



## Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 2 – Week 37 through 42

Dear Teachers,

November was a busy month and I am sure we are all holding on to our seats as we roll into the holidays. Here are some tips to make your classes flow smoother.

### Week 37

My singing circle is filled with lots of minor pieces in preparation for *The Will Horses* dictation coming up later in class. I also add cards for our latest reading pieces and often ask the children to play the piece after singing the melody through and reviewing the patterns. I include *Alouette*, singing the song with the recording and ROLLING BACK on the OOOHHHHH! (thank you, Jill Hannagan, for this idea) and I add Rocky Mountain with bells. They just love the song and it is easier to teach as a reading piece in week 38 if they have some familiarity with the song.

My dictation of *The Wild Horses* is quick. We sing and dance. Then we sit and sing and analyze the form with our form cards. To save time I use only one set and we work as a group to discover the form of the piece. Then I have copied the form on the side of the dictation page. I review the patterns aurally. Then we begin the dictation. On the top of my board, I write the four duple patterns from the yellow cards. After the pitches for the first phrase is down I ask, "Is the next phrase the same? (yes) Copy what you have already." Then I go back and ask, "Which rhythm pattern is La do mi (first measure)? (du, du de) and we add the rhythm to the pitch. I do the same for each measure, continue through section B and assign the rest of the piece to be completed at home.

*The Old Grey Cat* is a favorite piece and I included it in the singing circle. We conduct as we sing the piece. We are now ready to do a 6/8 triple song rhythm game. I start my dictation with "OLD Grey Cat", leaving out the upbeat. With the final card, I ceremoniously remove the single eighth note from the card (9a) and add it to the beginning of the dictation. Then we sing our entire song while pointing to the cards. I later re-attach that upbeat with scotch tape to the card for the next time I do this demonstration.

### Week 38

There is not much new material this week so I spend the first few minutes reviewing scales and improvisation using various game formats. One of my favorite apps is "Decide Now", which I have on my iPad. The children love to roll the wheel. I have one child play the scale selected and then everyone joins in for the repeat. You can also roll dice to determine which key and hand they will use for playing scales (I take one die and tape on the letters of the keys we are reviewing. The other die can say LH or RH). I bet you can come up with another game format to make this opening exercise light and fun while the children arrive. I also tend to add sharing time at the beginning if I have some late children and then I put a timer on in the room so that we still have five minutes at the end for sharing as well.



### **Writing Chords**

With books open, I have the children read the instructions and I draw the chords on my chalkboard. We discuss the direction of the stems. I ask which note is on the left of the stem in the V7 chord. Be clear in your head which notes fall to the right of the stem and which note falls to the left of the stem. Have the children complete page 20 in class and then they can do page 21 at home.

### **Week 39**

This week is pretty straightforward. When you hand out the Major Chord Symbols make sure the children and parents know that these cards will be used over and over again at home and in class not only in the next few weeks but throughout this year and next year.

You are preparing for another mini-musicale. One suggestion is to hand out index cards that the children can write their selections for the musicale. These will come in handy next week.

### **Week 40**

#### *Mini-musicale*

*My parents and children are always excited about this week and I make sure we have favorite pieces in singing circle to share. Black Key Improvisation sounds so lovely and you can make this a fun parent share time as well. It may be the first time a parent has made musical sounds at the keyboard! Alouette is fun to sing in song circle and now it is introduced at the pianos. It is exciting to see the children going ahead and figuring out this piece ahead of time but don't worry if you still need to go through the patterns and figure out how they fit in the piece. There is always at least one student that will benefit from this extra assisted thinking. This mini -musicale time is so much fun and so rich with scales, improvisation and a host of repertoire – leave enough time to end with the dynamic game, look at the homework on page 22, look at next week's dynamic markings page and off they go.*

### **Week 41**

*Improvisation with Melody in Both Hands* – When I introduce the next concept I first describe and demonstrate improvising a melody with the Right hand alone, then the left hand alone and finally a melody shared by one hand at a time. When we warm up for this exercise I first make sure they can block the I, IV, and V7 chord in each hand. (Have them play the L.H. Blocked chord and then the R.H. Blocked chord.) Let the student figure out what chord you are playing (or what chord the CD is playing) as this will challenge them to listen to the chord progression more carefully.

*When the Saints Go Marching In* – You may notice that the first line will be learned at breakneck speed, the tempo increasing as the repetition occurs, but when it is time to play a chord between the melody, most play at half the tempo. Even when I write in large letters, "SAME SPEED" or some other useless direction, there will be a student or two that will do this humorous rendition. The best way I have found to change this is to play it while the children sing the words. When it is time for a student to share the piece, I have the other students sing along. OOOOF! This makes the tempo change obvious. I remind



them to play the Left-Hand chords lightly. I demonstrate a “feather” touch while staying close to the keys during the rests. I also have them practice moving to the new chord during the rests. I call this “prepare – play”. They play the chord, prepare the next chord during the rest and then play the new chord.

*Major Chord Symbols* – A logistical tip; hand out all the major chord symbol cards wrapped in a rubber band. Sort them before you distribute. Then have them lay out the cards on the floor and mention there are different amounts of cards. Then have them collect the cards you do not need for the exercise. After the exercise, gently remind them to bring all the cards back next week (and cross your fingers). You can also collect the cards that are not needed for homework and save them for the next step.

By week 41 you will need set two. If you handed out all the cards be prepared for a student saying, “What cards? I never got those.” And if you hand out Set 2 to join Set 1 be prepared for, “What cards? I never got those.” It’s always a pleasure to check in their card file after this statement and retrieve these cards.

Another logistical idea: place the melodies you wish to analyze in the *Singing basket*. Later, sing the songs again and ask for some to play them on the piano. (You can even assign these pieces as review in Lesson 40). If you are feeling particularly retro, select songs from Book 1 and 2 and add a note to make sure students add chords with the other hand.

Happy Teaching,  
Ellen Johansen