

Introducing

Chord Play™

The Art of Arranging at the Piano

Do You Wish You Could?

- ◆ Create artistic arrangements of your favorite songs and themes
- ◆ Read “fake books” and know how to style all the chords
- ◆ Improvise new melodies over your arrangements
- ◆ Create accompaniments for singers or for your own voice
- ◆ Know folk melodies, hymns, and classical themes that comprise part of our musical heritage
- ◆ Develop a repertoire to play at various events
- ◆ Be able to play by ear and have a good aural memory
- ◆ Memorize any piece more securely and reduce performance anxiety
- ◆ Learn music theory in a practical and *musical* way

You Can!

You and your students can learn to do all these things with the new *Chord Play*™ series by Forrest Kinney, author of the acclaimed *Pattern Play*® books on improvisation. *Chord Play*™ offers an exploratory and intuitive approach to the art of making spontaneous arrangements at the piano. This series is designed to complement both traditional piano lessons and the *Pattern Play*® series.

Enjoy creating!



Chord Play™ 1

The art of arranging begins with a familiar tune or theme. The student first learns some popular tunes (either by reading or by ear), then adds simple triads to the tunes, being guided by the chord symbols on a lead sheet. In this example, the first few chords are provided for the student.

Adding Major Chords to AULD LANG SYNE

In the first line of this tune, chords have been added below the melody. Each chord matches the chord symbol written above the staff. Add the remaining chords to complete the tune. When a measure doesn't have a chord symbol above (as in measure 9), keep playing the chord indicated in the preceding measure.

Musical notation for 'Auld Lang Syne' in 4/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef. Chord symbols are placed below the staff: C, G, C, F, C, G, F, G, C. Measure 9 has no chord symbol, indicating the chord from the previous measure (C) should be held.

Chord Play™ 1 then explores the three main techniques used by arrangers: styling, substituting, and coloring. The student first learns to play triads in a variety of styles: ragtime, boogie, jump bass, and in the style of Mozart and Chopin.

EXPLORATION 9

Boogie Bass

Boogie Bass

Some melodies ask for a driving, rhythmic bass. When this is the case, we might play triads as a “boogie bass.” *Boogie woogie* was an early style of jazz, and early rock pianists often borrowed boogie-bass patterns to create their sound.

Musical notation for Boogie Bass in 4/4 time. The bass line consists of triads: C, C, C. The notes are: C4, E4, G4; C4, E4, G4; C4, E4, G4.

To make a simple, yet powerful *boogie bass*, play a major chord in the bass, omit the third, then alternate the resulting fifth with a sixth in each measure, as shown above. Play this loud and *legato* to achieve the fullest sound.

BirthDay Boogie

The *BirthDay Song* is in 3/4, but boogie woogie is in 4/4. So, we need to “stretch out” the melody to fit the style. We also need to syncopate the melody (play tones off the beat) to give life to the steady, predictable rhythm. Here’s an arrangement—followed by a written-out improvisation—that includes blue notes.

Musical notation for BirthDay Boogie in 4/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Chord symbols F and C are shown above the staff. The bass line consists of triads: F, F, F, C, C, C, C, C.

EXPLORATION 13

Chopin Voicing

Here is a way of playing triads that is especially suited for accompanying lyrical melodies, although it is so adaptable that it can easily become a tango accompaniment! Frédéric Chopin was one of the first pianists to play chords in this way, so I call it *Chopin voicing* in his honor.

Musical notation for Chopin Voicing in 4/4 time. It shows a triad (C4, E4, G4) being moved up an octave to (C5, E5, G5) to create a more lyrical sound.

Play a triad, then move the middle note (the third) up an octave. Rather than straining to reach the keys with your fingers, play with a swinging motion of your arm (like a pendulum) and keep a flexible, relaxed wrist. Use the pedal to connect the tones.

Any voicing is like a head of hair: it can be styled many different ways. Here are a few.

The student progresses by playing sample arrangements and adding the missing chords in the same style as the sample provided.

AMAZING GRACE (Chopin Chords)

Complete this arrangement using Chopin chords. Consider using some of the variations in 3/4 shown in the last line above.

Musical notation for 'Amazing Grace' in 3/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef. Chord symbols are placed above the staff: G, Em, C, G, Em, Am, D, G, Em, C, G, Em, D, C, G.

The second main arranging technique is “substituting.” On this page, the student learns how to substitute minor chords for the usual major chords to create an amusing arrangement.

Substituting Minor Chords for Major

Let’s start by replacing the usual major chords with minor chords. This is called “substituting chords.” Below, the *BirthDay Song* is played almost entirely with minor chords. Complete the arrangement by adding more jump chords.

“UNHAPPY” BIRTHDAY

Musical notation for 'Unhappy Birthday' in 3/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef. Chord symbols Am, Em, Dm are shown above the staff. The bass line consists of triads: Am, Am, Am, Em, Em, Em, Dm, Dm, Dm.

The third main arranging technique is “coloring” — adding additional tones to chords. Here, the student adds seconds to minor chords to make them sound more “minory” and to major chords to make them sound more “majory.”

EXPLORATION 16

Adding Seconds to Chords

Until now, we have played only with triads—three-note chords. Triads are like basic harmonic outlines that can be “colored in” with other tones. Or they can be thought of as the basic ingredients in a recipe to which you can add other ingredients to change the texture and flavor.

Seconds: Flavor Enhancers

By adding a major second to a chord (the note a whole step above the root), we can enhance the flavor of a basic triad. This lends a sweetness to major chords and a biting dissonance to minor chords.

Musical notation showing four chords: C, Cadd2, Am, Amadd2. The notes are: C4, E4, G4; C4, E4, G4, A4; C4, E4, G4; C4, E4, G4, A4.

GREENSLEEVES

In this partial arrangement, a second is added to every chord. Can you finish this arrangement? Keep in mind that blocked add2 chords can sound clunky when played much lower than those shown below.

Musical notation for 'Greensleeves' in 3/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef. Chord symbols Amadd2 and Gadd2 are shown above the staff. The bass line consists of triads: Amadd2, Amadd2, Gadd2, Gadd2, Amadd2, Amadd2.

By the final pages of the book, the student has learned that, by combining arranging techniques, a simple tune can become something special. Here, Jump Bass, Chord Substitution, and Added Seconds make *Auld Lang Syne* into a New Year's Eve lament. Throughout the book, the student is encouraged to improvise new melodies above the accompaniment.

NEW YEAR'S EVE BLUES

This arrangement includes only three different chords, i, iv, and V7 in the key of D minor. After you play the tune, you may wish to improvise melodies above the accompaniment using the D blues scale. This scale is made of the notes D, F, G, A \flat , A, and C.

Chord Play™ 2

This book explores inversions of triads and styles that can be created with them. In the first *Exploration*, the student learns that inversions can be used to create bass lines that move stepwise.

EXPLORATION 1

Introducing Inversions

Is There a Way?

In this chord progression from *Canon in D* (played in the key of C), there is a leap from the first chord to the second. Is there a way to move more smoothly and melodically between these chords?

In the second measure below, all three notes of the G chord are present, but now B rather than G is on the bottom. The chord has been *inverted*—in other words, a different note is played in the bass. Inverting a chord allows us to move smoothly and melodically from one chord to the next.

In *Exploration 4*, the student explores ways to combine inversions with the technique of chord substitution.

ODE TO JOY

Above is a typical lead sheet for this theme. Without an orchestra and choir to add depth and fullness to the simple harmonies in the first line, we pianists might feel "lost at C" or "C sick." Fortunately, we now know about substitute chords and inversions, so instead of simply repeating a C chord for three measures, we can create a strong bass line.

In *Exploration 5*, the student learns to play inverted triads with the Chopin Voicing introduced in *Chord Play™ 1*. This eventually leads into an exploration of arpeggios in *Exploration 8*.

CANON IN D (with Inverted Chopin Voicings)

Playing inversions with Chopin voicings enables us to create rich and varied accompaniments. Play this accompaniment with a swinging motion of your arm, like the back-and-forth motion of a pendulum.

Complete this by playing the next four chords in the progression (G, D/F#, G, and A) in the same way.

Exploration 9 introduces way to play triads and inversions with the right hand in the middle of the piano to provide accompaniments for singers.

Basic Accompaniment Position

Blocked chords generally sound clearest and most resonant when played in the middle register. As we move blocked chords into the bass, they begin to sound muddy or clumpy. As we move them into a higher register, they begin to sound thin or tinny.

If your left hand is big enough, play octaves in the bass with the right-hand chord. If not, just play a single tone deep in the bass. I call this the *Basic Accompaniment Position* (or simply, BAP).

In *Exploration 11*, the student explores ways to play both melodies and broken chords with the right hand.

GREENSLEEVES (Improvising with Broken Chords)

Here is a way to improvise with broken chords that creates an interplay of rhythms. To get started, play this passage—the first four chords of *Greensleeves*—over and over until the notes flow easily. Play each measure twice.

Then, make melodies by replacing the top note of the chord with other notes in the key of A minor, as shown below.

Exploration 12 takes the ideas in the previous Explorations into a different style: ragtime.

Making “Ragged” Melodies

To be able to turn normal melodies into “ragged” melodies, first play this example over and over. When you see a *tenuto* mark, emphasize that note to create the characteristic syncopated rhythm. Play this example until you don’t have to think about it any longer.

Exploration 16 explores right-hand inversions in gospel style.

To get started, play some “Amen” cadences starting on the various positions of a C chord. Notice how the IV chords are inverted to allow the voices to move smoothly. In this style, the IV chords are usually not specified because it’s understood that you will add them as part of the sound.

Chord Play™ 3

After exploring ways to make full sounds by playing chords with both hands simultaneously, this book dives into 7th chords. On this page, the student plays *Greensleeves* with triads, then with 7th chords to hear the difference a seventh makes.

EXPLORATION 8

Major 7th Chords

In the previous Exploration, we found that minor 7th chords are minor triads flavored with a major triad on top. Major 7th chords are the opposite—major triads flavored with a minor triad on top. The C major 7th chord is usually notated as Cmaj7, though CMA7 and C°7 are occasionally used.

While a minor 7th chord is a minor triad with the interval of a minor seventh added above the root, a major 7th chord is a major triad with a major seventh added above the root, the note a *half-step* below the octave. The major 7th chord is regularly confused with the dominant seventh chord (C7, introduced in *Chord Play™ 1*) because both have a major chord on the bottom. However, the seventh is different in these two chords.

GREENSLEEVES

To get acquainted with major 7th chords, first play *Greensleeves* with just triads.

Here, the beginning of the piece is arranged in the same style as above, but now with sevenths added to the chords.

In Exploration 11, the student learns to invert 7th chords and omit the fifth of the chord to create chord “fragments.”

TWINKLE, TWINKLE

This melody is harmonized with fragments. Complete the arrangement by adding fragments to the second half. The ♭5 symbol appears after the Bm7 chord in the third measure because the melody note is F, the lowered fifth of that particular chord. This kind of chord is explored in a later book.

Exploration 13 focuses on Jump Bass styles. This leads into an exploration of arpeggios in Exploration 14.

EXPLORATION 14 Arpeggios

We explored a number of ways to transform triads into arpeggios in *Chord Play™ 2*. There is one difference when making 7th chords into arpeggios: simply play the seventh instead of the root in the middle register, as we did with jump chords. The arrows below indicate the seventh.

The student then learns ways to play 7th chords with the right hand. Here, the left hand plays a walking bass.

OH, CHRISTMAS TREE (Walking Bass)

Here is how this piece might be refreshed with 7th chords. See the version in *Chord Play™ 2* for the remainder of the melody, or try to play it by ear.

Here, 7th chords are played with both hands. The left hand plays the root and seventh of the chord.

EXPLORATION 19

Two-Handed Voicings

The left hand spends most of its time playing single notes, octaves, or fifths. But there can be other jobs for the left hand. Let’s explore these in the final five pages.

SILENT NIGHT

Here is another arrangement that features chords voiced with the root and seventh in the left hand. The tune is harmonized so that the melody note is usually the third or seventh of the chord. For example, in the fifth measure, the melody tone is a C, the seventh of the accompanying Dm7 chord.

Chord Play™ 4

Chord Play™ 4 explores a variety of chromatic connecting chords. These are chords that step outside the key for a moment to add drama and interest to an arrangement.

The book begins with secondary dominants. These are dominant 7th chords that are substituted for some of the usual chords in an arrangement.

AMAZING GRACE

By substituting minor triads or minor 7th chords for the usual major triads, I was able to find a place in this arrangement for all five secondary dominant chords shown on the previous page: E7, F#7, G7, A7, and B7. A secondary dominant can resolve to a minor triad (measure 12), a minor 7th chord (measure 2), a major 7th chord (measure 3), and even another dominant 7th chord (measure 14).

G B7 Em7 G7 Cmaj7 D7 G Bm/I

This book then explores diminished triads, two kinds of diminished 7th chords, and augmented triads. Here, diminished 7th chords play a role similar to the role played by secondary dominants above.

AMAZING GRACE

Here's how that same chord progression might accompany the last phrase of *Amazing Grace*.

C C#dim7 G/D Em7 G/B Am7 D7 G

In *Exploration 11* we learn how to create chromatic bass lines using various chords. In this example, half-diminished 7th chords are used to make an arrangement of *Scarborough Fair*.

EXPLORATION 11

Chromatic Bass Lines

As we have seen and heard, the half-diminished 7th chord often appears as a ii7 chord in a minor key. But it also frequently plays an important role in chord progressions that descend chromatically in the bass. In this EXPLORATION, we explore a number of these striking progressions.

SCARBOROUGH FIESTA #1

In measure 3 of this arrangement of *Scarborough Fair*, you can hear the half-diminished 7th chord connecting Cmaj7/G and Fmaj7. Complete this arrangement, playing the chords in a similar style.

Amadd2 Cmaj7/G F#b7 Fmaj7

The final pages of the book explore various techniques such as ways to create surprise endings.

EXPLORATION 18

Surprise Endings

The ideas presented in EXPLORATION 17 suggest all sorts of possibilities for endings. For example, we often hear a IV—V—I progression or a ii—V—I at the end of a piece. Wouldn't it be nice now and then to hear an unexpected harmony before the final chord?

Instead of playing just a single chord before the final I chord, why not play two chords? Or three?

Abmaj7 Dbmaj7 C Abmaj7 Bbadd2 C Bb9 Abmaj7 Dbmaj7 C

You could also add unexpected chords as you lead up to the final chord. The first example is rather common, whereas the second example adds some surprises.

Fmaj7 Eo7 Dm7 G7 C Fmaj7 Eo7 Ebmaj7 Dm Db7 C

Chord Play™ 5

This book explores “color chords” — chords that have many tones added to them. The student learns how to play complex chords, including 6th chords, 9th chords, 11th chords, and 13th chords. On this page, a quick way to create minor 9th chords is explained.

“Splitting the Root”

Here's another way to think about making minor 9th chords. Play a minor triad in Basic Accompaniment Position, but instead of playing the root with your right hand, play the key on either side that is a whole step away. In other words, “split” the root. By doing this, you are now playing the seventh of the chord (a whole step below the root) and the ninth of the chord (a whole step above the root) *instead* of the root.

Gm Gm9 Dm Dm9

This chord usually sounds best when the right hand is played around middle C in root position (like Gm, above) or first inversion (like Dm).

SCARBOROUGH FAIR

Here's an arrangement made mostly with the two chords shown above.

Dm9 Gm9 Dm9 Gm9 Dm9 Gm9 A7 Dm9 Gm9 Dm9

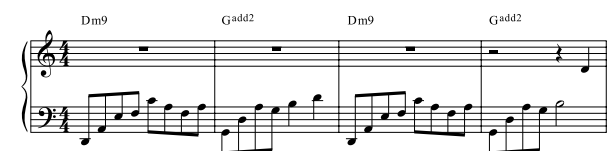
In *Exploration 5*, we discover various ways to create arpeggios with three kinds of 9th chords.

The same three foundations work for 9th chords.



WONDROUS LOVE

Here's an arrangement that features minor 9th chords played as arpeggios. You can create a longer introduction, or an ending, by repeating the first two measures many times and improvising melodies in the key of D Dorian (all white keys).



Throughout the book, the student learns ways to voice various chords by playing the notes with both hands.

EXPLORATION 15

Two-Hand Voicings of 13th Chords

The Left Hand Plays the Root and Seventh

Dominant 13th chords can be difficult to voice because the 13th and 7th (E and F in G13) create a dissonance when played right next to each other. Playing the root and seventh with the left hand and the thirteenth with the right hand is a good way to keep them apart. Here are several ways to voice a G13 chord. Some of these voicings include 9ths, others don't. With 13th chords, that's always your choice.

13TH BIRTHDAY

Here's how the *Birthday Song* might now be played in this style.



In *Exploration 19*, minor 11th chords are voiced using fourths rather than thirds.

EXPLORATION 19

Voicing with Fourths

We usually think of chords in terms of thirds. With 11th and 13th chords, we have so many chord tones that we are able to voice these chords in fourths. These two examples show two ways of adding an 11th to a m7 chord (in this case, G to a Dm7) to create voicings made with fourths.



ALL THE PRETTY LITTLE HORSES (à la Miles Davis)

This arrangement features 11th chords voiced in fourths. It sounds a lot like *So What*, the famous piece by Miles Davis. The chords below are called minor 11th chords when they have a (minor) third. Those that have no third are called dominant 11th chords.



About the Chord Play™ Series

There are now five books in the series. Each book has 64 pages and is filled with approximately 20 *Explorations*. By creating at the piano, you can learn to play all the chords in common use today in a variety of styles. Each new chord becomes a friend to create with rather than merely a theoretical abstraction to remember.

You explore in three main ways: by playing sample arrangements, by reading lead sheets and filling in the missing chords in the style, and also by playing and transposing by ear. This three-way approach cultivates knowledge and skill in an intuitive, “hands on” way. For this to be an art, intuition must be a key player!

Chord Play™ works best when used in conjunction with “fake books” containing your favorite songs, hymns, and classical themes. Apply the ideas from this series to make arrangements of your favorite music.

About the Author

Forrest Kinney, NCTM, is a music educator who is dedicated to helping others learn the “four arts” of music: interpreting, composing, improvising, and arranging. He is the author and composer of 19 books on music and creativity. This includes the *Pattern Play®* series on improvisation, the *Chord Play™* series on arranging, and *World Songs*, two collections of original art songs. He is also the author of *Creativity—Beyond Compare*, a book that explores misconceptions about creativity. He has taught music for 35 years, and has worked as a professional pianist for over 25 years.

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