

Jazz Improvisation for Keyboard Players

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JAZZ IMPROVISATION FOR KEYBOARD PLAYERS

VOLUME ONE: BASIC CONCEPTS

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INTRODUCTION

Improvisation, almost a lost art in some styles of music, is the freest form of expression of the human spirit. An improviser, who is actually a composer, can create his own melodies, harmonies and rhythms, and can instantly change the mood of the music he plays to anything he desires. Moreover, he can choose to improvise in any style, such as classical, folk, rock or jazz.

Listening is really the best way to gain an understanding of various styles of music. Therefore, the books in this series concentrate primarily on the materials and devices available to the keyboard player who wants to improve his skill as an improviser. The volumes begin with basic concepts and proceed through intermediate and advanced levels.

All the examples and exercises in these books are intended to be played. Understanding each example is important, but the hearing of it is of equal importance. Therefore, everything in the books should be played carefully and as musically as possible.

The serious student may wish to examine two other books by the author as supplementary to these volumes. They are **JAZZ/ROCK VOICINGS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY KEYBOARD PLAYER** and **SCALES FOR JAZZ IMPROVISATION**, both published by Studio P/R, Inc.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Kay, for her hard work in helping to prepare these manuscripts and her loving encouragement throughout.

I. CREATING MELODIES

Before beginning to improvise your own melodies, you should look at melodies of all types to see what goes into them. Generally speaking, all melodies are based on skipping motion through chords or step-wise motion through scales. Usually a melody is composed using a combination of the two methods. Since an improviser is really a composer, he must be thoroughly acquainted with chords and scales so that these materials are immediately available to him.

Play the following melodies and notice that they are based entirely on skipping motion through the chords which accompany them.

Example 1

Ballad

C Maj 7 F Maj 7 Dmi 7 G7 C Maj7

Example 2

Jazz Waltz

D mi7 G7 C Maj7 F Maj 7 C Maj7

When you play the next two melodies, you will see that they use only step-wise motion through scales.

Example 3

Swing

C Maj 7 F Maj 7 G7 C Maj7

Example 4

Bossa Nova

C Maj 7 F Maj 7 C Maj7