



**Basic Course Jazz Standards**

in 32 Lessons

by Claus Rückbeil

▷ [Workbook](#)

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\* The lectures refer to the chapters sent to you if you are taking the correspondence course.

# Foreword

Welcome to the improvisation course of the jazzschule berlin.

All 32 lessons of this Basic Course Jazz Standards follow the same method:

**a) listening    b) singing    c) playing    d) comprehending**

## **a) listening**

In each lesson you first listen to a chord progression. With a little help, you yourself will be able to find out which chords are being played in the playback. We start with simple chord progressions and then learn the corresponding jazz standards.

## **b) singing**

Using simple exercises you will be able to sing the matching scales for the specific chord progression.

## **c) playing**

Through listening to relation between tension and release within the particular chord progression of section a), and the tone material found through singing in section b), you can start to improvise along with the changes (the chord progression).

In this section you'll get instructions on phrasing and how to shape your solo. In this course we concentrate mostly on the sections a), b) and c). With a), b) and c) you'll learn how to improvise!

## **d) comprehending**

This part is about comprehending the theoretical aspects of the harmonic relations, that is to say the chords, their inversions, substitutions and the corresponding scales.

Most schools teach the theory before the practical part. (We used to do that, too). From our experience the better way is:

First the practical experience a), b) and c) - followed by d) the theory, i.e. the intellectual understanding.

After 32 lessons of this basic course you'll be able to "hear" any jazz standard, improvise over it and understand its chord progression.

Following the basic course we offer repertoire courses. You can expand your repertoire and apply in practice what you have learned.

## **Previous knowledge about music theory**

In this course we learn about music using our ears, your previous theoretical knowledge is not really important. What is important is only how well you can recognize the chord progressions, find the matching scales and finally how creatively you can play your own solos.

If you already know something about music theory, the section d) of each lesson will be very easy for you and you can concentrate even more on a), b) and c).

In this correspondence course, you will receive feedback from us which addresses your individual musical abilities (strength and weakness). Here, you will receive personal improvisation classes and you'll get the right exercises to develop your skills further.

## **Composition**

You write your own songs?

This course will also introduce you to the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic secrets of the great songwriters of the 20th century. Through this you'll be able to shape your compositions and be able to develop great ideas to complete songs.

**a) listening   b) singing   c) playing   d) comprehending**

As such, I would like to wish you lots of fun and endurance on this fascinating journey in the land of musical tones.



*Claus Rückbeil and the jazzschule berlin team*

# Tuning

Tune your instrument. On the "Drone CD" are 12 long tones. The first one is the note „c“, the second is "c sharp" and so on - see below. You hear the note „a“ (440 Hz) on playback 10.

## Transposing instruments:

For Eb-instruments the playback 01 starts with the note „a“ etc..

For Bb-instruments the playback 01 starts with the note „d“, so therefore the playback 08 would be the one that starts with the note „a“.

For a better overview of transposing different instruments, here is a track list of the Drone CD. [http://www.jazzschule-berlin.de/impro/?Drone\\_CD](http://www.jazzschule-berlin.de/impro/?Drone_CD)

## Drone CD:

### C-instruments

Track 01 = c  
Track 02 = c sharp  
Track 03 = d  
Track 04 = d sharp  
Track 05 = e  
Track 06 = f  
Track 07 = f sharp  
Track 08 = g  
Track 09 = g sharp  
Track 10 = a  
Track 11 = b flat  
Track 12 = b

### Eb-instruments

Track 01 = a  
Track 02 = b flat  
Track 03 = b  
Track 04 = c  
Track 05 = c sharp  
Track 06 = d  
Track 07 = d sharp  
Track 08 = e  
Track 09 = f  
Track 10 = f sharp  
Track 11 = g  
Track 12 = g sharp

### Bb-instruments

Track 01 = d  
Track 02 = d sharp  
Track 03 = e  
Track 04 = f  
Track 05 = f sharp  
Track 06 = g  
Track 07 = g sharp  
Track 08 = a  
Track 09 = b flat  
Track 10 = b  
Track 11 = c  
Track 12 = c sharp

## Note:

This applies only if you use the playback CDs. Don't worry about this if you use our downloadable MP3s.

On the playback CD • track 01, the "a" (standard pitch) is tuned at 442 Hz which is fairly common today. We added this unintentionally! The playbacks on the "Playback CD" and the "Drone CD" refer to the standard pitch for "a" at 440 Hz. For tuning please use the tones on the "Drone CD".

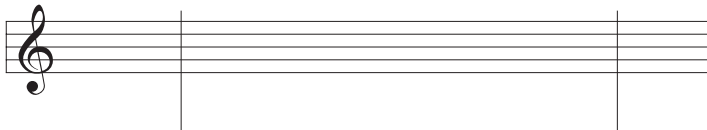
# No. 1

## Drone

1. Insert the Drone CD and play playback 01\*. What you hear is called a "drone".

Hum the note you hear.

Using this note (c) and slowly sing the first 5 tones of the C major scale up and down (1-2-3-4-5, 5-4-3-2-1). Tip: If you are unable to sing the tones straightaway, think of "do-re-mi-fa-so".



2. Add the first 5 notes of the C major scale between the vertical lines and write underneath each one the corresponding number (1-2-3-4-5). Use the space between the vertical lines to spread the five notes evenly.

3. Complete the scale with the adjacent notes next to the vertical lines: the sixth note of the scale on the right hand side of the fifth note, but the seventh note of the scale on the left hand side next to the first note (as the leading-note to the key-note C). We signify the seventh note with „j7“. „j7“ is the abbreviation for major7.

One can sing or play the scale melodically but our goal is to understand the harmonic dimension too. The following exercises will help you to hear the tension of each note in relation to the key-note.

(\*) Explanatory note for Bb- and Eb-instruments:

When it is required in the course to play the Drone CD playback 01 = C, you have to check the list on the previous page for the right playback for your instrument.

In this case (Drone CD Playback 01 = C) would be:

Bb-instruments - track 11

Eb-instruments - track 04

## 4. Sing the following exercise along with playback 01 • Drone CD.

While singing, be aware of the "color", that each note produces in relation to the drone. Each second tone always has a certain tension which is resolved when returning to the previous tone. When reaching the fifth exercise, we are already singing the whole major scale from the top down. The last exercise introduces the complete scale both upwards and downwards.

In each of these exercises, pay attention to how the tension produced by those tones is resolved by the following tone. These points are marked by the slurs.

If you start hearing how those notes resolve in advance, you are no longer just hearing melodically but are starting to hear harmonically too!

The image shows six musical staves in treble clef. The first five staves each contain three notes: a quarter note on the first line (C4), a quarter note on the second line (D4) with a slur over it, and a quarter note on the second space (E4). The sixth staff contains a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, with slurs indicating the resolution between notes.

5. Play any other drone from the CD. Imagine any note of the scale (e.g. the fourth). Move to that note with your inner ear, sing the note and check if it was the correct note by singing down to the key-note. That way you learn the color of each note in relation to the key.

6. Play the scale like that on your instrument along with the playback 01 • Drone CD. Play slowly and again pay attention to how each note has its own color in relation to the key-note (the drone).

7. Improvise over the playback 01 • Drone CD, creating musical tension and relaxation and record your improvisation together with the playback.

# No 2



## a) Listening

Listen to playback 02 • CD 1 [http://www.jazzschule-berlin.de/impro/?CD\\_1](http://www.jazzschule-berlin.de/impro/?CD_1). When do the chords change? Place the two symbols intuitively within the 4 bars. Tip: „▷“ is unstable, wants to resolve itself and lead to „□“ . „□“ is stable.



Pay attention to how the tension resolves and write down the associations that you have for each symbol. We all experience music very individually. Really take your time with this exercise in order to appreciate the distinct sounds of the chords. The further we proceed with this material, the more subtle become the differences between the chord sounds (illustrated by the symbols). Compare both sounds. This example is the basis for all the following lectures.

„□“

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„▷ to □“

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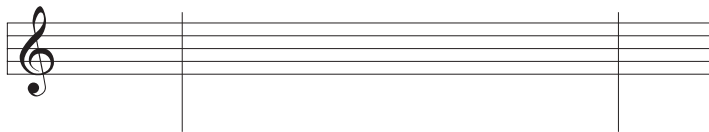


### b) 5-tone-scale (with adjacent notes)

1. Where does „▷“ lead to? The most important thing about this sound „▷“ is to hear where it leads to. And that is the direction we need to play to. It leads to „□“. „▷“ defines itself by the following chord. We listen backwards. We recognize „□“, because in that moment the tension „▷“ resolves. That means you recognize two chords once you hear „□“.

Write down the first 5 notes of „□“ between the two vertical lines.

Key of C-major:



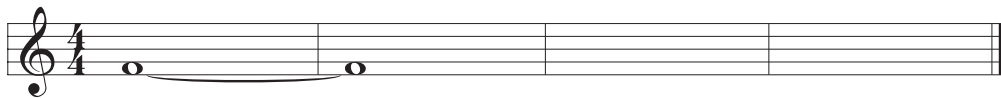
Complete the scale with the adjacent notes, the sixth on the right hand side and the j7 (as the leading note to the key note C) on the left hand side. Compare this with lecture 1.

In relation to the drone (key note) every tone has its own color. You can still feel this color, even when the chords change, because in tonal music (as opposed to atonal music) we always feel the key note.

When you sing or play a tone against a chord, there is a certain feeling of tension or of relaxation. Every tone adopts a certain color in relation to the chord. When the chord changes the tone can either remain, adopting a different color - or has to resolve.

In a sense, you take responsibility for the future of that tone you play. Over time your inner ear will be able to hear "in advance". Melodies - composed or improvised - follow these rules. The better you are able to hear "in advance", the more certainly you can intentionally control your improvisation.

2. Play the next exercise along with playback 02 • CD 1 and pay attention to the note „f“. Does it have to change in bar 3 or can it stay the same.? Write down the note.



What do you notice?

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3. Sing the next exercise along with playback 02 • CD 1.

While you are listening to the first two bars of the playback, look for the key note. When the chord changes in bar 3 it is easiest to sing the key note. With this exercise try to hear "in advance" how the tension-creating notes resolve in bar 3 of each line. Write down the symbols above the staff.

The image shows ten musical staves, each representing a line of an exercise. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are half notes, and they are often beamed together across bar lines. The exercise focuses on tension-creating notes and their resolution. The notes are as follows:

- Staff 1: Bar 1: Rest, Rest; Bar 2: Rest, Rest; Bar 3: G4, F4; Bar 4: E4, D4.
- Staff 2: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 3: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 4: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 5: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 6: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 7: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 8: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 9: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.
- Staff 10: Bar 1: G4, F4; Bar 2: E4, D4; Bar 3: C4, B3; Bar 4: A3, G3.

4. Also try to hold the tension-creating notes in bar 3 and allow them to resolve only in bar 4. What do you notice?

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5. Sing the next exercise along with playback 02 • CD 1.

Compare this exercise with exercise 3. on the previous page. The first note of each measure is the same in both exercises. We are beginning to move within the scale, regarding the guide lines of exercise 3. Write the symbols above the first stave.

6. Play this exercise on your instrument and vary the rhythm.

For „▷“ and „◻“ we use the same scale. However, while playing „▷“ we play "**towards**" C-major and while playing „◻“ we play "**in**" C-major. Play this exercise along with the C-Drone and listen how the phrases build tension and relaxation.

7. Explain how a phrase can create tension.

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### c) Improvisation

Add the symbols you have found to the following examples. Improvise with the 5-tone-scale and its adjacent notes along with the playback 02 • CD 1 in the following three ways:

1. Play one phrase until the chord changes and end on a long note. Since this phrase will be repeated after the 4. bar, we call it a four-bar-phrase.



2. Begin with a phrase in bar 3 which ends on a long note in bar 1. Tip: Start playing from the middle of bar 3.



3. Play a sequence. Repeat for example the rhythm of the first two bars or play the second phrase one tone higher or lower. Since this phrase will be repeated after the 2. bar, we call it a two-bar-phrase.



What do you notice with regard to the tension? Does the tension fundamentally change in examples 2 and 3 with respect to example 1?  
Which variation is the easiest for you?

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4. Check out a jazz standard of your choice. Where are the four-bar-phrases, where are the two-bar-phrases? Are there other phrase as well?

5. Make a recording of your improvisation along with playback 02 • CD 1.

**d) Exercises**

„▷“ is the dominant, that means the chord is built on the the V. degree of the major scale. „◻“ is the tonic, that means the chord is built on the the I. degree of the major scale.

1. Write down the two chords in the root position for the keys of F major, Bb major and G major like it is shown in the first example (C major).

A musical staff in treble clef showing two chords in root position. The first chord is G7, with a triangle symbol (▷) above it. The second chord is Cmaj7, with a square symbol (◻) above it. The notes for G7 are G4, B4, D5, and F5. The notes for Cmaj7 are C4, E4, G4, and Bb4.

An empty musical staff in treble clef for writing the G7 chord in F major.

An empty musical staff in treble clef for writing the Cmaj7 chord in Bb major.

An empty musical staff in treble clef for writing the G7 and Cmaj7 chords in G major.

2. Extend the following exercises by adding a long note in bars 3 and 4. Sing or play along with playback 02 • CD 1, beginning with the given note. Can the note be maintained or does it have to resolve to the next note of the scale?

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a half note G4 in the first bar. The rest of the staff is empty.

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a half note G4 in the first bar. The rest of the staff is empty.



# No 3



## a) Listening

Listen to the playback 03 • CD 1. A new sound is introduced. Once again place the symbols within the 4 bars. Tip: The sounds from Lesson 2 appear again and „○“ acts as a preparation for „▷“. The strongest sound we feel is the tonic „□“. Look for that sound „□“ first.



Again pay attention to the relation between the chords - in this example how the tension „▷“ is prepared by „○“ and then resolves to the tonic „□“. Write down your associations. Listen closely. Let the sounds really sink in. Once again, the differences will become firmer over time. The further you advance in the course, the easier it gets for you to feel and identify the chord changes.

„○“

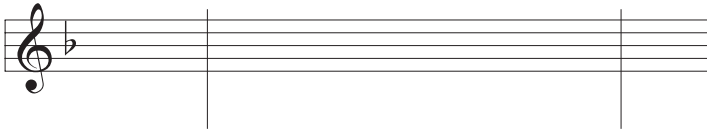
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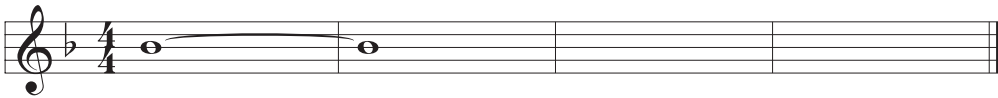
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**b) 5 tone scale (with adjacent notes)**

1. Where does „○▷“ lead to? To „□“. We have to play in this direction. Whether just „▷“ leads to „□“, or „▷“ is prepared through „○“, doesn't make a big difference to what is improvised. „○“ acting as a preparation for „▷“ is only a harmonic refinement. Now transpose the 5 tone scale, with adjacent notes from Lesson 2 to the key of F major.



2. Play (sing) the 5 tone scale with adjacent notes along with the playback 6 • Drone CD on your instrument. Pay attention to how every single note feels in relation to the key note (drone).
3. Sing and play the next exercise along with playback 03 • CD 1 and pay attention to the note in bar 3. Does it have to change?



What do you notice?

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4. Sing the next exercise along with playback 03 • CD 1.

Again try to "listen in advance" as to how each note resolves. Write the symbols above the first staff.

The image shows ten staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first staff has rests in the first two bars and notes in the last two bars. The following staves show various melodic lines with slurs and ties, illustrating different note resolutions.

5. Play this exercise on your instrument as well. Move around within the scale and try to land on the given notes e.g. in the 2nd staff: Start with the note „f“ , play a few notes and land in bar 2 on the note „e“ etc.

### c) Improvisation

Place the symbols you have found within the following examples.

Improvise using the 5 tone scale with adjacent notes in F major along with the playback 03 • CD 1 in three ways:

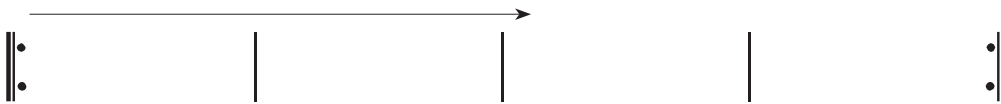
1. Invent a 2-bar motif, which ends in bar 2 on a long or a short note. Repeat this idea starting in bar 3, while keeping the same rhythmic idea. With this repetition, the notes may have to be adjusted as in the previous exercise.



2. Invent a 2-bar motif, which begins in bar 2 and ends on a long or short note in bar 3. Repeat this idea starting in bar 4, while keeping the same rhythmic idea. With this repetition, the notes may have to be adjusted.



3. Play a phrase over the first two bars and which ends in bar 3 on a long or short note.



What do you notice?

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4. Vary all three possibilities and record your improvisation along with playback 03 • CD 1.

**d) Exercise**

„ ○ “ acts as a preparation for „ ▷ “. „ ○ “ is the chord built on the II. scale degree of the major scale.

1. Write down the chords in the root position, as shown in the first example (C major), for the keys of F major, G major and Bb major.

The first staff shows a treble clef with a circle above the second line (D) labeled "Dm7" and a square above the first line (C) labeled "Cmaj7". Below are three empty staves for writing chords in F major, G major, and Bb major.

2. Complete the following exercise with whole notes in bars 2, 3 and 4. Sing or play along with playback 03 • CD 1, starting with the given note. Can the note be maintained or does it resolve to the next note of the scale?

Two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff starts with a whole note B $\flat$  on the second line. The second staff starts with a whole note B on the second space. Both staves have three empty bars for completion.

**e) Questions ?**

Write down your questions.