

EAR TRAINING SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE CHROMATIC PITCH PIPE

By Jamey Aebersold

Jamey Aebersold Jazz® offers The “Pocket Tones” Electronic Pitch Pipe. The following information will help you get the most out of it.

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EXERCISES

The following are just a few of the many exercises available. As you try some of these, I’m sure others will come to mind.

1. Play any tone. With that tone in mind, make it the root/tonic/first note of any scale. Sing the scale up, then down, then check to see that you ended on the note you began. You can do this with triads (major, minor, diminished, augmented); the chromatic scale; short melodies (such as *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, *Happy Birthday*, or *Ole Man River*); the first three to give notes of any scale; or just sing an interval such as a perfect 4th (the first two notes of *Here Comes The Bride*). Constantly check your pitch with the pitch pipe to see if you are straying from the original starting tone. I find it best to sing out loud so I can hear myself. If you seem to be having trouble, slow the exercise down or try fewer notes.
2. Pick out a note from anything you hear. It could be from the radio, CDs, TV, cassettes or even just a tone from your mind. After thinking about it for a few seconds, blow any tone on the pitch pipe. If it doesn’t match the original tone, try to figure out how far away it is and label (name) the distance (the interval) in your mind. Refer to the **Interval Chart** for suggested song titles to help our recognition/memory.

It’s a good idea to practice small intervals first, and then gradually widen them. With work and patience, you will be able to identify any intervals from a minor 2nd to 9ths. These are the most used intervals in jazz and pop music. The distances from one tone to another (intervals) should become like old friends—you recognize their voice anywhere. “Ah, there goes a major 3rd ...”

3. Play any tone on the pitch pipe. Make that tone the 3rd of a major scale or major triad. With that tone as your clue, fill in the missing tones to the scale or triad or 7th chord.

You can also assign your first tone as being the 7th, 5th, 6th, or 2nd of any scale or chord.

You can also do this with 7th and 9th chords. Example: Make the tone you sound be the 7th of a 9th chord. With the 7th in mind, drop down to the root or up to the root and then sing up the 9th chord—root, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th. Sing them ascending and descending.

4. Turn on the radio or put on a CD and listen to a song for a moment before trying this exercise. While listening, try to determine the tonic note of the key the music is in. Once you feel you’ve gotten hold of a stable tone or key center, make an educated guess as to what the actual tone is.

After making your guess, check the guess with the pitch pipe. Figure out how far off you were and label the distance (interval). The reason for labeling the interval is this: you need to immediately know how close you are when you make your educated guesses. As your mind thinks about distance, it tends to remember and this makes it easier and quicker the next time you try it.

EXERCISES (cont.)

5. Play any tone on the pitch pipe. From that tone, think and then sing up a perfect 4th. A perfect 4th interval is the first two notes of *Here Comes The Bride*. After you sing one perfect 4th, sing another, but make it begin one half-step higher than the first. Don't use the pitch pipe to get your starting tone when you begin the second perfect 4th. After this, do several more, each time going a half-step higher. At some point, stop and try to mentally sing your original note and then check yourself with the pitch pipe. See how far you've strayed. This exercise leads naturally to trying to sing any pre-chosen interval up or down chromatically. Doing this is a good way to familiarize yourself with all the various intervals. Most people begin with minor or major 2nds, minor or major 3rds, or perfect 4ths.

After you feel somewhat secure with these smaller intervals, begin trying wider intervals. You may find yourself spending several days just getting familiar with major 3rds. Since 3rds are a part of the building blocks of music (chords are built in thirds), your time will be well spent.

6. Play any tone on the pitch pipe. Mentally make that tone the #4 of a major scale and after doing so, sing the root, 3rd, and 5th, and then the entire scale with the #4 being part of the scale. This scale would be called a lydian scale. It's a major scale with the 4th raised 1/2 step. Then make that tone the #4 of a whole-tone scale or a diminished scale, etc. You can do this with any tone ... #9, b9, #5, b7, as well as any scale tone.

This is a great mental game and it helps embed in your mind's ear the relationships of one tone to many others. After working at this, you'll be able to do it without the help of the pitch pipe or and KNOW you are correct. Your mind is far greater than you can imagine and so is your memory.

7. Sing the first several notes of any familiar melody. Don't sing more than four tones. After singing them, find the starting tone on your pitch pipe. After you find the first note, sing the next several notes again to reinforce them in your mind. Now, see if you can mentally figure out the other 3 or 4 notes of the melody you sang. Check your answers with the pitch pipe. I like to visualize the piano keyboard when I'm mentally singing and figuring out intervals. This helps me keep my place, and it also helps me to anticipate what the next note is going to be because I can SEE it in my mind's eye on the keyboard.
8. Play any two notes on the pitch pipe and then figure out, without looking, what interval they were. With practice, you'll get so familiar with the sound of the tones that you can identify them as you would a friend's voice saying "hello" over the telephone. You'll recognize a minor 3rd as a minor 3rd, a 4th as a 4th, a major 6th as a major 6th, etc. ... you'll KNOW! It's just like learning to recognize a person's voice without seeing their face.
9. Hit a low C on the pitch pipe. While hitting the note, hum gently the major 3rd, minor 3rd, perfect 4th or 5th. Do this with other tones and listen to the two notes vibrate—one on the pitch pipe and the other, your humming. While doing this, be thinking the name of the interval.
10. Carry your pitch pipe with you everywhere and constantly check on the sounds you hear around you. You will be amazed how quickly knowledge of the musical world can be revealed to you. Once it's revealed, you can use that knowledge to MAKE MUSIC.

I highly recommend the Book/2-CD set called "Jamey Aebersold's Ear Training Course." It is available from Jamey Aebersold Jazz® (Ordering Code: JETCD). Call or write for a free catalog of jazz educational items.

EXCERPTS FROM THE VOLUME 21 “GETTIN’ IT TOGETHER” PLAY-A-LONG BOOK/CD

By Jamey Aebersold

“When a person tries to develop their capacity to better hear the sounds going on around them, they are faced with several problems which aren’t necessarily present when reading music or chord symbols from the written page.

“Having ‘good ears’ means having the ability to hear the roots to the various chords or scales that are being played; having the ability to hear the quality of the chord or scale ... major, minor (what kind of minor?), pentatonic, diminished, whole-tone, etc.; it also means having the ability to tell what tone of the scale or chord is being played at any point in the solo ... *‘Ah, that note what the #4 resolving to the 6th resolving to the 5th!’*; It means hearing the piano, bass, soloist, drums, etc. individually as well as collectively.

“I have found that there are many levels of hearing. Some people hear. Some people *really* hear! Some people can seem to hear and identify almost anything that is being played. They can seem to sing or play back portions of solos right after the performer has played. How can they HEAR and we can’t seem to find roots, scale qualities, or what time signature the piece is in?

“I’m firmly convinced that if all students, from the first grade (even kindergarten) through their last year in college were exposed to simple ear training exercised that allowed them to opportunity to identify what they were hearing on the radio, TV, CDs, or in jazz, opera, orchestra, chorus, band, etc., our music scene in general would be much different! If simple ear training exercises, coupled with simple music theory, were carried out in public school, the public would demand music of a much higher caliber than they are presently consuming. Why would they demand better music? Because they would HEAR that the music they are being fed is, in my opinion, too repetitious, trite, and banal to warrant our attention, muss less our money on the sale of recordings or concert attendance.

“I think one of the reasons jazz music, especially the music from Bebop to the present, has never had a big audience is due to the amount of thinking required to actually get to the essence of the music. The average person today doesn’t want to think about music, they just want to enjoy it. They usually will settle for the same thing day after day. They often feel life is too difficult to think about the music they listen to. Hence the gap between the jazz performer and the listener in the world today. I do not mean to imply that listening to music intellectually is not enjoyable. That’s where the enjoyment is—in our mind!”

This would be an excellent time to read Jerry Coker’s *How To Listen To Jazz*. This is a great book and is accessible to the laymen. I also recommend **Volume 21 “Gettin’ It Together”** of the Jamey Aebersold Play-A-Long series as well as **Jamey Aebersold Jazz Ear Training**. For ear training purposes, **Volume 21** will give you much to work with. I suggest beginning by simply putting the first track on and singing the roots. After singing the roots, sing the first five notes of the scale. Don’t forget to isolate individual pitches and sing them, such as the 5th or the 9th or the 3rd, etc. Any of the exercises in the **Volume 21** supplement can be used for ear training.

Try playing “drop the needle” on any of the tracks (begin with major) and see how long it takes you to find the root. You may want to sit at the piano or use your pitch pipe while doing this in order to occasionally check yourself. After you find the root, can you sing the scale or even improvise? The main thing is to be patient with yourself and not get frustrated if you make mistakes at first. All the time you are singing, be aware that each tone in the scale or chord has a number assigned to it. Be thinking of these various numbers whenever possible ... Root=1, 2nd’s and 9th’s=2, third=3, fourth=4, etc.

Play the recordings at home or in your car. Sing exercises, patterns, and improvise. While doing so, be aware of the pitch you are singing (if you are in your car, be aware of traffic!). You may want to buy an extra pitch pipe and keep it in your car to help identify the roots, 3rd’s, 5th’s, etc., you hear while driving.

Being able to sing and identify intervals is a key part of ear training. Experiment with singing or playing with the left channel only. Listen carefully to the bass. This would be an especially good time to try playing “drop the needle!” While doing this, be persistent. Don’t give up easily.

As I’ve said before, I have found it helpful to memorize a song title that begins with a certain interval. I like to use the following table (see the next page) as a guide to identify correctly whatever interval is being played. You may want to add song titles to this list if you aren’t familiar with these songs. Remember, you only need the very first two notes of a song or ad from the TV or radio—something your mind can instantly identify no matter where you happen to be.

INTERVAL CHART

I have found it helpful to memorize a song title that begins with a certain interval. For instance, the interval of a perfect 4th is the first two notes of *Here Comes The Bride*. By singing the first two notes of *Here Comes The Bride* and realizing it outlines a perfect 4th interval you can begin to center in on perfect 4th's whenever they are sounded. Or, it may help you to actually sing, or play on your instrument, in tune, the interval of a perfect 4th.

Each of these songs begins with the interval listed TO THE LEFT.

I like to use the following table as a guide to identify correctly whatever interval is being played:

| ASCENDING INTERVALS | | DESCENDING INTERVALS | |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| -2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT SAN FRANCISCO (LEFT MY HEART) I REMEMBER YOU I'M GETTING SENTIMENTAL OVER YOU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BYE BYE BLACKBIRD WHAT'S NEW JAWS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAJOR SCALE (DESCENDING) O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM JOY TO THE WORLD THE THEME (M. DAVIS) SOPHISTICATED LADY |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAJOR SCALE (ASCENDING) HAPPY BIRTHDAY RUDOLF, RED NOSE ... SILENT NIGHT THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TENNESSEE WALTZ MY FUNNY VALENTINE BODY AND SOUL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB DECK THE HALLS AWAY IN A MANGER YESTERDAY (THE BEATLES) ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET FREDDIE FRELOADER |
| -3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WORK SONG MINOR CHORD CONFIRMATION A FOGGY DAY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEORGIA ON MY MIND MOONTRANE THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM SOMEWHERE MY LOVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FROSTY THE SNOWMAN WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE 500 MILES HIGH (C. COREA) THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAJOR TRIAD OH WHEN THE SAINTS I CAN'T GET STARTED | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SUMMERTIME COME RAIN OR COME SHINE SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HEY JUDE PETER GUNN MISTY SESAME STREET |
| P4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HERE COMES THE BRIDE HARK THE HERALD ANGELS OH CHRISTMAS TREE 'ROUND MIDNIGHT MAIDEN VOYAGE WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS ORNITHOLOGY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SONG FOR MY FATHER LOVE ME TENDER AULD LANG SYNE DOXY ALL THE THINGS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OH COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL VALSE HOT (NOT INTRO!) YARDBIRD SUITE SOFTLY, AS IN A MORNING SUNRISE I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARIA (WEST SIDE STORY) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BLUE SEVEN (SONNY ROLLINS) |
| P5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR THEME FROM 2001 WHISPER NOT (BENNY GOLSON) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BAGS GROOVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FEELINGS 7 STEPS TO HEAVEN (M.DAVIS) HAVE YOU MET MISS JONES? |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MORNING OF THE CARNIVAL | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1ST TO 3RD TONE OF MISTY YOU'RE EVERYTHING (C. COREA) PLEASE DON'T TALK ABOUT ME WHEN I'M GONE |
| M6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES TAKE THE "A" TRAIN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NBC INCH WORM SPEAK LOW | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YOU'RE A WEAVER OF DREAMS NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOMEWHERE (WEST SIDE STORY) THEME from STAR TREK I'LL CLOSE MY EYES | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WATERMELON MAN (H. HANCOCK) LITTLE RED'S FANTASY (WOODY SHAW) 1ST TO 3RD TONE OF HONEYSUCKLE ROSE |
| M7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAST YOUR FATE TO THE WIND THEME FROM FANTASY ISLAND | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEORA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I LOVE YOU |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A CHRISTMAS SONG (CHESTNUTS ...) SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW MCDONALD'S COMMERCIAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LET IT SNOW DEL SASSER BLUE BOSSA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I LOVE YOU (THE OTHER ONE!) (THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT SONGS TITLED "I LOVE YOU") WILLOW WEEP FOR ME |

I am listing intervals that correspond with standards or kiddie tunes of the past 70 years. If you are not familiar with these songs, they probably won't help you in identifying intervals. In that case, I suggest you write down song titles that you are familiar with, such as current commercials on TV or radio, pop songs, religious songs, or anything that begins with an interval you need to work on. It is usually harder to find songs that begin with descending intervals.