

Improvisation

Part I: Chapter 11

Simple Meter—Quarter Note = Beat Unit; Syncopation

Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better

- **Process:**
 - The instructor or Student A chants a known rhythm pattern; Student B echoes the pattern exactly except they must change the last rhythm component following the rules below;
 - Student C must change the first rhythm component following the rules below and then echo the rest of Student B's pattern exactly;
 - Student D chants a new rhythm pattern; and student E echoes the pattern exactly except they must change the last rhythm component, etc.
 - Rules:
 - The last rhythm element must move to a rhythm of equal value/duration.
 - Elongated rhythm (ta-ah) = two beat rhythm (ta-ta, ta-a-di, ta-di-di) or elongated rest;
 - Beat (ta) = ta-di, borrowed division, etc. or beat rest;
 - Rests must move back to its corresponding note (beat function rest moves to the beat function note). For example, quarter rest must move back to a quarter note).

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The musical notation consists of nine patterns, each in 4/4 time. Each pattern is a four-beat sequence. Patterns A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I show various rhythmic combinations of quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests. Some patterns include triplets (indicated by a '3' over a group of three notes) or syncopation (indicated by a '7' over a note).

The goal is to develop spontaneous, rapid, automatic reaction to what is heard.

- Variation I: A particular rhythm is designated as a wild card (for example elongated beats or divided beats). The next student is free to ignore the rules and improvise at will;
- Variation II: Chant on rhythm syllables or a neutral syllable (bum);
- Variation III: One team improvises on a neutral syllable while the other team(s) writes (dictates) each pattern;
- Variation IV: Integrate accents, articulations and/or dynamics.
- Variation V: Individually practice *Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better* using the MP3 rhythm files found in Part I, Chapter 11.3, located on the Oxford Learning Link.
- **Parameters:**
 - The patterns must be selected from Part I, Chapter 11.3. The instructor or team leader designates the length of pattern (3-4 beats, 1-2 measures), meter (simple-duple, triple, or quadruple), physical motion (metric motion, heel march, down-up with hands/arms) and then sets the tempo and sets the tempo.

Additional Improvisation Activities

- **Call and Response**
See Chapter 2 for instructions
- **Pass the Pattern**
See Chapter 3 for instructions
- **Parameters:**
 - See the indicated chapter on the Oxford Learning Link, Improvisation-Part I for instructions.
 - Rhythm patterns to be selected from Part I, Chapter 11.3 (Borrowed Beat, Divided Beat, Beat, Elongated Beat, Sustained Beat, etc.). The instructor designates the meter (simple-duple, triple or quadruple), physical motion (metric motion, heel march, and/or down-up motion with hands) and then sets the tempo.
 - Remember to perform the patterns (a) with inflective expression (foundation of phrasing) and (b) while moving to meter, macro beat, or micro beat (facilitates understanding of rhythm).
- **Add A Rhythm**
See Chapter 2 for instructions
- **Ostinato Groove**
See Chapter 6 for instructions
- **Same or Different**
See Chapter 2 for instructions

The ability to improvise is a skill that can be learned!

Every improv game is a learning experience to practice both technique and musicianship.

Jeffrey Agrel