

All About The Symmetrical Augmented Scale

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During a recent lesson, a student of mine hit me with the following question “Master (no, people don’t really call me this way...), what do I play over a Major 7th #5 chord?”. I then proceeded to demonstrate the usual suspects, i.e., the melodic and harmonic minor scales from the bIII degree... and the symmetrical augmented scale. “Master, master, what is this? What is THIS?!”, exclaimed my student. “This, my young apprentice (no, I don’t call my students this way either), is the **symmetrical augmented scale**”.

So, here’s the rundown on this scale! We’re looking at this (all examples are in the key of C):



Notice that this is a **6-note scale**, a hexatonic scale. The symmetrical part comes from the repeating sequence of intervals used to build it: **minor 3rd, minor 2nd, minor 3rd, minor 2nd**, and so on.

Being a symmetrical scale, you will find interesting things in the intervals between each and every note.



Pay attention on exactly which degrees of the scale certain intervals occur.

Likewise, there’s a wealth of triads to be found in this scale...



... as well as tetrads (7th chords):

If you have read my previous articles, you know that I have a particular interest in patterns (though patterns are NOT everything!). If you haven't read those articles, please check out my website www.edouardbrenneisen.com, particularly the article dealing with new approaches to scale practice. Due to its particular symmetrical architecture, this scale lends itself particularly well to playing patterns. Here are a few for you!



Here are a few general observations on this scale and on the provided patterns:

- Like all symmetrical scales, this one has really no "handles", which makes playing it a little unsettling at first;
- Like all symmetrical scales, it only has a number of possible transpositions (the C symmetrical augmented scale has the same notes as the E and Ab symmetrical augmented scales);

The suggested patterns are only starting points – find your own! - All patterns that you like should be played as retrograde, inversion and retrograde inversion of the original pattern; I really like playing alternate fingerings with this scale!