

THEORY AND IMPROVISATION I AND II

Professor: Jack Wilkins, M.M.

[MUSIC PLAYING] Welcome to Jazz Improvisation. This is a course for Jazz Studies majors in the University of South Florida School of Music. This is the first semester of a two semester sequence. And it's a fairly exciting course for those of you that are wanting to develop your skills as jazz improvisers.

To develop as a jazz improviser is a lifelong effort. And the great jazz improvisers that you love and revere and enjoy listening to have all gone through the same learning process that you're entering in now. I'm a professional jazz saxophonist. I have a number of CDs out, and have been playing this music for a long time. I love doing this, and I'm still continuing to study how to improve as an improviser, and how to get better as a saxophone player. And the good news is that I really don't have to end that. You don't really retire as a musician, you just keep finding more things that you want to learn.

What we'll be learning this semester are a lot of the foundational elements, skills, and knowledge required to become a really good jazz improviser. We'll be talking about music theory, and chord scale relationships, and ways to develop melody, and use rhythm, and how to outline harmony effectively, and the ways that it has been done by all the jazz greats that preceded you. We'll also be looking at solos by those masters, analyzing them, and figuring out why they're such great works of art, and how to use those materials and ideas as foundational aspects of your own improvisations.

You'll be creating your own video submissions for tests, and quizzes, and assignments, where you will perform on your instrument with the accompaniment tracks and record that as a video. So you need the ability to be able to play the accompaniment of the tracks over a speaker, and play your instrument at the same time, and record a video of that so you can turn it in for your homework.

This is a course that requires daily practice. You'll be pushed to establish a disciplined practice routine. You'll be pushed to stay in the practice room an extra half an hour to work on your skills to master the things that we're asking you to learn. But it's very rewarding, and I think worthwhile. And these are skills that once you learn them, you really don't lose them. So it's a building process, and you'll hear yourself improve as the semester goes along. And if you don't, I certainly will as you continue to submit all of your exercises, and tests, and quizzes, and hear you improvise along with the other students in the class.

I look forward to getting to work with you this semester, and take the challenge to commit to excellence and become the best jazz improviser you can be.