



# **MODAL HARMONY**

**in the art of improvisation  
for the Jazz Accordionist  
and all instrumentalists**

**Mario Balestra**

**Part 1**

**Vienna Musik**



**Les Editions  
du Nord**

# **MODAL HARMONY**

**in the art of improvisation  
for the Jazz Accordionist  
and all instrumentalists**

**Mario Balestra**

**Part 1**

Worldcopyright © Les Editions du Nord  
All rights reserved  
30 Klaprozenlaan  
8400 Oostende  
Belgium

# Composer Biography

Mario Balestra was born in Castelfidardo, Italy. As a young boy he worked with his father Claudio and his uncle Goffredo in their accordion factory. After completing harmony and counterpoint with Adamo Volpi, Mr. Balestra received a virtuoso degree in accordion from the Lanaro Music Academy in Rome. At the age of 20 he soloed with the Barizza Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Piero Rizzi.

In 1964, Mr. Balestra moved to the US where he began working as a technician in New Jersey for the Guild Guitar Maker, an importer of accordions. He continued his modal harmony studies applied to jazz with Tony Zano of the Boston Conservatory, who was a pupil of the great Lennie Tristano. Mario Balestra accomplished additional harmony studies with Lee Evans of the Columbia University School of Music and jazz accordion with Al Astone.

Mario Balestra has been a teacher and noteworthy accordion freelancer in the US for over thirty years, backing a great variety of artists like Maurice Chevalier, Joan Crawford, Carlo Bergonzi, Frank Sinatra Jr., Julius La Rosa, Vic Damone, Nino Rossano, The Scintilles, Tony and Geney Stevens, Stanley Broad, Bobby Vinton, Pat Jovine and Sy Wayne. Additionally he has performed with musicians like Al Di Meola, Tony Zano, Sally Man, Lou Shuster, Jerry Cat, Mike Panebianco, Steve White, Bobby Wina, Phil Garr, Carl Moscowitz, Jack Bregan, Eddie Monteiro, Charles Nunzio, Al Haughen and many others.

As a member of many noteworthy ensembles, Mario Balestra has worked with the Al Altieri Quintet, Tony Stevens Trio, Steve Della Quartet, Al Silver Orchestra, The Duke Quintet, The Noblemen, Hal Darnell Quintet, John Koenig Big Band, Romeo Olilvieri Orchestra Italiana, Angelo Muto Quartet, Tony Oriolo Duo, Harty and Eddie Flatté Trio, Marty Sloane Orchestra, Joe Petrone Sestett, Peter August Quintet, Big Band at Concorde Resort and Hotel, and several high fashion shows at the Plaza, Saint Regis and Waldorf Astoria Hotels in New York.

In 1991 Mario Balestra returned to Italy, where he has continued to teach privately and to serve as an examination jury member in various competitions and jazz workshops. He continues to perform concerts in Italy and abroad, and for six years Mario Balestra has hosted an annual accordion festival at Recoardo Terme.

In honor of the great player Art Van Damme, Mario Balestra was recently invited to participate in a concert at Castelfidardo in a memorable jazz evening with such artists as Peter Soave, Emanuele Rastelli, Renzo Ruggeri, Simone Zanchini, Luciano Biodini, Stanley Kloskowski, Augusto Mancinelli, Stefano Travaglino and Massimo Manzi.

# Recent Concerts

Rocca di Ravenna with Gervasio Marcosignori and Daniele Ravaglia

Cittá di Fermo invited by Euro Teodori

Cittá di Numana presentation of the Super VI Scandalli Book

Cittá di Civitanova Marche invited by Fulvio Rusticucci  
Recoaro Terme with G. Marcosignori. D. Ravaglia, Wolmer Beltrami, Emilio Cervetto, G. Carlo Caporilli, Peppino Principe, Elio Bertolini, Ernesto Bellus, Romano Viazzani, Corrado Mediolì, Ermanno Melato, Luigi Luoni, Silvia Pagni, Ulises Passerella, Franco Polidori, Mariano Saccol

Cittá di Capristello invited by Carmine Di Marco with Gajic Djordie, Vincenzo Abbracciante, Pino Di Modugno, Adolf Del Cont, Pasquale Coviello, Riccardo Centazzo, Francesco Cassano, Paolo Rozzi, M. Gabriella Castiglione, Alessandro Vessella, Mario S. Capodarchi, Renata and Rinaldo Tepore, Roberto Fuccelli, Francesco Citera

Cittá di Benevento invited by Renzo Ruggeri  
Comune Di Morro D'Oro with G. Marcosignori

Mario Balestra has published other musical works with Berben, Physa, A. Piccoli, Barvin and Gaja Editions.

Since 2005, Mario Balestra plays Bugari Accordions exclusively, and he has represented them at:

Frankfurt Fair, 2005, Germany  
Shanghai Fair, 2005, China  
Shanghai Conservatory, 2005, China  
Frankfurt Fair 2006, Germany  
Frankfurt Fair 2007, Germany

# Notes of Modal Harmony

The principles of jazz require one to renounce melody in order to create new melodic ideas (improvisation) based on the original harmonic structure, or through the use of a new modal harmony. For this purpose we will use the diatonic scales as the source for this new blossoming of sounds. It should be of interest to both performer and listener.

There are seven types of modal scales, which, while they served as a tonal base for medieval sacred music, will now be employed as the foundation of contemporary improvisation.

The modal scales are :

Ionian  
Dorian  
Phrigian  
Lydian  
Myxolydian  
Aeolian  
Locrian

It is imperative to exercise these scales in all the twelve keys in one octave range, ascending and descending.

The modes are listed as :

Ionian	-	Dorian	-	Phrigian	-	Lydian	-	Myxolydian	-	Aeolian	-	Locrian
I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII

It is very important to learn these scales in all twelve keys in a one octave range, both ascending and descending.



This book has been divided  
in three gradual chapters

## Chapter I:

Modal Harmony approach  
Scales and Chords in the 12 keys  
Modal Chords summary

## Chapter II:

Polychords  
Major scale altered to Phrygian mode  
Modal improvisation  
Locrian and altered Locrian scale

## Chapter III:

Practical studyings second and third part  
Modal Substitutions

# Preface

With this book I hope to offer young musicians all of the necessary materials they need to become a professional performer of jazz. Since jazz follows the traditional rules of harmony, I suggest that students learn the harmony first and the improvisation second. Regardless of what instrument one might play, the discipline of jazz always requires that the harmonic foundation be approached in a step-by-step, day-by-day fashion.

To achieve a high level of expressiveness, one must always combine talent with thorough, daily preparation, keeping in mind the sacred trinity of music: Melody, Harmony and Rhythm.

The book has been structured in all twelve keys, in order to provide a complete grounding in all the possibilities.

My hope is that this book might make a significant contribution to the ongoing growth and development of this great American culture, jazz, for this particular art form represents the whole range of human beauty and emotion. My approach to harmonic theory is not new, but it works, and it is the result of the great many collaborations I have been fortunate to experience with some of the world's greatest musicians.

I would like to particularly thank my special friends Gervasio Marcosignori and Bio Boccosi for their support and encouragement in publishing this book.

*Mario Balestra*





*Mario Balotà*

# Table of Contents

Chapter I		Page
1	- Notes on Modal Harmony - Modal Scales in 12 Keys	11
2	- Modal Scales and Chords with Both Hands	24
3	- Summary of Modal Chords	49
Chapter II		
4	- Playing Arpeggios in the Composed Chords (Polychords)	78
5	- Example of Major Scale Altered to Phrygian Mode	80
6	- Modal Scales Used in Improvisation (First Part)	81
7	- Locrian Scale and Altered Locrian Scale	116
Chapter III		
8	- Practical Studies - Mixed Modal Exercises (Second Part)	119
9	- Practical Studies - Chords on Which to Improvise (Third Part)	123
10	- First Studies on Modal Substitutions followed by 18 Advanced Studies	125

# **MODAL HARMONY**

**in the art of improvisation  
for the Jazz Accordionist  
and all instrumentalists**

**Mario Balestra**

**Part 1**

 **Les Editions  
du Nord**







# Composer Biography

Mario Balestra was born in Castelfidardo, Italy. As a young boy he worked with his father Claudio and his uncle Goffredo in their accordion factory. After completing harmony and counterpoint with Adamo Volpi, Mr. Balestra received a virtuoso degree in accordion from the Lanaro Music Academy in Rome. At the age of 20 he soloed with the Barizza Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Piero Rizzi.

In 1964, Mr. Balestra moved to the US where he began working as a technician in New Jersey for the Guild Guitar Maker, an importer of accordions. He continued his modal harmony studies applied to jazz with Tony Zano of the Boston Conservatory, who was a pupil of the great Lennie Tristano. Mario Balestra accomplished additional harmony studies with Lee Evans of the Columbia University School of Music and jazz accordion with Al Astone.

Mario Balestra has been a teacher and noteworthy accordion freelancer in the US for over thirty years, backing a great variety of artists like Maurice Chevalier, Joan Crawford, Carlo Bergonzi, Frank Sinatra Jr., Julius La Rosa, Vic Damone, Nino Rossano, The Scintilles, Tony and Geney Stevens, Stanley Broad, Bobby Vinton, Pat Jovine and Sy Wayne. Additionally he has performed with musicians like Al Di Meola, Tony Zano, Sally Man, Lou Shuster, Jerry Cat, Mike Panebianco, Steve White, Bobby Wina, Phil Garr, Carl Moscowitz, Jack Bregan, Eddie Monteiro, Charles Nunzio, Al Haughen and many others.

As a member of many noteworthy ensembles, Mario Balestra has worked with the Al Altieri Quintet, Tony Stevens Trio, Steve Della Quartet, Al Silver Orchestra, The Duke Quintet, The Noblemen, Hal Darnell Quintet, John Koenig Big Band, Romeo Olilvieri Orchestra Italiana, Angelo Muto Quartet, Tony Oriolo Duo, Harty and Eddie Flatté Trio, Marty Sloane Orchestra, Joe Petrone Sestett, Peter August Quintet, Big Band at Concorde Resort and Hotel, and several high fashion shows at the Plaza, Saint Regis and Waldorf Astoria Hotels in New York.

In 1991 Mario Balestra returned to Italy, where he has continued to teach privately and to serve as an examination jury member in various competitions and jazz workshops. He continues to perform concerts in Italy and abroad, and for six years Mario Balestra has hosted an annual accordion festival at Recoardo Terme.

In honor of the great player Art Van Damme, Mario Balestra was recently invited to participate in a concert at Castelfidardo in a memorable jazz evening with such artists as Peter Soave, Emanuele Rastelli, Renzo Ruggeri, Simone Zanchini, Luciano Biodini, Stanley Kloskewski, Augusto Mancinelli, Stefano Travaglini and Massimo Manzi.



## Recent Concerts

Rocca di Ravenna with Gervasio Marcosignori and Daniele Ravaglia

Cittá di Fermo invited by Euro Teodori

Cittá di Numana presentation of the Super VI Scandalli Book

Cittá di Civitanova Marche invited by Fulvio Rusticucci  
Recoaro Terme with G. Marcosignori. D. Ravaglia, Wolmer Beltrami, Emilio Cervetto, G. Carlo Caporilli, Peppino Principe, Elio Bertolini, Ernesto Bellus, Romano Viazzani, Corrado Mediolì, Ermanno Melato, Luigi Luoni, Silvia Pagni, Ulises Passerella, Franco Polidori, Mariano Saccol

Cittá di Capristello invited by Carmine Di Marco with Gajic Djordie, Vincenzo Abbracciante, Pino Di Modugno, Adolf Del Cont, Pasquale Coviello, Riccardo Centazzo, Francesco Cassano, Paolo Rozzi, M. Gabriella Castiglione, Alessandro Vessella, Mario S. Capodarchi, Renata and Rinaldo Tepore, Roberto Fuccelli, Francesco Citera

Cittá di Benevento invited by Renzo Ruggeri  
Comune Di Morro D'Oro with G. Marcosignori

Mario Balestra has published other musical works with Berben, Physa, A. Piccoli, Barvin and Gaja Editions.

Since 2005, Mario Balestra plays Bugari Accordions exclusively, and he has represented them at:

Frankfurt Fair, 2005, Germany  
Shanghai Fair, 2005, China  
Shanghai Conservatory, 2005, China  
Frankfurt Fair 2006, Germany  
Frankfurt Fair 2007, Germany

# Notes of Modal Harmony

The principles of jazz require one to renounce melody in order to create new melodic ideas (improvisation) based on the original harmonic structure, or through the use of a new modal harmony. For this purpose we will use the diatonic scales as the source for this new blossoming of sounds. It should be of interest to both performer and listener.

There are seven types of modal scales, which, while they served as a tonal base for medieval sacred music, will now be employed as the foundation of contemporary improvisation.

The modal scales are :

Ionian  
Dorian  
Phrigian  
Lydian  
Myxolydian  
Aeolian  
Locrian

It is imperative to exercise these scales in all the twelve keys in one octave range, ascending and descending.

The modes are listed as :

Ionian	-	Dorian	-	Phrigian	-	Lydian	-	Myxolydian	-	Aeolian	-	Locrian
I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII

It is very important to learn these scales in all twelve keys in a one octave range, both ascending and descending.