

The First Harmonic Environment

The first harmonic environment is the way we are most accustomed to hearing the major scale, with note 1 acting as the tonal center. This is the most important harmonic material in all Western music and it's the first set of sounds that you should master.

1 • 2 • 3 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 | 1

Practice tips

Each of the jam tracks in this collection is designed to support you in practicing the entire series of creative exercises that we call Seven Worlds:

- **Play the map.** Identify note 1 on your instrument and build the first harmonic environment starting from this note. Improvise freely over the jam track and listen closely to each note that you play. Explore the sounds and notice the unique beauty that each note offers you.
- **Follow your voice.** If your instrument allows you to sing while you play (e.g. piano, guitar, bass, violin, etc.), then a fantastic activity is to sing each note as you play it. You can either sing the tonal numbers out loud (literally singing “one....two...three...etc.”) or you can just sing “la la la”. Both activities are valuable. If you play a brass or woodwind instrument, you can practice this exercise on a keyboard if you have one.
- **Sing the map.** Once you’ve had a chance to hear the sounds and improvise with them for a while, put your instrument down and practice singing the tonal numbers aloud over the jam track. Improvising with just your voice (without the aid of your instrument) is one of the most powerful practices we have for truly mastering the sounds and making them your own.
- **Sing freely.** A great (and fun) way to finish your practice routine is to allow yourself to just sing freely over each jam track. When you’re singing freely, you don’t need to make any attempt to recognize where you are on the tonal map. Don’t think about the tonal numbers or anything else. Just enjoy connecting with the *sounds* themselves. Hear them in your mind and enjoy singing them freely.

Note: IFR students who are working at the level of Exercise 3: Pure Harmony can also use these same tracks to practice Seven Worlds Expanded (both singing and playing).

Using the jam tracks

The jam tracks in this collection let you experience the sounds of each harmonic environment in three very different ways:

Meditative. This is the best place to start. The meditative tracks give you lots of space for deep contemplation of the sounds. These tracks are ideal for learning the musical lessons contained in each harmonic environment. Play slowly and listen deeply to each note you play. Think of this activity as your opportunity to get to know the raw materials of your art. Later in the other tracks you can focus on creating music with these sounds. But first you should take the time to really get to know each sound, and the meditative tracks are perfect for that.

Modern. The modern tracks allow you to hear each harmonic environment in a style that will be more familiar to you. These tracks will help you discover the beautiful melodic possibilities that each harmonic environment offers you. Use these tracks to practice creating your own music, and embrace the creative challenge of finding your own musical voice within these diverse styles.

Jazz. The jazz tracks give you an opportunity to really stretch out and follow your imagination. These tracks provide the ideal supporting environment for more intellectual or abstract modal playing. Use these tracks to push the limits of your playing, both creatively and physically.

Note about transposing for wind instruments

Remember that not all instruments use the same names for the notes. In the tracks, the key listed for each jam track always refers to the concert key. If you play an instrument that is not in concert key, remember to transpose this key name to the corresponding key on your instrument. (If you're not sure how to do this for your instrument, a quick Google search will lead you to many clear explanations.)