

Improvisator Vst

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This plugin is intended to develop unusual but not arbitrary harmonic ideas even with little classical harmony knowledge. To this end the program lets you explore, by clicking the mouse, the manifold worlds of harmonies without having to consider rules of part-writing and keys.

Embedding

In order to use this plugin - you must load it in your host program as a VST instrument (not as an effect). The plugin by itself does not produce sound. With this in mind - load a sampler or synthesizer for producing sound (piano or organ are ideal instruments for hearing the harmonies clearly). Next, connect both Improvisator and your sound source via a midi track, which has Improvisator as the input and a sampler / synthesizer as the output. Once this is set up, you can play harmonies in the Improvisator via your mouse.

First steps

The key is chosen in the Circle of Fifths on the top right. The two rows of buttons top left are the most important buttons. These are the scale degrees of the chosen key. The upper row corresponds to the major key and the lower one to the minor. Below that you will find the various derivatives of some of these functions:

- 1) Various basses
- 2) one mediant depending on function
- 3) suspensions
- 4) Various derivatives of subdominants
- 5) Various derivatives of dominants

On the right side of the plugin you will find suggestions of harmonies that could follow. These are computed anew after each choice of harmony. The first suggestion usually is a rather common sound, for example the resolution of a suspension or of a dominant. In the bottom row the plugin registers the functions which are being played. This sequence can be loaded and stored externally to .harm files. These harmonic sequences can be uploaded in the forum on www.Improvisator.de/en in order to share and discuss your ideas.

Right click on scale degrees

One of the scale degrees is always denoted in red, normally the Tonic (t / T, see below for more on the symbols). This scale degree is the target for building more complex harmonic constructs and for setting arbitrary suspensions and basses. By right clicking you can mark one scale degree as the target. For example, if you want to create an applied dominant of the Subdominant you click right on "S" as the target and then left on "D" in the scale degrees, or on any more complicated dominant that you find below in the derivatives. Such

a construct is written "(D) S".

The harmonic progression

All the harmonies that you play are entered into the harmonic progression unless you have deactivated the registration mode in the selector bottom right. Individual harmonies can be erased, replaced (set the registration selector to replace), new harmonies inserted (after the active harmony or at the end of the sequence depending on the registration selector). You can undo and restore all changes comfortably. Reset clears the whole harmonic progression.

Recording the output:

There are several possibilities:

- 1) If you have set a harmonic progression and want to get the notes - you push the record button in your host program and play the harmonies one after one with your mouse.
- 2) You can arpeggiate, i.e. time order the voices of the actual harmony by hand choosing "silent change" on top right. Now you need a second midi track that has the midi keyboard as input and Improvisator as output. By playing the keys C, D, E, F on the keyboard you can trigger the four voices. With the C# and D# keys on the keyboard you can move forward and backward in your harmonic progression without using the mouse. Push F# to stop, or A# to recall the chord. The "silent change" mode prevents the playing of the whole chord everytime you move on as would normally be the case.
You can record the results in your host program.
- 3) You also have the possibility to not transform the harmonies into notes at all, but rather have them computed live from the harmonic progression while playing the project. The Improvisator stores the harmonic progression together with the host project. This enables you to later change the harmonic sequence of the project. You merely need a midi track that has the Improvisator for output and where you placed set C# and D# or C,D,E,F notes at the desired time positions. It is very important, that the first note is a G#, which always corresponds to the very first harmony of your progression. G# resets the position in the harmony array.

The selector hold on / off makes it possible to hold all played voices until a new harmony is played, for example when composing for a choir.

Improvising with the Midi Keyboard

As previously described, you can trigger the four voices of your actual chord or the full chord with your Midi Keyboard. If you choose the "split keyboard" mode in the top right selector the Keyboard is split at the C3. The upper octaves you can use to improvise freely to the chords you trigger with your left hand (C D E F or full chords with C#, D#, G# etc.). To ease things you can choose the "split & transpose" mode, which allows free improvisation as well but transposes the right half of your keyboard so that with the white keys you play only the notes of the present key. When triggering the voices manually, you

can choose between 3 octaves or combine them: C2, D2, E2, F2 triggers the standard octave, whereas C3... transposes the voices one octave up and C1... one down respectively. The 3 octaves repeat on the keyboard one after another, so if you are in the split mode, you can use Co... to play the higher octave.

About the meaning of the harmony symbols

This plugin deals with function symbols instead of chord symbols like E sus 4. This may be confusing at first glance as these symbols are seldomly used in the context of producing music with the computer, but they represent the underlying concept of the Improvisator: The chord symbol E sus 4 for example only tells you how to play the chord, which does not contain any information about the meaning of the chord. Improvisator does not aim at presenting interesting chords out of a black box that you can only play but not understand. Instead, Improvisator is meant to present the value of a chord in a certain context to the user and to let the user choose as soon as he or she has spent a little time learning the system.

The symbols are quite easy to understand: A small character stands for minor, a large one for major. T stands for "Tonic", the key itself. S stands for "Subdominant", the chord which is based on the 4th of the key, and D stands for "Dominant", the (mostly major) chord on the 5th of the key. The progression T-S-D-T is called "Cadence"; it is the most common harmonic motif in our music.

The small upper numbers (superscript) represent an added note or suspension in the corresponding interval to the base note of the function symbol. S⁵⁶ for example means a minor Subdominant with added 6th, a so called "Added Sixth". (The 5 is to let you know that the 5th, which the subdominant already had before, is not removed.)

Numbers below the symbols denote which tone is set as the lowest note, the bass of the chord. The 3 for example means that the 3rd is the downmost voice, which corresponds to the first inversion of the chord.

Specials:

- p / P means the parallel of a chord. The parallel of a major chord is a minor chord 3 semitones below. The parallel of a minor chord is a major chord 3 semitones up. (a minor is the parallel of C major and vice versa)
- An upper "v" means diminished. Dissonant, dominant character
- A crossed symbol means that the first of the chord is missing
- DD means „double-Dominant“, which means the Dominant targeting the Dominant
- sⁿ means "Neapolitan chord", which has a characteristic small 6th and no 5th. It is widely used even in popmusic.