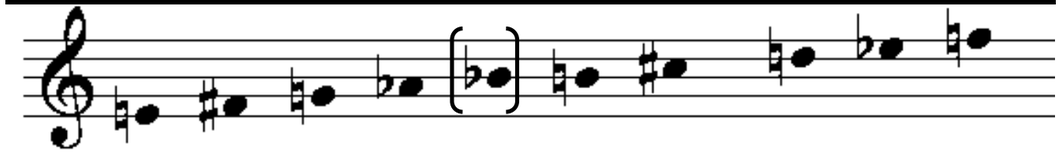
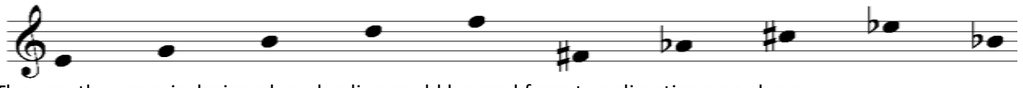
HOW TO PLAY NEXUS

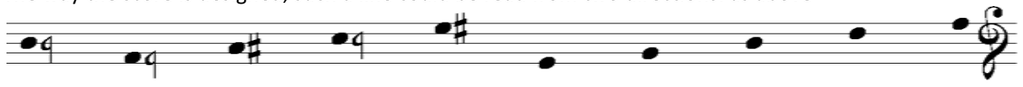
The Nexus Mode



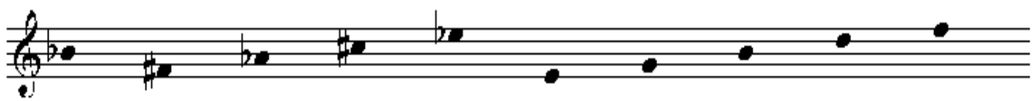
Nexus uses a limited number of written pitches: all the pitches on the five lines of the stave, all the pitches in the interstices, with accidentals – and for one melody only, the B♭ on the center line.



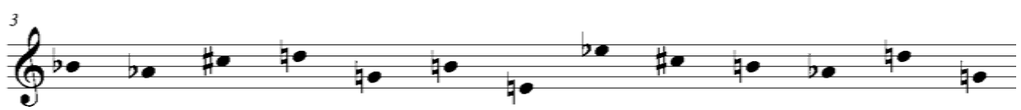
The way the score is designed, such a line could be read from two directions: as above –



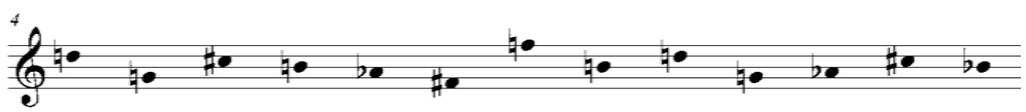
and like this: visually inverted and retrograde, as if looked at from the other side - or better, with the clef and the accidentals corrected:



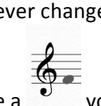
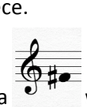
You can see that the accidentals are always on the same interstices: One of the rules of Nexus is that these four notes remain the same, regardless from which side they are looked at: the lowest note in between the stave-lines is a F#, the next is an A♭, then again a C# and then again an E♭. So a melody like this:



Would be transformed into this when read from the other side.



This is why there are no accidentals written into the pentagram score: because they are fixed to their own interstice and never change within the piece.

So when you see a  you always play a  when you see a you always play a etc.

IMPORTANT: ALL THESE PITCHES ARE WRITTEN – EACH INSTRUMENT WILL TRANSPOSE THEM DIFFERENTLY !

The 5 Nexus Comprovisation Modes

The melodies in NEXUS are not literally melodies in any conventional sense. Rather, they are sequences of pitches that can be interpreted in many different ways. Each of the five comprovisation modes asks you to read and improvise on a given sequence of pitches in a different manner.

RAAG the sequence of pitches is read as a real melody to be improvised on in whatever improv style you choose. For this improvisation you can freely use all pitches of the Nexus mode, but you must always start from and return to the melody or to fragments of it. Your task as an improviser would be to make the re-appearance of the raag-melody towards the end of a phrase natural. Tempo: very slow to slow.

MAQAM you always improvise on one pitch only, exploiting microtone glissandi, rhythmic variations and colour variations. You proceed from pitch to pitch – each in turn becomes the centre of these ornamentations around one pitch. Tempo: medium to excited.

SCAT Improvise in a complex, but groovy rhythm by using intervals from the melodic sequence. At any time the improv may use only max 3 different pitches, but nothing prevents a fourth one coming in occasionally. You play each short segment for min 3 max 15 times before you move on to the next. Tempo: fast to very fast. *Example: If you have 7 notes [e.g. c#, g, f#,b,a♭,e♭,d] you will slowly work your way through this melody by playing rhythmically with [c#, g] then with [c#, g, f#] then with perhaps [f#,b] then [b,a♭,e♭} then, briefly, [b,a♭,e♭,d} and finally with [e♭,d}.*

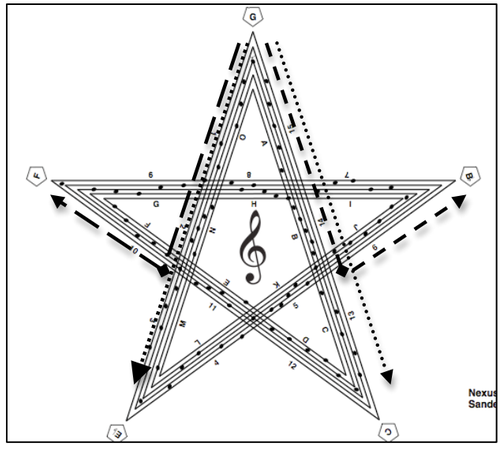
SCRUB rapidly move back and forth between the individual pitches, always starting on the one you ended with. Short, rapid bursts followed by hectic irregularly repeated pitches or trills with varying speeds on a long held pitches. Tempo: many rapid tempo-changes

NEXUS spider-legged lines crossing several octaves, with wide jumps, moving in varying speeds, but always relatively slow, not hectic or aggressive. Rather, there should be some grandeur to the melodies. Use the pitches in sequence, and cycle through the melody without any improv on pitches – the only improv should be around the octave transposition, the durations, the timbre and the dynamics. Tempo: slowly morphing tempi

In all improvisations the rhythms used MUST be based on a palpable 5 beat cycle or a 5/x measure. You can freely use the rhythmic models suggested (see below) or come up with your own.The tempo may change, the basic units may change, but you must always feel the groove in fives !

WHAT MELODIES DO I PLAY ?

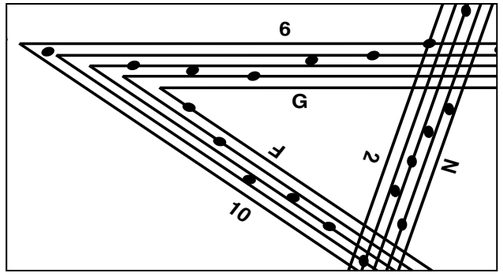
If you look at the NEXUS score, you will see that each tip of the star belongs to one instrument.
Four melodies originate from each tip – these are one player's melodies. (in this case: G's).



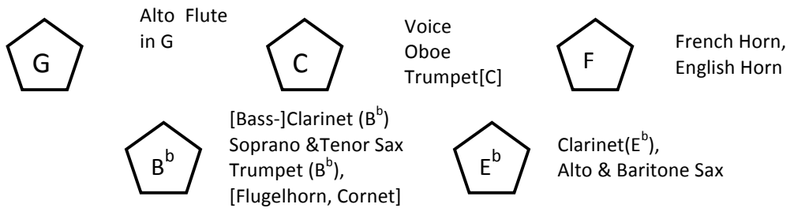
To play NEXUS, you will need to learn [by heart, forwards and backwards, and in your sleep] a minimum of four different melodies, each made up of 19 pitches (or three line segments). These are the four melodies that you will have to play– they belong only to you, even if parts of them overlap with parts of the melodies of others.

In addition you can see that there are many more possibilities of melodies within the score. These are optional: you can go in any direction, turn left or right and thus create a rich number of melodies that are all related to each other.

You can also see that, in the score, all line segments have a number on one side, and a letter on the other. The numbers indicate one way of looking at the staff, the letters indicate that one can also look at the staff from the other side: thereby playing a modal retrograde inversion of the melody.
[NEXUS uses these numbers and letters to designate paths for all melodies through the score.]



Now, if you look at the four melodies again (above), you will see that each melody leads to a different tip. That means that each of your four melodies connects you to exactly one other instrument. You see the instrument designation in the little pentagon at each tip – here is the legend.



So whenever you are "connected" to another instrument you play the melody for that instrument.

HOW DO WE PLAY NEXUS TOGETHER ?

There are two strategies of performing NEXUS. Both can be used alone, or be combined with each other.

STRATEGY 1 WIRELESS

For this strategy to be effective, the players should not be in the same acoustic space and should not be able to hear each other ! They should also be moving through their environment, thus creating new soundscapes for this environment and following either faultlines in the ambient soundscape or a pre-set trajectory.

Each player is connected to a wireless communications network capable of transmitting streaming musical sound in good quality. Each also carries a microphone pickup on her/his instrument and a loudspeaker attached to his/her body.

All musical streams incoming from the five players are received at a central server where an "arranger" re-routes them according to certain rules and patterns (see attachment below) – and sends five streams, each containing one instrument, back – one for each of the players. The arranger can be a human player or a software agent.

Each musician now hears only one instrument at any time coming through his loudspeaker and interacts with that instrument. It is important to note that there usually is no dialogue between the players, i.e. if the clarinet listens to, say, the horn, the horn will usually <u>not</u> hear the clarinet, but will in turn be listening to another instrument. Thus, each instrument reacts to the sounds coming out of the loudspeaker as one would to a music-minus-one record – playing along and paying attention to the other. The patterns that the arranger sets up, usually will be loops – in some sense all players will be reacting to the transformed echos from their past…

In an audience space, the five signals from the musicians will be broadcast in a live mix, if possible spatialized with GPS or otherwise obtained locative data. The audience will be listening to the way ideas and music spread through this interconnected organism of improvising musicians, and listen to the precarious balance of harmony generated by the structural loops and how the music changes when the loop configuration changes.

STRATEGY 2 VISUAL SCORE

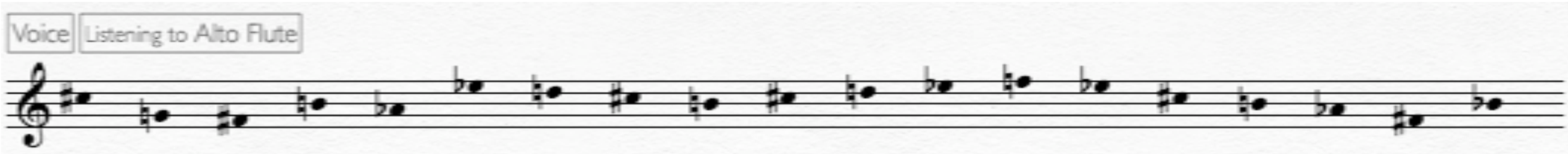
For this strategy, players are in the same room and have eye and acoustic contact to each other.The score in this case need minimally only consist in a display or a rule for each player that tells her/him to whom to connect and listen to.

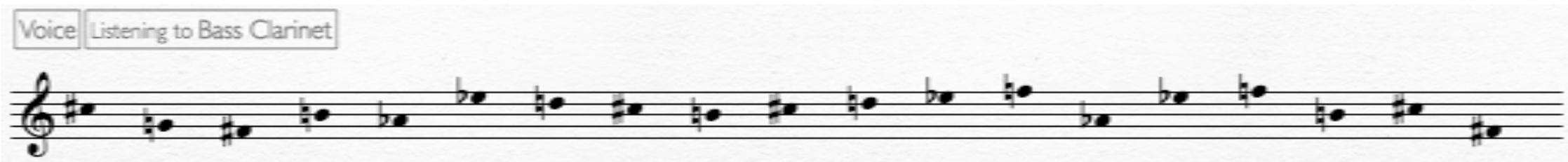
As in Strategy 1, each player focuses on one player only and plays with that other player – but now the players hear each other and can react to each other in many ways – though they still must use their comprovisation modes. They pay attention to rhythm, sonority and mode of comprovisation in the other players – and to their score display, which tells them which player to interact with at each moment. Sometimes the screen will also indicate a tacet.

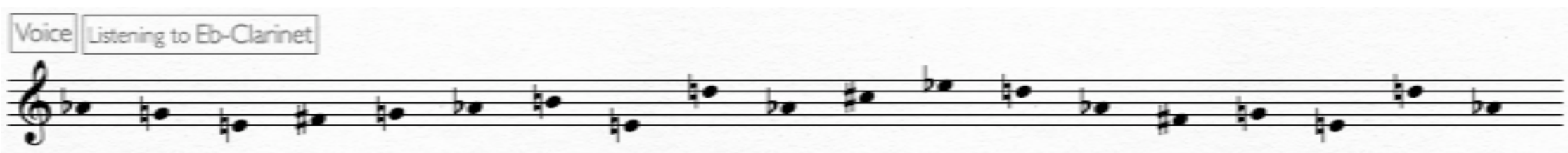
Here, the musical result will be much closer to conventional jamming. Yet the unpredictable configurations will create very interesting dramaturgies of comprovisation.

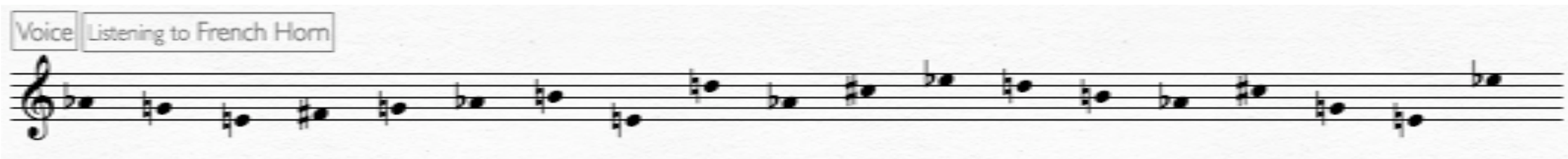
MELODIES THAT CONNECT THE PLAYERS – to be learned by heart backwards and forwards !

VOICE









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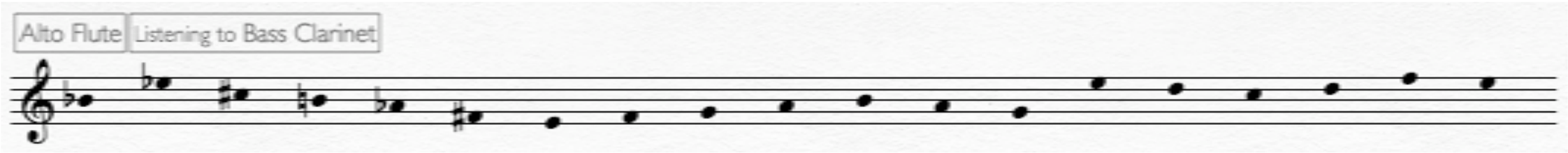
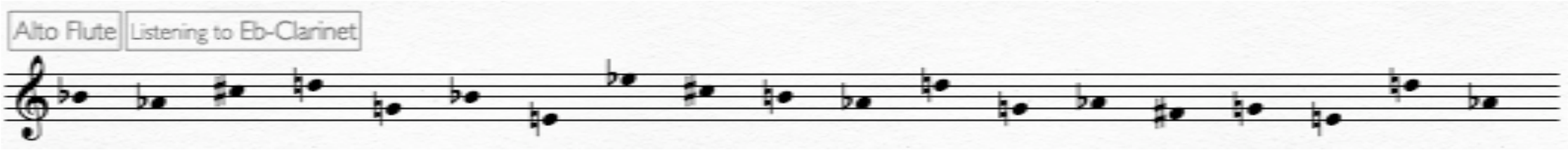
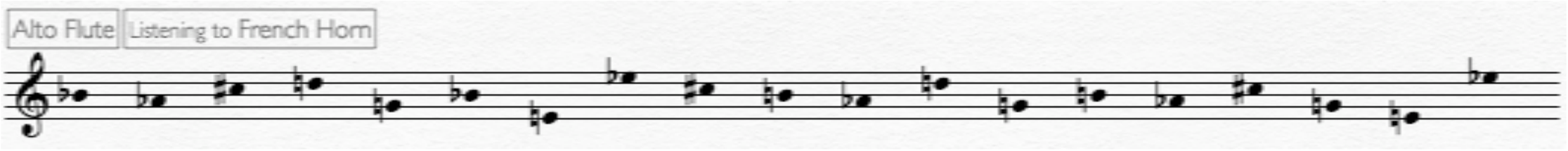
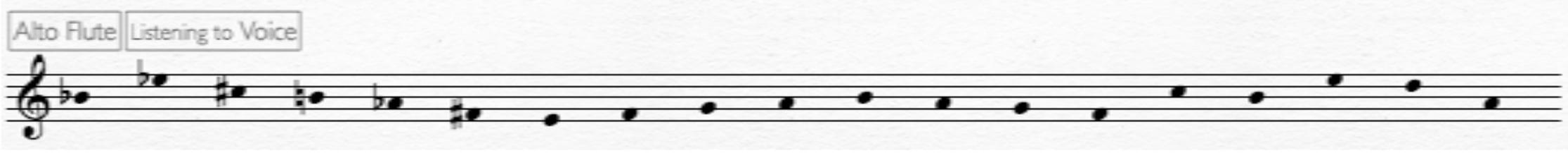
ALTO FLUTE









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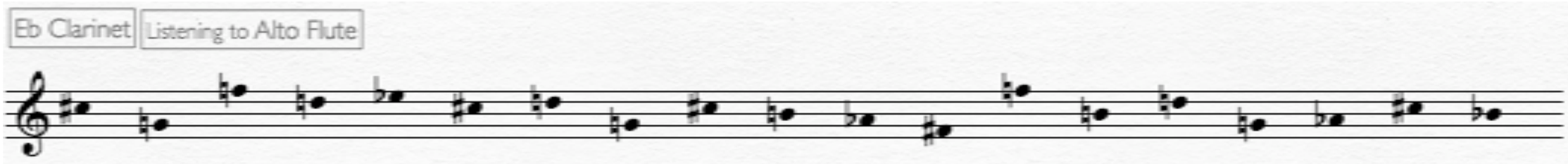
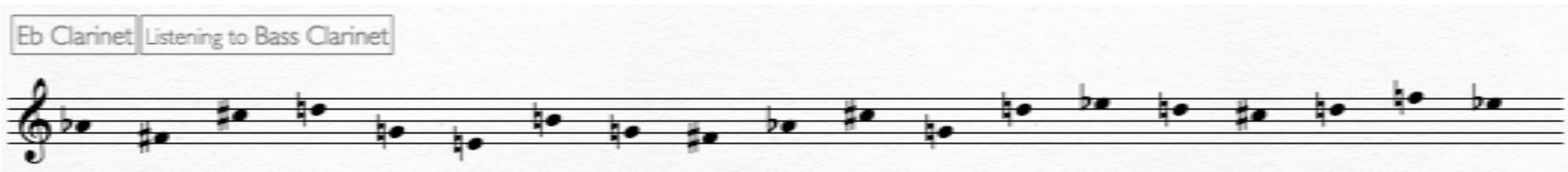
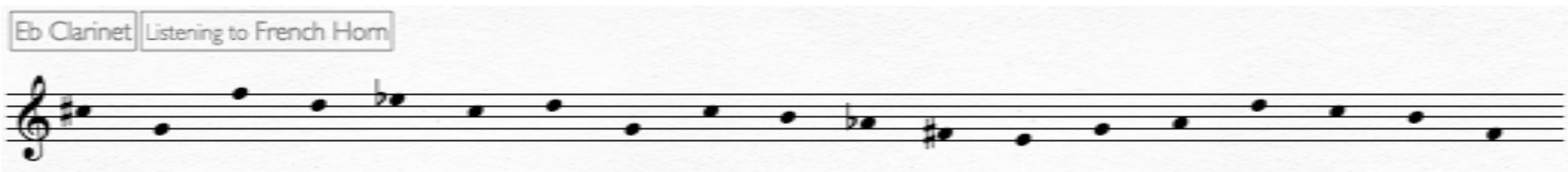
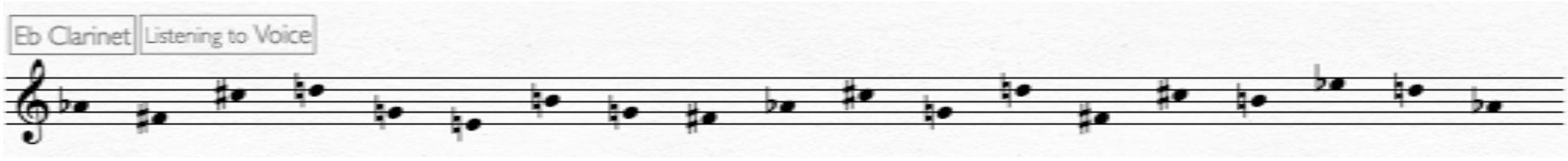
Eb CLARINET









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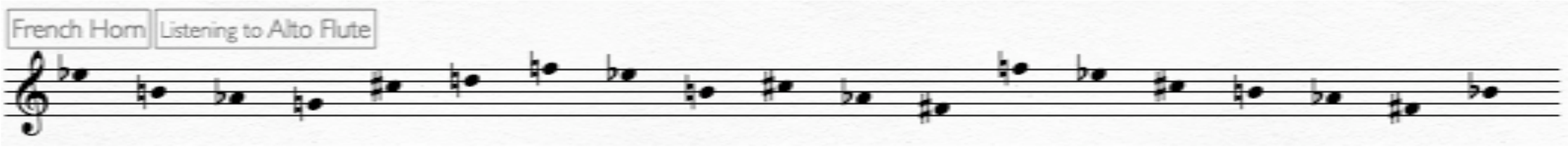
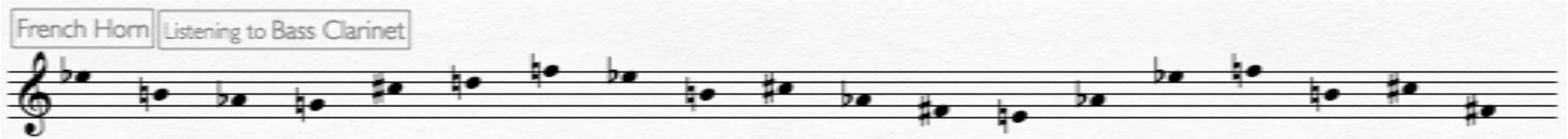
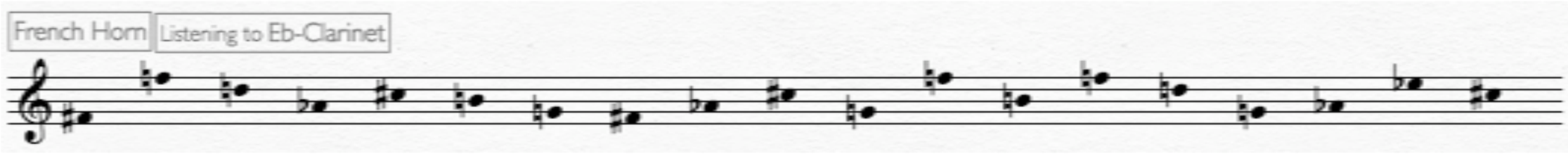
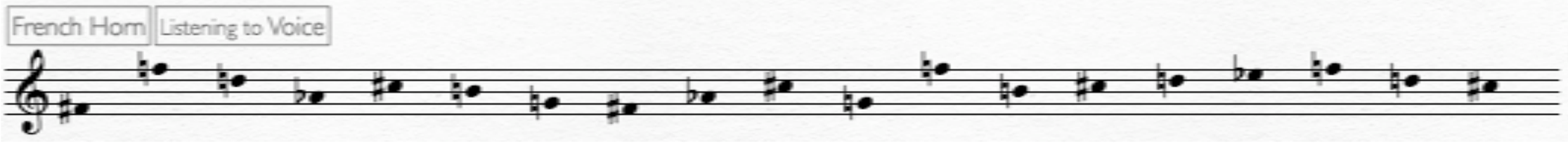
FRENCH HORN









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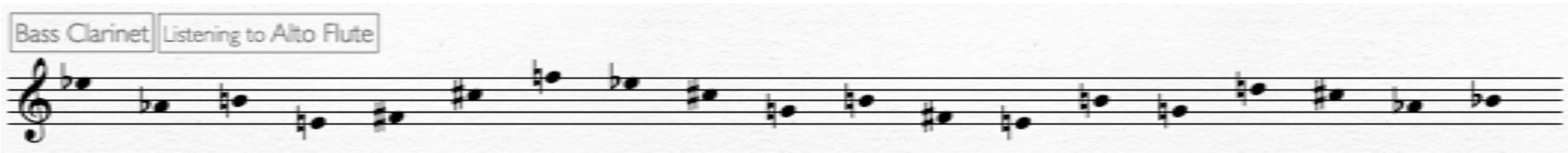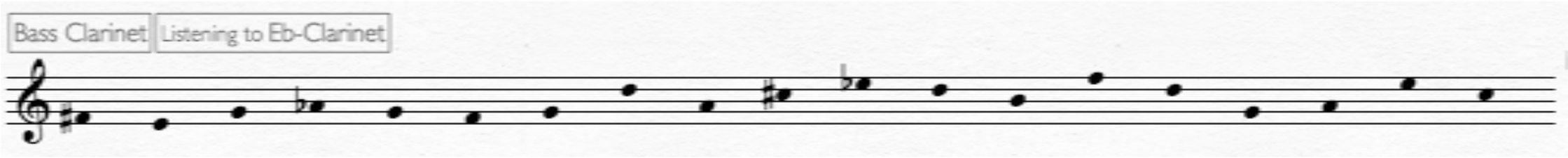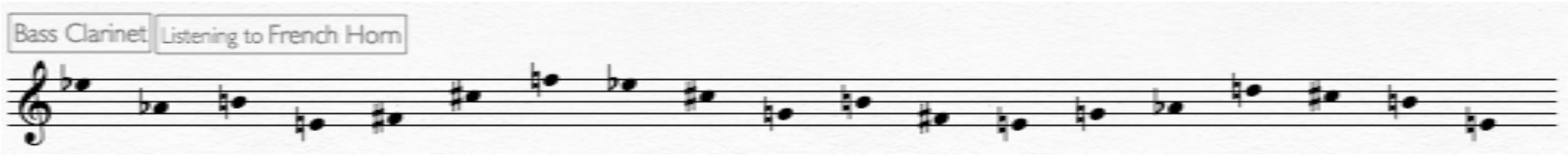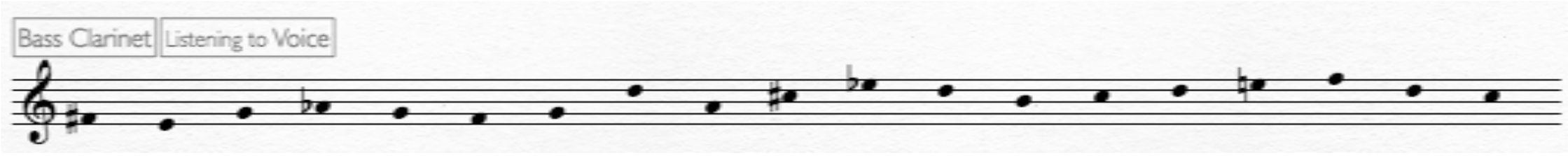
BASS CLARINET