(Piano) Improvisation Technique

by Musilosophy

Improvisation means real time composing.....
“I know of knowing nothing” ( Socrates )

Music is based on harmony

*Harmony is based on chords and scales*

Melody and improvisation are based on chords and scales

*Accompaniment is based on chords and scales*

Chords are based on scales

*Scales are based on physics, mathematical principles and musical traditions*

Musical traditions are based on human perception, technology, economy, history, religion…
SUMMARY

1. Keys

✓ Key awareness
✓ Major
✓ Minor
✓ Scale harmonization

2. Chords

✓ Major 7th
✓ Minor 7th
✓ Dominant 7th
✓ Half diminished 7th
✓ Diminished 7th
✓ Inversions
✓ Chord degrees

3. Other scales

✓ Blues
✓ Whole tone
✓ Diminished
✓ Diminished/whole tone
✓ Pentatonic
4. *Melody*

- Melody building
- Chordal notes
- Turning note
- Passing note
- Leaning note
- Delaying note
- Anticipated note
- Chromatic note
- Double leaning note
- Mixed note
- “Wrong” notes

5. *Phrasing*

- Beginning of phrase
- Ending of phrase
- Imitation

6. *Rhythm*

- Emphasizing offbeats and upbeats
- Syncopation
- Swing
- Polyrhythmics

7. *Practice... Practice... Practice...*

- Generale practice
- Progressive drills
- Fondamental drills
- Greatest piano improvise

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KEY AWARENESS

✓ Scale is a sequence of tones.
✓ It is a base to make music.
✓ The main scales of western music are major and minor scales.
✓ Every scale determines a key, that is an harmonic combination of tones based on that scale.
✓ So, F Major key uses the tones of F Major scale. E minor key uses the tones of E minor scale(s).
✓ I consider the Blues like a key: for example Bb Blues or Bb minor Blues can be considered two kind of Major and Minor keys.
✓ You always have to know in which key you are playing in each moment.
✓ A change of key is called Modulation.
✓ Each scale or key has its own chords.
✓ They are build on each degree of the scale with harmonizations by thirds.
✓ You can recognize key by Clef, chords, melody...

Transpose and play in all keys!
The chords of every key are:

Major Key : D Maj Example
Harmonic Minor Key  : D minor example

Natural Minor Key  : D minor example

Melodic Minor Key  : D minor example

✓ Transpose and play in all keys!
✓ Practice the analysis and recognition of chords, modulations and keys in classic music, jazz, pop songs...
  Recognize the chords and then the key they belong to.
! Remember:

Each chord **has not** an its own scale.

**The scale of each chord depends by the key in which it is!**

This concept is very important but I have realized that not many musicians have understood its importance.  
**For example**, they play the D dorian scale also on a Dmin7 that belongs to Bb key!  
Ahi,Ahi… in this way they do two terrible mistakes: E instead of Eb and B instead of Bb!
When you improvise on this song you have to use basically the C minor scale (when you are in C minor key) and Eb scale when you are in Eb key.

This is the key concept. But a melody and so an improvisation is based above all on chord besides on key.
MAJOR KEY CHORDS

D MAJOR KEY

Db MAJ

C MAJ

B MAJ

Bb MAJ

A MAJ

Ab MAJ

G MAJ

F# MAJ

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HARMONIC MINOR KEY CHORDS

C# HARMONIC MINOR KEY

C# MIN

C MIN

B MIN

Bb MIN

A MIN

G# MIN

G MIN

F# MIN
F HARMONIC MINOR KEY

E MIN

Eb MIN

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F MEL MIN

E MEL MIN

Eb MEL MIN
Chord families

Every melody and accompaniment is based on a chord. Melody generally uses the notes of a chord or notes that return to it. In order to improvise you need to know and play every chord very well.

✓ The fundamental drill is playing every chord and every inversion of each chord.

I suggest to study five families of chords:

1. Major 7\textsuperscript{th} chord
2. Dominant 7\textsuperscript{th}
3. Minor 7\textsuperscript{th}
4. Half-diminished
5. Diminished 7\textsuperscript{th}

✓ Play every chord :12 chords X 5 families = 60 chords X 4 inversions = 240 chords

For example:

1. **Major 7\textsuperscript{th} chord**: F Maj 7
   - Maj 3\textsuperscript{th} + perfect 5\textsuperscript{th} + maj 7\textsuperscript{th}

\[ \text{Fmaj7} \]
2. Dominant 7\textsuperscript{th} chord: Bb\textsubscript{7}  
- Maj 3\textsuperscript{rd} + perfect 5\textsuperscript{th} + minor 7\textsuperscript{th}

3. Minor 7\textsuperscript{th} chord: Em\textsubscript{7}  
- Minor 3\textsuperscript{rd} + perfect 5\textsuperscript{th} + minor 7\textsuperscript{th}

4. Minor 7\textsuperscript{th} dim 5 (half-diminished) chord: Dm\textsubscript{7b5}  
- Minor 3\textsuperscript{rd} + diminished 5\textsuperscript{th} + minor 7\textsuperscript{th}

5. Diminished 7\textsuperscript{th} chord: C\# dim\textsubscript{7}  
- Minor 3\textsuperscript{rd} + diminished 5\textsuperscript{th} + diminished 7\textsuperscript{th}
Major 7th chord

This chord is on the:

I and IV (#4) degree of the Major key
III (#5) degree of the harmonic and melodic minor key
III and VI (#4) degree of the natural minor key.

! #4 = This chord has augmented 4th
#5 = This chord has augmented 5th

In the next page there are major chords in all keys and in 4 inversions

PLAY them many, many times!
It is very important.

✓ Play these chords in the whole keyboard (More than an octave)
✓ Play them with both hands
✓ Arpeggiate the chords
MAJOR 7th CHORD
( For example I,IV in Major key )

Fmaj7

Emaj7

Ebmaj7

Dmaj7

Dbmaj7

Cmaj7

Bmaj7

Bbmaj7

Amaj7

Abmaj7

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\textbf{G maj7}

\textbf{Gbmaj7}
Dominant 7th chord

This chord is on the:

V and degree of the Major and harmonic/melodic minor (b9 and b6) key  
VII degree of the natural minor key  
IV (#4) degree of the melodic minor key.

! #4 = This chord has augmented 4th  
b6 = This chord has minor 6th  
b9 = This chord has minor 9th

In the next page there are dominant 7th chords in all keys and in 4 inversions

PLAY them many, many times!
It is very important.

✓ Play these chords in the whole keyboard (More than an octave)  
✓ Play them with both hands  
✓ Arpeggiate the chords
DOMINANT 7th CHORD
(For example V in Major or Minor key)

Bb7

A7

Ab7

G7

F#7

F7

E7

Eb7

D7

Db7

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Minor 7\textsuperscript{th} chord

This chord is on the:

- II, III, and VI degree of the Major key
- I, IV and V degree of the natural minor key
- II degree of the melodic minor key
- IV degree of the harmonic minor key

In the next page there are minor 7\textsuperscript{th} chords in all keys and in 4 inversions

PLAY them many, many times!
It is very important.

✓ Play these chords in the whole keyboard (More than an octave)
✓ Play them with both hands
✓ Arpeggiate the chords
Half Diminished chord

! It is also called minor 7\textsuperscript{th} diminished 5 (b5) chord ( C m7/b5 )

This chord is on the :

VII degree of the Major key
II degree of the natural and harmonic minor key
VI and VII degree of the melodic minor key.

\textit{In the next page there are half diminished chords in all keys and in 4 inversions}

\textit{PLAY them many,many times!}
\textit{It is very important.}

✓ Play these chords in the whole keyboard (More than an octave)
✓ Play them with both hands
✓ Arpeggiate the chords
HALF DIMINISHED 7th CHORD
(For example II in harmonic/natural Minor Key)

Dm7/b5

C#m7/b5

Cm7/b5

Bm7/b5

A#m7/b5

Am7/b6

G#m7/b5

Gm7/b5

F#m7/b5

Fm7/b5
Diminished 7th chord

This chord is on the:

VII degree of the harmonic minor key

In the next page there are diminished 7th chords in all keys and in 4 inversions

PLAY them many, many times!
It is very important.

✓ Play these chords in the whole keyboard (More than an octave)
✓ Play them with both hands
✓ Arpeggiate the chords
DIMINISHED 7th CHORD

(VII in Harmonic minor Key)

C#dim7

Cdim7

Bdim7

A#dim7

Adim7

G#dim7

Gdim7

F#dim7

Fdim7

Edim7
Ok, do not become confused!
These scales do not determine a key! Just the blues scale can be considered a basis for a particular key (Blues).

Blues Scale
In general it can be used on every chord but above all on min7th and dominant 7th chord. This scale is much used above all in Blues, Pop, Jazz, Soul, Funk, Rhythm and blues, Rock….
✓ Blues structure

- It has 12 or, seldom, 16 measures.
- It can be Major or Minor.
- There are many chord variations or substitutions in Blues structures. Here I propose two “classic” blues/jazz structures.

![F Major Blues][1]

![D Minor Blues][2]

! Transpose and play the blues scales and structures in all keys.

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F Major Blues

E Major Blues

Eb Major Blues

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B Major Blues

```
B7  E7  B7  (B7)
   E7  B7  (G#7)

Gb7  F#7  B7  (G#7)  Gb7  (Dbm7  F#7)
(C#m7)
```

Bb Major Blues

```
Bb7  Eb7  Bb7  Bb7
   Eb7  Bb7

Eb7  Eb7  Bb7  Bb7

F7  F7  Bb7  (G7)  F7  (Cm7  F7)
(Cm7)
```

A Major Blues

```
A7  D7  A7  A7
   A7  A7

D7  D7  A7  A7  (F#7)

E7  E7  A7  (F#7)  E7  (Cbm7  E7)
(Bm7)
```
C Minor Blues

1. Dm7 (Em7/b5) A7b9  
   I V

5. Gm7 A7b9 (Gm7) Dm7 F7 (Dm7) 
   I V I VI (b7)

9. Em7/b5 A7b9 Dm7 (F7) A7#9 (Em7/b5 A7#9) 
   II V I II V

C# Minor Blues

13. C#m7 C#m7 (D#m7/b5 G#7b9) C#m7 C#7b9

17. F#m7 G#7b9 C#m7 E7 (C#m7)

21. (F#m) D#m7/b5 G#7b9 C#m7 (E7) Ab7#9 (D#m7/b5 G#7#9)

C Minor Blues

25. Cm7 (Dm7/b5 G7b9) Cm7 C7b9

29. Fm7 G7b9 Cm7 Eb7

33. (Fm7) (Cm7) Dm7/b5 G7b9 Cm7 (Eb7) G7#9 (Dm7/b5 G7#9)
B Minor Blues

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Bm7} \\
\text{(C#m7/b5 \ F#7b9)} \\
\text{Bm7} \\
\text{B7b9}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Em7} \\
\text{(Em7)} \\
\text{Bm7} \\
\text{D7} \ (\text{Bm7})
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{C#m7/b5} \\
\text{F#7b9} \\
\text{Bm7} \ (\text{D7}) \\
\text{F#7#9} \ (\text{C#m7/b5} \ F#7#9)
\end{array}\]

Bb Minor Blues

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Bbm7} \\
\text{(Cm7/b5 \ F7b9)} \\
\text{Bbm7} \\
\text{Bb7b9}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Ebm7} \\
\text{(Ebm7)} \\
\text{Bbm7} \\
\text{Db7} \ (\text{Bbm7})
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Cm7/b5} \\
\text{F7b9} \\
\text{Bbm7} \ (\text{Db7}) \\
\text{F7#9} \ (\text{Cm7/b5} \ F7#9)
\end{array}\]

A Minor Blues

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Am7} \\
\text{(Bm7/b5 \ E7b9)} \\
\text{Am7} \\
\text{A7b9}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Dm7} \\
\text{(Dm7)} \\
\text{Am7} \\
\text{C7} \ (\text{Am7})
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Bm7/b5} \\
\text{E7b9} \\
\text{Am7} \ (\text{C7}) \\
\text{E7#9} \ (\text{Bm7/b5} \ E7#9)
\end{array}\]
Ab Minor Blues

Abm7
(Ebm7/b5 Eb7b9)
Abm7
Abm7
Ab7b9

Dbm7
(Dbm7)
Abm7
Cb7
(Abm7)

Bbm7/b5
Eb7b9
Abm7
(B7)
Eb7#9
(Bbm7/b5 Eb7#9)

G Minor Blues

Gm7
(Am7/b5 D7b9)
Gm7
Gm7
G7b9

Cm7
D7b9
Gm7
Bb7

Am7/b5
D7b9
Gm7
(Bb7)
D7#9
(Am7/b5 D7#9)

Gb Minor Blues

Gb7b9
(Gbm7)
Gb7b9

Cb7
(D7b9)
Gb7b9

Gb7b9
(A7)
Gb7b9

Abm7/b5
Db7b9
Gb7b9
(A7)
Db7#9
(Abm7/b5 Db7#9)
F Minor Blues

```
\begin{align*}
Fm7 & \quad Fm7 (Gm7/b5) & \quad C7b9 & \quad Fm7 & \quad F7b9 \\
Bbm7 & \quad C7b9 (Bbm7) & \quad Fm7 & \quad Ab7 & \quad (Fm7) \\
Gm7/b5 & \quad C7b9 & \quad Fm7 (Ab7) & \quad C7#9 & \quad (Gm7/b5) C7#9 \\
\end{align*}
```

E Minor Blues

```
\begin{align*}
Em7 & \quad Em7 (Gb7/b5) & \quad Cb7b9 & \quad Em7 & \quad E7b9 \\
Am7 & \quad Cb7b9 & \quad Em7 & \quad G7 & \quad (Em7) \\
Gbm7/b5 & \quad Cb7b9 & \quad Em7 (G7) & \quad Cb7#9 & \quad (Gbm7/b5) Cb7#9 \\
\end{align*}
```

Eb Minor Blues

```
\begin{align*}
Ebm7 & \quad Ebm7 (Fm7/b5) & \quad Bb7b9 & \quad Ebm7 & \quad Eb7b9 \\
Abm7 & \quad Bb7b9 (Abm7) & \quad Ebm7 & \quad Gb7 & \quad (Ebm7) \\
Fm7/b5 & \quad Bb7b9 & \quad Ebm7 (Gb7) & \quad Bb7#9 & \quad (Fm7/b5) Bb7#9 \\
\end{align*}
```
Eb blues

D blues

C# blues
Whole tone – It is made only by whole tones. I suggest to use it just on the dominant 7th chord. Whole tone scale is used above all in Jazz music.

We can simplify and summarize all 12 whole tone scales to just 2 scale types: “A” whole tone scale and “B” whole tone scale.

“A” whole tone scale type

C, D, E, F#, G#, Bb WHOLE TONE SCALE

“B” whole tone scale type

C#, Eb, F, G, A, B WHOLE TONE SCALE

• The other 10 whole tone scales have the same notes of these, but, of course, they begin from different tones. For example, D whole tone scale begins from D and has the same notes of the “A” whole tone scale, while F whole tone scale begins from F and has the same notes of the “B” whole tone scale.
**Diminished Scale** – It is made only by a sequence of half step (semitone) and whole step (tone). I suggest to use it just on the dominant 7th and diminished 7th chord in a **jazz context**. Diminished scale is used above all in **Jazz music**.

- Each tone has two different Diminished scale:

  1. Diminished scale beginning with half step
  2. Diminished scale beginning with whole step

For example: C dim scale beginning with half step (“A” type), and C dim scale beginning with whole step (“B” type)

Moreover, we can simplify and summarize all 12 diminished scales to just 3 scale types: “A” diminished scale, “B” diminished scale and “C” diminished scale

**“A” diminished scale type**

C, C#, Eb, E, F#, G, A, Bb diminished scale

```
\[ \text{diminished scale} \]
```

**“B” diminished scale type**

D, D#, F, F#, G#, A, B, C diminished scale

```
\[ \text{diminished scale} \]
```
“C” diminished scale type

E, F, G, G#, Bb, B, C#, D diminished scale

- The other 21 diminished scales have the same notes of these, but, of course, they begin from different tones.
Diminished/whole tone scale (also called Super Locrian or Altered Scale) and whole step (tone). I suggest to use it just on the dominant 7th and diminished 7th chord in a jazz context. Diminished scale is used above all in Jazz music.
DIMINISHED WHOLE TONE SCALE (ALTERED SCALE)

C Diminished/whole tone scale

B Dim/whole tone

Bb Dim/whole tone

A Dim/whole tone

Ab Dim/whole tone

G Dim/whole tone

Gb Dim/whole tone

F Dim/whole tone

E Dim/whole tone

Eb Dim/whole tone

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D Dim/whole tone

C# Dim/whole tone
Pentatonic scale has just five tones. It is like the Major scale but without 4\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th} degrees.

- This a very catchy scale and it sounds good on many chords (Maj 7\textsuperscript{th}, min 7\textsuperscript{th}, 7\textsuperscript{th})

- You can use different pentatonic scales on a chord.
Melody building

Melody is the most powerful and beautiful item of music. It has symmetric, geometric and harmonic rules:

! Pay Attention: I mean 1\textsuperscript{st}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 5\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th} by “CHORDAL NOTE”

When you improvise or compose, you can use to build a melody these notes:

1. Notes of the chord - (Chordal note)
   ( = chordal note)

\[\text{F Maj key} \]  

✓ You can use the notes of a chord \textit{freely}
2. **Turning note**: does not belong to chord but comes from a note of the chord and turn on it. (\( T = \) Turning note)

3. **Passing note**: it is between two chordal notes. (\( P = \) Passing note)
4. **Leaning note** (Appoggiatura): it leans on a chordal note (L = Leaning note)

![Musical notation](image1)

- Fmaj7  
- Dm7  
- G7  

**C Maj key**

✓ After a leaning note you have to play the chordal note close to it

5. **Delaying note** (Ritardo): it delays a chordal note (D = Delaying note)

![Musical notation](image2)

- Em7  
- A7  
- Em7  

**E min key (Melodic/Natural Scale)**

✓ After a delaying note you have to play the straight away below chordal note

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The difference between leaning and delaying note is that the first can go up or down to a chordal note while the second must go down to the straight away below chordal note!

6. **Anticipated note** (Anticipo): it belongs to the a next chord (A = Anticipated note)

7. **Chromatic note**: it does not belong to the chord and key (C = Chromatic note)

- I distinguish these cases:
  - 7.1 Chromatic passing note (Cp)
  - 7.2 Chromatic turning note (Ct)
  - 7.3 Chromatic leaning note (Cl)
8. **Mixed notes**: they are a mix or a combination of previous cases:

- Passing note of a passing note (also chromatic) \( Pp \)
- Passing note of a turning note (also chromatic) \( Ptu \)
- Turning note of a turning note (also chromatic) \( Tt \)
- Passing note of a delaying note (also chromatic) \( Pd \)
- And so on……

9. **Double leaning tone**

- This is a good melodic ornament

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“Wrong” notes

! Sometimes you can break the rules and play “wrong” notes, if they sound good. But BE CAREFUL with this dangerous sounds.

The concept is very simple:

1. You can play (or compose) every note you want if it sounds good

2. Absolute “wrong” notes do not exist. A wrong note is when a tension (not chordal note) is not resolved!

! IMPORTANT NOTE: For many musicians the X marked notes are not wrong. For my music general conception they are. I have played classica, jazz, blues, soul, funk, pop, rock, folk, ethnic. For example I do not like some kind of free modern jazz styles, but I respect every form of expression. So excuse me if I may have hurt your artistic sensibility.
Imitation means repetition with variation.
You can repeat a phrase transposing it, varying the rhythm or varying the melody but maintaining the same rhythmic structure. Let us analyze this pleasure and powerful technique.

Transposing (Progression)

Rhythmic variation
✓ Rhythmic repetition

Sometimes you can create some non harmonic effects, that is playing some notes without considering the chord in which you are.

For example:

1. Repeating the same melodic pattern
2. Repeating the same rhythmic pattern

However, **be careful** when you use these 2 techniques.
1. Remember to vary the **beginning of a phrase:**

- Practise to begin and to end the phrase in **every point of the measure**

![G Major key](image1)

- B = Beginning tone
- E = Ending tone

**AVOID this bad habit:** (Same beginning and ending points)

![E Minor key](image2)
2. Ending of a phrase:

✓ Practise to end a phrase on different tones:

! This aspect is very important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rest - Close the phrasing</td>
<td>Rock,Pop</td>
<td>You have to begin a new phrasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (2)</td>
<td>Tension and unbalancement</td>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>You have begin the following phrase from that note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rest and strong determination</td>
<td>Any style</td>
<td>No particular action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tension, unbalancement and suspension</td>
<td>Jazz,Blues</td>
<td>Begin from that note and solve it to the tone below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rest and neutral</td>
<td>Any style</td>
<td>No particular action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A bit of tension and coloured tone</td>
<td>Jazz,Pop</td>
<td>I suggest to begin the following phrase from that note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tension and determination</td>
<td>Jazz,Blues,Pop</td>
<td>No particular action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ Practise to end the phrase on the different tones of a chord and to make the action I propose.

Ab Major key

Na = no particular action
T = Tension

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Ba = Begin again
S = Solving tone

Another example containing a wrong ending tone (Tension is not solved or begun again).

B melodic minor key

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When you improvise, you have to **emphasize offbeats** (or upbeats).

There are different kinds of offbeats (upbeats):

1) Quarter notes = emphasize 2\textsuperscript{th} and 4\textsuperscript{th} beat
2) Eighth notes = emphasize the even notes (2, 4, 6, 8 in 4/4) (2, 4, 6 in \(3/4\))
3) Eighth note triplets = emphasize above all the last note of every triplet
4) So on….

! This is one of the most important concept in improvisation and music in general:

**emphasizing offbeats** (or **upbeats**)  

✓ **Exercises:**

1. Improvise all quarter notes continuously
2. Improvise all quarter note triplets continuously
3. Improvise all eighth notes continuously
4. Improvise all eighth note triplets continuously
5. Improvise all sixteenth notes continuously
6. Improvise all sixteenth note triplets continuously
7. …..

**But remember to emphasize offbeats always!**
Often, when you improvise on an eighth note basis, because of the time speed, emphasize just one or two notes:

So practise this important drills:

1. Emphasize the fourth eighth-note continuously (or eighth triplets) every 2 quarters (4th and 8th eighth)

! I think, this is the most important rhythmic accent pattern.

2. Emphasize the second eighth-note continuously (or eighth triplets) every 2 quarters (2° and 6° eighth)
3. When the time speed is very fast, emphasize continuously just the last tone of every measure.
• **SWING**

When you play Swing music, that is dixieland, ragtime, Swing, Bebop, Cool Jazz… you have to play these notes…

This basic pattern must be played in this way:

For example this measures:

G Major key ————————————————————————————————————————————————————
In other words Swing has offbeat (upbeat) accents and an eighth-note triplets rhythmic base.
- POLYRHYTHMICS

✓ Polyrhythmic means a contrast between two different rhythmic patterns.

For example you play three note groups against a background of two or four note groups. In other words you play an odd rhythm against an even ones.

3 : 2 or 3 : 4 or 2 : 3 or 4 : 3 or 5 : 4 and so on…….

![3:2 and 5:4 rhythms]

D doric mode

✓ Exercises:

8. Play all 3 : 2 figures - then 6 : 2 continuously
9. Play all 2 : 3 figures - then 4 : 3 continuously
10. Play all 5 : 4 figures - then 10 : 4 continuously
11. So on…….

! Attention : These drills are very difficult, so be patient!

However they will give you great advantages. Be patient… and continue your study.
Very important rhythmic drill

- It is very useful to practise playing polyrhythmics continuously in order to acquire a great independence between left and right hand.
- Moreover the rhythm becomes fresh, various, unforeseen.

C Major key

![Musical notation diagram]
General practice

Ok, now you have to play…

I suggest these progressive exercises:

⇒ **Learn all Major, minor and ….. blues scales**

✓ First play the scales for an octave just with the right hand, then with both hands; play for 2 and 4 octaves with both hands

⇒ **Learn all chords of every key**

✓ Play the chords of every key with right hand then with both hands

⇒ **Learn to analyze music**

✓ Practice to analyze every kind of music with scores or if you want by ear. Write keys, chord types, degrees of the chords, modulations (key changing) on the scores. Analyze melody and write the harmonic function of every note (Chordal note, turning note, passing note……).

⇒ **Arpeggiate all chords**

✓ Arpeggiate all 7th chords with right hand (but not only) in their four inversions.
Begin to improvise just using the chordal notes

- Improvise only on a chord and using just the four chordal notes (Also out of time)
- Improvise just using continuous eighth notes, eighth-triplet notes, sixteenth notes.
- Improvise on a song using **just** the four chordal notes, moving the melody up and down the whole keyboard and playing the chord with the left hand. (You have to play this chord around C4 and moving the notes less possible when you change the chord)

Improvise using a melodic item one at time

- Practice a melodic item out of time and just on a chord
- Improvise on a chord and on a progression out of time and using all melodic possibilities.
- Improvise just using continuous eighth notes, eighth-triplet notes, sixteenth notes.
- Improvise at time and on a song or on chord progressions

Improvise using the phrasing indications

- Practice a phrasing item out of time and just on a chord
- Improvise on a chord and on a progression out of time and using all phrasing possibilities.
- Improvise just using continuous eighth notes, eighth-triplet notes, sixteenth notes.
- Improvise at time and on a song or on chord progressions
Some important considerations

✓ Mastering these techniques needs many, many hours of playing but it is very amusing and you can feel what creating music means.

✓ Moreover, these techniques are the same of composing songs or any other kind of music.

✓ Composing is easier than improvising because you can correct your mistakes.

✓ However I will suggest you some easy techniques to “correct” some melodic “errors”.

✓ Sometimes many new and interesting ideas come from so called harmonic “errors”.
Other fundamental drills

⇒ Ear training

✓ Use this free tool – Functional ear trainer

⇒ Transcription – very, very powerful!

✓ Select your best songs or solos and transcribe them on paper using your piano or keyboard, then transpose them in all keys. I think this is the MOST IMPORTANT AND POWERFUL drill TO LEARN IMPROVISATION

⇒ Transposing

✓ Transpose some phrases in all keys

⇒ Sing

✓ Sing the notes you are improvising

⇒ Listening

✓ Every musical genre but good music, that is great artists
✓ When you listen to music, analyze it!
⇒ Piano improvisers

✓ Listen to this masters of piano improvisation

- Bill Evans
- Keith Jarrett
- Herbie Hanckock
- Chik Corea
- Ahmad Jamal
- Oscar Peterson
- Bud Powell
- Mc Coy Turner
- Many others….

⇒ Improvisers

✓ Other instruments

- Miles Davis (Trumpet)
- Charlie Parker (Alto Sax)
- John Coltrane (Tenor Sax)
About improvisation

✓ Intervals

✓ Improvisation with perfect fourths

✓ Analysis of solos

✓ Lydian chromatic concept

✓ Main chordal progressions

✓ Main used forms

✓ Improvisation tips

✓ Inside, outside

✓ “Free” improvisation

✓ What you have to avoid…

✓ Improvisation goals
About other music subjects

✓ COMPOSING
✓ EAR TRAINING
✓ ARRANGING
✓ ANALYSIS