

Project Year

2006

Project Team

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Project Title

Improvisation: Developing a Vocabulary for Success

Audience

Undergraduates enrolled in *Jazz Improvisation I & II* as well as other core Jazz courses.

Pedagogical Issue

Improvisation, which incorporates the seamless integration of linear (melodic) and vertical (harmonic) musical elements, is one of the most difficult skills for jazz musicians to develop. In many institutions, educational methodology in jazz improvisation has been reduced to the over-simplified process of chord-scale matching. Often, little emphasis has been given to the melodic and harmonic implications of improvised solos. Throughout the years, at Peabody, the study of transcribed solos has always proven to be one of the most effective methods of developing a vocabulary for improvisation. However, the musical application of this learned vocabulary to vehicles (standard compositions) outside of the original context seems to provide the student with his or her greatest challenge.

Solution

The purpose of this project was to create a user-friendly, web-based interface that would help students develop the skills to utilize content derived from transcribed solos in a variety of different musical contexts. A second objective was to provide reinforcement outside the classroom of the techniques studied in core curriculum classes, including *Jazz Improvisation I & II*, *Jazz Ear Training*, *Jazz Fundamentals* and *Jazz Theory/Keyboard I & II*.

Technologies Used

Digital Audio, Digital Video, Graphic Design, HTML/Web Design, Adobe PDF, Animation, Macromedia Flash, PowerPoint/Presentation

Project Abstract

This project will create a user-friendly, web-based interface that will help the student of jazz to develop the necessary techniques to effectively utilize content derived from transcribed solos in different musical contexts. A second objective is to provide reinforcement outside the classroom of information and techniques studied in core curriculum classes, including *Jazz Improvisation I & II*, *Jazz Ear Training*, *Jazz Fundamentals* and *Jazz Theory/Keyboard I & II*. Because the jazz program at Peabody is a retrofit of the classical performance degree program, faculty outside of the jazz department are also faced with the task of educating jazz studies majors. Those faculty need support in this task. As this program and its

resources will be made available to the entire Peabody community, it will become a valuable means for all faculty, not just those in the jazz department, to obtain insight into the developmental process of the most essential skill the successful jazz musician must possess: improvisation. This project will also contribute to the archives of the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, which currently contains personal papers, photographs, and microfilm of Maryland musicians and composers, and builds upon previous successful digital projects. Two examples of those projects are:

Sounds & Stories: Musical Life of Maryland's African American Communities

(<http://webdrive.jhsph.edu/eschaaf/sas/>)

Technology and Improvisation (2004 Center for Educational Resources Technology Fellows Program grant recipient) (<http://pcm.peabody.jhu.edu/~rose/techandimprov/>)

We hope to learn from the examples set by those projects, and create a new and valuable electronic resource for Peabody students and faculty of the future.