

# The Lost Art of Improvisation

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## Improvisation



- It's taking what you know and reworking it in a new way to fit a specific context, while also leaving room for exploration of new ideas.

# Why Improvise?



- Keyboard greats
- Personal expression
- Useful skill:
  - Performances
  - Lead sheets
  - Juries
  - Composing
  - Arranging
  - Relaxing
  - Church music
  - Weddings
- Basic accompaniment (music ed, music therapy)
- Theory reinforcement and application
- Better listening
- Decreases memory slips
- Unique audience experience
- TikTok
- Etc.

# How to Improvise: Remember first



- Everyone can improvise
- Complex, yet simple
- Practice
- Be ok with "Wrong" notes
- No comparing
- Teach yourself, then teach your piano class
- Many ways to learn and teach improvisation



# How to Improvise: An approach



1. Build confidence
2. Start simple: rhythm
3. Start simple: notes
4. Simple embellishments
5. Major to minor



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*Original:*



*Harmonic Minor:*



# How to Improvise: An approach



## To try

1. Try improvising newly learned theory concepts
2. Allow "wrong" notes. Pursue them.

Wrong notes are opportunities for exploration.

## In class

1. Call & response
2. Private improv to teacher's chords
3. Only a few minutes each week
4. Homework and practice
5. Quiz them (video submission)



Too busy for improv?

Warm-up routine:

- 5 minutes scales
- 5 minutes sight-reading
- 5 minutes improvisation

Improvisation is fun.

(Let yourself enjoy it)

Further sources

- Gabriella Montero
- Richard Grayson
- Chung, Brian, and Dennis Thurmond. *Improvisation at the Piano: A Systematic Approach for the Classically Trained Pianist*. Los Angeles: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 2007.
- Czerny, Carl. *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte: op. 200*. Edited and translated by Alice L. Mitchell. New York: Longman, Inc., 1983.

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