

Strategies for Jazz Improvisation

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This session will introduce exercises that get students feeling comfortable improvising while building foundational skills.

Call and Response

Major scale-based groove – **progressive** melodic call and response

Maj 6/9 chord – start with scale, choose chord tones, switch to another, play rhythms with those chords

Rhythm takes the lead - have students play an idea with 1 note, expand to 2 notes, etc.

Mo Betta Blues – lead sheet (melody/bass line)

- Listen to the tune, identify like phrases, play each one, talk numbers, sing pitches with numbers
- Improvise with melody notes (major pentatonic)

Comin' Home Baby – lead sheet

- I have them learn the bass line and melody and switch off. They continue playing when they are not improvising.
- Can be bossa, swing or reggae
- Play the “punch line”
- Improvise with melody notes (minor pentatonic)

Phrase-Based Improvisation

“Melody comes from rhythm” – Dizzy Gillespie

- Build a blues through language
- Swing – “Where’s the beef?” (younger kids,) “Golden State Warriors”, “My shoes are too tight”
- Straight Eighths – “Gimme one more grape”
- Funk - “Blue man in a little coat”

Blues – Blues By Five

- Bass line – I, IV, V sing and use hands
- Melody – sing then play
- Always play the “punch line”
- Tailgate rhythm for roots

Form

Using the punch line to learn and keep the form

Tunes In Your Pocket

- Importance of memorizing tunes
- Can't play melodically if you don't know melodies
- Having something that everyone in class knows
- Jam session

Vocabulary

- Fragments of melody – 2 Parker licks
- Tunes in categories – blues, major, minor, style
- Rhythm/genre vocabulary – Drum Genius
- Rhythm Changes tunes – learn as many heads as possible (they all contain vocabulary)

Framework of the Changes

- Arpeggios
- Scales
- Patterns, phrases through changes
- *Perdido* – use all of the above