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CHAPTER 2

Articulation

Articulation, also known as tonguing, is a key ingredient of your musical personality. Just like with a language, when you speak you articulate every word. In jazz, articulation is the way a note is being attacked or emphasized in between the two extremes, legato and staccato, from soft to hard. The majority of articulations heard in jazz fall somewhere between legato and staccato with an incredibly vast palette of variety.

The best way to study the many variations of articulation in jazz is by playing along to your solo transcriptions (see “Listen and Transcribe,” Chapter 8). When doing this, pay close attention to the player’s articulation and write it in your transcription. Every detail counts – that is how you become proficient in using various types of articulation in a creative and natural way.

This example shows an excerpt of Sonny Stitt’s solo on “Norman’s Blues” on his album “New York Jazz” (see “Appendix”). The articulation is very even, with few random accents to break the monotony.

Musical notation for an excerpt of Sonny Stitt's solo on "Norman's Blues". The notation is written on two staves in treble clef. The first staff contains the first four measures, with a E_b^7 chord symbol above the first measure and an A_b^7 chord symbol above the third measure. The second staff contains the next four measures, with an E_b^7 chord symbol above the second measure. The notes are primarily eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together, with various articulation marks such as accents (>) and slurs.

Here is an example of much more diverse tonguing as played by Julian “Cannonball” Adderley in his solo on “If This Isn’t Love” on the album “Takes Charge” (see “Appendix”).

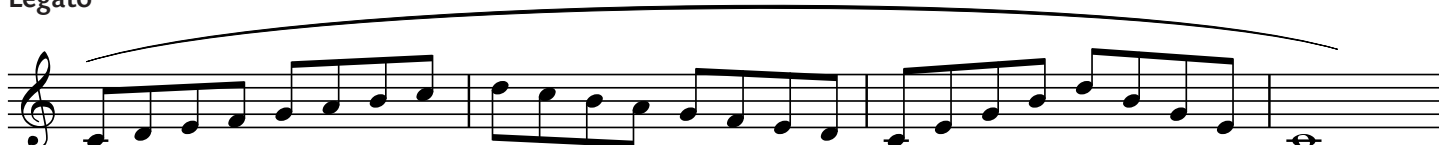
Musical notation for an excerpt of Julian “Cannonball” Adderley's solo on “If This Isn’t Love”. The notation is written on two staves in treble clef. The first staff contains the first four measures, with chord symbols E_m^7 , A^7 , and $D^{\text{maj}7}$ above the first, second, and third measures respectively. The second staff contains the next four measures, with chord symbols $C^{\#}m^7$, $F^{\#}7$, and $B^{\text{maj}7}$ above the first, second, and third measures respectively. The notes are primarily eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together, with various articulation marks such as accents (>) and slurs.

Exercises

These four different articulation studies should be played in all keys. It is important that they become completely effortless and automatic in all keys and tempos until they begin to sound natural. When improvising in jazz you will need to master all four types, in any key, at any tempo, in any register (low notes to high notes).

These exercises should be played with a metronome. Begin at the slowest tempo (60 beats per minute, bpm) and gradually increase it to the fastest tempo (200 bpm), but only when you fully master the slowest tempo.

Legato



Legato attack (tongue the sound "tu")



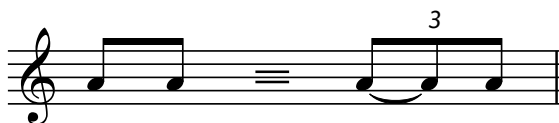
Staccato (tongue the sound "tut")



"Jazz articulation" – swinging eighth notes with every note on the upbeat being tongued ("hu-tu")



The so-called "jazz articulation" is derived from two eighth notes played with a triplet feel. You will obtain eighth notes with a swinging feel.



In order to play fast and perfectly coordinate fingers and tongue, you need to practice slowly and feel every note. Only then can you increase the tempo of an exercise, a scale, a pattern or a lick.

To develop your tonguing techniques further, study these basic exercises. Use a metronome and strive for accuracy and evenness. Play this exercise in the low, middle, and high registers.

