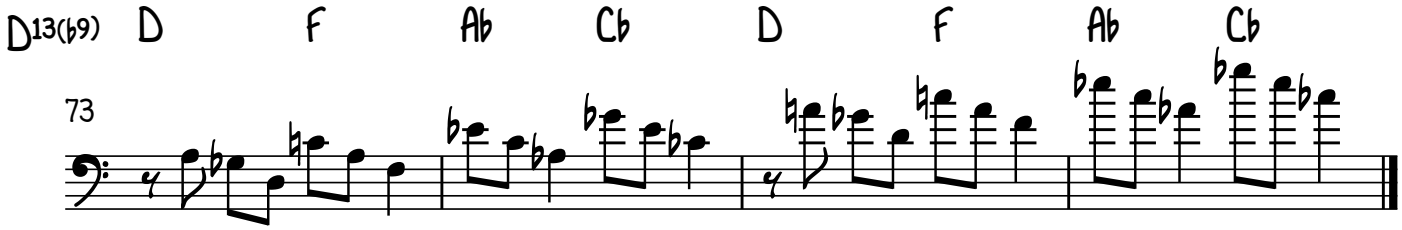


There is a major triad within the scale in minor 3rds (very useful indeed and sounds great)

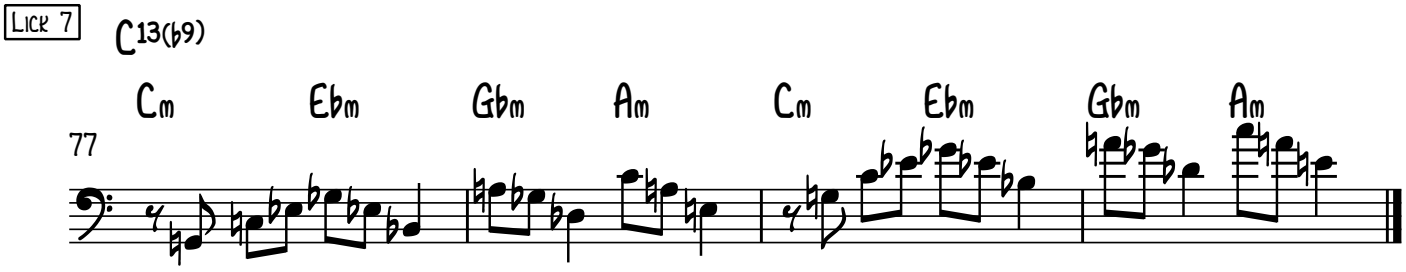
Lick 6 Transposed up a Half-Step



Lick 6 Transposed up a Half-Step again

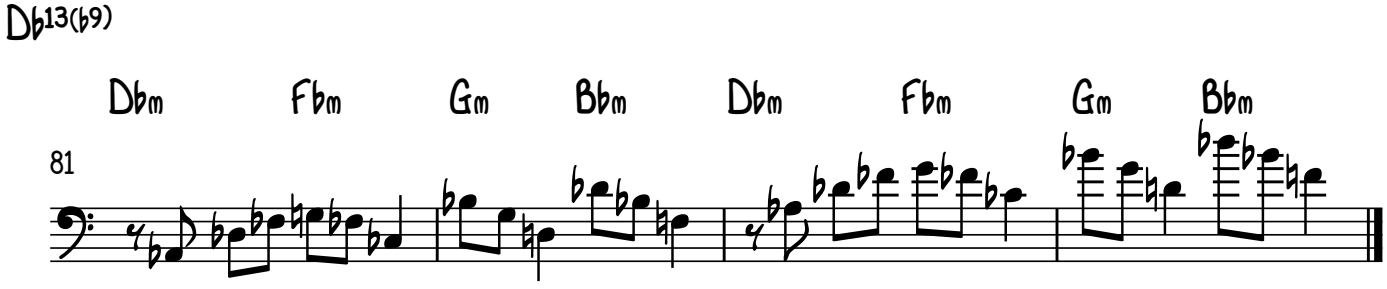


Lick 7

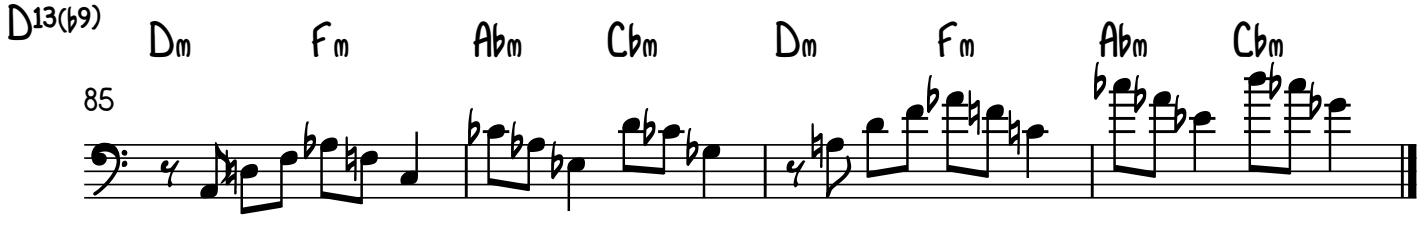


There is also a minor triad within the scale based on minor 3rds

Lick 7 Transposed up a Half-Step

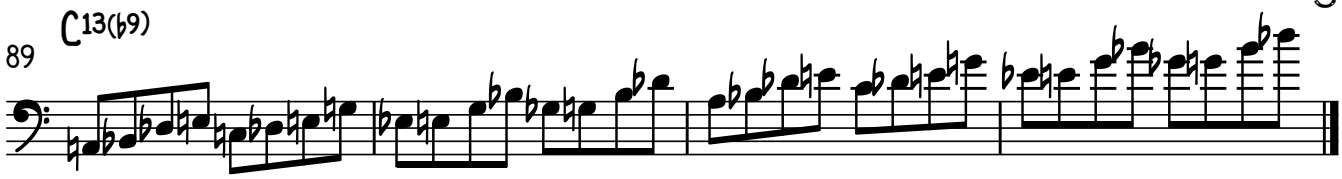


Lick 7 Transposed up a Half-Step again



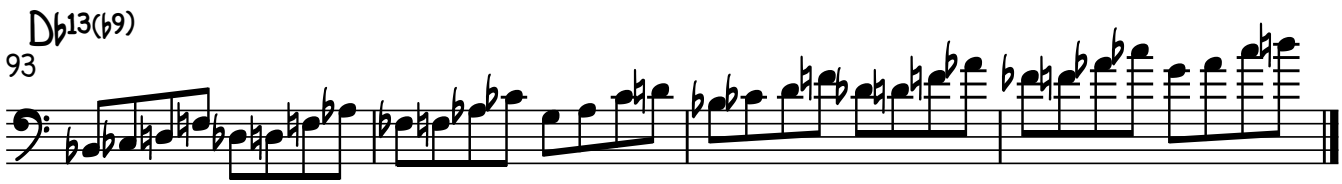
Lick 8

89 C13(b9)



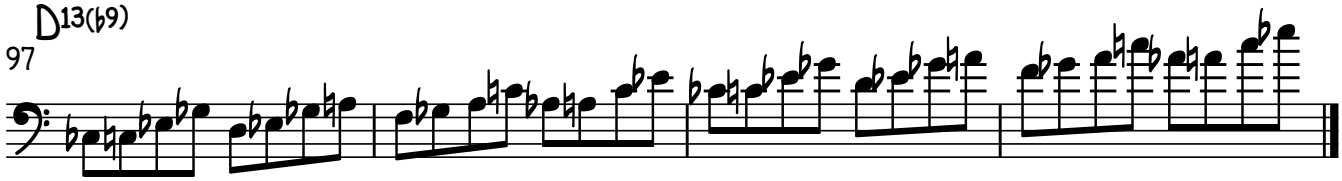
Lick 8 Transposed up a Half-Step

93 Db13(b9)



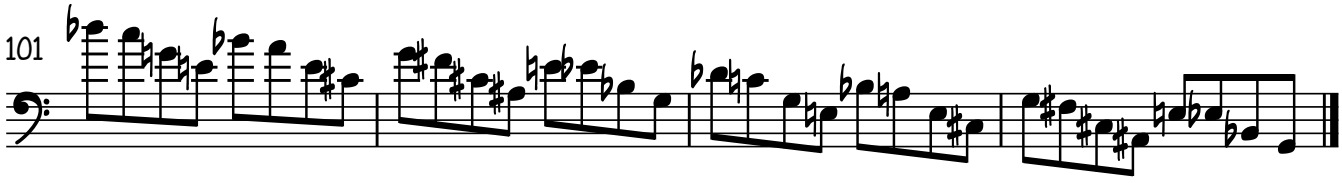
Lick 8 Transposed up a Half-Step again

97 D13(b9)



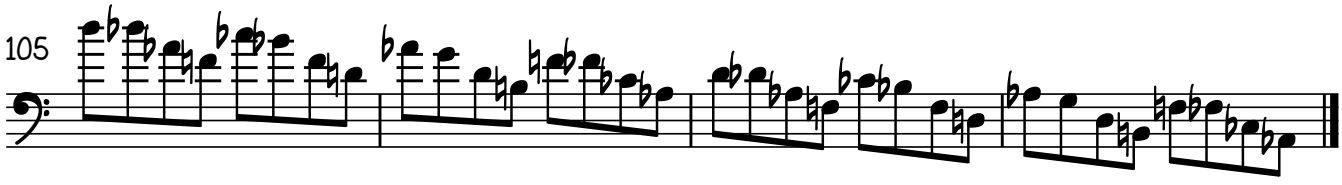
Lick 9

101 C13(b9)



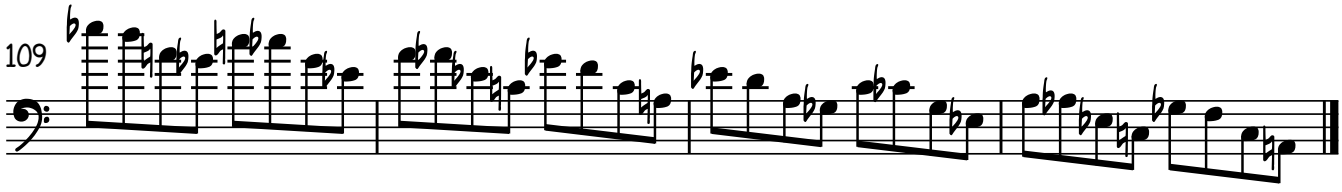
Lick 9 Transposed up a Half-Step

105 Db13(b9)



Lick 9 Transposed up a Half-Step again

109 D13(b9)



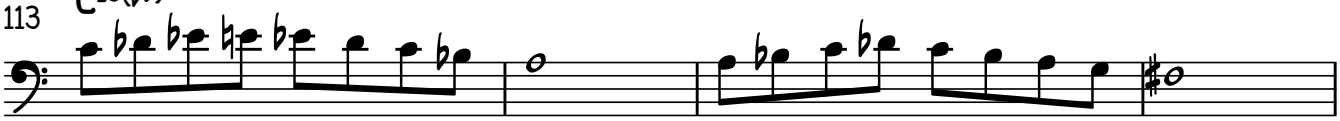
6

Lick 10

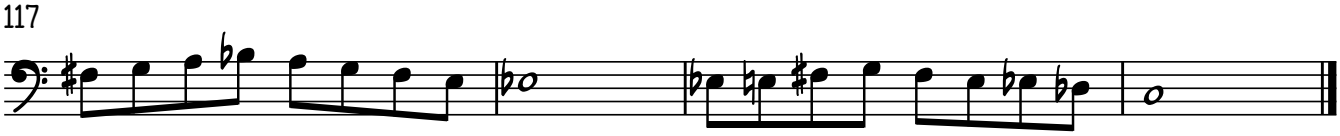
Notice the similarities to the Altered Scale
Diminished's highlight is emphasising the Natural 13

C13(♭9)

113



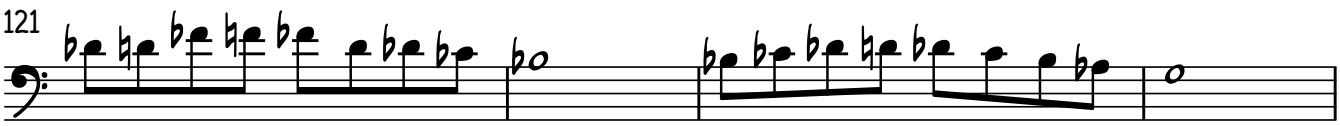
117



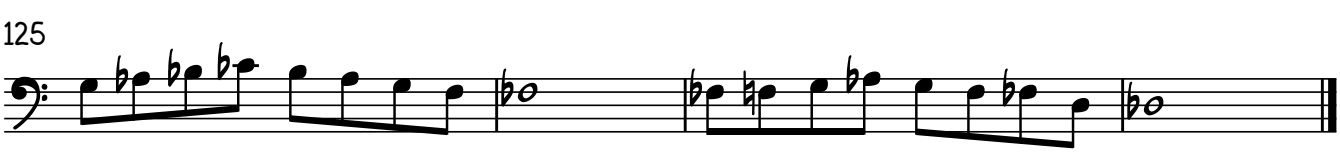
Lick 10 Transposed up a Half-Step

D♭13(♭9)

121



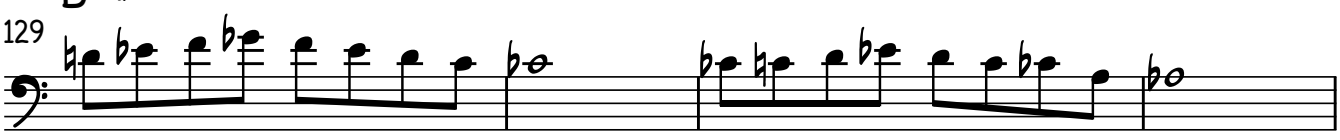
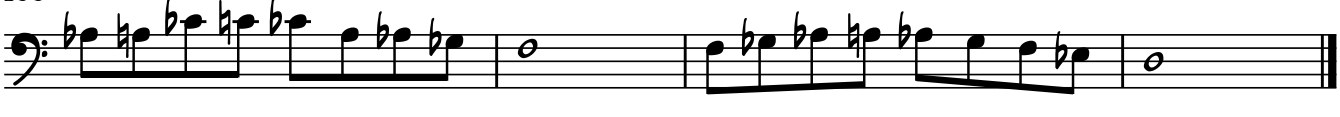
125



Lick 10 Transposed up a Half-Step again

D13(♭9)

129



133