

In the world of Jazz, a jam session very often takes the form of a concert, the second part of which is reserved for the invitation, on stage, of musicians who volunteer to improvise around a large repertoire called "Jazz standards". To put it simply, a Jazz standard is a musical composition performed and rearranged many times by influential musicians, thus allowing their popularisation ("Summertime", "All the things you are", for example).

During a jam session, playing a Jazz standard usually starts with an introduction, followed by the exposure of the theme (saxophone, trumpet, voice, etc.) harmonically accompanied (double bass, piano, guitar, etc.), which then leads to a long phase of improvisations (solo, chorus), ends up with a final exposure of the theme again, and finally an appropriate ending. All of this is conditioned in a defined tone, metric and tempo before playing. During the improvisation phase, everyone must develop their musical discourse on the harmonic structure of the standard: it is the musicians' playing field. This harmonic structure defines the starting and ending points of all the musical ideas proposed.

One night, after having announced the tempo, launched the intro, accompanied the theme and the various soloists, I had to offer my drum solo. Until then, everything was fine. It should be noted that it is customary in Jazz for the drummer to improvise his solo without any accompaniment, but still following the structure of the piece. This is precisely what allows other musicians to join, grab the song again, and then take over the theme to finish the piece.

But that night, I got confused in the structure, and didn't know what to do. I was lost. It appeared to me as a failure. A failure in my willingness to perform my solo according to the rules, by-the-book. But it was also seen as a failure by the other musicians, because I wasn't playing anymore in accordance to the Jazz customs, to the standard practice.

That is when I abandoned all these notions of harmonic structure, metrics and tempo, to propose a free improvisation, and try to focus only on the sounds I was producing on my instrument, on impulse. The audience and musicians here that night showed me their enthusiasm while I was trying my damndest, creating my new musical language, my musical painting. I felt an audience touched by my choices.

With a simple, clear and effective rhythmic signal (specific to the common vocabulary of Jazz) I finally announced back to the other musicians the metric and tempo so that everyone could take over the final theme, according to the rules of the art.

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