

**CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO  
ELEMENTARY PIANO PEDAGOGY:  
A Study of Original Pedagogical Pieces and Representative  
Elementary Learning Scenarios, with a Study on the Integration of  
Visual Art and Literature into Music Instruction**

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**A thesis  
presented to the Independent Studies Program  
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in fulfilment of the  
thesis requirements for the degree  
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**Waterloo, Canada**

**2016**

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Julia Jacklein

## **Thesis Abstract**

This thesis presents four original compositions for solo piano, each representing one of four elementary-level learning stages. These learning stages may be defined as the pre-reading level, the preparatory level, and Royal Conservatory Grades 1 and 2. Each composition introduces basic musical skills representing standard pedagogical requirements for the given level. An analytical essay describes the pedagogical significance of these compositions, also detailing how each may be taught to an elementary-level student of typical abilities. Three lesson plans and corresponding evaluations demonstrate lesson planning, presentation, and evaluation in elementary-level teaching scenarios; two further lesson plans for hypothetical students at the Grade 1 and Grade 2 levels represent slightly more advanced teaching scenarios. The research demonstrates that students retain information in a more comprehensive and meaningful way when art forms other than music reinforce musical experiences by combining visual, aural, and kinesthetic learning.

## Introductory Notes

Readers are asked to note that throughout this thesis, where student(s) and teacher(s) are referred to without reference to gender, student(s) will be referred to using the masculine gender, and teacher(s) will be referred to using the feminine gender.

Throughout this thesis, in discussions about fingering and in any reference to finger numbers, finger numbers will be referred to using Arabic numerals. For example, the left hand fifth finger will be identified as "left hand 5." For the sake of consistency, the individual hands will be referred to as "left hand" and "right hand," even in instances where "left-hand" or "right-hand" may appear equally, or more, appropriate. In some of the musical scores the words "left hand" will be abbreviated as "L.H." The words "right hand" will be abbreviated as "R.H."

In the lesson plans, lesson plan content and the recommended means of teaching it will be presented in straight formatting; all explanations of why something is taught a certain way will be presented in italics.

In the lesson evaluations, the teaching process, i.e. what was taught and how it was taught, will be presented in straight formatting; reflections on whether or not the teaching process was effective will be presented in italics.

All shorter musical examples presented in the context of the lesson plans and evaluations are excerpts beginning with bar 1 of the exercise or piece in question, unless otherwise specified.

The length of time, in minutes, assigned to each lesson component presented in the lesson plans and evaluations is identified with a number at the bottom right of each section.

Julia Jacklein

# **An Examination of Four Original, Progressively Graded Elementary Level Piano Pieces, with Teaching Recommendations, and a Discussion on the Incorporation of Visual Art and Literature into Music Instruction**

When teaching students at the elementary levels, the strategic introduction of new concepts is particularly important. A good teacher will consider factors such as a student's age, aural development, and practice environment when planning his program of study. Additional factors for consideration are the degree of support from home (e.g. whether or not the parents have knowledge of music and are able to help with written work), special learning needs, and a student's previous learning experiences. This thesis presents four original piano compositions for pedagogical application at four progressive elementary level learning stages. These learning stages may be identified as the Pre-Staff Reading Level, the Preparatory Level, Grade 1, and Grade 2. The present essay will outline the pedagogical value of these compositions, also detailing how each may be taught to an average-age beginner of typical abilities with substantial parental support.

## **Composition I: *Puppies at Play* (Pre-Staff Reading Level)**

Pre-Staff Reading in music describes the learning stage immediately prior to that where a student learns staff notation. At this point, a student has been taught finger numbers and an understanding of where the high and low registers are located on the keyboard and how they sound. He has learned the geography of the keyboard by playing groups of two and three black keys up and down the keyboard. He has been introduced to note durations such as quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes, and knows how they are represented using symbols.

Correct posture needs to be introduced from the start. Elements include: a torso that is well centered on the bench so the student feels balanced, feet that are flat on the floor or on a

stool, and a sitting position on the front third of the bench. Forearms will be parallel to the keyboard with the elbows relaxed and pointing to the floor. Students have already learned to keep a closed hand position, so the bridge is higher than the wrist. The hands rest on the keyboard with space underneath the palms.

The student at the Pre-Staff Reading Level has learned that music notation is read from left to right on a page and that note reading is done directionally. This means that, after identifying the correct fingerings using graphic notation (normally at the top of the page), the student moves his fingers based on the placement of each note (higher or lower on the page) in relation to the other notes. Finger numbers are written at the side of each note to facilitate reading. Thus, ascending notes on the page represent ascending notes on the keyboard, and descending notes on the page represent descending notes on the keyboard. Students are taught that initially all right hand notes have stems going up and all left hand notes have stems going down. The piece *Puppies at Play* consolidates information most students will have absorbed by the second month of study by combining skills learned separately prior to this point. For example, in this piece, the student learns to navigate the groups of two and three black keys confidently with each hand while applying a firm fingertip grip and observing rhythmic continuity throughout. Being able to apply skills simultaneously rather than individually is the foundation of confident piano playing. The piece also offers the opportunity for the student to use verbalization<sup>1</sup> through naming finger numbers, through a counting system, and by singing the words of the piece. This allows the student to become more actively involved in his playing.

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<sup>1</sup> In the broadest sense, verbalization in music refers to the use of speech to reinforce one or several components of the music (such as counting) during practice. Sometimes verbalization is used as a spoken reinforcement of the pianist's physical movements in order to achieve greater control of a performance. Metelsky states that "When supporting an action through the use of words, the intention of the doer is focused more deeply in what is being done. The vocal resonance of verbalization connects to a person's rhythmical center in the body's core, which also activates a rhythmical response." (Metelsky, November 28).



Compositional Score I: *Puppies at Play*

**Puppies at Play**

The diagram shows a keyboard with two hands. The left hand (L.H.) has fingers 4, 2, and 2 on three keys. The right hand (R.H.) has fingers 2, 3, and 4 on three keys.

Notes and fingerings:

- Notes: 4, 3, 2 (circled)
- Piano notes: P<sub>2</sub>, P<sub>4</sub>, 3 (circled)

R.H. 4 3 2


See the pups

Say: "woof,"


L.H. rom- ping round

4 3 2

Say: "woof,"


R.H.  Hap- pi- ly

on spring- y ground.

L.H. 


*Pause a moment*


*And continue*

R.H.  Jum- ping,

*mp*


rol- ling,

L.H. 

R.H.  all in


*mf*


a

L.H. 

*Depress right pedal*


bounce.

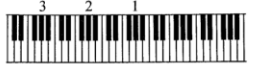
L.H. 

R.H. 

Soft-ly wai-ting,

*p*

L.H. 




When you see the downward arrow on the music (→), move your hand to the next lowest group of three black keys and continue playing in that hand position.


When you see the arrow again, move your hand once more to the next lowest group of three black keys. Look at the keyboard diagram to understand these movements better.

1. This is your starting position.
2. Then move your hand to this position.
3. Last of all, move your hand to this position.


- Remember always to use fingers 2-3-4 on a group of three black keys.

L.H. 

→




→




*Lift pedal*

*Return L.H. to its starting position*

R.H. 


Wai-ting,

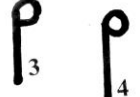
*mp*

R.H. 

wai-ting to leap and pounce.

*mf*

L.H. 

L.H. 

When you see the upward arrow on the music (  $\nearrow$  ), move your hand to the next highest group of three black keys and continue playing in that hand position. When you see the arrow again, move your hand once more to the next highest group of three black keys. Look at the keyboard diagram to understand these movements better.



1. This is your starting position.
2. Then move your hand to this position.
3. Last of all, move your hand to this position.

- Remember always to use fingers 2-3-4 on a group of three black keys.

*Depress right pedal*

R.H.

4

List- en, sh... sh...

*p*

4 3 2

4 3 2

*Return R.H. to its starting position*

*And repeat the pattern*

R.H.

4

Soft- ly, sh... sh...

4 3 2

4 3 2

*Lift pedal*

*mf* See the pups Fris- king round

R.H. 2 3 4 Say: "grrr,"

L.H. 2 3 4 Say: "woof,"

Bar- king ha- ving so much

R.H. 2 3 4 3

L.H. 3 4 Say: "boun- cing,"

*f*

R.H. 3 2 4 3 2

L.H. 3 4 4 3 2

good fun!

*mf* *mp* *p*

4

Now the puppies have played enough and snuggle up together for a good nap. Sleep well!

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When introducing this piece, the teacher may ask: "Have you seen dogs playing together?" or "What do you notice about dogs when they play together?" The teacher will give the student time to answer on his own: retention is typically better when students think through questions without assistance, since learning thereby becomes active rather than passive. A teacher will keep in mind that some students have not had the basic experiences that help them to relate to an idea. The teacher may ask the student to clap through the piece while counting out loud, putting the dogs' bouncy energy into each clap! Each individual quarter note value will be counted: "1, 1, 1, 1."<sup>2</sup> The student proceeds by verbalizing finger numbers from beginning to end, at the same time moving the fingers which correspond to the finger numbers being identified. The student learns to play each finger with personal energy and rhythmicity and without any muscular pressure. The student is advised to keep the fingers well extended, in closed hand position, with fingertips at the key surface and the bridge elevated. This is accomplished with the thumb bracing the playing finger, and helps focus the tone.

Most young children are curious and will enjoy the combination of speaking and playing in *Puppies at Play*. With shy children it is essential for the teacher to be upbeat when demonstrating the spoken words and syllables. As the child absorbs the teacher's energy he will realize that there is no reason to be self-conscious and gradually feel more at ease. To simplify the task of articulating the spoken passages rhythmically, the student may sing the notes leading up to the spoken word/syllable on "ba" or another strong consonant, thereby making the spoken word a rhythmic continuation of the previous sung syllables. The student is encouraged to alternate this approach with that of counting out loud while playing the notes leading up to the

---

<sup>2</sup> Students have not yet learned time signatures at this point, so counting "1, 2, 3, 4" to represent a bar of 4/4 time would be confusing.

spoken syllable: "I, I, I, woof." These strategies help train a student's kinesthetic response to rhythm.

### **Composition II: *Snow Swirls* (Preparatory Level)**

There are two versions of this piece: one intended for students at the Preparatory A Level<sup>3</sup>, and a second version intended for students at the Preparatory B Level. Preparatory A describes the learning stage where a student has begun to read notation on the staff, is familiar with the importance of fingering, dynamics (*p*, *mp*, *mf* and *f*), Italian terms (*allegro*, *ottava*), time signatures (4/4 and 3/4), and legato and staccato articulation. Many elementary-level students are capable of learning important techniques such as circular rotation, which may be taught beginning at the Preparatory A Level. According to Lynda Metelsky, "These techniques are important to sound [production] and [to] phrasing; they also teach good physical habits that help to prevent physical tension<sup>4</sup>." (Metelsky, February 11). At the Preparatory B Level, a student has begun to read sharps and flats on the staff and has had experience of reading clef changes on a staff. The student at this level is more adept at transitioning from one hand to the other. He has encountered some pieces with left hand melodies (instead of right hand melodies, as previously). The growth from Preparatory A to Preparatory B is also characterized by an increase of musical textures and more rapid alternations between playing techniques and articulations.

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<sup>3</sup> The Preparatory A version of *Snow Swirls* has been performed by students on three different occasions thus far: twice at private studio recitals (Summer 2015 and Christmas 2015), and once at a Canada Music Week recital organized by the Ontario Registered Music Teachers' Association (November 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Techniques such as circular rotation and staccato or slur releases may be choreographed using a system of symbols, marked directly on a pianist's score, to serve as reminders of correct playing technique. Refer to Appendix B for descriptions of the most common keyboard choreography markings. Composition II, Preparatory A version, illustrates how some of the symbols representing physical choreography at the keyboard may be placed directly on a musical score, to remind a student of correct hand movements during practice.

Compositional Score II, Version 1: *Snow Swirls*, Preparatory A Level

---

Snow Swirls

Julia S. Jacklein

Softly Swirling

1 3 1 1 3 1 1 2 3

9 1 3 1 4 3 2 5 4 3 2 1 1 2 3

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Compositional Score II, Version 2: *Snow Swirls*, Preparatory B Level

---



# Snow Swirls

Julia S. Jacklein

Softly Swirling

17

25

mp

mf

mp

dim.

8<sup>va</sup>

8<sup>va</sup>

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Both versions of *Snow Swirls* help develop the ability to shift energy seamlessly between the two sides of the body. The piece's expression marking, "*Endlessly Swirling*," indicates that an uninterrupted, almost hypnotic, forward momentum is intended throughout.

## Teaching *Snow Swirls*

First the teacher may ask the student what comes to mind when reading the title. A short exploration of the score will help the student discover parallels between the descriptive words of the title and the character of music. The teacher may ask: "What does snow look like when it is swirling?" She may continue: "I'm going to play the piece now: could you try to trace the swirling snow in the air as I play?" This kind of discussion reminds the student that a performer is first of all a communicator. To develop technical control, the student is encouraged to apply a set of common practice guidelines recommended for students at the elementary levels. Refer to Appendix A for a personal studio version of these guidelines<sup>5</sup>. These practice steps will be taught at the student's first lesson when learning a new piece, and applied during practice. The teacher will check that the student plays with consistently correct body posture. At the student's second lesson learning *Snow Swirls*, he may focus on communicating the ceaseless "swirling" quality of the music. To do so, he will begin by playing either the right hand or left hand line of music on its own while the teacher plays the music written for the other hand, preferably on another keyboard instrument, or an octave higher, leaving the student his own playing space. Through this activity, the student concentrates on hearing a continual swirl of movement without the challenge of coordinating both hands. Next, he can verbalize or sing the sounds that the teacher played, before fully replacing the teacher's playing by playing the notes themselves. This learning strategy helps the student feel the music interiorly: by singing, he experiences the music's vibration within his vocal cords and in the bones of his face<sup>6</sup>. The body has now become the musical instrument. The effectiveness of this strategy depends on the maturity and musicality of the student. Very young students often have difficulty finding a pitch; occasionally an older transfer student's aural skills have not been developed sufficiently for the singing to work well.

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<sup>5</sup> At more advanced levels an adapted version of these guidelines may be followed.

<sup>6</sup> For a more in-depth examination of the ways in which the bones of the face may act as transmitters of sound, refer to writings on the Tomatis Method<sup>®</sup> by Paul Madaule (Madaule, 39, 93, 112).

With such students, the teacher may help by initially singing along with the student or encourage a spoken tone.

When teaching the Preparatory B version of the piece, the teacher will ensure that the student balances his body carefully when playing in the high register. The student learns to face his playing hand when playing at the extremities of the keyboard. He also learns to keep the right foot in front of the left while playing, for optimal balance. (The left foot acts as a counterbalance).

### **Composition III: *Good Morning, Chickadee* (Grade 1 Level)**

As a student enters Grade 1, the portrayal of images through music becomes increasingly important. By Grade 1, a student has learned such musical fundamentals as basic notation (including the most common Italian terms, articulations, and time signatures), as well as basic keyboard choreography and pedaling. A student has been introduced to binary and ABA form and basic harmonies of I, IV, and V, and has learned to recognize these chord shapes in their broken forms. *Good Morning, Chickadee* is a piece that helps a student internalize these skills more fully before entering Grade 2. The piece has several characteristics typical of Grade 1-level repertoire (more frequent changes of register, key signature, and clef; more frequent pedal changes and new Italian terms. Its most important attribute is its potential to encourage involvement of the student's imagination. Through the colourful word imagery of the title, and from the images created through the sound of the music, the student develops a clearer sense for how the title of a piece may be characterized musically and how each symbol on a score serves to bring a title to life. The slurs of various lengths featured in *Good Morning, Chickadee*, are challenging both for the ear and the technique, and could be an area of focus during lessons. The young student learns to distinguish between the melodic motif representing the chickadee and the

longer notes supporting the chickadee motif. The changing meter encourages the student to count out loud and to preserve a clear downbeat no matter what time signatures used. Further, the piece "introduces the use of pedal for sonority and imagination" (Metelsky, December 3). Because pedaling is not a constant here, the student actively experiences its impact on the sound when it is marked. The frequent clef changes develop versatility by repeatedly changing the student's reference point.

### Teaching *Good Morning, Chickadee*

A teacher can find out if the student knows what a chickadee looks and sounds like, and whether he can mimic a chickadee's call. She will ask him where and in what kind of a situation he encountered the chickadee, and who shared the experience? Knowing this enables a teacher to approach teaching the piece in a way most specifically suited to the student.

The teacher will first play the "chickadee theme" on its own for easy recognition. Then she might play the whole piece, asking the student to listen for the "chickadee theme" and raising his hand whenever he hears it. This develops the ability to identify motivic material by ear. (Later, when reading the score, the student learns to recognize the same motif visually). The student may arrive at an individual conception of the music by thinking through and answering

### Compositional Score III: Good Morning, Chickadee

---

# Good Morning, Chickadee

Julia S. Jacklein

Sweetly

4 2 4 5 2 5 3 5 2 3 1

*mf* *mp* *mf*

1 4 5 1 3 5 3

7 5 3 5 4 3 5 1 3 5 3 1 3

*p* *mf* *mp*

15 1 3 5 3 2 3 4 2 4

*p* *pp* *mp*

22 15<sup>ma</sup> 2 1 *loco* *a tempo* 4 2 5 3 1 4

*mp*

27 4 2 3 1

*mp*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

*Knock with  
knuckles  
on fallboard*

32

38

*mf*

*mp*

*P*

Ped.

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such questions as: "Where is the chickadee – in the woods or in a park? Why do you think so? What else do you hear in the piece, besides the chickadee?" The teacher will play the piece once more, now asking the student to raise his hand when he hears something that is not the chickadee theme. Afterward, the discussion may continue in order for the teacher to learn what the student hears in those other sounds. The student is advised to create a written "storyboard" directly on the score, describing his conception of the story told by the music. Some students may benefit from making a list of descriptive words before choosing the most suitable ones to be written on the score. The teacher may either supervise this project or give it as written work at home. The process of writing down interpretive ideas helps the student think about exactly what he wants to portray at a given point in the music. This process also encourages careful thought about what the composer intended when choosing particular symbols for the expression of her ideas. The student's use of simple emoticons representing emotions or ideas, marked directly on the score, is likewise helpful, especially with visual learners or students whose reading and writing skills are less developed than those of their peers.

As when learning any previously unfamiliar repertoire, the student is encouraged to apply the practice guidelines detailed in Appendix A, for the development of technical confidence. To address the challenge of playing slurs on either a weak or strong beat, the teacher can write down syllables whose rhythmic inflection matches that of the music. Such syllables will differ from one student to another, depending on the student's age and extra-musical interests. Thus, for a young student who likes cats, the syllables "me-ow" could be written under each of the first four sets of eighth notes connected by a slur. (The word "meow" has its emphasis on the second syllable, as do all of the above-mentioned slurs). Where the pattern of slurs changes to two consecutive sets of three eighth notes connected by slurs, the words: "A lit-tle fur-ry cat" would match the musical inflection.

When practicing the repeated meter changes, a student is advised to count out loud while looking at least one bar ahead. The added internal impulse of counting out loud enables the student to connect with the music in his physical core rather than on a predominantly auditory level. The teacher may highlight each meter change, using a different colour for each time signature involved. This will be particularly useful for visual learners. A kinesthetic learner may benefit from receiving a tactile cue, such as a light touch on the shoulder, to signal a time signature change; an aural learner may benefit from an auditory cue (such as a spoken reminder from the teacher of an upcoming time signature change). Students will also profit from speaking a strong syllable (such as "ba") on the first beat of each bar, while playing, to allow the irregular emphases within the music to become ingrained on both an aural and a physical level. When these points have been addressed, practice will centre on communicating the image of the chickadee as vividly as possible. The teacher may play an audio or video recording of a chickadee chirping. The teacher will also remind the student to think of the image he

documented in his storyboard and to bring that image to life. The student is encouraged to record himself during practice, then listen to the recording to assess how effectively he portrayed the chickadee image, and after further practice record himself again. This process may reveal musical and technical inconsistencies of which the student was unaware.

#### **Composition IV: *Elegy for a Cat* (Grade 2 Level)**

In Grade 2, a student continues to consolidate technical and musical skills acquired at earlier levels. Many of these skills, having been learned separately, are now combined in more complex learning scenarios. Cultivating authenticity and performance is a primary goal. Doing so is crucial because performances lacking in conviction or deeper involvement from the performer will not engage the listener.

*Elegy for a Cat* is written for a student approaching the end of Grade 2 with a focus on developing imitation and counterpoint. It is largely imitative, which means that a melody is stated, and as that melody grows, the same melody is stated again contrapuntally. The student aims to shape each melodic line individually, so that one melodic line may, for instance, reach its climax while the other is still growing. Much keyboard music of the Common Practice Period (circa 1650-1900) performed by modern musicians involves the coexistence of several voices within the musical texture. Therefore, it is important that the student begins to develop the ability to recognize and control the interplay of two or more voices<sup>7</sup>.

#### **Compositional Score IV: *Elegy for a Cat***

---

---

<sup>7</sup> At higher levels, the student learns to recognize and control the interplay of three or more voices.



# Elegy for a Cat

For Toby

Julia S. Jacklein

Sorrowfully, ♩ = 96

1 2 3 4 5 3 1 3 1 1 2 3 4 5 2

2 1 3 2 1 2 4 1 5 2 1 3 2 1 3 1 2

7 5 1 4 3 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 1 4 2 1

5 4 3 5 2 1 3 2 1 3 1 2 5 1 2 1

12 2 1 3 4 5-1 5 3 2 1 2 3 4 5 1 3

1 2 1 5 4 3 5 2 1 3 2 3 1 2 4 5 1

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Another significant component of *Elegy for a Cat* is the movement of quarter notes against dotted quarter notes and eighth notes. This rhythmic texture trains the ability to feel two rhythms simultaneously within the rhythmical center of the body, and to both sense and communicate both rhythms with precision. With early level students, a frequently encountered issue is the tendency to play directly, without the deeper connectedness to music that an older student may achieve. It is then up to the teacher to provide experiences that allow the student to relate more closely to the music. For example, in-lesson use of a large drum, preferably one that can be held between the legs for the direct absorption of its vibrations, allows a child to

experience rhythm as a steady physical as well as auditory impulse. It is the physical aspect of this experience that gives immediacy to the encounter with rhythm. The movement of quarter notes against dotted quarter notes and eighth notes in *Elegy for a Cat* also supports the development of independence between aural and tactile processes. Very young children tend to imitate in their bodies what their ears perceive, and therefore the act of drumming with independent hands is a helpful extension of what they hear.

### Teaching *Elegy for a Cat*

A pedagogically valuable component of *Elegy for a Cat* is its expressive character, which encourages a student to use his musical imagination. To help the student understand the character of an elegy, the teacher can describe an elegy as being a short piece of music or poetry mourning a death and wistfully recalling life. She might inquire to find out what kinds of experiences the student has had in connection with death. The teacher may mention that the loss of an animal (i.e. a cat) could be related to this piece.

The teacher might ask the student to think back to a time when he was very sad for some reason – possibly about the loss of a pet or something treasured. She could ask the student to make a list of words that describe what he felt at the time. Then she could play the piece while the student listens carefully and underlines any of the words from his list that he thinks describe the mood of the music. He may cross out any words that he feels do not match the music. This activity allows a student to connect to the music through his own specific emotions around an experience, rather than through the instructions of an adult. Next, the teacher may ask the student to look over the remaining list carefully before hearing her play the piece once more. While listening a second time, the student may call out some of his descriptive words where he feels they apply. Doing so encourages active listening. It develops the ability to discern what is

aesthetically compatible from what is not, and demonstrates for the teacher part of the thought process by which various qualities of the music are identified. This same approach may be taken using visual art instead of descriptive words. The teacher may provide the student with a selection of art reproductions for this purpose<sup>8</sup>. A beginning student may identify artworks that match the music in terms of their overall mood. As a student advances, he will learn to describe that mood in detail. He will learn to identify different types of energy, both within art and music. He may also equate the symmetry of musical form such as ABA form with visual symmetry such as a striped pattern beginning with one colour, continuing with a contrasting colour, and finishing with the initial colour.

After following the practice guidelines recommended for learning rhythmic, notational, and technical details (outlined in Appendix A), the student is ready to apply his skills in these areas towards conveying the piece's musical structure. To do this, the student might explore the form of the piece, the appearance of imitation and homophonic structure, and the basic tonic and dominant harmony. The student can identify the highpoint of each phrase (since each musical statement must evolve towards that highpoint). Singing the individual voices can help the student experience a phrase's movement toward this highpoint kinesthetically as well as aurally. Once he is able to vocally shape both parts with confidence, he may try playing each while singing it, so that the hands learn by imitating the singing voice. Then each voice can be played by itself. Then, the teacher can play the lower (left hand) part, preferably on a separate instrument, while the student plays the upper (right hand) part, and vice versa. This can help a student weave together the music's expressive layers. As the student gains confidence, he may quietly sing the teacher's part on a syllable such as "la" as he continues to play his own part. It is important that the consonant used be a soft one such as "la," "ma" or "na." Hard consonants such as "ka" or "ta"

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<sup>8</sup> Postcards are ideal for this purpose, since several may be placed on the music rack simultaneously.

are inconsistent with the music's plaintive legato character. Eventually the student's singing may fully replace the teacher's playing<sup>9</sup>. The successful completion of this final step demonstrates that the student has developed an aural memory for each part individually and in combination.

To learn the middle section (bars 8-12) which has a more homophonic texture, it is useful to verbalize the rhythm of the melody line on a strong consonant. Because this is a rhythmic rather than expressive detail, the use of a strong consonant is recommended to encourage clear rhythmic articulation. Beginning with bar 8, the student may play the section hands separately, saying: "ta-ah-ah" (for the dotted half note) and "ta" (for the quarter note on beat 4 of bar 8). It is important to articulate the internal subdivision of beats through this kind of clearly punctuated verbalization, so that the hierarchy of the rhythmic subdivisions may be accurately internalized. Students with small hands may have difficulty playing the adjacent harmonic intervals in bars 8, 9, 11 and 12. With these students, the teacher can encourage additional separate hands practice of the harmonic intervals with a hand position that keeps a high bridge while extending the fingers ahead. The hand opens between the thumb and second finger, and the wrist remains lower than the bridge. (This is called extended hand position). After following the steps outlined above, the student is ready to practice the piece hands together, striving for independence of the musical voices where the music is imitative and aiming for a homogenous sound in the middle section.

To develop a student's ability to play two dissimilar rhythms simultaneously (in this instance, the quarter note rhythm against the dotted quarter and eighth note rhythm), the teacher can ask him to tap the right hand rhythm with the right hand and the left hand rhythm with the left hand, first individually and then simultaneously, while counting out loud. As the student

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<sup>9</sup> With pieces of music that are fully imitative, a further effective strategy is to line up the right hand and left hand lines of music vertically, and then play them hands together to practice an expressive intonation. Since the present piece at times diverges from its imitative pattern, applying this strategy in this context could confuse the student.

gains confidence, he may clap one rhythm while the teacher claps the other. Learning the rhythms may be broken up into shorter sections of a few bars each. Visual learners may benefit from seeing the rhythm written down (outside of the context of the music); kinesthetic learners may benefit from having the rhythm(s) tapped on the shoulder(s) while tapping them himself; if the student learns aurally, learning the rhythm through chanting it as the teacher counts, through clapping back and playing back may be most suitable. It is up to the teacher to identify how a student learns best and to support that learning preference while strengthening weaker areas.

To help a student to better communicate the expressive character of the music, the teacher may ask him to think about what kinds of instruments, other than piano, the piece could be scored for. Here a discussion of orchestral instruments will prove informative. Because piano writing often imitates the sounds of other instruments, knowledge of the various instrument families and their respective characteristics is an asset to any pianist. For a thorough child-oriented introduction to the orchestra, Benjamin Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* is an inspiring choice. This work is a set of variations on a theme by Henry Purcell (1659-1695), each of which showcases a particular instrument or group of instruments. The work includes narration describing the various instrument families and their characteristics. The guidebook entitled *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra – Teaching Strategies for the Classroom* (Ball) provides teachers with ideas on how to present the orchestral instruments to young students.

### ***Integrating Visual Art and Literature into Music Instruction***

Visual art, literature, and other artistic media may be incorporated into music instruction to enhance a student's understanding of his repertoire. Involvement with artistic media from different cultures and time periods encourages students to see music within the broader context

of human life. Exposure to the visual arts helps children to understand the abstract qualities of music through a more accessible visual medium, allowing each young person to expand his imagination as he becomes familiar with artistic milestones from history. Involvement with diverse art forms also fosters curiosity for what is aesthetically unfamiliar, expanding the learner's relationship with the world. The recitation of poetry strengthens a person's inner connectedness to an external rhythmic impulse (the poem's meter). Poetry teaches a student to recognize, and ultimately to connect with and communicate, a rhythmic impulse; after thus experiencing rhythm through poetry, which by using explicit words is less abstract than music, the student will approach rhythm in music with greater understanding. When poetry is deliberately matched with repertoire, it provides an aesthetic point of reference or comparison for the young learner. If a student is learning a piece in which the music soars like an eagle, the teacher may, for example, choose to read to him the following excerpt from *The Eagle* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

He clasps the crag with his crooked hands:  
Close to the sun in the lonely lands,  
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.  
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls. (Tennyson 50)

To help a child realize the storytelling quality which is part of every good performance, the teacher may choose to read him a narrative poem. She may ask him to think about how the poetic image(s) could be musically represented and to identify specific words to be matched with improvised musical motifs. (If the student has difficulty doing so, the teacher may provide him

with two or three musical motifs from which to choose the most compatible one. The teacher will ask the student to explain his choice, thereby encouraging him to rationalize his interpretation). Then she may ask him to return to his repertoire, now thinking of a convincing story to match the shape, texture and emotional energy of the music. A poem that could be used for this purpose is *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* by Edward Lear<sup>10</sup>:

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea-green boat:  
They took some honey, and plenty of money  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.  
The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
And sang to a small guitar,  
"O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are,  
You are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!" (Lear 210)

When choosing poetry for use with children, it is important to remember that works which are upbeat and rhythmic, using vivid word painting, alliteration and onomatopoeic effects will appeal to a child's innate playfulness and will therefore often work well in teaching<sup>11</sup>.

Dennis Lee's *The Muddy Puddle* is a poem that exhibits all of these characteristics and describes an experience to which children will readily relate:

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to Appendix C to see this poem in its entirety.

<sup>11</sup> Some children will be naturally drawn toward more somber, reflective pieces of poetry. The teacher will use her knowledge of the child's temperament when selecting poetry for use during lessons. She will aim to present a well-balanced selection of poems which provide opportunities for growth in many directions.

I am sitting  
In the middle  
Of a rather Muddy  
Puddle,  
With my bottom  
Full of bubbles  
And my rubber  
Full of Mud,  
While my jacket  
And my sweater  
Go on slowly  
Getting wetter  
As I very  
Slowly settle  
To the Bottom  
Of the Mud.

And I find that  
What a person  
With a puddle  
Around his middle  
Thinks of mostly  
In the model



Is the Muddi-

Ness of Mud. (Lee 14)

When a student reinforces his encounter with art, literature and music through strong, large-muscle body movements, the aesthetic structure of the artwork in question is effectively internalized and long-term retention of the learning experience enhanced. Stepping in time to music played by the teacher, conducting a simple rhythm with one arm while the teacher plays, and acting out a poem or picture are all ways in which movement may reinforce learning. Learning through movement is particularly important for students who have had minimal exposure to either the arts or nature, or both, and whose opportunities to experience unfamiliar sensory impressions have therefore been limited. To better illustrate ways in which visual art and literature may enhance music instruction, it is perhaps useful to consider a specific teaching scenario.

First of all, let it be noted that while the example given describes a possible approach to teaching music in a specific cultural context, a comparable approach will be taken with music representing other cultural and ethnic traditions as they relate to a student's learning. Discussions will be historical rather than religious in content and will present the tradition(s) under discussion in a world context. The teacher can emphasize inclusiveness of and respect for other people and cultures.

It is appropriate for a student to learn piano music for carols during the Christmas season. For the present example, let us assume that a student is learning music for carols to be performed at a Christmas recital. The teacher begins by finding out what the student knows about each piece and about Christmas in general. (A good teacher will not make assumptions regarding a student's knowledge of either. Many children have not learned to sing carols for different cultural

and/or educational reasons. With the increasing secularization of Christmas, the historical basis of the event is sometimes not remembered). Once the student's knowledge level has been established, the teacher can explain the carol texts, ensuring that any unusual or archaic word meanings have been clarified. The teacher may ask the student to listen to choral versions of the carols, preferably in video format, for a basic sense of the music's structural and aesthetic components. Teacher and student will then discuss the video, possibly watching it a second time<sup>12</sup>. Video details discussed between teacher and student may include how the music enhances the words, the role of the performance environment (church, community centre) and its impact on the quality of the music, as well as the musical elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and texture. This will be done in an age-appropriate and level-appropriate way. In an analysis of rhythm, for example, a seven-year-old may be asked to identify the general speed of the music and to clap back one or two bars played by the teacher; a 12-year-old may be asked to identify the music's time signature and describe its main characteristics (dancelike, marchlike, etc.). A teacher will take into account the student's disposition, learning style and learning background when approaching this kind of discussion.

Keeping in mind that a teacher's primary aim is to make learning relevant to the student, the teacher may describe details of the Christmas story. When doing so, she will emphasize the story's human elements (i.e. the birth of a child to a mother and father; the world's acknowledgment of supreme goodness in one of its own), telling it as she might tell a child's bedtime story. Children will identify with the story more closely when told as an archetypally human, rather than religious narrative. They will relate to its universal qualities. If the teacher is

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<sup>12</sup> Because many factors in our environment support visual, rather than aural or kinesthetic means of communication and/or learning, students' comprehension through visual means is often better. This trend is illustrated by the increasing number of music method books featuring colourful images throughout. Teaching in elementary schools tends to favour a visual, rather than aural or kinesthetic approach. The prevalence of screens in education and recreation also supports visual learning.

in doubt as to the family's support of this approach, she will be wise to check with the parent(s)/guardian(s) beforehand. The teacher can then clarify that the incorporation of such details into the lesson will be limited to historical information and is intended to provide a meaningful context for the student's musical interpretations.

Once parental support has been established, the teacher may add a further dimension by showing the student art illustrating different aspects of the Christmas story such as the Annunciation (figure 1), the Adoration of the Shepherds (figure 2), the Adoration of the Magi (figure 3), or the Flight into Egypt (figure 4).

Fig. 1 *The Annunciation* – detail (da Vinci)



The teacher will explain how these artworks, and the student's repertoire, illustrate part of the longer story. A student thereby learns that *Silent Night* describes the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, whereas the *Coventry Carol* describes the Massacre of the Innocents by King Herod<sup>13</sup>, and that *We Three Kings* is about the journey of the three Magi. Through this multifaceted

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<sup>13</sup> While most visual representations of themes associated with the Christmas story are appropriate for children, the Massacre of the Innocents is an exception. The teacher's mention of this aspect of the Christmas story is best limited a verbal reference when specific student repertoire renders it appropriate.

exploration of an ancient story, a common human connection binds the distant past with a more recent past and the present. Rather than Christmas being defined through its value for Christians only, it becomes an encounter with archetypes that the student will continue to encounter elsewhere throughout his life<sup>14</sup>.

Fig. 2 *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (Tintoretto)



Fig. 3 *The Adoration of the Magi* (Dürer)

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<sup>14</sup> Mary is a mother archetype; the three Magi represent sage archetypes.



Fig. 4 *The Rest on the Flight to Egypt* – detail (Isenbrant)



In order to illustrate for the student how textual content informs the music, the teacher could ask him to speak a stanza from one of his carols out loud. When we sing or play carols, the words easily blend into the musical whole: as we begin to think about them we have already

moved ahead to the next part of the music. When we speak text out loud, we are given the opportunity to appreciate the rhythm and poetry of the words. By speaking mindfully and listening closely, we may transform a simple strophic carol such as *In the Bleak Midwinter* from the somewhat predictable to the deeply moving. Assuming, for the present purpose, that a student is learning *In the Bleak Midwinter* to be presented in recital, the teacher may ask him to think carefully about what is being described with the words: "In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan / Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone" (Rossetti 1-2). The teacher may ask questions such as: "Why would the earth be hard as iron? What makes this image work well? Why would the poet choose the word 'iron', instead of 'metal'?" The teacher will ask the student what he considers the most important word of each sentence. As with most music written to accompany text, the highpoint of each musical phrase, expressing the greatest sense of musical intent or intensity of attitude, and the most important words of the text, coincide. To help the student discover this fact for himself, the teacher may play the first few phrases of the music several times, each time placing the emphasis on beats which would normally be considered weaker beats. The teacher will ask the student to keep in mind the previously identified textual highpoint of the phrase in question, listening attentively for the version of the music that best enhances that highpoint. This activity may be done several times, each time with a new musical phrase. If the student does not make direct observations regarding musical emphases of important words in the text, the teacher may ask questions such as: "Do you notice any significant pattern? Do you see what the music does when we reach important words in the text?"

The process of thinking through his reactions to sound, his reactions to words, and his reactions to artworks, presents the student with new ideas that could be transformative. He may

suddenly see nuances of word meanings where previously he saw nothing. He might become interested in the details of pictures in spite of their unfamiliarity, and by asking questions will gradually understand the wider cultural context of the music he is learning. These kinds of experiences can change the student's sense of himself within the world.

Visual art may also assist a teacher in developing a student's creativity more directly. It may be used as a visual stimulus during improvisation, taking the place of a score on the music rack. The activity could be done to prepare a student for playing a specific piece, in which case the artwork will be chosen for expressive qualities it has in common with the piece to be played. For example, if a student is playing a piece with an aura of calmness about it, the teacher might choose Monet's *San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk* (Fig. 5). The teacher will ask: "How do you react to this? What is the mood expressed by the painter?"

If the student is able to connect the quiet energy of the painting with the calmness inherent in the music, it is of course an advantage. The student could think about the internal energy of the artist as he painted his painting. The teacher may help him connect the mood of what is represented visually with the mood of what could be represented through music, by asking him to musically improvised sounds that recreate small sections of the painting. Questions from the teacher could include: "How could you help a listener imagine those soft colours in the sky? Would you connect individual notes smoothly? Would you play with a staccato touch?" The teacher may choose to have the student offer more than one rendition of the image at hand.

Fig. 5 *San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk* (Monet)





The advantage of this experiment is that the teacher thereby discovers what kinds of sounds the student associates with particular colors, visual nuances and shapes. This may help the teacher later when trying to elicit a particular sound from the student. Then she may say: "Think of a lake rippling in the sunlight," or "Think of beautiful blues and greens blending together in the sky."

The use of artworks may also help students lacking verbal skills by assisting student-teacher communication. The teacher may ask the student which of several artworks most closely represent his experience of a given composition: the student therefore needs only to identify an image, not articulate himself verbally. This approach could be effective with children on the Autism Spectrum <sup>15</sup>. Students who struggle with anxiety or poor concentration may benefit from creating their own drawing(s) to match music played by the teacher. The teacher may keep an easel in the studio for this purpose. Newsprint is an inexpensive type of paper for use with a range of media (including pencil crayons, wax crayons, charcoal, and pastels). A portable chalkboard/whiteboard with chalk or erasable markers is a viable alternative. Ideally, the student

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<sup>15</sup> "Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurobiological condition that...impacts normal brain development leaving most individuals with communication problems, difficulty with typical social interactions and the tendency to repeat specific patterns of behavior...The term 'spectrum' refers to a continuum of severity or developmental impairment." (Stevens, Lucie)



will stand where the teacher can observe the evolution of his drawing from the corner of her eye while at the piano. This activity also develops listening skills, since the student is called upon to respond to aural cues; it develops a student's kinesthetic response to music and rhythm, since his body internalizes musical patterns as it physically changes position for the purpose of matching the picture with the music.

Art may also be used to help a teacher determine how a student perceives a given piece of music: does he really hear the dreamlike quality of his study in pedaling technique? Asking him to choose between two or three possible visual "matches" for the music may be revealing. Visual art may also be incorporated into a session on music history, where the teacher shows artworks that might illustrate musical practices of different nations and historical time periods. This may enhance a discussion on the development of music, cross-cultural influences, and the changing social environment within which musicians moved. Figures 6-8 provide examples of artworks that could be used for such a purpose.

The above suggestions for the incorporation of art and literature into teaching are by no means exhaustive. Teaching music provides endless opportunities for development, both for the teacher and student. It is up to the teacher to approach each lesson with something of the child's

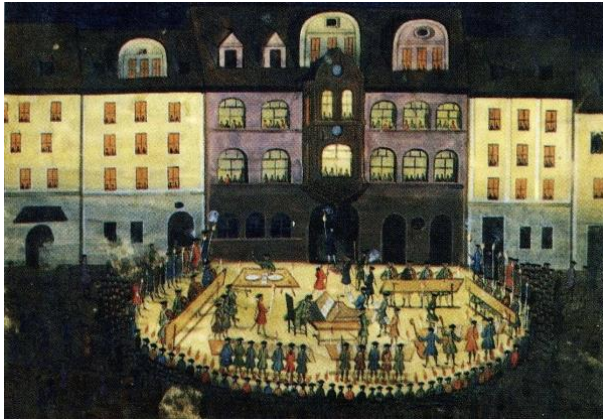
Fig. 6 *Painting from the Tomb of Zeser-ka-Sonbe* – copy in tempera (Egyptian, 18th Dynasty)



Fig. 7 A *Turkish Janissary Band* (Festival Book of Vehbi, The)



Fig. 8 *Evening Outdoor Concert in 1744 by the Collegium Musicum of Jena, Germany* (anon.)



wonder and curiosity. The young person's receptivity will make evident the teacher's enormous responsibility in shaping his conception of the world. When a teacher, however experienced, is able to remain open to new ideas and new approaches, she will continue her own learning experience while passing along her enthusiasm to the next generation, which is beginning the same journey.

## **Research Journal Summary**

**Based on entries recorded between September 2012 and January 2016**

In accordance with requirements for the completion of this thesis, regular journal entries were made to document the study process. The following is a summary of insights as revealed by the journal following completion of the thesis.

On perusal of the journal, two points in particular were noted: the first was my marked development as a teacher and composer; the second, my constant health-related obstacles. I began work on this thesis in September 2012, at which time I taught two students competently and had not written music for more than seven years. I now teach seven students with greater confidence, and am actively involved in writing large-scale compositions (one of which was performed by the Lyrica Chamber Choir of Barrie in May 2015). My growth in the application of newly re-trained piano technique has increased substantially over 3.5 years' study and is reflected in my greater astuteness as a music teacher.

The journal documents ongoing frustration with regards to my physical limitations. Chronic forearm pain has been and is a severe hindrance to daily functioning, and this affects my development as a performer. While engaged in completing my thesis, there have been extended time periods during which pain prevented me from practicing and compromised my ability to write students' notes. These hurdles made it necessary to be resourceful. I have adopted the system of silent practice, where the pianist pre-hears and pre-feels music without moving a muscle, prior to practicing. The advantage of this approach is that the musician is able to hear the music exactly as he intends it to sound before touching the instrument, thereby avoiding mindless repetition. Additionally, I have chosen to record most students' lesson notes rather than write them, to prevent arm fatigue. The parents transcribe these notes into their children's

homework planners each week. Other students make their own notes. Further, the voice dictation software Dragon NaturallySpeaking® has been enormously helpful for writing assignments. If necessary, this software makes it possible to transcribe and print off recorded lesson notes. Dragon NaturallySpeaking® is also partially compatible with Sibelius music notation software, which was used to notate the four compositions that are part of this thesis.

The journal reveals my absorption with alternative approaches to teaching, particularly through the exploration of technology to assist long-distance teaching with programs such as MusicReader™ (Leoné), and by studying physical exercises for body relaxation prior to playing, including *Body Conditioning Exercises* developed for pianists by Elana Mlotek and the *Brain Gym*® exercises (Dennison and Dennison). I have researched and experimented with ways in which various kinds of music, and art forms other than music may enhance music lessons, taking note of what was successful and in which context it was successful. Sometimes an approach that was effective in a group scenario proved inapplicable in private instruction, and vice versa.

Increasingly, it has become clear that teaching music is only a small part of a music teacher's role. I have learned that a music teacher will by turns be a best friend, a psychologist, a performing wizard, and an adversary who is "on the parents' side"; moreover, she is expected to be aware of general history and music history, philosophy, and mythology. She should understand the principles behind yoga, Pilates, or other body awareness disciplines. As well, it is helpful to be aware of how certain sports use body responses that are similar to those used in playing the piano. The teacher should also keep abreast of the most recent children's programs and shows.

It has been deeply rewarding to resume compositional activities, beginning with the thesis composition *Good Morning, Chickadee*, in December 2013. The other three thesis compositions

followed within half a year, later followed by the choral composition *How Sweet the Moonlight*. I also resumed work on the requiem mass begun with IS 103 in 2006.

The completion of the thesis has taken longer than expected due to several factors. In the spring of 2013 I moved to a new city; this transition necessitated a six-week break from studies. Winter weather conditions prevented my attendance at pedagogy mentoring sessions several times. The earlier mentioned pain in my arms made it necessary to cancel or take by phone an estimated number of 18 lessons over the course of 3.5 years' study.

Of the several components of this thesis, the practical pianistic one was decidedly the most demanding. Establishing a new muscle memory by re-training technique was like relearning how to walk. Writing the lesson plans was laborious but illuminated strengths and weaknesses in a telling way; writing the essay reminded me that every word in a language contains a world and implications of its own.

The journal confirms my impression that the thesis itself, as presented to my supervisors and the Independent Studies Program, represents only a minor part of what I have learned in the past 3.5 years. The learning process has been challenging but rewarding.

# Lesson Plan No. 1

**Student Name:** Jesse      **Age:** 35      **Gender:** male

**Method:** *Adult Piano Adventures® All-In-One Lesson Book 1* (Faber and Faber)

**Supplementary Materials:** *A Dozen a Day Mini Book* (Burnam); *Piano Town Level 1 – Technic* (Snell and Hidy); *Hanon* (Berlin); *Elementary Music Theory Book 2* (Sarnecki)

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**Date:** August 7, 2015      **Term:** 6      **Lesson:** 6

## Technical Exercises

I would begin with technical exercises so the student learns to focus on the precise muscles that need to be used when playing studies or repertoire. *A Dozen a Day* provides a good mental and physical warm-up for the student so he is able to control pianistic figures.

*A Dozen a Day Mini Book*, Group IV, Exercise No. 7, p. 19 (see example 1.1)

### Example 1.1

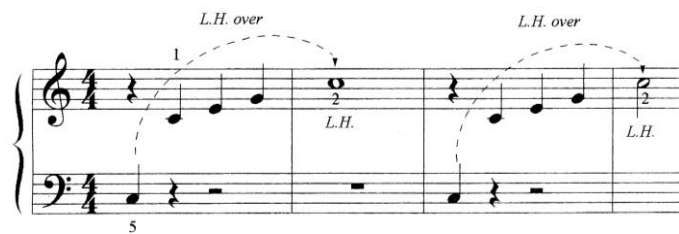


Here the student learns to create a well-focused tone while connecting the playing of fingers 1 and 3 with a well-supported bridge. It will be the student's second week on this

exercise, so assuming that note names and values have been well learned but that he is still working towards a better hand posture, I intend to check that the student's bridge of 2 is supported, and if necessary, encourage him to say: "tall bridge" whenever the thumb crosses underneath the hand. *A supported bridge of 2 allows the thumb to remain perched at a 45° angle to the keyboard; if the bridge of 2 is not supported, the palm tends to sag, resulting in a lowered thumb and a tensely raised 5. This imbalance in the hand quickly leads to arm tension, which will be reflected in the sound.*

***A Dozen a Day Mini Book***, Group IV, Exercise No. 8, p. 19 (see example 1.2)

**Example 1.2:**



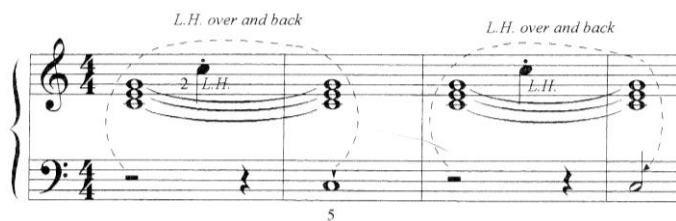
Here the student learns to transfer the energy of his balanced hand between lower and higher registers. Again assuming that this is the student's second lesson on this exercise, I would focus on technical, rather than notational, details. For instance, I would check that on the lowest note (C), the student grips the tip of 5 to pull 5's bridge out and around in a circle, without it bothering the wrist. *Omission of circles may result in a weakly diffused or static sound, making the music less pleasant.* I would check that the student's bridge propels and leads the left hand crossover. I would also check that the student's upper body is well grounded, allowing for a smooth connection of energy between the fingertips and the backs of the shoulder blades. *In any*



kind of passage involving hand crossovers, it is important for the torso to remain grounded, providing a solid foundation for the arm to move as a unit from the shoulder blade. This resembles the full arm connection in swimming in a front crawl style. When the torso is not grounded the playing may become weak, thereby losing control and cohesion.

**Assign A Dozen a Day Mini Book**, Group IV, Exercise No. 9, p. 19 (see example 1.3)

**Example 1.3**



Here the student learns to transfer his balanced hand between higher and lower registers. On a student's first week learning this exercise, I would check that he observes the right hand outward turns. Outward turns help create a follow-through movement which avoids a hard accent. They encourage the fingers to play from a supported bridge so all fingers play simultaneously. *Omission of outward turns can result in a hard accent or static sound, rather than convey a continuous linking sound between chords (as in ensemble playing).* Additionally, I would check that the student leads from the bridge as he crosses the left hand over the right hand.

I would then suggest some scale practice to reinforce the legato transfer of energy between fingertips, applying the concept the student has practiced in the exercises previously.

## **Chromatic Scale Starting on G, hands separately**

Chromatic scales have a greater intensity of tone, because they move continually in semitones. To accomplish this intensity, a student needs to keep his hands closed and focused as he grips to connect the notes smoothly. I would therefore check that the student keeps his palms elevated and his bridge supported. This will be the student's third week of practicing a chromatic scale starting on G. *When playing on the black keys, it is particularly important to keep space underneath the palm, so the thumb placed tall and operates like a finger, and so the hands move smoothly. This allows the fingers to grip each key firmly and evenly in turn.* I would also check that the student plays halfway up the key, closer to the fallboard. *Playing closer to the fallboard allows each key to be depressed near its middle and closer to the fulcrum of each key, which is behind the fallboard. Each key of a piano operates on a lever mechanism: the rate at which a key is depressed on one side of the fulcrum affect the rate at which the key rises behind the fulcrum. This opposite end of the key initiates the hammer mechanism which strikes the key. If the key is depressed too close to the end of the keyboard, there is less control (as in sitting at the edge of a seesaw). The tone therefore becomes less controlled, in the same way that a child sitting at the edge of a seesaw has less control than if sitting closer to the middle (fulcrum) of the seesaw.*

## **G Major and G Minor Scales**

My students normally learn a new scale every two or three weeks. During the first week learning a new scale, I usually ask the student to verbally identify whole tones and semitones, because this helps synchronize mental and physical processes. Assuming that this is the student's second lesson learning these scales, I would ask if he has been verbalizing the names of the scale degrees as he plays. *Verbalization helps a student to remain focused at all times.* I would remind

the student to grip each fingertip gently, pulling that energy up into his supported bridge. *Playing on the inside corners of the outer fingers of the hand (fingers 3, 4, and 5) ensures that the playing finger remains aligned with forearm. With this alignment, each finger feels firmly balanced and confident. Therefore the student's small grip on the tip of 5 and 4 should pull the hand slightly outward. The hand is usually turned outward every time these outer fingers of 5 and 4 play. This maintenance balance and confidence as 5 and 4 play and will help prevent any lifting or twisting of the elbow.*

### **C Major and G Major Contrary Motion Scales**

I normally assign a new contrary motion scale every two or three weeks. During a student's second week on a given contrary motion scale, I might check that his palm is elevated so that his fingers, thumb and bridge can operate with control. If necessary, I would hold a soft cotton wad attached to the tip of a pencil underneath the student's palm as a tactile reminder. *An elevated palm will allow the thumb to cross underneath the palm easily while fingers play the scale. The wrist remains level without rising above the bridge, especially when the thumb plays.* I would check that the student's bridge of 2 is firm, especially when the thumb plays. To encourage a supported bridge, I would provide an image suggesting a similar movement. For instance, I might ask the student to imagine the act of pulling off a tuft of cotton candy. It may also be useful to visualize the knuckles (bridge) as being a ridge of mountain tops that need to remain visible. *A supported bridge of 2 allows the thumb to perch at a 45° angle to the keyboard; when the bridge of 2 is not supported, the hands will become unbalanced and other fingers will try to compromise their positions to achieve some measure of control. The palm could sag, resulting in a flattened thumb and a tensely elevated tip of 5. This kind of*

*awkwardness in the hand can easily lead to arm tension, which will be reflected as a loss of control in the sound. Holding the cotton wad in place can remind the student to keep space under his palm, without interfering with his hand movements.*

***Piano Town, "Uneven Bars,"*** p. 7 (see example 1.4)

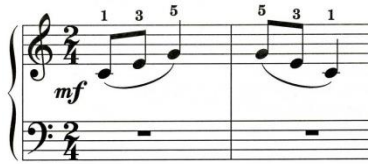
**Example 1.4**



I would choose this Piano Town exercise as a short study to continue working with right hand control of legato and balance while the left hand uses a detached touch. This exercise uses two different techniques at the same time and helps the student learn to multitask. In this example, the left hand, which plays on weak beats, should still sound firm and rhythmical. During a student's first lesson learning this exercise, he would learn to let this whole left arm follow through from the shoulder blade when playing these staccato chords. *This connection to an important joint enables the pianist to feel his arm as a whole. The student should watch for a relaxed wrist and arm, and his elbow should point to the floor. If the wrists protrude upward, the bridge usually collapses, weakening the student's control of the sound and of the alignment of the notes being played.* The right hand cantabile line should be played with a closed hand position and a legato grip and circular rotation.

*Piano Town, "Somersaults,"* p. 7 (see example 1.5)

**Example 1.5**



This exercise uses rising and falling broken triads, which are marked as 3-note slurs. These will need to flow smoothly. The new challenge is connecting notes smoothly while skipping a note between played notes. During a student's first lesson learning this exercise, I would suggest that he watch for a relaxed wrist. I would check that each fingertip grip pulls the bridge bone over the playing fingertip so that the hand is well balanced over the notes being played.

Now that the student has practiced transferring his finger grip both in stepwise motion and in a triad pattern, it would be helpful to practice broken triads next.

### **Broken Triads in C Major and C Minor**

This will be the student's third week of practicing these triads. To help him accomplish a musically focused tone, I would check that he grips evenly to the bottom of each key. *Naming into the depth of each key ensures a better engagement with the instrument. Gripping is essential to feeling stability in the hand while doing this. Music played without hand balance or fingertip gripping can lack conviction.*

**Hanon: Exercise No. 8**, pp. 18-19, bars 5-9 (see example 1.6)

**Example 1.6**



Example 1.6 shows a Hanon exercise which can help a student develop the technique of transferring the grip between fingers when playing a pattern that involves circular rotation as well as steps and skips. Here the student will not be using triad fingering, but will learn to skip between the thumb, 2, and 4, before proceeding to 5. Assuming that this is the student's first lesson learning this exercise, he should practice hands separately to learn to gain the best control of each hand pattern. since the exercise is based on a recurring one-bar pattern and sequence, I would encourage the student to memorize this pattern as he learns. In this way, his attention may be focused on his tone and hand choreography. I would ask him to mark all relevant symbols representing physical choreography on the score, as shown above. *Symbols representing physical choreography, marked directly on a score, provide constant visual reminders of proper playing technique. Physical choreography may include circles, outward turns, forward arrows (when a forward release is necessary), and triangles representing extended hand position. Each of these symbols has a specific purpose or purposes within a pianist's technique*<sup>16</sup>.

**30 min.**

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<sup>16</sup> For an explanation of the most important hand choreography symbols used in my studio, and for reasons why these are important, refer to Appendix B.

## Pieces

"*Minuet in G*", by Christian Pezold, adapted. *Adult Piano Adventures*®, pp. 150-151 (see

example 1.7)

### Example 1.7

Musical score for "Minuet in G" by Christian Pezold, adapted for piano. The score is in G major and 3/4 time, marked "Moderato". It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef has a melody starting on G4, with a slur over the first five notes (G, A, B, C, D) and a "5 on" marking above the first note. The bass clef has a simple accompaniment. The second system continues the melody, with a slur over the next five notes (E, F, G, A, B) and a "5 octave" marking above the first note. The bass clef continues with a simple accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings "p" and "mf", and a performance instruction "(light thumb)".

### Pedagogical Value of This Piece:

1. With this piece, the student learns about some of the characteristics of the minuet. The minuet is a graceful baroque dance, and like many baroque dances, the minuet has a general lightness of character and sense of uplift, which needs to be communicated through buoyancy in the music.
2. The student here begins to learn about part-playing, which is an element of all baroque dances. (In this minuet, the lower voice plays a more harmonically supportive role).
3. The student learns that piano music will often be suggestive of the sound of other instruments. In this minuet, the upper voice may be thought of as a violin line and therefore more projected; the lower line may be thought of as a lower stringed instrument and should not compete with the violin line.

4. The student learns to communicate a clear sense of the pulse (which in a minuet occurs on the first beat of every second bar).

**Pitfalls to Be Avoided:**

1. Playing each downbeat with equal emphasis (since the minuet has a stronger downbeat on every second bar).
2. Accenting the eighth notes that outline each new harmony (I, IV or V), since these function to gracefully connect the main harmonic points of arrival; they may be considered the musical parallel of the dancers' poised movements from one position to another, and should reflect buoyancy.

Teaching "Minuet in G"

I would choose this piece for a student to help him develop an elegant and controlled touch, and to apply different levels of energy between the left and right hand simultaneously. This is the student's third week of learning this piece, and as a result, he has learned note names and values, and is learning the necessary physical choreography at the keyboard needed for fluidity of movement and sound. In this lesson, I would focus on the degree to which he is able to differentiate energy and purpose between the hands. Because this particular student's wrist tended to rise when he last played this for me, I will first check that his wrists are relaxed. A reliable check is to see that the thumbs remain beside the second fingers. *This allows the bridge to rise correctly and support the hand, making it ready for circular rotation. An unduly high wrist usually means that the thumb has moved far back from the side of 2 (sometimes by two or three inches) and the bridge has therefore collapsed, with a resulting loss of tone control.*



*"Bells on a G Scale," Adult Piano Adventures®*, p. 152 (see example 1.8)

**Example 1.8**

**Pedagogical Value of This Piece:**

1. Here the student encounters the G major scale in the context of a piece and learns that scales may appear within repertoire.
2. The teacher may explain that scales are frequently used as connective material between different motifs, as part of a melody, or as accompanying figures. She may mention that one of the reasons why scales are learned separately is to develop the ability to communicate the scale's musical purpose, as above, with pulse and musical attitude.
3. This scale is presented with the same rhythmical organization as the last eight notes of a descending two octave scale, and is preceded by an octave leap.

**Pitfalls to Be Avoided:**

1. Playing the piece without any kind of rhythmic organization.
2. Accenting less important beats of a bar (such as beat 2).
3. Relying on the pedal for a strong sound, instead of playing with a firm fingertip and observing the *forte* dynamic marking.

## Teaching "Bells on a G Scale"

Now, at the student's third lesson learning this piece, I will check that the natural scale pulse is clear throughout. (Pulse refers to the stronger beat that recurs on a regular basis throughout a piece of music. Some pieces are organized into pulses occurring on the first beat of every bar, others have pulses occurring on every second bar, with a weaker downbeat happening on the first beat of the remaining bars). *The pulse offers rhythmical clarity and organization to metered music.* To better define pulse, a student will benefit from speaking a strong syllable (such as "ba") every time the stronger pulse occurs. This verbalization gives him a more active kinesthetic relationship to the pulse. It is useful to mark those areas of the score where the strong pulse occurs, for example by drawing a tenuto -style bar at the beginning of each bar with a stronger pulse. It is also helpful to prepare each stronger pulse by allowing the music immediately before it to increase in intensity of attitude, thereby leading up to the pulse. *Thus, the energy of the music leading up to each occurrence of the pulse will set up in the listener an expectation of regularly occurring musical punctuation.*

**"Alexander March," by Ludwig van Beethoven, adapted. Adult Piano Adventures®,**

p. 155 (see example 1.9)

### **Example 1.9**

The musical score for Example 1.9 is presented in two systems. The first system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a G4 note, followed by a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Above the first measure, there is a 'G' chord symbol and fingerings 1, 2, 1. Above the second measure, there are fingerings 1, 2, 1. The bass staff has a G chord (G2, B1, D2) in the first measure. The second system also has a treble and bass staff. The treble staff continues the melody: D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. Above the first measure, there is a '4' in a box, and above the second measure, there are fingerings 2, 3, 5. Above the third measure, there is a 'G' chord symbol and a '1' below it. The bass staff has a G chord in the first measure and a V7 chord (D2, F2, A2, C3) in the second measure.

**Pedagogical Value of This Piece:**

1. Through this march by Beethoven, the student learns to express the lively and assertive energy (reinforced through a strong I-V I focus) that this music exudes.
2. The student learns about the most important functions of the tonic and dominant as final or non-final sounding harmonies. Beethoven uses a more densely written texture of the I and V chords, (occurring on the I and V chords in every second bar), as well as a detached articulation on the I and V chords, to strengthen the march-like character of the music.
3. The student may learn that the internal rhythmic organization of this music could suggest an organization of beats that could be thought of as 4/2 time.
4. The student learns to listen for sounds suggesting other instruments in the music he plays. For instance, the three-note slurs, ending on a detached quarter note in bar 2, could be imagined as a drum sound between the main harmonic pillars.
5. The contrast of texture and articulation in this piece reinforces a sense of pulse and march-like buoyancy. The student will learn to communicate this sense of buoyancy by infusing each fingertip grip with a sense of upward energy.

**Pitfalls to Be Avoided:**

1. Omission of the right hand articulations, resulting in reduced cohesiveness and musical interest.
2. Playing with a hyper-detached staccato touch. (Staccatos in Beethoven signify a gently detached, "sticky" touch).

3. Giving emphasis to beats that should not be emphasized, given the rhythmical organization of the music. The stronger pulses occur on the first beat of every second bar, but a student may be tempted to emphasize the first beat of every bar, or even beats one and 3 of each bar. This will result in a forceful and forced-sounding rhythmicality.

### Teaching "*Alexander March*"

The sound and character of Beethoven's march music frequently suggests the less sophisticated atmosphere of country people. For this reason, I would ensure that the student is playing with a direct, sincere and robust sound. At the last lesson Jesse's technique had improved, yet his performance lacked the characteristic Beethovenian vigor. To help achieve this now, at his fourth lesson learning the piece, I would suggest a firmer grip. If Jesse is still unable to produce an energetic sound, I will help him grow towards creating a more energetic sound by thinking of a dramatic scenario for which the piece could serve as incidental music. The visualization of a concrete image can help a musician engage with the music with greater sincerity. Speaking syllables with a hard consonant wherever the stronger pulse occurs may also be helpful. Syllables taken from the composer's German language<sup>17</sup> could reflect the rhythmic energy and create the firm, even explosive impetus of this march.

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<sup>17</sup> Music often reflects the energy and inflection of a composer's language.

**"Amazing Grace,"** early American with words by John Newton, adapted. *Adult Piano*

*Adventures*®, pp. 56-157 (see example 1.10)

**Example 1.10**

The musical score for "Amazing Grace" is in 3/4 time and G major. The right hand melody is marked "Gently moving" and "mp". It begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. A slur covers the notes G4, A4, and B4, with a fermata over the final G4. The lyrics are "A - maz - ing - grace, how". The left hand accompaniment consists of chords: a G major triad (G2, B2, D3) in the first measure, and a G major triad (G2, B2, D3) in the second measure. The score is numbered 1 at the beginning of the first measure.

**Pedagogical Value of This Piece:**

1. The student learns to imitate the human voice in his piano playing and to create a sense of forward movement as indicated by the long phrases.
2. The student develops the ability to play legato (by slightly overlapping adjacent legato notes).
3. The student learns to balance a melody and its supporting harmony.

**Pitfalls to Be Avoided:**

1. An overly heavy or irregular left hand accompaniment.
2. A non-legato melody line.

**Teaching "Amazing Grace"**

This hymn was briefly introduced at the end of the previous lesson. The student was given the option of practicing it or waiting a week, depending on other commitments throughout the week. It presents a contrast in character to the previous piece by Beethoven.

Whether or not the student has had time to practice the piece, I would now focus on supporting his understanding of the music's vocal quality by having him sing or hum it. I may ask him to identify and practice any technical challenges that still prove awkward the extended phrases. If time allows I will introduce the new material on chord inversions, including "*IV Chord Warm-up in G*," *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 159 (see example 1.11) and the "*French Dance*," 17th century melody, *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 159 (see example 1.12).

### Example 1.11: *Chord Warm-up in G*

The musical score for "Chord Warm-up in G" is in 3/4 time and G major. It consists of six measures. The right hand (RH) plays a melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The left hand (LH) plays chords: G major (I), C major (IV), G major (I), D7 (V7), and G major (I). The first measure has a broken chord in the LH with a 'broken' marking. The second measure has a blocked chord in the LH with a 'blocked' marking. The tempo is 'Steady' and the dynamics are 'mp'. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Chord symbols are placed above the staff, and Roman numerals are placed below the staff.

### Pedagogical Value of This Exercise:

1. The student explores broken and solid chords on I, IV, and V7 of G major.
2. The student learns that the tonic chord may lead smoothly into an inversion of another chord (here the second inversion of the IV chord) through the medium of a common note (here G).
3. The student may learn that the various chords within a key have characteristics resulting from their placement in relation to other chords. For example, the I chord is a stabilizing chord that serves as an anchor around which other harmonies are built. The IV chord could be considered as having an unfolding,

exploring quality, and the V7 chord could be described as more questioning by nature.

Building on the previous work on triads, I would demonstrate how these harmonies sound in both broken and solid form, and ask the student to identify these harmonies after hearing them played. If the student can identify the harmonies easily, I may ask him to play them in various inversions with triad fingering that he has already learned. Technically, I would check that the student plays with a grip and forward release on staccato chords and with a slight outward turn on any solid chords that are not staccato. I might also remind him to keep his thumb perched at a 45° angle to the keys.

### Example 1.12: *French Dance*

Musical score for "French Dance" in G major, 4/4 time, Moderato. The score is in piano (p) and features a descending G major scale in the right hand. The left hand plays chords in the bass. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system shows the continuation of the descending G major scale with a piano (p) dynamic. The score includes a "2 on 7" fingering for the first measure and a "3" fingering for the descending scale. The chords G and C are indicated above the notes.

### Pedagogical Value of This Piece:

1. This graceful dance demonstrates for a student how simple musical building blocks (such as triads and descending scale patterns) may become the building blocks for engaging musical compositions.
2. The student experiences the sounds of the I and IV chords in a musical context.

3. The student learns to connect an upbeat to a succeeding downbeat, giving the downbeat greater intensity of attitude.
4. The student develops his ability to communicate a clear sense of pulse (here on the first beat of every two bars).

### Teaching "French Dance"

First, I would play the piece for the student, so he has the opportunity to react to its buoyant character and dance-like pulse. Then I would ask him to tap the rhythm of the piece, using the right hand for notes to be played with the right hand, and the left hand for notes to be played with the left hand. Counting out loud is a form of verbalization that could also be used to help the student to feel the placement of each beat. On occasion, a metronome may be used as an aid to make sure the counting is steady. To help the student internalize the pulse, I might ask him to speak a syllable starting with a strong consonant (such as "ba") on each occurrence of the pulse (here occurring on the first beat of every second bar). *The act of identifying something by speaking helps to reinforce the activity both mentally and kinesthetically.* Once the student is able to do this with confidence, I would ask him to practice the piece hands separately in 4-by sections, being careful to articulate each note as marked (staccato or legato). I would also mark the physical choreography symbols on the score, and ask the student to practice according to these symbols. I could ask the student to label the left hand chords as either I or IV. Part of hands separate practice may include identifying the chord symbols verbally to encourage the student to keep looking ahead and prepare for the approaching sounds. I would encourage the student to



begin practicing the piece hands together as soon as he is able to play the piece confidently (first in 4-by sections, then from beginning to end<sup>18</sup>) hands separately.

**25 min.**

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### **Theory, Aural Skills and Sight Reading**

At the end of the lesson, I would **check pp. 44** (the first two lines only) **& 45** in Mark Sarnecki's *Elementary Music Theory, Book 2*. *These pages deal with interval recognition, which is an important skill in sight reading and general pattern recognition. I would assign pp. 46 & 50 of Mark Sarnecki's *Elementary Music Theory, Book 2*. *Page 46 is a review of whole tones, semitones, accidentals, and intervals, which will help the student grow more confident when reading accidentals in the context of repertoire. Page 50 is a word game (relatively difficult at this level) involving the recognition of musical terms. (On being asked, the student clearly stated that the "game-like" activities in some of his books, obviously intended for children, have been enjoyable to him, and that he has not felt demeaned when asked to do them).**

**5 min.**

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<sup>18</sup> The step of playing a piece from beginning to end should only be undertaken when it has been practiced carefully in sections first. Practice generally consists of breaking down a piece into small sections and addressing areas that are challenging until these can be played at least three times in a row without errors. Playing the Piece in Its Entirety is the ultimate aim, but is not a recommended way of practicing.

# Lesson Evaluation No. 1

**Student Name:** Jesse      **Age:** 35      **Gender:** male

**Method:** *Adult Piano Adventures® All-In-One Lesson Book 1* (Faber and Faber)

**Supplementary Materials:** *A Dozen a Day Mini Book* (Burnam); *Piano Town Level 1 – Technic* (Snell and Hidy); *Hanon* (Berlin); *Elementary Music Theory Book 2* (Sarnecki)<sup>19</sup>

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**Date:** August 7, 2015      **Term:** 6      **Lesson:** 6

## Summary of the Lesson

Because Jesse's current repertoire has reached a polished stage, and because he has recently focused on strengthening his bridge, I chose to spend more time on technique than usual. There was a strong rapport between us throughout the hour. I balanced the discussion of musical and technical details with an occasional anecdote from music history or personal experience.

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## Technical Exercises

***A Dozen a Day Mini Book:*** Group IV, Exercise No. 7, p. 19 (second week)

When making my lesson plan, I forgot that Jesse had already finished learning this exercise. However, I was able to apply my lesson plan notes to his other *A Dozen a Day* exercises. *Reflection: in future I will prepare a new lesson as soon as possible after teaching the preceding lesson. In this way, my memory of what I wish to teach at the next lesson will be fresh as I make my notes.*

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<sup>19</sup> Refer to Lesson Plan 1 to see all pertinent musical examples of exercises and pieces discussed in Lesson Evaluation 1.

***Dozen a Day Mini Book:*** Group IV, Exercise No. 8, p. 19 (second week)

This was played evenly and without note errors, however there were some areas where Jesse's technique compromised the musical flow. For example, he forgot to circle outward on 5 on the bottom left hand note (C), and his left hand crossover was stiff, resulting in a static sound. Once aware of the omitted outward circle, Jesse repeated the low left hand C, this time with the correct hand choreography and a more musically engaging sound. The hand crossover was more difficult to correct, since Jesse tended to approach the key from above, without gripping and rolling forward to pull the nail over the fingertip. The musical result was a harsh accent because of the drop. After the student had learned to grip the fingertip and pull the bridge over it, allowing the hands to be led by the bridge and the fingers to slide along the surface of the keys, he understood the desired movement and his tone improved.

***A Dozen a Day Mini Book:*** Group IV, Exercise No. 9, p. 19 (first week)

I pointed out that this exercise involves a left hand crossover as did the previous one. The student is a strong sight reader and so read through the exercise without errors. I pointed out his tendency to lower his left palm and encouraged him to leap with the bridge for a higher palm. Since he is well aware of this tendency, I chose not to overemphasize the point. *Reflection: I consider that my suggestion for improvement addressed the aspect of Jesse's playing that most needed attention. Once he has learned to elevate his palm by means of a firmly supported bridge, it will be easier for him to produce an even, well-controlled sound.*

### **Chromatic Scale starting on G, hands separately (third week)**

The student played with a well elevated palm, close to the fallboard and without note errors. Because the sound of his playing was still monotonous, I asked him to now communicate a clearer sense of musical pulse by slightly emphasizing every fourth note using a quicker grip than previously. When Jesse attempted to emphasize by playing from above, I reminded him to grip from the surface of the key for a more engaged sound. I adjusted my lesson plan as a result of the student's progress beyond my expectations. *Reflection: I consider that my suggestions encouraged Jesse to think about how a scale may be played as music, rather than as an exercise.*

### **G major and G minor scales (second week)**

Instead of asking Jesse if he had verbalized the scale's pattern of whole tones semitones during practice, I chose to remind him to do so part of the time so that he might learn to internalize the pattern more. He was able to play two octaves of the G major and G minor scales fluently. Since identifying whole tones and semitones out loud is a practice tactic used especially in the early stages of learning new scales, and since he was confident in verbalizing I decided that constant verbalization was no longer necessary. Instead, I asked him to verbalize part of the time, also reminding him that verbalization would be useful in other practicing contexts.

Although fluid, Jesse's playing was awkward whenever fingers 2,3,4 and 5 crossed over the thumb as a unit. I suggested that he grip his thumb at a tall 45° angle, maintaining a supported bridge of 2 and sliding fingers 2, 3, 4 and 5 in front of the thumb. I also reminded him to think of fingers 2-5 as being a unit (e.g. the larger half of a mittened hand) when crossing over the thumb. To achieve a more even and seamless sound, I suggested that he grip each fingertip gently, pulling that energy up into his supported bridge. This movement involve gripping the tip of 5 and

4 to pull the hand slightly outward, and maintains balance as 5 and 4 play, also preventing any listing or twisting of the elbow. The reason for such care in crossing over and gripping is to allow for economy of movement and avoidance of tension. *Reflection: I adhered closely to my lesson plan, giving-clear suggestions for improvement.*

### **C Major and G Major Contrary Motion Scales** (second week)

The student had not practiced these scales, since we did not cover them at the previous lesson (and therefore he had notes for neither of them). Nevertheless, he played the C major contrary motion with fluid hand movements and an even grip. I did not insist on hearing the G major contrary motion scale, but forgot to assign it for the following week. *Reflection: in future, I will make sure a student practices material even if there was no time to cover it during a lesson. Since Jesse writes his own notes, reviewing as many of his notes after he writes them (without compromising lesson flow) will be a good idea.* I asked Jesse to begin all contrary motion scales on a unison rather than an octave apart, as previously. Because the Adult Piano Adventures® method book introduces the G major contrary motion scale with starting notes one octave apart, Jesse assumed that this was the accepted way of playing all contrary motion scales. *Reflection: in future, I will make sure a student learns technique as he will be required to know it for Royal Conservatory examinations.*

### **Piano Town, "Uneven Bars,"** p. 7 (second week)

This was securely played. The student was ready to practice this on his own at home.

***Piano Town, "Somersaults,"*** p. 7 (second week)

The right hand was played with a well-articulated forward release following both ascending and descending note patterns. The left palm tended to sag, also tipping outward slightly. I reassigned the left hand to be practiced with special attention toward supporting the bridge of 2, turning out slightly on the tip of 5 when playing to keep it aligned with the forearm. I also assigned ***Piano Town, "Trying on Costumes,"*** p. 8, since it combines the technique of forward releasing (featured in "*Somersaults*") with that of circling which Jesse has already learned. *Reflection: it may have been better to reassign "Somersaults" in its entirety, since one hand tends to learn from the other. However, since Jesse is a working professional with limited practice time, I chose to ask him to focus on the left hand.*

**Triads: C Major and Minor,** broken (third week)

The student's grip was much more even than before. His hand movements on cadences tended to be static, resulting in decreased resonance. I suggested more outward turn on each right hand cadence chord to buffer the impact of his (until now) too vertical attack. I reminded him to connect his left hand cadence notes smoothly, playing from the surface of the key and keeping 5 aligned with the forearm on its note, for optimal tone projection. *Reflection: I encouraged Jesse to listen closely to nuances of sound that do not exist on his keyboard at home. In future, I intend to encourage active listening more consistently. Part of developing as a musician is to learn to make choices based on the experience of listening to and hearing each sound.*

**Hanon: Exercises No. 3 & No. 8**, p. 18-19 (first week)

I waited until the end of the lesson to check these exercises, having already spent 35 min. of the lesson on technique by the time we reached this exercise (and wishing to allow sufficient time for all pieces). Although both exercises were evenly played, the student's hands were not fully synchronized on either. I suggested that he speak the syllable "da" on each eighth note to synchronize the internal impulse of speaking with the movement of playing. *Reflection: I could have checked these exercises immediately after the other technique exercises. It would have made more sense in terms of lesson flow. However, sometimes it is not easy to predict how much time needs to be planned for each part of a lesson. Since this is an adult student who does not require the same degree of predictability that a young child does, I plan to check the various technical exercises in a slightly different order at each lesson. In this way, it will not always be the same exercise that is checked last or needs to be given less time than the others.*

**30 min.**

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**Pieces**

**"Minuet in G,"** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, pp. 150-151 (third week)

This piece was played with grace and sensitivity. There was a sufficiently conveyed shape and direction into two independent parts. The hand choreography was well integrated into the musical whole in all places but one. Jesse immediately identified the problem area; I asked him to remind me of the technique I had suggested he use (since there can be more than one way of playing a passage). After going over the challenging passage two or three times, I decided that he was ready to enjoy this piece on his own at home. *Reflection: the problematic passage in this minuet was one that Jesse initially learned using a technique different from the one I chose to*

*have him use later. It was the unlearning and relearning that proved to be complicated. In future, if there is a passage that may be played using one of several techniques, I will determine from the beginning which approach is the best for the student.*

***"Bells on a G Scale,"*** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 152 (third week)

This piece was played with rhythmic accuracy but lacked musical interest. Since the bell has a rich and resonant tone, Jesse could try to achieve this through his way of playing each note. In order to elevate the tone and to help create this roundness of sound, I suggested that he circle more energetically. Jesse also tended to "sit" on each note, making the music a collection of individual notes rather than a cohesive whole. To help him solve this static quality, and to give the music a sense of direction, I encouraged him to pre-hear the phrase as a unit. To help him infuse music with greater buoyancy, I suggested that he aim for a greater sense of "upward lift" from his torso (as if experiencing the rise of helium). One way of reinforcing the upward energy of the sound could be to imagine that he is singing (or, if comfortable, actually singing) the notes while touching his right hand 2 to the middle of his forehead. The second step of this practice strategy is to return to the piece being practiced, still imagining the upward energy of the voice moving toward and through 2. *Reflection: I consider that I kept a fine balance between commending the student's efforts and discussing strategies for improvement.*

***"Alexander March,"*** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 155 (fourth lesson)

The student conveyed a sense of musicality in his performance of this piece. His firm grip and clear sense of pulse gave the music the more robust sound characteristic of Beethoven. He



was ready to begin enjoying this piece on his own. I suggested he keep the piece in his repertoire for future enjoyment.

**"Amazing Grace,"** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, pp. 156-157 (second week)

The piece had been well prepared. The student's left hand tended to be too heavy throughout; I suggested he practice by "shadow playing"<sup>20</sup> in the left hand and gripping the right hand more firmly for better tone projection. *Reflection: I think I did well to focus on musical balance here, particularly since this is something Jesse has been refining over the past weeks.*

**"Inverting the IV Chord,"** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 158; **"IV Chord Warm-up in G"** and **"French Dance,"** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 159 (first week)

The student quickly understood the process by which a chord on any degree of the scale may be inverted. He was able to read through the French Dance (which applies IV of G in the second inversion) quite capably. I explained to him the concept of first endings and second endings, pointing out that the first ending here finishes on a V7 chord, which requires resolution, whereas the second ending finishes on a tonic chord. The student remembered from earlier lessons that the tonic chord imparts a sense of finality. Jesse had more difficulty on the "IV Chord Warm-Up" because I asked him to analyze the harmony in relation to the tonic. He floundered until I pointed out that there were chord symbols beneath the music. *Reflection: I explained the harmonic relationships between scale degrees well. However, in future, I will not give away the answers to questions, even if they are clearly visible on the score, because learning is all about finding answers based on previous knowledge – not about being told*

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<sup>20</sup> Refer to the glossary for definition of this term.

*answers. Also, if a student cannot identify details on a score that is in front of him, this tells me that his reading skills could be improved.*

**25 min.**

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### **Theory, Aural Skills and Sight Reading**

**Correction of pp. 44** (the first two lines only) **& 45 in *Elementary Music Theory, Book 2*** by Mark Sarnecki: As usual, I corrected Jesse's theory assignment in installments over the course of the lesson, generally while he wrote down his practice assignments in his assignment book. In this way, we were able to make optimal use of lesson time. There were one or two errors (concerning his notation of harmonic versus melodic intervals and of perfect unisons). I defined the difference between harmonic and melodic intervals, and explained that typically a unison is notated using two adjacent notes of the same pitch on the same line or space of a staff. I showed him an example of a unison shared between two voices in a Beethoven bagatelle.

*Reflection: I could have told Jesse that in choral music, when two vocal lines intersect on a unison of the same note value, the direction of stems will indicate which part is being referred to.*

**I assigned pp. 46 & 50 of *Elementary Music Theory, Book 2*.**

**5 min.**

## Lesson Plan No. 2

**Student Name:** Callum      **Age:** 5      **Gender:** Male

**Method:** *My First Piano Adventures® Lesson Book* and *Theory Book* (Faber and Faber)

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**Date:** September 12      **Term:** 1      **Lesson:** 1

**Note:** The student's father will sit in on the lesson.

### Aural Activities and Exercises

This will be the student's first session of private piano instruction after a trial lesson, and as I get to know the student, timing and sequencing of instruction will need to be adjusted. Since any experience with music is connected to the creation and experience of beautiful sounds, I will begin the lesson by giving the student a memorable experience with sound. For example, I might ask him to sit under the piano while I play, to experience the fullness and beauty of its sound.

I will also encourage Callum to explore the piano by gently playing first the groups of two black keys, up and down the piano, and then playing the groups of three black keys up and down the piano. Playing the groups of two and three black keys up and down the piano familiarizes the beginning student with the geography of the keyboard and the sound of the piano.

Since Callum's father is present, I will ask him whether Callum has interacted with the piano at home in any way since the earlier trial lesson and possibly enjoyed playing the groups of two black keys up and down the piano. (The latter was given as an informal assignment at the trial lesson). Based on the father's response, I will determine how to approach a review of playing groups of two and three black keys up and down the piano. For example, if the student has practiced I may encourage him to stand up

as he plays, in order to maintain good contact with the keys. I may suggest that he keep his thumb touching the second finger as an anchor. If he has not practiced, I would show him how to play first the groups of two black keys up and down the piano, followed by the groups of three black keys. When doing so, I would be sure to demonstrate with a gentle but firm sound, keeping my thumb at the side of 2 for support. Then I would ask him to play first the groups of two keys and then the groups of three black keys. *Through the movement up and down the keyboard, the student experiences the raising and lowering of pitch, and this may be connected with aspect of "up" and "down" on the piano. The activity of playing the groups of two and three black keys allows a student to "map out" the keyboard. It allows him to experience the length and breadth of the keyboard, while familiarizing himself with the topography of the keys, their smoothness to the touch, and how they feel beneath the hand as they are depressed. It prepares him for learning the names of the white keys later, at which time he may remember their names based on where they are in relation to the black keys (e.g. C is left of the group of two black keys.*

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## **Piano Playing Posture**

This first lesson will include a thorough review of the healthy piano playing posture. This will include how to determine the correct bench height, proper placement of the feet on the supporting stool, the exact point of contact of the sitting bones on the bench (front third), and the tall posture of the back. The student will learn to check that his body is an appropriate distance from the piano when playing, so that his hands comfortably reach the black keys, his arms and hands are relaxed, and his back is tall.

**5 min.**

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## **Lesson Book**

Then I would **review** the names of the "**piano friends**": (The "piano friends" are named characters introduced at the beginning of *My First Piano Adventures for the Young Beginner*® *Lesson Book* by Faber and Faber. These "piano friends" accompany the student as he explores music throughout the book). Together with the student I would sing the "Piano Friends Song," which introduces the named characters musically, together with the student:

"Friends at the piano, we're a band of friends!

Meet Millie, meet Marta, they're the twins.

Hey, Carlos. Hey, Dallas. Katie, too.

Mrs. Razzle-Dazzle is tapping with you." (Faber and Faber 5)

I might give the student a tambourine and allow him to tap along, demonstrating the proper rhythmic movement by clapping along as he taps. *For a young child, the complexity of learning an instrument can become overwhelming. For this reason having a group of friends who are all doing the same thing, and enjoying it, can be reassuring. The many pictures of the "friends" are also fun to look at, and the stories around each one help keep the young beginner interested.*

## **Review of Loud and Soft Sounds**

Now I might review loud and soft sounds: Together with the student, I would explore a number of examples taken from his direct experience. I might ask: "What makes a very soft sound?" I would suggest that he imitate something, named by himself that could make a soft sound. Then I would ask:

"What makes a very loud sound?" I would ask him to imitate something, named by himself that could make a loud sound. (It is best to discourage imitations of sounds that do not reflect propriety and taste: some five-year-olds are attracted to sounds that fall outside of this description). Together with the student, I would then look at the pictures on p. 9 of his book that depict animals which could make soft or loud sounds. After this, I might ask him to create soft and loud animal sounds on the piano. Since the student has not yet learned to grip when playing, I would ask him to hold a soft cotton ball in his palm, making sure that the fingers are close together; in this position, I would ask him to turn over his hand so that his fingertips are touching the keys. Then I would ask him to play, trying to keep the cotton ball in position. *This basic approach to dynamics teaches a student that gradations of sound are part of music. It teaches him that he will want to know the difference between soft and loud sounds, also creating these sounds himself. With this exercise the student is given the opportunity to be entirely in charge. This is a welcome change from a young child's usual experience. Imitating some favourite sounds on the piano allows students to be creative. Most importantly, the student discovers that the energy with which he meets the instrument will come back to him through its sound.*

Note: In general, when teaching young children, it is best to adapt the lesson to the child's momentary experience of the world. Young children are constantly discovering the world, and what might be exciting and interesting one day will be replaced with something else another day. The teacher will use whatever is interesting to the child at a given moment to gently draw him into the lesson. If the child is absorbed with the cat in the room, she might to ask him: "Can you be a cat? Can you be a slow cat? Can you be a fast cat?" Once the student has "been a cat," the teacher may say: "Now can you show me with your fingers how that cat makes an energetic sound on the piano? Can you show me with your fingers how that cat makes a gentle song on the piano?"

## "Stone on the Mountain"

Then I would introduce the rhyme called "*Stone on the Mountain*":

Stone on the mountain falls to the ground,

Hold it, mold it, roll it around.

Lift your thumb, tap 1-2-3

Whoosh goes the wind, and land on the keys<sup>21</sup>. (Faber and Faber 12-13)

This rhyme is intended to be done along with hand movements, each of which has one or more pedagogical purposes (see table 1).

**Table 1**

Phrase	Movement	Purpose
<i>"Stone on the mountain, falls to the ground,"</i>	The student raises one arm until the hand is well above the head, and then lets it drop with gravity onto his lap.	This teaches natural arm resting weight, i.e. what the arm feels like when it moves with gravity in a fully relaxed manner. The student learns to associate a relaxed forearm with good playing posture.
<i>"Hold it, mold it..."</i>	In a closed hand position, the student touches his fingertips to the top of his leg.	This teaches a correct closed hand position, with a tall bridge, elevated palm and relaxed wrist. The student learns to keep the thumb at a 45° angle to a flat surface (here, the lap, and later, the keys).
<i>"...roll it around."</i>	The student rotates the top of the hand in the area of the top knuckle bones, either clockwise (L.H.) or counterclockwise (R.H.)	This teaches circular rotation. Refer to Appendix B for an explanation of why circular rotation is an important skill for pianists.

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<sup>21</sup> Lyrics © copyright Nancy and Randall Faber. Dovetree Productions, Inc. Faber Piano Adventures®, 2006. Used by permission.

<i>"Lift your thumb, 1-2-3."</i>	The student taps the thumb to relax it, also making sure that the wrist is neutral.	This mobile thumb motion is the foundation for teaching thumb flexibility later. As the student advances, the teacher may refer to this movement as a "thumb perch" <sup>22</sup> . Since the thumb is played on its side, keeping it perched enables a pianist to grip with the thumb to create a well-grounded sound.
<i>"Whoosh goes the wind"</i>	The student moves the back of the upper arm backwards, out, and around, in a relaxed manner, thereby moving the rest of the arm onto the keyboard.	This movement teaches the student to direct the large muscles consciously. The student learns to move the arm from the back of the shoulder blade.
<i>"... and land on the keys."</i>	The student opens/releases the back muscles, in order to move his arm around in a sweeping gesture which begins at the side of the body and finishes on the keys. This "falling" movement uses the natural resting weight of the arm.	This movement teaches the student to move freely, without constraint. It teaches the student to use the natural resting weight of his arm.

*These movements train the student to move the hand and arm while sensing their natural resting weight. They awaken an awareness of the hand and wrist as separate entities. These movements also explore basic lateral hand flexibility and thumb independence. The exercise teaches the student to place his hands on the piano respectfully, thereby cultivating a respectful attitude toward the instrument.*

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<sup>22</sup> This term is taken from Faber and Faber (Faber and Faber, Accelerated Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book 1, 5), and has also been used by pedagogues elsewhere.



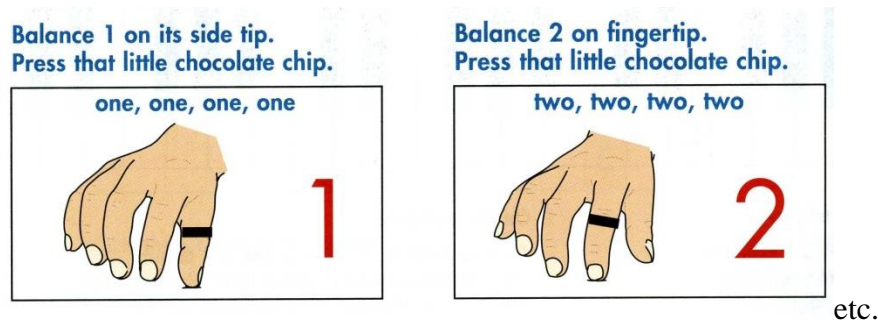
## Review of Left and Right

After this, I would review the identification of left and right. Teaching the student to *identify the two sides of the body is the first step in teaching him to coordinate left and right (beginning with the large muscles)*. Then I would review finger numbers. *Being able to name finger numbers is essential for understanding references to finger placement; such understanding is a prerequisite for a deeper study of piano technique.*

### "Cookie Dough"

If time allows, I might begin the exercise called "Cookie Dough," (Faber and Faber 15) in which the student is encouraged to imagine that he is pressing a chocolate chip into cookie dough using one finger at a time (see figure 9)<sup>23</sup>. When doing this activity, it is important for the student to relax all his fingers on the surface of the keys. *This activity begins training finger independence and reinforces the student's ability to identify individual finger numbers. It also teaches a gripping movement of the fingers, which is desirable for creating a beautiful and focused tone at the piano.*

Figure 9



<sup>23</sup> Idea and graphics © copyright Nancy and Randall Faber. Dovetree Productions, Inc. Faber Piano Adventures®, 2006. Used by permission.

## **Theory Book**

**Pages 4 & 5:** Here I would check that the student is able to identify which of the pictured "piano friends" is demonstrating good piano playing posture. *A note of caution to the teacher: the pictures could be misleading, since all the "piano friends" pictured here are sitting too far back on the bench. This point is best not brought up with student unless he notices it himself. Most students at this age will focus on the obvious differences between the pictures. Subtleties may be kept for later.*

**3 min.**

## Lesson Evaluation No. 2

**Student Name:** Callum      **Age:** 5 Years      **Gender:** male

**Method:** *My First Piano Adventure*® Lesson Book and Theory Book (Faber and Faber)<sup>24</sup>

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**Date:** September 12      **Term:** 1      **Lesson:** 1

**Note:** The student's father sat in on the lesson.

### Summary of the Lesson

The student is still learning to remain quietly focused during a lesson. The student is also still learning what kind of behaviour is acceptable with a musical instrument. This is a good opportunity to discuss respectful ways of addressing the instrument, e.g. not hitting the instrument and not sticking one's fingers in one's mouth.

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### Aural Activities and Exercises

The student enjoyed the experience of sitting under the piano while I played.

### **Review of Groups of Two and Three Black Keys**

Callum's father confirmed that his son had not practiced playing groups of two and three black keys up and down the piano. He mentioned that Callum typically does not tolerate interference when he

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<sup>24</sup> Refer to Lesson Plan No. 2 to see all pertinent musical examples of exercises and pieces discussed in Lesson Evaluation No. 2.

is at the piano and I also noticed that he is touch sensitive which I began to consider in my teaching. Since Callum hadn't practiced, we went back to the beginning. I asked: "Can you point up to the ceiling?" and "Can you point down to the floor?" Then I did it with him. After doing this action twice I told him: "At the piano, "up" and "down" are a little different. Then I showed him that "up" on the piano refers to the very high sounds (showing him the extreme right hand side of the keyboard), and "down" refers to the very low sounds (showing him the extreme left hand side of the keyboard). I began with pointing to the ceiling and the floor because this activity allowed the student to be active with his body rather than with his mind. Then I asked him to show me "up" and "down" on the piano by himself. After a few tries he was able to do so. Next I reminded him of what is meant by "groups of two black keys." When he had identified several individual groups of two black keys, I asked him to identify groups of two black keys up and down the piano. At this stage, Callum was unable to follow my instructions. It seemed to be a concentration issue rather than one of comprehension. Since activity away from the keys often helps a young student refocus, I asked him: "Can you wiggle two fingers?" *Reflection: I think at this point the student would have needed some large-muscle movement to break up the lesson. In future, when a student of this age shows reduced concentration ability, I will ask him to move around, away from the piano bench, for a minute or two. A simple "stamping" rhythm to be imitated, or a clapping exercise using the whole arm, may be enough. As it was, the lesson was further interrupted by the student's sticking his fingers in his mouth and having to go wash his hands.* On sitting down at the piano again, Callum showed he understood the meaning of "groups of two black keys," by playing them slowly from high to low.

**7 min.**

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## **Technical Exercises**

### **Review of Posture at the Piano**

I taught this by demonstration, and by then asking the student to imitate me. He achieved a tall back posture without much difficulty. Keeping his feet flat still proved challenging. Next, I asked him to sit on the front third of the bench. *On reflection I realize that this went over his head, since he is still far from learning fractions. Next time I will talk about sitting on the front part of the bench while trying to feel that part of the bench with his bottom.* I showed Callum how to check the correct distance from the piano by extending his forearms so that his hands could rest on the black keys in a relaxed position.

**5 min.**

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## **Lesson Book**

### **Review of the Names of the "Piano Friends"**

This part of the lesson went smoothly. Although the student struggled to give me full attention, he did not squirm as much as before, and even seemed to remember, from the trial lesson, that two of the "piano friends" were twins. He also remembered that there was a song about the "piano friends," asking me several times if we could sing it. *Reflection: although I had tentatively planned to include the song, I chose not to sing it at this moment because I didn't want the student to learn that I would automatically give him what he asks for. However, I will include singing in future lessons as appropriate.*

## **Review of Soft and Loud Sounds**

We explored different sounds together. I thought he might enjoy the loud sounds more, and so did those first. The student certainly enjoyed some energetic activity on the keys.

*Reflection: normally I am careful to teach a student that 'banging' of any kind on the instrument is unacceptable. I made an exception to this rule in a controlled way so that Callum might enjoy the freedom of uncensored exploration of different sounds.*

### ***"Stone on the Mountain"***

At this stage the student began to get restless. Nevertheless, he imitated some of the large-muscle movements that go with the rhyme energetically. *Reflection: in future, I will teach/review smaller-muscle movements closer to the beginning of the lesson (with one or two large-muscle warm-ups). In this way, Callum will learn the most difficult things when he is fresh, enjoying the kinesthetic appeal of large-muscle activity when he has lost some of his focus.*

## **Review Identification of Left and Right, and Finger Numbers**

This was left to the end: probably a wise decision, since a five-year-old already knows that he has five fingers on each hand. All that was necessary was to point out that for pianists, the fingers are numbered in mirror-image fashion, the thumbs always being finger No. 1, pointers No. 2, and so on. I also traced each of his hands for him and asked him to point to each finger in turn, naming the correct finger number for each "blank" finger. Since Callum is still learning how to write, I filled in the finger numbers for him. This is an enjoyable activity for young children. *Reflection: I intend to review this information at the start of the next lesson when the student is fresh.*

## ***"Cookie Dough"***

There was time to begin the exercise called "*Cookie Dough*." In order to keep the activity game-like, I had him "press his fingers into cookie dough" against my back. I then gave him feedback such as: "Was that a cookie or not? Was that finger number three? Can finger number two also make a cookie?" *Reflection: given the student's decreasing ability to focus, I was fairly successful at keeping him involved until the end of the lesson. In future, when the student has become familiar with a lesson routine involving several activities, I will not need to present as much new information in a single lesson. I will focus on the repetition of previously-learned materials, replacing one or two well-learned activities with new ones when the student is ready. In this way, the student will know more or less what to expect from one lesson to the next. He will be less likely to feel overwhelmed. Such predictability is important for young children.*

**15 min.**

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## **Theory Book**

**Pages 4 & 5:** The student was able to identify all the pictures of "piano friends" showing good piano playing posture.

**3 min.**

## Lesson Plan No. 3

**Student Name:** Jasmine

**Age:** 13

**Gender:** female

**Method:** *Piano Adventures for the Older Beginner*® Lesson Book 1, Technique and Artistry Book 1, Theory Book 1 (Faber and Faber)

**Supplementary Materials:** *A Dozen a Day Mini Book* (Burnam)

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**Date:** September 28, 2015

**Term:** 14

**Lesson:** 6

Since this is a student who is still learning to experience the connection between her arms and the large muscles of her back, I would begin the lesson with some physical warm-up exercises including *Shoulder Rolls*, *Figure 8's* Part I, *Arm Stretches*, and the *Arm Dropping Exercise*<sup>25</sup>. *Physical warm-up exercises help prepare a pianist for playing, much the way body warm-ups help those engaging in sports or dance. They loosen up any tensions in the body, making it easier for the person to identify separate sensations throughout the body.* In piano playing, the ability to identify separate joints and muscles is necessary for being in full control of one's performance. For example, a good performer will grip firmly with the fingertips without letting the upper arm become muscularly involved. *Learning this kind of self-awareness and self-control is part of a thorough ongoing music education.*

**6 min.**

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<sup>25</sup> Refer to Appendix D for a detailed description of these exercises.



## Technical Exercises

*A Dozen a Day Mini Book*, Group V, EX 2, p. 21 (see example 2.1)

### Example 2.1



With this exercise, the student learns to transfer her energy seamlessly and with a continuous flow of sound between the opposite sides of the body by alternating right hand ascending and left hand descending four-note patterns. Playing these patterns using the same fingers (1-4) with either hand makes this easier for a student, since a similar level of energy is needed to grip both left hand and right hand notes. At the previous lesson, which was her second lesson learning the piece, the student's bridge tended to collapse, resulting in loss of control and an uneven sound. In order to help the student to connect the notes of each hand smoothly, I would now check that the student's bridge is elevated and stable. I would also check that the top of her hands remain completely level when rotating outward slightly to keep the playing finger aligned with the forearm). *An elevated, stable bridge will ensure good, equally distributed finger control while playing. If the top of the hand is not level, the fifth finger may end up playing not on its tip but on its side, creating an intrusive accent. It will be difficult to create an outward rotational gesture because the movement of the fifth finger is restricted.*

Consider assigning *A Dozen a Day Mini Book*, Group V, EX 11, p. 24 (see example 2.2)

Next, I would consider assigning the exercise shown in ex. 2.2, based on the student's level of progress with the former exercise. Here the student learns to slowly roll off the end of a slur by gripping and leading off with the bridge. This builds on the skill of transferring energy between sides of the body that she has already worked on.

### Example 2.2



Now that the student has practiced the transfer of energy in two similar exercises, one of which is based on a C five-finger pattern (penta scale), I would proceed by hearing the student play penta scales in different major and minor keys. (She has already learned all the penta scales systematically over the course of many weeks, beginning with C major and minor and moving through G major and minor, D major and minor, and A major and minor, on to F major and minor, in ascending fashion, through the circle of fifths) . I normally ask students to play a major Penta scale in a given key, followed by a major triad, then followed by the tonic minor triad, and finally followed by the tonic minor pentascale. Doing so allows the student to develop an ear for the relationship between major and minor; it also teaches her that each major key has a corresponding (tonic) minor key. When students are asked to play pentascales in an ascending pattern beginning on the lowest C of the piano, where each new pentascale is started on the last note of the previous pentascale, the student discovers what he will later come to know as the circle of fifths.

## Penta Scales

Because the student has already learned all penta scales systematically over the course of many weeks (beginning with C major and minor and continuing in ascending fashion through the circle of fifths to F major and minor), I asked her to review two penta scales for the next lesson. I assigned A major and minor, and F sharp major and minor for this week. Jasmine has a tendency to play with her first finger joints collapsed, resulting in compromised finger control. For this reason, I would check that she plays on her fingertips, close to the nail. *Beginning students often have undeveloped muscles in their nail joints. Individual fingers can be strengthened by practicing a gripping movement into soft modeling clay or against the flat wooden ledge of the music rack (on acoustic pianos). When practicing this movement, it is important to support the fingers from the bridge and to imagine one's energy focused in the tips of the fingers.*

## Split Scales<sup>26</sup>

If Jasmine demonstrates that she is able to play penta scales confidently, I will allow her to focus on split scales and other types of scales in future. I will check her split scales on C sharp major and minor, and on G sharp major and minor, both of which she has been practicing for three weeks. Practicing split scales introduces a student to the sound of a one-octave scale and provides the opportunity to learn the pattern of whole tones and semitones of which major and minor scales are made up, prior to learning it technically more demanding one-octave scale fingerings. These scales allow a student to practice smoothly connecting notes that move in stepwise fashion. Scales also provide the opportunity to practice and even grip while listening for an equally even tone; they may provide a context for practicing gradations of volume and tempo,

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<sup>26</sup> Refer to the glossary for a definition of this non-standard term.

or for practicing steady breathing. These are only some applications of scales in practice. Since Jasmine often forgets to play in a closed hand position, I will check in this lesson that she keeps her thumbs touching her second fingers. *Keeping the thumb by 2 is a way of maintaining a closed hand position, thereby avoiding problems such as a collapsed palm or raised wrist.*

## **One-Octave Scales**

Penta scales and split scales prepare the student for one-octave scales. In penta scales, a student is asked to play five notes with one hand: one note with each finger. In split scales, an eight-note scale is divided between fingers 1-4 of the two hands. With one-octave scales, the student plays an eight-note scale with one hand, crossing the thumb underneath the palm to achieve a seamless continuity of sound<sup>27</sup>.

I will explain to the student that the only difference between split scales and one-octave scales is fingering. (In future, it will be important for a student to know that most white-key one-octave scales, the left hand 4 will always be on the second note of the scale, and the right hand 4 will always be on the seventh note of the scale). *It is important for the thumb to achieve a smooth movement under the hand, keeping close behind the other fingers while the bridge maintains an elevated position. The hand should remain in a closed hand position, and at a 45° angle to the keys. This will allow for even control of tone. A lowered thumb usually means that the bridge is also pulled down into a very low position, resulting in reduced control of tone and speed.*

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<sup>27</sup> For penta scale, split scale, and one-octave scale fingerings, referred to Appendix E, examples 1-3.

## Triads

At this point in the lesson, I would hear the student play solid triads. She has practiced the C major and G major triads for two weeks and three weeks respectively, both with V-I cadences. In the past, Jasmine has struggled to play her triads with the correct fingerings. I have given her fingering diagrams, and asked her to verbalize the finger number of the finger playing the middle note of the triad (which is the one that changes from one inversion to the next). These fingering diagrams take the form of rectangular boxes placed horizontally, each of which shows the fingerings of a single inversion. Thus, the box showing the fingerings for root position will have the finger numbers 1, 3, 5 written from left to right inside it. In each box, the outer fingers of each inversion are colored in using a light color, while the finger number of the finger that changes is colored in using a brighter color. The shape of each diagram reflects the approximate shape of the hand when playing the inversion that is being represented. Thus, the diagram for which position will have all finger numbers distributed evenly; the diagram for first inversion will have finger numbers 1 and 2 closer to each other, with finger 5 a little further to the right. The diagrams are placed side-by-side from left to right, to represent the individual triadic inversions. In this lesson, I would first pay close attention to the student's fingering, to determine her progress in this area. If she continues to have difficulties with fingering, I would ask her to verbalize finger numbers and the note names of consecutive triad inversions. *It is important to teach triads, because they are the building blocks of Western European art music which students at this level normally play. Fingering is important because, when triadic figures are later incorporated into repertoire, students will be expected to be familiar with the fingerings pertaining to the various inversions of each triad.* I would check that the individual notes of each triad are depressed equally. To help the student play the three notes of each triad inversion

exactly together, have her play first the lower two notes of the triad, then the higher two notes, then the outer two notes, and then all three notes together. *Learning to play triads exactly together encourages a student to listen closely. When they are not played exactly together it usually means a student is not listening or that her fingers are not supported by her bridge. Solutions for these difficulties include: practicing a fingertip grip into a bar of modeling clay (see above) and honing listening skills.*

16 min.

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## Technique and Artistry Book

*"The Viking Ship," Adult Piano Adventures®*, p. 37 (see example 2.3)

### Example 2.3

The image shows a musical score for a piano exercise. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is in 4/4 time and begins with the instruction "Proudly" and a dynamic marking of *f*. The right hand plays a half note chord (G4, B4, D5) with a fingering of 3, 5, 1. The left hand plays a half note chord (G2, B2, D3) with a fingering of 1, 3, 5. The exercise is marked with "wrist float-off" in both hands. The second system continues the exercise with similar chords and fingerings. A box containing the number "5" is located at the beginning of the second system. The word "repeat!" is written at the end of the first system.

### **Pedagogical Value of the Piece:**

1. This piece provides an opportunity for the student to develop expressiveness in describing a mood or attitude through sound. The music is marked "proudly," giving the student the first indication as to what may be expected. The forte dynamics, the left hand harmonic intervals descending by octaves further suggest the assertive energy and impetus that will help bring the image of the Viking ship alive through music.
2. The student explores the distinctive sound created by the interval of a perfect fifth.
3. The piece provides an opportunity for the student to develop her sense of rhythm. The frequent rests make it desirable for the student to count carefully; the alternating right and left accented quarter notes beginning in bar 5 may suggest a percussive instrument signaling the arrival of the Viking ship, and as such will be most effective when played with rhythmic accuracy.
4. The alternating right and left accented quarter notes beginning in bar 5 help train a student's ability to create a seamless connection of energy between the two sides of the body.
5. The student uses the pedal help blend the notes of the F major triad in a full sound.

### **Pitfalls to Be Avoided**

1. Playing without energy and rhythmic vitality.
2. Playing the left hand intervals with an excessively heavy or harsh attack.
3. Using the pedal to "hide" notes that have been played with less than their given time value.

4. Playing without enough outward turn on the left hand harmonic intervals (since this will create a hard, "unbuffered" sound).
5. Playing the alternating right and left accented quarter notes (beginning in bar 5) without sufficient fingertip grip and/or arm and elbow tension, which can lead to a heart, choppy sound.

### Teaching "The Viking Ship"

This will be the student's fourth lesson learning this piece, and most technical aspects of the music have been well learned. At the last lesson, her palm tended to sag on the left hand harmonic intervals, so now I would check that her bridge is well supported on these intervals.

**"Running in the Rain,"** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 38 (see example 2.4)

### Example 2.4

The image shows a musical score for 'Running in the Rain' in 4/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays a sequence of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Above the first three notes are fingerings: '1 on' above G, '3' above A, and '5' above B. Above the fourth note is '3'. The left hand (bass clef) plays a broken triad figure: G3, B3, D4, G3, B3, D4, G3, B3, D4. The first note is marked '1 on' with a question mark. The dynamic marking 'mf-p on repeat' is placed between the staves. The piece concludes with a whole note G3 in the right hand and a whole note G3 in the left hand.

### Pedagogical Value of this Piece:

1. This piece uses a gently rotating detached touch to suggest the sound of raindrops, while the repeated broken triad figure may suggest running.
2. The piece combines two of the patterns that the student has learned and practiced (penta scales and triads).



3. The student learns to control a detached articulation while using circular rotation.
4. The student learns to play with buoyancy, as she aims to create the image of pattering raindrops through her playing.
5. The student may learn (or be reminded) that there are different degrees of detachedness all represented by a staccato dot. The teacher could explain that the degree to which a note, or several notes, are played in a detached manner is understood from the musical context.

**Pitfalls to Be Avoided:**

1. Playing with an excessively heavy or staccato touch.
2. Forgetting to use circular rotation.

Teaching "Running in the Rain"

This will be the student's fourth lesson learning this piece. We have spent previous lessons on isolating and then combining the two techniques of circular rotation and detached releases used here, at a slow tempo while speaking the words: "run-ning, run-ning," etc. or counting out loud. *Jasmine tends to increase her tempo, so counting out loud has helped; speaking the words has made it easier for her to control her movements, since the act of speaking helps synchronize mental processes with physical movements.* I would now pay close attention to Jasmine's staccato releases and circles, and assess her improvement in this area. *When playing a detached/staccato sequence involving repeated circles, it is important for the arm to remain relaxed without excessive movement.* I would also ask the student if she has practiced by breaking down the music into sections, since this has helped her in the past.

*Practicing in short sections helps a student to overcome technical challenges since the music is thereby broken up into small segments. Instead of trying to grasp the musical flow of several lines of music at once, the student may focus on a very small portion of the score and practicing becomes less overwhelming. When applying this practice method, it is useful to practice in overlapping sections so that, for example, a student first practices bars 1-4, then bars 2-5 of a piece, continuing in the same manner through the whole piece. If a particular area is repeatedly incorrect, the student is advised to practice it at a slow tempo, paying close attention to the musical details and the hand posture.*

**14 min.**

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## **Lesson Book**

***"Two-Hand Conversation,"*** *Adult Piano Adventures*®, p. 57 (see example 2.5)

### **Example 2.5**

Moderately

*f*

1 on ? Name the position. \_\_\_\_

5

### **Pedagogical Value of the Piece:**

1. The student learns to focus her attention on one hand, then the other hand, while giving each 2-bar phase a sense of direction.

2. The piece provides an opportunity for the student to listen for and play one hand, then the other hand, while listening to the teacher play the music written for the other hand.
3. This piece may help a student give her playing a more natural sense of curve and direction by singing each phrase and synchronizing the first half of each phrase with an in-breath, and the second half of the phrase with an out-breath. (When practicing in this manner, the first half of bar 1 will be sung on an in-breath, and the second half of bar 1 will be sung on an out-breath).

### **Pitfalls to Be Avoided**

1. Playing without giving the phrases a sense of direction.
2. Playing all the eighth notes with equal energy and volume.
3. Unwanted accents, especially in the middle of a phrase.

### Teaching "Two-Hand Conversation"

At the previous lesson, I asked Jasmine to memorize the music, incorporating the physical choreography suggested by the symbols, so she is no longer dependent on the score. Now I would determine whether or not she is ready to enjoy this piece on her own, based on how well she has memorized the details of the score. *When memorizing a piece, it is important to take every detail into account. Phrasing, articulation, physical choreography, dynamics and fingering are only some of the components which should be considered. The composer's written directions, combined with imagination and a reliable technique in the performer, may bring the music to life.* When helping a student improve memorization skills, the teacher will first identify whether a student's memory is primarily visual, aural, or kinesthetic. The teacher will support all of these

distinct approaches to memorization, helping the student gain confidence with those forms of memorization that are less intuitive for her. *To develop a student's kinesthetic memory, it is useful to encourage her to play short portions with the music without looking at the keyboard. I would ask her to focus on what playing these short excerpts feels like. Do the hands stretch wide? Are the fingers close together? Then I would ask her to play the same excerpt(s) without the music, still focusing carefully on what playing feels like to the touch. To improve a student's visual memory, a study of small portions of the score could be helpful. The student may consider what each of these looks like on the page, whether the intervals are large or small, whether the accidentals are chromatic or diatonic, and what the fingering patterns are. I might take photocopied work copies of two- to four-bar sections of the score (which the student owns) and show these to the student out of order. Then I would ask her to identify what section of the music each represents. Matching an image or an idea with chosen elements of the music can aid also memory. To improve a student's aural memory, I would encourage her to sing or hum first the soprano line, then the bass line. As she improves, I might play excerpts from the score (either hands together, right hand only or left hand only), asking the student to identify the musical excerpt being played by pointing to the score.*

**"When the Saints Go Marching In,"** traditional, *Adult Piano Adventures*®, pp. 58-59 (see

example 2.6)

### Example 2.6

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "When the Saints Go Marching In." It is written for piano in 4/4 time. The score is divided into four systems. The first system starts with a "Lively" tempo marking and a "Traditional" label. The melody begins with a three-beat upbeat. The lyrics are: "Oh, when the saints go march-ing in, Oh, when the saints go march-ing in. (go march-ing in) Oh, how I want to be in that num-ber, (yes, I do) when the saints go march-ing in." The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (mf, f), articulation (accents), and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). There are also box numbers 5, 9, and 13 indicating specific measures.

### Pedagogical Value of This Piece

1. This piece explores imitation in the context of a rousing hymn.
2. The piece helps a student learn to better communicate pulse, since it provides a good opportunity for either moving or conducting along with the music (played by the teacher), or of tapping a drum on the stronger pulses. This helps the student internalizes both rhythm and pulse before reading the music. The three-beat upbeat which recurs throughout as an ascending figure strengthens the music's rhythmical appeal, creating an exciting context for the activities described above.
3. The student learns to integrate a three-beat upbeat smoothly into her playing.

4. The piece provides a good context for exploring how music may directly impact how we feel and move and behave.
5. This piece introduces a popular hymn in an accessible arrangement. If the student does not yet know the hymn, practicing this piece will familiarize her with it and broaden her horizons. If she already knows it, practicing the piece will give her a special sense of accomplishment when it has been learned, since she will anticipate being able to play it for others that also know it. This may increase motivation to practice in future.

### **Pitfalls to Be Avoided**

1. Either over accenting or under-emphasizing the downbeat. When it is over-accented, the music will sound aggressive; when it is underemphasized, much of the piece's rhythmic appeal and forward drive will be lost.
2. Incorrect counting of the beats within a bar, resulting in breaks in the music's momentum.
3. Increasing the speed: the excitement of the music could make keeping a steady tempo particularly challenging.

### Teaching "*When the Saints Go Marching in*"

This march communicates a sense of excitement, even urgency. The three-beat upbeat occurring throughout as an ascending figure draws us toward the downbeat of the stronger pulses (occurring on beat 1 of every second bar, beginning with bar 1). Because Jasmine tends to speed up, I would encourage her to practice with the metronome at 92 beats per half note part of the time, and to count out loud during practice to improve her comprehension of the hierarchy of beats within each bar. I would also ask her to listen for the musical pulse in her playing to better define it. Speaking a strong syllable such as "ba" where the stronger pulse occurs is helpful.

Asking the student to mark the places where the stronger pulse occurs directly on the score, using a tenuto-style bar, will visually remind her to communicate a clear pulse at all times.

18 min.

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## Theory, Aural Skills and Sight Reading

**Correction of p. 42 of the Theory Book:** This exercise asks the student to identify whether given stemless noteheads require added stems going up or down. This may help a student become more fluent at reading music. **I checked p. 43 of the Theory Book** (see example 2.7):

### Example 2.7

Which hand is imitating? \_\_\_\_\_

mf

This is an exercise in identifying whether given short melodic passages illustrate right hand or left hand imitation. I will do the ear training exercise on the **lower half of p. 43 of the Theory Book** with the student in the lesson (see figure 10). Here the student is asked to identify by ear whether or not a given passage is imitative. *Training a young musician's ability to recognize patterns by ear helps build an awareness of musical form, which in turn leads to a better understanding of pieces in their entirety. This understanding allows a performer to give*

Figure 10

**E A R TRAINING**

Your teacher will play two short musical phrases, one with each hand.  
Circle **imitation** if the second phrase exactly *imitates* the first phrase.  
Circle **no imitation** if the second phrase is *different* than the first one played.

1. imitation or no imitation    2. imitation or no imitation    3. imitation or no imitation

4. imitation or no imitation    5. imitation or no imitation    6. imitation or no imitation

**For Teacher Use Only:** (The examples may be played in any order.)  
Suggestion: Ask students to close their eyes as you play.

*the most stylistically accurate performance of each piece and the most aurally pleasing one. Listening exercises also hone the ability to listen actively during practice, thus teaching the student to use the ear as a diagnostic tool in a range of practicing contexts.*

## Composer Biography

I will assign the biography of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, which the student has researched three weeks previously, to be reviewed in preparation for a presentation to other students at an upcoming group lesson. I will review some of the components of a successful oral presentation. These include: organizing content chronologically or thematically, enunciating clearly, making eye contact with the audience, and using the voice expressively to highlight important content. *An important part of music study is acquiring knowledge of the various time periods during which the music being studied was written. This allows students to place their repertoire in context. At the early levels a study of music history will improve a student's playing*



*by making the music performed relevant and meaningful. Music played by a student who is interested and curious about that music will be more likely to sound engaging.*

## Lesson Evaluation No. 3

**Student Name:** Jasmine      **Age:** 13      **Gender:** female

**Method:** *Piano Adventures for the Older Beginner® Lesson Book 1, Technique and Artistry Book 1, and Theory Book 1*(Faber and Faber)

**Supplementary Materials:** *A Dozen a Day Mini Book* (Burnam)<sup>28</sup>

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**Date:** September 28, 2015

**Term:** 14

**Lesson:** 6

### Summary of the Lesson

The student took time to become focused during the body warm-up exercises. As she repeated these exercises her posture improved. She demonstrated clear progress in all exercises and pieces today. Because she was able to play both penta scales and split scales with ease, I introduced one-octave scales. I explained that I would continue to refer to penta scales and split scales occasionally as necessary in the course of her studies.

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### Warm-Up Exercises

I began the lesson by asking Jasmine to do the *Shoulder Rolls*, both forwards and backwards. This exercise is best done with the attention focused equally towards the right and left sides of the body. Jasmine tends to slouch forward, often with one shoulder higher than the other. Beginning the lesson with this exercise helps reinforce some of the muscle sensations

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<sup>28</sup> Refer to Lesson Plan No. 3 to see all pertinent musical examples of exercises and pieces discussed in Lesson Evaluation No. 3.

associated with good posture. I chose to let her do only the first part of **Figure 8's**, in which the arm moves loosely from the shoulder in a figure 8 shape. (The second part of the exercise involves a very controlled figure 8 movement from the shoulder blade, which is difficult for a student who has not had routine instruction in body-awareness exercises. I would like Jasmine to have a thorough grounding in a variety of exercises before introducing Part II). Because Jasmine was particularly unfocused today, we finished the exercises after **Shoulder Rolls**. I did not want her to continue by doing any exercises incorrectly (as a result of being unfocused), making it necessary to unlearn them later. *Reflection: I could have used Jasmine's restlessness as an opportunity. For instance, I could have asked her to sit still with eyes closed, quietly taking note of sensations in her body. The first step in overcoming restlessness is to be aware of it. I could also have asked her to focus on a single uncomplicated physical exercise, repeating it until well done, thus teaching her the importance of "working through" counterproductive impulses in the body (such as restlessness). I also could have helped her focus by introducing a breathing exercise such as counting to eight while inhaling, then counting to eight while exhaling, and repeating this several times.*

**7 min.**

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## **Technical Exercises**

### ***A Dozen a Day Mini Book*, Group V, EX 2 (third week)**

Jasmine played this capably, keeping the top of her hand level. I asked her to repeat it several times to help her become aware of small postural errors, focusing on only one postural detail per repetition. These included: keeping the thumb by 2, maintaining a tall bridge and

gripping firmly. As she improved in these areas, I asked her to listen carefully for changes in the sound of her playing. I reassigned the exercise to allow her to gain confidence through practicing the exercise correctly.

***A Dozen a Day Mini Book***, Group V, EX 11 (first week)

With this exercise, as in EX 2 of Group V (see above), the student learns to focus her energy alternately on the two sides of the body. I pointed out the similarities between the exercises, at the same time making sure Jasmine noted the differences (i.e. the detached releases in EX 11 as compared with the slower releases in EX 2). I also made sure she was playing the detached notes with a grip action pulling the bridge towards the nail and over the fingertip.

*Reflection: in future, I will also explain that by addressing the two sides of the body alternately and by directing the brain to focus first on one side and then on the other side, we are teaching it to synthesize our movements in a controlled manner: something that is important for pianists.*

**Penta Scales** (c. sixth week) and **Split Scales** (third week)

Jasmine played these confidently, with a solid grip and firm bridge. It was not necessary to remind her to play squarely on her fingertips. I chose to introduce the C major and G major one octave scales.

**One-Octave Scales**

I assigned one-octave scales for the first time. Jasmine was keen to repeat the C major scale many times but without listening to my instructions. When I had her attention, I

encouraged her to aim for an even legato sound by keeping a firm bridge of 2 and her thumb at a 45° angle to the keyboard.

### **Triads** (second and third weeks)

Jasmine played the C major & G major solid triads with V-I cadences. She was able to produce a resonant tone by gripping firmly and gently encompassing the keys between fingers 1 and 5 by moving these fingers towards each other slightly while gripping. At her first lesson learning these triads, I had given her a diagram showing the fingerings for the various inversions. Now her fingering was still largely incorrect. She had also begun playing a broken triad prior to each consecutive inversion of the solid triads, without having been instructed to do so. She did this with relative ease. First I addressed her fingering. I asked her to identify out loud the individual finger numbers of the fingers playing each consecutive inversion. Doing so combines visual, aural, and tactile processes, providing the strongest possible basis for long-term retention. *Reflection: in future, if a student demonstrates limited comprehension and/or incorrect fingering, I will also ask her to verbally identify the name of the note at the root of each consecutive inversion. Doing so helps a student identify which note will be the top note of each new inversion (since it is the root of the first chord which will be highest in the second chord; the root of the second chord which will be highest in the third chord, etc.).* Since the student played broken triads with ease (in combination with her solid triads, see above), I decided to introduce the C major broken triad. I did so hoping that playing triads in broken form would increase the student's fluency when playing solid triads. *Reflection: in a future comparable situation, I will explain that knowing how to play broken and solid triads separately from each other is*

*important because in repertoire, triads will appear in various forms: solid and broken, and in their inversions.*

**16 min.**

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## **Technique and Artistry Book**

*"The Viking Ship," Piano Adventures for the Older Beginner®*, p. 37 (fourth week)

Jasmine played this with energy. Her performance was rhythmically and technically accurate, with confident bridge forward rolls, left hand transitions between registers, and even timing (except for the last note, which was cut short). We talked about the importance of holding the final note of a piece for its full value and sitting quietly after the final release. In this way, the performer may allow the music to resonate in space, drawing out the mood and atmosphere created by it.

*"Running in the Rain," Piano Adventures for the Older Beginner®*, p. 38 (fourth week)

When I first checked Jasmine's performance of this piece, it was musically unstable, because she forgot to apply circular rotation and detached playing simultaneously: something we had worked on extensively at the previous lesson. After a review of these techniques, she gave a better performance. Since I was distracted by the problem of her limited progress, I forgot to ask *how* she had practiced. *Reflection: I have frequently told a student how best to practice; I have described the techniques to be practiced to both student and parent(s), and I have demonstrated to the student in detail. However, with Jasmine it is clearly necessary to spend lesson time*

*observing and guiding her as she shows me how she intends to practice. It is particularly important because her parents have not had music instruction themselves. In future, I will spend more time teaching Jasmine how to practice.*

**14 min.**

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## **Lesson Book**

***"Two-Hand Conversation,"*** *Piano Adventures for the Older Beginner*®, p. 57 (third week)

Although the performance was rhythmically accurate, it appeared Jasmine had practiced the piece very often without listening, since her sound was harsh and almost mechanical-sounding. She told me that she forgot to practice the phrasing by singing the individual phrases. Her circles were mostly memorized, however, she evidently perceived no relation between the hand choreography and the music (although I have taken care to explain why physical choreography is important, and have even given her a note explaining these reasons using simple language). . As a result, her playing lacked natural "rebound" or springiness; her fingers moved automatically rather than deliberately. I decided to stop working on this piece with Jasmine, not because she played well, but in order to work out some of these issues using a new piece. Sometimes it is better to move on to new repertoire instead of reassigning a piece repeatedly, since a student may develop great frustration or lose motivation if pushed too far in one challenging area. It is important for the teacher to be flexible. There is much repertoire available for every kind of student and learning style. *Reflection: I have addressed Jasmine's undeveloped listening skills through various aural exercises, including the identification of non-musical sounds (such as a pin dropping). I have played duets with her, and have decided to do so more*

often. Have given her tapping and clapping exercises and have had her listen to numerous excerpts of classical music during lesson time, teaching her to identify various instruments. As regards her stiff playing, Jasmine does not have the ability and self-awareness yet that would allow her to attain a higher standard of technical fluency. The physical exercises have helped, and I will think carefully about what else can be done to help her in these areas.

**"When the Saints Go Marching In,"** *Piano Adventures for the Older Beginner*®, pp. 58-59 (fourth week)

This piece was played with excitement and a predominantly secure sense of the pulse. I pointed out some areas where the student's counting was incorrect, later asking her to play these slowly several times while counting out loud, to ensure that each beat was given its proper duration. *Reflection: with most other students, I would have pointed out that a better-defined pulse would give clearer shape to the music. With Jasmine, I chose to focus on the timing inaccuracies because I sensed she could not absorb much more. I intend to take a close look at pulse with Jasmine at the next lesson.*

**16 min.**

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## **Theory, Aural Skills and Sight Reading**

**Verification of student corrections** on p. 42 of the **Theory Book:** Jasmine had corrected her previous errors. **Teacher correction** of p. 43 of the **Theory Book:** This exercise was neatly written and without errors. **In-lesson listening exercises** from the lower half of p. 43 of the **Theory Book:** Jasmine identified all passages correctly and without hesitation. *Reflection: this*



*shows me that, contrary to my previous impressions, Jasmine does have the ability to listen closely to short passages of music. While I have observed that she identifies different qualities of sound only with great difficulty, identifying upward or downward direction is easier for her. It also strikes me that her actual abilities and her belief in her abilities do not align. In future, I intend to build on her abilities by interspersing moderately difficult questions among other questions to which she knows the answers. This will boost her confidence.* **6 min.**

### **Composer Biography Presentation**

Jasmine made a presentation on the life of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel at a group lesson attended by three others. Several facts of Mendelssohn-Hensel's life were communicated clearly and from memory. Jasmine is still learning to use her voice as an instrument of expression. Her delivery tended to be automatic. *Reflection: Jasmine's speech when presenting, and her piano playing, are both somewhat mechanical. I will reflect further on how Jasmine may be helped to connect more closely with herself and others when speaking and playing. This was her first time speaking to a group, in consideration of which her delivery met my expectations.* Since I am preparing her for giving a presentation at this year's Christmas recital, there will be further opportunities to practice presenting. I intend to work with her on connecting with the audience, clearer enunciation, expressiveness of tone, and body language.

# Lesson Plan for a Hypothetical Grade 1 Student

**Program of Study:** Royal Conservatory of Music, Grade 1

**Student Age:** 10

**Study Materials:** *Celebration Series Perspectives® Piano Repertoire 1* (Jones et al.), *Celebration Series Perspectives® Piano Studies 1* (Jones et al.), *Technique, Elementary Music Theory Book 3* (Sarnecki), and *Four Star® Sight Reading and Ear Tests Level 1* (Berlin and Markow)

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**Date:** November 25

## Overview

This lesson plan is written for a hypothetical 10-year-old girl approaching the end of Grade 1. The plan is made with the assumption that the student will play at a Christmas recital scheduled for the second week of December. Moreover, the student has been registered for a Royal Conservatory of Music examination in Grade 1 Piano, which is scheduled for the third week of January.

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## Formal Technique

Assuming that the student is well on her way to achieving a Grade 1 standard in formal piano technique, I would check the student's 2-octave scales in G major and E minor in the right hand, and in D major and A minor in the left hand. At this stage of her studies, a possible area for

improvement may be evenness of touch and spacing, so I would check that her thumb purchase at a 45° angle to the keys when playing to help her achieve a continuous legato sound. *When the thumb plays in a perched position, it operates evenly like a finger. When the thumb plays without perching, this could mean that a downward pushing movement (from the top of the hand or wrist) is used instead. This kind of movement lacks control, and because it is created by pushing, may sound bumpy or harsh.* I would also check that the thumb is playing consistently beside 2, and that it slides along the keys behind the playing finger to help achieve a seamless continuity of sound. *If the thumb either strays behind 2 or does not slide smoothly along the keys, it may move away from 2, which could result in a collapsed bridge and protruding wrist. An unsupported hand posture may create breakdowns in the connection of energy in the performer, and therefore may result in a compromised sound and a weak translation of musical ideas.*

At this point in the preparation for an exam, I would expect a student to be able to perform both solid and broken triads with confidence. In particular, I would listen for a resonant and vitality of tone, which may be achieved through firm fingertip grips that engage with the key, to produce a resonant sound. I might check D major and A minor in the right hand, and solid and broken triads in C major and E minor in the left hand, since all of these are technical requirements for students undertaking a Royal Conservatory Grade 1 exam. I would also check that the student's bridge remains firm. *A firm bridge serves as a solid structure that keeps the individual fingers grounded while playing on their tips; it also helps keep the palm elevated. A weak bridge usually means a lowered bridge, which results in forearm tension, a lowered palm and raised wrist. This will make it difficult for the performer to express her ideas with fluidity.*

**8 min.**

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## **Etudes**

### **Etude No. 12: "Skipping Rope" by Dmitri Kabalevsky, *Celebration Series***

*Perspectives® Piano Studies 1* p. 15 (see examples 3.1 and 3.2)

#### **Pedagogical Value of this Piece:**

1. This music suggests the upward and downward swoop of the skipping rope, where the right hand represents "up" and the left hand represents "down." By studying this piece, the student develops the ability to portray an image through music. She develops the ability to communicate sensations evoked by that image with spontaneity.
2. The student refines detached/staccato playing. She learns to hear each note as having a beginning, middle, and end.
3. The student extends her experience of coordinating the two sides of the body. When playing this piece, it is important to be in full command of left and right, and also to anticipate a left hand movement while the right hand is still in action (and vice versa).
4. The student learns to gradually accelerate the playing tempo in equal increments.
5. The student reads all left hand notes on a treble staff, which may not come easily yet at this level.

#### **Pitfalls to Be Avoided:**

1. Fragmentation due to improper transfer of energy between sides of the body.
2. An overly heavy touch.
3. An excessively slow tempo.

4. Staccato notes that are played with and "attack" only, and not with a beginning, middle, and end.

**Example 3.1: alternation between left and right sides of the body**



**Example 3.2: the accelerando from bars 18-26**



Teaching "Skipping Rope"

A student practicing this piece may become so focused on the act of playing the right notes at the right time, that she may start raising her shoulders. In such a case, I would ensure that the student is fully relaxed through the shoulders. If she is not, I might remind her to feel her "shoulder hollows." The "shoulder hollow(s)" is one way of describing the small hollow space at the side of the shoulder joint (about 2 inches up from her shirtsleeve seam, along the shoulder seam). When this hollow is sunken, both the shoulder and upper arm will be relaxed, making it possible for the pianist to create a resonant

*tone*. A student at this stage of exam preparation could still have difficulties in timing the accelerando from bar 18 to the end as a subtle and consistent increase in tempo. If the student has difficulty with this section, I would ask her to imagine the acceleration that happens when riding a bike down a hill. I would encourage her to speak a word out loud repeatedly, slightly accelerating her speech with each repetition of the word. Keeping in mind the image of the bike gathering speed as it goes down a hill while doing so could be helpful. (A word that could be used is the word "alligator," since it is easy to pronounce when said quickly). I might also ask her to play a two-octave scale in C major, first establishing an even speed, and then increasing that speed with the utmost regularity. When this has been achieved, I would ask her to apply the same principle to the accelerando in this study.

It is important to remember that a musical performance is a story, told through sound. For this reason, I would encourage the student to tell me in detail what she wishes to express through this music. *When a performer is interested in the musical story she is telling, she will be most likely to interest a listener.* When a student finds the re-creation of an image through sound challenging, she may benefit from speaking a short poem out loud as expressively as possible. When doing so, she will strive to match her facial expressions with the word meanings. Ideally, a poem depicting the image suggested by a piece's title (here, the activity of skipping rope) will be used. Afterward, the teacher may ask the student to write cue words directly on the score to remind herself of the image she is striving to picture musically. If the poem used earlier was one describing the same image evoked by the piece's title, the student may use descriptive words directly from the poem on her score. Then she will be asked to play the piece again, now putting the same energetic expression into the music that she put into reciting the poem earlier. *This activity provides the student with an aesthetic parallel to her repertoire. It suggests experiences that she herself may not have had but is able to evoke by using her imagination and her voice. The activity of speaking a poem's words out loud helps the student to internalize the words'*

*expressive content on a kinesthetic level. Doing so substantially enhances the retention of sensory and emotional associations between the poem and the music which the student may have made. Thus, the emotional links between words and music, and between music and performer, will be strengthened, adding immediacy to the student's performance. A student will also benefit from describing a visual image corresponding to the title of a piece. The act of looking for words appropriate to the image suggested by the title of a piece helps the student reflect on what she is trying to communicate.*

**10 min.**

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## **Repertoire**

**List A: "Minuet in A Minor" by Johann Krieger, Celebration Series Perspectives®**

*Piano Repertoire* p. 10 (see example 3.3)

### **Pedagogical Value of this Piece:**

1. It extends the student's experience of 18th century keyboard music. The student continues to assimilate the technical skills required to play with grace, elegance, and clarity, which are characteristic of music of this time period. These skills include playing with a well-articulated grip for a sound that has poise, creating well-articulated slurs, and balancing the two parts so that each achieves its own musical purpose in the context of the whole.
2. The student learns about rhythmical imitation. The teacher will point out the two-bar rhythmical motif of three quarter notes followed by a dotted half note, which shifts from one hand to the other.

3. The student observes the interplay of rhythmical and melodic figures by learning about the use of sequences, in bars 9-13.
4. The piece provides an opportunity for teaching the characteristics of ABA form.

### Example 3.3

$\text{♩} = 120 - 126$

The musical score consists of five systems of piano music in 3/4 time. The first system (bars 1-4) is marked *mf* and features a sequence of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (bars 5-8) is marked *mp* and continues the sequence. The third system (bars 9-13) is marked *mp* and shows a sequence of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The fourth system (bars 14-18) is marked *mf* and continues the sequence. The fifth system (bars 19-22) is marked *p* and concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots.



### **Pitfalls to be Avoided:**

1. Insufficient rhythmical pulse, often resulting from the student not internalizing the downbeats.
2. Insufficient rhythmical definition in each sound, which may result from a weak or erratic grip.
3. A strong pulse on every downbeat (since one important characteristic of the minuet is a stronger pulse on every second downbeat).
4. Playing with equal emphasis on each beat.
5. Lack of sufficient resolution at cadence points.

### Teaching "*Minuet in A Minor*"

A student at this stage of learning this piece (i.e. six weeks before an examination, and approximately six weeks into her study of it) may still be working towards achieving more gradations of sound and energy, particularly on the upbeats leading up to the stronger pulses. For more elevation or highlight on the notes of the main pulse, I might suggest a taller fingertip grip.

The first section of this minuet is an 8-bar section divided into two halves. In the first four bars, there is imitation between the two parts, musically suggesting the dialogue between two pairs of dancers). In line two there is more melodic curve and purpose, owing to the presence of the leading note. When teaching this to a student, I would make sure that she feels the harmonic tension of the leading note and has an awareness of the dominant and tonic at cadence points. In the second section of the piece, beginning with bar 9, there is imitation between the hands again, now with an interesting key change to C major. When teaching this

piece, I would encourage the student to aim for a new sense of uplift with this key change. To realize this, I might ask her to grip from a higher position on her circles.

The music has some wider intervals which need to be supported by an extended hand position. If the student needs more practice at this technique, I would ensure that her wrist is lower than her bridge, and that her fingers open as a unit away from the thumb. *Keeping a high bridge, and a relaxed wrist and palm will ensure that the wrist does not rise and create tension.* I would encourage her to pre-hear and pre-feel 5's note before it grips. *By pre-feeling, she will be more technically and physically centered.* I would also ask her to prepare to engage the tip of 5. *This will make it easier for 5 to remain poised and elevated.*

**List B: "Dream Journey" by Christine Donkin, Celebration Series Perspectives® Piano**

*Repertoire p. 16 (see example 3.4)*

**Pedagogical Value of This Piece:**

1. This piece gives the student the opportunity to re-create the image or idea of a "Dream Journey" through sound.
2. The student may discover links between certain sounds within the piece and images she might associate with dreaming or being on a "dream journey."
3. The piece extends the student's experience of legato playing.
4. The student gains experience of syncopated pedaling.
5. The student develops the ability to play with a resonant but *piano* singing tone.
6. The student learns to better listen from outside herself, creating a seamless musical experience for the listener as she herself becomes the foremost listener.

### Example 3.4

Mysteriously ♩ = 96 – 108

5

9

12

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*rit.*

*a tempo*

*rit.*

white key gliss.

"Dream Journey" by Christine Donkin. © Copyright 2006 The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, Toronto, Canada. Reprinted with permission.

7. The piece offers the opportunity to learn a correct glissando (by supporting 3 with the thumb and inverting the hand in a closed hand position to create a regular tone. The student will learn to practice glissandi silently to avoid discomfort from the repetitive movement of sliding the inverted hand along the keys).
8. The student develops her ability to create natural-sounding changes in tempo.

### **Pitfalls to be Avoided:**

1. Careless use of the pedal at title changes, resulting in an excessively blurred sound, breaks in the sound, or a "drowned" sound.
2. Tempo fluctuations between sections.
3. A "note-y" performance, resulting from finger attacks that are too direct.

### Teaching "Dream Journey"

One of the elements that give this piece its beauty and its character of fantasy is the use of the pedal. When teaching this piece, I would check that the student's pedaling is correct (i.e. well-grounded) and precise (i.e. occurring as marked). One practice strategy to improve precision in pedaling is to count out loud, without playing but following the music, substituting the word "down" or "up-down" on beats where pedal changes occur. (In this case as in many, changes occur only on the downbeats). The next step is to do the same as above, now imitating a pedaling action with the foot exactly in synchronization with the spoken words. Then the student may play, while pedaling but still counting out loud and verbally identifying pedal changes. As the student's confidence increases, the metronome may be used as a guide for steadiness. I would also check that the student has practiced the resonant but *piano* tone so important in communicating the dreamlike character of this piece. *For a beautiful singing tone, a student strives to imagine each coming note and group into it with a slight overlap from the previous note.* Should the student need further direction in order to learn to play with a singing tone, a study by Carl Czerny, from *Technique Is Fun*, Elementary Book A, called "Rollerblading," (see example 3.5), may be assigned.

### Example 3.5

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked 'Moderato' and 'p (legato)'. The upper staff (treble clef) begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The lower staff (bass clef) has a '5' written below the first note. The second system starts with a '5' in a box above the first note of the upper staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

**Invention: "She's Like the Swallow" – Maritime folksong, arranged by David Duke,**

*Celebration Series Perspectives® Piano Repertoire p. 38 (see example 3.6)*

#### **Pedagogical Value of this Piece:**

1. The student learns to give as much importance to the shaping of the bass voice as to the shaping of the upper voice.
2. The student learns to contour each phrase to fit the words of this folksong. The words are not included in the book, but it is recommended that a teacher write these directly on the student's score<sup>29</sup>.
3. The student discovers that the music is in 2-bar units, creating a sense of symmetry.
4. The student learns to control the hands independently, so that each hand can shape its upbeat, its downbeat, and sense of arrival and termination. Two musical voices independently of each other.

---

<sup>29</sup> For the complete lyrics to this folksong, refer to Appendix C.

### Example 3.6

Wistfully, moderately ♩ = 120 – 132

*mp*

5 1 5 1

5 1 2 4 2

3 5 2 5 1 2

1 4 1

3 5 4 2 1 2 3

1 5 4 3 1 5

*rit.*

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### Pitfalls to be Avoided:

1. Treating one musical line as more important than the other one.
2. Drowning out both voices through overly loud or insensitive playing. This is usually the result of not listening to the direction and dialogue of the voices.

### Teaching "She's like the Swallow"

The study of inventions helps a student learn to shape to musical voices independently of each other. This means that the student develops the ability to listen for the movement of either a single line of music or two lines of music at the same time. She learns to give one line

momentary priority, without losing sight of the directional movement of the other line of music. She learns to control various levels of energy and sound, and to merge these into a cohesive whole. When teaching this piece, I would check that the student shapes phrases of each voice individually by creating a crescendo towards the highpoint of each melody line (which comes at a different time in the music for each voice). The first highpoint in the music for the right hand comes on the first beat of bar 3; the first highpoint for the left hand comes on the first beat of bar 5. To hear the phrasing, I would ask the student to sing the right hand melody as expressively as possible from beginning to end. This would enable her to hear the piece as a folksong, the way it was intended.

Next, I would have student play the left hand from bar 2 to the first beat of bar 9 as expressively as possible. After this, I would have her sing the first two lines of the right hand melody, coming in with the left hand in its proper place (bar 2). To further help the student project each melody line where it needs to be projected, it is helpful to use verbalization. The student may say: "right," where the right hand has its melodic highpoint, and "left," where the left hand has its melodic highpoint. *This verbalization allows the student to synchronize her hand with her voice. It teaches the student to recognize a hierarchy of sounds and music in the same way that there is a hierarchy of sound in the poem.* The remainder of the piece is best practiced in a similar way.

**30 min.**

---

## Theory


The assignment on p. 54 of Mark Sarnecki's *Elementary Music Theory, Second Edition, Book 3* (see figure 11) provides students with visual reinforcement of major scales and

**Figure 11**

**Triads**

1. Write the following scales using accidentals. Label the first, third, and fifth notes of the scale (1, 3, 5). Write the tonic major triad for each. Name the triad (C major, D major, etc.).

D major



triad name: \_\_\_\_\_

**etc.**

their tonic triads (which they will have played by visual, aural, and tactile memory from the first year of study onward. Penta scales and the triad on which each penta scale is based are normally introduced at the end of the primer from the Piano Adventures® series by Faber and Faber; most students will have reached this point by the end of their first year of study). *Triads are the building blocks that form the foundation of the pieces that students at this level are playing. With knowledge of triads, students are better equipped to read musical patterns both in the learning of repertoire and in sight reading.*

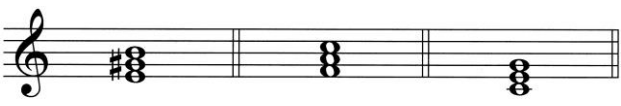
I might then assign p. 55 of Mark Sarnecki's *Elementary Music Theory, Second Edition, Book 3* (see figures 12 and 13) to be completed for the next lesson. Exercise 2 is an exercise in triad identification based on knowledge of each triad's root and the position of its accidentals. In exercise 3 the student is asked to write, rather than identify, triads.



**Figure 12**

Triads

2. Name the following triads.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

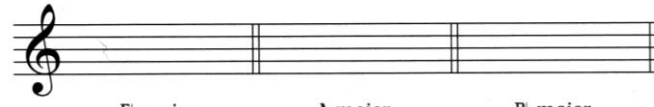
\_\_\_\_\_

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains three triads: the first is E major (E4, G#4, B4), the second is A major (A3, C#4, E4), and the third is B major (B2, D#3, F#4). Below each triad is a blank line for the student to write the name.

etc.

**Figure 13**

3. Write the following triads.



E major                  A major                  B major

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains three empty triad positions. Below each position is a label: 'E major', 'A major', and 'B major'. The student is to write the notes for each triad.

etc.

*The ability to identify and notate triads is important, because triads form the building blocks of the music they play. Knowledge of triads reinforces the penta scale positions from the circle of fifths, therefore helping the student to see the progression of keys in the circle of fifths.*

**5 min.**

---

## **Sight Reading and Ear Training**

At the end of the lesson, I might test the student on her sight reading skills, using the sample test on p. 44 of the *RCM Four-Star Level 1 Sight Reading and Ear Tests* book (see example 4.6). *When exercises in sight reading are done on a regular basis, skills such as*

### Example 4.6



*pattern recognition, note reading accuracy, and rhythmical precision improve. Sight Reading has better fluency when a student looks ahead. The learning of repertoire is assisted by the visual recognition of patterns which sight reading may give a student.*

Additionally, I would give the student two rhythms to clap back from p. 43 of the *RCM Four-Star Level 1 Sight Reading and Ear Tests* book (see example 4.7). When doing so, I would

### Example 4.7



check that her timing is accurate and remind her to project a stronger downbeat clap on beat 1. Depending on the student, I would give her a mark out of five, to be recorded for future reference. *Clapping exercises train accuracy in counting and the clear communication of rhythm (i.e. the hierarchy of beats within a bar) in a variety of meters. Recording marks is occasionally useful to help a student see her progress over a longer time period. Some students are particularly mark-focused and feel more motivated to practice when they are marked.*

At the end of the lesson, I might give the student two melodies to be played back from p. 48, being careful to adhere to current Royal Conservatory syllabus requirements (see example 4.8). Current Royal Conservatory requirements stipulate that student shall hear a given melody

### Example 4.8



twice, clap it back, then hear it again and play it back. *Playback exercises improve a student's ability to listen, which is important for a musician's aural development. Over the course of time, the student's enjoyment of music will be enhanced through her growing ability to appreciate subtleties in music.*

**7 min.**

# Lesson Plan for a Hypothetical Grade 2 Student

**Program of Study:** Royal Conservatory, Grade 2

**Student Age:** 11

**Study Materials:** *Celebration Series Perspectives® Piano Repertoire 2* (Jones et al.), *Celebration Series Perspectives® Piano Studies 2* (Jones et al.), *Technique, Celebration Series, The Piano Odyssey® 2* (Levene et al), and *Four Star® Sight Reading and Ear Tests Level 2* (Berlin and Markow)

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**Date:** October 6

## Overview

This lesson plan is written for a hypothetical 11-year-old boy, with the assumption that the student has passed his Grade 1 examination in piano at the spring examination session. He has now been working on Grade 2 material for eight weeks and is scheduled to perform his piece, "*March of the Goblins*," at a Halloween-themed group lesson at the end of the month.

---

## Formal Technique

Beginning a lesson with formal technical exercises allows a student to focus the mind, the ear, and the body. At the start of the lesson, I might hear the student's 2-octave scales in F major and D minor harmonic and melodic in the right hand, and in A major and A minor harmonic and

melodic in the left hand, checking that each finger plays from the surface of its key, instead of from above. I would ask the student to listen closely to his playing, hearing the fullness of each note. (Each note has an attack, duration, and an end. *Playing from the surface of the key makes it easier to connect sounds fluidly without accent, since this allows for more control of the key. It is important to remember that each individual musical sound is shaped by means of an attack, middle, and release. Students often need to hear that the attack forms only the beginning of each sound. Listening to the beginning, middle and end of each sound allows the student to appreciate how individual sounds may be connected smoothly. Music that is played solely with an attack, and not with a sufficiently long middle and release, may easily sound accented and choppy.*

Next, I would hear the student play broken triads in any of the following keys: A minor, F major, G major, or E minor with a gentle tone but a firm fingertip grip. This will support an engaging sound and prepare the student for the broken triads/arpeggiated figures occurring in Etude No. 12 (see below.) I would guide the student as he aims to play gently, but with a firm fingertip grip for a musically engaging sound. I would also encourage the student to aim for a smoothly connected sound, rather than a detached sound, since this is what he will be aiming for in the Etude. To control the character of his sound (i.e. energetic or gentle), I would remind him that the speed of his grip will influence his sound: the faster the grip, the more energetic the sound, and the slower the grip, the gentler the sound. Here I would encourage the student to aim for a slower grip. I would remind him that in order to create a smoothly connected sound (legato), it is necessary to create a slight overlap of sound between adjacent notes, by gripping the second notes (key) of a legato passage just before releasing the preceding one. *The speed of gripping, and the manner in which adjacent notes either overlap or not are important factors in creating the character and attitude of a piece of music.*

**8 min.**

---

# Etudes

## Etude No. 12: "The Wind" by Chee Hwa Tan, Celebration Series Perspectives® Piano Studies 2

p. 15 (see example 4.1)

### Example 4.1

Windy, in a gusting manner ♩ = 152 - 160

mf

4 3 1

5 2 1

5

5

5

1

p cresc.

1 5

10

4 2

just a rustle

4

pp

1 2 5

8va

15

gusting away

cresc.

4

5 2

8va

LH over

RH

3 2 3

ff

fff

"The Wind" by Chee-Hwa Tan. © Copyright 1994 The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, Toronto, Canada. Reprinted with permission.

### **Pedagogical Value of this Piece:**

1. The image of the wind suggested by the title encourages the student to use his imagination to conjure up a similar image through sound.
2. The student develops the ability to make smooth transitions from one side of the body to the other while playing. It is important for the student to feel this transition both in terms of internal energy and external movement. The student will aim play as if the arms were "hinged from the shoulder blades"; the arms will be extended and buoyant.
3. The student learns to isolate a melody line from a framework of broken triads. In the Etude's B section, the highest pitch of each right hand figure connects smoothly to the highest pitch of the right hand figure following it, to form a sweeping melody line. It is desirable to play this section on the fingers' inside corners.
4. The student extends his experience of syncopated pedaling.
5. The student encounters circular rotation in a new context.
6. The student learns to create a carefully graduated crescendo from a *pianissimo* to a *fortissimo* within the short space of seven bars and at a moderately fast tempo.
7. The student learns that a composer may employ non-standard directions on her score to clarify her intention. Here Tan uses the words "*in a gusting manner*," "*just a rustle*," and "*gusting away*."

### **Pitfalls to be Avoided:**

1. Imprecise pedaling resulting in a blurred sound.
2. Playing without applying circular rotation: this will result in an immobile, vertical sound, which is contrary to the image of gusting wind.

I would check that the student is fully relaxed through the shoulders. If he is not, I would ask him to place his fingertips under his arms, against his body, and then rotate his shoulders first forwards, then backwards, at least 15 times in each direction. *This exercise works by moderately using the arm and shoulder muscles. When a student plays after completing this exercise, the arms and shoulders will be a little more relaxed, and will not have energy for any unwanted contractions.* One important reason for teaching this piece is to help a student develop the ability to create smoother transitions from one side of the body to the other. To do this, the teacher may play the piece at a slow to moderate tempo, asking the student to stand in her field of vision and where he can see as much of her hands as possible. She may ask him to hold an easy-to-hold object in his hands, passing it from right to left, according to whether the teacher plays with the right or the left hand. After the student has done the activity successfully a few times, he may play the music slowly, while verbally identifying the hand with which he is playing as "right" or "left." It is important for the student to play with energy from the backs of his shoulder blades. The movement used to play will be initiated at the backs of the shoulder blades – not in any other part of the arm. Those parts of the arms that are between the shoulder blades and the fingertips serve as conductors of energy, but do not initiate movement themselves. *These activities combine kinesthetic, visual, and aural learning, giving the best possible basis for long-term retention.*

A student learning this piece can spend time identifying and learning to articulate the melody line in the B section. I would suggest that he "play" this section silently (i.e. move soundlessly on the keys as if he were playing), however playing the right hand skeleton notes at their correct volume. *Isolating the melody in this way helps a student to better identify and articulate the elements of melody and harmony of which the music consists.* Then, I might ask the student to play each bar of the B section, playing the broken triads as solid triads (this is called "blocking"). Thus, bar 5 will be played as



a solid right hand A minor chord followed by a solid left hand A minor chord. *This activity helps a student hear the harmony of each consecutive broken triad more clearly.*

15 min.

---

## Repertoire

### List A: "Menuetto I in C Major," by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Celebration Series*

*Perspectives® Piano Repertoire 2 p. 6 (see example 4.2)*

#### Example 4.2

The musical score for Example 4.2 consists of four systems of piano music in 3/4 time. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked *mp* and features a broken triad in the right hand and a solid triad in the left hand. The second system (measures 5-8) is marked *mf* and includes a trill in the right hand. The third system (measures 9-12) is marked *mp* and features a broken triad in the right hand. The fourth system (measures 13-16) is marked *mf* and includes a trill in the right hand. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

### **Pedagogical Value of this Piece:**

1. It extends the student's experience of 18th century keyboard music. The student continues to assimilate the technical skills required to play with the grace, elegance, and clarity which are characteristic of music of this time period. These include playing with a well-articulated grip for a sound that has poise, creating well-articulated slurs, and balancing melody and accompaniment in a transparent musical texture.
2. The student learns (or is reminded) that a minuet is a dance with a stronger pulse on every second bar. The student learns to recognize and clearly define this pulse. The teacher will point out that the minuet was known by various names (menuet, menuetto, minuuet), depending on the country where it was written and/or its musical characteristics (which may suggest the dance style of a particular country).
3. The student learns to listen for the characteristics of string and wind instrumentation and the music he is learning. Thus, the left hand could be considered a low stringed instrument sound, whereas the right hand (especially in the modulating section from bars 5-8) could be thought of as a bassoon line supported by violins.
4. The piece provides an opportunity for the student to learn about sequences (bars 1-4; bars 9-12).
5. Depending on the maturity of the student, the teacher may introduce a discussion of modulation. The teacher may explain, in simple terms, how the composer achieves the move to the dominant (bars 6-8) and the move back to the tonic (bars 14-16), while maintaining musical unity.

### **Pitfalls to be Avoided:**

1. An undefined pulse.
2. Playing with equal emphasis on each beat.
6. An excessively heavy touch.
7. Phrases that do not taper towards the end.
8. Unwanted and/or erratic accents.
9. Any stress on beat 3, since this is the taping note of each left hand musical "sigh."
10. Accentuating the repeated notes in line 2 when striving for a bassoon-like sound.

### Teaching "Menuetto I in C Major"

Assuming that this is the student's third lesson learning the piece and that note names and values have been well learned, I would check that he plays with an energetic grip into the bridge, for a clearly-defined and bright tone, which is characteristic of the classical period. I would remind the student that in a minuet, the first beat of every second bar will have a slightly stronger pulse. If the student has difficulty defining the pulse, I would ask him to speak a syllable such as "ba" where the stronger pulse occurs. Then I would ask him to start aiming for greater balance between the hands allowing the right hand to shape a graceful melody while the left hand plays lightly and with buoyancy. I might assign hands separate practice, with special attention to gripping from the surface of the key. This is best demonstrated by the teacher, and then repeated by the student, during the student's first lesson learning the piece, and reviewed as often as necessary. *Gripping from the surface of the key enables the pianist to create a focused tone, free of harshness. In some music an attack from above the key is used as a special effect, however, it is out of place in 18th century dance music.* Depending on how much time is spent on the

musical elements mentioned above, I might move on to the student's next piece, or continue working on the minuet. If continuing with the minuet, I might ask the student to work towards better melodic flow and well-articulated phrasing by singing the right hand melody down an octave and marking directly on the music those places where breathing can happen naturally without interrupting the flow of the melody. I would check that these places coincide with the natural phrase endings (every two bars). *A steady melodic flow and phrasing give shape to music.* A buoyant left hand may be practiced using shadow playing<sup>30</sup>. *This technique helps a student gain control of a less intense sound in the left hand and greater intensity in the right hand.*

**List B: "*March of the Goblins*," by Boris Berlin, *Celebration Series Perspectives*®**

*Piano Repertoire 2* p. 16 (see example 4.3)

**Pedagogical Value of this Piece:**

1. This is an excellent piece for developing a student's ability to portray an image through music. It is important for any performer to engage the listener by feeling himself a part of the story he is telling. This is a skill as important as good technique and, in combination with the latter, can make the difference between true musicianship and tedious "note playing."
2. The student learns to play with a touch that is detached but not excessively so. The teacher will explain that every mark on the score has a purpose in that it helps the performer express the title and the elements of the music. She may ask: "Why would the

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<sup>30</sup> Refer to the glossary for definition of this term.

staccatos in a piece called 'March of the Goblins' be only moderately detached? Would a very short staccato sound like a goblin?"

### Example 4.3

In march time ♩ = 96 – 108

5  
mp  
cresc.

6  
1  
f  
mp

11  
4  
3  
1  
2  
f

17  
5  
mf  
mp  
p

23  
f  
p

"March of the Goblins" by Boris Berlin. © Copyright 1947 The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, Toronto, Canada Reprinted with permission.

### **Pitfalls to be Avoided:**

1. A hyper-detached staccato touch.
2. An overly fast tempo: goblins are dwarf-like creatures, and this is a march. Fast playing would suggest a dance, done by some creature more light-footed than a goblin.
3. Insufficient pulse on beat 1, and heaviness on later beats of each bar.
4. Fluctuation of tempo and delayed register shifts.

### Teaching "*March of the Goblins*"

Assuming that the student is three weeks away from performing this piece, and that this playing is technically secure but not yet as imaginative as it could be, I would ask him to tell me what kind of a musical picture he wishes to create with this piece. Since I usually discuss a piece's title and the musical image suggested by that title in a student's first lesson learning piece, this would be review. If he is able to offer an image, I would take it up and help him develop a story to match the various musical events within the piece. I might play the characteristic opening theme and encourage him to find a verbal description for that theme, also asking him what about these musical sounds made him decide on that particular description. After the student has come up with an image that works well with the musical characteristics of the piece (register, range, directional contours and articulations) I might play the piece for him from beginning to end, to help him see that image by describing it in detail as I play. For example, I could say: "The goblins are wearing thick, knitted socks. Some of them have taken off their boots, and others are wearing heavy leather boots. It is dark outside, and the goblins have come out of their hiding places..." I would encourage the student to add to the story or to replace an image with another, if he can explain how the change supports the music. I might also ask him to stand up and take a few steps across the room, sensing his feet as they make contact with the

floor and feeling heaviness in his upper body, as if he were a goblin. Then I would ask him to play the piece, keeping the image established earlier in mind and putting the goblin-like ponderousness he imitated into his playing. *The ability to communicate an image or an idea will help music come alive. It is necessary to mentally and physically connect with the story told by a piece's title or through its musical characteristics, to be able to share that story meaningfully. It is important for a student to learn as early as possible, that music has meaning only when it appeals to human feeling and that music notation itself is merely a set of symbols. At the Grade 2 level, a student learns increasingly about communication through music, having by this time learned the basics of music notation. For this reason, discussions on musical imagery will be a valuable component of lessons from this level onward.*

**Invention: "The Argument," by Gordon A. McKinnon, Celebration Series**

*Perspectives® Piano Repertoire 2 p. 36 (see example 4.4)*

**Pedagogical Value of This Piece:**

1. The student learns to shape two musical voices independently of each other.
2. The student learns to give each voice an imaginary contrasting character.
3. The student develops his ability to listen closely to his own playing, so that he develops effective pacing between the two voices or elements of the argument.

**Pitfalls to Be Avoided:**

1. Treating one musical line as more important than the other one.

2. Drowning out both voices through excessively loud accents or not differentiating between the accented detached notes and the legato phrases.

### Example 4.4

Moderato ♩ = 112 - 120

"The Argument" by Gordon A. McKinnon. © Copyright 1994 The Frederick Harrick Music Co., Limited, Toronto, Canada. Reprinted with permission.

### Teaching "The Argument"

Assuming that this is the student's third week studying the piece and that notation has been well learned and a good start made on shaping the individual voices, I would check that the student's conception of the argument described by the piece is consistent with the musical events depicted in the score. To do so, I would go through the piece with the student from beginning to end, ensuring that each rise and fall of the contrapuntal lines has been assigned a credible part in



the musical story as the student understands it. For example, the right hand entry could be considered as an actor running on to stage, promptly pursued by another actor (the left hand). In line 2, these two characters start a heated debate with each other. Finally, the actor represented by the right hand seems to gain the upper hand (both literally and figuratively), shown by the ascending sequence begun in bar 4 and continued through bar 7, which leads into the confident re-statement of the opening motif, this time unchallenged by a counter-statement from the left hand. The student is encouraged come up with his own story, writing notes directly onto the score to remind him of what happens and when. *Having in mind a mental image of what a given piece of music could describe helps a performer communicate the spirit of the music. At the elementary level, most students are still learning that what is notated on a score of music, and the music itself, are separate from each other. The teacher may provide the student with an image to help him understand this. She might ask: "Is this book that I am holding the story that is in the book? Or is the story separate from the paper and the printed words in the book?"*

I would also help the student identify the climax of each phrase (since each musical statement will crescendo towards that climax). Singing the individual lines may help. Once the student can sing both the right hand and the left hand lines confidently with the correct phrasing, he will benefit from playing each line while singing it, so the hands learn by mimicking the singing voice. Then the student may try playing each line on its own. After this, he may carefully play one line and sing the other, always paying attention to phrasing. This way of practicing could be assigned from one lesson to the next as a practiced tactic to be well learned. *The process described above teaches a student listen closely, which may help him to adjust his playing in response to the sounds he creates. Being able to listen well and make changes in one's*

own playing based on its sound is an important skill for any musician, since music is an aural art.

26 min.

---

## **Theory**

Now I would check the student's assignment in the *Student Workbook 2*, p. 23, on "*Menuetto I in C Major*" (see figure 14), which was assigned at the previous lesson. I would be reviewed. I might add some further anecdotes from Mozart's life to give the student a better sense of who Mozart was, what his surroundings were like and what some of his accomplishments were. Then I would assign p. 71 of the *Student Workbook 2* on "*The Argument*" (see figure 15). This assignment gives the student an opportunity to write down some of his ideas about the musical story in *The Argument* in a new context, which may help him remember the important musical events of this piece more readily.

ask the student some questions from the book, to find out what he learned, and what might need to be reviewed. I might add some further anecdotes from Mozart's life to give the student a better sense of who Mozart was, what his surroundings were like and what some of his accomplishments were. Then I would assign p. 71 of the *Student Workbook 2* on "*The Argument*" (see figure 15). This assignment gives the student an opportunity to write down some of his ideas about the musical story in *The Argument* in a new context, which may help him remember the important musical events of this piece more readily.

Figure 14

**Menuetto I in C Major**

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is considered to be one of the greatest composers of all time. His music is filled with wonderful melodies and a great variety of mood and feeling. Mozart began performing and composing music at an early age. When he was only eight years old his *Violin Sonata*, op. 1, no. 1 was published in Paris.

**Opus 1, no. 1**

We know that this *Violin Sonata* is the first of Mozart's pieces to be published because it is identified as op. 1, no. 1:

- op. is the short form for the word *opus* which means "work"
- no. is the short form for the word number

An opus number is usually assigned to a group of works:

- op. 1 refers to the first collection of works to be published
- no. 1 identifies the first piece in the collection

There are usually three movements in a sonata. The third movement of Mozart's *Violin Sonata*, op. 1 no. 1 is made up of two minuets. The **Minuet 1 in C Major** is the second of these.

**Minuet Style**

The minuet is a graceful dance in a moderate tempo with three beats to the measure.

Why do you think Mozart writes so many two-note slurs in his minuet?

---

Look at the longer note values of the two-note slurs in mm. 8 and 16. Sometimes this kind of figure is called a "musical sigh" or a "leaning note." Can you explain why?

---

**An Accidental Key Change?**

*Menuetto* has two sections and you can see clearly where they are. Write in the measure numbers below and label the sections A and B in your music.

A: mm. \_\_\_\_\_ – \_\_\_\_\_

B: mm. \_\_\_\_\_ – \_\_\_\_\_

We know this music is in C major for two reasons.

1. There is a key signature of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The first and last notes of the piece are both \_\_\_\_\_.

Look at the **accidentals** in the A section.

What is the accidental in m. 2? \_\_\_\_\_ m. 4? \_\_\_\_\_

m. 6? \_\_\_\_\_

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Celebration Series®, Student Workbook 2 Menuetto I in C Major

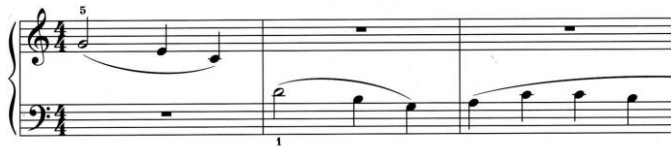
"Menuetto I in C Major" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Text© Copyright 2001 The Frederick Harrick Music Co., Limited, Toronto, Canada. Reprinted with permission.

**5 min.**

## **Sight Reading and Ear Training**

Now I would test the student on his Sight Reading skills, using the sample test on the top of p. 44 of the RCM *Four-Star Level 2 Sight Reading and Ear Tests* book (see example 4.5).

### **Example 4.5**



*When exercises in sight reading are undertaken on a regular basis, the student develops pattern recognition skills, note reading accuracy, and rhythmical precision. When a student has good sight reading skills, it increases his confidence, resulting in an ability to learn a greater amount of repertoire.*

Figure 15

## The Argument

### Gordon A. McKinnon (1952– )

Gordon A. McKinnon was born in Scotland and raised in Canada. From 1974 to 1993, he taught at The Royal Conservatory of Music. McKinnon is a founding director of the Toronto Associated Conservatory of Music.

### The Story

This “argument” between your two hands has a miniature story you can tell through music. Let’s call the two voices “Right” and “Left.” Here’s how the story begins.

\_\_\_\_\_ makes a statement in mm. 1–2. The first three notes form an \_\_\_\_\_ minor **triad**.

\_\_\_\_\_ interrupts \_\_\_\_\_ in m. \_\_\_\_\_ with a \_\_\_\_\_ major triad that **imitates** \_\_\_\_\_’s statement.

Play these two statements separately. They are similar but not exactly the same.

How do they differ?

---

---

In mm. 4–6, the argument heats up. \_\_\_\_\_ interrupts \_\_\_\_\_ again.

Their voices become higher and \_\_\_\_\_ as they struggle to make themselves heard. Compare these short fragments to the original statement. Can you see a relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, in mm. 7–10, \_\_\_\_\_ finally drowns out \_\_\_\_\_.

While \_\_\_\_\_ stubbornly holds one long note, \_\_\_\_\_ calms down (*decrescendo* to *mezzo piano*), to make one last point. The \_\_\_\_\_ in the final measure turns the music from E minor to \_\_\_\_\_ major.

Is this musical argument a model of our arguments in real life? Do we often disagree about small matters and shout each other down? Even so, it is usually possible to end a disagreement in a friendly way. In this story, both voices combine at the end to create a new key.

“The Argument” by Gordon A. McKinnon. Text© Copyright 2001 The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, Toronto, Canada. Reprinted with permission.

After this, I would give the student two rhythms to clap back from p. 43 of *Four-Star Level 2 Sight Reading and Ear Tests* (see example 4.6), checking that his timing is precise and

### Example 4.6



possibly giving him a mark out of five, to be recorded for future reference. *Clapping exercises train accuracy in counting and the clear communication of rhythm (i.e. the hierarchy of beats with in a bar) in a variety of meters. Recording marks is occasionally useful to help a student see his progress within a given time period. Some students are particularly mark-focused and feel more motivated to practice when they are marked.*

At this point, I would give the student two melodies to play back from p. 48 of *Four-Star Level 2 Sight Reading and Ear Tests*, being careful to adhere to the current Royal Conservatory syllabus requirements (see example 4.7). Current Royal Conservatory requirements ask students

### Example 4.7



**6 min**

to listen to a given melody twice, clap it back, then hear it again and play it back. *Playback exercises help develop a student's ability to recognize melody and rhythm by ear. They improve the ability to listen, which to any musician is highly important. Over the course of time, the student's enjoyment of music may be enhanced through his growing ability to appreciate musical nuances.*

## Glossary of Selected Terms

**Shadow Playing:** Also known as "ghost playing," this refers to the process by which the pianist trains one hand to play with a more subtle sound than the other. Because the coordination of two different types of energy may be difficult, following three distinct steps facilitates the process. In the first step, the hand that will play the given passage with greater intensity will play by itself while the other hand moves on the keys as if playing, however without producing a sound at any time. In the second step, the hand that will play the given passage with greater intensity again plays while the other hand depresses the keys gently, never making contact with the bottom of any key. In the third step, the hand that will play the given passage with greater intensity plays again, while the other hand plays at a *piano* dynamic. The intended end result is a texture characterized by sonorous playing supported by a more subtle but well-projected sound.

**Split Scale:** A one-octave major or minor eight-note scale played by distributing the eight notes of the scale equally between the two hands. The left hand plays the lower tetrachord of the scale beginning with 4, and the right hand plays the upper tetrachord of the scale beginning with 1 (and ending on 4).

## **Appendix A: Guidelines for Preparing the Notation of a New Piece**







1. Block out the rhythm of the piece by clapping while counting out loud. If the piece is written for both hands playing together at the same time, do this step hands separately. Make sure the rhythm of the first line is correct before moving on to the next line.
2. Block out the rhythm of the piece by tapping it on a flat surface, with the undersides of the hands, while counting out loud. Tap each part of the music only with the hand that will be playing that part of music. For example, if the first bar of music is played only with the left hand, then use only the left hand for tapping the first bar. This step may be done hands together.
3. Block out the rhythm of the music by tapping individual fingers on a flat surface in closed hand position. Be sure to follow the fingerings written above the music. Verbalize all finger numbers rhythmically and energetically, following the rhythm of the individual notes (which has been learned in steps 1 and 2). For example, to identify finger 2 playing on a whole note, say: "Two-oo-oo-oo." This step is best done hands separately.
4. Point to each note of the music from beginning to end, naming each note as you point. Verbalize all note names rhythmically, following the rhythm of the music (which has been learned in steps 1 and 2). For example, a whole-note C and then a whole-note G would be spoken "C-ee-ee-ee; G-ee-ee-ee." Students in Grade 1 and higher levels: check with your teacher whether you still need to do this step. You may be asked to name only a few notes.
5. Play the piece slowly, one hand at a time, while counting out loud.
6. If you have difficulty with fingering, your teacher may ask you to play slowly, one hand at a time, while naming finger numbers out loud.

Repeat steps 5 and 6, now playing hands together. Repeat this step until you can play the piece 3 times in a row without mistakes in rhythm or fingering.



## Appendix B: Physical Choreography at the Keyboard

The following are symbols used in my studio to represent hand choreography for specific techniques<sup>31</sup>:

- 1. Circle (representing circular rotation):**  (left hand) or  (right hand). The fingertip grip initiates a clockwise circle of the bridge (left hand), or counterclockwise circle of the bridge (right hand) which leads the hand outward and around. The top of the hand remains level. It is helpful to some students to imagine the top of the hand tracing an oval shape lying on its side. When circling, it is important to move the hand only outward and around, never down.
- 2. Outward Turn (balancing the hand on 4 and 5):**  (left hand) or  (right hand). The top of the palm remains level as the entire hand moves outward with a clockwise (left hand) or counterclockwise (right hand) turning movement similar to that of opening a jar lid. The fingertips remain grounded on the keys.
- 3. Forward Arrow (representing staccato):**  In a closed hand position, the pianist touches the finger pad to the key and grips. The grip action plays the note and pulls the bridge toward the nail and over the fingertip. The bridge keeps rolling forward until the key releases beneath the finger. It is important to keep the wrist and elbow disengaged.
- 4. Extended Hand Position:**  The pianist begins with a closed hand position before extending fingers 2-5 straight ahead in a "roof" shape and keeping 2 close

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<sup>31</sup> These examples of keyboard choreography and their corresponding symbols are among those absorbed in apprenticeship with Lynda Metelsky. While the symbols are not standard, the techniques they illustrate represent a school of pedagogical teaching and a lineage of teachers extending back many generations. Several of these teachings may be traced back to the 19th century piano virtuoso and pedagogue Franz Liszt (1811-1886).

to the thumb. Then fingers 2-5 extend outwards as a unit, in a movement comparable to that of someone opening a mittened hand laterally. It is important to keep the wrist below the level of the bridge at all times. When the destination note has been reached (normally a 6th to an octave away from the starting note), the thumb will join fingers 2-5 in a closed hand position with the hand balancing on the currently playing finger.

### **Reasons for Training Physical Choreography at the Keyboard:**

- Circles and outward turns help align fingers 4 and 5 with the forearm, allowing for optimal leverage in playing. This enables the pianist to create a resonant, unhampered sound at the instrument without tension.
- It is important for the outer voices of each individual note and chord to resonate freely. A solid outward turn allows this to happen because it balances the hand.
- Good hand choreography acts as a "shock absorber," allowing the pianist to create a beautiful, rather than harsh, sound.
- Good hand choreography gives efficiency and purpose to a pianist's movements; it eliminates unnecessary movements, improving accuracy and speed.
- Circles and outward turns allow the hands to be balanced. A straight-down attack gives poor balance, because additional fingers may rise to counterbalance the playing finger and this creates unwanted tension.
- The ending point of a good outward turn is a stable, balanced position with a high bridge of 5. Playing straight down does not guarantee a tall hand position. Any downward motion pulls the pianist's energy off the keys and into the lap, instead of keeping the energy on the instrument and directed into the instrument.

- Maintaining consistently correct hand choreography trains a muscle memory for sound piano technique. These movements will become second nature and may be relied upon for good results even under conditions of stress.
- The acceleration of the group (initiating an outward turn) gives rhythmicity to the music.

Good hand choreography generates sounds which have "movement in space," versus static sounds. Therefore, it adds direction to the sound.

## Appendix C: Poetry and Lyrics

*The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* by Edward Lear

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea

In a beautiful pea-green boat:

They took some honey, and plenty of money

Wrapped up in a five-pound note.

The Owl looked up to the stars above,

And sang to a small guitar,

"O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,

What a beautiful Pussy you are,

You are,

You are!

What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl,

How charmingly sweet you sing!

Oh! let us be married; too long we have tarried:

But what shall we do for a ring?"

They sailed away for a year and a day,

To the land where the bong-tree grows;

And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood,  
With a ring at the end of his nose,  
His nose,  
His nose,  
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."  
So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the turkey lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince and slice of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon,  
The moon,  
The moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.

***She's like the Swallow*** – Canadian folk song

She's like a swallow that flies so high,  
She's like a river that never runs dry,  
She's like the sunshine on the lee shore,  
She loves her love and love's no more.

'Tis out in the meadow this fair maid did go,  
A picking a lovely primrose,  
The more she plucked the more she pulled,  
Until she's got her apron full.

She climbed on yonder hill above,  
To give a rose unto her love,  
She gave him one, she gave him three,  
She gave her heart for company.

And as they sat on yonder hill above,  
To give a rose unto her love.  
She gave him one, she gave him three  
She gave her heart for company

And as they sat on yonder hill  
His heart grew hard, so harder still.  
He has two hearts instead of one;  
She says, young man what have you done.

How foolish, foolish you must be,  
To think I loved no one but thee;

This world's not made for one alone;

I take delight in every home. (Peter Webster Music)

## Appendix D: Selected Body Conditioning Exercises

### To be Done Prior to Practicing

1. **Shoulder Rolls**: Stand tall with hips and torso aligned. Rotate both shoulders backwards from the shoulder blade, slowly and mindfully. Keep the shoulders level. Then rotate both shoulders forwards from the shoulder blade. Repeat 10 times in each direction.  
*Purpose: this exercise loosens the shoulders. It requires a student to be aware of her body and notice postural imperfections. Like many body exercises, it gently calms the mind. A calm mind is a state conducive to concentrated learning (Mlotek).*
2. **Figure Eights**: Part I: Swing the right arm in a figure 8 motion in front of and partly to the side of the body. Allow it to swing upward freely and to fall with gravity as it moves downwards. Keep the shoulder relaxed. Part II: Now control the arm by controlling the shoulder blade. Focus on the whole arm moving as one entity from the shoulder blade. Lean against a wall if necessary to better feel the shoulder blade move (Mlotek).
3. **Arm Stretches**: Stand with the arms hanging loosely at the sides of the body. Slowly begin lifting the arms, keeping the palms facing the floor until the arms are level with the shoulders. Make sure the shoulders are relaxed. Then continue raising the arms, gently rotating them so that the palms of the hands finish by facing each other above the head (arms extended vertically from the shoulders). Then reverse. When reversing, the arms should rotate so that the palms face outward as the arms descend. The shoulders should stay relaxed and the head "grow taller" as the arms slowly move downward until resting at the side of the body. Repeat this exercise slowly several times, paying close attention



to every sensation of the body.<sup>31</sup> *Purpose: this exercise helps a student to feel the whole arm as a unit, and develops an awareness of the large arm muscles and upper body. Because it is very simple, it is almost meditative in nature. This kind of focus on one simple activity brings about a quiet mental state, allowing a student to "change gears" from an active schedule at school to a calmer environment.*

4. **Arm Lifting:** Raise the arms as in *Arm Stretches*, above. Then allow the arms to gently touch against the head, close to the ears. Keep the arms in this position for a solid minute or more, remembering to stand up straight and keep the shoulders relaxed. Then the student should allow the arms to fall completely with their natural weight, and remain still, experiencing what his relaxed arms feel like. *Purpose: this exercise moderately fatigues the arm and shoulder muscles, thereby encouraging a student to eliminate unnecessary muscle exertion during playing. It also encourages a student to become more aware of the natural resting weight of the arm. It is important for a pianist to use only this natural resting weight of the arm muscles when playing, avoiding excessive downward movement or tension of any kind. For this reason, developing awareness of the arms' natural resting weight is crucial* (Metelsky, 2012-2016).

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<sup>31</sup> This exercise is adapted by the author from movements used in Eurythmy, a form of body movement taught in the Waldorf curriculum established by the philosopher and social reformer Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925).

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# Appendix E: Scales

Example 1: Pentascale in C Major/Minor

1  
R.H.

2

3

4

5

Example 2: Split Scale in C Major/Minor Harmonic

4

3

2

1

1

2

3

4

L.H.

R.H.

Example 3: One-Octave Scale in C Major/Minor Harmonic

1

2

3

1

2

3

4

5

R.H.