A trombone stands vertically on a large pile of white, three-dimensional question marks. Numerous musical notes of various shapes and sizes are floating in the air around the instrument, creating a sense of sound and movement. The background is a plain, light gray.

Trombone Improvisation

Savvy

by Michael Lake

Song chapter packet for:
Moment's Notice

Accessing and Playing the Audio Files

The audio files for this packet are available to you within a Soundcloud playlist for the book *Trombone Improvisation Savvy*. The link to the playlist is: bit.ly/improvbook2.

On the playlist page for the book, simply look for the files associated with this particular song. All the audio files for a song are grouped together. Obviously, you now have access to every one of the almost 150 sound files for the book. Many of them won't make sense without the book's instruction, so if you like this song packet, perhaps you'll want to own the book. You can preview and buy the book at: bit.ly/ImprovSavvyPage

Each time a soundfile is available within this packet, you will see the music icon followed by the name of the file. For example:



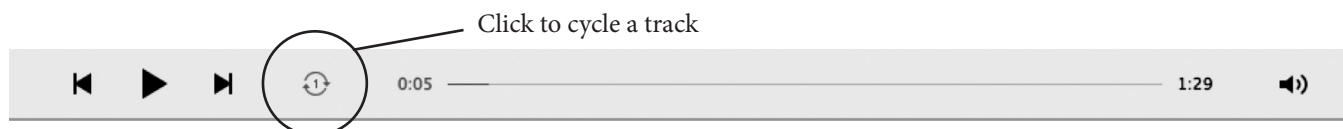
bit.ly/improvbook2 “East of the Sun - swing rhythm only”

In the above example, you would go to the soundcloud playlist at bit.ly/improvbook2 and select the file called “East of the Sun - swing rhythm only” within that playlist.

If you lack an internet connection that feeds a sound system, perhaps find a fast connection and download into a folder the files listed within this packet. Then feed them through your sound system which could be everything from a state-of-the-art stereo to an iPhone. Upon selecting a sound file on the Soundcloud playlist, click to the right of the file and select Download from the dropdown options.



The very bottom of the Playlist page displays some controls for going to the track start, play/pause on current track and next track. There is also a cycle link that will repeat the current track if you want to keep cycling the track. An application for that would be to cycle the ear training file *Groovy Jazzy* as you warm up your chops and your ears.



Moment's Notice

While this song doesn't present quite the same level of difficulty of John Coltrane's other great tune, *Giant Steps*, *Moment's Notice* is by no means an easy song over which to improvise. The challenge is the speed at which the harmonies progress chromatically throughout several keys. The classic version of this song is on Coltrane's 1957 album *Blue Train*. Curtis Fuller plays a terrific solo on that album, which is transcribed starting on page 10.



bit.ly/improvbook2 "Moment's Notice melody"

MOMENT'S NOTICE

JOHN COLTRANE

Handwritten musical notation for the melody of "Moment's Notice" in 4/4 time, featuring chromatic harmonic progressions. The notation is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Chord Progressions:

- Line 1: E^bMIN7 A7 FMIN7 B^b7 E^bMAJ7 A^bMIN7 D^b7
- Line 2: DMIN7 G7 E^bMIN7 A^b7 D^bMAJ7 DMIN7 G7
- Line 3: CMIN7 B7(b9) B^bMIN7 E^b7 A^bMAJ7 A^bMIN7 D^b7
- Line 4 (First Ending): GMIN7 C7(b9) A^bMIN7 D^b7 G^bMAJ7 FMIN7 B^b7
- Line 5 (Second Ending): GMIN7 C7(#9) FMIN7 B^b7 E^bMAJ7 FMIN7
- Line 6: GMIN7 FMIN7 E^bMAJ7 FMIN7 GMIN7 FMIN7 E^bMAJ7 (FMIN7 B^b7)

Measure numbers are indicated at the start of each line: 5, 9, 13, 17, 21.

One trick that can simplify the tune is to think of the II-Vs as simply the dominant chord (the V). That should make the harmonic movement feel easier. So instead of tackling every change in the first eight bars like this:

E_{MIN7} $A7$ F_{MIN7} $Bb7$ Eb_{MAJ7} Ab_{MIN7} $Db7$

D_{MIN7} $G7$ Eb_{MIN7} $Ab7$ Db_{MAJ7} D_{MIN7} $G7$

Think of them like this:

$A7$ $Bb7$ Eb_{MAJ7} $Db7$

$G7$ $Ab7$ Db_{MAJ7} $G7$

You can also think of these first eight bars in terms of their tonics. In other words:

D_{MAJ7} Eb_{MAJ7} Gb_{MAJ7}

C_{MAJ7} Db_{MAJ7} C_{MAJ7}

Thinking of the progression in this way simplifies the harmonic movement. In essence, we're moving only through five different keys. Now, at the typically fast tempo of the song, I'm not claiming that these changes "play themselves" but instead of working your way through 14 chord changes, you are navigating through 6. The other advantage in thinking of the changes in either tonic or the dominant is that it helps you resist the temptation to begin on the first note of the changes and run scales in bars 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8.

Page 4 contains some exercises for these first eight bars over the above three variations. Play the written lines in order to get a feel for playing within the changes, and for your ear to hear the harmonies. The audio file *Moment's Notice - slow first 8 bars* contains my recording of the exercise lines followed by rhythm section - all over a much slower tempo. The sound file *Moment's Notice - slow first 8 bars - rhythm only* is the rhythm section only track of those same eight bars again within the slower tempo. Practicing at the slower tempo will make it easier navigating through the quickly modulating harmonies.



bit.ly/improvbook2 "Moment's Notice - slow first 8 bars"



bit.ly/improvbook2 "Moment's Notice - slow first 8 bars - rhythm only"

Handwritten musical notation for "Moment's Notice - slow first 8 bars". The notation is written on a single staff in bass clef, with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. The notation is divided into three sections, each starting with a section number (#1, #2, #3) on the left. The notes are written in a rhythmic pattern, with some notes beamed together. Above the staff, there are handwritten chord symbols for each measure.

Section #1:

- Measure 1: Ebmin7 A7
- Measure 2: Fmin7 Bb7
- Measure 3: Ebmaj7
- Measure 4: Abmin7 Db7
- Measure 5: Dmin7 G7
- Measure 6: Ebmin7 Ab7
- Measure 7: Dbmaj7
- Measure 8: Dmin7 G7 Cmin7

Section #2:

- Measure 1: A7
- Measure 2: Bb7
- Measure 3: Ebmaj7
- Measure 4: Db7
- Measure 5: G7
- Measure 6: Ab7
- Measure 7: Dbmaj7
- Measure 8: G7 Cmin7

Section #3:

- Measure 1: Dmaj7
- Measure 2: Ebmaj7
- Measure 3: Gbmaj7
- Measure 4: Cmaj7
- Measure 5: Dbmaj7
- Measure 6: Cmaj7
- Measure 7: Cmin7

How to learn a tune

You know a tune when:

- You can play the melody in any key.
- You hear the changes in your head as you play the melody.
- Your improvised lines flow well without thinking about the changes because you anticipate them.

You really cannot improvise well over a tune unless you truly know it. Your lines flow, they are harmonically congruent, and you don't need to look at the changes. How many tunes do you know that well?

Here are some tips for learning a tune. There's no requirement to do them all. This is a list of the things that have worked for me on the tunes I know well.

- Analyze the form and the changes so that you understand the harmonic flow of the tune.
- Be able to comp the changes on a piano or guitar. You don't need to be Chick Corea. Just be good enough to play a root in your left hand and a 4-note 9th chord in your right. There are many great books on chord comping that non-piano players can master.
- Comp the changes mentioned above by heart.
- Record yourself playing the melody and blowing over the changes. Then listen to it, hear what needs to improve, then do it again, and again.
- Write a book on improvisation and dedicate a chapter to a tune, creating a rhythm section, recording the melody and transcribing your improvised solo. I'm kidding, considering the work involved, but the truth is that there is no better way to learn something than by teaching it. This book has improved my improvisational skills and has helped me play a bunch of tunes better! Maybe do some of that on your own. No need to publish it.
- Play the tune over and over and over and over and...
- Call the tune when you sit in with bands and jam sessions. Force yourself not to use the written music.
- Listen to others play over the tune.
- Transcribe the solos of great players, then play those solos over the changes for practice.
- Find the tunes on Aebersold records and play with them.
- Learn the lyrics, if they have any.
- Write out your own lead sheets containing the melody and the changes. Of course you may already have the lead sheets in fake books or on line, but writing things down ingrains details in your mind.
- Play the tune over and over and over and over and...

"You've got to learn your instrument. Then, you practice, practice, practice. And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail."

- Charlie Parker

Practice the exercises as well as the transcribed solos on the following pages over the slower rhythm track until you are able to play them at the full tempo. Remember that the objective is not to simply play a flurry of notes, but instead, to play melodic phrases throughout the form of the song. Improvising well over any tune—especially one as challenging as *Moment's Notice*—requires hours and hours of playing, recording, listening, and immersing yourself within in the piece.

Use the following audio tracks to practice the transcribed solos, the previous exercises, and your own improvisation.



bit.ly/improvbook2
"Moment's Notice - ML solo"



bit.ly/improvbook2 "Moment's Notice - slow rhythm only"



bit.ly/improvbook2 "Moment's Notice - rhythm only"

ML solo on *Moment's Notice*

Chords: EMIN7 A7 FMIN7 Bb7 EbMA7 AbMIN7 Db7

Chords: DMIN7 G7 EbMIN7 Ab7 DbMA7 DMIN7 G7

Chords: CMIN7 B7(b9) BbMIN7 Eb7 AbMA7 AbMIN7 Db7

Chords: GMIN7 C7(b9) AbMIN7 Db7 GbMA6 FMIN7 Bb7

Chords: EMIN7 A7 FMIN7 Bb7 EbMA7 AbMIN7 Db7

Handwritten musical notation in bass clef, key of B-flat major (two flats). The notation is divided into five systems, each with a measure number at the start and a series of chords written above the staff.

System 1 (Measures 21-24):

- Measure 21: D^bMIN7, G7
- Measure 22: E^bMIN7, A^b7
- Measure 23: D^bMAJ7
- Measure 24: DMIN7, G7

System 2 (Measures 25-28):

- Measure 25: CMIN7, B7(b9)
- Measure 26: B^bMIN7, E^b7
- Measure 27: A^bMAJ7
- Measure 28: A^bMIN7, D^b7

System 3 (Measures 29-32):

- Measure 29: GMIN7, C7(#9)
- Measure 30: FMIN7, B^b7
- Measure 31: E^bMAJ7
- Measure 32: FMIN7

System 4 (Measures 33-36):

- Measure 33: GMIN7
- Measure 34: FMIN7
- Measure 35: E^bMAJ7
- Measure 36: FMIN7, B^b7

The notation includes various musical symbols such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with some measures containing triplets.

“The trouble with most musicians today is that they are copycats.

Of course you have to start out playing like someone else. You have a model, or a teacher, and you learn all that he can show you.

But then you start playing for yourself. Show them that you’re an individual. And I can count those who are doing that today on the fingers of one hand.”

- Lester Young

One of the great solos on this song was played by Dexter Gordon on his classic album *Manhattan Symphonie*. Here is Dexter's third and last chorus. Yes, it's very high in places but I chose to feature this solo because of Dexter's great melodic sense throughout these difficult changes. Notice the repetitive motif in bars 25 - 28. Many fantastic solos have been recorded on this song, but Dexter makes terrific music from the fast and difficult changes.

Dexter Gordon's solo on Moment's Notice

Handwritten musical score for Dexter Gordon's solo on "Moment's Notice". The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of five staves of music, each with handwritten chord changes above the notes. The staves are numbered 5, 9, 13, and 17 at the beginning of their respective lines.

Staff 1 (Measures 1-4): Chords: E^bMIN7, A7, F^bMIN7, B^b7, E^bMAJ7, A^bMIN7, D^b7.

Staff 2 (Measures 5-8): Chords: D^bMIN7, G7, E^bMIN7, A^b7, D^bMAJ7, D^bMIN7, G7.

Staff 3 (Measures 9-12): Chords: C^bMIN7, B7(b9), B^bMIN7, E^b7, A^bMAJ7, A^bMIN7, D^b7.

Staff 4 (Measures 13-16): Chords: G^bMIN7, C7(b9), A^bMIN7, D^b7, G^bMAJ7, F^bMIN7, B^b7.

Staff 5 (Measures 17-20): Chords: E^bMIN7, A7, F^bMIN7, B^b7, E^bMAJ7, A^bMIN7, D^b7.

21

D^bMIN7 G7 E^bMIN7 A^b7 D^bMAJ7 DMIN7 G7

25

C^bMIN7 B7(b9) B^bMIN7 E^b7 A^bMAJ7 A^bMIN7 D^b7

29

GMIN7 C7(#9) FMIN7 B^b7 E^bMAJ7 FMIN7

33

GMIN7 FMIN7

35

E^bMAJ9 FMIN7 GMIN7 FMIN7 E^bMAJ7 FMIN7 B^b7

Here's another Curtis Fuller solo, this time on John Coltrane's album *Blue Train*. Unlike Dexter's solo on the previous pages which weaves meticulously through the changes, Curtis is frequently more aligned to the three flats in the key signature than to the specific harmonies of the changes. Notice his first note is a held Bb over the E minor 7th. Nothing wrong with this. It's just a different take on playing the changes. The frequent rests make it more playable as a model for getting comfortable with blowing over the song.

Curtis Fuller's solo on Moment's Notice

E^b_{MAJ7} F_{MIN7} B^b7 E_{MIN7} $A7$ F_{MIN7} B^b7 E^b_{MAJ7} A^b_{MIN7} D^b7

D_{MIN7} $G7$ E^b_{MIN7} A^b7 D^b_{MAJ7} D_{MIN7} $G7$

C_{MIN7} $B7(b9)$ B^b_{MIN7} E^b7 A^b_{MAJ7} A^b_{MIN7} D^b7

G_{MIN7} $C7(b9)$ A^b_{MIN7} D^b7 $b^bG^b_{MAJ7}$ F_{MIN7} B^b7

E_{MIN7} $A7$ F_{MIN7} B^b7 E^b_{MAJ7} A^b_{MIN7} D^b7

D^{MIN7} G⁷ E^b_{MIN7} A^b₇ D^b_{MAJ7} D^{MIN7} G⁷

23

C^{MIN7} B^{7(b9)} B^b_{MIN7} E^b₇ A^b_{MAJ7} A^b_{MIN7} D^b₇

27

G^{MIN7} C^{7(#9)} F^{MIN7} B^b₇ E^b_{MAJ7} F^{MIN7}

31

G^{MIN7} F^{MIN7}

35

E^b_{MAJ9} F^{MIN7} G^{MIN7} F^{MIN7} E^b_{MAJ7} F^{MIN7} B^b₇

37

As with the Dexter solo, play the solo over the sound file *Moment's Notice - rhythm only* and the slower *Moment's Notice 120 - Rhythm only* if slowing it down allows you to play the notes easier. You would never perform the tune this slow but as an exercise, it's very handy.



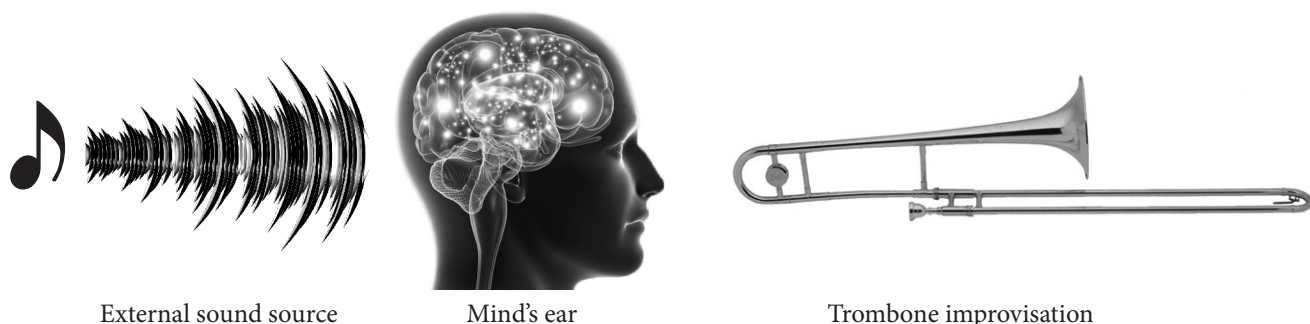
bit.ly/improvbook2 "Moment's Notice - slow rhythm only"



bit.ly/improvbook2 "Moment's Notice 120 - rhythm only"

The skill of any improviser is to project the music inside of them through their instrument as if the instrument is a transparent extension of their musical voice. The following exercises are built to strengthen that skill.

Improvising with musicians or other sound source works something like this:



Music begins in the mind, not with the horn, so let's discover what you can hear. The following exercises provide you with tones and phrases which you will first hear and to which you will then respond. Once you hear the tones in your mind's ear, you'll have a much easier time playing them on trombone, which leads to improvising well.

Trombone tones

The soundfile called *Random Trombone Notes* contains various random notes played on trombone. Playing the soundfile, sing or whistle the notes after you hear them. Once you have no trouble singing what you hear, play them on the trombone as you hear them. Playing them on the trombone is much harder, so make sure you hear them first and can sing them before playing them on the horn.

The trombone is a tough filter for your musical ideas. Before you can sing through the horn as if it's an extension of your voice, you must build the connection between your mind's ear and the trombone.

How quickly and how accurately can you match these notes using your voice? Try singing each note before you play it on the horn. A hint: the first note is (tenor) tuning note Bb. Don't overthink any of these. Play what initially feels right. If you land on the wrong pitch, challenge yourself to hit the correct note on the next try. How many tries do you need to land on the correct note? One, two, more? Just react, don't think.

Another excellent use for these ear training sound files is to buzz them in your mouthpiece without the horn. *Mastering The Trombone*, the excellent book by Edward Kleinhammer and Douglas Yeo, contains a chapter on buzzing. They recommend standing with your back to the piano keyboard and upon striking any random key, buzz that pitch on your mouthpiece, "visualizer" or cutaway mouthpiece. The same can be done with any of these ear training exercises.



bit.ly/improvbook "*Random Trombone Notes*"

Various timbres

The next audio file contains notes of various timbres, but not of trombone. Sing them first, then play them on trombone. Instead of always starting at the beginning of the soundfile, move the playhead located at the bottom of the Soundcloud soundfile page to somewhere in the middle. Then start at different places. How quickly and accurately can you find the pitches? When unsure, hit a short note, pause briefly and from that note see if you can find the note you hear in one more try.



bit.ly/altobook "*Miscellaneous Random Timbres*"

Praise for Trombone Improvisation Savvy

"Michael Lake's book is as comprehensive as it is insightful and practical. I can't wait to delve into it further and look forward to sharing it with my students. I highly recommend this book for all levels of trombonists and improvisers alike."

– Steve Davis, Trombonist/Composer/Educator

"Mike has created what has to be one of the most comprehensive tools for learning to improvise specifically for trombone! From the basics to more advanced concepts, great tune selections, and an amazing array of interactive play-alongs and demonstrations. This is a thoughtful, thorough, and dynamic approach to learning trombone improvisation."

– Nick Finzer, New York Trombonist & Educator

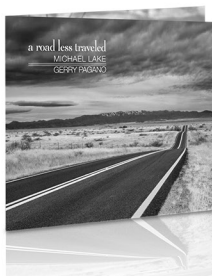
"I've studied from a wide variety of books on trombone and jazz but Michael Lake's book provided me something I've never before experienced. Within about an hour of working with one of the tunes in Trombone Improvisation Savvy - a tune I was soloing over with some difficulty in my band - I could now understand and hear the tune's harmonic structure, I could play well over the most difficult sections, and I finally felt comfortable soloing over the entire tune. Even my bandmates noticed a difference in my playing at our performance."

I really think that when this book gets into the hands of trombone players wanting to 'crack the improvisation code,' it will be a must have for all jazz trombone aficionados!"

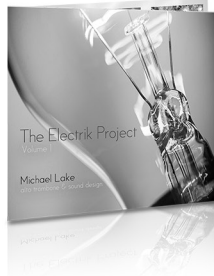
– Barry Kierce, Jazz Trombone Connoisseur

Visit www.altobone.com to receive a free piece of Michael's original music free each month.

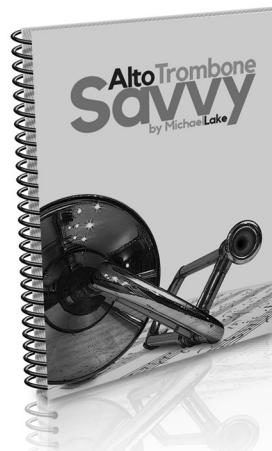
Also read additional articles, watch videos and check out his recent CDs and other books.



Roads Less Traveled



The Elektrik Project



Alto Trombone Savvy

Insights and method for
mastering alto trombone



Michael Lake