

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Top jazz educators choose the resources they can't teach without

COLLECTED & EDITED BY JEFF TAMARKIN



Jazz education begins with the ears and eyes. Nothing beats immersion in the music as both listener and player, and exposure to great jazz from throughout the music's history. But after one has absorbed the landmark recordings and observed the day's virtuosos at work, where can a student of jazz turn for more in-depth study?

We posed this question to several leading jazz educators: What teaching resources do you find the most effective?

All About Aebersold

Over the years I have used the Jamey Aebersold Play-A-Longs as an essential part of my program. The quality has never changed from its early days on vinyl through the transition to CD. Jamey takes great pride in getting it right. From melody to changes, transcriptions to tempos, it's researched and prepared to the highest level of accuracy for the classroom and for pros who want to practice all levels of jazz improvisation—any time, anywhere.

As an early student of Jamey's I've watched him

put this wonderful tool together from its beginnings. For his first effort, *Volume 1: How to Play Jazz & Improvise*, he asked his students what they felt was important to use as an improvisation clinic/practice tool for growth and understanding. He used us to help form the vision for what was to become the standard for music-minus-one Play-A-Longs, and has served our needs at the highest levels.

Some 39 years later there are 118 choices, including special volumes for bebop, blues, drums, fusion, Latin, bass, singers, standards and the inner workings of improv. Without sounding like a salesman, I really believe in this product, as it allows students to move forward when there is no rhythm section at the school or at home. The accompanying musicians on each volume are of the highest quality; on a number of the CDs are musicians who performed at one time during their careers with the featured artist. I have always used these in my improvisation classes at Booker T. and when I pass the torch I'll recommend that this wonderful tool continue to be used with aspiring artists.

Bart Marantz

Director of Jazz Studies

*Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts
Dallas, Texas*

There are many excellent resources now available for jazz educators and their students. I will focus on the beginning to intermediate student. I have found *Volume 54: Maiden Voyage* from the Jamey Aebersold series to be invaluable, with limitless options that can be used with all instruments.

This book and CD set contains excellent tunes played by a truly professional group at slightly slower tempos. The student can work on scale/chord relationships and standard chord changes, including ii-V7-I phrases, while beginning to build repertoire by memorizing tunes and progressions. I stress the importance of listening to the original recordings, which they can easily find, while working on selected tunes. Their listening skills will be sharpened and I encourage students to play along with the masters, which reinforces jazz phrasing and, most importantly, articulation.

Wind players are encouraged to work on sound and tone production; pianists and guitarists to work on voicings; bassists and drummers on time and style (swing, Latin, etc.). Another major asset is that there are excellent supportive materials: transcribed piano/guitar voicings, basslines and drum parts—even written out solos for all instruments. *Volume 54* is a great tool for the teacher and student, especially if the set is used as an ever-evolving educational tool.

Other materials I like to use include the *Charlie Parker Omnibook*, the Bob Mintzer Series (excellent contemporary selections from beginner to very advanced—great for reading and soloing), Jerry Coker's *Patterns for Jazz* and Aebersold volumes 3 (*The ii/V7/II Progression*) and 16 (*Turnarounds, Cycles & ii/V7s*). Personal transcribing is a must.

Michael A. Tracy

Director, Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies Program

Professor of Music

Fulbright Senior Specialist

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Louisville, Ky.

I always recommend my students check out what Jamey Aebersold's company is offering. There you can find a plethora of jazz study material related to the student's instrument, harmony, theory and



structures.

Finally, for my drumming students, I also recommend Steve Smith's wonderful *History of the U.S. Beat* DVD. Beautifully recorded and Steve articulates his message clearly. The exercises and demonstrations are musically relative to group performance and totally relate to what you do in a working context with other musicians.

Jae Sinnett

Drummer, composer, educator

Adjunct drumset, jazz ensemble instructor

Christopher Newport University

Newport News, Va.

I've used two particular Jamey Aebersold volumes since they came out in the late '70s: *Volume 3: The ii/V7/II Progression*, and *Volume 16: Turnarounds, Cycles & ii/V7s*. Although all of Jamey's Play-A-Longs are great, these "workout" volumes are the gems of the series, putting you through your paces in all keys. As a saxophonist, particularly with younger students, I've gravitated toward jazz etude books based on standard progressions, series by Bob Mintzer, Dan Higgins, Jim Snidero and Greg Fishman. All of these series really get students into the modern-jazz language, in a graded difficulty that allows them to succeed and progress.

Conceptually, Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz* has had a deep effect on me, my students and a lot of professionals I know. The interviews really get inside the minds of some of the great performers in unique ways: The meaning and importance of mistakes in their playing, how they practice and gain inspiration and growth.

Dr. David Demsey

Coordinator of Jazz Studies

Curator, Living Jazz Archives

William Paterson University

Wayne, N.J.

(Vocal) Instrument Instruction

As both a performing artist and vocal jazz instructor who strives to keep improvisation front and center in vocal jazz performance, I use Scott Reeves' book *Creative Jazz Improvisation* as my "go-to" text on the subject. I originally used the book as a text for a jazz improvisation course I taught, and I found it to be quite invaluable in my planning and delivery.

I've been using it ever since, both with my studio jazz-voice students