



Jazzing It Up

British pianist shows music students how it's all about believing in your tunes

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THE AUDIENCE sat in silence as British pianist and educationalist Christopher Norton instructed students to hit a D major or a F sharp on the piano and then explained that playing the piano is both “simple and idiomatic”. In the city recently for The Christopher Norton Piano Festival, organised by The Academy of Music, the New Zealand-born artiste taught his students nuances of playing the instrument and improvising. Writer of the successful American Popular Piano series based on

improvisation, Norton has been dabbling with the technique since 1983 when he released Microjazz, an educational music series.

“Microjazz is a large body of work and a distinctive title. There are graded levels in this series that help a student to go from simple tunes to idiomatic ones. It has been very successful since its release,” he says.

Explaining improvisation, Norton adds that he makes students listen to backing tracks — a complete soundtrack with all the instruments — and then produce their impressions on the piano. So

does the “simplicity” of the piano help him migrate from one genre to another such as pop, jazz or rock? “They are all the same style. A piano has many notes, so a number of instruments can be reproduced on it,” he says.

And while encouraging students to create their own tunes, Norton constantly reminds them to believe in the tune so that they can reproduce it. About his association with India, Norton says it started in 2011 when he was invited for Musiquess — a biannual competition organised by The Academy of Music. This time, he says, 60 students of the academy participated in the festival. Vouching for the sessions, Ronojit Chaliha, a student says, “They helped in taking forward our understanding about music.”

