

The Ultimate Guide to Piano Improvisation

Resource Sheet



This 6-step system is designed to help guide you into the world of improvisation. It's so easy to get overwhelmed with all the information out there. The purpose of this lesson is to provide you with a step-by-step system that you can follow and avoid getting overwhelmed.

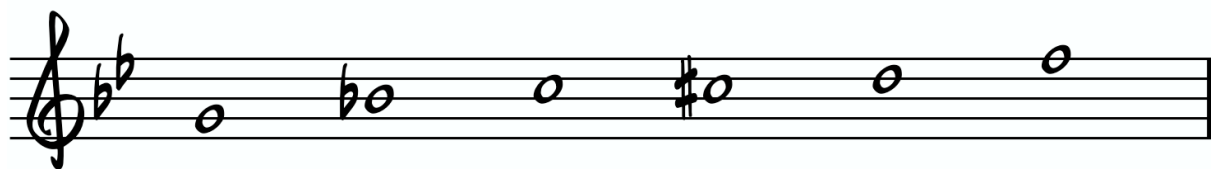
Step 1: Learn the chord progression

The first step is to learn the chord progression. It's constructed using rootless voicings and it should be played with the left hand. Practice it over and over until it becomes very familiar.



Step 2: Play around with the minor blues scale

Once you are comfortable playing the chords in your left hand. It's time to start playing around with the minor blues scale. Learn it and master it. Then spend a lot of time experimenting with it. Try playing simple, short phrases to begin with. Avoid just playing up and down the scale.



Step 3: Get familiar with the chord tones

Once you've spent a considerable amount of time playing around with the blues scale, it's time to learn about chord tones. Chord tones are essentially just the notes within a chord. They can provide a lot of color and interesting sounds to your improvisation. Here are 3 exercises for you to do:

Exercise 1



Play through the chord progression in the left hand, whilst playing the chord tones 1, 3, 5 and 7 in the right hand. You should only play one note per beat.

Exercise 2



Repeat exercise 1, but this time, play the chord tones 3, 5, 7 and 9.

Exercise 3

Play through the chord progression, along to the backing track, and improvise using nothing but the chord tones from each chord. You're still only allowed to play one note per beat.

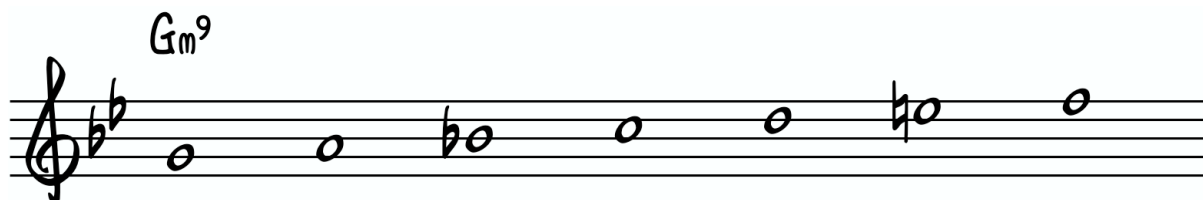
Step 4: Combine chord tones with the blues scale

When you feel comfortable improvising using the blues scale and you know the chord tones like the back of your hand, it's time to combine them together. Get the backing track on, or metronome, and play around improvising using the blues scale combined with the chord tones from each chord.

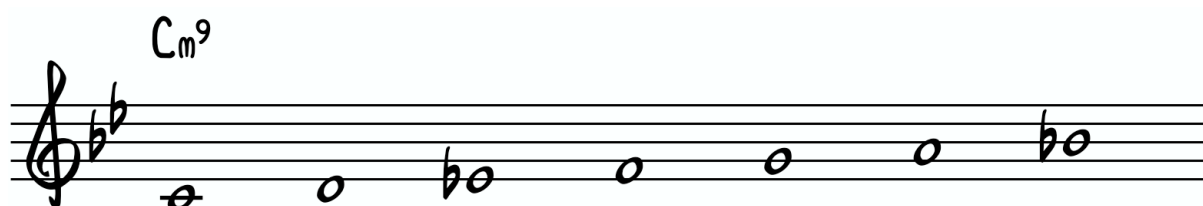
Step 5: Learn the chord-scales / modes

When you feel you need a step up from the chord tones & blues scale. It's time to learn the modes that go with each chord in the progression.

For the Gm9, we will use the G Dorian scale:



For the Cm9, we will use the C Dorian scale:



For the Dm7b9, we will use the D Dominant Diminished scale:



Step 6: Put it all together

When you know the modes and scales for each chord, have a go improvising with them. Combine this with the chord tones and blues scale.

There is an infinite amount of possibilities you can come up. Get creative and don't be afraid to experiment. When you're at this stage, it's still beneficial to return to previous steps and limit yourself as it can force you to be more creative.

Good luck!