

THOUGHTS ON IMPROVISING IN THE EASTERN/BALKAN TRADITION

- An improvisation is NOT about you or your abilities (contrary to popular belief).
- Respect the genre and its specific stylistic expression.
- Know AND STICK to your scales.
- Allow the song you've just played to inform and guide your solo.
- Know who your audience is.
- Listen and engage with the underlying rhythm of the tune.
- Know the pivot notes (hinges) that are natural points of transposition or scale change.
- Practice avoiding your own habits in favor of a well rounded expression.
- Use volumetric dynamics to your benefit.
- Explore and stay at the level of the emotional content of the song.
- Explore any given phrase by alternating its notes.
- Surprise or unintentional notes-use them to your benefit (if you can).
- Work on the sound of your instrument.
- Explore rhythmical repeatable patterns as a reinforcing tool to accentuate a single concept.
- Avoid overly repetitive notes or phrases (redundancy, blabbering).
- Study the masters of the genre you're soloing in.
- Be humble. "Music" is much bigger than you.
- Be a decent person. No matter how good a musician you are, if you're a jerk, other musicians will not play with you, AND your music will suffer.