About The Author

After 10 years of private study and 2 years at Indiana University, Jerry Coker interrupted his studies to go on tour with the Woody Herman Orchestra as a featured soloist on 2 Third Heard albums. After leaving the band, he went to Yale to study composition and later, he returned to IU to work on a doctorate in woodwinds.

In 1964, his first book, Improvising Jazz, published by Prentice-Hall, began its long and fruitful life as a pioneering text; among other things, as the source of the II-V-I system of Roman Numeral chord identification. Fourteen other books followed, some in multi-national translations, as student's needs were met, all available through Jamey Aebersold Jazz, Inc.

In 1966, Jerry went to the University of Miami where he, with the support of Dean William F. Lee, developed the first complete degree offering in Studio Music and Jazz, as well as the first masters degree in jazz. In addition to jazz courses already in existence, such as Jazz Ensemble, Jazz History, Jazz Arranging and Improvisation, he created new courses in Jazz Theory, Jazz Piano I & II (for non-pianists), Small Jazz Ensemble, Analysis of Jazz Styles, Jazz Composition, Advanced Improvisation, Jazz Directing, and Jazz Pedagogy. The curriculum conceived for that program was then emulated by other schools, and at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville), where he headed the program for 27 years, and where he continues to teach part-time as Professor Emeritus.

Jerry's professional playing activity continued as a soloist with Stan Kenton, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, and as a featured soloist on the Clare Fischer Extentions album. Highlights include performances of his extended composition, "Variations For Jazz Band, " and a performance with David Baker and Randy Brecker with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, at Tanglewood, on Gunther Schuller's "Journey Into Jazz."

Jerry Coker was inducted in to the International Association of Jazz Educator's Hall of Fame in 1996.

To Jamey Aebersold. . . who has contributed more to the development of tangible tools for practice leading to creativity than anyone else in the idiom.

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CHAPTER 1

Pre-study Considerations

Why Do You Want To Study Jazz?

Your motivations for embarking on the study of jazz are extremely important, with regard to your potential success. It will be an arduous and perpetual sort of undertaking. If your motivations are weak, unsound, or misguided, sooner or later they will weaken your effort and reduce your chances of success and personal fulfillment.

Being perfectly honest with yourself, mark each of the provided boxes in the following list of possible motivations which apply to your reasons for studying jazz.

❑ 1. It's an attention-getter . . . makes me feel important.

❑ 2. It attracts members of the opposite sex.

❑ 3. I'm being sort of pressured to do it (parents, band director, peer group, etc.).

❑ 4. It sure beats washing cars (comparative approach)!

❑ 5. Sounds like a lot of fun!

❑ 6. I just want to see if I can do it.

❑ 7. I admire people who can do it (their skill awes me and scares me).

❑ 8. It has always fascinated me . . . a sort of magic.

❑ 9. It's a creative skill, worth the effort.

❑ 10. It's a creative democracy that can be collectively exciting and communicative in group situations.

❑ 11. To avoid inertia. When I am not involved in creative practice, performance, or study, I feel unfulfilled and sense an emptiness.

CHAPTER 2
The Nature And Content Of Your Practice

How Much Should You Practice?

Most people who ask such a question are specifically referring to "how much" per day (as opposed to how much per week, month, or year). The question is difficult to answer, and probably the answer would come into sharper focus by asking a few more questions, such as: (1) How much do you want to accomplish over the long haul? (2) Are you anxious or in a hurry to reach your goal? (3) How intense is your desire to achieve your goals? (4) Are you physically or mentally handicapped in a way that places limits on the length of your practice? (5) Is the length of your practice sessions limited by other considerations, such as job, family, school, other hobbies, etc.? (6) How intense/taxing are your usual practice sessions? (7) Do you think of yourself as a fast learner, slow learner, or about average (mental agility, a 'photographic memory', and/or extraordinary motor skills/coordination can be a great help, to be sure, but the absence of one or more of those traits may indicate nothing more than the need to schedule more or longer practice sessions)?

Experience with practice will probably answer the question best. There are a number of variables, in addition to the ones above. First of all, your progress won't be as consistent as you might hope. We improve rapidly as novices, because everything is new and much of it really doesn't take long to learn, once we understand (in the mind) how things function. But then we taper off, seemingly anyway, in our progress, and have to work much harder than before to gain a little, almost imperceptible progress. We begin our studies by looking for methods that will make us sound twice as good as we did last week or month. We later find ourselves searching for ways to achieve a 1-2% improvement over a 6-12 month period. Irrespective of the over-all rate of progress just described, there will also be learning 'plateaus', and during such a period of time it seems that no amount of practice time and effort gets us moving again. We do, of course, get moving again (through patience, tenacity, and determination), but the period is excruciatingly difficult to endure. It is often at such a time that we start looking around for different methods, schools, teachers, mouthpieces, etc., being desperate for a quick solution to our pain. Another host of variables that could effect the length of our practice time is provided by the ups and downs of our mood,

energy, health, the absence of distractions or interruptions, the condition of our instrument, etc. How you handle *all* of the possible variables discussed thus far will be a personal decision and therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to name a specific length of time of daily practice that will be suitable for everyone, enabling each to reach his/her goal, in the hoped-for number of years, and on his/her particular instrument (another variable, as some instruments have a considerable number of special instrumental disciplines which *must* be worked into the practice time). An individual's choice and need for daily practice might be anywhere from 30 minutes to 6-8 hours! Jazz great Art Farmer (trumpet) practices 5-6 hours per day (at *this* time, and he's already a very accomplished player!), saxophonist Sonny Stitt was reputed to have practiced 8 hours per day during his development, and John Coltrane was observed practicing as much as *11* hours in one day (and he played and practiced in a *very* intense manner)! Similarly, Charles Parker is said to have practiced 11-15 hours each day for three to four years. All four of these individuals were especially gifted for music. This is not to say that no one will ever play as well as one of these unless they are equally gifted and practice at least as many hours per day as they did. There are enough variables to disprove such a notion. But it should at least make us realize that we probably won't reach their level with a smaller gift, 30 minutes of daily practice, and over one year's time!

Most people are accustomed to the 5-day week concept (Monday through Friday), as most schools and places of employment are set up in this fashion. The weekend is generally reserved for rest, recreation, church, shopping, visiting, hobbies, gardening, vacations, etc. Some use the weekend to catch up on activities or work which eluded them during the previous 5 days. All this is understandable. However, if you are seriously hoping to reach your goals in music, you will also consider extending your practice routine to 6 or 7 days per week, even if you have to shorten the practice time, slightly (some musicians practice *longer* on the weekends *because* they often have more free time than was available during the school/work week). Just remember what was stated in the introduction to this book: "If You miss one day of practice, no one notices. If you miss two days, you notice. If you miss three days, your friends notice. And if you miss four or more days of practice, *everyone* notices!" In other words, if you don't practice on Saturday or Sunday, at least *you* will already be noticing the missed practice.

Some musicians have said "Gigs don't count," with respect to practicing. This author doesn't ascribe to that camp. Although you can't practice scales, patterns, keys, technique-building exercises, and the like on a playing engagement in the same manner you play them in a practice session, there are plenty of atoning aspects. For one thing, you *are* playing your instrument for about 3 or 4 hours. For another, you are playing with others, which tends to promote more listening, exchange of ideas, better intonation, and more careful attention to time-feeling, phrasing, precision, balance, and blend. Most importantly performance, as opposed to practice, affords you the opportunity to 'test' the items you've been practicing with a live group of musicians and for an audience. Hence, gigs *do* count!

Finally, with regard to the question, "How much should you practice?," something needs to be said about the condition that most often causes us to cease practicing for the day . . . fatigue. The chief culprit is *unnecessary* tension, and much of it is created at the unconscious level. When we pick up an object, there is a great difference between holding it and gripping it lightly, in terms of energy expended, and if there was no reason to have gripped it tightly, then we've needlessly wasted energy. This author once studied with an oboe teacher who was fanatical about such things, especially as it related to the muscles of the embouchure, which are severely taxed in playing the oboe. Whenever I encountered a written rest, even a quarter-note rest, he'd yell "Let Go" (his way of saying "relax your embouchure"). Years before I had studied the relaxation principles of yoga, but without having to do it *instantaneously*, as in a quarter-note rest. After learning to follow my oboe teacher's demands for instantaneous relaxation, I found that I had acquired considerably more endurance, which was a revelation. Many brass players attribute their endurance to using a low-pressure or non-pressure embouchure. Good drummers use virtually no tension in their ride cymbal hand, letting the weight of the stick do most of the work. Jazz pianist Phil DeGreg will frequently drop his right hand limply to his side, even in the midst of a busy improvised solo. Jazz trumpeter Woody Shaw practiced Tai Chi relaxation movements before performances and during intermissions, and if he felt any frustration or tension during misfiring moments of his solos, he would take his trumpet away from his mouth and calmly fold his arms, letting his head drop slightly, as if in prayer, *then* resume playing. All of these examples point to the need to control our tensions (or remove them altogether!). Controlling the unconscious level is more difficult, because we're not aware that tension is being created. For example, I once went to the

faculty recital of my classical saxophone teacher, whose musical brilliance immediately captured and retained my full attention. Unconsciously, I was brought to such a level of empathy that *my* embouchure was completely exhausted before he reached the last selection on the program! If we dream of running, climbing, struggling, etc., we are likely to awaken very tired, even stiff or sore of muscle.

The point of all this is to make the reader understand that when he/she learns to practice without letting unnecessary tension creep in, it will result in greatly increased endurance, and longer practice sessions become possible. Furthermore, when fatigue sets in, consider two options to ending the practice session for the day: (1) first try taking a very short break and get completely relaxed. Then see if you were only momentarily tired and now feel a 'second wind' arriving; and (2) consider coming back to the practice room *much* later in the same day, perhaps establishing two slightly shorter practice sessions instead of one very long, tiring session. Learn to evaluate your mental and physical stamina. Though most of this chapter, thus far, seems to be exhorting you to working harder and longer, practicing after your mind/concentration and your body have reached the true point of fatigue will likely do more harm than good.

When Should You Practice?

For those who are very busy, no one can tell you when you should practice. But for those who have a choice, practice when you are mentally alert, your energy is at its peak, and when you are generally fresh in mind, body, and spirit. Industrial psychologists have learned that most (not all) people have reasonable predictable mood and energy swings, hence the music that is often played through the speaker system of an industry is designed to inspire or relax workers throughout a working day of fluctuating levels of mood and energy. In fact, these levels may vary widely between individuals. This author does his best work in the early morning and sags in the middle of the afternoon, whereas others awaken slowly and may not hit his/her stride until late in the day, even at night. The practice time(s), then, should be arranged accordingly.

CHAPTER 3
Structuring Your Practice Time

In the last chapter a total of 18 potential activities for your practice routine were listed, plus 8 more supplementary activities away from your chosen instrument and/or your practice room. It's also very possible that there are still more items for either list that you wish to, or should, add. Obviously you can't work at all those elements simultaneously, so choices must be made and a sequence established that would enable you to begin with a smaller number of activities you *can* handle now in your practice, and a replacement or turnover sequence planned that will bring some of the other elements into the schedule as you complete your work on each of the original activities, opening up time to add something new.

Here is the list of 18 potential activities again, without the descriptions that were included for each in Chapter 2:

1. **Tone Quality**
2. **Intervals**
3. **Chord Arpeggios**
4. **Scales**
5. **Patterns And Licks**
6. **Fermata Practice**
7. **Even-ing Up Keys**
8. **The Jazz Language**
9. **Playing Of Transcribed Solos**
10. **Learning Tunes**
11. **Vehicle-Types**
12. **Chromaticism**
13. **Studying Of Certain Progressions and Their Potential For Chord Substitution**
14. **Phrase-Overlapping**
15. **Tempo Study**
16. **Ear-Training Tapes**
17. **Sight-Reading Of Melodies And Progressions**
18. **Melodic Development**

Begin by eliminating anything on the list that you feel you've already covered very well, being careful not to deceive yourself. There is a

DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS With A SUSPENDED FOURTH (mixolydian scale)

RR-1	2		8 bars ea.	126
RL	4	random	4 bars ea.	138
RL	4	random	4 bars ea.	288
RL	4	random	4 bars ea.	288
RR-1	6	random	4 or 2 bars	144
JA-21	12	random	4 bars ea.	152

DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS With A FLATTED NINTH (diminished scale)

JA-21	12	cycle	4 bars ea.	126

UNALTERED & ALTERED DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS IN ALTERNATION (lydian augmented chromatically down)

RL	12	cycle (alternating types)	1 bar ea.	200

II - V - I PROGRESSION IN MAJOR

SOURCE	NO. KEYS	SEQUENCE/FORMAT	DURATION	TEMPO
JA-1	6	up in whole steps (mostly)	4 bars	132
RR-2	6	down in whole steps	8 bars	138
RR-2	6	down in whole steps	8 bars	138
RR-1	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	138
RR-1	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	152
RL	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	180
RL	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	192
RR-4	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	200
RR-4	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	200
JA-3	3	similar to Giant Steps	various	126
JA-3	12	down in whole steps	4 bars (2x)	126
PC	12	down in whole steps	4 bars (2x)	138
JA-16	12	chrom. up, 2 keys at a time	2 + 2 bars	116
JA-16	12	chromatically down & up	2 bars	138

II - V - I PROGRESSION IN MINOR

JA-3	12	down in whole steps	4 bars (2x)	120
RR-4	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	200
RR-4	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	200

II - V - I PROGRESSION IN MAJOR AND MINOR MIXTURE

JA-16	12	random, in major, hybrid, minor	2 bars	66

II-7 ♭II7 I PROGRESSION

RL	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	152
RL	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	160
RR-4	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	160
RR-4	6	down in whole steps	4 bars	184