

ADVANCED PIANO TECHNIQUES

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I. Intro

- A. Play Skillfully—cultivating the gifts God has given you (1 Chron. 15:22)
- B. Play Humbly—celebrating the gifts God has given others (Philippians 2:3)
- C. Play Passionately—playing as unto the Lord (1 Cor. 10:31)

II. Improvisation

- A. The Purpose of Improvisation
 - 1. Adorn the chord structure
 - 2. Accent the melody or the rhythm
 - 3. Amplify the mood
 - 4. Anticipate the progression
- B. Melodic Fill Ideas
 - 1. 1-3-4-3-2-1-5
 - 2. 7-1-5
 - 3. 2-7-1
 - 4. Scales ending on the 1 tone on the downbeat
 - 5. Octave 1-7-5
 - 6. Jazz Fills: m3-M3 5, m7-1.
 - 7. For practice: Focus on the unique uses of each tone in the scale
- C. Harmonic Fill Ideas
 - 1. Ascending/Descending 6ths
 - 2. Ascending/Descending 3rds
 - 3. vi-V (m6-M5) (i.e. Am-G)
 - 4. ii-I (m2-M1) (i.e. Dm-C)
 - 5. I and V sustained, 2-3-4, 3-4-3
 - 6. For practice: Focus on the unique possibilities of each interval and inversion

III. Voicing

A. Purpose of Voicing

1. Create beauty through organized diversity
2. Indicate a transition or progression

B. Voicing Ideas

1. R.H. Triad/L.H. Octave on 1
2. R.H. Single Note Accent (2,4,7)/L.H. 1-5-1
3. R.H. 1-5-1, L.H. 3 Or R.H. 1-3-1/L.H. 1
4. R.H. "Tight" Voicing/L.H. low melodic movement

IV. Transitions and Background

A. Introductions

1. Goals

- a. Establish tempo based on the chorus
- b. Reflect meter (Primary emphasis on the 1 beat, secondary emphasis on beat 3 for 4/4 or beat 4 for 6/8)
- c. Create "groove" (the accented beats reflected by the kick drum or bass)
- d. Quickly create anticipation to sing

2. "Hint" Ideas

- a. Consistent rhythm followed by a measured space
- b. Space followed by a rhythmic fill
- c. Range change
- d. Volume change
- e. Use the leading notes (4, 7, 6)
- f. Play the first melodic note

B. Before the Chorus

1. Beware a tempo change
2. Use leading chords (IV, V)
3. Create anticipation to sing
 - a. Volume Increase
 - b. Fills that build momentum
 - c. Dramatic Space

C. The “Turnaround”

1. Brief, but with some space to reflect on the chorus
2. Use a repeatable chord progression (i.e. same as intro, same as line 1, verse 1)
3. Use fills to decrease intensity (descending fills, fewer accents)
4. Succinct, memorable lead

D. Conclusion

1. Retarding quarters
2. Retarding fill
3. Counted space
4. End on the words
5. Extending the song’s celebration
 - a. Repeating the same chord, different inversions, moving right hand.
 - b. Consistent bass note, varying chords in right hand
 - c. Consistent bass note, with melodic repetition in right hand
 - d. End on a IV and begin an ascending chord progression to extend the extended celebration.

E. Between Songs

1. Brief space followed by a clear intro in the new key and new rhythm
2. For a more elaborate key change—transition using familiar chords to the V or V7 of the new key. (C-G-D-A-Bsus).

F. Background

1. Musically reflect the current spiritual activity of the church. (Note: These musical suggestions are cultural and will vary!)
 - a. Joy—more movement, brighter/higher tones
 - b. Passion—Dramatic Changes (staccato/legato, low/high, or space/movement, frequent leading notes (2, 7) building to concluding chords
 - c. Sadness—Minor Chords, frequent leading chords without many concluding chords.
 - d. Many words, much activity—more notes
 - e. Few words, much reflection—fewer notes
2. Amplify the appropriate emotional response to God, not the focus on your playing (it is background after all...)

V. Rhythm

- A. Practice with a metronome
- B. Practice “groove” (kick drum, bass guitar) of the song with the left hand.
- C. Practice different rhythms with either hand (simultaneous accents and melody rhythm)
- D. Practice emphasizing beat 1.
- E. Practice creating “groove” with fewer notes

VI. Orchestration

- A. Study the possibilities and weaknesses of each instrument
 - 1. Piano—solos, combination of rhythm and lead/harmonic parts, broad range
 - 2. Electric—solos, layered, straight rhythm, anticipated rhythm
 - 3. Acoustic—picking patterns, lead possibilities, rhythm
 - 4. Solo Instruments—Intro leads, harmonies during melody, emphasizing melody, counterpoints to melody
 - 5. Drums—Full rock beat, accents, underlying intensity
 - 6. Synthesizer—Organ, Strings, Pad, Loops.
 - 7. Bass—rhythmic emphasis, low/high transition.
- B. Pitch—different instruments should focus on different pitch ranges
- C. Rhythm/Texture—different instruments should take different rhythm and texture roles. Make use of contrasts.
- D. Dynamic Progression—songs should not switch “on and off” from the verse to the chorus.

VII. Conclusion

- A. Be able to play, content to listen
- B. Q and A, Group Participation