



Practice Plan for Rick Maurer

(8/13/18)

Welcome to your Practice Plan & Playing Evaluation, based on the two recordings you sent us, Rick. We enjoyed listening to them, and we heard plenty of great stuff there. We appreciate your jumping in with us at Jazz Wire, and we love your desire to know yourself and your playing better, and to take your music to another level. Your Strength Index number from your Playing Evaluation is an excellent place to start your work here at Jazz Wire. It has helped us in creating a great Practice Plan for you - a focus for the next six months of your time playing music.

As a reminder - you'll be sending in a second recording of these two songs in six months, on February 13, 2019. Add that to your calendar, and don't worry. We'll remind you too.

Your Strength Index

Congratulations Rick! Your playing is at a **7.6** on the Jazz Wire Strength Index. After 15+ years of evaluating adult amateur and semi-pro musicians, we see you right at the Advanced Intermediate level. After working in classes and summer camps with thousands of adult players over the years, you would be in one of the top groups, playing with the best of the best in our program. Folks with many years of experience, who have definitely been out there gigging and playing high level music.

Our Strength Index is on a scale of 1-10

- 10 = Good Professional Player
- 9 = Semi-Professional Player
- 8 = Advance Adult Amateur Player
- 7 = Advanced Intermediate Player
- 6 = High Intermediate Player
- 5 = Intermediate Player

- 4 = Advanced Novice Player
- 3 = Novice Player
- 0 - 2 = Not at Jazz Wire

Your Jazz Wire Community

We love connecting everyone here at Jazz Wire. Frankly, that's what Jazz Wire is all about. Getting like minded, serious musicians together in the same place, so that some magic can happen. That is where the fun is, and where the sparks can start to fly.

We've placed you in the BLUE Community. This is where you'll find folks who are at or near your playing and experience level. These are folks who are working on what you are working on, playing similar kinds of tunes, and addressing similar concerns in their practice. These are your peeps, and you should definitely know these folks! Drop in to say hi HERE.

Although you'll love hanging out with musicians at your level, we highly encourage meeting as many people as you can at Jazz Wire. We've got great players from every corner of the globe (every one a serious musician) in all three Jazz Wire Communities, playing a variety of instruments. Feel free to look around. You can answer other member's questions yourself, offer advice, or be a mentor. See what folks are talking about, which amazing concert they just heard, which album they just discovered, or which cool new bit of equipment they are excited about. There is a lot going on in the Jazz Wire Communities, and we want you involved and include in the fun.

(see below to learn more about the three Jazz Wire Communities)

What To Do With Your Practice Plan & Playing Evaluation

#1 - PRINT OUT your **Practice Plan & Playing Evaluation**. Put it on your music stand. You now have an incredible PLAN!!

Your evaluation sets your starting point today, and the advice and direction you receive from us (and hundreds of others here are Jazz Wire) helps you to set your goals, move you forward, and gauge your progress.

#2 - Go back and listen to the two recordings that you sent us, with your **Playing Evaluation** in your hand. Listen, and see if you can hear what we heard.

Go through each of the **15 Essentials**. Can you hear the time issues, or the articulation work to be done, or the motivic playing you did (or didn't do)? Listen through a couple times and key in on those observations from us.

#3 - Below you'll see your **Strengths** and **Areas for Fast Improvement**. This is a fantastic place to begin reorganizing your practice routine and incorporating your Jazz Wire **Practice Plan**. You'll find very personal and specific advice and tips, as well as links to videos (and pdfs) that will be perfect for where you are at right now.

#4 - Each week, in all three Communities, we will be doing a video lesson, based on a particular song, style or concept. This is some fantastic new information and direction for you, every week. The ideal scenario is to apply the advice we gave you in your **Practice Plan & Playing Evaluation** to these weekly lessons. Powerful!

#5 - We'll be answering questions and offering advice in all three Communities throughout the week, commenting on ideas and concerns, and taking questions which we'll be answering in the following week's video. If you ask a question, it'll be answered! Send us your requests for topics to cover, questions about your practice routine, next steps, or anything else.

#6 - Be interacting in your Jazz Wire Community. Everyone is here because, like you, they are SERIOUS. This isn't a broad and basic Face Book group, or a boring chat room about guitar strings or saxophone reeds. These are serious musicians from all over the world who want to meet you, interact with you, and move ahead with their music.

The Rubber Hits The Road HERE!

Congratulations Rick! Your playing is at a **7.6** on the Jazz Wire Strength Index. Refer to your 15 Essentials to get a take on what we heard, and what our thoughts are across the spectrum of the 15 Essentials for great jazz small group playing. There is a ton of information waiting for you there.

Your Strengths

Looking at your 15 Essentials, your **Confidence** and your good **Motivic Playing** are great strengths for you. Developing them further would be great, since you have such a strong inclination and skill in these regards.

Strength #1 - Confidence - Confidence comes from many places, but musically speaking, we can get it down to three items. #1 is playing the instrument technically well (having nothing to do with jazz). #2 is having enough “processor power” in our brain left over to think ahead, and improvise in a somewhat relaxed manner, and #3 is having a “professional sounding presentation.” Making the audience feel that they are in good hands with us!

ASSIGNMENT #1 - As for “playing the instrument well,” always have some non-jazz exercises and etudes in your daily practice. Things that get you playing accurately and precisely, thinking about your tone, time, articulation and other foundational elements of playing your instrument. This could include scales, scales in thirds, written etudes, or just about anything that isn’t improvised. It almost doesn’t matter exactly what it is. Just be sure to have some non-jazz, non-improvising material in your daily practice. Even 20 minutes in a practice session would be great, and it will get you some wonderful results.

ASSIGNMENT #2 - Here, we’ll work on developing our processor power, and our developing our “presentation.” With the goal of further expanding your **Confidence**, the three videos below would be fantastic for you to dive into deeply. In other words, have the topics of each of these videos as a REGULAR part of your daily practice. The great news is that you’ll be able to use these practice ideas regularly in the weekly sessions we do in your Community here at Jazz Wire. These concepts will help you dig deeper into your weekly assignments, and get much more out of them. See which of these three resonates with you most, and begin there. You can come back to the other two ideas in a few weeks or months.

Video #1 - “Unaccompanied Playing” - https://youtu.be/UdPNVeVi2_s.

Video #2 - “Develop Your Solos” - <https://youtu.be/dGQHkDjCr7s>

Video #3 - “Sound Like A Pro” - <https://youtu.be/qk8jrnEgcQ8>

Strength #2 - Motivic Playing - The ability to develop the content in our solos is a major hallmark of a great jazz musician. Early on in our development as a jazz player, we are happy with just finding some correct notes in each measure . . . that is a fantastic feeling! Then, as more time went by, we were thrilled when we

could actually play mostly correct notes through an entire solo . . . victory! This was a great arrival in our playing, and not a small thing. It could be argued, however, that we aren't really making jazz yet, we are just "hitting some correct buttons" on our instrument. *Learning to develop the ideas that we are playing* is what jazz (and most forms of music) is really all about.

We heard definite hints of this in your playing, which is very exciting. Spending practice time each day on developing your ability to find motifs (little musical ideas) and develop them will go a long way with you. This is what our jazz heroes were so excellent at doing - playing some small idea, and then taking us on a journey as they developed that idea through their solo. We're going to get you doing this at a higher level, guaranteed!

ASSIGNMENT #1 - Below is a video lesson that will give you a powerful practice idea on this topic. Motivic playing is a habit as much as anything . . . just do it a bit every day. Here, you'll learn how to get in the habit of listening to yourself, and to value your musical ideas. This exercise is one of the most important things that I've done over the past 25 years to develop my ability to play and think this way, and it's worked for many students of mine over those years. Have fun with it!

Video #1 - "Commando Jazz Skills" - https://youtu.be/l_wWsdhFgil

ASSIGNMENT #2 - Here, we give you two very tangible tools, a couple exact next steps to move ahead in your motivic playing. Below, you'll find two videos, each with specific devices to help build your motivic playing ability. These videos address classic devices you'll hear in famous jazz solos, in your favorite jazz compositions, and of course, in hundreds of years of classical music as well. The bonus is that you'll be able to use these devices constantly in your work in your community here at Jazz Wire. This will transform your playing and your understanding of music, guaranteed.

Video #2 - "Motic Playing" - <https://youtu.be/AAQRih2JV1Q>

Video #3 - "2X You Jazz Chops" - <https://youtu.be/i6ZznMmRu9M>

Your Areas For Fast Improvement

Looking at your 15 Elements, **Accuracy Playing The Melody (pitches & rhythms)** and **Confidence** are places you could get a lot of work done in a short amount of time. This is where things could move quickly for you, and where you could find yourself playing better (and likely have a higher Strength Index number) in six months time!

Area For Fast Improvement #1 - Accuracy Playing The Melody. The ability to accurately play the melody of the songs we are playing for an audience is very important. The melody is the part of the song that the audience may know, the part that they'll be singing along with in their head. And, it is the first thing that they hear from us as we begin to play. Working on this aspect of your playing will really improve your overall presentation. Beyond that, however, is a wonderful side benefit - as we learn melodies better, our sense of style, feel and time get better and better too, in both our melody playing AND in our soloing. Learning written melodies will be a great tool for us going forward.

ASSIGNMENT #1 - In your specific community here at Jazz Wire, we'll be working on a couple songs each month together. Really digging into their melody, harmony, form and much more. This will be fantastic, because a year from now, you'll have at least 25 songs that you know better than any song you've ever learned. You will be so much further ahead!

For you, we'll prioritize really nailing the melodies that we work on together in your community, playing them perfectly, as if we were playing a classical etude. We are certainly talking about correct pitches and rhythms, but we also want to think about HOW we are playing the melodies. The video below will give you some very good guidance on what we are talking about here.

Video #1 - "Scale Practice - How vs. What" - <https://youtu.be/fXYEb9rDwTU>

ASSIGNMENT #2 - A great next step is to work on further developing your jazz articulation. Articulation is one of the central tools we have to increase our precision, our tightness, and even our swing feel. You'll be able to make a lot of great progress here.

Work on these two videos are separate exercise, in that they seem to contradict each other a bit (don't worry, they don't really). You could work on one of them for a few months, and then go on to the other one, which would be perfectly fine. You could also work on developing them at the same time if you like. That said, be sure to not mix them together in your practice. If you want to practice both today, do one (say "Off Beat Articulation") for 20 minutes, and then do 2 minutes of Articulation from video #3 below. Just don't try to do them during the SAME 20 minutes . . . it won't work!

Video #2 - "Off Beat Articulation & Momentum" - <https://youtu.be/bH1QWGbOOil>

Video #3 - “Articulation - How To Swing” - <https://youtu.be/cF1bqpEKzv0>

Area For Fast Improvement #2 - Confidence. Confidence is important, because it makes the audience feel that they are in good hands with us when we are playing. Confidence comes from many places, but musically speaking, we can get it down to three items. #1 is playing the instrument technically well (having nothing to do with jazz). #2 is being sure that our phrasing is strong and in control as we improvise, and #3 is having a “professional sounding presentation.”

ASSIGNMENT #1 - As for “playing the instrument well,” always have some non-jazz exercises and etudes in your daily practice. Things that get you playing accurately and precisely, thinking about your tone, time, articulation and other foundational elements of playing your instrument. This could include scales, scales in thirds, written etudes, or just about anything that *isn't improvised*. It almost doesn't matter exactly what it is, it really matters that you are striving to play your instrument with precision and control. Just be sure to have some non-jazz, non-improvising material in your daily practice. This video will give you a good sense on how to focus on this kind of practice. Even 20 minutes in a practice session would be great, and would get you some wonderful results.

Video #1 - “Scales - How Vs. What” <https://youtu.be/fXYEb9rDwTU>

ASSIGNMENT #2 - Here, we'll work on developing our processor power, and our developing our “presentation.” With the goal of further expanding your **Confidence**, the two videos below would be fantastic for you to dive into deeply. In other words, have the topics of each of these videos as a REGULAR part of your daily practice. The great news is that you'll be able to use these practice ideas regularly in the weekly sessions we do in your community here at Jazz Wire. These concepts will help you dig deeper into your weekly assignments, and get much more out of them. See which of these three resonates with you most, and begin there. You can come back to the other three ideas in a few weeks or months.

Video #2 - “Phrasing Is Sexy” - <https://youtu.be/YVCb6RKa9xk>

Video #3 - “Sound Like A Pro” - <https://youtu.be/qk8jrnEgcQ8>

. . . and now, go practice!

At this point, you should have more focused, insightful knowledge about your playing than at any other time in your musical life. We've dug into the 15 Essentials that make all jazz players successful, and we've let you know where you are with each of them. Further, you now know what makes us smile when we hear you play (your Strengths), and what, to us, is clearly the best place for you to put some regular practice time (your Areas for Fast Improvement). Most pros and college students are not as musically self aware as you are, right now in this moment.

Remember -

- Your next video is coming to us on February 13, 2019. Write down the date, and work towards it! It'll be exciting to see how far you will progress in the next six months.
- Spend some time each week in your spot, the Blue Community. These are "your people" here at Jazz Wire, and they are excited to meet you and work with you. We'll be doing a lot of work together each week in all three Communities, but the Blue group is the best place to address your specific concerns, questions and ideas.
- Make it a goal to connect with at least two different Jazz Wire members every week. The greatest strength of Jazz Wire is the power of us getting to know each other.

The Three Jazz Wire Communities

We humans tend to gravitate towards like-minded groups. People who have similar views, people who like similar movies and books, people who value the same ideas that we personally value. Those conversations are often times richer, more comfortable, and more rewarding. We find a lot of spark in these groups. Plus, we all know that a good *team* can get a lot more done than an individual. Let's meet your team.

Blue Community - This community is filled with people who's Strength Index is 7.5 and above. These folks are working on more advanced jazz tunes, and are digging into expanded thinking on topics like harmony and voicings, rhythmic devices and phrasing, and more "modern" melodic devices. That said, we also

understand that there is still plenty of work to be done with the building blocks of jazz style, harmony, rhythm, feel and everything else. The full history of jazz is what we are working on! At this more advanced level, “Band/Group Dynamics” are a huge part of our development, and composition and arranging will eventually become topics of conversation as well.

Blue Community level musicians generally play every day (including some gigs and rehearsals), and likely practice daily for at least an hour or two on top of that. Playing and thinking about music is something like their “full time job.” These folks could sit in at a jam session anywhere on earth, playing a song they know, and do just fine.

Red Community - This group is filled with people who’s Strength Index is 5 to 7.4. These folks consider themselves serious musicians, and play their instruments most days of the week. They take private lessons (or have in the past). They have likely attended jazz workshops and camps. A member of this community likely plays music seven or more hours a week.

Red Community members been playing jazz for years, and are comfortable soloing on a variety of songs and in the different basic jazz styles (swing, bossa, funk/rock). They continue their work on typical jazz progressions (ie. ii-V-I, rhythm changes, etc) and continue learning and using the typical jazz scales and chords. Their best time spent is likely in accumulating more jazz vocabulary.

Musicians in this community likely practice four or five times a week, and generally have some outlets for playing and improvising in a small group setting (ie. classes, jam sessions, community big bands).

Green Community - This group is filled with people who’s Strength Index is a 3 to a 4.9. These are musicians who might be newer to jazz, and/or possibly newer to their instruments as well (or dusting off their instrument after a long break). These folks can function in a jazz group setting, and they continue to learn more about the roles of their instrument in the band. They are learning more jazz theory, chords, scales, style and feel. Everyone (including John Coltrane and Miles Davis) was at this level, once upon a time! Applying the theory they are learning to the music they are playing is their biggest challenge.

These folks practice at least several times a week, and aspire to advance and feel more comfortable as they play. They are eager to get more organized and get more focused in their practice.

