



Having contributed mainly music theory based articles to Yamaha Club for the past five years music teacher Gill Eccles embarks on a new series in which she embraces a wider view of music and the Yamaha keyboard/Clavinova.

As those of you who attended the Yamaha club weekend last October will know, my new Genos had been delivered just before the event began and I was still finding my way around this amazing instrument. Well, two months on I have mastered switching it on - and I can now get a good tune out of the keyboard. It's still a work in progress but by October 2020 I will have mastered it... honest!

Fill-ins - the 'what', 'where' and 'how'

Today's topic is 'fill-ins' - and you won't need to own a Genos to follow me through it because all Yamaha keyboards and Clavinovas (stretching back generations) have had this feature. I am frequently asked about fill-ins during lessons with my pupils, so here we go...

A fill-in is a short (usually 1 bar duration) variation in the drum/style accompaniment. It's there so that, like a live drummer, you can create a subtle break in the monotony of the rhythm - and it is also used to create a link between one musical section (or phrase) and the next.

Our keyboards and Clavinovas provide us with four main variations for each style. These are accessed via buttons on the keyboard marked as A, B, C, D (fig.1). Each of these takes the accompaniment style into a different 'gear' - starting with a gentle variation at A and gradually building up to the full 'bells and whistles' version of the style at D.

Note: If you want to hear the full effect of the style build up try running from Variation A- Variation D using the style called Animation Fantasy (I think this is available on most of the recent keyboards and Clavinovas). Make sure the [ACMP] button is switched on (fig.1) so that you hear all the style parts and not just the drums. Animation Fantasy is a great style for showing off how instruments are added to the style as you move from one variation to the next.

Look for the [AUTO FILL IN] button (fig.1). When this is switched on the style variation buttons A, B, C and D act as triggers for the fill-in so that when a variation is selected its button flashes as a one bar fill-in is played, before the style settles into the chosen variation. So, if variation A is selected the style will automatically play a short fill-in before the A variation begins to play (hence Auto Fill). If, whilst playing using variation A you then select variation C, the C button flashes and the style plays a different fill-in that is designed to link variation A to variation C. If the variation C button is selected again the style will play a one bar fill-in that links variation C back to itself before continuing the main variation C style.



Fig.1
Style VARIATION A, B, C and D
Style BREAK
AUTO FILL IN
ACMP (Accompaniment) On/Off

Using Fill-ins

So where do we use them? A Fill in can be used at the end of a musical phrase particularly if it has a cadence point. Now I hear you asking what is a cadence point? Well a cadence is a melodic or harmonic progression that creates a sense of resolution either finally or as a pause. The harmonic cadence is made up of at least two chords that concludes a phrase or the piece of music. Now I will point it out in a piece of music in a moment. You can also use a fill in when you change sound which may come at a cadence point or a natural break in the music. Finally, when the music changes key/modulates may also be a good place to use a fill in. Now what does all this mean, well the best way is to show you in a piece of music.

The image shows three musical staves in 4/4 time, each with a four-bar phrase. Staff 1 starts with a C chord and ends with a D note in the fourth bar, labeled 'Imperfect cadence' with a red arrow pointing from C to G. Staff 2 starts with a C chord and ends with a G note in the fourth bar, labeled 'Perfect cadence' with a blue arrow pointing from G to C. Staff 3 starts with a G chord, followed by alternating G and C chords in the first three bars, and ends with a G note in the fourth bar, labeled with an orange arrow pointing from C to G. Below these is a fourth staff starting with a C chord and ending with a G note in the fourth bar, followed by a C chord in the fifth bar, indicating a recap of the second phrase.

- 1 This first four bar phrase comes to a pause on the note D in the fourth bar. The C chord moving to a G chord (I-V) creates an imperfect cadence. A fill-in here would work quite well.
- 2 The second four bar phrase brings us to the end of the first section of the music - with a perfect cadence, (V-I) G to C chord progression. A change of sound would be good as you move into the second section - and this could be accompanied by a fill-in.
- 3 At the end of this four bar phrase we reach the end of the second section and are ready to go into the last part (which is a recap of the second musical phrase of the first section). This would be a good point in the music to add a fill-in and a final change of sound that reflects the sounds used in the first section.

The BREAK button

The [BREAK] button (fig.1) is located to the right of variation D. This performs differently from the fill-in, in that when the [BREAK] button is pressed right at the beginning of a bar the instrumental style parts come to a complete stop - leaving either a pause in the accompaniment or, more frequently, a short 'drums only' break in the style. If you press the [BREAK] button on the second or third beat of the bar you'll still hear a fill-in but there will be no 'break'. Although fill-ins and breaks are both of a one-bar duration the break has a more dramatic effect - so is probably best used sparingly.

I hope I've been able to help you with some ideas that you can experiment with when you play some of your own favourite pieces of music.