The Keyboard Express A

'Kids Notes' pre-staff reading for young pianists

A beginner piano method with pre-staff 'kids notes' and keyboard guides

by John Keller

The Keyboard Express™
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To the Teacher:

This book is designed to be used in both orientations.
Start with the book upright (portrait orientation), so notes go to the left and right.
Later have the book in the usual (landscape) orientation, so notes go up and down.
Black Key Groups of 2 and 3

Find all the groups of 2.
Then find all the groups of 3.

Note to teacher:
Please do not speak of left and right hand, or high and low at this stage.
Note stickers

Sit in the centre.

Hand Placements

3
2
1

notes for black keys

line note

space note
Note to teacher:

White note-heads indicate the playing of black keys (*Express Stave* notation).

They do not indicate time values.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

- **Mid-group of two: splash!**
  
- **Next is group of three: splash!**
  
- **Back to group of two: splash!**
  
- **Back key group of three: splash!**

Black key group of three:

- **splash!**

Next is group of three:

- **splash!**

Back to group of two:

- **splash!**

Centre of keyboard
Twos and Threes

For each bar, teacher plays and sings first, then student copies.

Twos and Threes

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Start with this hand.
Fingers Walking on the White Keys

1. Standing side-on to the keyboard, 'walk' your left hand along the white keys, all the way from one side to the other. The first white key on the left side is called A.

2. Stop on the way and 'walk' on the spot for a while. The key should stay held down and not repeat its note.

3. Facing the other way, 'walk' your right hand along the white keys, all the way back.

4. Stop on the way and 'walk' on the spot for a while. The key should stay held down and not repeat its note.

The white keys are called the **naturals**. They were the first keys to be invented. But then all the keys looked the same! Later on, they gradually added the **extras** - the black keys in the groups of 2 and 3.

Note to teacher: Please do not speak of high and low or upwards and downwards yet.
Smoothly Step

Smooth-ly step a-long this line.

Hop and skip and step this line.

Teach by ‘rote’. Show which keys to play by firstly pointing directly on the keyboard, then to the keys at the bottom of this page. Lastly the student can play by reading the notes down the line.
Racing car, (get ready)
Hop right in.
Let me take you for a spin.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

“double natural keys”

Play this side first

Racing car, (get ready)
Hop in-side.
Let me take you for a ride.

“double natural keys”
The Groups of 2 Black Keys (2 Extras):

These are notes. They tell us which keys to play.

The 2 black keys will have small white notes.

(line for group of 2)

The teacher can slide a coin over the line to help student learn to play these two notes.

Teach the student to hold each key down until playing the next one, aiming for a firm, smooth and clear legato action.

NB: As the young student will be playing black keys at this early stage, it is useful and logical to give these black keys their own unique single letter names.

Kids' Notes

Lets pretend they are two eyes!

- and call them I and J

(- the 2 dotted letters in the alphabet).

This hand plays groups of 2 on this side.

This hand plays groups of 2 on this side.
Walk a-long then have a rest.

Which side do you like the best?

On This Side

(Play black keys)

On this side we walk a long.

(Play)

rest

On this side we walk a long.

Keep in time and sing this song.

How to come off the keys:

Hold elbow slightly out.

Raise your wrist slowly. Let your hand hang loose, with the forearm muscles soft and relaxed.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

"Walk Along"

centre of keyboard

Walk Along

Walk a-long then have a rest.

(rest)

Which side do you like the best?
One Is My Thumb

"Copy-cat" routine:
For each bar, teacher plays and sings first, then student copies.
Echo with clapping and chanting at first if desired.

Technique:
Thumb plays on its side with a light loose touch. No other parts of the hands touch the keys. Keep elbows out to the sides so that the backs of hands are level.

Black notes mean play white keys (naturals).

Teacher's Accompaniment:

One little bell.
One big drum.

centre of keyboard
Wiggle Finger Number ...

1 one  two  three  four  five
One two three

Fingers play

Start here.

Left Hand

Write in all your finger numbers.

Technique:
Hold each key down, only lifting the finger off after playing the next note.
Thumb plays on its side. Curve the other fingers.

Right Hand

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Bird and Frog Sounds

Which side of the keyboard sounds like birds?

Which side of the keyboard sounds like frogs?

Note to teacher:
This is where the terms high and low may be introduced.
One two three four five, we heard
Notes that sound just like a bird.

One two three four five, we found
Notes like frogs down on the ground.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Play next-door white keys.)

(Play this side first)
This Way Goes Up

Up to the sky,
Where all the birds
Sing very high.

W
Where all the frogs
Make their low sound.

This Way Goes Down

Up and Down

Playing black keys.
(Use finger 2 all the way.)

Starting note:
(for both hands)

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Start on the same black key.)

Play black keys.

Up and Down

This way goes up,
Up to the sky,
Where all the birds
Sing very high.

This way goes down,
Down to the ground,
Where all the frogs
Make their low sound.

Play black keys.

Centre of keyboard

(Start on the same black key.)

This way goes down,
Watch these stems, So you'll see
Which hand plays each centre key.
I Spy With My Eye

Teacher's Accompaniment:

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C4-\-\-\-\-
\-\-\-\-\-\-
\-\-\-\-\-
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Line

Keyboard
We will call the 3 black keys KLH. On the line, the 3 black keys have large white notes.

Find all the groups of 3 on this side.

The teacher can move a counter or coin on the page to help students follow these three notes.

Low side of the line

(line for group of 3)

High side of the line

We will call the 3 black keys KLH.

Find all the groups of 3 on this side.

Kids’ Notes
If You’re Happy

If you’re happy and you know it, then you really ought to show it.

If you’re happy and you know it, play for me:

First play it all somewhere on the high side.

Then play it all somewhere on the low side.

Trace and copy:

- line notes -

- and space notes.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

If you’re happy and you know it, then you really ought to show it.

If you’re happy and you know it, play for me:

If you’re happy and you know it, play for me:

If you’re happy and you know it, play for me:
Every white note goes on one black key. Play this side first. That way they'll be so easy to see.
This Side, That Side

Go this side, that side, next to line, towards the sky or ground.

We're stepping up and down.

Go this side first.

Play this side first.

Sky

Ground

This Side, That Side

Go this side, that side, of this line.

centre of keyboard

up

down

Frogs

Birds
Every day we play these keys,

Play these keys,

Play these keys.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Every day we play black threes,

On the piano keyboard.

Play this side first.
Sing Up High

Sing up high, Sing up high, Sing up high where black birds fly.

Sing down low, Sing down low, Sing down low where bull-frogs go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Sing Down Low
Count to four in every colour, count to four in every bar.

Start from 1 at every bar-line, 1 2 3 4, Here we are.
Short and Long Notes

Notes are short or notes are long. One beat long or two beats.

How long will each note cling on? One beat long or two beats.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Frogs

Birds
Two Hands Play

Play each hand separately first.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Teacher's hands:

Frogs:

Birds:

(Moving outward and inward)
These lines are called link lines, and these lines for groups of three.

Links are what they point to, the blacks’ most famous key.
Twos and Threes

centre

high hand

low hand

centre
Tops, Middles, Bottoms Race

It's a race!

My timings:

3 bottoms
2 middles
3 tops

centre of keyboard
Two dots mean repeat this please. So each hand can play.

When we play on centre keys, either hand's okay.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

**centre of keyboard**
Play in Group

Next is group of three:

Back to group of two:

Black key group of three:

(The end!)

Play copy-cats.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

3 2 3

bottom  middle  top
The teacher can slide a coin over the lines to help students learn to play these black keys. Using these “Express Stave” notes for the black keys helps the student learn keyboard geography, plus the concepts of up and down, lines and spaces, stepping and skipping.
I Like Ice Cream

If I only had my way, I'd eat ice cream every day.

I'll have two scoops.

So do we. We'll have three.

Repeat

Teacher's Accompaniment:

bottom middle top
Group of 3 and Group of 2

Group of three and group of two.
Making music just for you.

Extra key groups, big and small.
Move your hand and play them all.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Repeat
Bigs and Smalls

Big notes for threes,
And small notes for twos.

That way we'll know
Which extras to choose.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

3 big notes 2 small notes 3 big notes
1. First play it all with high hand. (Use fingers 1, 2, 3, and 4.)

Start with finger:

2. Then repeat it with low hand (fingers 1, 2, 3, 4)

1: Climbing up, Climbing down. In the branches of a tree.

2: Changing groups, Moving round. Moving to this next black key.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

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G Bb e G Bb e G Bb e G Bb e G Bb e G Bb e
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Once I built a snowman,
He was my friend all winter long.

Time will wait for no man.
And so by summer he was gone.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
swing boogie

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{bottom} & : \\
\text{middle} & : \\
\text{top} & :
\end{align*}
\]
Go up and down with both hands, in the same direction.

Play hands separately at first.

Practice for perfection.

Repeat immediately.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \begin{array}{c}
\text{DOWN} \\
\text{UP} \\
\text{DOWN} \\
\text{UP}
\end{array} \\
& \begin{array}{c}
\text{DOWN} \\
\text{UP} \\
\text{DOWN} \\
\text{UP}
\end{array}
\end{align*}
\]
In between two black keys, there lives a single natural.

White notes for each black key, and black notes for each natural.

What do you think these keys look like?

Teacher's Accompaniment:

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single natural

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Kids' Notes

Start with high hand

Repeat with low hand

Find all the single naturals on this side of the keyboard.

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centre

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2

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Rocket Ship

Rocket ship,
Take your place.
Blast off into outer space.

Submarine

Submarine,
I will drive.
Deep down in the sea we dive.
Three Twos

Middle twos,

Teach by copying.

High twos, low twos, two twos. Right on the twos lines, Jump to link lines.
Near two extras, find three naturals. One between and one each side.

Extra keys close in and thin but naturals further out and wide.
I Sit In the Centre

I sit in the centre and I always will.

My two hands can travel*, but I just keep still.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

* Practice moving your hands gracefully to treble and bass sides of the keyboard while sitting still in the middle.
Twos and Threes  
(Hands Together)

It's a race!  
My timings:

Play by feel, without looking at the keys!
A pair:
- no black key between.

Find all the pairs on your keyboard. They are called pairs because of their shape.

Pairs of socks between these blocks.

Twos and threes.

Blocks of keys, low hand to high hand.
How many pairs are on the high side?
Put Your Socks On!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Put 1
your 2
socks on!

Put 1
Both 2
hands on!

Put 1
of 1
socks on
now!

Put Your Socks On!
3: Hands together we can play.

Notes go out and in this way.

1: Pair of naturals on the right. --------------- That’s where treble clef will start.

2: Pair of naturals on the left. --------------- They go down here in bass clef.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

3: Hands together we can play.
Notes go out and in this way.
This treble clef means play on naturals high up where birds go.

This bass clef means play naturals on this frog side where it’s low.
Do you know what this could be?

In the Centre

The D-clef means play in the centre.

In the centre, I can see,

Something smiling back at me.

Something that begins with D.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Kids' Notes
Note Stickers

Each little note sticker goes on one key. Put them on keys where they're easy to see.

Playing on extras to help find our place. Playing on naturals in treble and bass.

centre of keyboard
Mary Had a Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow.
Every where that Mary went, that lamb was sure to go.
"Copy-cat" routine:

For each bar, teacher plays and sings, then student copies.

Or echo-clap and chant at first.
How Do We Find A?

How do we find A? This very first white key.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

It's right above this link line, And inside group of three.

Write in the letter names on the naturals.

Play L - A everywhere on the keyboard.
**Staccato:**
- a dot over or under the note(s).
- hop off the keys straight after playing.

**Teacher's Accompaniment:**
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\*\*\*
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Here in the centre these characters play. Inside these link lines they all have to stay.

(Play finger 3 all the way.)
All Links on the Keyboard

It's a race!
My timings:

centre alphabet

Start on lowest link

crogs alphabet

centre alphabet

birds alphabet
Learn each music alphabet, inside link lines, don't forget. Seven naturals in a row, G on top to A below.

Three 'alphabet clefs':

Lower (Frogs') Alphabet

Centre (Kids') Alphabet

Top (Birds') Alphabet
First Two Letters

Touching link is first key A.

First two letters, don’t forget.

B’s a little bit away.

Start of every alphabet.

Write in the other letternames.
Play L - A - B all over the keyboard.

centre alphabet

crogs alphabet  

birds alphabet
Ants Push Balls

Ants push Balls along this wall. Balls just roll and ants just crawl.

A and B we sing down low. So on bass clef they must go.

Introduce flash cards for these notes A and B.
Touching link is last key G.

F’s out at the edge of three.

Last two letters, don’t forget.

Top of every alphabet.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
Play L - G - F all over the keyboard.
Naturals (♩) Above and Below

Bird Clef

3

Naturals above, and naturals below.
Two on each side, that’s four in a row.
Both hands at once, Just practice it slow.
Play up and down. Think which way to go.

Frog Clef

3

high hand

low hand

birds

frogs

1

2

1

2

4

5

4

5

1

2

4

5
G the Girl and First-space F

G the Girl and I think they'll get married soon,
First-space F, Love that curly treble clef!

Add flash cards for these notes F and G to A and B.

Brainy

Add flash cards for these notes F and G to A and B.
Skip link line, Skip link line. Both hands skip across link lines.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Start here.
"I like sun." "And I like rain." "I prefer it hot." "Not me!"

"I like day." "But I like night." "We just don't agree." "That's right!"
Out in Space

1: Out in space I’d love to be, Where there is no gravity.

2: Naturals next to group of three, At the edge and floating free.

3: Play together everyone, Black and white keys having fun.
Smiley Face  😊

When you see a smiley face,
Put your guide in centre place.

That's where children sing and play,
Making music every day.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

centre alphabet

3 - line guide
These notes would be near the sky.  Near the ground these notes should go.

Tied note (hold note on)

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Find the keys by feel.
Mary Had a Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow.

Everywhere that Mary went,
Mary went, Mary went,
Everywhere that Mary went that lamb was sure to go.

Mary had a little lamb,
Little lamb, little lamb.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
One-thumb and Tutu

Now, One-thumb was a race-horse, and Tutu was one too.

Well, One-thumb won one race, and Tutu won one too!

Repit at a faster speed!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Read - you, staid - you, off you go)
Sometimes we must start with frogs to make it sound down low.

So we have these clefs that tell us where we have to go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Merrily we roll along, roll along, roll along,

Merrily we roll along, O'er the deep blue sea.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
“Copy-cat” routine:
For each bar, teacher plays and sings first, then student copies.
Echo with clapping and chanting at first if desired.

Here is a D-line

Line for the twos.

Know which D to choose.

here.

Start here.
Hot Cross Buns

Hot cross buns, Hot cross buns. One a pen-ny, two a pen-ny, Hot cross buns.
Near these twos are three white keys. Let us learn each letter name.

They are letters C, D, E, Everywhere they’re named the same.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
In the centre, children play, With their favourite pet each day.
Tell me, what’s your favourite pet? Told me once, but I forget.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Cat and Duck and Edge-line,

You all are very little.

Do not leave this playground! Please keep right in the middle.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Common time:
4 beats per bar

Add flash cards for middle C, D and E so as to complete the centre alphabet (A to G).
Copy Cat

Low hand plays,          High hand plays.          Pat that cat two different ways.
Ant and Ball and Copy Cat

Ant and Ball and Copy Cat, From this centre alphabet.

Ant and Cat and Ball, They all crawl along this wall.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Centre Alphabet
My friends were playing hiding, They thought I would not find them.

But when I heard them laughing, Beneath my bed I found them.
Mark the “easys” and “plays”

Edge-line E, First-space F, Bottom pair in treble clef.

Girl looks through that curl at me. Line to line, skip one key.

Centre Alphabet
In Express Slav notation, the two extra keys I and J are written as small white notes close in to the line. Play these notes as your teacher points to them, or moves a coin on the page. Remember to hold each key down firmly until you smoothly play the next one.

The three naturals near them are written as larger black notes touching the line. The two next naturals are written as small black notes moved away from the line. The pair of naturals are written as white notes close in to the line.

Thumb plays on its side. Other fingers are curved.

Next-door white keys have next-door fingers.
Line and Space

Line and space, Line and space. Space notes always touch a line.

Under line, Over line. Next to lines they call it space.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

space | line | space
---|---|---

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Go Down, Down, Up, Down ...

1: Play high hand.

2: Play low hand.

3: Play hands together, getting wider, getting closer, same notes.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Frogs

Birds
Next door naturals, next door fingers, Playing with my friends next door.

Fingers curve and walk on tip-toe, Thumb lies on its side for sure.
Touch This Line
(All On the High Side)

Touch this line then move a-way. People say that’s not okay.

Moved a-way notes need a line. Then the people think it’s fine.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
\[\text{MIDI notation} \]
Treble clef, treble clef. Right hand plays white keys up high.
Treble clef, treble clef. Seagulls fly up in the sky.

The **treble stave** is only for **white** keys (naturals) on the high side, and notes are all the same size.

Number the **lines** upward from the bottom **Edge-line**.
How many **lines** are there?

Also number the **spaces** upward from the **First-space**.
How many **spaces** are there?

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Touch This Line
(All On the Low Side)

Touch this line then move away. People say that's not okay.

Moved away notes need a line. Then the people think it's fine.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
The bass stave is only for **white** keys (naturals) on the **low** side, and notes are all the same size.

Number the **lines** upwards. How many lines are there?

Number the **spaces** upwards. How many spaces are there?

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Bass clef, bass clef, Just play naturals on the left.

Bass clef, low side. Down there where those white frogs hide.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Baby Monkey

Find the 2-black-key groups by feel.

Baby monkey, cling on tight. Don’t fall off and get a fright.

Hold on to your mother’s coat, like we cling to every note.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
First Three, Top Three

First three letters: A, B, C.

Top three letters: G, F, E.

Centre key, A, B, C.

Place a 3-line alphabet guide in the centre.
Special Little Characters

Special little characters,       Just for centre alphabet.

Girls and boys and pets and toys,      All to learn and not forget.

Change the 3-line alphabet guide ...
...  to the centre characters' guide.
Centre Kids

Centre kids are exercising, keeping healthy, fit and strong.

Playing outside in their playground, feeling happy all day long.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
In this alphabet up high, Seven seagulls in the sky.
In this alphabet below, Seven white frogs in a row.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Alphabet staves have three lines.
In the middle of each alphabet, Lives the letter D,
And above is letter E and below is letter C.

The bass alphabet “hoodie”

Frogs (‘basic’) alphabet

low hand
In the Bass

A is a space note, B is a line note, C is a space note, D is a line note,

E is a space note, F is a line note, G is a space note, In the bass.
The treble alphabet

A is a space note, B is a line note, C is a space note, D is a line note,

E is a space note, F is a line note, G is a space note, treble clef.
Bass and Treble Alphabets

This alphabet is down low in the bass. This is where frogs hop all over the place.

This is the treble or third alphabet. High in the sky it’s the birds alphabet.

Frogs (‘basic’) alphabet

treble.alphabet
1: Old MacDonald had a farm.

2: On that farm he had a cow.

Moo moo here,  Moo moo there,
Here a moo, there a moo,

Every where a moo moo.

Play 1st part again.
Inside These Links

In-side these links, lives A, and G. They are the first, and last, white key.

Play one of these, and I will say, Whether that note was G or A.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

centre A  centre G
On these white keys, play the right keys. Line then space, all in a row.

Notes are either lines or spaces. In these places all notes go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

On these white keys, play the right keys. Line then space, all in a row.
Be careful!

First Two Naturals (♩)

First two naturals A and B. At the edge or inside three.

Last Two Naturals (♩)

Last two naturals F and G. Touching link or floating free.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

THREE

LINK
Thumbs are Finger 1s. Pointers finger 2s. Middles finger 3s. Ringers finger 4s. Pinkies finger 5s.

Thumbs are finger 1s.
Soccer, Cricket, Basketball

Throw a ball against a wall.

Ball game sports are fun to do.
"Copy -cat" routine:
Student chooses a colour.
Teacher plays and chants that pattern ("play", "easy", "rest", etc).
Student copies.

Student can also “mark” the rhythms with a pencil in real time as you chant.
Stepping

In these five-line staves we see each line and space is one white key.

Next door naturals, next door fingers. Stepping up and down with me.
Top Half, Bottom Half

Top half of alphabet G F E D.
Bottom of alphabet, keys A B C.

Learn all the letters in each alphabet. In each position which letter you get.
Alphabet in Bass Clef

Bottom letters A and B,
Middle letters C D E.

Fold finger 3 over thumb.

Top two letters G and F
Alphabet, In bass clef.

Fold finger 2 over thumb.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

“Basic” Alphabet
Copy of Copy-Cat

Teacher's Accompaniment:

No, the same spot on the keys!
Leger-Line

Start with Edge-line and next door, then move away from Edge-line.

When notes move out past the edge, we just add one leger-line.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

[Music notation]
Seven Characters

Common time:
4 beats per bar

In this central alphabet,
Seven characters we met.

In this treble clef and bass,
Some on line and some in space.
Duck Walks Down This Lane

Duck walks down this lane between treble clef and bass.
Quickly take a photograph and recognise that face.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(low hand)

Duck under!
Treble Clef Starts; Bass Clef Starts

Both these pairs are E and F. Edges of this treble clef.

Bass clef starts with double keys. Double keys at edge of bass.

At the edge, one line, one space. Double keys at edge of bass.

High hand

Bass clef region

Treb - le clef starts from this pair. Treb - le clef ends right up there.

Top line and space

Treb - le clef region

Edge-line and First-space

Bottom line and space
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle twinkle little star, How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky,
Twinkle twinkle little star, How I wonder what you are.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Fine
London Bridge

Lon - don bridge is fall - ing down, fall - ing down, fall - ing down.

Lon - don bridge is fall - ing down,

My fair la - dy.
“Ode To Joy” by Beethoven

Ode to Joy is by Beethoven, from his great ninth symphony.
Ode to Joy is all about how man should live in harmony.

Play each hand separately at first.
Count 4 beats in each bar.

One-two, and three-four.
Treble and Bass 5-line Staves
Express Staves