

WHAT TO PRACTICE - A Personal Assessment

By Mike Tracy

It is important to be able to assess just what one knows when practicing, regardless of ones experience. When working with students, many will ask just what to practice. A very necessary and logical question. Over my many years of teaching and discussing such topics with fellow educators and students it became clear that there are specific and general areas that we all need to experience and know. It is also important to build knowledge in a logical, efficient manner so that one can access whenever needed.

Following are categories - scales, chords, patterns, progressions, suggested tunes - and then specific elements which we all need to know from memory.

Scales:

- Chromatic
- All modes of Major – Major, Dominant, Dorian, Lydian, Locrian, Aeolian, Phrygian
- Blues
- Pentatonic – major and minor
- Major and Dominant Be-Bop
- Melodic Minor (primarily the ascending form)
- Harmonic Minor
- Diminished – X7b9 (half/whole) and Xo (whole/half)
- Diminished Whole-Tone (altered)
- Whole-Tone
- Augmented

Chords:

- Triads
 - Major
 - Minor
 - Diminished
 - Augmented
- Sevenths and Ninths
 - Major (7th and 9th)
 - Major b5 (7th and 9th)
 - Major #5 (7th and 9th)
 - Major 6th (6th and 9th)
 - Dominant (7th and 9th)
 - Dominant b5 (7th and 9th)
 - Dominant #5 (7th and 9th)
 - Dominant b9
 - Dominant #5#9
 - Minor (7th and 9th)
 - Minor Major 7th (7th and 9th)
 - Half-Diminished (Minor b5) (7th and #9th)
 - Diminished

Patterns:

- ii – V7 – I Patterns: all keys, through cycle or chromatically
 - Short (2 measure) major ii – V7 – I pattern
 - Short (2 measure) minor ii – V7 – i pattern
 - Long (4 measure) major ii – V7 – I pattern
 - Long (4 measure) minor ii – V7 – i pattern

Progressions:

- Blues – be able to improvise in Bb, F, Eb or C concert
- Blues – be able to play the melody and improvise over:
 - Riff-like Blues: C Jam Blues, Bag's Groove, Sonnymoon for Two, Blues in the Closet, Buzzy, Centerpiece, etc.
 - Tenor Madness, Blue Monk, Blues by Five, Blues Walk (Brown), etc.
 - Minor Blues: Mr. PC, All Blues, Footprints, Blues Walk (Donaldson), etc.
 - BeBop Blues: Billie's Bounce, Au Private, Sandu, Blues for Alice, etc.
- Rhythm Changes – be able to play the melody and improvise over: I've Got Rhythm (Bb), Lester Leaps In, Oleo, Anthropology, etc.

Repertoire:

- Each of the following are selections that provide different challenges.
- Each are from established literature.
- Be able to play from memory the melodies and improvise over:

All the Things You Are
Autumn Leaves
Blue Bossa
Doxy
The Girl From Ipanema
Groovin' High
In A Sentimental Mood
Killer Joe
Lady Bird

Maiden Voyage
Minority
Misty
On Green Dolphin Street
Satin Doll
Someday My Prince Will Come
Song For My Father
Summertime
Take The A Train