

JAZZ IMPROVISATION

THE BEST WAY TO DEVELOP SOLOS OVER CLASSIC CHANGES by SAM MOST

This book is lovingly dedicated to my dear father and mother, Jacob and Dora, and my dear brothers and sisters, Abe, Bernie, Ruth and Fran.

- And all the many wonderful musicians, arrangers and composers, too numerous to mention, whose work has inspired me throughout the years.



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Audio Performances:

Sam Most - Flute

Bill Cunliffe - Piano

Tom Warrington - Bass

Steve Houghton - Drums

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TO THE TEACHER

This book has been designed to fulfill two specific objectives.

1. Through exposure to graded harmonic development in the melodic examples, the student can develop his awareness of jazz chromaticism, the sources of the chromatic sounds, and how to generate these sounds himself.
2. By deliberately selecting and sequencing rhythmic elements and accidentals, we have created a simple and challenging book for improving single-line sight reading.

Although this text can be used successfully without a teacher (in a “Self Study” program), the organization and presentation of the Musical Examples have been designed for flexible presentation in any teaching program. This is one of the first books to successfully trace the origins of both the chromatic sounds and the rhythmic influences of jazz simultaneously and for all levels of jazz study.

INTRODUCTION

This book is for students who wish to improve their improvisation and sight reading skills. The examples are applicable to all treble clef instruments. Although not required, in order to obtain the maximum results, the student should have a working knowledge of keys and key signatures, note and rest values, major and minor scales, intervals, triads, and seventh chords.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

I have taken eleven well-known chord patterns and written melodies to them. The melodies move from simple to complex, both rhythmically and melodically, and demonstrate how specific techniques can be used in jazz improvisation. Each progression is treated in the following manner:

The first melodies use only notes found in the given chord or scale. Some melodies are written using only one note value, i.e. only half notes, only quarter notes, only eighth notes, only triplets, or only sixteenth notes. The concluding melodies contain mixed rhythms.

Chromatic tones are introduced through several different techniques. First I add tones a half step above or below the tonic, third, and fifth of each chord. A note a half or whole step below or above any note can be used to embellish any chordal tone. Another way of approaching it might be to treat the root, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth of a chord as its principal tones. Choosing one as a target note you can approach it by chromatic tones a half step on each side of the target note before you resolve into it.

Other techniques I've used to develop chromatic sounds include the use of altered dominant scales, flat five relationships between chords, fourth intervals, pentatonic scales, suspended triads and seventh chords, and “bitonal” thinking.

At first, the examples stay “inside” using scale tones, chord tones, and arpeggio fragments for harmonic clarity. Then (by the use of the above techniques) we move more “outside” with the addition of more chromatic sounds

Through this approach I have tried to present the concept of variation both tonally and rhythmically as applied to jazz improvisation. I hope that by the many examples shown, you will be able to develop both an intellectual and an aural awareness that can improve your improvisational ability.

- Play through each example and then try to invent your own examples using the same techniques.
- Strive in your improvisation to balance thinking and feeling (intellect and intuition); try to make your melodic lines flow from chord to chord (to make your melodies connect smoothly).
- Try to shape your lines to make good musical sense. Think lyrically and remember—a good improvised solo should make some kind of melodic statement.

ABOUT THE PLAY-ALONG RECORDING

A play-along track has been recorded for each of the eleven progressions taught in this book. Some progressions have two recorded examples providing the student with a variety of styles and tempos in which to play.

Students can play along with the examples in the book, focus on specific measures, and/or develop their own improvisational ideas while playing along with the recording.

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Track 1



Track 2

I need to touch music as well as to think it, which is why I have always lived next to a piano. —Igor Stravinsky

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