Addressing Overlooked Skills in Group Piano Teaching CU Boulder Collegiate Chapter of MTNA MTNA National Conference 2018

Keyboard Geography/Injury Prevention Sarah Rushing

Keyboard Geography Exercises

Without looking, play up and down the piano:

- single notes (all D's, C's, etc.)
- parallel intervals (major/minor, or white keys only)
- parallel chord inversions (major/minor, or white keys only)

Injury Prevention Basics

Common faults:

- poor wrist alignment
- key bedding
- bad posture
- bad practice habits (cramming before a test, un-ergonomic practice conditions)

Ouick solutions:

- introduce a vocabulary of moving "in and out" from the start
- demonstrate where students can see your hands
- avoid terminology that invokes tension
- first learn middle-register passages in a higher (RH) or lower (LH) position
- block chords to observe neutral wrist alignment
- support healthy practice habits through appropriately detailed assignments and benchmarks

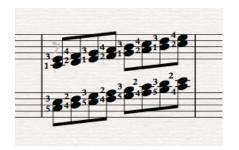
Teaching Technique to Children Olivia Richardson

Technical Exercises

"Monkey arms" - Letting the arms dangle down by the bench while sitting at the piano. Feel the weight of whole arm and imagine arm lengthening.

"Sling Shot" - Children raise their shoulders towards their ears and then release all at once, letting their shoulders drop into neutral position.

"Parachutes" - The exercise of hovering about 4 inches above the keys and then gently dropping onto the keys with curved fingers and strong hand. Any five-finger pattern can be practiced this way with all fingers.



Harmonic Thirds:

- *Can also be taught as a melodic thirds exercise.
- "Necklace Scales" Think of beads on a necklace. The scale is played adding a note each time before going back to the beginning until the scale is complete. Reinforces scale fingering.
- "Swinging Monkeys" Wrist Rotation on 1-5 and 1-3 (other combinations can be used as well).

Chord Voicing: Playing a triad three different times, each time voicing a different note of the chord.

"Flying Squirrels" - C-D-E or any other three-note successions played with wrist lift to the next octave

Common Physical Problems in Children

- "Spatula fingers" The breaking of a finger joint when a key is pressed.
- "Flying fingers" Caused by tension in the hand. Occurs when the fingers that are not playing are **not** resting on the keys but shooting up into the air.
- "High shoulders" Tension in the shoulders causing them to raise up.
- "Chicken Dance" When the elbows swing out instead of staying relaxed and close to the body.

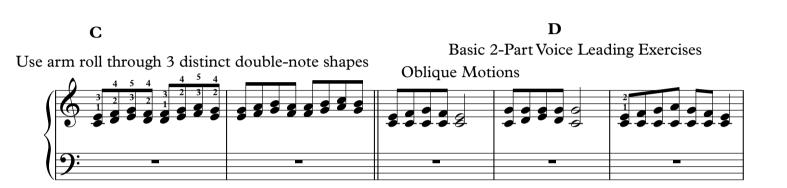
Resources for Sight Reading and Ensemble

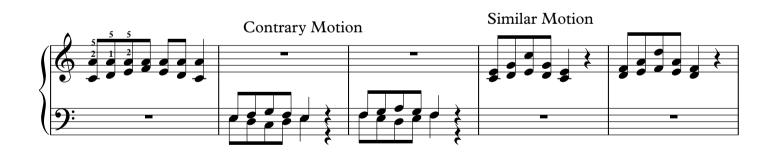
- The Joy of Piano Duets Arr. by Denes Agay
- Jazz, Rags, and Blues Piano Duets, Level 1 (Martha Mier)
- *Famous and Fun Piano Duets* (Carol Matz)
- Robbins Mammoth Collection of Famous Piano Duets

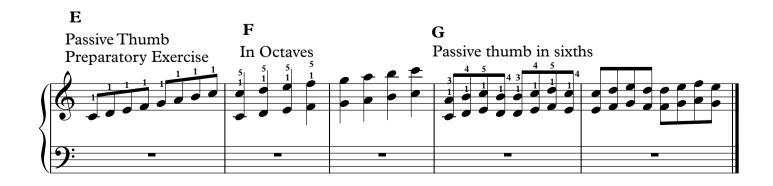
Preparing Students for 4-part Hymn Playing Robert Hjelmstad

Parallel 3rds Technical Progressions









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