

# Phrasing and Articulation

By  
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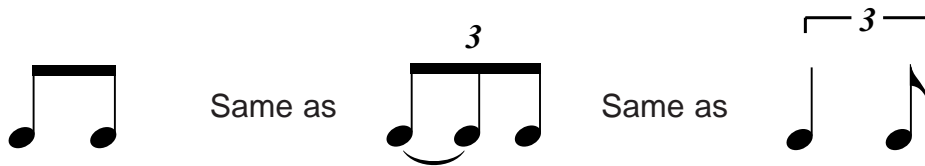
A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of conducting a jazz clinic at Madrona Middle School outside Seattle WA. The band director Matt Edwards is running a fantastic music program in which he has been able to inspire the students to take a very active role. The result is a high quality band with some very talented individual instrumentalists. I devoted some time to one on one piano lessons and found it encouraging that I was able to talk voicings, alterations and style with middle school students.

The music program is also supported by the administration, which has become increasingly important during these budget cutting times. Madrona is lucky to have Chris Matteson as vice principal because he understands the unique value of music and the difference it can make in a young persons life. Mr Matteson learned this from his father, the legendary educator, composer and musician Rich Matteson. Rich had the ability to inspire both students and teachers during his many years as a clinician. He also taught at University of North Texas (formerly known as North Texas State) where he was responsible for many successful music careers.

There is only so much you can do during a clinic due to the short time allotted. Matt Edwards and I decided to focus on phrasing and articulation. Since the feel of jazz is notated differently and sometimes not at all, phrasing is one of the most complicated aspects of jazz. The best way to teach this concept to middle school students is having them sing the phrases, using different syllables. This approach also works well for classically trained musicians who want to learn the correct way to articulate jazz lines and phrases.

Let's start with explaining the triple feel or what we call swing feel.

Eighth notes in jazz are seldom played the way they are written, they are swung.



Since it would be complicated to notate all the eighth notes in triplets, we change them by using jazz articulation. This can be practiced by using syllables for each note. Notice the difference in feel when comparing these examples

## Jazz Phrasing (triple feel)

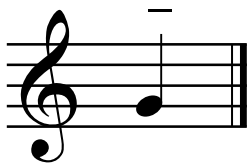


## Standard Phrasing



# Use these sounds to create jazz articulation.

Tenuto



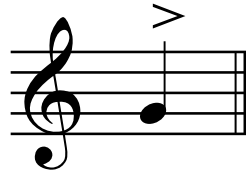
Doo

Staccato



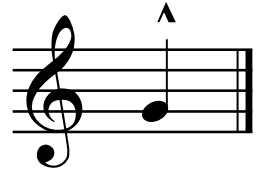
Dit

Long Accent



Baa

Short Accent



Daht

Practice singing the following examples out loud and with conviction. After singing them, play them on your instrument and sing them in your head while playing, this will connect your brain with your instrument. **Make sure the syllables are played smoothly and connected.**

Dit Dit Dit Dit Daht Daht Daht Daht Dit Daht Dit Daht Dit Daht Dit

Doo Daht Doo Daht Doo Daht Doo Daht Doo Daht

Dit Daht Doo Baa Doo Daht Dit Daht Doo Baa Doo Daht

Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht Daht Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht Daht Baa

Doo Daht Doo Daht Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht Doo Daht Doo Daht Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht

Doo Baa Doo Doo Baa Doo Daht Doo Baa Doo Doo Baa Doo Daht Baa Baa Baa Baa Doo Daht

The following examples are complete four bar phrases. When practice singing them, you don't have to worry about the notes, use one note to make sure you learn the correct phrasing and articulation. When your singing starts to swing, and I promise you it will, play the phrases on your instrument and sing along in your head. Practice the examples in different tempos.

Doo Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht Baa Daht Daht Doo Baa Doo Baa

Doo Daht Daht Doo Baa Doo Daht Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht Doo Daht

Baa Doo Daht Baa Baa Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht Dit Doo Daht

Daht Baa Doo Doo Baa Doo Baa Baa Baa Baa Baa Doo Doo Daht

Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht Daht Baa Daht Doo Baa Doo Daht

Baa Doo Daht Doo Daht Doo Baa Doo Baa Daht Baa Doo Baa Doo Daht

Very Slow

Doo Daht Daht Daht Daht Doo Daht Daht Doo Daht Baa Daht Doo