BOOK 1

A beginner piano method with middle characters and keyboard guides

by John Keller
**Grand Staff Note Tester:** Teacher slides a small coin over the page while student plays the notes.
To the Piano Teacher:

This method offers a different but effective approach to beginner piano study. Its salient feature is that the white key letter-names are taught in the symmetrical units ABCDEFG. To many teachers, seeing the symmetry of A to G on the keyboard will come as a new experience. Teaching the keys this way, however, uses the alphabet predictably, avoiding the conceptual conflict of starting from C. Moreover, the grouping together of keys A to G permits a systematic labelling of registers, making it easier to fully specify any note’s pitch. A child’s average singing range, for example, happens to be roughly middle A to middle G, and the bass spaces go from bass A up to bass G.

It is of interest to note how the letters A to G were assigned to pitches historically. The earliest record of their use, designating the notes of the vocal scale, occurs in Dialogus de Musica, written in about 935AD, a century or so before the invention of the stave. This treatise, formerly attributed to Odo of Cluny, tells monks how to mark pitches on a monochord or single stretched string. The first letter, capital A, is marked at one ninth of the string’s length, defining a whole tone above the open string (which was presumably tuned to the lowest note the men could sing). Other letters to capital G follow. Next come small letters, a to g, and then double letters, aa to gg. Clearly therefore, notes were originally classified into groups of A to G.

In The Keyboard Express, each white-key group, ABCDEFG, is likened to (and referred to as) a carriage of the keyboard ‘train’, and the middle black key in the three-black-key group becomes the link that joins one carriage to the next, as depicted on the front cover of this book.

Other innovations are: a wide range of hand positions to avoid notes being associated with particular fingers, and breaking up the written music into phrase sections for ease of practice. Finger-number and letter-name notes lead to regular stave notation, and characters help with the note-learning.

This book is an all-in-one course, containing a variety of attractive pieces with accompaniments, theory and writing activities for the student, and useful lesson guidance and other interesting information for the teacher. Although the book is printed in greyscale, it is suggested that the teacher make ample use of colour (pencils, highlighters, etc.) to draw attention to important points, thus enhancing the educational process.

Wishing both teacher and student a most enjoyable musical journey,

John F Keller
(MMus, FTCL, LMusA, BSc, DipEd) - Oct, 2010
High Sounds and Low Sounds

- Make these sounds with your **voice**.

A young student will understand high and low **positions** already.

In reference to **sounds** however, many children without any prior musical training will have heard the words **up** and **down**, **high** and **low**, only in contexts such as the following:

- ‘Speak **up**, I can’t hear you!’
- ‘Please turn the television **down**. It’s up way too **high**.’
- ‘**Lower** your voice or you’ll wake the baby!’

So it would not be unreasonable for a beginner to think the words **high** and **low** mean **loud** and **soft**.

However, if high and low **sounds** are played, a child might describe them as being **little** and **big**, since they will have associated different kinds of sounds with the animals, objects or people (such as babies and giants) that make them.

In view of these various possible confusions, the teacher’s task here is really to **redefine** the terms **high sounds** and **low sounds** as clearly as possible.

*The Keyboard Express* does this efficiently by choosing **birds** and **frogs** to connect the high and low **sounds** with familiar high and low **places**. Moreover, all association with **size** is avoided.
Notes and the Stave

The sounds in music are written as **notes** on a **stave** (or **staff**).

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The Grand Stave

**Piano** music has **two** staves, joined by a **brace** and **barlines**. The double stave is called a **Grand Stave**.

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1. Let’s follow **both** staves at once, by making a ‘C’ with our hand, like this, so we can ‘see’ ahead!
2. As we move along the staves, let’s point to and sing the **high** sounds, the **low** sounds, then **both** sounds **together**.

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**T** Using the left hand to point prevents obscuring the notes ahead.

It is suggested that the teacher sit to the left of the student. This enables the teacher to play the accompaniments; also to point to the notes, helping the student keep the place if required.

To begin with, staves are used only as a general reference for high, low and middle sounds; to show which hand is to play, and as a background against which ‘notes’ can be seen as going up or down. At this stage the notes are not intended to correspond to specific lines and spaces, and leger lines are not used.
Your Two Hands

We will call your two hands the **low hand** and the **high hand**.

- Inside the picture of each hand, write 'low hand' or 'high hand'.**

**If the two hands are called ‘left’ and ‘right’, some young children will tend to mix them up. If we label them ‘low’ and ‘high’ however, then the sounds of the keys themselves will reinforce which hand is which.

These names also help students to associate their two hands with the two staves. Pictures of the two hands are sometimes attached to the two staves, as shown on page 13.
The keyboard is made up of black and white keys.

The Finger Numbers

The fingers have numbers: 1 2 3 4 and 5. Our thumbs are finger number ‘ones’ (1).

- Write in the finger numbers for both of the hands.

1. Wiggle your fingers as your teacher calls out various numbers.
2. Close your eyes and hold out your hand (palm down). Say which finger numbers your teacher touches.
3. Have a race with your teacher to touch the target with the finger named. Don’t fold other fingers under.

- NB to parents: Fingernails should be kept short.
Black Key Groups

Black keys are divided into groups of **two** and **three**. So they are easier to find than the white keys.

- Find and play all the **two-black-key** groups, using fingers 2 and 3 together.

### Standing on Two Feet and One Foot

1. **Start down low** with **low hand.**
2. **Go upwards**
3. **Change hands in the middle.**
4. **Finish up high** with **high hand.**

### Walking Up and Down the White Keys

1. **Standing side-on to the keyboard, ‘walk’ your left hand up** the white keys, all the way from the low side to the high side.
2. **Facing the other way, ‘walk’ your right hand down** the white keys, all the way from the high side to the low side.

- **Going downwards** on the keys is the opposite direction to reading on the page!
Blackbirds

1. To see what the song is about, read its **lyrics** (words). Your teacher can help.

2. Next read the **notes**, saying the **note numbers** and the word ‘rest’ in time with your teacher’s steady walking **beat**. Each note and rest in this piece lasts just one beat.∗

3. The pictures show where to place your hand and fingers.
   - **Optional**: Draw a 2 on the starting finger, and place a white ‘note sticker’ on the black key to start on.∗
   - **Optional**: Turn the book on its side to follow the notes.

4. **Play** the song. Say the finger numbers (plus ‘rest’) as you play. Use your high voice.

5. **Practise** at home. Play any hard parts **five times**. Next lesson, we’ll sing the **lyrics**.

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A rest:
- shows **silence**.

Come off the key.

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The **beat**: (One, two, ready, go:)

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**Student's Part:**

**Teacher's Notation:** Andante

**Teacher's Accomp:** (Bullfrogs)
Bullfrogs

1. Read the song's **lyrics**.
2. Read the **notes**. Say their **numbers** (and ‘rest’) to the **beat**.

3. This picture shows where to place your hand and fingers.
   - **Optional:** Turn the book on its side to follow the notes.

4. After the count-in, **play** the piece. Say finger numbers (plus ‘rest’).

5. **Practise** at home. Play **five repetitions** of any hard sections.
   - Next lesson, you can play while singing the **lyrics** in a **low** voice.

A **slur:**
- notes are joined up smoothly (**legato**).

**T** *Pre-playing warm-ups:*
The teacher names and points to the finger numbers in the picture, keeping mainly to pairs of consecutive fingers.
The student is to play each key and hold it till the next. They could also close eyes and play by feel, as numbers are called.

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**Teacher's Notation (Student's Part):**

Andante

(One, two, read-y, go:) Two, one, two, three; Two, one, two, rest: Two, one, two, rest; Three, four, five, rest.

LH: Play the bass melody at pitch or 8va lower. (Sing 8va higher.)

**Trace and copy:**

**rests**
Two Easy Chords:
The ‘Black Chord’ and the ‘White Chord’

A chord:
- two or more notes played together.

Chords for Blackbirds

1. Practise each chord with your low hand, but a bit on the higher side of the keyboard!
2. Sing Blackbirds, but play only the chords, on the words where they come.

Chords:
- (Low hand)

Blackbirds fly,
In the sky.
Tweet tweet tweet, they sing up high.

Chords for Bullfrogs

1. Practise each chord with your high hand, but a bit on the lower side of the keyboard!
2. Sing Bullfrogs, but play only the chords, on the words where they come.

Chords:
- (High hand)

Bullfrogs live down on the ground.
Croak croak croak, Deep low sound.

Hands Together:
1. Leave these last two steps till a few weeks later (the teacher judging when the student is ready).
2. Blackbirds and Bullfrogs may also be played together as a duet, by two students. Refer to Teacher’s Notation on p.7.
Top and Bottom Stave

1. Read the words of the song. Use your high voice for top stave notes; your low voice for bottom stave notes.

2. Get both hands ready to play - but one at a time.
   - Notice that your thumbs play white keys in this piece. (The thumbs will play on their sides, not on their tips.)

3. Play. Sing the finger numbers (plus rests). Keep to a beat.
   - While one hand plays, don’t let the other hand come off its place.


Teacher’s Accompaniment:
Play with the right hand, crossing under student’s left.

Count-in . . . One, two, three, go:

Look out for sections that are similar!

High hand has its turn to try; Now my low hand gets a go.
Taking Sides

- The blackbird and bullfrog ‘take sides’ in an argument as well as on the keyboard!

1. Read the lyrics in bird and frog voices. Near the end, both characters speak at once. Your teacher or a parent can help.

2. Get each hand ready to play.

3. At each practice, play one or more of the sections (phrases). First sing finger numbers and rests; later the words.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
Use the right hand, crossed under student’s left.

Studies in music psychology have shown high sounds to be associated with brightness (‘day’) and low sounds with darkness (‘night’). These associations are thought to be innate, rather than learnt.
Merrily We Ride Along

Prepare both hands (one at a time).

Teacher's Accompaniment:
(Right hand crossing under student's left.)
One-thumb and Tutu

1. Read the words of the song.
2. Place hands in position. (Your thumbs play on white keys.)
3. Play, singing finger numbers and rests. Then sing the lyrics. If you play well, you can go faster on the repeat!
   - Use your high and low voice. At the end, where both hands play at the same time, let your high voice be the 'winner'!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Middle of the Grand Stave

(Ready, steady, off you go:)

Repeat signs
Hot Cross Buns

Different kinds of notes sound for different lengths of time.

1. Say the time-names as you point to the notes.
2. Say the time-names as you play the song.
3. Play, singing the lyrics.

Teacher's Accompaniment: 8th throughout

Notes are short or notes are long; Ea - sy when they're joined to - gether, Hold this on.

Middle of Keyboard

Quarter Note (crotchet): - one beat long. Its time-name: "Play"

Half Note (minim): - two beats long. "Play - hold"

Hot Cross Buns.

Two Eighth Notes (quavers): - both fit into the one beat. "Ea - sy"
Middle Riddle

The high stave is for our high hand to play.
(Ready, steady, go:)
When notes are in the middle, instead of high or low,
Then which hand has to play them? That’s what I’d like to know!

The low stave is for our low hand to play.

We play low notes with low hand, and high notes with high hand. But which hand would play middle notes?

Answer to the riddle: Use the hand for whichever stave a middle note is joined to!

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
Lazy country swing
A Special Black Key:

- There are five different kinds of black keys. But which one of them is in a special position?

1. Find three special black keys with your high hand as shown. (3 is your middle finger.)
2. Find three special black keys with your low hand as shown.
3. Find the two special black keys nearest the middle of the keyboard.

Naming the White Keys:

While holding down the two special black keys, first count the black keys in between. (Don’t go past the special black keys.)

- Then count how many white keys are in between.
- These white keys are named by the first seven letters of the alphabet.
- The seven letters are repeated over and over to name all the white keys.
- On your piano, play up these seven white keys, saying their letters aloud. Bounce on the keys with middle finger. Practise with each hand.
Missing Links

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Learn this piece in small sections. First chant the note time-names, then the lyrics. Then join up the sections.

Notes with letter-names:

Special new black keys Help you learn white keys;

Middle of black threes: Mis-sing Links!

“Easy, play…”

Lets you see sym-met-ry From an A to a G;

No more mys-ter-y: Mis-sing Links!

The term link, being new, is ‘missing’ from previous piano methods. Moreover, the symmetry of each group of keys A to G, here seen clearly, has nevertheless gone largely unnoticed in the past.
Train on Platform

Place your middle carriage at the back of the keys. Line up the two links. Also check the double doors. There are four black keys between the two links.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Read - y, go:)

Train on platform number two Stops all stations to the zoo. Doors are closing;

Please stand clear! Off we go, Out of here! Then we soon disappear!

MIDDLE
White Keys Backwards:

- Learn to say the musical alphabet backwards by memory: GFE - D - CBA
- On your piano, play down the keys, saying their letter-names aloud. Watch the keys.
- Practise this with each hand.

Music Alphabet

Place 3 keyboard carriages on the keys, the links all lined up correctly. Play in MIDDLE carriage.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Music alphabet:)

Also play in LOWER and HIGHER carriages.

Write in the letter-names (CAPITALS) for the white keys of the next two carriages.
First Two White Keys

1. Read the *lyrics*. Then read the *note letters*, to a steady *beat*.
2. Position hand. Do *pre-playing warm-ups*, some with eyes shut.
3. *Play* and *practise*. First sing the letter-names, then the words.

**Teacher's Accompaniment:**

With *low voice* and with *low hand*,  

*These first two white keys play.*

*They're written on the bottom stave:*

*Mid-dle B and A.*

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Throughout this method, *any* key in the middle ‘carriage’ may be specified as ‘middle’, from *middle A* to *middle G*. (Most other piano methods refer only to middle C.)

**Pre-playing warm-ups:** Now that letters for the keys have been introduced, the teacher names these, rather than finger numbers, to establish the hand position/s indicated. As each letter-name is called, the student plays it on the piano (*legato*). Finding the hand position by *feel* alone is another useful and fun activity. (Use this book to cover the hand and keyboard.)
Which White Key is Last?

1. Read the lyrics and chant letter-names.
2. Position hand and do some warm-ups.
3. Play and practise in phrase sections. They correspond to lines of the poem.

Play in the Middle Carriage

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

The Story of the Piano

The piano was invented about three hundred years ago, by a man called Bartolomeo Cristofori. His first name was Bartolomeo, and his last name was Cristofori.

Did you know that the word piano is only a first name as well? Its last name is forte. So the full name of our instrument, is the piano-forte. We only call it a piano for short!

Now when Bartolomeo invented his piano, there were already other types of keyboards around, like the organ and the harpsichord, but these instruments could not be played soft and loud.

The reason Mr Cristofori’s invention was special, is that it was the very first keyboard instrument that could be played either soft, or loud, or anything in between.

In fact Mr C. was so excited by his clever invention that he called it a ‘Keyboard with Soft and Loud’, or a ‘Soft-Loud’ for short!

Well actually this isn’t quite true. You see, Bartolomeo lived in Italy and didn’t speak English at all! So he named it a ‘Piano-Forte’, which is Italian for ‘Soft-Loud’.

So piano (p) means soft, and forte (f) means loud.
**Bass Clef**

1. **Read** the lyrics. Learn about the **bass clef**. Then read the **notes**. To an even beat, say “A, B, C-hold, B-hold, A-hold, . . .” and/or “B, same, same, up, down, . . .”

2. Position your hand. Do the **pre-playing warm-ups**, some with your eyes closed.

3. Practise in the **sections** or **phrases** shown.

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**Teacher's Accompaniment:**

(First-ly, sing the letters.)

What's this brand new sym-bol?

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**The Bass Clef:**

- defines notes on the stave as sounding **low**.

A **bass clef** sign is usually placed on the **bottom** stave, so it's for the **low hand** to play.
Treble Clef

No count-in. Student starts when ready.

Very slow!

The Treble Clef:
- defines notes on the stave as sounding high.

A treble clef sign is usually placed on the top stave, so it's for the high hand to play.

Do some pre-playing warm-ups before playing the piece.

* Why is the treble clef so named?
The word 'clef' means key. A clef was originally just a letter placed at the start of a stave line to show what pitch that line represented. At first clefs were 'moveable': the letter could be placed on various lines, but not in a space.
The primary meaning of the word 'treble' is triple. How it came to be associated with high sounds is uncertain, but three possibilities are:
1. In the 11th century gamut (vocal scale), notes of successive octaves were often indicated by single letters a to g, then double letters aa to gg, then triple letters aaa to ggg. Notes in this last octave were thus sometimes described as 'treble keys'.
2. In early polyphonic music, the treble, or triplum, was a third part, added for a higher voice.
3. The first two clefs appeared in the 1100s. They were the F (bass) clef, and C (tenor or alto) clef. The higher G (violin or treble) clef was not used till the 1400s, so historically it was the third clef.

It is interesting to note that whereas in Italy the G clef became established on the 2nd line as it is today, in France it was placed on the 1st line. This French violin clef was thus read the same as the bass! Had it prevailed, learning bass and treble today would be much easier.
Drawing the Two Clefs

It may be explained to the student that an average child’s voice does not cover the whole range of the piano keyboard, but corresponds roughly just to the notes within the middle carriage.

So for most children, to sing near middle A will feel low, while singing near middle G will feel reasonably high.
Changing Carriages - from middle A to the next carriage lower and from middle G to the next carriage higher.

Put 3 carriages in position at the back of the keyboard: the middle, the next carriage lower and next higher. Take one section at a time. Name the clef and choose the proper hand. Play, saying letter-names, then lyrics.

1. Start on middle-A
2. Start on middle-G

From the middle, take it lower. Step down where that bull-frog hops.

- Playing next-door white keys.
- Stepping:
  - playing next-door white keys.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

- Staccato (a dot under or over a note):
  - spring off the key straight after playing.

Exercise:
Step up and down five keys with your fingers. Start on any key and practise with each hand.
Bars and Barlines

Barlines divide music into bars (or measures).

Each bar in a piece lasts for the same length of time, even if they look to be of different lengths on the page. For example, each bar above lasts for a time-length of four beats.

Clapping Strong Beats

We can measure out equal amounts of time, by clapping at the start of each bar and putting hands out to the sides in between. The first beat of any bar is always the strongest (loudest).

Rhythmic Echoing:

Teacher and student clap together on the strong first beats, while some rhythmic echoing is added. This activity helps the student feel rhythmic flow (the ‘macro’ beat).

T - the ‘Clap & Snap’ Routine
Secret Disguise

1. Doing the *clap & snap*, echo-chant each two bars.

2. Get both hands ready, with correct fingers on starting notes.

3. Play, singing letter-names (plus 'eyes'), rhythm names and/or the lyrics of the song.

Let's pretend the black keys in the middle of a carriage are two eyes!

On the keyboard on p.4 & 5, draw the eyes for each group of two black keys.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Gradually get louder.

When I wear my secret disguise.

Even Mum would never recognise me.

Play the two black keys (the 'eyes') together.

"eyes - hold"

Even Mum would never recognise me.

I should be on T.V.!

Why introduce 'eyes'? Just as the link helped to teach the first two and last two white keys, so using a nickname and symbol for the two-black-key group helps teach the centre white keys CDE.
Stepping:
- Next door white keys;
- Next door fingers;
- Next door letter-names.

Building Blocks:
Write letter-names in these note-heads, which step up or down (or stay the same).

- Skip a key.

When we skip over a white key, it is not called ‘stepping’.

Counting 4 Beats in Every Bar
Write the numbers for the beats in each bar.
Tap and Rap
All within middle carriage.

1. Chant the lyrics: Clap on each first beat, but no snaps for this piece.
2. Play: low hand on mABC; high hand on mGFE.

I can tap dance, I can tap dance,
It makes people grin;

Coz the problem I get, Is my shoes get all wet!
I can rap dance, I can rap dance,

And on my head spin! But the problem is that I forget to unwrap!

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Get both starting fingers ready.

Get both starting fingers ready.

What's That Hiding?

(One, two, three, four:)

What's that hiding in the very centre spot?

Let's get thinking:

Which hand?

(rest) What's that?

Some-thing that goes swim-ming in the pond a lot;

Some-thing blink - ing;

(rest) Quack, quack!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Hold down the white key on each side of middle D; and reveal the duck, with its two eyes and beak!

Find all 'D's on your piano: start at the low end, and play them upwards.

Which one is middle D?

On the keyboard on p.4 & 5, colour-in all the 'D's yellow.

Also print 'D's in lead pencil.

• Find all 'D's on your piano: start at the low end, and play them upwards.
• Which one is middle D?

On the keyboard on p.4 & 5, colour-in all the 'D's yellow.

Also print 'D's in lead pencil.
Double Bubblegum

Practice each hand **separately** before putting them **together**.

1. Play, saying the letter-names (plus 'D-hold-no-stem!', etc.).
2. Play, singing the words.

Mark in the **starting** fingers:

(One, two, three, four:) Twice as much in **flavour**, and twice as much in **fun**;

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Write in the letter-names for the white keys near the two 'eyes'. Use CAPITALS.
Middle Characters

Place your *middle carriage* in position at the back of the piano keys.

Middle carriage is shown below:

![Middle Carriage Diagram]

Teach the middle characters' names. They will help with learning note-positions later.

Test the student's memory by covering up various characters' names with your finger.

Middle A    Middle B    Middle C    Middle D    Middle E    Middle F    Middle G
Ant          Ball          Cat          Duck        Edgeline    Firstspace    Girl

High notes all say "Hi!";

Low notes say "Hello!"

- Show where these middle characters live on the stave.
- Shade in after the hollow notes to show that they hold on.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Ready, steady, go:)

Fine only.

Mid - dle cha - rac - ters live here, where child-ren’s voi - ces go.

Notes go *inwards (closer).*

Middle of the Grand Stave

• Shade in after the hollow notes to show that they hold on.

To next page:

Notes go inwards (closer).

(Ready, steady, go:)

Middle of the Grand Stave

• Show where these middle characters live on the stave.
• Turn back to the *moveable note* at the front of the book and 'zip' the note up and down in the middle area.
Middle Characters (ctd)

Middle A's an ant and middle B's a ball;

...Middle C's a cat;
Middle D's the duck, 'cause it looks like that.

F's the first space-man;
G's the girl in curl.

Gradually get louder.

Da Capo al Fine

These words mean: from start to finish.

In other words, go back to the start and play as far as the word Fine (pronounced fee-nay). This is where we finish.

Notes go outwards (more apart).

Same note played by high hand. It looks like it's higher, but it's not!
An exercise for skipping from little finger 5, to middle finger 3. Play each hand separately at first.

Baker, make a tasty bun. Have it done by half past one.

Baker, make a tasty cake. Have it done by half past eight.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

- Write in the letter-names for the white keys near the threes. Use CAPITALS.
I'm Only an Ant

1. Chant the words.
2. Get ready to play.
3. Play, saying letter-names: ('L A A A A rest, A L L L L . . .')
4. Play, singing the lyrics.

(Count me in gently:)

I'm only an ant, just lowly and small, But seeds that I plant can grow very tall. You would not believe the tunnels I dig, Or how I achieve a network so big.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Allegretto (con Ped)

Play all the 'A's upward on your piano (the first white key after the links). Only one of these 'A's is for Middle-A* Ant - which one?

Smaller notes without letters:
These notes will be for white keys. The notes might stay the same, or they might step up or down.
Note characters from the middle carriage will help you find the correct key to start on.

Colour-in purple.

On the keyboard on p.4 & 5, write in all of the 'A's with a purple coloured pencil.

* The teacher is reminded to use the designation 'middle' to refer to all letters from A to G in the middle alphabet of the keyboard, not just middle C. This conforms to The Keyboard Express's terminology for easily specifying the pitch of any note by its register and letter-name.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
To Frogtown

Make sure you know which way to play **downwards**.

(Ready steady go:)

I'd like to go to Frogtown.
So now I've been to Frogtown.
And now I know the way.

Just take this down direction.
He took that down direction.
You'll make it there today.
And with those frogs did play.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Dotted Half Note *(dotted minim)*:
- three beats long.
“Play - hold - dot”

Middle G, the *Girl in Curl*
- Starting at the top end, find all ‘G’s downward on the piano keyboard.
- Which one is middle G?

On the keyboard on p.4 & 5, write in all the ‘G’s with an orange coloured pencil.
Stepping:
- Next door white keys;
- Next door fingers;
- Next door letter-names;
- And next door notes: ... Line to Space to \textbf{L} to ...

Lines and Spaces
(One, two, three, go:)
- Count up the lines in the \textbf{treble}.
- \textbf{Which line} is for middle G?
  - the \textbf{line}.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
(One, two, three, go:)
- Count up the lines in the \textbf{bass}.
- \textbf{Which line} is for middle A?
  - the \textbf{line}.

Notes are either lines or spaces, In these places all notes go.
So on white keys, play the right keys, Line then space, all in a row.
Middle G the Girl

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Hey, middle G, are you that famous girl Who can look right thru that treble clef, thru the treble curl. Play play easy play, play play play-hold. Play play easy play, play-hold-no-stem.

A Time Signature . . .

Common Time: C

- every bar in the piece has the same time-value as one Whole Note.

Clap

Snap

One bar

= one Whole Note

- four beats long

A Whole Note lasts for the whole bar in Common Time.
Keyboard Ladies

- Find all the ‘B’s on your keyboard (just above each group of three black keys). Start at the top and play downwards.
- Which one of them is middle B (ball)?

• Colour-in all the ‘B’s red.

1. Keyboard ladies sing this song; Do dah, do dah;
2. Ev’ry octave fits just right; Do dah, do dah;

\( \text{mf} = \text{mezzo-forte} = \text{half loud} \)

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

Extra time-value dot:
This dot goes after its note. = a longer note. Hold it down for 3 beats!

Staccato dot:
above or below note = a short note. Bounce up off the key!

1. Key-board ladies sing this song; Do dah, do dah;
2. Ev’ry octave fits just right; Do dah, do dah;

Key-board seven oct-aves long; Oh, do dah day.
Five keys black and seven white; Oh, do dah day.

An octave:
- the distance from any key to the same key in the next carriage;
(Choose two keys an octave apart, and play them together. How do they sound?)
Li’l Liza Jane - with two notes played together.

Naming the two notes:

On the keys, we read this way, so... on the staves, we should read the notes upwards. ('middle B and middle G')

There’s a girl that I once knew; Li’l Li - za Jane.
Hair of gold and eyes of blue;

Skip a key.

“Play-hold-dot,”

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
First Spaceman

(One, two, three:)

mf I am mid-dle F, the first space-man.

"ea-sy - play"

first man in space, I am. On the keys, my ad-dress is

Mid-dle - F; On the stave, it’s the First Space, Tre-ble - Clef.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

mf

• Play all the ‘F’s upwards on your piano (just below each group of 3 black keys).
• Which one is middle F?

On the keyboard on p.4 & 5, write in all the ‘F’s in blue.

Point out that this character has ‘grown’ a bit - from the middle area between the staves, up into the 1st space of the treble; and that is why he is called First Spaceman.

LAST TWO MIDDLE KEYS

• Number the 4 spaces upwards.
• Then trace the face in a space, and draw 3 more space-notes.

Space-notes go between the lines.
The Black Keys’ Holiday

Teacher's Accompaniment:

*(One, two, three:)*

We will be away, on a holiday, looking forward to some fun. And we

wish that you could be coming too, 'cause we'll sure miss ev'ryone. So good-

* The term *link* (L) is only a *nickname*. Each *black key* is actually named by its nearest *white key*, and is called *sharp* if it sounds *higher*, and *flat* if it sounds *lower*. So a black key really has two *different* names! The *link* can either be called *G sharp*, since it sounds a bit *higher* than G; or *A flat*, since it sounds a bit *lower* than A.
Drawing Notes on the Stave

All ordinary notes on a stave belong only to the white keys! These notes go in the spaces or on the lines of the stave.

- Trace and copy these notes.

While the black keys are away, let's learn more about the white keys and their notes...
Stepping:

- Next door white keys;
- Next door fingers;
- Next door letter-names;
- And next door notes: space to next line... or line to next space.

Using the moveable note at the front of the book, show how the note steps from a line to a space to a line, etc.

1. Step on five white keys in a row.

2. Step-ping means play white keys next door.

Notes show you which way the fingers go.

These are the keys that the notes are for.

Just take a look at each note's design;

Just look and see how each note's in place;

Teacher's Accompaniment:

1st verse ending:
Watch them go: space, line, space, line.

2nd verse ending:
Watch them go line, space, line, space.
Just Step Across

All within the middle carriage.

1. Play, saying letter-names.
2. Play, singing the lyrics.
3. Play, counting the beats.

- 1st and 2nd time endings: First time, play the 1st time bars, then go back for the repeat. Second time, miss out the 1st time bars and play these 2nd time bars instead.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Leger lines: the short lines used for notes written past the edge of a stave.

Leger line notes still step up or down by line and space.

In this piece, your middle finger (3) steps over your thumb (1).
Middle C is the 1st note between the bass and treble staves that needs a leger line (the cat's whiskers).

- Trace and then copy the note middle C.
  Draw the leger line first, then the note.
Edgeline Ed

1. Hey, Edgeline Ed, Don’t be a sleepy head. You’ve got to feed the duck, So get up out of bed!
2. There’s bright blue skies; Let’s open up those eyes. Your duck is mucking up, So get up out of bed!

Middle C Cat is lower than the duck. Edgeline is higher than the duck.

Find all ‘E’s on your piano keyboard - just above each two-black-key group. Play them from highest to lowest.

Which one of these is middle E?

Write the letter-names (CAPITALS) on the 3 white keys near the ‘eyes’:

On the keyboard on p. 4 & 5, write in all the ‘E’s in green.
Simply Hum a Song

• Colour-in gold - one whole gold bar, one half gold bar, and one quarter:

Cut these gold bars in - to quar - ters, while you hum a tune.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
March Your Fingers

First play each hand separately. Both hands start on the same note, middle C.

Middle C is the 1st leger line note between the bass and treble staves.

It's the only middle note for which the high hand version is an exact copy of the low hand version.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Raise your wrist slowly, letting your hand hang loose; forearm muscles soft and relaxed.
The Keyboard Train Song

Place your three carriages in position on the keys. The characters only live in the Middle Carriage.

To learn this piece, don’t look at each separate note, but the pattern they form in the phrases.

Your goal is to play all four verses by heart!

Introduction:
(May later be taught to student by rote.)

All aboard! Toot, toot.

*Learn by the patterns:*

Bounce upwards on the white keys (watching your hand).

Verse 1:
(Middle Carriage)

A B, C D E, F G, Link;

Rid-ing on the Keyboard Train;

Count-in and Teacher’s Accompaniment:

(Chugga-chugga, chugga-chugga, chugga, chugga, ready, go!)

Play smoothly at the high side (next-door white keys).

Tenuto sign: - not staccato.

To next page:-
Verse 1:

Bounce *downwards* on white keys (watching your hand).

G F, E D C, B A, Link;

Play smoothly at the *low side* (next-door white keys).

Verse 2:

*(Middle Carriage)*

In this carriage, what do I see,

Riding on the Keyboard Train?

Friendly characters watching me

Play the Keyboard Train Song.

• Can you *name* all the *middle carriage characters*?
The Keyboard Train Song (ctd)

Verse 3:

On - ly Mid - dle keys do they show,

To next car - riage, they do not go.

Play the Key-board Train Song.

Each middle character is either a line note (I), or a space note (S):

- Can you figure out why Middle A Ant can’t go to the next carriage higher?
To help student memorise the four verses, point out that each starts the same way, bouncing from m.A up to m.G, then link. Also, while the student plays, the teacher can state the verse number and give the following verbal reminders at the appropriate time:

**V1**: hands ‘separately’ (Also, ‘train’ is thumb.)
**V2**: hands ‘together’.
**V3**: ‘thumbs’ and ‘high’.
**V4**: ‘together’ and ‘thumbs’ (or half like V2; half like V3).

**A Suggested Ensemble Performance:**
If extra keyboards are available, up to four students can perform this piece together as a round. When the first student is up to the start of verse 2, the second student enters with verse 1, and so on. Set a different registration on each keyboard.

The teacher plays the same accompaniment on the piano for each verse (p.50). All players end together, with a ritenuto at the fine.

---

**Draw & write:**

1: Trace these notes which **step upwards**:

2: Continue drawing notes which **step up**:

3: Name the notes:

4: Trace and draw notes that step **downwards** then carefully **name** them:

---

**Riding on the Keyboard Train:**

One, two, three, and, four: count that beat;

Now arriving at Music Street;

End of Keyboard Train Song.

Next Carriage Lower

Middle Carriage

Verse 4:
Down By the Stream

Middle A is the lowest of the middle carriage notes. So it is usually drawn in the bass, and goes on this line.

A New Time Signature . . .

Three Quarter Time: 3/4

- every bar in the piece has a time-value of 3 Quarter Notes. (Or three-quarters of a common time bar.)

Teacher's Accompaniment:
What are their letter-names?

middle-

Trace, then copy each of these notes.
- this line:
- and this space:

How to Read Fractions:

Top number = how many:
1 one
2 two
3 three

Bottom number = what kind:
1/2 half
1/4 quarters

That's where the birds sang so sweet in the trees.
That's where the drag-on-flies played in the breeze.
Down by the stream, when I first met you.

Colour-in 3 quarters.
Skipping a Key

Stepping means playing next-door white keys up or down. But if we skip over a key, we usually also skip one finger.

• In each box, write the letter-name for that white key. Miss out the letters between. Play and say them on your piano.

How notes go when skipping a key:

- Space to next space
  (Skip over a line.)

- Line to next line
  (Skip over a space.)

- In other words -
  from a note to the next matching type of note, up or down.

* Use the moveable note to demonstrate how skips have matching types of notes.

Which Bar Did I Play?

Watch your teacher play, then find that shape. Also do vice-versa.

• Play and draw your own shapes.

• Also practise playing and saying them downwards.

• Trace and draw space notes upwards . . . . . . and downwards.

• Then trace and draw line notes upwards . . . . . . and downwards.

• Trace and draw space notes upwards . . . . . . and downwards.

• Trace and draw line notes upwards . . . . . . and downwards.
This Tie

Tied notes: - don't play; - just hold on.

The tie: — or —
- differs from a slur, in that it connects two note heads of the same pitch only.
The 2nd note, at the end of the 1st note's time-value, is 'tied' - which simply means held on, not played.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

With tied notes they say you hold extra long.

"Play-hold-dot, tie-hold-dot, tie-hold-dot, tie-hold."

At least once a day you'll have to decide

Which notes to play, and which to be tied.

Ties add together their two notes' time-values.
Flip the three Keyboard Carriages over, to make . . . the Keyboard Note-guide

In Lower ABCDEFG, the notes go from the bottom to the top of the BASS STAVE.

In Middle ABCDEFG, the notes cross from on top of the BASS STAVE up into the TREBLE.

In Higher ABCDEFG, the notes continue up in the TREBLE STAVE.

• On this page, colour the 4 bass space notes and their keys light blue.

• Then colour the 5 treble line notes and their keys light green.

Naming Notes

For each note, see whether it is in the BASS or TREBLE STAVE then look for it on the Keyboard Note-guide above. Carefully notice which space or line the note is on.

• On your piano: Play and name any white key in the three carriages. Look at its note on the Keyboard Note-guide. Match this note position with the moveable note.
Middle F is on the high side of the middle carriage. So it’s usually drawn in treble, and it goes in the 1st space.

In treble or bass, For each line or space; For each note we see,

First Spaceman

there’s just one white key. So high hand or low, We know where to go;

The top middle notes have grown a bit taller - up into the treble stave!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

It helps us decide; This Keyboard Note-guide.
Old MacDonald (Cha cha cha)

Middle C is the 1st leger line note between the bass and treble staves.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

- Trace, then copy each of these notes. - this first space: - and this line:
- What are their letter-names?
An interval:
- the distance between two keys.
To measure the interval between any two notes:
• Call the lower note the 1st (number 1);
• Count up to the higher note (both lines and spaces).

What is this interval?

- Trace and copy middle Cs for the high and low hands.
Always draw the leger line first, then put the note on it.

• Write the numbers (2nd, etc.) on these white keys. The interval from C to F is called ‘a 4th’.
This is a short way of saying that if C is named as the 1st note, then F would be the 4th note.
Middle G is the tallest of the middle carriage notes. Middle G has ‘grown’ up to this line of the treble.

Daydreams

Practise each hand separately first. When playing together, count the beats.

(One, two, three, four:)

Ly - in - ging by some shady stream, high a - bove Earth and Moon and Mars;

Where the air is crisp and clean; Where the orchids grow.

Find - ing out the secrets of Strange and distant stars.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

Four Quarter Time: ( = C)

- Count 4 quarters in each bar.

Four Quarter Time: ( = C)

- Count 4 quarters in each bar.

Whole Rest (semibreve rest):

- four quarter-beats long.

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest (minim rest):

“On - rest”

Whole Rest

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest

“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

“Rest”

Four Quarter Time: ( = C)

- Count 4 quarters in each bar.

Whole Rest (semibreve rest):

- four quarter-beats long.

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest (minim rest):

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“On - rest”

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“Un - der - neath-rest”

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“On - rest”

Whole Rest

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest

“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

“Rest”

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- Count 4 quarters in each bar.

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- four quarter-beats long.

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Whole Rest

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest

“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

“Rest”

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“Un - der - neath-rest”

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“On - rest”

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Half Rest

“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

“Rest”

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“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest (minim rest):

“On - rest”

Whole Rest

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest

“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

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Half Rest

“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

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“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

“Rest”

Four Quarter Time: ( = C)

- Count 4 quarters in each bar.

Whole Rest (semibreve rest):

- four quarter-beats long.

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest (minim rest):

“On - rest”

Whole Rest

“Un - der - neath-rest”

Half Rest

“On - rest”

Quarter Rest

“Rest”
Down By the Station

(One, two and, three, four:)

Down by the station, early in the morning,
See the little engines standing in a row.

Up comes the driver,
Pulls a little lever;
Toot toot toot toot, Off they go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

*Which line of the treble has m.G 'grown' up to?*

-the _____ line.
Driving Test

1. Play, saying the letter-names. For notes played together, say “play”.
2. Play, while counting aloud - four quarter beats in every bar.
3. If you pass your driving test, you can play the piece fast and sing the lyrics.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
I'm in my car; This traffic is insane! It's peak hour rush; Quick, move into that lane! I wish my car had wings so it could fly; Then I would get home all peaceful, calm and free.
Johnny What's-'isname...

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Fast swing tempo

Middle Carriage

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Here comes John-ny What's-'is-name, Walk in' down the street.

Middle Carriage

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Here comes John-ny What's-'is-name; You know,

Middle Carriage

Teacher's Accompaniment:

What's-'is-name! Here comes John-ny What's-'is-name, Walkin' down the street.
... and the **Odd-bods** - *Odd finger* exercise: 1 & 5 tied on; 3 *staccato.*

The Odd-bods are odd and even numbers:

- **Odd:** 1, 3, 5
- **Even:** 2, 4

These numbers are used in the music:

- **Step up:** 1, 3, 5
- **Step down:** 2, 4
- **Match down:** 1, 5

The music starts with:

- **Hear those famous Odd-bods!**
- **Cheer those famous Odd-bods!**

After the verse, the music continues:

- **Walk-in’ down the street.**

Then, it reaches the **Coda** section:

- **What’s ‘is name!**

The drawing notes indicate:

- **Middle A:** step down, step up, match down, match up
- **Middle B:** step down, step up, match down, match up
- **Middle C:** step down, step up, match down, match up

**Da Capo al Coda** (no repeat)

These words mean: **from start to coda.**

In other words, go back to the start of Johnny What’s ‘is name and play (without repeating) up to the coda sign. Then jump to the coda, meaning end section.
Name this Tune:

- To finish the tune, play the bars again, but in a different order! Next comes bar number ____, then bar number ____, then bar number ____.

Join each name to its sign:
- Quarter note
- Quarter rest
- Whole rest
- Half note
- Staccato
- Barline
- Pause
- Stave
- Tie
- Slur
- Brace
- Repeat
- Half rest
- Bass clef
- Treble clef
- Whole note
- Time signature

Drawing Notes on the Grand Stave:

To learn note positions on the staves, it is helpful if the student now draws notes on manuscript (large size). The teacher plays three or four notes, using as starting points m.A & B for bass clef and m.F & G for treble clef. The student plays these notes, names them, then draws them as whole notes. Do a little of this at each lesson.

Another Time Signature . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two Quarters Time:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- every bar has a time-value of 2 quarter notes (= 1 half note).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Count two quarter beats in every bar.
**Edge-line**

Middle E's name is 'Edge-line'.

This first line of the treble stave, is for middle E.

G, F, E's the edge of treble clef; Edge-line is his name.

But I call it the Edge-line of the treble instead!

A Whole Rest can be used in any time signature.

He and his big sister look pretty much the same. Edge-line bounces on his bed.

Kids do things like that. Once he fell off on his head, frightening the cat!
Learning Notes *Inside* the Bass

The *bass* was the first clef to be invented.
It was for men’s voices; low notes.

They’re easy to learn!
The bottom note is `A`, the top note is `G`, and the centre note is `D`.

Freight Train Bass-line

Give the *count-in*, then *count aloud* for the whole piece: *four steady beats in each bar*.

(One, two, three, four:)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOP NOTE = bass G</th>
<th>(2nd TOP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♪ ♫ ♩ ♪ ♫</td>
<td>♪</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOTTOM NOTE = bass A</th>
<th>(2nd BOTTOM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♪ ♫ ♩ ♪ ♫</td>
<td>♪</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♪ ♫ ♩ ♪ ♫</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Duck Under
(One, two and three and four and:)

Duck under treble clef now; Duck under

middle D (space note)

Bass D (line note)

Top stave. Remember; Take a breath now; Duck under that

Teacher's Accompaniment: (Optional - play 2nd time only)

Rock beat: (One, two and three and four and:)

1st time:
wave. (All together now)

2nd time: wave. (Quick!)

Certificate of Achievement

This is to certify that

has successfully completed The Keyboard Express, Book 1
and is hereby eligible for promotion to Book 2.

Teacher’s Signature:        Student’s Signature:        Date:
________________________________________________________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Blackbirds</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>What's That Hiding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bullfrogs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Double Bubblegum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chords for <em>Blackbirds</em> and <em>Bullfrogs</em></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Middle Characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Duet: <em>Blackbirds</em> and <em>Bullfrogs</em></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Top and Bottom Stave</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>I’m Only an Ant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Taking Sides</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>To Frogtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Merrily We Ride Along</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Lines and Spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>One-thumb and Tutu</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Middle G the Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hot Cross Buns!</td>
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<td>Keyboard Ladies</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Middle Riddle</td>
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<td>Li’l Liza Jane</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Missing Links</td>
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<td>First Spaceman</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Train on Platform</td>
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<td>The Black Keys’ Holiday</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Music Alphabet</td>
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<td>Stepping</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>First Two White Keys</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Just Step Across</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Which White Key is Last?</td>
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<td>See the Cat!</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Bass Clef</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Treble Clef</td>
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<td>Simply Hum a Song</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Changing Carriages</td>
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<td>March Your Fingers</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Secret Disguise</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>The Keyboard Train Song</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Tap and Rap</td>
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<td>Down By the Stream</td>
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<td>This Keyboard Note-guide</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>Old MacDonald (Cha cha cha)</td>
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<td>Daydreams</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Down By the Station</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Driving Test</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>My Car</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Johnny What’s ‘isname</td>
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<td>Edge-line</td>
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<td>Freight Train</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>‘Duck’ Under</td>
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</table>
This beginner piano method may be used with children aged from about six to ten, who can recognise numbers and letters. With a unique approach, The Keyboard Express...

...starts with high and low (rather than middle) sounds, showing clearly how the top and bottom staves correspond to the right and left sides of the keyboard, and to the two hands.

...introduces note time-names that can be used with or without pitch-names. A body percussion activity complements this rhythmic innovation, and ‘count-ins’ for each piece lead readily to counting time.

...presents the white key letter-names in the symmetrical keyboard units ABCDEFG, rather than by starting from C.

...features note characters which bring the notation to life and enable students to easily find the starting points for pieces in a variety of different hand positions and tonalities.

...includes the grand stave note tester (at the front of the book), and (at the back) the three "keyboard carriage" keyboard guides, plus a CD of all pieces in the book.

...contains appealing songs, a range of touches and hand coordinations including contrary and similar motions as well as melody with chords, and interesting accompaniments for the teacher. Some pieces are specially designed to be memorised.

About the author:

In addition to his music diplomas, John Keller has a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Physics and a Diploma of Education from Sydney University. After winning the inaugural Music Students Overseas Study scholarship, he attended Indiana University, USA, and was awarded a Master of Music with High Distinction in Piano Performance.

John’s diverse interests in music and music performance cover classical, jazz and popular styles. An experienced professional performer of popular music, he has played in bands and piano bars and won the grand finals of many talent quests. As a classical pianist, John has given recitals for music clubs and radio, and performed numerous piano concertos with the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra. He is also associated with this orchestra as their lead violist and regular guest conductor.

For eight years John directed, presented and conducted Walk Through the Orchestra, a series of orchestral concerts for children. The programs were popular with children and adults alike, and included orchestrations of some of his pieces to demonstrate his teaching methods.

The piano has always fascinated John. When he began lessons at the age of twelve, he had already experienced seven years of musical discovery, teaching himself to play by ear. In his early years as a piano teacher, the challenges presented by young students and less than adequate teaching materials led John to devise his own beginner method. Before long The Keyboard Express, with its unique introduction to the white keys in the symmetrical units A to G, was on its way. Since then, John’s innovative teaching strategies have encouraged his students to develop a range of skills applicable to many areas of musical endeavour, and produced many talented amateur and professional musicians.