

Master class with Joe Fonda (New York City)

Bassist – Composer

My master class would be divided into 3 parts.

The first part and primary focus of my class would be on, what we call in the bass playing world of Jazz Music, the students feel for the music, his or her time or groove, and ability to make the music “swing”.

Jazz is a music that is rooted in the African American community, which means that the music in essence is rooted in an African esthetic. That means that the rhythm of the music comes first, and it comes from the body, and you have to be able to physically feel the music in order to play it correctly. So the students need to learn to bring the music into their body and focus on what the rhythm of the music is all about and how to play it correctly.

We will examine what all of the great bass players from Pops Foster through Jimmy Blanton, Ray Brown, Paul Chambers, Charles Mingus, Jimmy Garrison, Ron Carter, Dave Holland, did rhythmically to make the music feel the way it did and “swing” the way it did, and still does. We will pick certain rhythmical ideas from these bass players and work at playing them as a class. Sometimes as an ensemble or in solo or duo or trio, and with the teacher at times when necessary.

The second part of my class will be the examination of the harmonic structure of the music. Again as we look at the different harmonic structures from Dixieland to Swing, Bebop, to post modern, we will look at what the bass players who created this music did with the harmony in order to make the music swing and groove and feel so good. We will look at the notes that Pops Foster chose to play on a given song, and why the notes he chose made the music of Louis Armstrong swing the way it did. We look at the notes played by the great Sam Jones for the same reason, and Ron Carter as well, etc.

The third part will be a focus on how to solo over changes, how to slur your 8th notes and make that aspect of bass playing swing as well. It always is about making the music “swing”. As the great master Duke Ellington said “It Don’t Mean A Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing”.

Sincerely,
Joe Fonda

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