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NEW ASPECTS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICING SCALES



When I was young and practicing scales on my saxophone, I thought: “how can I ever learn and understand all these scales?”

Finally, I developed a systematical method of learning all the scales by taking only half of a scale – tetrachord – and comparing these tetrachords for understanding the characters and differences.

And I was very surprised, that there are only five different tetrachords for all the usual scales.

There is the lydian with the sharpened 4th, the major, the minor, the phrygian with the small second and the half-whole-tone tetrachord. Every scale is a combination of two same or different tetrachords:

1. **lydian:** lydian and major
2. **major:** major and major
3. **mixolydian:** major and minor
4. **dorian:** minor and minor
5. **aolian:** minor and phrygian
6. **phrygian:** phrygian and phrygian
7. **locrian:** phrygian and lydian

This system works also with the melodic minor scale – it is the same principle (see my table).

And even it helps with the symmetrical scales.

You should use this method and learn to sing these tetrachords and then the combinations.

When you can sing them, you will understand right quick the characters and you really understand the scales and can recognize them also by ear.

For the playing it is very important, to practice the scales through all keys very consciously (knowing the right names of the tones). But: when you practice the major

and the melodic minor scale in all keys on your instrument or/and in mind, it helps a lot, when you first sing the tetrachords and their combinations because then you know them, you can hear them and you can recognize mistakes by ear.

Singing does not matter in what key – so you just sing the tetrachords and combinations in one key – and it does not matter in which key (it has to be in the range of your voice...).

But playing and knowing the major and melodic minor in all keys is necessary.

One important rule: never make enharmonic changes – you should not destroy the basic in construction of the scales: it is the alphabet.

Another important rule: with the half-tone / whole-tone or the altered scale it is very important to think about it like root, minor second, augmented second, major third, sharpened fourth (and sharpened fifth) – but minor seven. I cannot think and understand these scales with half- and whole-tone steps – that is not musical.

For understanding tetrachords on other instruments than piano it is helpful to first speak the names und finger the notes – you have to do it in all 12 keys:

C, C#, Db, D, Eb, E, F, F#, Gb, G, Ab, A, Bb, B

But no enharmonic changes!

Only one note is changing from one to the other tetrachord:

lydian	1	2	3	#4
major	1	2	3	4
minor	1	2	b3	4
phrygian	1	b2	b3	4
8-tone-dominant	1	b2 #2	3	#4 (my name for the half-tone-whole-tone scale or tetrachord)

Compare first this 8-tone-dominant to the lydian tetrachord: 1 2 3 #4 – only the 2 changes – but in two directions: **b2 and #2**.

Finally, you can take one more tetrachord and you get the harmonic minor scale (and their derivatives): it is the harmonic tetrachord – root, minor second, major third, fourth. And in the combination – minor tetrachord and harmonic tetrachord are the harmonic minor scale.

Now try to find out the HM5 – scale...

So, good luck working with 5 or 6 Tetrachords: Lydian – Major – Minor – Phrygian – Half-Whole (1/2-1) and harmonic! It makes musical life much easier...

Scales and Tetrachords

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MODES of Major Scale	(Tetrachords)	MODES of Melodic - Minors Scale	(Tetrachords)
C D E F# - G A B C - Lydian C D E F - G A B C - MAJOR C D E F - G A Bb C - Mixolydian	(Lydian - Major) (Major-Major) (Major - Minor)	> C D E F# - G# A B C - Lydian - Augmented > C D Eb F - G A B C - Melodic - Minor > C D E F# - G A Bb C - Lydian - Dominant > C D E F - G Ab Bb C - Mixolydian - b6	(Lydian - 1/2-1) (Minor - Major) (Lydian - Minor) (Major - Phrygian)
C D Eb F - G A Bb C - Dorian C D Eb F - G Ab Bb C - Aolian C Db Eb F - G Ab Bb C - Phrygian	(Minor - Minor) (Minor - Phrygian) (Phrygian-Phrygian)	> C D Eb F - G A Bb C - Dorian - b2	(Phrygian - Minor)
C Db Eb F - Gb Ab Bb C - Locrian - Halfdiminished	(Phrygian - Lydian) - Halfdiminished	> C D Eb F - Gb Ab Bb C - Lokrian 2 - Halfdiminished 2	(Minor - Lydian)
Special Case: C Db D# E - F# G# Bb C - Altered (<i>Superlocrian</i> ?) (1/2-1 - Lydian) > altered DOMINANT! > 1, b9, #9, 3, #4, #5, 7, 8			
Symmetrical Scales: C Db D# E - F# - G A Bb C - Dominant 8-Note > 1/2-1 - Minor (Half-Whole - Minor) E F# G A Bb - C Db D# E - Diminished > Minor - 1-1/2 (Minor- Half-Whole) C D E F# G# Bb - Wholenote > Lydian-Lydian? (C D# E G G# B C - Augmented			
Practice: 12 Major Scales / 12 Melodic-Minor Scales / Symmetrical scales (THINK and PLAY) SING: 5 Tetrachords und 14 Modes, Symmetrical Scales			
5 Tetrachords: Lydian - Major - Minor - Phrygian - Half-Whole (1/2-1)			

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Nowe aspekty rozumienia i ćwiczenia skal

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest prezentacją koncepcji opanowania wszystkich skal używanych w jazzowej improwizacji poprzez przyswojenie zaledwie pięciu tetrachordów i ich odpowiedniego łączenia. Taki sposób, w opinii autora, upraszcza i przyspiesza ten kluczowy dla każdego muzyka jazzowego proces.

Słowa kluczowe: skale używane w jazzie, tetrachord, efektywność procesu uczenia się