You Can Learn To Scat Sing

by

Dr. Scott Fredrickson

Techniques and concepts to enhance the learning of beginning vocal improvisation

From The Book

The New Scat Singing Method

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Introduction

You Can Learn To Scat Sing

Vocal improvisation can be easily and effectively learned by singers or taught in a classroom situation. For choral ensembles, it is educationally valid as a supplement to the total choral musical curriculum by increasing creativity in individual students, and by enhancing the over-all musicianship of entire ensembles. For individual singers, it can increase vocal skill, musicianship, and performance confidence.

Theme And Variation

This new approach is based on the technique of theme and variation. By using the elements of vocal improvisation: syllables, melody, and rhythm, and applying the techniques, musical objectives can be met and instant success achieved. In other words, you can learn to improvise right NOW!

The audio tracks for these lessons are available at the following web link:

ScatSinging.com

On the following pages of this manual you will find annotated scat examples. To listen to the example, click on the "**Take A FREE Lesson**" link on the web site.

To practice with the recorded rhythm section, click on the "**Practice**" link on the web page.

When you have completed a lesson, click on another one

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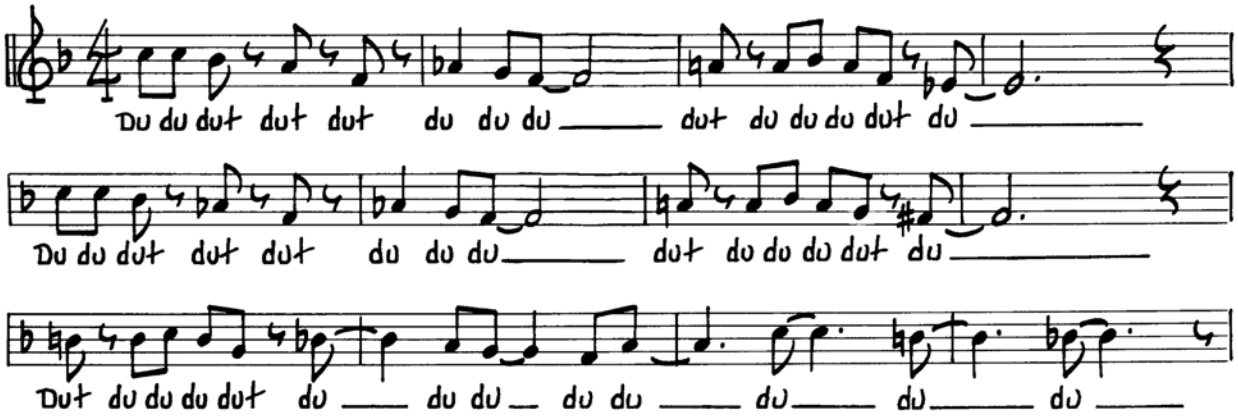
Lesson #1

Syllables

The first step in learning to improvise is creating new syllables over a given melody. Select any tune you would like to improvise with and replace the text with the syllables du and dut. Use the syllable *du* on the longer note values, and the syllable *dut* on the shorter note values. Here is an example using the tune entitled the *Scat Blues*.



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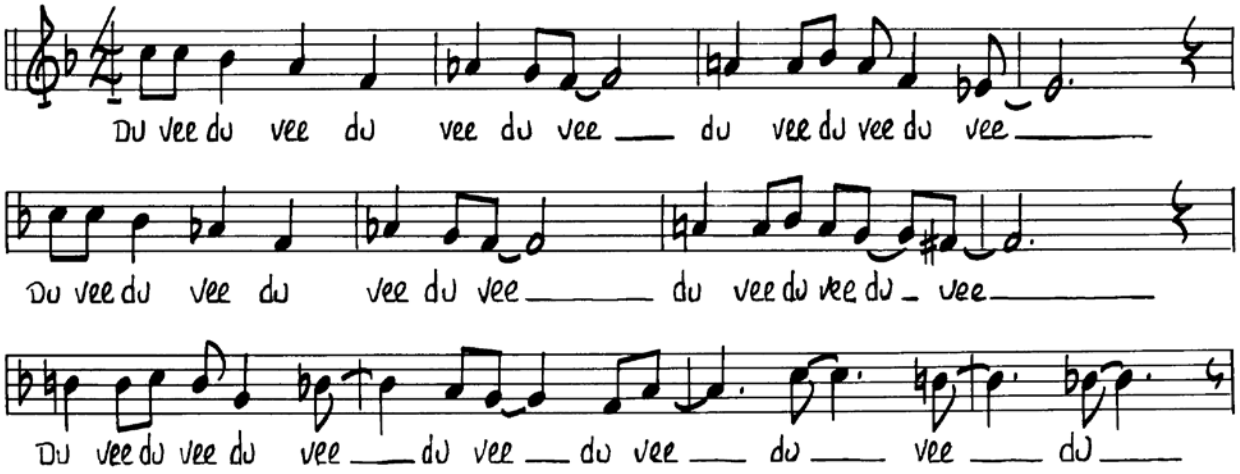
Lesson #2

Now, sing the melody and make up a few of your own syllables. Simplicity is usually the best choice. Here are a few other syllable suggestions that are long sounds: *vu*, *du*, *shu*, *wee*, *vee*, *zee*, *bee*, *vah*, *dwee*, and *skwee*. Here a few other syllable suggestions that are short sounds: *dop*, *bop*, *vop*, *dot*, *bot*, *zot*, and *dit*. Practice these syllables and others until you find the ones that feel right for a particular rhythmic articulation, inflection, or melodic interpretation that you desire. Here is the Scat Blues with other syllables. The original melody sung with new syllables can be a very simple but effective improvised solo. Try it.



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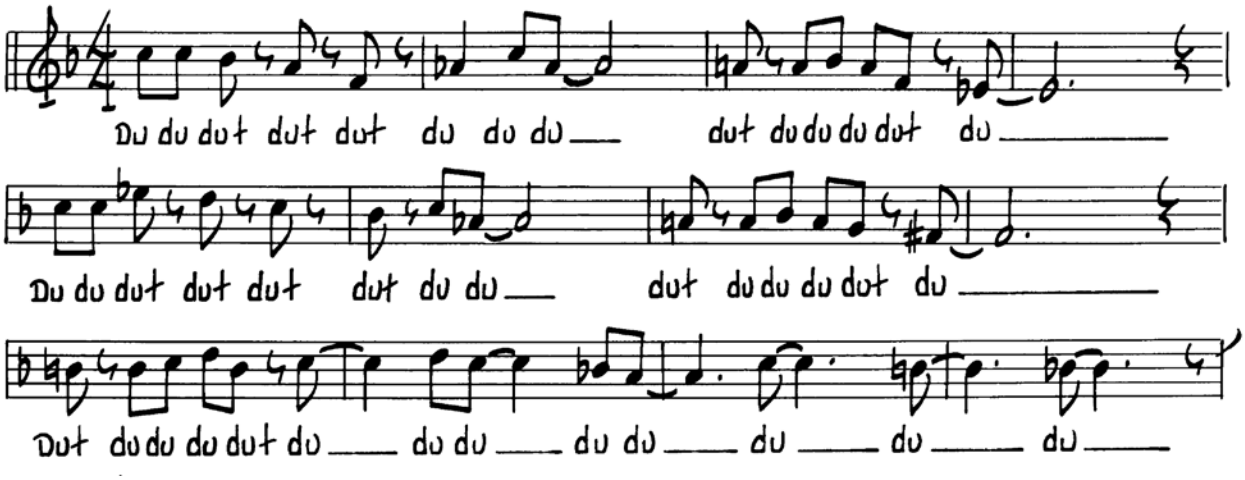
Lesson #3

Melody

The second step in learning to improvise is altering and embellishing the melody. This means adding and substituting notes to the original melody. Sing the original melody of the tune using the syllable *du* (Example #1). This brings you back to ground zero so that when the new variable (melody) is presented, you can easily relate it to the original melody. Now, while singing *du*, change several notes of the melody. Make sure that you maintain the original rhythms and the syllable *du*.



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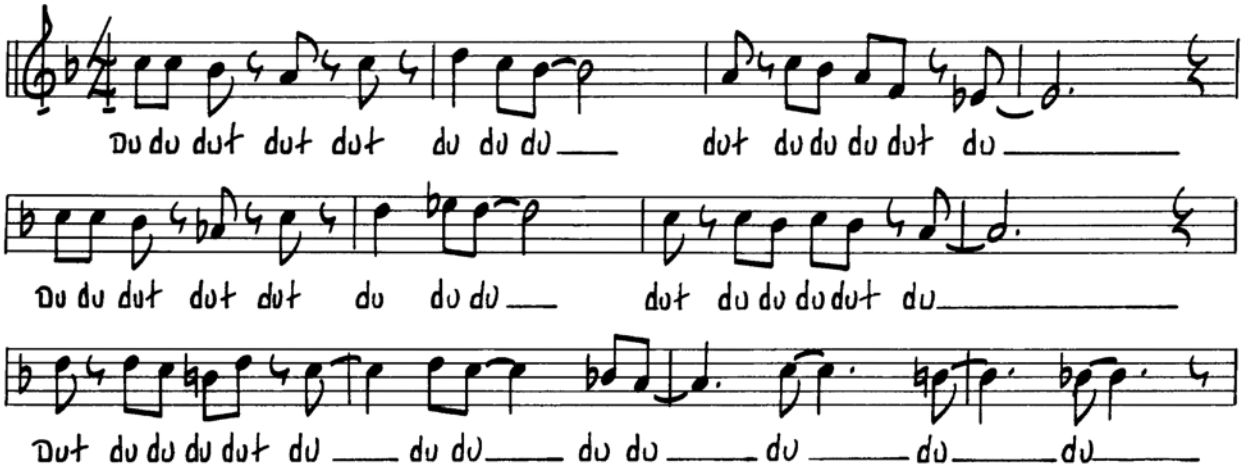
Lesson #4

While singing *du*, gradually change more of the original melody. Make sure that you so not change the rhythms. One of the keys to success with these concepts, is to maintain the self discipline to alter only one element at a time. As you change more of the notes of the melody and add more embellishments, always keep the original melody in mind. If all else fails, you still know where you are in the melody, and can sing it, using the syllable *du*.



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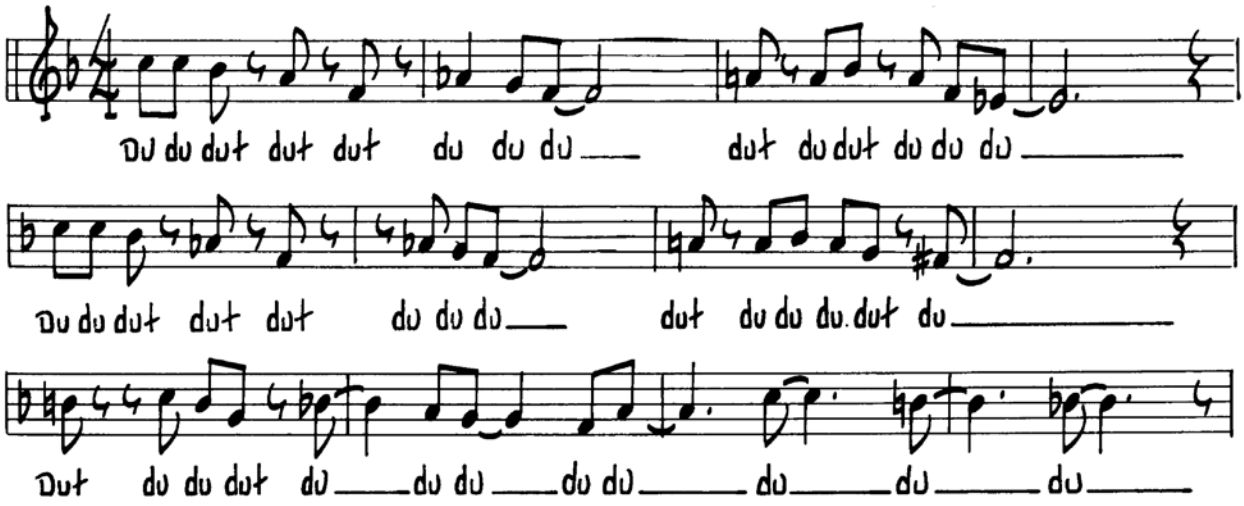
Lesson #5

Rhythm

The third step in learning to improvise is altering and embellishing the rhythms of the original melody. Sing the original melody on *du* (Example #1). This will again bring you back to ground zero. Now, sing the melody on *du*, and create a few of your own rhythms. Always make sure that you do not change the original melody. Keep the rhythmic changes simple.



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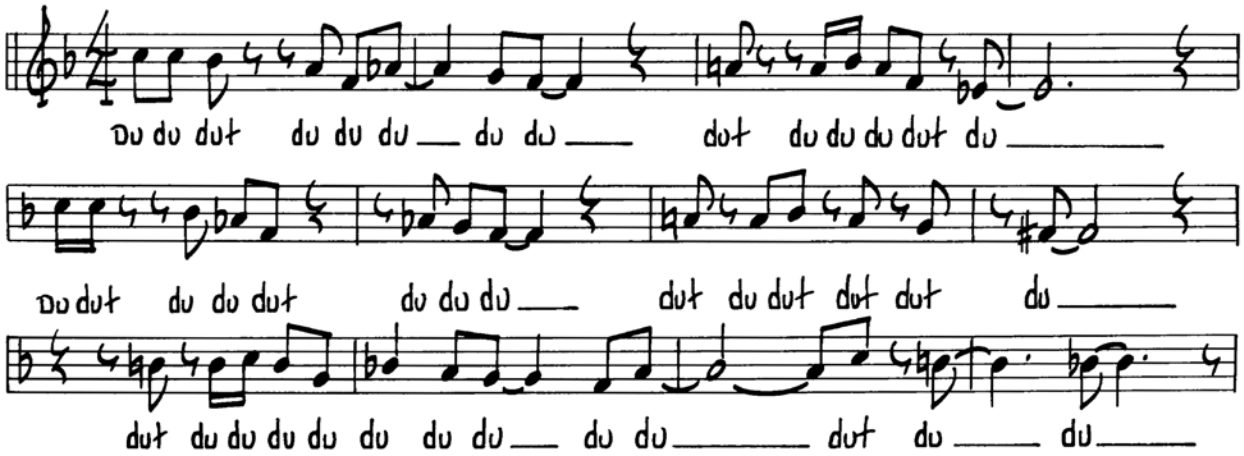
Lesson #6

Sing the melody on *du*, and gradually change more of the rhythms. Make sure that you do not change the original melody. Your goal is to rhythmically re-package the melody and not add new melodic events.



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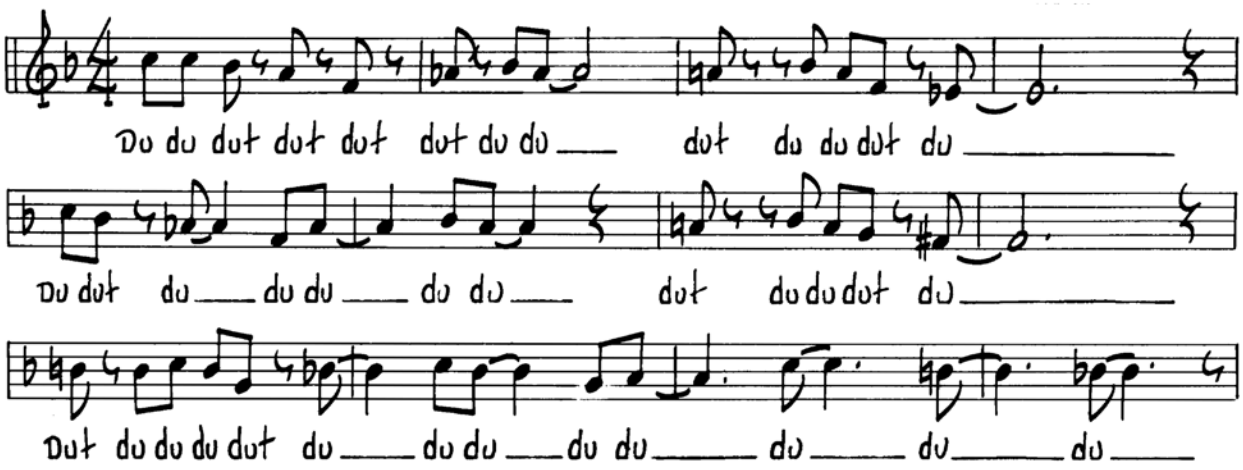
Lesson #7

Integration

The fourth step in learning to improvise is gradually putting together the three previously isolated concepts: syllables, melody, and rhythm.

Melody and Rhythm

Start singing the melody on *du*, and change a few notes of the melody and one or two rhythms.



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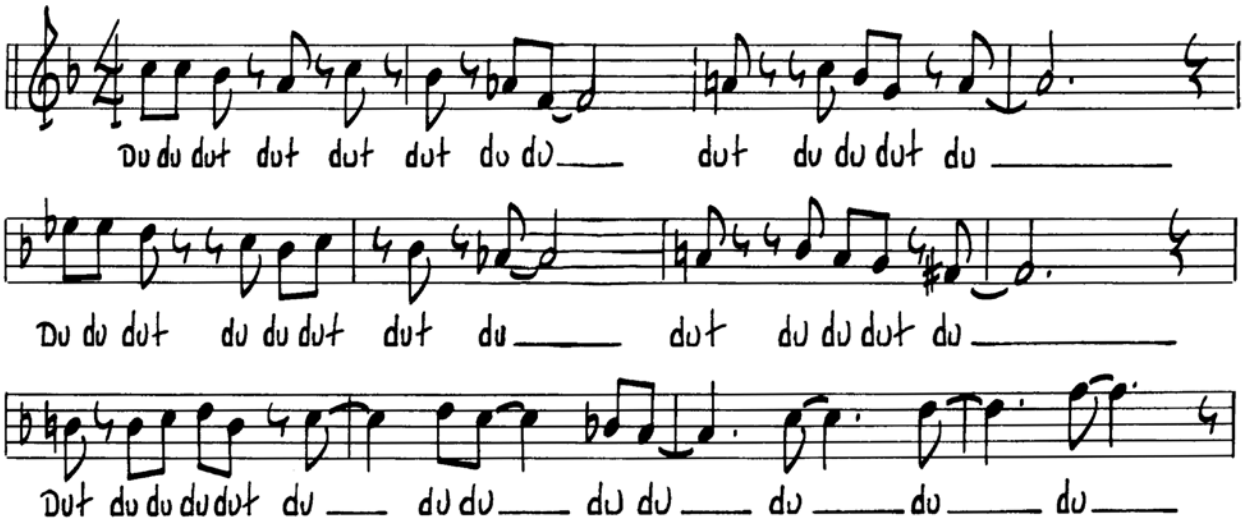
Lesson #8

Proceed gradually by adding more of your own melody notes and rhythms. Sing only *du* during this section.



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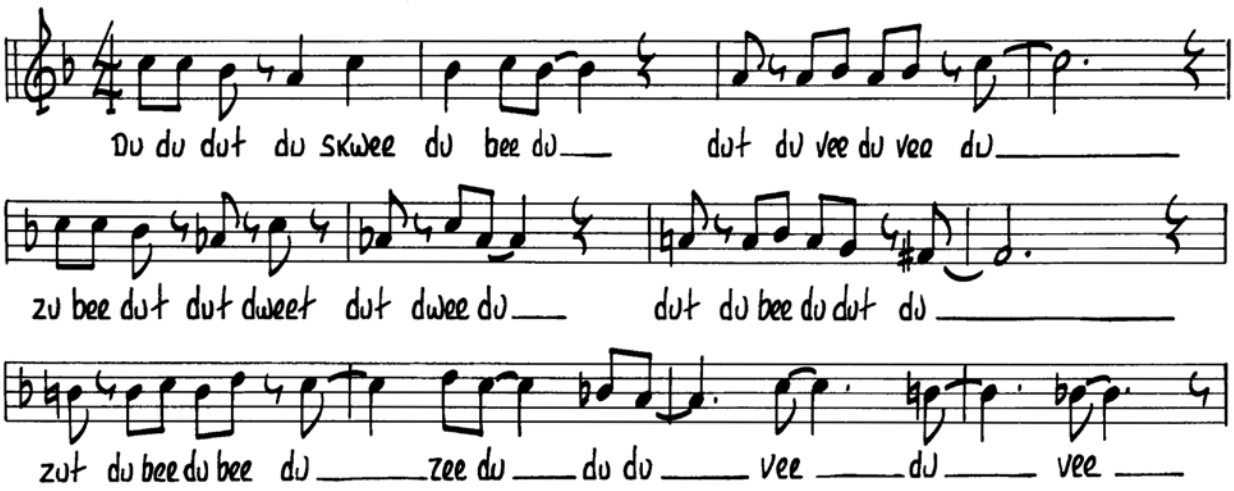
Lesson #9

Syllables and Melody

After you have become proficient at putting together melody and rhythm, try changing syllables and melody at the same time. Start singing the melody on *du*, and change a few of the melody notes and add a couple of new syllables. Maintain the original rhythms.



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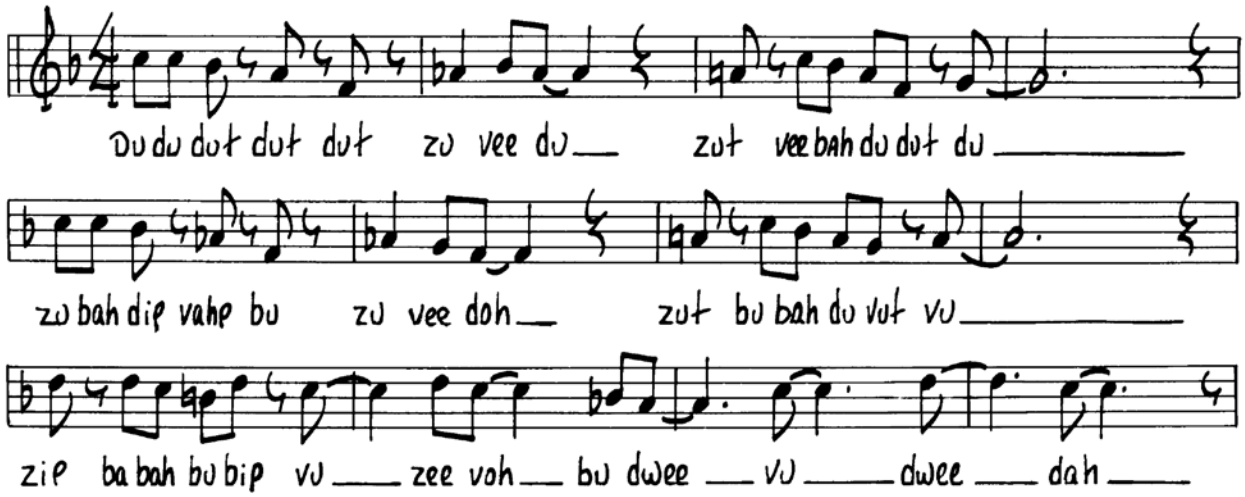
Lesson #10

Proceed gradually by adding more of your own notes and creating new syllables. Maintain the original rhythms.



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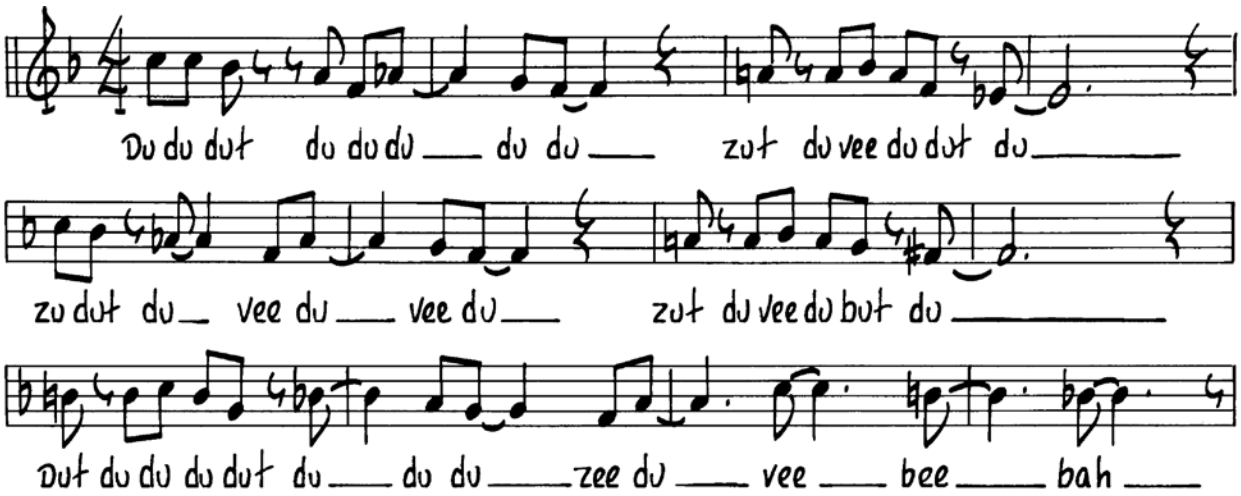
Lesson #11

Syllables and Rhythm

Now, try changing syllables and rhythm at the same time. Start singing the melody on *du*, and change a few of the rhythms and add a couple of new syllables. Maintain the original melody.



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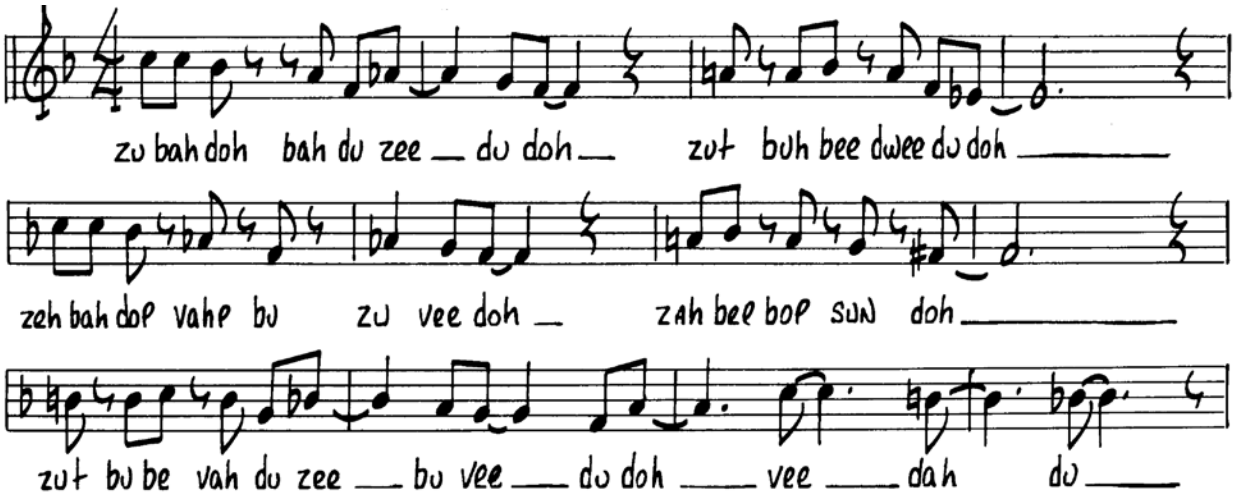
Lesson #12

Proceed gradually by adding more of your own syllables and rhythms. Maintain the original melody.



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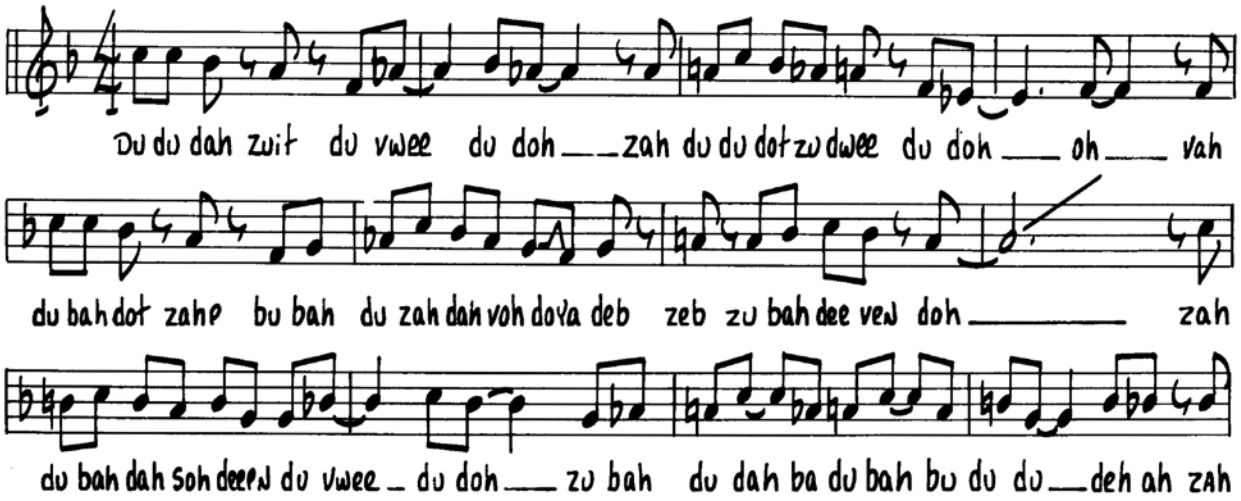
Lesson #13

After you have become proficient at putting together any two of the three isolated concepts, try including a small amount of all three as you start singing the melody on *du*. Gradually increase the amount of your own material in the solo as you sing the tune. Remember, if you isolate the elements and practice them separately, you are more likely to achieve the proficiency that you desire in vocal improvisation.



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Conclusion

Improvisation is a basic element of music, and can encourage individual creativity. It can be one of the most exciting and satisfying forms of musical expression. Here are a few things to remember:

- Keep the melody in your mind at all times, and start listening to the way it relates to the chords of the tune. This will be helpful as you later learn the theory (chord structure, scales, etc.) of improvisation.
- At first keep your solo simple and near the melody.
- Always observe good vocal production, even when trying to make new and unique sounds.
- Listen to as many jazz singers as you can, and compare their solos with the concepts you have just learned.
- Now use a tune of your own choosing, and repeat each of the isolated concepts (syllables, melody, and rhythm). Gradually put the three concepts together and you will find that you have a very good, logical, and musical sounding improvisation.

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