

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)

Quick 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

A

Arm Roll for soupy legato

Musical notation for exercise A, showing an arm roll for soupy legato in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The right hand plays a sequence of eighth notes with fingerings 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 4, 5, 4. The left hand has rests.

B

Use the same arm roll but with one double-note

Musical notation for exercise B, showing the same arm roll as in A but with one double-note at the end of the sequence in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The left hand has rests.

C

Use arm roll through 3 distinct double-note shapes

Musical notation for exercise C, showing an arm roll through three distinct double-note shapes in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The right hand plays eighth notes with fingerings 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1. The left hand has rests.

D

Basic 2-Part Voice Leading Exercises

Oblique Motions

Musical notation for exercise D, showing basic 2-part voice leading exercises with oblique motions in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The right hand plays eighth notes with fingerings 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1. The left hand has rests.

Contrary Motion

Similar Motion

Musical notation for exercise E, showing contrary motion and similar motion exercises in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The right hand plays eighth notes with fingerings 5, 5, 5, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1. The left hand has rests.

E

Passive Thumb
Preparatory Exercise

Musical notation for exercise E, showing a passive thumb preparatory exercise in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The right hand plays eighth notes with fingerings 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1. The left hand has rests.

F

In Octaves

Musical notation for exercise F, showing an exercise in octaves in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The right hand plays eighth notes with fingerings 5, 5, 5, 5, 1, 1, 1, 1. The left hand has rests.

G

Passive thumb in sixths

Musical notation for exercise G, showing a passive thumb exercise in sixths in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The right hand plays eighth notes with fingerings 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 4, 5, 4. The left hand has rests.

For the Beauty of the Earth

1 For the beau - ty of the earth, for the glo - ry of the skies,
2 For the won - der of each hour of the day and of the night,
3 For the joy of hu - man love, broth - er, sis - ter, pa - rent, child,
4 For your - self, best gift di - vine, to the world so free - ly given,

for the love which from our birth o - ver and a - round us lies.
hill and vale and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light,
friends on earth, and friends a - bove, for all gen - tle thoughts and mild,
a - gent of God's grand de - sign: peace on earth and joy in heaven.

Refrain

Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grate - ful praise.