

Alabama Music Educators Association
Jazz Session
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“THE INNER WORKINGS OF JAZZ”

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This session offers a comprehensive approach to practicing and performing jazz through tested solutions. Topics include creative practice, chord and scale analysis, effective listening, improvisation tips, and some helpful resources for educators and students.

I. DISPELLING THE MYTHS

- a. Jazz is not a product of random notes and rhythms.
- b. Jazz musicians are not just born with talent.
- c. Jazz is not the only music that is improvised.
- d. Jazz improvisation does not begin after the melody.

II. CREATIVITY: THE LIFE-BLOOD OF JAZZ

- a. Instinctive – What drives us to create is something inside that needs to get out.
- b. Courage – It takes courage to create, and we all need encouragement to become more creative.
- c. Visual – Art tends to show rather than tell. It allows people the opportunity to experience another way of viewing the world.
- d. Modeling – Your students need to know that you can demonstrate whatever you are asking them to do.
- e. Positivity – Students are bombarded with negative influences and thoughts.

Success cycle – PRACTICE → IMPROVEMENT → SATISFACTION

f. Use your imagination.

- Great playing is always driven by the vivid image of the desired sound.
- Your instrument is NOT the instrument. YOU are the instrument.

III. BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR V7 CHORDS

a. The Dominant scale (Major scale of intended tonic)

Example: F7 = Bb Major ('F' is the 5th degree, or mode, of the Bb Major scale.)



b. An Intervallic approach: Major triad pairs (constructed on the 4th and 5th degrees of the tonic).

Example: F7 (tonic is Bb), use the Eb triad (Eb-G-Bb) and F triad (F-A-C)



IV. FOR ALTERED V7 CHORDS

Play the major scale a tritone (b5) away from the tonic key. This scale choice gives logical coherency to the chord tones while creating melodic tension that can be very effective. In the example below, the tonic key is Bb. Notice how the E major scale contains the necessary pitches that are diatonic to both altered F7 chords:

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notation represents the E major scale, which is a tritone away from the tonic key of Bb. The notes are: E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter). Above the staff, the text reads 'F7#9 or F7b9'. Below the staff, the notes are labeled with their corresponding chord tones: b9 (under F#4), #9 (under G#4), 3 (under A4), b5 (under B4), #5 (under C5), and 7 (under D5). The piece ends with a double bar line.

V. THE MINOR 7TH CHORD AND THE ii-V-1 PROGRESSION

a. For all minor 7 chords, use Dorian scale (2nd mode of the Major scale)

Example: Cmin7, or C-7: play C Dorian (2nd mode of Bb Major)

b. The 'ii V I' progression is the most common progression in jazz. The Major scale of the 'I' chord (tonic) is easily accessible for the entire progression.

Example: D-7 / G7 / Cmaj7; C Major scale is the base of the progression.

VI. LISTENING: What to listen for

a. Overall shape of the music (emotional content, energy, melodic content and phrasing, harmonic structure, and form)

b. Technique (tone quality, articulations, dynamics, rhythmic precision)

VII. IMPROVISATION TIPS

- a. Learn all scales and arpeggios.
- b. Play simple melodies in all keys (ex. Nursery rhymes, hymns, TV themes)
- c. Get in the habit of writing down everything you hear.
- d. Self-evaluation – Record your practice and performances. Compare your playing to that of six months ago.
- e. Set goals to accomplish.
- f. Repetition causes a more dependable result.
- g. Transcribe rhythms.
- h. Vocalize – Sing the solo.
- i. Relax – Playing music is supposed to be easy and effortless.

SHANE PHILEN'S JAZZ RESOURCES

1. Method Books/ Improvisation and Theory:

- The Jazz Theory Book (Mark Levine; Sher Music)
- The Jazz Musician's Guide to Creative Practice (David Berkman; Sher Music)
- Intervallic Improvisation (Walt Weiskopf; Aeborsold)
- Voicings for Jazz Keyboard (Frank Mantooth; Hal Leonard)

2. Website Sources:

- Band Director: www.banddirector.com
- The Jazz Education Network- www.jazzednet.org
- E Jazz Lines- www.ejazzlines.com
- Jazz Preview- www.jazzpreview.com

3. Director Resources:

- Teaching Music Through Performance in Jazz (Ronald Carter; GIA)
- The Creative Nudge That Fuels Jazz Improvisation (Jerry Coker; Aeborsold)
- JazzEd Magazine (Symphony Publishing): www.jazzedmagazine.com
- JazzTimes Magazine: www.jazztimes.com
- Downbeat Magazine: www.downbeat.com
- Windplayer Magazine: www.windplayer.com

4. On-line Radio Stations:

- Pandora Radio – www.pandora.com
- Sirius XM Pure Jazz 72 – www.sirius.com
- WDCB 90.9FM Chicago, IL- www.wdcb.org
- WBGO 88.3FM Newark, NJ- www.wbgo.org

Shane Philen is available for guest performances, clinics, workshops, festivals, and society events. For more information, please visit www.shanephilen.com. You may contact Shane at 251-654-0781, or email at shanephilen@bellsouth.net.



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