

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

**“TOP SPEED AND IN ALL KEYS”:
CHARLIE BANACOS’S PEDAGOGY OF JAZZ
IMPROVISATION**

by Lefteris Kordis

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Introduction

I first became aware of Charlie Banacos on moving to Boston, MA in 2002 to begin graduate studies at New England Conservatory. Several of my friends and fellow musicians brought up his name repeatedly, commenting on his teaching skills. Intrigued by these accounts, I decided to enroll with him for lessons myself. At that time, he had a two-year waiting list unless one was an active student at NEC or Longy School of Music, where Banacos was a faculty member. Fortunately, being an NEC student allowed me to start taking lessons in three days after I called. Studying with him, I soon realized that he was teaching me based on a systematic curriculum, which was effective in expanding my strengths and overcoming my weaknesses. During my half-hour weekly lessons, Banacos would work with me on a composition assignment, a set of left-hand and two-hand piano voicings in all keys, an ear training exercise, a Chopin Etude, a jazz tune, special exercises for piano technique, and scales. Also, there was always time for duet jam sessions, jokes, story telling or discussions about music, politics, and history. From the time he opened the door until the time I left, he was very positive, encouraging, and highly attentive.

He cultivated a warm environment in which I felt I was making tremendous progress every week. I always had the feeling that I had a mentor who cared in a way a brother or a father would –without him being paternalistic. He always expressed his ideas and conveyed instructions with a balance of seriousness and humor. He introduced new

exercises by drawing funny cartoons next to them, which I felt was a powerful and inspiring way to connect with the material. His instructions were most of the times philosophical, which allowed me to interpret his exercises in a variety of ways. He was happy to see that I was expanding on ideas coming from his exercises in my compositions and improvisations. He never criticized or attempted to change any single note in my compositions, but rather gave me new material to work with. For my part, I also admired Charlie for his piano playing. He improvised using ideas that clearly reflected his wide knowledge of jazz piano history, and it was clear he wanted me to use them in my improvisations in order to expand my jazz vocabulary. So, in every lesson we would play together and, that alone, made me feel responsible and eager to practice diligently so that I would be in a good shape in order to come up to his level.

At the end of six months of study with Charlie Banacos, my playing and my composition skills were transformed. I felt completely liberated on the piano and capable of playing anything I wanted effortlessly and without any technical limitations. Stunned by these results, I began sharing my enthusiasm with friends and colleagues, telling them about the impact his teaching had on my playing. Several of them were studying with him at the time and reported experiences similar to mine.¹ Bassist Joe Hubbard, for example, said that Banacos's teaching completely transformed his playing in the areas of ear training, technique, and composition.² Pianist and educator Garry Dial, who studied with Banacos for 38 years and now continues to teach Banacos's online lessons (along with Banacos's daughter Barbara) upon Charlie's request, said that Banacos provided for him

¹ The effect of Banacos's teaching on students' playing and thinking is evident in several interviewees' testimonials that are transcribed and presented in the Appendix A.

² Joe Hubbard, interview by author, email, 2 March 2011.

the foundation on his playing and thinking about music.³ During his sixteen years of study with Banacos, guitarist Tony Wolff felt like a “Tin Man, oiled by Banacos every week.”⁴ “Within two weeks [of study with Banacos] everybody was talking about how my intonation was suddenly much more accurate,” said bassist Jim Guttman.⁵ Vocalist Amanda Baisinger also commented on the transformation she felt in her playing as well as on the effect Banacos’s teaching had towards the development of her personal style: “My piano playing and singing changed 5000% and improved in every direction. His ear training exercises helped me with my intonation and with developing my own sound and my own way of singing standards without copying other singers.”⁶

Found in published periodicals, other similar transformative experiences have been reported by students who studied with Banacos in the past fifty years.⁷ “He really opened up the neck for me and helped me to play what I felt without having to think about it” said guitarist Jeff Golub.⁸ Leni Stern mentioned “Charlie's mind works like no other. He sees structure where I see chaos. He is a genius.”⁹ Banacos was characterized “some kind of genius” by another student of his, saxophonist Michael Brecker.¹⁰ “Nobody ever instilled in me the wisdom of music like Charlie did,” said bassist Jeff Berlin.¹¹

³ Garry Dial, interview by author, phone, 1 August 2010.

⁴ Tony Wolff, interview by author, audio, Brookline MA, 11 April 2011.

⁵ Jim Guttman, interview by author, audio, Watertown, MA, 4 April 2011.

⁶ Amanda Baisinger, interview by author, audio, New York NY, 6 June 2011.

⁷ Students’ testimonials found in published periodicals are listed in the Appendix F.

⁸ Chris Jisi. "A Rep Grows on Bleecker Street" *Guitar World* (October 1988), 25.

⁹ Mike Brannon. “Leni Stern.” *All About Jazz* (June 2000). Web . April 16, 2010.
<<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/iviews/lstern.htm>>.

¹⁰ Boston Globe. Obituary: Charlie Banacos. Accessed on October 3, 2010.

<<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/bostonglobe/obituary.aspx?page=Lifestory&pid=137116307>>.

¹¹ Berlin, Jeff. "Bass and Beyond" *Guitar Player Magazine* (February 1988), 125.

That so many students reported the transformative effect of Banacos's teaching, and having experienced it myself, I realized that his teaching should be preserved as part of the history of jazz pedagogy. I determined to record for posterity some insight into his means and materials by describing a representative sample of the exercises he assigned and advice he gave. This paper is not intended to be a historical thesis, but a study and description of the jazz pedagogy methods of the recent Charlie Banacos.

Although my research turned up no published accounts of Banacos's pedagogical or other artistic work, I have been able to gain much insight and information on his methods through various sources. The most revealing information, which will be discussed in detail later, has come from personal interviews with 35 of his former students.¹² Also revealing is Banacos's interview in 1986 with John Novello, published in Contemporary Keyboardist. He also did publish five books between 1972-73, which he later allowed to go out of print. Another useful source of information comes from his personal communication with students as well as from testimonials in jazz periodical literature such as Down Beat, Jazz Player, Musician Magazine, and Saxophone Journal.

Born in Lowell, MA on August 11, 1946, Charlie Banacos, started piano lessons at an early age. He mentioned to me that some of his piano teachers included Margaret Stedman (Madame) Chaloff and Joseph Kahn. Jaki Byard was one of his most influential mentors, as well as a friend. Before he received a degree in Music Education from Lowell State Teachers College, Banacos had studied jazz on his own from an early age through

¹² Selected transcribed excerpts from interviews conducted by the author, are presented in the Appendix A. Personal interview questions posed to 35 students are listed in the Appendix E.

transcriptions and live performances. In his interview with Novello, Banacos narrates about his early music education and first teachers:

I was first inspired to become a musician at around age five, when listening to my father's record collection. It included Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins, Errol Garner, Teddy Wilson, Earl Hines, "Fats" Waller, etc. I used to cop as many of their licks as possible and this in turn gave me fast ears. I used to have a player piano and, of course, this helped me to hear all the old piano rolls and a lot of the masters who played them. By the time I was eight, my father, who was a former Big Band singer, could see I had a thing for music and wanted me to learn to read. So he took me to my first "legit teacher," who taught me the lines and spaces of the treble and bass clefs as well as some classical pieces. I eventually had about 14 different classical teachers, but the one I still think back to with a fondness [...] is Joey Kahn, who I studied with in my early teens. He knew the names of all the things I had been copping for years, and he also played great be-bop piano. He would even take me to jazz clubs to see the cats who happened to be in town.¹³

According to Barbara Banacos, he was known to have practiced ten or more hours a day. He also attended jam sessions, performed constantly, and spent as much time as he could with prominent jazz musicians in various jazz clubs around the greater Boston area (in those days, young people under the age of 18 were allowed in these clubs). As

Barbara recalls:

My father often talked about sitting at the bar and ordering a Coca-Cola. He was very lucky he could hang out in these clubs and ask questions of the players. On one memorable occasion, Oscar Peterson was booked for a week of gigs at Lennie's on the Turnpike. My father, interested in asking Oscar about a specific fingering Art Tatum used, hounded him over several nights seeking an answer. While initially being dismissive of this "kid" asking questions after every set, they finally caught up at the bar, and my father asked his question. Oscar said something like "Well, I can't show you here, there's no piano." And my father responded with "Just show me here on the bar - I'll get it." After Oscar showed him, my father said, "Let me buy you a drink." And then Oscar turned to my father and said, "No! Let me buy *you* a drink." I remember him saying with a lot of gratitude that he was in the "right place" at the "right time" growing up around Boston when there were many jazz clubs and being able to hear all the greats during the 50's and 60's.¹⁴

As a performer, Banacos was active during the 1960's in the New England area playing with Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, Jerry Bergonzi, George Coleman, Teddy Kotick,

¹³ John Novello, *The Contemporary Keyboardist* (Los Angeles: Source Productions, 1986), 526.

¹⁴ Barbara Banacos, email, 26 February 2012.

John Abercrombie, and Charlie Mariano, among others. Given his overall experience, talent, and versatility, he could have had a successful international performing career, but decided instead to withdraw from public performing appearances in his mid twenties in order to devote himself exclusively to teaching and family, although he continued performing every day with every single student in his studio. His devotion to teaching and pedagogy is apparent from the fact that he was offering private lessons from the age of 13. Since then, he taught thousands of students, according to Barbara Banacos. He preferred to teach one-on-one, and in the course of his career he had various studios in the greater Boston area.¹⁵ Since at least the early 1970's, according to Barbara, Charlie Banacos taught correspondence lessons via cassette tapes nationally and internationally in order to accommodate not only his students' needs while they were on the road, but also to teach people who were located in countries that didn't have access to jazz education.

I asked Banacos, as did several other students, why he withdrew from public performances. Using a metaphor of monks and preachers, he told violist Mihalis Katahanas that he quit performing in favor of teaching because: "Music for me is like religion. In every religion there are the preachers who are touring all over the world to preach about religion, and the monks, who sit in a basement, practice for themselves, and teach others. I am the monk."¹⁶ Saxophonist, jazz educator, and Banacos's best friend and collaborator in his college years, Jerry Bergonzi also asserts that although Banacos was a gifted and accomplished performer, his "mission in life was to teach."¹⁷

¹⁵ Banacos's studio locations include Brookline, Magnolia, Beverly, and Essex, all in MA.

¹⁶ Mihalis Katahanas, interview by author, email, 8 March 2011.

¹⁷ Jerry Bergonzi, interview by author, audio, Boston, MA, 22 September, 2010. Full interview is listed in Appendix I, page 83.

Two factors limit the scope of what can be revealed in this study: one is the integrity of Banacos's pedagogy, the other, its individualized nature. Regarding the former, his daughter Barbara and pianist Garry Dial who continue to teach Banacos's courses online, asked me to be cautious in how I provide copyrighted information and to protect the integrity of his pedagogy. As a solution, I describe a few exercises in detail and some others in outline. The full version of all exercises is available through online lessons with Barbara Banacos and Garry Dial at charliebanacos@gmail.com.

A second limiting factor is related to Banacos's teaching philosophy. Knowing him for three years, I am firmly convinced that it was not his intention to have his exercises published because it would be against the character and essence of his pedagogy. Banacos designed and utilized exercises in a similar way that a doctor carefully examines a patient and provides a specific prescription that will help that individual only. He said to his wife Margaret that he often created exercises right on the spot, when trying to facilitate a student's particular needs. Below, is his own description of his teaching philosophy:

There is no method! Upon hearing each student, I immediately have a method that will work for that particular student and no other. But there are certain techniques of musical composition that all modern musicians need to know and be able to use, either in pre-composed settings or spontaneously. I might even use some written exercises with more than one student, but explain them in a totally different way for each student. This is completely spontaneous and based on intuition, which to me seems like a fusion of knowledge and love and devotion to each student's needs at that particular time.¹⁸

A significant factor that made Banacos's pedagogy effective and transformative was the way he related to each student. Based on interviewees' comments and my own experience, it became quite clear that he had a charismatic personality. He possessed a

¹⁸ John Novello, *The Contemporary Keyboardist* (Los Angeles: Source Productions, 1986), 525.

gift to connect with the individual personalities of his students on an intuitive level, and to find ways to convey the spiritual dimension of long-term, persistent, and organized practice. Guitarist Mike Stern mentioned that through his studies with Banacos, he became a better musician because Banacos pushed him “in a good way with an attitude that was encouraging and forward thinking.”¹⁹ With pianist Danilo Perez, who was trained as an engineer, Banacos used engineering terms and graph scores when he explained the material.²⁰ He also used numbers to explain instructions to the math-inclined mind of pianist Gil Aharon.²¹ In other instances, Banacos conveyed instruction through imagination and philosophical concepts. Pianist Dave Frank recalled that the success of Banacos’s teaching is due to the fact that he did not give him any exercises, but rather “esoteric methods” as Frank called them, in order to develop certain musicianship skills such as solid and steady rhythm, or to overcome issues such as stage fright and instant decision making during live performances.²² In the case of bassist Ervin Dhimo, Banacos used different imagery to help him develop a swing feel, and fast, effortless playing.²³ Some of these concepts are listed in Section I, on page 48.

Another important aspect of Banacos’s personality, which made a difference for many students, was his level of awareness. In bassist Tal Gamlieli’s words: “He had an incredible ability to be in the moment; to be present, and this is a quality that you see in great performers, improvisers, and teachers.”²⁴

¹⁹ Mike Stern, interview by author, audio, Cambridge MA, 2 March 2011.

²⁰ Danilo Perez, interview by author, audio, Quincy, MA, 15 March 2011.

²¹ Gil Aharon, interview by the author, audio, Cambridge, MA, 15 June 2011.

²² Dave Frank, interview by author, audio, New York, NY, 24 June 2010.

²³ Ervin Dhimo, interview by author, audio, Newton, MA, 10 February 2011.

²⁴ Tal Gamlieli, interview by the author, audio, Medford MA, 15 June 2010.

The emotional intimacy and warmth in Banacos's relationship with students is described by pianist Bruce Wolosoff: "He approached the lessons with an air of friendship, like he was a good-natured older brother who was showing you something he had figured out by himself, and he could save you a lot of time if you checked out what he was telling you. He also assumed that you could also figure all this stuff out on your own if you wanted to, it wasn't some closely guarded secret."²⁵

Vocalist Sofia Rei describes Banacos as a disciplined and relaxed teacher, who would prepare the ground for passing on his knowledge by using the power of humor: "He was very encouraging and rigid and serious at the same time; a very fair individual. He was a very charismatic teacher, who conveyed the material by cheering up the student with a joke, but he would be strict at the same time."²⁶

In some occasions, Banacos didn't hesitate to sacrifice his warm relationships with students in the interest of pedagogy. He was willing to let students 'graduate' if he saw potential for pedagogical gain in such a sacrifice. Pianist Dave Frank, for example, who had lost his father and considered Banacos a father figure, mentioned that one day Banacos suggested ending the lessons. Although Banacos acknowledged the difficult time Frank was going through, he suggested that Frank should not go back for lessons until he showed proof that he toured and performed for a year.²⁷ A year later, Frank returned to Banacos's studio and showed him flyers and program notes from his concerts in Spain, South Africa, and other countries and therefore, Banacos accepted him back. Bassist Bruce Gertz, on the other hand, mentioned that he was very studious and Banacos

²⁵ Bruce Wolosoff, interview by author, email, 10 September 2010.

²⁶ Sofia Rei, interview by author, audio, New York NY, 24 June 2010.

²⁷ Dave Frank, interview by author, audio, New York NY, 24 June 2010.

wanted him to focus more on the music rather than the exercises. According to him, Banacos told him that he needed no more lessons, because, as Banacos said, “You need just enough chops to make the music that you need to express yourself.”²⁸ All of the 35 interviewees expressed similar views on Banacos’s positive, embracing, and encouraging attitude towards them.

²⁸ Bruce Gertz, interview by author, audio, Melrose MA, 11 February 2011.

Exercises and their Effectiveness

The pedagogy of Charlie Banacos consists of a repertoire of exercises that cover various aspects of musicianship. For purposes of description, I have organized them in groups, according to their pedagogical purpose. Described below are a limited number of some of his most popular and effective exercises based on information drawn from interviewees' responses and my own experience studying with him. Banacos mentioned to me and other students that he developed many of his exercises based on the actual practice of master performers. The conclusion regarding the intent of these exercises in the discussion below is based on my analysis and students' reports, as Banacos never explicitly stated what the purpose of each exercise was.

The exercises cover nine facets of technique and musicianship--which I have organized in Sections A - I. In Section A, three popular ear-training exercises plus a meditation practice are presented. These exercises are useful for the development of various aural skills, such as relative pitch, perfect pitch, and intonation. In Section B, ten prominent exercises for instrumentalists/vocalists are listed, which focus on enriching improvisation skills, expanding melodic, harmonic, and temporal vocabulary, and improving technique. Section C includes a list of names of voicing exercises for chording instruments, such as piano and guitar.

Banacos taught composition to a variety of instrumentalists and singers. In Section D are some composition exercises he assigned, some of them based on Joseph Schillinger's System of Musical Composition.²⁹ Section E features four prominent

²⁹ Joseph Schillinger, *The Schillinger System of Musical Composition* (New York: Carl Fischer Inc., 1946).

exercises for rhythm, and Section F, three exercises for sight-reading/sight-singing. Banacos's explanations for practicing the assigned repertoire, as well as for overcoming technical limitations, are listed in Section G. Some of the exercises included in this section were intended to further enhance instrumental technique. Section H illustrates Banacos's approach to building repertoire, which consists of jazz standards as well as classical piano works.

Banacos gave practical advice and used metaphors that were shaped and phrased to address the needs of individual students to ensure that they had fully grasped the essence of the exercises or broader concepts. Some of this advice is described in Section I. An additional list with selected concise descriptions of Banacos's various terms, written by Charlie Banacos himself, is listed in Appendix C.

Eleven Basic Chord Qualities with Their Extensions

A fundamental component in Charlie Banacos's pedagogy of jazz improvisation was the eleven basic seventh-chord qualities, which are built in thirds with their upper extensions.³⁰ The term extensions here, concerns the 9th, 11th, 13th, and in some cases, the 15th, and 17th as they are used in mainstream jazz harmony to extend the makeup of seventh chords. These chord types constitute the basis on which Banacos designed most of his exercises for various purposes. He told several students including me that every student should recognize them aurally and practice them as arpeggios, piano or guitar voicings, or other formations, and most important, practice them in all keys. He used other extensions for the same chords in other courses. For every seventh-chord type Banacos's recommended extensions are the following:

1. Major 7 Chord ($\Delta 7$): R (Root) – 3 – 5 – $\Delta 7$ – 9 – #11 – 13

2. Minor 7 Chord (-7): R – b3 – 5 – 7 – 9 – 11 – 13

3. Dominant 7 Chord (7): R – 3 – 5 – 7 to be combined with:

a. 9 – #11 – 13

b. 9 – #11 – b13

c. b9 – #11 – 13

d. b9 – #11 – b13

e. #9 – #11 – 13

f. #9 – #11 – b13

4. Half-Diminished Chord ($\emptyset 7$): R – b3 – b5 – 7 – 9 – 11 – b13

5. Diminished 7 Chord ($\circ 7$): R – b3 – b5 – bb7 – 9 – 11 – b13 – b15

6. Minor-Major 7 Chord ($-\Delta 7$): R – b3 – 5 – $\Delta 7$ – 9 – 11 – 13

7. Sus 7 Chord (7sus4): R – 4 – 5 – 7 to be combined with:

a. 9 – 13 – 17

b. b9 – b13 – b17

c. 9 – 17 – 13

d. b9 – b17 – b13

³⁰ Explanations of chord symbols as used in mainstream jazz are listed in Appendix B.

8. Augmented Major 7 Chord ($\Delta 7(\#5)$): R – 3 – #5 – $\Delta 7$ – 9 – #11

9. Major 7 flat 5 Chord ($\Delta 7(b5)$): R – 3 – #5 – $\Delta 7$ – 9 – b13

10. Augmented Dominant 7 Chord ($7(\#5)$): R – 3 – #5 – 7 – 9 – #11

11. Dominant 7 flat 5 Chord ($7(b5)$): R – 3 – b5 – 7 – 9 – b13

A. Ear Training Exercises

During his fifty-year teaching career, Charlie Banacos designed several ear-training exercises, which help to develop a strong background in musicianship and further expand aural skills and sonic vocabulary. For exercises requiring the use of solfège, he used chromatic syllables (do, di, ra, re, ri, me, mi, fa, fi, and so forth). The first exercise below shows how Banacos administered a popular Ear Training exercise and the ways he adjusted it to address individual students' particular needs. He sometimes used this exercise to achieve quite different results. For example, he assigned it to help a student develop a strong relative pitch with the objective of achieving perfect pitch. At the same time, he used it to help another student deconstruct perfect pitch. Exercises 2 and 3 discussed below cover various aspects of ear training including, among others, pitch recognition, intonation, aural familiarity with the blues form, and recognition of a pitch as a scale degree or chord tone. The last Ear Training exercise is a meditation that Banacos practiced on a regular basis, which he assigned to some students for increasing awareness of the surrounding environment in music and non-music settings. Additional Ear-Training exercises with concise descriptions are listed in the Appendix D.

1. I-IV-V-I Cadence in C followed by x number of pitches/Pencil exercise

What Banacos called the **Pencil** exercise serves to develop a strong relative pitch. It can be practiced alone or in pairs. For practice in pairs, one person plays a I-IV-V-I cadence in C major on the piano followed by a single note, while the other person attempts to identify that note as quickly as possible. Once proficiency in identifying a single note is achieved, the exercise progresses to identification of two notes played simultaneously. Eventually the exercise extends up to eleven notes played simultaneously. At the stage of eleven notes, identification of the missing note is expected instead of naming each one of them. For solo practice, this exercise can be performed in two basic ways. First, play the cadence on the piano, turn one's back to the keyboard, and reach behind to strike one or two keys with the eraser ends of one or two pencils. Second, make several recordings playing long series of cadences and notes, saying the answers a few seconds after each example. Then, playback the recording, guess for the right notes and confirm when hearing the answer. It is best to avoid singing the note C or any other notes after hearing them, but rather to identify and name each note instantly without measuring the intervals.

Banacos emphasized the importance of recognizing notes by reacting immediately from a Zen-like perspective of non-thinking. Putting the advice in his own words: "Go for speed, not correctness"—"Zen mind, intuitive mind"—"Strike, guess, look, repeat." For him the purpose of this exercise was to aim for recognition of an entire set of notes as one 'color' as opposed to hearing separate individual entities. He considered the successful identification of six notes or more a professional level.

Banacos would administer this exercise by playing the cadence in C and varying the dynamics, tempo, and character, to keep one alert. Several students reported that after practicing this exercise they experienced a tremendous improvement in the ability to recognize sound colors. In live jazz sessions or performances, they started responding quickly and interacting with their band-mates by relying more on attentive and deep listening.

The following instruction was given specifically to saxophonist Sean Berry and pianist Tom Thorndike for the purpose of putting individual pitches in a diatonic context by assigning numbers to each one in relation to a key center. After naming every single note, they had to select one of the notes and consider it the root of a chord and relate all of the remaining notes to it explaining what extensions or chord tones they were. For example, hearing the set of notes Eb, G, C#, F, B, and A# simultaneously, these students had to name all the notes, select one of them as root (G for example), and name this set of pitches as a G7 (#9,#11,b13) harmonic color.

Banacos used a metaphor to describe for bassist Ervin Dhimo the goal in this exercise. He said, “When you hear the voice of your father, you don’t take a moment to think whose voice it is; you immediately recognize your father’s voice and, in a split second, you say: It’s my father.”³¹ One should learn to recognize notes and sound colors in the same way.

My personal experience with this particular exercise was slightly different. After Charlie tested my ear training skills, he quickly figured out that I could recognize every single pitch he played, but I was not able to relate these pitches to a large-scale sonic

³¹ Ervin Dhimo, interview by author, audio, Newton MA, 10 February 2011.

spectrum. I told him that in many cases I wasn't enjoying listening to music because I was unconsciously focusing on the melody and hearing in my head every single note and its solfège name. I asked him if he could suggest an exercise to help me deconstruct this ability. He pointed at Monet's painting *Impression: Soleil Levant*, which was hanging on the wall of his studio, and said: "You can identify every single color, but you do not see the entire painting yet." After practicing this exercise for six months, I started to recognize each sound color as one unit, which affected the way I was transcribing, performing, or interacting with other band-mates in real time.

2. Weirdelo-Bird Blues

The **Weirdelo-Bird Blues** exercise served multiple purposes, such as broadening improvisation vocabulary, improving intonation, and mastering the standard 12-bar blues chord progression. This exercise is performed by playing on the piano the roots of each chord, from a 12-bar blues, and singing various chord tones, intervals, and chords. Aural recognition of these variables in relationship to the chords of the blues form is the main goal in this exercise. Additionally, **Weirdelo-Bird Blues** introduces the idea of chord substitutions. The exercise begins with singing various chord tones over the chord progression of a blues using solfège syllables. The next step is to sing melodic intervals, one quality of interval at a time, then arpeggiated triads, and finally seventh chords. When proficiency at the above steps is achieved, the blues progression becomes increasingly complex with the use of chord substitutions. One of the first intervals Banacos assigned was a P5, the root and fifth of each chord in the following blues progression:

	I	IV	I	I
IV	IV	I	I	
V	IV	I	V	

In a blues in the key of C, for example, the notes that should be sung in solfège using a P5 are illustrated in the example 1 below:

Example 1. **Weirdelo-Bird Blues**: singing in solfège P5's.

After one masters this first exercise, there is a series of substituted chords that cover all the intervals. To maintain accurate pitch, Banacos instructed students to play each note on the piano just after singing it, staying in tempo. Explaining the reason for playing after singing, Banacos told pianist Dan Tepfer: “Check yourself on every note, because you are building a relationship between the sound you hear in your head with the actual sound of the piano.”³²

³² Dan Tepfer, interview by author, audio, New York City, 29 June 2010.

3. Ragas and Sagars

The **Ragas and Sagars** exercise aims to help stabilize intonation and to explore aurally, orally, and visually all of the possible interval combinations (in equal temperament) within the compass of a third. This exercise requires singing in solfège various pitches within the confines of the stationary interval of a third (major or minor). While playing a sustained C or a C-G drone in the lower register of the piano, one sings various permutations of three or four-note patterns up and down (thus the palindrome of the title) by using chromatic solfège syllables. The following example 2 illustrates the first four permutations that Banacos assigned between the notes C and E. He insisted that the student play every note on the piano immediately after singing it for accuracy of pitch.

The musical notation shows four permutations of three-note patterns between C and E. The 'sing' staff uses solfège syllables: do ra mi, do re mi, do ri mi, and do ra me mi. The 'play' staff shows sustained chords (C or C-G drone) corresponding to each permutation. An arrow above the first measure of the 'sing' staff points to the 'do' syllable. The text 'etc...' is written at the end of the 'sing' staff.

Example 2. **Ragas & Sagars**: First four permutations.

4. Meditation on Tones

With **Meditation on Tones**, Banacos put to use all of the ear-training skills acquired through his ear-training exercises in order to increase awareness of the surrounding environment, whatever it might be. He explained to me how he practiced **Meditation on Tones** through the following story. He and Jerry Bergonzi often sat quietly in front of a tree, meditating, and trying to feel and hear the vibration of that particular tree. After meditating for fifteen minutes, they would name and sing the pitch together, at the same time. According to Banacos, they would often guess the same pitch.

Meditation on Tones can potentially help musicians increase sensitivity and attentiveness on the bandstand, in conversations with other people, when listening to the sounds of nature. It can also improve one's ability to be in a state of active presence in music and eventually to cultivate awareness in all aspects of daily life.

Banacos practiced everything he preached, which is evident in two emails he sent to his students during his last days in the hospital. In these notes, despite his deteriorating health, he emphasized how to practice ear training in every circumstance of life. As an example, he mentioned the pitches he was hearing from the various medical machines around him. These words, in general, reflect in Banacos's own words the ways he conveyed his lesson, his passion about music, and the level of dedication to his students. In an email from November 27, 2009, he explained how he was using his environment in the hospital to practice. "...Most of the electronic sounds of this hospital at this moment are B's, D#'s, F#'s and A-naturals," he wrote.

Now there are other sounds, but those are the pre-dominant sounds coming from the electronic equipment. [...] So you could say right at this moment I'm swimming around in a pool of Bdom7. If you use that as a basis, the next time you hear somebody yell "code" you can practice and name its function against the B7 chord as quickly as possible and it makes a type of symphony. [...]

This way you can do this all day long and have a mini symphony going on. I hope you never have to use this kind of exercise in this type of situation, but it works everywhere - in diners, supermarkets, etc. So try it and you might have fun playing that game.³³

³³ Charlie Banacos's excerpts from one of his last two emails are listed in the Appendix G.

B. Improvisation Exercises

Banacos's improvisation exercises served a variety of purposes all designed to expand jazz improvisational skills. The first one, the **Approach-Note exercise**, is presented here to show how he tailored it to address each individual's specific issues. Exercises 2 to 10 are some of most commonly assigned to the 35 interviewees. Each of these exercises was assigned to address particular individuals' specific needs.

1. Approach-Notes

1a. Chromatic Approach-Notes

This exercise increases technical facility and mastery of the bebop language through muscle-memory training and ear-training. The fundamental notion is to arpeggiate all of the aforementioned seventh-chord types (p. 12) by using a total of twelve different chromatic approaches (one at a time) on every chord-tone in all keys. For example, on a C Δ 7 one approaches each chord tone from above with two chromatic tones (Ex. 3).

Double chromatic approach from above on the Root Double chromatic approach from above on the Third

The image shows two musical staves in treble clef, both labeled C Δ 7. The first staff illustrates a double chromatic approach from above on the Root (C). The notes are: C (quarter), B (quarter), B \flat (quarter), C (quarter), G (quarter), F (quarter), F \flat (quarter), G (quarter), C (quarter). The second staff illustrates a double chromatic approach from above on the Third (E). The notes are: E (quarter), D (quarter), D \flat (quarter), E (quarter), C (quarter), B (quarter), B \flat (quarter), C (quarter), E (quarter).

Double chromatic approach from above on the Fifth Double chromatic approach from above on the Seventh

The image shows two musical staves in treble clef, both labeled C Δ 7. The third staff illustrates a double chromatic approach from above on the Fifth (G). The notes are: G (quarter), F (quarter), F \flat (quarter), G (quarter), C (quarter), B (quarter), B \flat (quarter), C (quarter), G (quarter). The fourth staff illustrates a double chromatic approach from above on the Seventh (B). The notes are: B (quarter), A (quarter), A \flat (quarter), B (quarter), C (quarter), B (quarter), B \flat (quarter), C (quarter), B (quarter).

Example 3. Double chromatic approach from above.

The development and systematization of the **Approach-Notes** exercise is the outcome of Banacos's studies, transcriptions, and analyses of solos by prominent bebop and post-bebop players such as Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, Phineas Newborn, Oscar Peterson, McCoy Tyner, and Bill Evans, among many others. He observed that a large percentage of the bebop language is based on a vertical approach to improvisation, which consists of arpeggiated chords with various diatonic or chromatic approaches on the root, third, fifth, and seventh chord tones.

Banacos would administer this exercise differently depending on the instrument type and individual student's needs. He assigned it to the majority of his piano students to be played in a range of two octaves using both hands, one octave apart. I asked him if I could practice this exercise covering the entire piano range, but he said that would be redundant for my needs as two octaves were enough. Four pianists, however--Gil Aharon, Eric Ostling, Nando Michelin, and Rebecca Cline--were assigned this exercise with slightly different instructions. Aharon, whose level was already advanced when he started his lessons with Banacos, had to go as far as four octaves with hands one octave apart, for the purpose of exploring the entire piano range. Ostling, on the other hand, was instructed to cover the range of two octaves with hands two octaves apart, for the purpose of spreading his attention in two different areas of the piano at the same time. Michelin was instructed to practice this exercise by covering the entire range of the piano for the purpose of applying a specific arm movement that would help him to overcome a particular issue. Rebecca Cline mentioned that Banacos told her to practice this exercise with both hands, covering the range of two octaves, and occasionally use one finger each time, for the purpose of overcoming her tendonitis. By disconnecting the notes (non

legato), by playing staccato and with one finger before connecting one to another, Banacos seems to have aimed for a movement that coordinates the fingers, hand and forearm as a unit as opposed to isolating the fingers, which according to him (along with Abby Whiteside and Dorothy Taubman) contributes to tendonitis and other repetitive stress injuries.

For bass players Tal Gamlieli, Ervin Dhimo, Jim Guttman, guitarist Mike Stern, and cellist Catherine Bent, Banacos recommended practicing this exercise on one string at a time covering the entire range of each string. Additionally, he suggested practicing it in two or more octaves using all strings (vertically), covering the entire board. In Bent's words, Banacos assigned her to: "not only do it across all four strings, but he made me do everything up each string and back. That was the first time I had somebody challenge me technically on my instrument."³⁴ Violist Tanya Kalmanovitch, who studied with Banacos via correspondence cassette tapes, reported that this exercise was very effective in helping her to establish a connection between ear and instrument, to explore the entire range of the instrument, to acquire a sense of voice leading, and to hear chord tones as target tones. She also noted that the **Chromatic Approach-Notes** are "an amazing introduction to how lines are constructed in the bebop vocabulary."³⁵

Another interesting direction was given to bassist Bruce Gertz. Banacos would assign him one chromatic approach per week, applied to one chord-tone per week. For example, Gertz had to practice one chord in all keys and use the assigned approach only on the root. A week later, he had to apply the same approach on the third, and so forth. Moreover, Banacos asked him to play the first note of each chord using a different finger

³⁴ Catherine Bent, interview by author, audio, Jamaica Plain, MA, 3 February 2011.

³⁵ Tanya Kalmanovitch, interview by author, audio, Brookline MA, 19 July 2011.

each time. Gertz who believed that specific fingerings are used in specific positions of the bass, recalls the moment of revelation about his previous notion on fingerings: “Then, I realized that it wasn’t about the fingerings at all, but it was about the music and the notes.”³⁶ Vocalists Carmen Marsico and Sofia Rei were instructed to practice this exercise in one octave and move it through the cycle of fifths. Also, saxophonist Dave Berkin was instructed to cover the entire saxophone range and move every chord type through the cycle of fifths.

In some students like Catherine Bent, Tom Thorndike, and Tanya Kalmanovitch, Banacos introduced this exercise by having them arpeggiate all chord types without applying approach tones. The majority of students reported that Banacos insisted on applying the **Approach-Note** exercise in repertoire by writing solos and improvising using it consciously.

1b. Scale (Diatonic) Approach Notes

Also for developing facility with the bebop phraseology, the **Scale Approach-Notes** exercise does not include chromatic but diatonic approaches to chord tones utilizing a given scale. This addition to the above exercise was given to bassists Joe Hubbard, Ervin Dhimo, pianists Joe Reid, Tom Thorndike, guitarist Tony Wolff, and trumpeter Mike Pipeman, who –unlike the others– was not assigned the **Chromatic Approach** version above. Ex. 4 below illustrates the way diatonic approaches are applied on a C Δ 7 and Cm7 chords in the diatonic context of various modes.

³⁶ Bruce Gertz, interview by author, audio, Melrose MA, 11 February 2011.

Diatonic approach from above - Ionian mode Diatonic approach from above - Lydian mode

$C\Delta 7$ $C\Delta 7$

Diatonic approach from below - Dorian mode Diatonic approach from below - Phrygian mode

$C-7$ $C-7$

Example 4. Diatonic scale approaches.

The Approach Notes also include the **Mixed Approach Notes** and the **Exotic Approach Notes**.

2. Pentatonics

The **Pentatonics** exercise helps to develop proficiency with intervallic melodic phrasing based on various pentatonic scales (one at a time or a combination of two and more). It is also a useful way to explore harmonic formations based on pentatonic scales. This exercise is performed by utilizing one pentatonic scale to formulate melodic lines as well as five-note harmonic voicings. When using the pitches of a pentatonic scale to create melodic lines, all possible permutations (125 in all) should be explored in all positions, ascending and descending motion, following all possible directions. The pitches of a pentatonic scale are also used to build chords, using a variety of close and open space voicing formations. Additionally, for all melodic lines and chords based on a pentatonic, a series of chord types over which each pentatonic scale is to be superimposed are included in this exercise. For example, to the pentatonic scale shown in the example below (Ex.5), Banacos suggested applying the $C\Delta 7$, $C7$, $A-7$, and another additional nine chords.

As mentioned earlier, Banacos used funny cartoons and jokes to convey the lesson. In this case, he baptized each pentatonic scale with a funny name as a means to make the material more attractive to students. He would also draw a cartoon next to it. In some instances Banacos would give different names for the same pentatonic scale. Between the notes of a pentatonic, he added numbers to denote semitone distances. He also placed a series of numbers below the notes and used them to generate all 125 possible permutations. The first permutation (12345) is illustrated in example below (Ex.5).



Example 5. One of the pentatonic scales used by Banacos.

By placing the note A before G, one forms the second permutation (12354), before F#, the third (12534), before D, the fourth (12543), and so forth. As in almost every exercise, Banacos suggested applying the **Pentatonics** exercise in tunes by either writing solos or improvising on the spot. The majority of the interviewees reported that this study helped them to expand their melodic, harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary.

Banacos designed and published a somewhat different version of this exercise in his book, **Pentatonics**. There he developed a systematic procedure to acquire all possible permutations of 4-note melodic lines that derive from the major and minor pentatonic scales. He allowed the book to go out of print, perhaps because he revised and expanded the material and used it for private lessons only. The main difference between the original book and the exercise in its later form is that the former contains drills using the major and minor pentatonic scales only, while the latter consists of exercises using 38 different

pentatonic scales. The majority of the interviewees were assigned the **Pentatonics** exercise regardless of instrument.

3. Hexatonics:

Bitonal Pendulums/Double Mambos

The **Double Mambos** exercise was designed for creating vertical, angular and melodic lines with large leaps, within the spectrum of a specific harmonic color. The exercise is performed by using pairs of triads for every chord type and playing these pairs in several permutations. Also, the notes of the triads are to be played as a line by utilizing all three inversions of both triads. Banacos's instructions include composing and learning several lines each week using this idea. The written lines should exploit the pitches of both triads, but are meant to be less strict than the permutations, by changing direction, as one prefers, and using more or fewer notes from each triad before changing to the next grouping. Eventually, non-tertian triads are to be used over various chord types.

Banacos required the majority of the students who were assigned this exercise, to play their composed lines and utilize this concept to improvise over the assigned weekly tune. This was the core exercise for Danilo Perez during his eight years of study with Banacos, who additionally assigned Perez to use this exercise for composition writing. He also advised him to explore common threads between this exercise and impressionist composers Debussy and Ravel, as well as jazz pianists Phineas Newborn and McCoy Tyner. Tyner's composition "Passion Dance," which features a melodic line consisting of notes that belong to the F and Eb major triads over an F7 chord, seems especially to have inspired Banacos to design this exercise. The first lesson Banacos assigned to students is

based on a mixture of the Eb and F major triads over the F7 chord:



Example 6. **Double Mambo**: random line using the pitches from the F and Eb major triads.

4. Septatonics

Septatonics is similar in purpose and conception to the above exercise. In this case, combinations of seventh chords with triads are used, which both make up lines with seven notes. At a later stage, the exercise requires combining 3 or 4-note--non-tertian--chords with tertian ones.

5. Rhythm Changes

As the title denotes, the exercise **Rhythm Changes** develops proficiency and fluency in improvising over George Gerswin's "I Got Rhythm" and various recompositions of the tune such as Parker's "Anthropology," Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning," and Rollins's "Oleo." The exercise is performed by composing a stepwise, half-note line through a chord progression, using chord tones and tensions. Those half-notes then have to be connected with an eighth-note line embellishing the half-note line with chord tones, tensions, appoggiaturas, and passing tones. The exercise continues by writing a similar half-note line through a chorus of "Rhythm Changes," and building close-four voicings using each note as one voice. As Banacos described them, close-four voicings have four notes in closed position with the root, third, fifth and seventh altered following a set of rules. The resulting chords (2 per bar) are to be played as chorus-long eighth-note lines.

6. Shapes/Tension Lines

This exercise helps to achieve motivic development in improvisations, to create angular improvisatory lines, and melodic lines based on abstract shapes. The **Shapes** exercise consists of short phrases that include vertical consecutive eighth-note, eighth-note triplet, and sixteenth-note lines (four beats each), which are designed to fit over all eleven chord types. There are approximately four lines for every chord type and they progress through all eleven chords, with a gradual increase in rhythmic values. These lines consist of chord tones and tensions in a shape that Banacos delineated with arrows pointing up and down. He would instruct students to play these tension patterns forward, backwards, and in other combinations. As pianist Stephen Page recalls, Banacos instructed him to:

Mix and match with the first half of one with the second half of another pattern. Also do that backwards or half forwards, half backwards. There are endless possibilities! The real gain is to take one line through all chords and change them to fit the new chord and all possible tension variations.³⁷

7. Mixed Long Lines (32nd-note licks)

Combining the **Shapes, the Chromatic and the Diatonic Approach Notes exercises**, the **Mixed Long Lines** exercise emphasizes speed. This exercise contains twelve different long flowing, 32nd-note lines to be superimposed over various chords composed as a summary of all approach tones. The aim in this exercise is to master these lines at “top speed and in all keys,” as Banacos repeatedly said to the majority of the interviewees. He emphasized playing these lines as fast as possible, “in one breath,” as bassist Ervin Dhimo recalls.³⁸ Banacos mentioned to me that, through his studies in

³⁷ Stephen Page, interview by author, text, 29 August 2011.

³⁸ Ervin Dhimo, interview by author, audio, Newton, MA, 10 February 2011.

physiology, he realized that for fast playing a different type of muscles is activated than for slow playing, and this is one of the reasons for suggesting this approach.

When students completed a series of lines in all chord types, Banacos would go back to the first four lines (which were written over C Δ 7) and provide various additional chords that fit to the lines.

8. Twenty-Third Chords

The **Twenty-Third Chords** exercise helps to expand the aural spectrum of a given chord type, improve technical facility, and enhance more vertical improvisatory lines. This exercise uses all twelve chromatic tones over one chord type built up in thirds (Root - 3 - 5 - 7 - 9 - 11 - 13 - 15 - 17 - 19 - 21 - 23). According to Garry Dial, “this had been used before in 20th century classical music, but not in jazz pedagogy. In this course the student learns to use all 12 tones on one chord type in a melodic approach by using ‘tension and release’ principles.”³⁹ The following example depicts one possibility of extensions given on a C Δ 7 chord.

The musical notation consists of two staves. The lower staff is in the bass clef and contains a C Δ 7 chord with notes C, E, G, and B. The upper staff is in the treble clef and contains a series of notes representing extensions: 9 (D), #11 (F#), 13 (G), #15 (A#), #17 (B#), #19 (C#), b21 (D), and #23 (E#). Each note is a whole note. Above the notes are labels: C Δ 7, 9, #11, 13, #15, #17, #19, b21, and #23. The notes for #15, #17, #19, b21, and #23 are marked with a sharp sign, while the note for b21 is marked with a flat sign.

Example 7. **Twenty-Third Chords**: Extensions of the C Δ 7.

³⁹ Garry Dial, through Barbara Banacos, email, 26 February 2012.

9. Chord on Chord

This exercise helps to develop proficiency in modal improvisation and build phrases that resemble those of modern jazz players from the 1960's and after, especially John Coltrane. According to Charlie Banacos, “**Chord on Chord** was a term used by John Coltrane to describe one of his methods of improvising.” This exercise is divided into three parts. Part one has exercises using two chords over one chord. The student is restricted to specific chord tones and directional patterns. Part two has exercises superimposing a ii-V-I progression over one chord. Part three contains exercises superimposing different progressions over a ii-V-I progression using specified patterns of chord tones, passing tones and approach notes. Banacos explained that this exercise: “tracks the development of re-harmonization as applied to melody in addition to harmony from classical works to Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, [John] Coltrane, [Eric] Dolphy and others.”⁴⁰

10. Reharmonization

Developing proficiency with spontaneous chord substitutions for the original chords of well-known jazz standards, **Reharmonization** offers a set of ways to approach target chords. The following example shows three basic approaches to the tonic (major or minor):

V7 → I; bII7 → I; bVII7 → I

Banacos documented at least 16 different approach chords and encouraged

⁴⁰ Barbara Banacos, email, 26 February 2012.

students to use them in writing several reharmonizations of a weekly assigned jazz tune. He also had students try to use these rules to spontaneously reharmonize in improvised solos.

An additional list with selected concise descriptions of Banacos's various terms, written in his own words, is listed in the Appendix C. Additional exercises that were mentioned by students in the 35 interviews I conducted are listed in the Appendix D. The full version of all exercises is available through online lessons with Barbara Banacos and Garry Dial at charliebanacos@gmail.com.

C. Voicings

The study of voicings was central in Banacos's pedagogy. The earliest source of information regarding his approach to harmony and voicings comes from his five self-published books. They consist of systematic ways for constructing three-note up to six-note voicings using intervals of fourths, fifths, and clusters, all of which are based on major and minor diatonic scales. These books, listed in the bibliography, are Voicings in Fourths, Voicings in Fifths, Voicings in Clusters, and Tonal Paralipsis (two-volumes).

Banacos did not utilize these books in his private lessons. When saxophonist Mark Zaleski asked him if he could buy these books, Banacos replied that they were out of print and that he preferred to not use them anymore in his teaching.⁴¹ A representative sampling of groups of voicings that he used instead are listed below.

1. 14 left hand voicings for piano in $ii-7 - V7 - I\Delta 7$ and another 14 in $ii\emptyset 7 - V7 - i-\Delta 7$;
2. 14 spread voicings for piano in $ii-7 - V7 - I\Delta 7$ and an additional set of 14 voicings in $ii\emptyset 7 - V7 - i-\Delta 7$;
3. 5-part left hand voicings for piano;

Each of the above piano voicings features a different chord tone or extension on the top voice.

4. George Shearing and Oscar Peterson voicings for piano;
5. Drop 2, drop 3, drop 2 & 3, drop 2 & 4 voicings;
6. Quartal voicings;

⁴¹ Mark Zaleski, interview by author, audio, Jamaica Plain, MA, 18 October 2010.

7. Icy voicings;

8. John Mehegan form A and form B ii-V-I voicings inspired by Bill Evans.

D. Composition

Banacos assigned composition exercises to some students as part of their weekly lessons. Among the 35 interviewees, there were no students who studied exclusively composition. In forming some of his composition exercises, Banacos acknowledged Joseph Schillinger's System for Musical Composition, Vincent Persichetti's Twentieth-Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice, and Arnold Schoenboerg's Structural Functions of Harmony as influential.

He used various classical and jazz compositions to serve as models to help students generate compositional material. For example, he gave Mike Stern the assignment of choosing any Bach piece, analyzing its chords, and using the harmonic progression as a foundation on which to write a new melody. In a similar way, Banacos asked Joe Hubbard to compose a new piece based on the chords of J.S.Bach's Prelude in Bb minor from the Well Tempered Clavier book I. In addition, Hubbard was given the assignment to enrich the original chords with extensions such as 7ths, 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths. A slightly different assignment was given to Dan Tepfer, who was to use Ravel's Sonatine and change all pitches, but maintain the shapes and rhythms. Banacos also assigned Tepfer Bach's Sarabande from French Suite No. 1 and asked him to analyze the piece and replace all roots of each chord with 9ths. He then had to remove all accidentals and gradually reintroduce accidentals one at a time. Banacos told him that this procedure makes the piece sound modal.

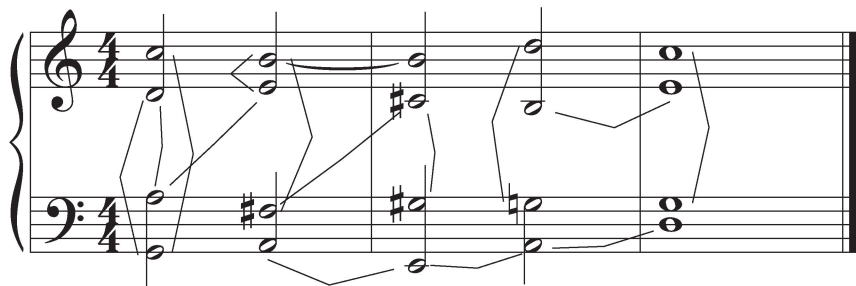
Regarding the composition exercises based on Joseph Schillinger's book, Banacos assigned exercises with geometrical melodic expansions.⁴² He assigned Bruce Gertz to expand the melody of J. S. Bach's Two-Part Invention No1, and of various jazz standards (e.g. "Solar") by writing all chromatic scale degrees above each note (C=0, C#[or Db]=1, D=2, D#[or Eb]=3, etc.). He then told him to expand each scale degree number according to the type of geometrical expansion. For example, the 2nd expansion requires multiplying each number by 2, the 3rd expansion by 3, the 4th by 4, and so forth. The first note is always a stationary note and is marked with 0. The following illustration depicts a 2nd geometrical melodic expansion applied on the first two measures of Bach's Two-Part Invention. According to Gertz, Banacos believed that Scriabin had possibly written many compositions using geometrical expansions of Bach's works.

The image shows a musical staff with two measures. The first measure is labeled 'original melody' and contains a quarter rest followed by eighth notes with fingerings 0, 2, 4, 5, 2, 4, 0. The second measure is labeled '2nd Expansion' and contains a quarter rest followed by eighth notes with fingerings 7, 12, 11, 12. A double bar line separates the two measures. The expansion continues in the next measure with fingerings 0, 4, 8, 10, 4, 8, 0, 14, 24, 22, 24.

Example 8. Geometrical Melodic 2nd Expansion on Bach's Two-part Invention, No1.

Banacos designed several composition exercises that have as common denominator the use of intervallic relationships. The first of these exercises is to write a composition that contains only one interval to be used vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. Every note must be related to a neighbor note (any direction) by the assigned interval. The example below (my own) shows how every pitch relates to a neighbor one by a P4 (or its equivalent P5) from at least one direction.

⁴² Schillinger, 208.



Example 9. Composition exercise featuring intervallic relationships (P4 and P5).

Another exercise of the same sort is to choose one chord type and a relevant mode (e.g. Lydian) and move it by a root motion (2nds, 3rds, 4ths). In addition, a melody should be composed based on the resultant harmonic progression. The following example (my own) is a possible realization if the given chord type is Major 7 and the root motion is 3rds (major and minor). The melody contains pitches derived from the Lydian scale of each root.

Example 10. Root motion of Major 7th chords by 3rds.

The last exercise presented in this study is the use of three and later four-note cells to generate compositional material on a melodic, harmonic, rhythmic or any other level. Banacos assigned me three-note chords every week, each of which contained the stationary pitch C. He instructed me to assign pitch class sets to these pitches and create a composition that predominantly contains each assigned set. For example, if he gave me the pitches C, Db, and E, I had to explore the {0-1-4} cell in melody, harmony, and sometimes rhythm.

E. Rhythm

1. Peak and Valley Notes

Setting target notes as “peaks” and “valleys,” this exercise helps to develop precision in time and intonation, and confidence and precision when arriving at a target note without hesitation. It also helps to develop improvisatory phrases that imply polyrhythms and swing feel. This exercise is performed by playing small phrases that contain a specific note, which functions as a “target note,” following either an upward or downward direction. All the notes need to be played in time and with precision, and it is of highest importance to arrive at the target notes. If the phrase follows an upward motion the “target” note is called a “valley note” and in descending it is called a “peak note.”

In conceiving this exercise, Banacos said that he was inspired by the following gestures from Joe Henderson’s tune “Inner Urge,” which contain “peak” and “valley” notes. He said that the aim is to arrive at the notes on beats 1 and 3 in time (Ex.11) without worrying too much about getting all the notes of the quintuplet on measure one in the example below (Ex.11).



Example 11. Last four measures from Henderson’s “Inner Urge.”

2. Agogics

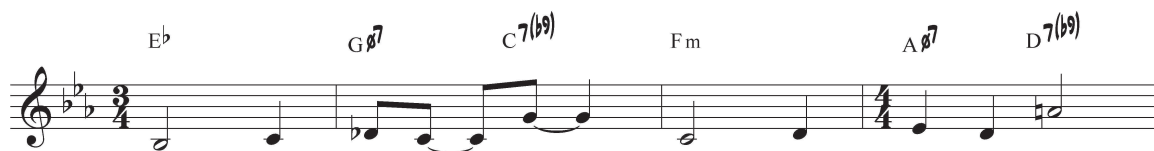
Agogics involves writing small phrases using 8th notes based on a pentatonic scale or fragments of a triad. The exercise is performed by repeating the first two 8th notes and, following an additive process, the first three notes, then the first four, and so forth. These phrases create various polyrhythms within the confines of a 4/4-meter (Ex.12).



Example 12. **Agogics.**

3. Meter Substitution

This exercise, which was assigned to me, helps to acquire fluency in changing meters of jazz standards or to apply metric modulations within a piece. In any AABA jazz standard tune that is in 4/4, one can substitute 4/4-meter with 3/4 in the first three measures and return to 4/4 in the fourth measure. This is to be applied every four measures. The above formula is illustrated below (Ex.13) on Van Heusen's song "It Could Happen to You."



Example 13. **Meter Substitution** on "It Could Happen to You" by Jimmy Van Heusen.

4. Superimposed rhythms.

This exercise is similar to **Agogics**. Instead of repeating two eighth-notes and expanding them, this exercise involves writing eighth-note phrases applying an accent mark every five 8ths, which creates a superimposition of a 5/8 over a 4/4 meter (Ex.14).



Example 14. **Superimposed Rhythms:** Accents implying a 5/8 over 4/4.

F. Sight-Reading

1. Random notes chart /Sprays

The purpose of this exercise is to establish an association between notation and singing, reading, and playing. It is also useful in gaining familiarity with all clefs. Banacos stressed the importance of learning all seven clefs (treble, bass, alto, soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and baritone) mainly for transposing purposes. **Sprays** is performed by creating a chart (table) that consists of random notes. The table indicates only notes spread inside, above, and below the staff containing many large intervallic leaps. Banacos would assign various clefs, meters, and accidentals, asking students to sight-read the chart using different instructions each time.

2. Random chords chart

This chart is similar to the one above, but consists of random chord symbols (two per measure). It is to be utilized for sight-reading purposes, in a “comping” style, especially for pianists and guitarists. One creates various Random Chord Charts and works on developing sight-reading fluency with a gradual increase of tempo.

3. Rhythm cards

This is another exercise for rhythmic sight-reading improvement. In one example of this exercise, one creates flash cards, each one consisting of one quarter-note rhythmic value (one quarter-note, two eighth-notes, three eighth-note triplets, four sixteenth-notes, and so forth), shuffles them, lays them out horizontally and sight-reads them.

G. Technique

Many students were assigned scales/modes for their practice routine. Scales included all modes of major, jazz minor (ascending melodic minor), harmonic minor, Spanish Phrygian (octatonic), harmonic major, major #2, augmented, and diminished, among others. Piano players reported that they were instructed to play one each week in two octaves, both hands, using only the regular C major scale fingerings to be applied to all scales. The fingerings for the right hand are 123-12345 and for the left hand 54321-321. When I told Charlie that Lennie Tristano also used these fingerings in his playing and his pedagogy, he already knew that, and also pointed out that Franz Liszt was the first pianist to use these fingerings on every scale.⁴³ Banacos also assigned piano students to practice all chord types as arpeggios and play selected transcribed solos from Jamey Aebersold's Parker Omnibook with 2-hands.

The basic admonition here is to avoid crossing the thumb under and –most important- avoid playing with only the fingers, but rather to generate the action from coordinating the fingers, hand and forearm together, while maintaining the alignment of the fulcrums to move as a unit from one hand position to another. Banacos advocated Abby Whiteside's piano pedagogy books Indispensables of Piano Playing and Mastering the Chopin Etudes and Other Essays,⁴⁴ Dorothy Taubman's piano pedagogy videotapes,⁴⁵ and Otto Ortmann's book The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique

⁴³ Lennie Tristano was a performer, composer, and a prominent jazz pedagogue, active in New York from the late 1940's until 1978.

⁴⁴ Abby Whiteside, *Indispensables of Piano Playing*, (New York: Coleman Ross Co., 1955).
 ---, *Mastering the Chopin Etudes and Other Essays*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969).

⁴⁵ *The Taubman Piano Techniques, 10 videotapes presented by Edna Golandsky. Commentary by Dorothy Taubman*, (Medusa, New York: Taubman Institute of Piano, 1995).

for fluent, effortless playing and for protection from injuries.⁴⁶

For string players, he recommended playing all scales and arpeggios from every key, using one string at a time from lowest to highest possible note.

In many instances, Banacos encouraged his students to apply scales or other forms of exercises in writing solos or compositions. As Massimo Sammi recalls, Charlie Banacos would recommend him to:

“Write a solo with a whole-tone scale but go crazy, don’t make it sound like an exercise.” With his exercises, Charlie made me be comfortable with the dissonances. His purpose was to make you feel, not think while playing.⁴⁷

More Banacos’s exercises and tips on technique are listed below:

1. 125 different 5-finger permutations on a Bb note for pianists (one hand at a time).

According to Banacos’s wife Margaret, Banacos said that these repetitive patterns on a Bb note encourage students to coordinate their fingers, hand and arm, and reduce any finger isolation. At the same time, this exercise encourages natural rotation of the forearm. Mrs. Banacos also emphasized the fact that Charlie would bring the students to a state of experiencing the effect or the end result of playing coordinately rather than using analysis or any other cerebral sort of explanation.⁴⁸

2. Repeated double trills for pianists.

Banacos isolated the trills from the opening of the Chopin Etude No.6, Op.25, G# minor and created an exercise based on it.

⁴⁶ Otto Ortmann, *The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique*, (New York: DaCapo Press, 1981).

⁴⁷ Massimo Sammi, interview by author, audio, Boston, MA, 16 June 2010.

⁴⁸ Margaret Banacos, interview by author, Magnolia, MA, 19 February 2012.

3. Speed Demons (for all instruments)

Speed Demons helps beginners in jazz to develop fast and effortless playing and acquire a “swing feel.” It includes short, “snake-like,” (as Banacos called them), gestural phrases to be used over one chord at a time. These phrases should be played in a fast tempo for the purpose of having students utilize the fast-twitch muscles. The **Speed Demons** exercise is also helpful for ear-training and swing feel, but the most prominent benefit is the development of technical facility.

4. Twelve Gradations (for guitar)

This exercise help guitarists to gain more control of tone, particularly to gain control of the amount of pressure on a string on the fingerboard. Banacos suggested dividing the distance from the point of contact to the string to the time it presses completely down on the fret into twelve equal segments. The last gradation would be when a fine, clear tone appears. Tony Wolff mentioned that this study helped him to increase his ability to control his left hand as well as his sensitivity not only with respect to touch, but also ear. He said: “Soon you start to hear the tone before you hit the fret.”⁴⁹

5. Radiations (for guitar)

The **Radiations** exercise promotes proficiency and improves right-hand technique for guitarists. The exercise is performed by holding the pick with the right hand, alternating between one particular string and each of the other five, so that the

⁴⁹ Tony Wolff, interview by author, audio, Brookline MA, 11 April 2011.

repeated string becomes a pedal point for the other strings. Banacos also provided specific plectrum stroke patterns using a variety of up and down-stroke alternations.

6. Tip on Playing Fast Tempos.

Banacos suggested to bassist Joe Hubbard that he counts his physical pulse and subdivide it as a means to effortlessly feel faster tempos.

H. Repertoire

1. Jazz Standards from various Jazz Real or Fake Books

Banacos required almost all jazz students to sight-read a new jazz tune and take it home to practice for a week. In many instances, he assigned students to apply their current drills or exercises to the weekly repertoire. Banacos used on a regular basis the Real Book and various jazz fake books and the Charlie Parker Omnibook.⁵⁰

2. Classical Works

Charlie Banacos assigned classical pieces to some of his students, especially pianists. Danilo Perez worked on Ravel's Menuet sur le Nom d'Haydn and Sonatine. Also, he was assigned Debussy's Jeux d'eau, Images, Preludes, and L'isle Joyeuse. Dan Tepfer was assigned Ravel's Sonatine, as well.

Rebecca Cline was assigned to choose one of Bach's inventions, rotate it by 180 degrees and play it. Also, she was assigned Chopin's Etude Op.25, No. 6 in G# minor. Pianist Tom Thorndike was assigned Chopin Etudes Op.10, Nos.4 and 8 and Op.25, No.6.

During my three years of study with Charlie Banacos, he assigned me the following Chopin Etudes: Op.10, Nos.1, 2, 4, and Op.25, Nos.6 and 11. He showed me a fast and effective way of learning a new piece: Instead of practicing a piece with separate hands, in a slow tempo, and playing from beginning to end, he suggested that I divide the piece in equal small segments. A segment could be one measure or less. He instructed me

⁵⁰ Charlie Parker, *Charlie Parker Omnibook*, transcribed and edited by Jamey Aebersold and Ken Slone, (New York: Atlantic Music Corporation, 1978).

to practice one segment repeatedly at the designated tempo. When I felt comfortable with the first chunk, I would connect it to the next segment and practice repeatedly the first two segments. Eventually, I would learn the entire piece in tempo by following an additive process without practicing in slower than the indicated tempo, as I used to. He mentioned that the human body uses different muscles to play in a slow tempo from those used to play in a fast tempo. He also said that if I practiced a piece in tempo by using the right movement (by also engaging the right muscles), I would learn the piece faster and acquire a quick sense of how the piece actually feels and sounds in tempo.

Pianist, percussionist, and composer Matthew Gordy was assigned Brahms's Intermezzo in E flat major, Op.117, Ravel's Pavane for Dead Princess, several of Beethoven's piano sonatas, and many of Prokofiev's pieces, which Banacos assigned as models for composition. Pianist/drummer Pedro Tsvidis was given Faure's Pieces Breves, Mozart's Sonata No. 5 in G major, Bartok's Mikrokosmos 133 in book V, Poulenc's Solo Pieces in C major, and Brahms's Intermezzi no. 117. Tsvidis also said that there was always a pedagogical reason for Banacos to assign specific classical works.

He picked pieces mainly to have me absorb certain elements of language, or certain elements of orchestration for the piano. He would always remind me that the great jazz players are very aware of such things and that there's a lot I can learn from non-jazz music that would greatly enhance my jazz playing.⁵¹

Banacos asked pianist Gil Aharon to learn J.S. Bach's Goldberg Variations and practice them in all keys. Pianist Joseph Reid was given Rachmaninoff's Prelude in G# minor, several of Chopin's etudes, and a few of Bach's preludes.⁵²

⁵¹ Pedro Tsvidis, interview by author, email and audio, New York City, 17 June 2010.

⁵² Joseph Reid, interview by author, audio, Cambridge, MA, 17 March 2011.

I. Tips/Concepts/Advice

1. Tips to pianist Dave Frank:

Pianist Dave Frank, described the following pieces of advice as “esoteric methods” that Banacos used to help him overcome stage fright and other nervousness or stress-relating issues. Frank said that Banacos had esoteric methods for every possible issue. Below, I present a relatively small number of the concepts mentioned by Frank.

1a. Antiphonal Harmony: Banacos told Dave Frank to imagine himself performing in Carnegie Hall and play with the feeling that the piano sound is coming from the back stage or from far away.

1b. Sitting in a bubble: In case of stage fright, Banacos recommended that one imagine being surround by a bubble. This trick often provides a sense of protection and helps the performer overcome nervousness.

1c. Playing at the moment: When performing in a situation with a lot of pressure, let the “Little Guy” in your head tell you what is the right tempo or in general, let that guy make the right decision.

1d. Imagine yourself walking or soldiers marching as a means to maintain steady inner pulse. Sometimes, Banacos would have ask him to physically walk up and down the stairs.

1e. Part of the performer’s awareness is sitting in the audience. Banacos mentioned to Frank that he heard this idea Bill Evans.

2. Tips to bassist Ervin Dhimo:

2a. Play with a “swing feel.” Banacos introduced to Ervin Dhimo the idea of trying to imagine jumping on a diving board of a pool in order to acquire a sense of the “swing feel.”

2b. “You cannot groove with your fingers, but with hand/body.” By engaging the entire body, Ervin Dhimo was helped to overcome Carpal tunnel syndrome.

3. Play jazz standards upon rising at an extremely fast tempo. Banacos recommended to students Ervin Dhimo, Tom Thorndike, Eric Ostling and me, the following tip: “When you wake up in the morning, before even brushing your teeth, go to your instrument and play and improvise on a jazz tune at the **maximum speed** you can.”

4. Seek inspiration from paintings. Banacos advised vocalist Amanda Baisinger to go to the Metropolitan Museum, find one painting and write a song based on that.

5. Play Rhythm.

Banacos’s advice to cellist Catherine Bent was to: “... not get hung up on the notes, but focus on the rhythm. Play rhythm.”

6. Transcribe or compose away from the instrument.

This is Banacos’s advice to bassist Ervin Dhimo and pianist Danilo Perez.

Epilogue

Charlie Banacos combined science and artistry, knowledge and wisdom, craft and intuition, humor and wit, orderliness and spontaneity, performance mastery and devotion in his teaching career, and –most importantly- love and respect for his students. It is striking how all 35 students interviewed for the purpose of this study expressed numerous positive and quite different points in describing their experience studying with Banacos. They all however, had one point in common, which can be summarized in the following phrase: he was a holistic music “doctor” who had the ability to see quickly what the students needed and prescribed a unique elixir that led to transformative effects, musically and personally.

Banacos designed exercises based on recurring patterns and formulas, which he located and isolated from his transcriptions of jazz masters’ solos. Along with developing exercises from ideas the masters were playing, he also used classical techniques that he adapted to the jazz language, and also had original concepts for technique, improvisation, harmony and voicings, ear training and composition. His exercises focus on developing a broad range of jazz aspects and improvisational approaches such as chromatic lines, vertical lines, bebop phrasing, swing feel, modern jazz voicings, and reharmonizations, among many others. In achieving quick and effective results, Banacos’s emphasis on a daily practice routine of persistent repetition of a small digestible amount of work seems to have been the key in subconsciously ingesting each exercise’s core elements into one’s muscle and aural memory. Eventually, these elements become filtered and expanded through one’s imagination and creativity. Another reason that Banacos’s teaching

achieved quick results and fast growth is his teaching model, which required students to attend weekly 30-minute lessons without offering the flexibility to cancel or postpone a lesson.

Thinking back on the ways my playing was transformed by Banacos's teaching, I realize how much I gained from his **Approach-Note** and **Rhythm Changes** exercises. Within a few weeks, I gained instrument control and technical freedom, and expansion of my aural skills just by practicing specific formulas in a rapid tempo and in all keys. I soon realized that several gestures and sounds from these exercises became “second nature,” my harmonic palette expanded, and my improvisations sounded more rooted to the jazz tradition. To give another example, I still remember driving my friend Mihalis Katahanas to Banacos for his first lesson in September 2008. He had just come from Greece with an insufficient background in jazz. I witnessed that after Banacos gave him the **Speed Demons** exercise, he was able to play with a ‘swing feel’ in just a week. Banacos instructed him to practice a specific melodic segment that consists of four eighth notes, rotate note accents every time, and do it in a fast tempo and in all keys through the cycle of fifths. Another student Sean Berry testifies that part of the reason he achieved transformative results through Banacos’s exercises was partially due to the fact that these exercises ‘forced’ him to associate physical movements with sounds:

The accuracy of my note choices in improvisation improved partly as a result of having a clearer mental map of pitch relationships (better "ears", or better "aim"), and partly from having more clearly associated specific sounds with specific finger movements through physical practice (more specified tonal palette). I also gained some important insights about how I learn, and learned some specific exercises that tend to help me with technically difficult passages, which popped up frequently in Charlie's exercises. This helped push my overall saxophone technique to a new level, and made my practicing much more efficient, which continues to make a huge impact.⁵³

⁵³ Sean Berry, interview by author, email, 3 April 2010.

Even though Banacos had over a thousand of jazz students, according to his family, I would not claim that a “Banacos school” exists. I have heard the music of many of his students, and I noticed that there is no unified sound in their improvisational and compositional styles. This is partly because Banacos aimed to help students not only find their personal voice through the tools he constructed for them, but also explore their true potential as artists and human beings.

That so many of his students report a transformation in their playing from taking Banacos’s prescriptions, and that so many of them have gone on to successful careers as performers, is testimony to the effect of pedagogy. The prescriptions he dispensed suggest that his pedagogy has a significant place in jazz history and it is worth preserving. His individualized approach to teaching, based on rigorously applied exercises drawn from music of the masters, stands as worthy models for the education of aspiring jazz artists.

Charlie Banacos’s positive, playful, and encouraging attitude made me realize the spiritual dimension of persistent practice as a means to constantly discover new pathways in art and life. Upon his students’ departure at the end of the lesson, he would always stand at the door and with an upbeat tone he would give words of encouragement like: “Hang in there man!” “Burn! Kill!” “Top Speed and in All Keys!” and blessings like “Pax Dominum Vobiscum!” He understood the power of humor to open up students emotionally and spark their full attention. His significance as a teacher lies partly in his craft-oriented approach to teaching jazz, and partly in the fact that he stands as a paradigm in conveying the message that hard work, persistence, devotion, and love are necessary qualities for achieving artistic growth.

Appendix

A. Students' Reports

This section presents excerpts from transcribed interviews conducted by the author. These are responses I received from my interviewees to questions related to the key elements of Banacos's pedagogy. The questions are pertinent to the ways Banacos helped them to achieve their current level of musicianship, how their playing changed as a result of his pedagogy, and the impact his teaching had on them beyond music. Students here are classified by instrument, such as bass players, guitarists, horn players (saxophone, flute, trumpet), pianists, string players (violin, viola, cello), and vocalists.

Bass players

1) Ervin Dhimo:

The first thing he asked me to do was to play a piece for him. He said: "Let's say you are at your gig, ready to play but the rest of the band members do not show up. So, you need to start playing to honor your contract and you need to make up something." I didn't expect this kind of question in my first lesson. After I played for him, in 2-3 minutes, he gave me a diagnosis on my musicianship, knowledge, technique, and the kind of stuff I had been practicing. He gave me a detailed explanation of the new direction we were going to take. My mind opened. Within the first 3 months my playing took off. When I played, I started to hear lines that sounded like bebop. He helped me see the infinite possibilities in every aspect in music. He guided me to learn all the rules thoroughly, and he later showed how to break them. This knowledge helped me to achieve a sense of freedom. I had lot of fun when I was practicing his stuff. Most of the times he had positive energy and he would say: "Keep cooking man!"⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ervin Dhimo. Interview by author, Newton, MA, 10 February 2011.

2) Tal Gamlieli:

He was a very caring, honest, and warm person. He had an incredible ability to be in the moment; to be present. This is the quality you see in great performers, improvisers, and teachers. These people are scary in a sense because when you interact with them they are so much present. They are with you, right now, there is no other thing besides you and him. And when he is with the next student he is 100% with him and that makes life so meaningful to be present in the moment at that level.⁵⁵

3) Bruce Gertz:

My vocabulary opened way up. I wasn't just laying bebop licks. Now, I can play long phrases and be more inventive. My solos became more compositional, too. [...] Charlie told me this: "Nobody really needs a lot of chops. You only need enough chops to make the music that you need to express yourself." He also told me: "When the guys in the band don't dig what you are doing then you know you are playing some jive." [...] He was one of the most positive people I've ever met. He was always up. I never saw him down. Everybody looked forward to seeing him. He had that spark in his personality. He had words in every language, too! He taught you how to teach yourself. That's what great teachers do.⁵⁶

4) Jim Guttman:

He was very clear and upfront about the business aspect. His teaching was all about jazz, improvisation, and understanding harmony. He helped me understand jazz and different styles. His approach was about the hard work. What he really imparted was: you need to know your way around the instrument; you need to know your way through all the keys; you need to learn your way around the piano; and you need to do the work. I think everything else came from doing the work. He had me listen and transcribe directly from the source. His approach was not different from that of the 3rd stream approach at the New England Conservatory. He always gave me pretty clear explanations. He was very encouraging. What a tough taskmaster he was. [...] When I started my lessons,

⁵⁵ Tal Gamlieli, interview by the author, audio, Medford, MA, 15 June 2010.

⁵⁶ Bruce Gertz, interview by author, audio, Melrose, MA, 11 February 2011.

within two weeks everybody was talking about how my intonation was suddenly much more accurate. [...] ...you know, having someone to tell me what to do and point me a direction, someone who is completely accepting the work that I did, someone who is extremely patient when I was incompetent. He help me to get to know the instrument in a way that none of my other teachers did. No part of my instrument is a mystery anymore. He was not critical or authoritarian, he used to point me to different directions, he was supportive, he pushed me gently, and that's what I wanted. The fact that I could leave his studio feeling as good as I did no matter how tough the lesson was, made me feel good about myself. I do carry him with me. It was a real sense of loss that I haven't felt for any other teacher, or any other mentor.⁵⁷

5) Joe Hubbard:

[Banacos's teaching] completely transformed my playing into playing more sophisticated lines with tension and release that I could apply to any musical genre. My ears improved, my technique improved, my compositions improved. Charlie gave me the complete package. He also really inspired me and made me believe much more in my own abilities. He had so many gifted students, but always made me feel like I was his only student; he really rewarded the effort I put in. [...] His intuitiveness to hear my playing and then prescribe specific things that related to improving my musical attributes. Charlie used to hate it when he heard that Jimmy Earl and I were comparing notes. He described it as though he was a doctor giving out specific medication for specific needs of an individual. Of course, he was right and that was part of Charlie's genius- he really understood that. [...] He really established to me the difference between being an artist and a performer. Where the artist constantly pushes the barriers of his own development, the performer is mainly concerned with career moves and making a living. He brought back the true meaning of being a quality musician and artist into my life. I will forever be indebted to him for helping me in the ways that he did. It was humbling and enlightening to have had the opportunity to be his student.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Jim Guttman, interview by author, audio, Watertown, MA, 4 April 2011.

⁵⁸ Joe Hubbard, interview by author, email, 2 March 2011.

Guitarists

1) Gene Ess:

I think the lessons helped tremendously in forming my own music. For me, although never having met him in person, his humanity that came across in the lessons were inspiring and kept me going through some difficult times as a young man trying to become a full time artist here in NYC. Also, his lessons have musical substance of no match. They are musical facts and once mastered, can help express the artist's own music. Charlie never got into the "how" of the lessons but the "what." I believe he realized artistry can't be taught. Only the musical facts can be taught.⁵⁹

2) Massimo Sammi:

He helped me to be in a musical state of complete effortless and fluidity [...] He made me understand the power of organization [...] Charlie's exercises helped me to be completely authentic and simple. In order to be simple, you have to be strong. He had a brilliant intuition about bringing out what your authentic voice was [...] He didn't have the attitude of a professor who knows everything and who looks down at you. He was really like a schoolmate. He would see the human being before the musician. He appreciated the effort and the commitment regardless of the result. He was able to see the potential rather than the limit.⁶⁰

3) Mike Stern:

I was becoming a better musician with more vocabulary. I had the opportunity to play with him during the lessons and that was very inspiring. Banacos always kept me inspired. [...] I always felt really good after my lesson, but at the same time I felt that I had a lot of work to do. He always pushed me in a good way. His attitude was encouraging and forward thinking [...] He was very humble about music. He was also a really honest and fair person. [...] Once Mike Brecker overpaid him by two dollars and sent him the check. Charlie sent him these two extra dollars back. He was very disciplined and loose at the same time. He was a

⁵⁹ Gene Ess, interview by author, email, 16 September 2011.

⁶⁰ Massimo Sammi, interview by author, audio, Boston MA, 16 June 2010.

real jazz guy, but what made him so special was his incredible balance of discipline and looseness.⁶¹

4) Tony Wolff:

He helped me to feel a sense of freedom of musical expression. When improvising, my phrases would cross over the barline, which became a point of reference instead of a point that melodic ideas begin and end, so my phrases would start and finish on various beats. I also started incorporating non-triadic patterns and gradually developed the ability to feel like a painter, by creating worry about “Do I suggest this, do I suggest that?” [...] I remember the excitement I had every time I went there feeling that this was going to be another mind-opening experience. Every time, after exiting from my lesson I would see the world differently. To me it is so clear that he has thoroughly thought out everything. He is not going to give a study or present a new idea to you unless he has really got it down. It is just the feeling that if he is going to open up a subject to you, you know that there is many layers and he knows it from all angles, so when he is presenting it to you there is no feeling of [ambiguity], and you say of this is the new pathway we are taking. In my lessons with Charlie, I felt I was learning about life.⁶²

Horn players

1) David Berkin (saxophone):

He had a very methodical but at the same time spontaneous approach to learning the stuff. He definitely had a gift for figuring out what you need after listening to you. It is still a mystery to me why he made certain choices but they were always right. Everything he’s taught me helped me become a better musician. We had a good human contact. He had a positive attitude towards life. He deserved every penny. He was always positive. His method was about to incrementally keep on doing a little something different every week, which keeps your mind working.⁶³

⁶¹ Mike Stern, interview by author, audio, Cambridge MA, 2 March 2011.

⁶² Tony Wolff, interview by author, audio, Brookline MA, 11 April 2011.

⁶³ Dave Berkin, interview by author, audio, Waltham, MA, 9 March 2011.

2) Sean Berry (saxophone):

I feel that the accuracy of my note choices in improvisation improved, partly as a result of having a clearer mental map of pitch relationships (better "ears", or better "aim"), and partly from having more clearly associated specific sounds with specific finger movements through physical practice (more specified tonal palette). I also gained some important insights about how I learn, and learned some specific exercises that tend to help me with technically difficult passages, which popped up frequently in Charlie's exercises. This helped push my overall saxophone technique to a new level, and made my practicing much more efficient, which continues to make a huge impact.

Charlie's persistently upbeat attitude and encouragement was very helpful. His parting words before he closed the door behind me were usually something like, "Hang in there, man!" "You're doin' it, man!", or "Kill!" He knew that he was asking very difficult things from his students — even things that they may have previously believed impossible — and he knew that with hard work and deep focus, one could usually accomplish even more. His faith in his methods was unwavering, and this was very reassuring, as well. But the most important thing for me was that he was able to diagnose exactly where I needed improvement, and to give me exercises to work on those very specific areas. After that, as he knew, it was just a matter of me doing the work.⁶⁴

3) Mike Pipeman (trumpet):

My playing became more modern, more fresh. My technique got much better to because it was a real challenge to play through all the exercises, which changed everything in my playing. You know, just, knowing him, his sense of humor, what a wonderful guy he was, and his approach to teaching, had a big effect on me. His outlook in life was very individual. Although he was like a recluse, he was really a very outgoing person. He'd like to pick when he related to people and he wouldn't be afraid to open up his personality. I never saw him outside the studio. He was a wonderful teacher and person.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Sean Berry, interview by author, email, 3 April 2010.

⁶⁵ Mike Pipeman, interview by author, audio, Cambridge, MA, 3 August 2011.

4) Geni Skendo (flute):

After the first two lessons with Charlie, I felt a dramatic change in my playing. A month later, my playing became worse, and this is because my ears opened up and I could hear what I played much better. I was becoming more conscious of my decisions. My lines became richer, more chromatic. My harmonic vocabulary became richer, too. I always felt really challenged with his lessons. I learned how to teach myself and how I can solve my own problem. He was a psychologist for me and many other musicians. Whenever I was with him, it always felt like a therapy. He would listen to you play and talk and he would give you answers that really worked. His teaching affected my daily life in the way I hear the sounds of my environment and also the ways I can solve any problem by breaking it down and solving it piece by piece.⁶⁶

5) Mark Zaleski (saxophone):

After the initial lesson he knew what we were going to be doing from then on. [...] He always had a lesson plan. His assessment [...] to recommend remedies based on your illness. Has there been a teacher ever, classical or jazz, that has had as many students as Charlie Banacos? I mean, arguably he has to be one of the people who had the most students. His vibe was so funny and positive and when I was stepping out of the studio I always felt good. There is invaluable musical information in his teaching. I am really glad I got to meet him and deal with him in person. For me, he was always an inspirational kind of person. He really chose a unique path and dedicated his entire life to teaching. I thought that was a super true artistic way of life. But what I found really heavy is the fact that he was equally dedicated to his family! He was so positive to the point he accepted death in a freakishly positive way. All of this was and still is really inspirational.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Geni Skendo, interview by author, audio, Boston, MA, 12 February 2010.

⁶⁷ Mark Zaleski, interview by author, audio, Jamaica Plain MA, 30 September 2010.

Pianists

1) Gil Aharon:

He was generally really happy. He seemed satisfied, in command of not just the material but also his demeanor, his approach. He seemed very thoughtful about the way that he lived. He was never sick. After a certain point I realized that what he was teaching me it was math, which means you can approach it from so many different angles and come to the same end. What was different about him is that he was expressing the idea of discovery. In the way that he taught, there was some mystery involved. He didn't explain the reasons behind how these exercises were put together. So, you can make your own narrative. There was more to it than just the notes.⁶⁸

2) Rebecca Cline:

He knew much more than any other teacher I've ever met, about everything. He was unhesitating and direct in giving me a quick and efficient prescription. I didn't feel any competition with him. He gave me so many ideas. He was bringing some humanity into the room by initiating discussions not related to piano or to music. I remember after just a few months after I started studying with him, I noticed a new sensation. I felt I knew what I was doing. I got more facility and chops and my brain got faster and sharper. I also felt more confident to deal with tunes and chord changes. Charlie required consistency, a sense of progression from one thing to the other, but uncompromising. He required my commitment to be a necessity, a top priority, but I think this is what makes you progress faster. Charlie was like a guru, a legend.⁶⁹

3) Garry Dial:

After my first lesson with Charlie I knew he would be my teacher for life. Charlie's work ethic was inspiring. [...] My mind is so methodical and Charlie's approach was about that: building blocks every week. He gave me the foundation on my playing and most important about how I thought about music: how to construct music, how to teach music, know how much information to give to

⁶⁸ Gil Aharon, interview by author, audio, Cambridge, MA, 15 June 2011.

⁶⁹ Rebecca Cline, interview by author, Jamaica Plain, MA, 26 March 2011.

students. That I have a music career as a performer, teacher and composer in New York, I owe so much of it to Charlie. [...] I would like to thank Charlie for his extreme generosity with me through 38 years. I would also like to thank Margaret, Barbara and the Banacos family for giving me the honor of carrying on the legacy of Charlie Banacos.⁷⁰

4) Dave Frank:

My playing changed in every possible way: rhythmically, harmonically, melodically, touch. He got me to have an analytical approach to playing, which I never had before. He also advised me on personal things that made a huge difference on my playing. Occasionally I would ask him for a therapy session and he was open to that, so he would give me a therapy session. That made a huge difference in my health and in overcoming sicknesses. He really helped me to get healthy. Whole areas of my life improved, not just musically. From Charlie, there is so much to learn. His work ethic is a role model. I work harder because I remember Charlie. I can't say enough about him.⁷¹

5) Matthew Gordy:

I would have to say that Charlie was simply the best teacher of music and life I've ever had. Charlie had a knack of hearing you play for not even a minute and he could tell what you were trying to play and then give you an exercise to work on that specific area. My playing changed dramatically over several years. I developed a much wider understanding of music in general and all the different 'bags.' He could both inspire you and intimidate you all at once.⁷²

6) Nando Michelin:

Besides being a great player and a great teacher, Charlie was a very intelligent and literary person. In my first lesson Charlie asked me to play a jazz ballad at the slowest tempo possible. After I played one chorus, he stopped me and he had a way of knowing what I was thinking, what I was aiming at, and what I needed to

⁷⁰ Garry Dial, interview by author, phone, 1 August 2010, and email, 26 February 2012.

⁷¹ Dave Frank, interview by author, audio, New York, NY, 24 June 2010.

⁷² Matthew Gordy, interview by author, email, 19 June 2010.

work on. [...] He protected me from injuries by correcting my piano technique. Now, I have more control of the instrument. I started using the whole range of the piano. [...] He had a way of exemplifying things. Many times, if he wanted to show me something he would sit down and play for me, instead of writing down, and he had me experience it myself on the spot. He helped me learn something in a deep way and from all angles. He had me do all the work around the music and not around the exercises. It was very inspiring to me to learn from someone who acknowledged the fact that every student is different and who was so devoted to music and didn't care about praise.⁷³

7) Eric Ostling:

He would see what you needed and what you didn't, and he would never spend time in what you didn't need. I didn't have a decent sense of relative pitch and Charlie helped me to be comfortable to play in any key. For pedagogical purposes, he would often change his persona with each student and he did it intentionally deciding to take on a different persona.⁷⁴

8) Stephen Page:

Being in Charlie's presence was always uplifting. He had a way of making you always feel good! After every lesson, I left feeling so "high" in a musical sense. He always brought out the best in me. It was a true honor and joy to know him. [...] I feel that not only he made me a better player, but a better human being! He had so much integrity, sensitivity, and compassion. The nickname Guru was given to Charlie and rightly so. The true guru shows you the light and the dark within. He was regarded as having great knowledge, wisdom, and authority in a certain area, and who uses it to guide others. He brought out of me an area inside I never knew existed. I learned over the years that I could ask him anything about any subject and he would always have an intelligent answer for me. He wouldn't give you the answers, but would make you ultimately ask the right questions in which the answers would then be revealed. In many ways he was like a father to me and so many. I feel that the experience of meeting and getting to know Charlie for ten years was one of the best experiences of my life and I take these experiences or you may call them life

⁷³ Nando Michelin, interview by author, audio, Boston, MA, 4 May 2011.

⁷⁴ Eric Ostling, interview by author, audio, Brookline, MA, 29 August 2011.

lessons, and extend them into my own life. I am sure that Charlie would have wanted me and others to take his lessons and put them to good use. I feel that I was one of the lucky ones to get to hear this master play music. Charlie never played out after a certain point in life, so the only people that could hear him were his students. I feel that the world didn't deserve Charlie but through me I am able to let the world know a little bit about this great person! His teachings and memory live on in me forever!⁷⁵

9) Danilo Perez:

In my first lesson, I played for him and then he gave me an analysis of my playing, like a doctor would tell you your symptom and your prescription. He really got to know me first before he proposed a unique agenda for me. He broke down any complicated concept in a way it would become easily mastered, in a similar way an old Asian guru would teach you only one ingredient. He taught me how to teach my self. I feel he was a guru. [...] He didn't teach you styles, but he gave you tools to combine them in your own way to form your own voice. [...] When he broke down an exercise, he used graph scores and for me having studied electric engineering it made total sense. He would always give me pieces that immediately sparked my attention. My playing became less generic, less predictable, and more personal because he gave me the tools to look on my own. [...] I never thought about teaching before I met Charlie. Directly or indirectly, he was and still is an inspiration for me as a teacher. [...] Charlie was helping students to have awareness. He was about awareness and humanity.⁷⁶

10) Joe Reid:

Charlie was the most concrete and abstract teacher in the same lesson. Through my studies with Charlie I became a better player with more clarity. He helped me to be able to tell a story, to get deeper into the keys. His harmony exercises helped me to become really good in transposing. His quotes were very inspiring. In describing the process of improvising, he would say: "It" is like walking in the dark with a stick, and you are trying to feel ahead of you of where you are going. [...] We'd always jam in every lesson. I mean, being able to play with such a great pianist at that level every week was so important. I would ask him about

⁷⁵ Stephen Page, interview by author, email, 27 March 2011.

⁷⁶ Danilo Perez, interview by author, audio, Quincy, MA, 15 March 2011.

some stuff he played during his solo and he'd say: "I am always trying to do the opposite of what you are playing." He wasn't trying to 'wow' me. It was such a joy to watch his hands. [...] Having that kind of weekly contact with someone like Charlie was very intense. While I was preparing for my lesson, I felt that I had somebody by my side.⁷⁷

11) Robert Scott:

He gave me all the tools to create music through the most structure lesson type I've ever had. Also, he taught me a strong sense of discipline. He was able to teach me things without me being offended. I always felt good leaving his studio. He expanded my technique and my vocabulary so much. Based on the respect he had for music and life, he showed me the reverence for the music and for all life.⁷⁸

12) Dan Tepfer:

His teaching was entirely craft based and very efficient. Another major thing is the care Charlie brought to giving me exactly the right amount of work per week. It never felt overwhelming. With other teachers, there is no sense of continuity. With Charlie there is a constant sense of progress. He taught me how to practice. He taught me how to teach myself. He made me better at improvising, meaning, being able to bring out the sounds I have in my ear quickly, at the piano. I appreciated his devotion to precision, his love for craft. When I left my lesson I was inspired to work hard, which was always a positive thing. He also inspired me to seeing work as a long-term project and that's a very deep thing.⁷⁹

13) Tom Thorndike:

Charlie was the most organized and thorough teacher I ever had in any subject period. He had methods for so many different aspects of music, jazz, piano, composition and improvisation. The power of his teaching and the raw amount material that he taught are really incomparable to anything else I have experienced in jazz lessons. He was a phenomenal pianist and improviser! He helped me see the thread between music and all other aspects of life by going very

⁷⁷ Joseph Reid, interview by author, audio, Cambridge, MA, 17 March 2011.

⁷⁸ Robert Scott, interview by author, audio, Cambridge, MA, 10 February 2011.

⁷⁹ Dan Tepfer, interview by author, phone, 29 June 2010.

deep into something.⁸⁰

14) Pedro Tsividis:

Charlie would have a seat at the grand piano and say, "now try something like this," as he took a solo. The solos he took always utilized the language I already knew (or was working on), but the point was to demonstrate a new non-linguistic concept - a particular rhythmic feel, more or less legato, a way of using different ranges of the piano, etc. This was particularly helpful because it often made me realize that the reason I didn't sound like the greats wasn't that my language wasn't up to their level (which, being a beginner, I had a strong reason to believe), but rather that I (a) wasn't using the language creatively enough, and (b) wasn't paying enough attention to stylistic aspects of my playing. Charlie knew that these things weren't worth analyzing too explicitly, and that a one-chorus solo, sometimes punctuated by a sentence description of what he was doing, was enough to get the point across. [...] Charlie's demystification of process was implicit. He never told me that I could break language down and build it up again; instead, by watching him do it over and over, I realized that I, too, could do so. [...] After studying with him for a while, I understood that between my level and where I wanted to be, there was only a process of breaking down a unit of knowledge (from other people's playing) and then using the pieces to build the unit in myself. In sum - in addition to demystifying language, he demystified process. Charlie taught me the importance of continual hard work. And his positivity and good spirit is something I will never forget.⁸¹

15) Bruce Wolosoff:

There would be some banter with the student who was leaving. Then some general conversation and laughter between Charlie and me. Then we would play something on two pianos, he would check my ears, then he would write out an assignment in the last 5 minutes of the lesson. [...] He was very into time management books! He also liked the writings of Wayne Dyer. [...] He relied on science and direct experience rather than received wisdom. Everything had a factual basis he had studied from primary sources or worked out for himself. He had investigated the materials he was teaching in a much deeper

⁸⁰ Tom Thorndike, interview by author, audio and email, 20 February 2011.

⁸¹ Pedro Tsividis, interview by author, email and audio, New York City, 17 June 2010.

way than anyone else I have ever met. His thoroughness and methodical approach could sometimes be exasperating! [...] His attitude was different too. There was never any condescension. He approached the lessons with an air of friendship, like he was a good-natured older brother who was showing you something he had figured out by himself and he could save you a lot of time if you checked out what he was telling you. He also assumed that you could also figure all this stuff out on your own if you wanted to, it wasn't some closely guarded secret. [...] His premise was that the piano was just a gateway to the music but that the music existed in the mind.⁸²

String players

1) Catherine Bent (cello):

Unlike any of my other non-string playing teachers, he did actually speak to the technical idiosyncrasies of my instrument. He had me do arpeggio exercises. He had me not only do it across all four strings, but he made me do everything up each string and back. That was the first time I had somebody challenge me into it.⁸³

2) Tanya Kalmanovitch (viola):

From being unable to connect my ideas to jazz harmony, I started to move around more comfortably. His Approach-note exercise was very effective in that respect. He was very supportive, very enthusiastic. He taught me the value of the long-term practice.⁸⁴

3) Mihalis Katahanas (violin & viola):

My playing changed rapidly during and after the lessons with him. Before I had trouble following the form. It is now solved. My ears have improved very much and are still improving because I continue to practice his ear training exercises. Now, I have much more phrases to play with, to alter and to use in order to give

⁸² Bruce Wolosoff, interview by author, email, 10 September 2010.

⁸³ Catherine Bent, interview by author, audio, Jamaica Plain, MA, 3 February 2011.

⁸⁴ Tanya Kalmanovitch, interview by author, 19 July 2011.

shape and variety to my improvisations. I can handle rhythm more easily and I can “swing” much better than I used to. I can also play chromatically with more variety and comfort.

One thing that I have learned from Charlie beyond the practical stuff that we did during our lessons is dedication. The art of music requires dedication. And this expands to every other aspect of life that I want to get happiness from. If you give with all your heart and effort, the most certain thing is that you will get joy, only by giving your full energy and strength to it, without complaining or being a grumbler. By being positive and supportive to yourself, you immediately invite all the positive and good things in life. Now that he is gone, every time I practice his exercises I feel a spiritual connection to him, like he is watching me from above and helps the music to come out of me.⁸⁵

Vocalists

1) Amanda Baisinger:

He asked me to write a composition every week, but he never gave me directions or instructions [...] He did not guide my writing process at all. He was the first teacher who really believed in me, which meant a lot. Charlie was so embracing, so encouraging. He was a huge part of my life. Charlie was the highlight of my week. He would give me stuff to practice that was doable on a weekly basis. [...] My piano playing and singing changed 5000% and improved in every direction. [...] His ear training exercises helped me with my intonation as well as with developing my own sound, my own way of singing standards without copying other singers. I trusted him. I did anything he asked me to practice and I did it faithfully. [...] I felt a sense of confidence that I was doing the right thing. He was my musical father.⁸⁶

2) Carmen Marsico:

I can hear chord qualities better. I feel more comfortable if I hear a sequence of chords in jazz standards. My improvisation became more chromatic. I have a better sense on how to learn a new piece because he gave me plenty of tools.

⁸⁵ Mihalis Katahanas, interview by author, email, 8 March 2011.

⁸⁶ Amanda Baisinger, interview by author, audio, New York City, 6 June 2011.

Charlie is the teacher that gives you everything you need without expecting anything in return. [...] His teaching was joyful. He made you feel that you were his only student.⁸⁷

3) Sofia Rei Koutsovitis:

He helped me to get a deeper understanding of the harmonic world. He also helped me in my writing [...] He was very encouraging and rigid and serious at the same time. He was a very fair individual. [...] He was a very charismatic teacher, who conveyed the material by cheering up the student with a joke, but he would be strict at the same time.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Carmen Marsico, interview by author, audio, Jamaica Plain, MA, 21 June 2011.

⁸⁸ Sofia Rei, interview by author, audio, New York City, 24 June 2010.

B. Jazz Chord Symbols

1. **C Δ 7**: The major seventh chord consists of a major triad and a major seventh from the root up. The triangle refers to the 7th member of the chord and indicates a major seventh. Alternative symbols for a Major Seventh chord-type include **CMaj7** and **CM7**.

2. **C-7**: The minor seventh chord consists of a minor triad and a minor seventh (in a seventh chord of any quality, if the number 7 is not modified in any way, it indicates the interval of a m7). This chord may be found as **Cm7** and **Cmin7**.

3. **C7**: The dominant chord consists of a major triad and a minor seventh. Alternative symbols are **Cdom7** and **CMm7**.

4. **C \emptyset 7**: The half-diminished chord consists of a diminished triad and a minor seventh. In some Jazz and Pop-Rock Fake books, this chord appears as minor seventh with flatted fifth **Cm7(b5)**.

5. **C \circ 7**: The diminished seventh chord consists of a diminished triad and a diminished seventh or of a stack of minor thirds.

6. **C- Δ 7**: The minor-major seventh chord comprises of a minor triad and a major seventh. Other possible symbols include **Cm Δ 7**, **C-M7**, **CmM7**, **C-Maj7**, and **CmM7**.

7. **C7sus4**: This is a dominant chord, where the 4th replaces the 3rd of the chord.

8. CΔ7(#5): The major seventh chord (similar to No. 1 above) with sharpened fifth or commonly known as the augmented major seventh chord, it consists of an augmented triad and a major seventh. Alternative symbols include: **CΔ7(+5)** and **CM7(+5)**.

9. CΔ7(b5): Major seventh chord with flatted fifth.

10. C7(#5): Dominant seventh chord with sharpened fifth.

11. C7(b5): Dominant seventh chord with flatted fifth.

C. Banacos's Self-Described Terms

The following document illustrates terms invented by Banacos that he used to describe a representative sample of his exercises, in his own words:

Term[s] invented by Charlie Banacos in the 1960's for [some] of his many courses of music study for advanced musicians [covering] a series of methods and techniques to teach improvisation and composition in styles that came after the Be-Bop era. [...] Charlie Banacos, in an interview, once stated that because of the advanced nature of [these] method[s] of playing, steps must be taken to avoid unmusical and mechanical playing and writing and so he uses these techniques in conjunction with special ear-training techniques geared to each individual's development.⁸⁹

23rd Chords: This method deals with improvising in 12-tone and serial techniques. Banacos uses these over traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Chord on Chord: Term used by John Coltrane to describe one of his methods of improvising. It contains a series of methods and techniques to teach improvisation and composition in styles influenced by Coltrane and his followers. Banacos's course tracks the development of re-harmonization as applied to melody in addition to harmony from classical works to Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, [John] Coltrane, [Eric] Dolphy and others. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Hemiola Substratum Elisions: This course deals with rhythmic and directional concepts for creating melodies and various harmonic rhythms.

Intervallics: His techniques in this course show how to use intervals as basic raw material to generate harmony and melody. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Overlaps: A series of exercises designed to enhance melodic ideas. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Pivots: This method deals with creating melodies by using common-tone pivots to join melodic groups. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

⁸⁹ Charlie Banacos, sent by Barbara Banacos, email, 27 February 2012.

Sprays: Contains a series of methods and techniques to teach sight-reading. The course uses all clefs and all transpositions and is geared to the level of the music student.

Tonal Paralysis: The techniques in this course deal with aggregates and elision to form harmonic and melodic ideas. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Agogics: The course explains the use of accents and directional concepts to create psychological movement. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Double Mambos: This course is also called by the term Bitonal Pendulums by Banacos and demonstrates various usages of triad pairs and other structures to form melody and harmony. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Hexatonics: His techniques in this course explain how to use six-tone scales, triad-pairs, cells and other methods to generate harmony and melody. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Modal Sequences: In this course various sequences of interval groups are used on many scales and also uses diverse rhythmic patterns to create melodies. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Pandiatonics: Literally, the term means “all diatonic tones” and in this course Banacos teaches the student to use all tones from various scales and structures to form melodies and harmonies. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Reverse Tensions: It deals with the re-distribution of harmonic resources. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Superimpositions: These techniques enable the player to improvise and compose using two or more different structures melodically and harmonically at the same time. They are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Triad Pairs: It is part of his course on Double Mambos and Bitonal Pendulums. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Bitonal Pendulums: This course is also called by the term Double Mambos by Banacos and demonstrates various usages of triad pairs and other structures to form melody and harmony. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Harps: This style imitates the sound of the traditional harp and is greatly influenced by Debussy and post-impressionistic composers and in jazz it is used by [Art] Tatum, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and others. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Interconnecting Scales: It is a method of practice to enhance melodic continuity. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Number Permutation Systems: This course deals with an examination of all possible combinations of melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and orchestral practices. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Pentatonics: Used to form melodies and harmonies using many five-tone scales. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.

Rhythm Systems: Contains a series of methods and techniques to teach improvisation, sight-reading and composition in all styles.

Tetratonics: Four-tone aggregates are used to form harmonic and melodic structures, tonally and atonally. These techniques are used with traditional harmony or as an alternative.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Ibid.

D. Additional Ear Training and Improvisation Exercises

The exercises below are concise descriptions of exercises mentioned in the interviews I conducted with 35 students.

Ear Training:

1. Pitch Memory: This exercise helps to develop perfect pitch. Banacos believed that everyone has the potential to acquire perfect pitch through training. This exercise requires focusing on single pitches to memorize and recall them at any moment.

2. Apply Numbers or Solfège syllables to Folk or Children's songs: Besides improving singing intonation, the exercise helps to develop awareness of the intervallic structure of early childhood folk or nursery songs that are subconsciously registered deep in one's brain. This exercise alters pitches with the intention of increasing awareness of the intervallic structure of familiar songs.

3. Hunt and Peck: This exercise promotes proficiency in instant recognition and reaction in real-time performance settings. It requires the participation of two players who trade phrases.

4. Isfahan: The purpose of this exercise is to develop the ability to hear the final note of a familiar phrase in the context of various chords.

5. Modes as Clusters: This is another exercise that improves the hearing of harmonic colors, but in the context of a mode instead of a chord.

Improvisation:

1. Facets/Giant Steps/Jewel/Triads of a scale: The benefit of the **Giant Steps** exercise is primarily to develop fluency when improvising over chord progressions of jazz compositions that feature unusual modulations to distant keys, such as keys a major third apart. John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" and "Countdown," include seventh chords that belong to three different keys, a major third apart.

2. Overlaps: This exercise uses neo-bop intervallic approach notes with four-note structures. Banacos mentioned to many students that this exercise reflects Eric Dolphy's approach to improvisation.

3. Walking Bass Lines: This exercise helps to develop proficiency in playing walking bass lines, swing feel, and accompaniment. There are several bass-line patterns starting at one measure in length and growing up to four measures.

4. Connecting Chord Tones: This is an exercise designed to develop awareness of all chromatic pitches (in equal temperament) between chord tones of various chord-types. This exercise is performed by choosing one chord-type, and connecting chord tones with all pitches between them, exploiting all possible permutations.

5. Sequences: For some students, Banacos gave over a hundred pattern variations for practicing scales, which he called **Sequences**. These were also intended for creating improvisatory lines. In Banacos's own words: "In this course various sequences of interval groups are used on many scales and also uses diverse rhythmic patterns to create melodies."⁹¹

Other exercises designed by Charlie Banacos include **Autumn Leaves, Modal Interchange, Cascades, Stride-Piano Figures, Boogie Woogie (piano & guitar), 100-note Sequence, and Gestures**. The full version of all exercises is available through online lessons with Barbara Banacos and Garry Dial at charliebanacos@gmail.com.

⁹¹ Barbara Banacos, email, 26 February 2012.

E. Interview Questions

1. “How did you hear about Charlie Banacos and why did you decide to study with him?”
2. “How long did you study with Charlie Banacos?”
3. “What level were you when you began?”
4. “Would you describe for me your first lesson as well as a typical lesson with Charlie Banacos?”
5. “What did he do differently from other teachers you have studied with?”
6. “What repertory did you study with him?” “What genres did you work in?” “Did Charlie Banacos assign any classical repertory, and if so what? [please list specific names of works, i.e. Chopin Etudes Op.25, No6]”
7. “Did he pick the repertory, or did you?”
8. “Can you describe some of the exercises he gave you in:
a) ear-training b) technique c) improvisation
d) composition e) rhythm, f) sight-reading, g) other areas”
9. “Did he ever assign any particular transcriptions?”
10. Did he ever recommend any specific books? (also include non music-related ones)
11. “Could you describe how your playing changed as a result of your studies with Charlie Banacos?”
12. “What was it in his teaching that brought about those changes in your playing?”
13. “Were there aspects of his teaching that you found were not helpful, or that bothered you?”

14. "How many hours per day did you spend preparing for your lessons with him?"
15. "Do you teach, and if so, do you assign your students exercises of the sort Charlie Banacos assigned to you?" "How do you adapt those exercises to individual students' needs?"
16. "Charlie was a master storyteller. Can you recall one story or a few?"
17. How did you feel when exiting his studio after your lesson?
18. "Could you describe for me the effect Charlie's teaching had on you beyond your playing and musicianship?"

F. Other Testimonials published in Magazines and Periodicals

“...Charlie Banacos...is the greatest American jazz teacher alive today.” - Jeff Berlin (poll-winning bassist)⁹²

“Charlie Banacos...happens to be one of the finest jazz and harmony / theory teachers in the United States...nobody ever instilled in me the wisdom of music like Charlie did. Charlie is a pianist, but his list of clients also extended to guitar, horn, composers, and bass players - some of whom waited as long as two whole years to come under Charlie's tutelage... I'm resuming my studies with Charlie again. I need the advice of a superior musical mind to help me open new doors.” - Jeff Berlin⁹³

“The turning point came when I saw the name of [renowned Boston jazz teacher] Charlie Banacos on a Jeff Berlin video. I sent him my records and explained my situation, and he wrote back saying he could help. The discipline of his lessons and the wealth of his knowledge gave me a whole new outlook. It brought the pure love and challenge of wanting to be a real player back into perspective for me, and it inspired my switch two years ago from 5-string to 6-string.” - bassist Joe Hubbard⁹⁴

“I was studying in Boston with Charlie Banacos, who I'm still studying with through correspondence. He's into all kinds of music...really smokin', and an amazing teacher. He's like an encyclopedia. He's got all kinds of methods of teaching different things. He's sussed out what people are doing and what's the best way of teaching.” - Mike Stern (poll-winning guitarist)⁹⁵

“...at this point I should mention that the most impacting teacher that I ever had and the guy that I still study with is Charlie Banacos. Charlie is a piano player in Boston. He teaches bebop in the most methodical, inspiring way and he really works the students hard. The waiting list for him is like two years. I study with him through correspondence.” (Mike Stern)⁹⁶

⁹² Jim Roberts. "Making it as a Pro" *Bass Player Magazine* (April 1992), 54.

⁹³ Jeff Berlin. "Bass and Beyond" *Guitar Player Magazine* (February 1988), 125.

⁹⁴ Chris Jisi. "A Private Lesson with Joe Hubbard" *Bass Player Magazine* (July/August 1993), 46.

⁹⁵ Andy Aledort. "Mike Stern" *Guitar Extra!* (Fall 1991), 96.

⁹⁶ Joe Barth. *Voices in jazz guitar: great performers talk about their approach to playing*. Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 2007, 403.

“Charlie Banacos helped me to organize my musical concepts. I always have a lot of ideas. Charlie's mind works like no other. He sees structure where I see chaos. He is a genius.” (Leni Stern)⁹⁷

“I studied with Charlie Banacos in Boston, who has a series of chromatic approach-note exercises that really help you learn the fingerboard and get up and down the neck... That came in handy for a lot of Chick [Corea's] chromatic lines.” - James Earl (Professional bassist with Stanley Clark, Freddie Hubbard, and Chick Corea)⁹⁸

“I still study with Charlie Banacos and we're working on those non-tertial double mambos... they're melodic intervallic patterns... I use a melodic approach as well as concepts Charlie Banacos taught me... permutations... which gives you a good handle on those types of chord changes on a "Giant Steps" type structure.” - pianist Rachel Z⁹⁹

“Charlie and I are tight. Some of my first gigs were with him... We'd go to his house and play all day... I graduated from Lowell State College with a minor in Banacos... he's a gifted individual. He makes you feel special because he tunes into you. He understands the essence of what things are about. He's an intuitive person and a great teacher because he's an eternal student.” - saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi¹⁰⁰

“Charlie has you learn everything one string at a time. That really opened up the neck for me and helped me to play what I felt without having to think about it.” - Jeff Golub (guitarist with Rod Stewart)¹⁰¹

“...Jazz guru, Charlie Banacos.” – Bill Milkowski (Down Beat magazine)¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Mike Brannon. “Leni Stern.” *All About Jazz* (June 2000). Web . April 16, 2010. <<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/iviews/lstern.htm>>.

⁹⁸ Chris Jisi. "Working Musician - James Earl" *Musician Magazine* (November 1992), 32.

⁹⁹ Tim Price. "A Private Lesson with Jazz Pianist Rachel Z" *Jazz Player Magazine* (December 1993), 37.

¹⁰⁰ Tim Price. "Jerry Bergonzi" *Saxophone Journal* (July/August 1992), 18-19.

¹⁰¹ Chris Jisi. "A Rep Grows on Bleecker Street" *Guitar World* (October 1988), 25.

¹⁰² Bill Mikowski. "Dial and Oatts" *Downbeat Magazine* (November 1989), 46.

G. Excerpts from Banacos's Personal Communication with Students (First of his two emails) and Obituary

[...]

I also just wanted to mention a couple of things that might help somebody else. As you do things through life you'll learn a lot of things and some of them never really get tested. In other words, it's all just theory unless it actually gets tested against something. So I've been testing certain things and I wanted you to know the results of some of the tests.

I've studied meditation and breathing exercises for example from a young age and I noticed that when I have tests here in the hospital there are certain breathing techniques that do help you overcome the pain more than others. So you might want to try learning some techniques like this, and hopefully you'll never have to go through anything like this, but it's good to have them in your 'arsenal'.

Another great way to practice when you can't move around too much is figure out the chord or chords that you hear in the hospital and use that to practice different sonorities. I'll give you an example of what's happening right now: most of the electronic sounds of this hospital at this moment are B's, D#'s, F#'s and A-naturals. Now there are other sounds, but those are the pre-dominant sounds coming from the electronic equipment. [...]

So you could say right at this moment I'm swimming around in a pool of Bdom7. If you use that as a basis, the next time you hear somebody yell "code" you can practice and name its function against the B7 chord as quickly as possible and it makes a type of symphony.

For example, let's say someone says "saline" and you notice that they said it on E and G, you would say to yourself "sa" is 4 and "line" is flat-6. Let's say you hear a nurse say "stat" and it just happens to be an F, you might say "Oh, that was #4 (or flat-5)". This way you can do this all day long and have a mini symphony going on. I hope you never have to use this kind of exercise in this type of situation, but it works everywhere - in diners, supermarkets, etc. So try it and you might have fun playing that game.

Obituary

Charlie Banacos

BANACOS, Jazz Guru Charlie Of Gloucester, Dec. 8, 2009, 63, passed away following a brief battle with cancer. He was a pianist, composer, author and educator, concentrating on jazz. He created over 100 courses of study for improvisation and composition. His concepts of teaching and his courses have influenced educators since the late 1950s. He is the original author of courses named "Hexatonics", "Intervallics", "Tetratonics", "Superimpositions", "Harps", "Overlaps", "Bitonal Pendulums", "Double Mambos", "Twenty-third Chords" "Tonal Paralysis", and "Triad Pairs," among others. These and many of his other terms for his courses have become part of the basic lexicon in jazz education. The ear-training methods he devised specifically for the improvising musician are imitated in college courses and ear-training routines by many educators around the world. His exercises have been used at such institutions as Berklee College of Music, The New School, Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory of Music, Longy School of Music among others. At the time of his death, Mr. Banacos was in the process of consolidating many of his courses along with the assistance of his daughter, pianist Barbara Banacos. When guitarist Mike Stern showed his employer, Miles Davis, some of Banacos' ear-training exercises, Davis stated "I know that Banacos. Give me his telephone number. I'm gonna get me some lessons." Michael Brecker once said of Banacos "He's some kind of genius." His students have performed or recorded with Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, Maynard Ferguson, Chick Corea, Wynton Marsalis, David Liebman, Wayne Shorter, Michael Brecker and Joe Henderson, among others. His students and musical associates include Mike Stern, Danilo Perez, Wayne Krantz, Jeff Berlin, Garry Dial, Gerard D'Angelo, Vic Juris, Daryl Rhodes, Michael Brecker, Jerry Bergonzi, Marilyn Crispell, Leni Stern, Rachel Z among many others.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Boston Globe. "Obituary: Charlie Banacos." Accessed on October 3, 2010.
<<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/bostonglobe/obituary.aspx?page=Lifestory&pid=137116307>>.

H. Interview with Jerry Bergonzi

The interview below took place at Jerry Bergonzi's studio at NEC on September 22, 2010. Through this interview, I was looking for answers that would shed light on Banacos's college years, when he and Bergonzi were best friends and colleagues, both studying at Lowell State Teachers College (now UMass Lowell) at the time. During my lessons with Charlie, I remember him mentioning countless stories about himself and Jerry from the 1960's, when they spent many hours practicing together, jamming, and performing in public. In the lines that follow, Bergonzi talks about how he first met Banacos, about Banacos's family and early career both as a teacher and performer, and he also provides insights about his personality.

LK: How did you first meet Charlie?

JB: My brother and Charlie had the same age. My brother is a year older than I am, as Charlie was. He went to the same college, Lowell State Teachers College at the time. So, my brother said "Well, you wanna come up and meet this piano player? He is a jazz piano player." You know, I was still in high school, twelfth grade, when I met Charlie and we became friends. The next year I went to Lowell State Teachers College myself, and we played every day, and we'd get to the school at 6 o'clock in the morning and practice until 9 together.

LK: Do you mean 9am?

JB: Yes, we would practice until 9am and then of course classes would start. We'd go to our classes and after school we would be jamming and we were doing gigs together. During the summer, we got this gig working with a trumpet player, his name was Billy Stevens, and Charlie knew that I played a little bass, you know I did a couple of gigs on bass with him. So, he said "You wanna play? I am doing four nights a week at this club with this trumpet player. Do you wanna play bass?" I said "bass?" So I went and bought an electric bass, went to the gig that night, and started playing, you know. And, you know

he had to deal with me, but after a couple of weeks I got the handle of it, and we played that gig for about a year.

LK: Do you remember the name of the club?

JB: Yes, it was called “The Shanti” and it was in Derry, NH. It had strippers every week, and comedians, or singers. They used to have singers, sometimes strippers, but like belly dance strippers, you know. This town Derry, NH was famous because it was the first place in the area that showed porno films. So, bus loads of people would drive up, not to the “Shanti” itself, there were movie theaters at the center of the town, bus loads of people would drive up from Boston to see these porno films. So, we did this gig for a while, and meanwhile during the summer we would play every day together. He’d pick me up and play all day. Sometimes I’d play drums, he’d play piano, or he played drums, and I played saxophone. We would be so tired that we were lying on the floor taking a nap. His mother would come home and she walked over our bodies...

LK: And Charlie told me that she would say “You guys are nuts!”

JB: Oh yeah, definitely. And his brother told me the story I completely get the kick out of: He said, one time his father, who, if you think Charlie had a big personality, it didn’t hold the candle to his father. His father had the biggest you have ever seen. I mean, unbelievable. So, Charlie and his brother Paul, who was playing drums, were jamming one day and his father was working on the roof of the house, you know, not a big house, just a regular kind of house you see out in the suburbs, in Dracut, Mass. Now, his father, the ladder came off under him and ladder is on the ground and he is holding on to the water drains. So, Paul said “Charlie, dad is on the roof, he is gonna fall off, you gotta go help him!” and Charlie said “Wait for the tune to be over!” (Laughs).

LK: Was his father a Big Band singer?

JB: I think he sang with a band for a minute, yeah. And he was a real music critic. If he didn’t like something, he would tell you, and he would always complain about the drummer we were working with at this place. He said “That [name of the drummer], he is terrible! If you put two drumsticks up Chippy’s [butt],” now Chippy was their dog, “he would play better drums than [drummer’s name].” (Laughs). So, you get an idea of what type of person he was.

LK: What about his mother?

JB: His mother just took a back seat, she was totally cool, a sweet person, so sweet, so loving. I used to call her “little hahasitu.” (Laughs).

LK: How often did you hang with Charlie?

JB: Every day! We were best friends.

LK: Could you please tell me about your gig with Charlie and Roy Haynes? What year was this, roughly?

JB: It was in 1967 or '68 that we played with Roy Haynes. You know, I got this gig with Roy, and I was playing sessions with all these dudes in Boston at the Western Front in Cambridge, so he was going to play there for a month, four nights a week. So I played saxophone, Carl Schroeder played piano, and Marvin Hannibal Peterson played trumpet. After two weeks, Marvin and Carl Schroeder had another gig; they had to go on. So, I got the gig with Charlie and we had Steve West play the trumpet. I haven't heard his name since. We had a lot of fun.

LK: Who was the leader of this group?

JB: Roy Haynes was the leader.

LK: Did you continue playing together after the gig with Roy Haynes?

JB: Yeah. We played gigs, we were always playing sessions, jamming together, and you know, you asked me about his pedagogy, we never talked about it. He used to teach at age 16 at this place in Lowell “Metro Music” and I got a gig teaching at “Metro Music,” but he would never talk about what he taught. He was just a natural-born teacher. People say how come he didn't pursue a music career and go out to play? He wasn't supposed to. His mission in life was to teach. It doesn't mean he wasn't a great player. He was an amazing player, everybody knows that, but his mission in life was to give to other people. [...] We'd listen to music, we'd go to Lennie's Turnpike and hear Wynton Kelly, Roland Kirk, Miles Davis, and whoever. He [Banacos] had an amazing ability to listen to the music and talk about it in terms of forces, of energies that were metaphysical. He was a very metaphysical person. This guy wasn't from this planet, you know; this guy would talk about music in terms of Kundalini forces, the energy of the person playing, etc.

[Charlie was] a very mystical person, very magical and powerful. You know, sometimes, he would scare me.

LK: Did Charlie study with Madame Chaloff?

JB: Charlie studied with Madame Chaloff as everybody did. I met Herbie Hancock at Madame Chaloff's, Chick Corea was there, all the people used to go to see Madame. She was a very metaphysical person. And they were doing this "touch" where you hit the piano, the Russian School of playing the piano, effortless. And you don't hit the bottom of the bed; you hit it with a force, but you release, and as soon as you hit it there is nothing that goes further than that. It's just the initial impact. So, one time Charlie came home and he started hitting one note on the piano for 14 hours, just one note. He drove everybody crazy. That's the type of person he was.

LK: You mentioned the term Kundalini, do you know if he was into yoga?

JB: Yeah, he would do. He would constantly read all sorts of books: Yoga breathing and yoga exercises, Kundalini forces, and you know, that sort of things.

LK: Going back to your steady gig at "Shanti" in Derry, NH, what kind of music were you playing?

JB: Standards and Bossa Novas sometimes.

LK: When did he decide to withdraw from public performances? Was it an overnight decision or a gradual process?

JB: I can't answer what year it was. I know I was living in New York at the time, 'cause I moved to New York in 1972. Right after that, he stopped performing. I think it was after he had met Margaret, his wife. He probably thought to himself, I mean I'm speculating now, Margaret would know better than I would for sure, that "What's the point of this? Working at a night club where you are dealing with club owners and with some nasty people?" You know, Charlie told me that he worked in this club in Lowell and the club owner put a gun on the table and he said "We are not gonna pay you this week." You know, that sort of thing. Like "I am not interested in this kind of life. I'd rather teach and if I feel like playing, I'll play." And again, his mission in life was teaching. He wanted to do things on his own terms; be his own boss. Teach on his own terms; not having

anybody tell him how to teach, what to teach, and I would imagine if he had his own nightclub, he'd probably play.

LK: Do you recall any other occasions where he performed?

JB: We had a very famous concert at this church in Arlington church [Arlington street in Boston, MA], and Miles Donahue played saxophone, I played saxophone, and Charlie played piano. Madame Chaloff was there...the place was packed. Also, Charlie's students, 'cause he taught at Berklee for a year and everybody wanted to study with him. So, when he left, all his students still continued to study with him.

LK: Do you remember what year he taught at Berklee?

JB: Was it the early 70's? I am not sure. Now, that's the sort of thing that Charlie remembers everything. He could tell you exactly the month, the year, the day, and tell you who was doing what. He had that type of mind. I can't remember anything, but he would remember everything. If you wanted to know something about me, you would typically ask him. I can't remember.

LK: Any other venues where Charlie played at?

JB: There is this club in Lynn called the "Robin Hood," and Charlie typically had these gigs there. He also played in other clubs in Boston. I can't remember the names. Also, I remember him sitting in with Elvin Jones at the "Jazz Workshop" with Frank Foster and George Coleman, and Frank Foster told Charlie "You will sit in under one condition: Can you play?" and Charlie said "Yeah, I can play." So, he sat in and they played "Yesterdays" and he sounded great.

LK: Is this before the 1970's?

JB: That was early 70's, maybe late 60's. I can't remember.

LK: I know that you were friends and colleagues with Charlie, but some people have said that you were taking lessons from him. You said in one interview that you graduated from Lowell State with a minor in Banacos. I guess you didn't mean that you were a student of his in a formal way.

JB: No. I mean, playing with him was like taking a lesson with him, it's not like a formal lesson. I'd say, "Hey Charlie, what would you use for a chord here?" So, I talked about what I was practicing, he talked about what he was practicing. We never... It was like two friends hanging out, discussing music. We were peers. I said about the minor because I played with him so much that it's just rubbed off. Especially about piano playing, you know he showed me some voicings, he'd always tell me that piano players are ruled by their left hand, they play off of their left hand. And I said, "Hey, that's not right, it's the right hand, it's the melody. The melody is the thing that rules the left hand." And it took me years to realize what he was talking about.

LK: What did you infer from his point?

JB: You know, your left hand holds everything together. When I am playing piano for example, I am better with forms than I am playing saxophone 'cause of my left hand. It's the left hand consciousness that never forgets, it's always keeping the form together. In saxophone, there is no left hand consciousness, you just play melodies, but in piano the left hand is the boss.

LK: To what extent has your teaching style been influenced by your acquaintance and interaction with Charlie? Or has your teaching style influenced his?

JB: I can't say it's an obvious thing. I don't know what Charlie teaches. People are always saying he teaches "Double Mambo," "Tonal Paralysis," all these fancy names, and yet I taught what I taught, I've written seven books. We never talked about what we taught. I made up all these systems and people say: "How did you come up with all these systems?" and I say, man, to me they were common sense. When I listen to a record, that's kind of my approach to obtain the result that I was listening to. I listen to somebody play a certain way, I'd say if I practiced this kind of material, I am going to get there. Charlie does the same thing, you know. I think if I had to say what the difference, which I don't really know 'cause I don't know what he teaches, but as an outsider just from listening to students. Charlie has a way –and that's in his playing too– he tapped into pure inspiration. Charlie would inspire people. Charlie on his instrument he would inspire by playing. Charlie could tell stories and inspire people. I know there are people who studied with him for 20 years.

LK: There are cases of students taking lessons for 37 years.

JB: 37 years?? What about Garry Dial, how many years?

LK: Well, I was thinking of Garry when I mentioned the number.

JB: 37 years! Now, think about that. I mean, he is an extreme case, but I am sure there are people who studied with Charlie for 15 years. That's normal. Nobody ever studied with me for 15 years. Why? Whatever he has, I don't have it. I am not putting myself down, but he had something special that is beyond information. It's pure inspiration, which is to me a higher octave of music knowledge. It's another octave, just a different zone. Charlie also had a way of relating to people. He could just tune into you, just feel your essence, and feel your being and get to know you at a very personal level, and know what to tell you, and how to inspire you like a psychic in a way, you know? And Madame Chaloff was like that. Charlie was always Madame Chaloff's favorite 'cause she knew that Charlie had this thing that very few people have. She had it, he had it.

LK: There are dichotomous views about him being either a sociable or a private person. A person who sees so many students every day should be at least one of the most sociable persons ever, right? Yet, he was very private. What's your take on this?

JB: Charlie was a complete recluse. He didn't want to be with people. He could be very sociable, but left on his own devices he loved being alone. And also one of the most—if not the most- generous person I ever met. Totally generous. Always picking up the bill, we'd go out to eat, he wouldn't let me pay. He's paying. That kind of guy. You know, when I think about music and the purity that music has, not hampered by the music business or discolored by any musical business bullshit. That was Charlie! He just played pure music and when he was teaching I thought the same thing, that this is music on a very purer level. It's no bullshit, you know. It's just music. It's not who's going to have the biggest career, who's the best player, who sold the most records, who had the biggest hit tune, who won a Grammy award... none of that!

LK: I am conducting research to find information about him in jazz pedagogy journals or jazz magazines and his name is almost nowhere.

SB: If you imagine, if you never played out—I mean after a certain year—there's no recording of him, you are not in any books, yet you become THAT big of a guru, with a guru status. Charlie had a guru status and very few people have guru status; that command; that type of status. It's just who he was; it's mystical.

LK: Many students have been telling me of him sleeping only for 4 hours a day and teaching for many hours. Is this the type of person you remember back in the 1960's?

JB: Oh, yeah. He'd be drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes, then he stopped smoking, but always high wired. He had a very sensitive nervous system. High wired. You know, that's why, I think, it was important that he spent a lot of time alone and be a recluse 'cause otherwise, he'd get his energy sucked down. He needed to regroup and chill, and be with his family and recharge his batteries. I don't know how he taught that much. I have no idea how anybody can teach that much. You know, I teach 18-20 hours a week and I am wiped out! You know, I am just throwing this out there, that maybe if he didn't teach that much, he'd still be alive. I don't know. But, I can't say that, you can say that maybe if Coltrane didn't play that much, he'd still be alive. When it's your time to go, it's your time to go.

LK: I remember his studio was covered up with heavy curtains, so there was no sunlight coming in. Did he have any sort of resistance to it?

SB: (Laughs). I am going to tell you, this guy is a total recluse, like a good vampire, if there is such a thing. A vampire, who gives blood, doesn't take it. And that's why he needed his space and his privacy; a very private person. You will never meet a person that private. He could have been a great spy, an unbelievable spy. And he could keep a secret. You'd tell him something in confidence; he is going to his grave with it. That kind of guy. But I wish you knew his father. Man, what a guy. I mean when he walked in the room, it's like the sun just came out. Huge presence, just enormous.

LK: Did he ever study psychology? What kind of books was he into?

JB: Charlie was a master psychologist. He made everyone no matter what their level and walk of life feel special. When they walked in his room it was like they were the only student he ever had. Regarding the books, yes, he was always reading all of those books. He knew great jokes and he had a great sense of humor, and people don't realize that about him, that he can be really fun, loving, and easy going, and cool and very intense.

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