

Playing by "Ear": Exercise 1

(Diatonic chords, Primary Chords and Pentatonic Scales)

JimO

1. Start with a major scale. Each tone gets a sequential Arabic number.
The second lyric row gives you the fingering for the scale.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8/1
1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5

2. This Arabic numbering is sometimes referred to as the "Nashville System."

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8/1
5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1

3. Building 3-Note Structures in 3rds from each scale tone gives the "DIATONIC TRIADS" in the key.
Study carefully and listen to the chords at the piano. Learn the names of the chords..

Cmaj Dm Em Fmaj Gmaj Am Bdim Cmaj
I IIm IIIIm IV V VIIm VIIo I
1(Major) 2(minor) 3(minor) 4(Major) 5(Major) 6(minor) 7(Dim.) 1(Major)

4. Notice that MAJOR chords are found at the 1st, 4th and 5th scale degrees. These are the PRIMARY CHORDS in the key.

5. Raising the lower tone of the ROOT-POSITION triads yields INVERSIONS. Shown below.

Cmaj Fmaj Gmaj
I IV V

C C/E C/G C
Root position 1st Inversion 2nd Inversion Root position

F F/A F/C F G G/B G/D G
Root 1st 2nd Root Root 1st 2nd Root

6. Major Pentatonic Scale: Mode 1, from the scale ROOT.
 Built on scale-tones 1,2,3,5 and 6.

17

1 2 3 5 6 (1)

7. Mode 2

2 3 5 6 1 2

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of music. The top staff shows the notes of Mode 1: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and (1) (octave). The bottom staff shows the notes of Mode 2: 2, 3, 5, 6, 1, and 2. Each note is represented by a quarter note on a five-line staff.

8. Mode 3

21

3 5 6 1 2 3

9. Mode 4

5 6 1 2 3 5

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of music. The top staff shows the notes of Mode 3: 3, 5, 6, 1, 2, and 3. The bottom staff shows the notes of Mode 4: 5, 6, 1, 2, 3, and 5. Each note is represented by a quarter note on a five-line staff.

10. Mode 5

25

6 1 2 3 5 6

11. Mode 1 at the octave

1 2 3 5 6 1

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of music. The top staff shows the notes of Mode 5: 6, 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. The bottom staff shows the notes of Mode 1 at the octave: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 1. Each note is represented by a quarter note on a five-line staff.

12. This innocent-sounding scale has a long history in music.

It is still one of the most widely-used scales in the world.

Play through the modes and LISTEN to them.

Now, with primary chords and a scale for improvising, let's turn to the point of all this--IMPROVISING AND CREATING MELODIES.

29

Detailed description: This block contains two empty staves of music, one for the treble clef and one for the bass clef, intended for improvisation. Each staff has a five-line structure and a double bar line at the end.