

BANDED

BANDED Lesson 3 **From Minor Pentatonic Scale to the Blues Scale**

This culminating lesson will build on **BANDED** Lessons 1 & 2, and will enable students to gain an awareness of the relationship between the minor pentatonic and the blues scale. In addition, students will be introduced to the harmonic structure of the standard blues progression. Students will begin by composing and playing simple melodies based on the blues scale, then move on to improvising over a 12-bar blues using different approaches.

Overall Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the blues scale by composing a melody for several 12-bar blues compositions and playing their melodies over a standard 12-bar blues progression.

Materials and Resources:

- One or a mix of the following: notation paper, Notation software, a DAW
- Preferred instrument
- Suggested listening:
 - Bessie Smith – St. Louis Blues
 - BB King – Everyday I Have the Blues
 - Duke Ellington – C Jam Blues
 - T-Bone Walker – Stormy Monday
 - Eric Clapton – Before You Accuse Me

PULSE Connections:

- Form Level 1 – Making Connections with C Jam Blues
- Form Level 2 – Making Connections with All Blues
- Melody Level 1 – Making Connections with Freddie Freeloader
- Melody Level 2 – Blues Scale
- Melody Level 2 – Blues Scale Example

Classroom/rehearsal room settings:

These activities can be done in a variety of classroom/rehearsal room settings:

- Students working alone or in pairs
- Students in small groups using classroom instruments
- Students in a variety of ensemble settings (traditional or jazz band; choral; orchestra; string ensemble; modern band – guitar, piano, bass, drums; etc.)
- Students working with a private instructor
- Students using a digital audio workstation such as GarageBand, GarageBand iOS, Mixcraft, Soundtrap, Soundation, etc.
- Students using notation software, such as Noteflight, Sibelius, Finale, etc

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards

CREATING

Common Anchor #1 – Imagine – Generate musical ideas for various purposes and contexts

MU:Cr1.1.C.1a - Describe how sounds and short musical ideas can be used to represent personal experiences, moods, visual images, and/or storylines.

Common Anchor #2 – Plan and Make – Select and develop musical ideas for defined purposes and contexts

MU:Cr2.1.C.1a – Assemble and organize sounds or short musical ideas to create initial expressions of selected experiences, moods, images, or storylines

MU:Cr2.1.C.1b – Identify and describe the development of sounds or short musical ideas in drafts of music within simple forms (such as one-part, cyclical, or binary).

Common Anchor #3 – Evaluate and Refine – Evaluate and refine selected musical ideas to create musical work that meets appropriate criteria

MU:Cr3.1.C.1a – Identify, describe, and apply teacher-provided criteria to assess and refine the technical and expressive aspects of evolving drafts leading to final versions.

Present – Share creative musical work that conveys intent, demonstrates craftsmanship, and exhibits originality

MU:Cr3.2.C.1a – Share music through the use of notation, performance, or technology, and demonstrate how the elements of music have been employed to realize expressive intent.

* Composition/Theory Strand

<http://www.nafme.org/wp-content/files/2014/11/2014-Music-Standards-Composition-Theory-Strand.pdf>

Instructional Activity Ideas:

1. If needed, review material about the minor pentatonic scale and the ideas for writing melodies introduced in Lessons 1 and 2.
2. Introduce students to the blues scale. Compare the minor pentatonic scale and the blues scale.

As seen previously, the minor pentatonic scale has 5 notes:

C minor Pentatonic Scale

1 b3 4 5 b7 8 b7 5 4 b3 1

The blues scale is similar to the minor pentatonic, but adds one additional note, the flatted 5th.

C Blues Scale

1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 8 b7 5 b5 4 b3 1

3. After exploring the above material, introduce students to the standard blues progression. Below are two variations using the I, IV, and V chords:

Version 1

12-Bar Blues

C⁷ C⁷ C⁷ C⁷
I I I I

F⁷ F⁷ C⁷ C⁷
IV IV I I

G⁷ F⁷ C⁷ C⁷
V IV I I

Version 2

12-Bar Blues

Staff 1: C⁷ F⁷ C⁷ C⁷
I IV I I

Staff 2: F⁷ F⁷ C⁷ C⁷
IV IV I I

Staff 3: G⁷ F⁷ C⁷ G⁷
V IV I V

4. The blues is usually in strophic form, with the same 12 bars repeating. Have students listen to and analyze several blues songs, either using songs of the teacher's choosing or songs from the PULSE Song Library. In addition, some suggested listening is listed in the **Materials and Resources** section above. If appropriate, students can also suggest songs for analysis.
5. Discuss the goals for the composition project:
 - a. The main goal of this composition project is to compose melodies that can be played over a standard blues progression.
 - b. Within the repeating "A" section of the strophic form, there is often another pattern. You'll notice that often the 12 bars of the blues are divided into an AAB pattern, with the 12 bars being divided into three 4-bar phrases. The first two phrases have the same melody, and the third phrase has a different melody. The following example illustrates an AAB pattern:

12-Bar Blues - AAB Pattern

Staff A: C⁷ C⁷ C⁷ C⁷
I I I I

Staff A: F⁷ F⁷ C⁷ C⁷
IV IV I I

Staff B: G⁷ F⁷ C⁷ C⁷
V IV I I

- c. Alone, in pairs, or small groups, students will compose several 4-bar melodic patterns based on the blues scale. Many approaches to melody writing were presented in previous lessons. If needed, review those concepts now.
- d. Once the students have composed their blues melodies, they will begin to develop their 12-bar blues compositions using an AAB pattern. Students will create several versions, combining different melodic patterns for each version.
- e. When students have completed their 12-bar blues compositions, they will practice and perform their melodies for the class. In addition, students will use their melodies to do echo and call and response activities in small or large groups.