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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Most books on the subject of jazz improvisation, including those I've written, are based upon an author's concept for how the subject should be learned. That is, the book, though reflecting upon the author's teaching experience to some extent, is largely based upon an overall concept for the subject, perhaps designed as a thorough going text for a course in improvisation. This is certainly a logical approach, but at least some of the contained materials exist because the author has tried to anticipate the needs of the student(s). This, too, is logical, especially in the name of completeness. However, such an approach has two potential shortcomings: (1) that the book may present more than what is needed, in a sort of textual 'overkill', where the author tries to anticipate every possible need (and perhaps a few pet theories thrown in for good measure); and (2) that, despite all the efforts toward insuring that the text will be absolutely complete, shortcomings are discovered after the book is in use, shortcomings that were not anticipated. The latter often leads to the need for the instructor to produce additional materials, in the form of handouts.

This doesn't negate the obvious values of existing texts. I merely point to the fact that most authors attempt to choose and organize materials in a manner that is actually before the fact. The solution to the problem, if it really is a problem, lies in basing our concepts for learning improvisation on the results. In other words, we should first make observations on the problems encountered by students, along with the best solutions we've been able to apply to solve those problems, then organize those topics into a logical sequence. If those observations are continued over a long period of time (years) with a considerable number of students (hundreds), we can be relatively sure there won't be either an over-kill or critical shortcomings in the resulting text.

This book is a compilation of topics in improvisation that address problems actually encountered by my students over the nearly fifty years I have taught the subject. They are arranged in an order that reflects the developmental needs of an improviser, from beginning to a more advanced level of study. Because the books and teaching methods for jazz improvisation are still addressing a relatively new area of study, many of the terms used in books and methods are not yet standardized (and perhaps never will be). Whenever possible, alternate terms will be given here to clarify such terms. It became necessary, in this book, to invent a few new terms, as well. They will be carefully defined to eliminate confusion. When and if better or more widely used synonyms are invented and adopted, we should all be willing to accept the more familiar, established synonyms. Some players, often young, desiring to be artists while somehow bypassing any theoretical information will shortchange themselves due to the resistance to technical or academic sounding names for chords, scales, etc. If a scale, for instance is not given a name, its characteristics cannot be identified in order to execute it. It is possible to hear someone else do it, and not have a means to recapture it for oneself, to have it now in hand to express in one's own

improvisation. The next step is to learn where its use is appropriate and workable, as a further aid to the ear in its widening scope and adventure.

Some of the topics have been at least partially addressed in other books. In those cases the presentations rendered in this book might be somewhat brief, referring the reader to more thoroughgoing treatments that exist in other books. Whenever another book (or a portion of it) is recommended, only the author and title will be given in the body of the text. The more complete information (publisher, city, date, etc.) will be listed in the Bibliography at the end of the book.

Because the topics cover a wide range of levels of development, those who no longer consider themselves to be in the beginning stages should feel free to skip over some of the earlier topics, or simply give them a perfunctory reading, in case there are a few details that are unknown to them. The book was not conceived as a textbook for a course, though some may find it so, but as a collection of oft-encountered problems and their solutions. It could even be viewed as a sort of personal history of feedback rendered to students over a fifty-year period.

J.C.

## Understanding Changes

The dimensions of our musical enrichment are incalculably expanded when we move from reading changes to understanding changes. The difference between the two is symbolized in the comparison of classical music study with jazz study. The students of classical music (and, unfortunately, many of their teachers) are content with placing their focus on reading music, while the students of jazz music prefer to place their focus on understanding music. This is, of course, a generalization. A good number of students of both styles are interested in both reading and understanding, thankfully. Nevertheless, jazz students are often poor readers, and classical students are seldom interested in the structural, theoretical, and compositional aspects that form the music they read. Because jazz improvisers function in the dual role of creator and performer, they cannot afford to ignore the questions that relate to understanding exactly why one creation is better, more effective, prettier, or more imaginative than another. If they fail to investigate those questions, they risk finding themselves in the great pool of musicians who are proficient but shallow, gifted but undeveloped, hip but without beauty, current but without roots, and active but aimless. The exception to this pronouncement would be the musical genius (i.e., Ira Sullivan or Wes Montgomery) neither of which learns to read music nor gropes to understand it, yet exhibits no lack of craft or inspired creativity. The rest of us will just have to dig it out the hard way.

The first key to understanding changes is to come to grips with the fact that the chord sequences are not random, and they are seldom without recognizable, pre-existing progression *cells* (relatively brief groups of chords that are linked together in a logical sequence). About 55 years ago, when I was about 15 years old, my older brother and I spent considerable time copying the heads and progressions of hundreds of tunes. It was before the advent of *fakebooks*, so we were forced to copy them by hand. Though a laborious task, it caused my curious mind to begin noticing that certain sequences of chords were reoccurring endlessly in countless tunes. Though the tunes were very often placed in different keys, the individual chords and their frequent organization into cells related to the I chords in the same or very similar way. Furthermore, nearly all the tunes would, within their overall length, modulate to at least one other key, yet both the modulating chords and the chord sequences in the new key would also follow those same discernable sequences and cells. I also noticed that even the relationships between the original key and the keys modulated to were not peculiar to a single tune. That is, not one but a handful or even many tunes would modulate up a perfect fourth, or up a major third, or to the relative minor, and so on. I then realized that those unities would be more visible if the changes to the tunes were translated into a more universal system, one that would cause all keys to have the same appearance when analyzed. Borrowing from the *figured bass* system of J.S. Bach, I began using a modification of the Roman Numeral system, which caused many more revelations to come into view. Seventeen years later (1964) the Roman Numerals and their attendant

**Digital Patterns** – Short groupings of notes, usually 4-8 notes per group, numerically-constructed in relation to each chord's root. Abbreviation: **DP**

**7-3 Resolution** – Melodic utilization of the traditional tendency of the seventh of a chord to resolve to the third of the next chord (discussed in the first paragraph of Topic 3). Abbr.: 7-3

**3-b9** – Melodic phrases which begin on the third of a dominant seventh chord and proceed up or down to the flatted ninth of the same chord. Abbr.: **3-b9**

**Bebop Scale** – An otherwise commonplace scale that has one specific, added chromatic note, causing the scale to have 8 notes instead of the usual 7. Abbr.: **BBS**

**Bebop Lick** – A specific 6-note phrase that uses the added chromatic note mentioned above in regard to the bebop scale. Abbr.: **BBL**

**Tri-Tone Substitution/Altered Dominant** – *Tri-tone Substitution* is the substituting of an unaltered dominant seventh chord whose root is a tri-tone away from the given dominant seventh chord's root. If, however, the given (original) dominant seventh is altered by choice, the scales for the two chords will be found to be identical (see the last paragraph in Topic 12). Hence only the bass note can reveal whether the chord is a tritone substitution or an arbitrarily altered given chord. Abbr.: **TT/AD**

**Enclosure** – The preceding of an aimed-for note with two other notes, the first being a half-step above that note, the second being a half-step below that note, then the aimed-for note itself, as in **Db, B, C**. Abbr.: **encl.**

**CESH** – (Contrapuntal Elaboration of Static Harmony) A harmonic device in which a prolonged chord (static harmony) has a chromatically-moving chord member (contrapuntal elaboration), while the other chord members remain constant. Abbr.: **CESH**

**Cry Me A River Lick** – A commonly-used, specific phrase, deriving from a tune with the same title. Abbr.: **CMAR**

**Gone But Not Forgotten Lick** – Also derived from a tune having the same title. Abbr.: **GBNF**

**Back Door** – The substituting of a **IV-7** ( or a **bVII7**) for a **V7**. Abbr.: **BD**

**#IIo** – The substituting of a **#II** diminished seventh chord for a **V7**. Abbr.: **#IIo**

## Topic 12

### A Closer Look at Tri-Tone Substitution

Though tri-tone substitution has been mentioned several times earlier in this book, there are dimensions of it that have not been explained or discussed. Those dimensions affect composers, pianists/guitarists, bassists, and improvisers alike.

#### Why Does Tri-Tone Substitution Work?

Go to the piano. With the right hand, in the middle of the keyboard, play the notes **F** and **B**. This is a tri-tone interval, but neither of those notes is a chord root, so we've not yet produced tri-tone substitution. Now, with the left hand, in a lower range of the piano, play the note **G** simultaneously with the **F** and **B** in the right hand. The chord has become a **G7**, with the left hand playing the root and the right hand playing the seventh (**F**) and third (**B**) of the chord. We don't have a fifth (**D**) in the chord, but it still sounds like a **G7**, since we have included the most essential notes of the chord.



Now play the same two notes in the right hand, but play a **Db** with the left hand, instead of the **G**. At first it may sound peculiar, but when the ear becomes adjusted to the new bass note, we realize that the chord has been transformed into a **Db7**. Why is this possible? Because the two chords share the same third and seventh, though their names are reversed. **F** is the third of the **Db7**, but it is the seventh of the **G7**. **B** is the third of the **G7**, but it is the seventh (**Cb**, enharmonically re-spelled) of the **Db7**. And that's why tri-tone substitution works.

