THE
PIANO Adventures® TEACHER

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Memorize In Black and White

THE F·J·H MUSIC COMPANY INC.

THE PIANO ADVENTURES® TEACHER

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From the Editor

BY MARIENNE USZLER

Our thanks for the enthusiastic response to the first issue. Your comments tell us that we *are* filling a need.

"From content to layout, I thought the entire newsletter was terrific."

"*The Piano Adventures Teacher* is a treasure that I will take the time to dig into because it will enhance the effectiveness of my teaching by increasing my confidence and reminding me of our mission, attitude, and process."

"I expect this publication to fill a particular niche for me."

"As a piano teacher who has been devoting time to another career and is now starting again to give piano lessons, the information was SO helpful. I read every word!"

"I think the coining of "Piano Adventures Teacher" is brilliant! Now when someone asks if I'm a Suzuki teacher, I can say, "No, I'm a Piano Adventures Teacher!"

The start of each new teaching year brings mixed emotions springing from the multi-layered activities that are part of this season. A renewed sense of dedication is combined with the sheer busy-ness of interviewing and scheduling. Questions about which students will return fuse with questions about those who will be new to the studio. Sorting through materials and fitting music and methods to individual students is buoyed by the hope that the choices will mesh better than ever. There may be a trace of anxiety-plus-excitement if you're adding a new feature—group lessons, preschool instruction, computer time, or working with digital pianos.

But then, the first lessons get underway, and you feel "in the groove" again.

On the other hand, this may be your first year in a pedagogy class. You may come to it with an unfocused interest (after all, making a living in music is still in the hazy future), or you may be eager to soak up some practical knowledge that will support your own first professional steps as a teacher. What will student teaching be like? An experiment? A scary responsibility? Will you find the right words? Will you have answers and solutions? What's it like to be on the other side—teaching instead of learning? Mixed emotions here, too.

But then, you'll discover that teaching is a "people" skill. You'll find your own humanity enriched and deepened (as well as challenged).

As we said in the first issue, we're in this together. The articles here offer support as you explore or refine the skills you need to run a professional studio: why memorizing should include a black and white "picture," how technique develops at the early stages, how you can teach a piece by asking questions, how to know when a student is "ready" to learn, how and when to equip your studio, how to position a videocamera for best results, and even how teachers a century ago asked questions and solved problems.

To all of us … Happy "New Year"!

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Memory—As Simple As Black and White?

BY SCOTT PRICE

Memorizing piano music is tough business. It is difficult, complex, and time-consuming for students, amateurs, and professionals. Occasional memory lapses are part of the human condition. Others may be symptoms of a larger problem. While some pianists sail past memory lapses with little thought, others can become paralyzed. Are memory problems just a natural occurrence, or are consistent memory lapses the result of a missing piece of the learning process?

Most students and teachers spend a great deal of lesson time learning the names of notes and how to find them on the staff. After all, we must learn to decipher the sound of what we see on the printed page. It's also important for students to have some knowledge of music theory, counterpoint, form, and analysis to interpret the score in order to make good music. While absolutely crucial for informed music making, learning and identifying note names and understanding abstract musical subjects is an intellectual process that can, and probably should, be done away from the piano. The business end of the piano is black and white keys, not note names on a staff. I believe that this is an area where many students encounter their first problems with memorization.

Students normally begin to learn the names of the piano keys and to find the letter names of the lines and spaces on the staff. In observing student teachers, I often see much intellectual guidance without a direct application to the actual instrument that makes the sounds. At some point, a correlation must be made between the notes on the staff and the keys on the keyboard. Unfortunately, the correlation between the staff and the piano keyboard is often left to chance. The best method book cannot teach this correlation, and even the best teacher can overlook initiating and maintaining students' understanding of this concept. The problem lies in not understanding that there is a difference between note reading and music reading.

Although it is important, note reading (deciphering the names of the notes on the staff, hearing the sounds, and deciphering the intellectual organization of the music) is only one side of the process. A student who relies only on internal aural and intellectual processes is doomed to memory failure. Why? Because the business end of the keyboard is full of black and white keys, and that is the prime reality in memorized performance.

The score is a blueprint that every student may aurally and intellectually understand. But, for a student to actualize and memorize music at the piano, a process of *transliteration* must occur to enable the student to fully realize the printed music in keyboard-produced sound. This transliteration process, *music reading*, is very different from note reading.

To read music, the notes on the page are no longer names of pitches; they represent individual keys on the piano. The notes on the printed page must be seen as individual black or white keys, small combinations of black and white keys, and larger groupings of piano keys. Once students grasp this concept, the music is literally

Photo: Bob Gassen www.humanature.com

From the studio of Dr. Mark Sullivan, Garden Grove, California

The business end of the piano is black and white keys, not note names on a staff.

before their eyes *on the keyboard* as a black-and-white snapshot of the music that has been studied away from the piano. Students can see the key combinations needed, immediately shape the hand to the key grouping, know which fingers need to play the individual keys, and gauge how the fingers must make contact with the key to produce the desired sound. Immediately, the process of memorization becomes organized and demystified.

Many great artists have related how they can hear a piece mentally and know the fingerings, dynamics, and other markings needed to create the sound at the piano. They can do this because they read music and know the correlation between the sounds they hear and the piano keys needed to realize that sound. If the mind knows the piano keys needed to play the piece, then it is just another organizational step to remember which finger is needed to play the individual key, which hand/wrist/arm gestures are needed to shape the phrase, and which markings are attached to the key or the groups of keys.

With my young students, college performance majors, and even myself, I have found the following formula to work very well as a teaching and memorizing learning tool. It has changed my learning/memorization/performance habits, and my students tell me that they feel comfortable in performance situations because they can remember and see exactly which keys they need to play to make music at the piano.

♦ Choose a Small Bit

Select a small bit of the music—a phrase gesture or smaller note group. With younger students, I use groups as small as two or three notes, depending on the meter and the pattern grouping. I always sing the small bit while we clap the micro and macro beats and, after a couple of tries, the student will often join in the singing. Fostering aural comprehension is the goal. Students are involved in an environment where they hear the sounds they need and develop a sound vocabulary that will eventually be applicable to any piece.

♦ Notes and Keys First

We then find a beginning note name and move directly to determining which piano keys—not which note names—make up the small bit. We figure out which fingers need to go over the keys and observe the black and white pattern. Fingering problems are solved and the hand is set to actualize the technical finger movements and hand/wrist/arm gestures necessary to make the correct sounds.

♦ Are You Ready?

Students are often so motivated and excited to play the notes that they can't wait. They play before they have really double-checked their information. I always ask if they are ready, and I am surprised that so many students will ask me to wait a minute before they say, "Okay, I'm ready to play". I think that's such a wonderful thing to hear from a student. The student is the one making the decisions in his or her own playing and learning and is fully invested in the process. The teacher and student are working together to achieve the goal.

♦ Play the Small Bit

If my student and I have done a good job of following this process, then the small bit plays itself with a few errors and necessary repetitions. Most importantly, the student is repeatedly reminded of the learning and practice process and takes these concepts home.

When this process is followed, students understand the music aurally and intellectually, know which keys to play to make the musical sounds, and know the fingerings and patterns needed for the whole piece. They can remember the black- and white-key combinations that make the sounds and can actually see them on the keyboard underneath their hands. Seeing really *is* believing! They know that they can remember the music and make it happen without fear in the performance setting.

The learning process is the practice process, which in turn is the memorization process.

The learning process is the practice process, which in turn is the memorization process. Best of all, everything has been accomplished with the student and teacher working together toward a common goal, and young minds are set up for 100% success with each trial. Teacher and student both grow together and learn to respect and love each other through music making. It sounds trite, but students leave lessons with learning tools that will serve them throughout their lives—and with fully memorized music! Confidence is built into the system, and personal pride comes from a job well done.

Memory is often seen as a task that follows after the music has been fully learned. Instead, it really should be part of the learning process. The key lies in realizing the difference between note reading and music reading and recognizing the importance of translating the notes on the page into black- and white-key patterns under the fingers. Once done, the music is memorized. It is literally under the fingers and before the eyes in black and white keys. With a little bit of rethinking in the learning/practicing/performing process, the fear can be taken out of memorizing and students can go into the performance situation ready to do their teachers, their parents, and—most importantly—themselves proud.

Dr. Scott Price is Associate Professor of Piano, Piano Pedagogy, and Coordinator of Group Piano at the University of South Carolina School of Music. He is creator and co-editor of "Piano Pedagogy Forum" (www.music.sc.edu/ea/Keyboard/PPF). He has presented and performed at numerous national conventions, and his work with autistic and disabled children was a featured session at the 2002 MTNA National Convention. He has recorded nine compact discs and published educational piano music with Alfred Publishing Company.

The Pedagogy of Piano Adventures

Level One: Articulation and the Wrist

BY RANDALL FABER

Level One of *Piano Adventures*® might be summarized by two primary objectives: 1) introducing beginning articulation, and 2) teaching the remaining notes of the grand staff. In this article we focus on articulation and the implications for wrist gesture.

After completing the Primer Level (see "Synergy at the Primer Level," *The Piano Adventures® Teacher*, February, 2003), the student is introduced to legato and staccato touches in the first unit of Level One. The terms *legato* and *staccato* are so familiar to us as music teachers that we might easily overlook the importance of these touches in building technique and in developing expression. Let's examine the technical building blocks for these touches and consider how to sequence them at the elementary level.

Perhaps you have noticed that there are no articulation marks at the Primer Level—no slurs and no staccato marks. We delay teaching legato (for young to average-age students) to ensure that a modicum of finger independence develops before insisting on connected touch. When a student's finger and small muscle coordination is undeveloped (common, and not a cause for concern), an insistence on legato playing can cause tension in the hand. This happens when *pressure* is maintained against the keybed. In most cases, the playing of a key should be followed by immediate relaxation, maintaining only sufficient balance of the hand and arm to keep the key depressed.

We commonly hear young primer-level students play all notes detached, poking at each key with a pump of the wrist or a stab with the elbow. While we want to minimize (but not necessarily eliminate) the wrist pumping, this non-legato touch inserts a relaxation between each note, which can be beneficial. The student is naturally building coordination by practicing a relaxation response after each finger plays. Granted, it doesn't *sound* good to a musician's ear, but it does seem to improve coordination (and rhythm as well).

Because of this, we choose to delay the teaching of legato until Level One, and we wait to eliminate the "pumping" mannerism. (Some students naturally play legato at the Primer Level. This is good, and usually indicates sufficiently developed coordination to explore the touch.)

Wrist Gesture Presented in Sequence

What does it mean to play legato? Yes, it is a connected touch, but—more importantly—it is the playing of *several notes in a single gesture*. It is initiating a phrase with a drop of arm weight and passing (transferring or "rippling") that weight from finger to finger.

We have all attempted to teach two-note slurs to elementary students in a single lesson, complete with this new wrist gesture and the softening of the slur ending. Experience reveals this to be frustrating for both student and teacher—and the student is not interested in the sound or the motion. In *Piano Adventures*®, the component parts of the slur gesture are isolated and sequenced over several levels, so that each element can become an automatic skill. This spiral approach offers both review of a previously learned skill and expansion of the technical concept, polishing the gesture and practicing its applications over advancing levels.

♦ **Height of the wrist** This is established at the Primer Level with the Technique & Artistry secret called "Thumb Perch." Playing on the *side tip* of the thumb (instead of a horizontal thumb) eliminates a sagging wrist, which is so common at this level.

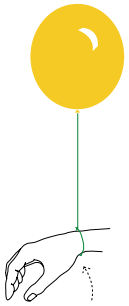
Thumb Perch

The thumb should play on the **side tip** of the fingernail.
Do a "thumb perch" by silently placing your right hand on the white keys with the thumb **"perching" on the side tip.**
Your other fingers should rest gently on the keys.

Then do a "thumb perch" with your left hand.

Note to Teacher: Finding the correct thumb position also eliminates a sagging wrist.

♦ **Range of wrist motion** "Relaxed Wrist," the Level One Technique & Artistry Secret No. 2, establishes the range of motion for the wrist in the exercise "Wrist Float-Off." With hands on the closed keyboard lid, an imaginary balloon pulls the wrist upward until only the tip of finger 3 is in contact. This precludes a locked wrist and models the gesture for a phrase ending.



2. The second secret is a RELAXED WRIST.

Wrist Float-off (on the closed piano lid)

Set your hands in a rounded hand position.

Pretend a balloon on a string is slowly pulling your wrist upward.

Let your wrist rise in slow motion until only the **tip of finger 3** is touching the surface.*

Then return to a normal playing position.

Do 2 "wrist float-offs" with your R.H., then your L.H.
Try it hands together!

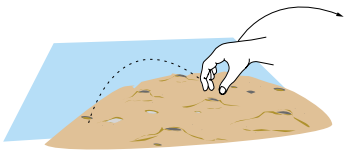
*Teacher Note: The shoulder should not rise, but stay relaxed.

♦ **The wrist gesture** At Level 2A (Technique & Artistry Secret No. 5), the exercise "Moon Walk" applies the Wrist Float-Off to playing keys across the keyboard.

Moon Walk (with damper pedal down)

Pretend you are walking on the moon.

Play a Middle C on the piano with **R.H. finger 3**.
Let your wrist rise in s-l-o-w m-o-t-i-o-n (float-off) and land gently on each HIGHER C.



Repeat with **L.H. finger 3** moving down the keyboard playing C's.

♦ **The slur gesture** The drop and release of arm weight through several notes is specifically practiced at Level 2B with the Technique & Artistry exercise called "Painter's Brush Stroke." Here the student perfects the "down-and-up" motion of the slur gesture.

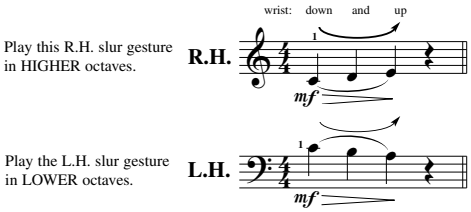
2. The second secret is a SLUR GESTURE.

Painter's Brush Stroke

A pianist can play several notes with a single motion. This smooth wrist motion is called a *slur gesture*.

As you play, imagine the smooth brush stroke of a painter.

Your wrist will rise slightly through the slur.

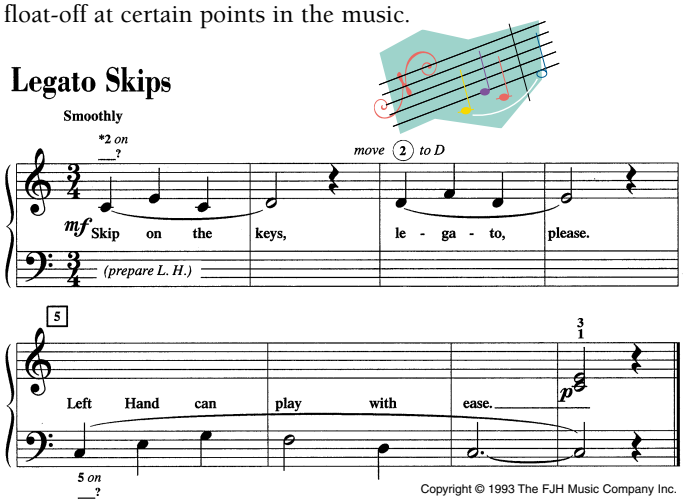


♦ **The tapered ending** At Level 3A, the focus is on "rounding off" the phrase ending. The wrist gesture carries the weight off the key to soften the last note of the slur.

Legato and the Wrist

So what do we expect of the student at Level One? We want a flexible, relaxed wrist that freely moves up within an established range of motion. We don't focus on *down* motions of the wrist here, as these tend to collapse the fingertip and lock the wrist low. We *do* focus on the up motion. It is the flip side of the arm-weight drop. The student drops into the phrase with arm weight and releases the weight with the Wrist Float-Off. This needn't be complex. We simply encourage the student to apply the wrist float-off at certain points in the music.

Legato Skips



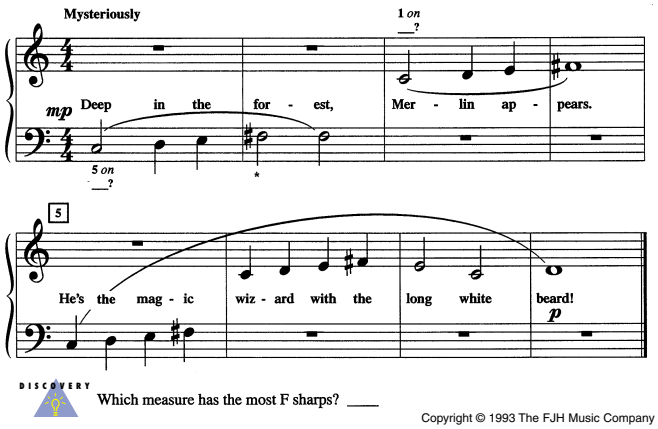
In Legato Skips, for example, the Wrist Float-Off is used at the end of each slur. In addition to tapering the phrase, the wrist lift prepares the hand for the subsequent phrase which is sequenced a step higher. (Notice how the sequential fingering promotes the wrist lift.) The use of the Wrist Float-Off is tremendously valuable for *preparation*. This is explicitly practiced in Smooth Take-off (Technique & Artistry pp. 6, 7) where the Wrist Float-Off carries the hand up an octave for the repeat. It applies in such pieces as Kite in the Sky (Lesson Book, p. 21) to prepare the LH crossover and in Rain Forest (Lesson Book, p. 24) for the concluding RH fifths.

There are countless applications of the Wrist Float-Off which both student and teacher can find. Look beyond just phrase endings. The rising wrist can add grace to ending chords or intervals. In Legato Skips, for example, a Wrist Float-Off adds finish to the RH third that concludes the piece. Long-held notes come alive by replacing a static hand with a wrist that slowly rises through the duration of the note. (See Floating Balloon, Technique & Artistry, p. 13) This conveys a continuing tone, reinforces rhythmic direction, ensures appropriate relaxation, and presents visual and kinesthetic elegance.

Much of the music of Level One is written to encourage the Wrist Float-Off. The phrases in Merlin the Wizard (Lesson Book, p. 32) and The Super Secret Agent (Lesson Book, p. 34) each end on a black key. The Wrist Float-Off aids in playing the black key and, conversely, the topography of the black key invites the Wrist Float-Off. For a more refined gesture, the knuckles should roll forward, toward the fallboard, as an integral part of the Wrist Float-Off. This forward roll ultimately becomes the key element of the wrist gesture.

Merlin the Wizard

Use the right foot pedal for the entire piece. Heel on the floor!



Staccato and the Wrist

There is no single way to play staccato. Staccato playing is always contextual—that is, the execution of the staccato depends on the musical context: How short a duration? How much of the touch is initiated by the finger? How much by the hand hinging at the wrist? How much by a thrust of the elbow and arm? It is important to note that the wrist staccato taught in the Level One Technique & Artistry Book (Secret No. 3, "Light Hand Bounce") is only one type of staccato. Other contexts call for a quite different handling.

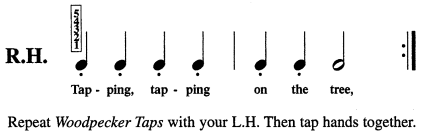
Teacher Note: The next secret teaches staccato, allowing the hand to bounce lightly from the wrist. The student should be coached to relax while tapping, so as not to stiffen the forearm.

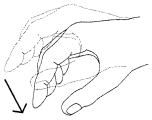
3. The third secret is a LIGHT HAND BOUNCE.

Woodpecker Taps (on the closed piano lid)

Place your R.H. in a rounded hand position.
Perch your thumb on the **side tip** so your wrist doesn't sag.

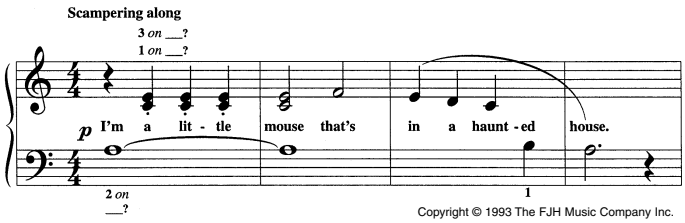
Lightly tap the rhythm below with your R.H. fingertips.
(all fingers tap together).





Repeat *Woodpecker Taps* with your L.H. Then tap hands together.

For this early level we choose the wrist staccato, a technique that essentially dribbles the hand from a slightly elevated wrist. Notice how well this ties in with the Level 1 theme of relaxing the wrist and finding its appropriate range of motion. Introduced as a "Light Hand Bounce" with the exercise Woodpecker Taps, this staccato technique applies fittingly to the repeated notes and repeated intervals that characterize much of the repertoire at this level: for example, Haunted Mouse (p. 11), Young Hunter (p. 13), and Russian Sailor Dance (p. 33) from the Lesson Book and Mouse on a Trampoline (p. 16), Legend of the Buffalo (p. 20), and Sidewalk Game (p. 35) from the Technique & Artistry Book.



This gentle hand bounce not only relaxes the wrist, but it also provides a technique for playing soft, accompanying chords. This has big payoff at Unit 8 where chords are first introduced. Instead of loud, clunky chords that overwhelm the melody, the left hand effectively plays soft staccato chords in the first pieces with block chord accompaniment (Song for a Scarecrow and My Pony, Lesson Book, pp. 41, 42). This is possible because of the technique acquired early in the level (and the compositional placement of the accompanying chords on beats where the melody is sustained, not played).

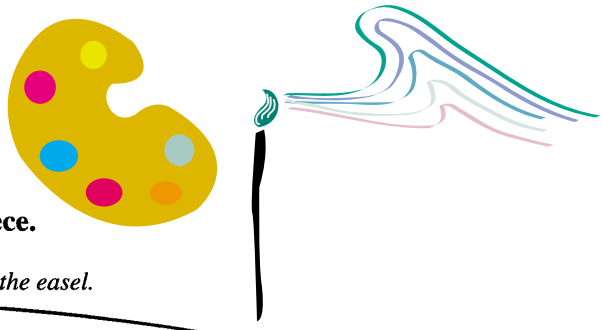
Expanded Note Reading

The Level One expansion of note reading to the entire grand staff is paced to parallel the technical sequence. After reinforcing the note recognition taught at the Primer Level, an orientation to the space note names F-A-C-E leads the student to the notes of Treble C Position. This allows the mimicking of a melodic phrase in a higher octave. As implied earlier, the movement of the hand from one octave to another can be executed using the Wrist Float-off. So this new range of notes allows a repertoire that invites use of the wrist gesture and, consequently, preparation and arm weight.

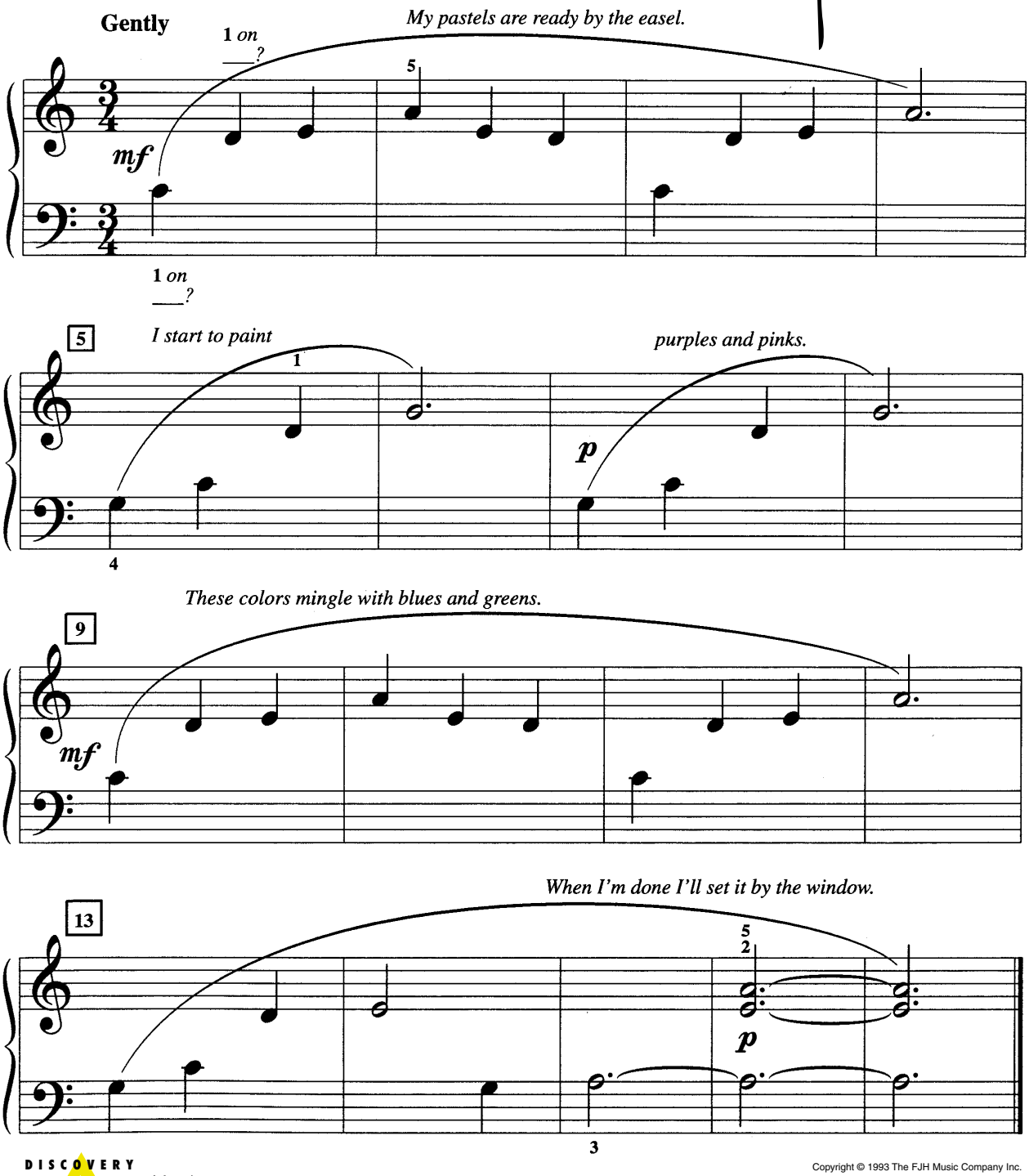
Importantly, the simultaneous introduction of all five notes of Treble C Position requires the student to read by interval (by step/skip). This is intentional, and offers a powerful opportunity to ensure that note-name recognition is paired with intervallic reading. This intervallic review of step/skip conveniently leads to introduction of the fourth and fifth in the next unit. This pedagogy is reiterated in the final unit, which introduces Bass G. The three G positions invite intervallic reading, carry the hand to different octaves, and present a repertoire with increasingly sophisticated articulation.

In summary, the Wrist Float-Off and the Light Hand Bounce constitute essential wrist gestures that derive from their counterparts—legato and staccato. These gestures provide a technical foundation on which more refined technique can be developed. And, importantly, whether through shaping a phrase, softening an accompaniment, or adding elegance to an ending, these gestures add a great degree of musical artistry … which is especially appreciated at this early level.

Painting With Pastels



Hold the right foot pedal down throughout the entire piece.



DISCOVERY

Circle each **4th** in this piece. Hint: There are 12.

How To

Teach "Painting with Pastels" By Asking Questions

BY MARIENNE USZLER

♦ Prepare to Read the Piece

Left hand
- Where will you put your thumb?
- What is the lowest note that you'll play?
- Will you play any other notes?

Right hand
- Where will you put your thumb?
- What is the highest note that you'll play?
- Will you play any other notes?

♦ Prepare to Play the Piece

Put both thumbs in position.
Think about which note you'll hold longer. How long?
Tap or count two measures in a rather slow 3.
In the third measure, begin to play—but keep counting.
Play measures 1-4.

Look through measures 9-12.
What did you discover? Why is it very easy to play these measures?

Look at measures 5 and 6.
Where will you put your thumbs?
How far down is the first note from your LH thumb?
Which finger will you use?
Where will you put your RH thumb?
How far up is the last note from your RH thumb?
Which finger will you use?
Which note will you hold the longest? How long?
Tap or count two measures in a rather slow 3.
In the third measure, begin to play—but keep counting.

Look through measures 7 and 8.
What did you discover? Why is it very easy to play these measures?

Measure 13 is the same as measure ___?
Prepare to play measures 13, 14, and 15.
Think about which notes you'll hold longer. How long?
When you play to the end, how long will you hold the last LH note?
Tap or count two measures in a rather slow 3.
In the third measure, begin to play—but keep counting.

In the last two measures the RH plays two notes together.
Which notes are these? Which fingers will you use?
Tap or count two measures in a rather slow 3.
Play from measure 13 to the end.

♦ Picture the Shape

You now know many things about this piece.

Which measures are exactly the same as measures 1-4?
Label these with the letter A.
Play the A sections with your eyes *closed*—but keep counting.
You have half the piece memorized!

Which measures are exactly the same as measures 5 and 6?
Label these with the letter B.
Play the B sections with your eyes *closed*—but keep counting.
You have three lines of the piece memorized!

Think about which letter to use to describe Measures 13-17.
You already know that it begins like measure ___.
Does that relate the last line to the A section or the B section?
You could label the last line as a variation of letter B.
You can show this by using the label B' ("B prime")

Play each of the A sections as one long phrase.
Play the B sections as a short phrase with an echo.
Play the B' section as a long section that whispers at the end.

♦ "Color" the Sound

Pastels are soft colors, light and delicate.

How loud will the loudest parts be?
Where will you play (paint) with even softer colors?
At the very end, you might even wish to play so softly that the color seems to fade away.

Pastels blend easily with one another and with brighter shades.

Keep the pedal down throughout the entire piece.
Listen to the sound "colors" as they blend and shift.

When you play with the CD accompaniment or the MIDI disk, listen to how all the sounds mix together in one gentle, lovely "picture."

From *Adult Piano Adventures*, All-in-One Lesson Book 2, pp. 146, 147

tenuto mark (stress mark)

This mark means to hold the note its full value.
Hint: Press deeply into the key.

In *measures 17–20* the R.H. plays both the melody and harmony (two voices).

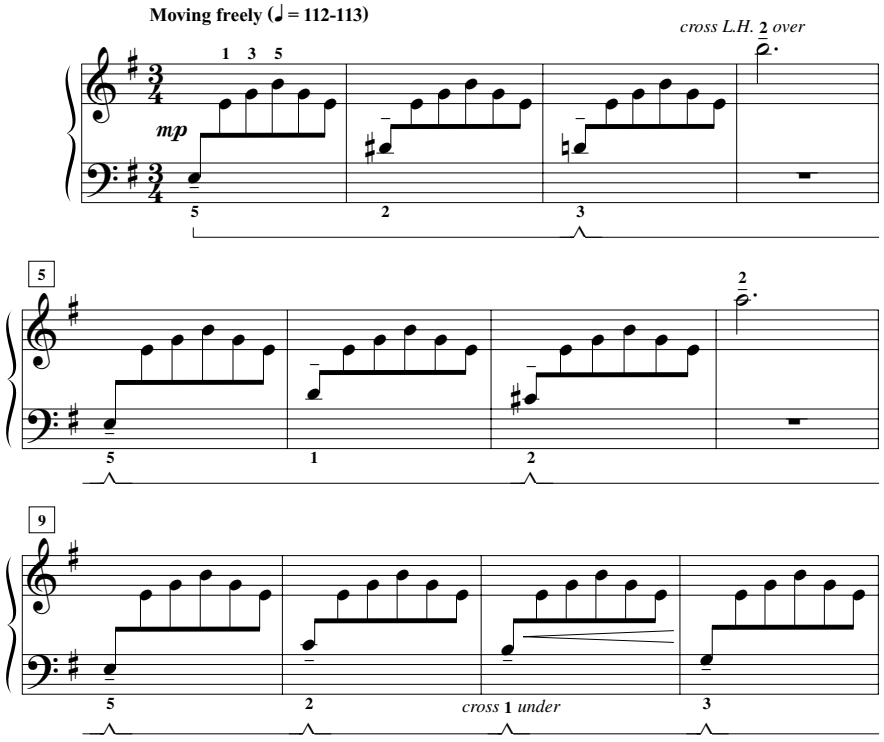
Play the upper voice ***mf*** with a rich tone. Play the thumb *lightly* for the inner voice.

Musical Form Check:

Label the sections of this piece.

Name the form: _____

Lunar Eclipse



How To

BY MARIENNE USZLER

Teach the *Tenuto* Touch

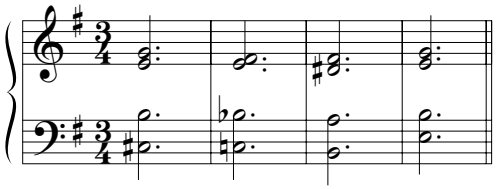
First play the LH notes marked *tenuto* with pedal.
Stress playing from the shoulder, with a flat finger that "strokes" the keys.
Play to the first note of m. 13.

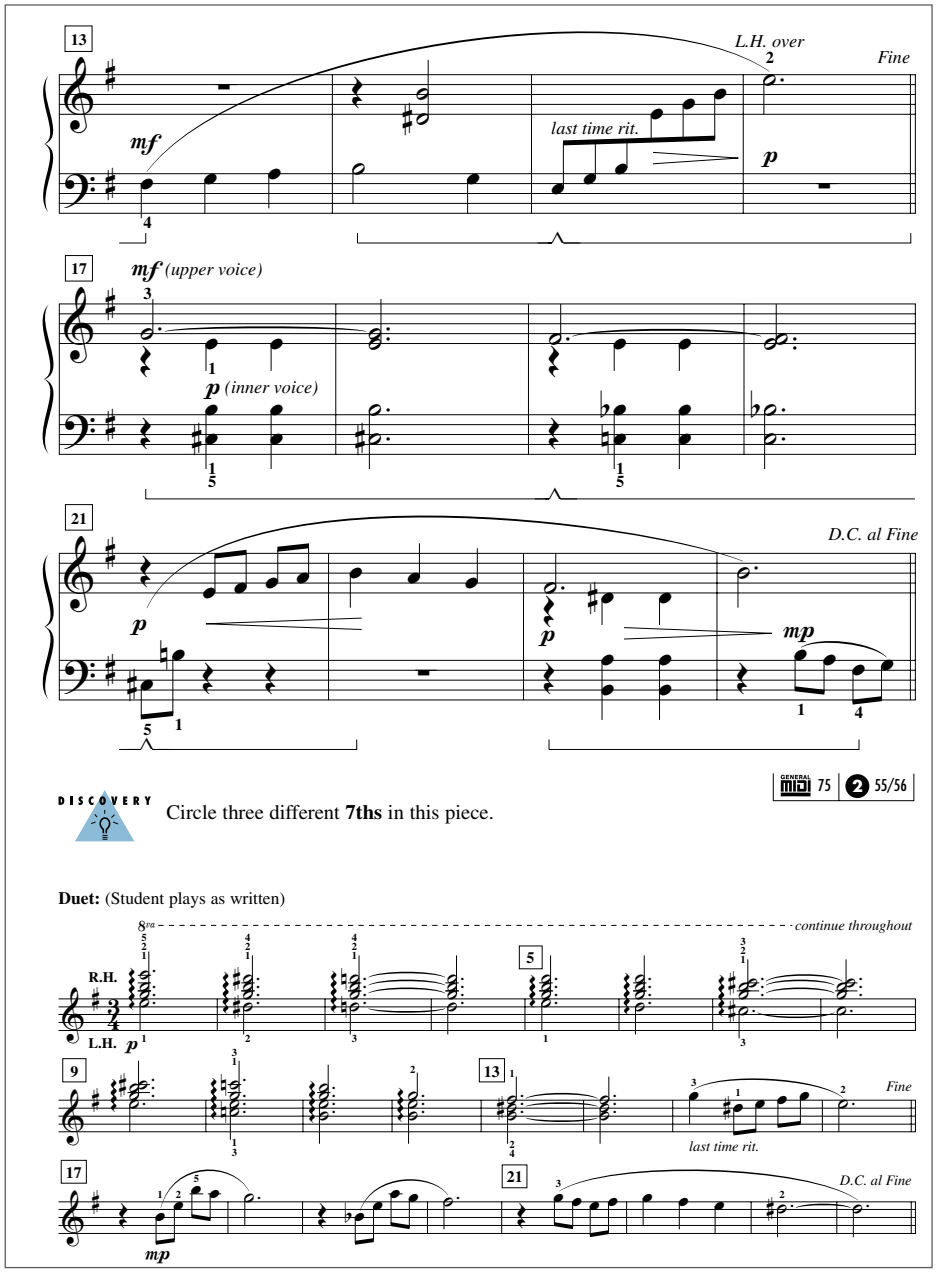
Add the RH chords, blocked, on beat 2.
The chords should be softer than the left-hand *tenuto* notes.

Then play as written—somewhat slowly, but very evenly.
Be sure that the LH *tenuto* notes continue to sing.

Sample Sevenths

Block the 7th chords in mm. 17, 19, and 23.
Add an E Minor chord at the end.





Teach the Right-Hand Voicing

Play just the top (melody) pitches in mm. 17-24. (In m. 21 add the LH notes.) Use the pedal as marked. Be sure the long notes are played with tone rich enough to sing through their entire value. Think of this as one very long phrase.

Play as above, this time adding the lower RH voice in mm. 17-20 and m. 23. The lower voice must whisper. Continue to listen for the long melody line.

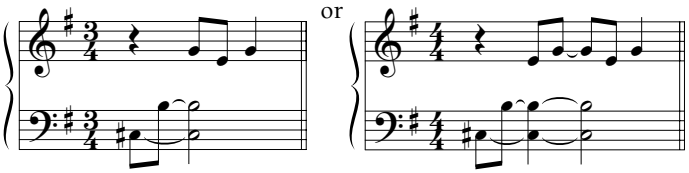
Add the LH chords. Make sure they whisper together with the RH "inner voice."

Using the pedal, play this series of chords

- Blocked, in different ranges of the keyboard
- Blocked, at different speeds
- Blocked, using different dynamics (like a hymn or fanfare, for example)
- Broken, at different speeds
- Broken, using different dynamics (like a harp or flashy ending, for example)

Using the pedal, play this series of chords with an original rhythm pattern.

Perhaps something like



WE'RE PSYCH-ED

"Ready" to Learn

BY PAUL A. JOHNSON, PH.D.

Let's assume that every learner sees himself or herself as capable of "self-direction." Every learner would also want others to see him or her in the same way. Self-direction is one possible definition of maturity.

What this implies is that, as teachers, we need to create a climate of openness and mutual respect if we are to successfully identify and truly understand what students want and need to learn. Many children, as well as adults, really enjoy planning and carrying out their own learning exercises. The teacher's role, therefore, is best described as a learning reference or mentor, rather than as the traditional instructor. Telling students "how I do it" rather than "this is how it's done" becomes a mechanism by which teachers can establish a collaborative alliance with students. Instead of "talking down," the teacher encourages the student to regard himself or herself as a self-starter and a decision-maker, rather than as a mere "sponge" who mindlessly absorbs what the "expert" knows.

Readiness to learn is a key concept because it relates to the learning materials and your expectations. "Learning readiness" is a vast and complex area of study, and a simple web search can yield scores of readings and research on this topic. For our immediate purposes, let's think of readiness as the "ability to do" and the "need to know" that resonates with each student's personal and social development. These concepts have a strong correlation with readiness-to-learn and "teachable moments" that make your job, as teacher, so potentially rewarding.

Suppose one of your students has, thus far, resisted being taught anything about thirds, fifths, or reading music. That student also has a favorite grandparent who absolutely loves "Taps" because of the memories or recollections it brings. All of a sudden, you and your student have a wonderful readiness and " teachability" moment on which to capitalize. Remember that no questions are stupid, and that the student's "need to know" can be a tremendously powerful force in helping that student (and you) overcome previous resistance to any type of learning that might benefit the student.

Children and adolescents, as well as adults, bring a lifetime of experience to the learning situation. Each student defines himself or herself in terms of what has been learned and what has happened in his or her own lifetime. That is how they know "who they are."

We must try to understand how our students perceive these life lessons since there are a myriad of interpretations and meanings that people assign to what has happened to them. To reject or fail to utilize the life experience of your student is equivalent (subtly or subconsciously) to rejecting that student as a person. Unfortunately, many students have not yet learned that mistakes are key opportunities for learning, rather than indications of inadequacy or worse. Assisting them to understand and constructively interpret what has happened is a rich learning opportunity.

It is critical for you, as the teacher, to try to assume a problem-oriented perspective. The most important focus must be on what *students learn*, not what *teachers teach*. Most learners are gripped by the urgent need to understand how to resolve a problem, whether it is fingering, technique, or mastery of the bass clef in a particular piece. Helping the student learn how to solve the problem is a sure way to build rapport, support the student, relieve anxiety, and eventually pave the way for going back (once the heat of performance has lessened) to review the theoretical or pedagogical basis for what you want the student to learn.

Keep certain points in mind—

- We are always learning. Most of the time that comes from imitating role models.
- Learning must take place naturally. Coercion, confusion, boredom, or too much perceived difficulty in early stages are all significant inhibitors of learning.
- Learning must be meaningful to the student in his or her living context. It must be something the student feels that he or she "needs."
- When we learn things that "make sense," much additional learning about the world and our environment takes place.
- Learning is most often a partnership or collaboration between a teacher and a student. Programmed learning and instruction plays only a very small part in "living education."
- The relevant outcome of learning is "what we show we can do," not how we score on tests.
- Learning always involves feeling, which can be positive or negative. We are not machines—we have "hearts." Learning must be something we feel we own and cherish.
- Try to make the learning environment as risk free as possible. Encourage students not to feel threatened by learning but to think of it as a natural part of living. That is one of the most critical aspects of our role as teachers.

Dr. Paul Johnson is a clinical and consulting psychologist who is also a pianist, fisherman, and gardener. His career has been dedicated to the development of people in educational, clinical, and corporate settings, whether with top CEOs or with people at all levels. He has been significantly involved with Randall and Nancy Faber in their ongoing professional activities and in promoting their methods and practices in the field of music education.

TALKING TECH

Videotaping—Location, Location, Location

BY RICHARD WEISE

Location, we are told, is the primary consideration when purchasing real estate. The same holds true for videotaping piano lessons—not the location of the piano lesson, though that can be a factor, but the location or position of the camera. Camera placement is the most important decision you make when videotaping a lesson.

How often have you watched videotapes of lessons in which you could neither clearly hear nor see interactions between teacher and student nor clearly see the student play? All of these problems go away, however, by carefully choosing the location of the camera:

- Distance from the piano
- Horizontal position relative to the keyboard axis
- Height above (or below) the keyboard
- Placement of the subject(s) in the viewfinder.

Though the rules don't change if there is someone operating the camera, I'm assuming here that you will attach the camera to a tripod and leave it unattended while taping.

Location—Distance from the Piano

Distance of the camera from the teacher, the student, and the piano is the primary limitation to the quality of sound that the video camera records—the closer the camera microphone, the better the sound. The quality of the camera's microphone pales in importance to its proximity to the sound source. Even the most expensive microphone will poorly capture the desired sound if it is too far from the source.

Location—Horizontal Position

There are two activities we want viewers to see, the interactions between teacher and student, and the student performance. If you place the head of the tripod on the invisible line that extends out from the key cover (as viewed from above), you will be able to see the faces of both student and teacher and the hands of the student on the keys.

Place the camera on the student's, rather than the teacher's, side of the pair, because this allows you to see the teacher's face when talking to the student and to see the student's hands clearly if they play a duet.

Location—Height Above the Keyboard

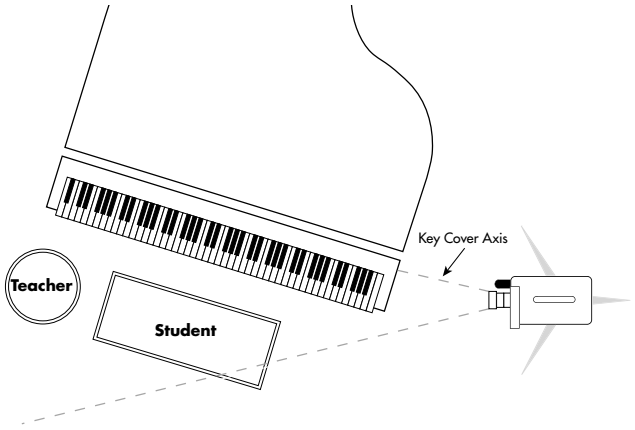
Camera height should be low enough to see the position of the student's hands and high enough to see the first and last keys of the keyboard. Adjust the camera height by extending the tripod legs, which increases stability, not by extending the tripod center post, which decreases stability.

Location—Subjects in the Viewfinder

Now, put it all together. Setting up the camera can be time consuming, especially the first time, even for an expert, so set up well in advance of the student's arrival. Changing one element (e.g., distance of the camera from the piano) can mean changing another (e.g., the height of the camera). Your goal is to get as close as possible while still being able to see the tops of the subjects' heads and both ends of the keyboard.

Focus your attention on the edges of the viewfinder to see that you include everything that is necessary and as little visual detritus as possible. A wide-angle lens attachment for the camera is very useful in getting the camera close to the piano while still seeing the whole keyboard and the subjects' heads. You have now completed the first and most important step to capturing high-quality images and sound.

Camera Setup



Richard Weise is Vice President for Educational Research and Media Development at Dovetree Productions, Inc.

Smiles from the Studio

It's always fun to uncover new student definitions. Here are a few taken from recent theory certification tests given by the Music Teachers Association of California.

Toccata … light and machine-like
Con brio … with beat
Tranquillo … tranquilized
Diminuendo … disappear slowly
Three sections of a sonata … theme, chorus, refrain

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

TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS

Planning Your (Dream) Studio

BY BETH GIGANTE KLINGENSTEIN

Gone are the years when the independent studio consisted of a piano and two chairs. The possibilities for a 21st-century studio are much more exciting and all encompassing. Whether you're just starting out or already on your way, you might find these suggestions for creating a home studio useful.

Studio space

In most cases, independent teachers work in their homes. You need to consider certain items before renting or purchasing a home, condo, or apartment.

- Be sure you are in compliance with all zoning laws and homeowner association rules.
- As soon as you can afford it, have your studio space separate from all other living areas.
- An entrance that leads directly to the studio helps keep your family life separate from your professional life. The best entrance is one where parents can watch their children enter your home and one that does not have dangerous steps or icy slopes.
- A long driveway allows for adequate parking, drop-off, and pick-up without distressing the neighbors or violating zoning laws.

Studio equipment

Creating the ideal studio can take years of planning and a great deal of money. A teacher just starting out can establish a functional studio with bare essentials, yet develop a long-range plan to build toward the ideal.

Prior to any technology purchase, it's important to decide what you wish to do with it. For instance, how will you use a video camera? Do you want to create digital movies of your recitals for the Internet or just videotape recitals to show within the studio? Which software should you purchase first? Which should follow and in what order?

If you hesitate to use technology, know that it's not as daunting as it may seem. If you choose not to enter the world of computers and MIDI keyboards, workstations can still be used with tape recorders, CD players, workbooks, and videos. Such workstations are a wonderful way to supplement teaching time.

Technology—Some Basic Guidelines

- Plan for the future as you purchase technology related items.
- Be sure your computer(s) can run the software you purchase.
- Develop a software library that covers a well-balanced curriculum. Include software on world music, music history, composers, aural and rhythm skills, and music theory at all levels. Use a balance of tutorial and drill programs, and include programs for composition, notation, and sequencing.
- Be sure that all computers, MIDI keyboards, and speakers function well together, and that you have the proper cables and jacks to operate all technology as a single unit.
- If you set up multiple workstations, be sure you have planned a system for listening to one or all of the stations simultaneously.

Year 1

- Acoustic piano
- Telephone answering machine
- Ledger for records
- Metronome
- Tape recorder
- CD player
- Small library of music, educational tapes, and CDs (You may find bargains at local music teacher organization sales.)
- Student workstation area with tapes, CDs, and theory workbooks

Years 2-5

- Student workstation area with computer, MIDI keyboard, and speakers
- Headset for workstation
- Starting library of theory, history, notation, sequencing, and aural skills software
- Bookkeeping software
- Video recorder
- Television to show educational videos
- Expand library of music, CDs, and educational videos
- Small library of books on music-related topics

Years 6-10

- Digital/MIDI keyboard(s) and speakers
- Additional computers for student workstations
- Expand library of music software
- Expand library of music and CDs
- Expand library of music-related books

Years 11-20

- Second acoustic piano
- Collection of ethnic and rhythm instruments
- Continued expansion of all libraries and workstations
- Organized storage space for expanding libraries

Years 21 +

- Expand and remodel studio space, if needed
- Add a waiting room
- Add a separate workstation room
- Upgrade acoustic pianos, if necessary

Beth Gigante Klingenstein is nationally known for her work on business policies for the independent music teacher. The author of *A Business Guide for the Music Teacher*, she taught as an independent music teacher for 28 years. Klingenstein is presently on the music faculty of Valley City State University (North Dakota) and is the Founding Director of the VCSU Community School of the Arts.

FAMILY TREE

The "Masonic" Touch

BY MARIENNE USZLER

Being a member of the Lowell Mason family in 19th-century America was like being one of the Bach boys. Mason was a compiler and composer of hymn tunes, a conductor, and president of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society. He was also the prime mover in getting music introduced (in Boston, in 1838) into public school education.

Two of his sons, Daniel Gregory and Lowell, became music publishers. The youngest son, Henry, joined Emmons Hamlin in making reed organs in Boston. In 1883 Mason & Hamlin began to manufacture pianos. Another Daniel Gregory (Henry's son) made his fame as a composer, a writer on music, and the head of the music department at Columbia University.

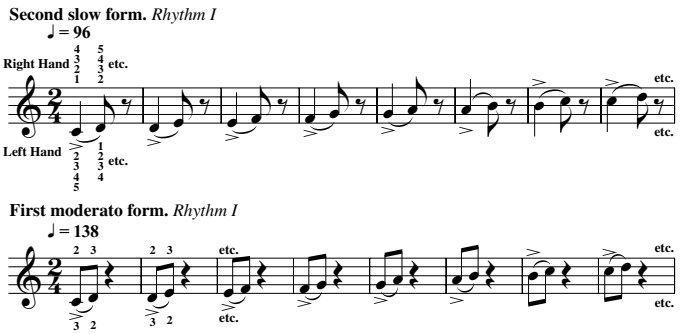
William, the patriarch's third son (1829-1908), was a pianist. At 20, he followed the path of most American musicians—he went to Europe for "serious" study. He moved around during his five-year stay. In Leipzig he studied with Ignaz Moscheles, in Prague with Alexander Dreyschock, and in Weimar with Liszt.

It was while working with Liszt that Mason came to appreciate the importance of accentuated, elastic movement. He noted in his autobiography that Liszt's demonstrations "let in a flood of light upon me.... When he wrote to me later about my own piano method, he expressed the strongest approval of the exercises on accentuation." He also credited Liszt with devising the "two-finger drill," a technique that later became associated with Mason's own name.

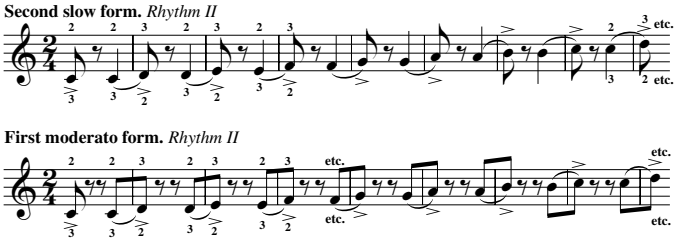
It was as a teacher and author of books on technical training that Mason carved his particular niche in keyboard history. Working in his New York Steinway Hall studio, he produced several influential publications, the most notable being *Touch and Technic*, op. 44, the four volumes of which were published in 1891-92.

When I first came upon this work, it struck me as a method so basic and naturally musical that I wondered why no one had ever shown me these techniques, and why Mason was hardly ever included in the lineup of the technical "giants"—Deppe, Leschetizky, Breithaupt, Matthay, et al.

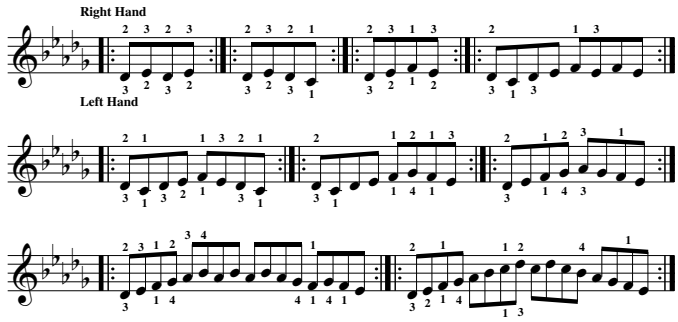
Mason's idea is simple. All pairs of adjacent fingers, in each hand, are exercised in rhythms that are then doubled. There are two "rhythms." In one, the accent is on the first note.



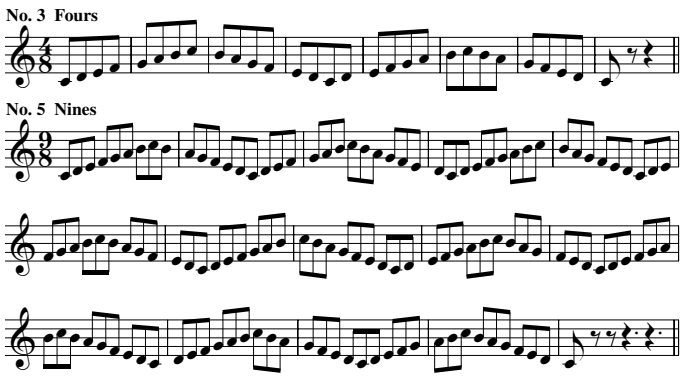
In the other "rhythm," the second note is accented.



Mason's ideas about "elementary forms of scale treatment" are further evidence of his belief in the importance of rhythmic (accentuated) technical practice.



Particularly ingenious are the scale forms he developed to keep the mind occupied and the ear engaged. These exercises may look obvious, but when you try them yourself, you'll find that your mind and ear must remain "on task."



Although William Mason is not often listed in the pedagogy "pioneer" category, his contributions to piano playing and teaching mark him as a late 19th-century leader in these fields, and the value and breadth of his theories should be more widely acknowledged. As Reginald Gerig notes in *Famous Pianists and Their Technique*, Mason "seems to have been the first original thinker in America in the area of piano technique."