

# Jazz/Rock Improvisation

A Complete Approach to Improvising on both Acoustic and Electronic Keyboards

## Bert Konowitz

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### Foreword

Improvisation is a skill that can be learned. It is important because it allows the performer to use music to express individual feelings and ideas. Improvising is a natural part of Jazz/Rock playing—it is an exciting skill and a welcome companion to studying and performing all styles of music.

Jazz/Rock Improvisation, Level 1, lets you improvise right from the beginning. It is correlated page-by-page with Alfred's Jazz/Rock Course, Level 1. Though the Improvisation series (Levels 1–4) may be used independently, when used together with the Jazz/Rock Course (Levels 1–4), the pianist has the unique opportunity to become a well-trained jazz/rock musician.

This book is written to be played on either a traditional acoustic piano or an electronic keyboard. At the bottom of each page, suggestions are offered for ways that acoustic and electronic instruments may be used together:

**Acoustic Jamming** suggestions offer a supportive left-hand accompaniment that may be added by a teacher, a parent who plays piano, or a more experienced student.

**Electronic Jamming** suggestions offer specific sound and rhythmic backgrounds that may be used when playing on an electronic keyboard. The electronic rhythm backgrounds may also be added as an accompaniment when performing on an acoustic piano.

*To Laura, Mark, Paul, Laurie, Adam and Stacey*

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## Improv Idea #1: Playing 8va (one octave higher than written)

**IMPROVISATION** ("Improv" for short) is an exciting musical skill that will give you the ability to use a variety of musical techniques to play written music in slightly different and appealing ways. Playing *8va* adds interest by creating a **contrast** (difference) with the written music.

### FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

Play as written.

Walking tempo

Musical score for 'Following Directions' in 4/4 time, walking tempo. The score is in G major and consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system has four measures, and the second system has four measures. The right hand (RH) features eighth-note patterns with triplets and slurs. The left hand (LH) features a steady eighth-note bass line. Dynamics include *mf*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5.

### CHANGING DIRECTIONS

The *IMPROV SCORE* is a step-by-step guide that will make improvising very easy.

IMPROV  
SCORE

1st time, play *right hand (RH) 8va* at the Improv measures marked (—).  
2nd time, play *both hands (BH) 8va* at the Improv measures.

Walking tempo

Musical score for 'Changing Directions' in 4/4 time, walking tempo. The score is in G major and consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system has four measures, and the second system has four measures. The right hand (RH) features eighth-note patterns with triplets and slurs. The left hand (LH) features a steady eighth-note bass line. Dynamics include *mf*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. An 'Improv' bracket spans the first two measures of the second system in the right hand.

**ACOUSTIC JAMMING:** Play the left hand an octave lower.

**ELECTRONIC  
JAMMING:**

**REGISTER:** Brass/Synth Brass 1 **RHYTHM:** Rock (even 8ths) or Jazz (slightly uneven 8ths)

# Planning an Improv #3: Creating a Longer Composition

## BEING CLOSE BY

IMPROV  
SCORE

1st time, play as written.  
2nd time, create a longer composition by repeating the Improv measures.

*RH 8va when repeating*

The score consists of two systems of piano and bass staves. The first system has a treble clef with a melody marked *mf* and a bass line. Above the treble staff, a bracket indicates a 5-measure improvisation section starting at measure 3. The second system continues the piece, with another bracket indicating a 5-measure improvisation section starting at measure 3. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

## COPY CAT

Write in Improv signs wherever you decide to create a longer composition—select any pair of measures (1–2, 3–4, etc.).

IMPROV  
SCORE

1st time, play as written.  
2nd time, play repeats *RH 8va* at Improv measures.

**Moderato**

The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features piano and bass staves. The tempo is marked **Moderato** and the dynamics are *mf*. The score includes several improvisation boxes: a box with the number '3' above measure 3, a box with '5' above measure 5, and a box with '7' above measure 7. The piece ends with a double bar line.

**ACOUSTIC JAMMING:** BEING CLOSE BY: none. COPY CAT: Play all single notes and the bottom tone of each chord in the left hand an octave lower.

**ELECTRONIC JAMMING:**

BEING CLOSE BY:	REGISTER: Horn/Flute	RHYTHM: Slow Rock
COPY CAT:	REGISTER: Brass	RHYTHM: Rock or Jazz