TEACHING STRATEGIES

To meet our definition of a teaching strategy, the steps must work consistently. No strategy, no matter how effective we have found it to be, will suit every teacher or work for every student. New teachers need to experiment to discover which ones feel right for them. All teachers eventually create their own unique method by selectively incorporating solutions created by others and by developing their own. Experienced teachers often have several different approaches for the same problem and know the best one to apply for that particular student. Developing these strategies is a large part of the joy of teaching. The following are the ones we have found most useful.

Planning and Teaching Lessons

In order to be effective managers of students' learning, teachers must have a system for organizing and remembering what their students are doing week-by-week, term-by-term and year-by-year. In planning, it is necessary to use only broad categories of technique, sight-reading, new pieces and review.

Using a three-notebook system.

Teacher, student and parents (those who attend lessons) must each have a separate notebook for written assignments, so that goals are communicated to everyone clearly and efficiently.

1. **The teacher's notebook** (for the teacher's eyes only)

   A separate page is used for each student and includes the student's name, address, phone number, age and an evaluation of strengths and goals. It is also helpful to keep a list of repertoire they have learned. The evaluation permits the teacher to create goals to direct the focus of the lessons and to spend more lesson time on areas that need improvement. The sample format is for a hypothetical student:

Figure 2: Strengths and Goals

<u>Strengths</u> 1. Technique – practices technique consistently and is developing excellent technical facility. 2. Motivation – loves learning new pieces and willingly practices to improve ability.

3. Consistent practice – manages to practice at least five days most weeks. 4. Repertoire – rotates through a list of six to ten memorized pieces during daily practice.
Goals 1. Expression –needs more help with shaping phrases and controlling dynamics. 2. Sight-reading – needs more reinforcement at Level 3. 3. Confidence – needs more reinforcement of Scramble Sections and Parachute Points to give increased security for performances. 4. Fingering – needs more careful attention in initial learning of pieces.

The strengths and goals are individualized to accommodate each student's abilities. The evaluation highlights imbalances in a student's development so that the focus of each lesson can be directed toward those areas that need more emphasis or reinforcement. These assessments should never be shown to the student or parent. The comments might be misconstrued as negative judgments about the student even though they have nothing to do with the student's ability or diligence and, if known, might make the student feel like a failure.

Writing the weekly assignment ensures that the teacher remembers what the student has been asked to accomplish. It is damaging to morale to be asked to play something unprepared, and discouraging when a teacher forgets to hear something that has been practiced.

2. The student's notebook

The teacher must write out the weekly assignment so that the student knows precisely what to practice. It is often helpful for young children to have the teacher write the number of repetitions to be practiced daily for each item in the assignment. Asking for the repetitions in a variety of ways, such as loud, soft, fast, or slow, promotes greater co-operation. Doing this can save arguments between parent and child during practice.

3. The parent's notebook(s)

The parent is asked to write down every positive comment the teacher makes. This keeps the parent attentive and focused on the positive. These comments may be read aloud at the end of the lesson or at home before practicing. This notebook, called a "warm-fuzzy file", helps to create a positive emotional environment, must be added to constantly and be available for the student to read. When a student feels disheartened, reading positive statements about himself is encouraging.

Parents who are working with young children should also have a second separate

notebook specifically for writing the teacher's instructions for practicing at home.

Structuring lessons

Each lesson should include the essential elements of learning to play the piano**.**
These are:

(1) Note Reading
(2) Technique
(3) Performance piece (piece to be memorized)
(4) Review (pieces a student has already learned).

Apportioning lesson time

It is helpful to vary the order of elements each week so that no one of them is always squeezed in at the end of the lesson or left out completely. We know from our own experience how tempting it is to spend the major portion of lesson time on a performance piece. Flexibility is important since a new reading or technical concept will take more time initially but less during subsequent lessons.

Figure 3: Examples of Lesson Apportioning

30 Minute Lesson – Level 1		
6 Minutes: Note Reading 4 Minutes: Technique 15 Minutes: Performance Piece 5 Minutes: Review Pieces	**or**	14 Minutes: To introduce new reading concept 3 Minutes: Technique 10 Minutes: Performance Piece 3 Minutes: Review Piece
45 Minute Lesson – Level 5		
10 Minutes: Note/Sight Reading 5 Minutes: Technique 25 Minutes: Performance Piece 5 Minutes: Review	**or**	4 Minutes: Technique 35 Minutes: Performance Piece (to prepare for upcoming recital) 6 Minutes: Reading (Omit Review this lesson)

Ensuring success

The more successful a student feels at a lesson, the more motivated he will be to practice. All of us are willing to repeat tasks we know how to do and procrastinate over those we don't. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to introduce and reinforce new concepts at the lesson. It is the student's job to practice them at home.

Successful teaching involves trial and error. If, at the lesson, the student does not understand the concept being presented, a different approach is needed. For example, if after several reminders, a student repeatedly uses the wrong finger, a visual cue such as putting a mark or a sticker on the correct finger may be the solution. If the student continues to use the wrong finger, Stop-Prepare may provide the physical and mental cues needed. Inability to perform the task usually stems from two sources: either the student cannot understand what the teacher means or there are too many steps concealed within the request.

Using words as learning and memory aids

Using words enhances learning and memory. Most toddlers learn the alphabet much more easily by singing it than they do by reciting it without the melody. We have found that saying or singing words helps students to:

(1) remember melodies.
(2) know how many times to repeat a note or phrase.
(3) execute rhythms accurately.
(4) co-ordinate hands together.
(5) feel how to shape a phrase musically.

Many suggestions on how to apply words are found in Memorizing a Piece P. 57) and in the Teaching Procedures for the repertoire.

Repertoire

Teachers need to be able to offer a wide variety of music from many different styles in order to select pieces that appeal to different personalities. If students like the pieces they are learning, they practice more consistently and willingly. Flashy pieces (loud or fast, preferably both) are appealing to most students, especially to teenagers.

Today's students lead extremely busy lives. Giving them pieces they can learn in a short time helps keep them motivated because it allows them to feel that completion is possible in the limited time they have. Everyone becomes discouraged when they feel that there is no end in sight. So while students are tackling a long, challenging piece, we recommend that they also learn some shorter ones that can be accomplished quickly, sound difficult and yet are relatively easy to play.

Listening

Benefits of using recordings as models

Listening to a recording of the music to be learned is a vitally important component of the process. Until recently and before advances in technology made it possible to base a system on listening, the prevailing wisdom was that students had to learn music only by reading it. Dr. Suzuki reminded us that music is an aural art in which knowing how the music sounds is the first step in learning it. It seems so obvious now but gaining acceptance for the practice of listening to recordings took a long time.

Just as those who watch a favorite movie many times discover more and finer details, those who listen to the recordings many times absorb concepts that are difficult to express in words. Some of the benefits derived from frequent listening are:
1. Familiarity with the melody and harmonies
2. A feeling for the rhythmic patterns
3. Exposure to a model of appropriate musical performance
4. Exposure to beautiful piano sound
5. Sensitivity to nuance such as dynamic contrast and shadings and rubato (the "push-pull" of rhythm).

Other benefits have taken longer to become known. Over the years, we were aware that our students were often top scholars as well. It was not until researchers, such as Frances Rauscher and Gordon Shaw (Nature, 1993), published their studies that linked music listening with brain development.

Robert Root-Bernstein (The Sciences, 1990) published an article detailing the importance of music in influencing the creativity and imaginations of great scientists**.** He confirmed what we as teachers had long thought: listening to and studying classical music stimulates the imagination. There are surveys that link music to success in other areas: 90% of CEO's in major companies participated in music programs in high school; students who took more than four years of music lessons scored higher on college entrance exams; in a study of mathematically talented students, 93% of the females and 81% of the males had formal instrumental music training. Evidence of the positive effects that classical music has on mental development and success in school continues to accrue as research continues in major academic centers throughout the world.

How to use the recordings

- Parents, not the children, have the responsibility of playing the recordings. They should never ask the children if they want to hear them, just put them on.

- The process of playing the recordings of the pieces prior to the student's beginning lessons should start as soon as possible. Certainly six months to a year ahead is wonderful but any amount of time is good. While the child is learning Level 1, play that one plus Level 2 and even 3. A general rule is to listen a level ahead, a year ahead.

- Play the recording every day, as often as possible. It can be played at bed-time, in the morning, in the car, whenever. It need only be background sound: audible but not intrusive.

Teaching the Young Student

Differing Rates of Progress

The teacher's goal is to teach all skills (technique, repertoire and note reading) to every student. The students' abilities, however, will develop at different rates as some will move more rapidly through the repertoire, others through the reading books, and some through the technical regime. A student might be in the middle of Level 1 repertoire and at the beginning of the reading book and technical regime. The discrepancy in the rate of learning does not matter, but it is important to keep all areas developing as equally as possible. As the student progresses, the skills will gradually develop and converge.

Preparing the Environment

(1) Principal goal of the first lesson

Most children arrive at their first piano lesson excited about beginning and at the same time, apprehensive about the unknown. The teacher needs to capitalize on that excitement and to eliminate the apprehension. Because the first lesson sets the stage for the child's future expectations and attitude, the primary goal is to make the experience as positive and enjoyable as possible.

(2) Create rapport

The first meeting with a student is the opportunity to establish a good relationship.

The more comfortable and secure the child feels, the more receptive and cooperative he will be. When the child arrives, a warm greeting is important: "I'm so happy to meet you", "What a nice smile you have", etc. If possible, get down to the child's eye level (kneel if necessary) and focus on the student, resisting the temptation to converse with the parent. The important unspoken message is that the lesson time is intended for the child.

(3) Establish a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment is one in which a student feels respected and successful. Fear of failure is one of the greatest known obstacles to learning, therefore teachers must try to present and prepare each task so that the child has a 99.9% chance of succeeding on the first try. An effective way to ensure this success is to **teach in small steps**, and to ask for only one thing at a time. As each step is achieved, the teacher's positive feedback creates receptivity to further learning.

(4) Pace the lesson

Effective lessons are geared to a student's age, maturity and ability to concentrate. Teachers must make decisions regarding the quantity of material presented and how long to stay on one point. Behavior is generally a good indicator of a child's waning ability to absorb information. Young children have short attention spans and lots of energy so if a child begins to get restless, changing activities can rekindle interest. It is possible, however, to return to an activity as often as necessary during the same lesson.

(5) Encourage endlessly

Teachers and parents must consciously look for and enthusiastically acknowledge the child's efforts without judgments or focusing on results. Accomplishment comes from consistent effort, and effort is sustained by encouragement. Parents do this intuitively and cheer the babies' first attempts at walking or talking.

Materials

(1) *Mastering the Piano* Repertoire and CDs, Levels 1-7

These scores and recordings are used to teach students how to play the repertoire in this series. The students listen in advance of learning the pieces by *enhanced rote*. Then, when they are able to, the students learn the repertoire by reading it themselves.

(2) Sight-reading

The students learn to read music using the system set forth in a method book of the teacher's choosing. We recommend *Alfred's Premier Piano Course, Basic Piano Library* or any similar materials from their selections (e.g. Alfred's *Prep Course* for young beginners or their *Chord Approach* for older beginners).

(3) Equipment needed for the activities that follow: pencil, washable magic marker and *Scramble* cards or a deck of playing cards.

Activities for the Beginning Lessons

The following list of activities for children aged three to five are preparatory steps for playing the piano. We call these activities our "Bag of Tricks". They are designed to promote confidence through easily accomplished successes, and to offer enough variety to keep young students involved and interested. It is not necessary to introduce or complete every item at one lesson; items can be repeated whenever a child loses interest. We have found that interspersing activities at the piano with whose that get the student off the bench keeps the pace moving enough to accommodate the attention span of such young children.

1. Bow

    a. Purpose:

        (1) Bowing is a way to say "thank you" when people applaud after a performance.

        (2) In the beginning lessons it serves as a means of getting the child off the bench to change position when a break is needed.

        (3) It is the first step in developing a comfortable *Stage Presence*.

    b. Method: We teach the simplest bow possible: Stand with the feet together, arms at the sides, with a big smile. Bend forward, let the head go down while saying "Thank you" to the toes. (Saying this and looking at the feet prevents the awkward chin out position created if the person looks at the audience instead).

2. Naming the piano keys

    a. Purpose: To create an immediate experience of success. The child leaves the lesson with the ability to name every key on the piano.

    b. Method: The teacher asks the child to say the alphabet and stops the student after "G". Together they repeat these first seven letters

rhythmically several times emphasizing "G", always stopping briefly. The child is then asked to play and name the white keys for the entire span of the keyboard, beginning with the lowest A.

3. The concept of high and low

   a. Purpose: To teach the student that high is to the right and low is to the left on the keyboard. Prior to keyboard experience, the concepts of high and low are vertical rather than horizontal.

   b. Method: The teacher demonstrates the difference between high and low pitches on the piano, then asks the child to play some of each. It is helpful to correlate the piano sounds with animals to distinguish between the sounds, for example, bird for high and elephant for low.

4. Black key groupings

   a. Purpose: To teach visual orientation of the keyboard.

   b. Method: The teacher shows the student the difference between the groups of two and three black keys and then, as a game, asks the child to play either group.

      (1) Variation: Have the student cover the groups of three with Scramble cards, and then play the exposed groups of two. Reverse this for an additional activity.

      (2) Reinforce the concept of high and low using black key groups. For example, play a group of three high black keys.

5. Clapping rhythms

   a. Purpose:

      (1) to develop a feeling for rhythm and the coordination to execute it.

      (2) to provide an opportunity to give the student a break by moving away from the keyboard. It works well to sit on the floor with the child for this activity.

   b. Method: Clap a rhythm pattern and ask the student to imitate it. Use words of corresponding syllables to facilitate coordination and to make it fun for young children, for example, Pizza Pie, the child's name (Susie), Mommy, Daddy, elephant, Merry Christmas – Happy New Year. Make the rhythms simple at first and gradually add more complex patterns.

6. Individual white key identification

   a. Purpose: Learning to identify and name individual white keys on the piano. After the student can name every white key and distinguish between the groups of 2 and 3 black keys, it is possible to teach the names of individual keys.

   b. Method: Begin by finding all the D's. This is the easiest one because it is in between the two black keys. A silly mnemonic is, "Hey, diddle diddle, the D is in the middle of the two black keys ". Add other keys one at a time as the student learns them.

      (1) Variation: Use cards to make this activity more fun, for example, the child draws card #3, and then must play 3 D's on the piano.

      (2) Variation: Reinforce the concepts of High and Low, for example, play 2 High D's.

      (3) Variation: Once the student can identify keys easily, they can spell words that use letters in the musical alphabet, for example, bed, deaf, egg, cabbage, etc.

7. Finger Numbers

   a. Purpose: Learning the finger numbers used in piano music.

   b. Method: Write the finger numbers on the fingernails of each hand with a felt tipped pen. Then trace the child's hands on the inside cover of the reading book If the child can write numbers, he can write the corresponding numbers above each finger.

      (1) Variation: Ask the child to identify each finger randomly by giving instructions such as: touch your head with fingers #3, touch your knees with fingers #4, etc.

      (2) Variation: Use cards 1–5 to make a game of drawing a number and identifying the finger. You may use red cards for the Right Hand and blue or black cards for the Left Hand to teach the distinction between the right and left hands.

      (3) Variation: Combine reinforcing the concepts of finger numbers and key identification. The student draws a card and plays a pre-determined key, for example, finger #2 plays all of the D's on the piano. This activity can also be combined with teaching rhythm patterns. For example, play the rhythm "Pizza Pie" with finger #2 on D's.

Positioning the student at the piano

1. Posture

Correct posture is comfortable and permits free use of the arm and shoulders so that power and facility are unrestricted. Incorrect posture induces tensions that can cause carpal tunnel syndrome in the hands, tendonitis in the wrists and elbows, and bursitis in the shoulders.

In the ideal posture for playing the piano, the body is seated on the center of the bench in front of the center of the keyboard. The head is balanced on the body and the shoulders are relaxed. The spine is straight and may lean forward a little and the forearms are parallel to the floor. The knees are slightly bent with the feet flat on the floor or footrest. In order to achieve these ideals, the position of the bench relative to the keyboard and its height must be adjusted to accommodate each student.

Figure 4: Ideal Posture

2. Seating

1. Bench position:

   The bench must be far enough away from the piano so that its front edge touches the place where the student's legs join his body. In addition to providing support, being seated in this position permits the body to be balanced and creates space for the elbows to move in front of the body when needed.

2. Bench height:

   The height is correct when the forearm is parallel to the floor. To determine this, place the hand over the keys with the fingers in a relaxed, rounded position. Raise or lower the bench until the forearm and hand are level. If an adjustable bench is

not available, use firm cushions which can be made of pieces of styrofoam covered with contact paper or fabric.

The height is correct if the knees are slightly bent when both feet are flat on the floor or footrest. If an adjustable footrest is not available, more styrofoam cushions can be used to support the feet.

After being properly seated, young children love to show how far they can reach with both arms stretched out. Because they know they can touch the keys on either end of the keyboard, they are better able to resist the urge to slide on the bench to reach high or low keys.

Figure 5: Checklist for Posture and Seating

Checklist for Posture and Seating	
1.	**Is your head balanced on your body?**
2.	**Is your spine straight or leaning forward slightly?**
3.	**Are your shoulders relaxed?**
4.	**Is the bench height the best for your body? Can your arms form a comfortable angle at the elbows?**
5.	**Is the edge of the bench touching the place where your legs join your body?**
6.	**Are your feet flat on the floor or on a foot-rest so that your legs can form a comfortable angle at the knees?**

3. Hand Position

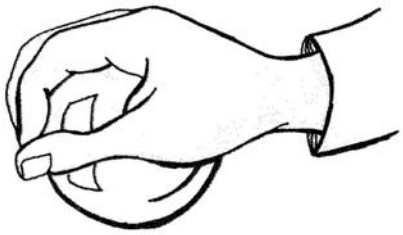
In order to control the fingers, it is important to have a good hand position with a wrist that is neither too high nor too low. The goal is to have the hands in the most natural position for playing the piano for as long as desired, without fatigue or strain. Because of the differing lengths of human fingers, it works best to have a hand position that permits the fingers to move as if they were all the same length. This permits the bridge of the hand (across the knuckles) to be high and gives the fingers the possibility of moving freely. See the photos below.

Three ways to find the most comfortable hand position for playing the piano

1. Make a fist and then place it over the piano keys. Open the hand slightly so as to place the five fingers over five white keys.

2. Hold a tennis ball or place a hand over the knee to feel the proper hand shape. The fingers should be slightly curved and relaxed.

3. Imagine holding a bubble (Alfred Lesson Book, Level 1A, P.5)



Curve your fingers when you play!

Pretend you have a bubble in your hand.

Hold the bubble gently, so it doesn't break!

Use the following sequence, always in the same order, to teach the concepts of individual finger control, the flexible wrist concept and legato technique:

(1) Introduce the concept, using the Right Hand.

(2) Working with one finger at a time, begin with finger 1 (thumb) on treble C (the one above Middle C) and continue with each finger consecutively through G (excepting the Flexible Wrist Exercise which begins with finger 2).

(3)	Stop after each finger has played in order to prepare the hand for the next one.
(4)	Follow the same procedure for the Left Hand after the Right Hand is comfortable.

Three Preparatory Steps for Playing Pieces on the Piano

Step l. Teaching individual finger control and independence.

a. Purpose: to teach staccato touch, keeping the fingers curved with hand and forearm as relaxed as possible. Having the student play softly promotes relaxation. This is the simplest touch to learn and is especially fun for young children.

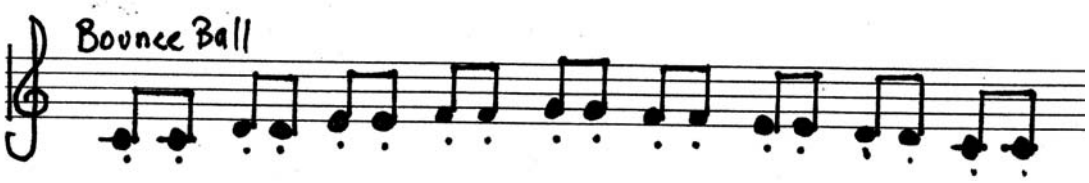
(1) Have the student clap a simple rhythm such as eighth notes using the words "Bounce Ball" or the child's name if it is two syllables.

Figure 6: Bounce Ball

(2) Demonstrate by playing C twice in rhythm with the thumb. Then, ask the student to play it. (Some young children may need the teacher's help. If so, gently hold the child's finger and help him feel the motion.)

(3) Once the student can play the rhythm with the thumb on C, continue with finger #2 on D. Proceed in a similar fashion until the five fingers can play the rhythm in the five-finger pattern up and down. Have the child stop briefly after playing each finger to make sure the hand is in a good position.

Figure 7: Bounce Ball with Five Fingers

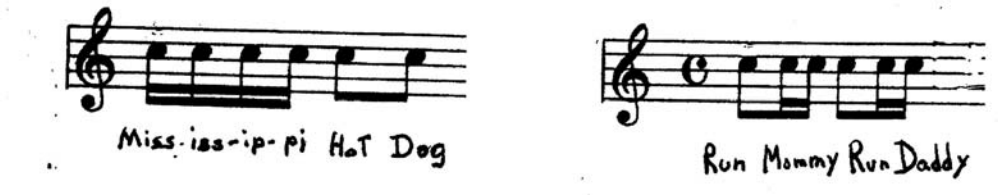


b. When the student can play the two-note rhythm, follow the same

procedure and introduce more complex rhythms one at a time , for example, triplets (say "Kangaroo"); 16th notes (say "Happy Birthday"); two sets of triplets (say "Elephant, Kangaroo"); two sets of 16th notes (say "Merry Christmas, Happy New Year").

c. Teachers using the Suzuki piano repertoire may now introduce the rhythms of *Mississippi Hot Dog*; *Run Mommy, Run, Daddy* from *Twinkle,*

Figure 8: Twinkle Little Star Variations: *Mississippi Hot Dog; Run Mommy, Run, Daddy*



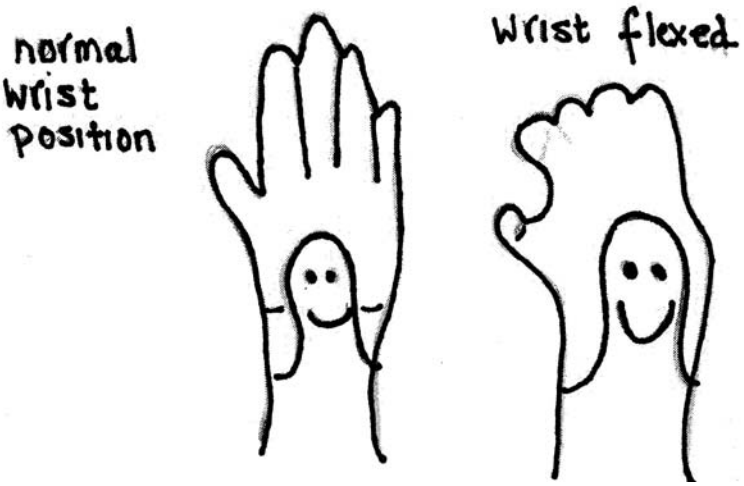
Step 2. Teaching the Flexible Wrist Exercise: Basic Concept

The Basic Concept involves flexing and dropping the wrist and repeating this movement in a relaxed manner. It is a precept in piano playing that allowing the wrist to move freely releases accumulated tension in the rest of the arm

a. Purpose: to teach that the wrist is a hinge that can move freely up and down. This is shown by flexing and then dropping the wrist while the finger simultaneously depresses and holds the key.

(1) Draw a picture of a ghost on the wrist (the ghost looks right side up to the student). To guide placement, use the skin wrinkle at the wrist bone to draw the mouth. The top of the ghost's head is nearest to the fingers.

Figure 9: Flexible Wrist Concept: Ghost



(2) Begin with RH finger 2. The teacher guides the student's finger so that the pad grasps the piano key and then holds the finger in place on the key (to prevent sliding forward). Using the other hand the teacher places her fingers under the student's right wrist and helps the wrist move upward, making the "ghost" grow (become larger). The teacher then takes away her supporting hand to permit the wrist to drop freely to a natural position. Note that the finger remains in place on the key throughout. Care must be taken to see that the elbow does not lift or twist; it stays lower than the wrist when the motion is done correctly.

(3) Repeat this step until it feels comfortable and natural, then ask the student to raise his wrist using his own Left Hand. Then the student raises and drops his wrist unassisted.

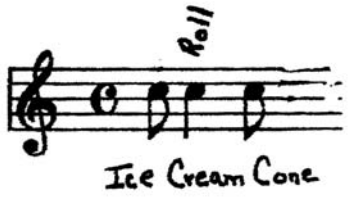
(4) Have the student grasp the key (Step 2) and raise his wrist (Step 3) without assistance.

b. Once the second finger masters this technique, add finger 1 and the remaining fingers, one at a time. Note: sometimes the fifth finger tends to turn the hand on its side; the goal is to move the wrist forward without altering the hand position.

c. The Basic Concept of the Flexible Wrist Exercises can be incorporated into the last note of the Walking and Skipping exercise. When the thumb plays the last C, say "roll" as the wrist moves upward and the key is released. The wrist returns to the normal position when the C major triad is played. When the Left Hand performs this exercise, it is the fifth finger that rolls.

d. Teachers using the Suzuki Method may introduce *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* Variation B at this point. Use the words, *Ice Cream Cone* (called *Bounce Roll Bounce* in *Studying Suzuki Piano: More Than Music*) to teach the rhythm.

Figure 10: *Ice Cream Cone*



(1) Teach the quarter note (*Cream)* of the rhythmic pattern first. Use the flexible wrist technique for this note only.

(2) Add the two detached eighth notes to complete the pattern

Step 3. Teaching legato technique

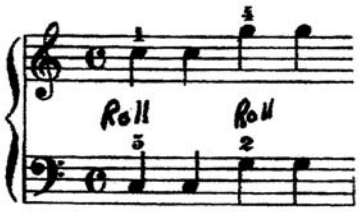
a. Purpose: to teach the student how to play legato (connecting one sound to another) by keeping the finger on the key that is already depressed before playing the next key.

b. We begin the process by using the five-finger pattern "Walking up and down again" with the flexible wrist technique. After the student plays the key then flexes and drops the wrist, he plays the next key without letting go of the key already played. Once the student has the feeling for legato while using the flexible wrist roll in both hands, the wrist motion can be refined so that it does not rise as far and the hand remains supple. At this point the wrist roll can be eliminated and the fingers only create the legato.

Accomplishing the legato techniques lead the student directly to the Technical Regime and the repertoire (note-reading skills are taught separately). The legato five-finger pattern is the first step in the *Technical Regime* and it is possible for many children to continue in Level 1.

When the student has learned the legato five-finger pattern, he has essentially learned the Right Hand of the Beyer Etude in C Major (the first piece in Level 1 of the repertoire). Only the last two measures need to be taught. The Left Hand part can easily be added.

Teachers using the Suzuki Method may teach *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* (Variation D – Theme) after the Beyer *Etude in C* (the first piece in Level 1 of the Repertoire). Only the last two measures need to be taught. The Left Hand part can easily be added.



Teaching Pieces Using Enhanced Rote Learning

The students need to be shown:

- what keys to play
- what fingers to use
- how to play the piece or segment being learned.

Scramble game is tremendously helpful with this. See Page 51 for *Scramble* instructions and refer to the Teaching Procedures for *Scramble* sections for every piece in the repertoire.

The students need to be able to find the beginning notes of each piece they play without assistance. Putting stationer's colored dots on important keys can helpful to beginners. As soon as they can find the starting positions by themselves, the dots can be removed. The child needs to be assured that the teacher is unable to predict when he is ready for the dots to be removed. If they try and are not yet successful, it is only because their fingers have not yet learned the positions and it is perfectly acceptable to put the dots back on.

At this point it is a good idea to begin the process of teaching the student to connect the eye to the printed score. Because the student already knows finger numbers, the teacher can write the finger numbers over the notes in Level 1 repertoire and can point while the student looks at the score and plays. Obviously, the student is not reading the notes, but he is learning eye-to-hand coordination. This step supports visual learning and is the first step in reading music.

Sight-reading

Musicians must be able to read printed music, a language of complex symbols. Those symbols must first be received through the eyes, interpreted and understood, and then executed through the fingers. A person who can speak a language but cannot read it is seriously restricted intellectually. Similarly, musicians who cannot read music also have limited options. Although there are many musicians who play well by ear, they cannot enjoy playing a piece at sight nor support their own efforts to learn a complex piece they have only heard.

We make a distinction between note-reading and sight-reading. To us, note-reading is the dual process of learning the language of musical notation and developing an orientation of the keyboard. Sight-reading is using the language after it is learned. We compare sight-reading to hitting a nail with a hammer; note-reading is the process of building the hammer.

Sight-reading occurs when a piece of music is placed on the piano, given a brief glance by the reader, then played with correct notes and rhythm, good flow and dynamics. This requires processing a vast amount of information in an instant, before a single note is played. We created the Sight-Reading Checklist (see P. 37) to illuminate the steps, such as clef, key signature, note, duration of the note, location of that note on the keyboard, which hand and finger, touch or articulation, phrasing, or dynamic level that an experienced reader notices quickly, almost subconsciously, before beginning to play.

Learning How to Read Music, using Alfred's *Premier Piano Course, Prep Course* and/or *Basic Piano Library*

These books are extremely well thought out and the material is presented in small, easily understood steps, suitable for beginners of varying ages and interests. It is important to practice note-reading and, eventually, sight-reading every day. In order to ensure that the students practice note-reading, the teacher must be consistent in spending time on it at every lesson and in checking that the assignments have been done.

Every new concept presented in the books must be learned at the lesson. Correcting a misunderstood concept is more difficult and time consuming than teaching it thoroughly at the start.

Rhythmic concepts, in particular, must be well understood and reinforced. A music student must understand basic note values before rhythms become too complex. Since we believe that counting out loud is essential for developing a solid sense of rhythm, we teach it from the beginning.

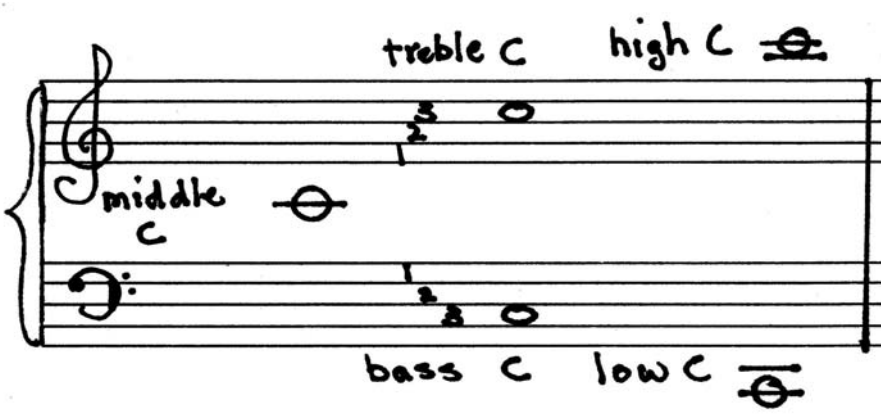
Teaching Reading as Soon as Lessons Start

Ideally, playing by ear and learning how to read music should develop equally. Sometimes students who have a head start on learning by ear resist learning to read music, consequently, that ability may lag behind their playing facility. Similarly, those who learn by reading only, may become too dependent on the score and feel insecure when asked to play from memory. Simultaneously learning by *enhanced rote* and note-reading helps prevent this imbalance. Even young children can read finger numbers or 5-finger pattern melodies in the Level 1 Repertoire. The goal of note-reading is to be able to connect a symbol on the printed page with a key on the piano.

- **Flash Cards** can be both fun and useful in developing a quick response between the printed symbol and its appropriate key on the piano. If using a method book, follow the instructions. Use only a few cards to begin. When the student can readily identify the note both by saying its name and by playing the correct note, increasing the quickness of response makes it fun.

- **The 5 C's Game**

  The "5 C's Game" begins with an effective way to identify Middle C on the keyboard. Next add names and memory aids for the two C's above and below Middle C so that the student has a powerful set of reference points for these notes on the keyboard. This game is used after the Grand Staff has been introduced in the preferred reading method book, but even if the student does not yet read music, this game can be taught using the example below, first with single flash cards, then with the complete example.



Teach the 5 C's in the following order:

(1) Middle C. Count the C's on the keyboard beginning with the bottom C:

1 2 3 4

The fourth C from the bottom of the keyboard is Middle C. On a printed score it has a line through its middle and is found between the treble and bass clef staves.

(2) Treble C (found within the treble staff): On the keyboard, Treble C is the next C above (or to the right) of Middle C. On a printed score, **count up** 1, 2, 3 spaces from the bottom space of the treble clef staff. The third space up is Treble C.

(3) Bass C (found within the bass clef staff): On the keyboard, Bass C is the next C below (or to the left) of Middle C. On a printed score, **count down** 1, 2, 3 spaces from the top space of the bass clef staff. The third space down is Bass C.

(4) High C: On the keyboard, High C is the next C **above** Treble C. On a printed score, High C is **two ledger lines above** the treble clef staff.

(5) Low C: On the keyboard, Low C is the next C **below** Bass C. On a printed score, Low C is **two ledger lines below** the bass clef staff.

Once the student has had an opportunity to learn even one of the C's, the question to be asked is, "How fast can you find Middle C?" Note that it is best to say "How fast? …" which implies that they can already do it, rather than "Can you?…" which seems like testing which the children resist.

- **Printed "Special Middle C"**

Students can identify Middle C easily when it is centered between the bass and treble staves, but young students often get confused when they see it printed closer to the treble or bass staff. We teach this distinction by telling them that "Middle C is Special".

The right hand usually plays notes printed on the treble staff and the left hand plays those printed on the bass staff. Using the Grand Staff with all the C's, point in turn to all of the C's **except** Middle C, asking the students to play each C with the correct hand as needed. Then point to Middle C and ask the same question, knowing that they will be puzzled. Ask, "What should you do, use your nose?" knowing that they will giggle at this absurdity. Explain and illustrate on a staff that Middle C is written closer to the treble staff for right hand notes (1 ledger line below) and closer to the bass staff (1 ledger line above) for left hand notes. Then use flash cards with Middle C's printed on just one staff or not centered on a

Grand Staff, to make a game of asking which hand plays the Middle C. If flash cards are not available, use staff paper to write some Middle C's in these two positions and ask the student to play them with the correct hand.

Mark the Score.

One of the most helpful techniques for facilitating sight-reading is marking the score with a pencil before beginning to play. It is best to have the student do the writing in order to reinforce comprehension. Their fingers, not the teacher's, must hold the pencil and do the writing if any real learning is going to happen.

Writing in pencil in the score promotes accuracy and fluency by requiring that the hand, eye and mind work together. Through writing, the probability of playing what is read correctly the first time increases. It helps to prevent the stopping or fumbling that breaks the flow.

Use the following process for marking the score:

- Write in the fingerings (a pencil is preferable in case changes are made later) above the treble staff notes and below the bass staff notes. Try to put the numbers directly over (RH) or under (LH) the notes to which they apply.

- Write the counting between the staves. Line up the notes that fall on that beat or sub-division. Be consistent in writing fingerings above or below the staff, and counting numbers between the staves. This prevents confusion in identifying which is which.

- Write in the counting for a few measures at the beginning of a piece to set the mind for the beats and/or subdivisions, as well as any unusual of tricky rhythmic patterns.

- Circle any notes that are played on black keys. Until the student has developed the ability to "think in the key", seeing the appropriate notes highlighted in this way helps them to sight-read accurately.

- Draw a slash through all tied notes. Inexperienced readers are prone to see the tie as a slur and thus re-play the second note of the tie.

- Use brightly colored Post-It notes to draw attention to passages that need special care. Post-It's now come in a wide variety of shapes (such as arrows) and colors, including some that are translucent and can be written on or placed directly over the notes. These also can be used to cover the left-hand notes while learning the right-hand part to prevent confusion or to help focus the eyes where needed. Different colors can be used to indicate dynamics.

Practice Sight Reading

- Most students are taught the basics of sight-reading but do not always get sufficient reinforcement. We recommend that students read several books at each level before moving on.

- It is important for the student to practice reading music that is several levels lower than his performing ability in order to develop confidence and facility in reading.

- Have the student practice keeping his eyes on the score**.** The ability to read music fluently requires keeping the eyes focused on the score without looking down at the keyboard (except when quick glances are needed for large leaps). Teachers can help students develop the ability to track visually by pointing at the music with a pencil or by holding a book over the keyboard to keep the eyes from looking down. This is analogous to using a computer, looking at the monitor, not the keyboard

- Use the Checklist for Sight-Reading when reading more complex pieces that cannot be instantly comprehended. The purpose of the Checklist is to provide the experience of "scooping" all the information off the page, the way an skilled reader does.

Figure 11 The Sight-reading Checklist

1. What clefs are at the beginning of the piece?
    - Right Hand?
    - Left Hand?

2. What is the Key Signature?
    - Name the sharps or flats.
    - Is it major or minor? (check accidentals)
    - Write in the clef and key signature plus one octave of the scale ascending and descending.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Circle all black key notes on the first line of the score.

4. Figure out any ledger line notes and write the letter name above or below the note.

5. Put a slash through all tied notes.

6. What is the Time Signature?
    - What time value gets the count of 1?
    - What time value gets the count of + (and)?
    - What time value gets the count of ta?

7. Write the counting in the score for the first line and any unusual patterns of rhythm. (Write between the staves; write finger numbers above or below notes.)
    - Start with the main beats. (e.g. 1 2 3 4)
    - Continue subdividing down to the next smallest unit. (e.g. 1+ 2+ 3+ 4+; 1ta+ta, 2ta+ta, 3ta+ta, 4ta+ta)
    - Subdivide **all** beats, not just relevant ones.

8. Tap the rhythm on the fallboard using RH for all RH notes and LH for all LH notes.
    - Do this for the first line and for any measure with unusual rhythm patterns.
    - ***Count out loud*** throughout, using the smallest rhythmic unit.

9. Play the piece at a comfortable tempo, *counting out loud*.

Improving Sight-reading

There are some valuable ideas and suggestions about improving sight-reading ability in the book, *Piano: Guided Sight Reading* (Deutsch, 1977):

- The only goal should be to read every note printed on the page correctly.

- Begin reading at an easy tempo, counting out loud. It is permissible to slow the tempo when the score becomes too complex to read at that speed. When the music becomes simpler, pick up the tempo again.

- For chords, always read from the bottom to the top. [Say the letter name of each note out loud, if necessary.]

Even though it may feel as though the process is slow and time-consuming, the mind grasps the notes more and more quickly. When reading music in this way, the mind is fully engaged in the process, and the reader is focused on looking at the score. Once confidence blooms, the speed at which the eyes, hands and mind work together seems to accelerate dramatically.

- **Teacher's Lending Library**

Teachers can encourage sight-reading by giving regular sight-reading assignments. Because it is not practical to ask students to buy music that they will read through only once, we suggest lending books to them. With a variety of music at different levels of difficulty in their collection, teachers can provide students with lots of reading experience. Some teachers charge an additional annual fee between $10 - $25 to cover the costs of extra and replacement reading books.

- **Set up a "Sight-reading Month"**

Sight-reading skills develop through reading at sight! Quantities of new material read is the goal, lots of which should be at an easy level for that particular reader and some at a level closer to his playing skill. In the regular teaching year, our colleague Clayton Scott assigns a minimum of one new piece every day to be read during the week and then hears only piece #8 at the lesson. The teacher must check the assignment or it doesn't get done. We are indebted to Clayton for the idea of "Sight-Reading Month". She chooses February to focus on sight-reading. Assign a specific number of pages to be read at sight every day. In the sight-reading month, there is a chart for personal weekly tallies, not for competition but motivation.

Rhythm

1. Count out Loud to Develop a Sense of Rhythm

Before beginning to play any piece of music, tap the rhythm hands separately and/or hands together while counting out loud for at least one or two measures. It is important to count out loud while tapping because hearing and feeling combine to reinforce a sense of rhythm. There is a strong connection in the region of the brain that controls the fingers and speech called the Broca area, named for the researcher Paul Broca who identified it. Counting out loud exploits the power of this connection and facilitates fluid playing. To experience the power of this connection, try this experiment:

(1) Say "I love the piano" in rhythm while clapping your hands.
(2) Then say and clap, "It is beautiful in the springtime when flowers start to bloom."
(3) Now say, "It is beautiful in the springtime when flowers start to bloom." while clapping the rhythm of "I love piano". The mind balks. It is virtually impossible to do this task unless you consciously work at fitting the words "It is beautiful in the springtime when the flowers start to bloom." into the "I love piano" rhythm.

For the pianist, counting out loud creates a sense of the equal length of time it takes for each beat of the music. Printed notation, on the other hand, squeezes a whole note measure into a small space while a measure with thirty-second notes uses much more

space. This disproportionate spacing creates rhythmic confusion for inexperienced players who have not had the repeated listening of the Suzuki learners, and can cause them to cut or "clip" time values of longer notes.

2. Use the Counting Charts

All musicians must know the note values found in music and their relationship to each other. For example, four quarter notes equals a whole note and four sixteenth notes equals a quarter note, but this knowledge does not necessarily translate into knowing how to establish and sustain a steady beat for an entire piece. The Counting Chart is a helpful tool in developing this ability by:

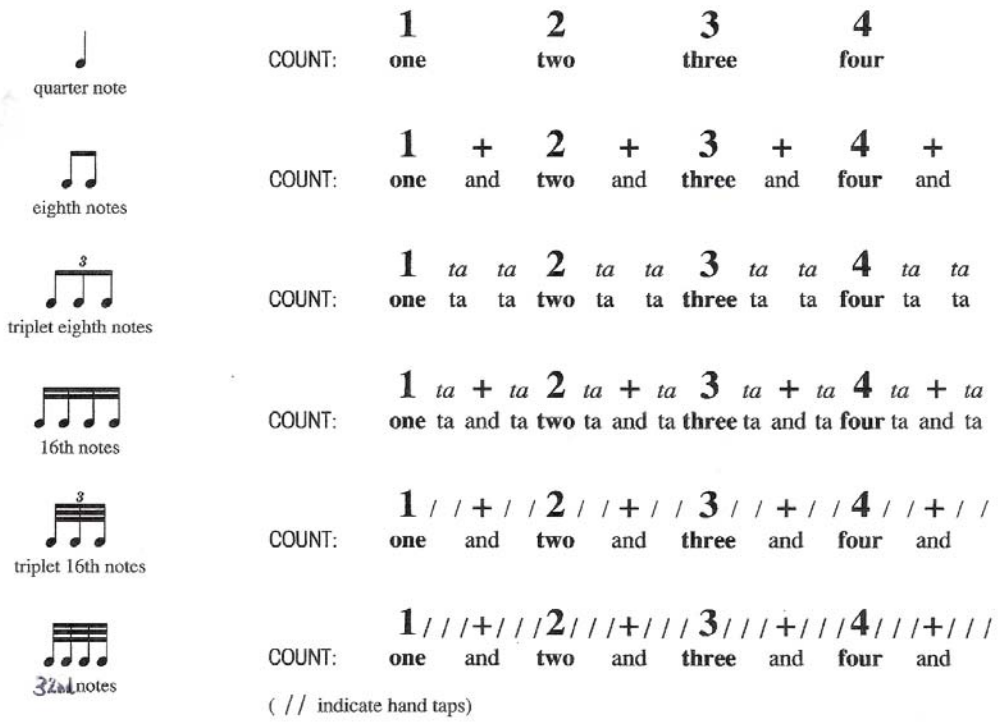
- **Showing the relationship of the subdivisions of the quarter note.**

- **Showing that each quarter note count (1, 2, 3, 4) is spoken out loud in the same place in every measure, regardless of the subdivisions of the beat.** In the French system, for example, all beats use the same syllables (tafe-tayfe for sixteenth notes).

- **Using a spoken syllable for each subdivision.** We have found the easiest and most effective syllables for rapid articulation to be "1 ta and ta".

We strongly encourage counting out loud. Doing so utilizes the power of the spoken sound to be imprinted on the mind, compared with simply thinking it. Counting out loud provides a more effective way of learning to apportion note values, that is, how much time it takes to count eighth notes, triplet eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

Figure 12: The Complete Counting Chart



How to Use the Counting Chart as an Exercise in Rhythm, Counting out Loud

- In the chart, every beat and subdivision of the beat has a spoken syllable. When speaking the names of the syllables, use both hands alternately to tap that rhythm on a table top or the fall board of the piano. At no point does one hand tap twice in a row. It is possible go much faster when alternating hands. Begin by tapping and counting out loud at a slow enough speed to be able to manage the sixteenth note counting without stumbling.

- If the student has learned how to use the metronome, set a comfortable tempo and ask the student to tap and count out loud with the metronome.

- We ask our students to practice the exercise one time per day, until they can perform it correctly and confidently.

- Subsequently, increase the speed only to the point at which the exercise can still be performed perfectly.

About the Metronome

The metronome is a device developed by Johann Maelzel (1772-1838) that indicates the tempo (speed) that the composer (or the editor) wishes a piece to be played. The use of the metronome is indicated by MM (Maelzel's Metronome). Tempo directions (for example, MM quarter note = 63), are shown at the top left of the musical score, just above the music. All printed music is made to fit a set pulse, in complete measures, from beginning to end. When the performer plays the piece following the beat of the MM, the rhythm is precisely executed.

Some teachers do not encourage their students to practice with the MM on the grounds that, in performance, the students' playing will sound "mechanical" and uninteresting. A performance without musical ebb and flow does indeed sound robotic. Practicing with the MM ensures only rhythmical accuracy and is not concerned with rubato or rhythmic flexibility.

Learning how to play with the MM is a skill that is best learned in a step-by-step procedure. We have found it most effective to introduce the MM by using rhythmical exercises first, followed by scales, before playing a piece with the MM.

- **Choosing a metronome**

While there are many metronomes available, we prefer the kind that has the movable arm. It is easier to see when the arm has reached its out point and the tick sounds than it is to anticipate when a light is going to flash.

- **What is the right age to learn how to use the metronome?**
  A given age is not the determining issue of the right time to introduce playing with the MM; it is the ability to distinguish between numbers that are being used to identify fingers, and numbers that are used to count beats.

- **When should the metronome be introduced?**

  We recommend learning how to use the Metronome before studying a piece of music that uses scales. In our repertoire, Level 2, #4 *A Pleasant Morning* by Streabbog uses the complete C major scale in both RH and LH.

- **Counting Out Loud while Playing with the Metronome**

Counting out loud is, for us, an essential part of learning how to use the MM. We count out loud (or say words) while playing with the MM because this helps in learning to play

with accurate rhythm. It is also a valuable tool in developing sight-reading ability. Playing with the MM is a new step, however, and extra concentration and co-ordination is required to listen to the tick, play the correct note with that tick and count out loud. To help in developing ability and confidence, the teacher can count out loud while the student plays with the MM. Then the student must count out loud while the teacher plays with the MM so the student experiences both parts of the process. The student can then attempt to play small segments of the assignment with the MM, counting out loud at the same time.

- **Benefits from Using the Metronome**

Playing to the tick of the MM has three principal virtues: (1) it provides the opportunity to experience how it feels and sounds when the music is played in strict, accurate tempo. (2) it helps to develop an inner sense of rhythmical pulse especially when combined with counting out loud. (3) It reveals the growing ability to play the music correctly at increasing speeds until optimum tempo is achieved.

The MM is great for showing improvement. For example, if last week's assignment was played perfectly at the quarter-note pulse set to 63, this week the same passage may be played perfectly at 76!

Five Steps for Learning How to Play with a Metronome while Counting Out Loud

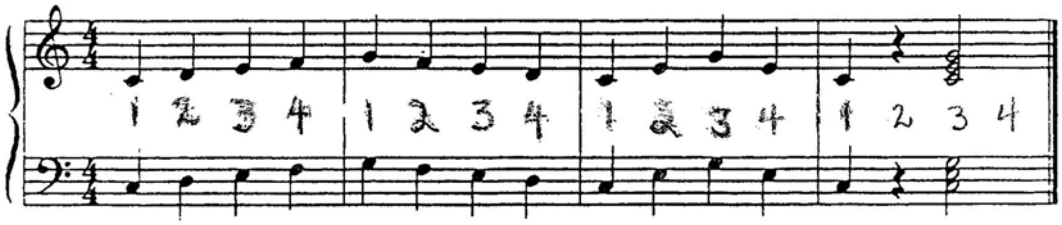
We offer five steps for learning how to stay with the beat of a MM. It may be possible to do all the steps in a single session or it may take several lessons. The student must be given time to become comfortable with each step. The individual steps can be varied by using different speeds of the MM. Anticipating and matching the beat seems to be easier to do when using moderately fast tempos than it is with slower tempos.

Step 1. Begin by having the student count and clap with the MM alone until he can "catch the beat". Then clap and count 1 2 1 2 over and over with the MM set at a moderate speed. When that is comfortable, clap and count 1 2 3 1 2 3 repeatedly, then 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4.

Step 2. Have the student pick a key at random and strike it repeatedly while counting out loud with the MM. Follow this by having him count out loud in groups of two (1 2 1 2), then groups of three (1 2 3 1 2 3), then groups of four (1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4).

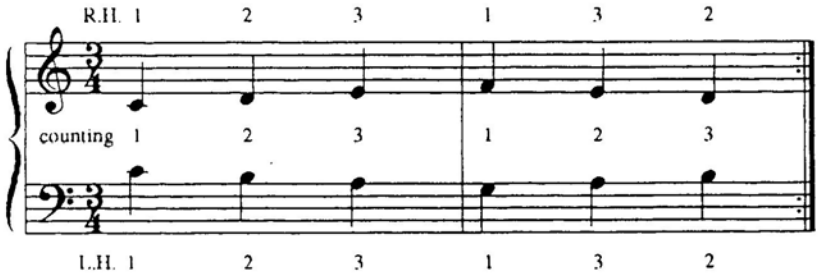
Step 3. Play the five-finger pattern "Walking and Skipping" HS or HT, counting out loud in time with the MM.

Walking and Skipping



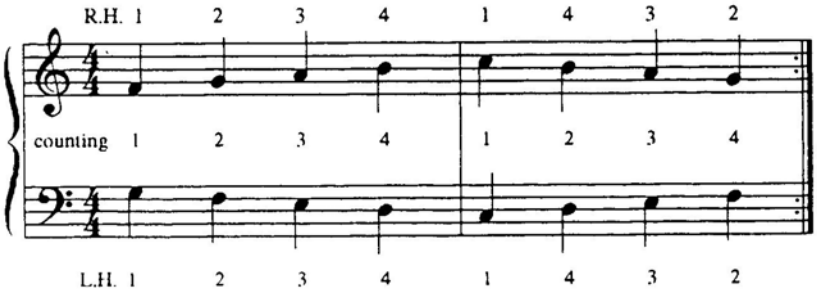
Step 4. Practice the preliminary scale exercise that follows HS, counting out loud in 3's (1 2 3 1 2 3 etc) with the MM. Notice that the LH begins on middle C and descends first (contrary motion). This exercise helps playing and counting out loud in groups of 3 and to pass the thumb under the fingers when playing a scale.

Figure 13



Step 5. Practice the second preliminary scale exercise HS while counting out loud in 4's (1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4) with the MM. This exercise is the remainder of a one octave C major scale pattern.

Figure 14



Solving Musical Rhythms

- Definition of "Solving Rhythms"

Composers use the rhythmical formulae developed and refined over hundreds of years so that performers can accurately reproduce their musical ideas. In notation, the music is divided into measures. At the beginning of the piece, the time [meter] signature tells which rhythmical conventions are to be used throughout the piece (unless otherwise noted). One of the rules is that each and every measure must have precisely the number of beats stated by the time signature.

- Teach students about upbeats ("pickup" notes). A "pickup" beat consists of a partial measure of music at the beginning of a piece. We tease the children by saying, "Oh, no, we'll have to throw this music away. This measure is incomplete and I told you that every piece must have only complete measures of music". Once they know the trick, the children delight in correcting us by saying, "No, we don't. The pickup is the completion of the last measure".

Five Steps for Solving Any Rhythm

Step 1. Write in the counting on the score (use the Counting Chart [P.41] as a guide), beginning with the basic note value (the bottom number of the time [meter] signature. Write the number between the staves as precisely over or under the note (depending on the clef) as possible.

Step 2. Then sub-divide the basic note value in half, writing the counting for that value throughout the score.

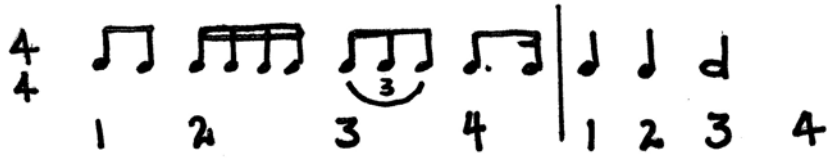
Step 3. Sub-divide again and again until the rhythm of every note in the score has been accounted for.

Step 4. Tap the rhythm, using the right hand for all RH notes and the left hand for all LH notes. Count out loud, using the smallest sub-division of rhythm in the piece

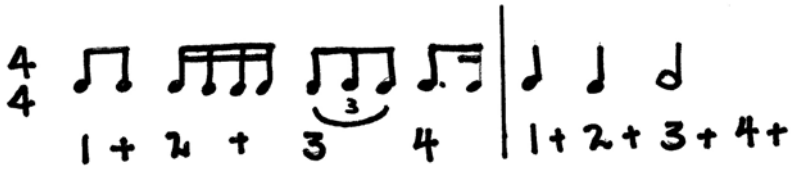
Step 5. Play the passage on the keyboard, counting out loud

An Example of Solving a Rhythm (using 4/4 meter)

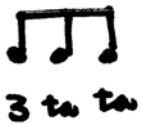
- Determine which note begins each quarter note and write the correct number under each note:



- Sub-divide the quarter note in half and write in the eighth-note (+) value:

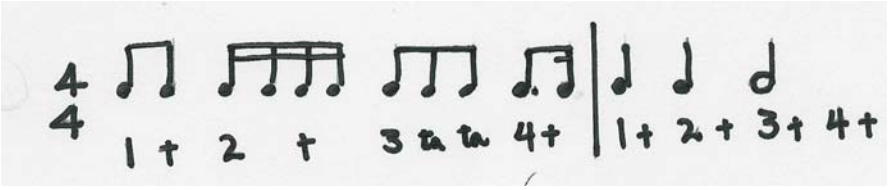


There are two tricky things here: 1. Beat 3 is a triplet so, using the Counting Chart, we see that triplets are counted "1 ta ta" so we write that in.

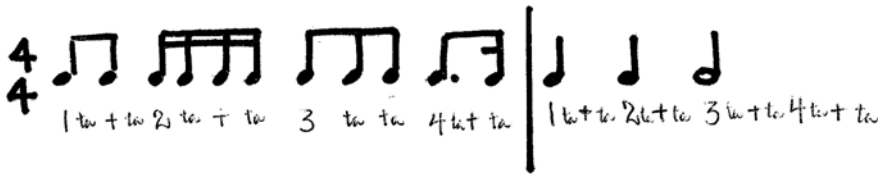


2. The dotted eighth note plus a 16th note would look like this if we wrote it out:

Now we have:



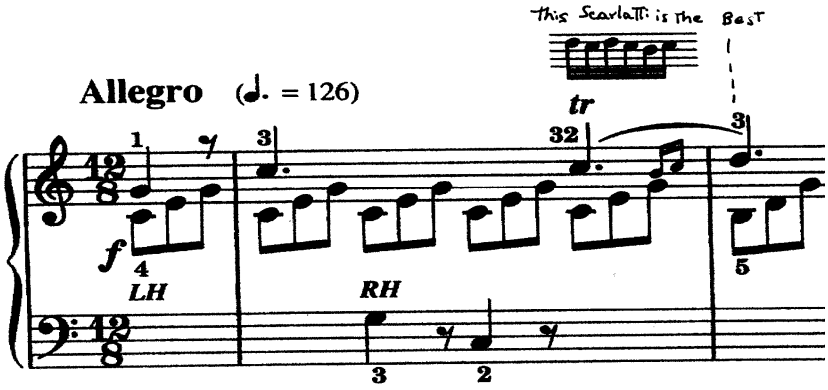
- Sub-divide in half again to get:



- Now count out loud and tap the rhythm.

Use Words for Fast, Irregular, or Complex Rhythms.

Sometimes it is easier and more fun to assign words to phrases or groups of notes that are too fast or cumbersome to count out loud. Words work particularly well for playing trills and other ornaments. Using humorous words appeals to younger students and promotes retention as well as a positive learning environment. Using the following example, instead of "this Scarlatti is the best", the words could be changed to "This Scarlatti drives me nuts".



Solving Super-imposed Rhythms and Fioritura

- **Super-imposed Rhythms** (sometimes referred to as cross- or poly-rhythms). Although it may seem as though there are many different rhythms, when they have been analyzed, there are only two instances of super-imposed rhythms: two against three or three against four. Because playing different rhythms in each hand simultaneously is unnatural, for example: RH playing eighth note triplets and LH playing eighth notes, using words helps coordination.

Figure 15: Two against Three ("Nice Cup of Tea")

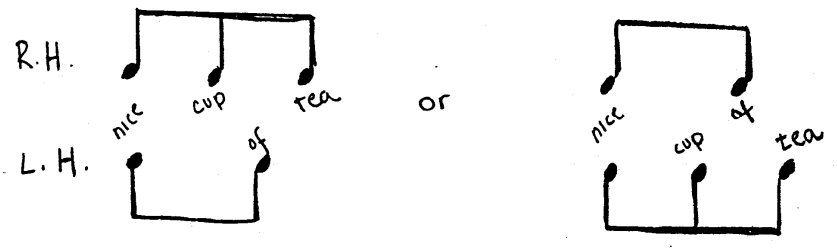
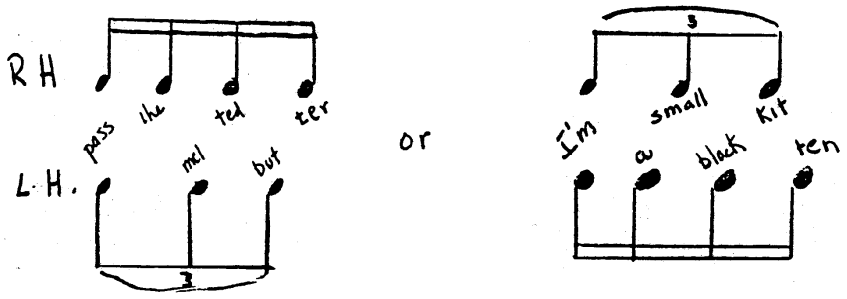
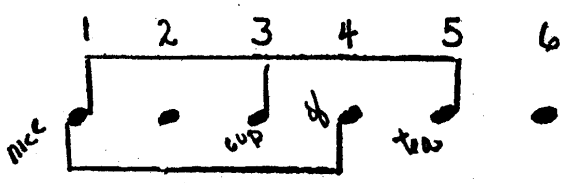


Figure 16: Three against Four ("Pass the Melted Butter" or "I'm a Small Black Kitten")

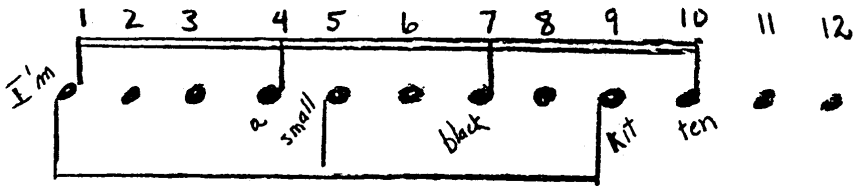


Note: The first note of each group plays together, after which the hand playing the larger number of notes plays the next one following the first simultaneous notes.

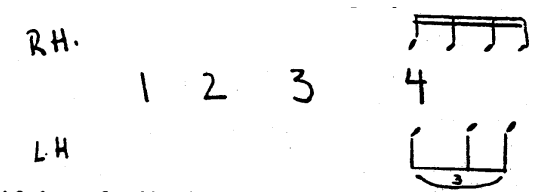
To see how these groups fit mathematically, find the common denominator to reveal the exact position of each note. In the case of two against three, the lowest common denominator is six. Count 1 2 3 4 5 6 out loud and tap the hands on the appropriate numbers.



In the case of three against four, the lowest common denominator is twelve. Count 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 and tap the hands on the appropriate numbers.



When these rhythms are learned slowly, the rhythms are exact. Then, practice each hand at a faster tempo, counting only the main beat.

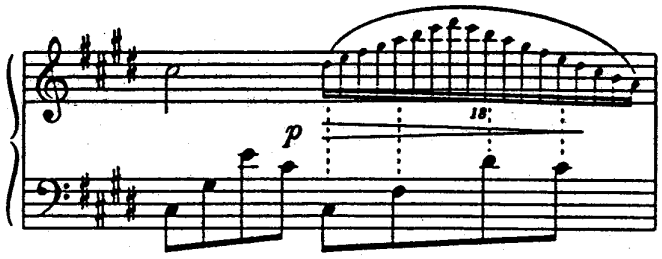


After this is comfortable, play hands together, trusting the fingers to fit the notes in.

- **Fioritura** is a series of cadenza-like ornamental notes played against accompaniment notes. The accompaniment notes fit within the rhythmic framework specified by the composer; the ornamental notes sometimes do not. Learning to play the passage is straightforward when the number of ornamental notes divides evenly by the number of accompaniment notes. Challenges arise when there are an odd number of ornamental notes.

A strategy for solving fioritura: divide the number of ornamental notes by the number of accompaniment notes. When these do not divide evenly, apportion the ornamental notes so that they are distributed as equally as possible among the accompaniment notes. For example, if there are 13 ornamental notes and 2 accompaniment notes, play 6 ornamental notes with one accompaniment note and 7 with the other. Although this division is not mathematically precise, the result is musically satisfying. When the passage is played at tempo, the exact division between ornamental and accompaniment notes is imperceptible to the ear.

Figure 17: Fioritura: Chopin Nocturne, measure 58



Frédéric Chopin. Nocturne in C-sharp Minor *(Posthumous), measure 58*

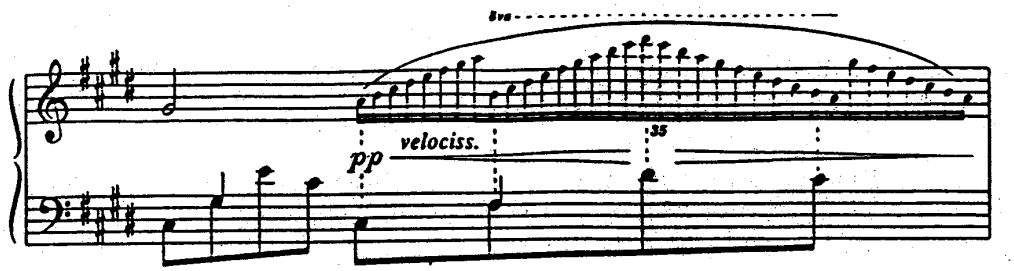
In this measure, the fioritura has 18 notes in beats 3 and 4, and the accompaniment has four single notes.

(1) Divide the 18 (fioritura notes) by 4 (accompaniment) notes. The answer is 4 with 2 left over.

(2) Apportion the notes as equally as possible. There will be 4 fioritura notes for two of the accompaniment notes and two will have five notes.

(3) Pencil in a line connecting the accompaniment note to the fioritura note with which it will be played.

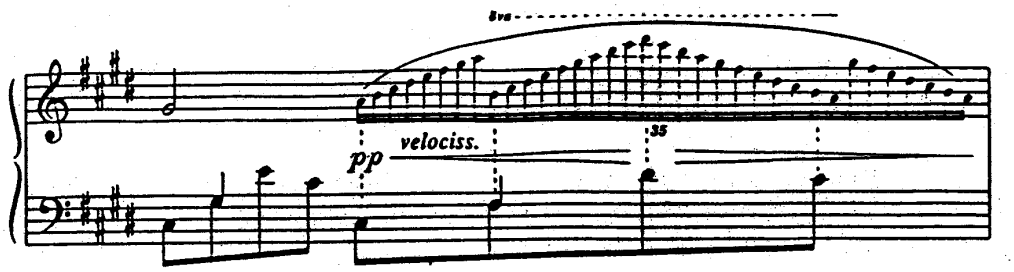
Figure 18: Chopin Nocturne, measure 59



Frédéric Chopin, Nocturne in C-sharp Minor *(Posthumous), measure 59*

In this measure, the fioritura has 35 notes in beats 3 and 4, and the accompaniment has four single notes.

(1) Divide the 35 (fioritura notes) by 4 (accompaniment notes). The answer is 8 with a remainder of 3.



Frédéric Chopin, Nocturne in C-sharp Minor *(Posthumous), measure 59*

(2) Apportion the notes as equally as possible. There will be 9 fioritura notes for each of the three accompaniment notes and 8 fioritura notes for the remaining 1 accompaniment notes.

(3) Pencil in a line connecting the accompaniment note to the fioritura note with which it will be played.

Learning a Piece

- **Learn a Piece in Small Steps, One Step at a Time.**

It is most efficient and fun to learn a piece of music in small segments and to master each step before adding a new one. Dr. Suzuki introduced this concept by saying, "Learn one step at a time and by all means, master each step." In other contexts, when specifically related to memory, it is called "Chunking" (George Miller, *The Magic Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two*). An example of chunking is found in telephone numbers: they have seven digits, arranged in a group of three, followed by a group of four.

- ***Scramble* Game**

Scramble is a powerful learning tool that we developed from the concept of "one step at a time:

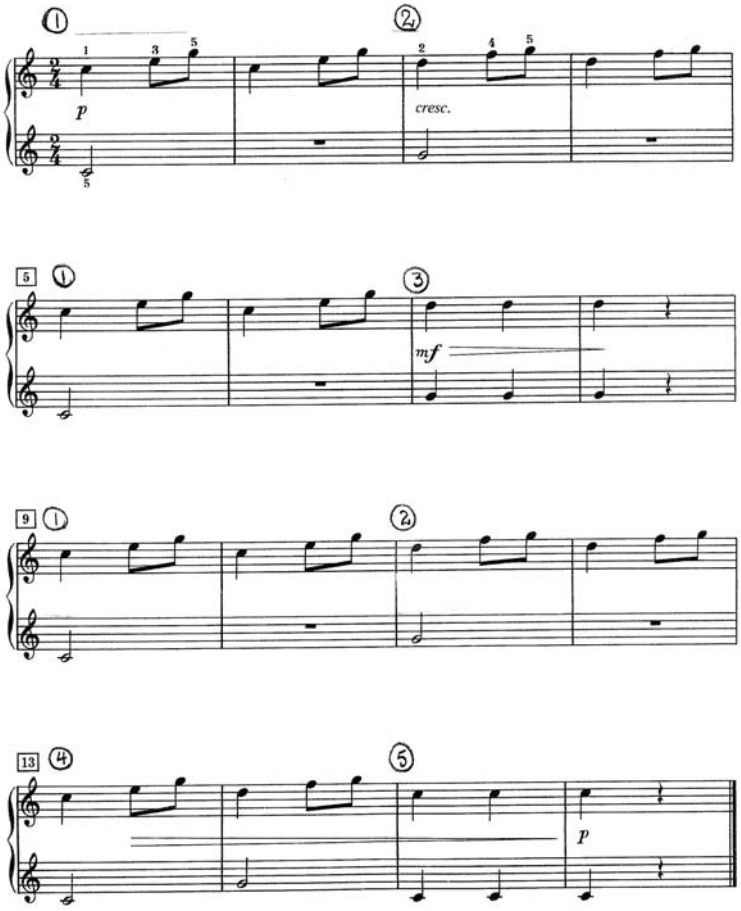
(1) It provides an organized procedure for breaking learning down into small, accessible steps.
(2) It turns practicing into a game.
(3) It promotes engagement by causing the learner to pay close attention to the score.
(4) It strengthens memory.
(5) It reveals the structure of the piece

In an effort to save busy teachers time, we provide *Scramble* numbers for every piece in the seven levels of repertoire for *Mastering the Piano*. These are found in the Teaching Procedures section of this manual. Please note that *Scramble* sections are infinitely variable and can be adjusted for each student.

- **How to Play *Scramble***

Step 1. The music score is divided into numbered segments. The numbers are written on the score. Each segment is represented by a numbered card (either *Scramble* cards or ordinary playing cards).

Figure 19. A*llegretto,* Op. 117, No. 5 by C. Gurlitt (*Mastering the Piano,* Level 1, P. 5)

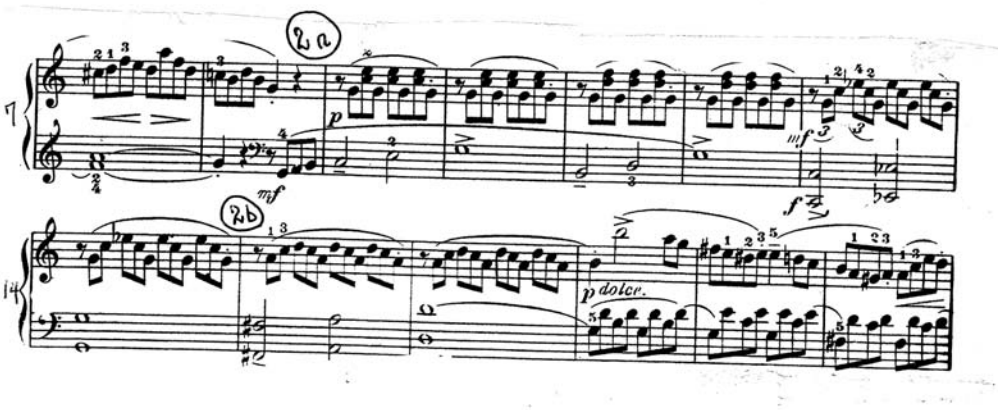


Step 2. As soon as the student has learned two segments, the game can begin. Turn the two cards representing the segments face down. The student picks a card and plays that segment, and then picks another card, etc.

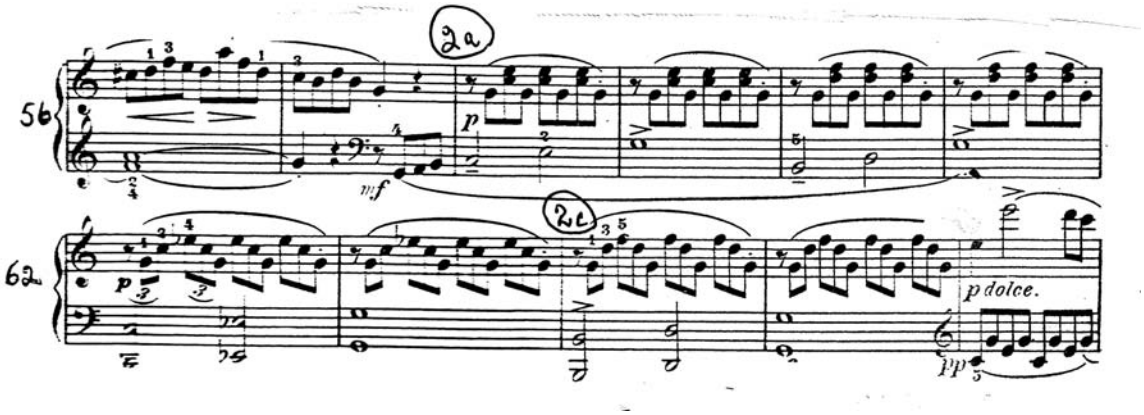
As each segment is learned, its card is added to the pile until the entire piece is learned.

There are many variations possible, limited only by imagination. One particularly useful variation occurs in sonatas or sonatinas: adding letters (a, b, c, etc) to the Scramble numbers, reveals the places where a theme modulates to a different key in the Exposition or remains in the same key in the Recapitulation. In the Kuhlau *Sonatina,* Op. 20, No. 1, first movement, Scramble 2a in the Exposition modulates to the Dominant key (G major) at Scramble 2b:

Figure 20: Kuhlau *Sonatina,* Op. 20, No. 1 (*Mastering the Piano,* Level 4, P.7)



In the Recapitulation, Scramble 2c remains in the Tonic key (C major):



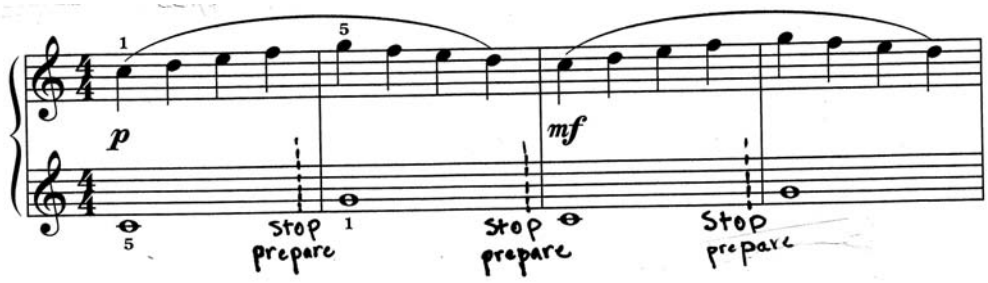
Practice Scrambles 2a, 2b, and 2c as separate segments. Then practice Scrambles 2a and 2b as a unit and Scrambles 2a and 2c as another unit for secure memory.

- **Use *Stop-Prepare* for Accurate Playing.**

Stop-Prepare is a Suzuki technique used to prepare the mind and fingers or hands before playing an unusual fingering, a large leap, a hand-position change or any technical challenge. It is literally a physical stop to check to see that the hand or finger is placed over the correct key. The *Stop* provides time to think before playing and thus ensures accuracy.

The following example shows how to help a beginning student coordinate hands together playing by using *Stop-Prepare*.

Figure 21: Beyer *Etude in C major* (*Mastering the Piano*, Level 1, P. 4)



The student stops on the 4th beat of the first measure, keeps the right hand "glued" to the key while the left hand prepares to play the G in measure 2. This helps with coordination, and ensures accuracy.

Stop-Prepare is an invaluable tool for:

(1) preventing kinesthetic learners, who often play before thinking, from making mistakes.
(2) correcting a habitual mistake.
(3) developing co-ordination.
(4) learning how to move the hand rapidly to a new position.

- **Typical Steps in Learning a Piece**

The Music-learning Cycle methodology includes procedures for learning any piece of music efficiently and thoroughly. The following steps offer an outline of how to learn a piece using these procedures.

Step 1: Listen to the recording of the piece. Ideally, listening should begin as far in advance of learning as possible. Play the recording as often as time permits. It is not a requirement to sit and listen intently; the music need only be audible while the listener is doing other activities. The goal is to program the auditory part of the brain, allowing the music to be internalized by the subconscious mind.

Step 2: Listen to the recording while looking at the score (For older students who can read music)**.** Observe patterns and similar or repeated sections.

Step 3: Play through the piece slowly. Notice patterns and similar or repeated sections as well as those that are technically or rhythmically challenging.

Step 4: Divide the piece into Scramble Sections. Number the sections consecutively and assign the same number to identical sections. Use a combination of numbers and letters, such as 1a, 1b, etc, to distinguish slight changes or differences in sections that are almost identical. Make note of technically or rhythmically challenging sections.

Step 5: Write the counting in the score between the staves. Subdivide all beats into the smallest rhythmic unit (see Solving Rhythms, P. 44). It is necessary to write in the counting only for a few measures, and if there are unusual or complex rhythms in any other measures, write the counting in these as well.

Step 6: Write in fingerings where needed. Write right hand fingerings above the treble staff and left hand fingerings below the bass staff.

Step 7: Circle black key notes in the score, write in the names of ledger line notes and put a slash through tied notes.

Step 8: Tap the rhythm on the piano lid while counting out loud. Count all beats and subdivisions out loud while tapping the rhythm of the piece hands together (the right hand taps all right hand notes; the left hand taps all the left hand notes). If the rhythm is complex, tap hands separately first then hands together.

Step 9: Play the piece, learning one Scramble Section at a time, at tempo. Do not add a new section until the one being studied is learned. If **memorizing** the piece, memorize each Scramble section as it is learned before adding another section. Begin with the most challenging Scramble Section (called *preview* in the Teaching Procedures). In general it is most efficient to **learn hands separately, learning the right hand first**. If the left hand part is not too complex, it can be added as soon as the right hand is learned. It is helpful to read the left hand part alone at least once before playing hands together.

Step 10: Add interpretative/expressive aspects after learning and/or memorizing the entire piece. Identify the style (homophonic or polyphonic) to determine balance, identify the climax points and the principle climax notes of the piece (architecture), pay attention to the shaping of each phrase and matching tones, dynamics, articulation and rhythmic nuances (e.g. ritardando, accelerando, rubato, etc.)

Step 11: Discover the mood of the piece and use imagination to bring it to life.

Ear Training Exercises

Including specific ear training exercises into lessons is a choice and a commitment. Students who are listening to a recorded model already have a tremendous head start on those who don't. Nevertheless, in order to be able to listen and understand, further experience is required. The Royal Conservatory of Music has excellent materials available, for example, The Four Star Sight Reading and Ear Tests. The elements to be covered are:

- **interval identification**. An easy way to start this is to play C, D, saying 1, 2, then C, E (1, 3), C, F (1, 4) etc, up to C, C (1, 8), then reversing the process. This introduces the intervals of the major scale. Then play one of the intervals and have the student sing it back or at the keyboard, match the pitch and then play the interval.
- **chord identification**. Introduce this process when the students are learning major triads and inversions in the Technical Regime. Identifying the chord (without seeing the teacher's hands) and then playing it back enhances the ability to listen accurately.
- **rhythmic clapbacks**. These are fun and the 4 Star books have wonderful examples. Practicing the Counting Chart (see the Technical Regime, P. 41) assists the student's ability to hear rhythmic patterns.
- **melody playbacks**. Use the 4 Star books for examples. The teacher plays a simple melody and the student repeats it.
- **harmonize a scale, then harmonize playbacks.** Begin by playing the tonic chord (LH) with the tonic note (RH), playing the remainder of the scale notes in one octave and adding the dominant harmony, then, after an appropriate length of experience, add the sub-dominant harmony. Eventually, add harmonies to every note.

Transposition

Students who are listening to recordings usually love to transpose and often do it spontaneously. Sometimes young students accidentally begin on the wrong key and continue; they end up transposing without even knowing they did it! This frequently happens when they are playing a piece in the key of G Major and begin in C Major position. When the students are using "Walking and Skipping" (Technical Regime, Level 1), ask them to play it in the next key. After they understand whole steps and half steps, they can play "*Walking and Skipping"* on any key. Following that, when they learn a new scale they can also transpose "*Walking and Skipping"* into that key. Encouraging students to transpose early on gives them confidence so that when the pieces are more complicated, they will be willing and able to transpose. Using F, G, Bb and Eb majors are enough keys to cover the range of most singers and other instruments. If the students are very familiar with the harmonies of I, IV and V in these keys, they have a tremendous resource for transposing. We recommend Steven Fielder's Introduction to Keyboard Harmony and Transposition (Waterloo Music, 1999).

Improvisation

Improvisation can prevent the student from becoming "locked on the page". It creates a sense of freedom, stimulates the musical imagination and encourages the student to listen more intently to all music.

Begin encouraging individual creativity through harmonization as soon as the student can play C major triad and G major triad. Most music lesson books introduce these chords in the first level and there are many available that teach the use of the three basic chords (I, IV and V). The students can then transpose short pieces into many keys. It is a short step to learn how to play and create blues patterns. Lee Evans (pub. Hal Leonard) has written many excellent books that teach the basics of jazz improvisation.

Theory

Learning about the components of music and having practice in writing signs and symbols greatly enhances the student's awareness of the printed score. We are huge believers in the value of the pencil in the student's hand. The more they write information in their scores, such as counting numbers, circling black keys, etc., the more they are able to focus on and understand what is printed.

Many method books have associated theory books. They may be called different names but they all involve exercises for the student to complete. The Royal Conservatory of Music has a theory syllabus for its excellent, graded program and lists many texts, such as Mark Sarnecki's *Elementary Music Rudiments.*

Memorizing a Piece

Use Mnemonics to Aid Learning and Memory

Mnemonics (so-called because of Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory) are any methods that aid memory by creating associations in the brain. They can be described as mental hooks on which a person associates names, words or numbers with the items to be remembered as a means to recall them. Mnemonics serve as a way of relating the known to the unknown or to make new information stand out. If the mnemonics are funny or unusual, they are even more effective.

Some mnemonics are organized by group:

(1) ***Scramble* game** is an excellent device for organizing smaller sections of a piece into a logical system (see P.51).

(2) **Patterns** organize learning in the mind. Patterns are found in fingering, scales and harmonic progressions. For example, using the same fingerings for identical passages, regardless of the placement of black and white keys makes them easier to remember. Patterns occur also in rhythms, melodies and accompaniments.

Some mnemonics are organized by words:

(1) **Categories** – to remember the beginning melody notes or phrases and sequences, use food words, for example, **C**ake, **A**pples, etc. or country names, especially when there is a large leap, for example, the right hand is going to **A**ustria.

(2) **Endings** – to remember the final notes of a piece. For example, if the piece is in the key of A minor and the ending is a dominant (E Major) to tonic (A Minor) chord progression, say Eat Apples.

(3) **Fast notes** – saying words out loud promotes the coordination that enhances kinesthetic memory. There is a strong connection between the ability to speak and the ability to control the fingers thus giving rise to the old adage among musicians: "if you can say it, you can play it." Words are especially effective when playing ornaments because, in addition to helping to remember how many notes to play, they slow down the fingers thus permitting every note to sound. When a trill is fast, assure students that the brain can think the words as fast as they need to be played, but the trill must be learned slowly enough to be able to say the words. For example, say "Merry Christmas, Happy New Year" for an eight-note trill.

For Those Who Think They Cannot Memorize

The following comments are intended for teen-agers and adults; they do not apply to children.

(1) Focusing

In some cases, an inability to memorize is caused by a lack of focus. We have found Neil Fiore's *Centering* Exercises to be helpful. His book, *The Now Habit (*Jeremy Tarcher, 1989, Pp. 144-148) has a slightly different format. Both are excellent for preparing the mind for practicing.

Centering Exercise
Neil Fiore, PhD

Centering is a one-minute, twelve-breath exercise that transitions your mind from fretting about the past and future to being focused in the present – where your body must be. Centering in the present clears your mind of regrets about the past and worries about anticipated problems in the so-called future.

As you withdraw your thoughts from these imagined times and problems, you release yourself from guilt about the past and worry about the future. You experience a stress-free vacation in the present. Whenever you experience moments of the joyful abandon in play, the easy flow of creativity, or a state of concentration that leads to effortless optimal performance, you are practicing a form of "centering." Use this exercise each time you start a project. Within just a week or two your body and mind will learn to naturally let go of tension and focus on working efficiently and optimally.

Read the following to yourself or tape record it and play it each time you start a project.

1. Begin by taking three slow breaths, in three parts: #1 Inhale, #2 Hold your breath and muscle tension, and, #3 Exhale slowly, floating down into the chair. With each exhalation – let go of the last telephone call or commute and float down into the chair. With your next exhalation, let the chair hold you and let go of any unnecessary muscle tension. Let go of all thoughts and images about work from the past. Clear your mind and your body of all concerns about what "should have" or "shouldn't have" happened in the past. Let go of old burdens. Let go of trying to fix your old problems. Take a vacation from trying to fix other people. Let each exhalation become a signal to just let go of the past.

Say to yourself as you exhale: "I release my mind and body from the past."

2. With your next three breaths, let go of all images and thoughts about what you think may happen in the future – all the "what ifs." With each exhalation clear your muscles, your heart, and your mind of the work of trying to control the so-called future.

Say to yourself as you exhale: "I release my mind and body from the future."

3. With your next three breaths, say: "I'm choosing to be in this present moment, in front of this work." I let go of trying to control any other time or striving to be any particular way. I notice how little effort it takes to simply breath comfortably and accept the just right level of energy to focus on this moment and this task – in the only moment there is, now.

Say to yourself as you exhale: "I bring my mind into the present."

4. For the next few minutes there is nothing much for my conscious mind to worry about within this sanctuary. You are safe from the past and the future. I just allow the natural processes of my mind and body to provide me with focused concentration. I access my inner genius and its creative resources.

Say to yourself as you exhale: "I am centered within my larger, wiser, stronger Self."

5. With your next three breaths count up from 1 to 3: One, becoming more adequately alert with each breath; Two, curious and interested about going rapidly from not-knowing to knowing; and, Three, eager to begin, curious and interested about how much I will accomplish in such a short period of time.

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(2) Memorizing

We believe that anyone (excepting injured persons) can memorize music if the desire to do so is strong enough. People are prone to think that just because they have played the piece many times, they should have it memorized. The flaw in this thinking arises from the fact that when the pianist is playing the piece with a score, there is a tendency for the fingers to react to the visual input without any lasting imprint on the brain. In order to remember the music, the look and sound of it, as well as the feeling in the fingers, must be registered somehow in the mind. We call this process, "taking the music off the page and into the brain".

In memorizing simple and shorter pieces, such as those found in *Mastering the Piano* Levels 1 – 3, this process occurs when students learn hands separately, count out loud and use Scramble Game. To make this process occur when memorizing longer or more complex pieces, we offer the following four steps that, if done faithfully, will guarantee memory of music.

(3) Four Steps for Memorizing a Complex Piece of Music

Step 1 Number each page of music. Divide each page into two-measure segments and number them, beginning with number 1. Select any page or begin with the last page, last segment (this is called *retrogressive learning)*. It doesn't really matter which segment, as long as it is noted in a practicing diary.

Step 2 Begin with the right hand. While playing the segment:

a. Say the letter names of the notes **out loud.**
b. Say the finger numbers **out loud.**
c. Count the rhythm (using the smallest rhythmic value) **out loud.**
d. Count **out loud**, with the metronome.
e. Count **out loud**, without looking at the music.
f. Count **out loud**, without looking at the music, with the metronome.
g. Count inside. Play by memory.

Step 3 Begin with the left hand. While playing the segment:

a. Say the letter names of the notes **out loud.**
b. Say the finger numbers **out loud.**
c. Count the rhythm (using the smallest rhythmic value) **out loud.**
d. Count **out loud**, with the metronome.
e. Count **out loud**, without looking at the music.
f. Count **out loud**, without looking at the music, with the metronome.
g. Count inside. Play by memory.

Step 4 Play the segment hands together:
a. Count **out loud**.
b. Count **out loud** with the metronome.
c. Count **out loud** without looking at the music, with the metronome.
d. Count inside. Play by memory.

These steps may be adjusted according to the ability of the student. Once the segment is learned, it works well to learn the one **before** it. That way, the new segment hooks into the one that is already learned and it feels extra good to play that one. In this manner, all the segments can be memorized and linked together.

Interpretation

Seven Steps to Create an Authentic, Compelling Musical Interpretation

When a piece of music is played, the performer is said to have "interpreted" that music. That is, the artist has learned the notes the composer wrote, in the rhythms indicated, paid attention to the articulations (slurs, legato, staccato, etc) and played loudly or softly as indicated. In addition, the nuances or shadings of tone and timing unique to the performer create the subtle art called "interpretation".

To the uninitiated, the interpretation seems like a gift to the great artists, one that is not granted to others. We believe, however, that all musicians can develop the skills embedded in great performances by applying the seven steps we have identified to create an authentic, compelling musical performance:

1. Create a singing tone
2. Balance the sound between the hands
3. Shape every phrase
4. Identify the most important note
5. Determine and analyze the form
6. Feel the flow of the rhythm
7. Use imagination to bring the music to life

Although we examine the elements separately, they overlap during the learning process.

Step 1. Create a Singing Tone

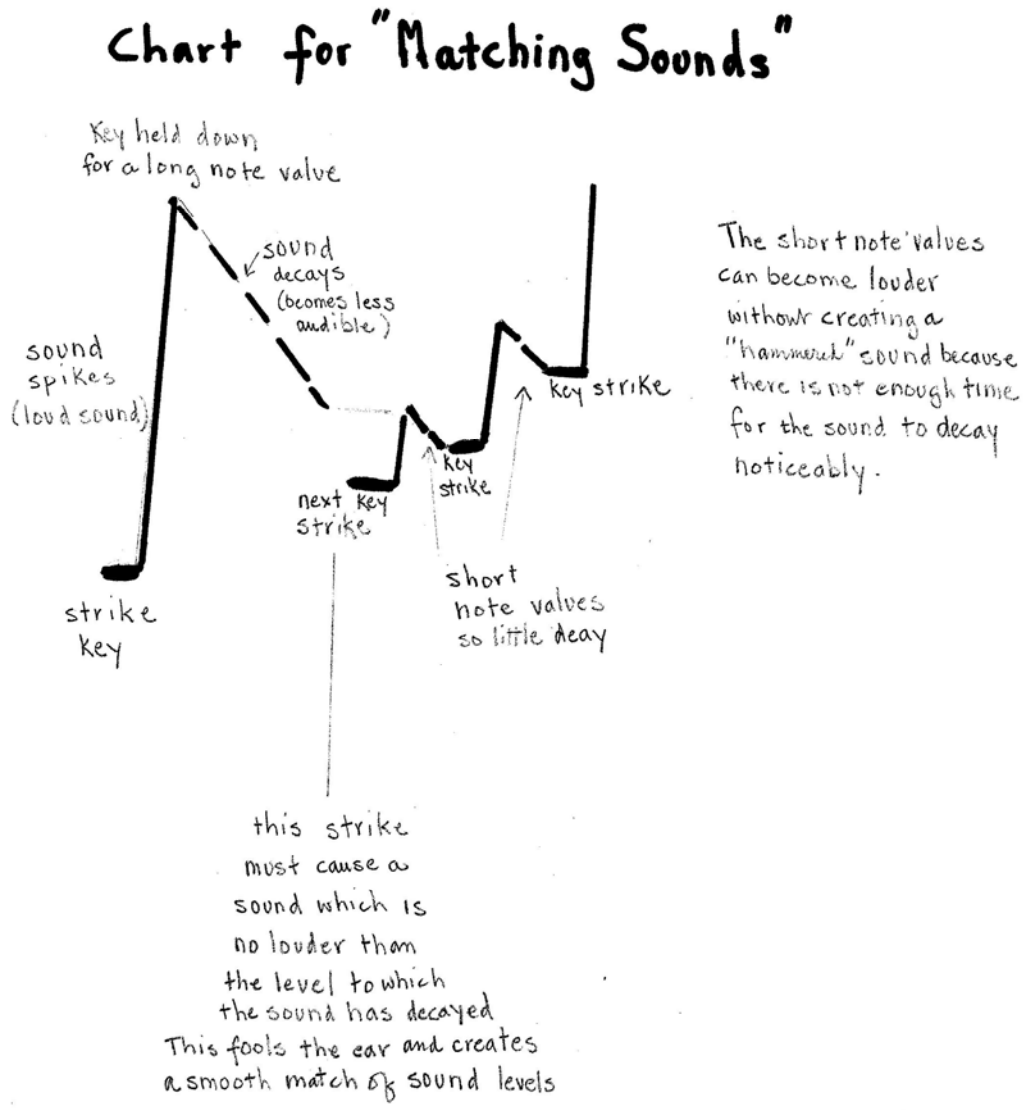
Creating a singing tone on the piano is a great challenge for pianists because we play a percussion instrument and the dampers stop the sound as soon as the key is released. The

pianist must somehow fool the ears into thinking the piano is creating a continuous, flowing sound instead of one hammered note after another. We need to be *magicians* as well as musicians.

- The **intention** to create a beautiful, continuous singing tone is the first step in making it happen. It is also part of the imagination. Imagination means having an inner aural sound of a beautiful voice and pretending that that voice is singing the notes being played. In so doing, the musical phrase flows naturally.

- The secret to a singing tone is called **matching sounds**. This means that after a long-held note, the sound which follows must be at the same volume to which the long-held note has decayed (become softer). As soon as the second note, played gently, has sounded, the ear does not react if the subsequent notes are louder. It will not perceive them as creating "bumps" in the sound because the sounds have not had time to decay. We have created a chart to illustrate how sound spikes and then decays. Look first at the words "Strike key" and follow the stem upwards.

Figure 22: Chart for "Matching Sounds"



Step 2. Balance the Sound Between the Hands

Balancing the sound between the hands means that **the melody** (wherever it occurs) **must be louder than the accompaniment**. This applies to all music where there is more than one voice. As soon as there are two or more lines of music being heard, one must dominate.

In **homophonic** (one voice) music, there is a melody plus accompaniment. The melody must be played louder than the accompaniment or the result is confusing and unpleasing to the ear.

In **polyphonic** (many voices) music, all voices are equally important. This can be perplexing: if all voices are equal, how do you hear the important notes? The answer is that the voice that has the theme (subject) must be louder than the voices that do not!

- **Five Steps for Creating Balance between Voices in Music (*Feathers and Lead*)**

(Assume the right hand plays the melody**)**

Step 1 First play the left hand notes as softly as feathers would play if feathers could play the piano (trust the brain to send enough energy to the fingers so that all notes will sound, yet they will be light and soft).

Step 2 Play the right hand notes as though energy has melted past the shoulder, melted past the elbow, melted past the wrist and pooled in the fingertips. The fingers now filled with lead are so heavy they create a big, loud sound without effort.

Step 3 Play hands together, with the right hand very loud and the left hand very soft. This is simple to do when compared to the effortless control a student has already demonstrated when playing different notes and rhythms in each hand simultaneously. It truly seems like a miracle.

Step 4 Once the miracle of playing simultaneously loudly in the right hand and softly in the left hand is achieved, for a melody that occurs in the left (such as Schumann's *Happy Farmer*), simply reverse the process and imagine the feathers in the right hand and the lead-tipped fingers in the left hand.

Step 5 In more complex music, sometimes it is necessary to play both loudly and softly in one hand. The *Feathers and Lead* image works just as effectively: those fingers that need to play softly respond to the thought that they are like feathers, and the fingers that need to play loudly feel lead-tipped.

- **How to Jump Large Intervals without Landing Too Heavily ("Bumping")**

  Once the understanding of the "feathers" touch of *Feathers and Lead* is established, jumping large intervals (used often in Left Hand accompaniment figures in the music of Chopin and always in Stride Piano) is an extension of that image.

  "Bumping" occurs when the pianist is already thinking about making the jump to the new key while playing the first one. This causes the finger to "launch" itself from the first note. Because time available to make the jump is short, the pianist is desperate to get to the destination note quickly and therefore grabs for it, generally causing it to play too loudly.

- **Five Steps for Playing Lightly and Softly No Matter How Large the Interval or How Fast the Tempo:**

Step 1 Play the first note before the leap softly by placing the finger on surface of the key, gently depressing the key to make the sound, then STOP.

Step 2 Look for the key that will be played next.

Step 3 Move the entire hand **AS FAST AS POSSIBLE** to the new key but DO NOT PLAY IT.

Step 4 Look to see that the correct finger is over the center of the key to be played.

Step 5 Depress the key gently (like a feather).

When the mind realizes that no matter how fast a feather travels, it still lands lightly and softly, it is possible to play all the notes as softly as desired. The hand is able to change position incredibly quickly. This position change now does not influence how loudly the key is played.

This technique permits playing accurately at a slow tempo. When the student is ready to increase the tempo, the fast hand position changes have already been practiced

Step 3. Shape Every Phrase: Identifying Points of Tension and Repose

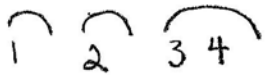
Every phrase of music has a natural shape of beginning, middle and end, just as a good story does. The great cellist, Pablo Casals, described this shape as a rainbow arch, starting softly at the bottom, loudest at the top, becoming softer at the end. This is another way of saying that after a phrase begins, it creates excitement (tension) as it reaches the peak and relaxes at the end (repose).

Examine every phrase to identify its shape. Often the highest note is the peak of tension. According to Toshio Takahashi, Suzuki master flute teacher, "The highest notes must be played the most warmly because they are the closest to the sun".

The two most common ways of shaping a phrase (regardless of its length) are:

i. 1 2 3 4

A four measure phrase may have one thought in the first measure, the same measure repeats, then measures 3 and 4 have a crescendo and diminuendo, creating the climax of the entire phrase.

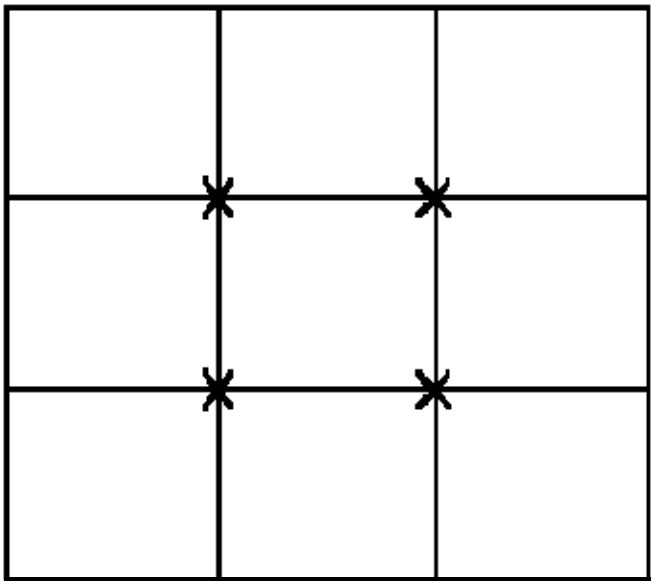
ii. 

There are other shapes as well: a phrase can begin with a loud dynamic, or begin softly and end with a bang.

Step 4. Three Steps to Discover the Most Important (Climax) Note of Any Piece

We base our understanding of the architecture of a piece on the Greek notion of the Golden Mean. This is also known as the one third/two thirds rule and is considered to be the most pleasing proportion. The following diagram illustrates the Golden Mean.

Figure 23: The Golden Mean



Both the length and width of the square are divided into three equal parts. The four points of intersection create places that may be points of the greatest visual interest. To have a climax dead center of the square was considered unpleasing (too much like a bulls-eye?). In music, the main climax usually occurs two-thirds and three-quarters of the way through the piece.

Just as each phrase has a beginning, middle and end, so does the entire piece. In order for the music to have the greatest coherence, it must have one principal climax point. It may

have several or even many climaxes but only one can be the "punch line". Sergei Rachmaninoff was famously said to know which specific note of any given piece was the principal climax. What a genius, we thought. How could he possibly know that? Now we have learned that we can discover this special note using the following strategy.

Three Steps to Discovering the Most Important Note of Any Piece:

Step 1 Identify all the Perfect Cadences [V-I] in the music (they are the climax points)

Step 2 Decide the order of importance of the climaxes, regardless of where they occur.

a. Usually the principal climax happens two thirds to three quarters of the way through the piece. This climax is sometimes the last one, but not always.

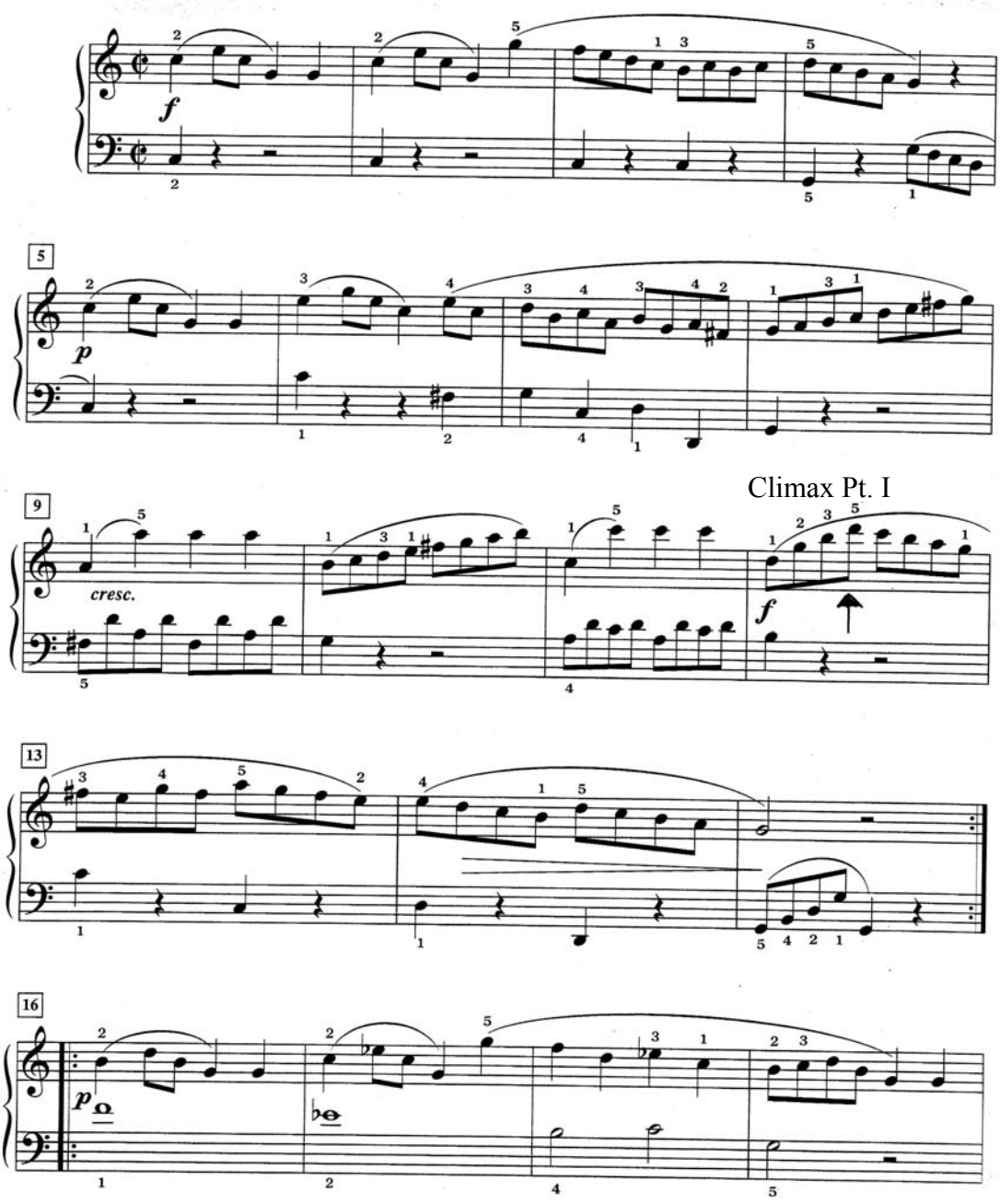
b. The first climax is the least important. After all, the story-teller doesn't give away the punch line of the joke in the first sentence.

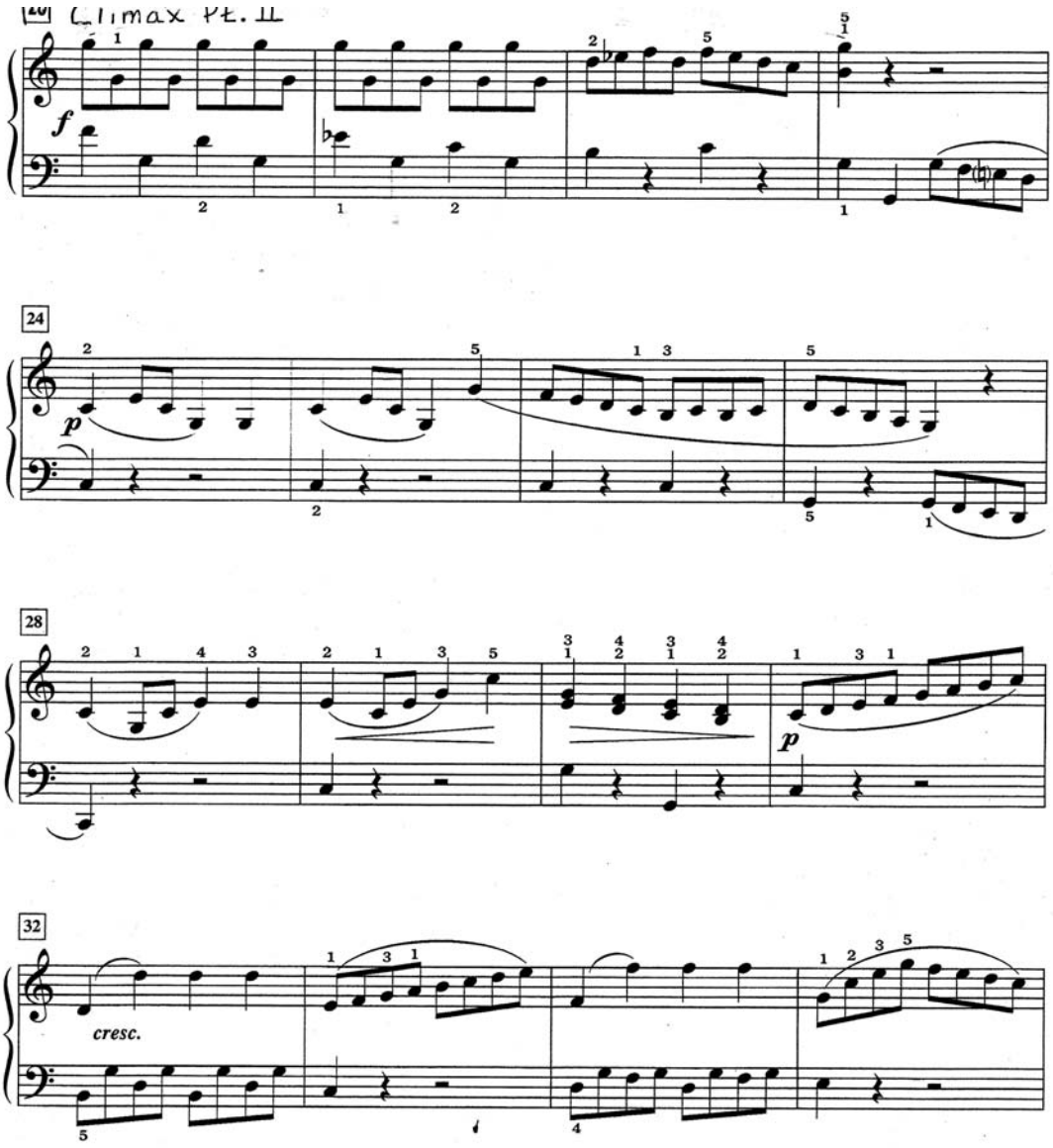
Step 3 Using the knowledge of Shape Every Phrase, identify the most important note of the principal climax. Often this note will be the highest pitch. That note is the most important note of the piece.

An example of discovering the most important note of the piece: the Clementi Sonatina, Op. 36, No.1, first movement (*Mastering the Piano, Level 3).*

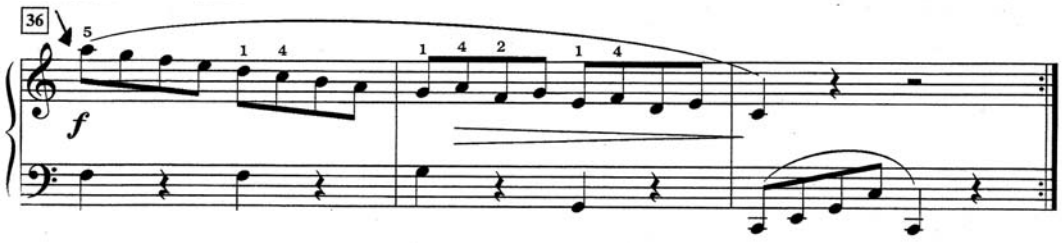
The three cadence points are in measures 12, 20 and 36. It is instructive to see how Clementi shapes the phrase of the first climax (the high D is the highest note on the page and therefore the most important note of the climax). Climax 2 occurs in the Development section and is incidental to the overall shape of the piece. Climax 3, which comes in the last phrase, is the principal climax. Compare it with Climax 1 and see that instead of G being the highest, most important note (as it would be if Clementi had exactly transposed his earlier theme), Clementi extends the climax and rises to A, thus making that the most important note of the piece.

Figure 24: Clementi Sonatina, Op. 36, No. 1, First Movement, Climax Points





Climax Pt. III



When performing this piece, ensure that the climaxes of the Exposition and Development sections are not played louder than the principal climax in the Recapitulation. Even if the audience does not know the strategy, they sense and understand intuitively the rightness of the shaping.

Step 5. Analyze the Form

The structure of the piece has a profound effect on its interpretation. Understanding form and analysis is the subject of advanced theory. We believe we are able to impart useful, easy to understand practical ways of approaching this analysis without becoming too detailed or academic.

a) How to Analyze and Perform a Fugue

1. What Is a Fugue?

A fugue is a composition in which three to five voices take turns singing the *subject*, or principal melody. The name fugue is derived from the Latin fuga meaning *flight* because the voices pursue each other. When one voice is singing the subject, the other voices may be silent or sing complementary material called *counterpoint*. The voices enter the music one at a time, and after each voice has been heard once, the voices may enter in a different order. Definitions of important aspects of the fugue are given in the Glossary of Terms (P.76).

A round is a simple form of fugue in which the voices sing the subject continuously and in strict order. One of the most famous rounds is *Row, Row,Row Your Boat,* which can be sung by two, three or four voices. The chart below shows how four voices overlap for one complete round. The round may be repeated indefinitely.

Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily	Life is but a dream	
	Row, row, row your boat	Gently Down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily	Life is but a dream

	Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily	Life is but a dream	
		Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily	Life is but a dream

2. How Should a Baroque Fugue be Performed?

There are two main schools of thought about how Baroque music should be played. The first says that the dynamic levels of the performance should be thought of in *blocks*. Each block can be whatever dynamic the performer chooses, for example, *forte* or *piano,* but within the block, however long, there should be no change of dynamics. This approach is based on the limited dynamic range of Baroque harpsichord and rudimentary pianos.

The second school believes the performer should take advantage of the modern piano which allows for the rise and fall of the level of sound as desired within a phrase.

From his letters, it is known that J.S. Bach was passionately committed to finding ever-improving instruments that would provide a greater range of dynamic expressiveness. We, and others including our esteemed colleague Willard Palmer, believe that Bach would have loved the dynamic subtleties possible with present day pianos.

- **Balancing the Voices in a Fugue**

The statement, 'In polyphonic music, all voices are equal; in homophonic music, there is a melody plus accompaniment', has caused confusion. In homophonic music the message is clear: play the accompaniment more softly than the melody so that the melody is easily heard. In polyphonic music, if 'the voices are equal', the implication is that they are all heard at equal volume. What is missing is the information that when one voice is singing the subject, the other voices must be softer so that the subject can be heard.

Each subject entry must be emphasized; this is called *voice leading.* In order to highlight the subject entries, the performer needs to know where they occur. To provide a simple way of learning where the subject entries are, we created the Fugue Subject Chart to show only each entry of the subject.

- **Five Steps for Analyzing and Interpreting a Fugue** (using Fugue No.1 from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I by J.S. Bach as an example):

(1) Mark the score.

(2) Mark the Fugue Subject Chart.
(3) Examine the chart for information about the structure of the fugue.
(4) Identify the perfect cadences and mark them in the score and on the chart.
(5) Use the information to determine the character and mood of the fugue.

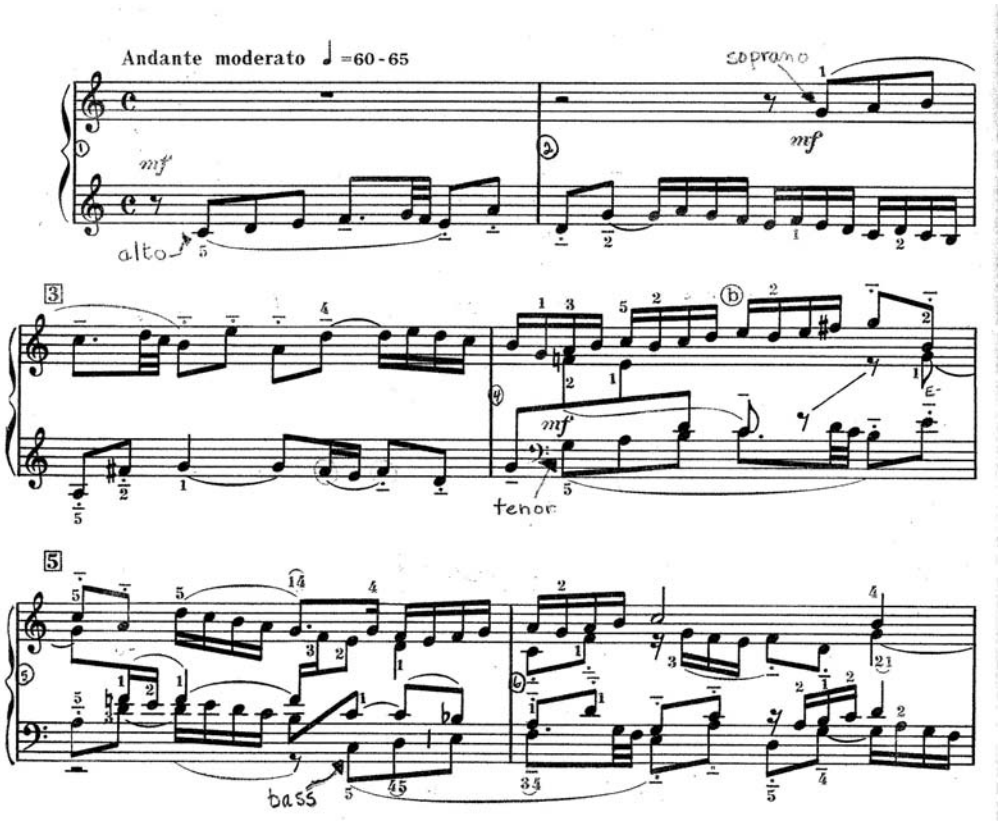
Step 1. Mark the Score

(1) Number every measure. Put the number in a circle between the two staves near the bar line.

(2) Identify the subject by marking the first note of the piece with an arrow. Mark the first note of the second voice with an arrow. The music between the two arrows defines the subject.

(3) Mark each entry of the subject with an arrow.

(4) Return to the beginning of the music and identify the voice of each subject entry and write its name (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, or Bass) at the head of each arrow.



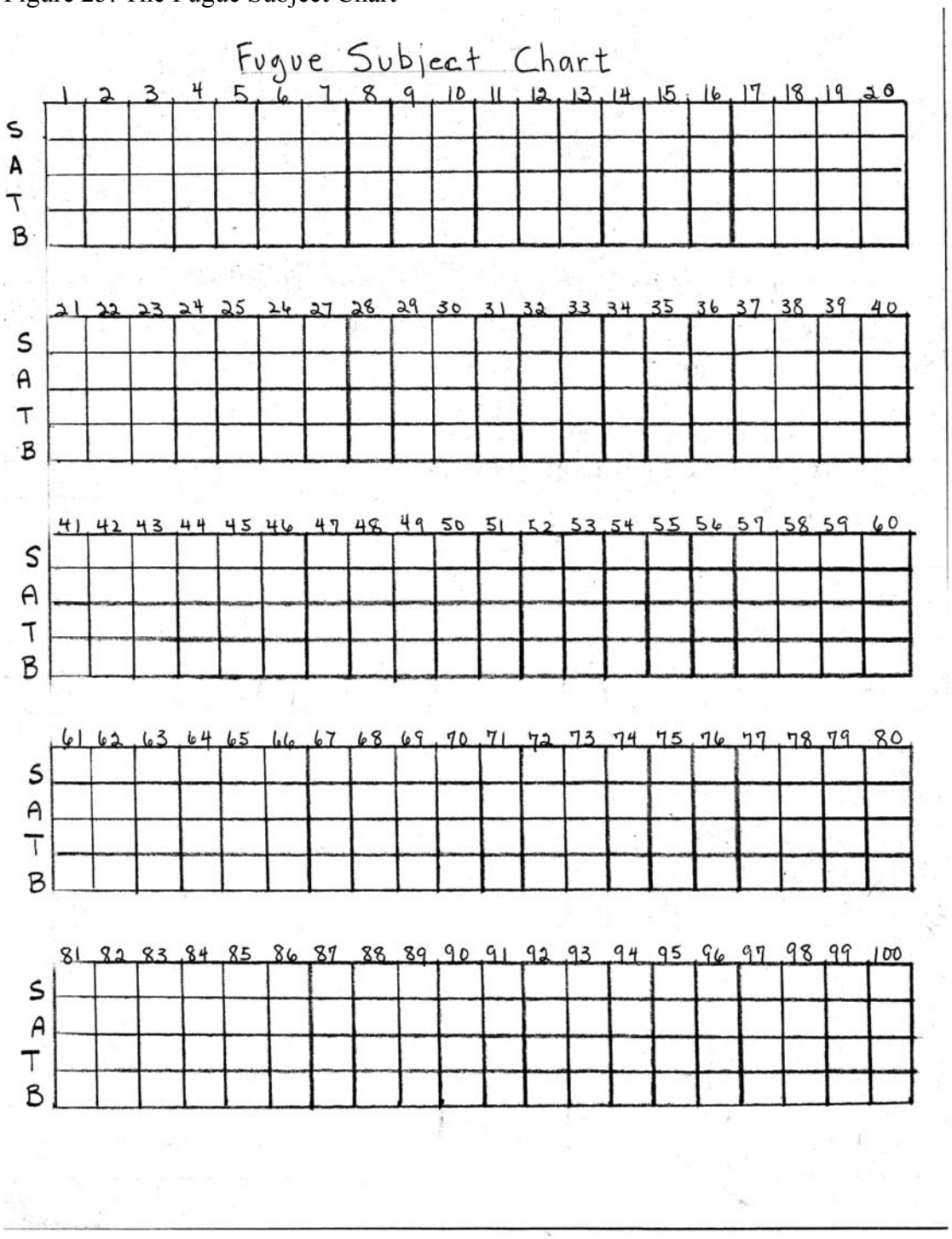
Step 2. Mark the Fugue Subject Chart

Fill in the Fugue Subject Chart. There are one hundred numbered squares in our chart, each square representing one measure of music. (Most of Bach's fugues use fewer than ninety measures while a small number require more than one hundred). The letters S A T B at the beginning of each line identify the voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass. Each voice subject entry will be represented by a line drawn in the appropriate squares to indicate where the entry starts and stops.

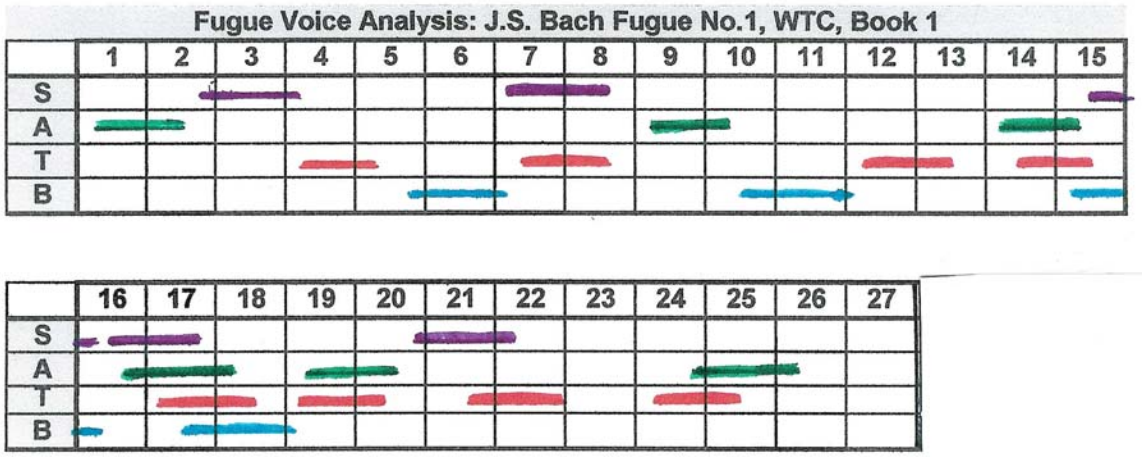
(1) Beginning with the square representing measure 1, using a colored pencil, draw a line on the chart in the voice box that represents the first appearance of the subject. Draw the line in the boxes, corresponding to where the subject appears in the score.

(2) Using a different colored pencil, draw a line in the voice box representing the second appearance of the subject (called the answer – see the Glossary of Terms – P. 76). Continue adding lines to represent the voices until all entries of the subject are accounted for.

Figure 25: The Fugue Subject Chart



The marked chart for this piece looks as follows:



Step 3. Examine the Chart for Information about the Fugue's Structure

From the marked chart we see:

(1) The fugue is rich in subject entries: there are only two measures in which the subject does not appear.

(2) There are no episodes; most fugues have several episodes (a string of measures where there are no subject entries).

(3) The Exposition begins in measure 1 and concludes at the first sixteenth note of measure 7 (all voices have been heard once).

(4) There is a Counter Exposition beginning in measure 7: all the voices have the subject again in rapid succession. It concludes at the first eighth note of the second beat of measure 12.

(5) Stretto (the overlapping of entries) occurs, beginning in measure 7 and continues in varying degrees of intensity until measure 25. The most easily seen example of complete stretto is in measures 16-18.

Step 4. Identify the perfect cadences and mark them in the score and on the Fugue Subject Chart

(1) There are three perfect cadences in this fugue: measure 13 (A minor), measure 19 (D major) and measure 24 (C major). A perfect cadence

always indicates a sense of completion and defines the segments of the fugue.

(2) Using a different colored pencil, draw a line in the voice box representing the second appearance of the subject (called the answer – see the Glossary of Terms).

Step 5. Decide the Character and Mood of the Fugue

Use the understanding gained from preparing the chart and identifying the cadences to interpret the fugue.

(1) The mood of the fugue is set by the character of the subject and each performer is responsible for deciding what this character is. Listening to some of the many outstanding recorded interpretations is instructive.

(2) Each perfect cadence is a climax point in the fugue and the performer must prioritize them. In general, the first climax point is the least important, and the last, the most important. In some cases, the climax before the last one is the most dramatic and played the most intensely.

Figure 26: Glossary of Terms

Answer: The answer is the second hearing of the subject. It is transposed up the interval of a fifth or down a fourth, always in the dominant key. If the answer is an exact transposition, that is, every interval between the notes matches those of the subject, it is called **Real**. If there is even one interval that is different (altered) between the subject and answer, it is called **Tonal**.

Counter Exposition: A counter exposition occurs when all the voices present the subject as redundant entries. The counter exposition immediately follows the exposition.

Counterpoint: Counterpoint is the harmonious combination of two or more melodies which are melodically and rhythmically independent. A fugue is made up of counterpoint.

Countersubject Counterpoint accompanies the answer, that is, the second hearing of the subject of a fugue. If the same counterpoint occurs regularly during the fugue, always played against the subject/answer, it is called a countersubject.

Exposition: The exposition begins at the start of the fugue, with the entry of the subject and concludes when each of the voices has been heard once.

Episode: An episode is a section of the fugue that contains new and often contrasting material. The first episode generally begins immediately following the exposition and continues, often for several measures, until the next subject entry. There may be several episodes in a fugue.

Perfect Cadence: A perfect cadence is the harmonic progression of Dominant-Tonic (V-I).

Redundant entry: A redundant entry is an extra entry of the subject/answer following the exposition, usually in a key (tonic or dominant) found in the exposition.

Stretto: Stretto occurs when there is overlapping of entries of the subject/answer, that is, the next voice enters before the previous voice has completed the subject or answer. This overlapping heightens the dramatic effect.

Subject: The subject is the principal melody of the fugue. It always begins the fugue alone, generally on the tonic (first) note of the key of the fugue. It ends when the next voice, the answer enters.

b. How to Analyze Sonata-Allegro Form

- **What is Sonata-Allegro form?**

Sonata-Allegro Form was the dominant musical form of the Classical period (1750-1820) and continued to be prominent through the Romantic period (1820-1920). It is a form that satisfies the basic human requirement that music have 'a clear, comprehensible structure that provides interest through contrast and variety both in thematic material and key' (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music). In tracing its development, it is possible to see embryonic Sonata-Allegro Form in the Baroque binary form sonatas of Scarlatti. Historians state that the classical form consisting of two main Themes, a Development of those themes, and a Recapitulation, began to emerge in the harpsichord works of C. P. E. Bach (1714-1788), became clear in the sonatas of Haydn (1732-1809) and Mozart (1756-1791), and reached its zenith in Beethoven's works (1770-1827). This form, which was originally used as the first movement 'Allegro', became so identified with the works called 'Sonata' that it became known as 'Sonata-Allegro' form (also called *first-movement form).*

- **Where Sonata-Allegro Form is Used**

Sonata-Allegro Form is a complete movement of a three- or four- movement piece of music called 'Sonata', from the Classical period onward. It is almost always found in at least one movement of a sonata; but occurs also in concertos, symphonies, and quartets. The traditional pattern for the three movements is:

1. Sonata-Allegro Form
2. Adagio in Sonata, Binary (AB), Ternary (ABA), or even Rondo Form
3. Rondo or Sonata-Allegro Form.

- **How to identify Sonata-Allegro Form**

In a printed score, there are two obvious clues:

(1) There will be a repeat sign about one-third of the way through the movement.

(2) There will be a return of the opening theme about two-thirds of the way through the movement.

- **How Sonata-Allegro Form is Constructed**

A movement written in Sonata-Allegro Form has three sections:

(1) The Exposition: there are two contrasting themes, often connected by a modulating passage called a bridge. The first theme is in the tonic key and the second theme is in the dominant or relative major if the composition is in the minor key. A codetta sometimes follows Theme II.

(2) The Development: this is the central section in which the themes of the Exposition are freely developed, using harmonic modulations to create heightened emotional impact.

(3) Recapitulation: this brings back the two themes of the Exposition, with the second theme in the Tonic key. A coda follows Theme II**.**

Figure 27: Sonata-Allegro Form Chart

I. Exposition

Theme I	(in Tonic Key)
Bridge	(in Tonic Key and may modulate to Dominant or Relative Major Key)
Theme II	(in, or modulates to, Dominant Key or Relative Major Key)
(Codetta)	(in Dominant or Relative Major Key)

II. Development - always begins after the double bar

III. Recapitulation

Theme I	(in Tonic Key)
Bridge	(in Tonic Key)
Theme II	(in Tonic Key)
Coda	(in Tonic Key)

- **Analyzing Sonata-Allegro Form**

To analyze a piece in Sonata-Allegro Form:

(1) Number all the measures..

(2) Identify the beginning of the Exposition (the opening notes) by writing *Exposition* above this place in the score.

(3) Identify the beginning of the Development section (it always begins after the double bar and is characterized by modulations and chromatic harmonies that are created by the modulations). Write *Development* above this place in the score.

(4) Identify the beginning of the Recapitulation (look for the same music as in the opening measures. Sometimes it will be in a different register, usually one octave lower). Write *Recapitulation* above this place in the score.

(5) Go back to the beginning and mark Theme I. It starts the piece (unless there is an Introduction, as in Beethoven's Sonata '*Pathetique'*, Op. 13, first movement). Write *Theme I* above this place in the score.

(6) Identify Theme II: look for new material that contrasts greatly with Theme I. The contrast is the biggest clue. It may use larger or smaller note values or it may be in a different key or both. It will definitely have a different emotional character. Mark the beginning of Theme II by writing *Theme II* above this place in the score.

(7) Identify any extra material between Theme I and Theme II. This is called the Bridge and while it follows Theme I it is not part of it. The modulation to Theme II often takes place in the Bridge. Mark the beginning of the Bridge by writing *Bridge* above this place in the score.

(8) Identify the Codetta, if present. It follows Theme II, and is most easily determined by comparing the ending of the Exposition with the ending of the Recapitulation. Look for the difference between the music that follows the end of Theme II. Identify the beginning of the Codetta in the Exposition by writing *Codetta* above this place in the score.

(9) Identify the beginning of Theme I in the Recapitulation: Look for the music of the opening measures. It will most likely be the same, possibly with some small variation and could possibly be in a different register. Write *Theme I* above this place in the score.

(10) Identify the beginning of Theme II in the Recapitulation and mark *Theme II* above this place in the score.

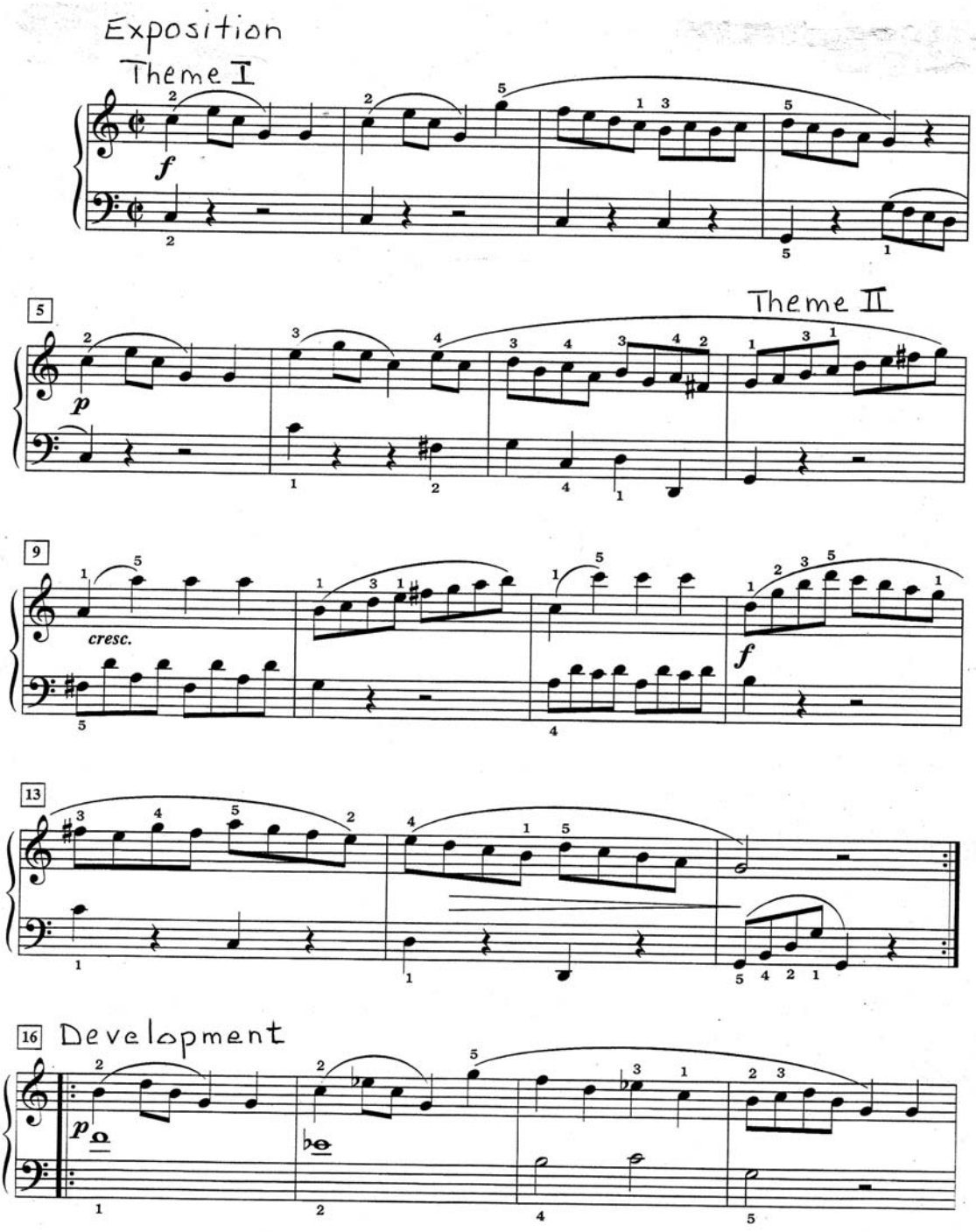
(11). Identify the Bridge by comparing the score with that of the Bridge in the Exposition. Write *Bridge* above this place in the score.

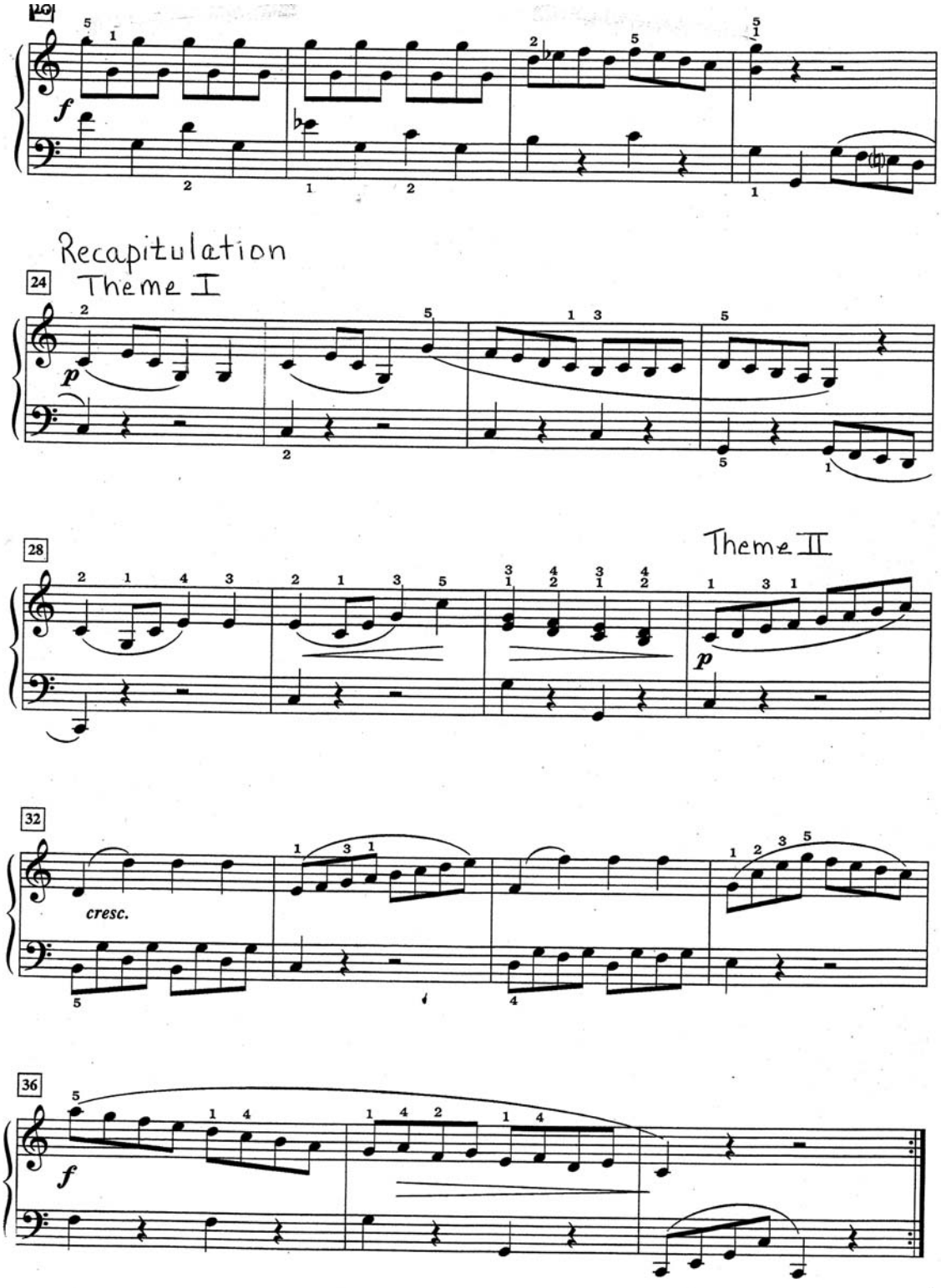
(12) Identify the Coda by comparing the difference between the endings of Theme II in the Exposition and the Recapitulation. Write *Coda* above this place in the score.

An Example of Sonata-Allegro Form: **Clementi Sonatina, Op. 36, No. 1, First movement** (*Mastering the Piano,* Level 2, P. 22)

Section	**Measures**	**Key**
Exposition		
Theme I	1-8*	C major
Theme II	*8-15	G major
No Codetta		
Development	16-23	modulates to C minor
Recapitulation		
Theme I	24-31*	C major
Theme II	* 31-38	C major
No Coda		

* There is a slight overlap of the ending of Theme I and the beginning of Theme II


Exposition
Theme I
f
5
Theme II
p
9
cresc.
f
13
16
Development
p


20
f
Recapitulation
24
Theme I
p
28
Theme II
p
32
cresc.
36
f

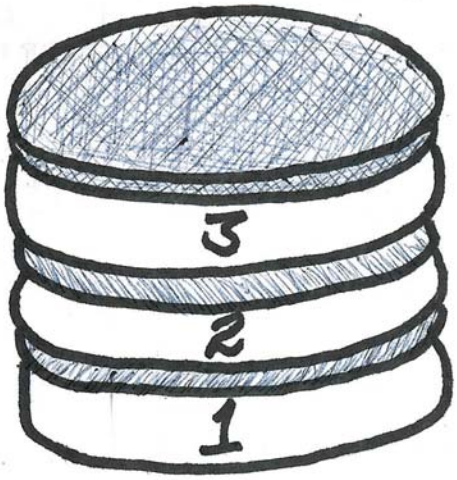
c. How to Analyze Rondo Form

Rondo form is used most often as the third movement of a sonata. It may also be used in concertos, symphonies, quartets and solo pieces. *Fur Elise* by Beethoven is a famous example. Beethoven even used the Rondo form for the second as well as the third movement of his Sonata, Op. 13, 'Pathetique'.

Analyzing a piece in Rondo form is straightforward: the main theme is heard at least three times, more or less unaltered. In classical Form and Analysis texts, it is usually written as A B A C A. It is more fun to think of Rondo form as a layer cake with different fillings between the layers, as shown below (viewed from bottom to top):

Rondo Form Chart

	Coda	Icing
A	**Theme**	Layer 3
C	**Episode 2**	Second filling
A	**Theme**	Layer 2
B	**Episode 1**	First filling
A	**Theme**	Layer 1



Example: *Für Elise* by L. van Beethoven (bottom to top view)
There is no coda.

A	Theme	measure 88 to end (measure 105)	Layer 3
C	Episode 2	measure 62 to 85	Second filling
A	Theme	measure 40 to 61, first eighth note	Layer 2
B	Episode 1	measure 24, second half of second beat to 39	First filling
A	Theme	measure 1 to 24, first beat and a half	Layer 1

d. How to Analyze All Other Forms

We have examined Fugue, Sonata-Allegro and Rondo form in great detail. The Fugue was an important component of the Baroque era (1600-1750) while Sonata-Allegro and Rondo forms were dominant in the Classical era, extending into the Romantic era (1750-1820). In the Romantic period, composers became less interested in strict form, although many works were written in Ternary form (a b a). Composers modified all the forms, almost beyond recognition, yet early in the 20th Century, composers began again to use the classical forms.

There are several forms we have not yet examined:

Binary form: **‖: a :‖: b :‖** These are two-part pieces in which each part repeats. Virtually all Scarlatti sonatas employ this form; see Level 3, Sonata in C, K. 95, L. 358

Rounded Binary form: **‖: a :‖: b a :‖** The first part is repeated, then the second part is paired with the first and they are both repeated. In many ways, this music looks like Ternary form (a b a) with repeats. The Chopin Nocturne, Op. 9, No. 2 fits Rounded Binary form profile perfectly, with the addition of a Coda.

Example: Chopin Nocturne, Op. 9, No. 2

a	Theme I	measure 1 to 4
a	Theme I (elaborated)	measure 5 to 8
b	Theme II	(pickup to) measure 9 to 12
a	Theme I (elaborated)	measure 13 to 16
b	Theme II	(pickup to) measure 17 to 20
a	Theme I (elaborated)	measure 21 to 24
Coda		measure 25 to 34 (end)

Ternary form: a b a. Example: Burgmuller 'The Pearls', Op. 109, No. 2

"Through-composed" form: A composition that does not repeat any material within itself is said to be 'through-composed'. Medieval motets and some songs are examples.

Step 6. Feel the Flow of the Rhythm

Duke Ellington: It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing!

Toshio Takahashi: Melody has rhythm; harmony has rhythm; rhythm has rhythm.

Kato Havas: Music is like a river, it is always flowing.

A piece comes to life when the performer has an inner sense of the continuous pulse of the music. Without that sense, the performance is lifeless, or plodding, at best.

In order to develop the inner feeling for the rhythmical flow, we recommend:

- Practicing the Counting Charts (see P. 41)
- Counting out loud when learning a piece (see P.41)
- Practicing the piece with the metronome, counting out loud. (The downbeats reveal the shape of the phrases most clearly).
- Counting the rhythm of one or two measures of the music internally before beginning to play (see P.60)

Step 7. Use Imagination to Bring Music to Life

The preceding Elements in Creating an Authentic, Compelling Musical Performance contain analyses and strategies that we have developed to turn what was thought to be right-brain activities that cannot be explained with words or organized into procedures into left-brain, step-by-step strategies. Being aware of those elements helps to create a musical performance; applying the strategies helps to ensure that the piece will be correctly and well played. Using imagination, though, is the tool that creates a truly authentic performance in which the performer feels the music deeply and is totally engaged while playing it.

Every human being is inherently musical; all known cultures make music in some fashion. Humans tend to sing when they are happy and, in many parts of the world, music is used to help labor flow more smoothly (the Volga Boatmen song) or to pass the time more pleasantly. Musicians often make up words to the rhythms they play in order to cause the accents to fall on the appropriate notes.

Virtually every person is able to visualize real or imaginary happenings. Every child who has ever sat in a schoolroom and thought about being somewhere else has demonstrated this ability. Imagination is the name we give to picturing something in our mind.

Humans tend to visualize scenes associated with emotions; music is emotion in sound. As far back as the 1600's, composers tried to codify which sounds triggered which emotions (The Theory of Affects). When the mind is visualizing a scene at the same time the hands are playing music, the subtleties of rhythm and spacing between the notes becomes natural, easy and right. It creates what we call an **organic** interpretation, where rests feel as though they are breaths, rather than a stopping of the sound. Tone color becomes more subtle because the muscles can respond in mille-seconds, more quickly than they can respond to a thought of "now play louder", etc.

A Strategy for Using Imagination When Playing the Piano

Examine the music for the clues that the composer gives: form, title, tempo directions, key signature, time signatures, dynamic markings, etc. Major key signatures are usually bright, pleasant, happy or strong; minor keys are generally sad or bleak. When the overall mood is decided, imagine feeling that emotion as strongly as possible, then begin to play the piece.

Even if the student has never experienced the emotion, ask him to **pretend** that he has. Pretending is a powerful tool. Fantastic events can happen and it is all OK. We give ourselves permission to imagine anything.

Sometimes the music can trigger an association with an event, a book or a movie. It is important for all of us to read, see movies, dance, theatre, and to live life. All experiences are fodder for the imagination.

In simple pieces, there may be only one mood. Most pieces, though, have contrasting moods and the imagination needs to respond accordingly.

Many performers observe find that when they are focused on expressing emotion, dramatic changes that happen to the sound and their accuracy improves noticeably.

Checklist for Seven Steps to Create an Authentic, Compelling Musical Interpretation

Step 1. Create a Singing Tone.

a. Have the intention to make the melody sing.

b. "Match" sounds: The note that follows a long note must be played softly.

Step 2. Balance the Sound Between the Hands.

a. Homophonic music is melody and accompaniment (played softly).

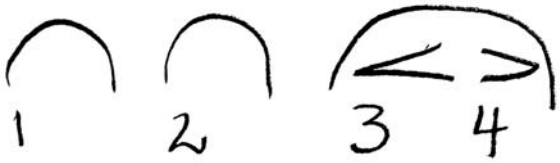
b. Polyphonic music is a dominant voice (at any given time) and softer voices.

c. "Feathers and Lead": imagine the hand playing the melody to have fingers that are as heavy as lead. Imagine the other hand having feathers instead of fingers.

Step 3. Shape Every Phrase: Identify Points of Tension and Repose

a.

b.



c. Rising or falling sequences.

Step 4. Discover the most important (climax) note of any piece

a. Discover all the climax points in the piece (these always occur at perfect cadences).

b. Prioritize the climaxes: the most important one is either last or second to last. Play this one the most intensely.

c. Discover the most important note of the most important climax point: this is the most important note of the piece.

Step 5. Analyze the Form: is it a Fugue, Sonata-Form, Rondo, etc.?

Step 6. Feel the Flow of the Rhythm

a. Takahashi: Melody has rhythm, harmony has rhythm, rhythm has rhythm.

b. Learn to think like a conductor: count beats out loud to discover that most important notes fall on the downbeat!

c. The downbeats reveal the shaping of the phrases most clearly.

Step 7. Use Imagination to Bring Music to Life

a. Picture yourself sitting in a comfortable movie theater chair.

b. Hear your piece being played magnificently.

c. What is the movie scene coming on the screen that the director has chosen your piece to enhance? (Let your brain fill it in)

PERFORMANCE

1. "Taking Ownership" of a Performance

"Taking ownership" means that the performer is totally **committed** to the performance. It means knowing the answer to the following questions:

(1) What do I think this music all about?
(2) How do I want to hear/play it?

If I am the **owner** of that music/performance, I immediately care much more intensely about both playing it and paying attention to when I practice it.

- **How Does a Performer "Take Ownership"?**

(1) By having a "non-competitive" attitude; knowing that there is no comparison to anyone else. Every performance is unique.

(2) By respecting his own efforts and by realizing that growth is a process and takes time. It cannot be rushed or forced.

(3) By having specific and achievable goals so that each practice session is realistic.

- **What Is the Goal of "Taking Ownership"?**

The goal is for the performer to feel completely in charge of the performance, not trying to follow someone else's instructions. It is not possible to "work from someone else's

center". It is only from one's own center that power and authenticity arises. This does not mean that instruction is not required; it means only that the goal of the instruction must be to prompt the performer to find his own answers.

- **What Are the Steps to "Taking Ownership"?**

Use the Elements in Creating an Authentic, Compelling, Musical Performance (P.86). When these steps have been practiced and integrated, the piece should be ready for performance.

2. Understanding the Difference Between Home Practice and Performance

After the piece is learned, it needs to be "seasoned" for performance. It is not commonly understood that being able to play the piece at home and being able to play it in front of others are two separate, distinct skills. At home, the situation is familiar and comfortable, on a piano that is known. In performance, every fiber of the performer's being is adjusting to the stimuli of a new place, a new piano and strangers who are listening and watching intently. Instead of having 100% of concentration available to play the music, there may be only 80%; the remaining brain power is busy responding to all the new stimuli.

3. Strategies for Strengthening Concentration in Performance

We have developed several powerful strategies to help deal with performance. These strategies are required from adolescence onward. Most young children are totally unselfconscious; they get up and strut their stuff in all innocence and charm, needing only smiles and encouragement from their families. In adolescence, it is as though the lights of the world are on the performer and everything comes under intense scrutiny.

These strategies are designed to counter the tendency for the mind to disconnect from the performance it by creating the feeling that there is a someone who is the watcher, witnessing the someone who is the performer. This tendency is most pronounced when people fear that others will judge them negatively.

- **Overload the brain.**

People have accomplished amazing feats when they have been so single-minded on doing something that their fear is totally forgotten. We have learned that if the mind is totally focused on communicating an emotion or story, the chatter of negative thoughts can be hushed. If the performer does not have a story, then concentrating on the shaping of each phrase and thinking about arriving at the climax points of the piece can be effective.

- ***Run-throughs.***

Run-throughs are what we call rehearsals for performance. The idea is to become accustomed to playing to an audience. Rehearsing only for immediate family does not create the feeling of strangers; they are too familiar. On the other hand, it is not necessary to play for critics either; invite only people who will listen encouragingly. No matter how well learned the piece is, playing it in front of others seems to remove a layer of concentration. When that happens, some segments of the piece may be not as secure as they seemed in practice. That is the entire point: to find these weak spots before the main performance. We call these places **guardian angels:** pay attention to them now and they will save the performance later.

- ***Clap* Game**

Use clap game after the piece is learned. It is a powerful tool both for keeping the mind attentive and for having lots of places in the piece to jump to, in case of a lapse of concentration. There are three steps:

(1) Begin to play the piece.

(2) At random, have an observer clap hands.

(3) Jump to the next *Scramble* Section as quickly as possible, without stopping or breaking the rhythmic flow.

(4) The last *Scramble* near the ending becomes a *Parachute Point.*

Playing *Clap Game* is useful for all solo musicians as well as students and helps:

- ✓ To learn to deal with distractions and know that in performance it is better to keep going rather than stopping or fumbling, trying to find a "lost spot."
- ✓ To reinforce recall of the *Scramble* Section beginnings.
- ✓ To improve the ability to recover composure quickly and to jump smoothly to the next logical segment in the piece.

- ***Parachute Point* (The great dignity preserver)**

A *Parachute Point* is a place near the ending of a piece that the performer jumps to. It is used in performance for recovery after a concentration lapse so that the performer can finish with dignity intact. If the *Parachute Point* is mastered, the transition to the conclusion can be so smooth that the audience will not detect it. There are three steps in this process:

Step 1. Select a small segment close to the end as the *Parachute Point*. It could be the last chord, the last two chords, or a measure or two. Make sure the *Parachute Point* is not too long because a loss of concentration could occur within the *Parachute Point* itself. Keep it short!

Step 2. Practice playing the *Parachute Point* as a separate fragment of music.

Step 3. During performance preparation, practice jumping from many different places in the music to the *Parachute Point*, ending the piece and rising from the bench with a triumphant smile.

5. Practicing versus Testing

For most pianists, fear of a "memory lapse" is the great bogeyman of performance. Because of this fear, the mind prompts playing the piece over and over again to make sure it is memorized. We believe there are two bits of wrong thinking embedded in this fear:

(1) The brain does not forget; it is concentration that is interrupted.

(2) Playing the piece over and over is not practicing; this is called *testing*. Try to avoid this. Instead of trying to find out if the piece is in the fingers or imagining that the performance is actually underway, play the piece as it is, right now. Then, after it is finished, if there were uncomfortable spots, **practice only those passages.** In that manner, the entire piece will be strengthened and improved

6. Seven Steps in Creating a Schedule for Performance Readiness

It is worthwhile to schedule the progress of study leading to a performance, whether it is a public engagement or examination. To follow are seven steps that work backwards from the performance day to the present day (with hypothetical dates for illustration):

Step 1. Begin with the date of the performance (June 1) on a piece of paper.
Step 2. Below that date, write the date of one week earlier (May 25): 3rd run-through.
Step 3. One week earlier again (May 18): 2nd run-through
Step 4. One week earlier again (May 11): 1st run-through
Step 5. Two weeks earlier (April 27): piece(s) all memorized
Step 6. One month earlier (March 27): piece(s) all HT, complex spots mastered.
Step 7. Two months earlier (January 27 – today's date): Start learning the piece(s).

Always plan from the performance date to today's date. The plan may not unfold exactly as outlined but it gives a clear picture of what needs to happen.

7. Reviewing Repertoire

Regularly reviewing pieces that have been memorized is one of the key components of Suzuki pedagogy. In his mother tongue philosophy, Dr. Suzuki taught that repertoire should accumulate in the same way as words do after children learn them. From our experience, we know that review is extremely beneficial to music students: it promotes confidence, facility and motivation. There is also great pleasure in being able to sit down and play something without having to work at it.

Reviewing repertoire, however, is a challenge for pianists. Because we do not play along with others the way the violinists do, there is less motivation to review pieces. Thus when a pianist is asked to play without warning, it is usually necessary to fall back on the excuse "I don't have my music with me". Having repertoire at their fingertips at all times not only means that students are always ready and able to play a piece, it also fuels the confidence that results from knowing something for a long time. There is the additional advantage of developing the facility made possible by freedom from having to read from the printed page. We recommend rotating through a list of five-to-ten pieces, selected from the list of repertoire the student has learned.

We liken the reviewing process to a bubble on the surface of the lake: when the piece is well-learned and recently played, the bubble is right at the surface. Over time, if not played, the bubble sinks further and further down. Bringing it back to the surface almost requires re-learning the piece and that never feels like fun. However, playing the piece, even just three or four times per month, keeps it close to the surface. Teachers may have to help parents understand that a review piece does not have to be perfectly played every time. It is enough just to reacquaint the fingers with the notes. Sometimes we recommend reviewing just a portion of a piece, covering the entire selection over a period of several days.

For performance, students should play a piece that is well-learned and settled, not the newest piece. All of us love the excitement of the new but what is not well understood is that playing a new piece is a new step; playing in public is a different new step. If we follow the wisdom that says, "One step at a time", playing a well-learned, settled piece should be the only new step.

Stage Presence

Stage Presence is the term used to describe how the performer walks onstage, performs, then leaves the stage and is a separate skill from performing a piece. Most prospective

performers do not practice this skill because they do not realize just how important it is, nor how different it feels to have to walk from behind the curtain, across the stage to the instrument and off again. Therefore we must develop the skill consciously. Happily, like all skills, it can be broken down into a step-by-step sequence that everyone can learn and master.

- **Why Practice *Stage Presence*?**

  (1) For total **comfort** onstage.
  (2) For **control** (because there is a strategy for every part of the experience).
  (3) So that the performer can be truly **authentic**. Stage Presence is not a tactic intended to change a person in any way! It does provide the security of a pre-planned rehearsed routine and prevents visible signs of anxiety or self-consciousness.

- **How to Learn a Positive Attitude about Being Onstage**

In general, little children adore going on stage to perform. They know that their parents, grandparents and assorted fans love them no matter what and they can't wait to get up there and show off.

It seems to be when puberty hits that complications arise. Because nature is now preparing these fledgling adults to leave the nest and become independent adults, it causes them to be incredibly self-conscious. One minute they are completely grown-up and disdainful of assistance and the next, wanting to cuddle and be comforted. These inconvenient but necessary fluctuations create a situation where, instead of being able to concentrate on playing their piece, they are worried about how they look, who is in the audience judging them, etc.

We try to implant positive images in these young performers. Mae West wrote in her auto-biography that she knew from the time she was seven years old that when she was on stage, no matter what happened, it was going to make her look better! So we talk about the fact that we cannot control what might happen onstage and that there are no written guarantees that everything will be perfect. We do know that no matter what happens, it is possible to respond with good humor and courtesy. Those qualities always win the heart of the audience.

- **The Vocabulary of Appreciation: How to Learn Positive Talk for Yourself and Others**

In our years as performing musicians and teachers, we have observed many changes in attitudes and teaching practices. Before the pioneering work of Haim Ginott, Thomas Gordon, Grinder and Bandler, Shinichi Suzuki and others, the prevailing climate in

master classes and in many studios was, "What was wrong with that?" or "How can we fix that?" Such questions elicit negative responses and not only damage but shred the ego. Occasionally there is such a trauma that the student abandons music forever but more often there is a gradual seeping away of the performer's enjoyment and self-esteem.

We are true believers in the power of positive language! As the great Canadian golfer Moe Norman, when asked how he could fix what was wrong with his game, replied, "I don't want to know what is wrong, I want to know what is right!"

Our teaching is predicated on finding what is right, what is good and applying that knowledge to every aspect of our lives, our work, our music. Our overall premise is that people learn best when they are engaged in an activity they love. Our performing premise is that people perform best when they feel good about themselves and the way they play their pieces. These good feelings are created by the performer's "self-talk". Before a performance, negative talk says: "I've practiced and practiced and I'm still not sure about those two measures. What if I blow them?" Positive talk says: "I love the mood of this piece, it is joyous and fun and I want to feel that way when I play it". What is said after performing? Negative talk says: "I fumbled that tricky bit and everyone heard it and knows that I messed up. Why can't I ever get it right?" Positive talk is "I loved playing that piece and I really gave it everything I had." Even just reading those two different attitudes can make us feel up and happy or down and sad.

Happy talk is the answer to performing pleasure, regardless of the importance of the occasion. Find the good and build on it! Pablo Casals responded to a student who, after playing rather poorly, questioned the positive comments made by renowned cellist: "I praised the skills you had. As for the mistakes you made and the things you did not do well, I leave that to fools to criticize. My job is to praise." Great teachers know that positive talk is far more effective and powerful than so-called 'constructive criticism'.

We have discovered in the Stage Presence classes that it is a powerful practice to require that each student makes one positive statement after every performance of the others. There are some ground rules for these statements:

1. It must be totally positive, eg, "I loved your interpretation of that piece", "Your tone was really beautiful"
2. It must not use a negative comparison to make a positive, for example, "I've heard that piece totally butchered and you did a good performance" or "You really had trouble in one spot yesterday and today it was fine".

We even make lists of positive words, such as terrific, excellent, awesome, wonderful, joyous, radiant, sparkling, etc. It has been shown that there are many more words in English to describe negative feelings than positive ones, so we try to enlarge our positive vocabulary.

The idea is that by listening enthusiastically to the performances of others and speaking generously about their accomplishments, it frees us to be enthusiastic and generous and to look for the good in our performance as well.

Checklist for *Stage Presence*

1. Backstage, before you can be seen by the audience:

    a. Feel the mood of your piece. Say to yourself the words that make you feel that mood the most strongly.

    b. **Show your teeth!** (and keep them showing).

2. Walk onstage, **head up, show your teeth,** always walking in front of piano.

3. **STOP** in front of piano bench.

4. Hands at your side, feet together, **BOW** (say "thank you" to your toes: it shows the top of your head to the audience and is a simple and graceful way to bow).

5. Turn to face the keyboard (¼ turn), **sidle** (small steps) between piano and bench.

6. **Gently lower bottom on to bench**, then make adjustments for seating comfort.

7. **Check pedal** (without looking): Use right foot to feel the outside of the damper (right) pedal to ensure you are on the correct pedal.

8. **Hands on lap.** Mentally:

    (1) Say the beginning notes of the piece for each hand, for example, Left Hand, finger 5 plays middle C, Right Hand, finger 3 plays treble C.

    (2) When ready to begin: Count 2 measures of the rhythm in tempo (if the piece is very slow, may only count 1 measure)

    (3) Begin the piece exactly on the 3rd measure (or 2nd, if the piece is slow)

9. The piece is over when your hands are back in your lap. Before turning to face the audience **show your teeth**.

10. Stand, **bow** (may bend more deeply now), keep **showing your teeth, w**alk off stage, **showing your teeth** all the way until you are invisible to the audience.

- **How to Use the Checklist for Stage Presence**

1. We believe that if the performer knows how to handle being onstage and is comfortable there, he will be able to focus on the real job: communicating the emotion of the music .

2. It is more effective for the students if they talk their way through the Checklist when they are practicing Stage Presence.

3. From the beginning lessons, we make have the students say out loud what key and finger is used to begin the Right Hand and what key and finger is used to begin the Left Hand in every piece they play. Saying the names of the beginning notes and the fingers that play them (OUT LOUD in practice) ensures being able to start the piece in performance. Even the greatest musicians have horror stories about the times when, onstage, they could not remember how to begin the piece. We guarantee that forgetting the opening notes will never happen if this strategy is used.

4. We recommend counting two measures of the rhythm of the piece before starting in order to think about the music, how it sounds, the correct tempo, and the mood. In the first measure of counting, the hands are in the lap. During the second measure, the hands go to the beginning notes and the performer begins on the third. This creates a "congruent" beginning: the entire body is focused on the piece, the hands come up to the piano slowly, if the tempo is slow, or fast, if the tempo is fast.

5. The statement "**Show Your Teeth**" is our way of helping the students to release the self-consciousness that most people feel when they are commanded to smile. "Show your teeth" is so ridiculous that almost everyone laughs and ends up smiling as a result. We demonstrate that no matter how pleasant a person's look may be, if the teeth are not showing, the audience does not receive the impression that the performer feels happy walking on stage.