

Improv Etude

by James M. Stevens

The next three pages contain an improvisational etude designed to help the pianist develop skills in playing in different keys, in melodic improvisation, and in using variations of accompaniment patterns.

The chord progression that is used is:

| ii7 V7 | IMaj7 vi7 | ii7 V7 | IMaj7 |

This is designed so that the pianist can repeat one line as many times as needed to work on the improvisational techniques. When the pianist is ready to go to the next line/key, the I chord becomes the ii chord of the next key, which is a whole step down. After going through 6 keys it loops back to the original key and therefore covers half of the keys. Of course, this exercise could be started one half step higher or lower and it would move through the other 6 keys.

The first page of music simply lists the progression with beat slashes.

The 2nd page of music has the left hand playing chords and the right hand improvising a melody. This should be played with a triplet/swing feel. The melodies are just suggestions and possibilities. Make up your own! The chords in the left hand are written with smooth voice leading with an effort to hold the common tones and move the other notes stepwise to the nearest chord tone. There is an assumption that a bass might be playing a bass line so the chords are in various inversions. Be careful not play thirds in a chord below the C and E beneath Middle C. It will become too muddy!

The 3rd page shows different accompaniment patterns that can be played with the different progressions. Any pattern will work with any of the progressions. There are hundreds of patterns. These are just examples to get started. Have fun and make up your own.

There is a lot of trial and error in learning to improvise. If something doesn't work well, then discard it. If something you play sounds good, then remember it and place it in your "bag of tricks." Learning to improvise is the beginning of learning to compose and arrange. Composing is just selected improvisation.

Hopefully, this will help improve your creative abilities and improvisational skill!

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<http://www.jamesmstevens.com/improvetude.html>

Improv Etude

Improvise over each section, repeating each section as many times as needed or desired.

1

1 Dm7 G7 CMaj7 Am7 Dm7 G7 CMaj7

2m7 5 7 1Maj7 6m7 2m7 5 7 1Maj7

5 Cm7 F7 BbMaj7 Gm7 Cm7 F7 BbMaj7

2m7 5 7 1Maj7 6m7 2m7 5 7 1Maj7

9 Bbm7 Eb7 AbMaj7 Fm7 Bbm7 Eb7 AbMaj7

2m7 5 7 1Maj7 6m7 2m7 5 7 1Maj7

13 Abm7 Db7 GbMaj7 Ebm7 Abm7 Db7 GbMaj7

2m7 5 7 1Maj7 6m7 2m7 5 7 1Maj7

17 F#m7 B7 EMaj7 C#m7 F#m7 B7 EMaj7

2m7 5 7 1Maj7 6m7 2m7 5 7 1Maj7

21 Em7 A7 DMaj7 Bm7 Em7 A7 DMaj7 D.C.

2m7 5 7 1Maj7 6m7 2m7 5 7 1Maj7

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L.H. Chords, R.H. Improvised Melody - Make Your Own Melody!

1 Dm7 G7 CMaj7 Am7 Dm7 G7 CMaj7

5 Cm7 F7 BbMaj7 Gm7 Cm7 F7 BbMaj7

9 Bbm7 Eb7 AbMaj7 Fm7 Bbm7 Eb7 AbMaj7

13 Abm7 Db7 GbMaj7 Ebm7 Abm7 Db7 GbMaj7

17 F#m7 B7 EMaj7 C#m7 F#m7 B7 EMaj7

21 Em7 A7 DMaj7 Bm7 Em7 A7 DMaj7 D.C.

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With Different Accompaniment Patterns - Mix and Match Your Own!

1 Dm7 G7 CMaj7 Am7 Dm7 G7 CMaj7

5 Cm7 F7 BbMaj7 Gm7 Cm7 F7 BbMaj7

9 Bbm7 Eb7 AbMaj7 Fm7 Bbm7 Eb7 AbMaj7

13 Abm7 Db7 GbMaj7 Ebm7 Abm7 Db7 GbMaj7

17 F#m7 B7 EMaj7 C#m7 F#m7 B7 EMaj7

21 Em7 A7 DMaj7 Bm7 Em7 A7 DMaj7 D.C.