



Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 3, Book 6 – Week 76 through 78

Dear Teachers,

Let's start our exploration and teaching of Book 6. There is a lot of material here, and you may be tempted to reduce the lessons. Instead, think about how far you wish to get into each activity. The tendency is to complete the activity as written and the first time around this may not happen. There is only so much time in each class. As you get to know the activities more you will know when to move more quickly and when to spend more time. There are points in the lessons where you have time to review. Keep a note about any activity you feel needs more time and add them at those points. *Singing Circle* is still a very important part of class, although

- I don't do it all at once but sing songs here and there throughout the lesson.
- I find am spending more time on aural recognition games in preparation for what is going to transpire in the lesson.
- I make sure I include 1 set of patterns from each of the 4 groups even if we are not singing a song.

Week 76

As I continue to work with my MG graduates I observe that they naturally read music the way I taught them! Surprised? They automatically sing musical phrases in solfeggio, because that is the musical language they have been taught for many years. It is very different from the way I was taught to read music as a child, and I bet you also didn't have this wonderful opportunity your students are having.

The *Vocal/Keyboard Improvisation* activity deepens this connection by having them create a pattern on the keyboard and then identify the pattern with solfeggio. To begin, we first review the rhythmical pattern (du-de-ta du), and then I show them a card with the I chord written on it and ask for an improvisation based on the chord tones. A volunteer plays his or her improvised pattern in the rhythm (du-de-ta du) on the piano and then plays and sings the pattern with solfeggio. I repeat this demonstration for the IV and V7 chords. Then I hand out an index card with either a I, IV, or V7 written on it and a key card. I have them play the chord progression using block chords. Next, I ask them to improvise on the chord in front of them, of course in chord progression order. Then they do it again singing and playing. It is important to give them time to create and memorize their improvised pattern before they play. They need to remember their improvisation and not change it from play to play. This process is fun, but please don't expect perfection in the beginning.

The concepts behind the *The Singing Circle* are still essential for the children but it has taken many new forms as I continue to re-think how to use it to reinforce what we will do in class that day. Singing and echoing tonal and rhythmic patterns should be part of every lesson but the basket of cards gets "old" for the children. I limit the singing circle to one or two songs and more often I place songs it at different times during the class. For this lesson we go right into *Jericho* and I adapt it to be a dance and ask the



children to supply a repeatable dancing move for the first part. We dance to the accompaniments found on the practice CD 6 and I let them know we are singing the melody and Howard is accompanying us, just like Karaoke. Later they will be playing the melody on the piano with these accompaniments. I will also do a round of Bow to your Partner (this will come just before I ask them to play the piece on page 21). That's it. Either I will follow the songs singing tonic patterns on "bam" and ask them to identify the pattern in solfege or I choose a pattern in the song that is familiar and ask them to find it in the song. You may choose to find other innovative ways to manage singing songs during your classes. There are many variations, just don't skip singing.

First Dance (Kabalevsky) – The reading piece has some technical challenges you may wish to point out to the students. The chords in the final line move down step-wise while the thumb remains on sol. I have them sing and play the top note of the chord (and they discover it is the same note). Then I have them point and sing the bottom notes of the chords and help them discover that they move down step-wise and back up stepwise. They Sing and then sing and play. Next, I have them combine the top note with the bottom note. Then I have them discover that the middle note follows the bottom note. Then we play the chords together. For the second line, I have them circle the b-flat in the chord. They then point out the natural sign. They try out the chords at the piano. We practice playing the chord from the bottom up, arpeggiating the chord with the written fingering. They practice finding the chord without pressing the keys and play the complete chord after they feel it. As a last resort, I will mention that this is a IV chord with a "re" added. I would rather not do this unless we are running out of time.

After dancing to the *Rondo* by Kabalevsky, we sit and analyze the piece with shape cards. By this time your students may no longer have their own set from the red book. No problem. You can use one or two sets and work together. It is time to let the children know that the shape can also be called a letter and this is how it is done in many theory music books. Then we open the book to page 8. The music form is described here. Have them listen again and point to the music as they listen. You can stop and start the CD and check to see they are in the correct spot.

Note that the *Dictation* on page 9 is mostly done at home. You are presenting the exercise and letting them begin to write the bass clef accompaniment. However, one or two measures are enough to get the idea. Move on when you think they can complete the home assignment.

The Dolly Suite is fun to move to using the scarves. My MG grads are learning this duet this semester!

Week 77

I love the response when the children open their books to page 11. WOW! Look at all those notes. We sing it in solfeggio, in tempo. So funny! Then I suggest we slow down a bit. I am quite impressed with their facility with solfeggio. We read it in both the treble clef and the bass clef; I lead them to discover they are playing in parallel motion. Then I ask them to figure out how to play the right hand and show me when they think they know. On go the headphones! When a child figures out the puzzle I ask them to figure out the left hand.



I love the recording of *Jericho* and have created a dance for it. As I mentioned earlier, I have been using the accompaniments to dance with, however, the full arrangement is so cool! I start with the same walk we use in Mr. Banjo and at the words, "And the wall came tumbling down" we shimmy to the floor. For the second part we point at each other ("You can talk about....") and we shimmy again at the end. Then I have the children improvise different moves they think would fit. Now we have our own dance form. In the final verse, which is sung softly, we do the motions on our knees.

When we build major Scales, I like to introduce the note name cards and find them on the keyboards. Where are the sharps? Where are the flats? Then we put them in order on the floor. I have one volunteer play a C major scale while singing the syllables. Then the student repeats the scale, and we all sing the note names. They place the note names in the boxes. After they write the answer down we move to the D scale. I leave the rest for home.

Week 78

Does the lesson plan look like there isn't much there? There is plenty to do!

In Singing Circle dance to *Jericho* add some patterns and then go listen to everyone's First Dance. Keep them all engaged. I have the children in CHAIRS surrounding a piano. One child plays while one points and everyone has their book open singing the solfege for the melody and pointing to the notes. This can continue while each child has a turn. I also do the following:

- All children play the chord progression while one child plays the melody. The children must follow the tempo of the melody. If this is too much have some of the children point to the chords as the children play. Keep switching parts.
- Have the children work on the chords on the bottom line. If a child cannot reach the seventh, drop the top note of the chord.
- Have the children comment on how they can improve their play. Play more hands separate? play only two measures hands together? work on articulation? go slower? go faster?

Now go back to singing circle and either add another song or introduce the c minor sight reading cards. Before introducing the *c Minor Sight Reading Cards*, it's a good idea to have a bunch of minor songs in the singing circle basket. Just sing the songs, review patterns on the cards and play some aural recognition games with these patterns. Go to the piano and do a five finger warm-up in c minor and review chords in c minor. Then bring out the cards and work together.

Time for Hey, Mister! on the drums. If you actually still have time left you can go back to the Keyboard and start the share. At this point I mention the mini-musical in two weeks and ask them to start picking out pieces, 2 or 3 and write them down on their assignment sheets. We go through the pieces and I help choose.

When parents come in there will be some time to review the sight reading cards and demo how to use them. Spend some time reviewing pp 14 and 15 and mention how you spent time on First Dance and repeat one of the ensembles above. Mention the Mini-musical and how you chose some pieces for each child to work on this week. The upcoming Mini-Musical will have lots of nice new music. This



is a good time to mention the supplementary pieces at the end of book 6 and perhaps Book 5 as well. Don't forget those great supplementary pieces in Books 3 and 4! They are great also. Finish with a Hey Mister Drumming, look at page 12 and you will have taught a rich and varied music class!

Happy teaching,

Ellen Johansen