

**BOSSA Feel** (Straight 8ths) **M.M.** ♩ = 120

**COUNTOFF:**

**COUNT OFF!**

*A*

4/4

"1" "2" "1 2 3 4"

*mf* *f*

3 3

3

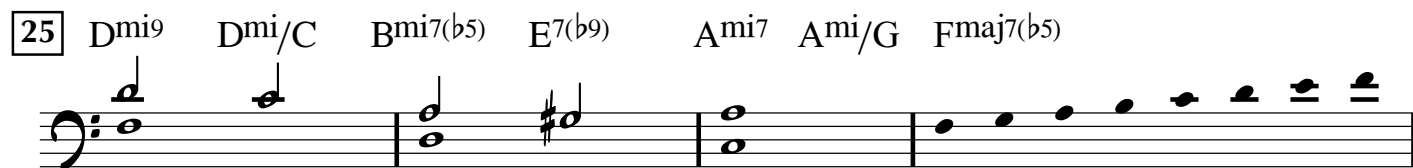
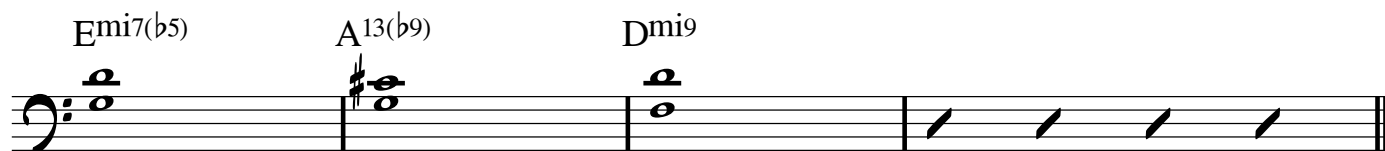
9

*p* *f*

3

3 3 3

**B** **Improvise!**



# IMPROVISATION RESOURCES

## NMEA All State Jazz Audition Etudes D1 & D2

### “JUMP STARTS” to a Great Jazz Solo!

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#### *Welcome to the NMEA All-State Jazz Audition Etudes – Set D!*

I'm sure you'll do a great job preparing the notated part of the audition etudes. While composing the audition etudes, I wanted to include some (hopefully) helpful ideas for dealing with the improvised part of the audition as well. In my work as a guest artist and clinician, young musicians around the country seem to ask a very similar question in master classes when it comes to improvising: “How do you begin an improvised solo and create something that sounds “authentic”?” No worries...*everyone* has been through that initial moment of fear and confusion at the beginning of the improviser's journey. One way to get through this challenge is to find a comfortable and logical “point of departure” for your solo. The main things that a listener will recall from your solo will be the first idea you play and the last idea you play, so an improviser wants to make a strong and clear first statement. Here are two ways to help you develop a very strong initial idea and give that jazz solo a “jump start”!

### 1. FIND THE GUIDE TONES!

This would be a great time to ask, “*What's up with the whole notes under the chord changes in the “IMPROVISE!” section of ETUDE D2-BOSSA?*”

Well...those whole notes are GUIDE TONES. **GUIDE TONES are the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> notes of the chord and function to give the chord its specific harmonic “colour”.** The Guide Tones enable the listener to distinguish between Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords and Major 7<sup>th</sup> chords and Minor 7<sup>th</sup> chords and...etc. Notice how these two notes tend to move within the progressions...you'll see the Guide Tones resolve by step...many times the Guide Tone voice will move by a minor 2<sup>nd</sup> (i.e., a half step)...sometimes it will resolve by a major 2nd (i.e., a whole step or two half steps).

An improvised or composed melody that is built primarily out of Guide Tones forms a kind of “inner melodic skeleton” that can make the chord changes sound very clear.

There are entire jazz tunes built on Guide Tone melodies. Two great examples (which happen to be based on Blues progressions) are: STRAIGHT NO CHASER by Thelonius Monk and TENOR MADNESS by Sonny Rollins. These two melodies are all about Guide Tone motion starting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord. YouTube ‘em...you’ll hear what I mean!

### *How can Guide Tones help me to “Jump Start” a Jazz Solo?*

You can use Guide Tones to create a melodic idea and then use the Guide Tone “path” to “track” your way through most chord progressions. There is a saying among jazz musicians, “...if a player really knows the chords to a tune, you can hear the chord changes in their solo even if the piano or guitar lays out!” One way that this happens is by the savvy player emphasizing Guide Tones.

When you begin to work on learning the chord changes of a song so that you can feel comfortable improvising on it, a great exercise is to start on one of the Guide Tones (3<sup>rd</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>...your choice!) and just play half-notes and whole-notes, resolving the Guide Tones through the chord progression. Try it with Etude D2-BOSSA. This etude is in the key of a minor (concert) and is a *contrafact* (newly composed melody) based on the chord changes to a wonderful bossa by Luís Bonfá titled Theme from BLACK ORPHEUS (a.k.a A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FOOL). The harmony in the first four measures is (sounding in concert pitch):

**Ami7 / / / | Bmi7<sup>(b5)</sup> / E7 / | Ami7 / / / | / / / / |**

The upper Guide Tone on this progression (beginning in measure 2) starts on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Bmi7<sup>(b5)</sup>: A (concert pitch), then moves by half step down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the E7: G# (concert), then resolves back to A (concert), the root of Ami7. The lower Guide Tone is D (concert)-the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Bmi7<sup>(b5)</sup> which ultimately resolves to C (concert), the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Ami7 in measure 3. Start on either one of these notes and follow their respective Guide Tone paths as you play along with recording. As you

come up with your own Guide Tone path through the chord changes, you can then embellish and even depart and return to the Guide Tone melody to come up with a solo that becomes your own creation.

**PIANISTS, GUITARISTS, and VIBRAPHONISTS:** The Guide Tones are primarily *melodic* resources, **not** suggested voicings (although they can serve as basic, “shell” voicings).

**Be sure to come up with your own 3-note, 4-note, (or more) voicings for comping.**

One way to begin to do this is to add 5ths and 9ths to the existing Guide Tones and experiment.

*Be sure to work with your teacher or director on this.*

Finally, I think one of the best definitions of improvisation is *spontaneous composition*, this is...creating a **new song** in real time. One of the devices a composer uses when writing a new piece is the balanced and varied use of repetition. Don't be afraid to use some repetition and development to create a solo that sounds “organic”...i.e., all the pieces flow together naturally. It doesn't have to be unnecessarily complicated, remember...

***A great jazz solo tells a story.***

I hope this short essay will help you to confidently dive in, have fun, and **make music** while improvising. Good luck with your audition!

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