

CHORD PLAYING AND IMPROVISING WITH CHRISTOPHER NORTON

2. POSITIVELY SWINGING (CONNECTIONS 4)

Connections for Piano has been very popular since its launch in 2007. It is a major part of the new Royal Conservatory syllabus in Canada as well as being a feature of many other syllabuses, festival programmes and competitions around the world. A recent quote from a teacher: *Connections: this series is the best and most complete series for ALL levels (up to RCM 10!) and has so many pieces in varying styles. Truly worth it!!*

Connections features a variety of pop and jazz styles, with (free) backing tracks available online. It is also available on Superscore (look for superscore-music on the App store)

There are 11 Connections levels - Preparatory, then 1-10.



Positively Swinging from Connections 4 is a big band-style jazz piece with a walking bass. One of the best things you can do is direct students to the composer performance with the track. The file below features the piano part with backing, at performance tempo) Play along!

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/03epksm73n1dnrq/Positively%20Swinging%20piano%20and%20backing.mp3?dl=0>

There are also composer performances on YouTube of all 11 Connections volumes (and lots more besides!) (<http://www.youtube.com/christophermicrojazz>) - do hit subscribe!

Here's a link to the composer solo performance of *Positively Swinging* on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/TnTtAZA2Yi4>

Here's the music for *Positively Swinging*:

12

5 Positively Swinging

Christopher Norton

Energetically ♩ = 144, swing eighths

mf *mp*

LH *legato*

5 *mf* *mp*

8 *f* *mp cresc.*

12 *f*

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Play the chord chart with the track:
[https://www.dropbox.com/s/q7e2cvexfzbr1km/04_05_Positively
 Swinging_accpf.mp3?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/q7e2cvexfzbr1km/04_05_Positively_Swinging_accpf.mp3?dl=0)

Positively Swingin' is a 12-bar blues, with the following chord progression (functionally)

I IV | I IV IV | I V IV | I

On the (varied) repeat, the V IV sequence is repeated twice more, with a stop on the last IV, before a final flourish built on chord I.

Play the progression in C, then try playing it in another key, using the Roman numerals.

SIMPLE IMPROVISING ON POSITIVELY SWINGING

Using the C blues scale, with the track, try improvising your own melodies.

C blues scale

Some ideas:

make up a 2-bar idea and repeat it up an octave

make up a 2-bar idea and “answer” it with a different idea

play more than one note sometimes (2-note chords)

try longer ideas

try continuous swung eighth notes, grace notes and pedal notes

MORE IDEAS

Start with a rhythm only

right hand (cowbell)

left hand (bass and snare)

Use a drum pattern to start your own ideas

Make up your own rhythm patterns and build ideas on them

Positively Swinging left hand voicing (without the track, then with the track)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three systems of four measures each. The first system (measures 1-4) features a right-hand melody and a left-hand bass line with chords C7, F7, and C7. The second system (measures 5-8) features a right-hand rest and a left-hand bass line with chords F7 and C7. The third system (measures 9-12) features a right-hand rest and a left-hand bass line with chords G7, F7, and C7. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a fermata.

Connections 4 is available from 80dayspublishing.com
(debrawanless.com in Canada)

Try playing along with Christopher Norton:

<https://youtu.be/TnTtAZA2Yi4>