

Piano Improvisation: Do You Know How To Improvise?

Can you talk to people without first memorizing what to say? Probably you can. Can you create melodies and nice licks to chords on the spot. Many pianists find this harder. Let's try out a few ways to improve your improvisations!

Put something in to get something out

Piano improvisation is a form of composing. In other words you are creating music.

In order to improvise in an intelligent manner and not only play random notes you have to listen to improvised music and practise on your piano in a manner that will help you create music when you improvise.

There are many ways to practise improvisation but let's start with playing a few licks over the II-V-I progression in the key of C.

In this exercise you will improvise melodic patterns with your right hand and play chords with you left.

The note C4 is the middle C on the piano and D4 is the D to the right of this C. B3 is the B note to the left of C4.

We will start with the Dm chord in the left hand. Dm is the II chord in C. We will play it in its basic form:

Dm: D3 F3 A3

With the right hand it's time to play patterns that fit this chord. For example:

F4 A4 C5 E5 D5 C5 A4 F4

We will now play the V chord which will come next in the II-V-I progression. In C-major this will be G. It can be played as follows:

G: B2 D3 G3

An continuation of the melodic flow in Dm could be:

E4 F4 A4 C5

We will now end on the I chord which will be C in the key of C-major. In it's basic form it looks like this:

C: C3 E3 G3

We will end the melody by playing the note B4. This makes the whole ending to a Cmaj7 chords. Sounds nice, doesn't it!

We will continue this piano improvisation lesson by trying out a few more possibilities with the same piano chord progression for your right hand improvisations:

Piano progression 1

Dm: E5 C5 A4 F4

G: D#5 B4 G#4 F4

C: D5

Piano progression 2

Dm: F4 A4 C5 E5

G: F4 G#4 B4 E5

C: D5

Piano progression unlimited

Of course there are unlimited possibilities so now it is time to jump into the unknown by experimenting and inventing melodies with your right hand as you play the progressions in the left hand.

What do you learn by practicing piano progressions?

You learn patterns that you can use in different contexts as you improvise. You learn different chords that can be implemented in your piano playing.

Most importantly, you learn to improvise. Improvisation is a bit of memorized fragments and a lot of just jumping into the unknown and do something about it.

The end result is hopefully a bit of music to the benefit of the people in the world.

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