

FINISHING WELL

Whenever I arrange music for piano or choir, I make sure I create an interesting and engaging introduction as well as a memorable ending. From the very first note I want to engage the listener to **continue** listening. Just as important, I want to finish well. In this edition of Improv Notes, I'd like to share an unusual way to end your piano arrangements. All it requires is learning two new chords.

This ending uses the flatted VI and flatted VII chords in any major key. Let's create this ending in the key of C major. First you need to identify the sixth and seventh scale degrees, which would be A and B. Then lower each note a half step and build a major triad on those notes. The new chords you will be using are Ab and Bb major triads, as highlighted by the example below.

Ab Bb

In order to make this chord progression sound smoother, add the "2" note to the Bb chord, making it a Bb2 chord. In this case, the added note would be a C note, as shown in the example below. In the second example, I have used a different inversion of the same chord which allows the C note to remain constant on the top of the chord. If you have not guessed by now, the C note is common to these three chords and pivotal to the success of this progression.

Ab Bb2 C Ab Bb2 C

This ending works best when the final melody note is the tonic note, which would be C in this case. To use this ending, simply substitute the Ab and Bb2 chords before resolving to the C chord as shown in this example of "Jesus Loves Me."

F C/G G7 Ab Bb2 C

Let's try the same ending in the key of F major. First build your two ending chords based on the flatted sixth and flatted seventh scale degrees in the key of F. Then add the "2" note to the flatted seventh chord.

Db Eb2

Here is the same musical example in the key of F.

B \flat F/C C7 D \flat E \flat 2 F

The Bi - ble tells me so.

Now try creating this ending using a different song that is written in the key of C or F. Choose two or three other keys and experiment with this progression. Listen for these chords in published arrangements. Find ways to utilize them in solo piano arrangements and when you accompany vocalists or solo instrumentalists. A little bit of creativity coupled with some chord knowledge can help you "finish well."

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