

11 The clarinet in jazz

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Introduction

Listen to almost any performance from the first decade of recorded jazz and you will hear the sound of the clarinet. Whether you choose to listen to the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB), the King Oliver/Louis Armstrong recordings or Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers, you will hear every ensemble topped by upper-register clarinet, playing in harmony above the melody.

All the evidence about the origins of jazz points to the music having developed from vocal performances. Undoubtedly field hollers, work songs, religious music and the famous post-1817 New Orleans Congo Square dances were all part of the picture, as far as vocal music was concerned. After the end of the Civil War in 1865 the New Orleans blacks were able gradually to acquire the instruments of the military band, including the clarinet. Military (marching) bands were important in all-French settlements, and in New Orleans most of the early jazz players started their careers in such wind bands, playing marches, polkas, quadrilles and so on. From these two sources – the vocal folk/dance music and the marching band – it is quite easy to understand how the five- or six-piece jazz bands evolved. Of course the evolution of jazz included the influence of many other musical styles, ranging from Ragtime and Klezmer to the Chopin waltzes from which stride piano (with its 'striding' left hand of a bass note on beats 1 and 3 and a chord on beats 2 and 4) was probably derived. But it is with these smaller 'marching bands', with their trumpet–trombone–clarinet front line, that jazz first appeared on gramophone recordings.

Jazz clarinet on record

It is not necessary for an aspiring jazz player to hear the whole of jazz history. One's favourite style and repertoire makes an entirely appropriate starting point. The following brief overview of important jazz

clarinetists is presented chronologically for simplicity, and is not intended to imply that each decade represents an advance on the previous one.

The poor quality of early recordings seems to be a major barrier to appreciation for many younger listeners. Recent attempts to remaster early recordings, using digital techniques, have been very successful and have made listening a lot easier. A series of CD releases, *Jazz Classics In Stereo* (BBC Records) engineered by Robert Parker, is to be particularly recommended. Also worth acquiring is the CD *Clarinet Marmalade – 25 Great Jazz Clarinetists* (Living Era, AJA 5132, 1994), which contains examples of the work of many of the players mentioned in this chapter.

Thomas Edison devised the first sound-recording machine in 1877. The first playback machines were on sale in Germany by the late 1880s, and by 1893 similar machines were on sale in America. However, we have to wait until 1917 for the first jazz recordings, which were made by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, a five-piece (cornet, clarinet, trombone, piano, drums) white band from New Orleans, that swept the world. In America they travelled first to Chicago. They then appeared in New York to great acclaim, and in 1919 spent nine months at the Hammersmith Palais in London. Thus the first jazz clarinetist to be recorded was the ODJB's Larry Shields (1893–1953). He was born in the same year as Lorenzo Tio, the first great teacher of jazz clarinet. Tio's most famous pupil was Duke Ellington's Barney Bigard (1906–80). Jazz clarinet playing began with these figures. The mystery of where they found their formative influences is one of the great and frustrating puzzles of twentieth-century wind playing.

The most striking aspects of Shields's contribution to these ODJB recordings are the maturity of the style (Shields was only twenty-four-years old), the outrageous quality of his two-bar breaks with their glissandi and whinnying effects, and the fact that – apart from the two-bar breaks – there are no solos. The players who came after Shields *can* be heard soloing. Leon Rappolo (1902–43) and Frank Teschemacher (1906–32) are the important white clarinetists of the 1920s, along with Jimmy Dorsey (1904–57) and Pee Wee Russell (1906–69). The New Orleans lineage begins with Alphonse Picou (1878–1961) whose famous *High Society* solo, with its resemblance to the piccolo solo in the military-band origins of jazz, and continues through George Lewis (1900–68), whose influence came to bear later, in the post World War Two New Orleans jazz revival. The three great New Orleans clarinetists were Johnny Dodds (1892–1940), Jimmy Noone (1895–1940) and Sidney Bechet (1897–1959). Dodds is to be heard on the seminal *Hot Five* and *Hot Seven* recordings with Louis Armstrong. Bechet's enduring fame lies in his great popularity in France, where he became

a popular entertainer almost in the Maurice Chevalier class towards the end of his life. Indeed he is now remembered mostly for his soprano saxophone playing, with unmistakable vibrato. But his clarinet work in the earlier days should not be overlooked, such as *Blues In Thirds* (1940) with Earl Hines. Mention should also be made of the work of Albert Nicholas (1900–73) and Omer Simeon (1902–59).

Yet for the layman and casual observer of the jazz scene, all this was but a prelude to the swing era, the period in the late 1930s when jazz became the pop music of the day, the age of the big swing band fronted and led by a virtuoso instrumentalist. This was the heyday of Benny Goodman (1909–86), the ‘King of Swing’, and Artie Shaw (b. 1910), the ‘King of the Clarinet’. Both musicians are well represented on recordings. Goodman made his first trio recordings when he was not yet eighteen. If you are seeking just one recording to represent Benny Goodman, then try the 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert. The concert took place on 16 January 1938, and it is undoubtedly easier to search for the recording by date than by record number, as it has been reissued many times in every format. Not only is the twenty-eight-year-old clarinettist at peak form, but the concert has the bonus of performances by many members of the Count Basie and Duke Ellington bands of the time. Goodman is the clarinettist’s clarinettist, yet his failure to assimilate the developments of modern jazz, coupled with his serious involvement with chamber and orchestral music (in addition to commissioning the works from Bartók, Copland, Hindemith and others mentioned in Chapter 5, he gave the world première of the Poulenc Clarinet Sonata in 1963 with Leonard Bernstein), has meant that he has received an unfairly hostile treatment from jazz journalists and from some jazz historians. There was not even an authoritative biography until two excellent ones appeared in quick succession some time after his death, James Lincoln Collier’s *Benny Goodman and the Swing Era* (Oxford, 1989), and Ross Firestone’s *Swing, Swing, Swing* (London, 1993).

Artie Shaw also became briefly involved with what he called ‘long-form music’ before giving up the clarinet completely in his mid-forties. His subsequent autobiography, *The Trouble With Cinderella* (New York, 1952), included a vivid portrayal of the conflict between art and entertainment which is so familiar to many musicians. One of the many highlights of his career was the recording of *Any Old Time* (New York, 1938) by the singer Billie Holiday, a song for which the gifted Shaw had written both words and music, and scored the big-band arrangement! Notable Artie Shaw performances on record include his *Concerto for Clarinet* (Hollywood, 1938) and his hit records *Frenesi* (four million sold in 1940) and *Begin the Beguine* (1938). He too suffered his share of critical deafness. In a chapter on the clarinet in what is widely regarded as one of the best companions to jazz

available, *The Jazz Book* by Joachim Berendt (Frankfurt, 1973), he is dismissed as a 'minor Benny Goodman of a sort!' In contrast, a video biography of Shaw – *Time Is All You've Got* (1984), by the brilliant Brigitte Berman – is well worth seeing.

Although, of course, jazz continued to develop after the Second World War there was (and is) a large group of excellent jazz clarinet players who chose to play in what could be described as a modified Benny Goodman style. Kenny Davern (*b.* 1935), Arne Domnerus (*b.* 1924), Pete Fountain (*b.* 1930), Edmond Hall (1901–1967), Peanuts Hucko (*b.* 1918), Ove Lind (*b.* 1926), Johnny Mince (*b.* 1912), Ken Peplowski (*b.* 1958), Dave Shepherd (*b.* 1929), Putte Wickman (*b.* 1924) and Bob Wilber (*b.* 1928) are all available on record and are well worth hearing. Indeed, although in the late 1940s and early 1950s jazz moved on quickly from Charlie Parker-inspired bebop, the clarinet was largely left out of the picture. The only substantial and enduring contributor was Buddy De Franco (*b.* 1923), who won the *Downbeat* poll ten years running. He has an outstanding fluency, a dazzling command of the high register, an understanding of the harmonic language of bebop, and a tone that suited the music well. His playing has a character that is sharply different from that of the swing-era clarinetists. His 1954 quartet recording with pianist Art Tatum is legendary, though some of his more recent work presents a happier and more cohesive overall result. The critical and popular neglect that Buddy De Franco has suffered in the latter part of his career is one of the scandals of post-war jazz.

Other clarinetists who made innovative contributions in the 1950s and 1960s include Jimmy Giuffrè (*b.* 1921), Duke Ellington's Jimmy Hamilton (*b.* 1917), Abe Most (*b.* 1920) and Sam Most (*b.* 1930), Tony Scott (*b.* 1921), Bill Smith (*b.* 1926), the tragically short-lived Swedish clarinetist Stan Hasselgard (1922–48), the Australian Don Burrows (*b.* 1928), and British clarinetists Vic Ash (*b.* 1930), Sandy Brown (1929–75) and Tony Coe (*b.* 1934). As a result of the post-war revival of interest in traditional jazz, two British clarinetists, Monty Sunshine (*b.* 1928) and Acker Bilk (*b.* 1929), became household names when their simple (and not at all jazzy) recordings of *Petite Fleur* and *Stranger On The Shore* respectively climbed high into the top 40 record charts both in Britain and America in the early 1960s.

Jazz styles continued to evolve via the abstract and the free, but despite interesting performances from Roland Kirk (1936–77), John Carter (*b.* 1929) and Perry Robinson (*b.* 1938), the major clarinet contributions to the avant-garde seemed to be from players of the lower members of the clarinet family. Eric Dolphy (1928–64) used the bass to great effect, for example in Oliver Nelson's *The Blues And The Abstract Truth* (Impulse AS5, 1961); Anthony Braxton (*b.* 1945) made rare but fascinating use of the contrabass when he played Charlie Parker's

Ornithology on his LP *In The Tradition* (Steeplechase SCS 1015, 1974). David Murray (b. 1955) continues this trend; his *Murray's Steps* (Black Saint 0065, 1983) received impressive critical acclaim, both for his tenor saxophone playing and his work on bass clarinet.

In the mid-1970s jazz lovers began to be aware of the clarinet playing of the established New York saxophonist Eddie Daniels (b. 1941). His *Morning Thunder* (CBS 36290, 1980) presented jazz-rock clarinet performances with a top New York session band, the first of several such releases. Combining a very refined technique (one night in Munich recently I heard him turn in an elegant performance of the Mozart Concerto) with an instantly recognisable jazz sound, he has been a consistent and deserving poll winner throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Fig. 11.1). *To Bird With Love* (GRP Records, GRP 95442, 1987) or *Breakthrough* (GRP Records, GRPD 9533, 1986) make a useful introduction to his work.

With the recordings of Paquito D'Rivera (b. 1948) it began to look as though there was a possibility of a jazz-clarinet renaissance. Born in Cuba, Paquito was a child virtuoso on saxophone and clarinet – and a Benny Goodman fan. After his New York debut in 1980 the *New York Times* stated that he 'should be heard ... by anyone who likes jazz that's inventive, hot and heartfelt', but he did not come to worldwide attention until he toured with Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations band in the late 1980s. Hear *Tico Tico* (Chesky JD 34, 1989) or *Reunion* (Messidor 15805–2, 1991), the latter featuring fellow Cuban Arturo Sandoval on trumpet.

At the time of writing, the most frequently mentioned new names in the world of jazz clarinet are those of Don Byron and Marty Ehrlich. Don Byron aims to bring both Klezmer and Rastafarian elements to jazz. Marty Ehrlich has been voted number one clarinet player in the 'Talent deserving of wider recognition' section of the *Downbeat* critics' poll, and was the subject of a recent article entitled 'Is Marty Ehrlich the future of jazz?' in the *New Yorker* magazine.

It is heartening to be able to conclude this brief overview of jazz clarinet on record with the thought that the place of the clarinet in jazz is now as strong as at any time since the end of the swing era and the end of the hegemony of Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. May the trend continue.

Equipment

Most jazz clarinetists play on standard B \flat Boehm-system wooden clarinets, and use standard commercial mouthpieces and reeds. However, there are some considerations peculiar to jazz which determine choices for some players; these are principally connected with tone and volume.



Figure 11.1 Eddie Daniels

It is important for a jazz clarinetist to sound like no one else, and to have a tone appropriate to the style in which he plays. For example, a clarinetist who is captivated by early jazz, and who enjoys the playing of Johnny Dodds, Omer Simeon or Albert Nicholas, will be likely to choose equipment to make it easier for him to capture that style. As these players all played on pre-Boehm instruments (Albert-system or similar) this probably accounts for the number of 'simple'-system clarinets still seen in bands emulating the New Orleans style today. Occasionally old metal clarinets are used in these bands. Other players

may simply wish to heighten their own individualism, so as to be easily recognised. This quest for identity presumably accounts for the contemporary British clarinettist Tony Coe's unusual choice of a C clarinet in boxwood, for example.

The need to play at high volume levels also influences reed and mouthpiece choices, and this in turn affects the choice of tuning barrel. Clarinettists playing in the classic New Orleans trumpet–trombone–clarinet instrumentation usually find themselves at a disadvantage when trying to match volume levels with the much louder brass instruments, particularly when these are allied to the power of the modern rhythm section. If you don't like using a microphone, then being able to play louder probably means choosing a more open mouthpiece and slightly softer reeds, and maybe taking a little more mouthpiece into the mouth. This all conspires to make it difficult to play up to a $\text{a}'=440$ on a standard-length instrument, and it is common to find clarinettists in these circumstances resorting to a very short barrel – sometimes as much as 6.5 mm or more shorter than standard, but this is an undesirable solution to the problem. Clarinets are not designed to function accurately with such distorted proportions, and there is inevitably the penalty of poor intonation. Incidentally, staccato becomes more difficult with more mouthpiece in the mouth, though a clean and fast staccato is not high on the list of stylistic requirements for the jazz clarinettist.

The instruments and reeds used by the major jazz clarinettists are reassuringly orthodox. *Downbeat* appears to be the only music magazine to have consistently listed the equipment used by its interviewees. Reading through *Downbeat* interviews of the last three decades every one of the famous clarinettists interviewed claimed to use one of the popular brands of clarinet and popular brands of reeds of middle strength, between two- and three-and-a-half.

What to play

For me, one of the pleasures of teaching in a large college jazz department is the contact one has with the regular flow of visitors who come to perform or teach, or merely drop in to have a look round. Naturally, some of the visiting teachers have been excellent, but it must be said that helpful teachers are uncommon amongst these world-class jazz performers. Of course it is unfair to expect that every great player will have the insight to understand both how he weaves his magic *and* the skill to be able to communicate that insight, though there have been moments when the thought occurred that it was a little cheeky of some musicians to accept payment for a kind of teaching that was little more than expert demonstration. In the 'most unhelpful' category was an unforgettable visit by a ten-piece band of eminent New York

musicians who called on us during a British tour. Following a crop of highly-acclaimed CD releases, these musicians were all well-known to the more aware jazz students. After giving a brief but quite wonderful performance in the college recital room, the group separated to enable each instrumentalist to take a few students away to practice rooms to receive specialist help and advice. The drummer was a widely-respected writer and player, so I attached myself to his group. One of our drum students was beside himself with eager anticipation at having such close contact with one of his heroes. Unfortunately the excitement didn't last long. The session started with what I now recognise as the classic way in which *not* to begin a masterclass. 'Anyone got any questions?' asked one of the visiting heroes. An eager and very hip drum student was quick to respond. 'Yes. If you're playing with a bass player who isn't grooving, what do you do about it?' he asked. 'I say "Man, You ain't groovin'!"' What marvellous confirmation of the truth of the celebrated saying that there are no such things as stupid questions, but only dumb answers. I find myself constantly trying to avoid giving a dumb answer to a similarly fundamental question, 'How do you know what to play?'

In order to arrive at a helpful answer, two assumptions must be made. First, you must have some proficiency on your instrument. You don't have to be a conservatoire-trained virtuoso, but a moderate command of scales and arpeggios is essential. Contemporary jazz is not simple music. The more technique you have the better, though it should not be allowed to dominate the music. Remember the virtue of art concealing art.

Secondly, it is essential that you have a love of some aspect of jazz. It does not really matter which aspect, but love it you must. If you share the opinion of the educationalist A. S. Neill, that jazz is all 'noisy, quacking stuff',¹ you are never going to play it convincingly, any more than you could learn to speak German convincingly if you found the language to be ugly and harsh. Impossible – or perhaps I should say *unmöglich!* Whether you love the outrageous vibrato of Johnny Dodds, the wistful low register of Jimmy Giuffrè, the exuberance of Benny Goodman, the melodic inventiveness of Artie Shaw, the harmonic skill of Buddy De Franco or the inscrutable waywardness of Pee Wee Russell, you simply have to be in sympathy with some aspect of jazz if you are going to make progress. If one's efforts are going to sound convincing and be taken seriously, then what one chooses to play must be part of, or at least built on, the jazz tradition. One's performance should carry a jazz accent. The playing should display some aspects of the jazz vocabulary. These include a personal tone-quality, jazz vibrato, note colourations (growls, swoops, bends, glissandi), the presence of a swing feel and so on. Otherwise – to pursue the analogy of learning German – there is a danger of communicating nothing at all. Imagine

the impossibility of learning German out of a book, without ever hearing the language spoken. It may seem strange to place such heavy emphasis on having a love of jazz and doing lots of listening. Surely everyone who tries to play jazz will do so out of a love of the music, and after hearing some of the jazz greats? Unfortunately that is not the case. I strongly suspect that those orchestral players who casually ask a jazz musician 'How do you know what to play?' are simply trying to find a golden key that will save them a lot of trouble. They do not want to spend lots of time listening to music that they do not really like, and hope that a few words with a jazz-playing colleague will provide a handy short cut to jazz competence. The author Laurence Block puts the point vividly. In *Writing The Novel* (Cincinnati, 1985), page 47, he urges would-be novelists to read widely, and observes that 'An isolated tribesman who spontaneously invents the bicycle . . . may be displaying enormous natural creativity, but one wouldn't expect the world to beat a path to his door'. The analogy for would-be jazz clarinetists is obvious. So one must emphasise two prerequisites for jazz study: a moderate amount of technical facility, and sufficient respect for the music to enable one to take a delight in doing a lot of listening. Given these two prerequisites, what else is required?

Without doubt those players who rely entirely on their ear are the most convincing improvisers and are, of course, comfortable in any context. By 'relying entirely on their ear' I mean that such players seem to be able to hear with outstanding accuracy the harmonic carpet laid out for them by the rhythm section, and can thus thread their way sure-fingeredly through any chord progression. Some of the greatest jazz players seem to have been able to do this, from Bix Beiderbecke to Chet Baker, from Scott Hamilton to Paul Desmond. Interestingly, there seems to be a penalty for such outstanding aural ability. Most of the players whom I've encountered who are able to accomplish such miracles of accurate hearing are not very good readers of music. But of course the two skills are not incompatible. The link is not axiomatic.

The crucial question is how to acquire such a refined hearing ability, and be able to react to what one is hearing. Unfortunately the only way to be absolutely certain of reaching the highest standards of aural awareness seems to be to start at a very young age. The research of Sergeant and Roche, 'Perceptual shifts in the auditory information processing of young children', *Psychology of Music*, 39 (1973), pp. 1–2, has shown that 95 per cent of musicians who possess perfect pitch took up music before the age of four. In a similar way most jazz players who rely on their ear seem to have begun early in life. Both they and the few late starters who are likewise outstandingly competent in this skill seem to have devoted a lot of time to playing along with recordings, as many authenticated accounts of great jazz players indicate. Cornettist Bix Beiderbecke is known to have learned the ODJB

repertoire, and imitated Nick LaRocca's style, in this way. In a September 1982 *Downbeat* interview (p. 22) Benny Goodman claimed that he could still play Larry Shields's solo on St Louis Blues note-for-note as a result of learning it from a gramophone record as a youth. Saxophonist Charlie Parker is reputed to have taken a pile of Lester Young 78s along on his first summer-season job and 'played them white'. 78s turned white as they wore out, and Parker wore them out copying Lester's solos note-for-note. Speed up a Lester Young tenor solo and you'll see the connection with Parker's alto. Playing along with records worked as an educative device for all of these style-setting players, and it is still to be recommended today. Even if you are a late beginner, this is still an important activity to include in your practice routine.

A more lengthy but time-proven practice is to write down other people's solos. The arguments in favour of transcribing jazz solos are many, and follow from the reasons for playing along with records, which:

- (1) Give an insight into note choices.
- (2) Help the understanding of characteristic chord progressions.
- (3) Make excellent technical exercises.
- (4) Enable a repertoire of licks (favourite phrases) to be collected.
- (5) Promote awareness of form and development in solos.
- (6) Provide a basic repertoire of tunes and changes for beginner soloists.
- (7) Encourage concentrated listening, thus developing tone, vibrato and articulation in the jazz manner.

Although I have several books of transcribed solos in print I would be the first to emphasise that notwithstanding their usefulness players will achieve faster progress if they make their own transcriptions, particularly if they use their instrument in the process. Transcribing is not an armchair exercise, nor should it be treated merely as some sort of aural challenge. Do not regard the use of your clarinet when transcribing as cheating. Obviously, if you were doing an aural test then use of your clarinet would be inadmissible. But you are trying to improve your jazz playing, not doing an aural test, and therefore it is essential to play each phrase for yourself as you write it down. In fact, the playing is much more important than the notation, though of course writing the solo down does give you something permanent to retain. By means of the transcription, the recorded performance becomes palpable. Not only do the chosen notes become familiar to the transcriber but so do the tone, intonation, vibrato, rhythmic style and tonguing. The whole performance relates to the instrument. I have witnessed many young players rapidly undergo a magical

transformation, particularly in the quality of their tone, as they work their way carefully note-by-note through several tracks by their favourite performer.

It would be helpful at this point to give some practical hints and tips concerning the methodology of transcription.

(1) The recording must be made accurately at concert pitch. Even the best-recorded performance is likely to have some notes or phrases, or maybe some bass notes, that are going to be difficult to hear and to notate accurately. Couple this with an off-pitch recording and the task becomes impossible.

(2) Use headphones if possible. These enable you to hear clearly, and also save wear and tear on the nerves of those within earshot as you constantly repeat those few difficult notes. If the headphones have individual volume controls you can sometimes gain some help by isolating a single channel.

(3) Choose a method of reproduction that enables you to repeat passages quickly and accurately. A CD player with an A to B function (offering infinite repetition of a chosen fragment of the recording) is very helpful. For vinyl discs, repeated jabbing of the stylus is bad both for your favourite old record and your patience. It is better to transfer the recording to cassette and use a machine with a rewind/review facility. Best of all is to transfer the recording to open reel quarter-inch tape. This gives you excellent quality and enables you to locate and repeat single notes and phrases with accuracy.

(4) Half- and double-speed versions of the recordings are helpful. Halving the speed of a recording drops the pitch of the music by an octave, whilst doubling the speed raises it an octave. This is easily done with a reel-to-reel machine, or a cassette deck with two speeds, pitch control and cue/review facilities. Dropping the music to half speed helps greatly with those rapid flurries of notes. It may seem that there is not much use for the double-speed facility, though it can be useful for difficult bass lines. What may sound a muddy or indistinct bass at normal speed becomes a clear and easily identified note in the middle register when the speed is doubled and the pitch raised an octave. Very few difficult bass lines remain obstinate when subjected to this treatment.

The bass part is very important. Some musicians seem content to write down the front-line part and disregard the accompaniment. Yet the meaning of the improvisation is lost unless it is put into a rhythmic and harmonic context. You need to know the chord progression in order to appreciate the note choices. As the harmonies have to be correct, it is not good enough to take the chords from a publisher's song copy, a play-along record or a fake book. (A fake book is a collection of jazz 'originals' and standard tunes, sometimes illegally published, with the music reduced to melody and chord symbols, and

usually printed on one staff). It is unlikely that any professional jazz musician will use the chord changes *exactly* as found in such a publication.

To transcribe the harmonies is not as daunting as it sounds. For clarity, work on two staves, with the transcribed improvisation in the treble clef and the transcribed bass line in the bass clef below. With that duet, plus the guidance of the original chords from a fake book or similar, you will have a good idea where the harmonies on the recording match your fake book and where they deviate. Add to this any other clues you may be able to hear. You may spot an inner accompaniment line ('thumb line') or chord, or you may be able to transfer an easily identified harmony from another chorus. Remember that some of the great song-writers make different choices of harmony at each repetition of each eight bar phrase. Gershwin does this occasionally with delightful effect. However, for most performances you can assume that the harmonies are simply repeated. Put all of this together and you will have a very good idea of the chord progression, and the transcription should make good musical sense.

Now that you have a complete transcription, the chances are that after all that detailed work you will be able to play the solo without very much practice. Making the transcription yourself is far more educative than merely buying a book of clarinet transcriptions and treating them as sight-reading practice. Reading through a ready-made transcription is no more likely to bring you near to an understanding of how to play jazz than playing a Weber concerto will teach you how to compose! Ready-made transcriptions require careful study, but if they are intelligently used they do have a place in the jazz player's development (Fig. 11.2). They are most effective when used in conjunction with a copy of the recording from which they are taken.

Making transcriptions, and playing along with records, are not the only ways to approach jazz improvisation. However, they have been dealt with first here because of their acknowledged role in the formative process of some of the world's great jazz players. Other approaches to learning that can be considered are:

- (1) Use of play-along records by Jamey Aebersold and others.
- (2) Use of 'patterns for jazz' books.
- (3) Use of improvisation-method text books.
- (4) Attendance at jazz workshops or summer schools.
- (5) One-to-one study.
- (6) Enrolling on an advanced course.

Play-along records are specially produced as an aid to jazz improvisation. An accompaniment to tunes from the jazz repertoire is recorded by a rhythm section with the intention that the clarinettist (or any

April In Paris

Clarinet Solo by ARTIE SHAW

Words by E Y HARBURG
Music by VERNON DUKE

$\text{♩} = 118$

(A)

C7+ Gm7b5 E7 Fmaj7 Fmaj7

Gm7b5 E7 Fmaj7 Fmaj7 Gm7b5 E7 F

Dm7 Cm7 Cm7 F7

Bb Bb Bbm

F6 Dm E7

(B) Piano
A7 Am7b5 D7b9 Gm C7

(C)
Gm7b5 E7 F Fmaj7 Am7b9 D7

Am7b5 D7 G7 Gb G7 Gm7 C7 F

Ab6 B6 Bb7(9)

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Chappell Music Ltd, London W1Y 3FA

Figure 11.2 Artie Shaw recorded this version of Vernon Duke's *April in Paris* in Hollywood in May 1940. Though Shaw's interpretation respects the melody, this is nevertheless a jazz performance. The improvisation is concentrated at the phrase-endings and turn-rounds. From *Jazz Clarinet 2* arranged John Robert Brown.

other instrumentalist) plays along with the recorded accompaniment. A tuning note is provided at the start of the record, and there is a careful count-in recorded. The stereo is utilised so that the piano is recorded on one channel and the bass recorded on the other. This enables bass players to eliminate the recorded bass and enjoy the accompaniment of drums and piano, and a pianist can turn down the recorded piano and play to the accompaniment of bass and drums. The Aebersold play-along records are the best known, and there are now over sixty albums available in this series. The records are supplied with a booklet containing top line and chord symbols, and each tune on the record is printed at concert pitch, and in B \flat and E \flat transpositions, all in the treble clef. There is also a concert-pitch bass-clef version. Thus all of the common jazz instruments are catered for. These records are widely used by jazz students and jazz educators. The only criticism is that the piano accompaniment ('comping') is done in reaction to a real performer who was present at the recording session but is inaudible on the record. Such reactive playing is not necessarily going to fit well with your performance, though it is difficult to think of a better alternative.

'Patterns for jazz' are technical exercises written in a jazz style for any instrument, composed to fit over idiomatic jazz chord progressions. (Incidentally, jazz journalists, and others who should know better, frequently use the expression '*chord sequence*' – despite the fact that a sequence is a particular musical device – when what they mean is '*chord progression*'.) The best-known book of such patterns is *Patterns for Jazz* by Jerry Coker (Miami, 1970). This is available in both treble- and bass-clef versions. A typical basic pattern would be a quaver melody moving around a cycle of dominant-seventh chords (Ex. 11.1).

Ex. 11.1 Quaver melody moving round a cycle of dominant-seventh chords



Ideally, these patterns should be memorised – 'Meant to be played not read' as Coker's publisher suggests. Pattern books provide excellent study material for any clarinetist, not just the aspiring jazz player. Their great benefit is to help players of monophonic instruments to think harmonically, and to understand guitar chord symbols, the universal harmonic shorthand of the jazz musician. Confusion between, for example, F 7 , F major 7 and F minor 7 is a constant difficulty for jazz students approaching the music from a background of traditional harmony. These patterns also introduce passing notes, higher extensions of the chords (ninths, thirteenths, etc.), auxiliary

notes, chromatic side slips, pentatonicism, the blues' scale and all the other devices that go to make up the everyday vernacular of the seasoned jazz player. There is a useful discussion of devices commonly found in improvised solos in *The Teaching of Jazz* by Jerry Coker (Rottenburg, 1989).

Improvisation books are few in number, and not always accessible. At present the most comprehensive are *Improvising Jazz* by Jerry Coker (New Jersey, 1964), *Complete Method for Improvisation*, by Jerry Coker (Lebanon, 1980) and *How to Improvise* by Hal Crook (Rottenburg, 1991). Both Coker and Crook have impeccable playing credentials, and both teach in large American college jazz departments. The Crook method seems most appropriate for use as a course book for formal programmed study with a private teacher or in a college jazz department. The attention given to what *not* to play is particularly welcome. The chapter devoted to the use of silence has proved very helpful with my own students.

A good teacher can save one a lot of time. College jazz departments now offer full-time courses to degree and post-graduate level. In Europe there are advanced, large and long-established jazz courses in Cologne, Rotterdam and Leeds. The list of North American jazz courses at college level includes many universities, and the famous Berklee College in Boston, Massachusetts. The size and maturity of such a department is of some importance if one is to take advantage of a suitable variety of teachers and ensembles, not to mention the influence of a wide variety of fellow jazz students. At least one American department is large enough to claim no less than 800 first-study guitar students! The number of reed players is apparently not quite so great, but amounts to several hundred. Some musicians may find such numbers daunting. Nevertheless, in such departments there will certainly be plenty of helpful answers to the question 'How do you know what to play?'