

B) IMPROVISATION EXERCISES



This music has a simple melody supported by simple harmony. The first part of the phrase limits the harmony to chords I and V. Then comes chord IV which gives space and momentum, moving the phrase towards its end (cadence). In the second part of the track the melody is in the left hand, with a right hand accompaniment on the offbeats. The melody is built on a rhythmic structure which does not change.

I - V - V - I

I - IV - V - I

I - V - V - I

IV - I - V - I

(next...)

- ❖ Use this rhythmic structure and improvise other walking melodies firstly with only the right hand, or only the left hand.
- ❖ Then create a dialogue between the two hands, one responding to the other.
- ❖ Play a melody in the right hand and accompany it in the left hand with the same harmonic progression as the piece, in order to focus your attention on creating a melody that makes you want to move forward.
- ❖ With the same harmonic structure, vary the bass so it acts as a stimulus for walking (this will create inversions and passing notes).
- ❖ Try the reverse: melody in the bass and accompaniment in the right hand.



This piece in 6/8 uses a rhythmic ostinato typical for compound time : a quarter note and an eighth note. The harmonic structure is similar to the first half of the track, except that the cadences are a little more complex. This type of ostinato uses inversions within the same chord.

- ❖ In the first half of the track it was the rhythm of the harmony that gave the impression of movement; in this second half, it is the melodic rhythm which gives structure to the phrase. When the three eighth notes appear more often, they give momentum (a sense of acceleration) to the phrasing. Consciously use this as a way of encouraging movement and giving direction to the phrase.

The form of the ostinato is very stimulating for skipping or “pas chassés”; it literally makes children leap! Since it is easy to play without reflection, it gives more freedom to concentrate on the melody one is playing while watching the students.



This music for a 3 beat walk has an effervescent quality that invites children to walk lightly and fairly quickly. How do you translate that into music?

Firstly, the left hand accompaniment is created by one low quarter note and two repeated higher chords. This basic rhythmic structure is enhanced by the use of inversions, passing modulations and chromaticisms.

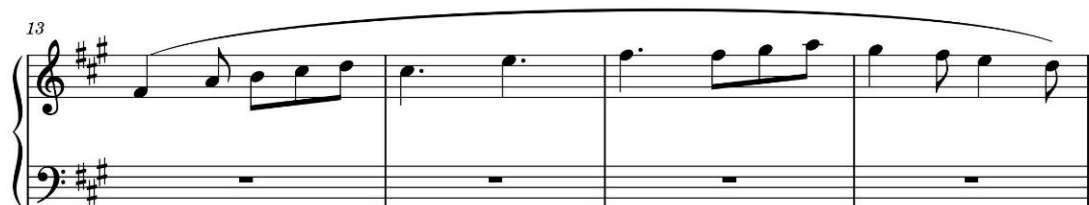
- ❖ Listen to the melodic movement created by the first quarter note of each bar in the left hand that supports the melody of the right hand.

(next...)

The right hand plays a melody in one voice, beginning simply using three quarter notes per measure, to make it clear that it is a walk and not a run. Then, eighth notes are placed where the music needs, to stimulate the sense of going forwards. It is worth giving time to analyze where one hears the eighth notes (and whether one hears two or four), because their placement is decisive in creating movement.

- ❖ Start by inventing a light, simple melody and then accompany it with a single bass tone on the first beat of each bar. Find a relationship between the two voices that pleases the ear.
- ❖ Then add one or two sounds in the middle, on the 2nd and 3rd beats, to create a harmony.

One's manner of playing on the keyboard (sound, texture, dynamics, accents, phrasing) is the key to creating the quality of a music that connects with the movement.



This music is like a lullaby. It creates a sense of calm through the repetition and subtle modification of rhythmic cells in the right hand, and in the left, through the repetition of harmonies. The legato touch is important too.

Regarding the ostinato in the left hand: the harmony does not change at each beat or even in each measure, but the sense of movement is created in the interior of each chord by the alternating bass.

(next...)

The form of the first part is quite static, and the harmony moves very little. In the second part, other chords are added and they change more often. It is this that gives the form to the whole piece in an organic way.

- ❖ The rhythmic structure of the melody (3 eighth notes/dotted quarter) immediately installs the impulse of the sway or the rock. Use this rhythmic cell to construct the beginning of the right hand melody and use the ostinato for the left hand.
- ❖ To practice the rhythmic independence of both hands, start by playing the bass ostinato on a single chord while adding the arpeggio of the same chord (3 eighth notes / dotted quarter note) in the right hand.
- ❖ Using modes can be easier than working in major or minor keys. One can create a pretty lullaby with only two alternating chords, and a melody that is decorated by some variations. Dare to experiment!