

Litchfield Jazz Camp Student Preparation

By Don Braden (version 3a)

Some preparation will make your Camp experience even more fun!

Things to bring to Jazz Camp (in addition to all the normal stuff):

- Some kind of recording device (digital recorder, minidisc, cassette)
- A Metronome and a Tuner
- Any accessories for your instrument (extra reeds, valve oil, etc.)
- Drummers: bring your cymbals (in a cymbal bag), drumsticks, brushes, practice pad
- Listening device (iPod or MP3 player) with great Jazz on it. **Listening is essential!**

Make sure everything (including your instrument cases) is labeled with your name. Please keep track of your possessions; the Camp cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items.

About the Sunday Theory Evaluation and Instrumental/Vocal Assessment

They are not tests or competition; they help us to see where you are, so we can create classes with students at comparable levels. The Theory Eval is written. The Instrumental Assessment (also called Combo Placement or Audition) tunes are the **12 bar Blues** (in Bb or F, such as “SonnyMoon for Two“, “Freddie Freeloader“, “Bag’s Groove“ or “Billie’s Bounce“), and “**Ladybird**“. Beginners can skip “Ladybird“, and advanced students can opt for “Half-Nelson” (Note: If you have another tune prepared that you know well, you may be asked to play it, and improvise over the chord changes, if applicable.) At the Assessment, an instructor will usually accompany you on piano, keyboard, guitar or bass. Listen to some versions of these tunes before you come (check out YouTube.com, Rhapsody.com or iTunes.com), and work on the melody, scales and chords of the tunes.

In any case, if you prepare for Camp in general (see below), the Eval and Assessment will go smoothly.

General Preparation:

Keep working on the basics regularly. If you work on your sound, rhythm, theory (scales, chords, etc.), learning tunes, ear training, improvisation, reading music, you will be in good shape!

Listen to Jazz Masters as much as you can, and pay special attention to those who play your instrument. Listening is a critical part of learning this music.

Boning up on your **Jazz Theory** will be helpful in every aspect of Camp. See the **LJC Theory Guidelines** for more info. We provide a variety of Theory materials at Camp, but if you want to obtain your own Jazz Theory reference, check out “The Jazz Theory Book” by Mark Levine.

Available on our web site is a sample Theory Evaluation for you to review. You will be given a similar assessment when you arrive for placement in the appropriate Practical Theory Class. If jazz theory is new to you, try to familiarize yourself with some basic concepts. Spending some time on the piano (more on this below) is very beneficial.

All instrumentalists, vocalists, drummers and percussionists are strongly encouraged to learn or brush up on your piano skills. If you have no previous piano experience, start by learning the notes, the major scales and the chord tones on the keyboard. You can also work on the other scales listed below in the “Beginner” level. This will benefit you tremendously at the Camp and

throughout the year.

Scales are a big part of the “alphabet” of Western music, Jazz included, and so are very important to learn on your main instrument. Based on the skill level (beginner, intermediate or advanced) you indicated on your application, recommendations are below. While you’re studying scales, it is very beneficial to study chords as well, and to learn how to understand chord symbols.

In particular, **pianists and guitarists** should begin working on at least basic Jazz voicings of at least Major, Minor and Dominant 7th chords. Jazz chord voicing usually contain the 7th and 9th (they aren’t just triads like basic chords in other styles of music), and sometimes have alterations. You should also learn basic Jazz accompaniment techniques.

Drummers and percussionists should prepare by learning the following: the 12-bar blues form, the 16-bar song form (such as “Summertime” or “Ladybird”), and the 32-bar song form (AABA, such as “There is No Greater Love”, or ABAC like “Autumn Leaves”). You should become familiar with the melodies of those or similar tunes by playing them on the drums. It is also helpful to become familiar with tunes that change feel within the form, like “On Green Dolphin Street”.

Vocalists should prepare by working on 1-2 octaves of each scale in your skill level. You can play the notes on the piano at first and sing along. Work on some standard tunes, like the ones mentioned below. For tunes without lyrics, vocalists should prepare by learning to sing the melody from a lead sheet. Vocalists should learn and memorize the lyrics to as many tunes as possible. Also, try to transpose a few tunes to your keys (make a written lead sheet, if possible), or at the very least, know what key you sing each tune in so an instrumental group can make the necessary adjustments.

Specific Preparation (by Level)

ALL LEVELS:

- **Listen to as much jazz as possible.** Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue" is a good start. See the Discography, available on the web site.
- **Try to practice or jam with friends regularly.** Play the Blues in a few different keys and work on Jazz standard tunes (see below).
- **Learn to play** at least two octaves of **the Chromatic Scale** on your instrument.
- **Drummers, learn all 26 basic rudiments, and learn to play solid swing,**
- **Latin, ballad and waltz** beats, if you don't already know how.
- **Practice your sight-reading,** or learn at least the basics of how to read music (including time and key signatures), if you don't already know how.
- **Learn about intervals.**
- **Learn the transposition of your instrument.** Some concepts are discussed in terms of the "Concert Pitch". You should know what this means for you. For example, if the instructor says: "Class, let's play a Concert C Major Scale", trumpets, clarinets and tenor and soprano saxes should know to play their D Major (a major 2nd higher), and alto and bari saxophones should know to play A Major (a major 6th higher, or a minor 3rd lower).
- **Practice basic piano skills.** Playing the chords to a tune (especially if you can play them in time) is great for your ears and your mind.
- **Practice singing.** Learn to sing intervals, scales, and the melody of any tune you are working on.
- **Learn the Major and Minor Pentatonic and Blues Scales** in Concert C, F, Bb, G and D. They are great for getting started in Jazz improvisation, and useful at all levels. In C, they are:
 - Major Pentatonic: C D E G A C
 - Minor Pentatonic: C Eb F G Bb C
 - Blues Scale: C Eb F F# G Bb C
- **Get some play along** CDs, and practice improvisation on some of the tunes listed below, especially the Blues. One of the best is Jamey Aebersold, Volume 2, "Nothin' but Blues". Check out www.JazzBooks.com. Also, iTunes apps such as "The Real Book" or software like "Band in a Box" can provide a decent computerized rhythm section with which to practice tunes. You can also practice with your favorite classic Jazz recording. None of these are as good as live musicians (naturally), but are better than practicing with only a metronome all the time!

Below are specific recommendations based on the level at which you think you play.

"BEGINNING" LEVEL:

Scales (the keys to learn are listed after each scale):

Pentatonic or Blues scale: Bb, Eb, C, F, G, D

Major: C, F, Bb, Eb, G, D

Dorian Minor: C, F, G, D, A, E

Dominant 7th (Mixolydian): C, F, Bb, G, D, A

Blues Tunes:

Sonny Moon for Two, Bag's Groove, C Jam Blues

Other Tunes:

Watermelon Man, Summertime, Maiden Voyage, Ladybird

“INTERMEDIATE” LEVEL:

Scales:

Pentatonic/Blues, Major, Dorian Minor, Dominant 7th (Mixolydian): All 12 keys

Locrian: C, F, G, D, A, E

Diminished (Whole-half and Half-whole): All 3 Keys

Blues Tunes:

The tunes mentioned above, plus Now's the Time, Tenor Madness

Other Tunes:

The tunes mentioned above, plus Song for My Father, Autumn Leaves

“ADVANCED” LEVEL:

Scales:

Major, Dorian Minor, Dominant 7th (Mixolydian), Locrian, Diminished Whole-tone (aka Altered), Melodic Minor (ascending): All 12 keys

Diminished (Whole-half and Half-whole): All 3 Keys

Blues Tunes:

The tunes mentioned above, plus Billie's Bounce, Unit 7, Blues for Alice

Other Tunes:

The tunes mentioned above, plus Alone Together, Stella by Starlight, Have You Met Miss Jones

FOR ALL LEVELS: A good way to practice scales

Learn to think of scales by numbers. This is handy because in Jazz Theory, almost all numbers discussed refer to scale numbers. In a C Major scale, for example, C is 1, D is 2, E is 3 and so on. The C one octave up is 8, the D above that is 9, and so on. A Major triad is 1-3-5, a Major seventh chord is 1-3-5-7, and Major 9 chord (common in Jazz) is 1-3-5-7-9, and so on.

When you practice scales, think about the numbers, and play the following pattern (all 8th notes, medium slow tempo at first -- use a metronome):

1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-

1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-

1-3-5-7-9-7-5-3-1

This simple practice pattern is great for dexterity, and it contains melodic ideas that are applicable to improvisation over chord changes.