

# The Creative Pianist

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cre· ate (verb)  
to bring into existence.

"Imagination creates reality." Richard  
Wagner

cre· ate (verb) to produce  
through imaginative skill.

## PURPOSE

The most commonly used method books do not include an adequate amount of harmonization, transposition, composition, and improvisation activities. Independent piano teachers need to know about supplemental materials that can be used in private lessons.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS —

- (a) Do method books supply enough of the "creative" activities?
- (b) What materials can be used as supplements?

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES —

- Harmonization
- Transposition
- Composition
- Improvisation

## METHOD

### Methods Surveyed

- Alfred's Premier Piano Course
- Faber Piano Adventures
- Helen Marlais Succeeding at the Piano
- Keith Snell Piano Town
- Bastien All-in-One
- Francis Clark Music Tree
- Royal Conservatory Celebrate Piano

## RESULTS

Method	Harmonization	Transposition	Improvisation	Composition
Alfred's Premier Piano Course	✓	✓	✓	✓
Faber Piano Adventures	✓	✓	✓	✓
Succeeding at the Piano	☐	✓	☐	✓
Piano Town	✓	✓	☐	☐
Bastien All-in-One	✓	☐	☐	☐
Music Tree	✓	✓	✓	✓
Celebrate Piano	✓	✓	✓	✓

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Students do not necessarily need each of these books for themselves. However, teachers should know about these resources and have some of them in their library to pull out when needed.

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## SUPPLEMENTAL REFERENCES

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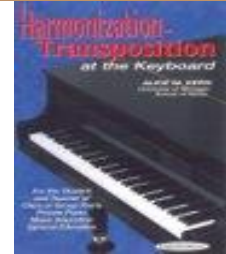
The following materials are commonly used and readily available.

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### HARMONIZATION

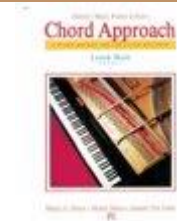
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*Harmonization – Transposition at the Keyboard* by Alice Kern is a book designed for all ranges of piano study, whether it is independent teaching of individuals and/or groups or college instructors. It serves as a reference for extra harmonization and transposition examples with little to no text or explanations.



*Chord Play* by Forrest Kinney is a five-volume series that allows students the opportunity to arrange pieces, read lead lines, and learn to improvise on their own arrangements. As a result of using these books, students will be able to play by ear, remember things aurally, and memorize pieces quickly.

Alfred's Chord Approach d Approach is designed for the older beginner who has the physical ability to play three note chords. These books can be used as supplements to regular piano methods in order to provide plenty of opportunity to be comfortable with chords and other harmonic intervals. The second level of this two-volume series has chances for lead sheet reading.



eNovativePiano offers an online solution to the need of piano teaching materials. It emphasizes a comprehensive curriculum that includes reading, harmonization, sight-reading, improvisation, arranging, score-reading, and more.

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### COMPOSITION

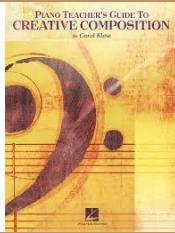
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*Creative Composition Toolbox* by Wynn-Anne Rossi is a "step-by-step guide for learning to compose". Through six levels, students learn how to comfortably and confidently write their own music where they can apply the musicality they learn through repertoire. This series can be used in group or individual lessons, and each level introduces ten new compositional tools.

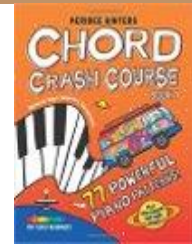
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*Music by Me* by Kevin Olson and Wynn-Anne Rossi is a five-volume workbook series designed for students to explore the joys of composing. Each workbook is divided into units that are then divided into sections: "tool of the trade", "let's explore", "improvise" (books 1-3), "scanning the score" (books 4-5), and "compose your own". Unlike the black-and-white printing of *Creative Composition*, *Music by Me* includes a single accent color to brighten the pages.



*Piano Teacher's Guide to Creative Composition* by Carol Klose serves as a source for activities to work in composition into even the shortest lesson. The lesson plans are designed to help keep students motivated week-to-week. There is an emphasis on hands-on application of music theory. Through weekly activities, students feel validated through presentation of their own compositions.

Meridee Winters wrote *Chord Crash Course* after working in a studio with vocalists who could not play piano for themselves. These two books are designed to facilitate the learning of accompanying and composing. Through the learning of chords and patterns, students can learn to read lead lines and play them in a variety of styles.

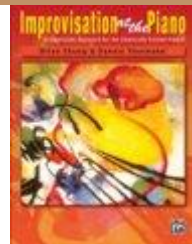


## IMPROVISATION



*Pattern Play* by Forrest and Akiko Kinney is a six-volume series designed to help students feel comfortable improvising at the piano. Through the use of patterns, students are able to create fresh and new music every time they play them. Playing the pieces with a teacher, a friend, or a family member is highly encouraged throughout the series to promote collaborative musicianship.

Brian Chung and Dennis Thurmond wrote *Improvisation at the Piano: A Systematic Approach for the Classically Trained Pianist* as an answer to the problem of students thinking that they can either play classical music or improvise well. This is a great resource not only for students, but also for teachers who would like to improve on their improvisation skills before teaching students.



Bradley Sowash wrote *Creative Chords* to be a "guide to creative music-making at the piano". Unlike the previously listed materials, this series is a "keyboard improvisation method". The systematic approach coupled with the colorful printing and images provide students with a familiarity that shows that improvisation is not something to be uncomfortable about.

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