

## NOTES ON HOW TO IMPROVISE

1. Jan 1988

### LESSON

Techniques for improvising 'ragas':

- ❖ okay 'blind'
- ❖ inner game - 'see' note/phrase before I play it
- ❖ move/dance to images as I play - bow in reverence to note - sway, swing and sculpt.
- ❖ use pedal to create space
- ❖ listen to chords die away
- ❖ uneven phrases in R.H. - explore rhythms in R.H. (**not** between L.H. and R.H.)
- ❖ I and IV before V
- ❖ LOTS of repetition - play what you feel at the moment, not what you think you should feel

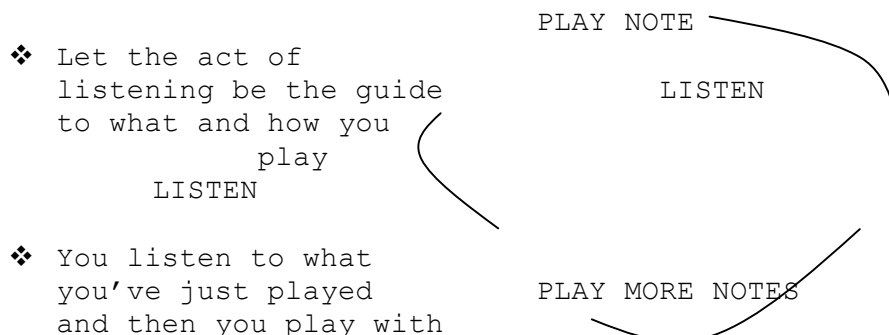
2. INSIGHT on 'How To Improve'

- ❖ Like a Quaker meeting, don't 'say' anything unless you have something to say.
- ❖ Get Right Hand and Left Hand 'talking' to each other
- ❖ R. H. - statement of something it wants / needs to say
- ❖ L.H. listens
- ❖ L.H. considers response while R.H. repeats statement
- ❖ L.H., when ready, gives response (e.g. could just be 1 note, i.e. 'I heard you', or it could be reflection or elaboration of R.H. statement, i.e. 'is this what you said?')
- ❖ R.H. listens → responds
- ❖ etc. in an upward spiral

2. INSIGHT: Key to right-brain improvising

- ❖ DON'T THINK
- ❖ JUST LISTEN

To create feedback loop:



what you've just heard - a feedback circle that  
becomes a spiral



again, he returns to the very simple tonal stuff. And then Elvin Jones talks about Coltrane being an 'angel', and tears come to his eyes, and he says "sometimes you know you have met .. (pause)... someone greater than life." And the documentary ends.

So ...

I am drawn instinctively to the keyboard and for the very first time in a long time, I do an improvisation that is based in C minor (the key that Coltrane had played the last track 'Alabama' in), and I repeat the 1, 3b, 5 and 7b notes, and I put in quick flurries, e.g. an Ab scale ... AND I AM NOT PLAYING FROM THE LEFT ANALYTICAL BRAIN that is caught in the mangrove swamp of new harmonic ideas ... instead it is like those improvisations in London and Montreal ... I play and play and, like Coltrane, I could keep playing because I am being guided by the spirit of the music ... there is no possibility for anything other than the 'right' notes, the right feel, and a beauty and strength of creative expression.