

1990

A blues-based improvisation method for beginning instrumentalists

Peter A. Spitzer
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Spitzer, Peter A., "A blues-based improvisation method for beginning instrumentalists" (1990). *Master's Theses*. 75.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.338n-4suz>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/75

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 1342737

A blues-based improvisation method for beginning instrumentalists

Spitzer, Peter A., M.A.

San Jose State University, 1990

Copyright ©1990 by Spitzer, Peter A. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

**A BLUES-BASED IMPROVISATION METHOD
FOR BEGINNING INSTRUMENTALISTS**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Music

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

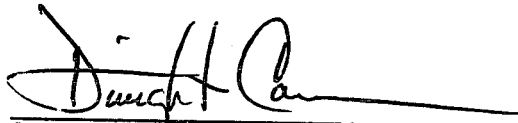
Master of Arts

By

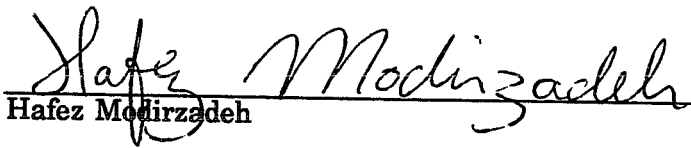
Peter A. Spitzer

November, 1990

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC



Dwight Cannon



Hafez Modirzadeh



William Resch

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY



ABSTRACT

A BLUES-BASED IMPROVISATION METHOD FOR BEGINNING INSTRUMENTALISTS

by Peter A. Spitzer

This study consists of two parts: (a) an introductory essay considering nineteen published methods for teaching musical improvisation, both jazz and classical, and (b) an original sequence of fifteen lessons, using exercises and tunes in various blues, jazz, and rock styles.

The lessons developed in this project are divided into three "levels." Level 1 is concerned with basic orientation, approached through simple idiomatic written exercises, call-response games, and improvisation in easy formats. Level 2 introduces theory concepts (blue notes, blues scales, chords, chord scales, and form) in a way that is intended to be clear, simple, and participatory. In Level 3, five original and standard pieces in various blues, jazz, and rock styles are presented, as vehicles for improvising. An effort is made throughout the method to maximize participation and to emphasize the precedence of creative impulse over theory concepts.

©1990

Peter A. Spitzer

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	2
Limitations	3
Methods Presently Available	4
Historical Overview	4
Evaluation of Existing Methods	6
Guidelines for a Successful Beginner's Method	18
General Criteria	18
Specific Information to Cover	19
Explanation of Lesson Plans	20
Levels	21
Lessons	22
II BLUES AND JAZZ FOR BEGINNERS	29
TO THE STUDENT	30
LEVEL 1 - GETTING STARTED	31
LESSON	
1 Easy Blues in G	32
2 Imitation Games	35
3 Improvising Your Own Solo	37

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(continued)

CHAPTER	PAGE
4 Blues in F	39
5 Expressing Yourself	41
LEVEL 2 - CONCEPTS FOR IMPROVISING	43
LESSON	
6 Blue Notes	44
7 Blues Scales	47
8 Chords and "Duke's Place"	52
9 A Full Arrangement	56
10 The Real Truth	59
LEVEL 3 - SONGS AND STYLES	61
LESSON	
11 Bo Diddley Beat	62
12 Chicago Style	64
13 "Now's the Time"	67
14 Slow Bb Blues	69
15 Jazz Mambo	72
16 The Next Step	74
GLOSSARY	75

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(continued)

CHAPTER	PAGE
TO THE TEACHER	77
III CONCLUSION	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Beginning-level instrumental instruction, usually in grades four to six, is the first experience many people have with "formal" musical training. It is a time when basic viewpoints can be formed, and attitudes set, concerning music and the musical learning process.

Many writers on music education have advanced the idea that improvising can be an enjoyable and useful part of musical education,¹ and, increasingly, teachers are incorporating improvisation into their curriculums. In response to this interest, a number of publications have appeared in the last half-century, written from both the "non-jazz" and the "jazz" perspectives: methods, articles, books for teachers, dissertations.

At the same time, jazz-based materials have found a secure place in the music programs of American public schools, especially through the widening popularity of "stage bands" (now often called "jazz bands" or "lab bands") since the 1950s. These ensembles, usually using "big band" instrumentation, are now found in many American high schools and middle

¹See, for example, Wollner (1967), Schafer (1976), Villiamy and Lee (1976), or Lanfer (1979).

schools. The "stage band movement," both a symptom and a cause of rising interest in jazz, helped create a need for instructional methods in improvisation, since the jazz band literature, and indeed the jazz tradition, require that at least some players be able to improvise solos.

Despite the profusion of jazz-based music and methods, and the widespread interest in introducing improvisation to beginners, few improvisation methods are geared to the beginning instrumentalist, and none of them seems to adequately take advantage of the opportunity to offer a teaching method that would serve as an introduction to both improvisation and the blues/jazz/rock idiom.² This thesis is a step in the direction of filling the need for such a method.

Purpose

The intent of this project is to provide a workbook for introducing improvisation to the beginner in a manner that is easy, pleasurable, and informative. Needs of the beginning player will be evaluated, and strengths and weaknesses of previous methods considered, in an effort to formulate a series of lessons that will constitute a successful beginner's method. Immediate goals of the method are to introduce beginning performance and theory, to provide some familiarity with the blues/jazz/rock idiom, and to

²This study will consider blues, rock, and jazz as partially separate but largely overlapping "idioms." Taken together they form a more general blues/jazz/rock idiom; within each are found various "styles."

help develop musical technique and understanding through improvisation. Beyond these are the larger goals: to foster in the student higher levels of self-expression, communication, confidence, awareness of tradition, and creativity.³

Limitations

This thesis to some extent is both a research project and a creative work. As research, it involves (a) examining existing literature, (b) finding usable common ranges for beginners on various instruments, and (c) evaluation of the lessons developed, by field-testing with approximately fifty students, in both individual lesson and class settings. (However, no attempt has been made at statistical evaluation.)⁴ As a creative project, this thesis entails (a) developing guidelines for a new method, (b) formulating a series of lessons covering the desired material, (c) writing blues melodies and "sample solos" appropriate for the anticipated level of student, and (d) placing this material in a clear and usable format. The method was produced not only in concert key, but in Bb and Eb transpositions, not included here. Supplementary material for the instructor was also produced,

³For a discussion of the correspondence between artistic improvisation and basic creativity, see Nachmanovitch (1990).

⁴Attempts at statistical evaluation of the effectiveness of jazz improvisation teaching methods are found in the dissertations by Burnsed (1978) and Damron (1973).

and is found at the end of the method. This workbook is intended primarily for use by young beginners (grades four to eight), under a teacher's guidance, in either an individual lesson or classroom situation. Secondly, it could be useful to adult beginners as a self-tutor.

Methods Presently Available

Historical Overview

Improvisation, or "the creation of a musical work . . . as it is being performed,"⁵ is surely a practice "as old as music itself."⁶ Throughout the history of Western "art music," improvisation has always existed in some form, from the improvised jubilus of early chant, to modern avant-garde concert pieces. Instruction books, from the tenth-century Musica enchiriadis to modern works, document the evolving nature of "classical" improvisation.

The development of musical notation, polyphony, and concert music were accompanied by a gradual, but increasing, separation of composer and performer. By the twentieth century, performers rarely composed or

⁵Imogene Horsley, Michael Collins, Eva Badura-Skoda, and Dennis Libby, "Improvisation," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), IX: 31.

⁶Ernest T. Ferand, Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music (Cologne: Arno Volk Verlag, 1961), p. 5.

improvised, and improvisation had become a fairly esoteric discipline, surviving mainly in the tradition of church organists.⁷

The rise of blues and jazz as commercial music, beginning in the 1910s and 1920s, occurred with the aid of powerful new media: the phonograph record and radio. Though blues and jazz used standard instruments and structural resources, the origins and route to popularity of these new genres lay in areas culturally distinct from traditional Western art music. Because of this cultural separatism, maintained by "serious" musicians' non-acceptance of the new genres,⁸ blues and jazz (and later, rock) developed as idioms largely separate and distinct from Western art music. In the twentieth century, blues, jazz, and rock have been the strongholds of musical improvisation in North America.⁹ A widespread interest in learning to perform in these idioms has been answered by the publication of much instructional literature.

A twentieth-century revival of improvisation in the "non-jazz" Western tradition may be traced in certain music education material, including the work of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (beginning c. 1910) and Carl Orff (beginning c. 1924). In more recent years, this current has led to the well-known book

⁷Horsley et al., p. 50.

⁸Graham Villiamy and Ed Lee, Pop Music in School (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 33-47.

⁹Horsley et al., p. 51.

by Gertrude Price Wollner (1963). Since that time, the stubborn exclusivity between the "jazz" and "non-jazz" worlds may have begun to break down, as may be seen in, for example, the approaches of Konowitz (1973) and Hamaker et al. (1979).

Evaluation of Existing Methods

The focus of this thesis is on producing an optimally effective improvisation method for beginners, using blues-based materials. In preparation for this task, a number of modern teaching methods were examined. Most are within the "jazz" tradition, though some others were considered. Following is a chronological listing of relevant works, with a description of each, and an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. This is not a comprehensive listing of modern improvisation methods, but represents those works available at the time of this writing, either commercially or at the San Jose State University library.

Improvisation in Music, Gertrude Price Wollner (1963)

This work, a modern classic in the non-jazz tradition, is in the format of a guide for teachers. Wollner's program begins with rhythm study via clapping and conducting exercises. Next come, in order: melody-making, using the concepts of melodic curves and motives; scale resources; use of mood; ear training; and form study. After this beginning, rather free and unconventional for its time, the book settles into standard chord study and

analysis of Bach and Beethoven pieces for their "musical logic." The closing chapters involve improvisation using imagery, and suggestions for teaching beginning group improvisation.

Wollner's book incorporates many valuable techniques. It is primarily for pianists—not for young students, but for their teachers. The book completely neglects jazz-related resources, though occasional lip service is paid to the discipline of jazz improvisation.

Improvising Jazz, Jerry Coker (1964)

Coker is one of the handful of prolific writers responsible for much of the jazz improvisation instructional material produced from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s. This pioneering little book, still valuable today, is aimed at the college-level student. It leans heavily on chord studies, including also chord-related scales, use of motives, role of rhythm section players, and the concept of "swing." Blues is considered as a harmonic progression, and is presented early on. Other books by Coker, especially Patterns for Jazz (1970), focus on acquiring the technical tools for self-expression by practicing myriad permutations of scalar, chordal, and melodic figures, in all keys. This approach, necessary for the dedicated older student, has little value for orienting and motivating the young beginner.

Patterns for Improvisation, Oliver Nelson (1966)

In a brief introduction, Nelson states his basic premise: "as long as the original pattern is correct, any irregularities which might appear in its sequence are justified . . ."¹⁰ This was the first "patterns" book. It differs from Coker's 1970 work in that patterns are presented more as ideas than as note-groups to be exhaustively practiced. Nelson's patterns range from Hanon-like diatonic phrases, to bebop melodic lines, to twelve-tone rows. Many of these patterns are in evidence in Nelson's own recorded saxophone solos. Again, the "permutations" approach is inappropriate for beginners. However, Nelson is also attempting to communicate the elements of his own jazz style. The "idea book" approach is one that could be usefully adapted for beginners.

A New Approach to Jazz Improvisation, Jamey Aebersold (1967-1990)

Aebersold's "new approach" is the play-along record, with accompanying booklet. A recorded rhythm section provides a background for student exercises and improvisations. While this kind of accompaniment is more realistic and enjoyable than a metronome, it does have the drawback of encouraging an approach to improvisation that is mechanical and lacking the element of communication that is basic to a "real" jazz group. Aebersold's

¹⁰Oliver Nelson, Patterns for Improvisation (Los Angeles: Noslen Music, 1966), p. i.

method has enjoyed great success and popularity, and has been extended to forty-five volumes at the time of this writing. Volume 1 of this series emphasizes exercises using dorian, major and minor pentatonic, and chord-related patterns, and patterns for II-V-I chord progressions. The amount of material presented in Volume 1 is too dense for the young beginner. Volume 2, Nothin' But Blues (1971), is more manageable, useful for younger students if they are motivated and have a teacher's help. This volume approaches blues soloing through the "blues scale" (1-b3-4-#4-5-b7-1) and chord-related scales. Recorded tunes include blues of various types, including minor, slow and fast standard swing, rock (minor), and "Parker changes," in various keys. An emphasis on dorian tonality is evident. Volume 3 works with the II-V-I progression, and subsequent volumes are nearly all concerned with providing a recorded background for practicing "standards." This remarkable and very useful series is conspicuously missing a volume for young beginners, in a clear and simple format.

A Guide to Improvisation, John La Porta (1968)

Twelve lessons are presented in this method, with each lesson broken into four parts: "theory," "rhythm training," "instrumental ear training," and "performance." An accompanying record is used for the ear training and performance sections. The performance section of each lesson involves playing an original piece by La Porta, with space for an improvised solo. La

Porta uses the Bb major pentatonic scale as a starting point, adding the blue notes b3 and b7 in Lesson 2. He places importance on proper jazz (swing) phrasing, and utilizes call-response ear training. Later lessons involve playing in the keys of Eb, F, and C; working with the concept of motivic development; and common-tone soloing. This method is a model of good pacing and clear organization. Presumably it was written for use with college students (La Porta is a central figure at the Berklee College of Music, and the method was published by Berklee Press), but it could be used with younger students. La Porta's use of the major pentatonic with added b3 and b7 is an idiosyncratic, but sensible, way to set parameters for soloing that reflect mainstream practice while limiting resources so as to provide security for the student. There is no mention of any rhythmic style except swing in this method.

Techniques of Improvisation: Vol. 1, David Baker (1968)

This book is representative of the many publications by Baker, one of the most prolific authors of instructional materials for jazz improvisation. Baker uses lydian-related scales to generate patterns, to be practiced in all keys. Baker's Improvisational Patterns: the Blues (1980) begins with an informative essay, followed by listings of blues chord progressions, original tunes by Baker, blues phrases, bass lines, and piano voicings. These books are overly technical for the beginner, but the "idea book" concept is, again, a

useful one. Another of Baker's books, Jazz Improvisation (1983), is a compendium of patterns, technical devices, and good advice to the relatively advanced improviser. To be useful to the beginner, these concepts would require considerable distillation.

Adventures in Improvisation at the Keyboard, Glenn Mack (1970)

Keyboard and band instrument pedagogy are largely independent fields, for obvious reasons. Band instruments are not self-accompanying, and pianos are not used in school concert or marching bands. Instructional literature for keyboard improvisation is thus not generally applicable to single-line instruments. Mack's book uses an approach built around fingering patterns and rhythmic figures. Modes, various pentatonic scales (black-key and others), whole-tone scales, and related chords are presented as resources. A chapter on "building blocks" emphasizes motivic development and phrasing. Other subjects covered are harmonizing a melody and improvising for dancers. No jazz materials whatsoever are included.

Music Improvisation as a Classroom Method, Bert Konowitz (1973)

In this book, presented as a teacher's guide, Konowitz recognizes three "phases" of teaching: exploratory or "loosening up" activity, expanding skills, and "development and involvement." These stages are applied to working with voice, instruments, and keyboard, in turn. Konowitz' outlook

values positive attitude formation, the expression of emotion, and improvisation as its own reward, above building technical facility. Although he does not show a deep concern with or understanding of jazz, he does employ some jazz-related resources. Konowitz has also authored two beginning improvisation books for pianists, unavailable for the present study.

Jazz Expressions, Phil Hardymon (1975)

Though packaged as a series of arrangements for beginning jazz band, Hardymon's work, in the hands of a competent teacher, constitutes a form of jazz improvisation method. Charts include solo opportunities, in which students are directed to work with a few notes derived from a pentatonic scale ("solo-notes"). Accompanying teacher's material suggests call-response exercises as ear-training and as a preparation for improvising. Ranges are moderate, and non-standard instrumentation is made possible by simple harmonizations and part doubling. These arrangements are an outgrowth of Hardymon's "Berkeley Jazz Project" in the Berkeley (California) public schools, beginning in 1966, and are currently in wide use. Positive features include: (a) an emphasis on "doing" rather than on theory, (b) a gradual, non-threatening introduction to improvisation, (c) playable ranges for middle school students, and (d) a format suited to practical public school situations.

Blues and the Basics, Dominic Spera (1975)

This booklet, with cassette, is a blues-based improvisation method aimed at younger students. Spera's approach is chord-oriented, utilizing a Bb blues progression and chord-related (mixolydian and major pentatonic) scales, with added blue notes (b3, b5, and b7). The "blues scale" as a concept is avoided, though the practical result of adding blue notes to a major pentatonic scale is a type of blues scale. Visually, the format is somewhat cluttered. While strong on ear training, theory, and swing interpretation, this method has some drawbacks: no beats except swing, overemphasis on theory, and material too densely presented.

Basic Rhythms and the Art of Jazz Improvising, Joe Tarto (1976)

Despite its title, this is not exactly an improvising method, but rather a collection of idiomatic musical examples, particularly rhythm drills. Brief written sections on improvising and on blues contain some debatable statements (e.g., "when improvising modern jazz in the key of C the following related scales C G and F can all be used with the following chords. C6, CMaj 7, C7, C9, C11, and C13 [sic]."¹¹) This book is best considered as a collection of swing- and dixieland-related examples.

¹¹Joe Tarto, Basic Rhythms and the Art of Jazz Improvising (New York: Charles Colin, 1976), p. 26.

**Improvisation Syllabus and Guide, Edith Hamaker,
Clarice Lincoln, Marilyn Thalman (1979)**

This method was produced by the Music Teachers' Association of California, for use with piano students. The progression of its lessons is intended to correspond to the MTAC's Certificate of Merit program. The approach combines theory study with improvising, also using variations on folk tunes, and imagery. In an effort to not neglect jazz elements, this method introduces chord charts and blues early on. Melodic resources for blues improvisations include major pentatonic scales and blue notes. Because of the density of material, emphasis on theory, and length of this method, it would probably succeed only with those few students who enjoy working with theory. The method is noteworthy because of the authors' sincere efforts to incorporate jazz elements into a method produced by, and for, teachers who work mostly in the classical tradition.

"The Blues: A Practical Project for the Classroom," Piers Spencer

This essay, published as a chapter in Pop Music in School (Vulliamy and Lee, 1980), is a teacher's guide for a structured presentation of blues in the classroom. Spencer begins with riffs using major pentatonic and minor pentatonic scales. Call-response games centered on rhythm (clapping or percussion) are extended to creating rhythmic responses, then melodic responses, to the teacher's phrases. Before proceeding to 12-bar blues, Spencer suggests playing arrangements of Negro spirituals incorporating

short (2-8 measure) improvised sections. Next, students are asked to listen to and write blues lyrics. Spencer then has them take a large step, to examining the 12-bar chord progression, and finally directs students to write their own 12-bar blues melodies. In its early stages (riffs, imitation, first improvisation), Spencer's curriculum makes sense for the beginner, but the pacing and content of later activities (words, spirituals, chord study, composition) are perhaps not as pertinent to developing beginning students' improvising skills. Spencer points out a relationship between Orff "Schulwerk" methods and his own.

Everybody Can Play the Blues, Don Hamilton (1984)

Brevity is a virtue of this book. It consists of seven pages of text and four tunes to play (one of them is Ellington's "Duke's Place," without title or attribution). Call-response ear training is used as a starting point, with a page on chords. Tunes are presented in a lead-sheet format, with chords spelled out on a staff below the melody, and a blues scale shown at the top of the page in the key of the tune. Clarity of format is the book's main strength; incompleteness is its main weakness.

Jazz/Rock Trax, Will Schmid (1985)

The aim of this method is to introduce improvisation to the young player by using a modern blues-related idiom ("jazz/rock") exclusively. A cassette tape contains performances of written examples and recorded

backgrounds. All material is straight-beat rock, played on the tape by synthesizer and growl-tone saxophone. Improvisation is introduced by having the student experiment first with four notes selected from an F minor pentatonic scale (C-Eb-F-Ab), over a recorded background, with lists of "solo licks" to use as idea sources. Chord construction is avoided. An explanation of how to construct pentatonic scales is given, but is somewhat confusing; otherwise, the format is quite clear and well-considered. This method should be practical to use with the beginner. However, it has inherent weaknesses: (a) swing, or any other beat than what might be called disco-funk rock, is not mentioned, (b) although minor pentatonic notes are used over minor and dominant chords, there is no mention of blue notes or blues scales, (c) no attention is paid to tradition, and (d) improvisation is taught as a monochromatic product, to be turned on or off without reference to the melody or character of the tune. Indeed, the method does not use tunes as vehicles, but rather uses chord progressions. This method comes very close to being a good one by virtue of its format, pacing, and practicality, but these qualities come at the cost of disregarding some important elements of jazz.

Learnin' the Blues, Joseph Lilore (1986)

As is the case with the previous work, this book has a unique mixture of positive and negative aspects. Here, tradition is respected; the book

includes a short history of blues (its accuracy is another question), and a listing of "great blues artists" as recommended listening. Soloing is approached through a blues scale (1-b3-3-4-5-b7-1). The format is mostly clear, including succinct and useful words of advice. The key of Bb is explored first; chord charts for blues in all other keys are included later. Each of these charts bears a note on "suggested style" (latin, reggae, etc.), but contains neither music pertinent to that style (melody or rhythm), nor explanation of that style.

Other Works

The following texts were also examined, but were not considered applicable to the present study because of their level of complexity:

Jazz Improvisation, John Mehegan (four vols., 1959-1965).

The Encyclopedia of Basic Harmony and Theory Applied to Improvisation on

All Instruments, Dick Grove (1971).

Pentatonic Scales for Jazz Improvisation, Ramon Ricker (1975).

Improvising and Arranging on the Keyboard, James Oestereich and Earl

Pennington (1981).

The 21st Century Way to New Sounds, Rudolf Schramm and Doug Freuler

(1981).

The Basic Elements of Jazz, Jim Progris (1986).

Creative Jazz Improvisation, Scott Reeves (1989).

Guidelines for a Successful
Beginner's Method

General Criteria

The nineteen methods reviewed above all have the same goal: to develop the student's skill in improvised musical self-expression. However, the means employed vary considerably. Basic elements of the nineteen approaches include (a) theory instruction, (b) ear training activities, (c) exercises for technical development, (d) vehicles for improvisation, and (e) exercises and advice aimed at developing imagination and a positive attitude. These elements, not mutually exclusive, are emphasized to a greater or lesser degree by each of the methods. To be optimally effective, a new method for beginners would balance these elements in a way that would enhance the effectiveness of all of them.

For teaching beginners, a special balance is required. By far, the most important element for beginners is development of a positive attitude. Activities must send the underlying message, "Anyone can do this. It is easy and fun." Because blues is a pervasive influence in modern popular music, blues-based material is ideal for developing motivation. Students perceive the idiom as enjoyable and relevant. A blues-based improvisation method has a motivational advantage inherent in its nature.

To encourage a positive attitude in the beginning student, early success is essential. This can be achieved by participatory activities in

carefully chosen formats, at gradually increasing levels of difficulty. By maximizing playing time, technical development can be pursued simultaneously with other activities. Call-response games are a commonly-used and effective way to approach ear training. Even theory concepts can be approached through participatory activity.

Theory is the most problematic element. Ideally, theory facilitates understanding. Too often, however, educators over-emphasize theory in their presentations, and thereby distort its significance. Not only does this error lead to an incorrect and sterile view of music, but it can alienate the average student, who is generally not mentally disposed or equipped to work with theoretical concepts, or to understand their relevance. In a book for beginners, theory concepts should be reduced to simplicity.

Specific Information to Cover

Drawing from the positive features of existing methods, and considering the needs of beginning students as discussed above, certain specific features emerge as desirable for inclusion in a new beginner's method:

1. A maximum of participatory activity.
2. A broad sampling of different styles within the idiom, including various "beats" (not just swing or rock).

3. **Essential theory concepts (blue notes, blues-related scales, chords, form) presented with clarity and simplicity.**
4. **Technique presented as subservient to expression.**
5. **Tradition treated with respect, as a base to build on.**
6. **Call-response games, as ear training and as preparation for improvising.**
7. **A level of difficulty appropriate for the intended audience.**
8. **Well-written, idiomatic ("funky") examples and vehicles for improvisation.**
9. **A gentle, non-threatening introduction to first improvising efforts, aimed at guaranteeing early success.**
10. **A clear format, giving each "element" a balanced emphasis.**
11. **An orientation that does not exclude other types of music—that is, the skills acquired by the student should be extendable into other idioms.**

Explanation of Lesson Plans

The booklet comprising Chapter II of this thesis, Blues and Jazz for Beginners, is the result of an effort to implement the above guidelines in an effective series of lessons. Following is an explanation of the reasoning that led to the specific content and order of lesson plans.

Levels

Fifteen lessons, grouped into three "levels," were produced. Level 1 (Lessons 1-5) uses four-bar riffs, with a background of standard 12-bar blues supplied by teacher or cassette tape, to orient the student and to introduce basic concepts. Primary emphasis is placed on participation, and theory concepts are downplayed. The main intent here is to generate an early feeling of comfort. To this end, ranges are narrow; repeated four-bar riffs are used; soloing is approached carefully. Improvisation is presented as a matter of working with melody, rhythm, and mood. The introduction of scale and chord approaches is put off until Level 2.

Level 2 (Lessons 6-9) presents basic theory concepts: blue notes, scales, chords, and how these elements interrelate with melody and with each other. Theory is a delicate subject: the student would be ill-served by a complete avoidance of chord-building or blues scales, yet these topics can easily come across as dry and boring. In addition, theoretical structures should not be presented to beginners as the last word in how music (especially improvisation) is organized. Therefore, these concepts are only pursued to the extent that they will aid the student's performance and comprehension. "Sample solos" are used more extensively in Level 2 (in Level 1, the riff-tune melodies served the same purposes). These exercises provide: (a) examples of the application of concepts being discussed, (b) a participatory aspect to working with theory, (c) practice in reading idiomatic

music, and (d) mental input of idiomatic musical ideas, for later use in improvising.

Level 3 (Lessons 10-15) consists of a series of tunes written in different blues-related styles. This section is intended to provide vehicles for improvisation using concepts learned in Levels 1 and 2, while conveying a sense of the wide and rich traditions associated with blues, jazz, and rock. It is not meant as a comprehensive catalog of styles. Ranges and general difficulty are increased somewhat.

A final chapter, "The Next Step," suggests directions for continued study, and a glossary for students ends the method. A three-page section of advice to other teachers who might use the method is included, following the glossary.

Lessons

Lesson 1 - Easy Blues in G

The purpose of this lesson is basic orientation. Range is minimal, using only three notes (G, F, and D, or 1, b7, and 5, in G). This range was arrived at by comparing standard band methods for various instruments; it is within the overlap of ranges at the point where eighth notes are introduced. Accompaniment by a teacher (or recording) is assumed. Subjects include concept of swing beat; examples in straight and swing, at various tempos; and the basic concept of arrangement.

Lesson 2 - Imitation Games

This is a participatory activity serving both as ear training and as a preparation for first solos. In fact, call-response games present the basic elements of improvisational soloing (pre-hearing; production of imagined sound), except that the decisions concerning note and rhythm choice are left to the instructor. A creative teacher could use these games also to present concepts of development and variation, in the phrases chosen for imitation. Like the sample solos, this activity serves as input of idiomatic material for later student use. One further aspect of value in preparing the student for soloing: imitation games completely bypass the printed page.

Lesson 3 - Improvising Your Own Solo

Imitation games are extended to "trading fours" with the teacher or with another student, still using only three notes, then to playing a 12-bar chorus. Motivic playing, with ideas derived from the melody, is presented as good improvisational technique. A sample solo is provided for illustration, for reading practice, and as an idea source.

Lesson 4 - Blues in F

Range is extended slightly; a new key is introduced. A three-note concept using 1, b3, b7 is employed for examples. The last two examples add scale steps 5 and $\flat 7$. Practice with soloing from the melody is continued.

Lesson 5 - Expressing Yourself

To complete Level 1 as a basic orientation section, additional means of expression are explored. Students are asked to select an earlier exercise and to play solos using different moods, note densities, and levels of volume.

The intent here is to establish emotion and texture along with melody and rhythm as basic elements in improvising. Scale and chord concepts (to follow) may then be seen in proper perspective: as technical means to the more basic end of expression, not as answers in themselves.

Lesson 6 - Blue Notes

This lesson begins Level 2, in which essential theory concepts are presented. Blue notes are presented as the lowered 3, 5, and 7 of a key. Illustrations show blue notes against C, F, and G major scales. This prepares the ground for Lesson 8, a blues in C using C7, F7, and G7 chords. Thinking of notes as related to a major scale, using numbered scale steps, is an integral part of this lesson. The idea of bending notes (a concept related to "blue notes") is presented.

Lesson 7 - Blues Scales

Three of the scales most commonly encountered in jazz improvisation methods are shown here in the key of F. Three are used both in order to educate the student and to avoid emphasizing any one of the three scales. All three scales will "sound" against dominant chords on I, IV, and V. The

student is asked to write these scales out in C and G. A sample solo is given that uses ideas related to these scales. This example is written in changing scale areas; the purpose is to show that scales are only one of many organizing forces. The primary technique of organization in this and other sample solos is extension and expansion of melodic-rhythmic motives.

Lesson 8 - Chords and "Duke's Place"

Students are shown how to build dominant chords by using steps 1, 3, 5, b7 of a major scale. Several goals are accomplished here: (a) chord building is introduced, (b) chords are presented as related to scales, a useful perspective for the improviser, and (c) dominant (mixolydian) scales are introduced. The student is now equipped with blue note, scalar, and chordal concepts, applied in C, F, and G. This should provide a strong background for dealing with "Duke's Place," a blues in C by Duke Ellington. Using this tune provides a reference to jazz history and teaches students a piece that is considered standard repertoire.

Lesson 9 - A Full Arrangement

Traditional roles of instruments in a jazz ensemble are discussed. A typical jazz combo arrangement format is applied to "Duke's Place."

Lesson 10 - The Real Truth

Using a short idiomatic phrase as an example, the point is made that the phrase could be explained theoretically several different ways, but that the "real truth" is that it is a phrase in a musical language. This is an explicit statement of the subservience of theory to expression. While students must be given a working knowledge of theory concepts, they should develop a natural, intuitive approach to improvising that uses theory concepts more as tools for understanding than as primary devices of musical organization. This lesson concludes Level 2, the section meant as a practical introduction to essential theory concepts. Six items of advice for improvising are added here.

Lesson 11 - Bo Diddley Beat

Lessons 11-15 constitute vehicles for practicing improvisation; no new theory concepts are presented in Level 3 except those encountered in playing the tunes, which are written in various styles. The piece in this lesson uses a rhythmic pattern found in many 1950s rhythm and blues (early rock) tunes. Although the melody uses sixteenth notes, the range should be easy, and chords for soloing are virtually the same as those for "Duke's Place."

Lesson 12 - Chicago Style

The key of G is re-introduced; chords include G7, C7, and (for the first time) D7. The piece is written in one of the "Chicago" styles associated with Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, etc.

Lesson 13 - Now's the Time

This is another piece in the standard jazz repertoire, providing the opportunity to introduce the "bebop" style and an alternate standard blues chord pattern. The key of F, already familiar to the student, is used; one new chord is introduced (G-7).

Lesson 14 - Slow Blues in Bb

The melody of this piece uses some very traditional phrases, and the chords are in a traditional, but slightly more difficult, progression. New chords include Eb7, C-7, A7, and Ab7 (the last two chords are optional). The tempo should be comfortably slow. This key is, of course, commonly used for instrumental blues. It was not included earlier in this method because the narrow range chosen as a starting basis seemed to translate better into the keys of G and F. Theory concepts in C led naturally to "Duke's Place" (in C, and using C7, F7 and G7 chords). Nevertheless, Bb and F are the most commonly-encountered keys for blues in mainstream jazz.

Lesson 15 - Jazz Mambo

While not exactly a blues form, mambo was selected as the style for the last piece, for several reasons: (a) because blue notes, especially b7, are a part of this style, (b) because "latin" styles are frequently used by jazz players, (c) to convey the idea that improvisers can function in a variety of idioms, and (d) to use another organizing framework besides 12-bar blues, namely layered rhythms.

The Next Step

For the student interested in further developing improvising skills and knowledge of the idiom, this chapter provides suggestions for directions of future study, and parting words of advice.

CHAPTER II

BLUES AND JAZZ FOR BEGINNERS

TO THE STUDENT

Blues, jazz, and rock are different styles of music that have a lot in common. There are even different kinds of blues (country blues, Chicago blues, etc.), jazz (big band, bebop, fusion, etc.), rock (1950s rock, heavy metal, etc.). Other related styles include rhythm and blues, soul, funk and rap. But all of these types of music have something in common: they all depend very much on "blues" sounds, and they all use improvisation.

In this book you will learn what these blues sounds are, and how to use them to make up your own music (or "improvise"). This book is intended to be easy to use and fun to play, and will help you to understand how this sort of music is put together. Have fun, and be creative!

LEVEL 1**GETTING STARTED**

You could think of blues, jazz, and rock as musical languages that are closely related. To learn these languages, you should work on both reading and expressing yourself—in this case, with notes and phrases rather than words and sentences.

This section will introduce you to blues, jazz, and rock through reading, imitating, and improvising.

LESSON 1

Easy Blues in G

In this lesson, you will play some easy blues using 4-measure "riffs" as melodies (a riff is a short, repeating musical idea).

All of these riffs are in the key of G. This means that G is the home note, or "tonic."

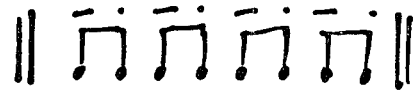
First, play Example 1 by itself. Next, listen carefully while the rhythm section (teacher or recording) plays a 12-bar blues. This is the kind of background we will use throughout this book.




Example 1



Now play Example 1 three times, while the rhythm section plays a blues background. This will make a blues melody, or "head." Try this several times.

Note: "Swing" beat means that every pair of eighth notes is played long/short, like this:



Sometimes swing beat is written  instead of  , though it really sounds closer to  . In this book, we will say "rock" when we mean straight (regular) eighths.

Now play each of the following 4-bar riffs:

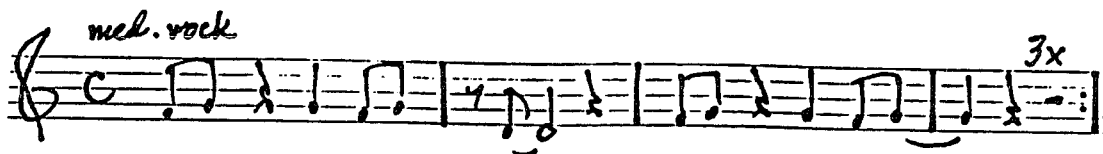
Example 2



Example 3



Example 4



Example 5



Example 6



You can make a short arrangement out of any of these melodies by putting a 12-measure solo in the middle, with the head at the beginning and the end. For now, let the teacher play a simple solo, or have the rhythm section fill the middle 12 bars. Lesson 3 will show you how to make up your own blues solos.

LESSON 2

Imitation Games

These ear training games will help you to know your instrument, and to think musically. The idea is that the leader (teacher) makes up a musical idea, and the class imitates it as exactly as possible. Start with just the note G, in any rhythm, for one measure, like this:

Example 7

Example 7 shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The first staff illustrates a sequence of six measures: a leader plays a quarter note G, followed by a class imitation, then another leader quarter note G, a class imitation, a leader quarter note G, and finally a class imitation. The second staff continues the sequence: leader plays a quarter note G, class imitates, leader plays a quarter note G, class imitates, and then the sequence continues with 'etc.'.

As you get better at this game, add the notes F and D; then try two-measure phrases. For example,

This notation shows a two-measure phrase. The first measure is labeled 'leader' and contains a quarter note G followed by a quarter note F. The second measure is labeled 'class 2' and contains a quarter note G followed by a quarter note D. The sequence ends with 'etc.'.

You can practice this game on your own with just two students, taking turns as leader and imitator.

Try playing at different tempos, and with different beats (rock or swing). Keep the rhythm steady!

LESSON 3

Improvising Your Own Solo

To warm up for this lesson, here is a different version of the imitation game, called "trading fours." The teacher will play a four-bar phrase, using G, F, and D. This time, students will answer individually, not by imitating, but with four measures of anything else they feel like playing, using any rhythm that comes to mind.

When you feel comfortable trading fours, pick one of the riffs from Lesson 1 to use as a "head." Play the melody (repeating the riff three times) over a 12-bar blues background, but this time continue by making up short solos, still using the notes G, F, and D. Each student should try to fill up 12 measures.

Your solo should fit with the tune you are playing. One way to do this is to start with an idea from the head. For example, here is a 12-bar solo that could go with the first tune in Lesson 1:

Example 8

med. swing

In the space provided below, write a few ideas that you might want to use in a solo for Example 4.

LESSON 4

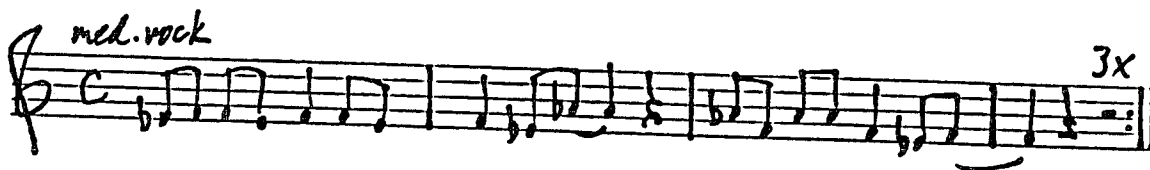
Blues in F

Next, try these riffs in the key of F. Play each one as a tune, with the head at the beginning and end, and solos in the middle. Base your solos on ideas from the melody.

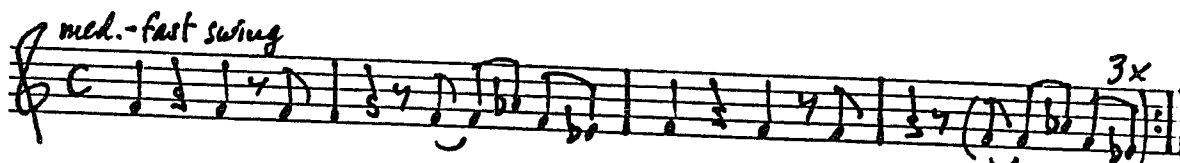
Example 9



Example 10



Example 11



Example 12

med. swing

3x

Example 13

med. slow rock

3x

LESSON 5**Expressing Yourself**

Choose one of the riffs from Lesson 4 to use as a head. For this lesson, you will play it as a complete tune (head-solos-head), as many different ways as possible.

Here are some variations to try:

1. Use a different beat.
2. Play with different emotions: angry, peaceful, nervous, friendly, etc.
3. Soft or loud.
4. Fast or slow.
5. Solos with lots of silence.
6. Solos with lots of notes.
7. Any combination of the above.

After you have played the tune as many ways as possible, decide which variations "fit the tune best" (or just, "which way you like most"). Then play it one more time that way.

In the musical language, there are many different ways to express yourself. Musicians should explore all kinds of expression. This is one of the most important lessons in this book!

LEVEL 2**CONCEPTS FOR IMPROVISING**

There are three basic approaches to improvising that are often used by blues, jazz, and rock musicians:

- 1. Play off the melody (you have already tried this);**
- 2. Base your ideas on a scale that relates to the piece; and/or**
- 3. Use notes from the chords in the accompaniment.**

In this section, we will explore the "scale" and "chord" approaches. You will learn what these scales and chords are, and how to use them.

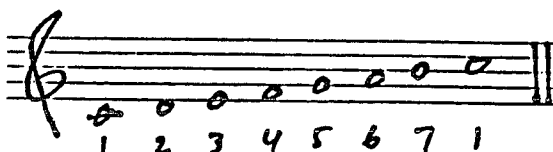
LESSON 6

Blue Notes

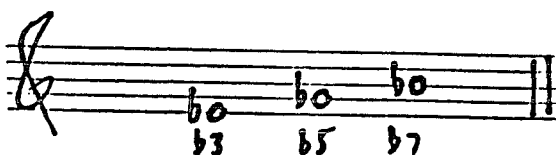
What makes music sound "bluesy" or "funky?" Part of the reason is that blues, jazz, and rock often use "blue notes." Blue notes are the flat 3, 5, and 7 of a key.

Here are the blue notes in the key of C, with a C major scale for comparison.

C major scale:

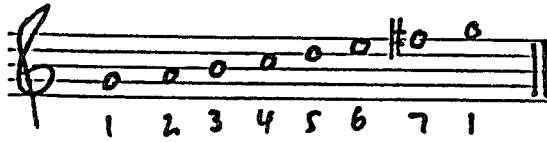


Blue notes in C:

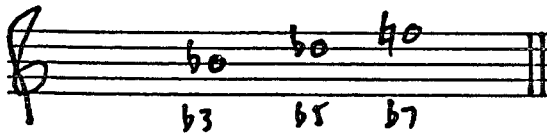


Here are the blue notes in G, with a G major scale for comparison. Go back to Lesson 1 and circle all the blue notes.

G major scale:

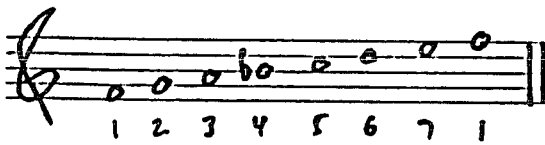


Blue notes in G:

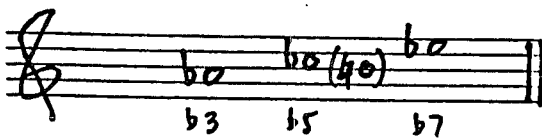


And below is the same thing, in the key of F. Go back to Lesson 4 and circle all the blue notes.

F major scale:



Blue notes in F:

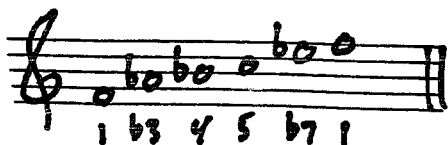


LESSON 7

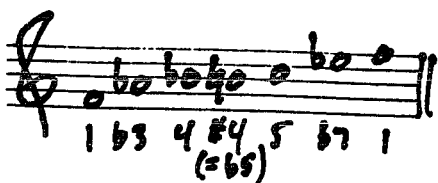
Blues Scales

To get a bluesy sound, musicians often base solos on scales that include blue notes. Three of the most popular of these are shown below in the key of F, with an F major scale for comparison. Play each scale through several times, up and down, to check its sound.

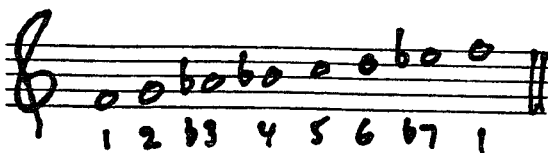
F minor pentatonic:



F blues:

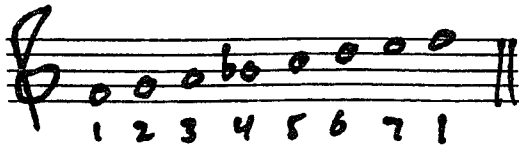


F dorian:



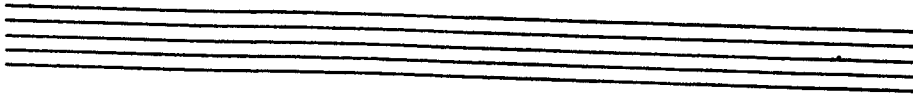
Compare to:

F major:



To make sure you understand how these scales work, write out the following:

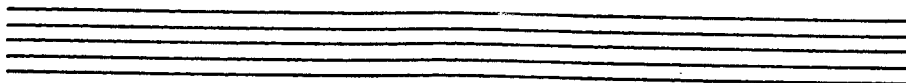
C minor pentatonic:



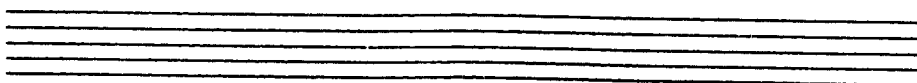
C blues:



C dorian:



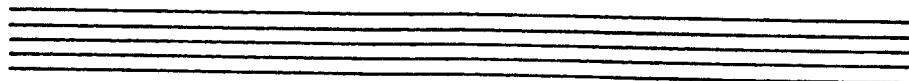
G minor pentatonic:



G blues:

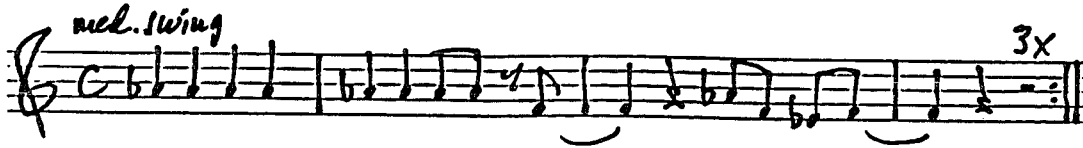


G dorian:



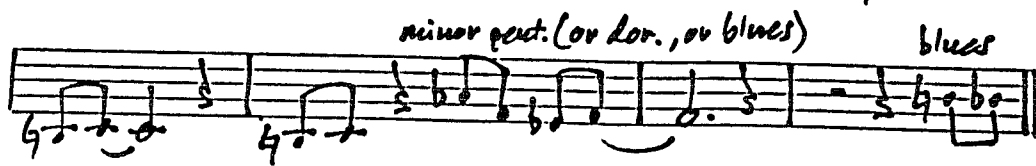
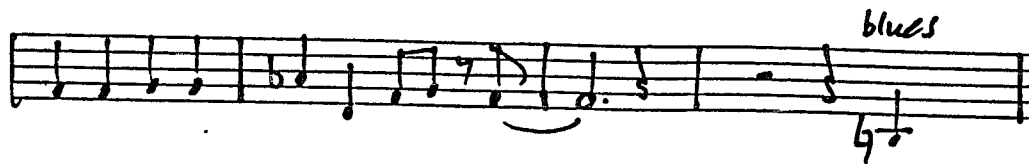
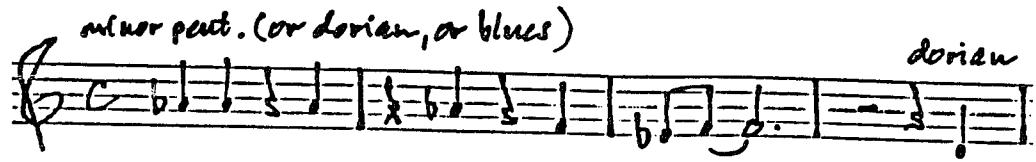
Now play Example 9 again as an arrangement (head-solos-head), with solos based on one or more of these scales.

Example 9



You should also play through the sample solo below, which could go with Example 9.

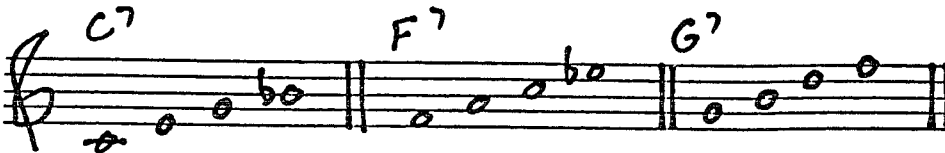
Example 15



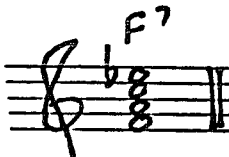
LESSON 8

Chords and "Duke's Place"

The chords in the blues accompaniments you have used so far are all built the same way. This type of chord is called a "dominant seventh" (or "dominant") chord. Play these chords:

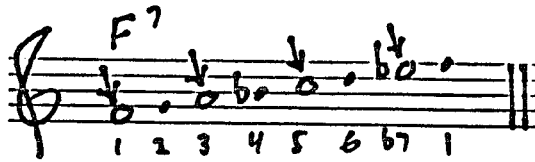


You will often see chords written this way:



Of course, only instruments like piano or guitar can actually play all the notes at the same time.

Chords and scales are closely related. You can build any dominant chord by imagining a major scale built on the named note, lowering the seventh step, then leaving out every other note:



"Duke's Place," by Duke Ellington (a famous jazz pianist, composer, and band leader), is a piece that uses only dominant chords: C7, F7, and G7. Try playing it, with solos based on the chords in the accompaniment, or on the scales that go with them (this kind of scale, like major but with a b7, is called a "dominant" or "mixolydian" scale).

You will have to keep your place and change chords at the right time!

Play through the sample solo for an example of how to use the chord tones and dominant scales.

Duke's Place

Duke Ellington

med. swing

C7

F7

C7

G7

F7

C7

G7 (omit last x)

Example 16

Sample solo for "Duke's Place," using chord tones and dominant scales:

C⁷ (dominant scales -)

F⁷ C⁷

G⁷ F⁷ C⁷ G⁷

C⁷ (blues, pent., dorian?)

F⁷ C⁷ (dom. scales)

G⁷ F⁷ C⁷ (G⁷)

LESSON 9**A Full Arrangement**

Next, we will play "Duke's Place" as a full arrangement. Traditionally, each instrument plays a certain role in this style ("swing jazz," which started in the 1920s):

Melody instruments (clarinet, trombone, flute, etc.): Play the melody, maybe with harmony notes added.

Rhythm section:

Piano or guitar: Play chords using short rhythmic figures in swing beat (this is called "comping").

Bass: Play steady quarter notes (this is a "walking" pattern).

Drums: Keep a steady swing beat.

All instruments: May play solos.

Try this arrangement:

Head (all in unison)

Head (add rhythm section, harmony parts)

Solos (any approach)

Trade fours**Head (including rhythm section, harmony parts)**

For added interest, try having players who are not soloing play background riffs during solos. Here is one example; you can make up other riffs on your own:

Example 17

Harmony notes for the head are shown below. As you can see, they form part of the chord, placed below the melody note:

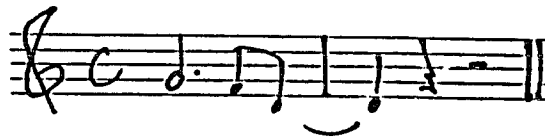
Example 18

Duke's Place

Handwritten musical notation for 'Duke's Place'. The score consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The music is written in a style that combines melodic lines with chordal accompaniment. The first staff contains four measures: the first measure has a treble clef, a common time signature, and a melodic line starting on G4 with a dotted quarter note, followed by a half note G4 and a quarter rest. The second measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The third measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The fourth measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The second staff contains four measures: the first measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The second measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The third measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The fourth measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The third staff contains four measures: the first measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The second measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The third measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest. The fourth measure has a bass clef and a dotted quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2 and a quarter rest.

LESSON 10**The Real Truth**

Look at the following phrase, from the very first lesson in this book:



Where did it come from? From a chord? From a scale? Actually, you could explain it several ways:

1. Part of a G minor pentatonic scale.
2. Part of a G blues scale.
3. Part of a G dominant scale.
4. Part of a G dorian scale.
5. Part of a G7 chord.

But the real truth is simply that it is a phrase in the musical language we call blues (or jazz, or rock). Theory exists to explain music. Music comes first, not theory.

Here is some more advice for improvising:

1. Practice improvising, by yourself or with others. You can do this with your instrument, with your voice, or in your head.

2. Keep your ears open. You can get musical ideas from the sounds around you. In a group, this means listening to the other players and fitting your ideas to theirs.

3. Don't be afraid of mistakes. Just "go for it."

4. Remember that interesting rhythmic ideas are at least as important as melodic ideas.

5. When you are improvising, let your solo take its own direction. You don't need to stick to one set of notes, unless that is the sound you want. Any note can be made to sound "right," by the way it is used.

6. Don't forget the value of using emotion or mood in your playing.

LEVEL 3**SONGS AND STYLES**

In this group of lessons, you will be able to try improvising on songs that use some of the important styles of blues, rock, and jazz. These are styles that a modern musician should be aware of.

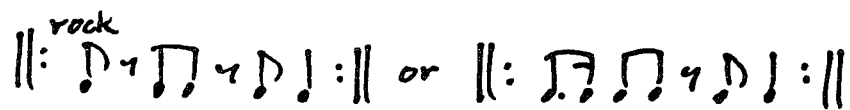
You will be able to try out ideas that you have already learned—for example, improvising with ideas from the melody, different scales, or bent notes.

LESSON 11

Bo Diddley Beat

This blues uses a rhythm that is found in quite a few 1950s rock songs, and is still popular today. It is usually called a "Bo Diddley" beat because a "rhythm and blues" singer and guitarist nicknamed "Bo Diddley" (Elias McDaniels) used it in so many of his songs.

The beat goes like this:



This beat is kept by the drums, and guitar or piano.

Notice that the chords are a standard blues progression in C, almost exactly like "Duke's Place." Play it with a basic arrangement (head twice, solos, head, coda). This is a good song for a drum solo.

Bo Diddley Beat

med. rock

C7

F7 C7

G7 F7 C7

2

LESSON 12**Chicago Style**

"Chicago blues" is a style that developed when many blues artists moved from the South to Chicago, and began playing their music on electric guitar and bass. The rhythm pattern in this tune is just one of the beats that is used in Chicago blues.

This style has been a heavy influence on rock music, and was at its strongest from the late 1940s through the 1960s. Famous "Chicago blues" musicians include Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield) and Howlin' Wolf (Chester Burnett).

Chicago Style

slow swing

solo lead:

other players:

Handwritten musical score for "Chicago Style" in 7/8 time, featuring a solo lead and accompaniment for other players. The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The solo lead part is marked "solo lead:" and the accompaniment is marked "other players:". The tempo is "slow swing". The key signature has one flat (Bb). The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and accidentals. Chord symbols G7 and C7 are present. The first system has two measures, the second system has three measures, and the third system has three measures.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. The treble staff contains a melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure and another triplet in the third measure. The bass staff provides accompaniment with chords D7, C7, and G7. A common time signature (C) is present at the end of the system.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. The treble staff has a melody with triplets. The bass staff has chords D7 and G7. A handwritten instruction reads: "solos: continue lower part for background; head; take coda (C) to end". A common time signature (C) is also present.

Chords (for solos):

Handwritten musical notation for the first chord line. The treble staff shows a G7 chord in the first measure, followed by a slash indicating a rest for the remainder of the line.

Handwritten musical notation for the second chord line. The treble staff shows a C7 chord in the first measure, a slash, and a G7 chord in the third measure, followed by a slash.

Handwritten musical notation for the third chord line. The treble staff shows a D7 chord in the first measure, a C7 chord in the second, a G7 chord in the third, and a D7 chord in the fourth with the instruction "(D7) omit last X".

LESSON 13**"Now's the Time"**

The type of jazz that this song represents is called "bebop," and was developed in the early 1940s by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and other musicians, based in New York. In this style, solos are more complex than in "swing," tempos are often faster, and certain notes are used more often (especially b5 and 2). Try to use chords and related scales in your solo, rather than just the F blues scales (use these, too).

Now's the Time

Charlie Parker

med. to fast swing

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of half notes: F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3. Chord symbols F7, Bb7, and F7 are written above the lower staff in the first, second, and third measures respectively.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody with eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The lower staff contains a series of half notes: Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3. A chord symbol Bb7 is written above the lower staff in the second measure.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody with eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lower staff contains a series of half notes: F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3. Chord symbols F7, D7, and G-7 are written above the lower staff in the first, second, and third measures respectively.

The fourth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody with eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lower staff contains a series of half notes: F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3, Bb2, D3, F3. Chord symbols C7, F7, and (C7) are written above the lower staff in the first, second, and third measures respectively. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign. Above the final measure, the word "fine" is written with a fermata over it. A note in the upper staff of the final measure is marked with a bracket and the text "omit on repeat".

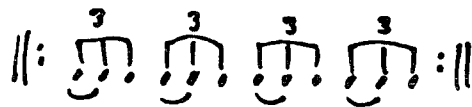
LESSON 14

Slow Bb Blues

Bb is one of the keys most often used by jazz instrumentalists (especially on saxophone and trumpet). This tune uses some very traditional phrases, and a slight variation in the chord progression. Chords shown in parentheses are optional.

Notice that when you play swing beat at a slow tempo, it sounds like

12.
8



Try playing solos for this tune that use "traditional" phrases. You know plenty of them by now. Then, if you like, try to be a little more modern—perhaps with more notes in the solo, or by using notes outside the key.

Chords in parentheses are optional. Omit the last chord for the end of the piece.

Slow Bb Blues

Handwritten musical notation for the first system of "Slow Bb Blues". It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a common time signature 'C'. It contains three measures of music, each starting with a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains three measures of music, each starting with a triplet of eighth notes. Chord symbols $Bb7$ and $Eb7$ are written above the second and third measures of the top staff respectively.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system of "Slow Bb Blues". It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains three measures of music, each starting with a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains three measures of music, each starting with a triplet of eighth notes. Chord symbols $Bb7$ and $Eb7$ are written above the first and third measures of the top staff respectively.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system of "Slow Bb Blues". It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains three measures of music. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains three measures of music. Chord symbols $Bb7$, $(A7)$, $(Ab7)$, and $(G7)$ are written above the second and third measures of the top staff respectively.

C-7 F7 Bb7 (Eb7)

(Bb7) F7 omit 1st x

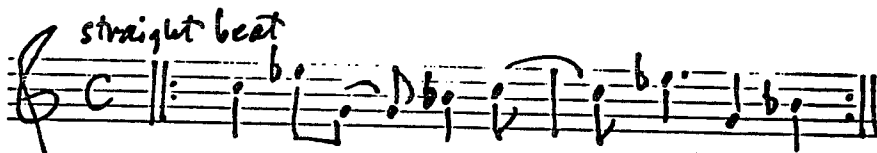
chords-in parentheses are optional

LESSON 15

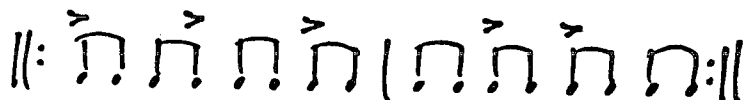
Jazz Mambo

Jazz is influenced by music from all over the world. The mambo started in Cuba and became popular in the United States in the 1950s.

To play this style, you will add parts in layers, until they form a "groove." Start with this part (usually played on piano, and called a "montuno"), at a medium tempo:



After 8 measures, add the drums, playing a straight beat with these accents (the accent pattern is called a "clave"):



After 8 bars, add the bass part (you could substitute another instrument if you don't have a bass):



Then, after 8 bars, add the melody, played by horns (melody instruments) and piano (switching from the montuno to the melody).

* The Bb7 and Db7 chords are optional. If you use them, the bass will have to play an Ab under the Db7 chord, instead of a G.

Play solos over the montuno, bass, and drum parts (C dorian, blues, or minor pentatonic scales are good here). If you like, make up riffs to add behind the soloist.

To end the song, play the head again, and stop at the "fine."

LESSON 16**The Next Step**

If you enjoy improvising jazz, blues, and rock, and want to learn more, here are a few suggestions for future projects:

1. "Jam" with other musicians whenever you possibly can.
2. Listen to recordings of great players like Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Louis Armstrong (jazz); Chuck Berry, Jimi Hendrix, Rolling Stones (rock); Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Bessie Smith (blues)—the list goes on and on.
3. Work with other teaching methods, especially the Jamey Aebersold play-along series.
4. Go to live concerts of all kinds of music, to check out how the "pros" play.
5. Write your own tunes.
6. Be open-minded. Try to play, and listen to, as many different kinds of music as possible.

Good luck, and stay funky!

The End

GLOSSARY

- bebop (or bop):** A style of jazz that started in the early 1940s, in New York.
- bending notes:** Hitting notes below pitch and then sliding up to normal pitch, a trick often used in blues.
- blues:** An American form of music that is also an important part of jazz and rock; also, a particular 12-bar chord progression.
- blue notes:** The flatted 3, 5, and 7 of a scale.
- Bo Diddley beat:** A particular beat found in many rhythm and blues and rock tunes.
- Chicago blues:** A style developed in Chicago in the 1940s using electric instruments.
- chord:** Several notes played at the same time.
- clave:** A rhythmic pattern used in Latin American music.
- coda (⊕):** A special section of music added to end a piece.
- dominant chord:** A chord built with scale steps 1, 3, 5, and b7.
- dominant scale (or mixolydian scale):** A major scale with a b7.
- fine:** The end of a piece (Italian for "finish").
- funky:** Very blues-like.
- groove:** A smooth, interesting and satisfying rhythm.
- head:** The melody, played at the beginning and end of a song.
- horns:** Jazz term for melody instruments (like trombone, saxophone, flute, etc.).
- improvise:** To make up your own music as you play.
- jam:** Playing music with other people.

- jazz:** A style of music that uses improvisation and a blues-related musical language; jazz has developed many styles over the last hundred years.
- mambo:** A style of music developed in Cuba in the 1940s, using a straight beat and some elements of blues and jazz.
- montuno:** A repeated riff used in Latin American music, usually played on piano.
- riff:** A short, repeating musical idea.
- rock:** A style of music that grew out of blues in the 1950s.
- rhythm section:** In a band, the bass, drums, piano, and/or guitar.
- scale:** A concept that puts a group of notes in a straight line, going up from the tonic note.
- solo:** When one instrument plays a lead part, or plays alone.
- straight beat:** A beat that uses eighth notes that have equal value. Most rock, classical, and South American music uses a straight beat.
- swing beat:** A beat that uses eighth notes that move in pairs of long and short notes.
- swing jazz:** A style of jazz that developed in the 1920s and 1930s, often played by "big bands" of about fifteen instruments, including sections of trumpets, trombones, saxophones, and a rhythm section.
- tempo:** Speed of the music.
- tonic:** The home note.
- trading fours:** A way of soloing in which musicians take turns improvising for four bars each.
- walking:** A bass pattern used in swing and bebop, with the bass playing steady quarter notes.

TO THE TEACHER

The purpose of this book is to provide written materials, in a programmed format, that will be useful in teaching improvisation to beginners on any instrument, in either private lessons or small classes. Naturally, you will adapt it to your own needs. The book itself will not do the teaching, and in fact it assumes the presence of a teacher as bandleader, and probably as a pianist.

If you can't already play through a simple blues in G, F, or C, using dominant chords, this method will provide you with the opportunity to learn. Your interpretation could be as simple as root position block chords, or it could use a left-hand bass line and better right-hand voicings, if ability permits. You might want to incorporate use of a drum machine, a sequencer for bass lines, or a recorded background as teaching aids.

The method assumes that students are beginning-level instrumentalists. If this is indeed the case, then keyboard, guitar, and drum set players could all use the same melodic line material as everyone else, perhaps until chords are introduced in Level 2. If your rhythm section players are more advanced than this, they may be instructed to play their

traditional ensemble roles at an earlier point. Here are some remarks on bass and drum parts:

Bass

Students can be assigned ensemble parts fairly early on, if they seem ready. A walking pattern (for swing) can be made out of either chord tones, or 1-b7-5 (the notes used in Lesson 1). Rock parts could be repeated blues melodic patterns. Bass parts may be covered by keyboard, electric or acoustic bass, guitar, or even bass clarinet or tuba; or they could be left out entirely.

Drums

In the absence of a trap set player or drum machine, the beat (swing or straight eighth notes) could be kept on a cymbal or hi-hat alone. This concept, with appropriate accent patterns, will serve even on the "Bo Diddley" (use sixteenth notes) and "Jazz Mambo" pieces. To simplify these, play accents (clave) only.

You (the teacher) should remember that the purpose of this project is above all to build a positive attitude in students toward their own creative efforts. All your comments on their improvising should be positive, uncritical, and reinforcing. The point is to develop the creative process, not

to work up pieces for a concert. If this teaching method seems to work for you, here are a few suggestions for augmenting or expanding it:

1. Use plenty of call-response drills, as in Lesson 2. You make up the drills, and adjust the level of difficulty as necessary.
2. Apply the concepts from Lesson 5 in other places (emotion, density, dynamics).
3. Expand arrangements (improvise with form).
4. Bring in jazz standards (e.g., Watermelon Man, Blue Bossa, Blue Monk, Cantaloupe Island).
5. Bring in recordings of jazz, rock, blues, salsa, etc. This is perhaps better done after students have tried playing these tunes or styles. Take the opportunity to say a few words about the players, style, or history of the recording.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Western music in the twentieth century has seen a growing interest in the art of improvisation. In the "classical" tradition, this art had been allowed to lapse nearly into extinction by the early part of this century. It is now being revived in ways that are pertinent to both avant-garde and historical styles. In the jazz world, musicians have become increasingly skillful in codifying and articulating performance practices of the great improvisers, for use in teaching future generations.

This project represents an attempt to fill a perceived gap in available teaching material: namely, the lack of a blues-based improvisation method for beginning instrumentalists that presents musical elements in proper focus. The method developed here stresses participation and the formation of viewpoints that might later prove valuable to the student. Use of expression and musical intuition is emphasized, while theory concepts are presented as tools for understanding rather than as primary organizing concepts.

This method does not create new teaching techniques, but utilizes components of proven efficacy. These include the use of blues materials to

introduce the blues/jazz/rock idiom and improvisation; call-response drills; idiomatic written examples; theory study; and a careful, reinforcing approach that generates success with first improvising efforts. What is new in this workbook is the sequence and balance of these teaching devices.

In reality, teaching "methods" exist not so much on paper as in the actual practice of the persons engaged in teaching (or method writing). Blues and Jazz for Beginners is a written manifestation of the present author's own method, at the time of writing. It will bear continued and endless revision. Its real usefulness, it is hoped, will be as a visual aid for students, to supplement the author's teaching; and perhaps as a suggested sequence of activities for other teachers.

Besides refinement of the method, there is the potential for its expansion. Several directions are possible: (a) into a more complete survey of blues, jazz, and rock styles, (b) into a method addressing knowledge of theory and development of technique, and (c) into the study of other idioms, with a less ethnocentric focus (or better, with other ethnocentric focuses).

The first of the above possibilities could lead to a "kid's fakebook," with playable versions of standard and original pieces, in various styles. The second possibility, theory and technique, has been explored by a number of books already. The third, expansion into other cultural traditions, is perhaps the area with the greatest potential, both for the student and for the art of musical improvisation.

Jazz has, by its nature, defined itself as a music that exploits a fusion of cultural resources. It began as a combination of African and European elements; later developments incorporated Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian, and Indian (Asian) musical languages. Much wider expansions for this improvisational idiom are clearly on the way; this is inevitable due to increasing cross-cultural awareness via the mass media. There is enough musical culture on this planet to keep musicians supplied with fresh input, for more than a few years to come.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abell, Alicia. A Survey of Methods for Teaching Keyboard Improvisation. Master's thesis, San Jose State University, 1988.
- Aebersold, Jamey. A New Approach to Jazz Improvisation. 45 vols. New Albany, Indiana: author, 1967-1990.
- Baker, David. Jazz Improvisation. Van Nuys, California: Alfred, 1983.
- _____. Improvisational Patterns: the Blues. New York: Charles Colin, 1980.
- _____. Techniques of Improvisation, Vol. I. Chicago: Maher, 1968.
- Burnsed, Charles V. The Development and Evaluation of an Introductory Jazz Improvisation Sequence for Intermediate Band Students. Doctoral dissertation, University of Miami. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1978, no. 7901829.
- Coker, Jerry. Improvising Jazz. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
- _____; Campbell, Gary; Casale, Jimmy; and Greene, Jerry. Patterns for Jazz. Lebanon, Indiana: Studio P/R, 1970.
- Damron, Bert L. The Development and Evaluation of a Self-Instructional Sequence in Jazz Improvisation. Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1973.
- Ferand, Ernest T. Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music. Cologne: Arno Volk Verlag, 1961.
- Grove, Dick. The Encyclopedia of Basic Harmony and Theory Applied to Improvisation On All Instruments. 2 vols. Studio City, California: First Place Music, 1971.
- Hamaker, Edith; Lincoln, Clarice; and Thalman, Marilyn. Improvisation Syllabus and Guide. Music Teachers' Association of California, 1979.
- Hamilton, Don. Everybody Can Play the Blues. Hialeah, Florida: Studio 224, 1984.

- Hardymon, Phil. Jazz Expressions. Orinda, California: Wynn Music, 1975.
- Horsley, Imogene; Collins, Michael; Badura-Skoda, Eva; and Libby, Dennis. "Improvisation," in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 1980.
- Konowitz, Bert. Music Improvisation as a Classroom Method. New York: Alfred, 1973.
- Lanfer, Helen. The Music Within Us. Hebrew Arts Music, 1979.
- La Porta, John. A Guide to Improvisation. Boston: Berklee Press, 1968.
- Lilore, Joseph. Learnin' the Blues. Secaucus, New Jersey: Warner Bros., 1986.
- Mack, Glen. Adventures in Improvisation at the Keyboard. Evanston, Illinois: Summy-Birchard, 1970.
- Mehegan, John. Jazz Improvisation. 4 vols. New York: Watson-Guptill, 1959-1965.
- Nachmanovich, Stephen. Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art. Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1990.
- Nelson, Oliver. Patterns for Improvisation. Los Angeles: Noslen Music, 1966.
- Oestereich, James, and Pennington, Earl. Improvising and Arranging on the Keyboard. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1981.
- Progris, Jim. The Basic Elements of Jazz. Miami: Studio 224, 1986.
- Reeves, Scott D. Creative Jazz Improvisation. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1989.
- Ricker, Ramon. Pentatonic Scales for Jazz Improvisations. Lebanon, Indiana: Studio P/R, 1975.
- Schafer, R. Murray. Creative Music Education. New York: Schirmer Books, 1976.
- Schmid, Will. Jazz/Rock Trax 1. Winona, Minnesota: Hal Leonard, 1985.

- Schramm, Rudolf R. A., and Freuler, Doug. The 21st Century Way to New Sounds. New York: Camerica Music, 1981.
- Sloboda, John (ed.). Generative Processes in Music. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Spera, Dominic. Blues and the Basics. Winona, Minnesota: Hal Leonard, 1975.
- Tarto, Joe. Basic Rhythms and the Art of Jazz Improvisation. New York: Charles Colin, 1976.
- Vulliamy, Graham, and Lee, Ed. Pop Music in School. Cambridge: University Press, 1976.
- Wollner, Gertrude Price. Improvisation in Music. Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1963.