THE
PIANO Adventures® TEACHER

FJH PEDAGOGY NEWSLETTER March 2004 No. 4

Improvise!

Chord Power

Speaking of Pedagogy …

Career Cues—Teachers

Organize Your Presentation

Videotaped Lessons — What Students Think

THE F·J·H MUSIC COMPANY INC.

THE PIANO ADVENTURES® TEACHER

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From the Editor

BY MARIENNE USZLER

About this time of year, piano teachers begin to plan what, when, and how students will "perform." Depending on where you teach, you're prepping them either for recitals or juries. This involves a special kind of focus and energy. Bringing performance to a state of public readiness is different than merely "learning a piece."

I've always found that timing was a big factor in helping a student do well when playing in a recital or jury—choosing the pieces early enough to give the student a chance to "play them in." Depending on the student and the level, that usually means several weeks of particular concentration on the recital or jury repertoire. Students don't generally know, as we do, that making a piece your own requires much more than playing it correctly once or twice.

Starting to work at recital or jury pieces in enough time, however, also often poses a balancing act—how to budget lesson and practice time. When students are young, or playing at beginning levels, the pieces are short and the pacing is rather rapid. If you begin too soon to work on pieces chosen for an upcoming public performance, playing these pieces can easily become mechanical, perhaps even boring. Bringing something new to the piece each time it's played is challenging for less-experienced performers.

There's also the matter of how to use lesson time to best advantage. You want to keep going in the method or lesson book because that's what needs to happen in the early stages. This is the time to explore and develop skills in ever broader contexts. You don't want to hold up progress in order to perfect just a few pieces.

At higher levels, mastering new skills or concepts is less of a factor. In this case, development may mean working at longer pieces, communicating the entire shape of a multi-part piece, refining articulations, touches, and pedaling, or differentiating among performance styles. The process is both more subtle and more intense. Lesson time is used to do finer work on fewer pieces.

And there is the matter of *what* to choose for public performance. It's always tempting (for both student and teacher) to show off the "hardest" or the "latest." In my experience, that's rarely a safe step. "Hard" pieces often demand physical stamina that has not yet been developed, and the "latest" pieces often reveal a student's not-too-deep understanding of the new skill or concept. That's true at any level. Better that a student performs comfortable and secure pieces. High-wire acts are best displayed under the Big Top.

Here are a few hints to meet these challenges.

For younger students, and for those who play easier-level music:

- Have each student play a group of pieces, perhaps six or more. This gives the student a chance to "settle down" at the piano, and to play pieces that are in different styles and tempos. Playing a group of graded pieces also gives a sense of the student's progress. A "hard" or "latest" piece might then be included because it's tucked in among those that are reliable. In order to do this, of course, the recital must include fewer students.
- Have the student record the pieces *before* the recital. This is a practical rehearsal for the real thing, and it can also be a gift to relatives and friends. In addition, it provides an aural record of the early stages of instruction.

For older students, and for those playing more difficult music:

- Discuss ways to vary repetition (pay special attention, in turn, to phrasing, pedaling, dynamics, articulations, continuity, tempo control)
- Have the student record the pieces. Listen for the same performance elements. Have the student write (or articulate) his or her own critique.

These are some of my teaching techniques. We're always happy to hear yours!

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It's Easy to Improvise!

BY ARTHUR HOULE

Great composers we revere—like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, and Brahms—were also great improvisers. Yet "traditional" pianism often neglects this important skill. What if your child came home from school and announced, "We're learning how to read, but not how to write"? Imagine the howls of protest!

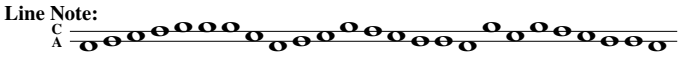
Creating should have just as much importance as "re-creating." I'm encouraged that more and more teachers are recognizing this. But the question I'm often asked is, "I was never taught this way, so how do I teach my students to improvise?" My answer: "It's easier than you think, and you don't have to be Mozart or Brubeck!"

One-line Melodies

Beginning students love to create their own three-note melodies using a single-line "staff," with notes written below, on, and above the line. Have them randomly write notes and assign a letter (A through G) to the line.

Students may play in high or low registers. They can also decide which hand should play each melody, and what the starting finger and title of each tune will be. For variety, identify the line note as a different letter each time. Note values, time signatures, and counting can come later, when students are ready.

Students then progress to melodies on a two-line staff (using five notes), and perhaps three-lines. (By this point students may be ready for full-staff reading, however.)

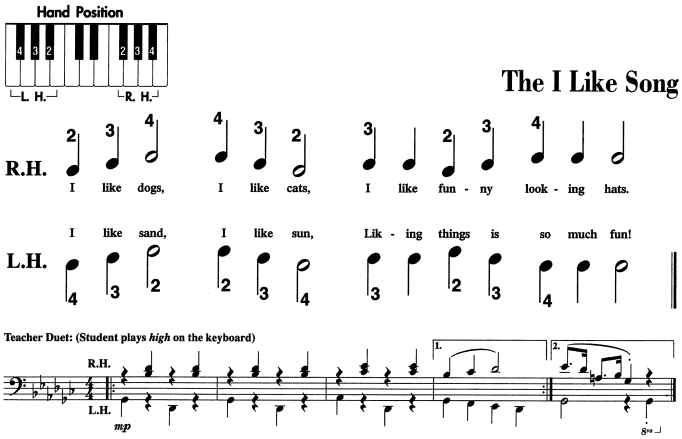


Pre-staff notation method pieces can always be supplemented with, "Let's create our own tunes the same way!" See, for example, "The I Like Song," *Piano Adventures® Lesson Book*, Primer Level, p. 15.

Children can make up new words or new songs using the black keys. Perhaps—

I like hugs,
I like rugs,
I like squishy looking bugs!

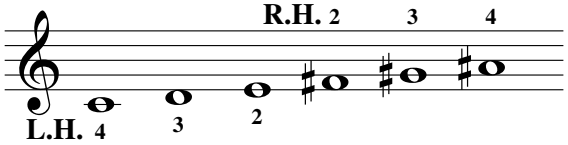
It's fun, empowering, and teachers know that musical concepts (such as intervals, up/down, and fingerings) are truly learned.



The Enchanting Whole-Tone Scale

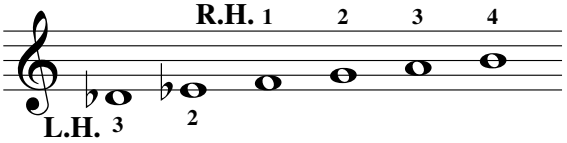
Here's a fun assignment, particularly for those who lack the confidence to improvise or use the pedal.

Use the notes of the whole-tone scale:



- Students may play any or all of these notes, individually or together, fast or slow, high or low, loud or soft, with or without pauses.
- Keep the damper pedal down, except to clear the sound if a note not in the scale is played accidentally.
- Ask students to think of a title for their improvisation (perhaps "Clouds," "Astronauts," "Dreaming," "Elephants," "The Storm"). Better yet, choose a title first, then ask students to evoke that image.
- Teachers may demonstrate first, or play along with students.
- Students may do this at home in a dark room—a great way to set a mood and help develop a tactile sense at the piano.

Next, try the same game using the other whole tone scale:



With more advanced students, discuss the whole-tone scale and its importance to impressionist composers, particularly Debussy and Ravel.

The Big Clue: Repeat Signs

Jazz or pop artists are rarely content to re-create the written score or repeat previous performances. They want to establish their own "signature" every time. In classical music we tend to place the highest ideal on literal, accurate interpretations of the score, as close to the composer's intentions as possible. But what if the composer intended us to embellish or improvise?

Teachers often say, "So, you've convinced me, but when and how is it appropriate to do this? What about method-book pieces?" As Marienne Uszler says, "Changing, or adding to, what a composer has written is not something you do with every piece." She offers a terrific example of when (and why) it is appropriate. (See "How to Add to the Tale," *The Piano Adventures® Teacher*, December 2003, pp. 10, 11.)

While improvisation is not advised for much of the classical repertory (particularly in contemporary works), freedom is often expected in Baroque and Classic era music, particularly in dances. One rule of thumb: check for repeat signs, or at least repeated musical material. Little wonder that jazzers often have a special affinity for Baroque music. In both genres the repeat is a signal to "take off" and improvise!

Start with Minuets

For starters, your best bets are easy minuets by Bach and his contemporaries (for example, those in the *Anna Magdalena Notebook*), and those by composers such as Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. On the repeats, challenge students to make at least one change in each of these categories:

◆ *Dynamics*

Does your student play soft the first time? Then suggest a louder dynamic for the repeat. Or vice versa. Or perhaps more nuances such as crescendos, decrescendos, or accents.

◆ *Articulations*

Students will likely play legato the first time. This has been the prevailing touch since Clementi. On the repeat, however, explore playing detached—very staccato, somewhat staccato, portato, or barely non-legato, depending on what seems right for the character of the piece. Generally, the faster the minuet, the crisper the staccato. Also try articulating two-note, three-note, and four-note slurs here and there.

◆ *Ornaments*

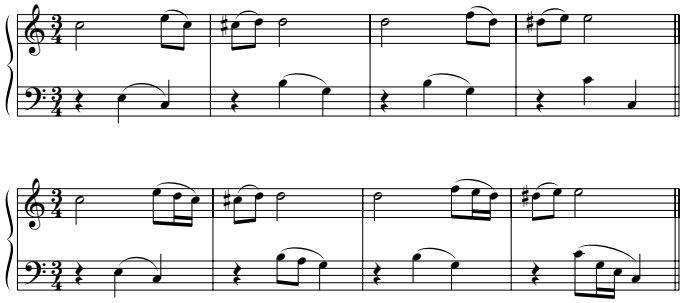
Ornaments were favored at most cadences, whether or not the composer indicated them. On repeats try using different ornaments (for example, substitute a turn for a mordent).

Want a lesson from Bach himself on how to embellish? Study his two versions (the first simple, the second ornamented) of the Sarabande movements in his second and third English Suites!

◆ *Embellish Melodies*

Add neighbor notes, passing tones, and chord fills to melodies (same as in jazz, minus the blue notes!).

Begin with adding passing notes to melodic thirds:



Note also the added "chord fill" in measure four.

Creating should have just as much importance as "re-creating."

Good Taste vs. Freedom

Always strive for a happy balance between good taste and freedom. Suffocating young students with excessive rules may stifle their creativity when they're most vulnerable. I suggest erring on the side of freedom at the beginning. Later you can refer students to various tables of ornaments, stricter guidelines, and historical treatises (like C. P. E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* and Czerny's *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte*, op. 200. The English translation of the Czerny work is (sadly) out of print, but readily available by interlibrary loan.

Be Sensible about "Purism"

Historical evidence enriches us with a fount of tasteful guidelines. These should not, however, straightjacket us! Every generation inevitably redefines "good taste" to some degree. Western civilization will survive a Baroque trill occasionally starting on the principal note. Apparently Baroque musicians didn't improvise two against three; does that mean we cannot possibly do this tastefully?

Should we be offended by excellent concerto cadenzas written or improvised in the "wrong style" by editors, performers, and later composers (Brahms, for example)? Mozart would have been surprised to hear anyone slavishly adhering to his style when improvising. He appreciated good taste, so it's certainly terrific to emulate his methods, especially as a starting point. But, true to the ethos of his time, Mozart would have also expected you to be yourself. He may very well have applauded the jazzy improvisations in Chick Corea's recent recording of the K. 466 and K. 488 concertos!

Dr. Arthur Houle is founder and director of the annual *International Festival for Creative Pianists*, open to all pianists up to age 18 or grade 12. He has taught at the New England and Boston Conservatories, the Universities of Iowa, North Dakota and Texas-Austin and, most recently, as associate professor at Albertson College. For more information on teaching improvisation, visit www.pianofestival.org

The Pedagogy of Piano Adventures

Level 2B: The Power of Primary Chords

BY RANDALL FABER

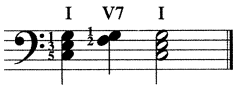
Perhaps the favorite application of music theory in piano instruction is the teaching of I, IV and V7 chords in that well-worn cluster surrounding the root-position I chord. This aspect of piano pedagogy identifies Level 2B of *Piano Adventures*®, just as the subhead "I, IV, and V7 chords in the Keys of C, G, and F" identifies *ChordTime*® Piano (Level 2B) in the *PreTime* to *BigTime* Supplementary Library.

This simple chord formula is favored for good reason:

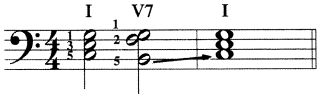
- The chords are easily accessible
- They reduce the harmonic language of many diverse styles to a common denominator
- They provide a basis for creative applications in arranging or composing.

Staging the V7 Chord

The earlier levels of *Piano Adventures*® work with a two-note V7 chord that lies readily under the hand. This allows for easy and rapid switching between I and V7 chords. Use of the more common three-note V7 chord tends to sacrifice the student's rhythm at the bar line. The moving of finger five and the span of the 6th demand significant attention from the student performer. In contrast, the *Piano Adventures*® use of a two-note V7 chord allows the student to maintain rhythmic fluency and, importantly, the musicality of a flowing meter.



2-Note V7 from Level 1



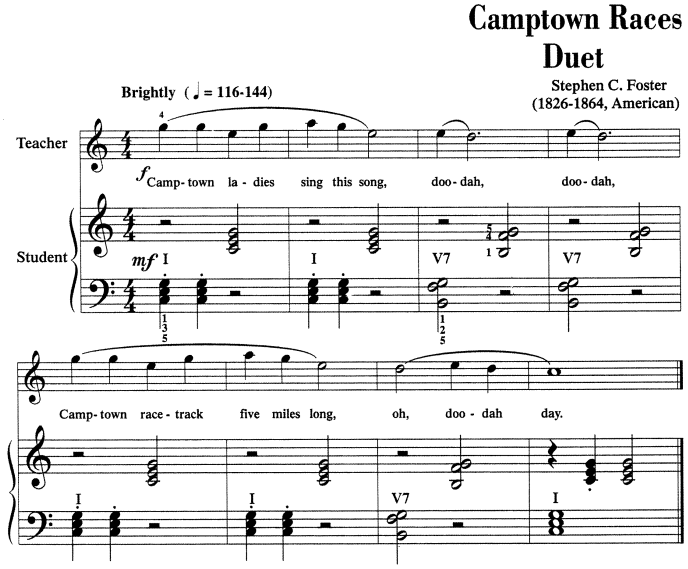
3-Note V7 from Level 2B

In ramping up to the three-note V7 at Level 2B, we next address two prerequisites: 1) the interval of the 6th and 2) the definition of the *leading tone*. These concepts are given meaning in the teaching of the major scale. The student hears the *leading tone* move by half step to the tonic. Now the student hears the leading tone of the V7 chord move to the tonic note in its resolution. Indeed, this leading tone is the new note of the V7.

At Level 2B we introduce the 6th, the leading tone, the tonality of the major scale and, building on the student's experience with the two-note V7 chord at Levels 1 and 2A, we introduce the three-note V7 with little liability and with greater understanding.

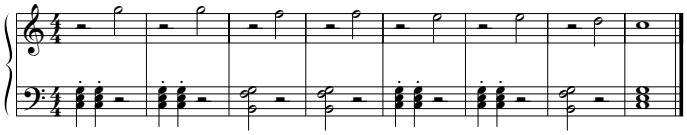
The Chord Accompaniment

It is not enough merely to read the notes of a chord, or even to recognize the notes as a chord. A student needs to understand the role of chords in accompanying a melody. So, immediately after introducing the three-note V7, we present a two-hand accompaniment for Camptown Races with the melody displayed on a third staff. This "piano/vocal" score provides much insight for the student: a conceptualization of melody and accompaniment, of chord progression, the prevalence and utility of I and V harmonies, and a valuable introduction to ensemble playing.



I recommend two activities as followup to playing this exercise.

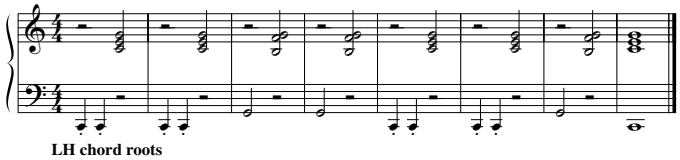
- Use the LH of Camptown Races Duet to accompany a descending 5-note scale in the RH.



Harmonize RH melody

As an alternative, begin with 3rds in the RH: E-G, descending to D-F, to C-E, then to single notes D and home to C. Both of these exercises illustrate the process of harmonizing and help students conceptually group scale steps 1-3-5 and scale steps 2-4 into their respective I and V7 camps.

- To anchor the student's understanding of I and V7 harmonies, I always ask the student to repeat the exercise playing only the chord *root* in the left hand.

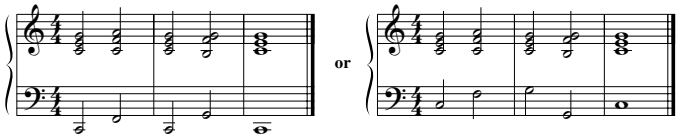


LH chord roots

My students and I like these bass notes played down low—where they growl. After playing the dominant a fifth *above* the tonic, play the dominant a fourth *below* the tonic. (Use LH finger 2 on C and finger 5 on G.) This activity offers significant insight into the role of the bass player in an ensemble, and can be great fun.

Playing roots in the bass can be continued as the level progresses. For instance, the upcoming waltz pattern (Carefree Waltz,

Lesson Book, p. 20) can be transformed into a two-hand accompaniment by using the chord root in the bass and RH chords on beats 2 and 3. (See Carousel Ride and Waltzing RH in the Technique & Artistry Book.) Be sure to use this LH root exercise when the IV chord is introduced. The typical I-IV-I-V7 cadence takes on significantly more meaning when played with left-hand roots:



Though we don't burden the student with reading in every key as yet, you can still work the cadences through numerous transpositions. See, for instance, the I-V-I and I-IV-I cadences which are presented in all keys at the back of the Level 2B Technique & Artistry Book. Again, repeating the exercises with roots in the bass deepens understanding and significantly enhances pattern recognition.

Chord Symbols

With each new key (C, G, and F), chord patterns are presented under the heading "Reading Chord Symbols." The student encounters this at the outset with Boom! Boom! (Lesson Book, p. 19), which immediately follows the Camptown Races Duet.

Reading Chord Symbols

Play I and V7 chords in the Key of C by reading the chord symbols below.

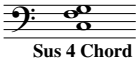
Use L.H. **I V7 I V7 I** Use R.H. **I I V7 V7 I**

After the student blocks the chords, ask for an accompaniment that follows the given chord progression. I often draw bar lines between the chord symbols to show a chord chart more specifically. The chord patterns on p. 19 constitute a 4-measure chord pattern followed by the tonic chord. If you play and then repeat the first four bars of either of these patterns, you produce a very common 8-measure chord progression. In fact, the first of the chord progressions is that of Boom! Boom! on that very page. The other progression is that of Camptown Races on the preceding page. This latter pattern is also the chord progression (in metric augmentation) for Carefree Waltz, which is the following piece.

Time spent listening, memorizing, and transposing these chord progressions is time well spent. Then, let your student loose to create melodies and various accompaniment patterns based on these chord progressions and those that follow. The creative questions that end each unit (p. 21, for example) will provide nudges toward such work. For most students, though, you'll want to push the creative activities even more. It's amazing how much similarity there is among chord progressions, and how much value is derived from working them over and over.

The Sus4 Option

As a transition into the three-note V7, I often teach the sus4 chord. (Sus4 means sustained 4th.)



Sus 4 Chord

In contemporary pop usage the 4th needn't resolve to the 3rd (unlike the Baroque 4-3 suspension). We teach the sus4 chord in *Adult Piano Adventures®* because of its contemporary sound. The sus4 chord is also very easy to play because there is no shift to a 6th. Certainly the V7 in a typical keyboard voicing is not the most beautiful sound. Whether we prefer the Haydn and Mozart orchestral voicing of V7 heard over a tonic pedal-point or the sustained 4th chord of a rock guitarist, both voicings are replicated by the sus4 chord. Not only is the sus4 an effective substitute for the V7, it can even substitute for the IV chord, with the G functioning as an added 9th (F chord in the key of C). Thus every tone of the major scale can be harmonized by either the I chord or the sus4. Share this with your students and they will credit you as being much more hip than the method writers!

The IV Chord

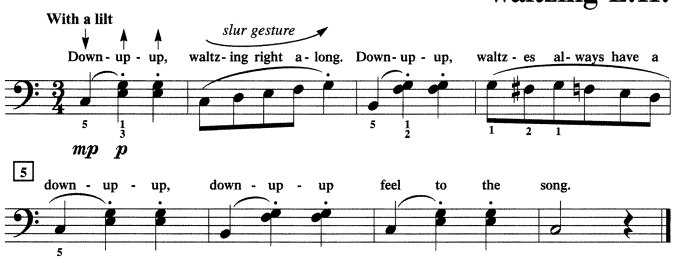
While we're on the subject of hip, the IV chord rates in this regard. Notice how Boxcar Rumble (Lesson Book, p. 11) sets the student up for the barrelhouse I-IV left hand with its 5th-6th alternation. You might revisit this piece after the IV chord is learned, adding the omitted chord tones to the LH pattern. For a somewhat easier variation, repeat each chord before changing harmony. You'll still want to play a chord on every beat, but the harmonic rhythm slows to a change of chords every two beats instead of every beat.

Accompaniments That Dance

Yes, those left-hand accompaniments can use plenty of practice. The Technique & Artistry Book is very helpful in this regard. The issue has less to do with coordination than it does musicality. We have all heard plenty of thumping thumbs in left-hand accompaniments. To remedy—or better—to prevent this malady, Technique Secret No. 3 at Level 2B specifically works for a *light thumb*. In fact, all of the "technique secrets" at this level converge to provide coordination and beauty in a left-hand accompaniment. A drop of arm weight (Heavy Arms) initiates the LH pattern. The energy flows through a slur gesture (Painter's Brush Stroke). The Weightless Thumb ensures a lightness for the non-downbeats. And skillful connected pedaling (Pedal Pushers) provides a finishing wrapper of sound.

The entire level is designed to achieve beauty and efficiency by playing several notes with a single gesture. This is applied specifically to left-hand accompaniments through a combination of "drop" and "up" touches indicated by arrows (Technique & Artistry Book, pp. 14-15).

Waltzing L.H.



Tipping over the "Snowman" Chords

Students typically recognize chords on the staff only when notes are stacked in thirds. I call this the "snowman chord" syndrome.

Our goal at Level 2B (and the levels that follow) is to tip the chord over so that a harmony is recognized when it spans horizontally across the measure and vertically over both treble and bass clefs. Our first tool in this perceptual transformation is the Cross-Hand Arpeggio (Unit 2, p. 6). Indeed, the Cross-Hand Arpeggio distributes chord tones over several measures and between clefs.

We ask students to identify and label all familiar chord names, often circling the chord tones in the music. The chord letter name should be written above the staff where the chord first occurs, usually on beat one. This is easy in Spanish Caballero, which immediately follows on p. 8. Notice the two-measure harmonic rhythm (chord change every two measures) and the shift to more rapid chord changes near the end of the piece. Taps on p. 12 plays out the C major chord for nearly the entire piece. The River (Popular Repertoire, p. 12) centers almost entirely around G and C chords. Whether in the Lesson Book, Performance Book, Popular Repertoire, or a ChordTime book, ask the student to label with a pencil all chord letter names that look remotely familiar.

Next, identify *chord functions* whenever possible. We are limited at this level to I, IV, and V, so we have to be content with just the chord letter name in some cases. Chord functions are typically written under the bass clef using Roman numerals. Chord letter names are best written above the treble staff.

For pieces that consist only of primary chords, I help the student chart out the chord progression in block symbols on a separate sheet of paper. Such pieces usually fall into 4-bar phrases that combine into an 8-measure section. By visually charting the chord pattern into these 4-bar groupings, we find the simplicity of the harmonic progression. For instance, the next song is Shave and a Haircut (p. 13), which reduces to

I	I	I	V7
V7	V7	V7	I

This is a common chord pattern that transcends many styles: from Schubert Ländler and the opening of the Brahms' Lullaby (Performance Book, p. 30) to cartoon themes such as "I Taut I Taw a Putty Cat" from Popular Repertoire Level 1.

Sometimes 1st and 2nd endings make the 4-bar groupings memorable. Consider Ashokan Farewell from Popular Repertoire, p. 20. The Activity Page for this piece works out the harmonic analysis. Yet, charting in this manner makes the pattern even more explicit.

I	I	IV	IV
I	I	IV	V7
V7	I		

Whether we synthesize accompaniments from a given chord pattern as in Reading Chord Symbols, or we analyze to find the chord pattern in an otherwise complex piece, primary chords provide a common denominator to which we can relate aurally, visually, and kinesthetically. The power of primary chords is in their simplicity. And, as many have heard me say in the context of artistic interpretation, "Always look for the simplicity."

How To

Organize the Presentation of a Piece

By Frances Larimer

The goal in presenting a new piece is to encourage the student to look at it as a whole, and to locate rhythmic and pitch patterns (what is alike and what is different). Block (where possible) the various patterns with appropriate fingering. See the score as units (patterns) of sound rather than progressing from one note to the next. This process becomes quicker and easier as students get accustomed to following such a process with each piece.

There are three steps in the presentation which culminate in the assignment.

Step One: INTRODUCTION
Have the student look at the picture and name the instruments.

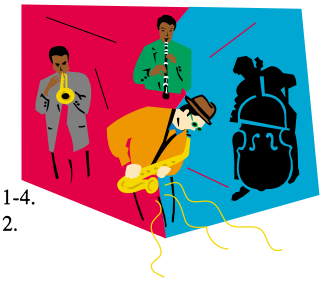
- Which instrument sounds the lowest?

Ask the student to listen and follow the score as the teacher plays, carefully looking and listening for rhythm and pitch patterns.

Review: The key signature for C major has no flats or sharps.

New: Flats or sharps that are written in the music but are not in the key signature are called **accidentals**. A *natural* is also an accidental.

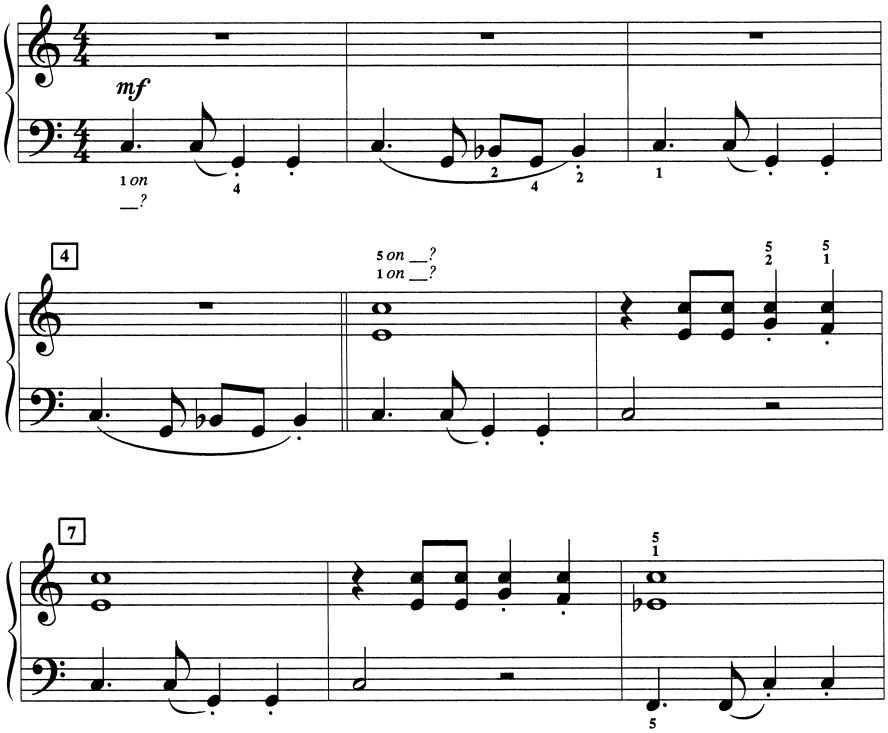
Notice the B♭ accidental in measure 2.
How many accidentals are in the last measure? _____



New Orleans Celebration

Rhythm Check: With your L.H., tap the rhythm for measures 1-4. Keep the beat steady and *feel* the dot on beat 2.

Moderately, with a strong beat (♩ = 96-108)



Step Two: ANALYSIS

- Did you see and hear any rhythm and pitch patterns in the bass clef?
- How many times did you see and hear this bass pattern?
- Which instrument in the picture might play this pattern?

Have the student place his hands over the notes of the pattern with the given fingering and play the notes blocked. (Student will discover the slight change in mm. 13 and 14)

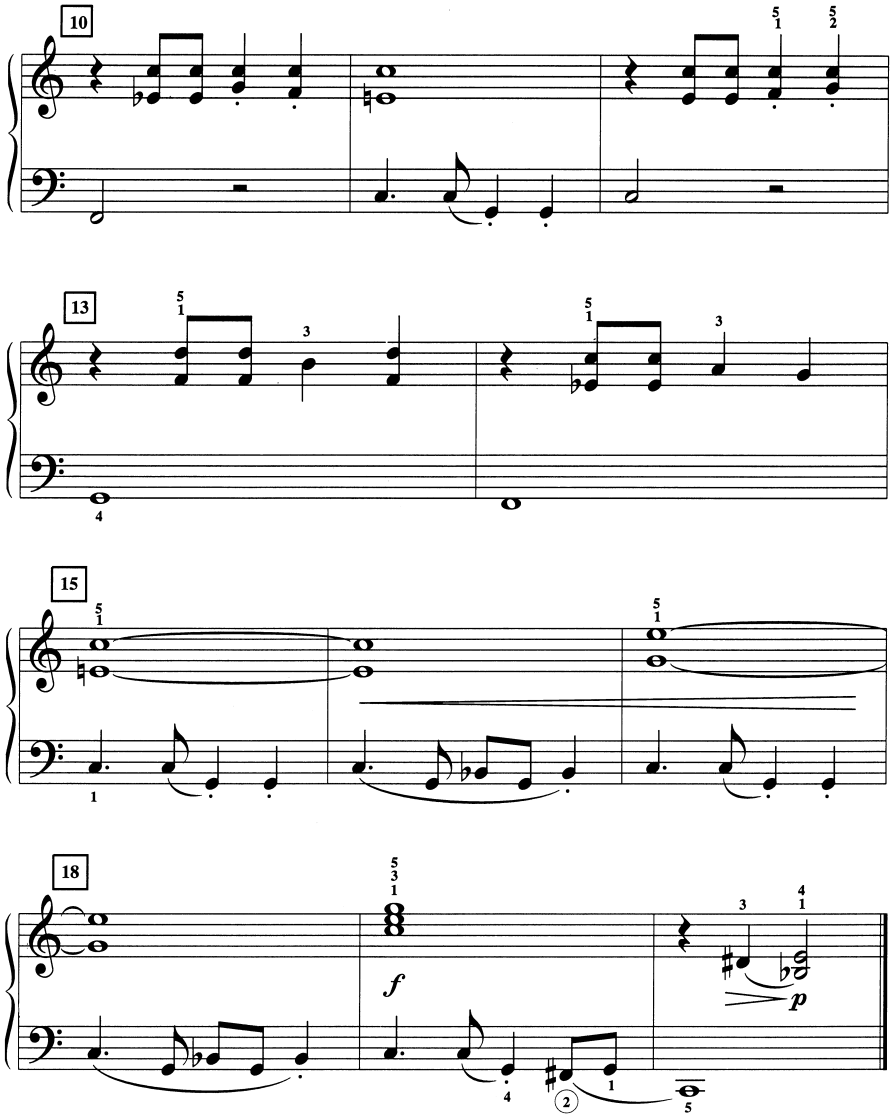
- Did you see and hear any measures where the bass pattern changes slightly?(mm. 9-10, 19-20)

Cover the bass notes in mm. 9-10 and play as a block, then proceed to the last two notes in m. 19 to m. 20.

- Did you see and hear any rhythm and pitch patterns in the treble clef?
- How many times does a pattern occur?
- Where do you find slight changes in the pattern? (mm. 9, 10, 12-14)
- Are there any big changes in the treble clef? (mm. 17-20)

Using the given fingering, have the student block the treble clef pattern in mm. 6-7. Repeat this process with the pattern changes in mm. 8-11, mm. 12-15, and mm. 17-20.

Step Three: WORKOUT
Move through the piece and locate all the places where each



CREATIVE Compose a short piece in the Key of C major that uses one or more **accidentals**. Call it "Accidentally on Purpose" or a title of your choice.

ASSIGNMENT

- Review and rehearse the moves in the bass and treble parts before playing hands together.
- Select a "thinking" tempo, one that remains steady and controlled throughout.
- Listen that the "instruments" create a celebration!

From *Piano Adventures* Lesson Book Level 2B, pp. 40, 41

hand moves from one grouping to another. Ask the student to locate all the moves and mark them with an X.

Left-hand moves
This involves only the last two measures of the piece. Ask the student to play mm. 19-20, making a smooth move without hesitation. If necessary, again block the notes and make the move.

Right-hand moves
These are mainly shifts between E and E♭. The student should practice the moves without looking at the hands. There are larger moves in mm. 15-17, 18-19, 19-20. Play these in correct rhythm, look ahead, and prepare for the moves.

The student might need to review the dotted-quarter rhythm as introduced on p. 38. Walk a steady pulse and tap or clap mm. 1-4. To reinforce this rhythm, have the student play the bass line while the teacher plays the treble line.

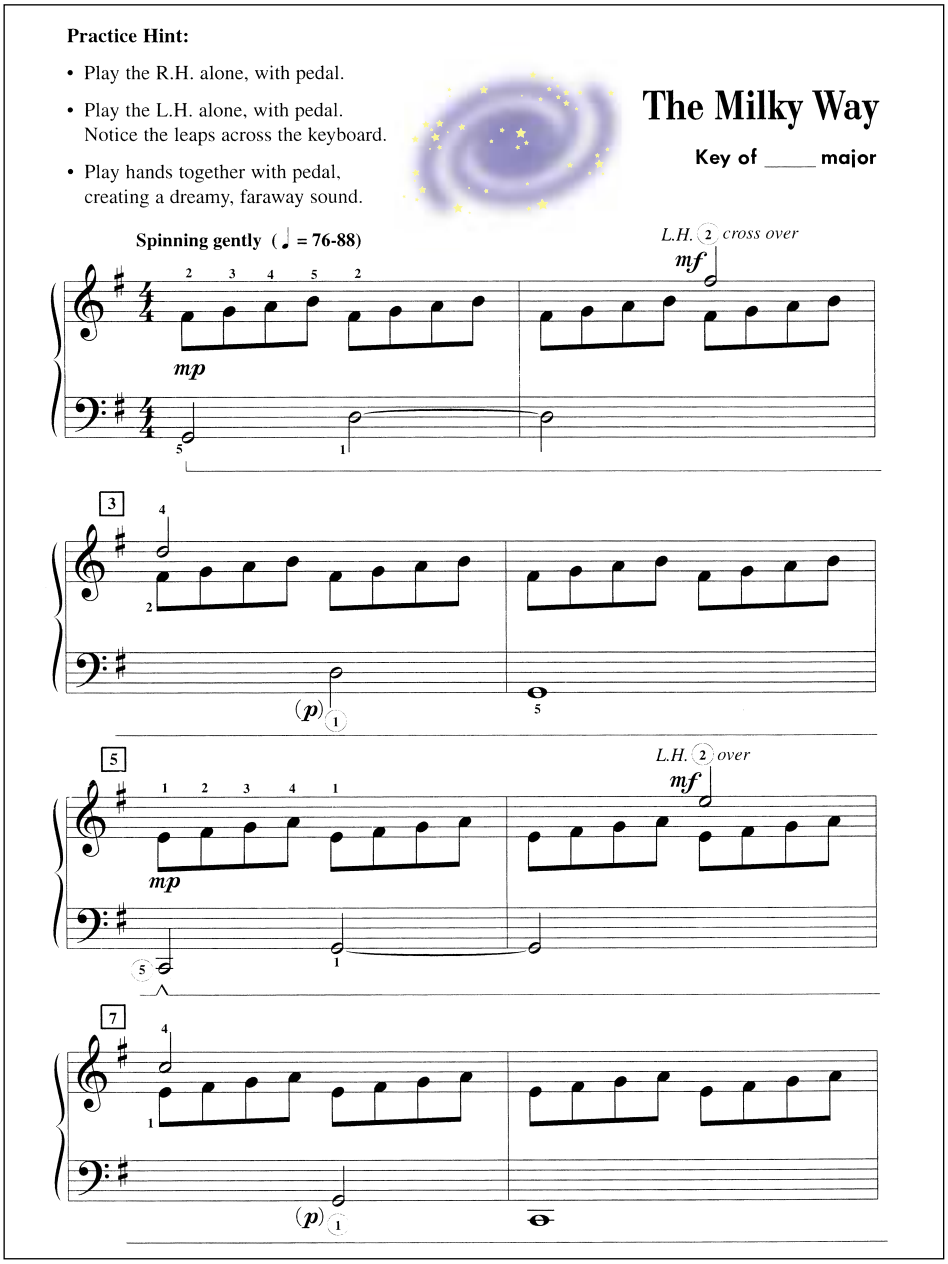
Since there is little simultaneous motion between hands, the student should be able to play hands together without difficulty once the moves have been rehearsed.

Remind the student that this piece is a celebration! The bass instrument sets a strong beat and pattern for the treble instruments to play against. Play firmly, but within the given dynamic range. Note the ending—from *f* to *p*!

How To

Organize the Presentation of a Piece

BY FRANCES LARIMER



Step One:
INTRODUCTION

Discuss the picture and a description of The Milky Way and stars within it. Have the student listen without looking at the score while the teacher plays the piece.

- Which sounds might imitate The Milky Way and stars shining within it?

Step Two: ANALYSIS

Look at the score and observe the strong pattern in the right hand.

- What is the rhythm?
- Does the rhythm change anywhere?

Look at the pitch pattern in the first four measures.

- Does this pattern change anywhere? (mm. 5-8)
- What happens to these two pitch patterns on the next page?
- Where do they repeat, and where do they change? (mm. 9-12 are like mm. 1-4) (mm. 13-16 are modified slightly from mm. 5-8)

Look at the left-hand part.

- What happens in m. 2? In mm. 3 and 4?
- Does the left-hand crossover pattern occur anywhere else in the piece? (mm. 6-8, mm. 10-12, m. 16)

The student discovers the left-hand differences between mm. 5-8 and mm. 13-16.

Discuss how the changing pattern groups throughout the piece could be labeled using letters. (A B A B')

Step Three: WORKOUT

Have the student block the right-hand pattern in the first measure.

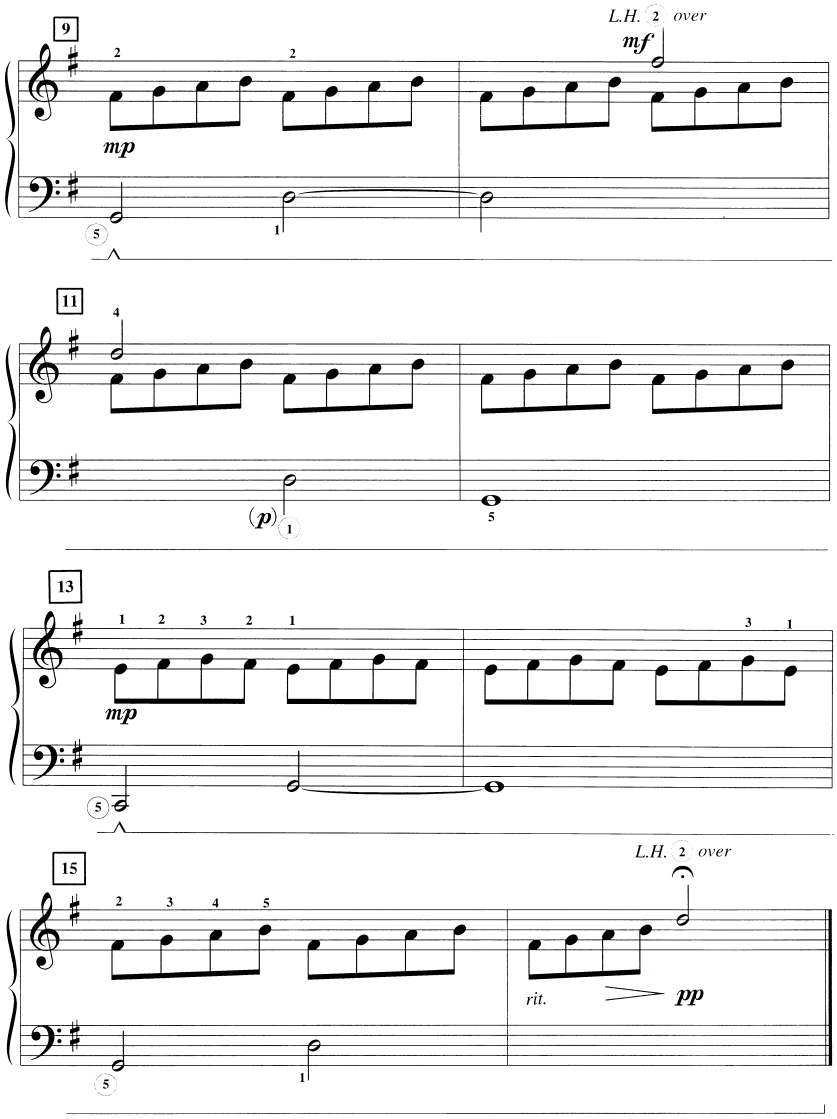
Move down to m. 5, then block that pattern.

- Does the hand need to move?

Scan through the second page for the same patterns. (mm. 9, 13, 15)

The student should discover that the right hand never moves out of one position—only the fingers change.

From *Piano Adventures* Performance Book Level 2B, pp. 24, 25



DISCOVERY

Point out 2 places where the L.H. plays the **leading tone** in the key of G.

The newsletter is wonderful. I especially liked the two articles on teaching specific pieces. Here's an idea other teachers may find helpful.

I keep a complete set of the Faber teaching materials on my Clavinova (which I use as a second piano). In these books I write down any great ideas I discover to help teach a piece. Now I will add the notes from your magazine to those pages also. That way I won't forget them, since these pages are typically open when I am teaching.

Wilma Hawkins
Via e-mail

Play the right hand softly and smoothly with pedal as indicated. Listen that the pedal changes are connected so that there are no gaps. The directions at the top of the piece indicate "spinning gently". To accomplish this with ease, keep the fingers resting on top of the keys within each pattern.

Play the left hand with pedal. Prepare the crossovers ahead so that there is no delay in the rhythm. Pay careful attention to the dynamic markings. The crossover high notes imitate stars.

Technical point
To control the soft tone of this piece, have the student play with the tone coming from balanced free arms, and with fingers close to the keys. Tonal control and evenness should come from the arms, rather than from individual fingers.

ASSIGNMENT

- Review the pattern groups in the right hand and the crossovers in the left hand, maintaining the indicated dynamic levels.
- Play hands together at a comfortable tempo, without hesitation at the crossovers.
- Listen for a smooth "spinning" effect with stars (higher left-hand notes) shining through.

TEACHING PIANO PEDAGOGY

Kaffee Klatsch

By Marienne Uszler

This is a "special' for all the pedagogy teachers among our newsletter readers. What we're proposing here might fill a need—and trigger some reactions.

All of us like to "sound off" at times. Certain issues keep cropping up that beg for discussion, if not resolution. On certain days, the issues may seem thorny, on others merely puzzling. But we'd like to *talk* about them. And because a pedagogy teacher is most often the lone faculty member to whom these topics *are* issues, the issues themselves never get the attention they deserve. You can't grab a latte and a faculty friend and ask, "What do you do when …" or "How do you feel about …"

Yes, pedagogy conferences and MTNA's pedagogy Saturdays are talk-fest opportunities for those with common concerns, but such meetings are few and far between. You have to pack a bag and go someplace—not to mention paying for airline tickets and room and board. It would be nice if you could talk shop in those moments when you'd really like to "hang out."

Well, you can. We've got a newsletter and a website. Let's use them. Pour that latte and speak up.

We'll put our cards on the table first, face up.

Teaching piano pedagogy has its own challenges.

Some of these are general and global.

- Within a pedagogy curriculum, how do you prioritize all that needs to be taught within the number of allotted semesters, or within a single semester?
- How do you ensure that students have exposure to good teaching at several levels—from preschool to more advanced instruction?

Some challenges juxtapose the ideal and the practical.

- How do you guide students to an understanding of educational theories, yet see to it that they also emerge knowing how to teach specific pianistic skills?
- How can you balance musical and real-world topics to prepare students to run a financially successful and professional independent studio?

Some challenges may be local.

- How do you inspire piano majors whose focus is only on a performing career to take the study of pedagogy seriously?
- How do you develop and sustain piano pedagogy as an important and viable subject when the administration or the keyboard faculty feel otherwise?

Are there answers to these questions?

The big challenges and general questions can't be addressed on a single page, or in a few hundred words. Answers and opinions must be set against a perspective, or stated in relation to fundamental principles. That requires time and space.

Go to www.PianoTeaching.com
Log on to the Piano Club Discussion Forum
Click on "Teaching Piano Pedagogy"
Enjoy a virtual latte and chat with us

But specific issues can be met head on, and these are the types we hope to address in the newsletter and on the website. To do so, we're inaugurating a page on which such questions can be posed and examined. The idea is to provide a forum where practical and theoretical matters can be looked at as honestly and thoroughly as possible. Different people may have different solutions, but an open discussion is a good way to examine a subject from several angles. From there, you can take what you feel makes sense to you.

There are many such issues, of course. While members of the Advisory Board will offer some opinions to get this forum going, we can't know the exact challenges you face in your own classes and schools.

So … here's your chance. What's on *your* mind? We'd like *you* to raise the questions, and we'd also like *you* to offer some solutions.

Take another sip of latte.

Are there some hot-button topics you'd like to see addressed? Do any of these hit home?

There are all those methods …

- Do you (should you) advocate a particular reading approach?
- Do you introduce students to a number of methods, or do you concentrate on just one?
- If you have students prepare reports on different methods, do you (and how do you) guide their examination of a method?
- Do students leave your class knowing you favor (a) certain method(s)?

And there's all that repertoire …

- Do you perform intermediate repertoire for your students?
- Do you require your students to perform intermediate repertoire?
- Do you encourage teaching 20th-century literature?
- What do *you* mean by 20th-century literature? (Yes, we know we're in the 21st century now.)

Well, your latte may be getting cold, but we hope that your pedagogy engine is beginning to fire on all cylinders. Sit down at your computer and tell us what frustrates, puzzles, inspires, or challenges you.

Here's where to find us with *our* cups of coffee.

Frank Hackinson
(frankh@fjhmusic.com)
Marienne Uszler
(muszler@pianoteaching.com)
Randall and Nancy Faber
(faber@pianoteaching.com)

TALKING TECH

The Video Camera: What Students Say

BY MARY TOY

Editor's Note: The first part of this article presents the teacher's point-of-view. (See "The Video Camera: A Teacher's Best Friend," The Piano Adventures® Teacher, December 2003, page 13.) In it you'll find advice on how and what to tape, and how to assign the video for home use.

There are always pros and cons about the use of the video camera in the studio. While the teacher usually sees the most improvement, students also admit to its usefulness.

Students who are having difficulty in a technical area feel they benefit greatly by being able to see a visual demonstration of movements. They appreciate the chance to observe their tensions and see how the teacher presents a solution for relaxation. This enables them to recall the feeling of relaxation, as well as to study the correct approach to the problem. Many students are not aware of their tensions until these are pointed out to them. Often a correction at the lesson does not carry over into the practice session, and this is where the video can perform magic.

Various motions such as horizontal, rotary, wrist, and arm movements are more easily learned when they can be observed during the week of practice. The camera can zoom in to show problems and corrections for these at close range. This is particularly useful for hand position, fingering, "flying off the keys" fingers, and even pedaling. The camera can also zoom out for correction on body alignment and posture. The student can view him or herself as the public does.

A Student Survey

When I took a survey of my students, I found that students felt they received the most benefit from being able to review exactly what went on at the lesson. As Elisa put it, "You can stop the tape and work on an area in depth. A reminder is there to show you how to practice for success. You listen more to your performance, and you can correct mistakes more easily." Alex felt that the video lets her listen with different ears, and teaches her how to listen to herself better when performing.

There is also the element of interpretation. While lengthy discussions on this subject are not suitable for taping, final decisions by the student as to how they wish to convey their intent and a comment or two by the teacher are enough to stimulate more thoughtful ideas during the week. Phrasing is a good example since there are numerous ways to explore shaping possibilities. Balance and voicing are also done through listening. Students can often detect immediately through playback what needs to be corrected. This saves endless time and frustration. Often the self-listening at the lesson or in practice is not focused or intense enough to perceive what needs to be corrected because the student's concentration is on other aspects of performance.

What They Didn't Like

The criticism that came from all students was the time element involved in using the video. They felt that it took time to rewind the tape and to find certain areas that they wished to review. Some felt that the TV was not always available to them or in another room, and that it took away from practice time, "especially if there is too much unnecessary information", as Quincy put it. Christina solves the problem by taking notes from the video. She then uses them in conjunction with the tape. Quincy does the opposite. She likes not having to take notes.

What I Learned from the Survey

I can see I need to be more careful about what and how much I record. We have spoken before (see the December, 2003 issue) about the fact that young people have little tolerance or patience for listening to a great deal of instruction on the video. This goes back to the teacher talking too much and forgetting to turn the record button off! With self-examination on the part of the teacher, improvements can be made to the satisfaction of all.

The student list of pros, however, far outnumbered the cons. All seemed to feel that using a videotape is a worthwhile project. Perhaps one of the biggest assets is teaching students how to listen to themselves. How often when we ask, "Do you hear how you would like this to sound?" or "Did you hear how beautifully you shaped that phrase?" the answer is, "Not really".

Jeff, who is not only very musical but also has a keen sense of humor, gets the final word. "The tape is one more thing to remember to put in your bag. Specific details from the lesson are available for application during practice. Maybe when Mrs. Toy is about to make a key point, she could do a dance or something and we could stop, watch, and listen to it. With the video you have your own portable Mary Toy for the week!"

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

When my nephew Cubby was three, I gave him Composer Baseball Cards, and I made personalized tapes for him that would play music by each composer. For example, when he heard *The New World Symphony*, he would dig through his cards, find Dvořák, and triumphantly announce the correct composer.

When he was four, Cubby's parents took him to a Yankees game. Giant video screens were showing the players and their stats. Suddenly, Cubby exclaimed, "Copland, Mommy. That's Copland!" "No," she said. "That's the right fielder." Cubby persisted. "Copland!" His Dad shook his head. "That's a Yankee baseball player." Cubby got stubborn. "COPLAND." Suddenly his Mom understood. Underscoring the player profiles was *Fanfare for the Common Man*!

Eric Rockwell (Via E-Mail)

TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS

Careers for Pianists: Part Two

By Beth Gigante Klingenstein

Editor's Note: This is the second 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 terminal degrees are not necessary in all cases.

TEACHING CAREERS

INDEPENDENT MUSIC TEACHER (IMT)
Requires
- excellent skills as a pianist and musician
- piano pedagogy courses
- knowledge of teaching literature
- computer skills
- good business skills (such as record-keeping)
- ability to set studio policy
- ability to devise attractive studio documents (such as studio policy sheets)
- long-range plan for accumulation of inventory
- understanding of laws that affect small businesses, local zoning, and tax
- membership in professional organizations

Degrees
BM, MM, DMA in Piano Performance, Piano Pedagogy, Music Education
www.mtna.org Music Teachers National Association
www.pianoguild,com/ American College of Musicians/National Guild of Piano Teachers
www.nfmc-music.org/ National Federation of Music Clubs

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBER
Requires
- excellent skills as a pianist and musician
- special skill in additional area, such as collaborative pianist, chamber music coach, group piano instructor, piano pedagogy
- ability to be flexible and cooperative in a college-university structure
- terminal degree (most institutions)
- membership in professional organizations
- skills and ambition to perform, publish, or contribute to area of expertise

Degrees
BM, MM, DMA in Piano Performance, Piano Pedagogy, Collaborative Arts
www.mtna.org Music Teachers National Association

COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS INSTRUCTOR
Requires
- excellent skills as a pianist and musician
- knowledge of teaching literature
- membership in professional organizations

Degrees
BM, MM, DMA, in Piano Performance Piano Pedagogy, Collaborative Arts
www.nationalguild.org National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts lists certified Community Schools by state

MUSIC STORE INSTRUCTOR
Requires
All as for Independent Music Teacher or Community School of the Arts Instructor depending on the situation

Degrees
BM in Piano Performance, Piano Pedagogy
BM/BS/BA in Music Education

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHER
Requires
- private lessons on a primary and secondary instrument to ensure musicality at the highest possible level
- knowledge of music theory and history
- conducting classes
- elementary education classes
- methods classes

Degrees
BM, MM, DMA in Music Education Performance, Conducting, Choral Studies
BS/BA in Music Education
www.menc.org Music Educators National Conference

JUNIOR HIGH, HIGH SCHOOL BAND/ORCHESTRA DIRECTOR
Requires
- private lessons on a primary and secondary instrument to ensure musicality at the highest possible level
- knowledge of music theory and history
- conducting classes
- secondary education classes
- methods classes in woodwinds, strings, brass, and percussion instruments
- experience in as many ensembles as possible in the college years (band, jazz band, pep band, marching band, orchestra)
- courses in areas such as jazz improvisation, scoring and arranging

Degrees
BM, MM, DMA in Music Education (arranging), Jazz Performance (Instrumental), Jazz Studies, Music Education (Jazz Emphasis)
BS/BA in Music Education
www.menc.org Music Educators National Conference
www.asbda.com/ American School Band Directors Association

JUNIOR HIGH, HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR DIRECTOR
Requires
- vocal methods
- diction classes
- language skills in German, French, and Italian
- conducting classes
- knowledge of music theory and history
- advanced piano skills
- private vocal lessons to ensure singing at highest possible level
- experience in as many ensembles and performance mediums as possible in the college years (choir, swing choir, vocal jazz groups, musicals, operas)

Degrees
BM, MM, DMA in Music Education
BS/BA in Music Education
www.menc.org Music Educators National Conference

K-12 MUSIC INSTRUCTOR
In many small towns in the United States, a single Music teacher must cover all the music classes and ensembles
Requires
All as for Elementary, Junior High, and High School general music, vocal, and instrumental instruction
- strong organizational skills

Degrees
BM in Music Education (Composite Vocal and Instrumental)
BS in Music Education
www.menc.org Music Educators National Conference

FAMILY TREE

Releasing the Splendor

BY MARIENNE USZLER

It's sometimes difficult to appreciate the originality of an idea or the foresight it may have taken to put a plan into action if the idea is now regarded as obvious or if the plan is a taken-for-granted design. Those teachers, composers, and authors who wrote piano methods that broke new ground in their own day are not always given the credit they deserve for discovering and smoothing the paths we now walk with confidence and ease. Redressing that wrong, of course, is the purpose of "Family Tree."

Angela Diller (1877-1968) and Elizabeth Quaile (1874-1951) are no longer pedagogy "household names" even though the school they founded in 1920 is still a thriving New York City music institution. The Diller-Quaile school evolved from their belief that teaching music to children ought to be child-centered rather than piano-centered—a novel idea at the time.

In the early 1900s, they were fellow faculty members at the Third Street Settlement School where Diller headed the Theory Department and Quaile the Piano Department. Well aware of how pianists were trained and of the books and methods used to do so, both women were determined to change that process. They also realized they would have to write their own material.

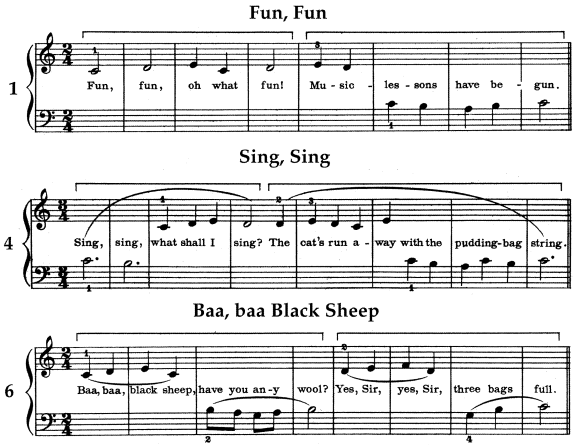
Diller and Quaile believed in an approach that was rooted in singing before playing—beginning with something a child could do with ease, then moving to how the song, with interpretation based on the words and phrasing, could be performed at the piano. "Musical" and "natural" would be good words to describe their educational philosophy. Other educators were promoting similar beliefs at nearly the same time, though not with particular reference to music.

Diller and Quaile's *First Solo Book* was published in 1918, two years after they had left the Third Street Settlement School to help found, with David Mannes, the school now known as the Mannes College of Music, and two years before they established their own school. One of the principal innovations of the Diller-Quaile School was that students were jointly enrolled in piano and theory instruction. Activities included singing, rhythmic experiences, and aural training. From the outset, and as stated in the preface to this first book, students were taught to transpose. The choice of music and its presentation demonstrate that Diller and Quaile were concerned with musicianship.

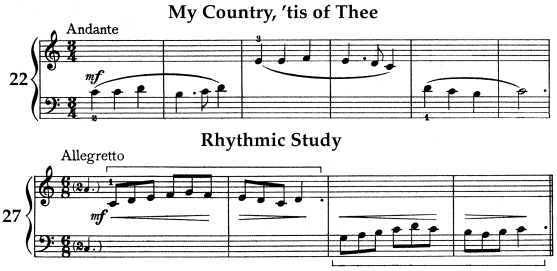
The first six pieces have words, and the brackets indicate the shape of the musical idea. Most basic rhythms, with the exception of the whole note, appear immediately. Eighth notes appear in Example 6, and are "natural" to the word rhythm.

From Example 7 to the end of the book, there are no words, but most of the examples are folk music drawn from many different countries and cultures. Major, minor, and modal melodies are intermixed freely. Key signatures of one and two sharps and one flat are used early and freely throughout the book.

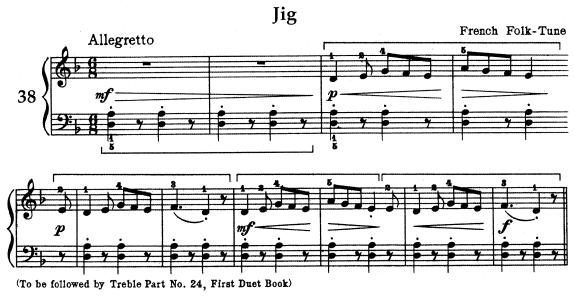
Hand positions begin to change as early as Example 9, although they remain close to the middle of the keyboard until Example 38. In the pieces that follow, the left hand begins to move toward C below Middle C.



The notation of dotted-quarter notes is unique. The dot is placed where the equivalent note would be. Examples in compound time use two time signatures.



The difficulty of the music advances rapidly. Playing hands together (with one small exception) begins in Example 38 and is used thereafter in every piece.



There were four Solo Books, the first three each matched by a duet book. The *First Solo Book* was very popular, selling over two million copies. Thirteen of the books are still in print.

Toward the end of her very long life, Diller wrote a lovely book, *The Splendor of Music* (1957) in which she artfully extolled two splendors, each needing to be discovered and released: the music behind the symbols and the music within each person. As she put it, "The fusing of these two splendors is one of the important aims of music education."