



## Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 1, Book 2 (Green Book) – Weeks 22 through 24

Dear Teacher,

### Week 22

Remember, the lesson suggestions are guides for a typical class of children. I bet your children are not typical. They may be still struggling with *Willum* and *All the Little Ducklings*. At this point in the curriculum you can decide to spend more time on these pieces and remove other repertoire. The pieces I suggest removing and adding later on will be mentioned as we move forward. This week you may want to spend time accompanying both songs with chords as the children sing the melody and then focus on chord technique. Here is a good opportunity to review the movement from a I chord to a IV chord in both major and minor. It is your choice to adapt the lesson suggestions.

**Vocal/Keyboard Improvisation Step 3**– In the last few weeks the children have improvised at the singing circle, first playing with rhythm patterns and then playing with tonal patterns. Now we are improvising with longer tonal patterns and we are asking their answer to end with Do. Start this activity by echoing two tonic patterns ending in Do. Then I give them an opportunity to create new patterns limiting their answers to combinations of Do, Mi, and Sol patterns and remind them (and model) to think about the pattern before you begin the question-answer game. If a child sings the wrong syllable to the pitches they select, sing the syllables they chose with the correct pitch and have the children echo. I will often ask, “Did you mean this?” and sing. They usually say yes. If I sing the pitches they give me but correct the names they will most likely say, “That’s not what I wanted.” This game can be added into the song circle as a card to keep this practice going throughout this year and next year even though it is not listed as an activity on the lesson suggestion.

**Hop up My Ladies (tetrachords)** - *Hop Up, My Ladies* and *Do As I’m Doing* use the tetrachord scale fingering. *(Before moving forward I want to let you know that I drop BOTH pieces from Book 2 and add these pieces as supplementary pieces for the few students that seem ready for these piece. This gives me time to review the Right hand fingering for Willum and review chords for Willum. I no longer teach the tetra chord part that follows. )*

Notice the fingering for the tetrachord scale uses fingers 4, 3, 2, and 1 of each hand. Sing these songs and review the patterns often before teaching the songs. This fingering seems to come and go and never re-appears in the curriculum so don’t worry too much if the children use creative fingering to play these pieces. As long as they are using their ear as the leader, these pieces can be valuable. Just an aside, as the children learn *Hop up My Ladies* at the piano I will offer a student to play the piece as we play the game. That student can be “in control of the sit down part of the game by REPEATING the pattern “So La, So La La So” over and over until.... They play MI Re Do and everyone scrambles to the floor. Of course I have sung the piece this way for a few weeks and they love this expansion of the



game. (Don't mind the weather, don't mind the weather, don't mind the weather over and over again until I sing, "til the wind don't blow" as I quickly scramble for a spot.)

**Mystery Songs – (Bim Bam)** – Our song of the day is still a familiar song that we have been singing and playing on the keyboards. I add this song during song circle and I ask for children to play it in e minor. I also review the chords in e minor and have the children play the chords as we sing the melody together (I am pointing out what chord to play in front of the children so they are forced to watch me for the chord change and not their hands). There are no surprises when we begin to look at this song. I will review the patterns on a board in e minor (you can also use the purple minor chords to review the patterns). You may be wondering if we are fooling the children into thinking they are reading when they aren't looking at the music at all. But don't worry. We are moving from familiar mystery songs to unfamiliar mystery songs soon enough. At this point I am more interested in setting up the practice of reading the score first on the floor as a group as we track the score with our finger. Then a student plays the piece as one child reminds them to keep their eyes on the music as they are playing. I often ask them if they need to look at their feet as they climb the stairs in their house. Of course not! Same here! I may have another child cover their hands with a book. The rest of the children continue to sing and point on the floor. You can also set up two children to read the piece and have one play the chords while the other plays the melody. I would choose two children first that you know can handle this complexity.

### **Week 23**

**Do As I'm Doing** - (Again, I may play this song in song circle and I may have them accompany this song using chords at the piano but I no longer teach this in class because I do not do the tetrachord part of the curriculum. Instead I teach the fingering for the C Major scale. You are welcome to join me in leaving out this song or you are welcome to follow the curriculum as stated. It's your classroom. ) This is another tetrachord song. You can teach the first part and save the second part for next week. I wouldn't worry too much if they don't do this piece in other keys. Sticking to one key is fine.

**Listen for Styles** – I like to talk about composers. Each composer is so different from the other. If you can play these pieces or part of these pieces, this is a fun option, otherwise, set up your CD and listen together. I insist we listen first and then I will let them move through the second listening after they discuss possible ways to move that work within the style. It is interesting to see what they create. Time this activity so that it doesn't take too long.

### **Week 24**

**Do as I'm Doing** – (If you are omitting this piece, here is space to continue to explore scales. Perhaps you can add the fingering for the left hand. Perhaps you can try Willum and All the the Little Ducklings with chords in other keys. This would be a great time to review) You may notice your children have the first part of the song but not the second part. Here is a good time to focus on the second part of the piece. You can always stay in one key or suggest other keys if the children seem ready. Don't push this.



**Mystery Song – Unfamiliar: Mary Had a Little Lamb** - I enjoy it when I announce that the song we are about to discover is not a familiar song, and yet the children still try to guess what the song is. When the children are singing the patterns and reading the songs in solfeggio, do not sing with the children. Hold back. Put tape on your mouth. Cross your eyes. If you cannot stand it at least wait until they identify the note before you blurt it out loud. Children are experts at singing a millisecond behind you and will play chicken and win every time if you are not aware of it. A nice technique here is to have children take turns singing a phrase and then have the children echo the phrase together. Children will announce that they cannot read music because, and this is my humble opinion, they already believe that reading music involves naming notes (now where do you think they pick up this idea?). This is always interesting when I have a child say this belief and then read the music in solfege in tune.

Don't forget to sing the songs with rhythm language. This is a great opportunity to post a rhythm pattern of the day and have them find the pattern during singing circle and then again during the discovery stage of a mystery song. (I often forget this step and I have a big sign on the wall to remind me.) I like to encourage children to play the mystery songs during keyboard sharing time. I also like to create a duet where one child is playing the left hand part while another plays the right hand part. The remaining children are either pointers and/or singers. Everyone gets a job when we play mystery songs at the keyboards. I do not have children play the same part at the same time unless I know they can play the song individually with a reasonable rhythm. This will happen more often in the second year.

#### ***Improvisation Step 4***

When setting up for this step, first decide what two major duple patterns you will use. Some options are:

Du, Du, du-day, Du

Du-Day Du, Du-Day Du

Du-day, Du-day, Du Du

First practice singing tonic patterns with the selected pattern. Then have them go to the pianos. Have them warm up in C position. Then have them sing and echo some patterns with the duple pattern you would like them to use. Now have them stop and think about their own pattern. Wait, be patient. Ask for a volunteer. I like to sing the pattern they create and have all echo. Once they seem comfortable, add a question and have them answer. Remind them that they need to end on Do.

#### ***In conclusion:***

Before you know it the semester will be over, and you will have completed your first year of teaching the keyboard program. And the best part is that you have a great second year and third year curriculum ready for your children. As I work with the children over the years, I am experiencing a lot of success and satisfaction in my classes. In fact, I love every moment of teaching every year of this curriculum. All the work you are doing to learn and teach this program this first year will give you the wonderful reward of teaching year two and year three. Keep going and in the next two months I will discuss the end of Year One so that the children will be clamoring for more.

Happy Teaching, Ellen Johansen