

Jazz Lesson 16

Technique

1. Learning Technique Through Tunes

- a. Many of my students are looking for technical exercises to improve their playing. Once they've reached a certain level, I like to give them technically hard jazz standards to practice. Technically demanding standards will help you understand the jazz language, and improve your technique! Below is an excerpt from "Joy Spring" with fingerings marked for you to practice.

Figure 16.1

The musical score consists of two staves of piano rolls. The top staff shows a sequence of chords: GmM7, G-7, C7, FmM7, F-7, and Bb7. The bottom staff shows a bass line. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: for example, over the first measure, the left hand has fingerings 5, 3, 2, 3, 2, 1; the right hand has 3, 2, 1. Subsequent measures show similar patterns of eighth-note chords with specific finger assignments.

Harmony & Theory

1. Blues Series Part 4 Styles and Solo Techniques

- a. Styles - There are lots of different jazz styles that have their own unique take on the blues. In this section we will cover **boogie-woogie** and **stride**.
 - i. Boogie-woogie - Boogie-woogie (or just boogie) is a style of jazz that emphasizes LH playing. The LH repeats an eighth note pattern in the bass register that continues over the form while the RH is free to play melodies and solo. There are two LH patterns that I will show you. The first pattern involves the root, 5th, and 6th of each chord. The root remains the same for each chord, but the 5th and 6th are interchanged every beat. Look at the figure below for the pattern over the first chord in a C blues, (see figure 16.2).

Figure 16.2

The musical score shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a bass clef. It features a continuous eighth-note bass line consisting of four measures of a C blues progression. Above the staff, the chord symbol C7 is written. Fingerings are provided for the bass notes: the first measure shows 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1; the second measure shows 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1; the third measure shows 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1; and the fourth measure shows 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1.

This pattern is simply transposed to the IV chord and played in the same manner, (see figure 16.3).

Figure 16.3



As your LH continues to play this pattern your RH can solo or play the melody.

The second LH pattern is two measures long and involves continuous broken octaves. It moves from the third to the fifth, to the sixth, and finally to the seventh. From the seventh it comes down by step down to the C then repeats itself (see figure 16.4).

Figure 16.4

A musical score for the left hand in bass clef. The key signature is C major (no sharps or flats). The pattern consists of two measures of continuous broken octaves starting from the third (E), moving to the fifth (G), the sixth (A), and finally the seventh (B). The pattern then steps down to the first (C) and repeats. Fingerings are indicated below the notes: 1, 3, 5, 6 for the first measure, and 7, 6, 5, 3, 1 for the second measure.

Like our first pattern, it stays constant throughout the blues form and is used as a palate for the RH to play over top of.

- ii. Stride –The stride piano style predates the boogie-woogie style by a few years. The use of a stride LH can be used over any pieces, but it works very well over a blues. With stride, the LH also plays a pattern that remains constant throughout the blues form. We start by playing the root of the chord on beat one, then jumping up to play the actual chord however you choose, (root position, or an inversion, or a

rootless voicing), we then jump back down to fifth of the chord on beat 3, and finally back up to the chord on beat 4. So there is a 4-step process for every measure. Root then chord, then fifth, then chord, giving us four beats total, (see figure 16.4).

Figure 16.4



b. Soloing Scales for RH

- i. Mixolydian – The mixolydian scale is similar to a major scale, but has a lowered seventh tone. It is the main chord scale you would use to play over a blues because the blues consists of all dominant chords. Let's say we are playing a traditional blues in the key of F. Our three dominant 7th chords are F7, Bb7, and C7. Each V7 chord has a Imaj7 chord it belongs too. Bb7 is the V7 chord in the key of Ebmaj, and C7 is the V7 chord in the key of Fmaj. To play a C mixolydian scale, take a C major scale and lower the seventh, which is Bb. Another way to conceptualize the C mixolydian scale is an F major scale starting and ending on C. This can get slightly confusing at first but once you start to practice and play the blues more, it will come more naturally.

Figure 16.5



- ii. Blues Scale – The blues scale is the traditional scale used over the blues, which we talked about previously. Let's say we are playing a blues in the key of C, we can

use our C blues scale over any of the chords. We can also use the blues scale that goes with each dominant chord in the form. So in this instance we would use the C blues scale over C7, the F blues scale over F7 and the G blues scale over G7, (see figure 16.6).

Figure 16.6

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff starts with a C7 chord, indicated by a 'C' above the staff and a '7' below it. It features a blues scale: notes C, E, G, A, B, D. The middle staff starts with an F7 chord, indicated by an 'F' above the staff and a '7' below it. The bottom staff starts with a G7 chord, indicated by a 'G' above the staff and a '7' below it. Each staff consists of four measures of music.

iii. Major^{6th} blues scale – The major 6th blues scale is a variation of the standard blues form. The notes are exactly the same as a regular blues scale with the exception of the sixth note. In a major 6th blues scale you substitute the 6th note with the 6th scale degree rather than the b7, (see figure 16.7). A major 6th blues scale can also be used over major 7th chords in any piece. Play the regular blues scale and then the Major 6th blues scale. Notice the differences in sound.

Figure 16.7

The image shows a single staff of musical notation. Above the staff, the text 'C6 BLUES SCALE' is written. Above the final note of the scale, the text '6TH' is written with a small downward arrow pointing to the note. The staff contains seven notes: C, E, G, A, B, D, E. This represents a regular blues scale where the 6th note (B) is repeated as the 6th scale degree (D).

2. Rootless Voicings Structure 2

- a. Structure 2 of our rootless voicings is similar to structure 1, but with some different extensions and movements. Let's start with the first voicing over our ii-7 chord in the key

of C, which is D-7. This first voicing is stacked with the following degrees of the chord, the 7th on the bottom (note C), then the 9th (note E), the 3rd (note F), and finally the 5th (note A). This is our -7 structure we will use over the ii-7 chord, (see figure 16.8).

Figure 16.8



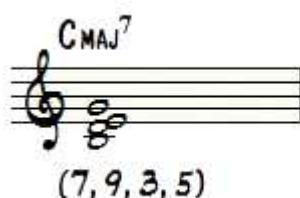
Our next structure is built over the dominant chord, or in this case our G7 chord. Built from the bottom up, our structure consists of the 3rd, (note B), the 13th (note E), the 7th (note F), and finally the 9th(note A), (see figure 16.9).

Figure 16.9



This rootless voicing is over a Imaj7 chord, Cmaj7. As with the first sequence, the last chord in the ii-V-I takes the same format as the 1st chord.This gives us the degrees: 7,9,3,5 just as we played over the ii-7 chord in this sequence, (see figure 16.10)

Figure 16.10



This completes our 2nd rootless voicing sequence, (see figure 16.11).

Figure 16.11

The image shows three musical chords on a staff:

- II-7**: Bass (B), Upper Notes (D, G)
- V7**: Bass (G), Upper Notes (B, D)
- IMAJ7**: Bass (C), Upper Notes (E, A)

Below each chord is its 7th chord formula:

- (7, 9, 3, 5)
- (3, 13, 7, 9)
- (7, 9, 3, 5)

Vocab & Repertoire

1. Beginner Improvisation Series Part 8 – LH Comping while soloing

- a. There are a few different steps for integrating your LH into your solo. A lot of people simply put their LH on autopilot while they solo, but I would like to get you away from that train of thought. When utilized correctly, your LH can make or break your playing. It can control and emphasize all the harmonies and add value to your RH. We want to make sure we are practicing control over our LH while our RH solos. Through the practice of the following techniques you will get used to placing your LH harmonies where it can support your RH improvisation.
 - i. During RH – When your LH is comping, make sure it is not interfering with whatever you're playing. One way to do this is by keeping your left hand playing simple. Only play whole notes over each chord. Play short rhythms or use a repeated rhythmic comp that does not change (see figures 16.12-16.14).

Figure 16.12

1. Holding Harmonies (playing whole notes)

Three staves of music. The first staff has a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a time signature of common time. It contains a single whole note labeled D-7. The second staff has a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (G), and a time signature of common time. It contains a single whole note labeled G⁷. The third staff has a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (C major), and a time signature of common time. It contains a single whole note labeled C MAJ⁷.

2. Short rhythms

Six staves of music. The first two staves show a pattern of sixteenth notes for the D-7 chord. The next two staves show a pattern of sixteenth notes for the G⁷ chord. The last two staves show a pattern of sixteenth notes for the C MAJ⁷ chord.

3. Consistent Rhythmic Comp

Four staves of music. All four staves show a consistent sixteenth-note pattern for the C-7 chord, featuring a bass note followed by three pairs of eighth-note chords.

Four staves of music. The first staff shows a sixteenth-note pattern for the C-7 chord. The subsequent three staves show variations of this pattern, each featuring a grace note (a sixteenth note) before the main sixteenth-note chord.

Four staves of music. The first staff shows a sixteenth-note pattern for the C-7 chord. The subsequent three staves show variations of this pattern, each featuring a different voicing or rhythmic arrangement of the sixteenth-note chords.

Four staves of music. The first staff shows a sixteenth-note pattern for the C-7 chord. The subsequent three staves show variations of this pattern, each featuring a sustained bass note (a quarter note) while the upper voices play sixteenth-note chords.

ii. In the space – The other way to have your LH comp is by playing in the space that your RH leaves, (or should leave). This is great because it will actually help your RH learn to leave space for your LH hand to react. In the space we can do anything you want with your LH. It's your LH's time to shine!

Figure 16.13

1. Rhythms in RH Space

D-7 G⁷ CMAJ⁷

2. Movements of harmonies

D-7 G⁷ CMAJ⁷

3. Long space or short space

D-7 G⁷ C_{MAJ}⁷

D-7 G⁷ C_{MAJ}⁷

iii. RH and LH should work together – Your RH and LH should be having a conversation with each other as you play. Sometimes your LH will not have much to say, other times your RH may not have much to say. Either way you can work on going back and forth in a conversation style manner. Remember, if you've forgotten your LH is playing, then it is probably on auto-pilot and that is not what we want to happen.

- b. The final step of our improv series involves a couple of steps, which I will address separately.
- i. Be simple – Bill Evans said it best, “It’s not what you play, it’s how you play”. This could be the most important statement ever said about music. Whenever you’re playing make it a habit to play simple, but with beauty and swing.
 - ii. Explore - Exploration is an amazing thing in jazz. The great living masters are still exploring this music even in their old age. Your journey will never stop. Explore as much as possible during your practice, rehearsals, performances, and any other time

you have the opportunity. The greatest discoveries in the world came through the process of exploration. It will help you develop your playing faster than most things.

- iii.* Make Mistakes – Never be afraid to make mistakes while playing. Making mistakes is what will continue to progress your playing. Otherwise you'll end up playing all the material you already know over and over again.
- iv.* Swing – The great Duke Ellington made a profound statement in the title of one of his compositions, “It Don’t Mean A Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing”. If your lines are not in the pocket and do not swing then they are meaningless in jazz. Take advantage of space if you have nothing to play so your lines can have meaning and a strong rhythmic purpose.