

LAURA'S WORKSHOPS

CONTRA PIANO WORKSHOP/SKYPE LESSON:

The workshop or lesson(s) can include:

The Role of the Backup Player

- How to play with other backup instruments.
- How to enhance the dancers' experience.
- When to take the lead.
- Playing the role of second lead.
- How to cue the dancers.

At the Keyboard

CHORDS: What are the different kinds and when, where and how can I use them?

Major, minor, diminished, augmented, 7th chords and higher.

Suspensions, alternate, substitute, percussive, passing and rhythmic chords.

Using good voice leading when playing chords.

How do I choose which chord to use? Choosing chords for affect.

Does register matter?

BASSLINES: how, when, where and why.

How to develop a bass line.

Consider style. What IS the difference between French Canadian, Old Timey, Celtic and other styles of tunes from the piano bench?

Balance.

How to cue the dancers.

The long build.

Life beyond the boom-chuck.

What **TEMPOs** work for what?

Choosing a tempo.

The role of the backup player regarding tempo.

Are **SCALES** useful?

Major, minor, pentatonic and blues.

Modes

Using scales for improv

OTHER Considerations:

When to use pedal in a contra set.

The art of playing waltzes.

Practice ideas.

Going with the flow, i.e. following your band mates' leads.

TUNE WRITING WORKSHOP/LESSON:

The workshop or lesson(s) can include:

What do you already need to know, if anything, to write a tune.
How much does understanding how music works help?
The theory and architecture of music.
Consider the instrument that will be playing your tune.
Also, who will be playing your tune?
What are the different styles of tunes that you could write?
How to get started: are you a chord person or a melody person?
What makes a good chord progression?
What makes a good melody?
How to write your tune down.
How to write a tune that is dance-able.
Tune-writing strategies.

BAND WORKSHOP:

Discussion can include:

The Band

How to collaborate with your band mates.
What is the role of the bandleader?
How to have an effective rehearsal.

The Tune

How to match a tune to the dance.
What comes first – the jig or the reel?
Tempo considerations.
Successful transitions from one tune to another.
Is there a right and a wrong time to change tunes?
How to play a tune 12 times and keep it interesting.
Tension and release.
The use of texture.
Inserts, how to make them great.
Consider the ending.

The Dance

Tips for a successful sound check e.g. how do you know you are being heard in the hall?
Right and wrong ways to work with a caller.
What can the band do to give the dancers the best possible experience?
What helps the band to connect with the dancers and is that important?
Does the size of the band matter?
Are we having fun yet?
Listening and communicating in 'reel' time.
Tips for playing danceable waltzes.

Question and Answer