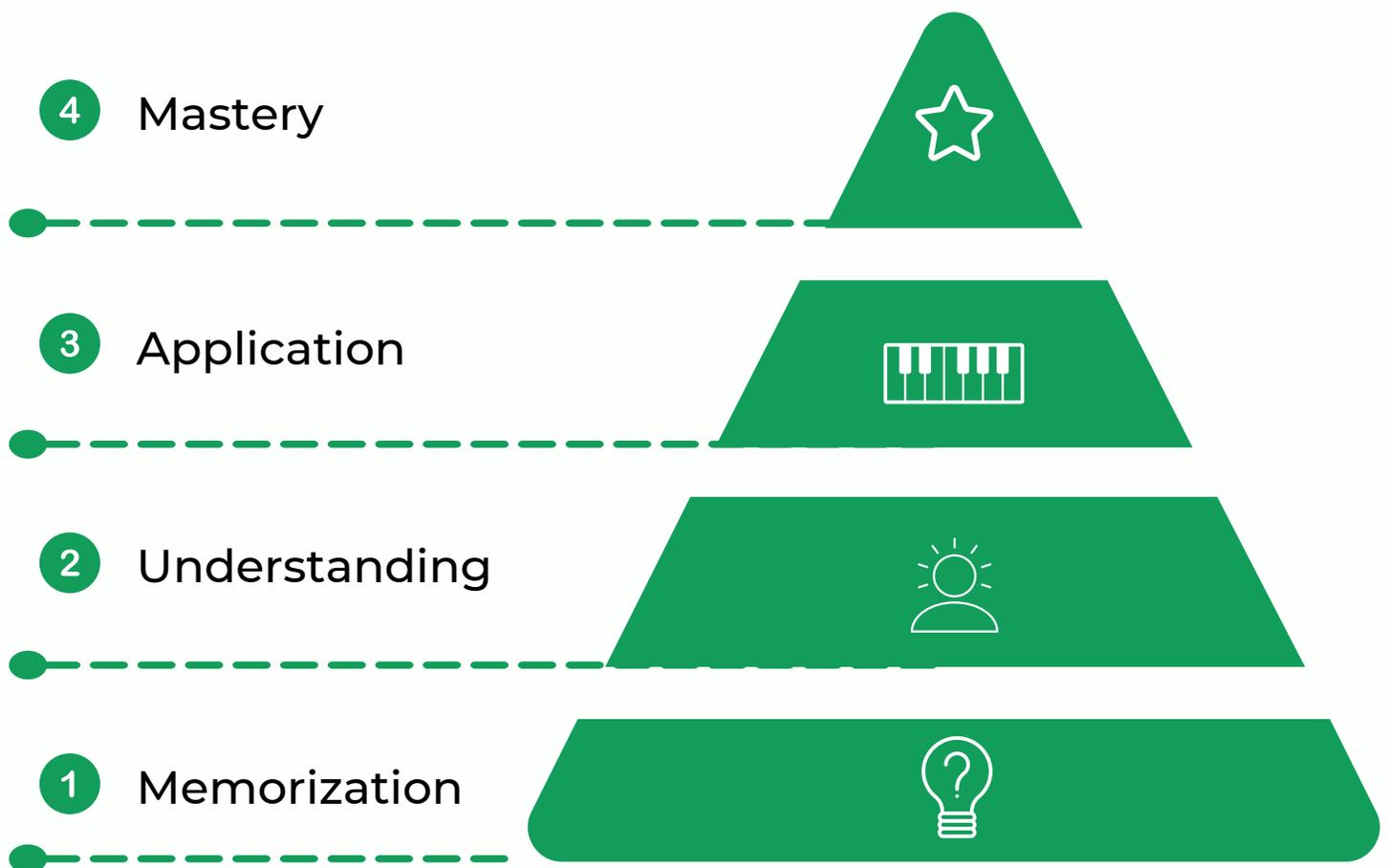
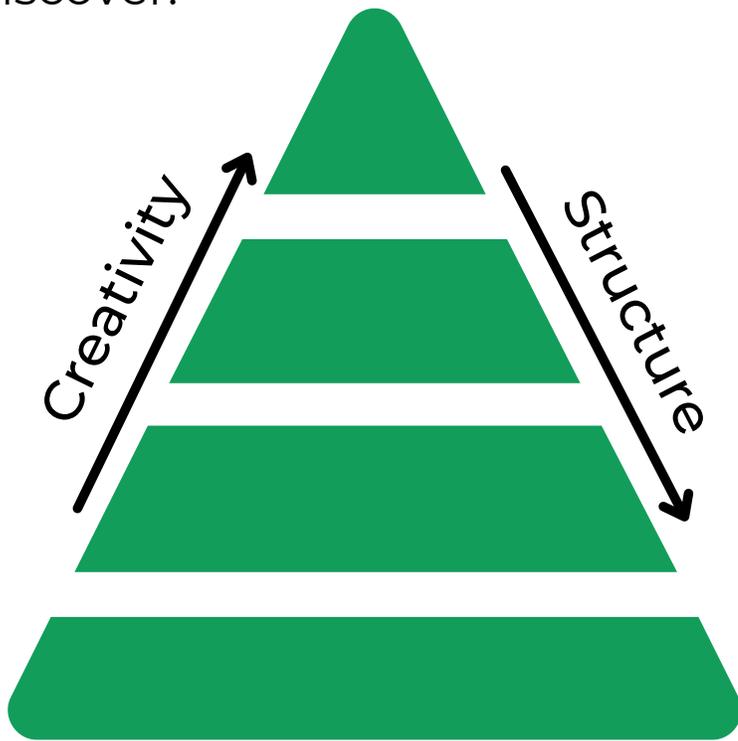


THE *Improvisation* *Mastery* PYRAMID



By Michael Clement Music

The Improvisation Mastery Pyramid™ is a practice tool used to organize, plan, and conceptualize the improvisation learning process. Used effectively, it will give you clarity and simplicity when practicing, help you avoid feeling overwhelmed, and give you the confidence to master any new concept you discover.



As you begin learning a new concept, use structured exercises to gain fluency. As you gain fluency, your exercises will become less and less structured until you can improvise freely. The Improvisation Mastery Pyramid outlines this process.

Memorization — The first step in improvisation is finding a musical pattern and learning it as you found it. This could be a melody, a chord, a rhythm, a chord progression, a texture, or another musical device. Memorizing patterns and getting "off the page" allows you to process new material in different ways as you work through all of these steps.

Understanding — After learning a new pattern, understanding and drawing connections helps you apply it into your music. A couple things you can do to understand a new concept are: learn it in a few different keys, explain it to another person, or write it down on manuscript paper.

The Three Pillars of Application

- **Exact Application** — Once you understand where a musical motif can be used, applying it to similar situations will help you further understand how to use it. Examples of exact application include playing a melodic motif on the same chord type or playing a new chord shape within a familiar chord progression.
- **Exhaustive Application** — After you have found several ways to use the idea that are similar to the original idea, start to introduce some creativity to the process by placing the original idea in new situations and modifying it as needed. You may start the idea on a different chord tone, modify the notes to fit a different chord type, change the rhythm, and more. If you discover something new and exciting, allow yourself the freedom to return to step one.
- **Natural Application** — After you feel you have explored your new idea sufficiently, begin to rehearse pieces in your repertoire. Begin using it in context, implementing it naturally and organically. Recording, arranging, and composing with your ideas can also be used at this stage to apply your new ideas musically.

Mastery — This last step will take much longer, as you passively allow all the material you have learned to become part of you. While you may not be a master of everything, you are the master of the things you have brought through these stages, and you are free to use them freely and without thought.