

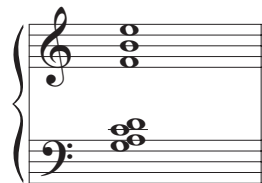
# Improve your improv!

## Basic techniques for the beginning improviser

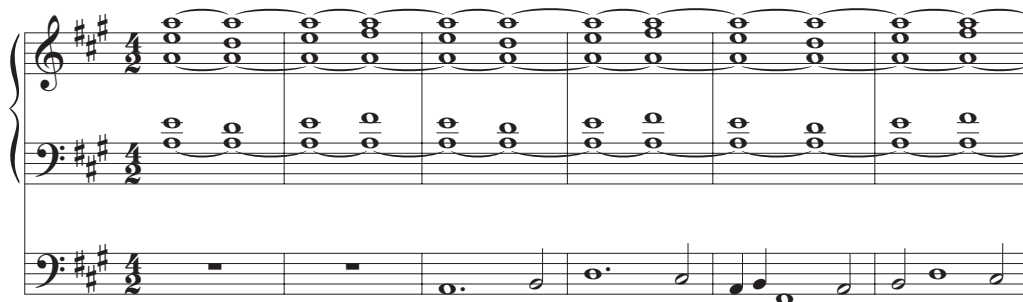
Dr. Richard K. Fitzgerald, *presenter*



1. What is improvisation? How do I go beyond “noodling”?
2. Presenting and developing a theme
  - a. accompanying with intervals (**Dissertation, p. 140**)
    - i. 5ths in both hands (extreme registers) with tune in pedal
  - b. oscillating 4<sup>th</sup>s (or any interval), pedalpoint, theme
    - i. gain coordination by practicing various distributions
    - ii. register dialogue
    - iii. dialogue between different registrations (and registers)
  - c. ‘raindrop’ template
  - d. simple ornamentation (**Dissertation, p. 148**)
  - e. canon, e.g. *Wondrous Love* and *Lobe den Herrn*
  - f. scherzo (quartal trichords and triads)
  - g. toccata
  - h. Klangfarbenmelodie (melody of tone colors)
  - i. 7<sup>th</sup> chords (3<sup>rd</sup> inversion, i.e. 7<sup>th</sup> in bass) with descending scales in pedal
  - j. metric shift
    - i. pastorale
    - ii. barcarolle
  - k. interval expansion
  - l. Messiaen, Chord on the Dominant



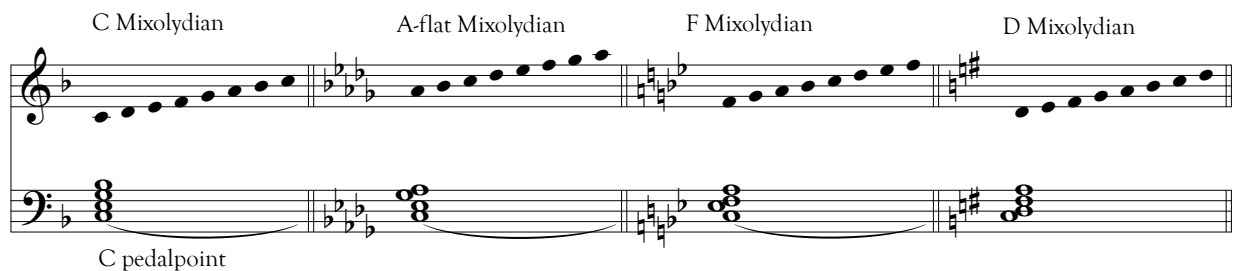
- m. Vierne, Cathédrales from Pièces de Fantaisie (Suite IV) template
  - i. use repertoire to inspire your surface material



- n. And the list goes on. Look to repertoire for an endless catalogue of templates.
- 3. Modal exploration: creating a sophisticated soundscape
  - a. Ecclesiastical modes
    - i. Dorian, Phrygian (**Dissertation, p. 59**), etc.
  - b. Acoustic (**Dissertation, p. 108**)
  - c. Whole tone (**Dissertation, p. 112**)
  - d. Octatonic (**Dissertation, p. 115**)
    - i. A nice octatonic progression



- e. Messiaen's Mode 3 (**Dissertation, p. 120**)
- 4. Flexing your transposition muscles: harmonizing a single note (C)
  - a. Transposition is an essential skill for the improviser
  - b. Direct modulation
    - i. C major, A-flat major, F major, D-flat major
      - 1. via common tone
        - a. C
          - i. C major 7<sup>th</sup>
          - ii. A-flat major 7<sup>th</sup>
          - iii. F major 7<sup>th</sup>
          - iv. D-flat major 7<sup>th</sup>
  - c. C with dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords: C dom 7, A-flat dom7, F dom 7, D dom 7
    - i. oscillating octave in pedal, chords in LH, mixolydian free melody in octaves
      - 1. then Lobet den Herrn (4 phrases, each phrase in a different key)



- d. Any 7<sup>th</sup> chord, triad, or other harmonic structure can be used
  - i. 1/2 diminished 7<sup>th</sup> is especially nice
    - 1. (**Dissertation, p. 92**)
- 5. Creating your own music: emphasizing structure and cohesion
  - a. A place to start: 4 bar phrases
    - i. antecedent and consequent phrases (question and answer)
  - b. The parallel period: a complete thought
    - i. A = monody in octaves
    - ii. A = monody in octaves

- iii. B = chords (*FF*)
- iv. A = monody in octaves
- c. Ternary exposition (ABA<sup>1</sup>)
  - i. hymn tune
  - ii. bridge/middle section consisting of a parallel period
  - iii. hymn tune again, different presentation
    - 1. importance of transposition
  - iv. development
  - v. other forms
- d. Compositions as formal models
  - i. Any set of variations
  - ii. Langlais, *Prière* from *Vingt-quatre Pièces* (**handout, p. 4**)
  - iii. Langlais, *Hommage à Fr. Landino* from *Vingt-quatre Pièces* (**handout, p. 6**)
  - iv. Vierne, *Préambule* from *24 Pièces en style libre*
  - v. Alain, *Ballade en Mode Phrygien* (**handout, p. 8**)
  - vi. any piece of repertoire (**handout, p. 10–end**)
    - 1. beginning piano repertoire makes for great models
- 6. How to practice
  - a. survey of sources (**handout, p. 17**)
- 7. Richard is accepting students
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