

## **The Jazz Piano Trio: Improvisation structures through the triangle analogy**

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The jazz piano trio, the incomparable music unit comprising piano, bass and drums, made its entrance into the jazz realm shortly before the second half of the twentieth century. An imposing presence well into the twenty-first century, this unique instrumental triumvirate continues to play two pivotal roles: (1) it makes an indelible artistic mark as a stand-alone unit and, (2) serves as the underpinning or ‘the rhythm section’ of the larger jazz ensemble. In this paper we will discuss the paradigm shifts in the twentieth century jazz piano trio through the artistry of Bud Powell, Bill Evans, and Keith Jarrett, illustrating why this unit in particular has emerged to become one of the most stalwart albeit consummate units in the jazz province. Through the historical timeline that these seminal jazz trios generate, we will look into issues of democratization in improvisation. From an analytical point of view, we will assess the weight of each player’s improvisation in the unit, through a conceptual analogy of the jazz piano trio and the simplest but strongest two-dimensional polygon - the triangle. Using the triangle analogy as a theoretical construct, we will be able to analyze each player’s improvisation stamp and its impact on the unit, as well the synergism transfer regarding the improvisation momentum among the members. Also, and at a deeper conceptual level, we will present how the triangle analogy is able to present analytical information regarding improvisation structures (e.g. melody, harmony, rhythm) in the various sub-forms of instrumentation that usually arise within the trio; playing solo and in duo, such as: PB, PD, BD. Using an analytical theoretical construct based on the geometric form of the triangle, we will present analytical data on the democratic condition at work within the trio improvisation sections, as well as how each member organize the solos as the trio comes together to produce the highest possible artistic result.

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