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# ROCK & POP PIANO

**An easy Introduction to Improvisation  
For Beginners & Advanced Students**

Volume 1

**MIGUMUSIC**

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# Introduction

The goal of this course is to master the art of creative Pop and Rock improvisation using just a few notes. Reducing your improvisations to just a few notes will help you avoid aimless noodling and will stimulate your creativity. Throughout this course we will use typical Pop and Rock harmony progressions.

## The Exercises

In all the exercises, for better clarity, we will use the C major scale and its chord structure. This allows for easier understanding and comparison of the various improvisation examples. Additionally, all exercises are presented in several keys (pages 46–115). However, it is recommended that you transpose the exercises in your head, in order to be more flexible in your improvisations.

## The Songs

Normally songs are notated as a “lead sheet”, consisting solely of the song melody and the chords. In this book we first present the song as a lead sheet, followed by the written-out piano version.

## Audio Tracks (mp3)

The CD symbol next to each musical example will show you where to find the track on the mp3.

The exercises were recorded using piano only, while the songs were recorded as professional play-alongs. Every play-along is presented twice. For listening and studying, a “full play-along” contains the written-out piano part. The “half play-along” omits the piano part so you can play and practice with a real band. Next to the examples you’ll see “FP” for full play-along and “HP” for half play-along.

## The chord symbols

If you browse through songbooks, you will notice that there are many different ways to notate a single chord. In order to interpret a song from a lead sheet, it’s very helpful to understand the meaning of these various chord descriptions. If you are having difficulty interpreting chord symbols, please refer to my books “Pop Piano Method – Volume 1 + 2” and “Cocktail Piano Method”.

## Fingering

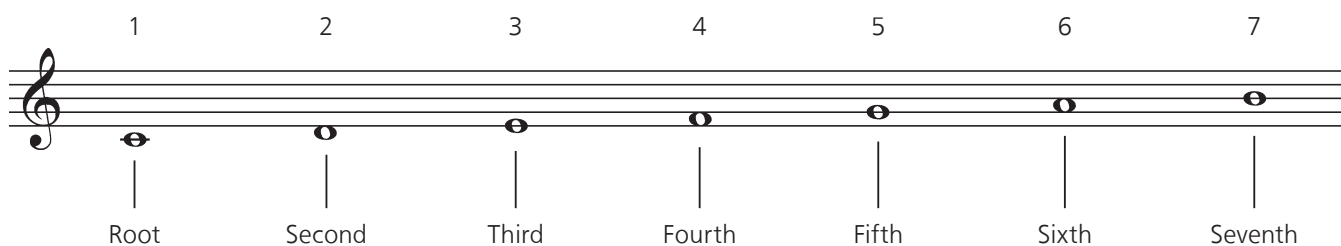
The right hand melodies are supplied with detailed fingering to allow for easier practicing. If you feel more comfortable using your own fingering, then please feel free to do so.



# Basics

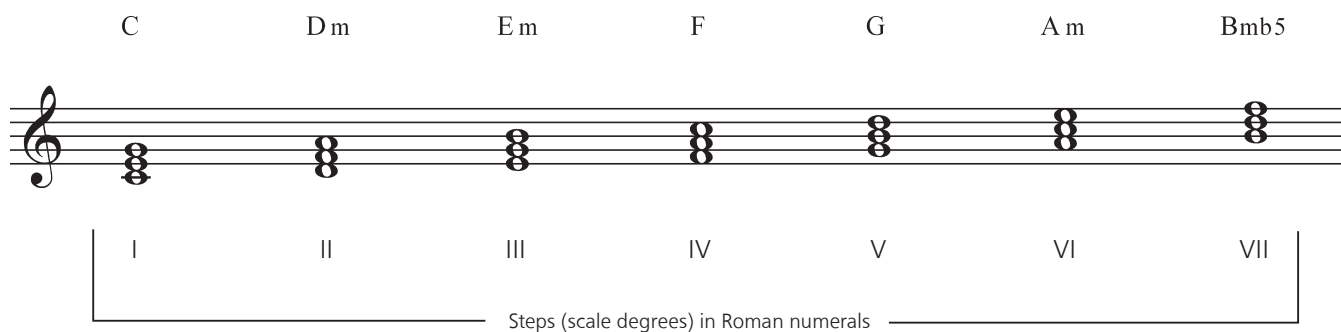
In this course, for improvisation, we will use the notes of the major scale exclusively.

## Notes of the C major scale

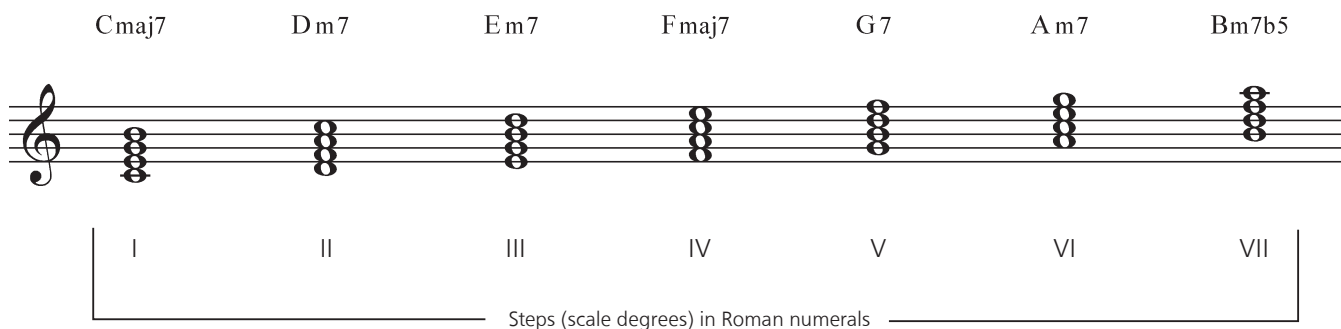


Many song stylists and bands use three-part and four-part chords from the major scale for song composition.

## Three-part chords of the C major scale



## Four-part chords of the C major scale



### Please note:

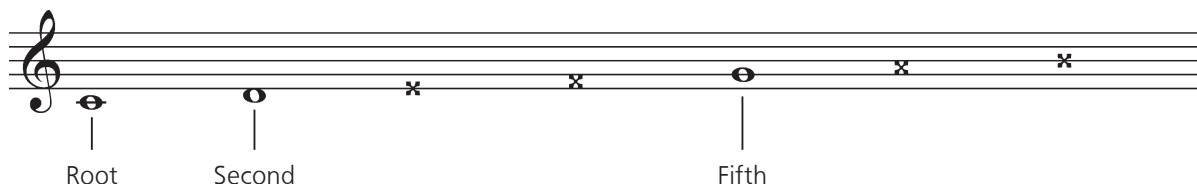
**For advanced playing, all the notes of the major scale can be used in improvised solos over all the chords related to that scale.**



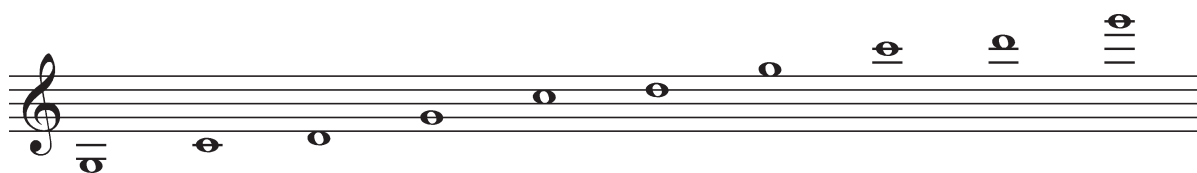
# Improvisation with 3 notes

Improvising with 2 notes is very interesting, but after a while it sounds bland. To broaden our horizon, let's add another note to our improvisations: the second tone of the scale. Now we are playing with the root, second and fifth.

## Root, second and fifth of the major scale



All three notes can be used in varying positions and octaves.



Exercises 4 + 5 show how these three notes will sound when improvising over Chord Progression 1.

## Exercise 4



Track 4

♩ = 98 C

Exercise 4 is a piano improvisation exercise. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has four measures with chords Am, F, and G. The second system has five measures with chords C, Am, F, G, and C. The improvisation is based on the root, second, and fifth notes of the major scale. The notes are written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The notes are marked with '1', '2', '3', '4' to indicate fingerings. The notes are marked with 'Red.' to indicate they are the root, second, and fifth notes of the major scale. The notes are marked with 'x' to indicate they are not used in this exercise.

# Butterfly

"Butterfly" is the first song using the 4 note improvisation. The song is in the key of A minor which is the parallel minor key of C major. This means we can use all the notes of the C major scale for improvising. We want to limit ourselves to the notes C, D, E, and G.



The improvisation section consists of a combination of Chord Progression 1 + 8.

## Chord Progression 1



## Chord Progression 8



Chord Progression 8 is a new combination formed by rearranging the chords in Chord Progression 1.

In the piano version you will see the improvised section in measures 37–60 (pages 40–41). Notice the use of single notes and two notes played together.

### Tip:

**"Butterfly" consists of the above four chords. When improvising with the play-along you can use the four note combination throughout.**



## Lead Sheet

Music: Michael Gundlach

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# Butterfly

Music: Michael Gundlach

♩ = 120 Am

F

C

G

Measures 1-4 of the piano score. The right hand plays a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The left hand provides a bass line with chords. Chords are indicated above the staff: Am, F, C, G.

Am

F

C

G

Measures 5-8 of the piano score. The right hand continues the melody. The left hand plays a bass line with chords. Chords are indicated above the staff: Am, F, C, G.

C

F

C

G

Measures 9-12 of the piano score. The right hand plays a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The left hand provides a bass line with chords. Chords are indicated above the staff: C, F, C, G.

Am

F

C

G

Measures 13-16 of the piano score. The right hand plays a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The left hand provides a bass line with chords. Chords are indicated above the staff: Am, F, C, G.

# Your Improvisations

Throughout this course you have seen many examples showing you how to improvise with 2–4 notes. As you play through the examples you acquire a feeling for what sounds good. You can apply this information to your own improvisation and when playing with other play-alongs.

Track 30 contains a play-along in a rock groove. The key of E major is typical for guitar-oriented rock music. The chords are arranged differently from Chord Progression 5, which means we have a new progression.

## Chord Progression 9 (E major)

I	IV	I	V
E	A	E	B

First try improvising using only the notes E, F#, and B. Then you can try different combinations (see Three Note Combinations, page 20).



Track 30 HP Style: Rock

♩ = 124

E                      A                      E

1.-9.                      10.

B                      E

The next play-along has a modern ballad groove. Here we use the key of Eb major. For your improvisations you can use the four note combination of Eb, F, G, and Bb. The play-along uses the chords from Chord Progression 7.

## Chord Progression 7 (Eb major)

I	IV	VI	V
Eb	Ab	Cm	Bb



Track 31 HP Style: Ballad

♩ = 102

Eb                      Ab                      Cm

1.-11.                      12.

Bb (Bb/D)                      Eb

# Exercise 11

♩ = 114      F                      B♭                      C                      F

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

\*

G                      C                      D                      G

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

\*

B♭                      E♭                      F                      B♭

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

\*

D                      G                      A                      D

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

\*