THE
PIANO Adventures® TEACHER

FJH PEDAGOGY NEWSLETTER Summer 2005 No. 7

Pedal by Ear

Faber Piano Institute

THE F·J·H MUSIC COMPANY INC.

THE PIANO ADVENTURES® TEACHER

Marienne Uszler, Editor
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The Piano Adventures® Teacher is published three times a year by The FJH Music Company Inc.
2525 Davie Road, Suite 360
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33317-7424

The FJH Music Company Inc.
(custserv@fjhmusic.com)
(800) 262-8744

Websites:
www.PianoAdventures.com
www.PianoTeaching.com
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From the Editor

BY MARIENNE USZLER

Summer time … and the livin' is easy". I'm not sure George (and Ira) got that quite right. Yes, we try to plan for some space in which we can escape from our usual routines and schedules. But summer is still a busy time for most piano teachers who need to generate income, as well as keep student interest and practice from shrinking—if not vanishing—while students, too, take "time out". For teachers, summer is also quite often when they plan to catch up on any number of professional tasks that have slipped through the cracks or had to be postponed until they could arrange some breakaway hours.

"Time" is a major item in most of our lives. Everything around us conspires to convince us that saving time is a principal goal if we are to be happy, successful, and admired. The urge to beat the system and get ahead without spending "time" is captured perfectly by Caulfield, the eight-year-old in the school where Frazz is the janitor-philosopher. (I trust you read cartoons every morning, as I do.) Caulfield's complaint? "Nearly four years of school. That's seven-or-eight-hundred days. Occasional special events to attend. And countless hours of homework and reading. You'd think there'd be some sort of first class I could upgrade to!"

It is certainly one of the aims of this newsletter to help you "upgrade to first class". But that may not always be linked with skipping steps, or getting someplace without reflection. The How-To articles offer ready-made plans for presenting a piece, in that way saving you time. But they hope to inspire a careful examination of the score, challenging you to dig deeper, think through strategies, and take a few creative risks. This is more a matter of time well spent than of taking shortcuts.

Using software to complement your teaching, as Sandra Bowen notes, stretches your time with students even though you do not directly oversee their work at the computer. They enjoy the rhythm, ear training, and notation programs because the graphics are entertaining and the learning style allows them to move at their own speeds. (You'll always have a few Caulfields who'll want to race to the finish line.) Although it may take you a bit of extra time to check through the programs yourself and follow up on student progress, Sandra reminds you that by teaching and drilling certain concepts, software frees you to do the "human" things. Again, time well spent.

In her morality story, Barbara English Maris cautions against taking the "You're Fired" approach. The damage done by focusing only on winners devalues what is important about the *process* of reaching for goals. The non-competitors and also-rans are not wasting time—theirs or ours. Those who move slowly and, perhaps, never reach the top of the ladder have nonetheless learned to climb. They have a bigger, richer view than if they never took the first step up. The time they spend—and the time you spend with them—marks a growth as quiet and steady as that found in nature. We do need "all those trees".

In the last issue, I suggested that Randall Faber's discussion on how to "play fast" could be compared to achieving and sustaining a sensible, healthy lifestyle. Among other things, it is a matter of balancing quick moves with parallel moments of relaxation. Now, at Level 4, the focus is on lyric playing, being expressive, shaping a melody. To give each note meaning is to be able to sing without words. Here, too, there is a life counterpart. Is there "heart" in what we do and say, or just efficiency and accuracy? Do we appreciate the small, quietly humming moments, or only the passionate outbursts? What, in fact, do we really communicate?

Even though our "livin'" may not be easy this summer, George gave us a melody that unequivocally reflects a relaxing mood and tempo. May we savor a bit more "hush" and "lull" and feel a lot less "push" and "zoom". We hope you are all having a lyrical summer!

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

Faber Piano Institute Grand Opening

Our cover tells the story. The Faber Piano Institute opened with a grand celebration! A few years ago, Nancy and Randall Faber, with daughter Vivian, moved from Nashville to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where they met and where they first developed Piano Adventures®. To give back to the local community, they purchased the former Loving Branch Library and have renovated it to top aesthetic and acoustical specifications. Although piano will be the main focus, the Institute will incorporate chamber music, teacher training, and the educational use of technology into its curriculum.

Most importantly, the Faber Institute will serve the broad community of piano teachers. As you plan your own programs, whether in North America or abroad, please let us know how we can best serve you, your school, and your students.

For video of the Grand Opening party, see www.faberinstitute.org or www.PianoTeaching.com.

Learning to Pedal "by Ear"

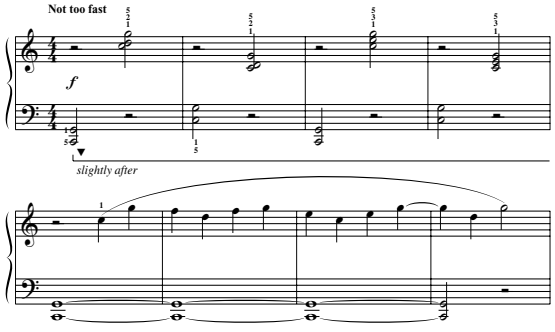
BY JESSICA JOHNSON

Artistic pedaling is one of the most deeply personal and defining features of beautiful piano playing. And yet, it is often one of the most neglected aspects of piano study. While extremely talented students may intuitively learn to imitate recordings and teacher demonstrations, most students need guidance in order to develop comprehensive pedal techniques sequentially. Ultimately, students must learn how to *listen* to the sounds they create and respond to each unique instrument and performance venue. In *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling*, Joseph Banowetz states, "The ear alone, rather than a set of printed directions, must always be the final guide for an artistic performance."

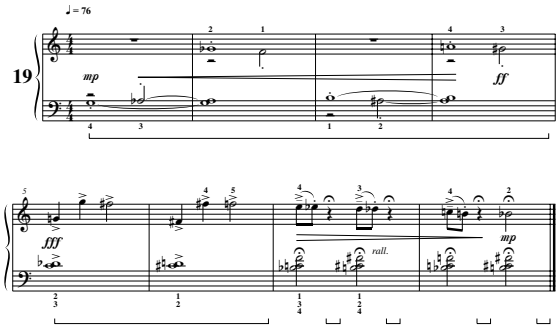
While it is imperative for students to acquire the basic physical techniques and coordination necessary for proper use of the damper pedal, the ability to hear the sound and recognize how pedaling changes the overall color is paramount. Before students ever place a foot on the pedal, they can learn how the damper pedal causes the sound to resonate and vibrate. Early experiences might include having beginning students stand in the crook of the piano and listen to the teacher play with pedal. Students can also sing and shout while the damper pedal is depressed, listening to how sympathetic vibrations arise without a key ever being struck.

Teaching Beginners to Pedal

Elementary piano pieces that incorporate the use of the damper pedal allow young students to experience the rich sonority of the piano. In Mountain Bells by Wynn-Anne Rossi, the depiction of ringing bells emulates those produced by a carillon. In order to encourage careful listening, invite students to hold the pedal down until the sound has completely faded out.



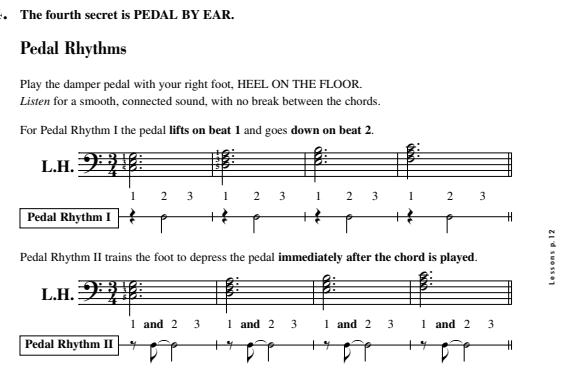
Experimenting with different sonorities by using less traditional performance techniques such as damping and plucking strings permits the student to explore the unique sound qualities of the piano. In *Soundworld: A Collection of New Keyboard Experiences*, Stan Applebaum uses many pedal effects that develop effective listening habits. Note how pedaling, dynamics, and articulation influence the sound in the example below. In measures 7 and 8, sympathetic vibrations are isolated by depressing the damper pedal on beats 2 and 4, during the "rests".



In order to foster the development of listening skills integral to artistic pedaling, elementary students should be exposed to recordings and performances featuring various instrumental and vocal sounds. Learning to equate the pedal with the vibrato of a string instrument, for example, will go a long way in facilitating artistic pedaling.

The Next Step

Before piano students can incorporate advanced pedal techniques such as half pedaling and flutter pedaling, they must first learn how to integrate syncopated or legato pedaling into their playing fluently and appropriately. They must also acquire a basic understanding of how harmonic procedures guide pedaling choices. Activities that help students understand harmony, phrasing, form, and stylistic characteristics prepare the ears for refined pedaling.



There is a plethora of worthwhile teaching resources designed to introduce legato pedaling to the early intermediate student. Pedal Rhythms from *Piano Adventures®* Technique and Artistry Book Level 3A offers two exercises that systematically and rhythmically develop syncopated pedaling.

Once students have mastered legato pedaling, they can begin to experiment with advanced pedaling techniques based on stylistic and coloristic elements in the music. In Yellow Moon on a Misty Lagoon (Technique & Artistry Level 3A, pp. 28, 29),

the image of mist provides a wonderful opportunity to experiment with different levels of pedal. Having successfully performed the piece using full pedal, the student can use half pedal in order to create a thin layer of "mist".

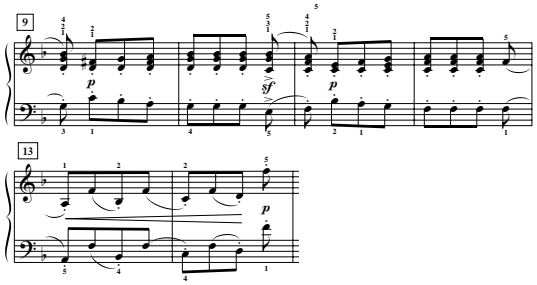
Initially the teacher should model both full and half pedaling and have the student identify, with eyes closed, which is being employed. If students are given frequent occasions to train the ears, they will learn to aurally distinguish how different levels of pedal affect the overall sonority. A grand piano also gives students visual reinforcement as they watch the dampers barely hover above the strings.

Students need to be aware that the depth of each pedal varies from instrument to instrument, one of the primary reasons that the ear must be the ultimate guiding force for sensitive pedaling. In *Notes from the Pianist's Bench*, Boris Berman discourages the notion of "memorizing" pedaling, noting that developing an artistic aural image of the work is more important than training the foot to execute a prescribed series of motions.

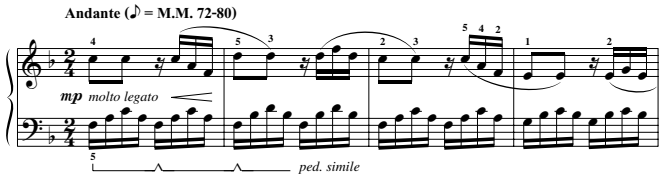
Direct, Finger, and Flutter Pedal

Intermediate students should be challenged to listen to how the style of a piece influences pedaling choices. Learning basic guidelines for stylistic pedaling is an excellent point of departure. *Artistic Pedal Technique: Lessons for Intermediate and Advanced Pianists* by Katherine Faricy offers a concise list of stylistic principles for pedaling and serves as an outstanding guide for introducing these to intermediate students.

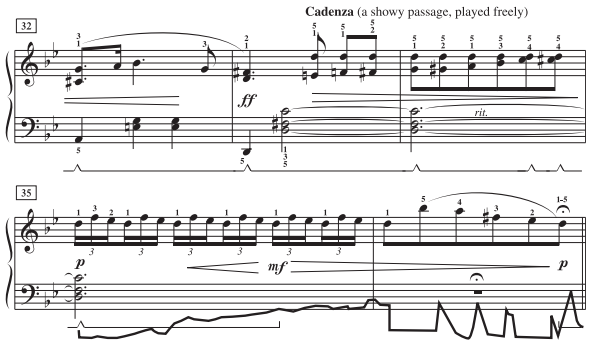
In classical repertoire, a direct pedal, corresponding with the hands, can often be applied to two-note slurs, *sfzs*, and cadential chords without distorting the articulation and phrasing. In Haydn's Allegro in F Major the student can add direct pedals to *sfzs* and selected two-note slurs in order to create a more orchestral sonority.



Finger pedaling should be considered when Alberti-bass figures are present in classical repertoire. Learning to lengthen the first note of each accompaniment pattern will help the student learn to distinguish between classical and romantic pedaling. Once students are able to finger pedal, they can attempt to recreate a similar sonority via half pedaling. Mozart's Andante in F provides a good opportunity for finger pedaling and half pedaling in a classical context.



Flutter pedaling requires acute listening skills and is appropriate when a slightly veiled sound and color are desired, or when the texture needs to be thinned out gradually. In order to prepare the ears, students can play a big chord or sonority with the damper pedal fully depressed, then vibrate or flutter the pedal until the sound gradually disappears. When flutter pedaling, students need to realize that the dampers do not actually clear the strings. In Mazurka in G Minor (Homage to Chopin) by Nancy Faber, flutter pedaling can create a more seamless transition between the cadenza and return of the theme in Mm. 35-36.



To develop stylistic awareness, listening to several recordings of the same work allows students to compare how pedaling changes the interpretation of the piece. Students can even attempt pedal "dictation", actually notating the pedaling used in a recording or performance. They might also perform a given piece in all styles, altering the pedaling to correspond with the appropriate style.

Once the teacher has guided the student through these pedaling techniques, the student should be given opportunities to apply these principles to new pieces. Frequent demonstrations, listening activities, and the chance to participate in making decisions regarding pedaling help foster independence and encourage musical growth. By challenging students to listen closely to what they *hear* as they play, teachers can help them discover a world of artistic possibilities.

Resources

Banowetz, Joseph. *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Berman, Boris. *Notes from the Pianist's Bench*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Faricy, Katherine. *Artistic Pedal Technique: Lessons for Intermediate and Advanced Pianists*. Ontario: The Frederick Harris Music Co., 2004.

Jessica Johnson serves on the piano faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as Assistant Professor of Piano and Director of Graduate Piano Pedagogy studies. She received the DMA in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Michigan. In addition to her love for the standard keyboard repertoire, Johnson frequently commissions and programs contemporary solo and chamber works. An active clinician, she has given workshops and presentations at the World Piano Pedagogy Conference, MTNA-affiliated state and national conventions, as well as held residencies at major universities and colleges throughout the United States.

The Pedagogy of Piano Adventures

Level 4: Lyric Playing

BY RANDALL FABER

Check out the supporting AUDIO CLIPS!
Go to Nancy and Randall Faber's
www.PianoTeaching.com
Check under "Listening Room"

In the last issue, we characterized Level 3B as *fast* playing. In Level 4 the student learns *lyric* playing—the ability to project and beautifully shape a melody.

We positioned lyric playing *after* fast playing because it requires more mature expression. I like to discuss the excitement of speed and the expressive quality of lyric playing as contrasting modes of expression—both powerful in different ways. Whereas all students relate to facile speed at the keyboard, most need to be coached into the expressive mode. With exposure, most students find the more subtle expression personally rewarding.

Lyric playing isn't entirely new to the student. Back in Level 2A we devoted a unit to Shaping the Phrase. Building on the Level 1 Wrist Float-off, the Technique & Artistry secrets gradually develop more sophisticated wrist gestures. Painter's Brush Stroke at Level 2B particularly addresses shaping the slur. At level 3A, the Round-Off ensures the student hears a softened phrase ending, and the Wrist Circles of Level 3A lead to use of the wrist to shape a longer phrase. Level 3B Technique & Artistry worked with Voicing the Melody to develop melodic projection. Now, here at Level 4, the repertoire is specifically tailored for beautiful handling of melody.

Is it advantageous to organize the method levels by such repertoire characteristics? Might this even counter our fundamental principle that students need a variety of repertoire? Indeed, one of the attributes of Piano Adventures® is its variety of musical styles. Let's examine why this variety is important, then consider how a distinct flavor or focus within a level enhances learning.

Variety of Repertoire

In most teaching studios, there is a range of musical tastes among students. Some students tell us their preference upfront, but, generally, we have to explore a range of sounds to find the style that really resonates with the individual. Broad exposure to various sounds and styles helps the teacher and student uncover a special interest—a personal sound. Once identified, we might celebrate this interest with a tailored supplement from the PreTime to BigTime library—such as Popular, Classics, Jazz & Blues, Rock 'n Roll, Hymns, Ragtime & Marches. As an alternative, we might choose from the correlating Piano Adventures® Popular Repertoire Book or from literature collections in The Developing Artist Library.

The motivational impact of this customization can be dramatic. In addition to harnessing the magnetic attraction to an individual's favorite musical sounds, this process personalizes piano study. This shift in "locus of control" from teacher to learner constitutes a major move toward intrinsic motivation. Not only will the student willingly practice more, but will open up to learning at the lesson and at home. We find more attentiveness, better retention, and a significant change in the communication dynamics. The right music makes all the difference.

Motivation isn't the only benefit of exploring many styles. A variety of styles invites a range of fundamental competencies which coalesce into the essentials of intermediate piano playing: note-reading, chord recognition, steady tempo, dynamic contrast, pedal coloring, coordination of fingers, wrist, arm and torso, technical gestures, long line, melodic shaping and projection, and so on. While this list is not intended to be comprehensive, even for elementary piano pedagogy, it nonetheless suggests a range of skills with an implication of sequence. The method levels provide proper sequence, and the repertoire characteristics of each level help ensure a depth of focus.

Focus of Repertoire

It is easy to assume that once *taught*, a concept is *learned*. Experience tells us otherwise. Neuroscience informs us that cognitive patterns must be repeated to be retained. If at level 3B we didn't immerse the student in the coordinated movements of fast playing, motor patterning would not become automatic. If we taught I, IV, V only in a single unit, there would be little or no recall of this a year later and no primary-chord recognition in the interim. So the entirety of Level 2B focuses on the primary chords, the bulk of Level 3B focuses on fast playing, and Level 4 focuses on lyric playing. By immersing the student in the defining character of the level, motor patterns, perceptual patterns, and cognitive patterns become reasonably lasting—not yet robust, perhaps—but sufficiently stable for the move to the next level.

Lyricism

Let's examine the Level 4 characteristic—lyricism. The lyric is the text of song, so lyricism refers to the singing quality in instrumental playing. The pianist does not simply accompany the singer; the pianist emulates the singer. We breathe the phrase, project the phrase, shape the phrase, and we imbue it with meaning—just as the voice does so naturally. In lyric playing, we give meaning to each phrase without words. Our goal in lyric playing is to bring the melody to the fore with intention and sensitivity. We don't just *play* the melody, we *speak* the melody through our instrument. When we give each note meaning—as in the spoken word—a melody takes on special magic. It becomes a personalized, poetic communication—indeed, a song without words.

The magic of melody often comes from its context. In other words, a melody derives its character, in part, from the colors of the accompanying voices. The setting critically frames the melody. How is the melody set against the accompaniment? To what degree does it contrast in dynamic? Does the accompaniment invoke the mood?

Invariably, students play the melody too softly. Students need to be taught to project the melody way above the background setting. Not just louder—a lot louder. This is accomplished with the drop of arm weight and its roll through the melodic phrase, but

also with the softening of the accompaniment. We're after big projection, but also big contrast, which is made possible by intentionally softening the accompanying voices.

Lyricism requires sensitivity to the contour of the melody. Are there expressive leaps? If so, might we stretch time through the larger interval? Does the melody *fall away* (characteristic of Viennese Classical) or *move toward* (as in the late Romantics)? How does the wrist assist phrase shaping? Does the passage invite wrist circles that can help transfer arm weight finger-to-finger?

Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag

A rag may seem the furthest thing from lyricism. But if we analyze the melody structure of Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag, we find interesting phrase patterns. The opening phrase, which outlines the I and V chords, is *two* measures in length, and repeats. At measure 5, intensifying in its flirtation with the parallel minor, the phrase is *one* measure in length, and repeats. At measure 7, the phrase becomes motivic as a *half-measure* pattern, arpeggiating the C minor tonality up the keyboard. Now, having shortened the phrase to almost nothing and as if to resolve the excursion to minor, the phrase length expands to *four* measures, and repeats. Attentiveness to this changing length of the phrases can make a world of difference in the expressive character of the piece. And, when we overlay this intelligently presented melody atop the staccato, dance-like left hand of ragtime, we have a context that lets the melody sing.

Leopold Mozart's Burlesca

Again, the bright, mischievous Burlesca of Leopold Mozart does not overtly suggest lyricism. Yet, it has important implications for the study of melody. If we trim out the sequence material of the descending thirds (in sixteenth notes), we find a duet of melody and bass, in parallel 10ths.

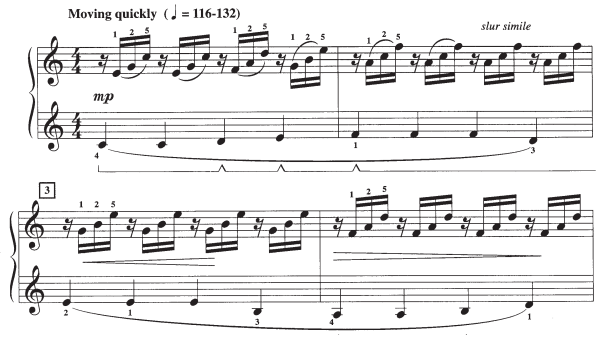
In a four-measure grouping, the melody hovers around scale step 5 (dominant), then descends stepwise to scale step 1 (tonic). After an echoed repetition of these four measures, the descent from 5 to 1 is reiterated in a succinct two-measure grouping. This is echoed, and the piece wraps up with the opening statement. Recognizing this stepwise framework of the phrase adds simplicity to what can otherwise appear as a complexity of tones. When the performer conveys the simplicity, a melodic beauty unfolds.

The Gondola

This quintessentially lyric piece sets a cantible melody against a repetitive, undulating arpeggiation. As in the Burlesca, the phrase shape of the B section derives from a descending line on the principal beats, floating downward in a simple, naturally expressive contour. Can you spot the C, B♭, A descent in Mm. 12-15? See pp. 8 and 9 for the score and details on how to play this expressive piece.

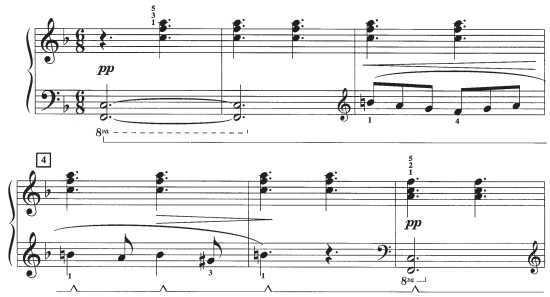
Seaside Suite

The first two movements of Seaside Suite give a lyric voice to the left hand. The melody of Sailboats in the Wind is doubled in the top of the R.H. first inversion chords. The piece is effectively practiced by blocking the R.H. chords while playing the L.H. melody. Hold the chord through the measure where the harmony does not change. Each of the two-bar phrases should be shaped like the swell of a wave—a surging forward and a falling away. In the B section, the gusts of wind grow with each sequence from Mm. 9 to 16.



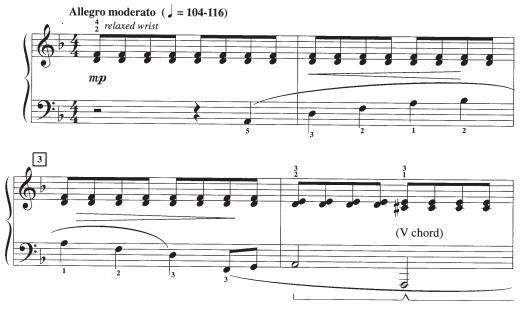
The second movement, Mysterious Cove, slows the tempo and sets a three-measure phrase against a placid background in the keyboard's outer ranges. The haunting L.H. melody in Lydian mode invites a controlled drop of arm weight that builds intensity through the turn of the phrase, then releases over time through the repeated Bs. The beauty rests in the color of the accompanying voices. The low fifth is not for loud support. It establishes a subdued anchoring of the F tonality (against the B♮) which is immediately mirrored in the undulating R.H. repetitions.

The piece is an interplay of dynamic colors, both between the three voices (bass fifth, R.H. fifths, and melody) and through the dynamic swells that move the piece forward. (You might imagine surging and receding waves, or changing gusts of wind.) The final phrase is a long descending scale that requires a crescendo and diminuendo to give shape and direction.



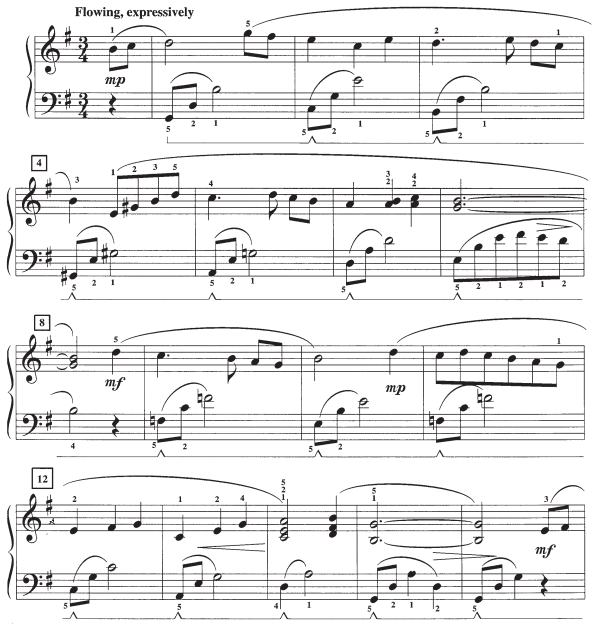
Night Ride

I love the way this L.H. melody outlines the tonic chord in D minor, then melodically cadences dominant to tonic (A to D). On the repeat, the melody cadences in F, the relative major (Mm. 8-9). This is a great piece for L.H. alone work, where the student can grasp the harmonic simplicity and bring out the rich, cello voice.



Chanson

Chanson, literally meaning "song", is explicitly melody over accompaniment. The melody is intentionally long and beautiful. Though the first gesture is a simple 3-note slur, the melody continues to unfold across seven measures. Use the pedal to sustain the D and take a new drop into the continuing phrase (pickup to measure 2). The long line invites awareness of direction in melody. Particularly effective is the move toward the A at measure 14, which then "rounds off" in its resolution to G. The B section pairs a bold move forward for four bars with a more relaxed surge and retreat in the alto voice. After moving forward again toward the unexpected F harmony at measure 27, the melody surges to the D (dominant) at measures 29 and 30, then expressively recedes.



Chanson is the French word for "song."

Wild Flowers

Probably the highpoint of expressive lyricism would be the coloratura soprano singing an operatic solo cadenza. So we give this to the student pianist in Wild Flowers. The expressive quality of the cadenza is enhanced by the color tones of the *forte* chord at measure 27 which sustain beyond the fermata. The singer ascends freely to the high B with a crescendo, but also with subtle 2-note *diminuendi* in the appoggiaturas B-A, E-D, A-G. Soften the second note in each of these stepwise pairings while maintaining a legato throughout. Remind the student of the expressive quality of the F♮ that begins the resolution. It is borrowed from the parallel minor (and from the B section) and also forms a tritone (three whole steps) against the preceding B. The finishing expressive gesture places the V chord atop the I chord (E major atop A major) through a *molto ritardardando*.

The student learns that expression derives from the musical content, and yet needs to be infused by the performer. We find hints to expression in our analysis—our analysis of phrase shape, and even our theory analysis. Informed by the simplicities and subtleties of the score, we add the warmth and expressive power of human emotion.

How To

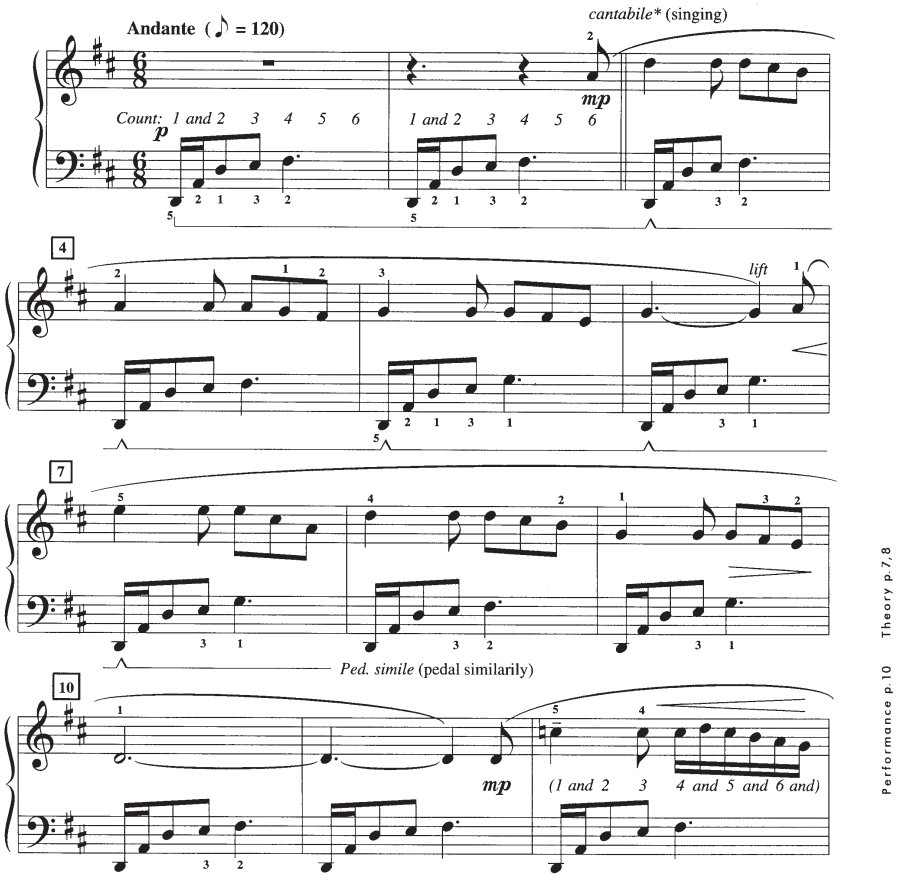
Blend a Musical Smoothie

BY MARIENNE USZLER

Review: $\frac{6}{8}$ = 6 beats in a measure, ♪ gets 1 beat

The Gondola

Success Hint: Learn this piece hands separately before playing hands together.



*The Italian word *cantabile* is pronounced, "con-TAH-bee-lay."

Left-Hand "Smoothie"
The key to playing this piece beautifully is to make the left hand effortless and quietly colorful. Think velvet. Think glide. Think smo-o-o-o-th.

Feel the left-hand figure in Mm. 1-4

- Open your hand for the octave D
- Glide over the thumb (be sure to keep it on the key) to the E and F♯.
- As you move to the E and F♯, let the hand glide up, floating off gently.
- Let the gentle "float off" begin the smooth move to the next low D.
- Play the left-hand figure, watching for a smooth crossover and float off. Do it over and over.
- Now play the left-hand figure over and over with your *eyes closed*. (You'll probably be able to find the low D without having to look for it.)

Create a subtle, but rich, *sound*.

- Leave the pedal down throughout.
- Play the low D with the most tone—rich, but gentle.
- Whisper all the notes between the low D and the F♯.
- Play the F♯ float-off with *almost* as much tone as the low D.
- The low D and the F♯ form the harmony. The other notes create a "blur." Play this over and over, eyes closed, *listening* for the "color".

Once you can play this left-hand "smoothie", apply the same movements and touches to the left-hand figure in measures 5-7.

Now the left hand is prepared. You won't have to look at it!

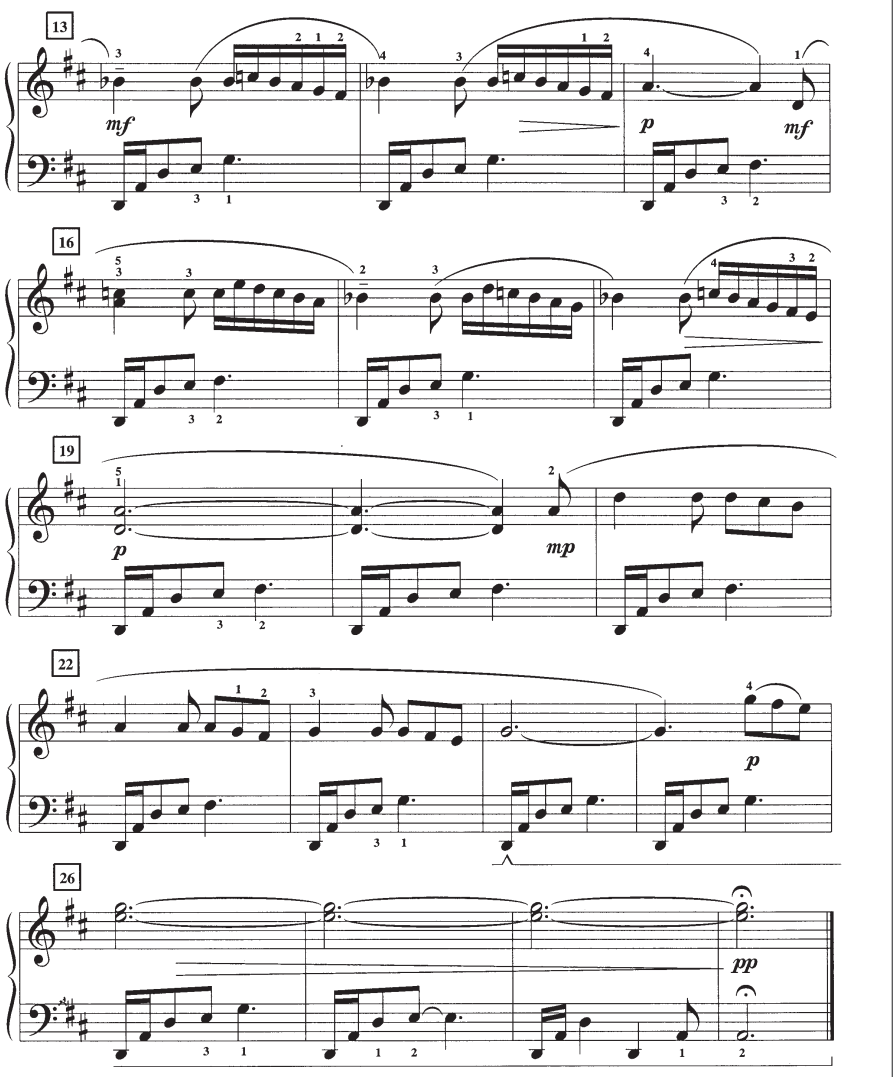
The Right Hand Sings
The right hand, too, must be smooth, but since it is the *cantabile* "singer" it needs its own kind of special attention.

In the first and last sections, the long four-measure phrases must arch and bend with suppleness. No bumps. No stick-out notes.

- Play on the pads of the fingers, clinging a little on each of the long notes.
- The notes on beats 3 and 6 should be played with the least tone, like gentle upbeats to the notes that follow.
- The only exception occurs in measure 7, where all the notes in the second half of the measure must sing out to match the high E and lead gracefully to the D that opens measure 8.

In the middle section, even though the phrases *look* shorter, they must still give the impression of four-measure arches—we need to hear the progression from C through the B♭s to A.

- The C♮s in measures 12 and 16 are dramatic because they are surprising. Give them the deepest, richest tone.
- The first notes in measure 16 are one of the few places where the right hand plays double notes. The opening of measure 16 is the most expressive moment in the song.
- The sixteenth-note figures are ripples that propel the song forward, to the downbeat notes that follow.



Accompany

Experience what it's like to accompany a "singer".

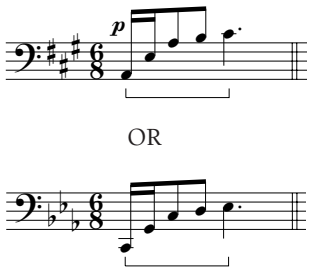
The student plays the left-hand accompaniment, as written.

- The teacher (or another student) plays the right-hand melody, perhaps in octaves.
- The right-hand melody might be played by a violinist or a flutist.

The student will discover how to listen to what a "singer" might do. The soloist might push ahead a little, hold back, or need time to breathe. The accompanist must support and be flexible.

Plan Your Own Gondola Ride

- Transpose the left-hand pattern to another key, perhaps



You'll discover that being able to "float off" a black key at the end of the pattern is more comfortable than finishing the pattern on a white key. But don't let that keep you from exploring any key you wish. Ending the pattern on a white key will feel something like the pattern in measures 5-7. Just keep remembering to move your hand toward the fallboard as you "float off".

- The only exceptions to this forward motion are the sixteenth-note figures that must glide quietly into the A at measures 15 and 19.
- The sixteenth-note figures in measures 16 and 17 create bigger ripples since they flip up a third before coasting forward to the B♭s.

At the end, the singer disappears, but with a magical twist.

- The G is never resolved.
- The tied thirds in the last measures are the highest notes in the song.
- The left-hand long notes fade from the G to the D as they seem to evaporate. The Gondola floats away on the horizon …

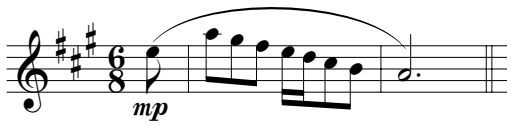
The Singer Is Accompanied

When the piece is played hands together, the left hand is the quiet "smoothie." It's the "pole" that gently pushes the gondola forward.

When you know the piece well, think of the music as forming two big beats in each measure. The gondola sways and moves forward as the pole is changed from side to side.

- When you improvise a new melody, you'll need to think in the new key.

Begin the melody as in the original Gondola, then play down the scale to test what the new notes will be.



From *Piano Adventures* Lesson Book
Level 4, pp. 14, 15

How To

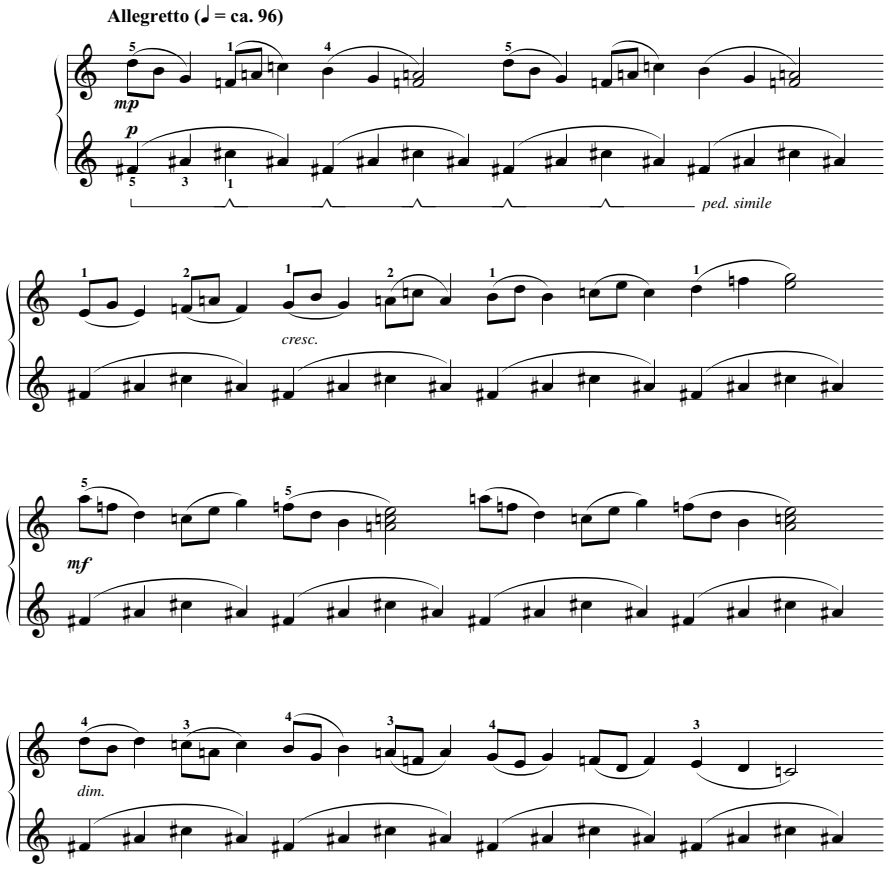
Explore the Score

BY SUZANNE W. GUY

Feel the lilt of the implied 4/4 meter, letting the absence of the bar lines create a freedom to your interpretation. Once the left hand is shaped over the F♯ major triad ("set and forget"), concentrate totally on the right-hand melody. This piece is about contrast: black keys and white keys; predictability (left hand) and improvisation (right hand); staying still and moving around. The treble melody plays all around the C major scale, either stepping or skipping. See how quickly you can memorize such a patterned composition.

In the Forest

VLADIMIR REBIKOV
(1866–1920)



About the Composer
Vladimir Rebikov (1866–1920) delighted in writing miniatures for elementary and intermediate students as well as more complex advanced piano pieces. His works show the influence of Debussy's impressionism, primarily through the use of overlapping pedal which blurred harmonies and melody tones. Rebikov's early works show the influence of Tschaikovsky's orchestral colors.

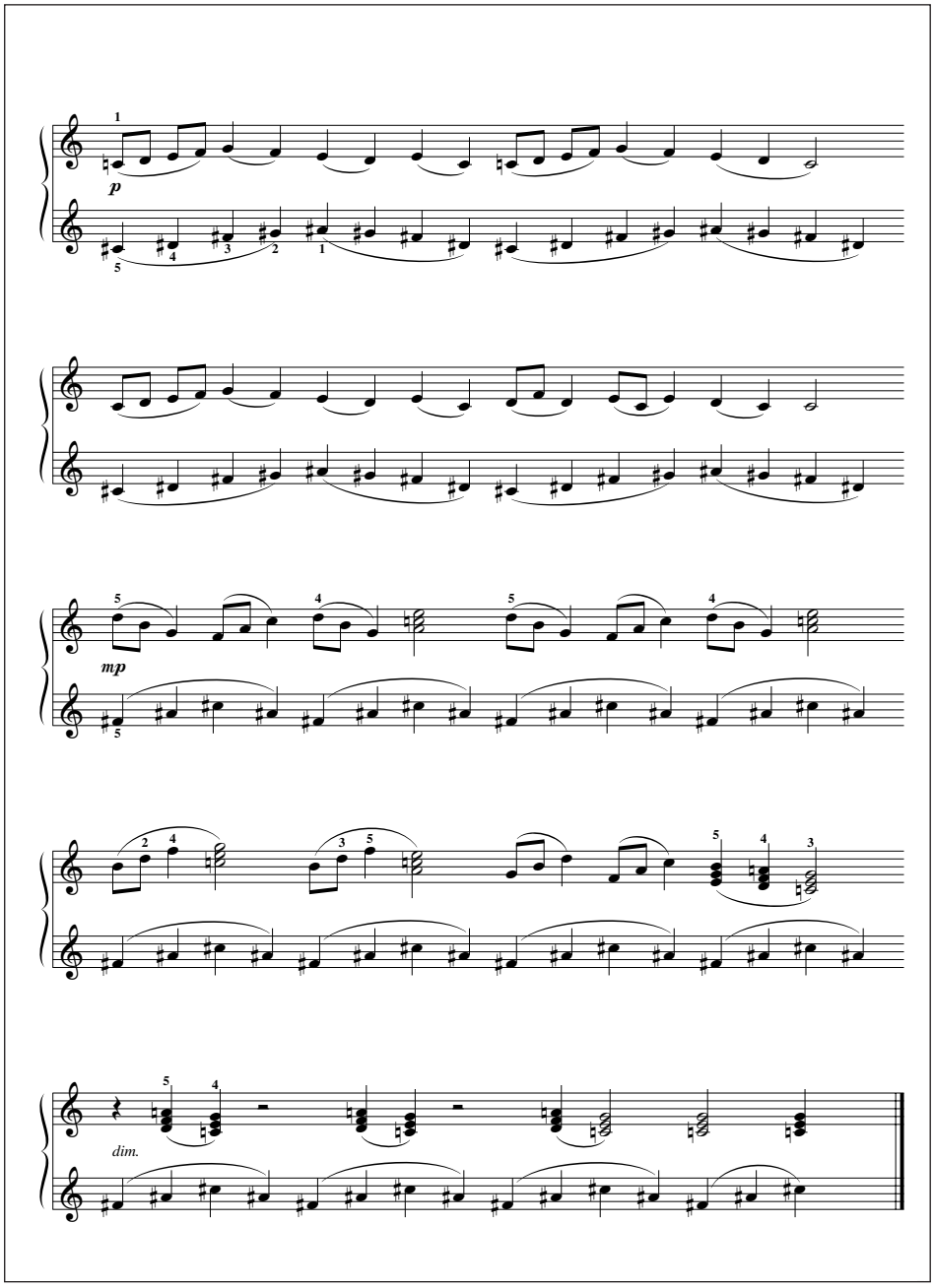
About the Piece
This is one of those mood pieces that plays best in the imagination. The patterns are easy and memorable despite the crowding of the hands as they operate in piggyback position (the left hand above and invariably brushing the right hand). Once you have "mapped" your way through In the Forest, try playing it early or late in the day, at dusk or at dawn when natural light is fading or emerging. Forget fingers and the keyboard; instead, listen to the sounds you create, remembering that one's sound is an extension of personal ideas and feelings.

Something's Missing
Do you suppose the composer forgot the time signature? And where are the barlines? At first, you may feel lost in this "forest" of notes, but soon you will sense a feeling of 4/4 meter, strongly implied by the slurred left-hand broken chords and pentatonic groupings. The "missing" time signature and absent barlines contribute to the seamless, timeless quality of the piece. Sing or speak the following sample lyric (goes with the first line) and create a mood from another world, perhaps an undiscovered forested planet.

Lost in space, not a trace, Can be found,
Slower pace, never race, Savor sound.

Something's Strange
The observant student will immediately notice the double treble staves; indeed, the lowest pitch is middle C, and the range is barely an octave and a half. The black and white keys are divided equally between the hands—all black for the left hand, and only white for the right hand. The inevitable bitonal effect (when the hands play together) is what "gray" might sound like.

Overview
What is the form or shape of this piece? Look for what's alike and what's different, the primary clue to its organization. There are nine systems (lines of notation), and no two are identical. However, the similarities and patterns throughout serve as anchors for both learning and memorizing. Notice that the left



hand plays only three notes (an F♯ Major broken triad) for seven of the nine systems. Its other function is to outline a pentatonic scale on C♯. Now you know everything you need to know about the left hand.

Let's explore the right hand's role, first checking for contrast to the predictable left hand. While the left hand stays still, the right hand moves. And where the left hand seems static, the right hand improvises. The upper treble melody skips and steps all around the C Major scale, frequently in a ♫ ♩ pattern.

Pedal Effects

In a piece like this, the skillful use of the right and left pedals is equivalent to having four hands! I would suggest liberal use of the damper pedal as marked in the score. Experiment with different levels of pedal (no need to "floor" it), changing at the implied half measure, as you listen to the clashing colors of black and white keys. The second diminuendo (a text indication) at the end of the piece would benefit from the una corda pedal. At first glance, the performer might fault the composer for being so stingy with dynamic indications. Why not delight in the opportunity to fire up the imagination and use additional shadings? Imitate the play of dappled sunlight in a dense forest by carefully gauging a note-by-note crescendo.

Handings

Everyone is familiar with the concept of fingering, but I often refer to "handings" as a learning tool, memory aid, technical assist, and all-around time saver! A pianist's hand is similar to a dancer's foot, in that choreography is equally critical. All motion at the keyboard must be planned for maximum ease and efficiency. The more notes that you can group or "bunch", the better.

- First system (G Major broken triad) is the first handing. The next seven notes all belong to a different handing). Practice each handing as a harmonic unit—all bunched together.
- Second system (alternate handings of two notes: 1-3 and 2-4), going up the C scale, with the last group of four notes, D-E-F-G in a single handing.

Note: Handing is not quite the same as blocking, which is usually reserved for broken chords played as a solid unit.

Tempo

Rebikov allowed for a tempo range (perhaps ♩ = 80–100), depending on whether we want a leisurely stroll or a quick trip through the forest. Whatever the pace, there is a natural reluctance at the journey's end. In the last system the eighth notes disappear, and the pace slows as rests appear for the first time.

From *Focus on Melody*, Volume 1, pp. 62, 63

Selected and Edited by Suzanne Guy and Victoria McArthur

TEACHING PIANO PEDAGOGY

We Need All the Trees

BY BARBARA ENGLISH MARIS

Once upon a time, not so very long ago and not so very far away, there was a woodsman who lived in a deep forest. One fine day the ruler of that forest sent a message to the woodsman. "Find for me the most wonderful, the most beautiful tree in the forest." The woodsman knew that he had been assigned an important responsibility, and so he appointed three other people to serve with him on the Selection Committee.

The following day, the committee gathered and began its task of selecting "the most wonderful, the most beautiful tree in the forest." Solemnly they walked from one tree to the next. Whenever a member of the selection committee noticed any sign of a defect or damage, that tree was tagged for elimination. Gradually the Selection Committee identified all the trees that did not meet their high standards and did not qualify as "the most wonderful" or "the most beautiful tree in the forest".

At the end of the day, only two trees had not been tagged and rejected. Both were tall and straight. Both had even branches covered with healthy leaves. As darkness invaded the forest, the Selection Committee agreed to adjourn until morning. "We have selected two semifinalists," the chairperson announced with fatigue. "Tomorrow morning, we will reconvene to make the final decision and inform our ruler."

At dawn, the Selection Committee gathered again in the heart of the forest. The two trees that had not been eliminated stood tall and leafy. They were magnificent specimens. But suddenly the woodsman realized that something in the forest was missing. "Where," he asked his companions, "are all those other trees? Where are the trees we tagged yesterday? Where are the trees we eliminated because they were not the most wonderful? And where are the squirrels and other creatures who lived in those trees? Why is it so quiet in the woods? Where are the birds that we heard singing yesterday?" The Selection Committee looked around the barren land and realized sadly that the majestic forest had been transformed.

The formal report of the examiners presented the following conclusion: "Although we have located two magnificent, verdant trees in the woods, the committee has been unable to select a single winner. Because of that impasse, we have decided to have both trees cut down and sent to our ruler. Then she can examine them, decide which is "the *most* wonderful, the *most* beautiful tree" in the forest, and announce the grand winner.

The moral of this tale is: The whole may be greater than the sum of its parts. Sometimes looking for the *very best* may prevent us from seeing and valuing *all the rest*.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

To have a beautiful and healthy forest, there must be room in the woods for many trees, even those that are not the tallest or the most verdant. The strength and richness of ecological environments depends on more than identifying the most majestic tree.

To have a healthy musical culture, there must be room for many people who create and enjoy music—even those who have not been acclaimed as great musicians. The health of our musical culture will not be sustained by identifying and rewarding only those who obtain perfect scores from Selection Committees, Judges, or Boards of Examiners.

And yet, in today's culture, children and students are surrounded by activities that identify the best through a lengthy process of eliminating all the rest. In spelling bees, beauty pageants, talent contests, basketball playoffs, tennis tournaments, and Olympic events, individuals and teams continue to participate until only one remains. Only one winner is declared, and even the winner realizes that, on another occasion, she or he might be a loser.

As parents and teachers, we have a responsibility to be aware of the long-range negative effects of activities and events that seek to remove those participants who are less than perfect, those that are declared unacceptable. What do we gain and what do we lose when we celebrate the elimination of "the weakest link"? What are the benefits of demeaning others and shouting, "You messed up. You're fired!"?

When my daughters were little girls, learning to ice skate, the instructor began the first class by leading the children to the middle of the rink and having them kneel on the ice. Then she showed them how to get up and balance themselves on the runners of their skates. The dramatic result was that as soon as the youngsters learned how to get up, they lost their fear of falling. Yet it was those early tumbles that enabled them to practice getting up with ease. Because of their initial struggles, my daughters soon learned to maintain balance and to enjoy skating.

What about those adults who harbor painful memories of being told to sit in the back row of music class and just mouth the words of the songs? How many of yesterday's "crows" now serve on school boards and control budgets that affect music programs? If only the most beautiful songbirds are permitted to sing, the woods will be very quiet. If only the most wonderful trees are allowed to remain in the woods, the forest will disappear. If we eliminate all but the very best performers in our musical environment, we undermine the strength of our entire cultural environment.

We all suffer when our children and students decide that there is no room in the world for weak links and runner-ups. If young people focus their energies on avoiding the demeaning words, "You're fired!", how can they grow through new experiences? If they do not learn to find their own voices and recognize their own ideas, we all become losers.

As piano teachers, we face an important responsibility. Our challenge is to become nurturing, supportive teachers who seek to enhance the musical growth of all our students. Now, *that* is a worthwhile pedagogical assignment!

TALKING TECH

Software for Levels 1, 2A, and 2B

BY SANDRA BOWEN

In the last newsletter, I talked about software that complements the Primer level of *Piano Adventures*®. That was a bit tricky because software is ill equipped to teach beginning skills—how to sit at the piano properly, hand position, and tone quality. But software to reinforce Levels 1 and 2? A piece of cake!

The concepts presented in *Piano Adventures*® 1, 2A, and 2B revolve primarily around notes and rests, counting, and intervals, chords, and scales. These are the areas where computer software shines.

Concepts Presented in Levels 1, 2A, and 2B

- NOTES and RESTS
  - Treble F A C E
  - Treble C Position
  - Sharp/Flat
  - Beamed eighth notes
  - Dotted quarter note
  - Half rest
  - Whole rest
  - Eighth rest
- INTERVALS
  - Half and whole steps
  - Second through Sixth
- CHORDS
  - C Chord
  - I V7 IV
- HAND POSITIONS
  - Treble C
  - G D A
  - Minor 5-Finger Patterns
- SCALES
  - C Major
  - G Major
  - F Major
- OTHER CONCEPTS
  - Legato/Staccato
  - Transposition
  - Phrase
  - Cross-hand arpeggio
  - Damper pedal

Carefully chosen computer software can help immensely with most of these concepts. (I find it comforting that it cannot teach everything.) Those topics under "other" are ours alone. To teach correct touch, a singing phrase, and careful pedaling one needs a human voice and hand. But for everything else, the following programs will help instill these skills in your students.

Essentials of Music Theory www.alfred.com
Interactive Musician www.alfred.com
ECS Early Music Skills www.ecsmedia.com
ECS Note Speller www.ecsmedia.com
eMedia Piano & Keyboard Method www.emediamusic.com
Instant Play Piano Deluxe www. musiccoach.com
Maestro Fortune Cookie www.wrldcon.com/maestro/comp-info.html
MiDisaurus www.town4kids.com
Mrs. G's Music Room Available through various vendors
Music Ace www.harmonicvision.com
Music Goals by Eye & Ear www.musicgoals.com
Music Goals Rhythm www.musicgoals.com
Music Lessons I www.mibac.com
Musition 2 www.risingsoftware.com
Noteplay www.alfred.com
PBJ Computer Activities www.pbjmusic.com
Piano Is Fun www.pianoisfun.com
Pianomouse www.pianomouse.com

Any of these programs will assist you and your students. You should definitely look into Music Goals and take advantage of their free 21-day trial. If you see Instant Play Piano Deluxe at your local warehouse store (I recently found mine at Costco for $29), check it out—there's a lot of value there. Don't miss Piano Is Fun—it's a great program!

Now here are the programs I was afraid you might miss.

If you used to have an Apple IIe in your studio, you might remember a program called Theory Games from Alfred. Good news—it's back! Alfred's Theory Games Software 2.0 was just released in a Windows/Macintosh hybrid CD. The games will be familiar, the graphics are delightful, and this program is particularly well suited to the topics of *Piano Adventures*® Levels 1, 2A, and 2B. Because it is geared to Alfred's own method, the page references are to those books, but it complements the Faber series as if it were their own. With frogs jumping over logs, fish getting devoured by fierce sharks (if you're wrong!), and turtles throwing darts at balloons, this is truly painless learning. You'll know your students are mastering the skills, and your kids will be thrilled to find out it's "Theory Games" day.

For rhythm and notation, I like Rhythm Factory from ECS. While it's no longer listed on the ECS website (which is quite a mystery—it's newer than most of their products), it is available through many vendors including Lentine's (www.lentine.com). Rhythm Factory is cleverly designed as an actual factory. You walk in the door and choose between TIME and NOTATION. I chose TIME and was first sent to the BEAT MACHINE. It does an excellent job of explaining the concept of pulse, then provides some good exercises for keeping an even pulse. The BEAT SPLITTER divides the beats into downbeats and upbeats and requires the student to demonstrate that s/he knows the difference. The TEMPO WAREHOUSE quizzes tempo markings.

In the NOTATION section, the student first visits the PAINT SHOP where s/he learns about note values in common time. In the puzzle section of the PART SHOP, s/he is given parts of notes (the note head, stem, beam, and so on) and must construct what's required.

MiDisaurus Notation is a must-own program for your software library. It's divided into three sections—Articulation, Dynamics, and Notation—and does an especially good job with younger students. In the Articulation section, the little tykes (and bigger ones, too) will be drilled on accents, legato/staccato touch, ties and slurs, and the fermata. Dynamics presented are forte, piano, fortissimo, pianissimo, mezzo forte, and mezzo piano. In the Notation section, students will learn about lines and spaces, sharps, flats, and naturals, and key signatures.

With just a little guidance, the equation is simple: You + *Piano Adventures*® + well-chosen software = 1 studio filled with terrific students!

HELP YOURSELF!

Using CD/MIDI Disks Rhythm Tricks

BY OUR READERS

More Than Play-Along

In my studio, I use the *Piano Adventures*® CDs in many ways. I may ask students to drum the beat, hands together, while listening to the CD, accenting the first beat with a larger gesture. The student might also drum the rhythm, hands separately or together, with the CD. I use a higher-pitched drum for the right hand, and a lower-pitched drum for the left.

Sometimes I ask the student to play the *first beats* of every measure along with the CD. This helps students coordinate the "down-and-up" or "down-and-up-and" wrist motions (as suggested by Max Camp). A variation is to play beat 1 to beat 1, alternating measures or lines of music.

For example:Play 1 2 3 /1 - - /1 2 3 /1 - - /

I might have the student listen to the CD while watching the music. When I stop the CD on a specific beat, the student must identify the measure and the beat. I also use ribbon sticks to have the student conduct a sideways figure 8 along with the CD.

If this fits the piece, a student may learn to play primary chords along with the CD, and get a chance to accompany a soloist instead of *being* the soloist. Swinging, marching, or tapping to the beat (or first beats only) is always helpful.

Students can also improvise to the accompaniment without the piano part, or play variations on the melody. They can even create an original piece using similar melodic and harmonic shapes.

REUSE THOSE CDS! When students move to a higher level, have them learn a teacher part from a lower level that is within their reach.

John Bisceglia
Seattle, Washington

Editor's Note: Check out "Get More for Your Money" (page 13) in the August 2004 newsletter. You'll find special CD/MIDI-related activities linked to specific Piano Adventures® *books and levels.*

Keep That Beat!

I bought one of those bright, colorful lollipop drums, and my students gaze at it lovingly! They *beg* me to tap out their rhythms on the drum before they play a piece. Many rhythm problems have disappeared!

The lollipop drum is in the Music in Motion catalog, and I've also seen it at educational retail stores like Learning Express. I use the medium size because little fingers can handle it easily. It seems to me that using a drum works better than clapping. I know it's the same concept, but when we clap, their eyes start to glaze over, whereas they *love* to play on the drum. I usually let them tap out the rhythms while I point, but sometimes they get to be the "teacher" and I tap it out and see if they can catch my mistakes. That's when I know they've got it!

Marie
From www.PianoTeaching.com

I use a pair of souvenir maracas in my studio. I show students how to use the right hand for the notes in the treble clef and the left hand for bass clef notes. This has been great fun and helps a lot. We even use the maracas with the accompaniment CDs to work out rhythm and/or tempo problems.

Mary Dieker
Canton, Missouri

I've found that students will not be able to play with a metronome unless they can speak or move to it. I start them out saying the alphabet of seconds, up and down with no break in between, with the metronome set at 88. They say one letter to each tick. As they get comfortable with this, I gradually speed up the tempo. You can also use this technique to teach thirds, at first letting them "think" the skipped letter with every other tick. Ditto with fourths and fifths, if you like.

Lisa Kalmar
From www.PianoTeaching.com

Chair Rhythms

This game is fun to do with a group. Set out four chairs from left to right. Each chair represents 1 beat of a 4-beat measure. Tell the students that you're going to clap or play a 4-beat rhythm pattern (for example, ta titi ta rest). Have them echo-clap the pattern. Then ask someone how many sounds did s/he hear? (4) Have that student choose three others to join in notating the pattern on the chairs using their own bodies. One person would sit on the first chair (ta), two would share the second chair (titi), one would sit on the third chair (ta), and no one would be on the fourth chair (rest). *Voila*! They've notated the rhythm with their own bodies! Once the pattern is complete, the remaining students all clap and count the pattern as I move my hand above each "chairperson".

(If you have lots of students in the group, 16th notes are really fun. Kids sometimes have to sit on laps.)

Gretchen Taylor
Mt. Carmel, Illinois

FAMILY TREE

A "Class" Act

BY MARIENNE USZLER

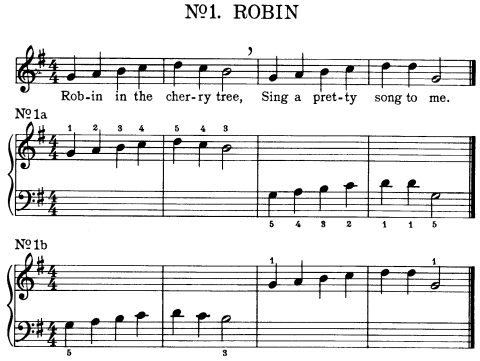
Nearly five generations of pianists have been exposed to the idea of group teaching, but the underlying concern—how to do it effectively—is still the focus of most group piano workshops and seminars. We should remember, though, that "class piano" (no longer an acceptable term) did not originate as a method for use in the independent studio. It was exactly what the name suggested— piano instruction in public school classes to provide music education as part of the general curriculum.

The heyday of the class piano movement was in the first quarter of the 20th century. Musicians and educators like Calvin Cady, Thaddeus P. Giddings, Helen Curtis, Otto Miessner, Ella Mason Ahearn, and Raymond Burrows, among others, all produced materials and were involved in teacher training since both were needed if class piano was to flourish.

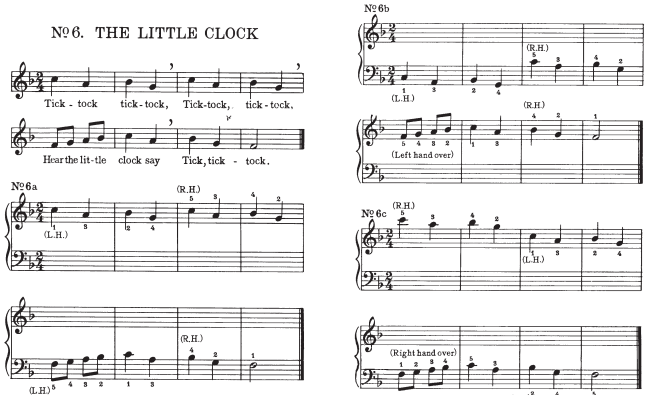
One method designed for class piano instruction, however, stands apart from the rest. The Oxford Piano Course was the work of a team whose expertise reflected different strengths: Ernest Schelling (concert pianist), Osbourne McConathy (authority in music education), Charles J. Haake, (piano pedagogue), and Gail Martin Haake (expert in child piano instruction). The authors, Schelling excepted, were on the faculty of Northwestern University.

The materials they produced—Singing and Playing, Preparatory: Book A (1928), Teacher's First Manual (1929), A Beginner's Book for Older Pupils (1929), Learning to Play the Piano, Preparatory: Book B (1942), five more instruction books, a second teacher's manual, and a supplementary volume, Play Tunes (with Polly Gibbs, 1971)—teach music as a total experience. Piano performance is not an end in itself.

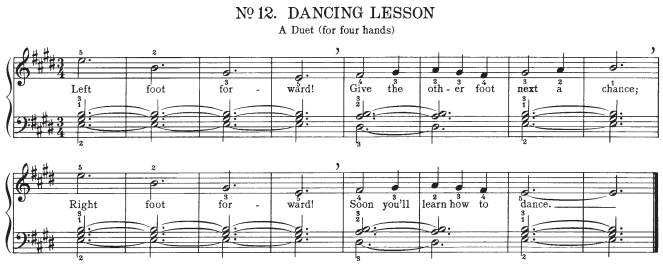
The pedagogy of the method is clear from the title of the first book—Singing and Playing. Students first learn a song, then play it on the piano. "The ear is the leading factor." The music is in a child's singing range—the keys of G, F, A, and E Major and A Minor and (further on) C, E♭, A♭, and B♭ Major. Breath marks replace slurs and phrases. Each piece has "variations", the same melody played in different octaves and with alternating hands.



By page 8 the student is playing (via "variations") in four different octaves.



Triads are introduced early, but the chords are divided between the hands. The right hand plays the two upper notes, the left hand the lowest. Chords are fitted to the melody only as a four-hand duet, one player for the melody, one for the chords.



Looking only at the student books, you can't really tell how to use the method. For this you need the Teacher's First Manual, which provides an unusual amount of introductory material and gives specific directions on how to teach each piece. Here you learn that a piece is taught by rote, phrase by phrase. Rhythms and note values are not explained, but absorbed from the words and melodies. Ultimately the student learns to transpose, harmonize, create "variations", and play duets.

The Manual covers a remarkable variety of subjects. Certain statements pop out. "Hearing is the only source of direct knowledge of music." "One of the chief aims of the course is to present all the material in such a way that the pupil is required to think his music before he plays it." "Rhythm is fundamentally a muscular rather than an auditory experience, and must be taught as such." "Interest and pleasure are essential to learning. In music study, there must be enjoyment, otherwise there can be no progress."

In the 1930s students used cardboard or mechanical keyboards, with one or two children playing, by turns, on an actual piano in the classroom. Wouldn't the Oxford team be amazed that—70 years later—each student could have an instrument and the teacher could monitor everyone via headphones! Ah, but in those days they had music in the classroom … III