

Jazz Accordion Course by Arrigo Tomasi

The course includes all the skills to improvise fluently in the language of jazz music. It brings the accordionist another way to approach jazz by pointing out some techniques to help manage the kind of freedom and creativity jazz allows.

Harmony is fundamental to the development of improvisation and in the course is introduced in its essential elements:

- Major and minor scale chords
- tonal functions (functional harmony)
- diatonic extensions
- avoid notes
- altered chords
- harmonization, reharmonization of the dominant chord and secondary dominant, tritone chord substitution
- modal interchange

Improvisation should be approached from chord notes rather than scales. Scales may lead to inconsistent improvising if the harmonic weight is not on the chord's main notes (root, third, seventh), extensions, alterations and avoid notes.

The bass system is developed from the basic chords of the standard bass accordion: Major, minor, seventh, diminished, and we'll also cover how to play most common chords of modern and, of course, jazz music using the possible combinations between.

The accompaniment (comping) (solo with jazz trio and solo accordion) is also introduced in all its possible ways.

Recordings and transcriptions of great performers of all instruments will help getting a grasp of the diction (mainly swing), as well as the appreciation of the aesthetic possibilities in the interpretation of the standards that make up the repertoire of the course.

The theory material includes:

- Harmony notes: What You Should Know
- Tables of diatonic chords with extensions and alterations grouped by key (Major and Minor)
- Tables of combined (compounds) bass chords with the possible combinations from C (root)
- Tables of combined bass chords by major and minor key (scale) with diatonic extensions.

The lesson consists of transcriptions (scores) of the examples, audio recording (with and without the accordion) and has the following development:

- Song/Tune introduction (structure and considerations)
- Harmonization and reharmonization process
- Resources that we have to develop improvisation: chords, arpeggios, ornaments, variation on the theme, blue notes, scales (set of notes that we can use depending on the chord)
- Examples of improvisation (summary)
- Bass accompaniment
- Practice on cadences, harmonic progressions (turnarounds)
- Solos by great performers

The Jazz standards on which we will work:

- Mack the Knife
- Lullaby Of Birdland
- St. Thomas (Latin)
- Autumn Leaves
- I Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)
- My One and Only Love (Ballad)
- Don't Get Around Much Anymore
- Sweet Georgia Brown
- All The Things You Are
- Blue Bossa (Latin)
- Rhythm changes (I Got Rhythm,)
- Blues (Things Ain't What They Used To Be, Billie's Bounce,)

To facilitate understanding and assimilation of the concepts introduced, all examples and practical exercises have a progressive technical difficulty from intermediate to advanced.

From the second lesson on, each course song outlines and applies the above concepts again plus adding new content.

Before moving on to the next lesson it is necessary to carry out an assimilation control test of the contents studied.

The course duration is 6 months.

Playing jazz can be relatively easy or extremely complicated (never impossible), you must have time to practice as much as possible and listen to jazz music (swing) of every kind, preferably from Sonny Rollins, Paul Desmond, Keith Jarrett, ... and the accordionists Leon Sash, Vladimir Danilin, Gus Viseur, Vince Abbracciante, etc...