

Workshop Handout

Piano Arranging: Hymns, Spirituals, and Gospel-style Piano

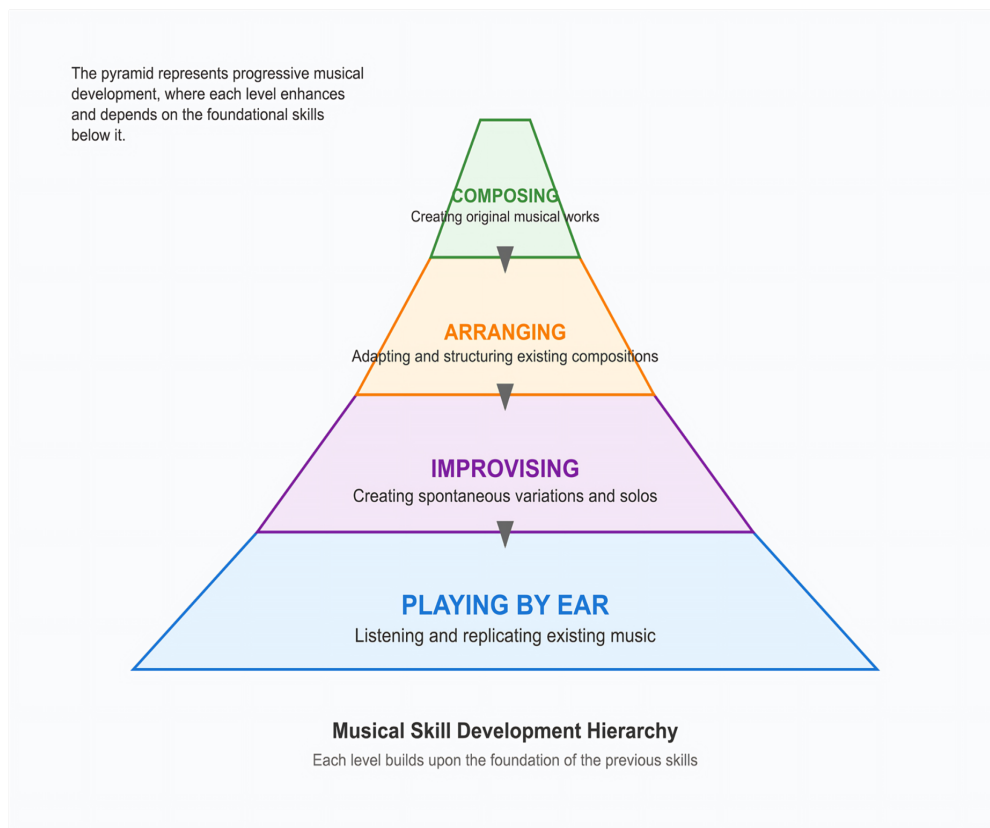
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Event: GIA Summer Music Institute

Date: July 9–11, 2025

The Creative Process

The pyramid below shows the relationship between four musical skills—playing by ear, improvising, arranging, and composing—each level building upon the previous one.



Playing by ear

Forms the foundation: the ability to hear and reproduce music without written notation. This skill develops the essential connection between what you hear and what you play.

Improvisation

Builds on playing by ear and requires you to spontaneously create music while understanding how notes and rhythms work together. Improvisation develops aural skills and creativity, which can feed into your arranging and composing.

Arranging

Builds on playing by ear and improvising but requires understanding music on a deeper level than simply playing it: you take a piece of music, restructure it, and transform it.

Composing

Is at the top of the pyramid, drawing from all the skills below—the ability to hear music internally, create spontaneously, and organize musical ideas to create something entirely new.

Section 1: Key Musical Elements

Melody:

Know the melody so well that you can play it in other keys. Then you can explore ways it can be altered or embellished.

Harmony:

The combination of different musical notes that form chords and progressions to provide support to the melody and contribute to the expressive quality of the music.

Rhythm:

Organized patterns of sound and silence occurring in time that create a sense of movement and flow in music.

Texture:

The sonic landscape—how all the musical elements interact together in layers of sound—polyphonic, homophonic, and so on.

Style:

Classical, jazz, and gospel music genres all have specific musical or expressive features that set them apart: balanced and structured; improvisatory, with swing rhythm; emotional, call-and-response driven. Style can be associated with a genre or a particular artist that displays those identifiable features.

Section 2: Arranging Techniques and Applications

Chord Substitution and Reharmonization

Chord substitution and reharmonization are probably among the most often used arranging techniques. While chord substitution involves replacing a chord with another chord that has a similar harmonic function, reharmonization involves altering the harmonic landscape of a piece on a broader scale, making it your own.

Meter Transformation

Changing the meter alters the way a rhythmic pattern sounds and feels. Altering the meter from simple to compound is commonplace in gospel music. "Amazing Grace" appears in 3/4 (simple triple meter) in most hymnals even though it is frequently sung in 9/8, compound triple meter. Take a look at "He's Risen, He's Risen"—transforming the meter from 4/4 to 12/8 (compound quadruple meter) adds a lilting, swing quality to the music.

Meter transformation can also be applied in cases where the meters are unrelated, as is the case with "His Eye is On the Sparrow," which is transformed from 6/8 to 5/4.

 **Refer to the music examples section at the end of the handout.**

Pedal Tones

Pedal tones can be used effectively to create a sense of anticipation at specific points within a piece, such as introductions, before cadences, and at endings. Here are two examples: In the first example from "His Eye is On the Sparrow," an E-flat "drone-like" pedal note anchors the opening of the arrangement, which includes the four-measure intro and the beginning of the verse section to this favorite hymn. In the second example from "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the two-measure passage with the F pedal tone dramatically sets up a mini-development section that functions as an interlude.

 Refer to the music examples section at the end of the handout.

Modulations

Half-step, whole-step, and chromatic mediant modulation are just a few of the numerous ways to move from one tonal center to another to create drama and interest. The half-step modulation in "Go to Dark Gethsemane," Example 4, works seamlessly because the B-natural melody note leads directly to the C-natural, completing the key change. Incidentally, B-natural and C-natural are pedal notes on the dominant scale degree for E major and F major, respectively. In Example 5, "Nettleton," a sequential pattern is used to modulate by whole-step to the key of D major. "Balm in Gilead" in Example 6 illustrates how the ascending pattern comprised of fourths allows for a smooth chromatic mediant modulation to G major.

 Refer to the music examples section at the end of the handout.

Quartal Chords

Intervals stacked a fourth apart are known as quartal voicings. These open-chord voicings sound unresolved and create interesting sonorities that blend well with altered dominant seventh chords and other advanced harmonies often associated with the jazz and gospel idiom. Often played in parallel or contrary motion, a practice known as coupling or planing, quartal chords sound great when played over a pedal tone. Listen to how nicely the quartal voicings float above the low C and G "ostinato-like" pedal point in Example 7, "What Wondrous Love is This."

 Refer to the music examples section at the end of the handout.

Section 3: Hymn Arrangement

Negro Spirituals carry deep emotional and cultural resonance and can be effectively integrated into various parts of worship.

Demonstration: *Taste and See* (James E. Moore, Jr.)

Final Notes

- While arranging, critically listen to various styles and genres to develop your musical ear.
- Approach arranging with creativity. Don't be afraid to experiment with new ideas or techniques.
- Continuously refine your arrangements. Polishing involves making small adjustments to enhance the musicality and playability.
- Always consider the playability of your arrangement to ensure it is both technically feasible and enjoyable for pianists.
- Use dynamic markings and tempo changes to convey emotions effectively and guide performers through your musical vision.

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Thomas W. Jefferson

July 9–11, 2025 – Naperville, IL

MUSIC EXAMPLES

Example 1a: 'He's Risen' – Hymn Version

And earth, sea, and moun - tain their prais - es pro - long.
For Je - sus was slain, whom the e - vil ones fear.
He lives, yes, He lives, and will nev - er - more die.
Re - deemed and for - giv - en, we now are His own.
With Fa - ther and Spir - it He ev - er shall reign.

Tune: Public domain
Text: © 1941 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110005782

Example 1b: 'He's Risen' – Meter Transformed from 4/4 to 12/8

[Insert musical notation: Traditional hymn setting with characteristic 6/8 feel]

Example 2: 'His Eye is on the Sparrow' – E-flat Pedal Tone Usage

Charles H. Gabriel, 1856–1932
Arr. by Thomas W. Jefferson

Andante moderato ♩ = c. 96

mp

rit.

a tempo
mp espress.

Example 3: 'Lift Every Voice and Sing' – F Natural Pedal Tone Usage

④④ Sonorous

mf

8vb

Example 4: 'Go to Dark Gethsemane' – Modulation by Half-step-

33

p

cresc. poco a poco

rit.

Example 5: 'Nettleton' – Modulation by Whole-step

55

mf

Example 6: 'Balm in Gilead' – Chromatic Mediant Modulation (E-flat to G Major)

55

p

rit.

Example 7: 'What Wondrous Love is This' – Quartal Voicings Over Pedal Note

47

♩ = c. 60

mp

53

TASTE AND SEE

Psalm 34

Words and music
by James E. Moore, Jr.

With a gospel feel
Refrain

Capo 3: (D)
F

(A/D)
C/F

(G/D)
Bb/F

(D)
F

Taste and see, taste and see the

(G)
Bb

(D/F#)
F/A

(Em)
Gm

(A7)
C7

good - ness of the Lord. O

(D)
F(A/D)
C/F(G/D)
B \flat /F(D)
F

9

taste

and

see,

taste

and

see

the

13

(G)
B \flat (D/F \sharp)
F/A(Em 7)
Gm 7 (A 7)
C 7

good

- ness

of

the

Lord,

of the

17

To verses (D) F	(G/D) B \flat /F	(D) F	(A ^{SUS4}) C ^{SUS4}	(A ⁷) C ⁷	Last time (D) F
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Lord. Lord.

To verses Last time

Verses

(D) F	(F \sharp m ⁷) Am ⁷	(Gmaj ⁷) B \flat maj ⁷	(D/F \sharp) F/A
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22

1. I will bless the Lord at all times. To -

2. Glo - ri - fy the Lord with me.

3. Wor - ship the Lord, all you peo - ple.

26

(Em ⁷) Gm ⁷	(D/F \sharp) F/A	(A ⁷ SUS4) C ⁷ SUS4	(A ⁷) C ⁷
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Praise shall al - ways be on my lips; my

geth - er let us all praise God's name. I

You'll want for noth - ing if you ask. 7

30

(D) F (F#7) A7 (F#/A#) A/C# (Bm) Dm (Bm7/A) Dm7/C

soul shall glo-ry in the Lord for
 called the Lord who an- swered me; from
 Taste and see that the Lord is good; in

34

(G ADD9) Bb ADD9 (D/F#) F/A (Em7) Gm7 (A7) C7 D.C.

God has been so good to me.
 all my trou- bles I was set free.
 God we need put all our trust.