

## A) B) IMPROVISATION EXERCISES



The aim of this exercise is to work on the superposition of two different divisions of time, in this case: three and two. The polymeter is thus located within each beat. Here, the music is in two beats. We chose the binary writing, so the groups of three are triplets (we could have chosen a ternary meter with groups of 3 eighth notes and duplets). In this example, the triplet arpeggiated chord is spread over two beats, so that the phrasing of the 2/4 meter can be heard.

- ❖ First play only groupings of 3 in the left and the right hand separately, with one note per beat in the other voice, without bothering to draw the phrasing of the meter.
- ❖ Then try to group these divisions by one meter, for the phrasing. We recommend an easy arpeggio drawing, in order to concentrate, in the next step, on the quality of the other voice and the fluidity of the piano playing.
- ❖ Add the division in two to create a polymeter, also starting by playing only notes from the chord.

Once you have mastered the combination of the two divisions (triplets and eighth notes) with easy melodic patterns such as the chord notes, you can start to decorate the melodic line of one or the other voice by adding scale movement, passing notes, appoggiaturas, etc.

The melody could also be placed in the first note of each triplet, which is emphasized by playing it slightly louder.

(next...)

- ❖ Exercise this polymeter also with measures of three, four or five beats: find a progression of simple chords and arpeggiate each of them in triplets grouped by two, three, four or five beats according to the chosen meter, to make the phrasing of the measure clearly heard. One chord per meter is sufficient, most of the time, except in cadences.
- ❖ In this example, the musical sign of the inversion between bass and soprano is simply given by the phrasing (last beat in quarter note). Start by doing eight meters of each, and then switch to four meters.



This piece begins with the harmonic sequence of the Pachelbel canon. Every other chord is in reversed position, creating a descending major scale movement in the bass.

- ❖ Begin by working through this harmonic sequence in different major keys to become familiar with the keyboard relief.
- ❖ Set a key in which to start with the suggested chords series, which can be repeated before continuing the improvisation with other harmonies. It is not indispensable to modulate, except perhaps to indicate a change of roles between bass and soprano.

Right hand plays arpeggiated chords (groups of 5) while adding passing notes and other ornaments.

The left hand plays one note, or two, for each group of 5 in the right hand. It is not necessary for the left hand to be heard more than this, as the right hand establishes clearly each chord in the groups of 5.

Adopt the same principle when the groups of 5 are in the left hand.



This piece begins with a repeated alternation of two chords, which makes it possible to settle comfortably into the groups of 5.

- ❖ Play one hand at a time; create a melodic pattern for the groups of 5 by:
  - arpeggiating a chord and inserting passing notes to it
  - choosing a series of 5 pentatonic sounds
  - playing a pentacord with modal consonances (with an augmented second).
- ❖ Don't hesitate:
  - to alternate two chords several times
  - to alter only one sound within a pentacord or to simply change the order of the sounds in each new group of 5.
- ❖ Add the second voice (two beats). Take care in the choice of sounds mainly when the two hands play together on the first beat.

Find a melodic line for the groups of 5 that sounds like a unit of 5 (not 3 + 2, for example).

The simplicity and stability of the bass gives freedom and space to unfold a simple but singing melody in the voice that performs the two beats.

The signal to anticipate the change between bass and treble is the dominant chord, used to modulate to another key. But don't hesitate to find other means of modulation or even other ways of emphasizing the change between treble and bass.



Observe the bassline descending diatonically from the tonic to the dominant. The second chord (VIb) maintains the same bass note as the first, transforming it into a major chord in first inversion.

This canon is more difficult than the previous ones because the succession of rhythms, when performed in canon between the piano and the participants, generates slightly more complex polyrhythms. When one is creating a continuous canon, it is important to be aware of what sort of polyrhythm will be created by two voices at a distance of a measure.

- ❖ Begin by inventing an interrupted canon, alternating an active measure with a passive measure. \*

(next...)

In this type of exercise, the emphasis is on the rhythm of the melody. However, the melody line is also important: it should be simple to sing, to facilitate the recognition and memorization of the rhythm, as it is a primary source of support for the memory.

In a measure of three beats, use only one chord per measure, or, occasionally, two or three for the cadence.

This piece can be used in different ways: divided into sections, it can also be used as rhythmic dictation.

- ❖ You may use the same chord progression and improvise in 4/4, 12/8 or 9/8, for example.
- ❖ To create interrupted or continuous canons, refer to the examples in other volumes\*.

\* For other examples of canons: vol. 2 no. 8, vol. 3 no. 7 and 9, vol. 6 no. 9, vol. 7 no. 8.