



Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 2 – Week 34 through 36

Dear Colleagues,

Week 34

Scales, Step 2

When I introduce this step I give each child a turn to show a scale with one hand and then I have them add the I and V7 chord for that scale. The other children are observing (although you will notice they will soon be peering into the piano or doing headstands when you are not looking). I was advised once to always give every child something to do at all times. So I have them sing the scale and do the fingering in the air with the same hand as the child demonstrating. I also will select a few children to “monitor” the fingering of the child demonstrating and then give me feedback on how they did.

Review Time

There is nothing like a few minutes to review a concept and improvisation will need a review to reinforce the structure of the exercise on the CD and to review those I and V7 chord tones. If the children seem secure you may want to create a melody Question answer game. I assign each child a different chord, and then have them improvise as I play the blocked chord under their efforts. Have the last child improvise on a I chord and end on ‘do’.

Singing Circle

Continue to review triple rhythm patterns after singing “Sea Shell” and “Walking in the Green Grass”. These are pieces you can use later for your 6/8 triple rhythm dictation.

I See the Moon

This ‘by ear’ piece moves quickly. I ask them, “Where is the ‘sol-mi-do’ pattern in the piece?” “How many times will I use the pattern?” and “What do I need to do to the pattern for the words, ‘hap-py as’ (‘sol-mi-sol’). Make sure to ask your most clueless student what sound ends the piece (‘do-do-do’). Everyone should be able to figure this piece out in class. I will ask them to play it during Share time.

Week 35

Mini-Musicales

The mini-musical component is new this year, and before you draw up chairs and sell tickets, let’s look at the purpose of this event. First of all, you may have noticed that they occur every fifth lesson. The purpose of the musicale is to “give children an opportunity to have more time in keyboard sharing with their classmates and parents”--*Teacher’s Year 2 Guidebook*. In my program, the parents are invited to stay for the entire lesson. One or two new activities are introduced, and other activities have been carefully chosen “to accommodate the differing dynamics that exist when parents and siblings are

present” -- *Teacher’s Year 2 Guidebook*. It can be a fun lesson that the children look forward to every five weeks.

To prepare for the musicale I make sure the parents are prepared as well as the students. I clearly ask the parents to assist the children in preparing their offering by helping them write down what they are going to play on a card. This card will go on their pianos at home and then brought to class so they have a reference as to what they are prepared to play. I insist that all children participate and I give lots of options how.

They can play:

A five-finger warmup

A scale of choice

An improvisation exercise

A free improvisation (there is always one child who loves to play random notes on the keyboard)

A Reading piece from Book 3

A Reading piece from Book 2

A by ear piece from Book 3

A ‘by ear’ piece from Book 1 or 2

Even the child still playing *Debka Hora* with open fifths can join in. Why not have them accompany another child who is playing the reading piece? There are so many options!

E Major Scale

Have the children figure out the scale at their pianos and then show you their results. Once everyone has sorted it out, have them play the scale together as grownups and children sing the solfeggio.

Hungarian Play Tune and French Folksong

Have the parents sitting alongside their student and ask the children to point out anything they know on the page. Talk about the position of Cs on the piano.

Week 36

Improvisations 4-6: answer on the opposite chord - You have completed the mini-musicale, the parents are duly impressed and the children are ready for more. In week 36 the children are introduced to improvisations where they answer on the opposite chords. This new element may stump the children, so using the term “opposite” in relation to I and V7 chords should be introduced a week or two before and at least on this day. Perhaps a game of “I am playing a I chord. Answer my I chord with the opposite chord,” will set the concept. Of course, you can play the game, “I am playing a V7 chord, answer my V7 chord with the opposite chord.” Then work on the exercise

Singing Circle needs to be carefully selected. For instance, I add *I Hear the Mill Wheel* do the dance and then ask if anyone remembers how to play this piece. I like to point out the low ‘mi’ in the piece. This is



preparation for *Zum Gali Gali* as a 'by ear' piece later in the lesson. Put aside the pieces that create chaos in your classroom and choose a few pieces to simply sing and follow with the resting tone and the patterns. Choose one dance and consider one piece where a bean bag is passed on the beat.

Frederic Chopin - When speaking about the composer, have a picture on hand. I have a copy of the timeline from book 5 on the wall and we add the composer's dates on this classroom timeline. Later when the timeline is introduced we have already filled in the dates and have looked at a few pictures not only of the composer but all some of the art that was prevalent at the time of the composer. You can also consider the dress and architecture and maybe some historical events that were occurring at the time of the composer's life. I try to stay away from the perennial discussion, "How long did he live?" Then I have to stop and do the math. They always ask me next how old I am and the discussion continues on its merry way from the subject at hand.

In their home assignment, I ask them to review *The Wild Horses* by ear in d minor and add chords. Then ask them to play it in f minor. This is a set up for next week's dictation.

I hope these few tips help make your classes smoother and seamless.

Happy teaching,

Ellen Johansen