



ORGAN-IZING

POPULAR MUSIC

by
AL HERMANN'S

Left Hand Counter-Melodies — Part 2

Continue practicing the exercises for left hand presented in the last issue of THEATRE ORGAN while studying the following rules for improvising a musical counter-melody. In order for these rules to have any meaning, it is necessary to realize and understand the 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th and 9th of all chords that appear in the music you play. (See Lessons 1-10 in ORGAN-izing Popular Music.)

Rules For Improvising Counter-Melodies

1. Start by holding the third of the first chord unless the melody is on that note. If the melody is the third, hold the other note that will move to the best sounding note in the next chord.

2. When the chord changes, move to the nearest note of the next chord unless the melody is on that note.

3. On 7th chords, always hold the 3rd or the 7th. If the melody is on or near the 3rd, hold the 7th. If the melody is on or near the 7th, hold the 3rd. Whenever there is a series of two or more 7th chords following the circle of 5ths, the 3rd of each chord moves downward 1/2 tone to the 7th of the next chord, while at the same time the 7th moves down 1/2 tone to the 3rd. Notice that Rules 2 and 3 often apply to the same situation.

4. Always try to keep the counter-melody moving for three or more notes in the same direction. This is what creates interesting little melodies and sounds much better than skipping to any note in the next chord.

5. Whenever a major of 7th chord is followed by the same Minor chord: hold the 3rd, then the lowered 3rd, and continue DOWNWARD to the nearest note in the next chord. If the harmony permits, continue downward.

6. Whenever a chord is followed by the same Augmented chord: hold the 5th, then the raised 5th, and continue UPWARD to the nearest note in the next chord.

7. Whenever the melody moves up or down the scale or chromatically, try playing a parallel counter-melody at the interval of a 3rd or a 6th, or a counter-melody moving in contrary motion to the melody. This will require a bit of experimenting to find the best effect.

8. After a counter-melody has been established, try adding passing tones from one note to the other if they are not too far apart.

9. Whenever the melody stops on the 3rd or 5th of a major chord, hold the major 7th for 2 or 3 beats and then resolve downward to the 6th.

10. **Always Listen.** Hold the note that harmonizes best with the melody. If it sounds right, it IS right. If you don't hear anything, you are holding the same note with both hands. This does not add anything to your arrangement.

If it sounds unpleasant, it is wrong. Either you are holding a note that clashes with the melody, or you are holding a note that does not belong to the chord.

Study each rule carefully and then experiment at the keyboard. Begin with slow, easy songs and you will find that all this is not too difficult. After a while, it will become automatic and very easy.

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