



Faithmusic Worship Center

Worship Improvisation

Bringing Hymns And Worship Songs To Life

What is worship improvisation?

Worship is the reverent love accorded to our heavenly Father. Worship is more than music. Worship is a lifestyle encompassed by everything you think, say, and do. worship.com

Improvisation is the practice of acting, singing, talking and reacting, of making and creating, in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment and inner feelings. This can result in the invention of new thought patterns, new practices, new structures or symbols, and/or new ways to act (or play). wikipedia

We know the old respected hymns but they are being used less and less and are being replaced with worship songs.

Worship songs are being accused of being simplistic and non-challenging to the church pianist.

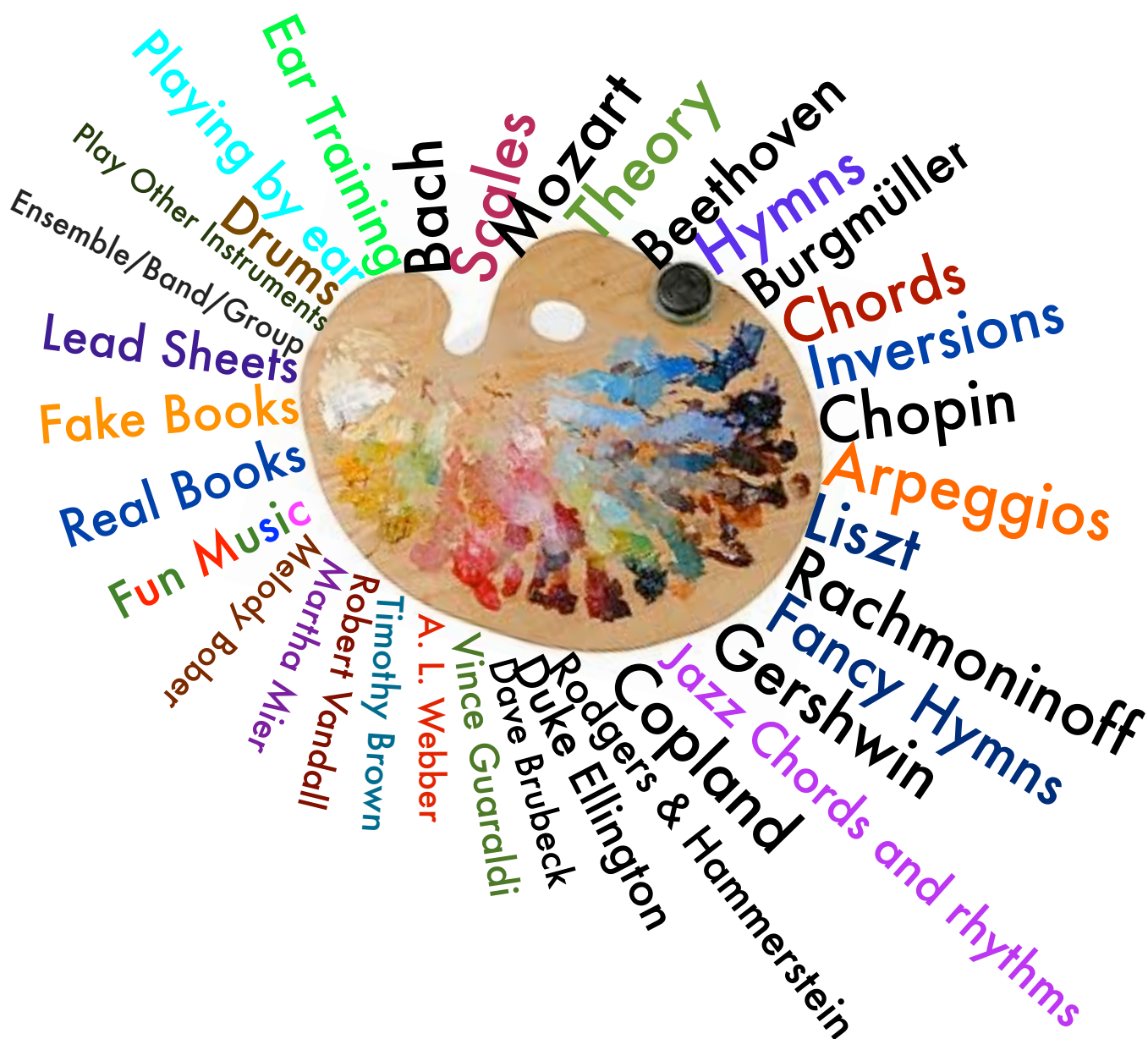
In Psalms, musicians are instructed to play skillfully.

Ephesians 5 tells us to speak to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.

Can we make unity and harmony out of both the old and the new?

Preparing the Pianist's Palette

Whatever musical beauty we want to be birthed from our minds, we must first make sure we have taken in all we possibly can. All genres, all styles, sight-reading, theory knowledge, ear training, lead sheet reading, etc. are necessary to create skillful musicians who can play what he or she hears.



How To Prepare

What to practice?

I. Play one hymn per day

A. write in chords

1. Look for common notes, try to simplify chords to one or two per measure to give a smoother sound, unless playing a very traditional hymn like "Mighty Fortress Is Our God". Write in chords on first and third beats, for the most part. When figuring out chords, compile the notes in root position, so you can see them or write them in thirds (all spaces or lines) Use chord formulas if you need them to figure out minor or major thirds)

B. play with bass note/ chord accompaniment

C. make sure your lh bass notes are correct

1. Emphasize any walk down notes, especially on the fourth beat

C. play with arpeggios , work on bass line, make sure it is strong and is the foundation of the song

D. play with arpeggios, put notes in different locations, low and high, backwards and forwards

E. notes in the scale of the chord to your arpeggios (passing tones)

F.add 6ths and 7ths to your chords, r.h .and l.h.

G.Add chords underneath your melody line in the right hand to fill out the right hand

H.Create a modern arrangement-

1.simplify l.h. arpeggios by making them 10ths or octaves with 5ths (i.e. C G C G C) or (CGE)

2.Turn melody into a pretty and simple harmony with 6ths or 5ths or 4ths

II. Play one fake book song per day

- A. Apply all of the same principles
- B. Work on those jazz chords and voicings. You have more inversions to work with when you have a larger chord such as 7ths and 6ths and then 9ths and 11ths.
- C. Start with something that is do-able .Work your way up to The Real Book

III. Play standards that have jazz chords and rhythms, apply these to your fake book arrangements and hymns

- Songs such as Stardust, Misty, As Time Goes By, etc.

IV. Play different genres including Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Contemporary, Jazz, Pop, Rock, Country, Gospel

- Add to your music library whenever you can. Always play a variety of music to increase sight reading abilities and to fill your palette with many experiences and styles. You also need many rhythm experiences to give your mind rhythms to work with in the future.

V. Play other instruments including percussion.

- Make friends with a drummer ;-) Offer to play percussion in a music group. Purchase a cheap kids drum/set or percussive instrument and play along with your favorite song on youtube. Learn how to play at least one other instrument. It will help you be a better writer or composer, arranger, improviser.

VI. Play by ear

- Pick a song you can sing or hum. Pick the melody out, determine what key it is in. Go over the scale and the chords in a scale. What chords go with the melody?

VII. Play worship songs by ear with a chord sheet.

Look up a song on youtube to listen, and look it up on ultimateguitar.com to print the lead sheet. Try to play along with all of your favorite worship songs this way. You can do it!!!

Easy Formulas and Chord Definitions

Root = R Half Step = h

4h = Major 3rd 3h = minor 3rd

R + 4h + 3h = MAJ chord

R + 3h + 4h = min chord

R + 4h + 3h + 3h = Dominant 7th chord

R + 4h + 3h + 4h = MAJOR 7th chord

R + 3h + 4h + 3h = minor 7th

C = C MAJ

Cm = C minor

G7 = G major + minor 3rd (7th)

GMAJ7 = G major + MAJ 3rd (4h)

Gmin7 = Gmin + min 3rd (7)

Csus = C major w/raised 3rd to 4th (CFG)

C2 = C major lower 3rd to 2nd (CDG)

B/E = rh chord B over lh Bass note E

C7+5 = C major w/raised 5th add 3h to raised 5th
(CEG#B)

+ = to augment, to raise 1/2 step (maj 3rd)

- = to diminish, to lower 1/2 step (min 3rd)
could also mean minor

Common Denominator

Practice inversions like crazy in block form and arpeggios.

When playing from one chord to the next, ask yourself “What note or notes do these two chords have in common?” Try to play the inversions in such a way that the common note/s connect. This makes for smoother transitions.

CEG -- FAC -- CEG

There are big jumps between these two chords. Put the C in the F chord on the bottom rather than on the top and your hand will remain in a close proximity to the next chord.

CEG -- CFA -- CEG

Cadences help prepare students for this way of thinking.

To add **COLOR** to your chords, and create more possibilities for keeping a common denominator, add a MAJ7th or a 6th.

For instance, look at the CMAJ7 chord: C E G B

Notice that C major chord and E minor chord share two notes in common.

I like to call these combo chords. We create many possibilities on the inversion front, when we play and mix colors of these two related chords.

And once you grasp it, it is so easy to add a third and mix and blend!

C E G & E G B

Arpeggios, Arpeggios, Arpeggios

Play them, count them, add scale notes or passing tones between the notes of arpeggios. Turn them into triplets or 1/8th notes or 16th or 32nd notes.

Go up the piano and down the piano, rh and lh. Get creative. Play them in a swing groove. Add **color** to them by adding the 2nd of a chord or 4th or 7th, etc. They can be used in many styles of music. Get very comfortable with arpeggios in many styles.

Percussive Piano

You can play your piano like a drum. Treat your left and right hands as if you were holding drum sticks. Play with strength and throw those chords as if you were hitting a snare or a tom. Piano can add so much texture to a piece!

The Orchestra Piano

Piano is such an amazing instrument. The harp that has the depth of a cello and the whistle of a flute. It can be tympani and cymbals and guitars and brass. Let us learn to utilize it as an orchestra. How can we create rich tones and complex grabbing rhythms? What can we do with melodies and harmonies when we layer and layer upon layer? An instrument that is as soft as rain mist on a spring morning or as loud as an elephant herd stampeding through the jungle.

Let us learn how to create and paint our work of art with the colors that have been laid in our minds.

Transitions

This is where we can have fun. Put two songs together and make something cool out of the two songs becoming one! No serious rules other than play a dominant or dominant 7th chord leading from one song to the next key. Try to arrange your songs where the song with the higher key is the second song. It sounds best to move in an upward motion.

Say your first song is in F major and the second is in G major. Here is an example of what you could play. Just remember there are so many possibilities.

end of song 1:

Bb /// | C /// | F /// | F /// ||

transition:

Dm / C / | Bb /// |

Dm /// | C /// | Dsus /// | D / D7 /

song 2: ↙

G

When playing from one piece to the next, take your time. Play at least 2-4 bars in your present key, then go to the dominant sus chord of the next key or the dominant 7th chord of the next for 2 or more bars and then start your next piece. Listen to what you play and avoid any abrupt change. Keep it smooth!

Chord Progressions and Loops

Have students write their own chord progressions. Start with chords in a scale. Start with no more than 4 chords and call this section A. Play repetitively practicing different improv ideas and fills. Copy for other students to play along. Add section B to progression. Add more color to chords or borrow chords from neighboring keys.

TRAINING

How much time is needed on a daily basis to become an excellent musician?

Well, for different people, there are different answers. But if you are serious about becoming a well-rounded, skilled musician, you should plan on devoting 2 - 4 hrs day in order to have the results you would like to have.

On the following page is a chart you can use as a practice guideline to make sure you are playing a wide variety of styles.

The chart does not include the following ideas that should definitely be implemented:

•Play Fun Music

Play extra music that you do not have to play for a teacher. Music that you enjoy and will want to keep going back to the piano to play. This fun music needs to be right on your reading level so you can for the most part, sight read it.

•The More You Read, the Faster You Will Play

•Accompany for vocalists, choirs, instrumentalists as much as possible

•Perform as much as possible

•Play with other musicians as much as possible

•Play chords while reading scripture •Try setting scripture to a meter and melody while playing chords

Practice Guidelines (min. 2 hrs per day - 4 hrs per day)

PREP	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
Scales 5 min					
<u>Chord Work:</u> Cadences, chords and inversions, arpeggios 7 min					
<u>Technique</u> 3 min					
<u>Sight Read</u> <u>Hymn</u> 5 min					
<u>Write in chords</u> 5 min					
<u>Fancy Hymns</u> LH note /chord and arpeggios 5 min.					
Sub-Total: 30 min					
Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Contemporary <u>Repertoire Work</u> 1 hr.					
<u>Jazz</u> 15 min					
<u>Showtunes</u> 15 min					
Sub-Total: 2 hrs.					
<u>Lead Sheets</u> inc. worship, standards, jazz 15 min or more					
<u>Play By Ear:</u> pick song you can sing, or listen to song on you tube 15 min					



Faithmusic Worship Center

For more information or to book Cheryl Amelang for a concert, clinic, or other engagement, please send your email request to cheryl@faithmusicworshipcenter.com or call 979-203-8293. Thank you.

www.brenhammusicacademy.com

www.faithmusicworshipcenter.com

to listen to Cheryl's free streaming music:

www.cherylamelang.com

Cheryl Amelang's CD's and sheetmusic are available at:

www.dowlingmusic.com

www.cdbaby.com

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