



Music Makers: at the Keyboard, Year 3 – Week 71 through 75

Dear Teachers,

I hope you have given yourself a well-deserved break for the holidays. My book 5 class has three more classes in January before we finish the book. So I have some time to enroll my Book 5 class into Book 6. Teachers, this is your next push. We have only one more book to complete the Musikgarten curriculum. For at least three years you have shared music with these families, and it is time to celebrate. This can be a wonderful time to dig out old photos!

Hopefully everyone that has stuck around this far would like a sense of completion. It may be a good time to start planning for that final musicale. I like to make it a fun celebration, and I encourage them to invite guests and bring food to add to our reception table! Each student is going to work on a list of favorite pieces so they can play them at the musicale. I like to have them include an improvised and composed piece, and I insist on a name for each piece. Throughout January I will show off Book 6 and talk up that wonderful spring musicale coming up in 15 weeks or so. I will then hand out my registration form and ask them to register for next semester. (My registration form includes all the classes I teach in my studio so they can consider other classes for any younger siblings.)

Week 71

Scales in Parallel Motion – Scale-playing is part of every day for my students. Bringing in parallel motion may be appropriate for some of your students at this point. If it is not, this is not a problem. Introduce the next step of scales when you think your students are ready. When I discuss scales with hands together, I demonstrate the fingering and remind them that the hands do different things at different times. I like to point out that finger three is playing in both hands on “mi” and on “la”. After they work out the scale fingering on their own pianos (with head phones), we play scales in ensemble. First we all play a scale with Left hand alone, then Right hand alone and finally with Both Hands. We will continue this ritual each week for at least one scale. We will play this scale exercise for the Mini-Musicale. As the scales become more familiar, we will break out into a game where they pick a musical alphabet card, and they get to choose:

1. Play that note everywhere on the piano
2. Play a five finger warm-up in major and minor with either hand or hands together, followed by a chord progression of their choice
3. Play a scale, hands separately or together followed by a chord progression of their choice and/or an arpeggiated chord progression of their choice.



This is one way to evaluate where their comfort level is. I may create a poster that depicts all scales in major and minor. When they demonstrate a skill in class, they get to fill in the chart with a sticker or a check mark.

Friendly Conversation (Beyer) – Research has suggested that learning hands together early on is better than learning each hand separately and then putting the hands together. *Friendly Conversation* is the first independent voice piece, and it is challenging for many of my students. After we have looked at the first page and sung the melody in each hand, I will ask them to draw a line from notes in one staff to the other staff when they are played together. Then we look at the second measure and play the rhythm on the floor as we say, “Both, left, both, both” (in rhythm). We mark skips. I ask them if the hands are moving in the same direction (same). Then I ask them to try this measure out on their own with headphones. I make sure they work from the first beat of measure two to the first beat of measure three. This is very important, because if they learn measures this way they can later “link” the measures, and bar lines do not become stop signs. In measure three I will ask them to describe the motion (contrary motion) and have them discover they have the same rhythm in both hands. I will also compare measure two to measure six and measure three to measure seven and note the similarities and the differences. When they are asked to learn this page, I make it clear I want them to work on hands together as soon as possible. I also suggest they play and sing the melody separately on each staff so they can hear the linear motion of the piece. I save the second page for next week. Once they learn the first page, the second page is a hop, skip and jump in C major.

Briu - Make sure you practice using the teaching strategy that is carefully written on page 80. I make sure I have rehearsed and memorized the different patterns.

Major Chord Progressions, Step 2 – If you make chord progressions part of scale study, these cards will be easier for the children to hear. Make sure you have played the F major scale followed by chord progressions before singing circle. Review these chords aurally before bringing in the visual.

Week 72

Friendly Conversation -- This week you may find some of the children have learned hands separately, and some may have hands together. At this point I enjoy having the children share their work, and if they seem secure enough, I will play the other part if they are playing only one hand. To keep everyone engaged, I will divide the children into two groups. One group will sing the solfege as one child plays his part. The other group will sing the solfege as I play the other part. I usually distance the two groups as much as possible. We may get through a line, or if the other playing student is secure, the whole piece. If I have two secure students, I will give a part to each and do the same. If I have more than two, I will place two on a part. If I have a child that can play both parts, I usually let them share it without any ensemble work. Most of the time they are not playing it in tempo. However, there is always one in the crowd that gets it down.



The next step is easy: same music, new hand position. BUT the solfege changes. So we look closely at the interval movement and compare this from page to page. Usually one child discovers the similarity. Then we play parts together or in groups as described above. It is most important that everyone in the room has a job in an ensemble even if it is pointing to notes on the page.

Marche Militaire - this favorite dance does have a lot of moves. If you can't remember all the moves or a move doesn't make sense, simplify and use a move that you create. Another idea is to plan to attend this Spring's Musikgarten festival, where we often review all the dances. I hope to see you there.

Week 73

Minor Chord Symbols - A nice way to introduce minor chord symbols is to fill the basket with minor song cards. Have them review these pieces on the piano (I usually ask who can still play the song after we sing it) then work together to decide on what harmony would fit. I take out my cards and introduce them this way. We play a minor five finger warm-up followed by a i iv i V7 i chord progression. I then show the chord progression with my *Minor Chord Symbol* cards. After working on *Hey, Let's Dance Together* we harmonize the melody, and I use the chord cards to describe what we are doing. When it is time to analyze the *Tarantella*, they are working with their own cards. I only hand out what they need for the analysis. Oh, by the way, there are always one or two children who can play the *Tarantella* on their own.

Week 74

Preparing the Mini-Musicale with solo improvisation - Solo improvisations have been shared weekly. I often need to give out copies of the page to some who would like to create more solos. Everyone gets to create one for Mini-Musicale next week. I make sure they have their plan written out, and they can follow the plan.

Week 75

Name that Tune -The curriculum does not spell it out how to prepare for this game. However, ever since the pink matching game cards were distributed and played with both in class and at home we have spent a small portion of our valuable time playing a note naming game of one sort or another. I am sure you can create many games as well. We also learn our new pieces with a new element--reading the note names. To speed up the process, I will often review the notes of the piece before we move to the piece. Still, this process is slow and usually painful for one or two of the children. There are some home games that the parents love watching the children play. Music Ace is a software program I suggest to my families. Musiclearningcommunity.com is also a great place for note naming games. There are plenty of note naming books families can purchase as well.



The Mini-Musicale has started and the children are excited. The parents are still supporting your lessons and the home activities of their child, and they are impressed with the solo improvisations. Time to sign the certificates and dazzle the class with Book 6. And it is time to let your families know we have only one book left in this curriculum. I hope all your families will stay with you as you close this special chapter of their lives.

May this holiday season be a time of music, joy and rejuvenation and the New Year bring all Musikgarten teachers the daily satisfaction that teaching this program affords us.

Ellen Johansen