

10 terrific tips about

IMPROVISING

from Christopher Norton

When you improvise, you should break things down into bite-sized chunks - learn new skills a step at a time.

1. Learn the piece first! You need to become familiar with the sound, the harmonies and the rhythmic and melodic patterns of the original piece, so when you come to improvise on it, you already have the source material.

2. Start with a beat. Play the backing track (or teacher accompaniment) for the piece and clap a beat to it. This can be in half notes, but it can also be in quarter notes, even whole notes. Then clap (eg in 4/4) ONE (slapped thighs) two three four (claps) or ONE (clapped), two three four (slapped) Try various other fun combinations, including tapping the head, nose etc.

3. Clap a simple repeated rhythm. Still with the backing track, clap a repeated rhythm (American Popular Piano provides lots of these) If you supply this yourself, don't make it too hard to remember!

4. Play your rhythm on one note. Play your repeated rhythm on one note (start with the key-note of the piece) Using the same rhythm, play using either note one or note two and then either note one, note two or note three (four, five, six..) Much of the time the

notes used will be pentatonic major (for major key pieces)
pentatonic minor (for minor key pieces) or a blues scale (for blues pieces).

5. Create your own melodies. Using your rhythm, create your own melodies. Keep the ideas simple and if possible use repeated ideas. Develop a feeling for melodic structure as soon as possible!

6. Create a 2-bar melody, then play it back! This encourages musical memory as well as a belief in your own idea.

7. Play the same 2-bar melody, then repeat with one note changed. This is no longer an echo, it's a variation. And it's easy to extend the melody to an AABA structure, or AABC (where C is either a new idea, or the first idea with 2 or more notes changed)

8. Start to use grace notes, pedal notes, tremolo, chords etc. You're now ready to experiment and to think about different shapes of melodies, about longer improvisations, about left hand variations and all the wonderful things that are available to the good listener.

9. Try some free improvisation. You never know where it might lead!

10. Play the key note of each chord change. If a piece has chords eg G, C and D, play the key note as each chord comes up in the sequence (with the backing track) Then try the 3rds of each chord, then the 5ths. Then try root position chords, first inversion chords and second inversion chords

(and third inversion chords if it's a 7th chord)

Websites: www.christophernorton.com for all B & H music, including sound samples

www.facebook.com/christophernortoncomposer for lots of news, postings by teachers, photos etc etc

www.soundcloud.com/nortonchristopher for lots of sound clips

www.youtube.com/christophermicrojazz for an ever-expanding library of How to play videos and How to teach improv videos

www.americanpopularpiano.com for all things American Popular Piano

nortonmicromusicals@gmail.com for information about Micro Musicals

www.debrawanless.com (Canada) and www.clearnote.net (USA) for Connections and other 80dayspublishing materials and for Connections backing tracks

Piano music by Christopher Norton



Canadian Edition



PRE-GRADE 1

MICROJAZZ FOR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, MICROJAZZ FOR BEGINNERS*



Microjazz for Absolute Beginners and **Microjazz for Beginners** are the very first **Microjazz** books and are suitable for learners of all ages. Using a combination of words, music and illustrations, the 2 books take first-time players steadily through the early stages of both the practical and theoretical aspects of playing. A booklet of accompaniments, suitable for use by teacher or any intermediate player, is included with each book. The resulting duets can be played on one or two keyboards and turn even the easiest pupil's tunes into unmistakable **Microjazz** pieces. The books also include audio CDs, containing both backing and full performance tracks to enthuse and enhance practice and performance.

AMERICAN POPULAR PIANO PREPARATORY (REPERTOIRE & ETUDES)*



American Popular Piano Preparatory Repertoire is a Preparatory Level book for first year students. There are lyrical pieces, rhythmic pieces and Ensembles. All of the pieces have stylish teacher accompaniments and the Ensembles have the added bonus of backing tracks (at 2 speeds) A fresh and appealing range of styles means these will have great appeal to beginner students of any age. The pieces are all at the same difficulty level, so can be chosen freely from across the book.

American Popular Piano Preparatory Etudes takes a number of pieces from the Repertoire book and shows, in a very step-by-step way, how to improvise.

PIANOZZAZZ PREP**



Pianozzazz Prep features early elementary piano solos in a wide range of styles, keys and metre by Canadian composers Christopher Norton, Wes Froese, Andrew Harbridge and Debra Wanless.. Pianozzazz provides teachers and students with ideal pedagogical works for festival, recital, examination and 'fun', recreational repertoire. Kids will piano cover to cover – a must-have!

GRADE 1-2+

MICROJAZZ COLLECTION 1*



A set of easy graded pieces in popular styles- jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae etc- **Microjazz Collection 1** now includes helpful teaching notes and an audio CD, containing both backing and full performance tracks to enthuse and enhance practice and performance. The book also includes Microstudies, which usefully outline how to practice each piece.

MICROBALLADS*



Microballads introduces the beginner to a wide variety of classic ballad styles from rock, pop, country, folk and bossa nova, but with only modest technical challenges. Play along to the backing CD or listen to the composer's own vibrant performances. **Microballads** starts at Grade 1 and progresses to around Grade 3.

MICROLATIN*



MicroLatin contains 20 piano miniatures which introduce beginner/intermediate-level pianists to Latin American musical styles. Play along with the backing CD, or listen to the composer's own vibrant performances. **MicroLatin** starts at Grade 1 and progresses to around Grade 3.

MICROROCK*



Microrock introduces the beginner to the high spirits of rock musical styles: twenty pieces capturing the characteristic qualities of this stimulating and effervescent music but with only modest technical challenges. Play along to the backing CD or listen to the composer's own vibrant performances. **MicroRock** starts at Grade 1 and progresses to around Grade 3.

MICROSWING*



MicroSwing introduces the beginner to the exhilaration of swing musical styles: 20 pieces capturing the characteristic qualities of this energizing and captivating music, but with only modest technical challenges. Play along to the backing CD or listen to the composer's own vibrant performances. **MicroSwing** starts at Grade 1 and progresses to around Grade 3

GRADE 1-2+ *cont.*

PIANOZZAZZ LEVEL ONE**



Pianozzazz Level One includes 16 Elementary Piano Solos in a wide range of styles, keys and metre by Canadian composers Christopher Norton, Wes Froese, Andrew Harbridge and Debra Wanless. **Pianozzazz** provides teachers and students with ideal pedagogical works for festival, recital, examination and 'fun', recreational repertoire. Kids will play cover to cover – a must-have!

PIANOZZAZZ LEVEL TWO**



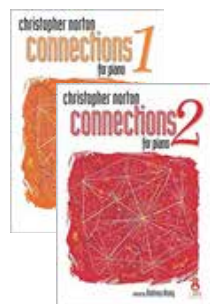
Pianozzazz Level Two includes 16 Elementary Piano Solos in a wide range of styles, keys and metre by Canadian composers Christopher Norton, Wes Froese, Andrew Harbridge and Debra Wanless. **Pianozzazz** provides teachers and students with ideal pedagogical works for festival, recital, examination and 'fun', recreational repertoire. Kids will play cover to cover – a must-have!

MICROJAZZ DUETS COLLECTION 1*



Microjazz Duet Collections 1 contains easy duets in popular styles- jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae. This collection includes all the pieces formerly contained in **Microjazz for Starters Duets** and brand new pieces too!

CONNECTIONS 1, CONNECTIONS 2**



Connections for Piano 1 & 2 are collections of pieces in popular styles that are ideal for students and teachers looking for a sound pedagogical supplement or alternative to the study of classical piano literature. These first 2 book both have backing tracks at practice and performance tempos (available to purchase separately from debrawanless.com)

AMERICAN POPULAR PIANO 1, 2 REPERTOIRE & ETUDES*



American Popular Piano Level 1 & Level 2 Repertoire contain lyrical pieces, rhythmic pieces and Ensembles. The Ensembles have the added bonus of backing tracks (at 2 speeds) A fresh and appealing range of styles means these will have great appeal to students of any age. The pieces are all at the same difficulty level, so can be chosen freely from across each book.

American Popular Piano Level 1 & Level 2 Etudes take a number of pieces from the Repertoire book to show, in a very step-by-step way, how to improvise.

Distributors: * www.halleonard.com **www.debrawanless.com

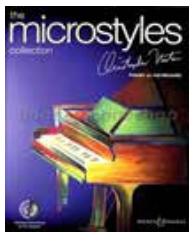
GRADE 3-4

MICROJAZZ COLLECTION 2*



A set of easy graded pieces in popular styles- jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae etc- **Microjazz Collection 2** now includes helpful teaching notes and an audio CD, containing both backing and full performance tracks to enthuse and enhance practice and performance.

MICROSTYLES COLLECTION*



This bumper compilation takes the best from all 4 **Microstyles** books and takes the sounds into a new dimension with an accompanying CD featuring performances by the composer and backing tracks to help with practising. A bargain with over 48 pieces and a CD for just \$20. If you like **Microjazz**, you'll love this fantastic bumper collection of pieces in a wide range of specific styles, with a stimulating playalong CD!

LOST IN CYBERSPACE*



Easy and imaginative pieces complete with illustrations to colour in. 8 pieces by **Christopher Norton** recreate the story of a boy who surfs the net and ends up lost in cyberspace!

MICROJAZZ DUETS COLLECTION 2*



Duets in popular styles such as jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae. This collection includes all the pieces formerly contained in **Microjazz Duets 1** and **More Microjazz Duets** and brand-new pieces too!

MICROJAZZ TRIOS COLLECTION*



Pieces in popular styles – eg jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae- for three piano players (one piano six hands). As well as encouraging ensemble skills, **The Microjazz Trios Collection** is great for festivals, recitals and 'fun' playing at home.

GRADE 3-4

MICROJAZZ COLLECTION 2*



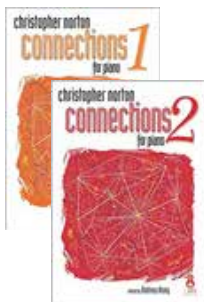
A set of easy graded pieces in popular styles- jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae etc- **Microjazz Collection 2** now includes helpful teaching notes and an audio CD, containing both backing and full performance tracks to enthuse and enhance practice and performance.

MICROJAZZ CHRISTMAS 1*



Microjazz Christmas features 20 jazzy interpretations of traditional Christmas carols. This edition includes: The First Nowell * Il Est Ne * Infant Holy * Jingle Rock and * O Tannenbaum * .

CONNECTIONS 3, CONNECTIONS 4**



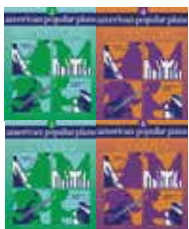
Connections for piano 3 & 4 are perfect for students and teachers looking for a sound pedagogical alternative to classical piano literature. **Connections** resonates with students of all ages giving them relevant, modern music that all will want to play. Backing tracks at practice and performance tempos are available to purchase separately from debrawanless.com.

PIANOZZAZZ 3**



Pianozzazz Level 3 includes 16 Elementary Piano Solos in a wide range of styles, keys and metre by Canadian composers Christopher Norton, Wes Froese, Andrew Harbridge and Debra Wanless. **Pianozzazz** provides teachers and students with ideal pedagogical works for festival, recital, examination and 'fun', recreational repertoire. Kids will play cover to cover – a must-have!

AMERICAN POPULAR PIANO 3,4*



American Popular Piano Level 3 & Level 4 Repertoire contain lyrical pieces, rhythmic pieces and Ensembles. The **Ensembles** have the added bonus of backing tracks (at 2 speeds) A fresh and appealing range of styles means these will have great appeal to students of any age. The pieces are all at the same difficulty level, so can be chosen freely from across each book.

American Popular Piano Level 3 & Level 4 Etudes take a number of pieces from the Repertoire book to show, in a very step-by-step way, how to improvise.

Distributors: * www.halleonard.com ** www.debrawanless.com

GRADE 3-4

TIP-TOP & JOIE-DE-VIVRE FOR PIANO 6 HANDS**



Brand-new, these arrangements for 6 hands are scintillating and great fun for festivals, recitals and 'fun' playing at home.

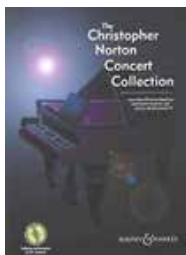
GRADE 5-6+

MICROJAZZ COLLECTION 1*



A set of easy graded pieces in popular styles- jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae etc- **Microjazz Collection 3** now includes helpful teaching notes and an audio CD, containing both backing and full performance tracks to enthuse and enhance practice and performance. The book also includes Microstudies, which usefully outline how to practice each piece.

CONCERT COLLECTION*



Often humorous and always inventive, play Christopher Norton's take on well-known folk tunes, Christmas carols and nursery rhymes. Plus you can play along with the accompanying backing CD or listen to inspiring performances by the composer. Contains all the music previously published in *Swing A Carol*, *Lavender's Kind of Blue* and *Yankee Doodles*, with newly recorded performances and backing tracks.

CONCERT COLLECTION 2*



21 entertaining and inventive pieces based on well-known spirituals, folk tunes and classical themes. A free playalong CD features spectacular backing tracks and performances by the composer.

Distributors: * www.halleonard.com ** www.debrawanless.com

GRADE 5-6+

MICROJAZZ DUET COLLECTION 3*



Easy duets in popular styles such as jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll and reggae. This collection contains all the pieces formerly contained in **Microjazz Duets 2** and **More Microjazz Duets 2** and brand new pieces too!

THE EASIEST WAY TO IMPROVISE*



Christopher Norton's Easiest Way to Improvise promises a new and truly easy approach! Designed for teachers and players who have little or no confidence in improvisation, it reveals the "magic move" that will really transform your "doodlings" into fully fledged performances. Its user-friendly format combines a practical workbook and a fabulous CD resource.

CONNECTIONS 5, CONNECTIONS 6



Connections for piano 5 & 6 are perfect for students and teachers looking for a sound pedagogical alternative to classical piano literature. Connections resonates with students of all ages giving them relevant, modern music that all will want to play. Backing tracks at practice and performance tempos are available to purchase separately from debrawanless.com

AMERICAN POPULAR PIANO LEVEL 5,6 REPERTOIRE*



American Popular Piano Level 5 & Level 6 Repertoire contain lyrical pieces, rhythmic pieces and Ensembles. The Ensembles have the added bonus of backing tracks (at 2 speeds) A fresh and appealing range of styles means these will have great appeal to students of any age. The pieces are all at the same difficulty level, so can be chosen freely from across each book.

American Popular Piano Level 5 & Level 6 Etudes take a number of pieces from the Repertoire book to show, in a very step-by-step way, how to improvise.

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY & EASY DAY FOR PIANO 6 HANDS**



Brand-new, these arrangements for 6 hands are scintillating and great fun for festivals, recitals and 'fun' playing at home.

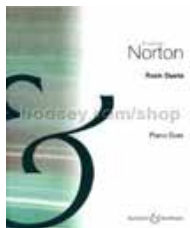
GRADE 5-6+

LATIN DUETS*



A set of characteristically Latin American pieces for 4 hands – ideal for end of term concerts and festivals. Contemporary mood pieces based on Latin American styles including samba, beguine and bossa nova for adventurous pianists. Intermediate-advanced standard.

ROCK DUETS*



Contemporary mood pieces for piano duet based on the strong rhythms of rock music. Intermediate- advanced standard.

CHRISTMAS SUITES 1 & 2 FOR PIANO DUET**



These Christmas Suites are for intermediate players and both feature 4 pieces, three of them well-known carols and the fourth piece an original composition by Christopher Norton.

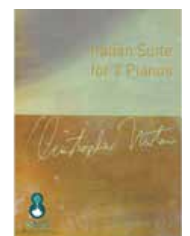
GRADE 7-8+

ANATOLIAN-PORTUGUESE SUITE FOR 2 PIANOS**



The **Anatolian-Portuguese Suite for 2 Pianos** was written for the Başgöze-Pinto Piano Duo- Pinar Başgöze and Susana Pinto, colleagues at the MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis. Pinar is Turkish, Susana is Portuguese, so it seemed appropriate to write them a suite utilizing the music of their respective countries. The suite has 4 movements – in style terms: Anatolian Folk, Fado, Anatolian Folk, Fado.

ITALIAN SUITE FOR 2 PIANOS**

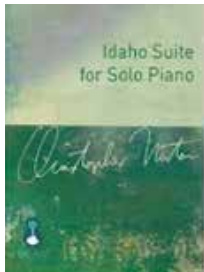


The **Italian Suite for 2 Pianos** was written for Duo Pianistico Nicoletta & Angela Feola, Italian sisters from Bergamo who play a wide and varied repertoire to audiences all over Europe. The suite has 4 movements and is a Fantasia, loosely based on four different segments of a single day.

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GRADE 7-8+

IDAHO SUITE**



The Idaho Suite was written for members of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Collegiate Chapter at the University of Idaho, as well as their faculty advisor, Jovanni-Rey de Pedro. The pieces vary greatly in style because they were written based on videos of the students talking about themselves, their interests, and backgrounds. Christopher Norton has in effect written 6 musical pen portraits. The premiere of the Idaho Suite took place on November 2017 at the University of Idaho, with the original dedicatees performing.

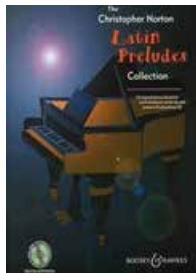
AMERICAN POPULAR PIANO REPERTOIRE & ETUDES 7,8*



American Popular Piano Level 7 & Level 8 Repertoire contain lyrical pieces, rhythmic pieces and Ensembles. The Ensembles have the added bonus of backing tracks (at 2 speeds) A fresh and appealing range of styles means these will have great appeal to students of any age. The pieces are all at the same difficulty level, so can be chosen freely from across each book.

American Popular Piano Level 7 & Level 8 Etudes take a number of pieces from the Repertoire book to show, in a very step-by-step way, how to improvise

LATIN PRELUDES COLLECTION*



Embark on a voyage of discovery with this stunning collection of 14 original Latin Preludes inspired by the musical styles and rhythms of Latin America.

JAZZ PRELUDES COLLECTION*



A set of pieces for piano, covering a range of jazz styles from ragtime to modal jazz and beyond, with stunning CD backings. A must for the would-be improviser.

GRADE 7-8+

COUNTRY PRELUDES COLLECTION*



16 original solo keyboard pieces for intermediate to advanced-level players, based on country styles including country rock, ballads and bluegrass. Includes a play-along CD with orchestrated backing tracks and full performances by composer Christopher Norton

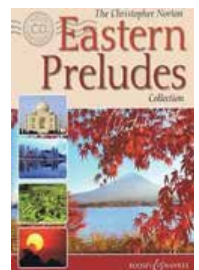
ROCK PRELUDES COLLECTION*



Pieces for the young and adventurous concert performer, with dangerous backing tracks on CD. Not for the faint-hearted!

Popular original repertoire, exploring rock styles, for intermediate to advanced pianists, now collected into one volume and released with CD for the first time. This an innovative collection of mood pieces for enjoyment and for the concert platform, as well as being ideal teaching material. Players will respond to the vibrant pulse at the heart of these pieces, whose styles are idiomatic and eminently accessible.

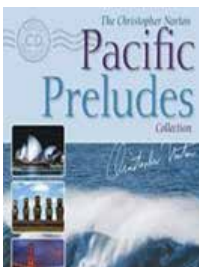
EASTERN PRELUDES*



Review

When it comes to that fusion of Eastern and Western culture and styles, Christopher proves to be expert... Playing through the pieces I was struck that there isn't a weak link here – every piece deserves to be learnt, played and performed, and taken together these 14 compositions represent a brilliant addition to the intermediate pianist's repertoire. - **Andrew Eales, Pianodao**

PACIFIC PRELUDES*



Embark on a voyage of discovery with this captivating collection of 14 new Pacific Preludes from the creator of **Microjazz**, inspired by traditional music from the shores of the world's largest ocean. Each Prelude weaves together native themes from countries including Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Japan, Peru, New Zealand and the United States of America with Christopher Norton's characteristically innovative popular music styles. Ideal for intermediate to advanced-level keyboard players. An accompanying CD puts each Prelude on the map with stylish demonstration performances by Iain Farrington.

GRADE 7-8+

CONNECTIONS 7, CONNECTIONS 8**



Connections for piano 7 & 8 are perfect for students and teachers looking for a sound pedagogical alternative to classical piano literature. Connections resonates with students of all ages giving them relevant, modern music that all will want to play. Backing tracks at practice and performance tempos are available to purchase separately from debrawanless.com

GRADE 9-10+

JAZZ PIANO SONATA**



This is an easy piece to enjoy on first listen or play, but also rewards repeated exposure, with themes that continue to delight and work their way into your head and heart