

## IMPROVISED THE PROGRESSION OF THE SONG BALONKU BY A.T MAHMUD: JUDGING FROM MODERN PIANO PLAYING TECHNIQUES

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### **Abstract:**

This article discusses the improvisation of progressions and modern piano playing techniques in the song Balonku. The song Balonku is the work of A.T Mahmud (alm.) which was created in 1963. He is a maestro of Indonesian children's songs. He has composed many very educational children's songs. The owner of the full name Abdullah Totong Mahmud often appears on the Ayo Singnya program on the Indonesian television station, TVRI. This Indonesian culturalist has even been given the Parama Dharma Cultural Star Honor for his services in popularizing children's songs. My Balloon Song has the meaning of educating to learn from a loss and take good care of it so as not to lose again. The method approach used is descriptive qualitative by collecting data through youtube observation (<https://youtu.be/VfPX6VGsa9g>), literature studies, and documentation. The results of this research will show the work in a performance form of presentation of the song.

**Keywords:** My Balloon, A.T Mahmud, Improvised Progression, Interpretation and Game Technique

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Music is an expression of one's soul that is still in the mind which is then focused and expressed through sound, as one of the values of human culture and as a universal language, can also unite all humans who have different backgrounds, as well as a medium to describe or express one's feelings. Sometimes a person has thoughts, ideas, hopes, desires that require realization, music is the right vehicle to use from the effort to emerge or manifest it. (Ancient Ed, 2020:53).

Music is one of the arts that attracts a lot of human attention, especially musical instruments or piano music. The piano is also known as the king of musical instruments, because it is easy to understand, has a wide tonal area, can represent all musical instruments. The piano also has a distinctive sound, interesting technique, and has its own "class" for humans. This is what makes people easily interested in this musical instrument, starting from just being a connoisseur, as a hobby, to for those who want to explore professionally. So many are easily

found in society people who can play the piano, and proudly call themselves pianists. But many people and pianists do not understand that to enjoy, make it a hobby, let alone make pianists a profession of life requires sacrifices that are not very easy. (Genta K, 2018:51)

Improvisation is a spontaneous and free activity in playing a song without being bound by notation or bound by the original song so that it is different from the original song. Improvisation is also not played arbitrarily or without thought but technically must also be completely mastered. In addition to qualified knowledge and technical skills, improvisation requires a good sense of musicality and whether or not in an improvisation (Nindya et al, 2019; 76)

Interpretation is a word that we often hear in the art world, not least in music. Interpretation is also brought closer to the activities of composers, presenters, and musicologists, for example; The composer in the preparation of a work is inseparable from the historical context, the symbols used in writing, and how the work is performed. Similarly to music presenters, they involve interpretation to be able to perform the work well, where the work is written will give a lot of influence for a presenter to decide the style, technique, and character of the work. (Simanjuntak, 2022:58).

The technique of playing on musical instruments has the most important parts that must be mastered, which is the first time about notation in the form of numbers or block notes. If the pattern of number notes or beam notes has been mastered and developed, then you can move on to the next exercise, namely fingering, touching, rhythm / tempo, harmony and reading. So we can conclude that the embodiment of the instructions of the artwork is presented completely and correctly from beginning to end. Presentation has a meaning, namely: the process, method, and behavior of presentation. (Gufran et al, 2016:12)

Game technique is knowledge of the patterns used in a work of musical art. The work produced by the composer is the best embodiment of expression, so in playing the composer's work, a player must understand the thoughts and intentions of the composer. This is so that the message conveyed by the composer can be conveyed to the listener, either by playing the piece or through others to play it (R ariyani, 2016: 1)

Masagus Abdullah Mahmud or better known as A.T. Mahmud (Abdullah Totong Mahmud) is a reliable songwriter. He composed quite a lot of children's songs and many of his songs are famous, often sung by children in the past and today, especially school children. At SGK it seemed that he found fertile ground to develop his musical talent, especially creating children's songs. The Music Art teacher is good at playing the piano and the SGK students also encouraged him to compose children's songs. In those days, finding children's songs that would suit children was rather difficult.

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became known among children, school teachers, and parents. One of the officials there explained that TVRI wanted to organize a new program, namely elementary level children's music.

Appreciation:

Received the Art Prize Charter by Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia through the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia - October 11, 1999.

Art Education Award by the Rector of Universitas Negeri Jakarta - June 27, 2003 (39th Anniversary of Universitas Negeri Jakarta).

Received the Parama Dharma Cultural Star from President Megawati Soekarnoputri - August 14, 2003.

Anugerah Broadcasting Ramah Anak 2018 category of Legendary Children's Song Creator (Special Award) by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission - 30 July 2018.

(<https://www.sekitarmusik.com/2019/09/biografi-at-mahmud.html>)

This paper is expected to provide a better understanding of how modern music styles influence popular music production in Indonesia, as well as provide insight into piano playing techniques and modern music elements that can be applied in today's music production.

## METHOD

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This paper is a descriptive qualitative research that aims to find out improvisation and modern piano playing techniques in the song "Balonku" which will be studied more deeply. Data are found by literature study methods (books, journals, etc.).

The object of writing research is something that makes a reference to the actions of the subject. In this case, objects represent data, habits, science, as actions. The object of this study is the song "My Balloon" with the focus discussed being the improvisation of progressions and modern piano playing techniques.

The subject in writing this research is a subject of conversation or subject of discussion, in this case the author uses Improvised Progression as a subject

The location of the research is at the author's residence. This research place is adjusted to environmental conditions at this time, because this research discusses more about improvised progress and piano playing techniques in modern on the song "Balonku" by AT Mahmud. In writing this study, the author found one solution to facilitate the completion of writing, the solution is that researchers use various sources such as youtube, journal article references, and others.

In research, the source of data obtained must be in accordance with the object of research, in order to facilitate the process and steps of the research carried out, with the aim that the results of the research are as expected by the researcher. In the research The data used by researchers are youtube conservation, articles, journals, books that contain piano playing techniques that are explained descriptively.

Improvisation is the oldest technique in musical playing throughout the ages. Before humans knew the civilization of writing writing, on this earth there was more music

played improvisationally rather than with text. Improvisation can be referred to as the art of composing while playing. Improvisation and jazz are two things that are interrelated and cannot be separated from each other. This has long been regarded as the distinguishing feature of jazz from other music, although many of the world's musical cultures also improvise to some degree. Improvising does not mean that they play without thinking, or "naturally", or without limitations, the arrangements in improvisation are minimal and unwritten will be played and their relation to the music as a whole, and at least some of the standards that determine the success or failure of improvisation. A musician must have knowledge of improvisation and mastery of instrument techniques, music theory, musical imagination, and appreciation of music. Not infrequently a musician who does not pay attention to knowledge about improvisation, not infrequently a musician improvising only relies on taste and instinct without basic knowledge of improvisation, so that improvisation is done less optimally. Thus, systematic and intensive practice is also supported by theoretical insight and knowledge in addition to creativity and high musical imagination to continue to develop the ability to improvise on the piano.

The development of music is endless. For music composers, they already know more about the existence of various types of modern music. Modern Music is a genre of music art that is relatively new but its development is so rapid in the midst of Indonesian society. To keep up with the development of music, knowledge of the notion of modern music must be mastered. Dieter Mack, a famous German composer stated, modern music presents a completely new concept, using a variety of sound sources as a medium of creative expression, although new music cannot necessarily be said to be modern music. Various types of music genres were born thanks to the birth of modern music. So are the latest musicians who have a modern spirit.

The development of music is very dependent on the efforts and hard work of its artists to face the challenges of the times. The result of the hard work of the artists can be seen as the inexhaustible efforts of the artists in pouring their ideas and creativity to the maximum. Hard work for music artists who think ahead, is the aim of seeking new possibilities and new ventures as wide as possible, which previously the form and rules of presenting music have felt insufficient to express the ideas and creativity of music artists for the future. The efforts made by music artists to find new possibilities will still not be separated from the nature of music itself. (Panggabean, Ance Juliet, 2015)

Modern has the meaning of the present. Understanding modern music is often referred to as new music or the latest music. Another understanding of modern music is often considered as a unique and innovative musical art. The reason is, a modern music musician usually uses a combination of clapping sounds, various frictions, or other sounds that can be produced from objects that are often used in everyday life. That is the reason why the understanding of modern music whose techniques are usually played without using original musical instruments, but the resulting music is no less good than the original musical instruments The true understanding of modern music is not music of origin or origin of sound. Although modern music carries freedom in work, however, modern music has a clear and strong concept and refers to the present. Modern music creates new techniques in producing musical works, which originally did not exist and had not been thought of being unearthed and presented in modern music. (Ibrahim, Hasan. 2021)

Musical instruments / instruments of various types. In addition to guitar and drums, the piano is the most familiar and loved musical instrument by some circles, especially in the world of music. The piano is a harmonious musical instrument whose way of playing is pressed. Piano is a musical instrument or acoustic musical instrument that sounds because the strings or strings are hit by hammers on the inside of the piano. The piano is one of the musical instruments that can be said to be new, because the piano, was only invented in the 18th century. As time went by, the piano grew more and more and finally the modern piano was perfected to the present. But the piano has the advantage that it can stand alone without the help of accompaniment and does not need to use electric current in its use. The piano is rich in tones and each note can be played together forming chords and melodies.

Pianos have very extensive registers, so registers for all other instruments can be arranged on top of them. The piano can be played solo, but most other instruments including vocals require a piano for accompaniment. There are many types of pianos, including grand pianos, baby grand pianos, upright pianos, electric pianos, and so on. Piano is one of the choices of instruments that is quite difficult to play, because it requires balanced coordination between the right hand and the left hand. This is not to say that other instruments do not require coordination between the right hand and the left hand, but the difference in piano instruments is that the difficulty lies in the different key marks between the right hand and the left hand. The difference between the two keys is what makes the piano look more difficult to play. However, through a regular practice process and supported by good musicality, everyone can definitely play the piano. The more diligent in practicing, the higher the skill / good skill.

The presentation of music is a work presented in the form of a recital or an art performance in the form of actions of a person or group that is deliberately shown in front of a large audience. Presentation greatly affects the quality of a work to be produced. A person's expression when presenting music can be assessed by the audience how to convey or interpret the work properly and correctly.

Interpretation is an art that describes indirectly, but the communication can be easily understood. Interpretation is closely related to the reach that the subject must reach and at the same time is reexpressed as the identity of the structure contained in life, history and objective. Interpretation is only used as a method if needed. If an object of work or art is clear enough in meaning, it will not invite interpretation. The term interpretation itself can refer to the process of communication through the presenter's movements with the music player that is taking place.

To play all types of instruments including saxophones, it definitely takes technique and a way to play these instruments. Technique also helps when playing the piece according to what is written on the score. Technique also depends on an interpretation or bearing according to the will of the music player. In this case, the technique discussed is the technique of performing a music performance in front of a large audience (Wicaksono, 2004: 5).

In a musical performance, interpretation is something that is very important to hear and see, namely the way a music player places his cultural style and music performance (Clarke, 2006: 185). Some things that must be considered in a musical performance are the place where the musical instrument is played, the performance process and interpretation. In the interpretation

is very necessary is the player's expression, the player's emotions and the style of play in presenting a work. Expression is how a performer can control conditions, detect the time of each work performed, changes in dynamic signs. Emotion is the intensification of using song phrases by using tension in a performance (Clarke, 2006: 192-193).

Based on some opinions about the form of presentation, it can be said that form is a form of the relationship of factors that support it and are interdependent and related to each other, can be captured by the senses as a medium to convey the meaning to be conveyed. If the word form is used in the sense of the form of presentation, it can be said that the form of presentation in a musical performance is everything that is presented or displayed from beginning to end to be enjoyed or seen which contains elements of beauty values conveyed by the creator to the connoisseur.

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According to Djelantik (1999: 73), presentation is how art is presented to those who watch, audiences, observers, readers, listeners, audiences in general. This opinion is in line with Sedyawaty (1981: 61) that the performing arts are first about group work and both require the presence of two parties, namely the presenter and the receiver. Meanwhile, according to Purwadarminto (1985: 862), presentation is defined as a way of delivering, serving, presenting or in other words setting the appearance. From the statement above, it can be concluded that the understanding of the form of presentation is the basic element in the performance which includes artists, musical instruments, costumes, and makeup, the songs presented, the time and place of the performance presented to the audience, observers, listeners, the general public in general.

The presentation of music can be categorized in three parts, including:

- a) Solo is a musical performance, both vocal and instrumental that is only played by one vocalist or one instrument player.
- b) Ensemble is a musical game together with more than one player. examples of ensembles include string ensembles, guitar ensembles and others.
- c) Orchestra is a performance consisting of a group of people who are joined by different musical instruments. The number of instruments depends on the position (Kodijat, 2004: 70). The number of players in the orchestra tends to be more than the number of players in the ensemble performance. The orchestra consists of several large pieces of musical instruments, including strings, wind, percussion and so on.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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Here the author will describe each of the several improvisational methods and modern piano playing techniques used in my balloon songs. The author uses piano or keyboard instruments as a medium for creativity.

Know the main chords in advance of the song "My Balloon" as material to be improvised. To find out, you can listen to the song in question or directly look for the chord. The main chord is an important point because part of the soul or identity of the song is contained in it. In this song the chord used by the writer is the C major chord.

After knowing the main melody proceed to determine the movement of chords and tonality. Before being determined, the writer must know the chord progression of the song to be improvised by listening or directly searching in books or the internet. The result of the process can be determined the chord progression according to the author's consideration. Then the chord progressions are converted to the required tonality. Tonality will affect the range of the main melody. So it can make it easier and even harder to play.

Combining the main melody with chord movements, the left hand position still presses the chords of the basic form. This stage is a blend between the main melody and the chord progressions that have been set according to the required tonality. The chords here act as accompaniment to the main melody played by the left hand. Chord formation is still the basic form stage, being the first step in the development of accompaniment patterns. Only one note is pressed, which is the lowest note of the trinada chord that matches the name of the chord. Like the C Major chord, the basic form consists of the C-E-G tone, which is suppressed only the C tone.

During the application of improvisation, ideas always arise, so there is a change in the pattern of accompaniment and a slight development in the main melody. Improvised changes often occur due to the development of ideas, there are additions and even subtractions occur. Blending the main melody with revamped and set chords. This stage is like the g chord and c chord that really combines the main melody with the pattern or accompaniment melody that has been finalized.

The first of these songs, my balloon 'ku' was chosen as the first note to open the chord. This first part should be used is the C major chord consisting of C-E-G. But because we improvised the chord, in this case the first chord used is CMaj7 chord 9, which consists of C-E-B-D-G, the technique in playing this chord is that the right hand of the little finger presses the key (C), and the thumb presses (B), and on the left hand, for thumb pressing (D), index finger for (E), and ring finger for key (G). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



Picture. 1  
CMaj7.9 chords

And in the lyrics there is 'da', we move the finger or press the next chord which is the second chord, and this uses the D11 chord where 'sol' is the 11th note of this chord, consisting of D-A-C-E-G, the technique in playing this chord is that the little right hand presses the D key and the thumb presses the A key, and the left thumb presses the key (C), index key (E), and ring finger key (G). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



Picture. 2  
D11 chord

Next to the word 'ma' or five, we press the next chord where the chord used is E minor 7, consisting of E-B-D-E-G, the technique in this game is on the little right hand pressing the key € and thumb pressing the key (B), on the left hand the thumb finger pressing the key (D), index finger key (E), and ring finger key (G), Here is an example of a chord image in the piano



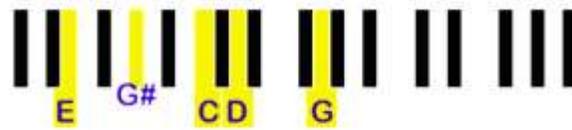
Picture. 3  
Emin7 Chord

In the second sentence, namely "rupa' 'ru' here uses chords, namely the C11 chord, consisting of C-G-Bb-D-F, the technique in this game is, the right little hand presses the key (C), thumb key (G), and left hand thumb pressing (Bb), index finger key (D), and ring finger pressing key (F). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



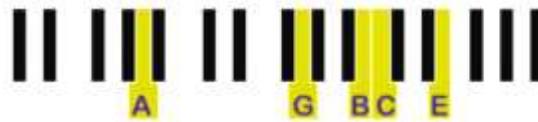
Picture. 4  
C11 chord

In the lyrics 'war' or 'color' using chords E7, +5+9, consisting of E-G#-C-D-G, the technique in this chord game is, on the right hand the little finger presses the key (E), the index finger presses the key (G#), and the thumb presses the key (C), on the right hand only uses two fingers, namely the thumb on the key (D), and the middle finger on the key (G). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



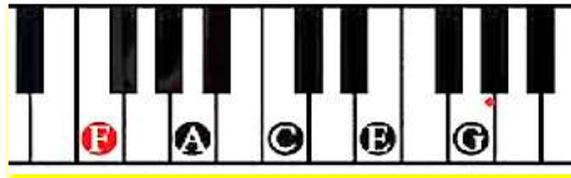
Picture. 5  
E7,+5+9 chord

In the lyrics '*Nya*' in the word '*color*' using the chord Am7.9 consists of A-G-B-C-E, the technique in this game is, the right hand little presses the key (A), thumb on the key (G), and the left hand thumb presses (B), index finger key (C), and ring finger presses key (E). Here's an example of a chord drawing on a piano.



Picture. 6  
Am7.9 Chords

In the lyrics of the song '*green yellow gray*' using the chord F Major 9, consisting of F-A-C-E-G, the technique in this game is, the right hand of the ring finger presses the key (F), the index finger is on the key (A), the thumb is on the key (C), and the left hand thumb presses (E), and the ring finger presses the key (G). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



Picture. 7  
F Maj Chord 9

In the '*red*' lyrics using the chord F#11, consisting of F#-A#-C#-E-G#-B, the technique in this game is, the right hand starts from the little finger pressing the key (F#), index finger on the key (A#), and thumb is on the key (C#), and on the left hand the thumb presses (E), the index finger presses the key (G#), and the ring finger presses on the key (B). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



Picture. 8

F#11 chord

In 'young' *Irik* using the G11 chord, consisting of G-B-D-F-A-C, the technique in this game is, the right little hand presses the key (G), the index finger is on the key (B), and the thumb is on the key (D), and on the left hand the thumb presses (F), the index finger presses the key (A), and the ring finger presses on the key (C). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



Picture. 9

G11 chords

And in the lyrics 'and *blue*' using the first chord is, CMaj7 9, consisting of C-E-B-D-G, the technique in playing this chord is that the right hand of the little finger presses the key (C), and the thumb presses (B), and on the left hand, for thumb pressing (D), index finger for (E), and ring finger for key (G). Here's an example of a chord drawing in a piano



Picture. 10

CMaj Chord7.9

## CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of this writing, the main chord is an important point because part of the soul or identity of the song is contained in it. In this song the chord used by the writer is the C major chord. After knowing the main melody proceed to determine the movement of chords and tonality. Before being determined, the writer must know the chord progression of the song to be improvised by listening or directly searching in books or the internet. The result of the process can be determined the chord progression according to the author's consideration. Then the chord progressions are converted to the required tonality. Tonality will affect the range of the main melody. So it can make it easier and even harder to play.

After that, combining the main melody with the movement of the chords, the position of the left hand still presses the chords of the basic form. Chord formation is still the basic form stage, being the first step in the development of accompaniment patterns. Only one note is pressed, which is the lowest note of the trinada chord that matches the name of the chord. Like the C Major chord, the basic form consists of the C-E-G tone, which is suppressed only the C tone.

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(JC Sasongko, 2017:2)

**PENERAPAN PENDEKATAN IMPROVISASI CHORDAL PADA PIANO JAZZ**

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