

### 3) Practicing Tips for Improvising Jazz Singers

by Yasmina Zack

- Practice musical intervals, chords and scales (modes).  
The more you familiarize yourself with, understand and internalize them, the easier melodic- harmonic improvising will become for you.
- Play each typical jazz chord alone (on the piano, guitar, played by iReal, etc.) as an arpeggio as well as all notes simultaneously, singing the corresponding scales over the sound.

☼ Often there is more than one scale option. ☼

Of course, the suitable scales depend on the context of the chord (chord progressions and chord functions), but careful consideration of the chord itself is a good first step to find out which scale might be possible and which sound qualities each scale might have. A I-maj7-chord works well with a Ionian or Lydian (Ionian#4) scale, a II-m7-chord sounds nice with Dorian, Aeolian or- depending on the context- Dorian-b9.

The image shows a musical example for a Dm7 chord. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a melodic line of eighth notes: D4-E4-F4-G4, A4-B4-C5, B4-A4, G4-F4, E4-D4, C4. The bottom staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing three measures of Dm7 chords. Each measure has a chord symbol 'Dm7' above it and shows the chord structure with stacked notes: D4, F4, A4, C5.

- Practice and listen to the song, phrase, motif, etc., you wish to learn in a quiet environment without interruptions. Additional visual and auditory stimuli will reduce your attention span and ability to focus.
- Create exercises for yourself that pursue a specific goal (like being able to sing Dorian over any IIm7 chord in a IIm7-V7-Imaj7 progression). If your exercises contain sub-steps that build on one another, this can make you become more aware of what exactly you have to practice in order to achieve this goal. Test and repeat each of the steps as often, focused and as slowly as necessary, until you have the impression their order makes sense and until you have been able to master each precisely. Be patient, revise the steps, ask some peers for their opinion and change them if necessary.

☀ Some aspects can be practiced independently, of course. Not everything happens successively. ☀

☀ During the process of creating an exercise, give yourself the space to be playful. Playing around helps you discover inspiration and may help to keep you from getting stuck as well as keeping your practicing more motivated. ☀

☀ Try to be aware of when you're practicing something specific as opposed to when you're playing around. ☀

- Occasionally use a metronome for practicing. Start with a slow tempo, becoming faster as your proficiency increases.

☀ Some things seem easier in a faster tempo, but deeper understanding and precision are often better accomplished in a slower tempo. ☀

### Learning from a Solo (Transcription):

Divide a musical phrase into the shortest motifs with the fewest notes possible that make sense to you, and start practicing each short motif.

☀ Focus on just one motif, repeating it until you have mastered it (also with a metronome). Only continue practicing the next motif after having mastered the previous one. ☀

101  
— gei! an -dan pa de-du-du pa-de-du pa-de-du-du pa-de du\_\_ u\_\_ yah -pa-du-pah un pa du  
104  
\_\_ du du du\_\_ a - de - pa\_\_ a - de - pa pa pa dwi - an - da

In this excerpt of Tania Maria's "Come with me" solo<sup>1</sup> you could divide as follows:

A gei! an -dan B pa de-du-du C pa-de-du D pa-de-du-du E pa-de du. F u\_\_ yah

- 1) Practice one motif (for example A) until you have mastered it (then go on to B, C, etc.).
- 2) Practice connecting two short motifs together: A+B, as well as B+C, etc.
- 3) If you've mastered the preceding steps, then practice the whole phrase: A+B+C.

<sup>1</sup> See and listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JRn-enkGYU> from 5:24- 5:37 [03.10.2020]

It is also possible to divide as follows, with the advantage of anticipating the next motif (this may help your memory):



A1 gei! an -dan pa    B1 pa de-du-du pa·    C pa-de-du

1) Practice one motif (for example A) until you have mastered it (then go to B, C, etc.).

2) Connect two motifs by practicing them leaving a little break in between: A1, B1.

3) Connect two motifs practicing them without a break: A+B1.



A gei! an -dan    B1 pa de-du-du pa·

(The same with 2) B1, C and 3) B+C)

4) If you have mastered the preceding steps, practice the whole phrase: A+B+C.

## Learning from an Audio Recording:

- Practice short sequences (2 to 4 bars for example) in which you play, pause, rewind and replay the audio recording.
- If you have mastered a short sequence (2 bars), practice the following short sequence (2 bars). If you have mastered both sequences then connect them together (4 bars).
  - ☀ Practice with pausing and then without pausing the recording. If you make mistakes, wait quietly a moment and then repeat the procedure, starting with the practice of short sequences. ☀
  - ☀ You may notice better results if you reduce your practice tempo by practicing with the recording set at a slower speed (possible with some online providers, iReal and a few other Apps). ☀
- Practice "bit by bit" like in sports! Your brain can't deal with too much musical information at once. Listening only to very short sequences and then practicing these short sequences will provide better results than trying to sing a whole phrase your brain hasn't yet been able to process and internalize all at once.
- Rather practice short, small sections and take short breaks after you've accomplished your goals (in order to appreciate the work, give your mind- especially your listening memory- a rest and to stay motivated).
- Don't expect fast progress without doing the work. Keep in mind that melodic- harmonic improvising requires quite a lot of musical understanding, playfulness, knowledge and disciplined practicing.