



CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 0A

LEVEL I - CLASS #1 - 1/22/15

CLASS GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Teacher's Notes

WEEK #1 - TRAIN - GUIDELINES - Basic Do's and Don'ts but strongly emphasize that if you can breathe, you can play! I want folks leaving with a feeling that they have been successful doing this and it's fun. Try and also make the point that Chicago Blues is best represented by Muddy Waters and the players who played harp with him.

HOLDING - Bent index finger. Right hand comes up for hand tremolo only then drops. Posture! Don't aim downwards!

TRAIN WHISTLE - Always inhaling around holes 3, 4 & 5 with Hand tremolo or throat tremolo. All holes are good for this.

TRAIN RHYTHM - Always 2's and don't break the rhythm! Wide open mouth for biggest and most resonant sound. Introduce sway and emphasize that the train is the embodiment of rhythm and massive sound & tone.

WEEK #2 - HARD SHUFFLE & [CE] - REVIEW! Unless class size is unmanageable, you always want to review as much as possible.

SHUFFLE RHYTHM - Hard Shuffle adapted to the Train Rhythm with tongue articulations. Talk about the "SWAY" again. These have no sustain and are usually played at a moderate volume level. Actually only one breathe in and one out. The tongue is creating the rhythm and cutting the breathe in half giving you the two sounds.. When in doubt, INHALE !!!

TRAIN WHISTLE SUSTAIN - Introduce the Shake "S" and the Tongue Shake "TS" and make sure that along with the Hand Tremolo and Throat Tremolo folks understand that they are all Chordal Effects "CE". Want folks feeling successful so focus on what they can do well and comfort them that they can revisit challenging things in the future. Accuracy is not required! While the shake that is heard being executed by pros will usually go between only two holes, the objective here is to ONLY introduce folks to the concept of moving either their head, harp or tongue sideways between any cluster of adjacent holes and remain as relaxed as possible. YOU may need to be the one to point out that they don't look relaxed.

GROUP JAM - Split the class in two groups with half doing the Hard Shuffle Rhythm and the other half doing the Train Whistle Sustain for 2 bars and using the Exhale Push "EP" on the last beat of the second bar. Folks running out (filling up) too quickly should be encouraged to play quieter and/or pinch off their nose. Breathing in through the nose is NOT GOOD!

WEEK #3 - BOMBS, GHOST & ORGAN - REVIEW! This time should be a group activity of making music with multiple parts after train review.

CHORD BOMBS - Always played on the second beat with lots of ATTITUDE! "YUH, YUH". Should practice this initially with guitar or a jam track. There is a trick to playing the chords in tune that relates to mouth shape and don't let folks rush!

GHOST CHORDS - Identical groove as the Hard Shuffle with also NO sustain, BUT played using the Full Tongue Block and much quieter. The sound should be spitty with lots of air puffing. Tongue stays on the harp now at ALL times and only comes off very briefly to let the chord quickly sound and then goes right back on. Same single breathe in and out. This may turn out to be less effective in the class environment but is actually a more important technique to spend time practicing as it better trains and challenges the tongue

ORGAN SUSTAINING - Played down on hole 1 & 2 (3) with no [CE]. Play fairly quietly with no sharp edges. Play for 2 bars and use the EP on the 4th beat of the second bar. OverAchievers should attempt four bars before EP.

GROUP JAM - Ideally you will want to split the class into 4 groups (Shufflers, Whistle Sustainers, Bombers, Organ Sustainers) or let them decide what part they want. None of the parts are really that easy. They all have their unique challenges. Key here is making sure that everyone knows where "one" is. Play for a minute or two and then encourage folks to switch parts. Hopefully folks can keep the counting straight. If not, you will have to play guitar or play a I chord jam track in "G". Using the food analogy, this is the table preparation and side dishes. These are the Four accompaniment approaches.



CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 0B

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WEEK #4 - BLOCKING CLEAN NOTES - REVIEW! This time should be a group activity of making music with multiple parts after train review.

BLOCKING CLEAN SINGLE NOTES - Don't confuse the issue by even talking about puckering or pursing. Big toned Chicago Blues IS a tongue blocking sound. Demo the TBT for sure. Folks will most likely conclude that it is hard because they can't see their tongue and it may feel unnatural at first. Folks will most likely be playing sloppy at first and some won't even be able to tell. Set your expectations on a few months of folks struggling before playing it "clean". Be sure to emphasize that the accompaniment parts requiring no single notes are important.

GROUP JAM - You can now have as many as five parts happening over the two bar I chord jam. Use your judgement based on the skills and enjoyment level of the students. Everyone should feel pretty successful and happy.

WEEK #5 - 12 BAR FORM #1 - REVIEW! May not have time for the train BUT there should be lots going on with all the multiple parts happening over the I chord jam. Make sure folks know how cool it is sounding.

TWELVE BAR BLUES - I believe that it is best to introduce this with the **Organ Sustaining** done along with guitar or a jam track. The "V" chord which is a "D", can be either played inhaling on a "G" or exhaling on a "D". Those that don't have the extra harp can play hole 1 inhaling on their "C" or not play in the case of them playing it out of tune. The harp really only has 2 chords. Try and not let folks make a rest (hole) in the music at the end of bar 4, 6, 8 (if they have a D) and 10. Very important to try and sustain as long as possible and important to not pause to exhale right before the breathing changes to exhaling. If folks want to know whether to get a "G" or "D", tell them both or a "G" as it is better for practicing the train.

TWELVE BAR BOOGIE RIFF #1 - This does a great job at helping to further clarify the 12 bar blues form. This boogie should actually be played continually under all the choruses while practicing in the class.

TWELVE BAR MELODY #1 - Plan is for YOU the teacher to introduce whatever melody you are most comfortable with next. There is the E-Z, BIRD and 5-HOLE melodies. It is also a fine choice to stop with just the Organ Sustaining chorus and the Boogie Riff if folks have gotten enough. Need to use your judgement.

GROUP JAM - Having everyone trying to play the melody together is fine BUT encourage folks to play some of the accompaniment parts under the 12 bar form along with the Boogie Riff. ALL the parts need to be emphasized as important.

WEEK #6 - 12 BAR #2 - REVIEW! Try and determine who has memorized the melody you introduced and let each one of them be featured while everyone else plays accompaniment or the Boogie Riff. You can point to the new person to play it while the previous one is ending.

TRAIN WHISTLE SUSTAINING VARIATION - This is more active than just playing the same train whistle under all the chord changes. The note written is now the highest note to be played. Note that bar 10 is now exhaling. Encourage the TS! I have this chorus to help and break up the monotony of that same 5 inhale note played continuously but better to have it played continuously that confuse people.

TWELVE BAR MELODY #1 or #2 - Plan is for YOU the teacher to introduce whatever melody you are most comfortable with next. Need to use your judgement.

GROUP JAM - Please emphasize teamwork and the importance of making music together. Not everyone can be the star quarterback or main course all the time but you do want to feature the overachievers. Try and come up with an instrumental arrangement for the class. Not likely a good idea to have everyone do a variety of Accompaniment approaches in each one. Better to have them focus on one per instrumental played. Any singers in the class who can sing blues in the key of "G"? Let them be featured for sure if they are into stepping up.



CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 0C

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WEEK #7 - REVIEW! Same as the week before but only more orchestrated. Much of this really depends on what people can play and who wants to be featured. Music, music, music!

TWELVE BAR ENDING - Every good song must come to an end. The ending is set up so that you just need to clip off the last 3 bars, (10, 11 & 12) and tag in the 3 bars of the ending. Everyone should signal and say "hey!". Hardest part of the ending is hitting the anticipated rhythm on the "a" of "one". If this proves too difficult for students you should just encourage them to play the notes that are "outlined" which will make it much easier for most folks. It is certainly fine to introduce this the week earlier.

TWELVE BAR MELODY #3 - Use your judgement as to whether appropriate or not to introduce.

TWELVE BAR SOLO - Most blues songs have an instrumental solo(s) in one or more places in the song. It tends to take the song in a different direction from the melody and usually is active and more intense. Loudest parts should be bars 1-4 and bars 9 & 10. Note that bar 10 is also from the EZ melody to keep things more simple. Make sure folks follow the breathing markers and not add rests/holes where they are not desired. There should really only be one person at a time, maybe two playing it. Everyone else should always default into one of the four accompaniment approaches or the Boogie Bass. Same goes if someone should sing or if there is a guitar solo.

WEEK #8 - I would like to think that at this point in the session there are so many different things to play and arrangements to be had that a new handout won't really be needed. Class is spent creating musical arrangements of the material from the previous classes. I feel strongly that the class is better off playing some things well as opposed to everything poorly. Should a CD become available and all the material is on it, you may want to let folks take handouts of the material that they didn't work on in class as they are leaving at the end of the last session. Tell them they can work on it along with the CD.

GROUP JAM - My goal is to have the class end up with everyone having multiple things that they can do in a 12 bar blues progression. The last class could end up as a bunch of folks playing a melody together for the first verse, others playing through it again for the second verse a third verse left for vocals or a guitar solo, a fourth verse left for another melody played by a bunch of folks, a fifth verse left for a harp solo followed by more if others are able, followed by another verse for vocals or guitar solo, followed by a group playing the end verse together. Please experiment with your resources!!! This format allows for everyone to play non-stop and play at the level that they are comfortable with. Ideas for a CD are coming.

FINAL THOUGHTS - I would like folks to display comfort in playing with only one hand and be much more posture conscious, aiming up and not down all the time. Folks should understand that all single notes should be played using blocking and hole #1 should be played by using the tongue switch. Ghost Shuffle chording should clearly have a different sound than the hard shuffle. It can be very difficult to detect if it is done correctly or not. Nothing wrong in telling students that you aren't sure if it's right. Encourage them to purchase or make a TBT for more answers.

Folks should be encouraged to pursue ALL 3 types of the Shake but should be aware of how important it is to be relaxed and likely pursue the Tongue Shake. Most are more relaxed with it and most tense with the Head Shake.

Using two harmonicas should almost be second nature and the four accompaniment approaches should be well known. Since blues is mainly inhaling, folks should understand the concept of "when in doubt, inhale" and should understand the (EP), exhale push. This is a key to high horsepower blues and being able to relax more.

Very few students take the sway seriously and incorporate it even though many display rhythmic challenges. Just need to remind folks that if they can walk with rhythm, they can learn to play music with rhythm.

All the handouts are dated and are now in my computer program. Please check for updates as I can easily send them as a PDF file and do share your successes and failures with me so that I can make appropriate adjustments and revisions.