



Jazz Improvisation: “Anyone Can Do It”

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2009 Texas Bandmasters Association Convention/Clinic



**JULY 26-29, 2009
HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

"Jazz Improvisation: Anyone Can Do It"
Sam Houston State University
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July, 2009

Outline of Presentation

- I. Introduction: Let's begin together with "Bags Groove" by ear.
 - Learn Melody with voice/instrument
 - Learn duet harmony line
 - Play-a-long with Miles Davis recording
 - Call & response blues licks
 - Embellishments to melody
 - Blues scale (1, b3, 4, #4/b5, 5, b7, 8)
 - 4-step rhythm exercise (single note & blues scale) to develop the "swing feel"
 - Group Improvisation
 - Go around the horn (everyone take a solo)
 - Play melody/harmony out to end tune

- II. Discussion and questions regarding Introduction and the following points:
 - Teach beginners by ear
 - Any language (English, French, German,Jazz) is first learned by ear
 - Natural learning process:
 - Observation
 - Imitation
 - Trial & Error
 - Play-a-long with actual jazz recordings
 - Call & response – earliest historical approach to jazz improvisation
 - The Blues is in the very fabric of most, if not all, American music – It's already in our mind's ear, and in our blood
 - All jazz musicians play, or continually strive to play, with excellent rhythm (i.e., quarter notes on/off the beat, swinging 8th notes, & double-time 16th notes)
 - Group Improvisation (safety in numbers) interspersed with individual solos

- III. Jazz Transcription Process: Demonstration of John Fedchock's solo on "What's New, and vocal scat of all solos on "It Don't Mean A Thing." (both tunes from Woody Herman's 50th Anniversary CD).
 - Listen to one's desired solo, over and over again, until the goal of singing it from memory with the recording becomes unstoppable.
 - Learning ii7-V7-I language in both major and minor tonalities.
 - Listening to, learning and internalizing the style and language of the role model being transcribed.
 - Performing the transcription for an audience

- IV. Let's learn "Autumn Leaves" (in G minor) by ear & with sheet music.
- Learn Melody with voice/instrument
 - Learn lyrics & song form
 - Play-a-long with Aebersold recording
 - Play Bb major, G harmonic minor scales & and its blue scale equivalents
 - 4-step rhythm exercise with the above mentioned scales
 - Play any note you like, but with good rhythm
 - Group Improvisation
 - Go around the horn (everyone take a solo)
 - Play melody/harmony out to end tune
 - Listen to recordings of the jazz greats playing this tune
 - Learn basic piano voicings for practice and sound as found in Jazz Piano Voicing Skills by Dan Haerle
- V. Conclusion and questions regarding today's presentations with the following points:
- No wrong notes in jazz improvisation, just rhythm that may not swing very well. "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." (Duke Ellington)
 - As quoted by Wynton Marsalis on numerous occasions, Jazz is made up of "Blues & Swing."
 - Acquire the "taste" for jazz, or getting "bit" by the jazz bug, by non-stop listening to the music and going to live performances
 - Lighting the students "fire" by your enthusiasm for jazz.
 - Playing along with Youtube videos of jazz artists

Sample of Suggested Jazz Materials

Coker, Jerry. *Improvising Jazz*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1964. 115p.

Coker, Jerry. *The Teaching of Jazz*. Rottenburg, West Germany: Advance Music Publishing, 1989. 175p. (ISBN 3-89221-028-4)

Haerle, Dan. *The Jazz Language: A Theory Text for Jazz Composition and Improvisation*. Milwaukee, WI.: Hal Leonard Pub., 1980. 58p.

Haerle, Dan. *Jazz Piano Voicing Skills: A Method For Individual Or Class Study*. New Albany, IN.; Jamey Aebersold Jazz, Inc., 1994. 153p.

Haerle, Dan. *The Jazz Sound: A Guide to Tune Analysis and Chord/Scale Choices for Improvisation*. Milwaukee, WI.: Hal Leonard Pub., 1989. 88p.

Haerle, Dan. *Scales for Jazz Improvisation*. Miami, Florida: Belwin, Inc., 1975. 52p

Steinel, Mike. *Building A Jazz Vocabulary: A Resource for Learning Jazz Improvisation*. Milwaukee, WI.: Hal Leonard Pub., 1995. 177p.