

# ***Orchestrated Backgrounds – Benefits and Beyond!***

*By Lori Frazer*

When using technology, one of the most basic applications is the use of pre-prepared software that accompanies all the various teaching methods. Almost every teaching method in print has orchestrated accompaniment that can be used with digital and acoustic pianos, depending on the type of file used. The benefits of using this tool are numerous!

The two most common types of files are audio and MIDI files. Audio files are found on CDs, played via some apps, as well as downloaded and played from a device. Some apps will allow the song to be slowed down, and parts marked off for rehearsal purposes, such as Yamaha's free app [Chord Tracker](#), available for IOS devices only.

MIDI files require a digital instrument that has orchestral sounds to be used properly. MIDI files are much more flexible as they are data files, and the data can be manipulated and changed. Tempo can be slowed down, parts can be marked for rehearsal, instrumentation and balances can be changed, and many other parameters.

The most obvious benefit when you begin using orchestrated accompaniment backgrounds is how much the student's timing improves! The student uses accompaniments from the first lesson, unaware that they are really playing with a modern-day metronome! Using the orchestrations keeps the student from having to go back and relearn areas of timing errors, and really makes the student a great counter. Playing with orchestrated accompaniments also helps the students to keep going without the constant stopping and starting

Orchestrated accompaniments also provide a lot of interest, especially to beginning students. How many times have you given a student a piece of music only to be told "that's not what it sounds like on the cd!"? Of course, the student is right, as publishers must water down arrangements for the beginning student. Orchestrations provide interest, and fun for the student.

Orchestrated accompaniments can also be used to discuss music arranging. When using midi files, parts can be muted, and played individually so the student can get an idea of how a particular instrument of the orchestra may be performed. This is a great ear training and listening exercise! In addition, piano parts are generally recorded with left hand and right hand on individual tracks, so students may practice hands individually. This feature also comes in very handy for students with physical limitations who wish to

study music. Midi files, and orchestrated accompaniments are also helpful when a student announces they are quitting piano for a time, due to a broken arm. No longer an issue!

Most all piano methods books have some type of accompaniment available, some midi, some are audio, some have both. Trying to figure out who has what can be a bit challenging! Several apps also provide orchestral accompaniment as well.

## ***Resources***

- [Yamaha Chord Tracker](#) - free app available in the app store. Works with any song loaded into your iTunes library, including any teaching methods you might own.
- [Keys to Imagination](#)- this site has all the midi file accompaniments available for all of the various method books, and supplementary materials. **Free midi files and mp3 files are also available for supplementary materials created by Lori Frazer.**
- [Mayron Cole – freepianomethod.com](#). MP3's, MIDI files, and lots of free material
- [Musical Moments](#) - wonderful RMM course, with some great free files
- [Ogilvy Music](#) - sign up for a free quarterly newsletter with great teaching tips, and free downloadable files
- [Piano Pronto](#) – Audio and MIDI file accompaniments
- [SuperScore](#)- by TimeWarpTech.com. Free app with in-app purchases
- [Piano Maestro](#) - by Joy Tunes.
- [Faber Piano Adventures Player](#)- free app with in-app purchases. Hal Leonard - My library available in marked publications Interactive Piano Method by Carol Matz
- [Bastien Interactive Practice Studio app](#)
- I'm sure there are many more that I have missed! Play some music and have some fun!!