

ACTIVITIES THAT BUILD CONCRETE LINKS BEWEEN CM THEORY/TECHNIQUE & IMPROVISATION

PREP LEVEL

- Start in a C 5 finger pattern position.
- Improvise a melody by changing the 5 finger pattern around. (Try to use a rhythm of quarter-quarter-half note with RH.)
- LH plays single notes (I or V) while RH improvises a melody.
- There are no rules, just notice that half step between 3-4!
- In different weeks, use a different 5 finger position, experimenting with the different positions in Prep Level C-A
- Can you have the RH play the I or V notes, and have the LH play notes from the 5 finger pattern? Can you try the quarter quarter half note rhythm in your LH?
- Now try the same in minor. Notice that the half step is between the 2nd and 3rd tones!
- For “advanced prep improvisers” see if your LH can play the I triad, and the V triad in root position. Try common tone for the LH chords. Can you switch the parts the hands play, and have RH play the I/V triads while LH makes up a pattern?
- Then, let’s add the use of the scale. When trying the 5 finger improv exercise in C or G, expand the RH notes that you experiment with to include the major scale (we are adding the 6-7-8 tones)
- Rhythm ideas- at first just use quarter notes and half notes, note values which are introduced in this level. This can be expanded to include dotted half notes, whole notes and eighth notes, as well as the associated rests.
- Specific parameters for an improvisation idea can be set to also reinforce the intervals which are introduced in this level: 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, and 5ths
- Time signatures/meter can be taught this way as well. 2/4 3/4 4/4
- Create assignments where your student can practice writing out these concepts.

LEVEL 1

- Similar to the above ideas—but the Level 1 keys
 - It is important to do a lot with the cadences as these are concepts that many students have a hard time assimilating.
 - For example- in C major, have the LH play the cadence chords and improvise simple RH melodies, even like half notes F-C for the plagal cadence, etc.
 - Rhythm ideas- use quarter notes and half notes and some staccato articulation.
 - Create assignments where your student can practice writing out these concepts.
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LEVEL 2-3

- Have the student transpose the first 4 measures of the Minuet in G to the other L2-L3 keys.
- Add the LH chords in root position and make a smooth transition to the IV chord.
- Try moving from the I chord in root position to the IV chord using a common tone inversion.
- Try the LH with just whole notes, which may allow for more movement in the RH.
- Stay in 3/4 or change to 4/4 and try the chord progression of the Minuet (the first 8 bars of the Minuet, or the 2nd 8 bars.)
- Try this in 6/8, 2/4
- L3 introduces *alla breve*. Try to demonstrate *alla breve* in an improvisation.
- Create a melody of half notes using chord tones in RH.
- Use quarter notes in the RH and also add passing notes.
- Understanding of intervals can be assimilated by creating melodies using specific intervals. (Example: move by a second, then a third, etc)
- Notice and verbalize the different cadences.
- Do this in all the L2-L3 keys.
- Create assignments where your student can practice writing out these concepts.

LEVEL 4-5

- Create a chord progression (in a Major key) with the student, using primary chords as well as some secondary chords.
- Have the student verbalize using the Roman Numeral symbols it as he plays it.
- Alternatively, have the student verbalize it using the scale degree names (tonic, mediant, etc), as well as the chord names (C-Emin, etc) as this will help build knowledge.
- Practice this progression using root position chords, then 1st inversion chords, then 2nd inversion chords.
- Create a melody that fits with the chord progression, using specific intervals, (ex: perhaps a third followed by a sixth.) See if your student can identify/verbalize the interval as a major, minor, or perfect while playing the LH chords or pattern with a steady time feel.
- Do the same process in the other keys.
- Especially focus on A Major and Bb Major as these are the L4 keys that a student has to demonstrate primary and secondary chords.
- Include the use of the three cadences in the chord progressions in these different keys.
- Create a minor chord progression with the student, using primary chords, and then add the diminished ii chord. (harmonic minor)
- Then modify the progression and add the VI chord, and the diminished vii chord. Have the student add the III+ chord.
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- Try the same process using scale tone triads from F harmonic minor.
- Create assignments where your student can practice writing out these concepts.

LEVEL 6-7-8

- Create a chord progression (in a Major and/or minor key) with the student, using primary chords as well as some secondary chords.
- Have the student verbalize using Roman Numeral symbols it as he plays it.
- Alternatively, have the student verbalize it using the scale degree names (tonic, mediant, etc), as well as the chord names (C-Emin, etc) as this will help build knowledge.
- Practice this progression using root position chords, then 1st inversion chords, then 2nd inversion chords.
- Create a melody that fits with the chord progression, using specific intervals, (ex: perhaps a third followed by a sixth.) See if your student can identify/verbalize the interval as a major, minor, or perfect while playing the LH chords or pattern with a steady time feel.
- Do this same process in all major and minor keys.
- Especially focus on E & B Major and Ab, Db and F# Major as these are the L6-7 keys.
- Include the use of the four cadences (half, plagal, authentic, and deceptive) in the chord progressions in these different keys.
- Practice modulations to the Dominant.
- Use 2:3 polyrhythms in your RH improvisation.
- Create assignments where your student can practice writing out these concepts.

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