

Session 1

Jazz Improvisation is for *all of us!*

Jazz is a musical language. Learn to use minutes of class time to effectively teach improvisation. Session I unlocks the fundamentals of teaching improvisation through call and response, and an aural/oral approach to chords. Integrated learning and performance for students and teachers!

Introduction:

Since jazz musical language, then it makes most sense to learn jazz music like a language; by listening and speaking. While it's nothing new, the Aural/Oral approach to learning music is organic, and in the long run leads to success in the most expedient way. A friend of mine said we need to hear music with our eyes, and see music with our ears!

Analytical vs. Aural/Oral approach : While there may be a lot of information on the next few pages, the best learning we can disseminate to our students is through listening, and repeating back phrases.

The Aural/Oral approach frees us from delving into an analytical approach, which can be cumbersome and easily loses student's interest.

First things first: rhythm in jazz

Michael Brecker told me that the most important thing in music is rhythm, and I believe that next to tone production, he was right. Articulation in jazz is a little different than in classical music, and here are a few principals of jazz articulation, demonstrated through rhythmic solfege

- 1 Downbeat quarter notes are generally short!
2. downbeat eight notes are generally legato, or tenuto.
3. The last note before rest will be accented, and/or short
4. Offbeats are accented.
5. Off beat quarter notes are accented, and short, unless otherwise notated.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in treble clef, 4/4 time. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4 (DOP), a quarter note on A4 (DOP), a quarter note on B4 (DU), a quarter note on C5 (DAT), a quarter note on B4 (DAA), and a whole rest. The second staff contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4 (SHO), a quarter note on A4 (BE), a quarter note on B4 (DU), a quarter note on C5 (BE), a quarter note on B4 (DO), a quarter note on A4 (BE), a quarter note on G4 (DU), and a quarter note on F#4 (DAT!). The third staff contains a sequence of notes: a quarter note on G4 (DOP), a quarter note on A4 (BA), a quarter note on B4 (DOO), a quarter note on C5 (DAT), and a quarter note on B4 (DAT). Accents (^) and slurs (>) are used to indicate articulation.

Rhythmic solfege:

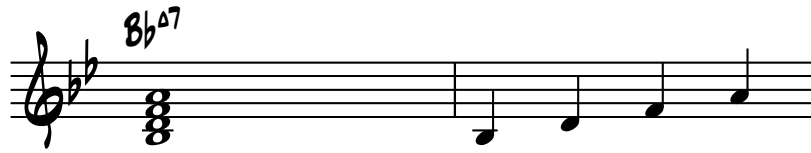
Notice that the short quarter notes have the syllable "dop" (dat is used alot, too.)

Off beat eights are usually annuciated with "be" or "ba".

Down beat eights (unaccented) can be annuciated with "shoo" (for an extreme legato sound), or "Du".

Lets add some tones to the rhythm!

Its actually a good idea to stay away from the blues scale at first. The blues scale is intrinsic to jazz, but doesnt convey the sound of melody through harmony. We are going to easily *convey harmony through melody*.

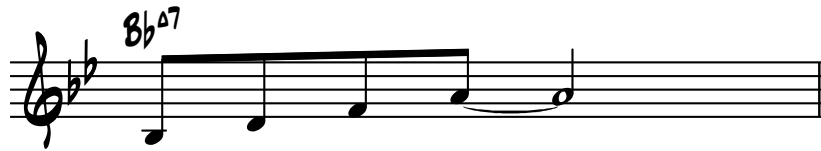


Bach and Bird would have been friends!

Jazz musicians understand something crucial to counterpoint....

Playing chord tones will convey the sound of a chord, especially if they happen on a downbeat.

some jazz melodies:



Now lets add a little chromaticism. We can add chromatic tones, especially if they are on upbeats. What would the rhythmic solfege be for these melodies?



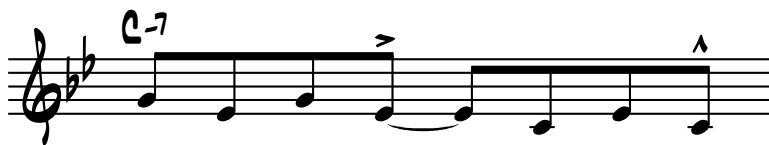
Minor Chords:



Minor chords in jazz are almost always ii chords, in other words, they are major scales starting on the second note of the major scale.

Young students usually know their major scales, or at least some of them. This perspective on the derivation of minor chords really helps out beginning improvisors.

Minor Melodies:



What would the jazz rhythmic solfege be for these minor melodies?



Points to remember:

1. Music is art that happens in time, we need to always play in the medium of time!
2. Encourage your students to play by ear! I do it all the time with my students. Sometimes they are quicker than me, and that's ok- let them build confidence in themselves, and respect for their teacher.
3. Keep the jazz rhythmic solfege at the fore. Jimmy Lunceford's bands theme song was *Rhythm is our Business!*