

Intermediate Jazz Improvisation  
560:052/560:152(g), Section 2  
Fall 2009  
Christopher Merz

E-mail: merz@uni.edu  
Tel. 273-3077  
Office hours TBA, second week of class

Text:  
Crook, *How To Improvise*

Supplementary Materials:  
Course pack (available from Copyworks)  
Tune cd  
Aebersold *I Got Rhythm (in 12 keys)*, Vol. 47 (Available at the University book store, or from jajazz.com)

Course Description:  
This course will cover materials and techniques of the mainstream jazz improviser through the study of selected repertoire:

1. *My Shining Hour*
2. *What Is This Thing Called Love/Hot House*
3. *Ballad of the Sad Young Men*
4. "I Got Rhythm"-based tunes:
  - a. *Second Balcony Jump*
  - b. *Lester Leaps In*
  - c. *Anthropology*
  - d. *I Got Rhythm*
  - e. *Cottontail*
  - f. *Rhythm-a-ning*
  - g. *The Eternal Triangle*
  - h. and/or others

Goals:

1. Build a small repertoire of memorized jazz standards
2. Learn to effectively paraphrase a melody
3. Develop more convincing phrasing
4. Develop skill in linear (melodic) and vertical (harmonic) improvisation
5. Become more familiar with functional harmony

Activities and Techniques:

1. Learning melodies and lyrics by ear
2. Transposition of melodies by ear
3. Embellishment and improvisation from melodies
4. Playing chord changes at the piano
5. Writing and playing bass lines to chord changes
6. Functional analysis and harmonic lines
7. Composing solos and/or alternate melodies (contrafacts) on chord progressions
8. Applying patterns and motives to chord progressions
9. Harmonic and motivic improvisation
10. Rhythmic exercises

### Grading:

1. Four unit exams (40% @ 10% each)
2. Final playing exam (20%)
3. Quizzes and assignments (20% total)
  - a. Be able to play melodies 1-3 in assigned keys, from memory
  - b. Playing changes of all tunes at the piano
  - c. Technical studies
  - d. Written work (written solos, contrafacts, bass lines, analyses)
  - e. Bass lines on your instrument, as assigned
  - f. All "Rhythm" heads in original keys, from memory
4. Aural transcription assignments (10%, equally weighted)
  - a. *My Shining Hour*
  - b. *What Is This Thing Called Love*
  - c. *Ballad of the Sad Young Men*
  - d. *Second Balcony Jump*
5. Solo transcription (10%)

You are encouraged to select a solo from the tune cd for transcription. If you choose something from another source, find something on a progression studied in the class, or similar (one chorus [32 measures] minimum). Solos need not be notated (students enrolled for graduate credit see item #4 below).

Students enrolled for graduate credit must also complete the following:

1. Play *My Shining Hour* and *What Is This Thing Called Love* (melody and improvisation) in one additional key, as assigned, on unit tests.
2. Select an additional ballad to learn by ear (melody and changes), to be performed at final exam. Write out the melody and changes, to be handed in on the last day of class.
3. Improvise on "Rhythm" changes using the A variant (circle, starting on flat 6<sup>th</sup> degree) on unit test.
4. Transcribe a **complete** solo (2 chorus minimum) on one of the vehicles studied through the semester. Notate it, provide changes, and mark formal divisions ("First chorus: A1, A2, B, A3," etc). Write a brief introduction pointing out some of the more significant features of the solo. Use transcriptions published in *Downbeat* magazine as a template.
5. Create a lesson plan for and teach a class on a topic appropriate to this level of improvisation.

### Notes

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides protection from the illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting instructional accommodations due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodation through the Office of Disability Services. The ODS is located at 103 Student Health Center. The phone is: 273-2676 (voice) 273-3011 (TTY); Email: [disability\\_services@uni.edu](mailto:disability_services@uni.edu).

Disruptive behaviors in the classroom will not be tolerated. Students may be reported to the Director of the School of Music, Dean of Students or UNI Police for possible disciplinary action(s).

Cell phones should be set to the silent mode or vibration mode while in class.