

State And Relate

How do you create a beautiful melody? Well, the first step is creating a melody that makes sense. For a melody to make sense, that means (to me) having connectivity between your musical phrases. What has always helped me was thinking in terms of A, B, C and D phrases. My A phrase slightly contrasts my B phrase. The C phrase is a different statement in a similar atmosphere, but the D phrase relates back to the A and B phrases.

This is looking at phrasing in a micro scale. On a more macro scale, you can look at A/B contrasting phrases. Say your A phrase takes place over 2 bars and your B phrase is the next two bars. The B phrase will relate to the A phrase in some way. You make a statement, and then you relate to that statement. This leads me to the single wisest sentence I have ever heard in a musical context:

NEVER FORGET WHAT YOU JUST PLAYED!

I first heard this from Professor Tim Miller. So many musicians don't realize this. They start an idea and then go on to their next idea, never really finishing their musical sentences. This is the **curse of the arsenal**.

Many musicians live by their arsenal of licks, never really deviating from their norm. Their licks may be impressive. They may even get a response from the audience. Many times, they do, however, every good musician has their sets of impressive licks. It is time for YOU to break away from that.

Here's what you can do RIGHT NOW...

Play a set of a few notes. Literally, any notes. Make it span 1 bar of music. Now, STOP. Play that same phrase again but change 1 note. You just responded to your call. This is melodic development and melodic composition. This is a little different than call and response. I will talk about that later. Now you are creating a statement and relating directly to that statement.

Never forget the last thing that you just said. Never forget the last thing that you just played. Your second statement must relate to your first statement. Whether that relation is a direct or indirect relation... we are going to discuss that in a later paper.

Melodic development is the single most important part of musical individuality. The next papers you will read have to do with direct melodic development. The melodies can be rhythmically centered, melodically centered, dynamically centered, range centered, or centered by a single note. There are definitely more but these are the ones that I have studied. If you can think of more, please reach out. Let's have a conversation!