

INCORPORATING AURAL-CENTERED TEACHING WITH TRADITIONAL PIANO
PEDAGOGY: AN ADAPTIVE APPROACH TO THE FABER METHOD

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many piano methods have been invented by pedagogues with their individual philosophies regarding the best way to teach piano. Each method has been studied and used by piano teachers who have given various opinions about the effectiveness of these individual methods. The four well-known music education methods for teaching classical music to children are the Orff method, the Kodaly method, the Dalcroze method, and the Suzuki method. The Orff method combines music, movement, drama, and speech into lessons that are similar to a child's world of play. The Kodaly method is based on a belief that folk music is an ideal vehicle for early musical training because of its short forms, pentatonic style, and simple language. The Dalcroze method teaches musical concepts by using physical movement. The Suzuki method is based on language acquisition theories, which is that all people can learn from their environment. As described, each method has its philosophy and focuses on different senses for teaching music. The methods mentioned above use primarily auditory and kinesthetic based methods. These methods are used in a group setting for young children.

In contrast to the methods above, piano pedagogy methods for home studios—such as Faber—are highly focused on learning to read music, which is a visual-centered learning method. For young beginners, many piano method books begin with the use of finger number and black key groups. Notes on the staff are introduced later in the book or not even in the first book, but students learn the basic rhythms including quarter note, half note, and whole note in the early stage. Without the staff, each song is notated showing the direction of notes (going up or down). By the end of the first book, in the case of Faber “My First Piano Adventure,” students learn how to play on both black keys and white keys by reading notes with the finger numbers and the letter

names on the notes. Although this method reduces the need for students to read notes on the staff, it can become overwhelming due to the heavy emphasis on reading for each musical concept they learn.

A choice of piano method is crucial for instructing children or beginning students, and piano teachers choose a method that fits their teaching philosophy. Children advance through diverse developmental stages at varying paces. Understanding child development enables educators to customize their teaching strategies to align with the unique needs and capabilities of each child. A variety of physical developments happen during childhood, and early elementary school age is one of the stages showing significant growth and changes in their ability. Cognitive developments are not only related to their musical abilities—including skills such as listening, reading, writing, and singing—but also related to the receiving and processing of information.

An observable aspect of child development is the earlier maturation of auditory skills before reading skills, attributed to the different pacing of cognitive development. Therefore, my conjecture posits that it is more efficient to approach early elementary students using more auditory methods when teaching piano. Chapter I will explore the detailed development of early elementary-aged children in aural and cognitive skills. This exploration will encompass age-related improvements in both auditory and reading performance due to the physical and functional changes that occur as they grow. The fundamental differences in the structural details that carry meaning in speech and music necessitate careful teaching approaches.

Most of the popular piano method books are mainly based on a visual approach, but the Suzuki method—which is part of my focus on my research—is the mother-tongue approach that is centered on aural learning. Alongside the Suzuki method, I will explore the jazz teaching method in the piano studio (which also depends highly on auditory skills) in Chapter II. I will

undertake a comprehensive observational and analytical study through five sessions each of Suzuki violin lessons and jazz lessons specifically with early elementary students (6 to 7-year-old). The prevalence and adoption of the Suzuki method within violin pedagogy surpasses its application in piano instruction, therefore I prompt my decision to observe violin lessons rather than piano lessons to study this approach.

Chapter III will concentrate on Faber, a prominent traditional piano method renowned for its emphasis on reading skills. This section will undertake a comprehensive examination of Lesson Book A, Pre-Reading, from the My First Piano Adventure series. While widely utilized globally for teaching piano to children, my objective is to delve deeper into the potential adaptation of the traditional piano method to incorporate auditory-oriented activities aligned with various stages of child development.

In Chapter IV, I will provide a comprehensive exploration and rationale for my decision to utilize adaptive methods. It is crucial to clarify that the term "adaptive method" refers to teaching suggestions within the framework of the traditional piano method book, Faber, rather than general accommodations tailored for students with disabilities or neurodiversity. By embracing the adaptive approach and presenting a range of teaching methodologies, I aim to utilize the strengths of both traditional piano pedagogy and aural-centered teaching methods, thereby fostering a more enriched learning experience for students.

Lastly, in Chapter V, I will integrate the Suzuki method and jazz pedagogy—renowned for their emphasis on aural learning—into the traditional, reading-based piano method books, such as Faber. While Faber, like other popular traditional piano methods, systematically introduces musical concepts at an appropriate pace and offers a diverse repertoire, there is an opportunity to align its teaching methodologies more closely with the natural developmental

stages of children, consistent with the philosophies of Suzuki and jazz pedagogy. I will propose several approaches to incorporate aural-based learning techniques into the instruction of fundamental musical concepts and beyond within the framework of Faber method books, particularly tailored for young students.

II. COGNITIVE AND AUDITORY DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD

A. Cognitive Development

As children grow, they acquire varied cognitive, motor performance, social, and emotional skills at an expected rate and sequence. A developmental psychologist Jean Piaget is known for his theory of cognitive development, and through his theory, he proposes a sequential developmental trajectory in children, delineated into four distinct stages: sensorimotor stage, pre-operational stage, concrete operational stage, and formal operational stage. In the series of distinct stages, Piaget argues that a child's way of thinking and perception of the world evolves, which influences the development of intellectual abilities.

Among the four stages, young children and early elementary children from two to seven years of age are in the pre-operational stage. In the phase of cognitive development termed pre-operational, Piaget observed that children lack a grasp of concrete logic and are incapable of mentally manipulating information. Children at this stage encounter challenges in comprehending the perspectives of others because of their egocentric thinking. Nevertheless, they show the capacity to think through images and symbols and have intuitive thought. An effective approach when teaching musical concepts to young beginners will occur through an understanding of these cognitive developmental milestones.

Example 1: Piaget's theory of cognitive development¹

Stage	Age	Features
Sensorimotor stage	0-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of their senses and bodily movements to understand the world around them
Pre-operational stage	2-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of language and abstract thought • Classification by a single feature • Imitation, Symbolic play, drawing, mental imagery, verbal evocation of events
Concrete operational stage	7-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning logical, concrete (physical) rules about objects, such as height, weight, and volume • Classification, seriation
Formal operational stage	12+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand abstract concepts and solve problems • hypothetical-deductive reasoning - what is possible and what might happen in the future, based on their existing knowledge

The development of children and the development of musical concepts and skills is closely related. According to several experiments on children by George M. Christ, there is a series of musical ability that children develop—children can learn tempo, volume, pitch direction, and pitch level sequentially. He mentioned that apparent developments of musical concepts and skills were found which were related to Piaget’s theory. Children’s ability to

¹Zia Sherrell. “What Are Piaget’s Stages of Development, and What Are Examples of Each?” MEDICAL NEWS TODAY, n.d. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/325030>.

differentiate between same and different sounds and pitches seems to develop by the first grade which corresponds to the pre-operational stage of Piaget's theory. Elementary-school-aged children who were tested in his experiment displayed their ability to perceive and understand pitch direction earlier than to separate two high and low pitches. The high and low pitches confuse children with different dynamics as they perceived lower pitches as louder compared to higher pitches. Also, the inclusion of music reading skills, which combine pitch and rhythm, should occur after most students in a grade level have reached late concrete operations. He suggests that learning reading skills should be introduced earlier as part of a rote learning process, not as a part of a cognitive development process. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of adapting music education to the individual needs of each child by saying that "if the students fail to respond correctly to the music skills, then the presentation should be delayed until the child can accommodate and assimilate the new material."²

Therefore, understanding child development for music educators is significant in child education for two important reasons: to give individualized teaching and to meet the unique needs and abilities according to their skill level. This will allow educators to have realistic expectations for every student, which is essential. Educators equipped with knowledge of child development can establish achievable expectations regarding children's behavior, learning capacities, and social interactions. By avoiding unrealistic demands, a positive and supportive learning environment is fostered. Additionally, educators proficient in child development can identify potential issues in advance and collaborate with parents and specialists to address them effectively. This proactive approach enhances overall outcomes for the child. By designing a curriculum that resonates with their developmental milestones, educators can create engaging,

² Ibid.

relevant, and accessible material that nurtures children's natural curiosity and facilitates optimal learning experiences. Educators who possess insights into child development can engage in meaningful conversations with parents, sharing information about a child's progress, milestones, and challenges. Effective communication between educators and parents is essential for successful music education in children. This collaborative approach strengthens the partnership between educators and parents, contributing to the child's educational journey. And as it is described in “The Importance of Child Development in Music Education” that the overall quality of the parent-child relationship impacts not just attachment and emotional growth but also influences the child's central nervous system and self-regulation skills, the parent’s role in child development is crucial. Thus, continuous, well-developed communication with parents as a music educator is strongly related to child music learning. Incorporating knowledge of child development into child education practices ensures that educators can provide effective, personalized, and supportive learning experiences that meet the unique needs of each child.

B. Aural Skill Development

A child’s auditory system displays its growth after their birth through continuous stimuli and the auditory system actively analyzes the auditory environment, enabling them to accomplish the goals of communication and learning. Anatomical studies indicate that numerous changes take place after full-term birth. For instance, the development of the middle-ear cavity volume continues until the late teenage years, which is substantially effective on the absorption, processing, filtering, and transmission of the sounds to the auditory system.³ And mature

³Ruth Litovsky. “Development of the Auditory System.” Handbook of clinical neurology, 2015. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4612629/>.

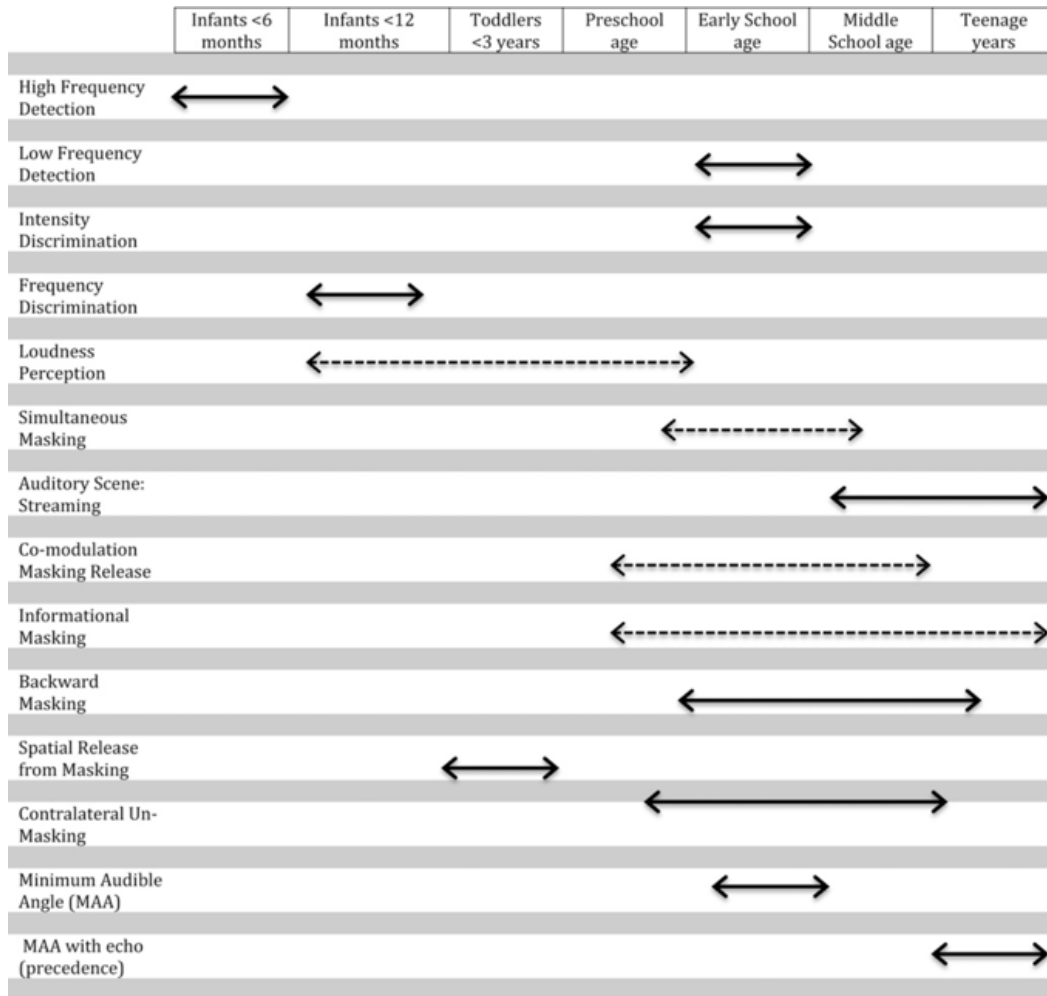
processing of the information is achieved only late in childhood or even in late adolescence.

Therefore, it is important to understand the developmental milestones of young students to know their abilities.

Although young infants are already capable of distinguishing tones of varying frequencies and the duration discrimination develops throughout most of the childhood years, their performance in this regard is inferior to that of adults due to their ongoing developmental process. The presented example below attains adult-level maturity, indicating a notable emergence of aural abilities during the early school age period.⁴ It is essential to note that while established developmental milestones exist for each age group, individual children may demonstrate unique developmental trajectories at their own pace.

⁴Ibid.

Example 2: The assessment of the age at which these capabilities attain mature adult levels.⁵



The maturation of the auditory system is a prolonged process, serving as one of the contributing factors to auditory development. Nonetheless, non-sensory elements such as attention, cognition, and memory are recognized as pivotal in shaping the maturation of auditory perception and accounting for the individual variability observed across age groups.

In the article, “Perceptual Shifts in the Auditory Information Processing of Young Children,” Sergeant and Roche conducted an experiment to explore evidence of the existence of shifts of young children’s process of auditory information. The experimental findings underscore

⁵Ibid.

significant shifts in both perceptual and conceptual proficiency occurring between the ages of three and six, with conceptual maturation closely correlated with the increase of age. Throughout the developmental span from three to six years old, there is a discernible acceleration in the refinement of perceiving melodic contours and sense of tonality. Conversely, the development of processing visual information is typically slower compared to the processing of auditory information. By approximately six to seven years of age, individuals typically initiate the process of offering basic narrative descriptions of depicted visual stimuli; however, it is not until the subsequent stage of cognitive development, typically around ten to eleven years old, that they begin to exhibit the capability for nuanced interpretation of depicted scenarios, discerning underlying motivations, actions, and other intricacies within visual narratives.⁶ This implies that the processing of visual information represents a more advanced level of cognitive activity compared to the processing of auditory information. Unlike auditory information, visual process involves multiple stages, including perception, recognition, and interpretation, which take time to mature.

In conclusion, as children advance through their developmental stages, they enhance both their auditory and cognitive capacities. However, it's noteworthy that these abilities develop at varying rates; many research indicates that cognitive skills typically progress more slowly than auditory skills. Despite individual differences in developmental pace leading to diverse skill levels among children, educators should consider overarching developmental milestones and recognize each student's distinct capabilities. By adapting teaching approaches accordingly, educators can facilitate efficient and effective piano instruction.

⁶Desmond Sergeant and Sheila Roche. "Perceptual Shifts in the Auditory Information Processing of Young Children." *Psychology of music* 1, no. 2 (1973): 39–48.

III. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS ON AURAL-BASED TEACHING METHODS FOR BEGINNERS – SUZUKI AND JAZZ PEDAGOGY

In the realm of music education, two distinctive approaches stand out for their emphasis on auditory proficiency – the Suzuki method and jazz pedagogy. These teaching methodologies, while originating from different musical genres, share a common focus on developing aural skill and fostering a deep connection to sound. The Suzuki method, rooted in classical traditions, emphasizes early exposure to music and learning by ear, while jazz pedagogy delves into the improvisational and expressive aspects of jazz, guiding students through aural exploration and theory. Despite their divergent origins, both methods highlight the crucial role of listening and auditory skills in the journey of musical mastery.

To engage in a more comprehensive examination of these two pedagogical methodologies, I investigated by using two procedures. In addition to researching each method, I observed five lessons for each approach. For the Suzuki method, I observed Shelley Rich, a violin instructor affiliated with the University of Oregon Suzuki Strings Program, featuring a six-year-old student. The choice of observing violin lessons instead of piano lessons for Suzuki method was the result of the lack of local Suzuki piano instructors and the well-established violin Suzuki program at the institution. For the jazz pedagogy, I observed Nick Rieser, a private studio teacher. Although the student of the lesson that I observed is 14 years old, which surpasses early elementary school years, their status as a beginner student suits my purpose of observing teaching beginners. While an additional examination of the specified age group is encouraged to facilitate a more comprehensive case study, these observations remain valuable in capturing the essence of each teaching method.

A. Suzuki Method

The philosophy of Suzuki method is based on mother-tongue approach. It was created in the mid 20th century by a Japanese violinist and pedagogue, Shinichi Suzuki. Suzuki observed that children easily grasp their native language, even managing dialects effortlessly at the age of five or six. This led him to conclude that if children possess the capacity to learn their native language naturally, they might similarly have the potential to excel in learning a musical instrument and to achieve a prominent level of musical proficiency. The beginning of his teaching philosophy is well-described in his talk at the Japan Institute of Educational Psychology in 1973.

Children everywhere in the world were speaking in their own language; moreover, they did this fluently which required a very high level of proficiency... why did it appear that the mother tongue ability could be taught with the greatest of ease to every child... and yet why did they not do well in various subjects at school, acquiring this learning just as they did their language?⁷

In the book *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*, Mills emphasizes the crucial role of auditory skills in both music and language reading.⁸ As with learning language, music learning requires auditory discrimination, memory, and rhythm awareness. Mills argues that these skills can be obtained by imitation. She continues her argument by outlining various drawbacks associated with early readings in music learning. Mills identifies obstacles when learning to read and play an instrument concurrently, proposing alternative approaches such as focusing on vocal reading (in the approach of Zoltan Kodaly) or

⁷Carolyn M Barrett. *The Magic of Matsumoto: the Suzuki Method of Education*. Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1995, 45.

⁸Shin'ichi Suzuki, Elizabeth Mills, Therese Cecile Murphy, and Masaaki Honda. *The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education*. Edited by Elizabeth Mills and Therese Cecile Murphy. Berkeley: Diablo Press, 1973.

mastering an instrument before tackling reading (in the approach of Suzuki). She stresses that children can perform complex music before being able to read or notate it. Mills points out that early dependence on reading can impede memory development, suggesting the fact that many proficient readers often struggle with memorization. Proficiency in musicianship and comprehension of the instrument are enhanced simultaneously. In pitch and tempo senses, she underscores the significance of attentive listening. When focusing primarily on visual information from the page to the eye, the brain does not effectively register messages from the ear. Despite these challenges, Mills asserts the importance of printed notation, emphasizing that a balanced approach is key for effective music education.

In five observed Suzuki violin lessons, a distinct teaching approach was evident. Notably, the absence of sheet music was observed throughout the sessions, fostering an environment where the young students were encouraged to rely on their auditory and kinesthetic senses rather than immediate reading. The deliberate delay in introducing reading allowed a focused emphasis on fewer senses, with an initial emphasis on listening before engaging with new repertoire. The instructor employed creative language, such as "silent sea saw" and "waterfall," to convey rhythms and techniques, adding a unique and imaginative dimension to the learning experience. For another example, the instructor utilized three distinct "creatures" – the water spider, lobster, and tuna fish – to illustrate different tone qualities. By demonstrating three specific sounds corresponding to each creature, the student quickly established a connection between the creature and its associated tone quality. Additionally, the incorporation of theory classes in a group setting provided opportunities for collective reading exercises, contributing to a comprehensive and multi-sensory learning environment. Group lessons and concerts provide joy and impart

social skills through ensemble playing. In summary, beginners in Suzuki pedagogy are encouraged to engage in attentive listening and awareness of their bodily movements.

The Suzuki method posits a philosophy on musical notation, asserting that music primarily utilizes the auditory sense rather than the visual. Therefore, a comprehensive and conscious experiential understanding through listening precedes the introduction of its symbolic representation. Nevertheless, the significance of learning to read music is not disregarded. Mills outlines conditions that should be met before learning to read music at an appropriate time as follows.⁹

- Effective posture should be well-established, requiring minimal reminders.
- Technical movements should be executed effortlessly, securely, and accurately.
- Musical sensitivity should manifest in tone, expression, and rhythm.
- A developed musical memory and keen observational skills allow for precise imitation.
- Neurological development should be sufficiently mature to meet reading demands without compromising established musical and technical proficiency.
- The need for reading arises when parental guidance in fingering and bowing instructions becomes inadequate for ensuring accuracy, or when orchestral experiences are imminent.
- A genuine interest in reading and curiosity about musical symbols should be present.

Mills believes that even after reaching the reading stage, students should persist in performing from memory during lessons. This approach enables better control over both musical and technical aspects.

⁹ Ibid., 155.

Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the Suzuki method was initially designed for violin instruction, and it diverges in its application to piano pedagogy. In contrast to its well-established and widely adopted use in violin instruction, the Suzuki method for piano is relatively limited. A contributing factor to this discrepancy lies in the divergence of reading skill acquisition.

Unlike the violin, which involves a more gradual introduction to reading skills, the piano demands an earlier integration of such skills due to its inherent complexity. The fundamental difference stems from the nature of the instruments themselves. While the violin primarily involves the execution of single notes, the piano necessitates an earlier emphasis on developing reading skills in the learning process due to its capacity for playing multiple notes simultaneously. The intricate nature of piano music, often involving harmonies, polyphony, and diverse rhythmic elements, imposes a unique set of challenges compared to the violin. As a result, the Suzuki method's adaptation to piano instruction encounters certain limitations, particularly concerning the timing of introducing and advancing reading skills.

For this reason, the divergence in the widespread use of the Suzuki method becomes apparent between these two instruments. Acknowledging these distinctions underscores the necessity for tailored instructional approaches, ensuring that the pedagogical methodologies align with the inherent demands and capabilities of each musical instrument.

B. Jazz Pedagogy

Unlike traditional piano pedagogy methods, teaching jazz relies heavily on developing the skill of playing by ear. While classical training often emphasizes reading sheet music and adhering to precise interpretations, jazz education encourages students to internalize melodies,

chords, and rhythms through active listening and imitation. This approach fosters improvisational abilities, allowing musicians to express themselves freely and interact dynamically with other performers. By honing their ear-training skills, jazz students not only deepen their understanding of the music but also cultivate a unique musical voice that is deeply rooted in the improvisatory tradition.

In the realm of jazz education for young students, the availability of method books is notably limited compared to traditional piano instruction. However, Toby Koenigsberg, based at the University of Oregon, has authored jazz method books tailored for young beginners, with a particular emphasis on improvisation. These method books consist of five progressive levels, and they aimed at equipping students to perform standard jazz repertoire upon completion. I will analyze the content of the first book (Level 1), examining how its aural-centered approach introduces musical concepts, and draw comparisons with the conventional piano method book, Faber. The Level 1 book introduces fundamental concepts including improvisation and ear training, guiding students through improvisation exercises involving call and response, steps, skips, and leaps, as well as basic rhythmic patterns (quarter notes, half notes, whole notes). Additionally, it covers the C and G positions on the keyboard and explores accompanying techniques using triads.

In Koenigsberg's method books, the audio component plays a pivotal role, serving as a primary accompaniment for students to engage in improvisation exercises. Koenigsberg provides only the necessary notes for students to play, prompting them to improvise within the given framework. The instructional approach involves Koenigsberg first demonstrating musical ideas, which students then repeat after him, repeating multiple times to reinforce learning. This method


is implemented when students engage in either improvisation or imitation of what they listen to in the audio files.

Both in this method and the Faber method, a sequential progression is observed where students begin by playing on black keys before transitioning to white keys. Both methods recognize the advantage of introducing black keys to young beginning students without initially delving into letter names. This approach allows students to concentrate solely on finger numbers, enabling them to become accustomed to finger placement before introducing letter names.

When introducing rhythmic elements like quarter and half notes, students are instructed to vocalize each note's name corresponding to its duration before performing them in Koenigsberg's book. The audio files incorporate a metronome feature, contextualizing concepts with references to "one/two clicks of the metronome." Similarly, students are encouraged to internalize the rhythms through vocalization or tactile engagement along with the audio files in the Faber method. However, in the Faber method, students are also prompted to draw the notation of the rhythms. In contrast to Koenigsberg's sequential introduction of quarter notes and half notes before letter names, Faber introduces letter names (C, D, and E) following the quarter note's introduction exclusively.

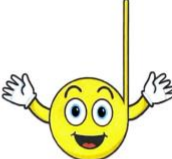
Example 3: Toby's Piano Improvisation: Level I, page 19.

Do What I Do




Track 11

Meet Toby's friend, Hanna! Hanna is a half note.



Toby

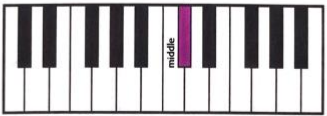


Hanna

In this song, you hear Toby say "quarter" for the length of a quarter note, and Hanna say "half" for the length of a half note. After they speak, you say what they say.

Then, Toby and Hanna play quarter notes and half notes on the piano, and you play what they play.

There is only one piano key in this song.
Use any finger you want.



Teacher's note: the student may not play this exercise perfectly at first - that is fine.

19

Intriguingly, hand positioning is initially centered around middle C, expanding gradually from two notes to four notes in each hand. The C position is introduced afterwards, facilitating a broader range of hand movement. The introduction of musical alphabet occurs after students get familiar with the C position with both hands. In contrast, the Faber method introduces the C

position from the outset, aligning with the approach of teaching notes based on their letter names.

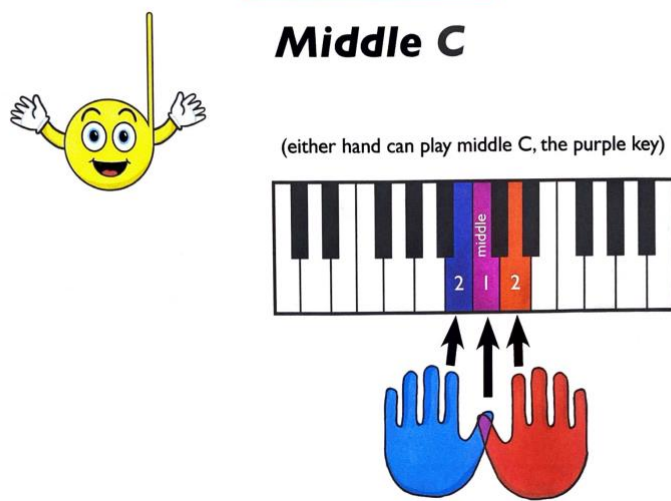
Example 4: Toby's Piano Improvisation: Level I, page 24.

CHAPTER 12

Middle C

Track 16

(either hand can play middle C, the purple key)




In this piece, you will make up music using white keys.

When you put your fingers on the piano, the thumbs share middle C, and either thumb can play it.

Copy Me: Middle C

Track 17

Play only one key: middle C

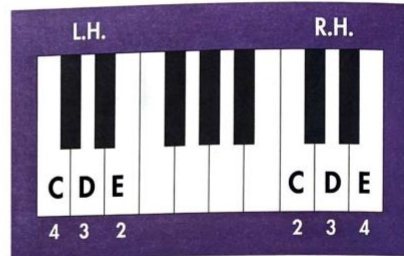


Little Lost Kitty

Quarter-Note Song on C-D-E

Tips from Millie and Marta:

1. Point to each note, counting "1, 1, 1, 1."
Use **L.H.** for down-stems and **R.H.** for up-stems.
2. Guide your teacher! Point to each note and say the **finger number** as your teacher plays.
3. Circle all the **repeated notes**.
4. Play on the piano, singing the finger numbers.
Can you see your "stone"? (See p. 12)



Words by Crystal Bowman

Kit - ty cat, where are you go - ing?
f Here's some milk, what's your de - sire? _____

L.H. E E D D C C D D

2 same finger 3 4 3

Koenigsberg's methodology intertwines musical concepts with improvisational practice, utilizing various accompaniment styles encompassing traditional, folk, pop, classical, and jazz genres from the beginning stage of learning. This eclectic approach aims to expose students to diverse musical styles, fostering a versatile understanding of music performance and interpretation which aligns with Faber's pedagogical philosophy and their selection of repertoire featured in their method books.

As previously mentioned, I also observed five sequential jazz piano lessons taught by Nick Rieser. Even though the lessons were not explicitly designed for early elementary students,

they provided valuable insights into the application of an aurally centered pedagogical approach within piano instruction. In this instance, the student engaged in learning a popular song by audibly discerning its chord progression and structure. Preceding the song study, the student learned theoretical concepts related to chord progressions, diligently practicing them across various keys to solidify comprehension. For example, mastery of the dominant 7th chord and its progression to a major chord was reinforced through systematic practice in all key signatures. Subsequently, when encountering similar chord progressions within the song, the student could identify quickly and executed them on the piano by relying on auditory cues. Other foundational theoretical concepts such as scales were emphasized during the lesson, facilitating the student's ability to navigate key changes and engage in improvisation across different tonalities. Additionally, the instructor utilized digital tools such as the Transpose from Google extensions to facilitate the transposition of songs into more accessible keys, particularly when challenging key signatures posed difficult for beginners.

Both the examination of jazz method books and the observed lessons revealed a distinct approach to acquiring musical concepts and mastering pieces. These methods emphasize minimal reliance on visual aids and prioritize internalization of music primarily through auditory engagement. This contrasts with the conventional approach found in traditional piano method books.

IV. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS ON VISUAL-BASED TEACHING METHODS FOR BEGINNERS - FABER METHOD

In contrast to the pedagogical methods explored in the previous chapter—Suzuki and jazz—The traditional piano method books authored by Nancy and Randall Faber, presented in this chapter, stand out for their pronounced visual guidance for students. Specifically, the "My First Piano Adventure" series is written for young learners aged 5 and 6, comprising three distinct books: Pre-Reading (A Books), Steps on the Staff (B Books), and Skips on the Staff (C Books). Each level includes Lesson and Writing books.

This chapter will focus on the first book, Pre-Reading, delving into its directional pre-reading approach, elementary music theory, and technique. The book employs engaging songs, games, and creative discovery at the piano to teach white-key names, basic rhythms, and a diverse repertoire spanning classical, folk, and blues genres. Many musical concepts are introduced through "friends at the piano." Supplementary to the books, Faber provides audio files that students can use for playing along.

Randall holds three degrees from the University of Michigan, has a Ph.D. in education and human development from Vanderbilt University. Meanwhile, Nancy has studied composition with Joan Tower, William Albright, and Nicholas Maw. Faber incorporates numerous compositions written by Randall and Nancy themselves. The teaching philosophy underlying Faber method books is encapsulated by the "ACE," meaning Analysis, Creativity, and Expression. According to the Faber method, analysis fosters understanding, creativity sparks self-discovery, and expression cultivates personal artistry. The philosophy incorporates a highly integrated approach that engages both right and left-brain modes in teaching, learning, and experiencing the nuances of pianistic sound. According to their website, their curriculum is

based on five principles for their mission to nurture musical minds and hearts: comprehensive exploration of pianistic music across diverse sounds and styles, profound understanding of music supported by theoretical knowledge, a systematic and synergistic approach, personalized learning experiences, and the strategic choreography of piano technique.¹⁰

Faber recognizes the difficulty young students face in grasping music with its symbolic language, which demands the integration of both visual and aural faculties. Embracing a natural learning approach, Faber postpones the introduction of the grand staff until the final page of the pre-reading book. Instead, emphasis is placed on mastering rhythm, note names, dynamics, and other foundational musical concepts.

¹⁰ “About.” Faber Piano Adventures, August 29, 2022. <https://pianoadventures.com/about/>.

12 **L.H. Rainbows**
Technique: Graceful Wrist Motion

Tips from Mitsy:

1. Point to each box where L.H. fingers 2-3 play together.
2. Listen and watch your teacher play.
3. Your turn! Play and make L.H. rainbows to each LOWER 2-black-key group. Your teacher may press the pedal as you play.

Start on the MIDDLE 2-black-keys.

L.H.
play together **2**
3

Say: Rainbow

up and

down and

up and

down and

up and

down.

Teacher Duet: (Student begins on a MIDDLE 2-black-key group.)

Chant: Rain - bow up and down and up and down and up and down.

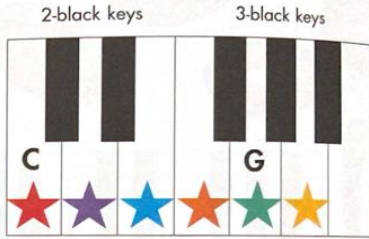
26 FF1

The Faber method incorporates a wide range of keyboards from the beginning. In the example of page 26, students engage with a four-octave span by playing the set of two-black-keys. Also, in contrast to the Suzuki method book, Faber books are characterized by their pronounced emphasis on visual elements by its decorations and coloration to engage the student's attention. Between pages 26 and 35, the instructional material employs visual and imagery guidance to teach the concept of "Graceful Wrist Motion" when transitioning to different octave ranges. This instructional approach integrates depictions such as rainbows, kangaroo leaps, the flight of a soccer ball, and the deliberate ascent and descent resembling that of a whale. The utilization of visual aids fosters a kinesthetic experience, enabling students to naturally achieve an arch-shaped movement of their wrists.

7 Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
Repeated Notes

Tips from Millie and Marta:

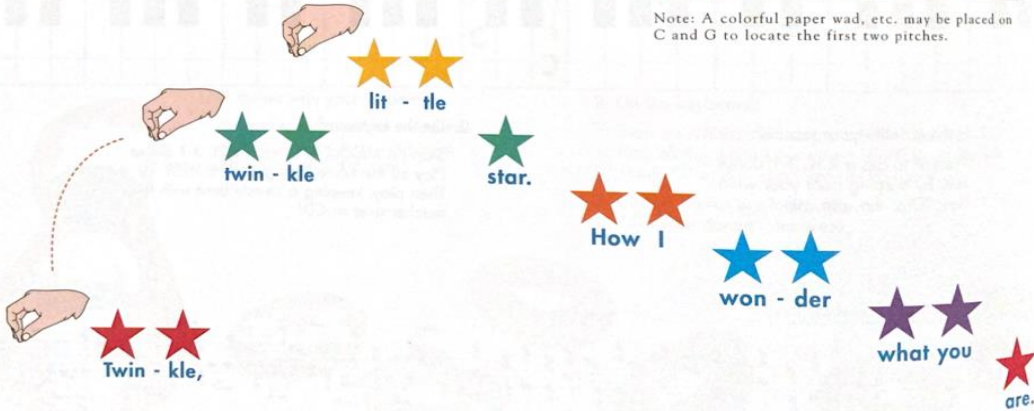
1. First, sing and point to the stars on the page.
2. Next, rest your **R.H. 3-1 donut** on top of your teacher's hand as she/he plays the song using finger 3.
3. Now play with **R.H.**, then **L.H.** You may learn just the first page this week.



2-black keys 3-black keys

C G

Note: A colorful paper wad, etc. may be placed on C and G to locate the first two pitches.



Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.

20 | WRITING BOOK 12-13 (What's in the Honey Pot?)

As in the Suzuki method book, the first piece that the beginning students learn from the lesson book of My First Piano Adventure is “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” According to the tips provided for instruction, students are advised to begin by singing the song and pointing to the stars on the page, each denoted with a distinct color. This dual approach, involving both vocalization and visual aids, enhances students’ familiarity with the song. Subsequently, students create a “3-1 donut” on their teacher’s hand while the teacher plays the song using the third finger. This tactile exercise enables students to sense the movement of a hand and an arm without having to focus on finger number.

Little Lost Kitty
Quarter-Note Song on C-D-E

Tips from Millie and Marta:

1. Point to each note, counting "1, 1, 1, 1."
Use **L.H.** for down-stems and **R.H.** for up-stems.
2. Guide your teacher! Point to each note and say the **finger number** as your teacher plays.
3. Circle all the **repeated notes**.
4. Play on the piano, singing the finger numbers.
Can you see your "stone"? (See p. 12)

L.H. **R.H.**

Kit - ty cat, where are you go - ing?
f Here's some milk, what's your de - sire? _____

L.H. **E** **E** **D** **D** **C** **C** **D** **D**

2 same finger 3 4 3

Words by Crystal Bowman

44 | WRITING BOOK 28-29 (Rescue the Kitty) FF1619

"The Little Lost Kitty" on page 44 represents the initial inclusion of letter names within the musical score. Serving as the culminating piece in Unit 5, it introduces the concept of quarter notes. Furthermore, the piece incorporates dynamic marking, a concept previously introduced in Unit 4. Through engagement with the white keys, students are instructed in maintaining a consistent tempo through the utilization of quarter notes, concurrently enhancing their familiarity with note names. As per the tips provided, the pedagogical approach advocated by Faber underscores the primacy of finger numbers over letter names initially, with a transition towards emphasizing letter names occurring after the completion of two additional pieces, as indicated on page 54.


48

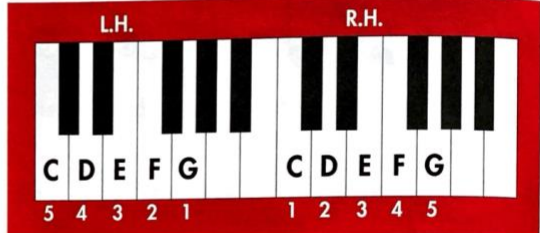
Graduation Party

C 5-Finger Scale Melody

Tips from your friends:

1. Guide your teacher! Point to each note and say the **letter name** as your teacher plays.
2. On the closed keyboard, play the song and say finger numbers.
3. Place your hands in the **C 5-finger scale**. Play and sing finger numbers, letter names, or words.






R.H.

1. This is my grad - u - a - tion, Book A grad - u - a - tion par - ty,

L.H.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Teacher Duet: (Student plays HIGHER on the keyboard.)



84

WRITING BOOK 60-61 (C Scale Animal Parade and Carlos Says, "Play C-D-E-F-G")

FF1619

As the final composition within the volume, "Graduation Party" includes bar lines and increased dexterity in hand alternation. Moreover, both treble and bass clefs are presented for each hand, facilitating comprehensive musical notation. The hand positioning adheres to the C 5-finger scale. Notably, the introduction of a chord (C-E) occurs on the second page, signifying a progression towards more complex harmonic structures. In accordance with tips, the pedagogical approach advocates for the simultaneous utilization of both letter names and finger numbers in the acquisition of proficiency with this piece.

In the examined volume of the Faber method book in this chapter, Faber employs a gradual approach to concept introduction, ensuring students assimilate each idea methodically,

mitigating the risk of the students becoming overwhelmed. The sequential presentation of the finger number preceding the letter name is conducive to the developmental stage of young learners, fostering a structured progression. Notably, the introduction of the staff occurs at the very end of the volume, laying the groundwork for future learning in subsequent books. In addition to vibrant imagery, Faber incorporates an array of visual aids such as notation and keyboard depictions featuring both finger numbers and letter names. However, the efficacy of these visual aids may vary depending on individual learning styles, potentially serving as either facilitators or distractors. Consequently, the selection of a method book should be approached with careful consideration, accounting for the compatibility with each student's preferred learning modality.

V. WHY ADAPTIVE METHOD

In this chapter, the term "adaptive method" carries a more specialized meaning than its widespread use in pedagogy. While it could be mistaken for an approach tailored for students with disabilities and neurodiversity, in this context, it refers specifically to adjustments made to the traditional piano method book, Faber. It is important to note that the teaching examples I will propose in the following chapter are intended for neurotypical students.

For this project, an adaptive method that incorporates an aural-centered approach to a reading-centered method is chosen for several reasons. While traditional piano instruction often relies on established method books, an adaptive approach offers additional benefits that accommodates diverse learning styles and preferences which enhances the accessibility and variety of piano education. An adaptive method's flexibility allows for tailored instruction, fostering a dynamic learning environment conducive to individual growth and development.

One notable advantage of an adaptive method lies in its facilitation of parental involvement during practice sessions. By providing clear structure and guidance within the instructional materials in the method books, parents are empowered to actively support and reinforce learning objectives outside of formal lessons. This collaborative approach not only strengthens the student-teacher-parent triad but also cultivates a sense of shared responsibility and commitment towards the students' musical journey.

Furthermore, an adaptive method cultivates essential reading skills, a fundamental component in navigating the intricacies of piano repertoire that characterized by dense textures and polyphonic complexities. By systematically integrating reading exercises and auditory skills, students are afforded the opportunity to develop fluency in musical notation, interpretive

proficiency, and sensitive listening which becomes a solid foundation for future musical endeavors.

In contrast to the Suzuki method, which often emphasizes a narrower selection of repertoire styles, an adaptive approach offers a broader spectrum of musical genres and idioms. Due to the Suzuki method's emphasis on learning by ear, the repertoire selected for Suzuki method books tends to be highly tonal. This choice facilitates students' familiarity with the melodies, making it easier for them to learn the pieces by ear. On the other hand, methods like the Faber series encompass a diverse repertoire spanning classical, contemporary, jazz, blues, folk, and popular music styles, affording students the opportunity to explore and engage with a rich tapestry of musical expressions. This exposure not only fosters a comprehensive understanding of musical traditions but also cultivates a broader appreciation for the multifaceted nature of artistic expression.

This argument is supported by a journal article written by Robert Michael De Yarman. In his journal article, as De Yarman emphasized the importance of children's early musical experiences, he highlighted the educator's role to teach children to understand broad aspects of rhythmic and tonal characteristics of music such as variety of meter, mode, and tonality. The study shows that young children who encounter both tonal and nontonal music demonstrate superior performance in tonal music compared to those exclusively taught tonal music.¹¹

¹¹ Robert Michael De Yarman. "An Experimental Analysis of the Development of Rhythmic and Tonal Capabilities of Kindergarten and First Grade Children", n.d.

Example 10: Contents of Suzuki Piano School New International Piano Volume 1¹²

Title	Composer
"Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" Variations	Shinichi Suzuki
Lightly Row	German Folk Song
The Honeybee	Bohemian Folk Song
Cuckoo	German Folk Song
Lightly Row	German Folk Song
French Children's Song	French Folk Song
London Bridge	English Folk Song
Mary Had a Little Lamb	American Nursury Song
Go Tell Aunt Rhody	Folk Song
Au Clair de la Lune	J. B. Lully
Long, Long Ago	T. H. Bayly
Little Playmates	F. X. Chwatal
Chant Arabe	Anonymous
Allegretto 1	C. Czerny
Goodbye to Winter	Folk Song
Allegretto 2	C. Czerny
Christmas-Day Secrets	T. Dutton
Allegro	S. Suzuki
Musette	Anonymous

The adoption of an adaptive method in this project reflects a deliberate and informed choice rooted in its versatility, inclusivity, and capacity to cater to the evolving needs and aspirations of students. By embracing a pedagogical approach that prioritizes flexibility, parental

¹² "Suzuki Piano School International Edition Piano Book, Volume 1: Piano Book | Sheet Music | Alfred Music." Alfred Music. Accessed May 17, 2024. <https://www.alfred.com/suzuki-piano-school-international-edition-piano-book-volume-1/p/00-0473SX/>.

engagement, reading proficiency, and repertoire diversity, educators can effectively nurture the next generation of pianists, fostering a lifelong love and appreciation for music.

VI. SPECIFIC AURAL-CENTERED TEACHING EXAMPLES

The child's developmental characteristics outlined in the initial chapter support the argument that young learners may experience cognitive overload when tasked with simultaneous utilization of multiple abilities during the learning process. Therefore, for the young students exhibiting challenges in learning, a strategic approach involving the deconstruction of tasks into more manageable components becomes imperative. By focusing on singular or dual aspects at a time, educators can alleviate cognitive strain and enhance comprehension.

Moreover, employing an aural-centric pedagogical approach in their formative stages holds promise in cultivating a heightened sense of musicality among students. Through active engagement of auditory sense, learners can develop a deeper understanding of sound production of the instrument which fosters familiarity and proficiency with the instrument. This auditory emphasis not only facilitates comprehension but also nurtures a holistic musical experience for young beginners.

In this chapter, two pieces from the Faber "My First Piano Adventure" Pre-Reading lesson book have been selected as examples of aural-centered teaching. The first piece is "Shepherd, Count Your Sheep," which is on pages 60-61. It is noteworthy that students were introduced to the concept of whole notes following their instruction on quarter and half notes within this chapter.

Example 11: My First Piano Adventure for the Young Beginner: Lesson Book A, page 60-61.

32 **Shepherd, Count Your Sheep**
Black-Key Song with Whole Notes

R.H.

Shep - herd, count your sheep (2 - 3 - 4) as they fall a - sleep. (2 - 3 - 4)

L.H.

f *p*

Teacher Duet: (Student plays HIGHER on the keyboard.)



Tips from Carlos: (pp. 60-61)

1. Point to the notes as your teacher plays.
Your teacher may ask you to count aloud.
2. Play on the piano and sing the finger numbers or words.
Your teacher may press the pedal as you play.
3. Make up your own peaceful shepherd music. Play any black keys with the teacher duet. End softly on the highest black key.

R.H.

f
Gen - tle shep - herd, sing - ing songs so sweet. (2 - 3 - 4)

L.H.

p
3 2

FF1619

Scenario 1 – Visual-centered Approach

The teaching recommendations within the Faber method encompass a range of activities, yet notably, aural-centered exercises are typically presented after reading-focused tasks. Initially, students are prompted to visually identify notes on the score while the teacher plays, as exemplified by the activity "Point to the notes as your teacher plays." This activity serves to acquaint students with the musical piece through auditory engagement prior to transitioning to piano performance. Nevertheless, the simultaneous demand on auditory and visual skills may prove overwhelming for certain students, necessitating repeated attempts for proficiency.

Subsequently, the activity "Play on the piano and sing the finger numbers or words" integrates piano playing and vocalization concurrently, fostering a deeper internalization of the

piece. While advantageous for enhancing musical comprehension, this activity may benefit from preceding simpler tasks, such as exercises focused on hand positioning. Given the disparity in hand positions between the left and right hands, additional preparatory activities could aid students in developing familiarity with proper hand placement.

Then students are encouraged to create their own "peaceful shepherd music" using black keys, as the last suggested activities. This final task exemplifies the most pronounced emphasis on aural skills. However, providing students with explicit guidance on hand positioning may enhance their comprehension and execution, particularly if they require additional support navigating the keyboard.

Scenario 2 – Aural-centered Approach

As mentioned above, this piece necessitates a differentiated hand positioning, whereby the left hand is allocated to a grouping of two black keys, contrasting with the right hand's engagement with a grouping of three black keys. To foster a deeper assimilation of these distinct hand configurations, pedagogical interventions involving improvisatory or compositional exercises using the physical layout of the keys are recommended. However, the simultaneous execution of activities by both hands can pose challenges due to the inherent complexity of coordinating disparate hand positions. Consequently, it is important to scaffold the learning process by initially engaging students in activities using one hand at a time. Several prospective activities include:

- The teacher plays a short series of notes, and the students copy with an accompaniment by the teacher or a metronome for rhythmic guidance.
- The teacher demonstrates some improvisation, and the students engage in melodic improvisation using each hand separately. Provide them with a simple rhythmic pattern

or ostinato to follow (e.g., quarter notes or half notes), and encourage them to explore the sounds within their hand position. This activity allows students to develop their ear for melody while reinforcing the hand position.

- The students create rhythmic compositions using the given hand positions. Provide them with rhythmic templates or patterns (e.g., quarter notes, half notes, whole notes) and ask them to compose short melodies using these rhythms within their hand position. This activity enhances rhythmic comprehension while reinforcing the hand position learned in the piece.
- The students practice coordinating both hands together by playing simple melodies connecting from one hand to another in both directions.

By integrating these activities, students can enhance their comprehension of hand positions while fostering their musicality through aural-centered pedagogy. This approach is akin to the Suzuki method, where the primary focus in teaching is on utilizing kinesthetic and aural skills. Exercises such as improvisation, call and response, and composition closely resemble jazz pedagogy, wherein students rely on their ears. Once students have attained proficiency in the designated hand positions, utilizing audio resources can serve as a valuable tool for familiarizing themselves with the melody. Prior to embarking on piano performance, students can utilize the audio recording to acquaint themselves with the piece's melody. Repeated listening enables students to internalize the melody, facilitating the ability to sing along before transitioning to piano performance. Once students have achieved proficiency in singing along with the melody, activities incorporating the musical score can be introduced to foster visual familiarity. By coupling auditory learning with visual engagement, students develop a comprehensive understanding of the piece. These activities may include:

- The students sing along while pointing to each note on the score.
- The teacher plays while having students point to each note on the score.
- The students vocalize the finger numbers aloud while the teacher plays.
- The students clap (or tap on their lap) the rhythms along with the score and the audio file.

Once students are comfortable with it, have them clap with the dynamic indicated on the score. This advancement in the activity allows students to integrate their understanding of rhythm with the expressive nuances specified in the notation.

If students encounter challenges in transferring their skills to piano performance following the aforementioned activities, the integration of visual aids can prove beneficial. Employing colored stickers on each note, drawing arrows to indicate direction, or circling repeated notes can offer additional guidance, assisting students in navigating the musical score effectively.

Moreover, I strongly advocate for encouraging students to memorize and perform the piece from memory by the end of the learning process. By memorizing the composition, students can refine their performance through increased focus on auditory perception. This approach facilitates a deeper engagement with the music, fostering enhanced musical expression and proficiency in piano playing.

The second example is “Wish I Were a Fish” on page 70-71. The white keys are introduced prior to this piece and this piece also requires different hand position for both hands.

Wish I Were a Fish

Song using F-G-A-B

Tips from Dallas:

1. Find your hand position. "Sneak" your thumbs up to C and F.
2. Play and sing finger numbers, letters, or words.



R.H.

1 2 3 4 3 2 1 1 2

f How I wish I were a fish, in the blue sea. 2 - 3 - 4
p Star - fish, dol - phin, might - y whale, so much to see! 2 - 3 - 4

L.H.

C C

1



Teacher Duet: (Student plays HIGHER on the keyboard.)

R.H. **L.H.**

1 5 13 5-2 9

mf-pp with pedal *mf* *last time rit.* *Fine* *D.C. al Fine*

R.H. 3 2 1 2 3 *play together*
 Ride a sea-horse, may-be two! 2 - 3 - 4

L.H. 1

R.H. 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 1 1 1
 Wish that I could be a fish, would you be one too? 2 - 3 - 4

L.H. 1

3. Have fun with key names and play *Boa Constrictor* in the Writing Book, pp. 50-51. 41

Scenario 1 – Visual-centered Approach

This piece emphasizes the use of the thumb in the left hand and the four white keys (F, G, A, and B) in the right hand. The correct hand position for the thumb is introduced prior to this piece, ensuring it is addressed beforehand. Unlike "Shepherd, Count Your Sheep," the teaching suggestions for this piece are simpler. Following the establishment of their hand positions, the second activity entails playing and singing finger numbers, letter names, or words. Having to simultaneously play and read one of the three visual cues can potentially overwhelm students and lead to numerous unsuccessful attempts. Introducing additional exercises before transitioning to the piano would alleviate students' difficulty in learning this piece.

Scenario 2 – Aural-centered Approach

The hand position for the thumb in both hands can be enhanced by having similar jazz activities from Koenigsburg's method book such as:

- The teacher plays a short series of the two notes (C with the left hand and F with the right hand) and the students copy with an accompaniment by the teacher or a metronome for rhythmic guidance.
- The teacher demonstrates some improvisation, and the students engage in rhythmic improvisation using both thumbs.
- The students create rhythmic compositions using the given hand positions. Provide them with rhythmic templates or patterns (e.g., quarter notes, half notes, whole notes) and ask them to compose short melodies using these rhythms with the two notes. This activity enhances rhythmic comprehension while reinforcing the hand position learned in the piece.

The same activities can be applied to the series of white notes in the right hand (F, G, A, and B). Furthermore, the activities introduced for "Shepherd, Count Your Sheep" can also be utilized for this piece.

- The students sing along while pointing to each note on the score.
- The teacher plays while having students point to each note on the score.
- The students vocalize the finger numbers aloud while the teacher plays.
- The students clap (or tap on their lap) the rhythms along with the score and the audio file. Once students are comfortable with it, have them clap with the dynamic indicated on the score.

In summary, the adaptive activities introduced in the second scenarios for both pieces serve as pivotal tools for enhancing piano instruction. By systematically breaking down the learning process into smaller, more manageable steps, these activities provide students with a scaffolded approach that promotes comprehension and skill development. In other words, students are encouraged to focus on one sense at a time which fosters the cultivation of essential musical skills and techniques. This deliberate approach not only reinforces understanding but also promotes the internalization of musical concepts and facilitates the development of muscle memory. Consequently, students are better equipped to navigate the complexities of piano playing with confidence and proficiency.

Drawing inspiration from aural and kinesthetic methodologies prominent in the Suzuki and jazz pedagogies, these activities prioritize sensory engagement and holistic learning experiences. Moreover, the emphasis on sensory-focused activities before engaging in reading and playing exercises mitigates the risk of overwhelming students and minimizes the occurrence of unsuccessful attempts. By providing a supportive learning environment where students can experience incremental successes, educators cultivate a sense of accomplishment and motivation among their students. By embracing a pedagogical approach that prioritizes sensory engagement and scaffolded learning, educators lay the groundwork for students to have learning experiences filled with growth and achievement.

VII. CONCLUSION


Early elementary school-aged children undergo significant physical and cognitive development, necessitating educators' awareness of individual capabilities to facilitate effective teaching practices. While students may exhibit distinct learning styles, such as auditory, visual, or kinesthetic preferences, incorporating multisensory activities can enhance lesson efficiency.

The Suzuki method epitomizes an auditory and kinesthetic teaching approach, delaying reading sheet music to prioritize body movement and listening skills. And jazz pedagogy emphasizes an aural-centered approach, employing improvisation as a foundational teaching tool for imparting basic musical concepts like rhythms and note names.

In contrast, the Faber method is renowned for its visual-centered approach, widely utilized in beginner piano instruction. Specifically tailored for young beginners, the *My First Piano Adventure* book employs abundant visual aids and decorations to facilitate learning. In terms of content, the repertoire within the Faber method differs from that of the Suzuki method by offering a broader variety and utilizing a wider range of the keyboard.

To capitalize on the strengths of each method, I have devised adaptive teaching strategies for the Faber book, incorporating incremental learning steps to facilitate the mastery of musical pieces. By sequencing aural-centered activities before engaging in reading exercises, students can develop requisite physical and cognitive skills progressively. Furthermore, the integration of less complex exercises cultivates a low-pressure learning environment, fostering success and optimizing the efficiency of the learning process for each piece.

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