

Bodhrán Improvisation

From Jazz to Trad

Master Class Notes

Class Meetings

Saturdays, 1:30pm - 2:30pm Eastern Time (USA)

1. January 29 - [Bodhrán Toolkit](#)
2. February 5 - [Hornpipes and Triplets](#)
3. February 12 - [Recovery, Fills, and Space](#)
4. February 19 - [Trading Fours](#)
5. March 5 - [Extended Solos](#)
6. March 19 - [Review and Challenge](#)

Audio List

Audio tracks are listed in purple in the weekly outlines for quick reference.

- 2014 - *Fall Quarter* (Riley School of Irish Music)
 - "Bunker Hill"
- *Foinn Seisiún 1: Traditional Irish Session Tunes* (Ceoltóirí Cultúrlainne)
 - Track 38 - "Cregg's Pipes"
 - Track 49 - "Cork Hornpipe"
- *Survival Guide for the Modern Drummer* (Jim Riley)
 - Track 22 - "Medium Bebop Jazz"
 - Track 25 - "Two-Beat Swing"
 - Track 27 - "Jazz Sextet (with Syncopated Ensemble Figures)"
 - Track 28 - "1940s Swing (with Drum Solos)"
 - Track 51 - "Bo Diddley"
- *Time Out* (Dave Brubeck Quartet)
 - Track 3 - "Take Five"
- *Vitalization* (Steve Smith & Vital Information)
 - Track 1 - "Interwoven Rhythms - Synchronous"
 - Track 11 - "Jimmy Jive"
- *Workshop Tunes* (Fiddle - Justin Bridges; Flute - John Skelton)
 - "Frank's Reel"
 - "Spellan the Fiddler"
 - "Tinker Hill"
 - "Wedding Reel"

Video Links

Videos are hyperlinked throughout the outline.

- ▶ [Aimee Farrell Courtney, Teacher's recital, Áine McGeeney on fiddle - Craiceann 2015 vide...](#)
- ▶ [Benny Goodman Orchestra - Sing, Sing, Sing](#)
- ▶ [Bobby Gardiner & Johnny "Ringo" McDonagh](#)
- ▶ [BWS 2015 : Goitse, Colm Phelan bodhran solo](#)

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- ▶ Charli Persip: The Art of Brushes
- ▶ Eamon Murray (Beoga), Bodhrán Solo, 14. Oct. 2017
- ▶ Flook - Beehive
- ▶ Jazz Drum Brushes Play Along - Medium Swing - 144 BPM
- ▶ Joe Morello: The Art of Brushes
- ▶ John Joe Kelly Bodhrán Solo - Temple Bar TradFest 2012

"Lost Time"

- ▶ Robbie Walsh, bodhrán solo, #Craiceann Bodhrán Festival 2016
- ▶ Snarky Puppy - Lingus (We Like It Here)
- ▶ Steve Smith - Victor Wooten: Drum & Bass Duet
- ▶ Trading 4's With Yourself - Ulysses Owens, Jr. | 2 Minute Jazz

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Week One - Bodhrán Toolkit

What do you already have in your musical vocabulary?

- Introductions
 - Name
 - Location
 - Goals for the Course
- Course Overview
 - Learning Goals
 - Optional elements
 - Office Hours
 - Synchronous Performances
 - Recorded Performances
- Discussion - *Listening Profile*
 - What did you listen to growing up?
 - Who are some of your favorite musicians?
 - Irish Traditional Music?
 - Other Genres?
 - What are some characteristics of the music that you listen to?
 - Consider the elements of music:
 - Rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, texture, dynamics, and form
 - What do you like/ not like about it?
 - Why?
- Show and Tell - *Optional Performance*
 - Choose a tune/ song that you enjoy playing along to and share a brief performance that highlights your style of playing (**1-2 minutes max**)
- Hornpipe Basics
 - Meter
 - 4/4 (Simple) vs. 12/8 (Compound)
 - Compare with jigs/ slides
 - Developing “Swing”
 - Swung 8th-Notes/ Triplets
 - “Wedding Reel”
 - “Bo Diddley”
- **Recording - *Optional Submission***
 - Record a video of yourself accompanying “Two-Beat Swing”
 - Upload submissions to your subfolder in “Portfolios” in the class Google Drive
- Player Profiles
 - **Fill out your “Player Profile”**
 - Edit prompts as needed
 - Limit “Favorites” to 4 responses

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Week Two - Hornpipes and Triplets

- Check-In
 - How did practice/ recording go this week?
- Warmup - “Bo Diddley”
 - Sticking variations
 - “Dud” vs. “Dut”
 - Is one option easier?
 - Does one option “swing” harder?
 - “B” Section
 - Bars 1-8: Walking bass line/ “double-time” with back-beat
 - Bars 9-12: Hemiola with the bass guitar
 - Bars 13-14: Bo Diddley motor
 - Bars 15-16: Big fill!
- Exercise - “Soft-Loud”
 - Focus on dynamic contrast between the soft note and the accented note in each variation
 - Use forearm rotation to follow-through/ swing outward after each unaccented note
 - “dU, dU, dU, dU”
 - “uD, uD, uD, uD”
 - “uT, uT, uT, uT”
 - “tD, tD, tD, tD”
- Listening - Compare “Bo Diddley” to the “A” Section of “Cregg’s Pipes”
- Hornpipe Mechanics
 - Sit back on the beat/ don’t rush
 - Motor Rhythm
 - Two-Beat vs. Four-on-the-Floor
 - “Two-Beat Swing”
 - Practice Tool:
 - ▶ [Jazz Drum Brushes Play Along - Medium Swing - 144 BPM](#)
 - Triplets - Consider how sticking affects phrasing...
 - “uduD”/ “dutD” create natural crescendo
 - “dudU” creates an upward movement (e.g. into a “pop”)
 - “TduD” places more emphasis on the beat
 - “dbuD” creates a smooth texture with less-distinct rhythm
 - Triplets in Context
 - “Cork Hornpipe” (a.k.a. “The Harvest Home”)
- Call-and-Response - *Optional Performance*
 - Improvise a 4-count rhythmic motive on a particular tone (e.g. “pop”)
 - Repeat that motive on another tone (e.g. “open”)
 - Replicate the process with a 2-count motive
 - Replicate the process with a 1-count rhythm

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- Reacting to Musicians - Create a Dialogue
 - Listen to how Larnell Lewis interacts with Cory Henry (07:10):
 - ▶ Snarky Puppy - Lingus (We Like It Here)
 - Listen to how Aimee adapts to the tune change (01:47):
 - ▶ Aimee Farrell Courtney, Teacher's recital, Áine McGeeney on fiddle - Craic...
 - Simulate call-and-response
 - Hocket
 - Catch/ add onto a repeated motive
 - Listen to the piano/ guitar solos on "Two-Beat Swing"
- Listening Assignment
 - ▶ Joe Morello: The Art of Brushes
 - ▶ Charli Persip: The Art of Brushes
- Recording - *Optional Submission*
 - Record a video of yourself accompanying "Spellan the Fiddler"
 - Upload submissions to your subfolder in "Portfolios" in the class Google Drive

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Week Three - Recovery, Fills, and Space

- Check-In
 - What are some things that you noticed about Joe Morello and Charli Persip's brush work?
 - Think about the motor rhythm, variations, and fills
 - Were there any moments that stood out?
- Warmup - "Two-Beat Swing"
 - Think about the brush videos
 - React to what you hear
- Exercise - "Bodhrán Improvisation - Stick Control"
 - Builds "tap" chops
 - Develops ability to "reset" errant sticking
 - Near-infinite variation possibilities
 - Option to add 16th-notes to create rolls
- Simulate Mistakes - *Optional Performance*
 - Two bars of Jig motor rhythm, followed by two bars of improvised sticking
 - Try to include at least one "triple-down"
 - Four repetitions per demo
- Fills
 - Determine end point
 - Decide on start point
- Melodies that resolve on Beat 2
 - "Bunker Hill"
 - "Frank's Reel"
 - "Tinker Hill"
 -  Aimee Farrell Courtney, Teacher's recital, Áine McGeeney on fiddle - Craic...
- Finding Space - *Optional Exercise*
 - "Wedding Reel"
 - Identify and "play" the spaces
 - Don't worry about fills/ ornamentation/ pitch on the first attempt
- Listening Assignment - Space in Improvisation
 - Listen to Joe Morello's solo on "Take Five" (01:58)
 - Development of a short rhythmic idea
 - Repetition - The motive does not have to be performed in the same space (e.g. start on a different beat)
- Recording - *Optional Submission*
 - Choose one of the following reels and record a video of your accompaniment
 - "Bunker Hill"
 - "Frank's Reel"
 - "Tinker Hill"
 - Look for opportunities to add space and vary stickings
 - Upload submissions to your subfolder in "Portfolios" in the class Google Drive

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Week Four - Trading Fours

- Check-In
 - What are some things that you noticed about Joe Morello's solo on "Take Five?"
 - How does Morello use space and repetition?
 - Is this effective/ compelling?
 - Why/ why not?
- Warmup - "Medium Bebop Jazz"
 - Discuss the style/ form of the tune
- Trading Fours
 - Solo sections follow the form of the tune
 - Melodic solos (accompanied by the rhythm section) will alternate with drum solos
 - Example:
 - Piano - 4 bars
 - Drums - 4 bars
 - Guitar - 4 bars
 - Drums - 4 bars
 - Solos may also be traded in 8-bar phrases/ 2-bar phrases/ etc.
 - Listen to how Steve Smith and Victor Wooten trade solos throughout (08:00)
 - [Steve Smith - Victor Wooten: Drum & Bass Duet](#)
 - Trading in Practice:
 - [Trading 4's With Yourself - Ulysses Owens, Jr. | 2 Minute Jazz](#)
- Rudiments - "Rudiments in Irish Dance"
 - Drag/ Ruff
 - Ratamacue
- Borrowing from Irish Dance - "Rudiments in Irish Dance"
 - Pickup Notes: "Bang stamp"/ "Tip down, tip down"
 - Traditional HP Ending: "Step shuffle cut, shuffle hop back"
 - Slow HP Ending: "Step shuffle hop toe, step shuffle hop back"
- Altering Rhythmic Figures
 - Repetition
 - Diminution
 - Augmentation
 - Reduction
 - Listen to Steve Smith on "Interwoven Rhythms - Synchronous" (02:00)
- Two Recordings - *Optional Submissions*
 - Demonstrate the concept of "trading fours" - with a metronome - a capella
 - [Trading 4's With Yourself - Ulysses Owens, Jr. | 2 Minute Jazz](#)
 - Record a video of yourself accompanying "Medium Bebop Jazz"
 - Try to respond to some of the ideas presented by the piano, guitar, and bass soloists
 - Fill in the 4-bar empty spaces with your own solos
 - Upload submissions to your subfolder in "Portfolios" in the class Google Drive

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Week Five - Extended Solos

- Check-In
 - How did practice/ recording go?
 - Did you encounter any challenges while improvising?
 - If so, what were they?
- Warmup - “Jazz Sextet (with Syncopated Ensemble Figures)”
 - How would you describe the prominent rhythmic features of this track?
 - How did you react/ adapt to them?
- Show and Tell - *Optional Performance*
 - Trading 4s with yourself (3-4 reps with a metronome)
 - Choose ONE of the following:
 - Reel, Hornpipe, Polka, Jig
- Call and Response - 4+ bars
 - Exact replication/ embellishment
 - Organize ideas into micro-phrases: AABA; ABAC
- Scatting/ Linting
 - Vocalize a solo, then copy it on the drum
- Quote Other Works/ Players - “Beg, borrow, steal”
 - [▶ Robbie Walsh, bodhrán solo, #Craiceann Bodhrán Festival 2016](#) (06:31)
 - Can you think of some other examples?
 - [▶ John Joe Kelly Bodhrán Solo - Temple Bar TradFest 2012](#) (04:48)
 - [▶ BWS 2015 : Goitse, Colm Phelan bodhran solo](#) (01:39)
 - [▶ Robbie Walsh, bodhrán solo, #Craiceann Bodhrán Festival 2016](#) (04:40)
 - [▶ Eamon Murray \(Beoga\), Bodhrán Solo, 14. Oct. 2017](#) (00:51)
- Metric Modulation
 - Hemiola
 - Listen to John Joe Kelly - [▶ Flock - Beehive](#) (04:10)
 - Listen to Colm Phelan - ["Lost Time"](#)
 - Listen to Steve Smith at the end of ["Jimmy Jive"](#) (03:59 and 04:21)
 - Reel to Jig
 - Group 8th-Notes into threes
 - Jig to Reel
 - Group 8th-Notes into pairs
- **Two Recordings - *Optional Submissions***
 - Record a video of yourself accompanying “Jazz Sextet (with Syncopated Ensemble Figures)”
 - Consider adding “set-ups” before the ensemble “hits”
 - Record a video of yourself accompanying and improvising over ["1940s Swing"](#)
 - Feel free to slow the track down for your recording
 - Upload submissions to your subfolder in “Portfolios” in the class Google Drive

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Week Six - Review and Challenge

- Check-In
 - Have you found occasion to perform/ attend sessions in the weeks leading up to St. Patrick's Day?
 - If so, how did it go?
 - If you could pick one concept from this course to spend a bit more time on, what would it be?
- Warmup - "1940s Swing"
 - How did you structure your solos?
 - Did you find room for improvisation in between the solo breaks?
 - Consider the function of Gene Krupa's solos on "Sing, Sing, Sing"
 - [YouTube Benny Goodman Orchestra - Sing, Sing, Sing](#)
 - Compare to "more-traditional" styles of bodhrán playing
 - [YouTube Bobby Gardiner & Johnny "Ringo" McDonagh \(01:02\)](#)
 - Note Johnny "Ringo" McDonagh's rim work at the beginning of the reel
- Setting Up Hits - "Jazz Ensemble Set-Ups"
 - Ensemble figures - "Jazz Sextet (with Syncopated Ensemble Figures)"
 - How might a drum set player interpret the hits?
 - How might a bodhrán player adapt a drum set fill?
- Walking Bass Lines
 - Check to make sure that you are not playing on your tone hand!
 - Contrary motion - If your tone hand goes down, your tipping hand goes up (relatively speaking)
 - Practice every beat on the root
 - Move the accent
 - "duDu" vs. "Dudu"
 - Alternate between I, IV, and V
 - See [The Bodhrán Primer](#) (Kruspe, p. 93) for more details
 - This pattern is the "reel" equivalent of a two-beat swing
- Recording Challenge - *Optional Submission*
 - Record a video of yourself accompanying "Dallas Rag - Super Mario Bros. 2"
 - Consider adding a 6-bar solo from 02:32 - 02:44 in "Dallas Rag"
 - Improvise an 8-bar transition between "Dallas Rag" and "Super Mario Bros. 2"
 - Upload submissions to your subfolder in "Portfolios" in the class Google Drive