



Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 1, Book 2 (Green Book) – Weeks 28 through 30

Dear Teachers,

Congratulations! You are on the home stretch and about to finish teaching the first year of *Music Makers: at the Keyboard Year One*. Year One's curriculum has set up a strong aural foundation and now you can begin to get ready for the students' second year. Next year they will continue to harmonize melodies, read music, improvise using chord tones, work on dictation, listen to and play chord progressions and compose. My students are not shy about singing and dancing and look forward to more complex and challenging drum activities. A new component enters the curriculum: mini-musicales. This event appears every 5 lessons; parents and friends are invited to stay for the entire class, and the children share the process of making music with everyone in attendance.

Let's look at with some final tips for the lesson suggestions to the end of Year One.

Week 28

It's only three weeks before our end of year musicale, and I want the children to begin to think about what piece they would like to share. I create a Favorite piece chart with room for 5 pieces. I let the children choose the pieces (with some suggestions from me). Then when they play, I can offer ideas of how they can expand the piece. For instance, if the child plays the piece with the right hand, I will ask them to repeat the piece with the left hand. Maybe I will suggest they play the chords and sing the melody, or play the melody. They can play the melody and accompany with chords, first R.H. melody, L.H. chords and vice versa. Perhaps just playing it in different registrations on the keyboard is enough for a child. By doing this I am encouraging all the children to think beyond the basics. Even the child who cannot get beyond *Listen for Bells* week after week can perhaps play it seven times on the keyboard in seven different registrations. Perhaps they could also play the piece in seven different keys. Once the juice is flowing I ask the children for suggestions. It is so much fun to hear the different arrangements. On Week 29 I can hear their results and fine-tune them, but I know that in week 30 all the pieces can sound different again. It is a creative part of the program I enjoy the most.

Week 29

The *Canoe Song* is one of my favorite pieces of the curriculum. I will put this song in the song basket often in year two just so we can sing in round form. *Canoe song* is wonderful for ensemble development. You can start with a simple ostinato (dip, dip, and swing), and with parents you can sing it as a round, while children sing the ostinato. Later you can add resonator bars or accompany the ostinato with the keyboards. I look forward to playing this piece as a part of my final class. It doesn't take long to have some children playing the ostinato on the keyboards, perhaps a few children using a bell to fill the space after "swing", a second ostinato using D and A on resonator bars, and parents and children singing in a round. Don't fret though if this seems overwhelming. You can simplify this by just



singing as the children play the ostinato on the keyboards all together. Ideas like this will begin to flourish in your studios as you get to know this curriculum.

Even though it is tempting, don't go into Week 29 without thinking through the activities you will wish to include in Week 30. I like to put up a list and have the children choose their favorites from the list. I also have a food reception after and have the parents bring the dishes. Because it tends to go into the dinner hour, I ask for healthy food suggestions. I always provide the silverware, plates, cups and drinks. The rest depends on the families. I write down what they offer to bring and send a reminder in the mail or with a phone call. By the way I ask the children to bring their list of what they are going to play written down on an index card. I also encourage them to plan the order of what they will play.

Week 30

Here is where the families come to together and celebrate a year of music-making. I want it to be a fun celebration, and I want to celebrate their achievements. Make sure you have planned the entire hour and don't forget to include a feeling of fun and accomplishment throughout.

There are many ways to plan this final lesson. Get your creative juices going and have fun. Here are some ideas I have tried with success:

- Make sure the families come. Invite siblings, grandparents, and friends.
- Plan to start with a moving activity and then have a student share their pieces. Continue in this manner so that there is never a sense of "recital" but rather a sense of music sharing time
- Set up a video recorder and put a parent in charge of the camera.
- Have another parent take still pictures which you can later upload to your website for all the parents to view.
- If you feel especially techno-savvy, record the pieces that are danced to and later edit the movie so that the movement activities move from a group dancing or drumming a piece to a child playing the same piece on the piano. This is a wonderful video to share with families, but I warn you, it can take lots of time to prepare, so beware. Don't plan anything the following weekend.
- After the class and during the reception use this time to talk to each family and make sure you have a few positive observations about their child. This is a great time to talk up next September. I will often have a display table showing next year's books and convenient registration forms with the day and time of next year's program. While the parents and children party I spend this time recruiting.
- Oh, by the way, I don't eat when they eat because talking and eating can be messy. I usually save a plate of my favorites for later when I collapse from sheer exhaustion. However, this is a wonderful feeling of accomplishment that I relish each year.

So plan now to have a successful end-of-year celebration. Plan so that your families look forward to another year of wonderful music-making.



Happy teaching,

Ellen Johansen