

Advanced Instrumental Jazz Improvisation
560:252:01
Spring 2009
Chris Merz

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TTh 10-10:50 AM, RSL 101

Text:

Reeves, *Creative Jazz Improvisation*
Crook, *How to Improvise*
Hearle, *The Jazz Sound*
Weiskopf, *Coltrane: A Player's Guide to His Harmony*
Liebman, *Chromaticism/Non-diatonic Scales*
Nachmanovitch, *Free Play*

Supplementary materials:

Course pack (available at Copyworks)
Tune disc
Manuscript paper

Objectives:

1. To develop transposition skills for
 - a. playing in all keys
 - b. sequencing patterns and motives
2. To understand the theory of and be able to improvise on Coltrane changes (Giant Steps)
3. To gain a comprehensive understanding of chord-scale choices through tune analysis
4. To acquire a basic repertoire of contemporary jazz tunes and develop appropriate tools for improvising on them
5. To develop skill in chromatic playing against a static (modal) harmonic background
6. To explore aspects of free improvisation and apply related concepts to conventional structures
7. To develop skill in improvising in odd meters
8. To nurture creativity and the development of a personal voice

Activities/techniques:

1. Reading of *Free Play* (including a written report)
2. Theory and technical studies
 - a. Scale studies to be selected from the following:
 - 1) major and whole-tone scales
 - 2) selected modes of ascending melodic minor scales
 - 3) pentatonic scales and 3-note cells (Campbell)
 - 4) Selected modes from harmonic minor and harmonic major scales
 - b. Transposition/Sequencing studies
 - 1) *Chi Chi* (head and changes) in several keys (one per week up to Spring Break)
 - 2) Miscellaneous motivic cells to be sequenced:
 - a) around the circle
 - b) chromatically
 - c) in whole steps
 - d) in major and minor thirds
 - 3) Contemporary tune study and analysis (Hearle)
 - a) *Giant Steps*
 - b) *Juju* (Shorter)
 - c) *Mirror, Mirror* (Corea)
 - d) *Iowa City* (Wheeler)
 - e) *Sail Away* (Harrell)
 - 4) Free jazz explorations (Nachmanovitch, Reeves ch. 12, Chase, Liebman, etc.)
 - a) solo improvisations based on established parameters
 - b) collective improvisation
 - 5) Composition
 - a) original head based on "Bird" blues progression

- b) original head based on Coltrane reharmonization of a standard tune or original harmony using Coltrane changes
 - c) Arrangement of a "standard," set in odd meter
 - d) original vehicle that accommodates some aspect of "free" improvisation
- 6) Solo transcription project (based on a contemporary vehicle or approach)

Grading:

"Bird" blues study (8 keys)—20%
Performance exams on each assigned tune—30%
Original compositions—10%
Daily assignments—10%
Free play report—10%
Solo transcription and analysis—10%
Final examination (written and playing)—10%

Note

The Americans with disabilities act of 1990 (ADA) provides protection from illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting instructional accommodations due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodations through the Office of Disability Services. The ODS is located at 213 Student Services Center. The telephone number is 273-2676.