

What scale or arpeggio should I use to play over this?"

I hear this question repeatedly from students in jazz lessons. Because we want our students to sound as good as they can **as quickly as possible**, we jazz musicians/teachers are guilty of skipping over the story of how players learn jazz music (by ear from recordings or live experience), which leads students to the false belief that playing jazz can be reduced to a technical problem with a corresponding technical solution. The story of the history of jazz is colorful, rich, and should be learned through a variety of resources such as DVD's, books, and audio recordings. But it's through audio recordings that the language of jazz is passed on from jazz master to student. When the student has learned solos from the original recordings, the answer to that question would be, "well Lester would have played it like this, Hawk like this, and Johnny Hodges like this."

Students who have NOT transcribed are missing out on forming a relationship with great historical players, so Lester, Hawk, and Hodges are just names from jazz's distant past. Older players, like many things from the past, are incorrectly dismissed as irrelevant simply on the basis that they lived *such a long time ago*, "so how could they possibly be relevant?" Students tell me that Bird, Cannonball, and other modern players (Coltrane, Brecker, Potter, Lovano, Redman) are so much more interesting and hip and that they want to sound like them. When in fact, the key to understanding the musical and harmonic advances of these modern saxophonists lies in studying and copying the solos of earlier players.

But students need proof! So this year in Faenza, I will be preparing transcriptions and arrangements of swing era bands from the following composers: Count Basie/Bennie Moten, Mary Lou Williams, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson. Participating students will have the opportunity to play these historic pieces in the **SaxART Orchestra** in a public concert called **Swing Evolution** adapted for saxophone ensemble with rhythm section accompaniment. The music from these early swing bands is accessible for both students and audiences, and will be a fun way for the saxophone students to begin explore the musical contributions of master saxophonists.

In masterclasses, we will examine and play the solos of tenor saxophonists Lester Young, Chu Berry, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Don Byas, and alto saxophonists, Johnny Hodges, and Benny Carter. In our study, students will experience the benefits of this historical survey in the following ways: 1) learning to phrase through a ii-V-I progression without sounding choppy, 2) feeling how to "swing" more naturally, 3) how solos learned by ear won't make you sound like somebody else, but actually make you a better listener, and 4) form the basis of your own emerging style.