

A Step-by-Step Approach to Becoming a Jazz Musician.

Part 1. Whatever instrument you play, whether it be it be Woodwind, Brass, Strings or Percussion, here are some 'Top Tips' to guide you in the right direction:

1. Experiment taking yours eyes off the music and see how many different sounds you can make on your instrument e.g. long/short, loud/soft, smooth/harsh, fast/slow.

2. Think of a vivid descriptive theme e.g. A. Ghost/Monster sounds, B. Happy sounds, C. Night sounds.

Form a picture of these sounds in your mind and play a series of notes which portray these contrasting themes. Record yourself and listen to the results.

3. If you do this you have taken the first steps towards improvising on a theme. You also did this without music or any prescriptive notes or scales. The music came straight out of your mind.

4. Learning to improvise in a jazz style is similar to what you have just achieved, but like learning French or Spanish you need a new approach to the language of jazz improvisation.

5. To quote Scott Stroman and Richard Michael in their book on Creative Jazz Education, remember that "Music is an aural medium" and "Written music is valuable as a record and reminder but can never serve as a substitute for music carried round in the brain and heard in the ear".

6. There are so many different styles of jazz still played in the U.K. and Europe by different artists. These include Traditional/Dixieland, Big Band swing, Bebop, Cool School, Jazz Rock, Latin and Funk and you can hear all these styles on BBC 2, 3, and 6.

7. Also you can learn from the Great Masters. I've compiled a list for you to research (See List X on the next page). You need to choose a style or particular artist who appeals to you and listen to how they play jazz.

Choose a solo they play and try to copy their playing aurally or by transcribing the solo on manuscript. Looking at the transcription will allow you to see characteristic features which form their identity and particular approach to improvising.

8. To guide you on your musical journey there are many books on jazz improvisation with all the details of chords, scales and harmony. I would recommend 'Improvising Jazz by Jerry Coker' or 'Creative Jazz Education' by Scott Stroman and Richard Michael.

List X – The Great Masters

Flute: Joe Farrell, Hubert Laws.

Clarinet: Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Buddy De Franco.

Oboe: Yusef Lateef

Alto Sax: Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt, Cannonball Adderley

Tenor Sax: Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz.

Baritone Sax: Harry Carney, Gerry Mulligan

Trumpet: Dizzy Gillespie, Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, Lee Morgan.

Trombone: J.J.Johnson, Kai Winding.

Piano: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans.

Bass: Sam Jones, Paul Chambers, Ron Carter, Charles Mingus, Jaco Pastorius

Drums: Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Buddy Rich.

Guitar: Django Reinhardt, Freddie Green, Charlie Christian.

Violin: Stephane Grappelli

N.B. This list is not exhaustive, you will be able to find lots other artists.