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DaVinci *Coda* (or) How David ^Foster Does It!

How to create, embellish, improvise and arrange anything from hymns to fake sheets.

C=f(K.I.E.) The Formula.....Creativity is a Function of;

Knowledge

Imagination

Evaluation

Knowledge...

Develop your applied theory... a workable harmony you can use instantly, or with very little effort. This does take some time, but will happen. You are only as creative as the tools you have in your hands.

Scales; Practice scales in Octaves, 10ths and 6ths

- Two Octaves Up, Two Octaves Apart, Two Octaves Together, Two Octaves Down... (one fluid motion, consider using a metronome)
- Major Scales , Harmonic Minor Scales (these are main ones)
- Blues Scales (especially if the student likes Rock or Jazz – RH only), Third Scales (both hands, but not necessarily together), Full Chord Scales, Whole Tone Scales (in all forms.. octaves, 10ths, 6ths; two octaves up, apart, together and down), Chromatic & 7b9 scales.

Chords around the circle of **fourths** (this is the most common movement in music):

- Thirds, Triads, Tenths, Sevenths, then eventually various Voicings
- Time them; the student is only competing against themselves.. the goal is **12 seconds**
- Except for the Thirds (Major & minor), all chords are played hands together
- Teach students to work in small groups of chords (two a day), visualize the chords, use their imagination (imagine the chords blowing up like a balloon, stretching like a piece of clay), imagine looking at the chords from a different perspective (helicopter flying around, over and under the notes). All of these ideas are memory devices...

Tenth Routines (10th, Chord, 5th, Chord) left hand only; this is an invaluable tool, it helps review everything they have learned plus gives them a huge demographic for their left hand. Often this is referred to as Stride Piano.

- Variations using inversions with the Right Hand (half notes, quarter notes)
- Running Tenth Routine Variations (added root tone, added passing tone, ¾ variations)

Arpeggios; 3-Octaves, Broken, Alternating Broken, Combination (LH Broken, RH 3-Octaves)

- This is a four note pattern, hands together, two octaves up and down.
- 7ths, 6ths, mi6, dim7, lower top note (7th), lower two middle notes (half dim 7th, mi6, 7b5), lower two top notes (add 9)... work up the **white keys** (keep the thumb off the black keys), work on the choreography of the hands (smooth, fluid movement)...

Other Ideas:

- **Patterns;** Alberti Patterns, Running Tenth Routine Variations, Pivot Patterns, block broken patterns and variations, scale and passing tone variations, invent some.
- Practice popular routines around the circle; Soft Rock, Latin, Jazz, etc.
- Learn chord substitutions, composition techniques, fills, breaks, licks, patterns

There is always a myriad of ways to practice your theory... you'll never be bored!

Imagination...

Brain storm with yourself, experiment, fake it, have fun!

Resist the temptation to evaluate yourself... you are just playing around, trying out anything that comes to your mind. If you are stuck, look at other peoples ideas; classical composers, new age, jazz, YouTube it!... you will find some fairly brilliant and creative players. Swipe any ideas that you can... make them your own. Your personalty will come through with your efforts, you will begin to develop a unique style all your own.

Without knowing who is playing, often you can tell who the performer is by the way they arrange their tunes, the way they might play a “C” chord, the rhythms they might employ... For instance, I can almost always tell when Peter Nero is playing verses Andre Previn... or when Ramsey Lewis plays verses Dave Grusin, Billy Joel verses Elton John or any other performer who improvises, creates, or arranges.

Take a chord progression that doesn't modulate... play the progression with your Left Hand. In the Right Hand, run a scale that matches the key signature... initially up and down, in eighths, sixteenths and triplets... then play the scale randomly, changing direction and rhythm at will.

- Example: (Emi7 – Ami7 – Dmi7 – G7) repeat this pattern several times then when ready to resolve, end with a Cmaj7.
- Right Hand is running the C Major Scale.. the Chord you are on at any given moment becomes your rest tones.. notes you would start and stop on, and possibly change direction on.

Evaluation...

This is were you decide what you like...be very careful that you don't “bash” yourself, or evaluate to early in the process. The goal is to help you decide if your ideas are musically pleasing.

Here are some considerations that will help you create musical imagination;

Musical Interest vs. Predictability

Regardless of how great a particular pattern or idea might be, if it is used through the entire arrangement, it becomes predictable...losing musical interest.

Change something, even a little.. Consider what a listener needs:

- Melody (slight changes work great; neighboring tones, grace notes, stylizing the melody, adding runs and arpeggios)
- Harmony (try a few chord substitutions, additions, transitions, modulations)
- Rhythm (experiment with rhythmic accompaniments, rhythmic variations in the melody, possibly jazz eighths, ghosting techniques, time signature changes)

Musical Interest

Predictability (50% Rule)

Shock the ear a bit ... change something...

Popular Music; about every eight bars...

Classical Music; about every two bars...

Rock Music; about every sixteen bars...

A little musical interest goes a long way...

Texture (try one or two texture changes)

- Monophonic
- Homophonic
- Heterophonic
- Polyphonic

Other Ideas to consider

- Substitutions
- Extensions
- Intros, Endings, Transitions
- Fills
- Counterpoint
- Special Effects
- Textures

Have some fun...

It really is not difficult..
You were born to be Creative!
It is in our very nature!
And is a lot of fun.

Creativity is ongoing **experimentation, observation and adjustment.**