LESSON ONE

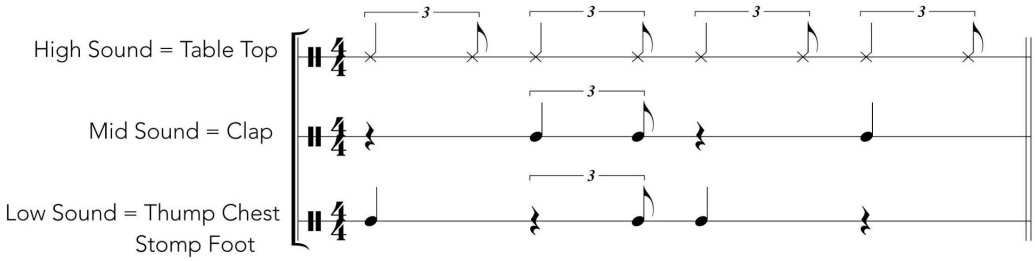
Basic Major Tonality Tools – C Treble Clef

What you will learn in Lesson One:
- Funky shuffle groove
- Triads and pentatonic scales extracted from the major scale
- Strategies to improvise over major tonalities

Take a moment to listen to **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES**.
All audio examples may be found at www.departurepointmusic.com/audio.
An aural concept of music will be presented before any music theory. The song will create context for why and how we practice our major scales, major triads, and major pentatonic scales.

The tune "Major Dues" has the following basic building blocks:
1. Groove 2. Bass Line 3. Melody

GROOVE
Let's begin by constructing a funky shuffle groove which is at the heart of the tune.



Groove Assignment
Listen to **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES**. Tap, clap, and thump the different lines until the groove locks in with the track. Once you feel you have a firm grasp of the assignment, test yourself on the ability to perform the High, Middle, and Low portions of the groove along with the recording. Then attempt the groove without the recording, using a metronome for reference.

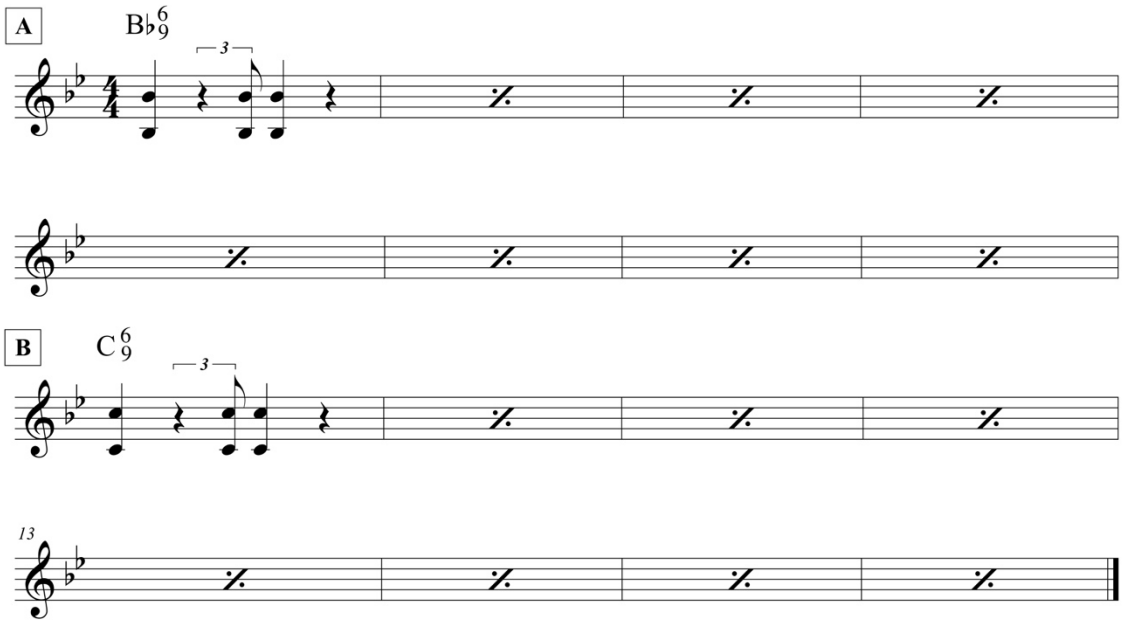
Groove Assessment
Emerging - Comfortable performance of one portion of the groove with the recording

Developing - Ability to perform all three portions of the groove with the recording

Proficient - Ability to perform all three portions of the groove without the recording and with a steady time feel

BASS LINE

Once you have a solid internal grasp of the groove, you may layer in the bass line.
NOTE – You may change the octave of any playing exercise or drill to maintain a comfortable range.



Bass Line Assignment

Play the bass line along with **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES** until the groove locks in. In an ensemble setting, one group may continue the groove while the next begins singing/playing the following bass line. Notice how the bass line matches the kick drum sounds in the rhythm pattern. This will provide a solid foundation for the melody.

Bass Line Assessment

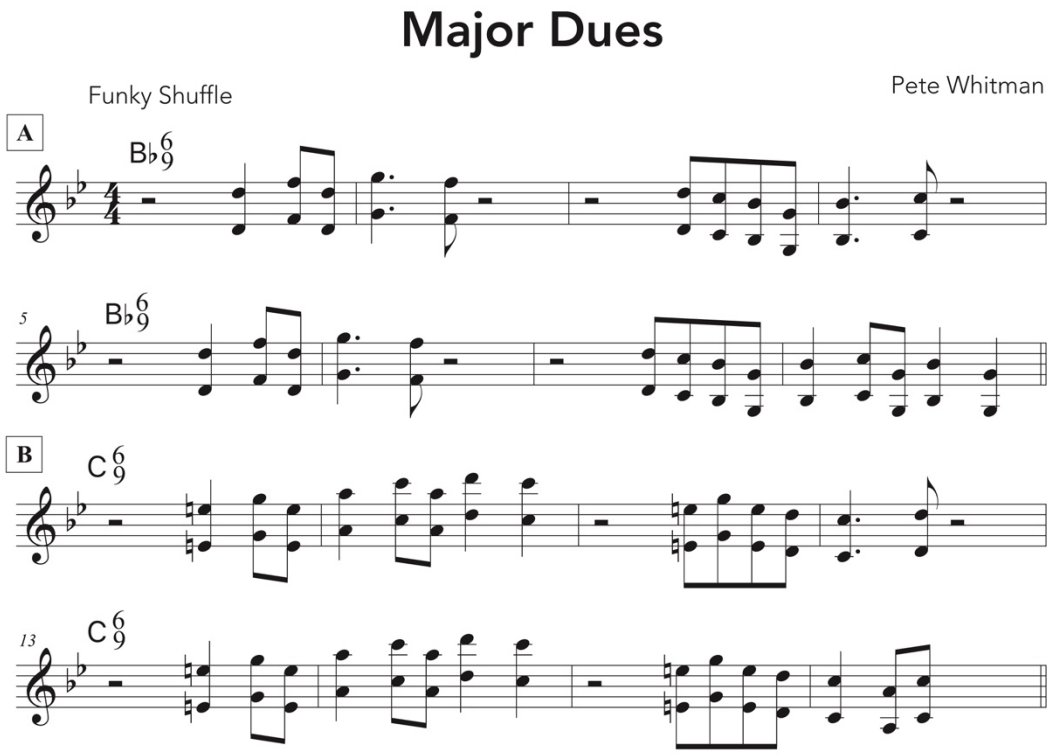
Emerging - Comfortable performance of the rhythms and pitches

Developing - Ability to lock the bass line in with the drum groove

Proficient - Ability to perform the bass line from memory without the track.

MELODY

Once the groove and bass line are established, play through the melody below. Try memorizing the melody as soon as you can! See Exercise #4 later in the chapter if you are experiencing difficulty memorizing this melody.



Melodic Assignment

Play the "Major Dues" melody over the groove and bass line you just learned.
For an ensemble setting you can split the class into three sections: Groove, Bass Line, and Melody. For solo practice, you can play along with **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES**.

Melodic Assessment

Test yourself on the ability to perform the melody with the recording. Then attempt the melody without the recording.

Emerging - Comfortable reading the melody off the page in the book

Developing - Ability to perform the melody with the same musical style as the recording

Proficient - Ability to perform the melody from memory

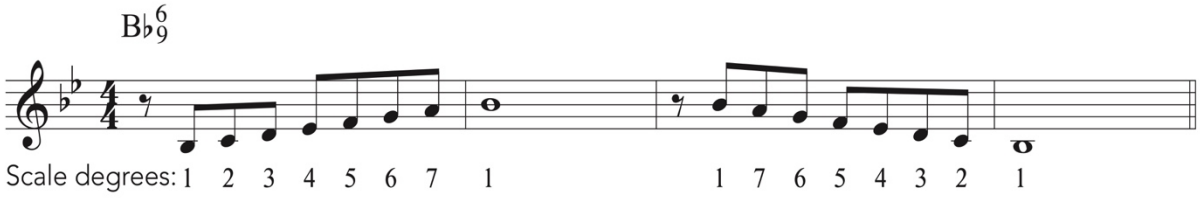
Lesson One Theory Concepts

Major scales contain all the notes within a specific key center and provide the building blocks for melodies within a tonality. They have been used to generate beautiful melodies and harmonies for hundreds of years. Learning your major scales will help you to develop an improvisational vocabulary and a basic understanding of music theory.

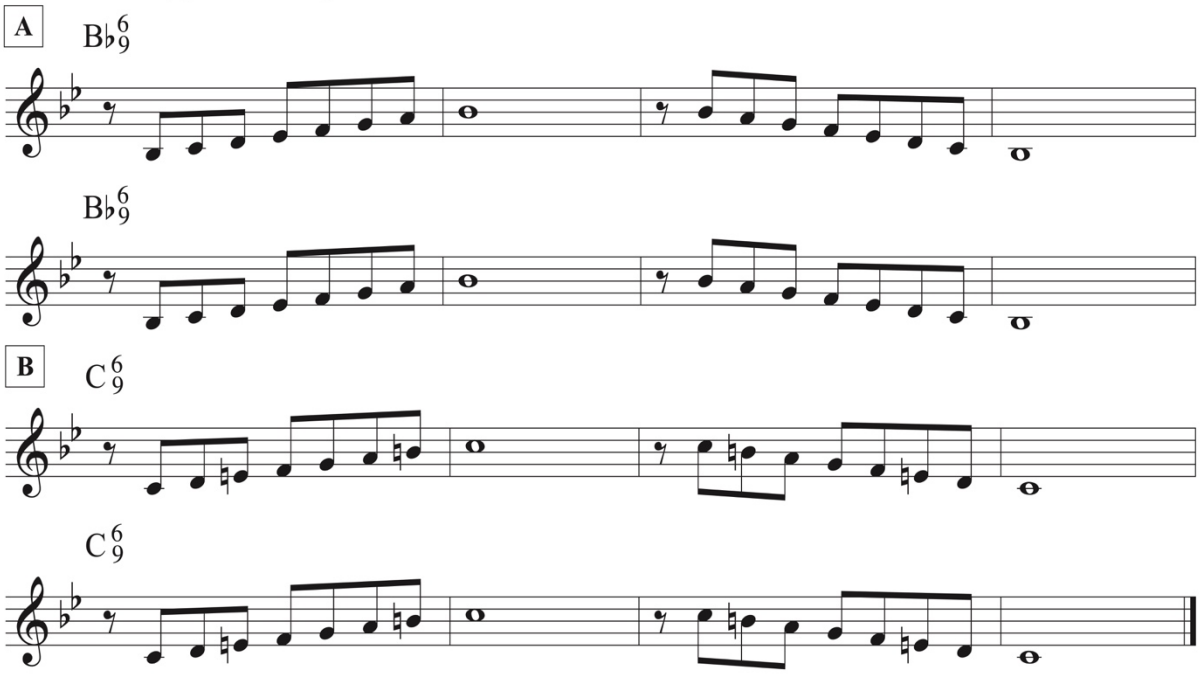
Exercise #1: Applying the Major Scale

Play the Bb Major Scale with **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES** or with your rhythm section. Be sure to "swing" the eighth notes. Switch to the C Major Scale for the second half of the form.

Exercise #1

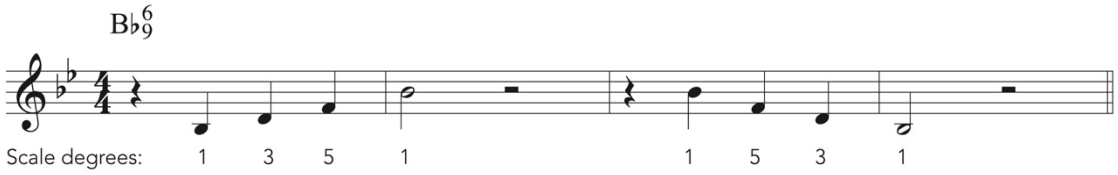


Exercise #1 applied to *Major Dues*:

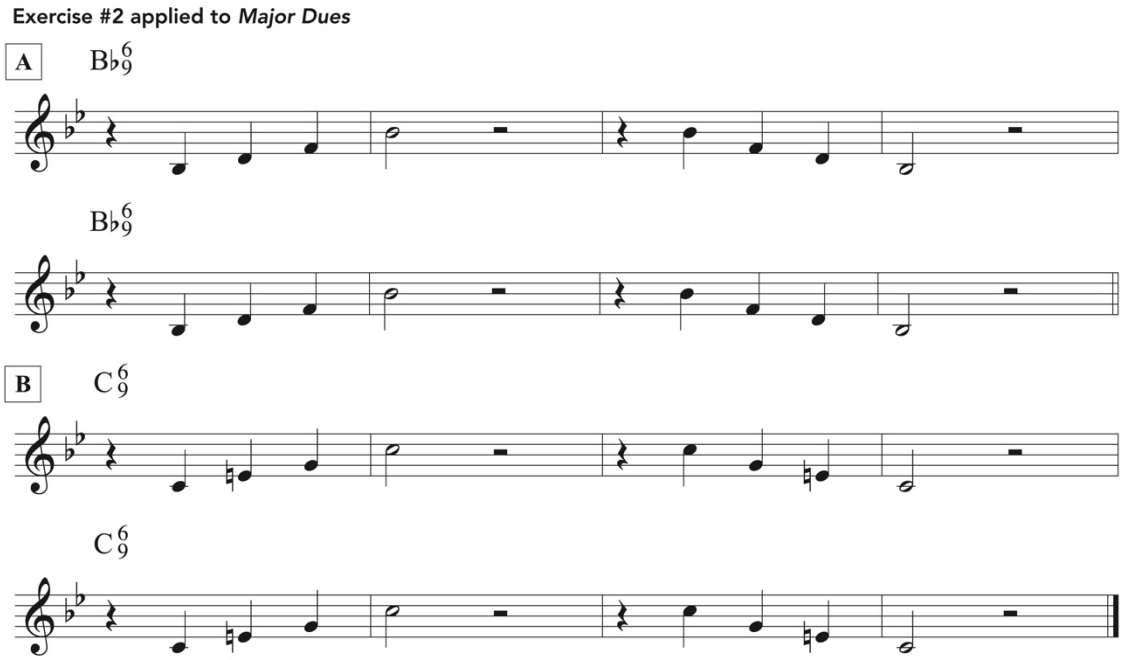


Major triads make up the basic skeletal structure of a major tonality. They provide a foundation for melodies and accompaniment patterns. Learning your major triads will help you to develop an improvisational vocabulary and a better understanding of basic music theory.

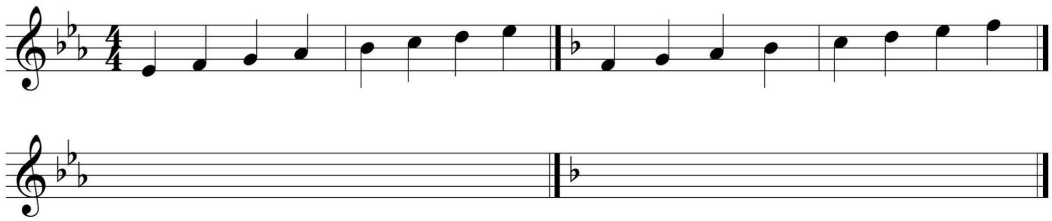
Exercise #2: Deriving Major Triads from the Bb Major Scale
Build a major triad using the 1st, 3rd, and 5th scale degrees of the major scale:



Now play Exercise #2 with **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES** or with your rhythm section.



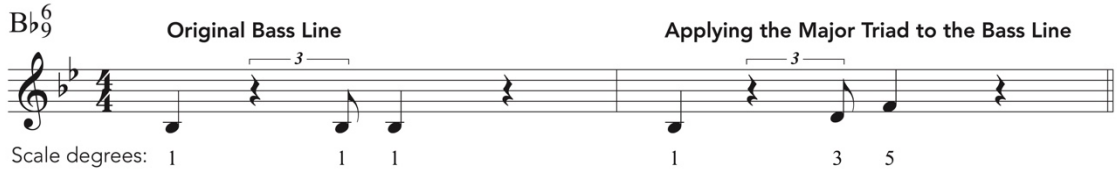
Written Assignment #1
Build the major triads in the space provided using the scales listed below:



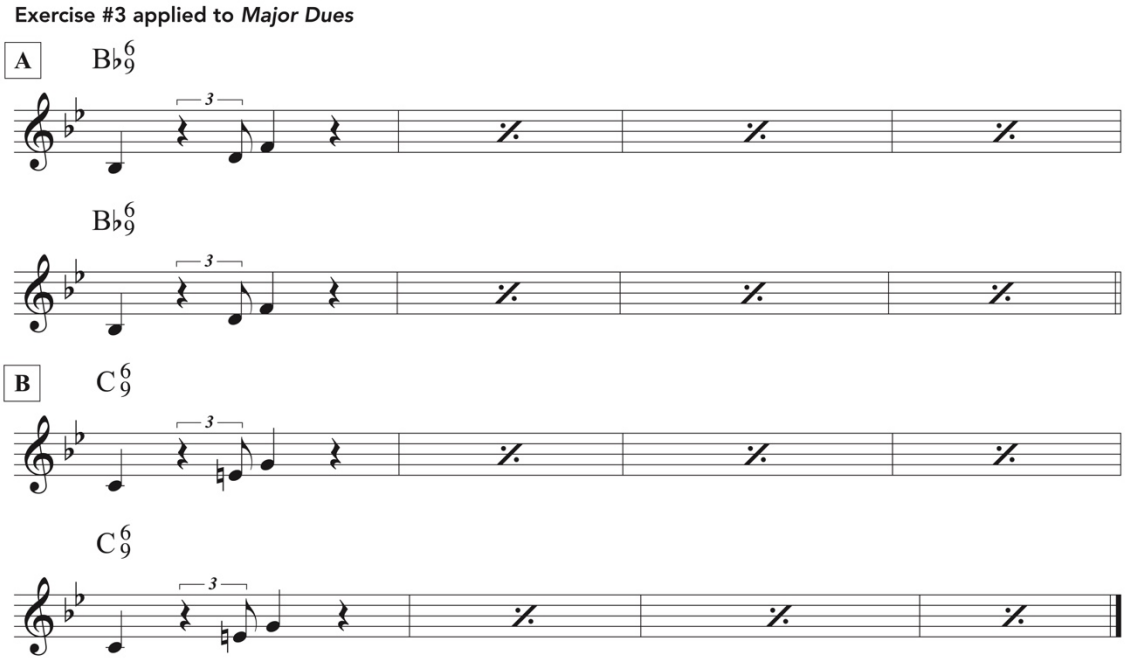
**Written assignment answers may be found at the end of this lesson.*

Bass lines create a link between groove and harmony. They provide a wonderful tool to internalize a chord progression and help you to "feel" phrase lengths. Generating bass lines over different grooves and chord progressions will help you develop a foundation for improvisation.

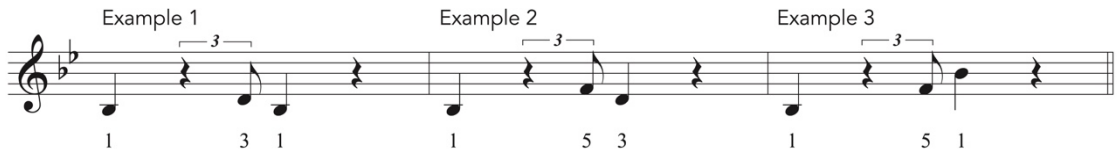
Exercise #3: Using Major Triads to Augment the Bass Line
Apply the concept of major triads to the rhythm of the bass line below:



Now play your new bass line with **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES** or with your rhythm section.



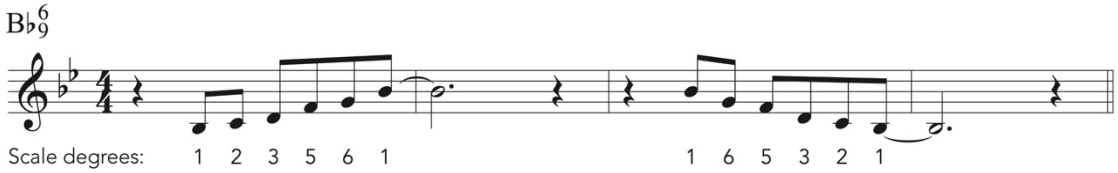
Here are some more examples of major triad bass lines. Try mixing them up over Track One or with your rhythm section.



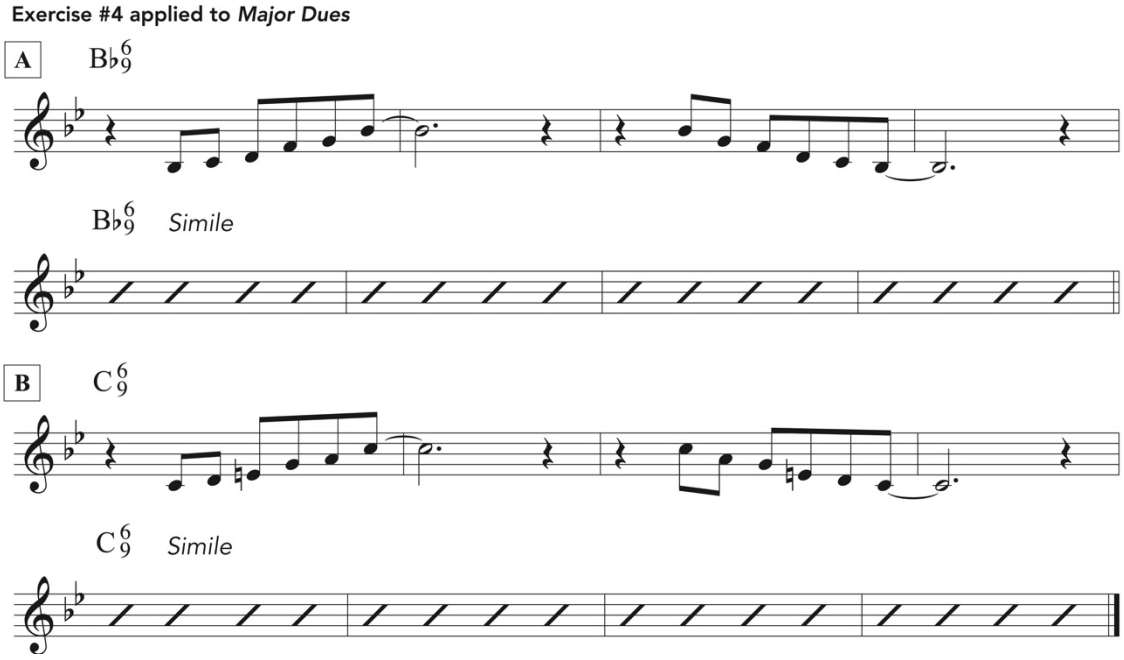
Major pentatonic scales have been used for hundreds of years to create beautiful and soulful melodies in music from all over the world. The "Major Dues" melody is based on the five-note major pentatonic scale.

Exercise #4: Deriving the Major Pentatonic Scale from the Bb Major Scale

Extract the following scale degrees from the Bb Major Scale to create the Bb Major Pentatonic Scale.

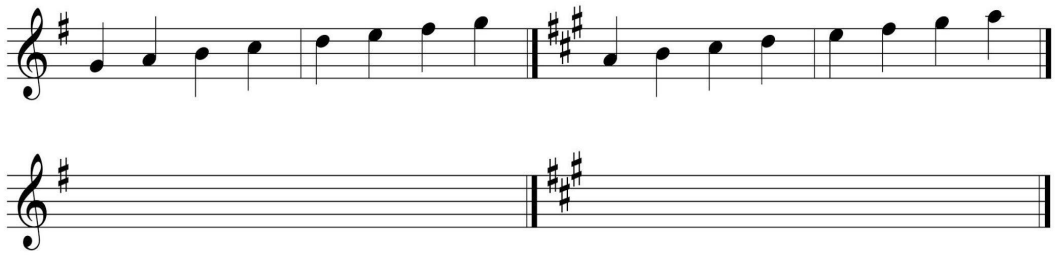


Now play Exercise #4 along with **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES** or with your rhythm section.



Written Assignment #2

Build major pentatonic scales in the space provided using the scales listed below:



Improvise!

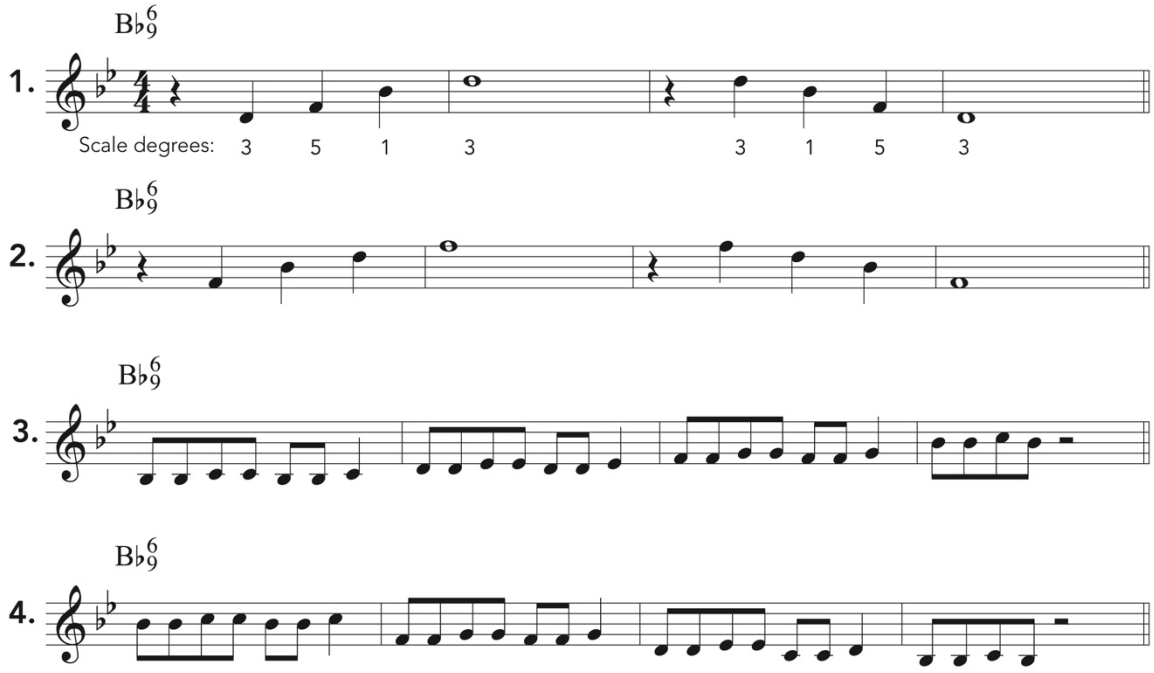
Now go and play "Major Dues," and improvise over the form of the song.
Some suggestions:

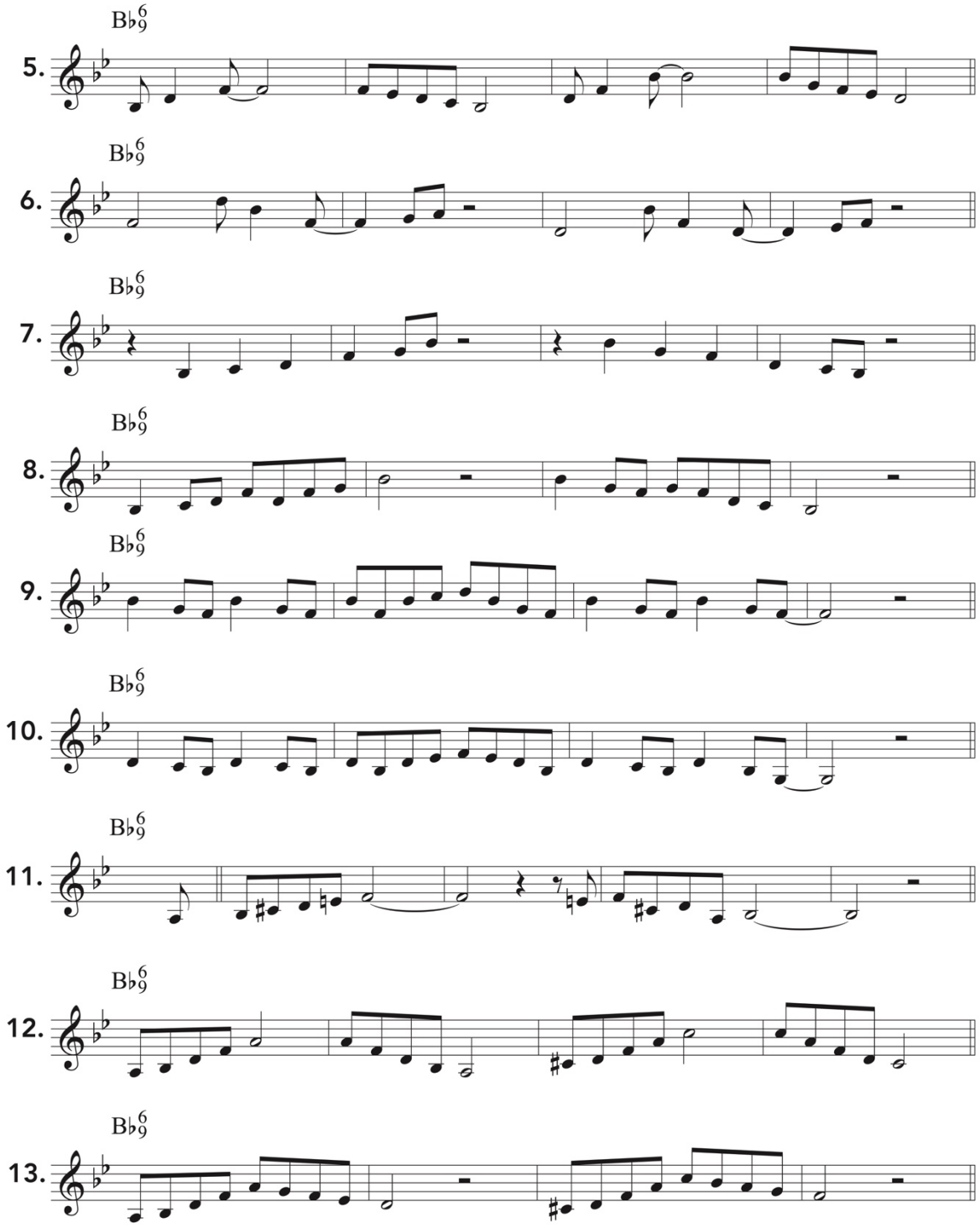
- Memorize the melody and the chords. Learn to rely on your "ears" more than your eyes.
- Start by playing simple ideas that sound intentional.
- Create a groove with the rhythms that you play.
- Develop a concept of the kind of ideas that you want to play.
- Be patient! This whole process gets easier the more you do it.

Lesson One Drills

Now let's learn some tools to be more expressive in our improvisation. Learning to spontaneously create melodies over harmony is similar to learning how to verbally communicate your ideas. The following drills mimic the process of learning your alphabet and simple phrases. They provide the building blocks of musical sentences. Begin by practicing the different concepts over **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES**.

Major Chord Scale/Shape Drills
Write the scale degrees under the pitches to help transpose each exercise.
Note – Continue to perform these drills with swing eighth notes.




B♭9 6
5.
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6.
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12.
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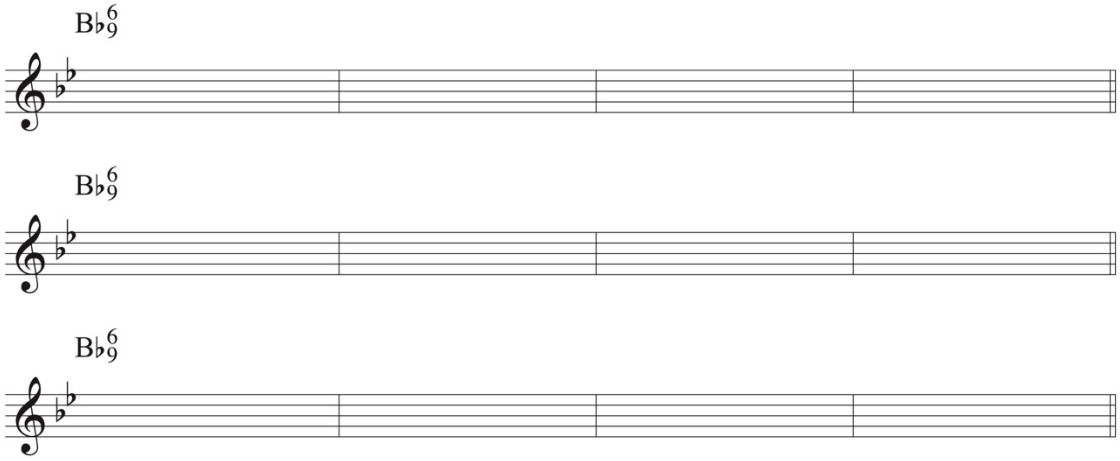
13.

Use the space below to compose your own three drills.



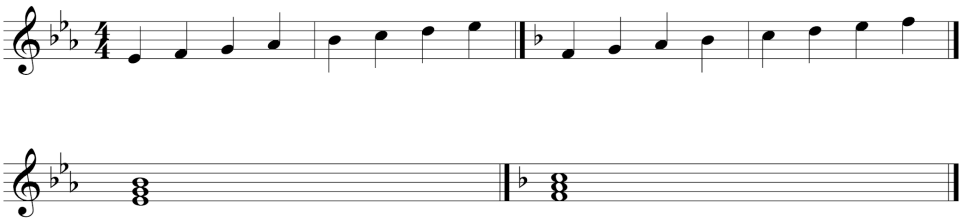
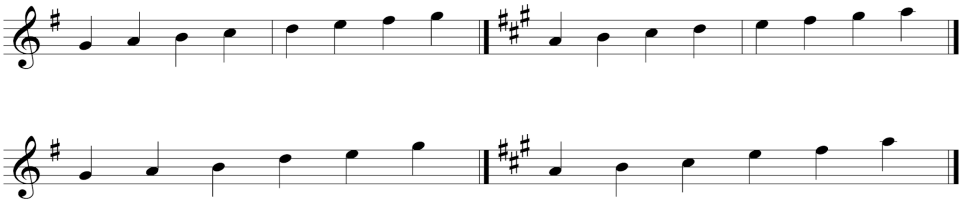
Monitor Your Progress on the Drills

Check off each box as you progress through the Lesson One drills. Make sure to master each drill in the original key and then transpose it up a whole step to match the harmony on **TRACK ONE – MAJOR DUES**.

Drill 1	Drill 2	Drill 3	Drill 4	Drill 5	Drill 6	Drill 7	Drill 8	Drill 9	Drill 10	Drill 11	Drill 12	Drill 13

Written Assignment Answer Key

Written Assignment #1



Written Assignment #2