

Excerpts from ...

**DEVELOPING
MUSICIANSHIP
THROUGH
IMPROVISATION**



Simple Gifts

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Developing Musicianship through Improvisation

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INTRODUCTION

Do you know someone who can improvise? Chances are he or she knows a lot of tunes and learns new tunes with relative ease. It seems that improvisers can sing and/or play anything that comes to mind. Improvisers interact in the moment to create one-of-a-kind experiences. Many accomplished musicians do not think of themselves as improvisers, yet if they have something unique to say in their performance, they are improvisers. In that sense, we are all improvisers, and it is important to have opportunities throughout our lives to express ourselves creatively through improvisation.

Improvisation in music is the spontaneous expression of meaningful musical ideas—it is analogous to conversation in language. As presented here, key elements of improvisation include personalization, spontaneity, anticipation, prediction, interaction, and being in the moment. Interestingly, we are born improvisers, as evidenced by our behavior in early childhood. This state of mind is clearly demonstrated in children’s play. When not encouraged to improvise as a part of our formal music education, the very thought of improvisation invokes fear. If we let go of that fear, we find that we are improvisers. Improvisation enables musicians to express themselves from an internal source and is central to developing musicianship in all aspects of music.

The process of learning music is much the same as the process of learning a language. Think for a moment about how you learned language. First you listened to language. From birth and even before, you were surrounded by the sound of language and conversation. You absorbed these sounds and became acculturated to the language. Soon you began to imitate the words and phrases you heard spoken by your parents and siblings. Before you were successful at imitating, you were praised for your efforts and encouraged to “babble” even when the sounds you were making did not make complete sense to others. Eventually you began to associate words (names) with people, things, feelings, desires, etc., and you began to make statements and ask questions that were your own. You began to think and improvise in the language, and your interaction with parents and siblings was crucial to your language acquisition. After several years of developing your ability to think and speak, years of being surrounded by print, and years of being read to by others, you learned to read and write. You learned to read and write with understanding because of the experiences you had listening, thinking, and speaking.

Developing Musicianship through Improvisation offers an approach to learning music that is similar to the process for learning language. And just as it is possible for everyone to learn a language and engage in meaningful conversation, it is also possible for everyone to engage in meaningful improvisation, which is at the core of the music learning process. Like conversation in language, interaction with others is crucial. In this book, you are asked to listen to music and sing and play melodies and bass lines by ear. The objective is *not* to memorize the tunes. After all, you didn’t memorize your speech as a child. Rather, the objective is to internalize so many melodies and bass lines that you begin to hear harmonic progressions (the changes, or patterns in music) and generate your own melodic lines.

At the same time you build a repertoire of tunes and a sense of musical style, you develop an understanding of harmonic progression, harmonic rhythm, and the aural skills you need to listen to music meaningfully and to interact expressively with others. Throughout these materials you will build a vocabulary of tonal patterns, melodic phrases, rhythm patterns, and rhythm phrases to apply in many ways. As a part of *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation* you will read and write music, thus connecting your improvisation to meaningful experiences with notation. The objective is to read and write music with comprehension. You will hear and understand the music documented on the page in the context of what you have created and improvised. You will also gain a greater understanding of music you hear in everyday experiences.

When reading music, it is important to remember that notation is the documentation of a creative process. Learning to read and write music should be presented in light of that creativity. Developing your musicianship through improvisation provides a context for reading and composing music with comprehension. When musicians express themselves by putting together their own musical thoughts in composition, they can create, develop, and reflect on musical ideas. Composers are able to “go back” or “move forward” in time as they create. This reflection and revision process is a good way to discover relationships in music, and, as a result, to improve your overall musicianship. There is a powerful relationship among listening, improvising, reading, writing, and analyzing music. Each has the potential to influence the other in significant ways when presented in the context of improvisation.

With the goal of improving your musicianship, each unit in *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation* is based on a familiar tune. Each unit contains six parts: 1) Repertoire; 2) Patterns and Progressions; 3) Improvising Melodic Phrases; 4) Learning to Improvise – Seven Skills; 5) Reading and Writing; and 6) Learning Characteristic Solos.

Improving your musicianship will promote more spontaneous and meaningful music-making. Regardless of your musical background, it is never too late to begin learning tunes and harmonies by ear. This process is at the heart of improvisation, and it is perhaps the most exciting aspect of *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation*.

DEVELOPING MEANINGFUL IMPROVISATIONS

The following are additional suggestions for your continued growth as an improviser. These suggestions and the improvisation rating scale included in the books provide you with many ways to improve your musicianship as you acquire the skills presented in *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation*. To get started, you may wish to practice one or two of the following concepts at a time. With experience, you will internalize these ideas and develop more meaningful improvisations.

A good place to start this process is listening to other musicians. Become aware of how improvisers:

- personalize melodies with expressive phrasing, dynamics, and tonal and rhythmic variation.
- are spontaneous and in the moment.
- play with space (silence).
- interact with each other.
- develop motives.
- understand harmony and rhythm by ear.
- can play anything that comes to their mind.

Developing Musicianship through Improvisation will help you to develop the principles listed above and will also assist you with the following ideas for improving your skills as an improvising musician.

- Learn a repertoire of tunes and improvised solos *by ear* from other musicians and by listening to recordings. Building a large repertoire of tunes by ear will provide a basis for developing improvised solos.
- Listen to improvised music like an improviser—notice the spontaneous interaction.
- Learn harmony by ear.
- Learn a harmonic, rhythmic, and expressive vocabulary by ear.
- Take risks—try out some new ideas.
- Surround yourself with others working on the same principles.

UNIT 4

PART I – REPERTOIRE

When first learning “Simple Gifts,” cover the notation.

1. LISTEN to “Simple Gifts” – melody (CD 2, Track 6) and bass line (CD 2, Track 7).
2. With the accompaniment (CD 2, Track 8) SING the melody by ear with words and on a syllable such as “doo” and SING the bass line by ear on “doo.”
3. PLAY your instrument by ear on the clicks immediately following each melodic pattern (CD 2, Track 9).
4. With the accompaniment (CD 2, Track 8) PLAY the melody and bass line on your instrument with the appropriate style of articulation. Personalize the tune using expressive phrasing, dynamics, and tonal and rhythmic variation.

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 6–9

Simple Gifts

Joseph Brackett, Jr.

Melody

Bass Line

F C7

'Tis the gift to be sim-ple, 'tis the gift to be free, 'tis the gift to come down

C7 F

where we ought to be, and when we find our-selves in the place just right, 'twill

C7 F F

be in the val - ley of love and de-light. When true sim - plic - i - ty is gained, to

F C7 F

bow and to bend we— shan't be a - shamed. To turn, turn will

F C7 Bb F

be our de - light, 'til by turn - ing, turn - ing we come 'round right.

PART 2 – PATTERNS AND PROGRESSIONS

RHYTHM PATTERNS AND SERIES OF PATTERNS IN DUPLER METER

Learn the patterns by ear – echo the patterns performed on the CD or by your teacher. When first learning the patterns, **cover the notation.**

Echo Rhythm Patterns for “Simple Gifts”

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 10–11

Learning these patterns is similar to learning words in a language. Becoming familiar with these patterns will improve your vocabulary for improvising rhythms to this tune.

1. ECHO the duple patterns on the syllable “bah” – CD 2, Track 10.
2. ECHO the patterns with rhythm syllables – CD 2, Track 11. The rhythm syllables will help you to organize and remember the patterns.
3. ECHO the patterns on your instrument on F–DO. Use the style(s) of articulation appropriate for “Simple Gifts.” CD 2, Track 10 or 11.

The number (2) tells how many macrobeats (DU) are in a measure. The symbol (♩) indicates what kind of note is a macrobeat (DU). (♩=DU; ♪♪=DU DE; ♪♪♪=DU TA DE TA)

REPEAT AS NECESSARY

Echo Tonal Patterns for “Simple Gifts”

(F Major – Tonic and Dominant)

1. ECHO, singing the following patterns on the syllable “bum” (CD 2, Track 14).
2. ECHO, singing the following patterns with solfège (CD 2, Track 15).
3. ECHO, playing each of the following patterns on your instrument (CD 2, Track 14 or 15).

Establish Tonality (Concert Pitch)

F C7 F

I V7 I

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 14–15

1 F

2 B \flat

3 C7

4 F

5 C7

6 C7

7 F

8 C7

9 F

10 B \flat

11 C7

12 F

REPEAT AS NECESSARY


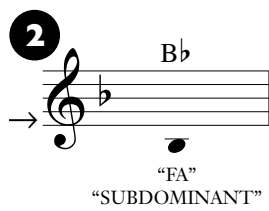
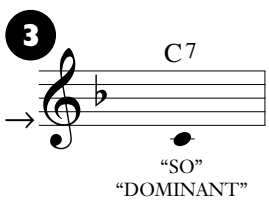









SING the Root (DO, FA, or SO) and NAME the Function (Tonic, Subdominant, or Dominant) in F Major.

1. LISTEN to the tonal patterns performed on CD 2, Track 15. After each pattern, SING the root of that function using tonal syllables, and immediately identify the harmonic function. SING: “DO” and “Tonic,” “FA” and “Subdominant,” or “SO” and “Dominant.” (F=Tonic; B \flat =Subdominant; C7=Dominant)
2. LISTEN again to CD 2, Track 15, and PLAY the roots on your instrument.

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Track 15

F indicates TONIC function, B \flat indicates SUBDOMINANT function, and C7 indicates DOMINANT function. A TONIC pattern in major tonality includes any combination of “DO MI SO”; a SUBDOMINANT pattern includes any combination of “FA LA DO”; and a DOMINANT pattern includes any combination of “SO FA RE TI.”

SOLFÈGE SHOULD ALWAYS BE SUNG—NOT SPOKEN

1  F “DO” “TONIC”	2  B \flat “FA” “SUBDOMINANT”	3  C7 “SO” “DOMINANT”	4  F
5  C7	6  C7	7  F	8  C7
9  F	10  B \flat	11  C7	12  F


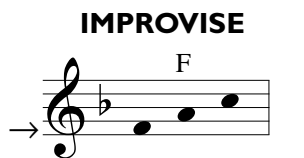



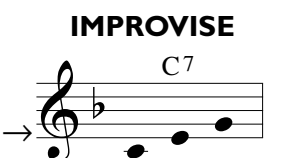
REPEAT AS NECESSARY

Improvise Tonal Patterns for “Simple Gifts” (Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant Functions in F Major)

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 14–15

1. LISTEN again to the tonal patterns performed on CD 2, Tracks 14 and 15.
2. After each pattern, IMPROVISE a different pattern with the same harmonic function with a neutral syllable (“bum” – CD 2, Track 14).
3. After each pattern, IMPROVISE a different pattern with the same harmonic function with solfège (CD 2, Track 15).
4. After each pattern, IMPROVISE a different pattern with the same harmonic function on your instrument (CD 2, Track 14 or 15).

Example:

1 LISTEN  F	IMPROVISE  F	2 LISTEN  B \flat	IMPROVISE  B \flat
3 LISTEN  C7		IMPROVISE  C7	

Continue with tonal patterns 4 through 12 (CD 2, Tracks 14–15).

ECHO and IMPROVISE Series of Tonic and Dominant Patterns in F Major

Improvising a series of patterns to make a harmonic progression in music is like speaking a sentence or phrase in language. **Anticipate** and **predict** the harmonic progression. Where does the harmony go and where might it go?

1. Using the syllable “bum,” ECHO (SING) the series of patterns (CD 2, Track 16).
2. Using solfège, ECHO (SING) the series of patterns (CD 2, Track 17).
3. ECHO the series of patterns on your instrument (CD 2, Track 16 or 17).
4. After each series of patterns, SING the bass line (roots) using solfège (CD 2, Track 17).
5. After each series of patterns, PLAY the bass line (roots) on your instrument (CD 2, Track 16 or 17).
6. After each series of patterns, IMPROVISE a different series of patterns over the same harmonic progression using solfège (CD 2, Track 17), with a neutral syllable (“bum” – CD 2, Track 16), and on your instrument (CD 2, Track 16 or 17).

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 16–17

Example:

LISTEN-ECHO

F C7 C7 F

ROOTS

F C7 C7 F

IMPROVISE

F C7 C7 F

1

LISTEN-ECHO

F C7 C7 F

ROOTS

F C7 C7 F

IMPROVISE

F C7 C7 F

2

LISTEN-ECHO

F F C7 F

ROOTS

F F C7 F

IMPROVISE

F F C7 F

3 LISTEN-ECHO

F B \flat C7 F

ROOTS

F B \flat C7 F

IMPROVISE

F B \flat C7 F

4 LISTEN-ECHO

F B \flat F C7 F

ROOTS

F B \flat F C7 F

IMPROVISE

F B \flat F C7 F

PART 3 – IMPROVISING MELODIC PHRASES

Sing improvised melodies to familiar repertoire.

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Track 18

1. Listen to CD 2, Track 18. The performer sings the first phrase of “Simple Gifts”; instead of continuing with the original second phrase, you hear an improvised melody that continues the harmonic progression. Listen to all four first phrases (antecedent phrases) and improvised second phrases (consequent phrases).

Example:

Simple Gifts

MELODY F **IMPROVISE** C7

2. Listen to CD 2, Track 19. After hearing the first phrase (antecedent phrase) of “Simple Gifts,” continue the harmonic progression of the tune and sing a second phrase (consequent phrase) that is different from the original melody. Continue in a similar manner with the remaining phrases. Direct your melody toward chord tones, e.g., “DO,” “MI,” “SO” (CD 2, Track 19).

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Track 19

3. Perform in a similar manner on your instrument (CD 2, Track 19).

Now, you try:

MELODY	IMPROVISE
F	C7
F	C7
F	F C7
F	C7 B \flat F

4. Improvise both antecedent and consequent phrases to the harmonic progression of the tune (CD 2, Track 26). (The accompaniment repeats two times.)

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Track 26

PART 4 – LEARNING TO IMPROVISE
TONALLY RHYTHMICALLY EXPRESSIVELY

SEVEN SKILLS

Simple Gifts
 CD 2
 Tracks 6–9, 20

Before you begin the Seven Skills, review “Simple Gifts” (CD 2, Tracks 6–9).

1. SING and PLAY the melody.
2. SING and PLAY the bass line (roots).

Skill 1

1. Listen to CD 2, Track 20. The performer improvises rhythm patterns to the bass line of “Simple Gifts.”

Example:

Simple Gifts

Improvise Rhythms
 on Chord Roots

The musical notation consists of three staves of music in 4/4 time, key of F major. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single line. Chord roots are indicated above the staff: F, C7, and F. The second staff continues the melody with chord roots F, C7, F, F, and F. The third staff continues with chord roots C7, F, C7, Bb, and F. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests, intended for improvisation.

Simple Gifts
 CD 2
 Track 26

2. Improvise rhythm patterns to the bass line of “Simple Gifts.” SING your improvisation with the neutral syllable “doo,” and then PLAY it on your instrument (CD 2, Track 26).

Skill 2

1. Establish tonality in F major and SING each of the four parts on the next page for the harmonic functions of “Simple Gifts.” For example, SING “DO, FA, SO, DO” – “DO, DO, TI, DO” – “MI, FA, FA, MI” – “SO, LA, SO, SO.”
2. Play each part on your instrument.

When in a group setting, each student should select a part to sing and play for Skills 3 and 4. When performing alone, start with the bass line (chord roots – Skill 1). Be sure to perform Skills 3 and 4 using the other three parts as well.

Example of Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant Harmony in F Major – 4 Parts:

Bass Line DO, FA, and SO				
	DO	DO	MI	SO
DO and TI	DO	DO	TI	DO
MI and FA	MI	FA	FA	MI
SO and LA	SO	LA	SO	SO
	TONIC I	SUBDOMINANT IV	DOMINANT V7	TONIC I

Skill 3

Learn the harmonic rhythm for “Simple Gifts” using the pitches from the harmony in **Skill 2**. SING every part. PLAY these parts on your instrument (CD 2, Track 26).



Skill 4

Using a neutral syllable (e.g., “doo”), improvise rhythm patterns to the harmonic progression using pitches learned in **Skill 2** (#2, 3, 4, and 5 below and on the next page). Select a part and improvise rhythm patterns. Do this with each part. Interact with the melody (#1) and other parts (CD 2, Track 26). First SING, then PLAY these parts on your instrument.

Simple Gifts

MELODY

BASS LINE; IMPROVISE RHYTHM

IMPROVISE RHYTHM ON “DO” AND “TI”

3

IMPROVISE RHYTHM ON “MI” AND “FA”

4

IMPROVISE RHYTHM ON “SO” AND “LA”

5

Skill 5

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Track 21

1. Listen to CD 2, Track 21. The performer improvises tonal patterns to the harmonic progression using macrobeats.

Example:

- Using macrobeats improvise (SING, then PLAY on your instrument) tonal patterns to the harmonic progression (CD 2, Track 26).

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 22, 26

Skill 6

- Listen to CD 2, Track 22. The performer improvises tonal patterns and rhythm patterns to the harmonic progression.

Example:

Example musical notation for Skill 6. It consists of three staves in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The harmonic progression is: F, C7, F, F, F, C7, Bb, F. The melody is a simple sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

- Improvise (SING, then PLAY on your instrument) tonal patterns and rhythm patterns to the harmonic progression (CD 2, Track 26).

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 23, 26

Skill 7

- Listen to CD 2, Track 23. The performer improvises by decorating and embellishing the melodic material in **Skill 6**.

Example:

Example musical notation for Skill 7. It consists of three staves in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The harmonic progression is: F, C7, F, F, F, C7, Bb, F. The melody is a decorated version of the Skill 6 example, featuring slurs, ties, and grace notes.

- Decorate and embellish the melodic material in **Skill 6**. Improvise melodies to the harmonic progression (CD 2, Track 26). Learn to SING and PLAY the solos provided (CD 2, Tracks 24 and 25).

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 24–26

IMPROVISE to “Simple Gifts” (CD 2, Track 26).

PART 5 – READING AND WRITING

Rhythm Writing

1. Write the patterns on page 52 or notate improvised patterns. Establish meter and remember to group the notes into patterns and phrases before writing them.

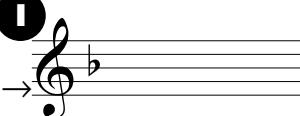
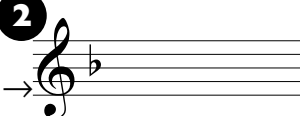


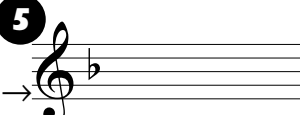
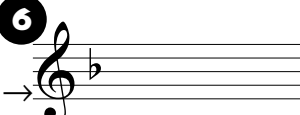
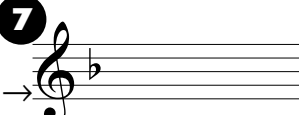
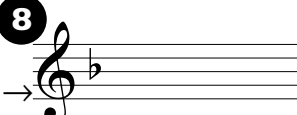
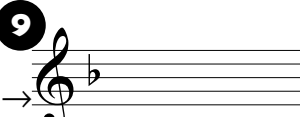
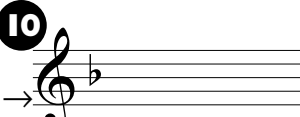


1	_____	2	_____
3	_____	4	_____
5	_____	6	_____
7	_____	8	_____

2. Write the series of patterns on page 54 or notate an improvised series of patterns.

1	_____	2	_____
3	_____	4	_____

Tonal Writing

1. Write the patterns on page 55 or notate improvised patterns. Establish tonality and remember to group the notes into patterns and phrases before writing them.

1		2		3		4	
5		6		7		8	
9		10		11		12	

2. Write the series of patterns on pages 57–58 or notate an improvised series of patterns for the progression.

1

2

3

4

IMPROVISE – READ – COMPOSE

READ “Simple Gifts” and IMPROVISE to the harmonic progression (CD 2, Track 26). SING and PLAY the melody and/or bass line on your instrument. Also, COMPOSE other melodies using the harmonic progression indicated and the tonal and rhythm vocabulary that you have learned.

Simple Gifts

MELODY

1

BASS LINE

2

IMPROVISE

3

COMPOSE

4

PART 6 – LEARNING SOLOS

Simple Gifts
CD 2
Tracks 24–26

Listen to CD 2, Tracks 24 and 25. The performer plays an interpretation of the melody followed by an improvised solo. Learn to sing and play the solo performed on the CD. Use the space provided to finish transcribing the solo on CD 2, Track 25, or to notate other solos. Analyze the solos for vocabulary and ideas to incorporate into your own improvised solos. See page v for suggestions about developing meaningful improvisations. Perform with the accompaniment on CD 2, Track 26.

Simple Gifts

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). Chords: F (measures 1-2), C7 (measures 3-4), F (measures 5-6).

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). Chords: F (measures 1-2), C7 (measures 3-4), F (measures 5-6), F (measures 7-8), F (measures 9-10).

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). Chords: C7 (measures 1-2), F (measures 3-4), C7 (measures 5-6), Bb (measures 7-8), F (measures 9-10).

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). Chords: F (measures 1-2), C7 (measures 3-4), F (measures 5-6).

Musical staff 5: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). Chords: F (measures 1-2), C7 (measures 3-4), F (measures 5-6), F (measures 7-8), F (measures 9-10).

Musical staff 6: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). Chords: C7 (measures 1-2), F (measures 3-4), C7 (measures 5-6), Bb (measures 7-8), F (measures 9-10).

DEVELOPING MUSICIANSHIP THROUGH IMPROVISATION

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Richard F. Grunow

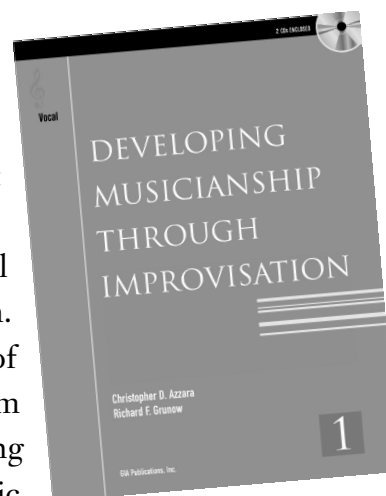
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With *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation*, you will learn to improvise as readily as you would join in a conversation.

Using the tunes in this book, you will build a vocabulary of tonal patterns, melodic phrases, rhythm patterns, and rhythm phrases that you can apply to a wide range of music, including classical, jazz, and folk styles. You will also read and write music, connecting your improvisation to meaningful experiences with notation.

Each unit in *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation* contains six components: 1) Repertoire, 2) Patterns and Progressions, 3) Improvising Melodic Phrases, 4) Learning to Improvise – Seven Skills, 5) Reading and Writing, and 6) Learning Solos.

Regardless of your musical background, you can play tunes and learn harmony by ear, skills at the heart of improvisation. This intuitive and engaging approach to *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation* is a major advance in music teaching and learning.



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