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Developing a Systematic Approach for Teaching Beginning Improvisation Using the Concert Percussion Ensemble

Ian McClaflin

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DEVELOPING A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH FOR TEACHING BEGINNING
IMPROVISATION USING THE CONCERT PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

by

Ian McClaflin

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Sciences
and the School of Music
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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ABSTRACT

Typically, when studying percussion at a University, a student is required to be proficient at multiple aspects of percussion (snare drum, mallet keyboards, drum set, hand drumming, etc.) and work through multiple method books and solos on the different instruments. This often leaves little to no room for the study of improvisation on their instrument.

Examined in this study are the following points pertaining to the state of teaching improvisation:

- There is an apparent lack of improvisation in the classroom
- Teachers often feel unprepared in teaching improvisation
- Improvisation is most commonly associated with jazz
- Both teachers and students tend to experience anxiety when encountering improvisation
- The recent changes to the National Music Standards (2014) puts a greater emphasis on improvisation
- While many teachers feel unprepared to teach improvisation as a subject, most are willing to learn

This project will address these points and provide percussionists with fundamental skills in improvisation. This study contains three original concert percussion ensemble pieces that provide a structured foundation for beginning improvisation using a four step method. First, improvising using only chord tones. Second, improvising using scalar patterns. Third, incorporating digital riffs into the improvisation. Fourth, improvising using a combination of the three methods.

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Most importantly, I would like to thank Dr. John Wooton for his guidance throughout my time of study at The University of Southern Mississippi. You have instilled within me a passion for this project and have continued to mentor me to make it the best it can be. It is my hope that this project can inspire others the way you have inspired me.

DEDICATION

This project is first dedicated to my family who have supported me every step in my life. I also dedicate this work to each former percussion teacher I have had the pleasure of learning under. Each one of you have shaped me to become the musician and person I am today. In addition to my family and mentors, I dedicate this project to anyone willing to try something new and outside of their comfort zone.

Lastly, I dedicate this project to my beautiful wife Kelsey who has been by my side supporting me throughout the entire process and has made this project possible. This project is for you and our son Ben.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
LIST OF MUSICAL FIGURES	vii
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Need for Study	2
Challenges in Implementing Study for the Percussionist	3
History of the Modern Concert Percussion Ensemble	4
CHAPTER II STATE OF REASEARCH IN IMPROVISATION	6
Improvisation Education	7
Improvisation Method.....	12
CHAPTER III METHOD FOR TEACHING IMPROVISATION	16
Composition Structure	16
Method Overview for Teaching Improvisation	17
Lesson Outline for Teaching Improvisation Using Composition I.....	20
Lesson Outline for Teaching Improvisation using Composition II	24
Lesson Outline for Teaching Improvisation Using Composition III	27

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS	32
APPENDIX A COMPOSITION ANALYSIS	35
APPENDIX B COMPOSITIONS	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73

LIST OF MUSICAL FIGURES

Figure 1	Cmaj7	21
Figure 2	Dbmaj7	21
Figure 3	C major/Ionian.....	22
Figure 4	Db major/Ionian.....	22
Figure 5	Cmaj7 digital riff	23
Figure 6	Dbmaj 7 digital riff.....	23
Figure 7	C-7	24
Figure 8	F7	25
Figure 9	C Dorian	26
Figure 10	F Mixolydian	26
Figure 11	C-7 digital riff.....	26
Figure 12	F7 digital riff.....	26
Figure 13	C7	28
Figure 14	F7	28
Figure 15	G7	28
Figure 16	C Blues	29
Figure 17	C Mixolydian.....	29
Figure 18	F Mixolydian	30
Figure 19	G Mixolydian.....	30
Figure 20	C7 digital riff	30
Figure 21	F7 digital riff.....	31
Figure 22	G7 digital riff.....	31

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Musical Example 1 Composition I measures 1-8	36
Musical Example 2 Composition I measures 9-16.	36
Musical Example 3 Composition I measures 21-24	37
Musical Example 4 common bossa nova pattern.....	37
Musical Example 5 Composition I measures 1-12.	38
Musical Example 6 Auwarter's bass rhythm.	39
Musical Example 7 Composition I measures 1-12.	40
Musical Example 8 Composition I drum set accompaniment	40
Musical Example 9 Composition II measures 1-8.....	42
Musical Example 10 Composition II measures 13-16.....	42
Musical Example 11 Composition II measures 21-24.....	43
Musical Example 12 Auwater's montuno rhythm.....	44
Musical Example 13 Composition II measures 1-2.....	44
Musical Example 14 Cha-Cha bass pattern.	45
Musical Example 15 Composition II measures 1-4.....	45
Musical Example 16 Auwarter's cha-cha pattern for drum set.	46
Musical Example 17 Composition II measures 1-4.....	46
Musical Example 18 12 bar blues progression.	47
Musical Example 19 Composition III measures 1-12 showing chord tone patterns.	48
Musical Example 20 Composition III measures 13-24 using Blues and Mixolydian scales.	49
Musical Example 21 Metzger's comping patterns.	50

Musical Example 22 Composition III measures 1-2.....	50
Musical Example 23 Composition III measures 4-7.....	50
Musical Example 24 Composition III measures 9-12.....	51
Musical Example 25 bass line example	51
Musical Example 26 Composition III measures 1-2 and 5-6.	52
Musical Example 27 Composition III measures 9-12.....	52
Musical Example 28 Igoes' drum set shuffle pattern.	53
Musical Example 29 Composition III drum set pattern.....	53

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>mm</i>	Music Measures
<i>maj</i>	Major

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, improvisation has played a role in most every musical genre. The New Oxford Companion to Music defines improvisation as “musical performance which is created as it is played, without notated score or detailed preparation.”¹ The Oxford entry then examines the history of improvisation throughout western music:

Skill and improvisation was often expected of solo performers until the early part of the 19th century. Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, for example, were all esteemed as keyboard improvisers, and some of their works are presumed to have originated in extemporizations...improvisation re-emerged in the 1960s as an important skill, thanks in part to the development of indeterminate music and in part to the influence of jazz and Indian music.²

Notable scholar in the field of improvisation in Western art music, Ernst Ferand, writes:

There is scarcely a single field in music that has remained unaffected by improvisation, scarcely a musical technique or form of composition that did not originate in improvisatory performance or was not essentially influenced by it. The whole history of the development of [Western art] music is accompanied by manifestation of the drive to improvise.³

These entries emphasize that improvisation was an integral aspect of Western music. In today's musical landscape, improvisation is primarily studied in jazz curricula and seemingly overlooked in other areas. As a result of this, students studying music at most universities do not receive adequate improvisation instruction. This project seeks to

¹ Paul Griffiths, *The New Oxford Companion to Music*, Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1983, 903.

² Ibid., 203.

³ Robin Moore, “The Decline of improvisation in Western Art Music: An interpretation of Change.” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 23, no. 1 (Jun 1992): 62.

provide a guide for both teachers and students, foundational principles for improvisation using the medium of the concert percussion ensemble.

Need for Study

Improvisation is a skill that can be developed, but it is often only a small part of a university music major's training⁴. In the ever-changing modern musical landscape, it is more important than ever for a musician to be as well-rounded as possible. Included is a comment from Shelton Berg, dean of the Frost School of Music, on the state of music and the necessity of a musician being well rounded:

The days of musicians being educated only to be adept at playing music seems to be fading fast. The more education and background students have in a wide variety of disciplines, the greater their overall success in the field of music.⁵

Berg's quote shows that musician training needs to be more diverse than just being technically proficient on the instrument. Vibraphone player John Metzger comments on this as it pertains to a percussionist:

Given today's difficult employment climate for musicians, you will do well from the start to ready yourself for many different kinds of work situations ranging from orchestral and solo playing to Sunday Timpani jobs, drum set work, and jazz vibes gigs. Knowing the tunes you need to know and how to improvise well enough to succeed on a jazz vibes gig could prove beneficial one day down the road.⁶

⁴ Michael Thomas Gieb, "Teaching Improvisation to Orchestral Double Bass Players: Significance and Methodology." Dissertation, Tallahassee, FL: The Florida State University, 2013, 1.

⁵ Shelton Berg, "The days of musicians being educated only to be adept at playing music seems to be fading fast," *jazzedmagazine.com*, July 9 2010, <http://www.jazzedmagazine.com/articles/publishers-letter/todays-well-rounded-musician/> (accessed June 29, 2018).

⁶ Jon Metzger, *The Art and Language of Jazz Vibes*. Roaring Cap, NC: EPM Publications, Inc., 2008, Introduction.

Challenges in Implementing Study for the Percussionist

A music major studying percussion at a university is required to be proficient at many different instruments along with different styles of music. Percussionist Pamela J. Nave illustrates the demanding expectation of the university percussion major:

By far the university studio curriculum demanding the greatest versatility of the student is the percussion studio. It encompasses a wide array of instruments and playing everything in between. A short list of the instruments students may be required to study may include snare drum, timpani, mallet instruments, steel drum, hand drums, bass drum, triangle, Latin instruments, cymbals, tambourine, and many others. The great diversity of playing techniques and the sheer number of percussion instruments can be both a blessing and a curse to the university undergraduate student.⁷

Due to the overall span of material and different instruments that must be covered for a percussionist studying at a university, improvisation is often not developed.

Primarily in a percussionist's mallet training, they prepare scales and arpeggios and work through method books on the various keyboard instruments. An upper class student's mallet training becomes more centered around solo and etude playing as they begin to prepare for recitals toward the end of their programs. In this model, percussionists develop the scales and arpeggios that are often used in improvisation but do not have a structured way to apply these skills effectively.

The concert percussion ensemble is now standard in most percussion studio curriculum. Using this study, students will be able to apply their knowledge to improvisation along with being able to apply their theory and aural skills training within the percussion ensemble. By working through all pieces in the study, students will be able

⁷ Pamela J. Nave, "A Survey of Percussion Studio Curricula in the State Universities of the United States and Puerto Rico." Dissertation, Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, 2001, 1.

to navigate basic concepts for tonal improvisation, be provided a foundation for future learning on the topic, become a more well-rounded musician, be exposed to different styles, and learn these concepts through an already established medium in most percussion studios. Before explaining the specific aspects of each piece in the study, provided is a brief history of the modern concert percussion ensemble and how it became an integral part of the percussion curriculum.

History of the Modern Concert Percussion Ensemble

The first instances of the modern concert percussion ensemble in the United States date back to 1931 with the release of *Ionization* by Edgard Varese. This marks the beginning of the percussion ensemble movement in the early twentieth century. “The San Francisco Group” whose members include John Cage, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, Gerald Strang, Johanna Beyer, and William Russel, was one of the first groups to begin experimenting with instrumentation along with creating different percussion instruments.⁸ John Cage’s experimentation with the medium during this time was crucial in the development of the concert percussion ensemble. In 1938 Cage presented a concert of all percussion ensemble music that was the first of its kind.⁹ This helped to bring the medium to a wider audience and started legitimizing the concert percussion ensemble. Around this same time, the first college percussion ensembles began being formed. Fred Novak established a percussion ensemble at the Cincinnati College

⁸ Benjamin Joshua Arnold, “The Development of the Collegiate Percussion Ensemble: Its History and Educational Value”. Dissertation, Boston, MA: Boston University, 2016, 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5

Conservatory of Music around the early 1930's.¹⁰ While Novak's ensemble was one of the first at the collegiate level, the group formed at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign became the main model for the university setting. Benjamin Joshua Arnold's study tells of the significance of the University of Illinois' percussion ensemble:

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign was the first and the catalyst for significant changes in United States collegiate percussion programs. In 1950, Paul Price became the first person to teach both a percussion ensemble class and a percussion literature course for college credit. Price's influence upon [percussion] and the promotion of percussion elevated it to a status of equality with the rest of the orchestral instruments. His influence was such that by the end of the 1950's, the percussion ensemble had become a standard group in many large universities in the United States. For the next twenty years universities began to accept the percussion ensemble as a viable form of performance and thus an important part of their percussion curricula.¹¹

Due to these influential groups and composers, most universities and secondary schools have some form of a percussion ensemble.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5

¹¹ Ibid., 6

CHAPTER II

STATE OF REASEARCH IN IMPROVISATION

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that jazz as an art form became accepted at universities.¹² In the 1988 spring issue of the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, Wayne D. Bowman's compiles an overview of research in the field of jazz improvisation. Bowman raises many questions about the early state of jazz improvisation research. He states:

It is much like any body of research literature. But in this instance one may say with some confidence that many of the questions remain not so much because they are intractable or insoluble but because of the relative newness of jazz research to academia and, more tentatively, because researchers in the area have not been held to the same rigorous standards as other music educators... It would appear that regardless of the route by which it has arrived, jazz improvisation pedagogy research is poised at the brink of a potentially exciting quest, should scholars choose to take up the challenge.¹³

Today the field of jazz improvisation research and education materials has grown but is severely lacking within the area of improvisation for the concert percussion ensemble.

When compiling the resources for this study, I have come across many trends throughout the body of sources. I have divided these trends into two categories. The first category is the need for improvisation (education articles). The second category is learning how to improvise (method books lessons/master classes).

After careful research of sources pertaining to improvisation education, the following common trends arose:

¹² Wayne D. Bowman, "Doctoral Research in Jazz Improvisation Pedagogy: An Overview." *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 96 (1988): 47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 72

- There is an apparent lack of improvisation in the classroom
- Teachers often feel unprepared in teaching the subject
- Improvisation is most commonly associated with jazz
- Anxiety for both teachers and students is common when encountering this subject
- The recent changes to the National Music Standards (2014) put a greater emphasis on improvisation
- While many teachers feel unprepared to teach improvisation as a subject, most are willing to learn

Improvisation Education

For students that choose not to participate in jazz ensembles, they will generally not have any exposure to the subject. This is especially problematic for percussionists due to the construction of a jazz ensemble only allowing for a small number of players.

Leading education scholar Christopher Azzara writes of this trend:

Although improvisation has been a vital part of music making throughout history, it is inexplicably missing from most school music curricula today. With the exception of jazz and some instructional activities in elementary general music classes, improvisation occupies a comparatively small place in a comprehensive music education. Even though most people admire individuals who can improvise, instrumental or vocal experiences rarely elicit improvisational skill from every student. Due in large part to this lack of experience, students may become increasingly apprehensive about attempting improvisation. However, regardless of one's musical background, it is never too late to start learning how to improvise.¹⁴

¹⁴ Christopher Azzara, "An Aural approach to improvisation." *Music Educators Journal*, 86, no. 3 (Nov, 1999): 21.

In his article, Azzara goes on to provide strategies for how to implement improvisation into the large performing ensemble. The following trend explains a common reason for the lack of improvisation within the classroom.

Students who pursue a degree in music at a university will not have a fundamental knowledge of improvisation and most likely, if they do not take any jazz courses, will not receive any training in the subject. This leads to teachers not being adequately prepared to teach the subject because they have had little to no experience themselves. Herbert D. Marshall is an assistant professor of music at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His article, *Improvisation Strategies and Resources*, explains his own lack of experience with the subject. He writes:

I had no course work in improvisation and held a very narrow definition of the term: complex music created spontaneously by jazz musicians and organists I identified with neither category, therefore I was not an improviser...Of course, neither my students nor I were ready to improvise, so every attempt was a disaster.¹⁵

Marshall's article shows that teacher's inexperience with the subject is all too common within the field. Both Azzara and Marshall highlight the next trend within the body of research that improvisation is most commonly associated with jazz music.

The association of improvisation to strictly jazz can be attributed to the following points. At the height of jazz music's popularity during the mid-twentieth century, the top players at the time were also amazing improvisers. Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, are just a few of the leading players during this time that all used

¹⁵ Herbert Marshall, "Improvisation Strategies and Resources for General Music." *General Music Today*, 17, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 51.

improvisation as a major aspect of their playing. As a result of jazz music's influence during this time, secondary and university music programs began incorporating the study of jazz music into their curriculum.¹⁶ Today, the jazz band is a common part of any music program and improvisation is a major part of any jazz ensemble; however, improvisation can and should be incorporated in many different styles and settings outside of jazz music.

Michael Bitz article, *Teaching Improvisation Outside of Jazz Settings*, shows how improvisation can be taught using other genres of music. Bitz writes of this problem and offers solutions including introducing improvisation in different genres such as Bluegrass, Blues, Ska, Reggae, and Rap.¹⁷ This approach leads to two favorable outcomes in that the student will be improvising in a musical setting that they are more comfortable with and it can expose students to different genres of music they could have never heard. The next trend occurs as a result of the first three trends and is commonly cited throughout the entire body of research.

While the lack of experience can cause high anxiety for both the student and teacher, managing that anxiety is crucial to having success when improvising. Janine Riveire, an assistant professor of music at California State Polytechnic University of

¹⁶ Andrew Krikun, "Popular Music and Jazz in the American Junior College Music Curriculum During the Swing Era." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, 30, no. 1 (October 1, 2008): 39.

¹⁷ Micheal Bitz, "Teaching Improvisation Outside of Jazz Settings." *Music Educators Journal* 84, no. 4 (Jan 1998): 21.

Pomona, writes of anxiety and how it is important to remove it when learning the subject.

She writes:

An important key to any of these activities is to consider your students; and your own anxiety about improvisation. Many musicians and students fear improvisation for different reasons, but it is important to remove the element of fear and allow the musical mind to play. That is the essence of improvisation.¹⁸

When students and teachers approach improvisation without anxiety, it allows them to be more creative. This leads to better improvisation. The next trend sparked the recent push for more improvisation within secondary education.

The recent revision to the National Music Standards (2014) put a greater emphasis on creating within musical settings rather than just performing. Included is the novice guidelines for the Creating standard:

Compose and improvise melodic and rhythmic ideas or motives that reflect characteristic(s) of music or text(s) studied in rehearsal.¹⁹

This led to many articles and studies on how to implement the new standards for improvisation into ensembles that have historically had little to no improvisation within them. The final trend in the state of research points to teacher's experience with improvisation due to the recent change to the standards.

Professor of Music at the State University of New York Christian H Bernhard's article, A national survey of music education majors' confidence in teaching improvisation, findings reveal the above mentioned trends. The findings of the survey

¹⁸Janine Riveire, "Using Improvisation as a teaching Strategy." *Music Educators Journal* 92, no. 3 (Jan 2006): 42.

¹⁹ National Association for Music Education Standards 2014: Website, accessed July 23, 2018, <http://nafme.org/my-classroom/standards>.

show that the majority of music majors reported “slight confidence” in teaching the improvisation standards grades 9-12.²⁰ The survey goes on to include participants reported “slight to moderate” in their own ability and reported “great interest” in learning more about how to teach the subject.²¹ This survey shows teachers’ interest in improving their teaching skills in improvisation as well as their willingness to learn more about the subject.

The above articles and sources show the apparent need for my study and will serve to address the trends found within the body of research. The next section will present trends on how to improvise. They are as follows:

- Having knowledge of the harmonic structure when soloing through chords tones and scales
- Varying the rhythm of your solo to simulate the sound of a conversation
- Listening to great jazz musicians to transcribe and emulate their solos
- Developing a mastery of the theory and style that allows you to have your voice as an improviser
- Analyzing improvised solos and identifying the most common passages

²⁰ Christian Bernhard, “A national survey of music education majors’ confidence in teaching improvisation.” *International Journal of Music Education*, 34, no. 4 (Nov, 2016) 387.

²¹ Ibid., 387.

Improvisation Method

Having knowledge of the harmonic structure within a musical passage enables the improviser to understand how their improvisation moves through the music. This includes the knowledge of chord tones and how they comprise the foundation for any scale. In *The Art and Language of Jazz Vibes*, author John Metzger writes of this pairing:

In a big, very general nutshell, jazz improvisation can be described in two ways. It can be based on a type of scale or it can be based on an outline of chords. A combination of the two approaches in the hands of a master is what makes jazz improvisation an art.²²

In addition to Metzger's method, Jamey Aebersold's many methods stress this pairing of chord tone based approach with the use of scales when soloing. Along with Aebersold's and Metzger's method books, leading vibraphone player and educator Tony Miceli references this approach in many of his instructional video lessons. One such lesson is Miceli's lecture on the jazz standard Donna Lee from Vibes workshop.com²³. In the lecture, Miceli talks about the ways the head or main melody perfectly outlines each chord. Understanding the chord structure is crucial in understanding how to improvise over the changes. He offers many different ways to get familiar with the chord structure such as exercises using thirds and starting on different chord tones to develop more interesting passages. I have structured my method to be line with the chord tone based

²² Jon Metzger, *The Art and Language of Jazz Vibes*. Roaring Cap, NC: EPM Publications, Inc., 2008, 47.

²³ Tony Meceli, Donna Lee, Lecture Video accessed on Vibeworkshop.com

approach outlined in these sources. The next common trend within improvisation methods is to vary the rhythms of a solo to mimic the sound of a conversation.

This is a good device in teaching a student how to vary their solo because it can be easy to model a conversation. A conversation has natural peaks and valleys within it and that same movement can be played within a solo. World renown vibraphone player Gary Burton shares his explanation on mimicking a conversation in a solo in his lecture, “Tips and Tricks for starting out with improvisation” from Berklee online²⁴. In his lecture, Burton talks about the development of improvisation and how it is related to the study of language. Scales represent vocabulary and phrases make up sentences. He mentioned sentence structure is varied and this can be applied when soloing. The next two trends focus on an essential element of any musical training.

Throughout the history of jazz music, listening to other musicians has been one of the most commonly cited ways to improve a musician’s improvisation. In *The Jazz Piano Book*, author Mark Levine writes of the importance of listening to jazz musicians:

Listen to as much live and recorded jazz as you can, transcribe solos and songs from records, and, in general, immerse yourself as much as possible in the work of JAZZ.²⁵

In listening to other soloists, a musician will begin to learn and expand their musical vocabulary. Great improvisers have a way of marrying their knowledge of the harmonic structure with putting their own musicianship into the solo. After listening to many

²⁴ Gary Burton, Tips and Tricks for starting out with improvisation accessed on Berklee online

²⁵ Mark Levine, *The Jazz Piano Book*. Petaluma, CA: Sher Music CO., 1989, vi.

different soloists, the student will begin to emulate the solos they have been listening to and start to create their own musical voice. After a combination of learning the theory and listening to great improvisers, the next step leads to the third trend.

In learning any musical instrument, there comes a point where the student no longer has to think about the technical side of playing. Once the student achieves this, it allows them to play more freely. This is the same in the study of improvisation. Once the student no longer thinks about the technical side of chord changes, it allows them to play more freely. The ultimate goal is to be able to use this concept and play over any combination of chord progressions. In the book *The Jazz Theory Book*, Mark Levine includes this quote from famous jazz musician Charlie Parker, “Learn the changes and then forget them.”²⁶ Even in the most basic of levels of improvisation, this is an essential point. The last of the trends within the body of research deals with finding patterns within solos.

The trend of analyzing solos and determining what patterns are being used has been prevalent through the history of improvisation research. Recently, there have been studies that use statistics to determine the frequency of notes and passages within solos. This helps determine if there are patterns to what makes a great improvised solo. Two of these such studies are Simon Scott’s “Tonal Hierarchies in Jazz Improvisation”²⁷ and

²⁶Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book*. Petaluma: Sher Music CO, 1995, Introduction.

²⁷ Simon, Scott. “Tonal Hierarchies in Jazz Improvisation.” *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12, no. 4 (Summer, 1995): 415-437.

Gary Potter's "Analyzing Improvised jazz."²⁸ Both studies revealed that chord tones are the most frequently used notes in solos. These studies along with many others seek to find patterns in solos that help to determine what makes a solo great.

Today's jazz improvisation research and education materials have grown, but improvisation within the concert percussion ensemble is still an underserved medium. In using vetted improvisation methods and research, I have put together a study that will help guide both teachers and students in learning improvisation. In using three original percussion ensemble pieces, students will be exposed to basic chord progressions and scalar patterns and three different styles of music. This study will also provide fundamental knowledge on improvisation that will in turn foster more creativity for both teachers and students.

²⁸ Potter, Gary. "Analyzing Improvised Jazz." *College Music Symposium* 30, no. 1 (Spring, 1990): 64-74.

CHAPTER III

METHOD FOR TEACHING IMPROVISATION

Composition Structure

The melodies within each composition are comprised mainly of chord tones and scalar patterns. The melodies and harmonic structure are simple enough to be transposed to different keys. Through these melodies, students will gain the understanding and importance of chord tones and how they function as the foundation of each scale.

The compositions for the project will allow students to gain experience in four different types of roles within the ensemble. First is the solo line providing students with a linear one-voice line. Second is the accompanying (comping) line exposing students to vertical lines or blocked chords involved in each piece. This uses rhythmic patterns idiomatic of the style of music. Next is the bass line providing students commonly used patterns and providing a guide as to how they relate to the rest of the harmonic structure as the foundation of each chord. Last is the percussion accompaniment/drum set part.

Ensemble awareness is especially important for the role of the drum set or percussion player in any ensemble. Two main factors to address with the drum set player are, keeping the ensemble in time and controlling the balance of the instrument. Due to the nature of the drum set, a player can easily be too loud for the ensemble. This is especially true in these particular ensembles as they are comprised of mallet percussion instruments as the main melodic content. Brushes and smaller sticks are a must for the drum set player of the ensemble. This part will also have the option of different configurations to suit the needs of any ensemble. For the bass, comping, and drum set members of the ensemble, the notation on the page should first be followed; however,

this can be later opened to improvisation as long as it still fits the style of the particular piece.

There is no substitute for playing with others in a live setting; however, included in the study are play-along tracks that give students the option to rehearse any part with a full ensemble sound/feel. This allows for any number of students to benefit from the method and not be limited to the shortage of equipment or personnel.

Setting up the ensemble with these various roles provides each student a chance to experience different aspects of the ensemble. For the bass instruments, these students will play on the lower range of the marimbas and learn common bass lines and patterns that are characteristic to the music while gaining experience reading in bass clef. The comping instruments will play on the middle and upper ranges of the marimbas divided with two mallets each or, for advanced players, this can be performed with four mallets. The drum set part will provide rhythmic accompaniment and play patterns characteristic of each style. The lead instrument will play the main melody and solo over the changing chord progression of the various pieces. All parts fit within the ranges of standard mallet percussion instruments. The compositions follow a systematic progression adding only one more chord or scale in each piece. This allows the student to become comfortable with the material without getting overwhelmed.

Method Overview for Teaching Improvisation

Included in each composition is an improvisation section after the main melody. By playing the melody line of any of the compositions, the student will have a fundamental knowledge of chord tones and scales that can be used when soloing. The following section outlines an improvisation method using each composition as a guide.

The first step in the method is limiting the student to only using the chord tones found within each chord. The student will already be familiar with these notes, as they comprise the main melody of each composition. For example, if the chord being improvised over is a C7, the student will only use the notes, C, E, G, Bb. Limiting the student to just chord tones at first is crucial as the chord tones are the most structurally important notes. Through practicing, students will begin to hear how chord tones sound stronger when played over the given chords and will hear how non-chord tones do not sound as strong. During this step it is important to focus only on one chord at a time. This focus can be accomplished by repeating a particular section of the piece until the student feels comfortable with the chord tones available to them. Guiding the student to use their ears while improvising will help them to hear when they are making strong improvisational choices. When learning any new skill, students need time to feel comfortable with the material. It is important to stay patient and repeat any section as many times as possible until the student grasps the concept. As the student becomes more comfortable with the chord changes, encourage him/her to expand their rhythmic choices. It is important not to allow the student to become too reliant on repeating the same rhythm continuously. Encouraging the student to explore different rhythms on chord tones will create a more interesting improvisation.

Once the student is comfortable with chords and chord tones used within the piece, the second step in the method is to have the student incorporate scalar patterns to help vary their improvisation. The student should listen and explore how the non-chord tones (or scalar patterns) relate to the overall harmony. During this part in the method, explain to the student(s) that the scales simply connect the chord tones. A visual

representation of this can be to have the student(s) lay their mallets on the keyboard spelling out each chord and showing them that the scales are the notes in between the chord tones. Scalar examples are also found in the melody of each of the compositions along with supplementary exercises provided in the following chapters. Have students experiment with these different approaches and find patterns they like. Limiting students to larger rhythms and repeating small sections should still be applied during this section as well.

After the student feels comfortable with each chord using both chord tones and scales, the third step in the method is using digital riffs to further vary their improvisations. A digital riff is a collection of certain scale degrees that are played over each chord within a progression. Metzger identifies the collection of scale degrees 1,2,3,5, ascending and descending, as a commonly used digital riff.²⁹ Provided in the method are examples of possible digital riffs that can be applied to each composition. Like the other two steps, once the student is comfortable have them start to create their own digital riffs.

Once the student can demonstrate an understanding of the above mentioned concepts, the fourth and final step in the method is having the student combine the three approaches and think about the overall structure of their improvisation. A place to start with this is using the metaphor of a conversation. In a conversation there are highs and lows in the speech patterns. This can be applied to the student's improvisation by not

²⁹ Jon Metzger, *The Art and Language of Jazz Vibes*. Roaring Cap, NC: EPM Publications, Inc., 2008, 47.

relying on the same notes or approach but varying the solo to mimic speech patterns. The following section will provide specific exercises and a lesson plan for achieving the above points using each composition.

Lesson Outline for Teaching Improvisation Using Composition I

Objectives

The first objective is to have the student improvise using only chord tones. The two chords found in Composition I are Cmaj7 (C E G B) and Dbmaj7 (Db F Ab C). The second objective is having the student use scalar patterns in their improvisation. The mode used in Composition I is the Ionian mode or major scale. The third objective is to have the student incorporate digital riffs into their improvisation using scale degrees found in Cmaj7 and Dbmaj7. The final step is combining the three methods and consider the overall structure of their improvisation. The next section will provide specific exercises on how to achieve the objectives.

Procedure/Method

The first step involves having the group successfully play from the beginning to letter C of Composition I, “appendix B.” During this portion, the teacher should call attention to instances of chord tones found in Cmaj7 and Dbmaj7 chords within the melody. Repeat this using the scalar patterns found in the melody as well. This will reinforce the choices the improvising student will have once they begin to solo. Once the lead player can successfully play from the beginning to letter C, they can then move to the improvisation section.

Before the student starts improvising, have the ensemble outline each chord tone found within the composition by playing arpeggio figures on the entire range of their

instruments. The following exercises outline the chord tones found within each chord of Composition I using the standard range of a vibraphone.

Figure 1

Cmaj7



Figure 2

Dbmaj7



These exercises should be applied to different rhythms along with starting on different chord tones. The students should also be able to start at the top of the instrument and descend rather than always starting at the bottom. Changing the pattern helps the students understand all of the different options they have for improvising. Once the students have a grasp on the chord tones they will be using, they can now begin improvising over a single chord.

First, limit the soloing students' improvisation to only chord tones. The ensemble should vamp the first two measures while the soloist begins using chord tones found in Cmaj7. This vamp should be repeated as many times as necessary until the student feels comfortable. Next, have the ensemble vamp measures 9 and 10. This is where the chord changes to Dbmaj7. Repeat the previous process until the student feels comfortable with the new chord. Once the student is comfortable with both chords, they can begin to solo

over the entire section (measures 25-48). After the student feels comfortable improvising over the entire form, they can begin to incorporate scalar patterns.

The following two exercises are different ways to introduce scalar patterns in a way that is not playing them from the bottom to the top then back down.

Figure 3

C major/Ionian



Figure 4

Db major/Ionian



Using these two exercises as a guide, have the student start on different parts of the scale. Having the student explore different starting and ending spots within the scale will help them as they begin to incorporate scalar patterns into their improvisations. Once the student has demonstrated they are comfortable with the scale exercises, they can then begin improvising over the form using the same steps as the previous section. At this point in the procedure the student will have played both a chord tone based solo and scalar solo. Next the student will begin incorporating digital riffs.

Below are two possible examples of digital riffs using scale degrees 1,2,3,5 for Cmaj7 and Dbmaj7.

Figure 5

Cmaj7 digital riff



Figure 6

Dbmaj 7 digital riff



As with every other section of the method, these exercises are guides for further improvisation. Encourage the student to create their own digital riffs once they grasp the concept.

The final step is to have the student use a combination of the three approaches and applying it to the overall structure for their solo. This step should be played over the entire solo section. At this point the student has three options to choose from as they solo and should begin incorporating parts of each approach throughout their improvisation.

When learning any new skill, it is important not to overwhelm the student with information. Let the student make mistakes when soloing and have them use their ear to determine why a particular note didn't work. All students learn at different rates.

Patience is key for both the teacher and the student to be successful.

Lesson Outline for Teaching Improvisation using Composition II

Objectives

The first objective for the student is to solo using chord tones over a C-7 (C Eb G Bb) and F7 (F A C Eb) chord. The next objective is to have the student soloing use the following scalar patterns, Dorian mode for the C-7 and the mixolydian mode for the F7. The third objective is using digital riffs over both the C-7 and F7 chords. The final objective for the student is to improvise using a combination of the three methods along with attention to an overall structure to their improvisation.

Procedure/Method

The first step is to have the group play from the beginning to letter C of Composition II, “appendix B.” The teacher should call attention to the instances of chord tones found in C-7 and F7 chords along with C Dorian and F Mixolydian modes that make up the melody. Once they understand the main melody of the composition they can then proceed to the improvisation section.

First have the students outline the arpeggios for each chord used in the improvisation section. The following exercises outline the chords tones used for both the C-7 and F7 chords.

Figure 7

C-7



Figure 8

F7



Depending on the students' familiarity with these particular chords, it may take longer for them to feel comfortable with the notes. Once they are comfortable, start varying the rhythms and starting points of the exercises. The next step is to have the student begin improvising over a single chord.

When the student begins to improvise, limit their improvisation to only chord tones. Have the ensemble vamp the first two measures of the solo section for the improvising student to begin soloing over. Composition II includes both chords every two measures. If the student is having trouble making the switch between the two chords, limit their improvisation to only one chord at a time. It is important to note that C-7 and F7 share two common chord tones (C and Eb). Therefore, the student only switches from using (G) and (Bb) for the C-7 to (F) and (A) for the F7. Another way to reinforce chord changes is to have the ensemble say the chord out loud when the change occurs. Once the student feels comfortable with a chord tone solo, they can begin to incorporate scalar patterns.

The following two scalar exercises represent two possible ways to change the pattern of where the scale begins and ends.

Figure 9

C Dorian



Figure 10

F Mixolydian



Once the student is comfortable with the scale exercises and explored different patterns within each scale, they can then begin improvising over the form using the same steps as the previous section. When the student and teacher feel they are ready, the student can begin using digital riffs in their improvisation.

Below are two possible digital riffs using scale degrees 1,2,3,5 for C-7 and F7.

Figure 11

C-7 digital riff



Figure 12

F7 digital riff



The included exercises are guides for the student to use to create their own digital riffs over the form. Allow the student to be creative and experiment with this part of the method to hear how playing the same scale degrees in each chord function in different parts of the form.

For the final step, have the student use a combination of the three approaches and apply them to the overall structure for their solo. At this point in the method the student has explored multiple options for their improvisation and can use each method to begin to shape a larger scale improvisation.

Lesson Outline for Teaching Improvisation Using Composition III

Objectives

The first objective for the student is to solo over the C7 (C E G Bb), F7 (F A C Eb), and G7 (G B D F) chords using chord tones. The second objective is to have the student solo using scalar patterns using the C, F, and G Mixolydian mode, and C blues scale. The third objective is to have the student solo using a digital riff pattern in each chord. The final objective involves the student being able to seamlessly improvise over the entire form using a combination of a chord tones, scalar passages, and digital riffs. The next section will provide descriptions and exercises on how to meet these objectives.

Procedure/Method

The first step in the procedure is to have the ensemble play the beginning to letter B of Composition III, “appendix B.” During this portion, the teacher should call attention to instances of chord tones found in the C7, F7, and G7 chords within the melody along with corresponding Mixolydian modes and the C blues scale. Once the

students understand the main melody of the composition they can then proceed to the improvisation section.

Have the students play the arpeggio of each chord, starting with the chord's lowest scale degree 1, up and down the full range of the instrument. The following exercises provide an arpeggio figure using the C7, F7, and G7 chord.

Figure 13

C7



Figure 14

F7



Figure 15

G7



Once the student has outlined all of the chords, and explored different starting points within the chord, they can begin to solo over smaller sections of the progression.

Have the ensemble vamp each chord while the soloing student improvises using only chord tones. This will allow for the student to become comfortable with each

particular chord. This open solo process should be used over every chord in the form. After the student has improvised over every chord, they can then start linking chords together in the form. Pause after each repetition to give time for the student to reset. Pay careful attention to the student's choice in chord tone selection during this particular section to make sure they are understanding each chord switch and using appropriate chord tones.

Now that the soloing student feels comfortable soloing over the form using only chord tones, introduce the corresponding scale. Just as we outlined the arpeggios of each chord earlier in the method, we will now play the scale options for each chord using the full range of the instrument. The following exercises show a C blues scale, C Mixolydian, F Mixolydian, and G Mixolydian scale.

Figure 16

C Blues

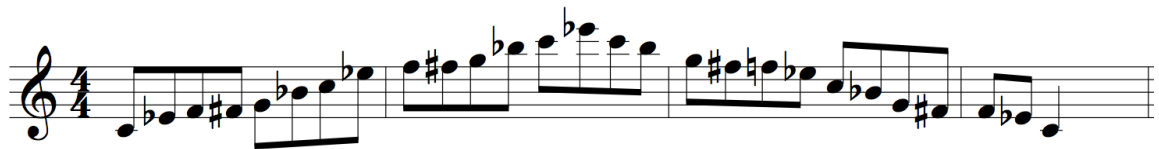


Figure 17

C Mixolydian



Figure 18

F Mixolydian



Figure 21

F7 digital riff



Figure 22

G7 digital riff



As with all steps in the method, once the student is comfortable with a couple basic digital riffs have them start creating their own. Next, have the soloing student incorporate all three methods into their solo.

At this point in the method the student has gone through all three compositions and should have multiple tools and ideas for how they want their improvisation to sound. Always make sure the student is using their ear to help them make sound improvisational choices.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Improvisation finds itself in an interesting place in the modern musical climate as the amount of materials and expectation on musicians to improvise grows. The heightened importance of improvisation due to the change in the national music standards have caused educators to take note and re-evaluate their own knowledge of improvisation to best serve their students. It is important to remember that improvisation is not only limited to jazz music but can be applied to any other musical genre. Musicians such as Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, among many others, were all expert improvisers. This study seeks to provide percussionists within the concert percussion ensemble this opportunity to learn foundational skills in improvisation.

Percussion encompasses a large number of instruments and techniques in both melodic and non-melodic instruments. Students studying percussion are required to have a solid foundation on each different instrument and technique. Using this study, percussionists are provided a foundation on improvisation that they can then use for further study on the subject. This study also provides a foundational method in a setting that is a part of most every percussion curriculum, the concert percussion ensemble.

This project fits within the field of improvisation education along with established methods for teaching improvisation. It addresses the mentioned trends within the field of improvisation education and provides an additional resource for students and educators. As a method for teaching improvisation, this project draws from established improvisation methods and seeks to provide students a guide for how to begin learning the skill.

Along with providing an introduction to improvisation, this study also introduces different genres, styles, and roles using the concert percussion ensemble. The concert percussion ensemble itself is relatively new. Often times, in standard concert percussion ensemble literature, students are not exposed to the different roles this study provides. These specific roles being the comping, bass line, and drum set parts to the three compositions. Each one of these roles within the ensemble have very different and distinct responsibilities. Having this exposure to these different roles within the compositions can inform students of how to make more well-informed decisions in different ensembles and other musical settings. Along with providing a foundation for both teacher and student on improvisation, this project can encourage further research on the subject.

A logical next step for applying this study would be incorporating the widely used ii-V-I progression and exploring the various options for soloing over that form. Another topic, that could be addressed in a later version of the project, would be to involve extended harmony to the comping lines: 9ths, 11ths, 13ths. Improvising using these more advanced chords and forms can be practiced using the same method of: chord tones, scales, digital riffs, then combining each approach. True mastery of improvisation requires a focused commitment to learning the art. This includes listening and mimicking great improvisers and exposing oneself to many different methods along with many different genres of music.

Teaching improvisation in the concert percussion ensemble provides students a comfortable and familiar outlet in which to hone their improvisational skills. While there is the option for the student to play by themselves by using the included play along

tracks, this study is best served playing with others. Even though this study focuses on the concert percussion ensemble, this approach can be easily modified to fit different musical settings using any instruments. For improvisation to be successful in having a larger role in music education, it is up to the teachers and students' willingness to learn something new and not be afraid to make mistakes.

APPENDIX A

COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

Composition I

The first composition is centered around major tonality using major seven chords. The main scalar patterns used in this piece are contained in the Ionian mode. The Ionian mode is simply a major scale. The chordal structure of the piece is C major going to Db major using a half step relation. The piece is divided into three sections (ABA) with eight measures for each section.

This composition is in the style of a bossa nova. Oxford music online defines the bossa nova as:

A musical style of Brazilian origin blending elements of the samba and cool jazz. It was popular in the USA in the 1960's, but many bossa nova tunes have become staple to the jazz repertory... its challenging harmonies have elicited fine improvisations.³⁰

Popular musical examples of the bossa nova style are “Blue Bossa” by Joe Henderson, “Garota de Ipanema” by Antonio Carlos Jobim, and “Chege de Saudade” by João Gilberto.”

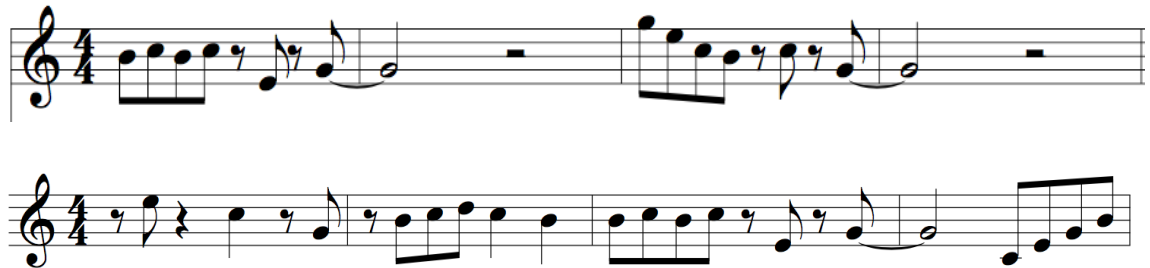
Melody

The main melody of the piece uses only chord tones that make up the major seven chords of C major and Db major. Musical example 1 shows the first eight measures of the melody using chords tones with only one instance of an upper neighbor on the “&” of “2”

³⁰*Oxford Music Online*, “Bossa Nova,” by Barry, Kernfeld, accessed January 14, 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000990003>.

in measure 6. This addition of the note “D” is to provide students a fragment of a scale passage.

Cmaj7



Musical Example 1 *Composition I* measures 1-8

Musical example 2 shows the “B” section of the melody. In this, all chords tones of the Db major seven chord are used along with Ionian mode passages. The main theme is stated in Db major in measure 9 then using Ionian mode passages in measures 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16.

Dbmaj7



Musical Example 2 *Composition I* measures 9-16.

Musical example 3 shows the final four measures using a descending scale in Ionian mode with added rests to provide the melody more variety in measures 21 and 22. Measure 23 recalls the main theme and measure 24 ends with double stop octaves on the note C.

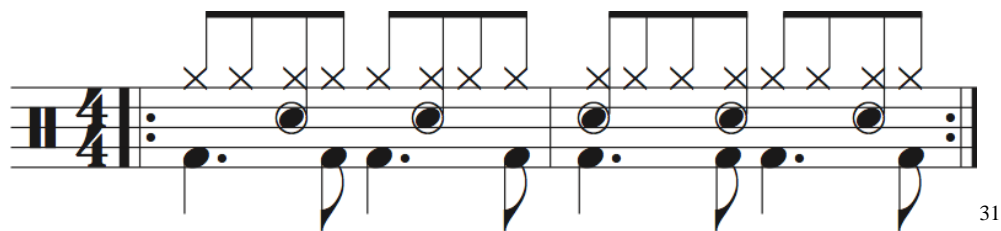
Cmaj7



Musical Example 3 *Composition I* measures 21-24

Harmonic Structure/Comping Line

The rhythm of the comping pattern is characteristic of the bossa nova style. The following example shows a common bossa nova pattern adapted for the drum from musician Tim Haley.



Musical Example 4 common bossa nova pattern.

The above example illustrates the rhythm and style that the comping line is based on. The specific rhythm that the comping line is based on is the snare line rhythm on the third space.

³¹ Timothy R. Haley, "Bossa Nova Essentials" accessed Oct 24 2019, <https://drumsettips.org/bossa-nova-essentials/>

The harmonic structure of the first composition comping line is simply C major 7 for the first “A” section, Db major 7 in the “B” section, and returning to C major 7 for the last “A” section. Musical example 5 shows the harmony and pattern used by the comping instruments in the first “A” section. The patterns avoid beat 1 on every other measure while the harmony spells out the C major seven chord. The chord is spelled in second inversion to get the student comfortable with not always putting the root of the chord as the lowest note. The example then shows the half step modulation to the “B” section in Db major. The chord tones used are the same in the comping line from the previous section modulated a half step up to Db major.

Cmaj7



Dbmaj7



Musical Example 5 *Composition I* measures 1-12.

The last eight measures return to the “A” section and share the same comping pattern and harmony as the beginning.

Bass Line

The rhythm of the bass line puts an emphasis on the “&” of “2” leading to beat “3” and the “&” of “4” leading to the downbeat of the next measure. In his book,

“Essential Latin Styles for the Drum Set,” Doug Auwarter examines why this rhythm is characteristic of a common bossa nova bass line. He writes:

The bass should create the illusion that it is a surdo-the Brazilian bass drum. The more this effect is realized, the more effective the bassist will be in interpreting this music.³²

Auwarter then provides 4 examples of possible bass rhythms that are characteristic of the music. Below is Auwarter’s third option for a bass rhythm and serves as a guide for the bass rhythm in *Composition I*.



33

Musical Example 6 Auwarter’s bass rhythm.

The harmonic structure of the bass line exclusively uses scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 throughout the piece. This is to provide students with a basic outline of the chords they will be using. Musical example 6 shows the bass line for the first “A” section in C major and a half step modulation to Db Major. The return of the “A” section would also use the same pattern.

C



³² Doug Auwarter, *Essential Latin Styles for the Drumset*. Kansas City: Douglas Auwarter, 2004, 83.

³³ Ibid., 83.

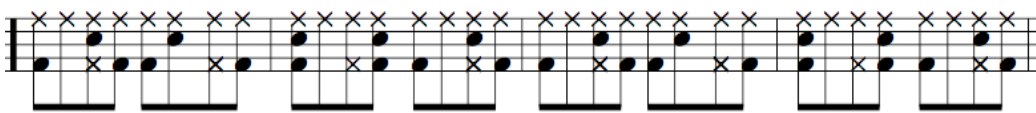
Db



Musical Example 7 *Composition I* measures 1-12.

Drum set Accompaniment

For the drum set accompaniment, I provided a basic bossa nova pattern adapted for the drum set. In the pattern, the drum set has the same rhythm of both the comping and bass line instruments. Identifying how the drum set part relates to other sections in the ensemble is crucial for the player. The bass line is doubled in the bass drum of the drum set (bottom space) and the comping line is in the snare part (third space from the bottom). The ride cymbal sounds on every eighth note and the hi-hat pedal sounds on every beat “2” and “4”. This pattern is derived from the previously mentioned example in the comping section. Musical example 8 shows the drum set accompaniment part for *Composition I* based on the above bossa nova example.



Musical Example 8 *Composition I* drum set accompaniment

Composition II

The next composition introduces minor tonality along with Dorian and Mixolydian modes. The harmonic structure is ii going to V in the key of Bb major. Dorian mode passages are used over the ii chord harmony and mixolydian mode passages are used over the V chord harmony. The notes that comprise the Dorian and mixolydian scales within the modes are the notes in between the chord tones that make up the Cm7 and the F7. The form of the piece follows the same form as the first ensemble (ABA). The style of this ensemble is actually called a “Cha-cha-cha” but it is commonly shortened to “Cha-cha.” Doug Auwarter, author of “Essential Latin Styles for the Drumset,” explains the characteristics of the cha-cha style as:

The cha-cha-cha, usually referred to simply as the “cha-cha” in the US, originally was just a type of mambo. But when specific steps were created for mambos at this moderate tempo, it took the name of cha-cha-cha, which described the sound of dancers’ feet on the dance floor. Its popularity reached its zenith in the 1950’s but remains immensely popular to the day. Cha-cha-cha has a quarter note pulse ranging from about 104 beats per minute up to 126.³⁴

Popular musical examples of the style of the cha-cha are “Oye Como Va,” by Tito Puente,

“Guantanamera,” by Joseito Fernandez, and a rock Cha-Cha “Evil Ways,” by Carlos Santana.

Melody

I structured the melody in the first eight measures to use common chord tones between the C-7 and F7 chords. This allows for a smooth transfer between the two

³⁴ Doug Auwarter, *Essential Latin Styles for the Drumset*. Kansas City: Douglas Auwarter, 2004, 19.

chords. Musical example 9 shows the first eight measures using chord tone figures and the note C occurring on the “&” of beat “4” in measures 1, 3, 5, and 7.

C-7 F7 C-7 F7

C-7 F7 C-7 F7

Musical Example 9 *Composition II* measures 1-8.

As the melody enters the “B” section in measures 9-16, I introduce the Dorian mode over C-7 or “ii” chord and the mixolydian scale over the F7 or “V” chord. These scalar passages occur in measures 13-16. Musical example 10 shows the mentioned measures with the Dorian mode being used over the C-7, beginning with the Eb rising to the C on the “&” of “3” in measure 13 and the mixolydian scale being used over the F7 starting at the G and rising to the Eb on beat “4” in measure 14. In measures 15 and 16, the Dorian mode flows into the mixolydian mode by using the note A as a common tone.

C-7 F7 C-7 F7

C-7 F7 C-7 F7

Musical Example 10 *Composition II* measures 13-16.

The final “A” section, measures 17-24, start with the first four measures using chord tone figures. Musical example 11 shows measures 21-24 where the mixolydian scale is used in measure 22 over the F7 chord and the Dorian mode used in measure 23 over the C-7 chord. Measure 24 ends the melody with an octave displacement with the note Eb on the “&” of “2” and finishes on double stop C’s.

C-7 F7 C-7 F7

Musical Example 11 *Composition II* measures 21-24.

Harmonic Structure/Comping Line

This part is structured to keep common chord tones and move to closest chord tones. The comping part gives examples of this in the written key. The rhythm of the comping pattern is taken from a common montuno pattern, which is characteristic of the style. A montuno is defined as:

a repeated two- or four-bar phrase which is played by the piano as an accompaniment ostinato.³⁵

The rhythm for this particular montuno can be found in Auwater’s book included below:

³⁵ *Oxford Music Online*, “Montuno,” accessed January 14, 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000643300?rkey=mYUmbb&result=1>



36

Musical Example 12 Auwater's montuno rhythm.

Musical example 13 includes the two bar comping pattern based on the above montuno in Composition II.

C-7

F7



Musical Example 13 *Composition II* measures 1-2.

Bass line

The bass line of Composition II uses a repeating four-bar phrase that incorporates scale degrees 1, 3, and 5, in both the C-7 and F7 chords. Chord tones comprise the melody of the bass line. The first measure of the phrase outlines scale degrees 1 and 5 while the second measure provides scale degrees 5, 3, and 1 in the F chord. The third measure of the phrase repeats scale degrees 5 and 1 in C minor. The fourth measure of

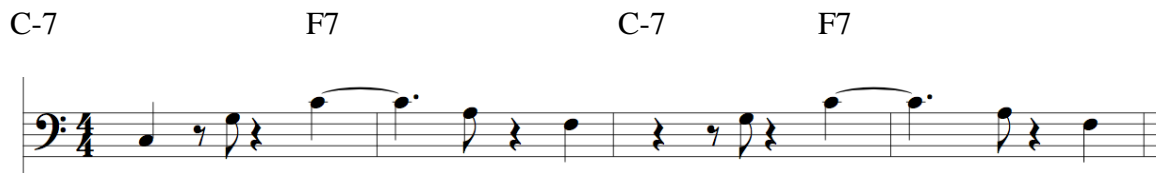
³⁶ Doug Auwater, *Essential Latin Styles for the Drumset*. Kansas City: Douglas Auwater, 2004, 73.

the phrase again uses scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 in the F7 chord. Every time the four-bar phrase is repeated, there is a note on beat “1” to help the student find beat one. This specific cha-cha bass pattern is included here and found in the song styles and scores of the Cha-Cha section of the Uribe text.



Musical Example 14 Cha-Cha bass pattern.

Musical example 15 shows my adaptation of the above cha-cha bass line used for the ensemble.



Musical Example 15 *Composition II* measures 1-4.

Drum Set Accompaniment

Traditionally, cha-cha music is performed on Latin percussion instruments such as congas, bongo, timbales and guiro. Included is Auwarter’s variation on a cha-cha groove adapted for drum set.

³⁷ Ed Uribe, *The Essence of Afro-Cuban Percussion & Drum Set*. Van Nuys: Alfred Music, 1996, 187.



38

Musical Example 16 Auwarter's cha-cha pattern for drum set.

Using the Auwarter example as a guide, I have adapted cha-cha rhythms to the drum set for one player but this can easily be broken apart for one player per part. The right hand provides the cha-cha bell pattern (repeated quarter notes) throughout. This should be played on a cowbell but can be substituted on the bell of the cymbal if a cowbell is not available. The left hand plays a cross stick on beat “2” and floor toms on beats “4” and the “&” of “4,” mimicking the tumbao pattern that is traditionally played by the conga player. Uribe defines the tumbao as:

The most fundamental and, common, and familiar pattern on the Conga drums is a rhythm called Tumbao.³⁹

The bass drum sounds on beat “1” of every fourth measure and “&” of “2” lines up with the bass instrument in the second and fourth measures.

Musical example 17 shows the cha-cha pattern adapted for *Composition II* for the drum set.



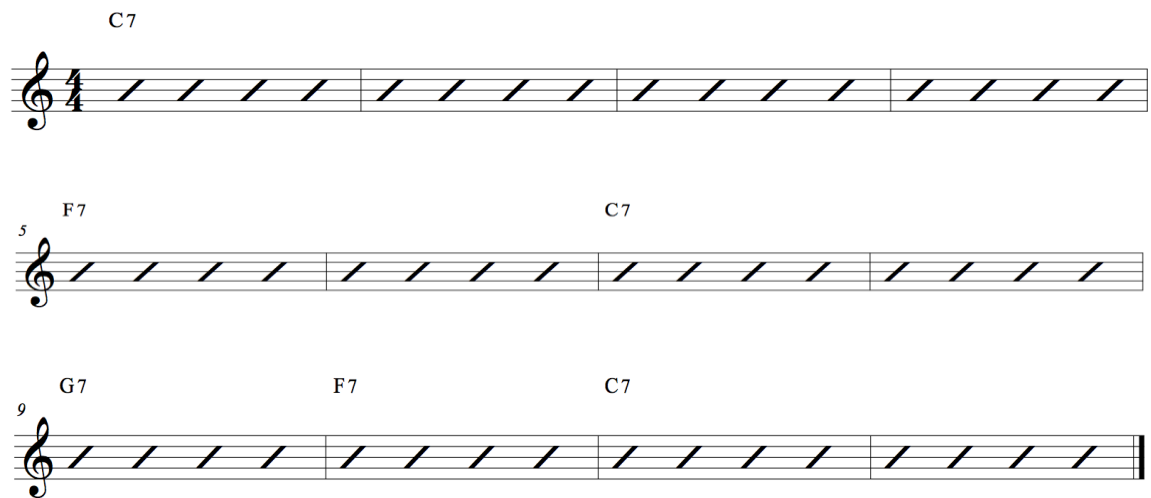
Musical Example 17 *Composition II* measures 1-4.

³⁸ Doug Auwarter, *Essential Latin Styles for the Drumset*. Kansas City: Douglas Auwarter, 2004, 20.

³⁹ Ed Uribe, *The Essence of Afro-Cuban Percussion & Drum Set*. Van Nuys: Alfred Music, 1996, 90.

Composition III

The third composition focuses on an archaic or basic 12 bar blues form. For this, all chords in the piece are dominant seven chords. Musical example 18 shows the chordal structure for a basic 12 bar blues progression.



Musical Example 18 12 bar blues progression.

This ensemble will use the mixolydian mode and introduce the blues scale. The overall form of Composition III will repeat the 12 bar blues pattern twice. Oxford defines the blues as:

A secular music with roots in African American folk forms, which arose in the Southern United States and became internationally popular in the 20th century.⁴⁰

Popular musical examples of the blues style include “Crossroads” by Robert Johnson, “Every day I have the Blues” by B.B. King, and “Kansas City” by Fats Domino.

⁴⁰ *Oxford Music Online*, “Blues,” by Elijah Wald, accessed January 14, 2019. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002223858?rskey=aVoLBO&result=2>

Melody

The melody of the first 12 bars of the piece uses only chord tones of the C7, F7, and G7 chords. Like the previous two compositions, this allows the student to become familiar with all of the chord tones used. The following musical example shows the chord tone patterns for the first 12 bars used over the C7, F7, and G7 chords.

C7



F7

C7



G7

F7

C7



Musical Example 19 *Composition III* measures 1-12 showing chord tone patterns.

The next 12 bars introduce the blues scale (used over the *C*7 chords) and the mixolydian mode (used over the *F*7 and *G*7 chords.) The following musical example shows the second time through the 12 bar form with the blues and mixolydian figures.



Musical Example 21 Metzger's comping patterns.

Musical example 22 shows the first two measures of *Composition III* using a combination of the above rhythms adapted into a 12/8 shuffle.

C7



Musical Example 22 *Composition III* measures 1-2.

The comping voice shows how to use common tones and move to the nearest chord tones when changing chords. Musical example 23 shows measures 4-7 switching between the chords C7 to F7 and back to C7.

F7

C7



Musical Example 23 *Composition III* measures 4-7

⁴¹ Jon Metzger, *The Art and Language of Jazz Vibes*. Roaring Cap, NC: EPM Publications, Inc., 2008, 332.

⁴² Ibid., 332.

In measure 9 the G7 chord is in root position. This allows for a smooth transfer to the F7 chord in measure 10. This switch between the two chords G7 and F7 is done by moving the entire chord down a whole step. The pattern then returns to the C7 chord in measures 11 and 12. Musical example 24 shows the switch between the G7 to the F7, then resolving to the C7.

G7 F7 C7

Musical Example 24 *Composition III* measures 9-12.

Bass Line

The bass line of *Composition III* consists of a scalar pattern using scale degrees 1, 3, 5, 6, b7. Included is a common bass line by Bassist Chris Fitzgerald from his study, “Walking Bass Line Basics Lesson 1.”

b7
R 3 5 6 7 6 5 3

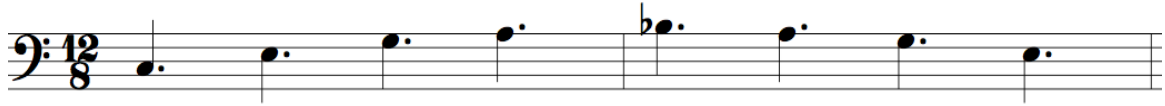
43

Musical Example 25 bass line example

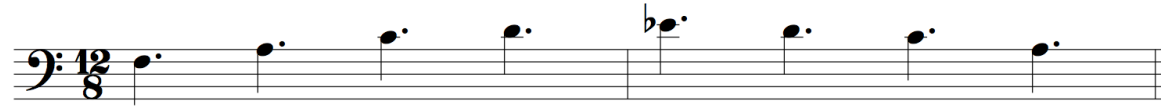
⁴³ *Chris Fitzgerald*, “Walking Bass Line Theory Basics,” accessed Sep 12, 2019. accessed January 14, 2019.
<http://www.chrisfitzgeraldmusic.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/11/Walking-Bass-Line-Theory-Basics-PDF-File.pdf>

Musical example 26 includes the bass line for measures 1-2 for the C7 and measures 6-7 for the F7 based on the above example.

Bass line for C7



Bass line for F7



Musical Example 26 *Composition III* measures 1-2 and 5-6.

The bass line changes in measures 9-10 for the measures of G7 and F7. For this, the pattern uses the chord tones 1, 3, and 5. The pattern ascends to scale degree 5 and back to 3 in a G7 chord then repeats the same pattern in the F7 chord. The pattern then returns to the same C chord pattern for the rest of the form.

Musical example 27 shows this bass line pattern in measures 9-12.



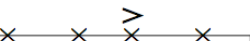
Musical Example 27 *Composition III* measures 9-12

Drum Set Accompaniment

The following example is taken from Tommy Igoes, “Groove Essentials vol 1,” and shows a common jazz shuffle part for the drum set.



repeated swung



ukee, WI: Husdon

APPENDIX B

COMPOSITIONS

Score

Major Modal

McClafin

The musical score for "Major Modal" by McClafin is written for Vibraphone, Marimba 1, Marimba 2, and Drum Set. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into three sections: A, B, and C. Section A starts at measure 7, Section B at measure 13, and Section C at measure 19. The Vibraphone part features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The Marimba 1 and 2 parts provide harmonic support with chords and single notes. The Drum Set part consists of a steady eighth-note pattern.

2018

2 Major Modal

26 Cmaj7

Vib. 

Mrb. 1 

Mrb. 2 

D. S. 

33 D♯maj7

Vib. 

Mrb. 1 

Mrb. 2 

D. S. 

39 Cmaj7

Vib. 

Mrb. 1 

Mrb. 2 

D. S. 

46 

Mrb. 1 

Mrb. 2 

D. S. 

Vibraphone

Major Modal

McClaflin



6

A

11

15

B

20

C C maj7

26

32

D \flat maj7

41

C maj7

2018

Major Modal

McClafin

Marimba

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

6

A

12

B

23

C

29

35

40

46

Marimba 2

Major Modal

McClaflin

Marimba

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

2018

Drum Set

Major Modal

McClafin

Bossa Nova

6

11

B

22

C

27

32

37

43

2018

COMPOSITION II

Score

Minor Modal

McClafin

$\text{♩} = 140$

Vibraphone

Marimba 1

Marimba 2

Cha Cha

Drum Set

6

Vib.

6

Mrb. 1

6

Mrb. 2

6

D. S.

11

Vib.

11

Mrb. 1

11

Mrb. 2

11

D. S.

A

16 B

Vib. 

Mrb. 1 

Mrb. 2 

D. S. 

21 C C-7 F7

Vib. 

Mrb. 1 

Mrb. 2 

D. S. 

27

Vib. 

Mrb. 1 

Mrb. 2 

D. S. 

Vibraphone

Minor Modal

McClaflin

$\text{♩} = 140$

5

10

15

20

C C-7 F7 C-7 F7 C-7 F7 C-7 F7

2018

Marimba 1

Minor Modal

McClaflin

$\text{♩} = 140$

Marimba

5

A

10

B

15

20

C

29

2018

Minor Modal

♩ = 140

64

Drum Set

Minor Modal

McClafin

♩ = 140

6 A

12 B

18

24 C

29

2018

COMPOSITION III

Score

Blues

McClaflin

Score for Composition III (Blues) by McClaflin, featuring Vibraphone, Marimba 1, Marimba 2, and Drum Set.

The score is written in 12/8 time and consists of four systems of music. The instruments are Vibraphone, Marimba 1, Marimba 2, and Drum Set.

System 1:

- Vibraphone: Melodic line with eighth and quarter notes.
- Marimba 1: Chordal accompaniment with eighth notes.
- Marimba 2: Bass line with quarter notes.
- Drum Set: Syncopated pattern with eighth notes.

System 2:

- Vib. (4): Continuation of the melodic line.
- Mrb. 1 (4): Continuation of the chordal accompaniment.
- Mrb. 2 (4): Continuation of the bass line.
- D. S. (4): Continuation of the drum pattern.

System 3:

- Vib. (8): Continuation of the melodic line.
- Mrb. 1 (8): Continuation of the chordal accompaniment.
- Mrb. 2 (8): Continuation of the bass line.
- D. S. (8): Continuation of the drum pattern.

System 4:

- Vib. (8): Continuation of the melodic line.
- Mrb. 1 (8): Continuation of the chordal accompaniment.
- Mrb. 2 (8): Continuation of the bass line.
- D. S. (8): Continuation of the drum pattern.

2018

2 A Blues

Vib. ¹²

Mrb. 1 ¹²

Mrb. 2 ¹²

D. S. ¹²

Vib. ¹⁶

Mrb. 1 ¹⁶

Mrb. 2 ¹⁶

D. S. ¹⁶

Vib. ²⁰

Mrb. 1 ²⁰

Mrb. 2 ²⁰

D. S. ²⁰

B C7

Vib. ²⁴

Mrb. 1 ²⁴

Mrb. 2 ²⁴

D. S. ²⁴

F7 Blues C7 3

28 Vib. 

28 Mrb. 1 

28 Mrb. 2 

28 D. S. 

32 Vib. 

32 Mrb. 1 

32 Mrb. 2 

32 D. S. 

36 Vib. 

36 Mrb. 1 

36 Mrb. 2 

36 D. S. 

Vibraphone

Blues

McClaflin

4

8

12

15

19

23

27

32

A

B C7

F7 C7

G7 F7 C7

2018

Blues

McClafin

Marimba

Mrb.

Mrb.

A

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

B

Mrb.

Mrb.

Mrb.

Blues

McClaflin

Marimba

5

Mrb.

10

Mrb.

15

Mrb.

20

Mrb.

29

Mrb.

34

Mrb.

A

B

Blues

McClafin

Blues Shuffle

5

9

A

17

21

B

29

33

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