The MAYRON COLE PIANO METHOD

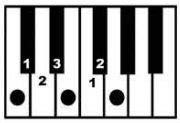
Improvisation

Pages 46 - 53 will teach you how to improvise your left hand. At least one full lesson plus a week of practicing should be spent studying this information.

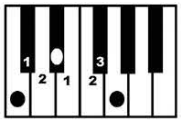
When you are reading a piece of music that only shows the tune (often referred to as "fake" music because you will be faking the left hand), you will see abbreviations for chords above the staff. Guitar players use these chord abbreviations to improvise and so can you!

A Quick Review of Chords

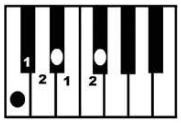
A major chord is built with a major third (skips 3) on the bottom and a minor third (skips 2) on the top:



A minor chord is built with a minor third (skips 2) on the bottom and a major third (skips 3) on the top:



A diminished chord is built with a minor third (skips 2) on the bottom and a minor third (skips 2) on the top:



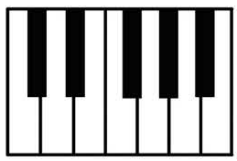


The chords are written using the following abbreviations:
"C" designates a C **major** chord.
"Cm" designates a C **minor** chord.
"C^{o}" designates a C **diminished** chord.

1. When you see "**C**" what 3 notes will you play? ____ ____ ____

2. When you see "**Cm**" what 3 notes will you play? ____ ____ ____

3. When you see "**D^{o}**" what 3 notes will you play? ____ ____ ____



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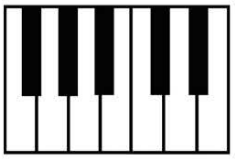
4. When you see "**F♯m**" what 3 notes will you play? ____ ____ ____

5. When you see "**A♭**" what 3 notes will you play? ____ ____ ____

6. When you see "**A°**" what 3 notes will you play? ____ ____ ____



7. Play each of these chords on the piano:

Am C F G C

Start to notice how it can be easier to play inversions rather than always playing chords in the root position. Take a look at the chords above. This time let's play them using the following roots and inversions:

Am	A, C, E
C	G, C, E
F	A, C, F
G	B, D, G
C	C, E, G



How well did you do? _____

Now play each of these chords on the piano and see if *you* can invert the chords when necessary so you are moving to the keys that are the closest to where your hand is already playing:

Am C F G C

Did inverting the chords at times make the left hand easier to play? _____

8. Play each of these chords on the piano. When necessary, invert the chords so you are moving to the keys that are the closest to where your hand is already playing:

C Am G C Am G C G

C D G C Am G C

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More About Improvising

In addition to major and minor chords, you will also see some chords that are new to you. Let's take a look at those chords.

1. When you see a "7", it means to play an additional third at the top of your chord. It is called a "7" chord because the last note you will land on is a 7th above the root note of the chord.

   Let's take a look at a "C_7" chord… the three notes in a C major chord are C, E, G. When you add another third above the G, you will land on B.

   How do you determine if the last third is a major third or a minor third? Stay within the key signature in which the piece is written. If for example the piece is written in C major, then there are no sharps or flats in the key signature. Therefore, there will be no sharps or flats in your chord.

   When playing a "7" chord, you will often see the 7th note inverted down. Instead of playing C, E, G, B it is easier to play B, C, E, G.

2. When you see a "6", it means to also play the 6th note above the root note of your chord. A chord is built on the 1, 3, and 5 notes, so the 6th note will be right next to the top of your chord.

   Let's take a look at a "C_6" chord… the three notes in a C major chord are C, E, G. The 6th note above C is A, so for a "C_6" chord you will play C, E, G, A.



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Now you try a few "7" and "6" chords:



1. When you see "D_7" what 4 notes will you play?

____ ____ ____ ____

2. When you see "Cm_7" what 4 notes will you play?

____ ____ ____ ____

3. When you see "$E\flat_7$" what 4 notes will you play?

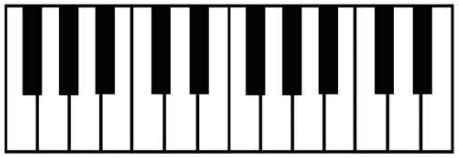
____ ____ ____ ____

4. When you see "F_6" what 4 notes will you play?

____ ____ ____ ____

5. When you see "Dm_6" what 4 notes will you play?

____ ____ ____ ____



6. When you see "$B\flat_6$" what 4 notes will you play?

____ ____ ____ ____

7. Play each of these chords on the piano:

C C_7 F G_7 Dm_7 G C

This time let's play them using the following roots and inversions:

C	E, G, C
C_7	E, G, B, C
F	F, A, C
G_7	F, G, B, D
Dm_7	F, A, C, D
G	G, B, D
C	G, C, E

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Fun with Improvising

When a measure does not have a chord indicated, continue to play the chord from the previous measure. For example, you will play a G_7 chord in measure 10.

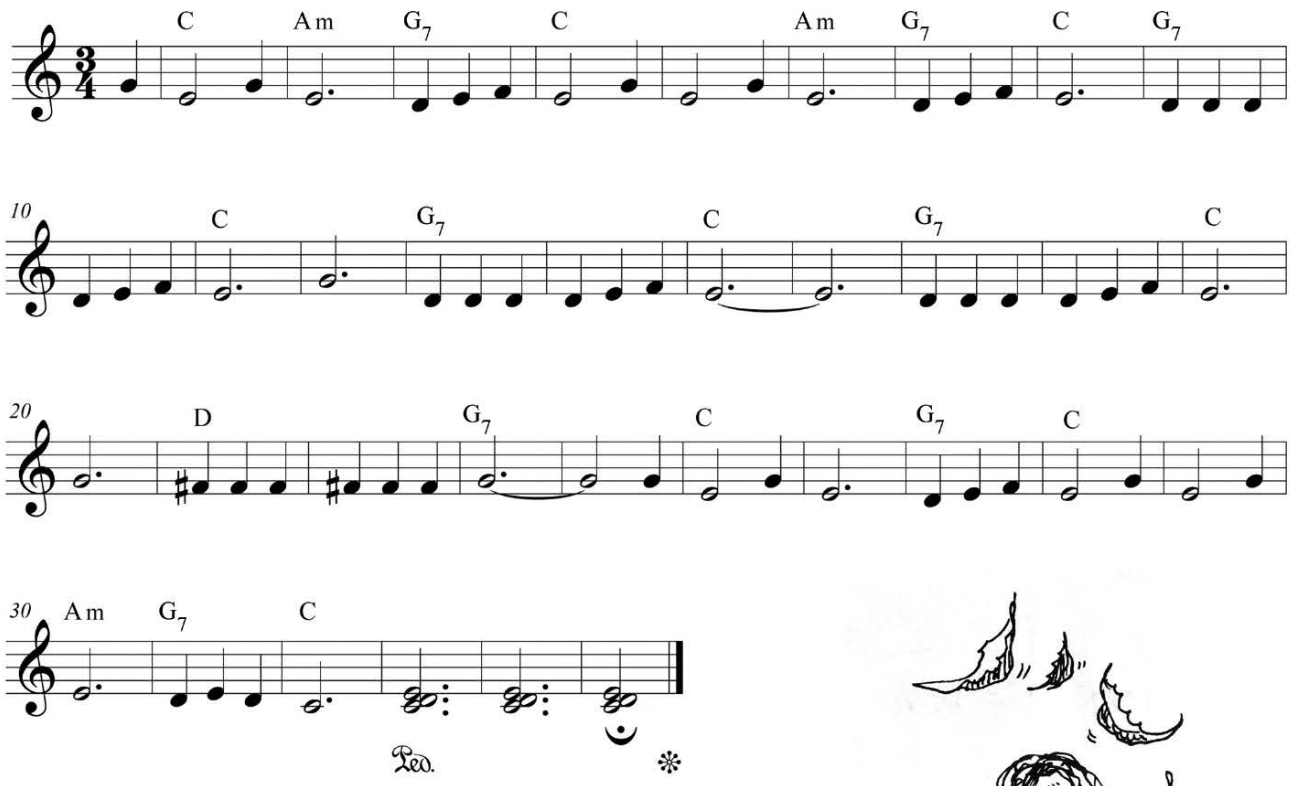
Practice improvising the left hand of this composition.



Autumn Bells!

from Level 1A
of the Mayron Cole Piano Method

Mayron Cole



How did you do? _____

Now play it again and see if you can make the left hand easier by inverting the chords so you are moving to the keys that are the closest to where your hand is already playing.

Did inverting the chords make the left hand easier to play? _____



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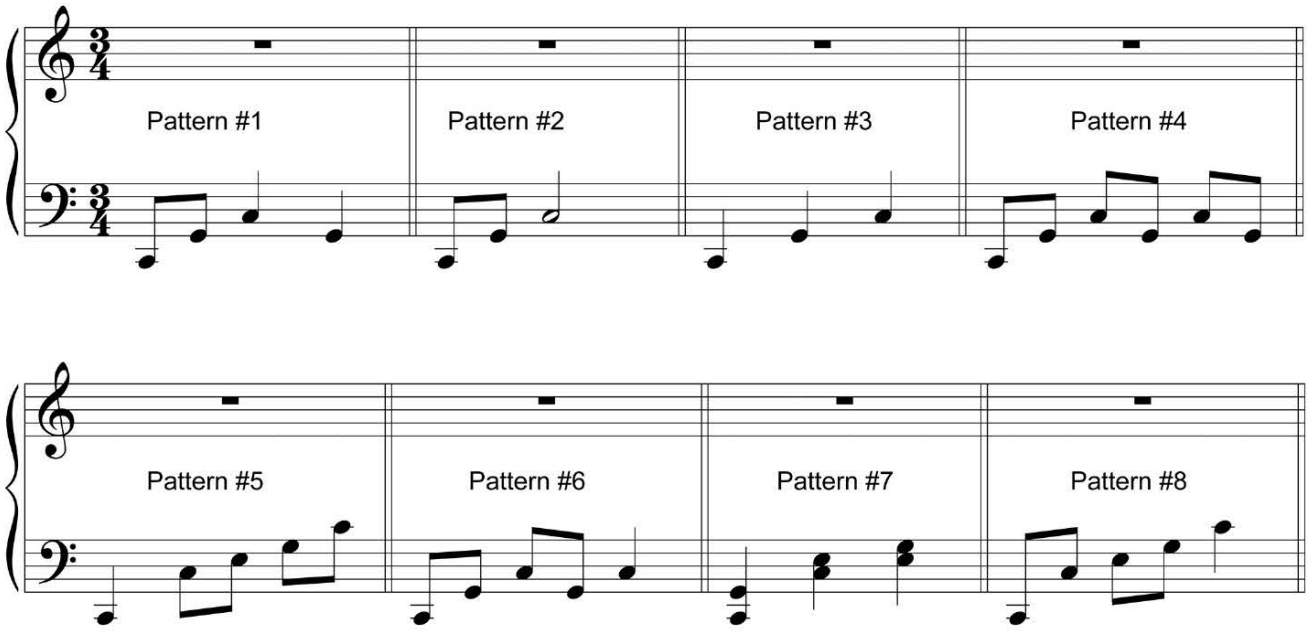
Improvising With Patterns

Now that you are great at improvising using chords, let's make it even more fun! Instead of just blocking out chords, let's play broken chords in different inversions and rhythms. Here are some of Mayron's favorite left hand patterns (using a C chord for the examples).



1. Practice playing each of these patterns using a **C** chord.
2. Practice playing each of these patterns using a **Am** chord.
3. Practice playing each of these patterns using a **D** chord.
4. Practice playing each of these patterns using a **G_7** chord.
   Note: you do not have to play all four notes in the G_7 chord, but playing the F will give the chord the G_7 sound as opposed to just a G chord sound.

How well did you do? _____



For more examples of Mayron's Favorite Left Hand Patterns, please visit page 31 of "***Compose Yourself***," Mayron's supplemental book that teaches music composition.

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More Fun with Improvising

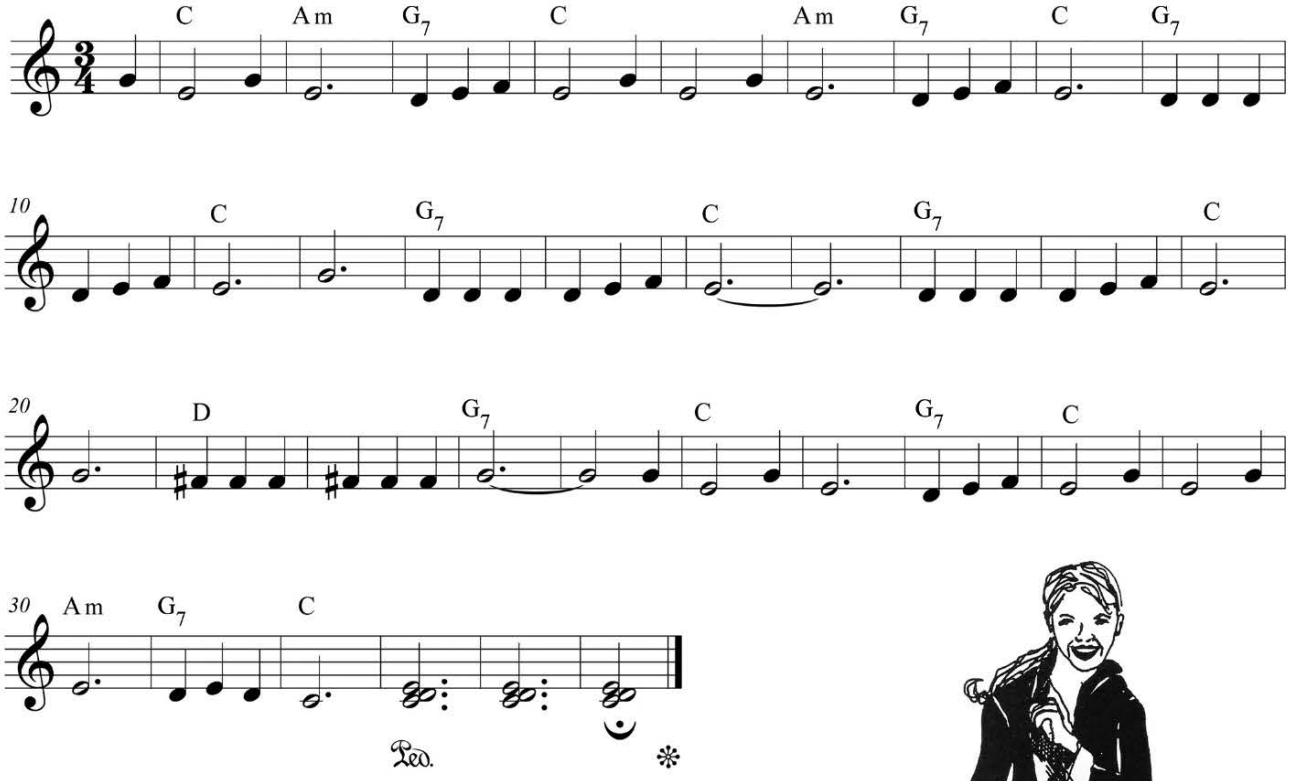
Are you ready to improvise the left hand of this piece using a more complicated pattern?

1. Practice improvising the left hand of this composition using your favorite pattern from the previous page.

Autumn Bells!

from Level 1A
of the Mayron Cole Piano Method

Mayron Cole



2. Now play it again using another favorite pattern from the previous page.

3. Play it again using your favorite two patterns from the previous page. Switch them out on various measures. Be creative and have fun.



Did using more complicated left hand patterns help the music sound more interesting? _____

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Improvisation Homework

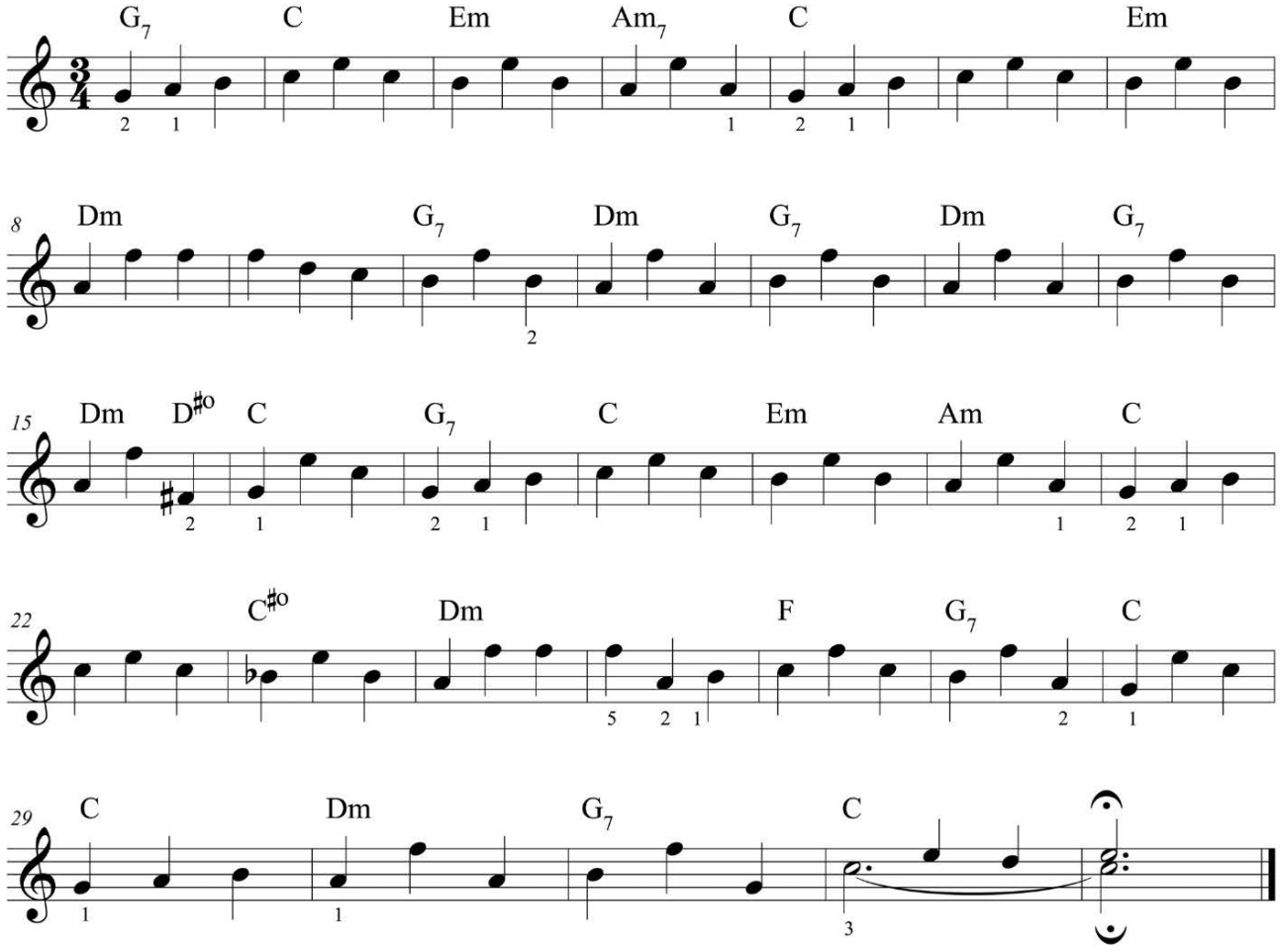
You are at a party and you see a "Fake Book" sitting on the piano. You open it up and to your surprise, you see County Fair. You smile remembering how much you loved that piece when you were in Level 1. Now that you look at it again, you realize that you can improvise the left hand to make this Mayron Cole classic sound even better. So, you sit down and play County Fair with an improvised left hand. Your friends are impressed, but you know you can do even better. Each time you play County Fair you play an even more complicated pattern in the left hand. The whole party cheers with delight.



County Fair

from Level 1B
of the Mayron Cole Piano Method

Mayron Cole



Each time you improvise the left hand in County Fair, try to make the patterns more complicated. Come up with your own patterns in addition to using Mayron's. You will be surprised how great you can make this Level 1 piece sound. Have fun and be creative.

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