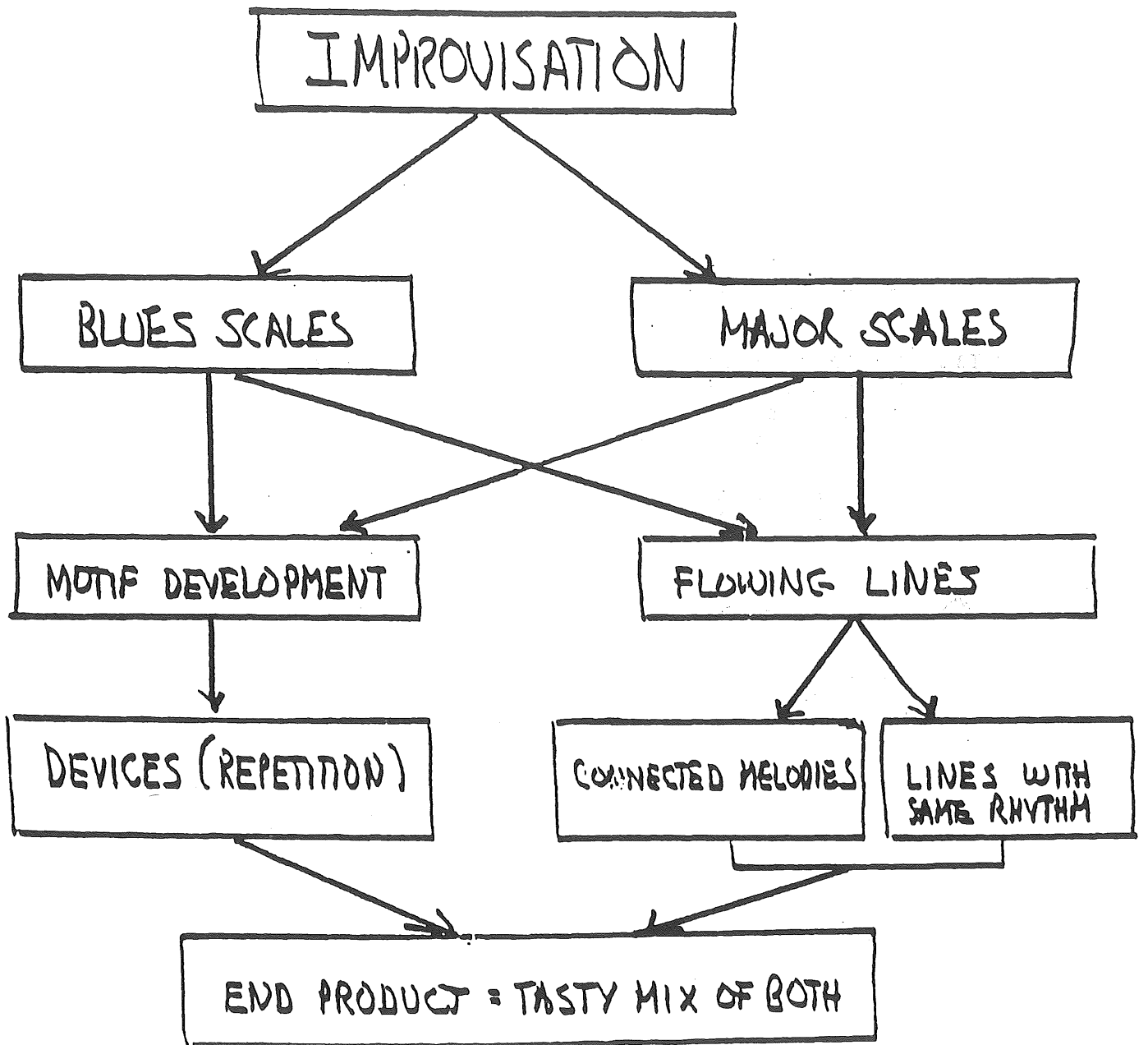


JAZZ IMPROVISATION

by

HAL SHERMAN



JAZZ IMPROVISATION

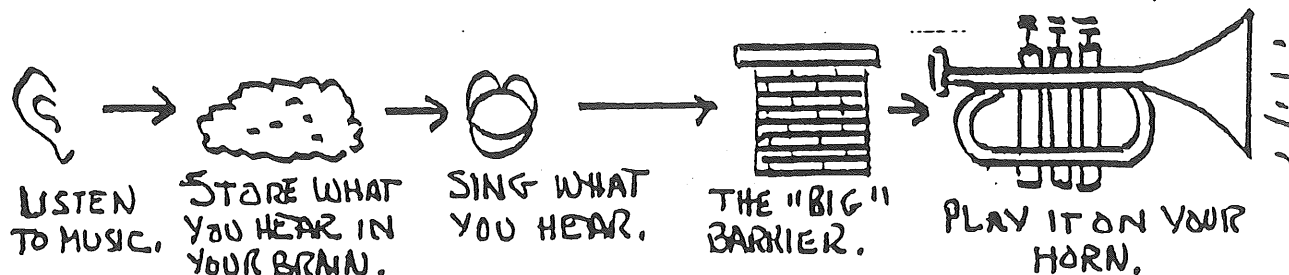
Teaching Jazz Improvisation in the average public school situation should involve four general areas of learning and, if possible, should be taught simultaneously. They are as follows:

1. Listening to Jazz Artists on a regular basis
2. The study of basic theory concepts
3. Ear training
4. Jazz Improvisation techniques

I. LISTENING TO JAZZ ARTISTS: This must be done on a near daily basis. There is a definite relationship between the amount and frequency of listening one does and their success as an improviser.

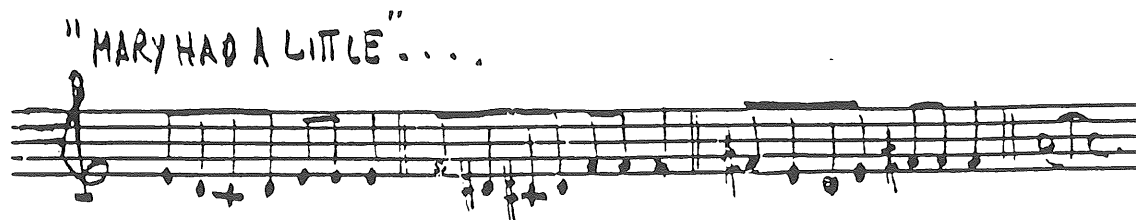
II. THEORY: Basic theory concepts should be taught from the very beginning. Students should become familiar with basic intervals, major scales, the four types of triads, key signatures, and seventh chords.

III. EAR TRAINING: Being able to play on ones instrument anything one can sing is the ultimate goal of an improviser.



A. Three activities will help one to accomplish this goal:

1. THEMATIC TRANSPOSITION: play short melodies or, preferably, bits of melodies and transpose as follows:
 - a. Chromatically up in 1/2 steps
 - b. Chromatically down in 1/2 steps
 - c. Through the circle of fifths
 - d. Whole steps up and down



2. MELODIC DICTATION:

- a. Teacher play an idea (motif), student repeat (give starting pitch). ALWAYS SING THE IDEA BEFORE PLAYING IT.
- b. Student play an idea/other students sing it, then play it.
- c. Teacher play an idea/play a different pitch/students sing idea based on new pitch and then play it.
- d. Students play an idea/play a different pitch/sing the idea on the new pitch/play the idea on the new pitch.

3. TRANSCRIBING PORTIONS OR ALL OF RECORDED SOLOS:

- a. Record a solo at 1/2 speed as well as at regular speed.
- b. Using a pencil, start by indicating pitches only.



- c. Determine where the measures are.
- d. Fill in the rhythms

IV. JAZZ IMPROVISATION: In order of effectively write and play jazz solos a student must be well equipped with the necessary "tools of the trade," SCALES. For our purposes we will deal with only two types, BLUES (melodic) and MAJOR (diatonic).

- A. BLUES SCALE: This is an excellent scale for inexperienced players to learn to improvise with. It gives melodic security and can be used throughout the Blues Progression without regard for chord changes.



GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE BLUES SCALE

In order to create melodies freely and comfortably one must be well acquainted with the Blues Scale, "inside and out." The following suggestions are designed to help one achieve this goal.

1. PRACTICE ALL THE SCALES AS FOLLOWS:

a.) REPEAT THE FIRST 3 NOTES IN 8THS. (SWING 8THS) (BOTH 8ths IF POSS.)

b.) REPEAT THE FIRST 4 IN TRIPLETS

c.) REPEAT THE FIRST 5 IN 8THS

d.) PLAY ALL THE NOTES IN TRIPLETS AND 8THS.

2. EXPANDING THE BLUES SCALE

3] START AT THE TOP OF THE SCALE AND EXPAND BOTH DIRECTIONS.



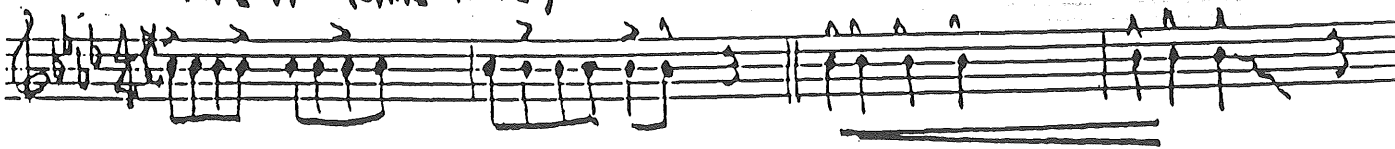
CREATING MELODIES WITH BLUES NOTES

Two contrasting types of rhythmic development will be referred to with regard to writing and playing melodies in the following pages.

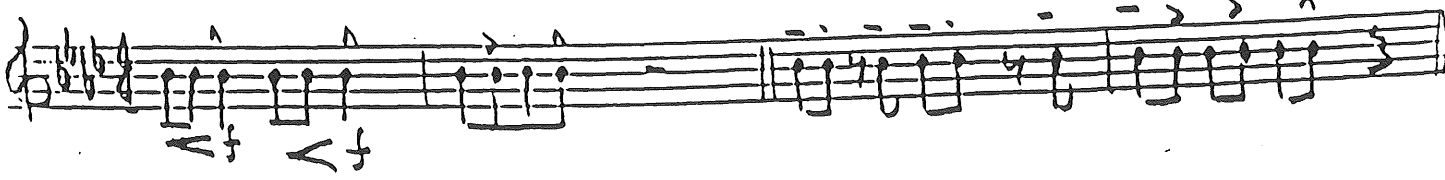
1. TYPE "A": Motifs and lines that use the same exact rhythms (all quarters, 8ths, triplets etc.).
2. TYPE "B": Motifs and lines that use a varied combinations of rhythms and rests.

Effective ideas can be improvised by using only 1, 2, or 3 notes of the scale. When doing so always be sure to incorporate the use of dynamics, nuances, jazz articulations, and special effects.

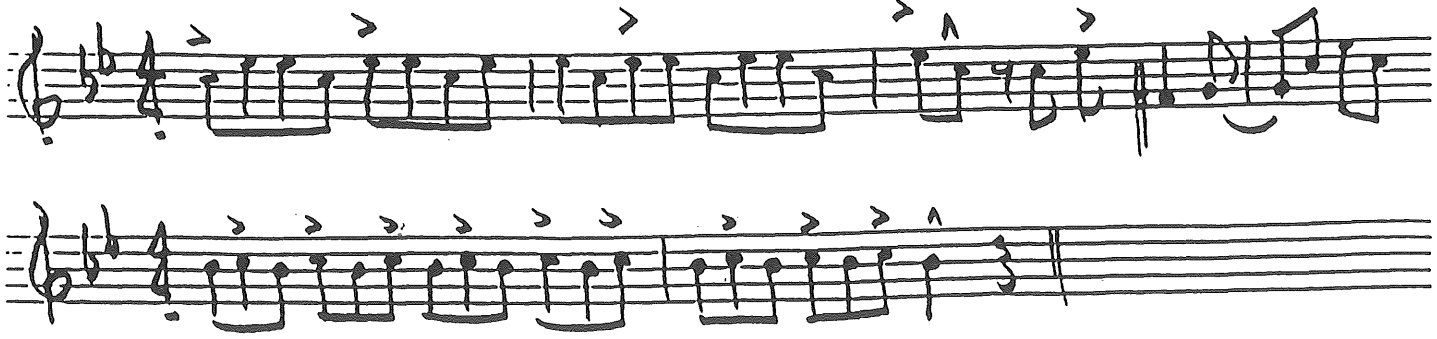
TYPE "A" (SAME NOTE)



TYPE "B"



TYPE "A" 2 NOTES



TYPE "B" - 2 NOTES

2 NOTE COMBINATIONS

CREATING MELODIES WITH THREE BLUES NOTES: Many melodic possibilities become available when using various combinations of three blues notes.

* PLAY THESE COMBINATIONS IN DIFFERENT OCTAVES.

BLUES OPTIONS (MOTIFS):

The following is an illustration of various melodic options using only the top three notes of the blues scale. Similar possibilities exist when using any of the "NEIGHBORING BLUES NOTE" combinations. The following four note "motifs" use Type "A" rhythmic involvement (all 8ths).

One can create entirely different melodies by using any of the above "Options" and Type "B" rhythmic development.

TYPE "A" (OPTION #12)

TYPE "B" (OPTION #1) (OPT. 2)

STARTING TO WRITE AND PLAY MELODIES: In the beginning stages students should only write and play melodies that are two measures long or that are four bar "question answer" types. This will help give their solos continuity and direction.

TWO TYPES OF JAZZ IMPROVISATION

If one were to analyze Jazz Solos they would have to conclude that, for the most part, they were a mix of two types of melodies. One, motifs that are "DEVELOPED" through the use of various "improvisational devices" and two, "FLOWING (non-developed) MELODIC LINES."

I. DEVELOPED MELODIES: The following is a list of various IMPROVISATIONAL CONCEPTS AND DEVICES used in developing melodies. As mentioned earlier, one should remember to make extensive use of the jazz style, nuances, articulations, and special effects when playing your melodies.

A. SPACE: Avoid playing continually, leave rests (space) between the ideas. This concept is equally valuable when playing "Developed" or "Flowing" type melodies.

B. REPETITION: A number of different types of repetition are available, each is very effective. It would be wise to concentrate on one at a time.

1. Repeat one, two or three note combinations using the same rhythm (type "A" development). Don't forget to use jazz articulations, nuances, and dynamics etc.

#1 (TOP 3)

2. Repeat one, two or three note combinations but use varied rhythms and rests (type "B" development).

3. Repeat an idea two or more times playing it on the same beat of the measure each time.

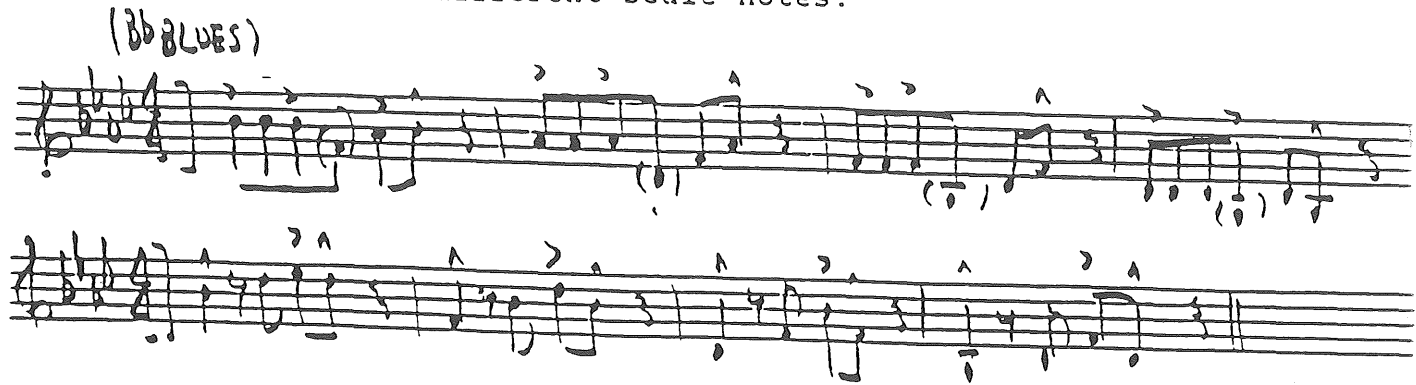
#2

4. Repeat an idea on different beats of the measure.

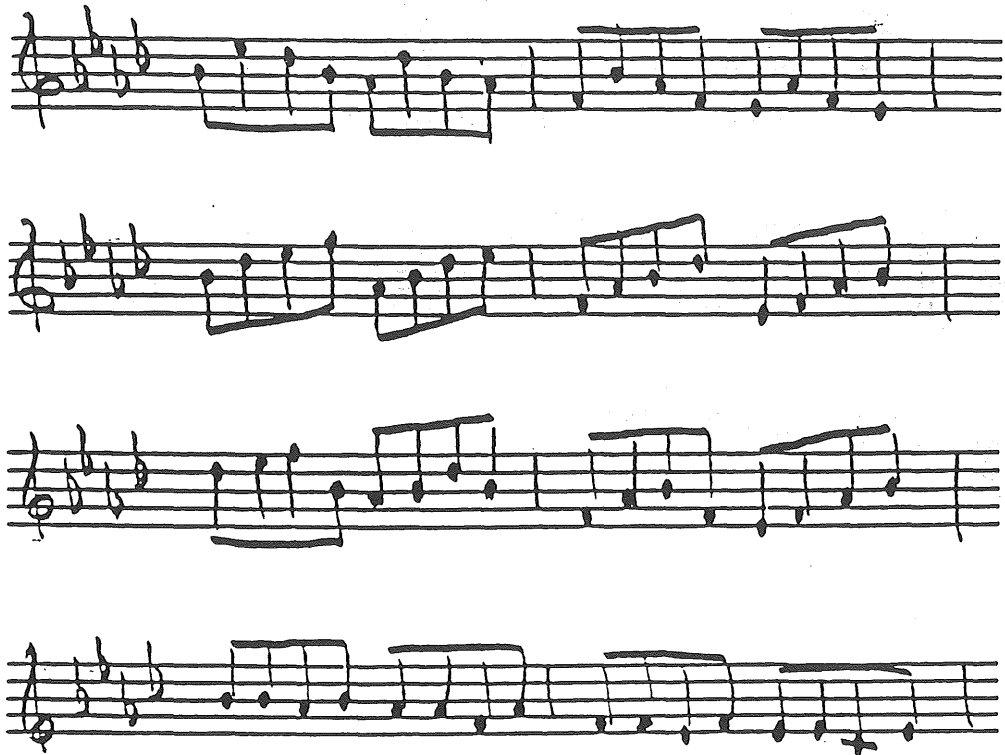
5. Repeat the rhythm but change a note.

6. TRANSPOSITION: Repeat the original motif on different scale notes.

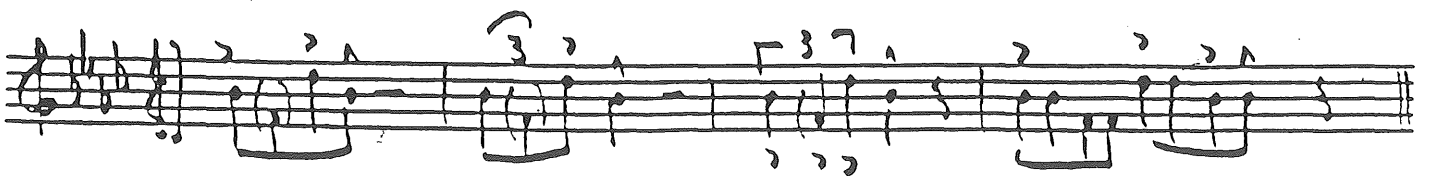
(Bb BLUES)



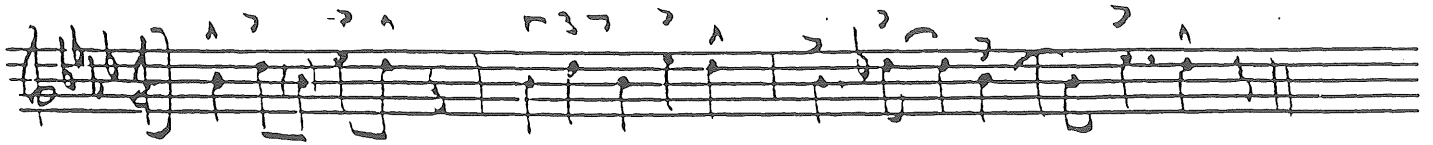
7. SEQUENCES: Using either type "A" OR "B" development, create an ascending or descending melody (sequence).



8. RHYTHMIC DEVELOPMENT:
a. Repeat an idea but change the rhythm.



b. Change an idea by increasing or decreasing note values.



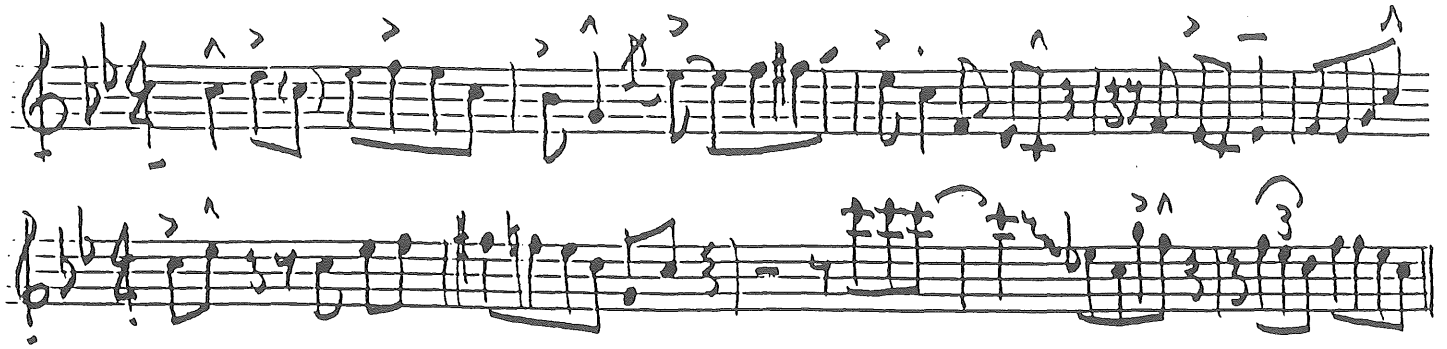
II. THE FLOWING CONCEPT: This type of improvisation is essential to connecting the two types of melodies and "completing the picture." It is also by far the most frequently used of the two types. Two measure Flowing Melodies should be introduced as soon as possible and used in conjunction with the "developed" melodies.

There are essentially two types of flowing lines, both can use as many scale notes as desired. It is important to stress the need to vary the direction of these lines. Students have a tendency to either play ascending or descending lines only, this can sound monotonous.

A. Type "A" Lines: Those that use the same rhythm.



B. "Connected Melodies" (Type "B" developed lines): These lines are essentially "flowing" motifs or short melodies that relate to one another.



Both types of flowing melodies can be used together or in conjunction with the various types of "Developed Melodies."

USING MAJOR SCALES FOR IMPROVISATION

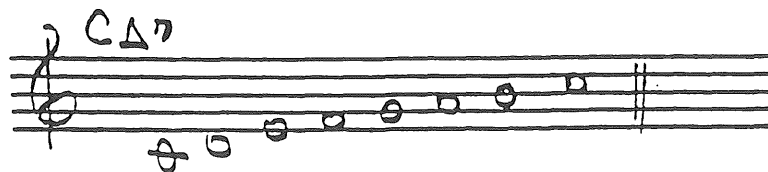
There is no question about the tremendous value of the Blues Scale in teaching beginning improvisation, however, it does have its limitations. The tonality can become a bit "trite" after a while and its very structure limits certain types of movement.

Once the students grasp the concept of creating the two types of melodies with Blues Scales and the "devices", its time to show them how they can use Major Scales in the same way. They should continue to write and play "flowing" and "developed" lines using all of the rules and concepts that they used with the Blues Scale. The main difference now is that they can't use the same scale throughout the solo section, they must now "make the changes."

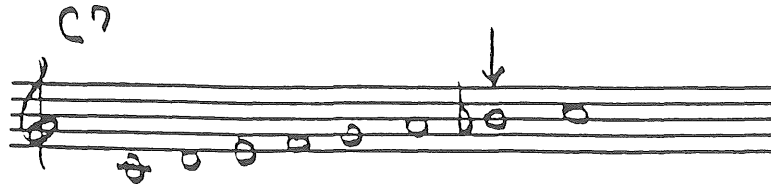
"MAKING THE CHANGES": The beginning improviser must be concerned with three basic chord types: Major, minor, and dominant. All three can be related to major scales by using the following formula:

B. THE MAJOR SCALE: THE THREE BASIC CHORD TYPES (MAJOR, MINOR AND DOMINANT SEVENTHS) CAN ALL BE RELATED TO MAJOR SCALES BY USING THE FOLLOWING FORMULA:

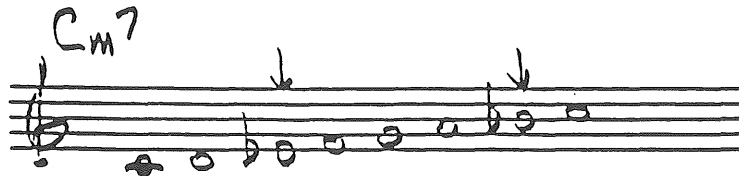
1. MAJOR CHORDS: CREATE MELODIES USING THE NOTES OF THE KEY INDICATED.



2. DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS: ADD ONE FLAT TO THE KEY SIGNATURE INDICATED AND USE THE NOTES OF THAT SCALE:



3. MINOR SEVENTH CHORDS: ADD TWO FLATS TO THE KEY SIGNATURE INDICATED AND USE THE NOTES OF THAT SCALE (IN SHARP KEYS FLATS CANCEL SHARPS):



That was the "good news", the "bad news" is that they must be THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED with all the key signatures and major scales. When they see a chord change they must be able to tell how many flats or sharps are involved at a glance.

In order to accomplish this difficult task one should create as many different activities (games) as possible. Use "flash" cards, do oral drills naming a specific chord and its type and having students name the key signature (number of flats and sharps), write a short progression and melody on the board and have the students play through it etc. etc. Another effective activity is to have instruments in the same key (all Eb, Bb, C etc.) repeat a one octave ascending and descending Bb concert scale many times. Call a chord change out each time they are about to reach the bottom of the scale and start up again.

The following are typical scale sequences that can be used with the "flowing" type of lines. Many others can be found in various classical methods and improv. books. Try using different rhythms and follow the same sequence, start a sequence and call or write out chord changes along the way.

MAJOR SCALE SEQUENCES

The image displays 20 handwritten musical sequences for major scales, numbered 1 through 20. Each sequence is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The sequences are arranged in two columns. Sequences 1 through 10 are simple eighth-note scales. Sequences 11 through 14 incorporate triplets. Sequences 15 through 20 are more complex, featuring various rhythmic patterns and slurs. Each sequence begins with a circled number and ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign. Some sequences include the text "etc." at the end.

THE CHROMATIC SCALE

This scale can be a very effective tool for the improviser. It can be used over any chord type. It is extremely effective as a connecting device. Many "flowing" lines can be created with it as well as sequences and fast moving passages. The rule is that you should start and end on the correct notes and as long as you are moving you're o.k. If you sense you are playing a "wrong note" you're never more than a 1/2 step away from a correct one.

CHROMATICISM

This is another very effective device for the improviser. It involves approaching scale and chord tones from half steps above and below in various ways. This is explained quite well on pages 19-23 in Volume I of "A NEW APPROACH TO JAZZ IMPROVISATION" BY JAMEY AEBERSOLD.

THE TWELVE BLUES SCALES

The image displays the twelve blues scales in a handwritten format. Each scale is represented by a single staff with notes and accidentals. The scales are labeled with their corresponding chords above the staff. The scales are as follows:

- C**: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- D^b**: D^b, E^b, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E^b, D^b, C
- D**: D, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- E^b**: E^b, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E^b, D, C
- E**: E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- F**: F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- G^b**: G^b, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- G**: G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- A^b**: A^b, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- A**: A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- B^b**: B^b, C, B, A, G, F, E, D, C
- B**: B, C, B, A, G, F, E, D, C