

# ProProach



## How It Arrived And What It Can Do For You

My first piano lesson was at the age of seven... I remember that it was in the middle of the month of March and, "coincidentally," I am writing this at the same time many years later. I became inspired to play because I had a cousin who lived a mile and a half down the road and when I used to visit, I was very impressed with seeing those fingers whirl up and down that keyboard, getting the kind of results that I knew I would enjoy creating as well.

Within a matter of weeks my parents, not wanting to deprive me and yet doubting my sense of commitment, called my cousin's teacher and set up an appointment for my first lesson. We were lucky at the time to have a teacher who made it his business to make house calls. Actually, my first lesson was on a tiny organ, and the piano didn't arrive until about six months down the road, since they wanted to make sure my interest was genuine. The teacher agreed that the organ was fine for me to get started while stressing that investing in a piano would be inevitable at some point...

Since that very first lesson, learning chords was drilled into my brain. My entire experience revolved around learning chords inside and out and improvising with them. To be honest, I have never had a piano teacher who didn't teach piano chords and improvisation to some degree. While most people who start to learn piano get the traditional classical training and often don't get to explore chord construction and improvisation until their later years of development (if they ever do), I was experiencing it the other way around.

As I developed and was more and more exposed to other individuals, including schoolmates (throughout my grammar, junior high, and high school days) who were also involved with taking piano lessons, I became more and more aware that the majority of others who were studying piano with a private teacher were enduring classical studies more than anything else. To me, this seemed a bit odd, but what did I know? In truth, it was my situation that was "odd."

You see, playing piano with a "chord" mind set was all I knew. Sure, I learned to read music, so there was a balance in my education in that respect, but while other kids my age were learning Fur Elise by Beethoven, I was playing standards like Misty - and using chords in a variety of

ways while doing so. I never really played a song more than once in exactly the same fashion. To others, this seemed impressive. To me, I didn't know any other way!

Creativity was an instinct that was nurtured at a very early age. Today, I am thankful for it. Since piano chord "technology" became a way of thinking at such an early part of my development, to this I can attribute my rather unique perspective on this art of "chord piano." Having been exposed to a number of teachers who ALL promoted the art of improvisation, and who were all very encouraging, I have been exposed to a pretty nice variety of "chord tactics" and learning approaches, not to mention what I've learned when it comes to encouraging and motivating others.

Actually, in addition to the art of "chord piano," I consider the very act of teaching it to be an art in itself. My piano teaching days starting in my teens and probably the one reason that has kept me to coaching people on piano all these years has been that I really do enjoy the challenge of approaching the instructional process from a variety of different angles. When it comes to understanding what is being taught, often is the case that what works for one doesn't necessary work for the other. I don't see failure as an option, and I think I can attribute my attitude regarding this to the fact that I was exposed to encouragement and inspiration with each and every piano teacher I ever had.

I have been faced with a specific challenge (thankfully) - one that I was committed to overcome. In an effort to devise a learning program meant to be effective for a large population of individuals, if what I said above is true - that what works for one doesn't necessarily work for another - how do I make it compatible for everyone?

This was definitely a nut I had to crack. Would it be possible, in coming up with an approach to get people to learn and enjoy incorporating some genuine professional sounds at the piano, to create it in such a way where anyone and everyone would gain value from it?

I wouldn't take "no" for an answer. I had to make it happen.

In doing so, there were considerations I had to acknowledge...

- 1) People come from all walks of life with a number of different backgrounds
- 2) Individuals of all ages would be exposed to my program
- 3) Those exposed to my program will have different piano playing experience and skill levels
- 4) Everyone has a different amount of time to actually devote to learning and improving

These are all important truths and I could not ignore any of them.

And I didn't.

- 1) Giving consideration that I would be dealing with people from a number of different backgrounds, I quickly decided that the best way to approach producing a program that places a heavy emphasis on creativity would be to take the same approach I've taken that has been

responsible for being successful during my excess of 30 years coaching people one-on-one... be myself, keep the instruction simple, express what I had to say clarity, and present it in an informal manner.

2) I knew that I could expect my program to be used by a wide range of ages - from 18 year old students aspiring to become piano stylists to more mature adults who come to realize that the rewards in store for those who decide to get involved with learning chord piano and improvising are plentiful... people in the 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, and older. This being the case, again, I concluded that keeping the program informal and simple was my best approach. In addition, maintaining a sense of humor would be a priority while holding to the task at hand. This was easy for me to achieve since I love teaching this material.

3) The fact that people of different playing levels would be adopting my program was an important consideration not to be overlooked. After all, some people may be familiar with how to play a few simple triads (three note chords) and that may be the extent of their experience. Some others would know how to create major seventh chords, dominant seventh chords, etc., and yet others would have some understanding of 9th chords, 11th chords, and 13th chords and more. Of course, there are many skill levels within this spectrum as well.

Firstly, if your chord experience is limited to playing some triads like C Major, G Major, etc., then you will find that the material in this program will be content you should aspire to learn. Your attitude toward your expectations from this program will be the determining factor as to whether or not you think it's for you. The truth is, if you expose yourself to these lessons in the right way, you can become very inspired. To you, I would offer the suggestion that your involvement with the lessons be less aggressive than someone who has experience with all the seventh chords, for example. These lessons just may be the incentive you need to take your chord knowledge to the next level.

Secondly, if you are familiar with your basic seventh chords, such as major sevenths, minor sevenths, and dominant sevenths, then this program will serve as a very nice bridge that will take you from where you are to the next level of chord understanding and application. Participation with these lessons will have you creating many of those professional piano chord sounds that you've likely often heard and were a mystery up until now.

Thirdly, if you possess a rather advanced knowledge of piano chords, including ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths, then you have likely developed an appreciation for learning advanced chord strategies as well as a capacity to want to learn additional applications of what you already know. It is quite probable that what you learn in this program will enhance your piano playing ability.

4) The fact that everyone has their own schedule and amount of time to devote to learning is one that I have placed special attention to. I hold strong to the truth that each and every one of us has the innate desire and ability to express ourselves musically... and this does not mean that the process of allowing this desire and ability to breath needs to be enslaved by a tedious

learning program. It has been my commitment that this program would be one that can be used by all, whether you have a few minutes a week to devote - or hours a day.

It is with this in mind that I decided to have these lessons are delivered in a weekly fashion. However, to those with a minimal amount of time per week, it is certainly not a requirement that these lessons be fully assimilated on a weekly basis. They, after all, can be referred to whenever you like... these lessons are not "time sensitive." Many users of the program choose to spend weeks or months on one lesson while they simply collect all subsequent lessons for later enjoyment. As a matter of fact, I emphasize throughout the program that full assimilation is not necessary before moving onto the next lesson. Exposure to these lessons will open your mind up to new ways of thinking at the piano... repeated exposure will eventually lead you to actually applying what you are learning with growing confidence.

This program is intended to serve as a basis for many "aha!" moments to be experienced by you in the future. As an example, let's say that you only know how to play a few major chords on the piano - like C Major, F Major, and G Major - when you get involved with this program, I recommend that you expose yourself to its concepts, without having high expectations in terms of actual playing results. Simply stay in touch with the lessons at your convenience while you continue to increase your basic chord skills... as you become more acquainted with a wider array of chords, including seventh chords, you will eventually see how some of these lessons make more sense than when you initially started familiarizing yourself with them.

Time is not an issue. The real issue is your commitment to being open to learning something new and having fun while doing it!

You see, you cannot possibly fail with this program. You simply choose how much you want to get out of it and you do so at your own pace... there is no pressure, there are no time constraints... you have no reason not to begin! In addition, this program will not interfere with any other that you may be engaged in. Rather, it is likely to enhance your experience.

This program, which I call ProProach, will get you to adopt a more creative mind set at the piano. If you are already playing some songs, you are likely to find yourself taking these concepts and making them yours relatively quickly... surely, your playing will reflect your new discoveries!

If you are not currently playing songs but are simply familiarizing yourself with playing chords on the piano, then you will find this program to be a wonderful vehicle by which you will take having fun with chords to a whole new level! Merely experimenting with the different "pro-like" chord sounds you can achieve will be well worth your involvement with the lessons!

I can't tell you how much fun I've had creating ProProach! It is my hope that you will quickly learn this for yourself once you begin the program. I continue to enjoy receiving email messages from individuals who have expressed their appreciation for my unique coaching style, ultimately resulting in their realizing results that previously seemed unattainable. To all of you for your wonderful comments... please accept my sincere thanks and genuine admiration. You have

been - and continue to be - my inspiration.

And remember...

Always...

ALWAYS...

PLAY WITH PASSION!

Musically,

A handwritten signature in a cursive, light grey font, appearing to read 'D.L.' or 'David Longo'.

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