

# Jazz Theory and Ear Training

**Objectives:** By the end of the session students should be able to..

- Use the circle of fourths to predict chord changes
- Apply at least two ear changing exercises into their daily practice
- Understand which modes to play over which chords

## Materials

- Guided notes sheet ([btnworkshop.com](http://btnworkshop.com))
- Slideshow ([btnworkshop.com](http://btnworkshop.com)) and projector
- Whiteboard and dry erase markers
- Piano
- Writing utensils
- Student instruments

## Welcome to the session and duet (15 min)

- Play
- Introduce co-presenters
- Check students' homework from last session (keeping a practice log)
- Why is theory important?
  - Play what you hear
  - Understand what you hear
  - Communicate with other musicians

## Circle of 4ths (15 min)

- What is it the circle of fourths and why is it important
  - Forms the base of most chord progressions (ii V I, iii VI ii V)
    - Play some examples of chord progressions students will have heard that are based in thirds on the piano. Try to provide some examples that aren't jazz progressions
  - Provides a framework for improvisation practice
    - When you practice something in all twelve keys, practice in fourths mimics actual changes
  - **Activity: Set a timer and have students write the fourth of each note in the circle of fourths practice on the guided notes sheet**
    - Make sure to *wait* and make sure that all students understand how to find the fourth. If the more advanced students have already finished, have one co-presenter facilitate races to find the fourth of the same set of notes on the whiteboard, while the other facilitator helps struggling students.
    - BEADGCF is a helpful acronym to use *pronounced bead-gu-cuff*

## Hearing the circle of 4ths (15 min)

- Play fourths on the piano and ask students to listen closely
- **Activity: Play Bluesette by Toots Thielemans** The first time through, have students focus on hearing the fourths in the song
  - The second time, show the chord changes to the song (provided on the slideshow) so that students can hear and see where the fourths are
  - Play the song a third time
- Go through the chord progression of bluesette and explain where the fourths are
  - Focus on the concept of a half step as skipping a fourth (measures 1-3)

## Ear Training (15 min)

- Show students apps/websites they can do ear training on
  - App/website examples: Chet, Teoria, tone
- **Activity: Do a demonstration using an ear training platform**

- Play the exercise and have students raise their hands to give the answer
- Explain the air playing exercise to students
  - Activity: Have students raise their hands to come to the front and try the exercise in front of the class while the rest of the students keep doing it silently on their instruments

### Major modes and chord qualities (20 min)

- Give students a quick crash course in modes however you see fit
  - By the end of the crash course students should learn mode names (**I Don't Particularly Like Modes A Lot**), how modes are formed, and the chords that different modes correspond to
  - Make sure to play each mode as you explain them, so that students can get the sound in their ear
- Activity: Go back to the chord changes to bluesette, have students identify which modes to play over which chords by raising their hands

### Transcription (10 min)

- What is transcribing?
- How do you transcribe *and* get it into your playing
  - Understand the concepts in the solo, not just the licks
  - Be able to apply those concepts in your own playing

### Closing (jump to homework if time is tight)

- Chord progressions are based in the circle of 4ths
- You can improve your ear training through practice
- Modes give you scales to play over chords
- Transcribing can bridge ear training and theory
- Homework for next session: Do a transcription