

Thoughts about a teaching concept for ear training based on a jazz/rock education at a high level.

Ear training is a very important matter related to the education of a jazz-musician. Ear training can help the student to reach a higher level of musical consciousness. The better one can perceive music, the faster one can react, and the better are the conditions for creativity. The most important tool for a jazz-musician should be his ear. So the question should be : How can we develop our student's aural skills?

In my teaching I spilt up in three musical parameters: the melodic, the harmonic and the rhythmic. By working the parameters separately we get the possibility to cope with the music without loosing our sense of perspective. Later we can combine the parameters.

For the **melodic parameter** my main tool is solfege. I want to develop the sense of a tonal centre, because most of the music we work on has got that – also because it is a good way to develop a relative pitch. I use the moveable “do” so all steps in the scale – major, minor or others – relate themselves to “do”. Because everybody knows the sound of the major and the minor scale, solfege is very easy to understand. I'm not that interested in the Kodláy's –stuff or the hand signs and all that. What is interesting for me is to get a method to relate all twelve steps to a tonal centre. When it is not possible to use a tonal centre, we need to use intervals.

The work with the **harmonic parameter** has got two directions : how to determine a certain harmony – major, minor, dominant, extensions and all that. This is related to the scale, and solfege is a brilliant tool here. Then we have to work on the harmonic progressions. Again solfege is a good tool as well as intervallic hearing, but recognition of typical harmonic progressions is the most important. When you know 20 jazz-standards, you know 200 because it is the same things happening. It is the same progressions and the same modulations. So what I want to develop for the student is a “harmonic language”. Recognition is the thing!

Also the **rhythmic parameter** has got more directions. One that relates much to sight reading, where it is important to be able to read ahead, what you are playing. I use phonetics so it is possible to recognise read rhythms and to visualize heard rhythms. First one beat at a time, later an entire bar or more. Another direction is the one about subdivision related to pulse. It is essential for a good “time” to have a consciousness of and knowledge to subdivisions. You should be able to change subdivision from beat to the next from triplets to sixteenth notes e.g. I work with polyrhythms and metrical modulations because it is impossible to do such matters without the right subdivision.

Being able to overview the different parameters it is much easier to combine them – and them is begins to sound like music. I have developed about 250 pages of exercises that goes from an introduction level to very advanced as well as music-examples form “the real life” always is present in my teaching.