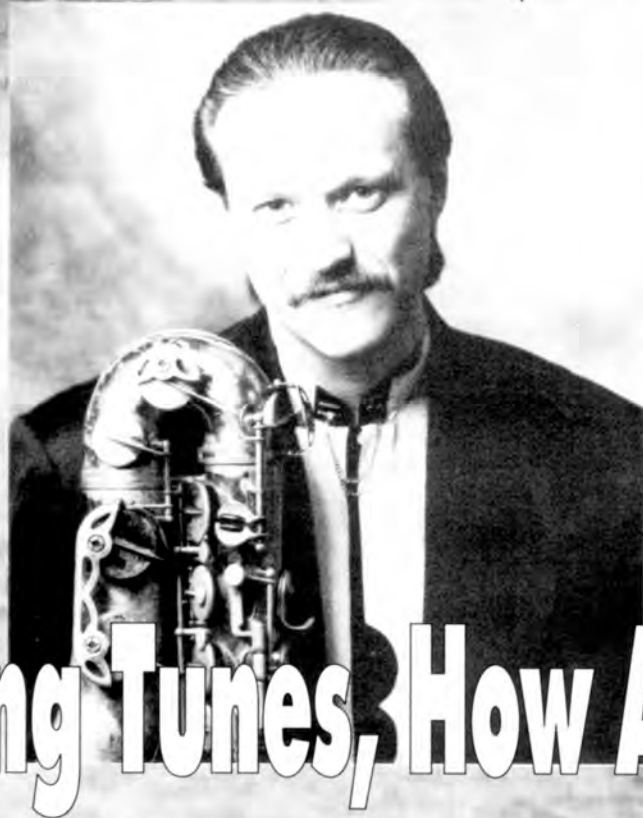


GETTING THE MOST OUT OF EVERY PRACTICE SESSION!



Learning Tunes, How And Why

By Gunnar Mossblad

Being able to play by memory a large number of tunes in one or more keys is necessary for any jazz musician, but it's only the beginning. Seasoned jazz musicians can also fake tunes that they have never played before by analyzing, recognizing, and anticipating typical melodic and harmonic patterns. This is an invaluable skill for any musician. Too many young jazz musicians have fallen prey to the accessibility of fake books. They are often more concerned with reading lots of different tunes than spending the time necessary to thoroughly understand a few tunes. Until a student realizes the importance of

learning tunes, they usually become what I call fake book junkies. They are easily spotted at club dates and gigs reaching for a fake book or having their head buried in a music stand...on every tune. This not only looks unprofessional, it reduces the potential musical communication of that performance.

Only when a tune has been committed to memory does the music start being truly useful as a communication vehicle. Woody Herman used to say that you really did not know how to play a tune until you played it so many times that you were sick of it. In a video interview, Elvin Jones indicated

that John Coltrane made his classic quartet play *My Favorite Things* multiple times right before recording it so they would explore all aspects of the tune and find new things to say when playing it. My personal experience confirms the validity of both of these comments. The tunes I know the best are the ones I have played hundreds of times in all kinds of keys and tempos, and sometimes even different stylistic feels.

The sooner a musician understands the importance of learning a core of standard tunes, the better he or she will be. Once a good list of tunes is a systematic method of practicing, the tunes should be

incorporated. Learning the first few tunes may seem like a daunting task, a systematic and organized approach will make each tune easier to learn.

The best system or practice routine for learning tunes will vary slightly for everyone. If you have a system that works do not change it. However, if you do not yet have a methodology for learning tunes, a review of some of the principles and concepts will help you formulate the most advantageous approach. I also encourage you to check out publications on the subject, including a book by David Baker, titled *Learning Tunes*, (Jamey Aebersold Jazz, Inc.). Baker's book is an in-depth examination of ways to organize and categorize tunes.

LEARNING LEVELS

There are two levels of learning, literal memorization and conceptual understanding that must both be incorporated to internalize tunes. While literal memorization is successful by itself to a point, without conceptual understanding, it is very difficult to retain the information for long periods of time, yet alone apply it to other tunes. A good example of literal memorization without conceptual understanding is a student studying or cramming the night before a test. A large amount of material can be memorized long enough for the student to get it on the test paper, but it is soon forgotten. In the case of learning tunes, a student who memorizes all aspects of a tune as it pertains to a specific key, and becomes proficient improvising on the tune, knows the tune, right? Not necessarily!! What happens when the tune is called on a gig in another key, or you do not play the tune for years and then you are asked to play it? A potential disaster could occur. At best you may be able to stumble through it sounding as if you have never heard the tune. If the tune had been learned using conceptual understanding, a small adjustment from one key to another or recalling the tune after several years

would not be as difficult.

Learning compositions with conceptual understanding requires more time and organization when you first start utilizing the method. During the process of intellectually and mechanically learning a tune on your instrument, you are also comparing the form, melodic content and harmonic formulae with other tunes. With a limited number of notes, chords, and rhythms available in western music, there are only so many melodic and harmonic combinations. Therefore, a well-constructed composition will have many patterns and compositional formulae in common with other compositions. By understanding, recognizing and categorizing these similarities both intellectually and aurally, you are effectively learning the parts of every tune that utilizes the same formulae.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS: MEMORIZATION

Learning the intellectual aspects of tunes are pretty objective. If you have mechanical control and understanding of the form, melody, and harmony on a given tune, you should feel reasonably comfortable in saying that you know the tune. A minimum check list would include the following items.

1. Listen (repeatedly) to the original recording as well as several other versions until the tune has been committed to your aural memory. Listening to the original recording of the tune ensures that you are listening to the closest representation of what the composer had in mind. Then become aware of other versions of the tune. Other versions express the personal influences of that performer or arranger. Listen repeatedly, until the tune has been written to your hearing and you can sing it.

2. Analyze and learn the form of the tune. This is usually the most obvious and objective aspect of learning a tune. Like European classical music, jazz uses letters of the alphabet to designate indi-

vidual sections of the music. "A" signifies the first theme "B," the second, "C" the third and so forth. The most common forms are AABA, ABAC, and the 12-bar blues.

3. "Find" the tune or melody on your horn. Learn to play the melody in its original form, then with the influences of your favorite version, and finally develop an interpretation that is personal to you. Ideally the melody should be learned in all keys, but learning the melody in the original key and at least one other is a good start.

4. Analyze and learn the Harmony of the original and subsequent versions. This includes developing the ability to arpeggiate the changes, walk valid bass lines, play diatonic scales over the harmony on your instrument, and comp the tune on a piano or keyboard. These exercises should also be executed in all keys, but at least in the original key and one other at first.

5. Improvise cohesive, compositionally sound solos on the tune. Successfully perform a creative, cohesive solo with a play-along, or better yet, just a metronome. Then perform it on a gig. Practicing creative applications of your improvisation skills is a process that never ends. However, a good starting goal is to be able to play the tune a capella, with all aspects of the time, feel, and harmony, represented in a beautiful, compositionally sound improvisation.

6. Write (compose) etudes, a new melody or even new changes to the tune. Etudes and compositional exercises help to develop a greater understanding of the inner workings of the tune. The result of re-harmonizing a melody and/or developing a new melody on the original changes of a tune is a new personal and original musical statement. It also develops a fuller understanding of the tune's melodic and harmonic concepts.

APPLICATIONS TO OTHER TUNES: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Execution of the items listed above will ensure you a successful performance of the tune learned.

but it does not necessarily help with the execution of the tune in another key nor learning other tunes. Global or general observations about the way a tune is constructed and subsequent categorization will aid you in the learning and successful retention of a larger number of tunes. Categorizing tunes by form is relatively obvious. There are numerous tunes that use common forms like AABA, ABAC, or 12-bar blues. This letter system is a universally accepted way to express or categorize tunes that have similar compositional forms. A thorough understanding of these common forms makes hundreds or thousands of tunes more accessible.

Melodies can be expressed using a number system rather than key specific names. The tune can then be categorized by a starting note expressed as a number or name that applies to all keys. For instance, *Have You Meet Miss Jones* starts on the 3rd note of the key of the tune. By analyzing and learning the melody in numbers rather than key specific notes, you are not limiting your knowledge of a particular tune to a particular key. Other observations about melody could include whether it is predominantly major or minor, diatonic, or chromatic, scalar or chordal, even whether it is sequential or motivic. All of these observations serve to remind your intellect and ear how to successfully play the tune in any key.

Harmony is somewhat more predictable than melody. With only twelve notes, a limited number of chord types, and even fewer common progressions, many tunes use the same or similar progressions. Like melody, harmony should be learned and expressed in non-key specific terms. Instead of memorizing Dm7-G7-CM7, internalize iim7-V7-IM7. This works for larger harmonic forms like rhythm changes or the blues as well as smaller harmonic forms like sections, phrases or even turnarounds. Observations about key relationships within the tune are

valuable. For instance, many tunes modulate up a 3rd or 4th for the B section. This is all information that will help you remember the tune. Other observation might include general kinds of harmony that are used in a tune. For example, some tunes are primarily ii-V tunes others are modal. Smaller harmonic formulae like turnarounds should also be observed and categorized.

I have only scratched the surface on the specific categories and observations that can be made about tunes to fully internalize them. The process is difficult and time consuming at first, but well worth the effort in the long run. After you have a few tunes learned using this method, you will begin hearing and identifying similar harmonic formulae, forms, and melodic content with every new tune you study. The process of learning a tune will become much faster and more successful, and over the years you will build a large repertoire of tunes. §

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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF EVERY PRACTICE SESSION!



Learning Tunes? Which Ones?

By Gunnar Mossblad

One of the most important aspects of learning to be a jazz musician is the memorization and internalization of standard (and non-standard) tunes. Traditionally, jazz tunes were learned by hearing and comping the tune on the gig or in a session. In jazz's infancy you did not even need to read music, let alone be able to discuss specific theoretical aspects of the tune. You learned the tune on your axe. Each city or region of the country had a different set of tunes that the local musicians played. If you lived in a certain region, you had to know those tunes if you wanted to work. As touring jazz bands came

through town, their tunes were heard by the local musicians and might be incorporated into the repertoire for that region. As jazz became more popular, and recordings became more prevalent, the tunes of certain artists or bands became more universally popular between regions and the jazz standard was born.

During the big band era, the need for jazz musicians to read music grew, and as a natural outgrowth, the musicians began documenting their tunes and sharing them with each other. These collections of tunes known as fake books, served as an abbreviated guide to the melody or the

harmony for the standard tunes of the region. These original fake books were used sparingly on the gig. The process of learning tunes was still an aural exercise. In the late 1960s and early 70s, when jazz education was introduced in the schools, the need for written materials to utilize in jazz classes, spawned a generation of readers, dependent on written versions of the jazz repertoire. This was the era of the realbook. Fortunately those of us that went through our early jazz training at that time recognized the importance of learning tunes in the aural tradition as well. Eventually, a balance of the written and aural materials were used to

learn tunes.

Today, with an alarming amount of jazz publications, legal and illegal fake books, and so much jazz literature to learn, I believe that the aural tradition of learning tunes is still the most effective way to learn tunes. Written publications serve as an excellent supplemental reference tool.

SO, WHICH TUNES SHOULD I LEARN?

To say that there is one list of all the tunes that you need to learn to be a jazz musician is impossible, and even a basic list would still vary from region to region. But, for a younger student I feel comfortable suggesting a jazz survivalist's list of necessary tunes for beginners. A very annotated, must learn, list of tunes for beginners is included at the end of this column. This list should be used as just a starting point to build a library of tunes that you will use throughout a jazz career.

With thousands, even hundreds of thousands of tunes in the jazz repertoire, and more being written everyday, it is difficult to know where to begin. The tendency by younger students of jazz is to learn and play the current jazz tunes that are being played by the most popular jazz artist of the moment. However, there is still a huge list of tunes that you need to know if you want to pay the bills, and another list of tunes that you need to know for the jam sessions that often get you other gigs.

I generally consider tunes to be in one of 3 (or 4) categories. *Standards*, *Jazz Standards*, and *Current Originals*. The fourth category, commercial and novelty tunes, is not really, in the strictest sense a jazz category. However, they should be incorporated into a survivalist's list, depending on your professional opportunities and interests. Each of these categories contain tunes from a wide variety of jazz styles and sources. For younger students I recommend spending the most time on the standards, because these are the tunes that are most universally known, and

you can really learn the basics of swing. As you become more proficient in the jazz idiom, work on the jazz standards. The current originals and hopefully some of your originals should be incorporated when you have a fundamental understanding of song forms and jazz theory (both aural and written). It should be noted that many tunes can be included in more than one category by the way they are played.

Traditional standards generally include tunes from the 20s, 30s and 40s. Swing tunes like *Satin Doll*, *Take the 'A' Train*, and *All of Me*, as well as show tunes and ballads, including *All The Things You Are*, *What Is This Thing Called Love*, *The Day's of wine and Rose's*, *Misty*, *My One And Only Love*, *Stella By Starlight* and hundreds of other Broadway tunes are included in this category. Latin Standards, mainly bossa novas from the 60s like *The Girl from Ipanema*, *How Insensitive*, *A Day in The Live of a Fool*, and *Meditation*, *Wave or Corcovado* should also be included in this category. This is the largest category, and even an annotated list like the one below does not even begin to list all the wonderful tunes.

Jazz standards or session standards are tunes that are traditionally played at sessions and the \$25.00 per man, creative jazz gigs. They are definitely not for dancing and are tunes that you are supposed to be testing and stretching your creative jazz improvisation. These include some of the standards from other categories played in a more creative or original way as well as tunes from the 40s, 50s, 60s and even 70s. Tunes by artists like Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Mile Davis, Wayne Shorter, and Freddie Hubbard, and Monk should be included in this category. Bebop tunes like *Airegin*, *Joy Spring*, *Giant Steps*, *Yardbird Suite*, *Oleo*, and *Moment's Notice* are examples of some of these tunes. Modal tunes like *Impressions* or *Maiden Voyage* can be included in this list. Modal tunes,

due to their relatively simple song forms and harmonic progressions are excellent tunes for beginning improvisers. Latin tunes could include Joe Henderson's *Recordame*, and Kenny Dorham's *Blue Bossa*. Ballads might include *Naima*, and *In A Sentimental Mood*. Blues, including Miles' *All Blues*, Train's *Mr. P.C.*, Monk's *Straight, No Chaser*, or Bird's *Now's The Time*, and Rollins' *Tenor Madness* should be included.

Originals and current or contemporary tunes are tunes that are written by current jazz artists and reflect the developments in the jazz idiom during the late 60s until today. You only need to get the most current jazz compact discs to find these tunes. Some of these tunes may turn into the jazz standards of tomorrow, and for that reason it is important to pick and learn tunes that are of the most musical interest to you. Because these tunes are non-standard, it isn't likely that you will be called to play them on a session unless you were handed some music. Established groups with a rehearsal schedule usually utilize these tunes for concerts.

Novelty or commercial tunes are tunes that might be requested at clubdates or jobs like wedding receptions. Many jazz musicians use these gigs to help support themselves. It can include all kinds of folk songs for various ethnic groups, novelty tunes like the *Macarena* or *Unchained Melody*, big band themes, waltzes, specific Latin dances like cha chas, merengues, bossa novas, sambas, and calypsos as well as commercial, motown, and popular tunes. Obviously this category is enormous, and some musicians make a career of playing this kind of music. But, as a jazz musician that may need to supplement your income in between jazz concerts, learning a few of these tunes can be extremely valuable. Club date lists will vary so much from region to region, that it would be fruitless to try and publish even an annotated list. A seasoned jazz musician in your area can provide you with the must learn tunes.

Assembling a beginner's must learn list is overwhelming. There are just so many important tunes. But while on a short tour to Amsterdam, with Henry Mancini's former guitar player, Royce Campbell, we had a good six hour flight to debate and hone down a list that I believe is a very good starting point for a young student of jazz. We tried to limit the list to no more than ten tunes in each sub-category, but when it came to the swing standards we just could limit it to ten. My thanks to Royce for his insight, and without further comment, below is my jazz survivalist's list of must learn tunes for the beginning jazz student. Remember it is only a starting point. Learning the jazz literature is a life long project.

THE BEGINNER'S JAZZ SURVIVAL LIST OF TUNES

List A

STANDARDS

• SWING

All of Me
All The Things You Are
Alone Together
Autumn Leaves
Beautiful Love
Bye Bye Blackbird
But Not For Me
Don't Get Around Much Anymore
Have You Met Miss Jones
How High The Moon
I Could Write A Book
I Hear a Rhapsody
I'll Remember April
I Love You
In A Mellow Tone
Indiana
Invitation
It Could Happen To You
I Should Care
I Thought About You
Love For Sale
My Romance
No Greater Love
Our Love Is Hear To Stay
Out of Nowhere
Satin Doll
Secret Love
Softly As in a Morning Sunrise
Stella By Starlight
Summertime
Sweet Georgia Brown
Take The 'A' Train
The Day's of Wine and Roses
There Will Never Be Another You
What Is This Thing Called Love

You Stepped Out of A Dream

• BALLADS

As Time Goes By
Body and Soul
Embraceable You
I Can't Get Started
In a Sentimental Mood
Misty
My Funny Valentine
Stardust
Tenderly
When I Fall in Love
LATINS
The Girl from Ipanema
Desafinado
Dindi
How Insensitive
Meditation
Once I Loved
One Note Samba
Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars (Corcovado)
Samba de Orfeu
Wave

• WALTZ

Bluesette
The Boy Next Door
Dear Heart
Emily
Fascination
Fly Me To The Moon
Moon River
Someday My Prince Will Come
Tennessee Waltz

• BLUES

(also see list in Jazz Standards)
C Jam Blues
Now's The Time
Things Ain't What They Used To Be
Walkin'

• BIG BAND

Cherokee
Cotton Tail
Gettin' Sentimental Over You
In The Mood
It Don't Mean a Thing...

Opus 1

Little Brown Jug
Mood Indigo
A String of Pearls
Tuxedo Junction

List B

JAZZ STANDARDS and SESSION TUNES

II-V-I/BEBOP

Along Came Betty
Donna Lee
Doxy
Four
Groovin' High
Moment's Notice
Nardis
Oleo (or any Rhythm changes tune)
Solar
Yardbird Suite

• BALLADS

Angel Eyes
Blue in Green
Coral
Infant Eyes
Lush Life
Naima
'Round Midnight
Yesterdays
You Don't Know What Love Is
You've Changed

• LATIN

Blue Bossa
Ceora
Little Suede Shoes
Nica's Dream
A Night In Tunisia
Recordame
St. Thomas
Song For My Father

• MODAL

Afro Blue
Impressions
Little Sunflower
A Love Supreme
Maiden Voyage
Milestones
So What

BLUES

All Blues
Billie's Bounce
Blue Monk
Blues Walk
Equinox
Mr. P.C.
Footprints
Freddie The Freeloader
Straight, No Chaser
Tenor Madness

• CONTEMPORARY

(note—this list will vary dramatically from region to region and there are so many great tunes)

Bolivia
Dolphin Dance
E.S.P.
Katrina Ballerina
Nefertiti
Once Remembered
Red Clay
Well You Needn't
Witch Hunt
Yes and No

• WALTZ

Alice in Wonderland
Black Narcissus
A Child is Born
Footprints
Up Jumped Spring
Valse Hot
Waltz for Debbie
What Was
Windows