**Improvisation thoughts: what goes on in your head…and not**

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**Specific areas to consider:**

Technical skills:

Scales, arpeggios (and inversions); digital patterns

“Money” notes (2, 3, 5, 7…and inversions)

Chords and scales (what goes with what)

* + 1. Write them out
    2. Circle chord tones
    3. Identify guide tones (lead from one to the next)
    4. What notes are common to all (ID the overall key center of song/section)
    5. Develop exercises to learn your way around
       1. Arpeggios
       2. Scales
       3. Original exercises, riffs

Melody playing

* + 1. Add to/variations on the tune
    2. Use melodic rhythm, change pitches
    3. Use melody notes, change rhythms

Bass lines

* + 1. Try to write/play a bass line accompaniment to the song based on chord changes
    2. Play/trade with colleague melody/bass

Know the tune! Style, words, phrases: as an unaccompanied soloist!

Simplifying exercises: set parameters (all quarter notes, all eighths, melodic tones only, specific scale tones only) but make it INTERESTING!

Simplify progressions: every 2 or 4 bars (instead of every one, inclusive); what 1 (or 2) scales can be used?

Form, pacing; 2/3 point; how to end? Plan it out!

Focus on RHYTHM and GROOVE! Pick a 2-4 bar rhythmic motive and use that throughout instead of trying to find “the note!”

Additional thoughts:

“The Music Lesson: a spiritual search for growth through music” by Victor Wooten

I only listened to what I wanted to hear, not what the music had to say. It was as if I only wanted to hear my own opinions.

Learn to be conscious of your note choices and Life will respond with the proper chord.

All things are in motion, and although a thing may appear to be stationary, it is always moving. This motion may change, but it will never cease. All Music ever played is still playing.

You should never lose the groove in order to find a note.

“Teacher” is just a title. You can only teach yourself. The “teacher” can only SHOW you things.

A true Musician plays Music and uses particular instruments as tools to do so.

Stop “practicing” and do/speak: do you “practice” your native language?

The FIRST thing you should listen for when playing is GROOVE.

If you stopped playing notes, Music would still exist.

Parts of Music: notes, articulation, technique, feel, dynamics, rhythm, tone, phrasing, space, and listening.

Notes are just a part of Music, but NOT music itself.

Situations in life may seem to “clash” but may not be “wrong;” notes are not wrong, but perhaps in the wrong situation (octave, voice).

Beauty is something you experience, not something you prove. It is something you know, yet “technically” it is not there.

Without proper technique, nothing can happen.

As a baby your technique was not adequate enough to allow you to speak like everyone else. Not having the proper control/technical skill causes frustration.

Techniques are tools to get you somewhere.

Start by KNOWING, not just believing that you can do the technique.

E means “energy” + motion = activity; energy in motion

Most people play louder to get someone’s attention, but getting quieter can stop a bull from charging.

Warm- up your MIND as well as your “physical” instrument.

“Bless” things that get in the way. You may not want it, but what is it trying to tell you?

There is really only ONE note; space and time allow you to experience the different characteristics of that note, making it appear as many different notes.

Anything, including physical actions can be phrased.

An individual note sounds one way and produces a certain vibration. Groups of notes together produce different vibrations. Longer groups become a phrase.

Don’t try hard: try EASY.

How do we use rests? If we pay attention to the rests and really learn how to use them, we find that they can speak louder and deeper than notes.

Music doesn’t stop at the ears. Vibrations can be felt in all places, at all times.

Vibrations are penetrating; they NEVER stop vibrating; they may change, but they never stop; therefore be more intentional and careful to what we’re putting out there.

Often the more we learn, the less we dream; the more we practice, the less we play; the more we open our eyes, the less we feel.

What is more dangerous: success or failure?

“A Work In Progress: on being a Musician” by Chick Corea

What do you think of when you play? Which notes go with which scales? Music is an expression and communication of an intent and an emotion. You have something you want to “say”…an emotion you want your listener to “feel.” The act of creating the messages is the act of making music and is the PRACTICE of music. Music making is a form of communication; it happens; it’s an action.

Investigation and theory’s only use is to help me (as a player) understand how to better do what I want to do: how to play/perform better; how to be a better musician.

Only the ideas and theories that one freely creates or understands and accepts on his own judgement are the ones that have value to him and therefore can be put to good use. But all of these get put aside when I’m actually playing and making music. Playing music combines intention and action into one thing with absolutely no “thinking” at all. All analysis is for the practice room and rehearsal. Playing in performance has to be a “pure” act.

Just a comment about making music with metronomes: I feel they can be helpful in noting the general speed of a piece of music: like indicating the metronome number marking on a written score. But for my personal tastes, the best grooves and feelings in music can never be attained using a metronome or mechanical click to guide the music’s rhythm and tempo.

Each voice makes a melody. Thinking “melodically” about all voices and parts is a communicative key to composing for me.

If each part and voice of a composition has its own communication and is its own melody or voice, the composition as a whole is stronger because it is “singing” and communicating with all its parts.

Each part or voice should “talk” as if it were being rendered by an individual musician just creating that voice.

From John Cage:

Cage wrote a collection of essays titled *Silence*, and in one, he described entering into a soundproof audio recording chamber at Harvard and hearing two sounds, one high and one low. When he asked the sound engineer about what he was hearing, he informed him that the high-pitched sound was that of his nervous system, the low one that of his blood in circulation. If you’ve ever taken a hearing test and they put you in those sound booths, something like that; you can hear your own heart beat! This event was an epiphany of sorts for Cage, and one that began him to focus much of his musical attention on ambient and accidental sounds as opposed to willful, compositional ones. Cage wrote: "Until I die, there will be sounds, and they will continue after my death. One need not fear about the future of music. Any sounds may occur in any combination and in any continuity." And from that one of his most famous pieces was 4’ 33”. This composition, Cage said, was composed first in his mind and in his mind, he wrote it note by note and every note was silence! And when he added them all up they were 4’ 33” long.