
THE WHOLE HORN · CURRICULA AND SYLLABI

Jazz

The Jazz Program · Afro–Cuban Music and Percussion · The Jazz Year · Jazz: The First 30 Days

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ONLINE

Every syllabus, with its practice links and films, is at thewholehorn.com/curriculum. Each link opens the exercise in The Whole Horn app, on the student's own instrument.

The Jazz Program Licence to Maîtrise

An innovative curriculum rooted in the traditions of jazz while integrating elements of Lebanon's rich musical heritage.

Thomas Hornig · Henri Selmer Paris Artist · The Whole Horn

Mission

Mission statement

Our mission is to cultivate a new generation of musicians who possess a deep understanding of jazz and its associated traditions, emphasizing the transformative power of ensemble performance. By fostering innovation alongside a solid foundation in the jazz language, students will be equipped to contribute to and evolve the art form in Lebanon and beyond.

Ensemble at the heart

At the Lebanese Higher National Conservatory of Music, ensemble experience is the cornerstone of both the learning and teaching philosophy. It is our belief that no student can truly acquire the skills necessary for professional success without regular, immersive participation in ensemble settings.

Collective performance

“The primary aspirational driving force for musicians at every level, and across the globe, lies in the incalculable joy and wonder of collective performance.”

Through ensemble participation, students learn to express the full gamut of human emotions.

Two higher cycles

Watch the video · 22 s

FIRST HIGHER CYCLE · LICENCE

Focus: Establishing foundational skills in jazz performance and theory.

Jazz Theory I & II

Ear Training I & II

Instrumental Proficiency (weekly private lessons)

Jazz Improvisation I

Ensemble Performance (small group)

History of Jazz

Introduction to Composition and Arranging

Introduction to Piano (non-pianists)

SECOND HIGHER CYCLE · MAÎTRISE

Focus: Advanced performance, composition, and professional readiness.

Advanced Jazz Theory and Harmony

Advanced Ear Training

Jazz Composition and Arranging

Improvisation Techniques II

Ensemble Performance (large ensemble and small group)

Contemporary Jazz Styles

Capstone Recital

Music Pedagogy and Professional Practices

Two higher cycles

What defines the cycles

“We have to define what those cycles are. I think they can be largely defined by the demonstration of advanced technique and the demonstration of the ability to learn and being [in] command on a stage with their peers ... playing whatever repertoire is being called, no matter what the repertoire is.”

“All students in the second cycle should be very, very capable of playing ... difficult repertoire, like Inner Urge or Countdown or Giant Steps or any of those difficult tunes, and they shouldn’t be seen as difficult but rather a job that has to be done. You work on these things very carefully, meticulously, with a ... greater amount of repetition, and you’re fine ... It’s really more about the work methodology and the work ethic when it comes to preparing for gigs. That would be a successful outcome as far as I’m concerned in any musical discipline in the conservatory.”

Certificate and diploma

“The [jazz] program is in its infancy at the National Conservatory, so [the] determination on exactly what [the] final syllabus will be ... will be the result of a lot of consultations, but my sense of things [is that a] certificate can be offered at the end of the first year, and [a] diploma for specialization [in] jazz can be offered at the end of the third year, but these are all very preliminary assessments. So I think that the degree in jazz is going to be a sort of qualifier to their degree in their principal instrument, and depending on the kind of expertise that is brought into the Conservatory to teach the different aspects of the jazz curriculum, students can benefit from more refined specializations.”

Length of each cycle

First Higher Cycle: 3 years. Second Higher Cycle: 2 years. These are the lengths of the jazz department of the Paris Conservatoire (CNSMD de Paris): a 3-year first cycle (180 ECTS) and a 2-year second cycle (120 ECTS) conferring the grade of master.

The academic year is divided into two semesters: Fall Semester: September to mid-February. Spring Semester: March to July. Orientation for new students: Early September. Examination periods: February and July. Recital evaluations: End of each semester.

Lebanese Higher National Conservatory of Music · Jazz Curriculum

Core areas of study

The program follows a European-style higher education structure with two primary cycles.

Watch the video · 25 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Instrumental Proficiency

Development of technical and expressive skills.

Open

Music Theory and Harmony

Comprehensive study of jazz harmony and advanced theoretical concepts.

Ear Training

Mastery of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic recognition.

Ensemble Playing

Small group dynamics and performance practice.

Core areas of study

The program follows a European-style higher education structure with two primary cycles.

Improvisation

Exploration of improvisational techniques and strategies.

Arranging and Composition

Techniques for arranging and composing within jazz idioms.

Music History

Historical study of jazz and its cultural contexts.

Jazz Performance Syllabus

The class as taught today

[Open](#)

Practice Instrumental Proficiency in The Whole Horn

[Open in the app](#)

Jazz Theory I & II

Two semesters · LHNCM Jazz Theory 101

How it is taught

“[Jazz Theory] I and II, that’s going to be taught pretty much in class. [It] is gonna be one class ... opportunities to experiment and perform as jazz players, and a lot of emphasis will be put on scales and chords and [chord-scale] relationships. But a formal jazz theory class, I think that[’s] something that we have to wait [for] until [we have a] professor that can develop a very specific syllabus for that.”

The course

Theory of Jazz Music is divided into two credit courses to be taught in the span of two academic semesters: MUJ 342 and MUJ 352. This course provides in addition to the classical theory of music, the specific foundations of Jazz Theory and harmony. MUJ 342 begins with basic Jazz Theory, the Major Scale and the II–V–I Progression, Chord, Major Scale Harmony, Melodic Minor Scale Harmony, Diminished Scale Harmony, Whole Tone Scale Harmony, to how to practice Scales and Slash Chords.

Major scales · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

ii–V–I arpeggios (ii7–V7–Imaj7, the major-key progression) · every key · quarters · ♩ =60

Open in the app

Diatonic 7th chords of the major scale · all 12 keys · ABCD · quarters · ♩ =60

Open in the app

Jazz Theory I & II

Two semesters · LHNCM Jazz Theory 101

Diatonic 7th chords of melodic minor · all 12 keys · ABCD · quarters · ♩ =60

[Open in the app](#)

7th chords of the diminished scale (half-whole, then whole-half) · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60

[Open in the app](#)

Triads of the whole-tone scale (augmented triads) · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60

[Open in the app](#)

Outcomes and content

The primary goal of any aspiring jazz musician is to learn to improvise. To that end this course will look at the fundamental concepts of jazz harmony, chord/scale relationships, chord voicings and commonly used substitutions. Practical application of this material will be a main focus and students will be tested on their use of this knowledge in a live performance setting.

The students develop an ability to map out chord scale relationships in standard jazz repertoire. They will also be asked to study chord voicings, alternate chord progressions for common forms. Emphasis will be put on developing basic knowledge of jazz harmony and then immediately applying those skills in classroom performances of modern, standard jazz repertoire.

Texts: Modern Reading Text in 4/4 time – Louis Bellson/ Gil Breines; Essential Rhythms For Jazz Ensemble – Doug Beach & George Shutack; Improvisation The Jazz Language – Dan Haerle; Jazz/Rock voicings for the contemporary keyboard player – Dan Haerle.

Ear Training I & II

Jazz Sight Singing, Rhythmic Chanting and Ear Training

Watch the video · 20 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Course requirements

The student will sing and identify intervals, basic rhythms, melodies in major and minor keys, triads, chord progressions, and seventh chords. Emphasis will be put on learning how to transcribe melodic lines, jazz improvisation, and bass lines as a way to profoundly internalize jazz phrasing and rhythmic concepts.

Ear games: Echo level 1 (sing the interval back) + Name It level 1 (identify the interval) · 1 hour each

Open in the app

Ear game: Chord Colors level 2 (major, minor, diminished, augmented triads) · 1 hour

Open in the app

Ear game: Chord Colors level 5 (dominant 7, minor 7, major 7, half-diminished, diminished 7) · 1 hour

Open in the app

Keyboard and grading

The student will also demonstrate basic keyboard skills for intervals, scales and be able to play chord progressions of selected repertoire. The student's grade will be determined by short periodic exams in singing, aural recognition, easy transcription, memorization of selected Jazz standards and keyboard skills.

Improvisation

Jazz Improvisation I (First Higher Cycle) · Improvisation Techniques II (Second Higher Cycle)

Watch the video · 22 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Improvisation techniques

Using guide tones and chord tones as a basis for melodic lines.
Applying scale-based improvisation to navigate harmonic changes.
Developing rhythmic motifs and phrasing for expressive solos.
Practicing transcriptions of jazz solos to internalize vocabulary.

ii–V–I arpeggios: the chord tones of ii7–V7–Imaj7 · every key · quarters · ♩ =60 (guide-tone lines are not in the app)

Open in the app

Improvisation

Jazz Improvisation I (First Higher Cycle) · Improvisation Techniques II (Second Higher Cycle)

Chord-scale relationships and vocabulary

Understanding chord-scale relationships, such as using Dorian and Mixolydian modes for minor and dominant chords.

Building a vocabulary of licks and phrases through transcription and practice.

Exploring timing and pacing to create cohesive musical statements.

Practicing solo construction by writing and memorizing ideal solos over standard progressions.

Using tools like Miles Davis's recordings, especially 'Kind of Blue,' for practical examples of lyrical and accessible improvisation.

Dorian, then Mixolydian · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

[Open in the app](#)

Ensembles

Students at LHNCM participate in a wide range of ensembles, including small combos, big bands, and cross-cultural fusion groups.

Objectives

Perform a diverse repertoire with stylistic accuracy and expression.
Develop ensemble cohesion through active listening and communication.
Explore improvisation within ensemble contexts, applying theoretical principles.
Participate in regular performances, fostering stage presence and professionalism.

Performance opportunities

Weekly ensemble rehearsals and performances in small and large groups.
Regular student recitals showcasing solo and ensemble work.
Participation in jazz festivals, concerts, and community events throughout Lebanon.
Collaborative performances with other departments and external institutions.
Opportunities to perform original compositions in professional settings.

Composition and Arranging

Jazz Composition and Arranging

Course topics

Writing for small and large ensembles.

Techniques in melodic coupling, counterpoint, and reharmonization.

Exploring non-functional harmony and advanced voicing techniques.

Creating compositions that blend traditional jazz forms with modern innovations.

Composition techniques

Students will learn techniques such as melodic development, reharmonization, and the use of modal and chromatic language in original works. Compositions should integrate theoretical knowledge with creative expression.

History of Jazz

Understanding the historical development of jazz is essential to appreciating its cultural and artistic significance.

Watch the video · 26 s

thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

The eras

Origins of Jazz (1900–1914): Jazz emerged from a blend of African, European, and American musical traditions, with roots in blues, spirituals, and ragtime.

Swing Era (1929–1945): Characterized by large ensembles and highly danceable rhythms, the Swing Era made jazz America's popular music.

Bebop (1940s): A response to the commercialism of swing, bebop introduced complex harmonies, fast tempos, and virtuosic improvisation.

The eras (continued)

Cool Jazz and Hard Bop (1950s): Cool jazz emphasized smooth, lyrical lines, while hard bop incorporated elements of gospel and blues.

Free Jazz and Fusion (1960s–1970s): Free jazz broke traditional harmonic and rhythmic conventions, while fusion combined jazz with rock and world music influences.

Rhythm Studies

Rhythm Studies and Jazz Drumming · Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345)

Watch the video · 17 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

When it is offered

An elective, offered when a specialist teacher is available. The syllabus for Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345) is ready to run.

Course outline

History and fundamentals of jazz drumming.

Triplet interpretations and cymbal line patterns.

Advanced coordination and reading jazz charts.

Afro-Cuban and Afro-Latin rhythm integration.

Courses for rhythm section instruments (piano, bass, drums) emphasize foundational responsibilities such as timekeeping, groove establishment, and harmonic support. Advanced studies include comping techniques, rhythmic independence, and interaction with soloists.

Rhythm Studies

Rhythm Studies and Jazz Drumming · Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345)

Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion

The course explores from a historical perspective the various styles of Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion along its dual relationship to the Jazz language. The percussion instruments are all studied and explored in-group setting.

The syllabus · MUJ 345 · 15 weeks · 2 credits

Afro-Cuban religious ceremonial rhythms, in addition to drum set applications, are also covered. The course also focuses in depth upon the analysis and knowledge of the inner workings of clave and basic techniques on the major battery of Afro-Cuban percussion (congas, bongo, timbales) in addition to [the] minor battery (maracas, guiro, shakers, cowbells, etc.).

Weeks 1–8 · Brazil. The Brazilian percussion instruments (surdo, agogô, triangle, caixeta, ganzá, afoxé, reco-reco, tamborim, pandeiro, cuíca, repinique, berimbau...); bossa nova and samba bass lines and comping; the drummer's role. Students play the rhythms while singing the standards ("Corcovado", "Só Danço Samba") and rehearse four bossa novas and three sambas in a small group.

Weeks 9–13 · Cuba. Five clave rhythms, the cascara, traditional son clave styles, rumba clave styles, contemporary Cuban styles; a history of Afro-Cuban music and ten Afro-Cuban musicians, such as Paquito D'Rivera and Tito Puente.

Weeks 14–15. A public performance with a small jazz group.

Texts. Essential Rhythms for Jazz Ensemble (Kendor); The Essence of Brazilian Percussion and Drum Set and Cuba: Passport to a New World of Music (Alfred).

Recommended: Rebeca Mauleón's 101 Montunos and Salsa Guidebook; Aebersold volumes 31, 64, 69, 77 and 98.

Grading. Participation and practice 20%, class work and quizzes 20%, midterm 20%, final 40%.

Rhythm studies and Afro-Cuban studies

"... The likelihood that we would add in a rhythm studies or ... Afro-Cuban studies component to the jazz program ... depends on the human capital [that] comes in, and many of the courses that will be offered are gonna depend on the expertise that comes into the Conservatory."

Scales and harmony

Jazz harmony is built on chord progressions that create tension and resolution.

Watch the video · 22 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Scales and modes

Major Scale: The fundamental scale in Western music, consisting of seven notes arranged in whole and half-step intervals: W-W-H-W-W-W-H.

Modes of the Major Scale: Derived by starting the major scale on each successive note, these modes include: Ionian (Major), Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian (Natural Minor), and Locrian.

Pentatonic Scales: Five-note scales commonly used in blues and jazz improvisation.

Blues Scale: A six-note scale used extensively in blues and jazz, adding a b5 to the minor pentatonic scale: 1-b3-4-b5-5-b7.

Melodic Minor Scale: A scale with a minor third and raised sixth and seventh degrees ascending.

Harmonic Minor Scale: A minor scale with a raised seventh degree, creating a distinctive interval structure.

Major scales · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

The seven modes of C major, each from its own degree: C Ionian, D Dorian, E Phrygian, F Lydian, G Mixolydian, A Aeolian, B Locrian · written keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Major pentatonic, then minor pentatonic · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Scales and harmony

Jazz harmony is built on chord progressions that create tension and resolution.

Melodic minor · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Harmonic minor · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · two octaves

Open in the app

Chord progressions

ii–V–I Progression: A cornerstone of jazz harmony, the ii–V–I resolves tension through a sequence of chords based on the second, fifth, and first degrees of the scale.

Minor ii–V–I: A variation used in minor keys, typically involving a half-diminished ii chord (e.g., Dm7b5), a dominant V chord (e.g., G7), and a minor I chord (e.g., Cm7).

Voice Leading: The smooth transition of notes between chords, emphasizing stepwise motion and minimizing leaps.

Extended Chords: Chords that include notes beyond the seventh, such as ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths, adding richness and complexity.

ii–V–I arpeggios (ii7–V7–Imaj7) · every key · quarters · ♩ =60

Open in the app

Diatonic 9th chords of the major scale · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 (the app stops at the ninth)

Open in the app

Performance

Performance is where theoretical knowledge and technical skills come to life.

Watch the video · 20 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

Performance practices

Preparing for live performances through rigorous rehearsals.
Adhering to professional standards for attire, punctuality, and stage conduct.
Interpreting charts and lead sheets accurately and expressively.
Engaging with audiences through dynamic performances.

Program features

Masterclasses: Regular sessions with internationally recognized jazz artists.
Workshops: Practical training in studio recording and live sound engineering.
Collaborative Opportunities: Projects with other departments in the conservatory.
Electives: Courses in world music, jazz technology, and interdisciplinary studies.

Performance

Performance is where theoretical knowledge and technical skills come to life.

Open the Jazz Performance syllabus in The Whole Horn

Open the page

Jazz standards, every year

“They should learn at least 10 jazz standards every single year, if not many, many more. That would be the bare minimum, I think, of the first year ...”

Elsewhere: the Paris Conservatoire’s first cycle has a required course, “Repertoire and oral tradition” (20 ECTS), with no published tune count. At North Texas, each upper-division jazz saxophone jury draws on a list of about 20 tunes from one era, and students play three transcriptions a semester (2021 saxophone handbook).

Capstone Recital

Second Higher Cycle · Maîtrise

Watch the video · 19 s

thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program/

Watch the video

The recital

A culminating performance project that allows students to synthesize and showcase their technical, creative, and performance skills. Students present a curated program of jazz standards, original compositions, and stylistic explorations that reflect their journey through the program.

Student performances are evaluated on fluency, technical facility, and interpretive communication. These criteria are designed to provide specific feedback and foster continuous improvement.

Assessment criteria

Preparation and participation in ensemble rehearsals and performances.

Mastery of scales, improvisational techniques, and theoretical knowledge.

Original compositions and arrangements for diverse ensemble configurations.

Proficiency in rhythm studies and coordination exercises.

Major, harmonic minor, melodic minor, major and minor pentatonic · all 12 keys · quarters · ♩ =60 · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app

Open in the app

Graduation

First Higher Cycle

Licence

Foundational studies in jazz performance, theory, and history.

Second Higher Cycle

Maîtrise

Advanced studies focusing on specialization, composition, and professional performance.

Beyond

After the Maîtrise

Upon completion of the Maîtrise, students may pursue further specialization in specific areas such as jazz composition, performance, or pedagogy.

The standard for graduation

“[As for] graduation, what the standard should be for graduation is, I think, ... from my perspective, ... gonna be more based on their work, their work ethic, their attitude, and the extent to which they are willing to make themselves available to be in [support] of others. Some young musicians crave the limelight. They really want to have their name on the billing, and that [circumstance trumps] ... any incentive, I think, to initiate discussions on the formation of various groups, to hopefully get together [and] rehearse material that maybe can be located ... through someone like me, or through websites where you can get some of this repertory, and/or write original compositions for these things.”

The whole program

The class as taught today is the Jazz Performance Syllabus.

Jazz is all about individual accountability.

thewholehorn.com/jazz-syllabus

Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345)

Rhythm Studies and Jazz Drumming · Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345)

Thomas Hornig · Henri Selmer Paris Artist · The Whole Horn

The syllabus • MUJ 345 • 15 weeks • 2 credits

Watch the video • 17 s

Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion

The course explores from a historical perspective the various styles of Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion along its dual relationship to the Jazz language. The percussion instruments are all studied and explored in-group setting.

Afro-Cuban religious ceremonial rhythms, in addition to drum set applications, are also covered. The course also focuses in depth upon the analysis and knowledge of the inner workings of clave and basic techniques on the major battery of Afro-Cuban percussion (congas, bongo, timbales) in addition to [the] minor battery (maracas, guiro, shakers, cowbells, etc.).

Weeks 1–8 • Brazil.

The Brazilian percussion instruments (surdo, agogô, triangle, caixeta, ganzá, afoxé, reco-reco, tamborim, pandeiro, cuíca, repinique, berimbau...); bossa nova and samba bass lines and comping; the drummer's role. Students play the rhythms while singing the standards ("Corcovado", "Só Danço Samba") and rehearse four bossa novas and three sambas in a small group.

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Five clave rhythms, the cascara, traditional son clave styles, rumba clave styles, contemporary Cuban styles; a history of Afro-Cuban music and ten Afro-Cuban musicians, such as Paquito D'Rivera and Tito Puente.

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Weeks 14–15.

A public performance with a small jazz group.

Texts.

Essential Rhythms for Jazz Ensemble (Kendor); The Essence of Brazilian Percussion and Drum Set and Cuba: Passport to a New World of Music (Alfred).
Recommended: Rebeca Mauleón's 101 Montunos and Salsa Guidebook; Aebersold volumes 31, 64, 69, 77 and 98.

Grading.

Participation and practice 20%, class work and quizzes 20%, midterm 20%, final 40%.

Rhythm studies and Afro-Cuban studies

When it is offered: An elective, offered when a specialist teacher is available. The syllabus for Afro-Cuban Music and Percussion (MUJ 345) is ready to run.

“... The likelihood that we would add in a rhythm studies or ... Afro-Cuban studies component to the jazz program ... depends on the human capital [that] comes in, and many of the courses that will be offered are gonna depend on the expertise that comes into the Conservatory.”

thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-program

The Jazz Year, Week by Week

October to July. The language of jazz, one step a week. Every link in concert pitch, so the whole band plays the same sounding scale.

Thomas Hornig · Henri Selmer Paris Artist · The Whole Horn

One link a week. The whole band, one sound.

Watch the video · 21 s

The problem

In a jazz class every horn reads in a different key. 'Play the C blues' means A blues on alto, D blues on tenor and trumpet, and C blues on trombone.

The solution

Each week below is one link in concert pitch. Paste it into Google Classroom, WhatsApp or email; every student opens it written for their own instrument, and the band sounds as one. Anything you assign opens free for your students — up to two octaves; the full range is the Full Studio. No student accounts.

The year at a glance

FALL • 16 WEEKS

Weeks 1–4 introduction to jazz standards and foundational improvisation · 5–8 technical development: scales, arpeggios, piano voicings · 9–12 ensemble collaboration across jazz and crossover genres · 13–16 mid-term assessments. MID-TERM early March.

SPRING • 16 WEEKS

1–4 advanced improvisation and transcription · 5–8 composition and arranging · 9–12 collaborative rehearsals and performance preparation · 13–16 final assessments. FINAL early July.

Running through the year, one step a week, in Tom's order of importance: the 12 major scales straight up and down (one octave, then the full range), diatonic 3rds, the chromatic scale and chromatic minor 3rds, pentatonics straight and broken, the blues and rhythm changes, diatonic triads and 7th chords in all 12 major keys, whole-tone and diminished scales, then more chromatic shapes. Transcription through the spring.

1a · the 12 major scales, all 12 keys · one octave · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing · concert pitch

[Open in the app](#)

1b · the 12 major scales, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing · concert pitch · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app

[Open in the app](#)

The year at a glance

2 · diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing · concert pitch

Open in the app

3 · the chromatic scale (♩ =88) and chromatic minor 3rds (♩ =80) · eighths · swing · concert pitch

Open in the app

4a · major and minor pentatonics, straight, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · concert pitch

Open in the app

4b · major and minor pentatonics, broken, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · concert pitch

Open in the app

5 · the blues bass line in F (♩ =92) and rhythm changes in B ♭: B ♭ major + the arpeggios of B ♭, G, C, F (♩ =80) · swing · concert pitch

Open in the app

The year at a glance

6 · diatonic triads and 7th chords, all 12 major keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · concert pitch

[Open in the app](#)

7a · whole-tone scales, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · concert pitch

[Open in the app](#)

7b · diminished scales, half-whole and whole-half, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · concert pitch

[Open in the app](#)

Weeks, not dates.

October

Weeks 1–4 · Fall · Introduction to jazz standards; foundational improvisation exercises.

The first weeks

“In the beginning, ... starting [in] October, it’s gonna be an assessment of what [the] students’ abilities are, [how] they’re playing, and an attempt to try to organize sessions [where] we have a [bass] player, and we have horns, we have a ... drummer, and we have a pianist, and then we can start to have small ... classes. We can teach various concepts, and we can also bring in arrangements that I have, and [ask] the students to write their own arrangements [and] compositions for that ensemble.”

Watch the video · 19 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

1 Major scales straight up and down: F and B $\flat$, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ = 80 · swing
+ Standard: Autumn Leaves, E minor (Real Book, 6th ed.) · Listen & discover: find out what YOU love, and find a mentor, a great artist whose sound you want to emulate

Open in the app

October

Weeks 1–4 · Fall · Introduction to jazz standards; foundational improvisation exercises.

2

Major scales straight up and down: E $\flat$ and A $\flat$, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ = 80 · swing
+ Standard: Blue Bossa, C minor · D $\flat$ major bridge

Open in the app

3

Major scales straight up and down: D $\flat$ and F $\sharp$, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ = 80 · swing
+ Standard: C–Jam Blues, C blues · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

4

Major scales straight up and down: B and E, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ = 80 · swing
+ Standard: Summertime, A minor · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

November

Weeks 5–8 · Fall · Technical development: scales, arpeggios, and piano voicings.

November

“So the first step is a lot of rudiments, and then we go into effectively a kind of performance class situation in November.”

5

Major scales straight up and down: A and D, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Shell voicings — ii–V–I in all 12 keys. 3rd & 7th in one hand, root in the other · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

6

Major scales straight up and down: G and C, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Shell voicings — ii–V–I in all 12 keys. 3rd & 7th in one hand, root in the other · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

7

Major scales straight up and down, all 12 keys · the full range
all 12 keys · eighths · the free app plays up to two octaves · every note tongued · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Play the 12-bar blues form. One hand and/or both hands · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

8

Diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing
+ 12-bar blues — root (LH) + minor pentatonic · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

December

Weeks 9–11 · Fall · Ensemble collaboration across jazz and crossover genres.

Watch the video · 17 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

9

Diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Standard: Take the A Train, C major · D7 #11 · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

10

The chromatic scale
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Standard: All of Me, C major · E7, A7, D7 · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

11

Chromatic minor 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Standard: Satin Doll, C major · ii–V chains · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

January

Weeks 12–14 · Fall · Ensemble collaboration across jazz and crossover genres → Mid-term assessments: individual and ensemble recordings.

Watch the video · 21 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

12

Chromatic minor 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Standard: Fly Me to the Moon, A minor / C major · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

13

Pentatonics straight up and down, major and minor
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Record: melody plus one improvised chorus of a standard, with the play-along (video) · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

14

Broken-scale pentatonics, major and minor
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Record: melody plus one improvised chorus of a standard, with the play-along (video) · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

February

Weeks 15–16 · Fall · Mid-term assessments: individual and ensemble recordings.

Watch the video · 25 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

15

The 12-bar blues in F: the blues bass line from memory
F, 12 bars · ♩ =92 · swing
+ Ensemble recording for the mid-term: your part, with the play-along

Open in the app

16

Rhythm changes: I Got Rhythm, in B ♭
B ♭ · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Standard: I Got Rhythm, B ♭ major · rhythm changes · Ensemble recording for the mid-term: your part, with the play-along

Open in the app

March

Weeks 17–18 · Spring · Advanced improvisation techniques; transcription projects.

17

Diatonic triads, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · Echo ear training, level 1
+ Transcribe a 12-bar blues: two or three choruses from your favorite artist

Open in the app

18

Diatonic triads, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 2
+ Transcribe rhythm changes: two or three choruses from your favorite artist

Open in the app

Mid-term · early March

Mid-term assessments: individual and ensemble recordings.
Live or video-taped performance featuring the entire class. Short solos for all participants.

Ear training this month — Listen, Sing, Play.

March · Echo ear training, levels 1 and 2

Open in the app

April

Weeks 19–22 · Spring · Advanced improvisation techniques; transcription projects → Composition and arranging workshops for ensembles.

Watch the video · 17 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

19

Diatonic 7th chords, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · Echo ear training, level 3
+ Transcribe excerpts from a really important album, like Miles Davis, Kind of Blue

Open in the app

20

Diatonic 7th chords, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 4
+ Find recordings of jazz standards and transcribe bits and pieces you like

Open in the app

21

Whole-tone scales
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 5
+ Standard: Impressions, D Dorian · E ♮ Dorian bridge · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in MuseScore

Open in the app

April

Weeks 19–22 · Spring · Advanced improvisation techniques; transcription projects → Composition and arranging workshops for ensembles.

22

Diminished scales · half–whole
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 6
+ Standard: So What, D Dorian · E ♭ Dorian bridge · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in
MuseScore

Open in the app

Ear training this month — Listen, Sing, Play.

April · Echo ear training, levels 3 to 6

Open in the app

May

Weeks 23–26 · Spring · Composition and arranging workshops for ensembles → Collaborative rehearsals and performance preparation.

May

“... In May there should be hopefully [a] performance where the students will get up and play ... standards, and hopefully arrangement[s] we may have written, and composition[s] ...”

23

Diminished scales · whole–half
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Straight, No Chaser, F blues · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in MuseScore

[Open in the app](#)

24

Chromatic major 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Watermelon Man, F · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in MuseScore

[Open in the app](#)

25

Chromatic perfect 4ths and double 4ths · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Perdido, B ♭ major

[Open in the app](#)

26

Chromatic major and minor triads · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Billie's Bounce, F blues

[Open in the app](#)

June

Weeks 27–30 · Spring · Collaborative rehearsals and performance preparation → Final assessments: collaborative performances and project submissions.

Watch the video · 17 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

27

Chromatic diminished and augmented triads · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Now's the Time, F blues

Open in the app

28

Chromatic major 7th and dominant 7th chords · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Tenor Madness, B ♭ blues

Open in the app

29

Chromatic minor 7th chords · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

Open in the app

30

Final review: the 12 major scales, the full range
all 12 keys · eighths · the free app plays up to two octaves · every note tongued · ♩ =100 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

Open in the app

July

Weeks 31–32 · Spring · Final assessments: collaborative performances and project submissions.

Watch the video · 20 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

31

Final review: diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =100 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

Open in the app

32

Final review: chromatic minor 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =100 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

Open in the app

Final · early July

Final assessments: collaborative performances and project submissions.
Live or video-taped performance featuring the entire class. Short solos for all participants.

The standards • 1 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Autumn Leaves

E minor (Real Book, 6th ed.) · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Blue Bossa

C minor · D $\flat$ major bridge · concert pitch

[Open](#)

C-Jam Blues

C blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Summertime

A minor · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Take the A Train

C major · D7 #11 · concert pitch

[Open](#)

All of Me

C major · E7, A7, D7 · concert pitch

[Open](#)

The standards • 1 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Satin Doll

C major • ii–V chains • concert pitch

[Open](#)

Fly Me to the Moon

A minor / C major • concert pitch

[Open](#)

The standards • 2 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Impressions

D Dorian · E ♭ Dorian bridge · concert pitch

[Open](#)

So What

D Dorian · E ♭ Dorian bridge · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Straight, No Chaser

F blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Watermelon Man

F · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Perdido

B ♭ major · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Billie's Bounce

F blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

The standards • 2 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Now's the Time

F blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Tenor Madness

B $\flat$ blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Grading

Watch the video · 18 s

40 points

Video Submissions of Jazz Standards

present at least ten jazz standards as individual performances; accompaniment: metronome or Aebersold Play-Along recordings; format: melody plus one improvised chorus minimum.

30 points

Arrangements and Compositions

video submission of ensemble performances organized and produced in collaboration with classmates.

30 points

Mid-Term and Final Exams

live or video-taped performance featuring the entire class; short solos for all participants.

Part of the grade will also be based on regular attendance and engagement; and if there are opportunities for group performance, in class or in public, that will be part of the grade as well.

Listen, Sing, Play

'Listen, Sing, Play. This is the mantra. Listen to the small chunk of music over and over again until it is burned into your memory. Sing the phrase back. If you can't sing it, you haven't really heard it. Play the phrase on your [instrument]. Hunt for the notes until you find them.'

Echo ear training, level 1 · hear the notes, sing them back — Listen, Sing, Play

[Open in the app](#)

'Choose a Simple Melody. Do not start with a complex John Coltrane solo. Start with something simple and slow.'

Make it yours

Every week here is a starting point. To change one, open For Teachers in The Whole Horn, set the key, tempo, groove or hours, add your own sentence, make the link, and paste it over ours.

Jazz is all about individual accountability.

thewholehorn.com

The First 30 Days: Jazz

The first month of the Jazz Year, one week at a time.

Before week 1

Scales first, then standards

For jazz students there's no prerequisite, because I would like to encourage everyone, but if they don't have an instrument, they've never played and they're young, I'll tell them they're too young. Otherwise I'll take them on as instrumentalists, and I'll have them work with great focus on their major scales, explaining the larger goals that will bring them to the point of being able to have freedom of movement within the context of the group of notes that they need to focus on when they're on stage, which is often a major or a minor scale or a pentatonic scale.

The foundational technique has got to be the most important part of it, because jazz ultimately is about freedom of movement, and the example I would give is always: let's take any major scale and I'll play something, because I've got a lot of technique, I can do what I want, pretty much. Let's see if you can respond with any kind of maturity to what I'm saying. And yes, there are ... articulation, phrasing issues, a lot of issues ... related to that, but it's primarily, you know, if I just play a broken scale, for example, they can't follow me, or just fluently moving up and down the scale, straight up and [down], they can't follow me, so that has gotta be the major hurdle ...

Then beyond that, when you get on stage, yes, there is structure that you have to learn: 12-bar blues, rhythm changes. You have to learn ... the jazz standards that everyone plays. That means you have to learn the melodies extremely well and learn the [chord] changes ... but then it becomes a question of: OK, you know the changes, you know the melody, can you move around your horn? So we're back to the same thing.

So the development of a program for beginners and advance[d], it's just the pursuit of ... those primary goals, and in the first instance, it's just being able to play your [scales] one [octave] up and down, and then the full range of [the instrument], straight up and [down], and then just developing technique: broken scales, thirds, [fourths], fifths, [pentatonics], chromatics. It's all the stuff that's in ... The Whole Horn, but alongside that you need to learn ... [the tunes] that are always going to be called on stage, and [the] musical structures that are always going to be repeated, like the blues and like rhythm changes.

... Without that basic core ability to move with great wizardry around the instrument in the context of those 12 major [scales], and ... all the [tributaries] that come from that, then all the extemporaneous knowledge is not gonna matter a lot, because if you can't get on stage and play what you feel, it doesn't matter what other [skill sets] you bring to that magical moment.

... If you want to play, play. So you gotta get yourself to [a] place where you are strong enough to participate ...

Before week 1

Scales first, then standards

A student who has never played

... Jazz is the result: jazz is what happens when you have control of your instrument. It's that simple: when you have freedom [of movement] ... If ... you want to learn jazz, then I would say, before you get into jazz, you have to learn to control your instrument, at least to a certain extent; then we can start talking about chords and [scales] and chord–[scale] relationships, but if you can't play your scale[s] straight up and down your instrument, all 12, then you're not ready. You can come to my class and I will encourage you to do that, but effectively you haven't graduated to the point where we can start talking about being able to communicate on stage with other jazz and session musicians ... and it requires a development of a work ethic that is stronger than most of the people that [he or she] will ever meet. ... Jazz students must be able to play all 12 keys before we can talk about anything related to jazz, so if they want to enter into the class, then they have a lot of catching up to [do] ... and it has to be done very, very quickly.

The First 30 Days
For a student who has never played

[Open the page](#)

The Milestone

For jazz players that are playing the Milestone ... exercise, it's not like I'm gonna take [rank] beginners into the jazz program, but if I were to recommend that, I would say tongue every [note].

Before week 1

Scales first, then standards

All 12, straight up and down

... First one is just being able to play your major scale straight up and down, very fluidly ...

That's why I recommend taking each major scale and playing it up and down, articulating every note, with no pressure, so you don't blow your lip ... Play along with the app, or play with the metronome, or tap your foot, and do that for two hours in each scale. It's 24 hours of work that will probably take, you know, 'cause you need to stop and start, a couple weeks, maybe a couple months ...

... To suggest that the goal is to have freedom of movement within only a partial range of the instrument is not in fact the definition of freedom of movement ...

In the free app, the major scales stop at two octaves; the full range is in the Full Studio.

... In terms of preparing to go deeper into the jazz curriculum, that would be the first order of business: ... making sure that students can get every note to speak on the flute and a clarinet, and can play all their major [scales] fairly fluidly throughout the entire range of the instrument.

The first month

... A [jazz student] should spend at least 30% of their time in the first month, if not closer to 80% of their time, ... making sure they do focus heavily on very quickly achieving that ability to move around their horn when they're on stage with other musicians. If they get on stage with veteran [blues] musicians, then what's going to save the day is technique [and pentatonics], and if they have none, then they need to start working on a lot of the things that are in this app, [or] at least be introduced to them. That's what should happen in the first month, but ... a lot of discussion as well about what the steps are going forward. If they don't play piano, they should learn to play [scales] on piano, and they should start investigating what are [shell voicings], and what is the relationship between dominant [chords] and the tonic, and what are some of the basic substitutions, and what ... kind of [scale] do you play over these various chords, and I will simplify that for them, but those are all things that can and should happen in the first 30 days. ... If they have minimal ability to read music, I would very quickly try to get some of the students together to [play in] ensembles, even if they have minimal ability.

For the first 30 days for a beginner jazz player, I think one standard is good [and] a lot of technique, but ... this is really about meeting the students [where they are], because they're coming from very different ... backgrounds, and they all possess very different levels of ability, etc., etc., so that can change, but that sounds reasonable.

Before week 1

Scales first, then standards

How long each day

... Like I said, you're not really playing jazz until you [can] move around your horn anyway, so if [they're] serious about jazz, it should be at least a couple hours a day.

The daily check

For the jazz class, ... the daily check should be on the part of the students, ... on a daily basis and weekly basis, and they [should] make ... every effort to ensure that their own personal goals, as well as the goals of the class, are [maintained]. They can also send records of their practice via WhatsApp, using the internal recordkeeping that's in the app.

Transcription

Jazz musicians are very much going to develop their skill set through a lot of repetition. Transcription is really about repetitive listening, and that's the only way that you can start to hear all the delicate subtleties that are coming out of a jazz performance, or any musical performance for that matter: rhythmic [phrasing] subtleties, articulation subtleties ... and nuance with relation to bending pitches and tone, and all that projection, the actual shape of the tone. All of this can be transferred ... only through repetitive [listening], whether it's playing along with the album and ... trying to decipher a phrase or two ... and making that your own, or, even better, ... by writing things down. That process, regardless, ... usually [takes] a lot of time and effort, blood, sweat and tears, for a simple phrase; even if it's an easy one, it's going to take a fair amount of time ... of repetitive listening in order to start to hear a lot of the detail that simply cannot be written down. So that is a great benefit of transcription: ... a deeper listening, repetitive [listening]. This translates into being able to hear and respond to things that are happening on the bandstand that a young musician would never be able [to] connect with, because [they're] stuck in their own horns and in their own universe on stage, because there's just too many ... metaphorical balls to juggle. Transcription will help them get past that.

Week 1 • Days 1–7

A musical mentorship

... The first week should be trying to find a musical mentorship. There's so many great artists online. I would ask [them] to go find at least 25 artists from the past or the present that they admire and that they would like to emulate, and give me some kind of an essay, hopefully fairly wordy, ... on what they've discovered and what they like and what they don't like. That could take a week.

Week 2 • Days 8–14

Basic technique based on scales

... Then we would probably spend another week working on a basic technique based on scales, so, depending on where they're at, I probably would ask [them] to start working on broken scales and diatonic [chords] and diatonic thirds in all 12 major keys, and then we would expand beyond that.

Practice link

Broken scales and 3rds
All twelve keys

Open in the app

The first time a student opens a link, the app asks what they play; the week is waiting underneath.

Week 3 • Days 15–21

Choosing the repertoire • the blues bass line

The third week I would talk probably about choosing repertoire that they're going to learn this year, and asking them to take a melody from that list and just drill the melody ... over and over and over and over again, hundreds of times.

The blues bass line

I would say possibly in that third week or fourth week, depending on what else is happening, ... they should attempt to learn the [blues bass line] in all 12 keys. I think that's gonna be incredibly helpful going forward, and will greatly [boost] confidence in their ability to play [chord] changes and play jazz. ... You probably start early on working on being able to play from memory, and repeat often, ... the blues [bass line] that I'm prescribing, or something similar ...

Practice link

The blues bass line
The 12-bar line, in all 12 keys

[Open the page](#)

When to start the bass line, and how often

The [blues bass line] should be played once they've gotten through some rudimentary [scale] work and [are] fluid around the 12 major [scales]. Then the [bass line] should be something they work on every day. You can go through all 12 ... quite quickly. It ends up being a skeletal framework they can ... always start from and return to in their improvising over a 12-bar blues, anywhere they go, in any key.

Week 4 • Days 22–30

The standards: the melody, then the chords

... In the fourth week, I would ask [them] to make a list of [jazz standards they] would like to learn, and explain how they should go about doing that. Number one is learning the melody; the melody is king. Number two is learning to [arpeggiate] the chords in the harmonic structure that is associated with that melody, so they should work through playing those chords on their instrument of choice, [arpeggiating] the chords over and over and over again, so the melody is recognizable and playable, but so is [the] harmony.

Days 29 and 30

Days 29 and 30, from my perspective, should be about review and record and ... personal accountability for what they have learned, but it should also be the moment where there's supposed to be an ability to use the achieved skills as a warm-up for whatever performance might come later.

After day 30

Scales first, then standards. Standards are learned by learning the melody extremely well, and then learning the harmony after the fact by [arpeggiating] the chords ... and, if they want, they can go into the extended notes. Doing that, that's gonna help enormously, because once they have developed muscle memory for those arpeggios, they can bounce around those arpeggios and sound like a [virtuoso] playing that standard.

The year

I would consider the whole endeavor ... a success if students will have learned 10 jazz standards by heart and prepared performances, maybe inside the class (we could call it a performance class), and demonstrate their knowledge and ability and achieved skills ... The number that I would give is 10 jazz standards for the entire year, which is a very small number indeed.

The Jazz Year
The year continues week by week

[Open the page](#)