

Piano & Keyboard Texture Studies - Part 3.

"Groove"

"Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer a sacrifice of fools..."
- Eccl. 5:1a

7 Steps to Piano Groove Improvisations: Learn to think like a rhythm section.

Learning "groove," for piano can be somewhat cumbersome for most trained pianists. Because chart reading and improv skills alone are enough to learn, pianists may avoid learning new tricks. As said before, a comfort needs to be firmly established (in all players) before venturing off into improvisation. Again, the key is to listen more than to play - use your ears as said in the above Scripture. In these next examples, we will combine Right and Left hand textures to create simple chord patterns into a groove.

We will start with forming a few new chords by reharmonizing the original chords. After we choose our chord color palate, we will paint a new musical interpretation of "Here I Am To Worship." This example exercise is to demonstrate how you can create your own textures and grooves. Remember, this attempt must be coordinated with the rest of the band. In essence, the pianist/keyboardist needs to think in terms of being an arranger of the rhythm section in working with the drummer and bassist, rather than just a stand alone player. As in every section of the band, there is color, context and space (time). Ready to paint? Here we go.

1. Chord Palate: Choose the 3 Major chords of the tune with a little embellishment.

E² (I) B/G (V) A² add 7 (IV) F#m7 (ii7)

*Listen to the "b" - how it is used as a common tone between these chords.

2. Context: Select the placement of the chords (determine for rest of band) to the appropriate section of the song: Verse or Chorus. Note: before placing chords, make sure the melodic structure outlines the spelling of chords - they share the same notes. Let's choose the Verse section for our chords.

Verse

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness, open my eyes let me see.

Here I Am To Worship by Hughes, Tim
 Copyright 2000 Thankyou Music
 Purchase the Full Chart at: www.praisecharts.com

3. Space: Define the space and time for the chord placement. For now, we will keep our chord placement the consistent.

E² (I) B/G (V) A² add 7 (IV) E² (I) B/G (V) A² add 7 (IV)

I V IV I V IV

*Play these chords in time with a metronome to develop solid timing; feel how the chords line up with each bar as it creates space.

4. Combine & Play: Let's put everything together and play. In addition, we will add the last chord to the last phrase.

E² (I) B/G (V) A² add 7 (IV) E² (I) B/G (V) A² add 7 (IV)

I V IV I V IV

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness, open my eyes let me see.

(Chorus Continued)

E² B/G A² add⁷ [E/G[#]] F[#]m⁷ Bsus⁴ B

I V IV ii⁷

Beauty that made this heart adore You, hope of a life spent with You.

5. Groove: Let's create a groove to complete our musical landscape.

Play along: Right hand plays quarters as rhythm and Left hand will play half notes of chords.
 This style creates a Coldplay or Elton John feel.

E² B/G A² add⁷ E² B/G A² add⁷

Try the Groove with the Vocal Line.

E² B/G A² add⁷ E² B/G A² add⁷

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness, open my eyes let me see.

E² B/G A² add⁷ F[#]m⁷ Bsus⁴ B

Beauty that made this heart adore You, hope of a life spent with You.

6. Embellish the Chorus: Instead of going back to the home chord (E) let's try moving to the IV - hear the difference.

(Chorus)

A² add⁷ G[#]m⁷ F[#]m⁷ Bsus⁴ B

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that You're my God. You're altogether

A² add⁷ G[#]m⁷ F[#]m⁷ Bsus⁴ B

lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

*Like text painting, notice how the new chords/harmony gives the chorus a new meaning & setting.

7. **Finalize:** Your new groove is ready. Combine the song sections together with the groove we've established; listen and explore the new texture. Use the lyric cues to sing along with the lead melody.

Notice: how the song creates space, by beginning simple and building into rhythms. Remember, this piano part is ideally performed with drums and bass to fill in the gaps. The piano is limited intentionally to avoid every note being played.

DEMO Recording (Matching Audio Example found on Media Player Link)

Intro

Verse

Light of the world...

Beauty that made...

Chorus

Here I am to worship... You're altogether

lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

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This portion suffices for a good beginning of the tune. As you move through the remainder of the song, move back to the Major I chord (E) on the Chorus. Finish the song as-is according to the original, while keeping the same feel and groove. Trust your instincts and anchor yourself to the bass and drums. Let the music take you to new places as you are inspired in this new musical portrait.