

UNIT TOPIC: MAJOR SCALES IMPROVISATION ACTIVITY

NOTES FOR THE DIRECTOR:

Using the scales learned from the major scales and arpeggios sheet, students can improvise over major chords.

Collective improvisation is a good way for students to become comfortable improvising in front of others. In collective improvisation, all students will play at the same time. This provides an opportunity for students to work out ideas without all of the attention being on them alone. While this may seem chaotic, the results are worth it. Students become more comfortable and confident, and this is a good step to getting them comfortable improvising in front of others.

While this lesson plan is written using the F Scale and play-along, any scale and play along may be used.

Think of a scale as a collection of pitches rather than a scale. The notes do not have to be played up and down in order, and all of the notes do not need to be played. The notes in the collection merely present possibilities.

Students shouldn't be afraid to repeat notes. Repetition is good. Repetition is good. Repetition is good!

Leave space in your improvisation. Silence is important.

Major scales can be used to improvise over major 7 chords. Students can improvise over one chord vamps to focus on only one scale at a time.

While using the major scale, it is important to know that the 4th scale degree is dissonant. It will want to resolve to the 3rd.

Using the major pentatonic scale (1 2 3 5 6) is one way to avoid the dissonant 4th note. The 1st scale degree will still have some dissonance when the 7th is present in the chord.

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To avoid all dissonance, play a minor pentatonic scale beginning on the 3rd note of the major chord being played. If playing over an Fmaj7 chord, use the A minor pentatonic scale (A C D E G). If playing over a Bbmaj7 chord, use the D minor pentatonic scale (D F G A C).

This activity is intended to help students learn major scales and associate them with chord symbols. This will help develop improvisation, but students should be listening to jazz in order to develop a musical vocabulary.

Try these improvisation games with any scale:

- One note improvisation: How many rhythms can you come up with?
- Two note improvisation: pick two notes (possibly the 3rd and 7th of the scale) and only use them in your improvisation.
- Quarter note only improvisation: Try to hit all of the chord tones (1357)
- Eighth notes only improvisation: Don't leave any space!
- Echo Game: Teacher plays, students echo (see measures 1-12 of the Major Scale Improvisation Activity Sheet)
- Call and Response: Someone plays 1-2 measures, someone else responds (See measures 13-24 of the Major Scale Improvisation Activity Sheet). The Question should not end on tonic. The Answer should end on tonic.

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PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

Students should be familiar with one-octave major scales.

Students should have played major scales with the play-along track

TEKS:

117.310.c.3

Creative expression. The student demonstrates musical artistry by singing or playing an instrument individually and in groups. The student performs music in a variety of genres at an appropriate level of difficulty. The student performs from notation and by memory as appropriate. The student develops cognitive and psychomotor skills. The student is expected to demonstrate mature, characteristic sound appropriate for the genre; demonstrate psychomotor and kinesthetic skills such as appropriate posture, breathing, text, diction, articulation, vibrato, bowings, fingerings, phrasing, independent manual dexterities, and percussion techniques; demonstrate rhythmic accuracy using appropriate tempo; demonstrate observance of key signature and modalities; demonstrate correct intonation, appropriate phrasing, and appropriate dynamics; and create and notate or record original musical phrases.

MATERIALS:

Major Scales and Arpeggios Scale Sheet

Major Scale Play-Along Vamp Tracks

Major Scale Improvisation Activities Page

12 Major Scales Play Along Track

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

The Students will use major scales to improvise over major 7th chords

The Students will relate scales with their corresponding chord symbols

PROCEDURES:

Review Concert F major scale and arpeggio

Discuss how the major scale can be used to improvise over major chords

Students will play the Concert F Major scale and arpeggio from the scale sheet

Using the Major Scale Improvisation Activities Page, play the Echo activity (measures 1-12)

The teacher plays the first measure and the students echo. Come up with your own patterns as you feel comfortable.

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Optional – You may choose to do the Question/Answer activity in addition, or use it another day

Play the Question and Answer Game

The teacher plays two measures and the student answers with two measures. The Question should end on any note except tonic, but the Answer should end on tonic.

When students become familiar with this game, have students play this game with a partner.

Using the F Major-Play along, students will collectively improvise using the F major scale

Using the F Major Play-along, ask for volunteers to improvise 4 measures of the F Major scale

All students should be expected to participate and improvise

Repeat this activity with all 12 major scales

EXTENSION:

Discuss how the major pentatonic scale is comprised of scale degrees 1 2 3 5 6

Students can use the major pentatonic scale when improvising major chords

Students will improvise over all 12 major chords - Each chord in the Circle of 4ths play-along lasts four measures

This activity can be done with collective improvisation

This activity can be done individually in class

This activity can be assigned as homework and submitted as a recording

Improvise using a minor pentatonic scale beginning on the 3rd note of the major chord being played

EXIT TICKET:

Students will individually improvise over 4 bars of Fmaj7

ASSESSMENTS:

Students will submit a recording improvising over one of the play-along tracks

ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

Students may only use the major pentatonic scale. (Scale degrees 1 2 3 5 6)

Students will improvise using only one or two notes, focusing on rhythms