THE
PIANO Adventures® TEACHER

FJH PEDAGOGY NEWSLETTER December 2003 No. 3

Learning "Limits"

The Pedagogy of Patterns

Chunk and Conquer

Keys, Music, Camera!

Career Cues—Performers

Mathews Knew His ABCs

THE F·J·H MUSIC COMPANY INC.

THE PIANO ADVENTURES® TEACHER

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From the Editor

BY MARIENNE USZLER

In a cleverly titled book, *The Pen Commandments*, Steven Frank gives advice to beginning writers. "Show, don't tell" is one of his "basic principles." This is certainly not an original maxim, but it is basic, and it is useful. Although this suggestion will undoubtedly aid writers, it's an even better motto for teachers—and, I would add, especially for music teachers.

We all nod in agreement. Of course, it's better to demonstrate than explain. Of course, a beautiful sound is worth a thousand words. Of course, imitating a model is more motivating than following verbal instructions. That's the theory.

But what's the practice? Too often, I'm afraid, it's the opposite of what we profess to believe. We tell, define, explain, and describe far more than we play, demonstrate, give examples, or inspire. We teach an art in which sound is the ideal by talking about, rather than making and reacting to, sound. It's like reading recipes to someone who hardly ever tastes food.

It all comes down to a simple, natural fact. We learn best from personal experience. The "light bulb" doesn't go on until we connect a fact or an idea to something that already has meaning to us. The root word for education comes from the Latin *educare* which means "to draw out." You must know what the student *knows* before you can build on and expand that knowledge. No point in counting or explaining rhythmic notation until a student really *feels* pulse, or groupings of pulses. No point in circling slurs or phrase marks on the page until a student *feels* and *hears* the difference between a bumped-off and a tapered release. No point in using words like rich, deep tone until the student *hears* and *appreciates* beautifully resonant playing.

If you've been checking out the Family Tree column in this newsletter, then you're aware that the old piano methods all began with pages of rules and definitions that were to be "learned" (memorized) before hands ever touched the keyboard. Concepts were defined before there was any reason for a student to fit them into an already existing frame of reference. It has taken method writers a rather long time to design materials that more closely follow natural learning principles. Now that methods and materials are more in sync with how learning is sequenced and reinforced, it's easier for a teacher to help a student process this information effectively.

But, make no mistake. Our job as teachers is not to use materials in order to tell students what's this, what's that, or what's next. Our most important role is to find out what *this* student knows and feels in order to help *this* student make a personal translation from marks on the page into gestures and sounds. We must be show-ers, not tell-ers.

The holidays will soon be here. Once the presents have been opened, the special treats eaten, and the fun with family and friends enjoyed, the coming of a new year will spur us all to think about making those changes we know we should. In 2004, let's all resolve to *show*, not tell.

A note to pedagogy teachers: We'd love to hear from you about how the newsletter fits into your classes and activities. We'd also love to hear directly from your students. Stimulating them to get involved in the larger piano-teaching community is a good way to help jump-start their teaching careers.

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"Limitations Are Your Best Friend"

BY SUZANNE W. GUY

The Itsy Bitsy Spider deserves more pedagogical credit than one would expect of a little critter. Itsy Bitsy was nothing if not resilient. And its dogged determination remains quite a fight song for those who practice the piano, not to mention all the other members of the human race. Most of us recall the words. (Go ahead, make the accompanying gestures.)

The itsy bitsy spider
climbed up the
water spout,
Down came the rain and
washed the spider out,
Out came the sun and
dried up all the rain,
So the itsy bitsy spider
climbed up the
spout again.

Over and over the spider goes through its paces, braving the dark and creating its web, only to start all over again after the rain destroys it. The spider never gets tired of endless repetition, but people do. Why is this? Human beings have brains that are open to stimulus, but vulnerable to boredom. The more specific and creative the directions, the more excited our brain waves become. The crux of the problem lies in the necessary repetition of practice habits. Only in spiderland is over and over an acceptable learning style.

Photograph of Fallingwater courtesy of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Fallingwater, Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright

At best, many young pianists have vague ideas about the general nature of practicing the piano. In fact, I am living proof that it is possible to practice the piano and get worse. I spent many of my best childhood years perfecting the two steps backward for every step forward approach. I realize now that I was as busy as a spider and just as mindless, running my fingers over the keys and having a picnic at the piano.

Yo-Yo Ma's advice is "Never play a note until you have heard it first." Ma, of course, was a child prodigy on the cello and grew up to be a world famous champion of the performing arts, as well as a humanitarian *par excellence*. Mistakes are bound to happen. The best practicing is the kind that increases the repertoire of ways to recover from them. Thomas Edison put it this way: "I have never failed. I've just found 10,000 different ways that do not work."

But there are limits to the lessons we can learn from Itsy Bitsy. The term "limits" is fascinating as a teaching and practicing tool. Consider the words of Frank Lloyd Wright, the most brilliant American architect since Thomas Jefferson. "Limitations are your best friend." Whenever he was asked to design a building, he could allow himself infinite freedom if he knew advance boundaries (how big, how much, what site, when are the plans needed). "Give me some limits and I'll be creative." His most famous building is Fallingwater (the weekend residence of family friends), the key to which is the setting atop a waterfall. The owners envisioned a house that faced the falls, but Wright felt the dwelling should rise above the water and be part of the falls. Within the limits he set, the architect created a masterpiece.

Teachers can use Wright's definition of limitations to their pedagogical advantage when they provide boundaries for their students' practicing, both in time and task. Many students practice too much of a piece, for too long a session, and much too fast—three all-too-common signs of malpractice! Camille Saint-Saëns advised his students about practice tempos in no uncertain terms. "First, practice slowly. Then go slower. Finally, even slower." Fast pieces benefit from a variety of practice tempos, especially the slower and moder-

"Know yourself,
and know your limitations."
Adele Marcus

ate ones. Notice how often sporting events on television use replays in slow motion to pinpoint the detail of a fastball, a passing shot, or a shoestring catch. "There is a lot of Slow in Grow," as Lynn Freeman Olson was fond of saying.

Apply specific limitations to the Minuet in G Major (the famous one) in *Piano Adventures*® Performance Book Level 3B. Divide this 32-measure dance into four eight-measure groups. (It helps to know that a minuet is a neat eight-measure phrasing package in binary form). Within these eight measures, it is even more productive to make the groups as small as two measures. Experiment with sound and balance, seeking a singing tone and a kick-up-your-heels lilt that comes from the composer's choice of triple meter. (I often write H L L—heavy, light, light—under beats 1, 2, and 3 in the score). Bach is two-handed music, meaning that the left hand often has melodic content and plays a different rhythm from the right hand. First play the RH an octave higher; next play the LH an octave lower. This will open up the student's ears to hear the ensemble of both hands.

For those students who are particularly brave (remember the spider's bravery), it is a fascinating experiment to practice Baroque music with the hands crossed. One must listen attentively to the left hand, which is brought into sharper focus since the right hand now sounds an octave lower. It's useful to set limits of dynamics (how many shades of soft are possible, for instance), pedal, articulation, texture, and rhythm in all pieces for greater variety in practice techniques.

All too often teachers dismiss a student at the end of the lesson with a catchall phrase—"Go home and practice this piece or that scale"—without being specific enough about the problems to be solved. It is much more effective to practice parts of a piece in detail than to run through it several times, oblivious to sound, structure, fingering, phrasing, and so on. One of the best ways to practice any new piece is to play the beat units only, so that the rhythmic structure is absolutely solid with regard to pulse. Underneath each of us is a skeleton that serves as a framework for everything that covers it. Similarly, rhythm is the skeleton of music.

Photo: Alan Fischer

From the studio of Suzanne Guy, Norfolk, Virginia

Limitations apply to teachers as well as students. I set limits on my teaching schedule with enough flexibility for recurring professional travel and writing projects. It works well for me to teach three hours Monday-Wednesday mornings (from 6:00-9:00) and five hours in the afternoons 3.5 days a week. Thursday is an afternoon-only teaching day, while weekends are set aside for professional engagements. Adult students are scheduled on Fridays whenever they and I are in town.

An outstanding student from my Northern Virginia studio, Jennifer Hayghe (now on the faculty at Louisiana State University), was Adele Marcus's last student. Jenny often credits Miss Marcus with these two valuable lessons, among many: "Know yourself, and know your limitations." This may seem blasphemous when from childhood so many youngsters are told "to be all you can be," and that "the sky is the limit." The piano repertoire is so vast that no one can play it all, even in a lifetime of practicing. Not every pianist is technically equipped to handle the Tchaikovsky Concerto in B♭ Minor and could risk injury by playing it. Nor is every pianist temperamentally suited to play Schubert's Posthumous Sonata in B♭, which may put an audience to sleep instead of producing the intended effect of awe.

Alas, visiting hours are over for the spider and the architect, but their lessons continue. Recent research shows that college admissions boards are more impressed with depth than breadth. The 21st century is already stocked with overcommitted young people whose slates are full of activities. By choosing everything, they are also choosing mediocrity. Being good at something is good enough, the irony of which is the limitation of one's own greatness.

Suzanne Guy is a master teacher of piano who motivates students and teachers with her enthusiasm and love for music through studio lessons, lectures, and books, including music literature and children's picture books (coauthored with Donna Lacy). For FJH, she has compiled and edited *Expressive Etudes* and, with Victoria McArthur, *Focus on Melody*. She serves on the Advisory Board of *The Piano Adventures® Teacher.*

The Pedagogy of Piano Adventures

Level 2A: Pattern Recognition and Five-Finger Positions

BY RANDALL FABER

Does an emphasis on five-finger patterns hinder or enhance the development of reading skill? One might easily adopt a negative stance having encountered students who are dependent on reading by hand position. But we need to ask if a student's dependence on five-finger positions is an inevitable outcome of teaching these patterns, or does dependence result from imperfect sequencing of concepts?

If a student initially learns to read using five-finger positions, there is a potential problem. But if the student first learns the basics of reading, we can then use five-finger positions to enhance reading skill by eliciting visual, kinesthetic, and aural pattern recognition. This is why major and minor five-finger patterns are taught in Level 2A of *Piano Adventures*®—*after* the basics of reading are acquired in the Primer level and Level 1. With the fundamentals of note recognition and intervallic reading firmly in place, this multikey approach can take hold without liability.

In this issue we look at Level 2A with special focus on pattern recognition. (See previous issues of *The Piano Adventures® Teacher* for topics at the Primer Level and Level 1.)

A student who reads only note-by-note misses the musical picture. Why? Because music is coded in *contour* and *context*. Contour of musical line depicts phrasing and the expressiveness of changing pitch. Contour is decoded through recognition of pitch direction and interval. Context suggests another level of pattern recognition. Context provides harmonic meaning through recognition of chords, key, tonic/dominant relationships, and so on. Context provides artistic meaning through recognition of form and motivic relationships, as well as more subtle relationships found through conscientious study of the score.

From the standpoint of artistry, understanding of contour and context can reduce a dense score to relative simplicity, and thus provide musical meaning that leads to expressive playing. From the standpoint of reading skill, an ability to grasp contour and context simplifies the reading process by allowing visual information to be processed in "chunks" through recognition of familiar patterns.

To explore the pedagogical applications of pattern recognition, we might consider five types of visual pattern recognition required for reading music, or if you prefer, for deciphering musical contour and context:

- Intervallic reading (step/skip/same)
- Five-finger patterning
- Recognition of chord names
- Recognition of chord function
- Rhythmic "chunking."

If we set aside rhythmic pattern recognition, which has its own sequence that spans Primer to advanced levels, we find a sequence of visual processing in the first four types. Linear processing of intervallic reading takes on meaning in the context of five-finger scales (pentascales). Because five-finger patterns tend to suggest root position chords, a vertical dimension emerges. Recognition of chord names takes on meaning with recognition of chord functions—the relationship of chords to scales and key. Ultimately, recognition of chords and inversions is achieved, even in diverse musical contexts, through an elliptical scanning of the score that grasps both horizontal and vertical dimensions.

This sequence of pattern recognition unfolds in the levels of *Piano Adventures*®.

- The Primer introduces intervallic reading and Level 1 reinforces it.
- Level 1 introduces five-finger tonality in C and G, with emphasis on tonic and dominant scale steps.
- Level 2A delivers the multikey perspective with transpositions to D, A, and to minor five-finger patterns.
- Level 2B adds meaning to triad recognition with awareness of key and key signature, the full major scale, and consequent recognition of primary chord functions—I, IV, and V7.
- Level 3A reinforces and expands recognition of both chord names and chord function.
- Level 3B introduces chords in their inversions, and also minor tonalities.
- Level 4 reinforces these minor key patterns with special focus on the V7 in root position, while offering additional work on chord inversion recognition.
- Level 5 introduces new flat-key patterns while working over recognition of I, IV, and V chords in any inversion and in any key.

Intervallic Reading

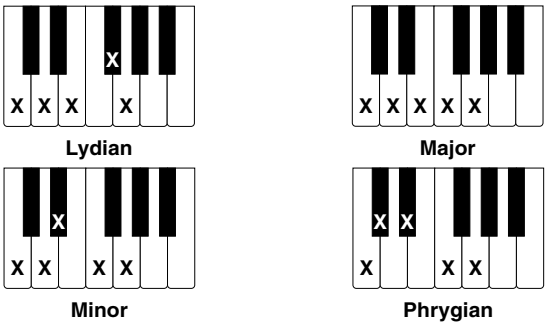
Decoding contour requires recognition of direction (up, down, same) and interval span (step, skip, fourth, fifth, and so on). This reading skill is not a substitute for note recognition, but a skill to be learned concurrent with note naming. For this reason, the Primer level merges note-name recognition with intervallic/directional reading. These skills go hand-in-hand. Consider that note-name recognition is essential for student confidence. A student should "know that she knows." In contrast, a student who cannot identify note names tends to approach music reading timidly. He/she wonders, "Should I know?" and worse, "Does my teacher know that I don't know?" So intervallic reading alone does not suffice. Yet, directional/intervallic reading is not of secondary importance. It is essential for grasping musical contour and for fluent sightreading. Intervallic reading is pattern recognition in its most elemental form. Consequently, it is of paramount importance. Yet, it rests on a foundation of note recognition.

Five-Finger Patterns

Why are five-finger positions a necessary part of piano pedagogy? *Because our hands have five fingers.* We therefore cannot escape the relevance of five-finger patterns at virtually any level of piano playing. We need intimate familiarity with five-finger positions on the keyboard and on the staff. (True, we may extend

the hand to reach beyond adjacent seconds. But the stretch usually involves the thumb, while the other fingers rest on adjacent steps of a scale.)

Ideally, a pianist should become familiar with all modal combinations of five adjacent fingers on the keyboard.

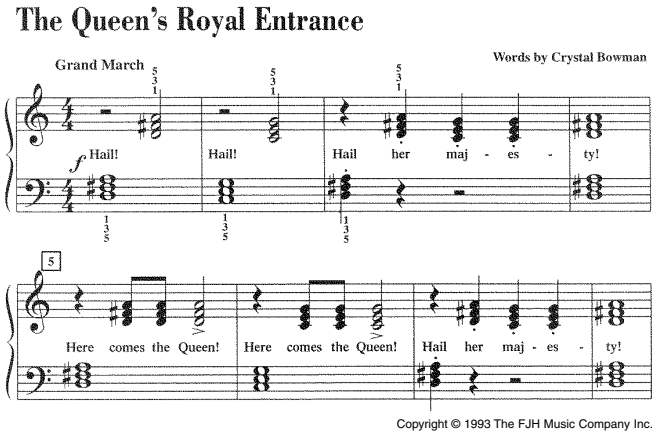


The importance of major and minor five-finger positions may be obvious, but let's cite three reasons:

- Major and minor five-finger patterns (pentascales) reinforce recognition of major and minor triads.
- Major and minor five-finger patterns prime the student for major and minor scales, which form the basis of tonality.
- Major and minor five-finger patterns highlight the tonic and dominant notes to provide contextual meaning, meaning which retains importance when learning the full major scale.

Because five-finger patterns span adjacent notes, the fingering for seconds, thirds, fourths, and fifths is predictable. This predictable and simple context is ideal for reinforcement of intervallic reading and for developing a corresponding kinesthetic memory. In fact, five-finger patterns invite (virtually demand) intervallic reading, particularly when transposed.

It is the predictability of five-finger positions that can get a teacher or student into trouble. For this reason, many pieces at Levels 1 and 2A require moving the hand between familiar positions. This movement between positions sharpens the student's reading, mitigates position dependence, and invites motion that can prevent a locked wrist.



One might argue, why have familiar hand positions at all? Why so much "C Position" at Level 1, for instance? It's a valid question, an argument that sets the *challenge of unfamiliarity* against the *comfort of predictability*. The apparent dichotomy resolves when we recognize that unfamiliarity is best encountered from a base of familiarity. We do not want an overwhelmed piano student; we want a confident piano student. We do not want to hear pieces played badly; we want to hear fluent, musical playing. We do not want home practice to be burdened by unresolved questions and confusion; we want home practice to be successful.

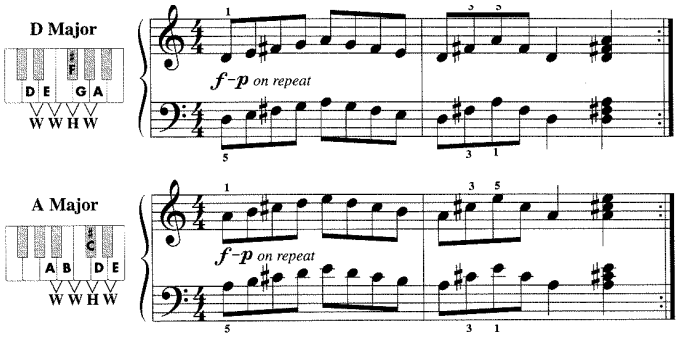
Here is where real-life issues of teaching take precedence over idle argument, where the experience of studio teaching supercedes ivory-tower pedagogy. Familiarity and comfort breed confidence and musicality. Familiarity and repetition build pattern recognition. Familiar patterns are eventually processed as "chunks," freeing up attention for the inevitable challenges of the unfamiliar.

Note the three modalities involved with five-finger pattern recognition:

- Staff recognition is *visual*
- Keyboard topography is *kinesthetic*
- Aural perception of five-note tonality is *auditory*

Since music making involves these modalities in combination, the pedagogical use of five-finger scales provides a playing field for exploring the integration of elementary patterns—visual, kinesthetic, and auditory.

Occasionally, it's helpful to spotlight a specific modality. For instance, the shift from major to minor (or vice versa) is aurally striking. We introduce five-finger patterns in terms of black and white, which is visual. We also stress the feel of the pattern. The pairing of D and A Major highlights both their visual and kinesthetic similarities.



Much has been written that recommends teaching from the student's strongest modality (visual learners, kinesthetic learners, auditory learners), but one of the demands and the benefits of playing music is that it merges *multiple* modalities. The visual mode may dominate Western civilization in this century, but music is primarily an auditory art, with tremendous kinesthetic demands on the performer. Music instruction, then, should focus on developing skill in all these modalities.

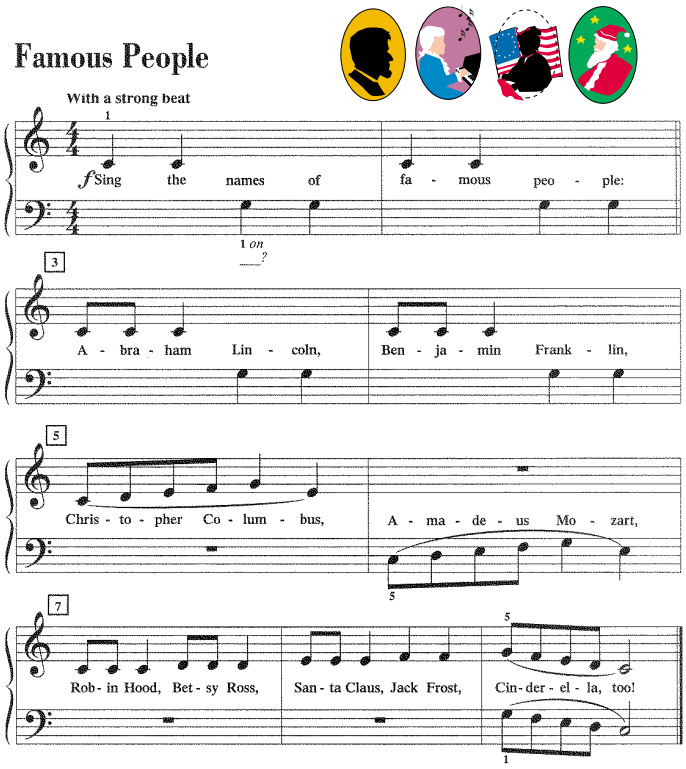
Rhythmic "Chunking"

Eighth notes are not presented in *Piano Adventures®* until Level 2A. This allows the student to be at ease with rhythm at the Primer and Level 1. The beat can be quite fast, unhampered by intruding eighth notes. This promotes a rhythmic fluency based on meter, instead of a slow, interrupted beat. One readily recognizes the increase in musicality.

By not subdividing the beat, these early levels present a limited set of rhythmic values which the student can readily "chunk" into macro patterns, such as 1 1 1-2 or 1-2 1-2.

When eighth notes are introduced at the beginning of Level 2A, they are presented in rhythmic groupings:

Thus the student is led to read eighth notes, not as individual counts or sub-counts, but in the context of a meaningful rhythmic pattern that is felt kinesthetically, not just intellectually.



Summary

Repetition of predictable and reliable patterns (aural, kinesthetic, and visual) leads to recognition of these patterns. We can't assume that random occurrence of principal patterns will lead to recognition of them. Our goal is to equip students with tools of pattern recognition. We accomplish this with systematic presentation of patterns and a matching repertoire.

"Multikey" piano teaching is, of course, not new. What is new in *Piano Adventures*® is the placement of multikey reading *after* the skills of individual note recognition and intervallic reading are consolidated. Just as proficient music reading requires more than simple note recognition or intervallic recognition, the "context" of multikey reading is insufficient on its own. The context itself becomes a crutch. However, as part of a well-sequenced, multifaceted reading strategy, five-finger patterns offer uniquely valuable opportunities for many time-honored teaching techniques. Through transposition, "question and answer," harmonization, ear training, and a carefully conceived repertoire, working with five-finger patterns lays a foundation of multi-modal pattern recognition that ultimately leads to a refined sense of tonality and intelligent, fluent music reading.

How To

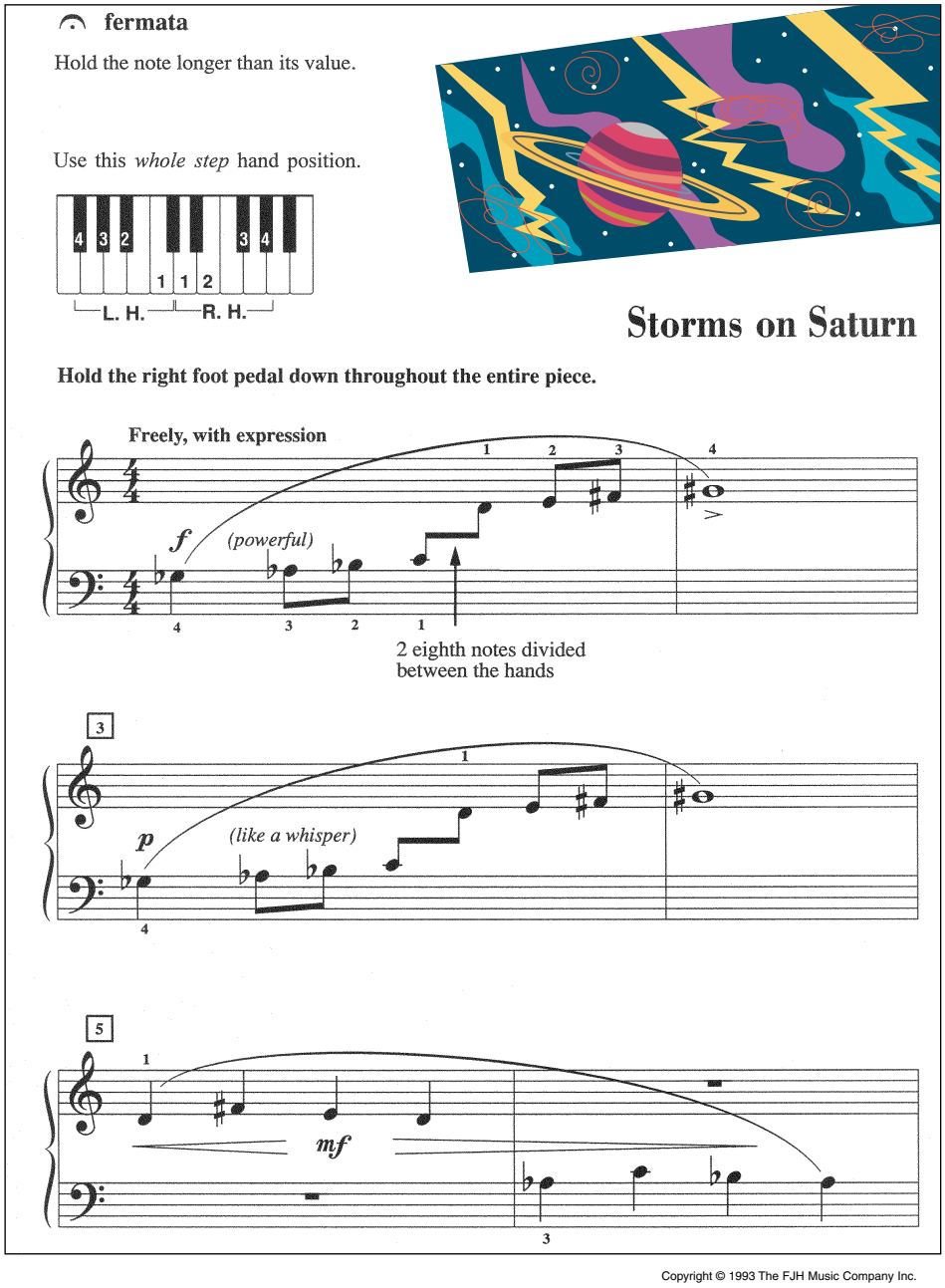
Teach Using Imagery and Exploring Sound

BY JOANNE SMITH

Here's a perfect example of a piece with a title that matches the sound!

• **Begin with the Title**
Discuss the picture. Ask how it represents weather on a planet in the solar system with wind, swirling particles, and lightning bolts.

• **Listen to the Sounds**
With eyes closed, have the student listen (while you play) for wind, swirling debris, lightning, and thunder. Have the student use arm gestures to represent the direction of the sounds. (Upward movements for wind, swirling circles, fists punctuating lightning and thunder.)



• **See and Hear**
While listening, have the student watch the page to track the direction, dynamics, and descriptive words with his fingers. Ask what the student saw and heard. Did he notice how the pedal produced a blurred effect?

• **Review Whole Steps** (Lesson Book, p. 22)

• **Keyboard Picture**
Have the student find the keys pictured in the diagram with the correct fingers.

Play the keys from the lowest to the highest.

Are they half or whole steps?

Did you skip a key in between each finger?

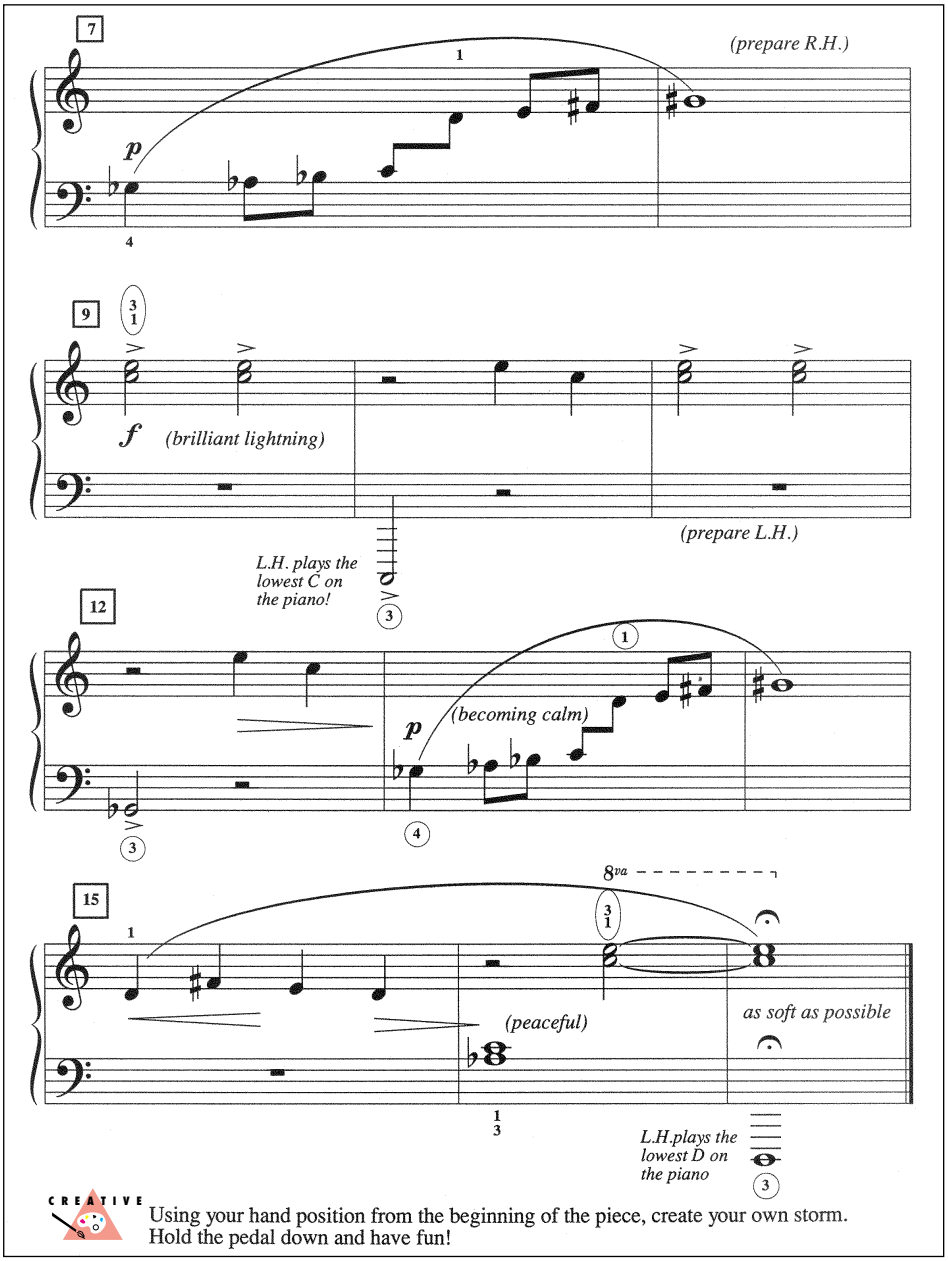
How would you spell the letter names of these keys?

How did the composer spell them in measures 1 and 2?

Check the eighth-note stems. How can you tell which is for the LH? The RH?

Have you ever had your hands in this position before?

From *Piano Adventures* Lesson Book Level 2A, pp. 24, 25



• **A A B A C A B'**

If measures 1–4 are A, what would you call measures 5, 6? (Mark B)

What happens here?

What did the composer use to create this swirling effect?

Student plays the B part with crescendo and diminuendo, noticing the upward direction of the third.

Does the B part ever return? (Mark it B')

Star the change in measure 16.

Let's look at the brilliant lightning in measures 9-12.

Have the student find the RH third and play boldly, noting the accents.

Prepare, then play the LH notes. (Perhaps thunder?)

(Remember that the low G♭ is new to the student!)

What letter would you use for this section?

• **Finish the Piece**

Demonstrate measures 15, 16, beautifully emphasizing the dynamics, "peaceful," and "as soft as possible."

Have the student play the ending. Point out the need for *very firm joints* to play "as soft as possible."

Through listening, questioning, and experiencing, the student should be ready for fairly error-free practice.

• **Play "Teach Me"**

Have the student place your hands on the correct keys. Ask the student to point to the notes and count *powerfully* as you play measures 1, 2.

Ask the student to look at measures 3, 4. Are these the same or different?

Mark both with a letter A and circle the dynamics.

• **Student Plays**

Play the A parts, counting, with dynamics and pedal. *Listen to the wind*!

(Make sure the student is positioned on the front of the bench with the heel grounded on the floor in front of the damper pedal.)

Are there any other A parts in the piece? Mark them.

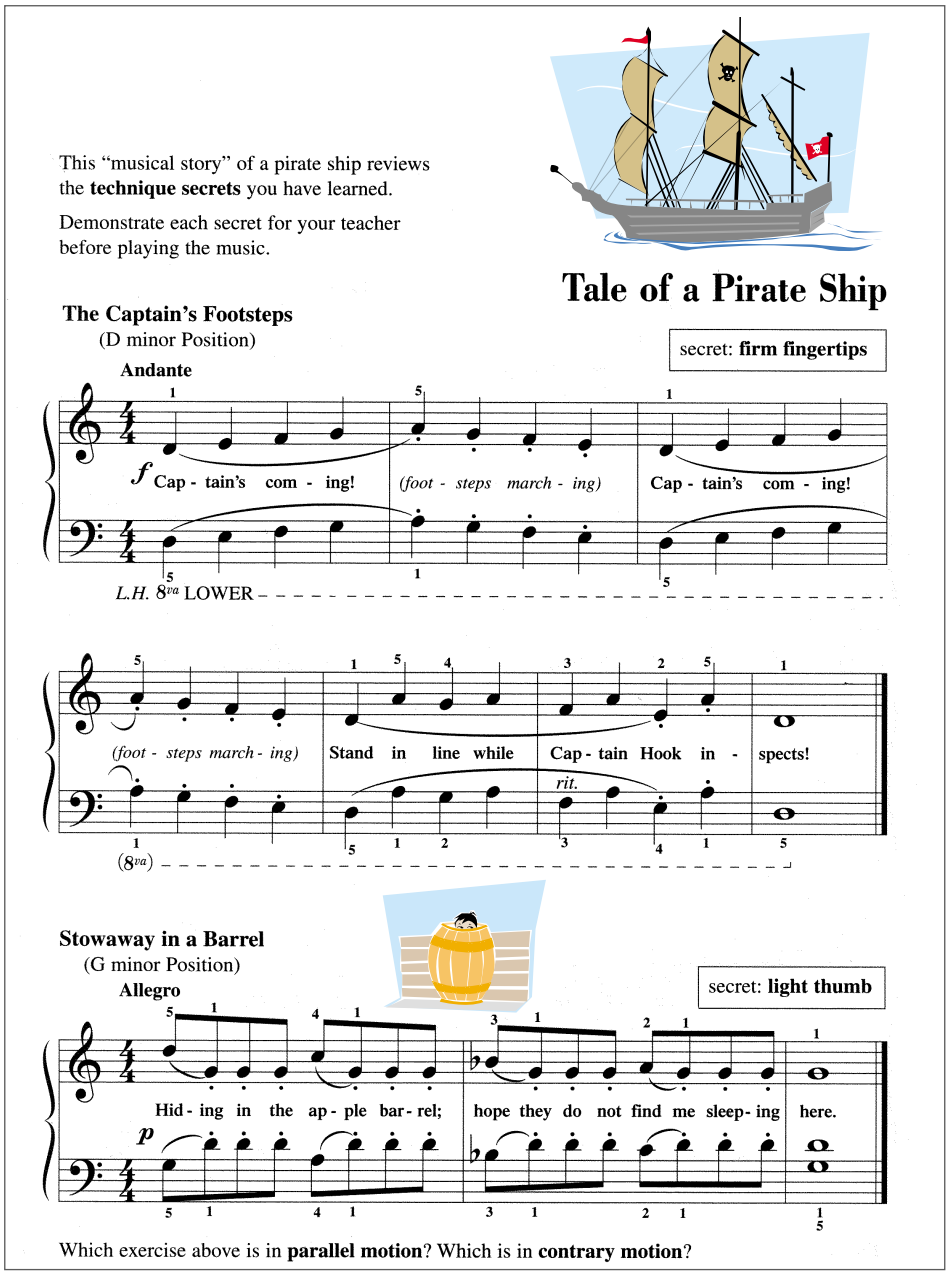
You already know how to play them!

From *Piano Adventures*
Technique & Artistry Book
Level 2A, pp. 28, 29

How To

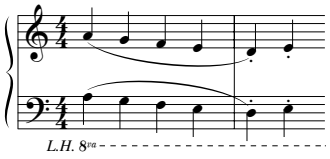
Add to the Tale

BY MARIENNE USZLER



The Captain's Footsteps

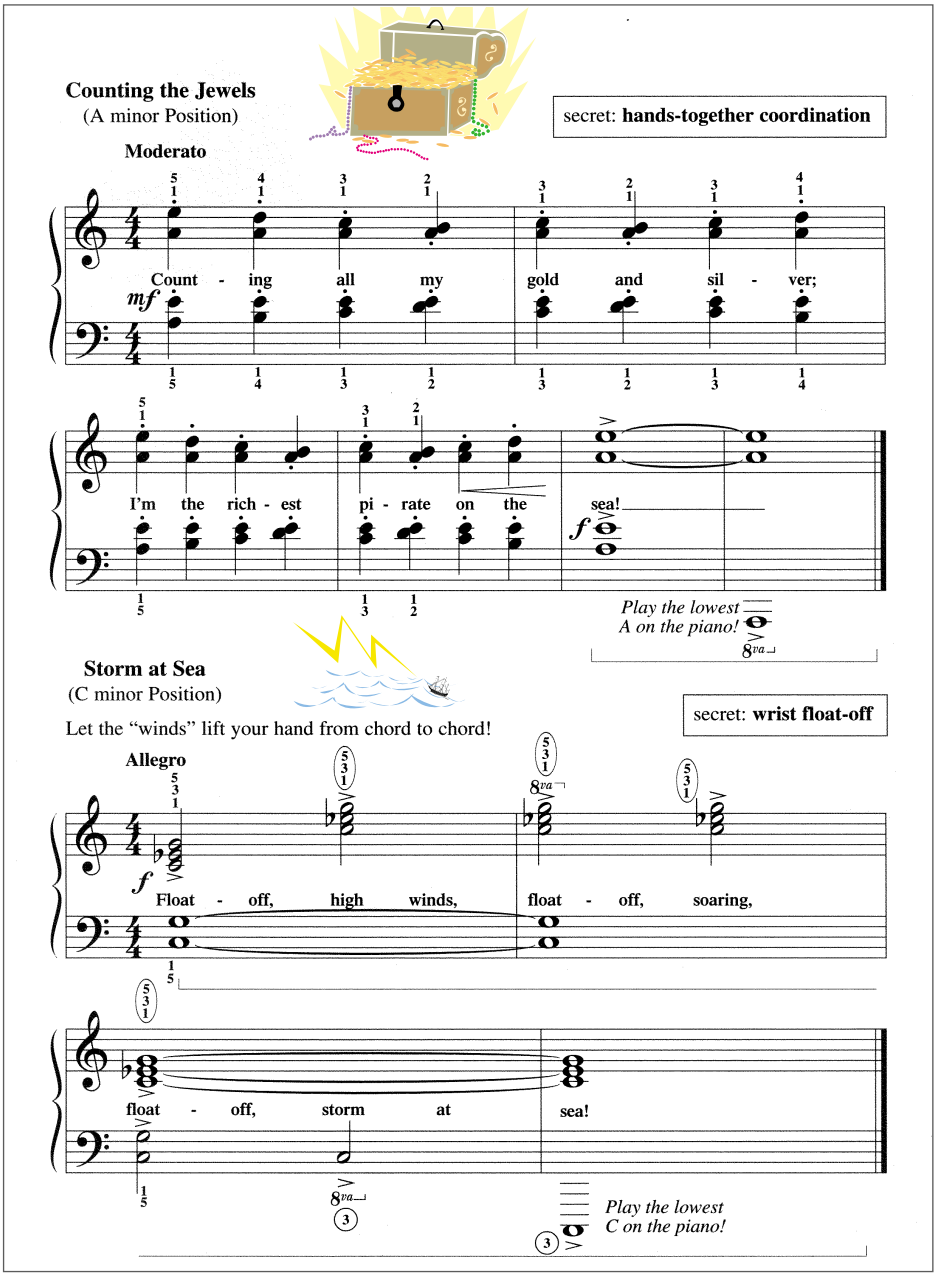
- Play the right hand an octave lower
- Change the dynamics, as if he were "sneaking up"
- Change the direction of his footsteps



Stowaway in a Barrel

Play the piece in the G minor Position, then the D minor Position, then go back to the G minor Position.

- Would you change the dynamics?
- Would you change the tempo?
- Could you add new words?



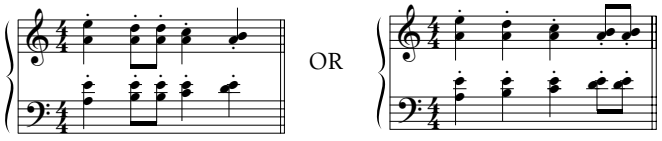
Changing, or adding to, what a composer has written is not something you do with every piece. Certain pieces, like Tale of a Pirate Ship, lend themselves to creative exploration because each section has a distinct character, and because there is a story involved. This is like a launching pad for the imagination. The images are concrete, and the music gives them form and feeling.

Also, this is not a piece in which a new concept or technique is approached for the first time, but a piece in which a student is asked to apply "technique secrets" already learned. It goes without saying that a student has already played the piece correctly and musically before beginning to improvise and explore.

Experimenting with an existing piece is one way in which a student learns how music is put together. The elements that a composer chooses—key, dynamics, tempo, articulations, and rhythmic patterns, for instance—are not casual or haphazard choices. They make a piece what it is … and changing any one of them can make it a different piece!

Counting the Jewels

Add a few "jewels" in each measure, perhaps



Storm at Sea

Play the piece as is, then change the music to show the calm after the storm.

- Which dynamics would you use?
- Which tempo would you use?
- Could you have the RH play the single Cs in measures 3 and 4? Which direction might they go?
- What if you changed the music to major?

WE'RE PSYCH-ED

Chunks and Links

BY MARIENNE USZLER

With the coming of the information age, it was inevitable that our everyday vocabulary would begin to include expressions related to computer use. Dot-com, downloading, and cyberspace, for example, are used routinely, even by some who aren't completely familiar, or comfortable, with what those terms mean. Words like menu, link, spam, and file have taken on additional, computer-specific meanings.

It's no surprise, then, that some in the "psych" world now refer to learning as "information processing." It's as if the mind is a very smart machine that can be programmed. Steven Pinker vividly sketches the computational theory of mind in his book, *How the Mind Works*. "Beliefs are inscriptions in memory, desires are goal inscriptions, thinking is computation, perceptions are inscriptions triggered by sensors, trying is executing operations triggered by a goal."

Thinking about learning in this way has led, also, to special focus on short- and long-term memory, crucial steps in the learning "process." Short-term memory is the place where you rehearse things, where you try out and manipulate bits of information to determine whether the information belongs in the long-term memory. It's the "scratchpad," as Pinker would say.

One of the most efficient ways to pack more into the short-term memory (it has a limited capacity) is to reduce longer streams of information into short bits—a process called *chunking*. All mnemonics and acronyms are "chunks": SCUBA to stand for self-contained underwater breathing apparatus, NATO to represent North Atlantic Treaty Organization, HOMES, to remind you of the names for the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario …), and—Every Good Boy Does Fine.

Memory aids and acronyms are useful because they are catchy reminders and short forms of more complex ideas and expressions. In the case of a memory aid like HOMES, you have less to remember. An acronym provides a single term for a string of words. Again, less to remember.

The importance of the chunking process in a learning situation is not merely to accept and use ready-made aids, but to learn *how* to chunk. That's the key to efficient learning. It's also the key to easy and reliable memorization. The significant chunks are those you store in long-term memory. And it's evoking these chunks that enables you to trigger recall of items from long-term memory.

Let's consider chunking in a musical context. C-E-G, as separate, but combined pitches, make up a chord. C-E-G then becomes a single unit, a C Chord. Other chords develop into single units in the same way. Soon I and V become symbols for important chords. I-V or V-I evolve as cadences; two related chords have become a single unit, a half or authentic cadence.

Recognizing cadences—chunking chords—leads to an understanding of form. An eight-measure musical period—perhaps I-I-I-V, I-I-V-I—is seen and heard as two units balancing one another in a musical statement. A period then becomes a single unit in itself, constituting an A or B section, making it possible to diagram a piece as A-A', A-B, or A-B-A'. Smaller part-forms evolve as separate sections of larger forms, such as a rondo or sonata-allegro form. In each case, something that was two (or multiple) units becomes a single unit. A-B-A', then, is a mnemonic that represents a more complex set of sub-units.

It's important to note that in the just-described progression of sub-sets, chunking is not the only activity. The chunks themselves are *linked*, in a musically logical way, in order to see the growth from the smaller units to the larger.

- Understanding chords precedes understanding cadences.
- Grasping the function of cadences leads to recognition of musical periods.
- Musical periods become the building blocks of larger forms.

The linking process itself is the strong connecting thread that binds smaller, multiple bits of information into logical "wholes."

That overview sketches the process from the standpoint of the learner. How do you *teach* in a way that fosters chunking and linking?

- You yourself must chunk and link. Unless—and until—these processes have become second nature to you, you can't stimulate others to do the same. You can't draw a map unless you know the territory.
- Ask questions in an order that draws attention to how parts of a phrase or sections of a piece are linked. (See "How To Teach 'Painting with Pastels' By Asking Questions: Picture the Shape" in *The Piano Adventures Teacher*, August, 2003, page 9.)
- Show students how to reduce information in the score to a simple diagram.
- Encourage students to find original ways to summarize complex ideas.
- Use ear-training activities so that students make comparisons by listening.
- Choose materials that reinforce concepts and forms used previously.
- Remind students how to use what they already know to solve new problems.

And remember—it's the *mind* that's the smart machine, not the computer!

TALKING TECH

The Video Camera: A Teacher's Best Friend

BY MARY TOY

Students today are more informed and more open to innovations than in previous generations. Their lives are also more fragmented. Time for music study has become a valuable commodity. To ensure that practice is efficient and productive, the teacher needs to utilize and take advantage of every available tool, including technology.

One tool we can use is the video camera, which puts the teacher by the student's side during the practice session and enables the student to progress more quickly. However, it must be used correctly to be effective. Only basic concepts presented in the lesson should be taped. Too much taping will discourage students from using the tape.

Students learn differently. The teacher must decide whether the student is a visual, aural, or tactile learner and make sure the presentation takes this into account. Most young people are more visually, than aurally, oriented. The video camera allows for watching as well as listening to correct practice procedures. Listening will reinforce visual learning, just as seeing will reinforce listening. A tactile learner will need the teacher's "hands on" experience to feel the physical aspect, and this, too, is reinforced by the camera's visual and aural capacities.

Remember How It Feels and Sounds

Recall is another important way in which the video camera is helpful. When students watch the tape, they often recall the feel of the motion, such as a phrase that needs to have arm movement as well as lift at the end. One of the ways I like to teach touch is by having students feel my weight drop on their arms; then they do the same to me. The camera makes it possible for them to see, hear, and remember how this feels. Learning weight transfer then becomes easier and faster. The camera is also invaluable for capturing correct motions for scales, arpeggios, chords, voicing, teacher demonstrations, and much more.

Besides recalling "feel," students learn to listen to tone production and to what kind of tone quality is necessary for a particular piece. Debussy does not sound like Beethoven, nor Chopin like Copland. Students can listen to CDs, but it's the combination of seeing, listening, and recall from the videotape that can vastly alter a student's approach to interpretation.

Practicing with the Videotape

Are there drawbacks to videotaping? Yes, if the student is not taught how to use the tape. Only one concept should be listened to at a time. To play a tape from beginning to end is of little consequence. A student must practice what s/he has just listened to. If it is scale work, for example, students should view only that portion of the tape, then proceed to practice the scale. Encourage students to rewind and review a section to make sure they follow directions and successfully complete that assignment. From there, they should continue to the next taped assignment, perhaps an etude. Ask them to listen carefully, and to watch the correct practice procedure.

On the "Plus" Side

Are there advantages to using a video camera? Absolutely, if for no other reason than that it gives parents the opportunity to watch and know what is going on at the lesson. For younger students, it allows parents to help with the practice session, and to become a learning partner with the child. This, in turn, builds a musical bond between the child and parent that can last a lifetime. It is a nurturing process. Parents appreciate knowing how to relate to the music and to the concepts being taught, and the teacher receives greater respect and appreciation.

Is there an advantage for the teacher? Yes! All corrections and learning styles are accommodated and reinforced when seeing, listening to, and recalling what has been taped. Directions and teacher demonstrations are more easily assimilated. The student progresses more quickly. Most of all, it helps students learn proper practice procedures, and it saves time. Using a video camera is enormously helpful. Give it a try!

Mary Toy has a busy studio in Kirkland, Washington. For many years she has adjudicated auditions and festivals and conducted workshops and masterclasses throughout the United States and Canada. She has reviewed materials for *American Music Teacher* and served as an MTNA board member at the state and national levels. For seven years she was division chairman for the national high school piano competition. Her students have won awards at the local, division, and national levels.

Smiles from the Studio

For the holiday recital, one teacher asked students to play their favorite carol and, before playing, to announce the reason for the choice. Both teacher and audience were surprised and amused when one six-year-old said proudly, "I'm going to play Hark, the Herald Angels Sing because my Dad's name is Harold!"

Don't forget to send your own special "smiles" to muszler@pianoteaching.com

TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS

Careers for Pianists: Part One

BY BETH GIGANTE KLINGENSTEIN

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of three lists of careers in music for the pianist. The checklist below suggests academic routes to prepare for certain careers, but real-world careers, even for performers, most often include working in several capacities—teaching, church or university positions, gigging, and various types of free-lancing.

PERFORMANCE CAREERS

CLASSICAL: SOLO
Requires
- excellent musical ability and technique
- top-notch memorization and performance skills
- large repertoire, including concertos
- a lifetime of dedication
- proficiency in performance practice, music history and theory
- willingness to travel and supplement income in other music fields
- good business skills

Degrees: BM, MM, DMA in Piano

COLLABORATIVE ARTIST/COACH
Requires
All as for solo career, except memorization and concerto repertoire
Special emphasis on
- excellent rhythm
- top-notch sightreading skills
- ability to transpose at sight
- ability to realize figured bass
- language skills (especially Italian, French, German)
- coaching skills
- good business skills

Degrees: BM, MM, DMA, in Piano, Collaborative Arts, Chamber Music
www.nats.org/ National Association of Teachers of Singing

CLASSICAL: CHAMBER MUSIC
Requires
- all as for solo career, except memorization and concerto repertoire
- extensive chamber music repertoire
- excellent sightreading ability
- ability to work well within the chamber music group

www.chamber-music.org Chamber Music America promotes artistic excellence and economic stability for performers of chamber music
Degrees: BM, MM, DMA in Piano, Chamber Music

CLASSICAL: ORCHESTRA AND OPERA
Requires
- performance requirements as for solo career
- excellent musical ability and training
- excellent sightreading ability
- ability to play piano, harpsichord, celesta

There is usually one keyboardist per orchestra.This is usually a part-time position.
Degrees: BM, MM, DMA in Piano
http://icsom.org International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians

CHURCH MUSICIAN
Requires
- excellent organ skills
- conducting skills
- broad knowledge of sacred literature
- sightreading skills
- ability to harmonize, transpose, and improvise
- organizational skills
- willingness to perform a variety of functions: organist, choir director, hand bell director, youth music director, and director of all church music activities

Degrees: BM, MM, DMA in Sacred Music, Organ Performance, Choral Studies
www.agohq.org American Guild of Organists. Information on AGO Certification requirements
www.gospelmusic.org Gospel Music Association

RECORDING ARTIST FOR TELEVISION, MOVIES, COMMERCIALS
Requires
- excellent musical ability and training
- willingness to live in New York or Los Angeles
- excellent sightreading ability
- reliable commitment to schedules

Degrees: BM, MM, DMA in Piano, Jazz Piano
www.rmaweb.org/Main/frmain.asp Recording Musicians Association
www.afm.org/public/home/index.php American Federation of Musicians

JAZZ
Requires
- ability to read jazz and chord symbols
- strong background in music theory
- ability to improvise
- ability to play in varied jazz styles
- unique, individual style
- a lifetime of dedication
- high standards for technical and musical excellence
- willingness to travel and work non-traditional hours
- good business skills

Degrees: BM, MM, DMA in Piano, Jazz Performance (arranging), Jazz Performance (Instrumental), Jazz Studies, Music Education (Jazz Emphasis)
www.iaje.org International Association for Jazz Education. Excellent links to many jazz areas.
www.apassion4jazz.net/ A Passion for Jazz covers jazz history, commentary, and education
www.artsnet.net/music.htm An arts and entertainment resource with multiple links

ROCK/POP/COUNTRY/WESTERN
Requires
- individuality and artistic vision
- ability to compose
- less rigid standard for technical keyboard excellence can be acceptable
- location (New York, Los Angeles, Nashville)
- willingness to travel and work non-traditional hours

Degrees: High level of musical skill is important, regardless of the types of degree
- A degree is often not necessary

www.reasontorock.com Historical development of rock. Many good links.
www.scaruffi.com/music.html History of Rock Music. Multiple links
www.songwriters.org/nas2.htm National Academy of Songwriters
www.roughstock.com/history/ Historical development of country music
www.westernmusic.org/index.htm Western Music Association
www.countrymusic.org Country Music Association

FAMILY TREE

He Set the "Standard"

BY MARIENNE USZLER

The name itself is impressive—William Smythe Babcock Mathews. So it's not surprising that the ad in an 1891 *Etude* used superlatives to herald Theodore Presser's newest publication. *The Standard Graded Course of Studies for the Pianoforte* was "Original. Successful. Thorough. Complete. Modern. Compact. The model of all others."

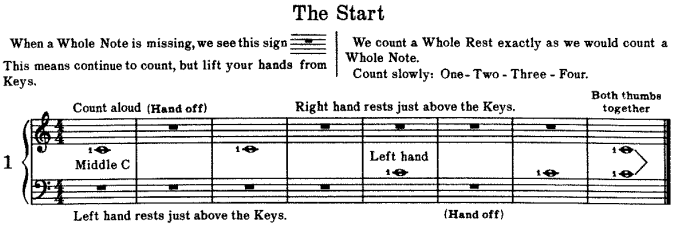
W.S.B. Mathews was no lightweight. He was determined to change the way piano was taught by the multitudes of those who capitalized on the popularity of the instrument that was then the showpiece of every American parlor. It was clear, however, that most piano teachers *were* lightweights, with little training in piano playing or in how to teach it. Mathews was indeed on a mission

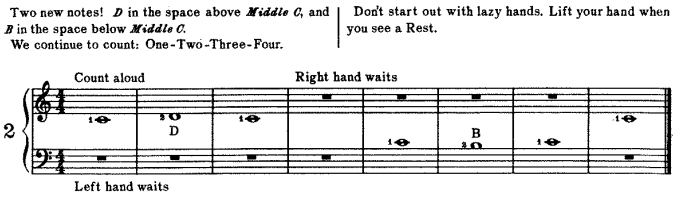
He was not alone. Earlier, in 1876, Presser—together with Eben Tourjée, Galusha M. Cole, and William Henry Dana—called the first meeting of the organization that became the Music Teachers National Association [MTNA]. Mathews attended that meeting as the leading delegate from Illinois. As the organization developed, a sometimes quite acrimonious conflict erupted between groups who were then called the "High Priests" and the "ABC Teachers." Those with considerable training and performing ability were the "High Priests." The large number of independent teachers with modest backgrounds and abilities constituted the other group.

There was never any doubt that Presser and Mathews were on the side of the "ABC Teachers." Presser, through his publishing business and the *Etude* magazine, provided teachers with music, advice columns, and articles, as well as teacher discounts through a mail order business. Mathews wrote many of these articles, notably a regular column, begun in 1887, called "Letters to Teachers."

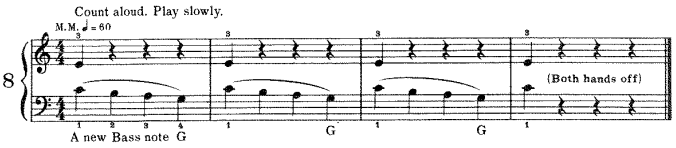
Presser had published William Mason's *Touch and Technic* (see *The Piano Adventures Teacher*, "Family Tree," August, 2003), and it was the popularity of these books that established Presser as the leading publisher of educational music. He had also been collecting exercises and pieces drawn from what he considered the best sources with a view to compiling this material into a systematic curriculum. Mathews became the final editor and author of the ten graded volumes of this series that became another Presser "hit."

The Standard Graded Course opened with two pages of advice on how to orient the student to the keyboard—finding the black-key groups, naming the keys, and learning the basic elements of notation and rhythm. The first exercises, therefore, needed no explanation.

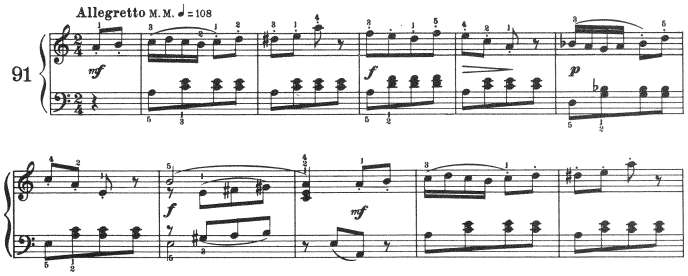




The pacing was rapid. By Exercise 8, the hands were playing together.



Eighth notes (without any explanation) appeared in No. 43, the tie in No. 45. The reading range expanded quickly to include the five Cs by Nos. 40 and 43. The final exercise, No. 91, was a Hungarian Dance in A Minor.



All major and minor scales and chords were presented on a single page, followed by 18 pieces that were considerably longer and more difficult than the exercises and pieces that preceded them.

Grade II contained a large number of etudes by such composers as Kullak, Bertini, Duvernoy, and Czerny. Grade III pieces, while continuing the succession of etudes, also included fragments of works by Beethoven (opening measures of op. 14/2, Mvt. 2, Andante; first 24 measures of "Rage Over a Lost Penny"); and the complete A Major Chopin Prelude.

The entire series was a no-frills approach intended to interlock with Mason's *Touch and Technic* to form the solidly prepared pianist. Students at the turn of the 20th century were offered the best pedagogical material of the times. Mathews's *Standard Graded Course* was clearly determined to "raise the standard." The first six books are still available. That's quite a record!