

# Improvisation 101

Blackhills AGO Chapter, Rapid City, South Dakota  
November 17, 2012, 9:30 AM  
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## Introduction:

1. Adopt a plan, road map, either in your head or on paper
2. Should not be random or haphazard
3. Even with limited ability and knowledge of theory:
  - a. Short pieces
  - b. Daring enough
  - c. Planned approaches and exits
4. Only notes need to be improvised as the following has already been predetermined:
  - a. Rhythmic pattern
  - b. Harmonic scheme
  - c. Melodic pattern
  - d. Form
  - e. Registration

## Rhythmic pattern:

1. Create an original theme/pattern
2. Improvising on a Set Theme
3. Meter and Tempo

## Harmony:

1. Progressions by Thirds
2. Progressions by Fourths
3. Tone Clusters
4. Progressions in Harmony:
  - a. I, IV, V, I
  - b. I, VI, II, V, I
  - c. Parallel motion
  - d. Contrary motion
  - e. Ascending Soprano line
  - f. Descending bass line
  - g. Constant line

## Accompaniment Figure:

1. Alberti bass
2. Ostinato

## Melody:

1. Melodies from harmonies
2. Scale melodies

3. Hymn Tunes
  - a. Passing tones, based on preceding music
  - b. Fragments of a tune
  - c. Thematic development
    - i. Augmentation
    - ii. Diminution
    - iii. Inversion/faux bourdon
4. Phrasing
  - a. Random or organized
  - b. Erratic or meaningful
  - c. Verbose or cogent
  - d. Monotonous or vibrant

Form:

1. Extended A and ABA
2. Improvised hymns
3. Simple Polophony

Registration:

1. Meditation
2. Chorale or Hymn
3. Solo
4. Ceremonial

## References

- Barnes, Edward Shippen. *Modulation in Theory and Practice and Interludes for the Church Organist*. J. Fischer & Bro.:Glen Rock, New Jersey. (1949)
- Conely, James. *A Guide to Improvisation: An Introductory Handbook for Church Organists*. Abington Press: Nashville, Tennessee. (1975)
- Krapf, Gerhard. *Organ Improvisation: A Practical Guide to Chorale Elaborations for the Service*. Augsburg Publishing House: Minneapolis, Minnesota. (1967)