

Improvisation Using One Note At A Time 3-Call Series Part 1 - Scale-Play

Tonight we're going to explore scales as a simple gateway into improvisation

1. Scales are primarily thought of as an exercise to develop technique
2. Use one hand only – 2 hands add complexity and confusion
3. If you listen to all kinds of music, you'll hear scales are heavily relied on – with changes in rhythm, range, repeating notes, dynamics – ie. Pachelbel, Joy to the World, 3 Blind Mice, Beethoven's 5th Piano Concerto

Definition of "Improvise" – taken from Dictionary.com

1. to compose and deliver without previous preparation; extemporize
2. to compose, play, recite, or sing (verse, music, etc.) on the spur of the moment
3. to make, provide, or arrange from whatever materials are readily available

Why improvise?

1. Provides flexibility – allows you to easily extend a tune or a session, play in the dark, play in the midst of commotion
2. It's fun, it's freeing
3. It will help you learn new tunes
4. It will change your relationship to your instrument and your music
5. It will make your recording requirements easier

Fundamental Concepts

1. Slow down, breathe and listen, listen, listen – let each note guide you to the next
2. Know that every is perfect
3. Keep it simple; limit what you include – think sandboxes or experimenting in the kitchen
4. Think phrases, lyrical, musical – no matter what you do
5. Make your music in a small range; use only small jumps
6. Change leisurely; use repetition
7. Create a tonal center
8. Create a musical conversation
9. Change rhythm, tempo, dynamics, direction, repeats and patterns to add interest – leisurely

Application of and Experimentation with Fundamental Concepts

1. Most demonstrations use a C Major scale
2. The demonstration of the pentatonic scale uses D, E, G, A and B. F and C are not played
 - a. On a harp set in a C tuning, play only the white strings
 - b. On a piano, play only the black keys
3. Things to listen for and observe the impact on you
 - a. Speed
 - b. Direction of playing
 - i. mostly up
 - ii. mostly down
 - c. Range
 - i. Large – multi-octaves
 - ii. Small – 4 or 5 notes to 1 ½ octaves
 - d. Use of 1 and 5 to create tonal center
 - e. Changes in rhythm