

Let's Improvise a Duet!

A lesson on making interactive music with your students



Yuko Maruyama, MM, MPIA

www.mercantilemusic.com ♦ ymaruyama@ucsd.edu

Presentation Summary: Improvisation fosters students' creativity and nurtures self-expression. Playing duets is an excellent way for your students to start improvising because they can learn to listen and interact with each other spontaneously by having a partner playing along with them. Besides the sheer enjoyment of playing collaboratively, piano duets are also a valuable ensemble activity for your students that help develop teamwork, ear training skills, and musical interaction. When you learn basic accompanying elements, you as a teacher can naturally create simple supporting harmony for your students to play along and improvise with, without relying on a pre-arranged accompaniment score.

About the Presenter: Yuko Maruyama is a pianist-composer-arranger from Tokyo, Japan. She holds a Master's degree in Jazz Studies from USC. A Kawai Pianos recording and performing artist, Yuko has toured the U.S. with her acclaimed 2002 album, "In Tone Nation," which was the premiere jazz recording of the all-hand-crafted Shigeru Kawai concert grand piano from Japan. She currently serves as the MTAC Improvisation State Chair and is also the president of the MTAC San Diego Branch.

Music Examples from the Presentation

BEGINNING LEVEL DUETS

I-vi-IV-V progression

Musical score for a duet exercise titled "I-vi-IV-V progression". The score is divided into two parts: A and B. Part A consists of two measures of music. Part B consists of four measures of music. The score is written for two parts: Primo (Student) and Secondo (Teacher). The Primo part is written in treble clef, and the Secondo part is written in bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The Primo part plays a simple melody, and the Secondo part plays a simple accompaniment. The chords are C, A minor, F, and G. The Roman numerals I, vi, IV, and V are indicated below the Secondo part.

Twinkle, Twinkle – broken chord pattern

Musical score for a duet exercise titled "Twinkle, Twinkle – broken chord pattern". The score is written for two parts: Primo (Student) and Secondo (Teacher). The Primo part is written in treble clef, and the Secondo part is written in bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The Primo part plays a simple melody, and the Secondo part plays a broken chord pattern.

Happy Birthday – chordal accompaniment

Musical score for a duet exercise titled "Happy Birthday – chordal accompaniment". The score is written for two parts: Primo (Student) and Secondo (Teacher). The Primo part is written in treble clef, and the Secondo part is written in bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The Primo part plays a simple melody, and the Secondo part plays a chordal accompaniment.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL DUETS

Chord Progression: Canon in D

Lead Sheet: Always with Me – chordal accompaniment

Lead Sheet: Always with Me – arpeggiated accompaniment

ADVANCED LEVEL DUETS

Lead Sheet Notation

You Do Something To Me

Cole Porter

ADVANCED LEVEL DUETS

"You Do Something To Me" - Accompaniment Style Examples (Secondo)

[Stride] Eb6 D7 Eb6

Musical notation for the Stride style. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords Eb6, D7, Eb6. The left hand (bass clef) plays a simple bass line.

[Stride - medium swing]

Musical notation for the Stride - medium swing style. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords Eb6, D7, Eb6 with a medium swing feel. The left hand (bass clef) plays a walking bass line.

[Walking Bass - medium swing]

Musical notation for the Walking Bass - medium swing style. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords Eb6, D7, Eb6. The left hand (bass clef) plays a walking bass line.

[Bossa - medium]

Musical notation for the Bossa - medium style. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords Eb6, D7, Eb6 with a bossa nova feel. The left hand (bass clef) plays a walking bass line.

[Samba - fast]

Musical notation for the Samba - fast style. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords Eb6, D7, Eb6 with a fast samba feel. The left hand (bass clef) plays a walking bass line.

[Rubato]

Musical notation for the Rubato style. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords Eb6, D7, Eb6 with a rubato feel. The left hand (bass clef) plays a walking bass line.