

# Jazz Improvisation- Exploring The Basics

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## CLINIC DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this clinic is to provide directors and students with minimum experience, concepts to learn the jazz language, and basic concepts of style used in jazz improvisation. Several ideas will be presented to teach jazz improvisation through listening, call & response and exploring the cultural relationships that students and directors already feel comfortable using already, the ears, eyes, and speaking voice. Improvisation will be stressed as becoming part of every aspect of the jazz experience and not just during the combo settings. Most of all, it has to be **fun** for the teacher and the students. This allows students the opportunity to play and create in a non-threatening environment.

### **CORE CONCEPTS:**

1. The **blues** is used as the primary source for teaching the building blocks of jazz improvisation because it is the heart and soul of all music derived through the Afro-American culture.
2. We use **rhythm and feel** as the starting point for improvisation because rhythmic feel is the most important aspect of music derived from the African culture.
3. We use the **voice** to teach specific concepts and tie all aspects together because jazz is a vocally derived art form.
4. We use **call and response** as a teaching tool to make sure the students are using their ears.
5. \*We **listen** to great recordings of the jazz masters to learn the jazz language because jazz has its foundation in the **aural tradition**.
6. Improvisation is more than standing up and taking a solo, it involves group **interaction**.

*\*Due to the limited time of this session, handouts and recordings are provided for participant's reference. This session will be hands-on from beginning to end; **instruments will be needed.***

- I. Review Jazz language and syllables- see "***Teaching Music Through Performance In Jazz***" [GIAMusic.com](http://GIAMusic.com)
- II.
  - A. Teachers needs to stay a step ahead of the class initially - review concepts or ideas to be passed on before entering rehearsal or classroom.
  - B. Create vocal ideas that sound and feel like the jazz ideas you are teaching.
- III. The Blues
  - A. Three Line Stanza
  - B. Telling a story!
  - C. Activities – Learning jazz language (**Shug - A -Shug – A – Wah – Wah !**)
  - D. Teaching basic theory and form while working on the blues
  - E. Learn to teach through the process of Part to Whole!

1. \*Tune to be used: Ex: “**Bag’s Groove**” - “**Blues In The Closet**”  
“**Freddie The Freeloader**”
2. This is the **babbling** stage of learning the jazz language. Insist students try to imitate what they actually hear with their voice first, then with the instrument.
3. Start to build jazz ideas in the correct style and chord sound.  
( Start exploring the Dominant Chord as it relates to Major Chord, spelling the chords and most of all - **THE SOUND!**)
4. Understanding Basic form of the BLUES! (12 Bar)
  - F. Insist on physical involvement and everyone maintaining correct rhythmic feel.

### LISTENING EXAMPLES FOR ALL DIRECTORS

The following list of recordings provides examples in a variety of tempo, feels and settings and is accessible to students at all levels.

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1. C Jam Blues             | Duke Ellington                          |
| 2. One O’Clock Jump        | Count Basie                             |
| 3. Bag’s Groove            | Milt Jackson/ Miles Davis               |
| 4. Tenor Madness           | Sonny Rollins                           |
| 5. Straight No Chaser      | Thelonius Monk (recorded by Mile Davis) |
| 6. Sonny Moon For Two      | Sonny Rollins                           |
| 7. Straight No Chaser      | Miles Davis                             |
| 8. Billie’s Bounce         | Charlie Parker                          |
| 9. Mr. Magic               | Grover Washington                       |
| 10. Lester Leaps In        | Lester Young                            |
| 11. Little Sunflower       | Freddie Hubbard                         |
| 12. Theme                  | Miles Davis                             |
| 13. Freddie The Freeloader | Miles Davis                             |
| 14. Lou Donaldson          | Blues Walk                              |