

# NYJA® Online Jazz Improv Primer

Jazz Improvisation for  
all instruments

Topics and Contents



# 1

## A Perfect Tonic:

### Major Scale Fragments, Transposition, and Oppositions

#### TOPICS

- The simplest melody
- Major scale symmetry and fragments
- Scale degrees and *sofège*
- Moveable "do" vs. fixed "do"
- Scale degree workout
- Jazz repertoire using scale degrees
- The chromatic scale
- Transposition
- 12 major scales
- Circle of fifths
- Key signatures
- Composition 101
- Musical oppositions
- Intervals

#### EAR-TRAINING

- "Yankee Doodle"
- "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"
- Scale degrees and *sofège*

#### LISTENING GUIDE

- Audiation using classic melodies

#### MASTERCLASS

- Four parts of practice: Mind, body, ear, soul

#### INVESTIGATE

- Two views: Major scale construction

#### SONG STUDY

- "Lean on Me"

#### HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

- "Hot Cross Buns" (Traditional)
- "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" (Traditional)
- "Itsy Bitsy Spider" (Traditional)
- "Happy Birthday to You" (Mildred & Patty Hill)
- "Three Blind Mice" (Traditional)
- "Skip to My Lou" (Traditional)
- "A Tisket, a Tasket" (Traditional)
- "Jingle Bells" (Traditional)
- "Ode to Joy" (Ludwig van Beethoven)
- "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" (Traditional)
- "When the Saints Go Marching In" (Traditional)
- "The Nearer of You" (Hoagy Carmichael)
- "My One and Only Love" (Guy Wood/Robert Mellin)
- "C Jam Blues" (Duke Ellington)
- "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" (Harold Arlen)
- "Autumn Leaves" (Josef Kosma)
- "St. Louis Blues" (W.C. Handy)
- "Amazing Grace" (Traditional)
- "The Way You Look Tonight" (Jerome Kern/Dorothy Fields)
- Lester Young tenor sax solo "When You're Smiling"
- Tony Pastor tenor sax solo, "Begin the Beguine"
- Louis/Ella solos "Dream a Little Dream of Me"

#### IMPROVISE

- Free improv (over C major)
- Using scale fragments (C major vamp)
- Major scale workout

#### COMPOSE

- C major melody

# 2

## Playing with Purpose:

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### Rhythmic Placement and Target Notes

#### TOPICS

- Counting rhythm
- Strong and weak beats
- Rhythmic matrix
- Syncopation and the Charleston
- Syncopation studies
- Target notes (C major scale)
- Target notes in improvisation
- Cut time
- Pivots and octave displacement
- Enclosures
- Rhythmic accuracy
- Rhythmic displacement
- Rhythmic variety
- Neighbor notes and enclosures

#### EAR-TRAINING

- Rhythmic ear-training

#### MASTERCLASS

- How to play swing eights

#### INVESTIGATE

- Note grouping

#### SOLO SPOTLIGHT

- Paul Desmond alto sax solo “Pennies from Heaven”

#### HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

- “Frère Jacques” (Traditional)
- “C Jam Blues” (Duke Ellington)
- “Lean on Me” (Bill Withers)
- “Old MacDonald” (Traditional)
- Charlie Parker alto sax solo “Anthropology”
- “Washington and Lee Swing” (Sheafe/Robbins/Allen)
- “My Shining Hour” (Harold Arlen)
- “Blue Moon” (Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart)
- “Mack the Knife” (Kurt Weill)
- “When You’re Smiling” (Shay/Fisher/Goodwin)
- “All of Me” (Marks/Simon)
- “Perhaps” (Charlie Parker)
- Johnny Dodds clarinet solo “Weary Blues”
- Johnny Griffin tenor sax solo “The Way You Look Tonight”
- Hank Mobley tenor sax solo “Home Cookin”
- Kenny Dorham trumpet solo “Mack the Knife”
- “If I Could Write a Book” (Richard Rodgers)

#### IMPROVISE

- C Major triads
- CMaj7 to FMaj7 vamp
- 1 measure + target note
- Free improv over C major

#### COMPOSE

- 8 measures using C major scale (target notes)

# 3

## Night and Day:

### Dorian Minor and Minor Key Melodic Targets

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#### TOPICS

- Dorian minor chord tones
- Dorian minor workout
- Dorian minor scale fragments
- Dorian minor scale tendencies
- Natural, harmonic, and melodic Minor Scales
- Alternative minor scales
- Melodic architecture and direction
- Melodic direction: Keeping the big picture
- Melodic direction examples
- Natural minor scale patterns
- Harmonic minor scale patterns
- Melodic minor scale patterns
- Minor scale workout

#### EAR-TRAINING

- Dorian minor exercises
- Differentiating minor scale types

#### MASTERCLASS

- Four minor scales and properties

#### INVESTIGATE

- Two Views: Dorian minor scale

#### SONG STUDY

- “So What” (Paul Chambers, Miles Davis)

#### HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

- “Scarborough Fair” (Traditional)
- “Freedom Jazz Dance” (Eddie Harris)
- “Witch Hunt” (Wayne Shorter)

#### SOLO SPOTLIGHT

- Miles Davis trumpet solo “So What”
- Stanley Turrentine tenor sax solo “Impressions”
- Lester Young tenor sax solo “Blue Lester”

#### IMPROVISE

- Freely improvise using D Dorian minor + 2 new keys
- D Dorian minor scale fragments and targets
- C minor vamp, using natural, dorian, melodic, and natural minor scales

#### COMPOSE

- Dorian minor melody
- Minor scale pattern
- Minor melodies

#### LISTENING GUIDE

- Songs in minor keys