

# Say It, Play It

One day when I was doing my undergraduate degree, and friend of mine and I were talking about Music Theory. At one point in the conversation, I remember him looking at me and saying, "It shouldn't be called music theory, but music fact." At the time I remember being fascinated by this statement. After multiple degrees in music studying with a number of wonderful teachers, all the while teaching students of my own, that comment really began to make sense to me as it related to how I teach a few concepts to my students.

If we look at history for example, the Boston Tea Party occurred on December 16, 1773. This is a fact that will not change, no matter how much time passes.

In music, the same is true of a number of "music theory" concepts. The C Major Scale will always have a neutral key signature and will utilize the notes C - D - E - F - G - A - B - C, forever and always. A Bb Major 9 chord will always employ a C natural as the 9. And so on and so on....

In much the same way we study other facts for a number of topics and subjects, we can do the same in music. The simplest version of this...

## Say It, Play It

1.) Say the information, in its entirety, aloud before playing on your instrument.

Example #1: "The C Major Scale has no flats or sharps. The notes of the scale in order are C - D - E - F - G - A - B - C - B - A - G - F - E - D - C."

Or:

Example #2: "The Bb major 9 chord is made up of Bb - D - F - A - C."

2.) Play the material that you just said aloud.

This is effectively a form of **studying**, as you would for a history, math, or any test, really. This puts into practice the old "Know what you are going to do before you do it" saying. However, by simply saying the material aloud (a known and effective study tool) you are helping to not only prepare yourself for the immediate action of playing the scale or chord, but also engraining this information into your brain so you will not soon forget it.

By employing the **Say It, Play It** approach, you are making true progress both as an instrumentalist on your respective instrument, and as a musician who can then access this information at any time.

## You can take this one step further!

Why not employ additional methods of studying as well? You can prepare flash cards, or simply just to try write the information down when you are away from your instrument (much the same way I did in my high school Spanish class with the modes of the major scale, but I digress...). There are a number of times when trying to develop a skill where you can work smarter, not harder. This is one simple way to do this.

This approach works with scales and chords (and their relationship with each other), but could be applied to other musical concepts as well (intervals, the notes and spaces of various clefs, etc.). Again, this is "music fact". This information is not going to change, so why not set yourself up for success in the long run? Take the extra 30 - 45 seconds to employ this approach before you play some of this material, and help future you out. Future you will thank you.