

CASMEC 2020 Conference

Accessible Jazz Theory for Directors and Students

Presented by Mike Dana,
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Download addition materials for these topics, including iReal Pro practice tracks, here:



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The Circle of...(wait a minute...)

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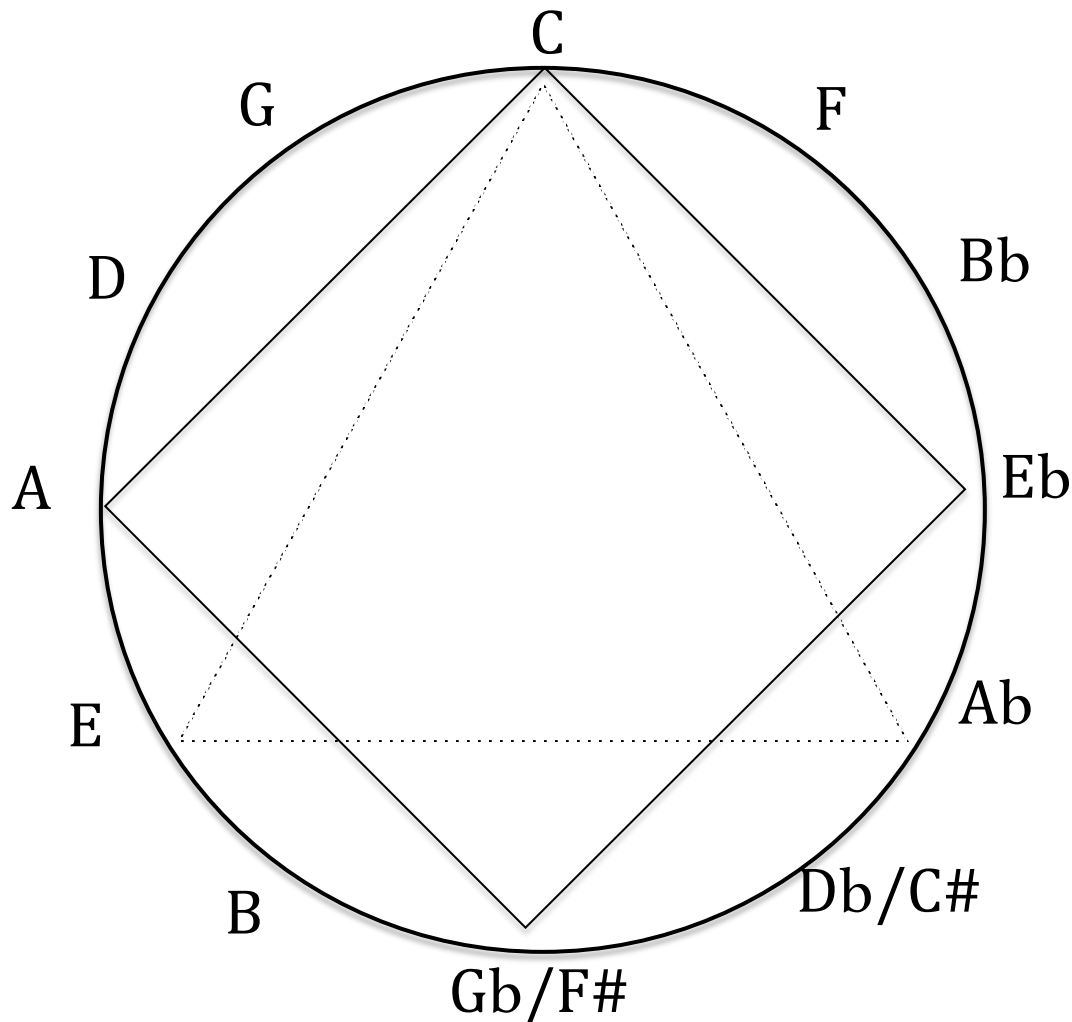
- The name issue: it IS a **circle**...of descending **5ths** (intervals), of dominant-to-tonic (V to I) and secondary dominant (V of V of V... all harmonic functions.)
- This is how music moves *forward*. Should go clockwise, the way time moves forward.
 - Example: the bridge of “Cherokee” (10 in a row!)
C#mi7 F#7 B Ma7 Bmi7 E7 A Ma7 Ami7 D7 G Ma7 Gmi7 C7 Cmi7 F7 Bb
- The most important structure in jazz music?
- **Contains ALL key signatures:** Clockwise to add flats, counterclockwise to add sharps.
- **Contains ALL the ii - V⁷ - I progressions**
 - Clockwise (forward!): mi7 - dom. 7 - Maj. [Dmi7 - G7 - C Ma7]
- **Gives important chord tone info for secondary dominant progressions**
 - Example: Bridge of rhythm changes: D7 G7 C7 F7 Bb Ma (the tonic)
 - Dominant chords “look ahead” to the next chord’s key signature.
- **Contains ALL the iii - vi - ii - V⁷ progressions** (common “turnaround”)
 - Clockwise (forward!): mi7 - mi7 - mi7 - dom. 7 [Emi7 - Ami7 - Dmi7 - G7]
- **Contains ALL diminished chords**
 - Use the square; gives you 4 min. 3rds, spells complete diminished 7 chord.
 - “Rotate” the square to get the other two “sets” of dim. chords
 - Any note in a dim. chord can be considered root; so, only 3 different ones.
 - Example: C⁰⁷ = Eb⁰⁷ = Gb/F#⁰⁷ = A⁰⁷
- **Contains ALL augmented chords**
 - Use the triangle; gives you 3 maj. 3rds, spells complete augmented chord.
 - Example: C aug. = E aug. = Ab aug.
- **Contains ALL tritones** (for tritone substitutions...very cool harmonic trick!)
 - Go directly across the “pole” to see the tritone (aug. 4 or dim. 5 interval)
 - Example: C7 and Gb7 are tritone subs; Eb7 and A7 are tritone subs)
- **Contains all of the modes**
 - A bit more advanced. Please see the additional handout in the Dropbox folder.

Teaching, Practicing, and Applying the Circle

- Display prominently in band room, include handout in folder. Quiz, chant...VARY THE STARTING NOTE!
- Practice simple sequences around the circle. **ALWAYS GO FULL CIRCLE!**
 - Use the iReal tracks provided.
- Have the “hemisphere” talk. 😊
- Bass: “see the future” root movement, visualize patterns on the instrument.
- Guitar: lower strings tunes in 4ths. Move to closest root (adjacent string) when comping.
 - Remember, down a 5th = up a 4th!
- Improvisers: map out changes that follow the circle. Indicate all ii - V⁷ - I and other diatonic progressions. Look for patterns from song to song.
- Sneaky trick: Get one student fired up on this. When the others hear how good *she* sounds, they’ll get on board. Trust me.

The Circle of Descending Fifths*

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- *The name issue
 - Series of descending 5ths.
 - C is the dominant (V) of F, F is the V of Bb, etc.
- ii - V⁷ - I progression follow the circle (m7 - dom7 - Maj)
- Time moves forward in a clockwise direction. **So does music.**
 - See “All The Things You Are”, bridge of rhythm changes
- Clockwise to add flats
- Counterclockwise to add sharps
- “Squares” = minor thirds = diminished chords
- “Triangles” = major thirds = augmented chords
- “Opposites” = tritones (aug. 4 or dim. 5)
- Transposition: this is a great tool for learning to transpose
- Modes: this will help you keep your modal relationships organized in your head
- I first learned it “the other way” too. People can change. ☺

Understanding Major Tonal Centers

(Getting Off the Grid)

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- The “key” to establishing the tonal center (key of the moment). Always play in the right key!
 - Jazz tunes often shift to other tonal centers, often without resolving to I. How to recognize?
 - The HIP-ocratic oath: Primum, ludere in recto clavem.
- Two things to know:
 1. Major scales in all keys
 2. The formula

I = Maj7	V = dom. 7
ii = min7	vi = min7
iii = min7	vii = min7(b5) or half diminished (ø)
IV = Maj7	
- Note: there are 2 Maj7 chords, 3 min7, but **only ONE dominant!** This is the go-to.
- **Most important progression in jazz: the ii – V⁷ (– I)** [see ex. 1 Satin Doll]
- **Common “turnaround” progression** is iii – vi – ii – V⁷ (Days of Wine and Roses)
- **Also very common:** I – vi – ii – V⁷ (Blue Moon)
- TIP #1: Not all starting Maj7 chords are tonic (I.) Often they are IV chords. [see ex. 2 Just Friends]
- TIP #2: You don’t need a tonic (I) chord to establish the tonal center.
- TIP #3: As you get more comfortable, target the color notes of each chord (zoom in.)

Teaching, Practicing, and Applying Tonal Centers

- ALL 12 keys. There are no “safe zones.” Non-negotiable.
- Make a habit (game? contest?) out of ID-ing tonal centers. [see ex. 3. All The Things You Are]
 - Look for commonalities in tunes. Learn to **think and hear “in numbers.”**
 - Start with student solos in jazz ensemble and combo.
 - One standard a week!
- Integrate practice (through circle) for entire ensemble as a warmup. It’s inclusive, and it reinforces key/scale awareness.
- Practice using the supplied iReal tracks
 - ii – V⁷ – I 4 bars, through the circle [see ex. 4a]
 - ii – V⁷ 4 bars, chromatically up [see ex. 4b]
 - I – vi – ii – V⁷ and iii – vi – ii – V⁷ [see ex. 4c]
- Things to consistently reinforce with students
 - Beginners: foundation = the right key (of the moment)
 - In jazz, all 12 keys matter!
 - ALWAYS play with great sound and great time
 - Intermediate: look closer at each chord (color tones = 3 and 7), and alt/ext.
 - Advancing: Understand the minor ii^ø – V⁷ – i
 - Modes (of major and jazz minor)
 - EVERYONE: play melodies, not scales!

Major Tonal Centers/Diatonic Harmony

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	I	ii	iii	IV	V7	vi	viiø7
C	C Ma7	D m7	E m7	F Ma7	G 7	A m7	B ø7
F	F Ma7	G m7	A m7	Bb Ma7	C 7	D m7	Eø7
Bb	Bb Ma7	C m7	D m7	Eb Ma7	F 7	G m7	A ø7
Eb	Eb Ma7	F m7	G m7	Ab Ma7	Bb 7	C m7	D ø7
Ab	Ab Ma7	Bb m7	C m7	Db Ma7	Eb 7	F m7	G ø7
Db	Db Ma7	Eb m7	F m7	Gb Ma7	Ab 7	Bb m7	C ø7
C#	C# Ma7	D# m7	E# m7	F# Ma7	G# 7	A# m7	B# ø7
Gb	Gb Ma7	Ab m7	Bb m7	Cb Ma7	Db 7	Eb m7	F ø7
F#	F# Ma7	G# m7	A# m7	B Ma7	C# 7	D# m7	E# ø7
Cb	Cb Ma7	Db m7	Eb m7	Fb Ma7	Gb 7	Ab m7	Bb ø7
B	B Ma7	C# m7	D# m7	E Ma7	F# 7	G# m7	A# ø7
E	E Ma7	F# m7	G# m7	A Ma7	B 7	C# m7	D# ø7
A	A Ma7	B m7	C# m7	D Ma7	E 7	F# m7	G# ø7
D	D Ma7	E m7	F# m7	G Ma7	A 7	B m7	C# ø7
G	G Ma7	A m7	B m7	C Ma7	D 7	E m7	F# ø7

Using The “Tonal Center” Approach

- **What it means:** when you have several chords from one key (example: ii-V⁷-I, or iii-vi-ii- V⁷) you can use the scale of the “tonal center” (the “I” key) over the entire progression.
 - **Pros:** Easy, less to think about. One size fits all. Solid approach for beginning improvisers.
 - **Cons:** Doesn’t always “nail” the individual chord/sound. Can be a little “scale-y” or “floaty.”
- **Use for:** Standards, up-tempo tunes, or tunes with quick chord changes. To create a modal feeling. For smooth jazz (kidding.)
- **Learn these in all keys, and recognize them by ear:**
 - ii-V⁷ (I) maybe the most common jazz progression
 - iii-vi-ii- V⁷ common “turnaround.” Follows circle of 5ths.
 - ii-iii common on modal tunes, vamps, Latin tunes
 - vi-iii also common on modal tunes, vamps, Latin tunes
 - I-vi-ii- (IV) V⁷ lots of standards use this
 - iii-IV for those flamenco-jazz gigs
- **Words of wisdom:** always make sure you know what the “key of the moment” is! (Hint: look for the V⁷.) What is the “current” key signature?
- **More words of wisdom:** Understanding tonal centers is a great start (and it’s essential) but it’s not the end of the road.

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Solving the Minor Mystery

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- Several minor scales, different names
- NOTE: all formulas are based on parallel major/minor!
- Most use the same first 5 notes: 1 2 b3 4 5 [see ex. 1]
- All have a b3, but the “action” comes from the 6 and 7
- The “big four” minor scales:
 - Natural (relative) minor: 1 2 b3 4 5 **b6 b7** 8 (*note: 3 lowered tones*) [see ex. 2]
 - Jazz players prefer modal name: **Aeolian** mode
 - 6th mode of the relative major scale
 - Great for minor blues [see ex. 4], tunes in minor keys, tonic minor. Works OK over minor ii – V⁷ – i [see ex. 3 & 5]
 - **Dorian** mode: 1 2 b3 4 5 **6 b7** 8 (*note: 2 lowered tones*) [see ex. 2]
 - Sounds “brighter” than Aeolian
 - 2nd mode of the related (NOT relative!) major scale
 - Great for “random” mi7 chords, ii – V⁷ progressions, vamps
 - NOTE: if you use Dorian for minor blues, beware the minor iv chord! [see ex. 4]
 - **Harmonic minor**: 1 2 b3 4 5 **b6 7** 8 (*note: lowered 6, natural 7*)
 - Very distinctive sound (personally, not my most used)
 - Sounds great over the V⁷ in a minor ii – V⁷ – i [see ex. 2 & 5]
 - Ascending melodic minor (aka the **Jazz Minor**) 1 2 b3 4 5 **6 7** 8 (*note: only 1 lowered note, the b3. The most “major” minor scale.*) [see ex. 2]
 - Differs from “classical” melodic minor... “Jazz Minor”
 - Sounds awesome on tonic minor chords like Cmi6, Cmi6/9, Cmi(ma 7). So much color!
 - The modes of the Jazz Minor are incredibly rich and absolutely essential for advanced players

Teaching, Practicing, and Applying the “Big Four” Minor Scales

- Sing then play the basic minor scale: 1 2 b3 4 5.
- Introduce new scale mode; emphasizes its 6 and 7; sing then play. Focus on the 6 and 7!
 - I like to go to the 9 then back down.
 - DO NOT write these out!! By ear, always. (Ear training quiz...fun way to torment!) ☺
- Students can practice these using the iReal tracks provided (4-, then 2-bar versions) adjusting tempo and feel as needed.
 - Tracks start on Cmi concert, go through Circle of 5ths.
- Eventually, move away from up-and-down scale practice ASAP. Tips:
 - Start at the top (the 9) then down-and-up. Sounds cooler IMO.
 - Try starting on the b3, or 5 of the scale.
 - LISTEN to how each note “feels” against the harmony.
 - Sequences are good to practice early on.
 - **Play melodies, not scales.**
- Find parts in solos where these sounds can apply. (Big band AND combo!)
- No combo? Gotta start one (at least!)
- iReal pro app for iOS, Android, Mac: a must-have for practice!!!

SOLVING THE MINOR MYSTERY

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Ex. 1

BASIC MINOR SCALE

1 2 $b3$ 4 5 8

Ex. 2

AEOLIAN MODE

DORIAN MODE

1 2 $b3$ 4 5 $b6$ $b7$ 8 1 2 $b3$ 4 5 6 $b7$ 8

HARMONIC MINOR

JAZZ MINOR

1 2 $b3$ 4 5 $b6$ 7 8 1 2 $b3$ 4 5 6 7 8

Ex. 3

MINOR II - V7 - I

$D_{MI}^{7(b5)}$ G^7 C_{MI}

MADE INTO A SCALE = HARMONIC MINOR

1 2 $b3$ 4 5 $b6$ 7 8

Ex. 4: CASMEC BLUES (IN C MINOR)

C_{MI}^7 $D_{MI}^{7(b5)}$ $G^{7(b9)}$ C_{MI}^7 F_{MI}^9 $D_{MI}^{7(b5)}$ $G^{7(b9)}$

I II V7 I IV I II V7

C_{MI}^9 $D_{MI}^{7(b5)}$ $G^{7(\frac{13}{15})}$ C_{MI}^9 $D_{MI}^{7(b5)}$ $G^{7(b9)}$

I II V7 I II V7

Ex. 5: MINOR II - V7 - I IN ALL KEYS

C_{MI} $D_{MI}^{7(b5)}$ $G^{7(b9)}$ C_{MI}

I II V7 I

F_{MI} $G_{MI}^{7(b5)}$ $C^{7(b9)}$ F_{MI}

I II V7 I

(...CONTINUE IN ALL KEYS THROUGH THE CIRCLE)

Better Blues

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- The traditional blues scale (1 b3 4 5 b7 8) AKA minor pentatonic. [see ex. 1]
 - Pros: Easy, fits a lot of situations (sort of), maj OR min blues, you already know it.
 - Cons: Monochromatic. Some notes clash w/ chord. Doesn't address the actual chord.
- IMPROVEMENT #1: Use the maj 3 of the key for the I⁷ chords, the b3 for IV⁷, and the 4 for the ii - V⁷. [see ex. 2 a, b, c]
- We are using the correct 3 or 7 of each chord, moving as little as possible when the chords change. This is a **guide tone** line.
- **Better Blues Scale:** Try 1 2 b3 5 6 8...no clashing notes! [see ex. 3] NOT for minor blues!

Teaching, Practicing, and Applying Better Blues

- Have students write out the changes (their key) for the blues on manuscript. Discuss the 3-7 concept, pick a starting note (correct 3 or 7) for them, have them write out the guide tones. Check work, pick one, play practice track, everyone sing the guide tone line. Then everyone play it. Then play it rhythmically. Then have a student solo, embellishing the rhythmic GTL.
- 4 step call and response: You play (sing), they SING, then you, then they PLAY. [see ex. 4]
- Practice Better Blues Scale with included iReal track (can change tempo, key, feel...)
- Show students where and how to apply these ideas in the songs that the ensemble is rehearsing.

BETTER BLUES

MIKE DANA

EX. 1: TRADITIONAL BLUES SCALE

EX. 2A

EX. 2B: IMPORTANT CHORD TONES

EX. 2C: Bb BLUES W/ IMPORTANT CHORD TONES

EX. 3: BETTER BLUES SCALE

EX. 4: C & R PHRASES. ALL NOTES LONG EXCEPT THE LAST ONE!