



Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 3, Book 6 – Week 85 through 87

Dear Teachers,

We are almost finished with the 6th and final book of this curriculum. Some of your students and parents may be asking, “What color is the 7th book?” Time to talk about the future from your studio’s perspective: Are you planning to take these students as a group next year? Private students? Referring them to other teachers in the community? A letter stating what you are offering would be a helpful tool for your parents. I hope you know that wherever these students move on to, they will be valuable musicians that you have worked with for three or more years. Congratulations on your excellent work!

Week 85

Another Mini-Musicale – by this time your students are quite used to the idea of sharing music with their parents and perhaps invited friends. They have developed a comfort level in performing their pieces in front of others. Please continue to keep this special time light and participatory for all. I believe this kind of music-making is rare for our children and families.

Scales, Step 5: 2 Octaves – time to expand their scales to move to two octaves. What fun. I demonstrate the movement of the thumb moving past the fourth finger. I ask them to hold down the fourth finger and when the thumb presses the next key to hold this position. Then we look to see how the elbow moved for this activity. There are different perspectives on the role of the elbow. All I suggest is minimal movement, perhaps an allowance of movement as needed to bring the thumb under. The hands can practice the movement together by moving out in contrary motion. I love asking them to hold at the farther part and try to see both hands. The demonstration of the hand moving over the thumb is fairly similar. I make sure I demonstrate and then have them try it out on their pianos with headphones while I go around and observe. Instead of doing private corrections, I stop everyone and work on the correction with everyone observing. Then it is back to the pianos.

Twelve Bar Blues, Step 5 – This is a big step. We have developed their improvisational skills by vocally creating patterns to creating an entire piece. Although it is a Blues, this can easily be expanded to create a Waltz or a March or even a Tango. The theory is the same; it’s just a difference in style.

Weeks 86 and 87

Country Dance is a Two-Piano score, and I hope the students have lots of fun with this. There are many ways you can pull this ensemble together. They can learn each hand as a separate part. They can play different parts together. They can play as written. Often I will play one piano part and have a student play the other, although I have had some students be able to hold it together for the entire piece. Determine where you pianists are with this and go with it.



Minor Chord progressions can be surprisingly challenging for some of the students. Make sure you stack the singing circle with lots of Minor songs and follow up with chord patterns in anticipation of this exercise.

Trading Places – Make sure you rehearse the movements before you do the dance with the children. Once they are secure with the movements you can open up the floor and have them create a movement. I warn them to keep the movement small and repeatable.

Happy Teaching,

Ellen Johansen