

In this room,
in your practice space
and while performing:

**Make no judgement.
Assign no meaning.**

Just listen.

Let your experiences
and the feelings that they may evoke,
happen
so that they arrive
without interference
and leave you
changed or not.

Anxiety is the death of the rich colourful world of music.
Anxiety and Focus can not occupy the same space.
Priority number one is to Focus.

In the practice room ask yourself:

What am I intending to do?

What outcome do I wish for?

Set your intention using a positive affirmation in the present moment.

Some examples:

My practice time is effective.

I focus upon the elements of relaxed, efficient sound production.

I let my imagination guide my fingers.

I sing to feel connection to melody.

I focus.

Workshop on Sound, Time and the place where Imagination and Experience meet.

In this workshop we discover the beginning point to build a
stable and expandable jazz concept upon.

Sound:

It begins with an "In Breath", this is where the work is
done. The rest of playing is relaxation in motion.

Time:

It's about syncopation, not counting. It is also about playing
evenly between the "big pulses".

Experience:

Your remembered experiences are the working materials of
the imagination and your creativity.

Thought is useful for preparation, a clear imagination of
the materials of music is what makes a flowing improvised
performance.

Sound:

It begins with an in breath, this is where the work is done.
The rest is relaxation in motion.

The "In Breath"

It starts with posture.

Lightly tuck in belly below the navel.

Finger on chin.

Guide your chin back and the top of your head up.

Open your jaw in and then down.

Breathe in.

Feel your sides and back expand.

Breathe in a little more for more expansion and without
pausing, let the air and expansion go.

While maintaining upright posture, head and jaw position,
repeat 4 more times.

Now let go of lower belly and relax.

Variation:

Put mouthpiece cap, open side facing you, in your mouth.

Using your jaw, point the end of the cap downward.

When you relax and the air comes out, sing any note scale or
simple melody.

Reed Vibration

is created by applying light pressure to the reed from your bottom teeth, through your relaxed bottom lip while you let the air go out of your body.

No other lip or face muscles are involved in the initial production of sound.

To experience this clearly, use only the mouthpiece on the saxophone neck for the first tones. Find the relationship between bottom teeth, bottom lip and reed by breathing out through the mouthpiece while applying pressure downwards on to your bottom lip with the mouthpiece/saxophone neck.

Do this as the first part of your warm-up until it becomes second nature.

When you have a clear experience of this process attach the neck (and mouthpiece) to your horn and discover the same process and feeling. Do long tones to make it second nature.

The sound that you produce this way will be bright and loud.

This is as it should be. Subtle involvement of additional facial muscles will serve to dampen or otherwise impart your personal ideas as to how your saxophone should sound.

This is done after you produce an efficient bright tone.

You can always make a bright tone darker but to make a dark tone brighter requires you to push against yourself. This wastes precious strength and energy and is the opposite of relaxing to play.

Considerations:

You may find that this way to play requires a different strength of reed or that the reed you once found comfortable now feels a little too hard or soft. Learn how to use a tool like the Reed Geek™ to adjust your reed. There are many YouTubes available on this topic

What is "Jazz Time"?

For musicians who wish to play jazz and improvise with a rhythm section "Having Good Time" means primarily, the ability to play evenly within a rhythmic pulse.

Your fingers must be able to move within a framework of subdivisions, mostly in groupings of 2 or 3, i.e. "Straight Eights or Swing Eights.

It is of the utmost importance to be able to imagine clearly the flow of subdivisions and to have this playing clearly in your mind on its own and at all times as it is the framework that everything you play is attached to.

We can gain these experiences through working with a metronome and vocalizing the subdivisions and articulating syncopated rhythms.

We progress in accuracy by progressively making the metronome click slower and slower, adding more subdivisions between clicks. This practice deepens your ability to imagine clearly the subdivisions and make you responsible for playing the time, rather than having to constantly listen to others to stay synchronized. It gives you the ability to predict the pulse accurately so that what you play does not rush or drag. It makes you responsible for the feeling of the music. It relieves you from the burden of "counting" to know where you are in the form of the music as when we connect with each other through subdivision and syncopation the form, i.e. 2, 4, or 8 bars becomes a thing you feel by connecting through syncopation.

Speaking Exercises:

Make clear duplet, triplet and sixteenth note subdivisions using the metronome click on the:

quarter note (1 quarter)

half note (2 quarters)

whole (4 quarters)

double whole (8 quarters)

dotted half (3 quarters)

dotted half plus half (5 quarters)

whole plus dotted half (7 quarters)

Use syllables that come naturally to you to "speak" the subdivisions and then syncopations.

Listen to New Orleans "Second Line" recordings and imitate the syncopations.

There are almost infinite syncopated variations so don't worry about practicing everything.

Record yourself and then speak different syncopations along with your recordings.

Have fun.

Metronome Game

Predicting the pulse.

Set the metronome to 60bpm

Listen to it.

Tap your finger to what feels like the middle point in between clicks.

Make a very light sound with the tip of your tongue to mark the click and the middle point.

Shift the finger tap to the click. Eventually this will cover the sound of the click.

Repeat at the process at 50bpm, 40bpm and 30bpm,

At 25bpm, 20bpm and 15 bpm

Do the same thing but double the subdivisions of your tongue.

This exercise gets gradually better over months.

The process is more important than the goal.

The Melodic Experience

Make musical experiences to learn music.

A musical experience is composed of making a tone or sequence of tones on your instrument and then singing them while touching your instrument and imagining their relationship to a harmonic situation and/or to each other as intervals.

The most useful tool for learning a musical experience is to

Think once (clearly) Play once (clearly)

Play the first note of the sequence.

Sing, touch and imagine the remaining tones.

Check often by playing a tone you are imagining to find out if what you sing, touch, imagine is indeed correct and what you intended.

Things to apply this learning method to:

Melodies

Melodic patterns - "Licks"

Scales

Arpeggios

Root movement of chord changes

Chord tones

Scale tones in between chord tones

Chromatic tones between scale tones

Anything you want to play on your instrument.

This practice builds clear connection to the music and your instrument. It's the opposite of following your fingers and endlessly repeating stuff you don't hear or understand.

Pick something simple to learn.

At first sing, touch and imagine it slowly and not in time.

Then sing, touch and imagine slowly in time.

Check what you sing, touch and imagine often by playing it
your horn.

You will stray from what you intended a lot.

That's normal.

By making mistakes you send a message to the part of your
brain that is responsible for making new connections
(learning) to activate and learn.

As you amass these experiences you build a source of things
you can clearly imagine and play without thinking. Your
inner musical world guides your fingers.

You can think about what you want to play before you play
but when you play, you are in a flow of experiences that
make sense while you play.