Improvisation

• Innate or Learned? (Nature vs. Nurture)
• New and original or reprocessed?
• Spontaneous composition or pre-determined?
• All of the above, that is, improvisation can be perceived as the organization of materials (e.g., melodic, harmonic, & rhythmic), learned and internalized, producing a new presentation of these materials that are unique and creatively intertwined with one another.
Developmental Levels of Improvisation

• **Exploration**: student tries different sounds in a loosely structured context (*awareness*)
• **Process-Oriented**: student produces cohesive patterns (*imitation*)
• **Product-Oriented**: student is aware of structural principles (key & rhythm) (*internalization*)
• **Fluidity**: student manipulates instrument in more automatic/relaxed manner (*mastery*)
• **Structural**: student is aware of overall structure and develops a repertoire of strategies for shaping an improvisation (*assimilation*)
• **Stylistic**: student improvises skillfully within the given context (*emulation*)
• **Personal**: musician transcends recognized styles to develop a new style (*innovation*)
Beginning Solo Development: Goals

• Develop an aural awareness of the characteristic sound of a chosen note over a given chord quality.
• Develop an awareness of the composition’s formal structure via its melodic and harmonic make-up.
• Develop an awareness of idiomatic rhythms and style used in jazz.
• Develop an awareness of idiomatic melodic patterns and phrases used in jazz.
• Develop facility of melodic manipulation and organization in jazz improvisation.
10 Steps for Practicing

• Developing technical facility and aural awareness with scales
• Scale patterns with idiomatic jazz rhythms
• Developing technical facility and aural awareness with arpeggios
• Chord patterns with idiomatic jazz rhythms
• Combining scale and chord patterns
• Combining scale and/or chord exercises with the melody
• Combining scale and chord exercises with melodic materials from a transcribed solo
• Rearranging melodic materials from the solo transcription
• “Trading fours” with the solo transcription
• Combine melodic material from other solos
“Imitate. Assimilate. Innovate.”
Renowned jazz trumpeter Clark Terry comments on improvisation.
The Performance: Programming the Music

- Variety of styles
- “Theme” concerts
- Balance
- The first tune, last tune, and those in between
- Length (no more than 70 minutes)
- Brass player logistics
- Do not over conduct
- Longer solos in at least one tune
- Short announcements
- Attire?
The Performance:
Check list

• Program info should be ready two weeks in advance
• PR 2–4 weeks in advance
• Inventory equipment needed (e.g., chairs, stands, mics, risers, shells, percussion, piano tuned)
• Dress rehearsal in the hall
• Ushers and stage crew
• Play program in order and all the way through
• Avoid conflicts in community calendar
• Program length and intermission?
The Performance: Sound Reinforcement

- Try not to overdo mics
- Create an acoustical sound
- 3 mics on saxophone and placed to the right of the bell, but close
- Trombones usually ok, but max 2 mics
- Piano can use 2 mics and 1/2 stick
- Soloist mic near rhythm section (also to be used to speak)
- Placement of mics in relation to monitors and speakers, and placement of monitors
- Microphones: wireless vs with wires; omni vs unidirectional
- Brands: AKG, Shure, Sennheiser
The Performance: Festivals

- Pros & cons
- Competitive vs non-competitive
- Obtaining and contacting guests
- Mailing lists for audience development
- Balance festival with performances, clinics, and guest performances
- Purpose?