

We welcome Tim Price as a new columnist to Sax On The Web. Tim Price is a Selmer Clinician , professional musician, jazz journalist and author. His books " The Cannonball Adderley Collection", " Hot Rock Sax ", " Great Tenor Sax Solos" are all published by Hal Leonard.

A Private Lesson withTim Price

Being a well-rounded saxophonist and making the most of your ultimate musical skill, which is the melody:

Let's start with looking at the market place today from a professional standpoint. I feel your training and education must be at a very high professional level. There are few college-level teaching positions and sometimes even fewer gigs, so our key in the marketplace is being well-rounded.

One of the basic approaches to this, I found, is keeping an open mind. Don't shut yourself off to saxophone quartets, rhythm and blues gigs, teaching beginning students, or playing in big bands. By doing these and embracing many styles musically, you will start to develop skills that are as diverse as they are vital to your survival.

If you can play the Omnibook of Charlie Parker solos, you should also work with Guy Lacours (28 Etudes), which all are on altered dominant scales. I use it a lot in my teaching.

Another great book for sight-reading which I feel all students, no matter what level they're at should be checking out, is my buddy Fred Lipsius' book called "Reading Key Jazz Rhythms," published by Advance Music. This book is a must!

Those are some key things to consider before I start my main topic of melodic improvisation below.

Learning to Use Basic Melody

Music is communication. In order to communicate your ideas to others, you must speak the same language. Whether you choose to speak with slang, proper English, or beatnik poetry, there are certain spelling and grammatical conventions required to talk musically.

Musical Ideas

When musical phrases are constructed of basic elements such as chords or scales, they are organized into ideas and sentences much the same way that speech is just a combination of spelling and grammar. Phrases, like sentences, have beginnings and endings. This is one of the most important aspects. We separate our phrases with space and pauses. We punctuate our ideas with accents and rhythms. The tools and tech of music are there to help us express our ideas in much the same way language helps us speak.

Melodic Possibilities Within Personal Musical Style

There are as many melodic possibilities as there are people to play and hear them. The beauty of jazz and improvising is that you should be able to communicate your own ideas. That is the difference between reciting someone else's story and telling your own. Learn to believe in yourself and let your own musical personality enhance the melody. Whether it's the melody of a tune or your improvisation.

Tracking

Tracking is the ability to listen to yourself. This is one of the most crucial things in melodic playing. Tracking is the ability to identify your own ideas and build on them. Music is not the combination of as many different ideas as possible in the shortest amount of time, (e.g. playing a lot of notes fast and all over the place) but, the flow and elaboration of a few ideas in a logical and coherent manner.

The secret of tracking is to listen to yourself. Again, each idea should have a beginning and an end. Pause and listen to your last idea. Your next idea should be related to the last. Whether you repeat a rhythm, note, shape, or even stop and begin with a new idea, this will help you to direct your lines and phrases into a specific area.

What you will hear coming out of yourself will be your own musical ideas. They are shaped by your feelings and the interactions of the people you are playing with, as well as your technical condition. All this will grow richer as you study more and practice harder and learn the repertoire.

The secret is to create in the **now**, and not simply play all your memorized licks. The more you practice, the more you will be able to hear, and your abilities as a jazz improviser will grow and expand. Remember, what you hear is more important than what you know.

The Three Aspects of Melody

#1- The Melodic Curve

#2- Harmony

#3- The Melodic Rhythm

The melodic curve is a melody's linear or graphic structure. A melody is basically a line of notes that can move up or down by step or by skip. It can be primarily horizontal or very vertical in shape. The melodic curve is the horizontal and vertical shape of the melody.

The melody- harmony relationship refers to the relationship of the melody note to a chord progression. This aspect of melody corresponds to the concept of modality. The melody notes we use should have varying degrees of consonance or dissonance within the harmony.

Melodic rhythm refers to the length and time feel of the melody and the phrasing. Melodies tend to sound like sentences and tend to have pauses in between ideas. The pauses and space between ideas can also be a form of rhythm as it defines the larger pattern of the phrase relationships. Play in phrases. Try to use speak like rhythms.

Practicing These Concepts

Try to create melodic-type exercises by focusing on different aspects of the melody. For instance move upward or downward. Create a climax. Work deliberately

with scale-wise motion or skips. Learn to play into the beat with pick-up notes. A terrific exercise is to play the first bar as a whole note, the second as four quarter notes, the third as whole, the fourth as four quarters, etc. Hear the exercise as a series of pick-ups to the whole note target notes. This melodic movement can be called "playing into the beat."

Analysis

Analyze your melodies and tunes you are learning. Create original melodies over the changes in melody over the tune you are playing on.

Final Thoughts

Melody making is the ultimate art of music. No matter how far out or far in, or what kind of music you are playing, there must be melody. Everything you know and hear goes into your choice of notes or melodies. The creation of an expressive personal melodic style is the long-range goal and reward of studying improvisation and musicianship. Good luck, and remember...when you practice work and when you play.....PLAY !

Thank you,

Tim Price

(Tim teaches in New York City and Pennsylvania. He can be contacted for clinics, masterclasses, private teaching , gigs, and concerts by e-mailing him at : TEP251 SAX@AOL.COM .)