

How Jazz Musicians Use Improvisation in Communicating with Each Other and with the Audience

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This presentation explores how jazz musicians use improvisation to communicate with each other and with the audience. Unlike orchestral music, which is written in advance, jazz improvisation involves creating music spontaneously. The presenters demonstrate this process through short solos supported by a rhythm section consisting of piano, bass, and drums. Soloists create melodies that fit the chords and rhythm being played, forming a musical “story” that listeners can follow and remember.

The presentation also explains how musicians choose notes that sound consistent with the musical background, introducing basic ideas of Western scales and chords. Audience members are invited to participate by singing melodies that fit the music heard from the rhythm section, allowing them to experience musical improvisation firsthand.

As the session progresses, the musicians perform longer and more complex improvisations to demonstrate musical conversation and interaction. The presenters also show how jazz musicians use hand signals and brief verbal cues to guide performances and strengthen communication during improvisation. Overall, the presentation highlights improvisation as a creative and interactive form of communication between musicians and audiences.