



## Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 1, Book 2 (Green Book) – Weeks 25 through 27

Dear Teachers,

### Week 25

Vocal/Keyboard Improvisation Step 5 (Triple Major) – In the past few weeks, we have improvised at the singing circle, first playing with rhythm patterns and then playing with tonal patterns. Please continue to make it a small part of every singing circle. Improvising is probably the most important skill being developed at this time and will be part of every lesson in the next two years. Before you begin, 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. Another strategy is to give them a choice of corrected pitch or corrected syllables. With practice, the children will become comfortable with this game.

You may notice that the improvisation exercise for this week is immediately after a review of the triple rhythm cards. I place these cards on a wall in my studio and instead of having the children pull out their cards, which takes time away from improvising, we play the game together. Everyone gets a turn choosing a card, identifying the card rhythm language, and singing the rhythm while pointing. Then I choose two cards to use in the improvisation. Because they have been immersed in triple rhythm, it is so much easier to answer in triple rhythm at their keyboards. If you look ahead in the teacher's guide, you will notice there is a composing activity (Week 29 – Triple Major Keyboard Rondo) that will connect with the improvising the children are doing today and in the following weeks.

### Week 26

The song of the day is *Rain Dance: Iona*. We have been drumming and dancing to this for a while. Sit down and plan out this piece. I use my shape cards to do this. First, we sing the first part ("Hey, Hey Iona") and I ask them how many times this line is repeated. (Hopefully, they answer 3 times in a row). I place a Circle shape to denote this section. Then we sing the second part ("Hey, Iona; Hey away Iona", which I call the Eagle dance, or in my neck of the woods, the seagull dance), and I lead them to discover that this line repeats 3 times in a row (triangle shape). Then we return to the first part (circle shape). The "Hiya" part comes next (this is where the children love jumping into the air and slap their thighs). Then the piece returns to a variation of the first part (circle card). A great idea when they return the following week is to play with the CD. This tends to clear up any lingering confusion. By the way, a good companion review piece for this lesson would be *I Hear the Mill Wheel* since it has a similar hand position (where the left-hand plays the low Mi). I put the *I Hear the Mill Wheel* card in the song basket, we dance, and then I ask the children to share it on the keyboards. If necessary I quickly review the hand position.



The Unfamiliar Mystery Song for Week 26 is hardly a mystery to my students because they have heard this particular piece in a video game they have at home. Often one or two students will learn to play this piece (and if they are an older group all of the students will try it at the piano); otherwise, I play it for them and have the children follow along with their score. I also enjoy going to a keyboard that has a harpsichord sound and playing it with that sound. I also played a YouTube recording of the F major invention on the harpsichord, and we watched it on my television in my waiting room.

### **Week 27**

When working on Mystery songs remember to drop out from singing with the children except to keep them in tune. I am always doing a balancing act here because I don't want them to fall into the habit of singing a micro-second behind me. One game I like to play with the children is to give a measure or a pattern at a time to one child and then have all the children echo the measure after I sing the measure. Then we link measures to the next new measure, have the next child sing, I echo, children sing, and so on until the piece is done. Then we start over again from beginning to end of a phrase, letting them sing without me.

Happy Teaching,

Ellen Johansen