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## Engaging Students in Learning Music Theory Fundamentals And Preparing for College Level Music Theory

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Engaging Students in Learning Music Theory Fundamentals  
And Preparing for College Level Music Theory

By

Marissa Aronson, B.A. Music Education

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Music

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2024

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And Preparing for College Level Music Theory

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Marissa Aronson, B.A. Music Education

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## **ABSTRACT**

The goal of this thesis is to provide teachers resources to prepare students for college-level music theory by using the keyboard. By providing visualization of patterns, the keyboard provides a superior tool to create a smooth transition between pre-college and college-level music theory instruction. In search of easing the passage between these levels, I interviewed numerous piano teachers who provided suggestions on how they include the keyboard to teach theory. After the interviews, I compared piano lesson theory books and college theory textbooks to compare their approaches. To assist with any gaps found in the theory books, I provide some suggestions of supplemental materials such as games and worksheets for theory comprehension in the early years. In order to make a smooth transition, I devised young student lesson plans and an accelerated keyboard program for older students may help prepare pupils for college-level music theory.

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Students should receive a comprehensive music theory education in the pre-college years. A smoother transition between pre-college and college-level music theory is achieved through teaching fundamentals prior to college. Students will gain proficiency by utilizing the piano as the basis of instruction. In my years of teaching piano lessons and observing college music theory classes, I discerned most students struggle to grasp this subject.

The lack of fluency in music theory fundamentals has led to frequent remediation classes in college. Furthermore, many students entering college lack aptitude in basic music fundamentals such as how to read music.<sup>1</sup> Garret Michaelsen recommends giving students more time to grasp concepts to improve mastery.<sup>2</sup>

Debbie Rohwer performed a study that found that high school music classes predicted collegiate GPAs. Based on her findings, she recommended students learn to

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<sup>1</sup> Rosa Abrahams, “Rethinking Music Literacy in the Undergraduate Theory Core,” *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 35 (2021): 83. See also Michael Lively, “D.A. Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning: Implications for the Development of Music Theory Instructional Material,” *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, no. 19 (2005): 77.

<sup>2</sup> Garret Michaelsen, “Teaching with Radical Optimism: Mastery in Learning Music theory,” *Engaging Students in Music Pedagogy* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.18061/es.v7i0.7370>.

study music theory and music history before college.<sup>3</sup> A strong pre-college foundation in music theory could lead to greater success in student's college-level music theory classes.

Pre-college textbooks focus heavily on music fundamentals rather than building student's critical thinking abilities. College typically focuses on developing student's previous knowledge of fundamentals and giving greater independence. The focus of this thesis is to help bridge the gap between pre-college and college-level learning by incorporating keyboard skills.

One of the main goals explores different pre-college and college theory textbooks to compare how well the pre-college theory books prepare students for college theory textbooks. Pre-college books should provide a solid foundation in the fundamentals of music theory as well as expanding on more complex ideas including atonality and serialism. Additionally, the books will be examined for usage of musical examples in conjunction with exercises.

I include concrete ideas for music educators to implement music theory into their classrooms utilizing the piano. Brent Nolte wrote an article in which he observes that pianists are more prepared for music theory than other instrumentalists or vocalists due to

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<sup>3</sup> Debbie Rohwer, "Predicting Undergraduate Music Education Majors' Collegiate Achievement," *Texas Music Education Research* (2012): 50, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1102253.pdf>.

their ability to fluently read music.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it has been argued that pianists have an advantage since they are already familiar with keyboard geography, can fluently read both clefs, and can visualize the piano quickly during theory analysis.<sup>5</sup> This is further demonstrated through the use of keyboard visuals in college textbooks, especially in the beginning fundamentals chapters.

Janet Bourne found that students must repeat classes in music theory frequently due to the under-preparedness of incoming college freshmen.<sup>6</sup> This highlights the disparity students face in their knowledge prior to college-level music theory. To assist with remediation, Bourne recommends that students complete “Classroom Assessment Techniques” to help teachers see where students lack music theory knowledge.<sup>7</sup> It is imperative that students understand fundamentals before moving on to more challenging theory concepts. If their fundamental knowledge is lacking, it will make building beyond that knowledge difficult.

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<sup>4</sup> Brent Nolte, “In Support of Requiring Two Semesters of Class Piano Prior to Music Theory 1,” *The College Music Society* (2019): 1-3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26902603>.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Amato, “Cultivating the Pianist’s Advantage in Beginning College Music Theory Courses,” Meeting of the SFASU Music Preparatory Division/Nacogdoches Music Teachers’ Association. Nacogdoches, TX. October 23, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Janet Bourne, “CAT got your Tongue? Adapting Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) for the Music Classroom,” *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy* 2 (2014), <http://flipcamp.org/engagingstudents2/essays/bourne.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Bourne.

The main goal of this thesis is to help fill in gaps students may encounter in first semester college-level music theory classes. College classes often skim over fundamentals in the beginning semesters of music theory which may cause discrepancies in students' knowledge.<sup>8</sup> For example, theory textbooks teach music fundamentals quickly without a lot of repetition to solidify the concepts. If students do not have enough time to process the information, building on these fundamentals will prove difficult.

After reviewing the piano lesson theory texts and college textbooks, I present some sample lesson plans to incorporate in beginning private piano lessons as well as an accelerated piano course to learn music theory skills. Incorporating these lesson plans leads to creating a smoother transition between pre-college and college-level music theory. Therefore, developing a flexible curriculum that covers the necessary topics of music fundamentals is imperative. This is underscored by Sara Bakker's claim that creating measurable learning objectives and lesson planning for both the individual and the group leads to better understanding.<sup>9</sup> Since each class will be different, it is important that the instructor is able to adjust accordingly. Creating measurable learning objectives each week will help teachers assess if students are comprehending the material. Jeremy

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<sup>8</sup> Michael R. Rogers, "Teaching Approaches in Music Theory: An Overview of Pedagogical Philosophies," 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Sara Bakker, "Creating Measurable Learning Objectives," *Engaging Students in Music Essays*, no.7 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.18061/es.v7i0.7369>.

Day-O'Connell recommends reforming elementary music concepts.<sup>10</sup> One of his activities suggests having students sing intervals in stepwise motion to arrive at the desired interval.<sup>11</sup> This activity could be adjusted for the piano classroom. For example, if the instructor plays a fifth on the piano, the students will play a scalar pattern leading up to a fifth. This assists them with learning to feel and hear the difference in intervals. Similar activities will be incorporated into the lesson plans provided.

Utilizing games as a method of drilling concepts and introducing new ones will be an integral part of my proposed teaching method. Games can be especially advantageous to use with the three different types of learners which are visual, aural, and kinesthetic.<sup>12</sup> I will be providing many game examples both for younger students as well as the older students who may be taking the accelerated piano course. With each unique learning style, games enhance students' music education.

There will be various activities presented to address each distinct learning style. In group settings, it is important to teach the same concept in ways that can appeal to several learning styles. For example, in music, students may learn best aurally and struggle with sight reading. In this case, the teacher should target the weaker skill of sight

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<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Day-O'Connell, "Putting the Theory back in Music Theory," *Engaging Students in Music Essays*, no. 7 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.18061/es.v7i0.7368>.

<sup>11</sup> Day-O'Connell.

<sup>12</sup> Jeanine M. Jacobson, *Professional Piano Teaching*, vol. 2, *Intermediate-Advanced Levels, A Comprehensive Piano Pedagogy Textbook* (Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Publishing, 2015), 37.

reading rather than the student's aural skills. Ensuring students can interact with music aurally, visually, and kinesthetically creates well-rounded musicians.

I conversed with six successful piano teachers with substantial student populations to gain perspective into teaching techniques that prepare students for college music theory. I inquired how effective the instructors felt their methods were to gain an understanding of where information may be lacking for students in their music theory skills. Novice teachers and veteran instructors offered diverse philosophies in their teaching methods.

Initially, the teachers were asked to give a brief overview of their teaching strategies. Some of the more experienced teachers emphasize the necessity of students analyzing theory concepts within their current pieces. The newer teachers mentioned that they rely heavily on books to teach music theory concepts whether it be theory books or method books. All the instructors applied experiential learning where students discover new concepts either on their own or through playing music games.

Secondly, the teachers describe how they incorporate music theory into their lessons. The majority of the teachers employ improvisation for students to learn music theory, quickly implement various concepts, and promote critical thinking. Most of the teachers mentioned that they utilize different games, including board games or movement-based games, in private lessons or group classes. Sight reading and ear training are also integral aspects each teacher mentioned. Lead sheets and improvising based off the chords are both techniques applied by several of the experienced teachers.

Thirdly, the teachers were queried on how effective these methods were at aiding students enter college music programs. Some of the teachers have not had students enter college yet but feel confident in their methods to effectively prepare their students. The teachers who have had students enter college music programs felt that their in-depth methods adequately prepared students for college music programs. Furthermore, some of the teachers mentioned that their students performed exceptionally well on state testing programs which suggests the effectiveness of their teaching. The teachers who utilize a theory testing program suggests that the program prepares them for college-level theory classes.

Fourthly, the teachers describe how they accommodate visual, kinesthetic, and aural learners. A couple of the teachers took an interesting position on this topic. They mentioned focusing on teaching students by helping them with their weaker learning abilities. For example, if an aural learner excels at playing by ear, the teacher focuses instead on sight reading to build that skill for the student.<sup>13</sup> All the teachers apply a combination of the three learning styles for each student. Many of the activities mentioned involve the different learning styles in one way or another. For example, some teachers use conducting as a way to help kinesthetic learners with rhythm.

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<sup>13</sup> Jeanine M. Jacobson, *Professional Piano Teaching*, vol. 2, *Intermediate-Advanced Levels, A Comprehensive Piano Pedagogy Textbook* (Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Publishing, 2015), 37.



The teachers suggested a number of activities incorporating the learning styles. One such activity was that the teacher utilizes the stairs in their house to teach intervals, an example of kinesthetic learning. They would have the student step on the stairs to demonstrate intervals. For example, for a third, the student would start on one stair and step up two steps to reach a third. Another way to do this would be to have a large mat with the picture of a keyboard on it and have students step on the correct notes for the interval indicated, an example of visual learning. Another activity involved improvisation utilizing letters in the student's name that are in the music alphabet and having the student play melodic patterns that include these letters, an example of kinesthetic and aural learning. Taking this activity further, the student could add chords to accompany the melody they improvised.

Several of the teachers utilize board games and web-based activities such as *Boom Cards*, and *Sproutbeat* as supplemental materials for students. These provide a colorful and hands-on way for students to interact with the theory concepts. These activities could cover all music theory concepts since there are many available. *Boom Cards* and *Sproutbeat* are web-based activities. *Boom Cards* are interactive flashcards and can be sent to students to practice at home. *Sproutbeat* includes similar games to *Boom Cards* as well as worksheets. Teachers having success with these resources suggest the significance of these activities.

To teach rhythm, especially eighth notes, one teacher recommended to use a plate that is cut into different pieces. For example, show the student that a whole plate

represents a whole note, then when it is cut in half, it represents half notes. Keep cutting to denote smaller note values.

The instructors interviewed recommend using games to teach and reinforce music theory concepts. The interviews also gave me ideas of games that have worked for students that these teachers came up with themselves such as cutting a paper plate to show note values. Each teacher mentioned using improvisation to teach different concepts which highlights the importance improvisation plays in the learning of music theory. Improvisation was not one of the main ideas I was focusing on, but since all the teachers mentioned it, I will be incorporating this into my ideas as well. The teachers mentioned the effectiveness of these activities and how they have assisted students in having a deeper understanding of the topics. Considering all these activity suggestions, I will be including these concepts into the lesson plans later in the thesis to help bridge the gap between pre-college and college-level music theory.

## CHAPTER 2 – PIANO THEORY BOOKS AND SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

In order to comprehend how to bridge the gap between pre-college and college-level music theory, four theory series will be compared and contrasted for private piano lessons and group music settings revealing which series provides the smoothest transition. Comparison of these theory books provides a resource for choosing which series leads to student success in music theory studies. The four books I will compare include: *Just the Facts* by Ann Lawry Gray, the *Piano Adventures* theory books, *Basics of Keyboard Theory* by Julie McIntosh Johnson, and *Celebrate Theory* by The Royal Conservatory. These are among the most popular piano theory books and contain valuable information for students.

Spiral learning is one of the aspects that will be examined from the books. Elizabeth West Marvin provides two examples explaining Bruner's learning spiral curriculum. The first introduces a concept and gradually adds new information.<sup>14</sup> For example, students learn consonant and dissonant intervals and then apply this knowledge to nonharmonic tones and their tendencies. The second idea incorporates the same repertoire to learn distinctive concepts. Marvin used Mozart's Variations on "Ah, vous

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth West Marvin, "What I Know Now," in *The Norton Guide to Teaching Music Theory*, ed. By Rachel Lumsden and Jeffrey Swinkin (New York: W.W. Norton Company, Inc., 2018), 374.

*dirai-je, maman*” to teach concepts such as intervals, two-voice counterpoint, binary form, and parallel minor.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to comparing theory books, supplemental theory resources such as *Sproutbeat* and *Boom Cards* offer teachers more resources for students. The supplemental materials provide creative ways for students to interact with the concepts rather than simply memorizing the information. Some of these materials could be used for older students, but most will appeal to younger students. All these resources include the piano as the basis of instruction.

### ***Just the Facts***

*Just the Facts* is a series made up of thirteen books marked for students ages five to six and features advanced theory concepts such as figured bass analysis.<sup>16</sup> This series presents concise lessons which could be beneficial for students who learn quickly, other students might struggle from the lack of practice exercises. This differs from *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Celebrate Theory* which provide numerous examples for students to process the material. The last three books of *Just the Facts* briefly cover more advanced theory concepts such as four-part harmony. To offset the lack of abstract examples, composition activities, and music literature analyses, providing students with supplemental materials may be necessary. Furthermore, unlike *Basics of Keyboard*

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<sup>15</sup> Marvin, 375.

<sup>16</sup> These books align with the Texas State theory test and are used frequently by Texas piano teachers to prepare their students for theory tests.

*Theory* and *Celebrate Theory*, this series does not introduce 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century techniques.

Each level of *Just the Facts* contains a review of concepts from the previous level. For example, the first four books all begin with similar information, such as the music alphabet and quarter notes, and add on a few new concepts for each book. Level four begins to focus more on new information rather than reviewing previously learned material.

The first four books focus on reading landmark notes which facilitates memorization of the notes and reading by intervals and direction. Beginning with reading intervals rather than individual note names helps students become familiar with intervals early in their studies. As the series progresses, the books emphasize individual note reading. College textbooks tend to cover intervals and note names early in the fundamentals sections, so incoming college freshmen must have a firm grasp on these concepts.

Spiral learning is an outstanding feature of this series. For example, the books incorporate short examples of different concepts throughout each lesson (fig. 2.1). Students ascertain how to practically apply the concepts gained through the learning spirals throughout the books. *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Celebrate Theory* focus on one or two concepts at a time making information retention difficult. By frequently building on concepts throughout the entire book, students can effectively learn music fundamentals and thus be well prepared to begin college-level classes.

Figure 2.1: *Just the Facts* Sample Page Including the Music Alphabet, Landmark Notes, and Rhythm

Book 3 - Lesson 3

Page 6

1. **Before & After:** Print the missing letters.

\_\_\_ C \_\_\_    \_\_\_ F \_\_\_    \_\_\_ B \_\_\_    \_\_\_ G \_\_\_  
 \_\_\_ D \_\_\_    \_\_\_ A \_\_\_    \_\_\_ C \_\_\_    \_\_\_ E \_\_\_

2. **FACT:** 3 new Guide Notes - Treble C, Middle C and Bass C.

Trace each C and draw 3 more.

3. Write the letter name of each note - F, C or G

G

4. **PYRAMID POWER** - Order of Rests. Fill in the missing rests in the 2nd pyramid.



Table 2.1: Overview of *Just the Facts* with New Information Listed in Bold Font:

Levels: K	1	2	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music alphabet</li> <li>• Keyboard geography: finding 2 and 3 black keys</li> <li>• Quarter note</li> <li>• RH/LH and finger numbers</li> <li>• White key names</li> <li>• Half note</li> <li>• Whole note</li> <li>• Staff/line and space notes</li> <li>• Treble clef and treble G</li> <li>• Time signature</li> <li>• Bass clef and bass F</li> <li>• Bar lines/measures</li> <li>• Middle C</li> <li>• Treble C and bass C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music alphabet</li> <li>• White key names</li> <li>• Quarter, half, whole notes</li> <li>• Finger numbers</li> <li>• Staff/line and space notes</li> <li>• Treble clef/treble G</li> <li>• Bass clef/bass f</li> <li>• Time signature</li> <li>• Middle C</li> <li>• <b>Quarter and half rests</b></li> <li>• Bar lines and measures</li> <li>• <b>Direction of notes</b></li> <li>• <b>Whole rest</b></li> <li>• Treble C and bass C</li> <li>• <b>Steps and skips</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music alphabet</li> <li>• White key names</li> <li>• Quarter and half notes</li> <li>• Line and space notes</li> <li>• <b>Dotted half</b> and whole notes</li> <li>• Time signature</li> <li>• Treble clef and treble G</li> <li>• Bass clef and bass F</li> <li>• Bar lines and measures</li> <li>• Middle C</li> <li>• Quarter and half rests</li> <li>• <b>Seconds and thirds</b></li> <li>• Whole rest</li> <li>• Treble C and bass C</li> <li>• <b>F, mf, mp, p</b></li> <li>• <b>Sharp and flat</b></li> <li>• <b>Half step and whole step</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music alphabet</li> <li>• Quarter, half, dotted half, whole notes</li> <li>• Line and space notes</li> <li>• <b>Rhythm pyramid</b></li> <li>• Treble G and bass F</li> <li>• Quarter, half, whole rests</li> <li>• Time signature</li> <li>• Treble C, middle C, bass C</li> <li>• <b>Order of rests</b></li> <li>• Bar lines and measures</li> <li>• Seconds and thirds</li> <li>• Half and whole steps</li> <li>• <b>Stem rule</b></li> <li>• <b>Major scale pattern</b></li> </ul>

Table 2.1 continued

Levels: 4	5	6	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Eighth note</b></li> <li>• Half and whole steps</li> <li>• <b>Rhythm pyramid (eighth notes and up)</b></li> <li>• <b>Eighth rest</b></li> <li>• <b>Accidentals</b></li> <li>• <b>Rest value pyramid (eighths and up)</b></li> <li>• Major scale pattern</li> <li>• Stem direction</li> <li>• Seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths</li> <li>• <b>G and D major scales</b></li> <li>• <b>Key signatures and keynotes (tonic)</b></li> <li>• <b>A and E major scales</b></li> <li>• <b>F major scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Order of sharps</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sixteenth note</b></li> <li>• Half and whole steps</li> <li>• <b>Rhythm pyramid (sixteenth notes and up)</b></li> <li>• <b>Ledger lines</b></li> <li>• <b>Sixteenth rest</b></li> <li>• <b>Accidentals</b></li> <li>• <b>Rest pyramid (sixteenth notes and up)</b></li> <li>• <b>Bb and Eb major scales</b></li> <li>• <b>Ab major scale</b></li> <li>• Tonic notes</li> <li>• <b>Enharmonic notes</b></li> <li>• Seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths, octave</li> <li>• <b>Tonic triads</b></li> <li>• <b>Tonic, subdominant, dominant</b></li> <li>• <b>Naming major keys</b></li> <li>• Order of sharps</li> <li>• <b>Major third</b></li> <li>• <b>Order of flats</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major scale pattern</li> <li>• Rhythm pyramid (notes and rests)</li> <li>• Key signatures and tonic triads</li> <li>• Order of sharps</li> <li>• Enharmonics</li> <li>• Order of flats</li> <li>• <b>Primary triads</b></li> <li>• Naming major keys</li> <li>• <b>Flags and beams</b></li> <li>• <b>Augmented seconds</b></li> <li>• <b>6/8 time signature</b></li> <li>• <b>Major and minor thirds</b></li> <li>• <b>Triad, root, third, fifth</b></li> <li>• <b>Major and minor triads</b></li> <li>• <b>Major circle of fifths</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major scale pattern</li> <li>• Rhythm pyramid (notes and rests)</li> <li>• Order of sharps/flats</li> <li>• <b>Major and perfect intervals</b></li> <li>• Primary triads</li> <li>• Naming major keys</li> <li>• <b>Double flat/sharp</b></li> <li>• <b>Natural minor scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Relative major and minor keys</b></li> <li>• <b>3/8, 9/8, 12/8 time signatures</b></li> <li>• <b>Simple, compound, asymmetrical meter</b></li> <li>• Major and minor triads</li> <li>• Primary triads</li> <li>• <b>Minor circle of fifths</b></li> <li>• <b>Roman numerals</b></li> <li>• Root, third, fifth</li> <li>• <b>Lead sheet triads</b></li> </ul>



Table 2.1 continued

Levels: 8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major and perfect intervals</li> <li>• Rhythm pyramid (notes and rests)</li> <li>• Relative major and minor keys</li> <li>• Order of sharps</li> <li>• <b>Chromatic and diatonic half steps</b></li> <li>• Natural minor scale</li> <li>• Order of flats</li> <li>• Natural, harmonic, melodic minor scales</li> <li>• <b>Diminished triad</b></li> <li>• <b>Triplets</b></li> <li>• <b>Transposition</b></li> <li>• <b>Inversions</b></li> <li>• <b>Minor primary triads</b></li> <li>• <b>2/2 (alla breve) and 3/2 time signatures</b></li> <li>• Lead sheet triads</li> <li>• <b>Parallel major and minor</b></li> <li>• <b>Inversions of primary triads in</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major and perfect intervals</li> <li>• Parallel and relative keys</li> <li>• Chromatic and diatonic half steps</li> <li>• 3 forms of minor scale</li> <li>• <b>4-part harmony</b></li> <li>• Diminished triad</li> <li>• <b>Common tone in cadences</b></li> <li>• <b>Minor, diminished, augmented intervals</b></li> <li>• <b>Chromatic scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Authentic cadence</b></li> <li>• <b>Augmented triad</b></li> <li>• <b>Half cadence</b></li> <li>• <b>Whole tone scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Melodic and harmonic intervals</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major, minor, diminished, augmented intervals</li> <li>• Triads</li> <li>• Half cadence</li> <li>• <b>Perfect and imperfect authentic cadences</b></li> <li>• Harmonic analysis</li> <li>• Three forms of the minor scale</li> <li>• Parallel and relative keys</li> <li>• <b>Alberti bass</b></li> <li>• Lead sheet chords</li> <li>• <b>Close harmony in cadences</b></li> <li>• <b>Diatonic scales</b></li> <li>• <b>Seventh chord</b></li> <li>• <b>Dominant seventh chord</b></li> <li>• <b>Open harmony in cadences</b></li> <li>• <b>Triad qualities in major scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Chord inversion notation</b></li> <li>• <b>Analysis in Classical style</b></li> <li>• <b>Homophonic and polyphonic textures</b></li> <li>• <b>Open/close harmony</b></li> <li>• <b>Dominant seventh inversions</b></li> </ul>

<b>major and minor</b>		
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Table 2.1 continued

Levels: 11	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major, perfect, diminished, augmented intervals</li> <li>• Triad review</li> <li>• Writing authentic cadences</li> <li>• Three forms of minor scales</li> <li>• Parallel/relative keys</li> <li>• Dominant seventh chords</li> <li>• Writing half cadences</li> <li>• <b>Thirty-second note</b></li> <li>• <b>Interval inversions</b></li> <li>• <b>Triad qualities in minor scales</b></li> <li>• <b>Spelling primary triads</b></li> <li>• <b>Writing plagal cadences</b></li> <li>• <b>Writing melodic minor melodies</b></li> <li>• <b>V7-I resolutions</b></li> <li>• <b>Analysis with figured bass</b></li> <li>• <b>Writing with 4-part harmony</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major, perfect, diminished, augmented intervals</li> <li>• Parallel/relative keys</li> <li>• Writing authentic cadences</li> <li>• Scale degree names</li> <li>• <b>Music texture examples</b></li> <li>• V7-I resolutions</li> <li>• Writing half cadences</li> <li>• Writing melodic minor melodies</li> <li>• Analysis with figured bass</li> <li>• <b>Deceptive cadence</b></li> <li>• Writing 4-part harmony</li> <li>• <b>Half diminished seventh</b></li> </ul>


### *Piano Adventures*

The *Piano Adventures* theory series lacks the comprehensive element present in the other series. Two of the teachers from the survey prefer this series as theory is integrated throughout the main method along with a separate theory book. Some of the visuals included in the text are useful such as the rhythm pyramid (fig. 2), while others are superfluous. The most advanced concepts covered include the circle of fifths, major and minor scales, arpeggios, and chords in root position, first inversion, and second inversion.

Students apply the concepts through several activities. Improvisation is a highlight throughout the series which requires that students think critically and creatively. Typically, the books recommend improvisation exercises after new information is introduced. The emphasis on composition requires students to rehearse what they have learned. Finally, frequent examples from music literature allows for practice with analysis.

The *Piano Adventures* series is not comprehensive, making it the least likely to facilitate bridging the gap. While the emphasis on composition and improvisation prepares students for more advanced series, students would benefit from beginning in a comprehensive series. Transferring students to new series can prove difficult since they become acquainted with a specific teaching style. Therefore, originating with an in-depth series leads to a smoother transition between levels.

Table 2.2: Overview of *Piano Adventures* with New Information Listed in Bold

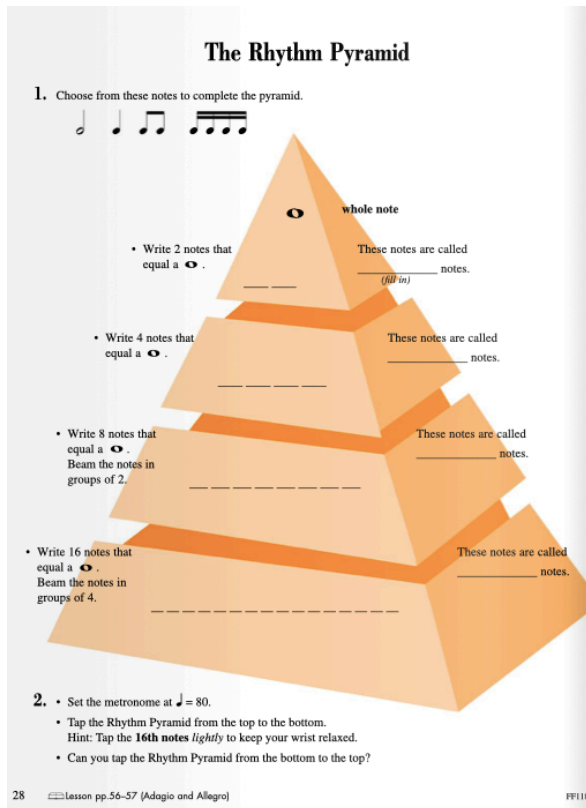
Font:

Levels: Primer	1	2A	2B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keyboard geography</li> <li>• Quarter, half, whole notes</li> <li>• White key names</li> <li>• Dotted half note</li> <li>• Grand staff</li> <li>• Middle C and treble G landmark notes</li> <li>• Bass F landmark note</li> <li>• Middle CDEFG notes</li> <li>• Steps on the staff</li> <li>• 3/4, 4/4 time signature</li> <li>• Middle CBAFG notes</li> <li>• Skips</li> <li>• Bass CDEFG</li> <li>• Question and parallel/contrasting answer</li> <li>• Quarter rest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slur, tie, <b>staccato</b></li> <li>• Step and skip</li> <li>• <b>Notes</b></li> <li>• <b>FACE in treble clef</b></li> <li>• Middle C and treble C</li> <li>• <b>Rules for stems</b></li> <li>• <b>Treble CDEFG</b></li> <li>• <b>Second (step) and third (skip)</b></li> <li>• <b>Fourths and fifths</b></li> <li>• <b>Half and whole rest</b></li> <li>• <b>Sharps and flats</b></li> <li>• <b>Tonic and dominant notes</b></li> <li>• <b>The C chord and Roman numeral (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Simplified V7 chord</b></li> <li>• <b>Bass G, middle G, treble G</b></li> <li>• <b>G 5-finger scales on grand staff</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Eighth notes</b></li> <li>• <b>Natural sign</b></li> <li>• <b>Transposing</b></li> <li>• <b>Phrase</b></li> <li>• Half and whole steps</li> <li>• <b>D 5-finger scale and tonic triad</b></li> <li>• <b>A 5-finger scale and tonic triad</b></li> <li>• Question and answer</li> <li>• <b>Major versus minor and their whole/half step patterns</b></li> <li>• <b>Lead sheet chords</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low C (the C one ledger line below bass clef), bass C, middle C, and high C (C one ledger line above treble clef)</b></li> <li>• Second, third, fourth, fifth, <b>octave</b></li> <li>• <b>Arpeggios</b></li> <li>• <b>Sixths</b></li> <li>• <b>C major scale</b></li> <li>• I and V7 chords</li> <li>• Harmonize with blocked chords</li> <li>• <b>G major scale</b></li> <li>• Parallel/contrary answers</li> <li>• <b>ABA form</b></li> <li>• <b>Eighth rest</b></li> <li>• <b>Dotted quarter-eighth rhythm</b></li> <li>• <b>IV chords</b></li> <li>• <b>F major scale</b></li> </ul>

Table 2.2 continued

Levels: 3A	3B	4	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C, G, F scales and <b>key signatures</b></li> <li>• <b>Primary chords</b> (I, IV, V7)</li> <li>• <b>Alberti bass</b></li> <li>• <b>Compose a sonatina</b></li> <li>• Harmonizing a melody</li> <li>• <b>Sevenths</b></li> <li>• 2/2 (cut time), 4/4 (common time)</li> <li>• 3/8, 6/8</li> <li>• <b>Triplet</b></li> <li>• <b>Bass ledger line notes to three ledger lines below</b></li> <li>• <b>Treble ledger line notes to three ledger lines above</b></li> <li>• <b>Chromatic scale</b></li> <li>• <b>D major scale and primary triads</b></li> <li>• One octave arpeggio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A minor scale and primary triads</b></li> <li>• <b>Motives and sequences</b></li> <li>• <b>E minor scale and primary triads</b></li> <li>• <b>D minor scale (natural and harmonic)</b></li> <li>• <b>Relative major/minor</b></li> <li>• <b>Major/minor third</b></li> <li>• Major/minor triads</li> <li>• <b>12-bar blues</b></li> <li>• <b>First and second inversion</b></li> <li>• <b>Sixteenth notes</b></li> <li>• <b>Rhythm pyramid</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C major/a minor scales</li> <li>• Finding the root of an inversion</li> <li>• <b>Transposing with inversion</b></li> <li>• <b>V7 chord in root position</b></li> <li>• Motive and sequence</li> <li>• <b>Dotted eighth-sixteenth note</b></li> <li>• F major and d minor scales</li> <li>• G major and e minor scales</li> <li>• <b>Naming sharp key signatures</b></li> <li>• <b>Order of sharps</b></li> <li>• <b>Sixteenth notes in 3/8 and 6/8</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triads</li> <li>• <b>Compound meter</b></li> <li>• <b>Cadence</b></li> <li>• <b>Perfect intervals</b></li> <li>• <b>Tritone</b></li> <li>• Major and minor <b>seconds, thirds, sixths, sevenths</b></li> <li>• <b>Circle of fifths</b></li> <li>• Arpeggios</li> <li>• <b>Naming flat key signatures</b></li> <li>• <b>Bb and Eb major scales</b></li> <li>• Inversions</li> </ul>

Figure 2.2: The Rhythm Pyramid<sup>19</sup>



### ***Basics of Keyboard Theory***

*Basics of Keyboard Theory* is a series made up of ten books and a final advanced placement theory book which benefits students seeking to pursue music in college. Each level includes frequent review and gradually builds on information. Half the teachers

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<sup>19</sup> Nancy and Randall Faber, *Piano Adventures: The Basic Piano Method Theory book*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Michigan: Dovetree Productions, 2015), 28.

surveyed experienced great success with these books.<sup>20</sup> On average, each book introduces only a few new concepts and reviews previous material. Music literature analyses and abstract examples provide students opportunities to practice theory frequently (fig. 2.3). In addition to in-depth theory fundamentals, this series includes 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century compositional techniques such as atonality and serialism.

Designed like a college textbook, this series focuses on one main idea per chapter. While the review chapters assist with information retention, Jerome Bruner's spiral curriculum suggests presenting a basic idea and then gradually making the concept more complex.<sup>21</sup> The objective of spiral curriculum explains the concepts in a way that can be understood by the student and building up to abstract thought.<sup>22</sup> Focusing on one topic per chapter exposes a weakness in this series when considering spiral curriculum.

Failing to include important skills necessary for college theory fundamentals exposes another drawback of this series. College-level music theory requires expertise in writing and analyzing four-part harmony which the core books in this series do not include. Ideally, teachers should utilize the extra AP theory book which prepares students for four-part harmony and other complex ideas. Finally, the lack of composition and

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<sup>20</sup> These books align with the Certificate of Merit testing system which is based in California.

<sup>21</sup> Sandra Smidt, "Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning" in *Introducing Bruner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 86.

<sup>22</sup> Smidt, 86.

improvisation exercises in this series reveals another discrepancy in preparing students for college-level music theory.

This series could be more effective with some supplemental resources provided by the teacher. For example, assigning composition and improvisation exercises could enhance learning since the series lacks these activities. I would also recommend using the AP theory book in lessons which focuses on advanced concepts such as writing twelve tone rows. With frequent review of concepts between the levels and the option for students to further their learning in the advanced levels, this series provides a strong foundation for college.



Figure 2.3: Example of Short Music Analyses from *Basics of Keyboard Theory Level*

Seven

9

d. From *Mazurka, Op. 7, No. 1*, by Chopin. B<sup>b</sup> Major



e. From *Prelude, Op. 28, No. 6*, by Chopin. b minor



f. From *Prelude, Op. 28, No. 20*, by Chopin. c minor



Table 2.3: Overview of *Basics of Keyboard Theory* with New Information Listed in Bold

Font:

Levels: Preparatory	1	2	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic music notation</li> <li>• Grand staff/terms</li> <li>• Names of the notes on the staff</li> <li>• Sharps/flats/naturals</li> <li>• Half/whole steps</li> <li>• 2nds-5ths</li> <li>• C, F, G, and D major/minor 5-finger patterns</li> <li>• C, F, and G scales/key signatures</li> <li>• Time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All notes on staff</li> <li>• Sharps/flats/naturals</li> <li>• Half/whole steps</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, <b>6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, octave</b></li> <li>• C, G, <b>D</b>, and F major scales/key signatures</li> <li>• C, F, and G major 5-finger patterns and <b>triads</b></li> <li>• <b>D, A, E and Bb major/minor 5-finger patterns/triads</b></li> <li>• <b>Triads of the scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Primary triads</b></li> <li>• Time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4</li> <li>• <b>Motif and repetition</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Order of sharps/flats</b></li> <li>• Scales: C, G, D, A, E, F, Bb, <b>a natural and harmonic minor</b></li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup>-octave</li> <li>• Major and minor triads</li> <li>• Primary triads</li> <li>• <b>Authentic, half, plagal cadences</b></li> <li>• Time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4</li> <li>• Motif, repetition, <b>sequence</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major key signatures</li> <li>• Major scales: C, G, D, A, E, <b>B, F, Bb, Eb</b></li> <li>• Minor key signatures/scales: <b>a, e, d</b></li> <li>• <b>Major/perfect intervals</b></li> <li>• Triads/<b>inversions</b></li> <li>• Authentic, half, plagal cadences</li> <li>• Time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, <b>common time, alla breve, 5/4, 7/4</b></li> <li>• Motif, repetition, sequence</li> </ul>

Table 2.3 continued

Levels: 4	5	6	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All major key signatures/scales</b></li> <li>• Natural and harmonic minor key signatures/scales up to three sharps/flats</li> <li>• Major/perfect/<b>minor</b> intervals</li> <li>• Major, minor, <b>diminished triads</b></li> <li>• Inversions</li> <li>• Primary/<b>secondary triads</b></li> <li>• <b>Roman numeral chord names</b></li> <li>• <b>Dominant seventh chord</b></li> <li>• Authentic, half, plagal cadences</li> <li>• <b>Transposition</b></li> <li>• Motif, repetition, sequence, imitation</li> <li>• <b>Four periods of music history</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major/minor key signatures/scales</li> <li>• <b>Chromatic scale</b></li> <li>• Intervals</li> <li>• Major, minor, diminished triads</li> <li>• Inversions</li> <li>• Primary/secondary triads</li> <li>• Dominant seventh</li> <li>• Authentic, half, plagal cadences</li> <li>• Motif, repetition, sequence, imitation</li> <li>• Transposition</li> <li>• Periods of music history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major/minor key signatures/scales</li> <li>• Chromatic scale</li> <li>• Intervals</li> <li>• Major, minor, <b>augmented, diminished triads/inversions</b></li> <li>• Primary/secondary triads</li> <li>• Dominant seventh chord</li> <li>• Authentic, half, plagal, <b>deceptive</b> cadences</li> <li>• Motif, repetition, imitation, sequence</li> <li>• Transposition</li> <li>• <b>Modulation</b></li> <li>• Periods of music history: <b>figured bass, sonata form, quartal harmony, etc.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major/minor key signatures/scales</li> <li>• <b>Whole tone scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Ionian, dorian, mixolydian, aeolian modes</b></li> <li>• Intervals</li> <li>• Major, minor, augmented, diminished triads/inversions</li> <li>• Primary/secondary triads</li> <li>• Dominant/<b>diminished seventh chords</b></li> <li>• Authentic, half, plagal, deceptive cadences</li> <li>• <b>Chord progressions</b></li> <li>• <b>Circle of fifths</b></li> <li>• Motif, <b>theme</b>, repetition, sequence, imitation, <b>canon</b></li> <li>• Transposition</li> <li>• Modulation</li> <li>• Four periods of music with new composers</li> </ul>

Table 2.3 continued

Level: 8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major/minor key signatures/scales</li> <li>• Ionian, dorian, <b>phrygian</b>, <b>lydian</b>, mixolydian, aeolian, <b>Locrian</b></li> <li>• Chromatic/whole tone scales</li> <li>• Intervals</li> <li>• <b>Diatonic/chromatic half steps</b></li> <li>• Major, minor, augmented, diminished triads/inversions</li> <li>• Primary/secondary triads</li> <li>• <b>Figured bass</b></li> <li>• Dominant and diminished seventh chords</li> <li>• <b>Secondary dominant</b></li> <li>• Authentic, half, plagal, deceptive cadences</li> <li>• Chord progressions</li> <li>• Modulation</li> <li>• <b>Pivot chords</b></li> <li>• <b>Contrapuntal techniques:</b> canon, <b>pedal point</b>, <b>augmentation</b>, <b>diminution</b></li> <li>• <b>Polyphonic/homophonic texture</b></li> <li>• <b>Improvisation and cadenzas in Baroque music history section</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major/minor key signatures/scales</li> <li>• Modes</li> <li>• Chromatic/whole tone scales</li> <li>• Intervals</li> <li>• Major, minor, augmented, diminished triads</li> <li>• Primary/secondary triads</li> <li>• Figured bass</li> <li>• <b>Major/minor seventh chords</b></li> <li>• Secondary dominant</li> <li>• Authentic, half, plagal, deceptive cadences</li> <li>• Chord progressions</li> <li>• Modulation</li> <li>• Homophonic/polyphonic textures</li> <li>• <b>Fugue and all different sections</b></li> <li>• <b>Baroque Suite dances</b></li> <li>• <b>Sonata form</b></li> <li>• <b>Impressionism</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major/minor key signatures/scales</li> <li>• Modes</li> <li>• Chromatic/whole tone scales</li> <li>• Intervals</li> <li>• Chords</li> <li>• Secondary dominant</li> <li>• Cadences, chord progressions</li> <li>• <b>Augmented sixth chords</b></li> <li>• Texture, compositional techniques</li> <li>• <b>Nonharmonic tones</b></li> <li>• <b>Neighbor tone, passing, tone, suspension, tertian harmony</b></li> <li>• <b>20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century compositional devices:</b> <b>melodic inversion</b>, <b>retrograde</b>, <b>retrograde inversion</b>, <b>12-tone row</b>, <b>serialism</b></li> <li>• Fugue</li> <li>• Sonata form</li> <li>• <b>Rondo form</b></li> <li>• <b>Theme and variations</b></li> </ul>

### *Celebrate Theory*

*Celebrate Theory* contains ten books with the last two books encompassing harmony and counterpoint. The four groups included in the series encompass: elementary (levels preparatory-four), intermediate (levels five-eight), and advanced (levels nine-ten). Each level gradually builds on the information previously learned which makes these books very thorough. It includes analyses of piano music literature as well as some choral scores. The comprehensive aspect of this series goes beyond the scope of only keyboard theory by incorporating orchestral and choral concepts. Additionally, the series covers SATB style, an integral component to college-level music theory.

Similar to *Basics of Keyboard Theory*, this series employs a unit-based approach. *Celebrate Theory*, unlike *Basics of Keyboard Theory*, does not emphasize reviewing concepts. At the end of each unit, music literature analysis questions include previously learned information (fig. 2.4). Not having frequent review throughout the book could make students forget pertinent information learned towards the beginning of the book. This series provides the most complete format of the four reviewed and would help provide a strong foundation for college-level music theory. Learning these concepts will enable students to become fluent in the fundamentals and creates a smoother transition to more complex ideas.

This series includes composition assignments which *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Just the Facts* lack. Composing yields an essential skill for students entering college to learn since they must apply what they are learning rather than just analyzing other

works. Unlike the other series, *Celebrate Theory* prepares students for chorale writing. Because this is such an in-depth series; this would likely be the best fit to prepare students for college-level music theory. Each book builds on previous knowledge and provides a solid foundation for students in their music theory knowledge.

Figure 2.4: Example of Music Analysis in *Celebrate Theory* Level 8

Unit 1

13

10. Analyze the following piece of music by answering the questions below.

**Waltz**

**Gracefully** Franz Schubert  
(1797–1828)

con pedale

Op. 18, D 145, no. 6.

- a) Name the key of this piece. \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Write the time signature directly on the music.
- c) Write functional chord symbols below the chords in measures 1 and 2 on the lines provided.
- d) Write root/quality chord symbols above the chords in measures 1 and 2 on the lines provided.
- e) Place phrase marks over the two phrases in this excerpt.
- f) Identify the type of period in this excerpt as parallel or contrasting. \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Name the interval at letter A. \_\_\_\_\_
- h) Write the correct rest(s) in the box at letter B. \_\_\_\_\_
- i) Provide an Italian term for "Gracefully." \_\_\_\_\_
- j) Identify the era in which this piece was composed. \_\_\_\_\_

Table 2.4: Overview of *Celebrate Theory* with New Information Listed in Bold Font:

Levels: Preparatory	1	2	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff/grand staff</li> <li>• Treble clef/bass clef</li> <li>• Bar line/measure</li> <li>• All notes on staff plus one ledger line above and below both clefs</li> <li>• Location of notes on keyboard diagram</li> <li>• Eighth, quarter, half, and whole notes and rests</li> <li>• 2/4 and 4/4</li> <li>• Note direction</li> <li>• C major and a minor scale and tonic triads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>C, G, F major</b> and a minor scales/tonic triads</li> <li>• All notes on the staff plus <b>two ledger lines above and below both clefs</b></li> <li>• <b>Accidentals</b></li> <li>• <b>Measure numbers</b></li> <li>• <b>Dotted half note</b></li> <li>• <b>2/4, 3/4, 4/4</b></li> <li>• <b>Half and whole steps</b></li> <li>• <b>Melodic and harmonic intervals: seconds-octave</b></li> <li>• <b>Recurring motives in rhythm or melody</b></li> <li>• <b>Composing a short melody in a major key using steps/skips</b></li> <li>• <b>Analyzing stepwise and non-stepwise motion</b></li> <li>• <b>Music appreciation: guided listening for Carnival of the Animals by Saint-Saëns and Peter and the</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C, G, F major and a, <b>e, d</b> minor scales/tonic triads</li> <li>• All notes on the staff plus <b>three ledger lines above and below both clefs</b></li> <li>• <b>Stems and beams</b></li> <li>• <b>Dotted quarter note</b></li> <li>• <b>Strong, weak, medium beats</b></li> <li>• Half and whole steps</li> <li>• Melodic and harmonic intervals: seconds-octave</li> <li>• <b>Relative major/minor key relationships</b></li> <li>• <b>Scale degree numbers (1-8)</b></li> <li>• <b>Scale degree names: tonic, subdominant, dominant, leading tone</b></li> <li>• <b>Functional chord symbols (I, i)</b></li> <li>• <b>Root/quality chord symbols (like C or Am)</b></li> <li>• Composing a melody using a major key and steps/skips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C, G, D, F, <b>Bb</b> major and a, e, <b>b, d, and g</b> minor scales/tonic and dominant triads</li> <li>• <b>Enharmonic equivalents using accidentals</b></li> <li>• <b>Transposition up or down one octave within treble/bass clef</b></li> <li>• <b>Sixteenth note and rest</b></li> <li>• <b>Dotted eighth note and rest</b></li> <li>• <b>Upbeat</b></li> <li>• Application of time signatures, bar lines, notes, rests</li> <li>• Melodic and harmonic intervals: <b>perfect and major</b></li> <li>• Major and minor scales up to two sharps/flats using key signatures and/or accidentals</li> <li>• Scale degree names: tonic, subdominant, dominant,</li> </ul>



Table 2.4 continued

	<p><b>Wolf by Prokofiev</b></p>	<p>ending on scale degree 1 or 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identification of melodic phrases</b></li> <li>• <b>Life of Mozart and guided listening for two of his pieces</b></li> </ul>	<p>leading tone, <b>subtonic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional chord symbols (I, i, V)</li> <li>• Root/quality chord symbols (like C or Am)</li> <li>• Composing melody using steps, skips and <b>occasional leaps</b> ending on scale degree 1 or 3</li> <li>• Melodic phrases: same, similar, different</li> <li>• <b>Bach and the Anna Magdalena Notebook</b></li> <li>• <b>Baroque dances</b> (menuet gavotte, gigue)</li> <li>• <b>Harpsichord</b></li> </ul>
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Table 2.4 continued

4	5	6	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major and minor (natural, harmonic, <b>melodic</b>) keys up to three sharps/flats</li> <li>Transposition up or down one octave, including change of clef</li> <li>Eighth note triplets</li> <li>Application of time signatures (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, <b>2/8, 3/8, 4/8</b>), bar lines, notes, rests</li> <li>Melodic and harmonic intervals: major, <b>minor</b>, perfect</li> <li>Scale degree names: tonic, subdominant, dominant, leading tone, subtonic</li> <li>Tonic, subdominant, dominant triads in root position</li> <li>Functional chord symbols (I, i, IV, iv, V)</li> <li>Root/quality chord symbols (C, or Am)</li> <li>Composing in a major key using steps,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Major and minor (natural, harmonic, melodic) keys up to four sharps/flats</b></li> <li>All notes on the staff plus <b>four ledger lines</b> above and below the treble and bass staff</li> <li><b>Rewriting melodies at the same pitch in the alternate clef</b></li> <li>Note and rest values: <b>breve</b>, whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, <b>dotted whole</b>, dotted half, dotted quarter, dotted eighth</li> <li>Triplets: <b>quarter</b>, eighth, <b>sixteenth</b></li> <li>Strong, weak, medium beats</li> <li>Upbeat</li> <li>2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/8, 3/8, 4/8, <b>2/2, 3/2, 4/2, 6/8</b></li> <li><b>Chromatic and diatonic half steps</b></li> <li>Whole steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>All major and minor keys</b></li> <li><b>Double sharp/flat</b></li> <li><b>Transposing melodies in major keys up by any interval within an octave</b></li> <li><b>Thirty-second notes and rests</b></li> <li><b>Dotted sixteenth notes and rests</b></li> <li><b>Compound meters</b></li> <li><b>All intervals (major, minor, perfect, augmented, diminished)</b></li> <li>Relative/parallel major/minor scales</li> <li>Scale degree names: tonic, <b>supertonic</b>, <b>mediant</b>, subdominant, dominant, <b>submediant</b>, leading tone, subtonic</li> <li>Blocked/broken triads and inversions in major and harmonic minor, <b>close or open position</b></li> <li>Dominant seventh chords in root position,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All major and minor keys</li> <li>Transposition of melodies up or down by any interval or to any key</li> <li><b>Double dotted notes and rests</b></li> <li><b>Irregular groupings (duplets, triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, sextuplets, septuplets)</b></li> <li><b>All intervals (and their inversions) including enharmonic equivalents</b></li> <li><b>Chromatic, whole-tone, and octatonic scales (using key signatures or accidentals)</b></li> <li><b>Major and minor pentatonic scales</b></li> <li><b>Blues scale</b></li> <li><b>Diminished and augmented triads in root position and inversions</b></li> </ul>

Table 2.4 continued

<p>skips and leaps (between the tonic and dominant) ending on scale degrees 1 or 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identifying sections A and B within a piece</b></li> <li>• <b>Getting to know the orchestra instruments</b></li> <li>• <b>The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra by Britten and The Nutcracker by Tchaikovsky</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Melodic and harmonic intervals: major, minor, perfect</li> <li>• Relative major and minor keys</li> <li>• <b>Parallel major and minor keys (up to four sharps/flats)</b></li> <li>• Scale degree names: tonic, subdominant, dominant, leading tone, subtonic</li> <li>• Tonic, subdominant, and dominant triads in root position and <b>inversions</b> (solid, blocked, broken)</li> <li>• <b>Dominant seventh chords in root position</b></li> <li>• Functional chord symbols in root position (I, i, IV, iv, V, V7)</li> <li>• Root/quality chord symbols (like C, Am, G7)</li> <li>• Composing a four-measure <b>answer (consequent) after a given question (antecedent) phrase</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>close or open position</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Authentic and half cadences</b></li> <li>• Application of functional or root/quality chord symbols (I, i, IV, iv, V)</li> <li>• Composing antecedent-consequent phrase in a major key</li> <li>• <b>Identifying key using key signature or accidentals</b></li> <li>• <b>Musical styles of Baroque and Classical</b></li> <li>• <b>Baroque terms: invention concerto grosso polyphonic texture motive sequence</b></li> <li>• <b>Classical terms: chamber music homophonic texture sonata form</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– exposition</li> <li>– development</li> <li>–recapitulation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Triads built on any scale degree using both functional chord symbols and root/quality</b></li> <li>• <b>Leading tone diminished seventh chords in minor keys in root position using both functional chord symbols and root/quality</b></li> <li>• <b>Dominant seventh chord root position and inversions using functional chord symbols and root/quality</b></li> <li>• Authentic and half cadences</li> <li>• <b>Melodic and passing neighbor tones</b></li> <li>• <b>Composing a contrasting period</b></li> <li>• <b>Romantic and Modern periods of music</b></li> <li>• <b>Romantic terms: program music, concert overture,</b></li> </ul>
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Table 2.4 continued

	<p><b>creating a parallel period</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable and unstable scale degrees</li> <li>• <b>Identify key from key signature</b></li> <li>• <b>Identify question and answer in parallel period</b></li> <li>• Melodic phrases: same, similar, different</li> <li>• <b>Voices in song</b></li> <li>• <b>Vocal works from oratorio to opera to verse-chorus</b></li> </ul>		<p><b>étude, nationalism, chromatic harmony</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Modern terms: ballet, polytonality, Rondo form, pentatonic scale, electronic music, jazz</b></li> </ul>
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Table 2.4 continued

8	9	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All major and minor keys in any clef</li> <li>• <b>Alto and tenor clefs</b></li> <li>• <b>Score types: string quartet and modern vocal in short and open score</b></li> <li>• <b>Transcribe a melody to any other clef at the same pitch</b></li> <li>• <b>Transpose melody to concert pitch for trumpet, clarinet, French horn, English horn</b></li> <li>• <b>Hybrid meters 5/4, 7/8, 10/16</b></li> <li>• <b>All simple and compound intervals up to a fifteenth</b></li> <li>• <b>All diatonic modes</b></li> <li>• <b>Triads in root position and inversion using functional chord symbols or root/quality</b></li> <li>• <b>Dominant and leading-tone diminished seventh chords in root position and inversions using functional chord symbols or root/quality</b></li> <li>• <b>Authentic, half, plagal cadences in keyboard or chorale style</b></li> <li>• <b>Cluster, quartal, and polychords</b></li> <li>• <b>Unaccented melodic passing and neighbor tones</b></li> <li>• <b>Composing contrasting period</b></li> <li>• <b>Identification of types of motion: parallel, similar, contrary, oblique, and static</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All major and minor keys</li> <li>• <b>SATB and keyboard style</b></li> <li>• Major, minor, diminished, augmented triads</li> <li>• <b>6/4 position chords: passing, neighbor, cadential, and arpeggio</b></li> <li>• <b>Dominant seventh and supertonic seventh chords</b></li> <li>• <b>Secondary dominant and leading tone chords</b></li> <li>• <b>The I chord in minor keys</b></li> <li>• <b>Pedal points on tonic or dominant notes</b></li> <li>• <b>Tonal hierarchy of phrase ending using terms T (tonic), PD (pre-dominant), and D (dominant)</b></li> <li>• <b>Non-chord tones: passing, neighbor, appoggiatura, suspension, echappée, and anticipation</b></li> <li>• <b>Cadences: perfect authentic, imperfect authentic, half, deceptive, plagal</b></li> <li>• <b>Diatonic descending fifths sequence using root-position and/or first inversion triads</b></li> <li>• <b>Modulations to the dominant in major keys or relative major or minor dominant key in minor keys</b></li> <li>• <b>Modulation to closely related keys</b></li> <li>• <b>Dance types: sarabande, gigue,</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All major and minor keys</li> <li>• SATB and keyboard style</li> <li>• All triads and <b>diatonic seventh chords</b></li> <li>• <b>Leading-tone seventh chords</b></li> <li>• <b>Dominant ninth and thirteenth chords (root position only)</b></li> <li>• <b>Chords derived from melodic minor scale</b></li> <li>• <b>Applied/secondary chords of all diatonic major and minor chords</b></li> <li>• <b>Functional chord symbols, root/quality chord symbols, figured bass</b></li> <li>• <b>Tonal hierarchy of phrase ending using terms T (tonic), PD (pre-dominant), and D (dominant)</b></li> <li>• <b>Descending fifths sequence (diatonic and chromatic) using triads or seventh chords</b></li> <li>• <b>Ascending fifths sequence</b></li> <li>• <b>Descending 5-6 sequence</b></li> <li>• <b>Ascending 5-6 sequence</b></li> <li>• <b>Modulation to closely related key</b></li> <li>• <b>Sonata form</b></li> <li>• <b>Compound ternary form</b></li> <li>• <b>Five-part rondo form</b></li> <li>• <b>Fugal exposition</b></li> </ul>

Table 2.4 continued

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Medieval and Renaissance period music</b></li> <li>• <b>Medieval: plainchant, monophonic texture, canon, <i>ostinato</i>, polyphonic texture</b></li> <li>• <b>Renaissance: <i>frottola</i>, word painting</b></li> <li>• <b>Javanese Gamelan: gamelan, metallophones</b></li> <li>• <b>The raga in Indian music: raga, tala, sitar</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>menuet, bourée, gavotte</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phrase structure: <i>a, a1, b</i>, antecedent, consequent, phrase, period (parallel, contrasting)</li> <li>• Forms: binary and ternary</li> <li>• Contrapuntal and motivic techniques: <b>subject, countersubject, imitation, repetition, transposition, inversion, variation</b></li> <li>• <b>Counterpoint</b></li> <li>• Chord progressions</li> <li>• <b>Chorale harmonization</b></li> </ul>	
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In summation, the tables of the theory books show the information included and the pacing of the series. *Just the Facts* and *Piano Adventures* move slower while the other series move at a quicker pace and still include plenty of review. After thoroughly reviewing the four series, *Celebrate Theory* and *Basics of Keyboard Theory* provide the more comprehensive education.

### **Supplemental Theory Resources**

Supplemental materials offset the weaknesses unveiled in the theory books. *Boom Cards* are an interactive resource for students to reinforce theory concepts. These activities vary and resemble flashcards in that they drill different concepts. Instead of flashcards, *Boom Cards* provide a game-based approach to memorizing information. Typically geared towards younger students, specific *Boom Cards* have also proven beneficial for older students. Individual creators sell *Boom Card* decks which can be sent to students for at-home practice. Receiving instant feedback imparts a significant advantage of utilizing this resource for students.

The web-based activity, *Sproutbeat*, offers supplemental materials such as drills and worksheets for piano and string instruments. The site organizes the material into separate categories and curricula. Teachers can quickly find a topic to reinforce a particular theory concept incorporating these worksheets. Utilizing *Sproutbeat* in conjunction with theory books offers additional practice for students that struggle with certain theory concepts. *Sproutbeat* consists of written worksheets and interactive activities. Students receive instant feedback on the interactive activities which is

especially useful for at-home practice. Content is geared primarily towards younger students; however, older students might appreciate some of the activities as well. For example, the key signature worksheets could be utilized in the accelerated piano program or as a review for college students.

Employing apps to drill concepts for music and piano instruction provides more practice on the theory topics. Some sight-reading and note-reading apps include: Music Tutor, Flashnote Derby, Learn Music Notes Sight Read, Note Rush, and Note Quest. There are also aural training apps such as Earpeggio and ScoreSkills. Theory apps include: Tonality, MyMusicTheory, Music Theory 101, and Waay: Learn Music Theory. By incorporating some of these tools, teachers engage students in lessons in diverse ways.

Navigating the plethora of resources available proves to be overwhelming, so I will provide two specific outlines including *Boom Cards*, *Sproutbeat*, and board games that go along with the theory books. One outline covers level one of *Piano Adventures* and level three of *Just the Facts* since this series moves slower. The other outline incorporates the level one books of the *Celebrate Theory* and *Basics of Keyboard Theory* series. The framework establishes a guide on how to implement these resources to provide a firm foundation in music fundamentals. The pacing differs from one theory series to the next and may affect how the resources line up. Some concepts appear sooner in one series as opposed to another series, but for the most part, the levels include similar topics.



## **Level 1 of *Piano Adventures* and Level 3 of *Just the Facts Theory***

### **Supplemental Ideas**

I will list the concept found in the theory books and some supplemental ideas that go along with these concepts. Then, I will provide examples from *Boom Cards*, *Sproutbeat*, and different board games. Incorporating supplemental ideas along with the theory books helps students interact with the concepts in different ways which could assist with bridging the gap between pre-college and college-level music theory.

### **Music Alphabet and White Key Names**

*Just the Facts* reviews the music alphabet and white key names in the first four books while *Piano Adventures* mainly covers this in the primer level. In the *Boom Card* deck, students must click the correct note and then receive instant feedback (fig. 2.5).<sup>23</sup> This activity isolates the white keys based on the two and three black key groups. Next is a music alphabet worksheet from *Sproutbeat* where students must fill in the blanks for the music alphabet (fig. 2.6). Finally, in the board game, “Musical Meander,” students must draw a card from the deck and move their token to the corresponding letter on the board (fig. 2.7). This game encourages students to identify the name of the note as well as visualize the music alphabet.

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<sup>23</sup> Whole Foundation Method, “Piano Keys,” 2022, <https://wow.boomlearning.com/deck/piano-keys-q6JBKBjcKL3fiwgpQ>.

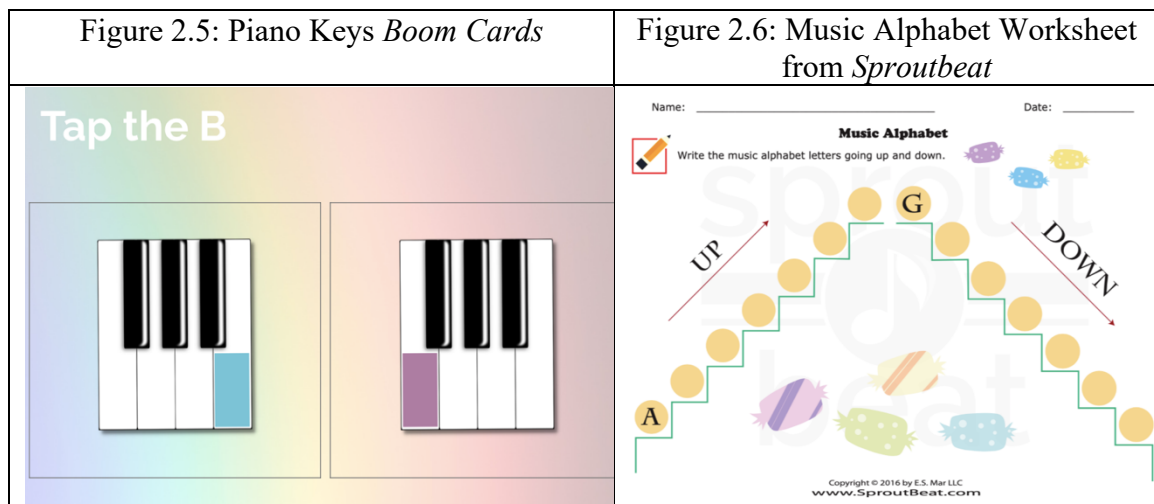
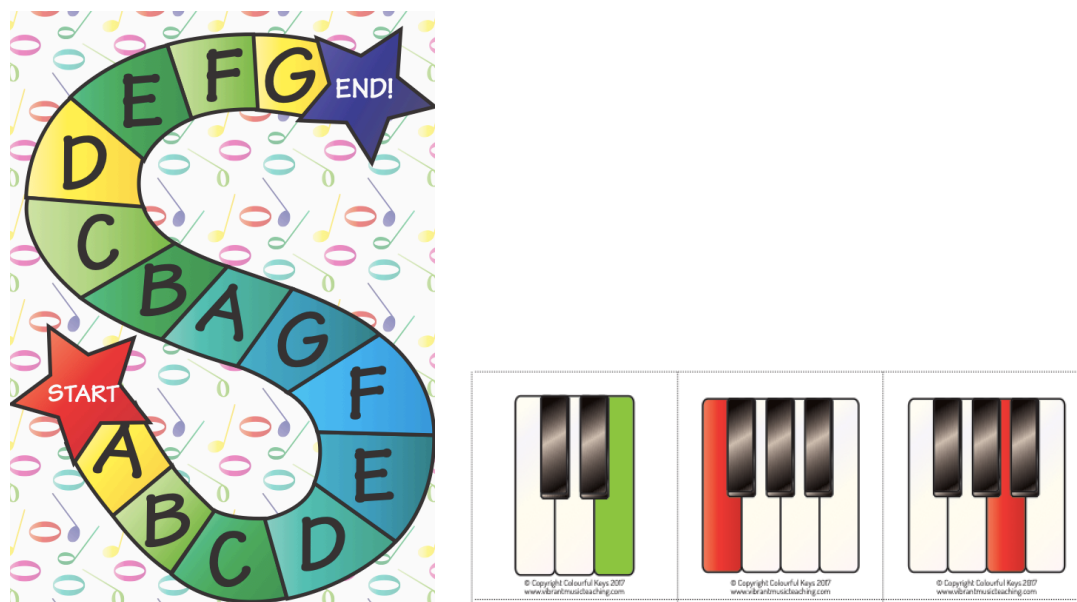


Figure 2.7: Musical Meander from Vibrant Music Teaching



### Steps and skips/Seconds and Thirds

Students must have a firm grasp on intervals beginning with seconds and thirds. The theory books cover intervals in various ways such as aural exercises or writing the intervals. The “Step and Skip Sort” *Boom Cards* provides an interactive way for students

to drill their interval knowledge by dragging the intervals to the correct house (fig. 2.8).

The second and third interval worksheet from *Sproutbeat* provides extra practice in addition to the theory books (fig. 2.9). The board game “Treacherous Treasure” allows students to identify the number and direction of the interval (fig. 2.10). For example, if the interval goes up a second, the student moves up to the next rung on the ladder.

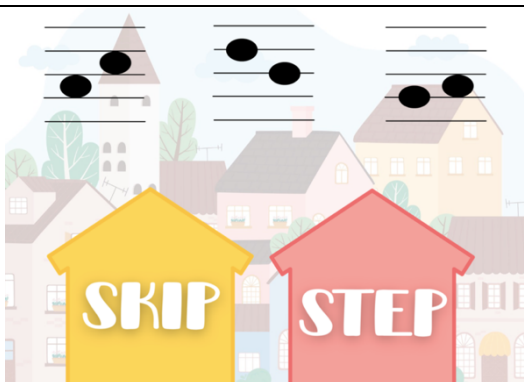
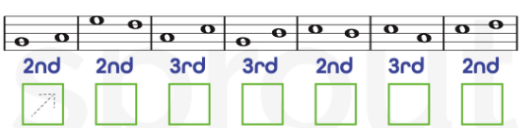
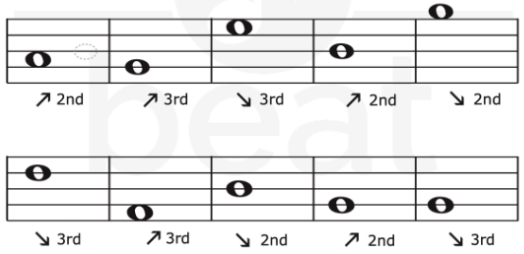
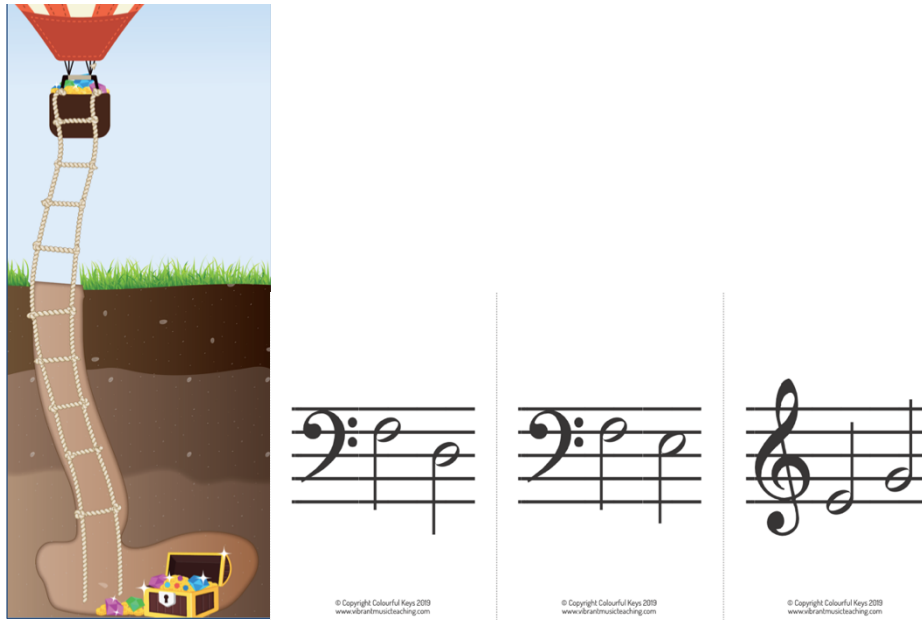
<p><b>Figure 2.8: Step and Skip Sort by Whole Foundation Method</b></p> 	<p><b>Figure 2.9: Intervals of 2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup> Worksheet from <i>Sproutbeat</i></b></p> <p>Name: _____ Date: _____</p> <p><b>Intervals of 2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup></b></p> <p>Identify the direction of each interval in the given boxes.</p>  <p>Draw a note to form each given interval.</p>  <p>Copyright © 2020 by E.S. Mar LLC www.SproutBeat.com</p>
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Figure 2.10: Treacherous Treasure from Vibrant Music Teaching



### Fourths and Fifths<sup>25</sup>

*Piano Adventures* briefly covers fourths and fifths while *Just the Facts* goes a little more in-depth. Students benefit from more practice with these intervals. The *Boom Cards* cover seconds, thirds, fourths, and fifths by having the student select the interval and providing instant feedback (fig. 2.11). Honing in on the concept more, the *Sproutbeat* worksheet isolates fourths and fifths which accommodates more practice differentiating between the two intervals (fig. 2.12).

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<sup>25</sup> This occurs in *Piano Adventures* level 1 and *Just the Facts* level 4.

Figure 2.11: “Music Intervals—Treble and Bass Clef 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, and 5ths”  
by Melody Payne

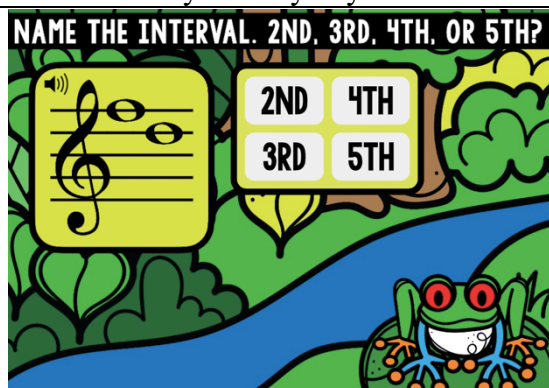


Figure 2.12: “Intervals of 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>”  
*Sproutbeat* Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Intervals of 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>**

Match each shirt to its correct interval.

	up a 4th	down a 4th	up a 5th	down a 5th
	up a 4th	down a 4th	up a 5th	down a 5th
	up a 4th	down a 4th	up a 5th	down a 5th
	up a 4th	down a 4th	up a 5th	down a 5th
	up a 4th	down a 4th	up a 5th	down a 5th
	up a 4th	down a 4th	up a 5th	down a 5th

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### Notes FACE in the Treble Clef

*Piano Adventures* highlights the notes FACE while *Just the Facts* focuses on specific landmark notes, such as treble C and bass C. The “Treble Clef Space Notes: FACE” activity is an example of *Boom Cards* (fig. 2.13). *Sproutbeat* has an interactive game to cover the FACE notes in treble clef (fig. 2.14). This game requires students to drag and drop the notes on the staff to the corresponding note on the keyboard which allows students to make the connection between the staff and the piano. Similarly, in the

board game, “Sandy Space Notes,” the students make the connection between the staff and the piano (fig. 2.15). Students draw a card, name the note, and then move to that note on the board.

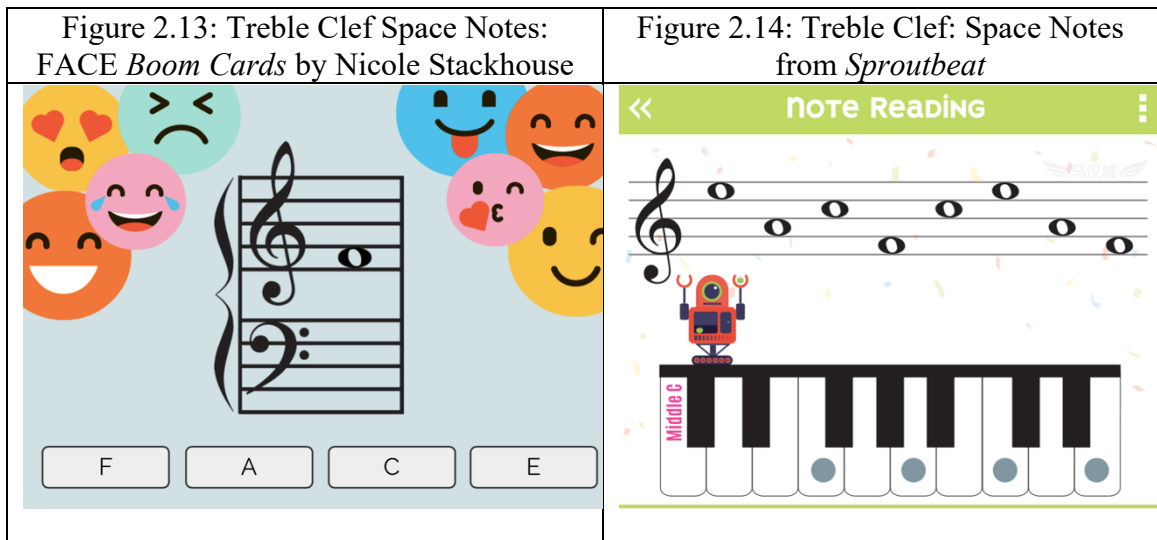
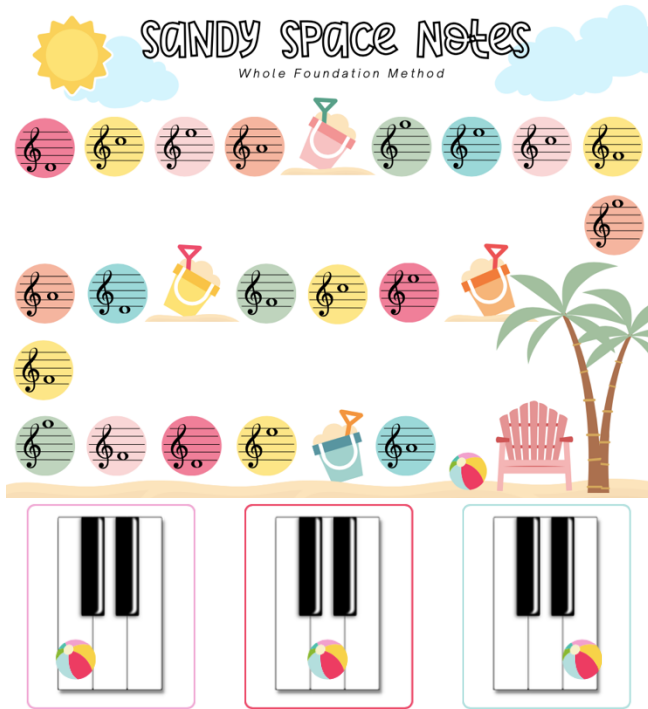


Figure 2.15: “Sandy Space Notes” by Whole Foundation Method



### Half and Whole Steps

Both theory books briefly cover half and whole steps, so supplemental activities enhance student’s learning.<sup>28</sup> The *Boom Cards* show a picture of the half or whole step on the piano, and the student must identify the step (fig. 2.16). Next, the half and whole steps worksheet from *Sproutbeat* engages students with more practice on the concept (fig. 2.17). Finally, in the board game, “Toads and Semitones” students practice identifying

---

<sup>28</sup> Piano Adventures introduces this concept in the next level.

the half or whole step and moving on the lily pads accordingly (fig. 2.18). For example, if the student draws a whole step, they will move forward two lily pads.

Figure 2.16: “Whole Steps and Half Steps on the Keys-Jungle” *Boom Cards* by Kelly Bordeaux Piano

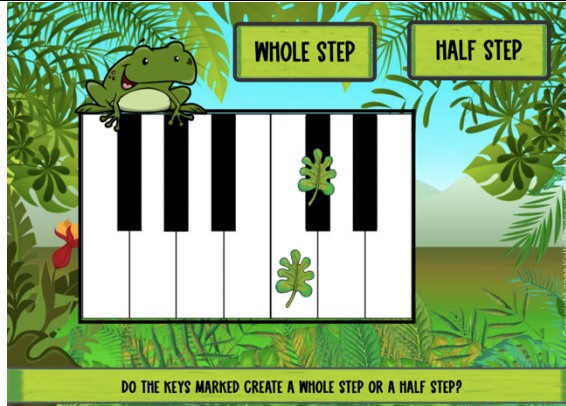


Figure 2.17: Half Steps and Whole Steps Worksheet from *Sproutbeat*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Half Steps & Whole Steps**

Mark the keys that are a **half step HIGHER** than the given keys with an x.

Mark the keys that are a **half step LOWER** than the given keys with an x.

Mark the keys that are a **whole step HIGHER** than the given keys with an x.

Mark the keys that are a **whole step LOWER** than the given keys with an x.

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Figure 2.18: “Toads Tones and Semitones” by Busy Little Turtle



### Major Pentascale Pattern

Both books briefly cover the major pentascale pattern, but do not include drills on the approach. The *Boom Cards* show the designated notes and students must mark the missing whole or half step (fig. 2.19). This implements a smooth transition from learning about half and whole steps to identifying them in the pentascale. Next, in the *Sproutbeat* worksheet students identify which keyboards are the major pentascale (fig. 2.20). This activity encourages students' critical thinking skills since they must mark the correct keyboards. Finally, the board game "Pentapop" requires students to build the pentascales on the keyboard (fig. 2.21). Presenting the activities in this order culminates in a spiral curriculum since each activity requires the students add new information.

Figure 2.19: “Major 5-Finger Pattern on Piano” *Boom Cards* by Kelly Bordeaux  
Piano

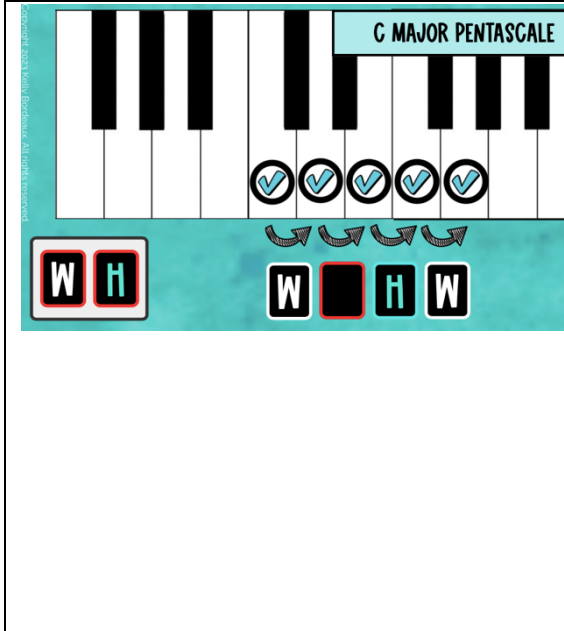


Figure 2.20: “5-Finger Pattern—Major” *Sproutbeat* Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

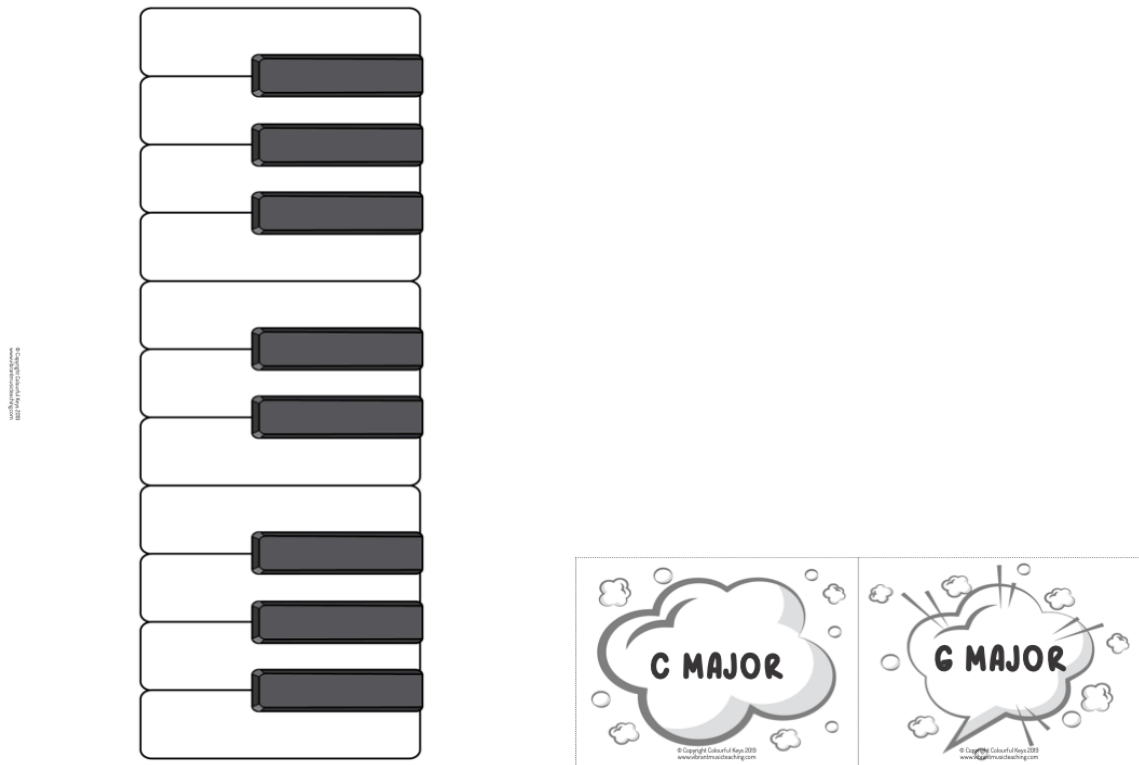
**5 Finger Pattern - Major**

W = Whole Step H = Half Step

Circle the keyboards that follow the major pattern.

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Figure 2.21: “Pentapop” from Vibrant Music Teaching



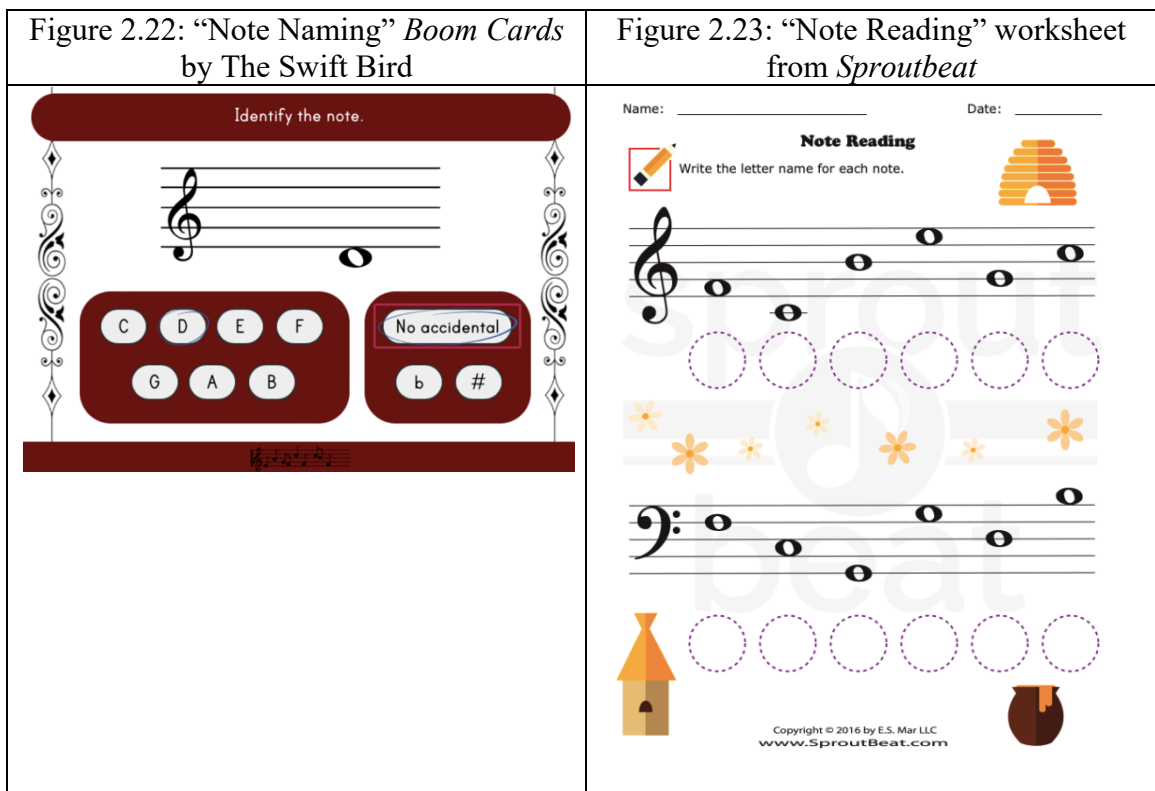
### Level 1 of *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Celebrate Theory* Supplemental Ideas

Level 1 of *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Celebrate Theory* are similar in content, so I will provide some supplemental resources to accompany these theory books. I will list an activity from different sources such as *Boom Cards*, *Sproutbeat*, and various board games.

### All Notes on the Staff

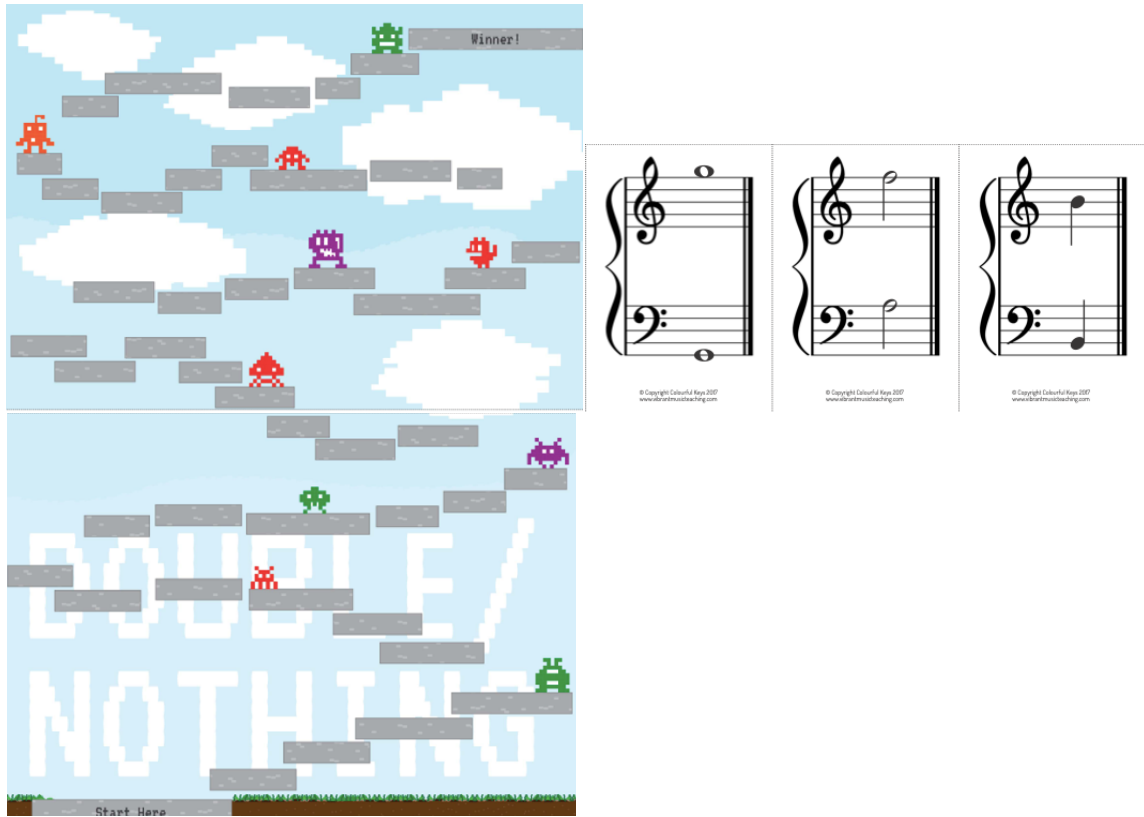
*Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Celebrate Theory* progress at a faster pace than *Just the Facts* and *Piano Adventures*, so students should be comfortable reading all the

notes on the staff fluently. The *Boom Cards* involve identifying the note name and accidental (fig. 2.22).<sup>29</sup> The note reading worksheet from *Sproutbeat* delivers extra practice for students to identify note names (fig. 2.23). Finally, the board game, “Double or Nothing,” focuses on students recognizing notes on both clefs (fig. 2.24). Students must draw a card and name one or both notes on the card. If the student guesses one note correctly, they roll the die and move forward that many spaces. If the student guesses both notes correctly, they roll the die and move forward double the number rolled. It challenges the students to think in both treble clef and bass clef simultaneously.



<sup>29</sup> This could be used for the note naming and accidentals which are both found in these theory books.

Figure 2.24: “Double or Nothing” from Vibrant Music Teaching



### Accidentals

An example of spiral curriculum incorporates introducing accidentals after mastering all the notes since the accidentals are a new added layer of knowledge. The *Boom Cards* focus on the rules of accidentals (fig. 2.25). Drilling this concept can avoid the mistakes many students make when first playing pieces with accidentals. Next, the *Sproutbeat* activity focuses on correct placement of the accidentals (fig. 2.26). Finally, the game, “Accidental Abacus,” covers accidentals on the keyboard (fig. 2.27). Students

begin on any note on the keyboard and take five cards. Next, they move their token on the keyboard based on which accidental they played. The first player to arrive at the next C wins the game. This game requires students to strategize about which accidentals will get them closest to C.

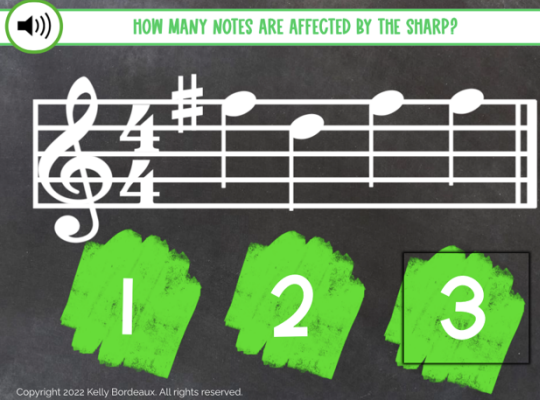
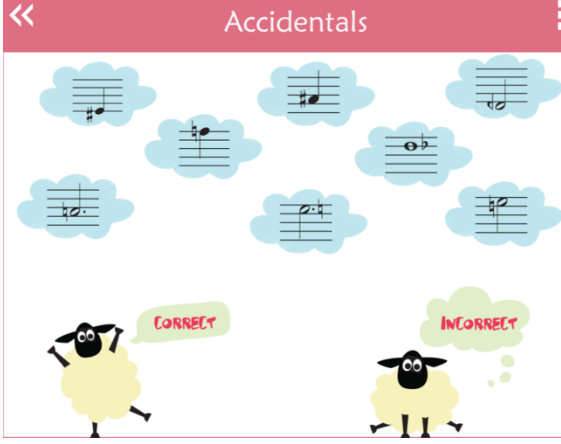
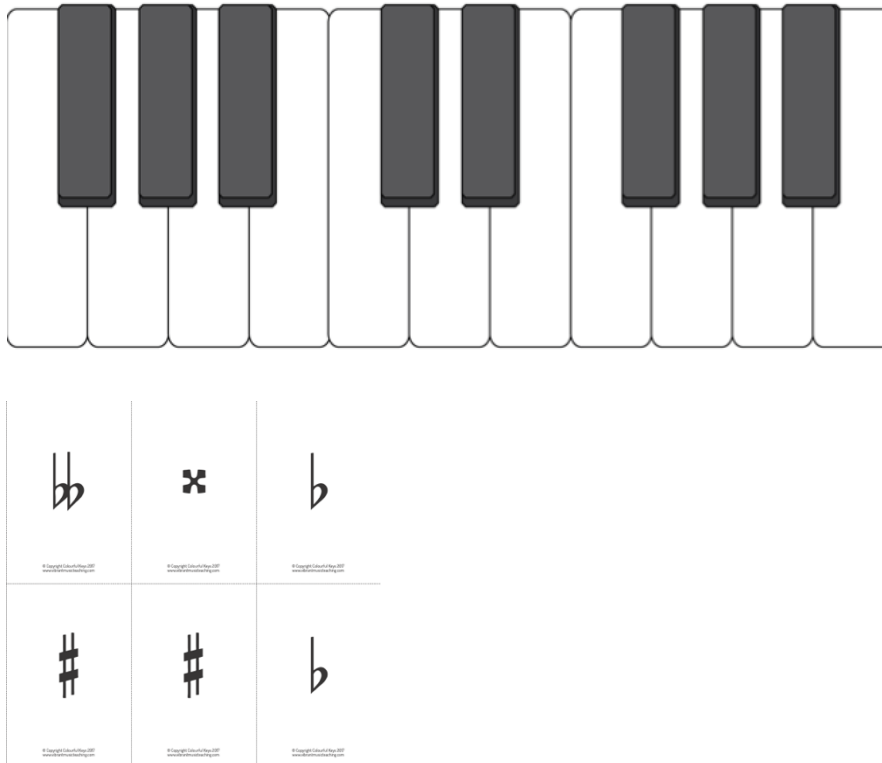
<p>Figure 2.25: “Rule of Accidentals in Music” <i>Boom Cards</i> by Kelly Bordeaux Piano</p>	<p>Figure 2.26: “Accidental Placement” from <i>Sproutbeat</i></p>
 <p>Copyright 2022 Kelly Bordeaux. All rights reserved.</p>	

Figure 2.27: “Accidental Abacus” from Vibrant Music Teaching



## Intervals

*Celebrate Theory* and *Basics of Keyboard Theory* introduce all intervals by level one. They enlist practice exercises such as writing the intervals or identifying intervals within a musical excerpt. The *Boom Cards* example includes a keyboard graphic to enable students to visualize the interval (fig. 2.28). The *Sproutbeat* activity is an interactive game where students drag the intervals to the correct mailbox (fig. 2.29). The game, “Interval, Sprinterval, Shminterval,” works on building the intervals (fig. 2.30). Students start at the bottom line and work their way up the staff. If they draw a fifth, they

must move their token up a fifth on the staff. This game allows students to interact with the intervals uniquely rather than simply identifying the intervals.

Figure 2.28: ABRSM Grade 1 Intervals Boom Cards by 3 Eighth Notes Music Studio

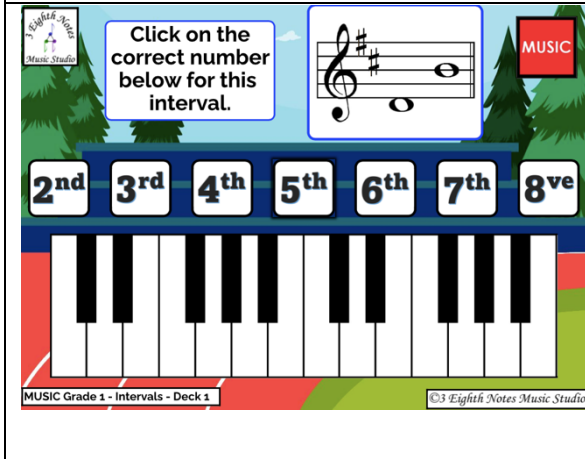


Figure 2.29: 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>ve</sup> from Sproutbeat

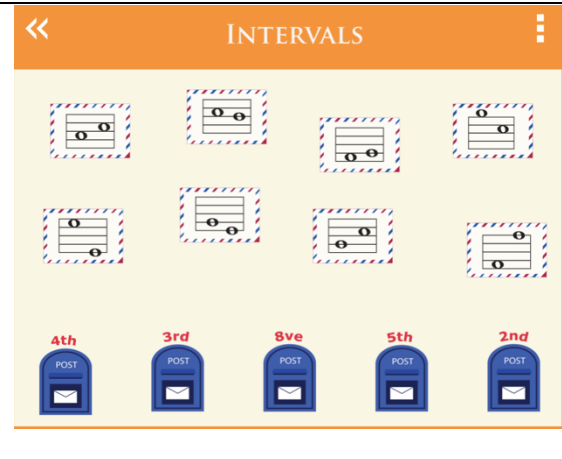




Figure 2.30: “Interval, Sprintinterval, Shminterval” by Vibrant Music Teaching

Interval Sprintinterval Shminterval

Finish line →

Start here →

<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">2<sup>nd</sup></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">© Copyright Colourful Keys 2007 www.vibrantmusicteaching.com</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">3<sup>rd</sup></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">© Copyright Colourful Keys 2007 www.vibrantmusicteaching.com</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">4<sup>th</sup></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">© Copyright Colourful Keys 2007 www.vibrantmusicteaching.com</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">7<sup>th</sup></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">© Copyright Colourful Keys 2007 www.vibrantmusicteaching.com</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">6<sup>th</sup></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">© Copyright Colourful Keys 2007 www.vibrantmusicteaching.com</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">5<sup>th</sup></p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">© Copyright Colourful Keys 2007 www.vibrantmusicteaching.com</p>

### C, G, D, A, E, and Bb Major Keys

Offering more practice drilling the C, G, D, A, E, and Bb major keys will help students with memorization and retention. The *Boom Cards* highlight the key signatures

and students must select the matching key (fig. 2.31). *Sproutbeat* boasts a game that covers A-major where students must fill in the whole and half step pattern as well as drag the green dots to the correct keys (fig. 2.32). Finally, the board game, “Vitamin D,” emphasizes the D-major scale (fig. 2.33). Students must identify if the card includes a note from the D-major scale. The rules for moving forward are as follows: If the student correctly identifies that the note does not belong, they move one planet forward; if the student correctly identifies that the note does belong, they move two planets forward; if the student correctly identifies the tonic, D, they move three planets forward.

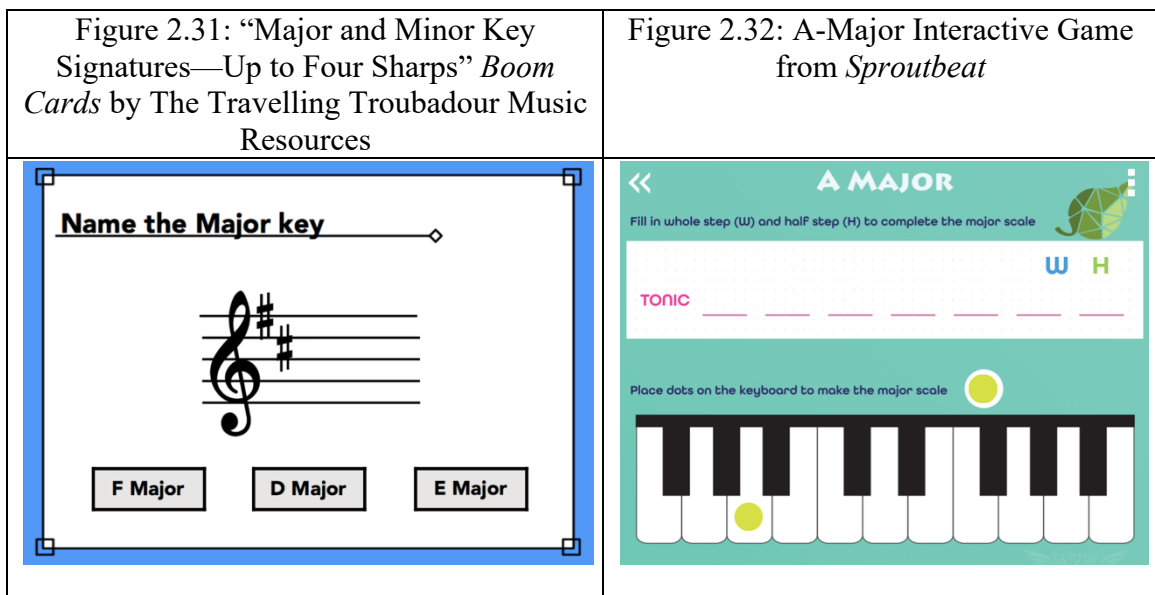
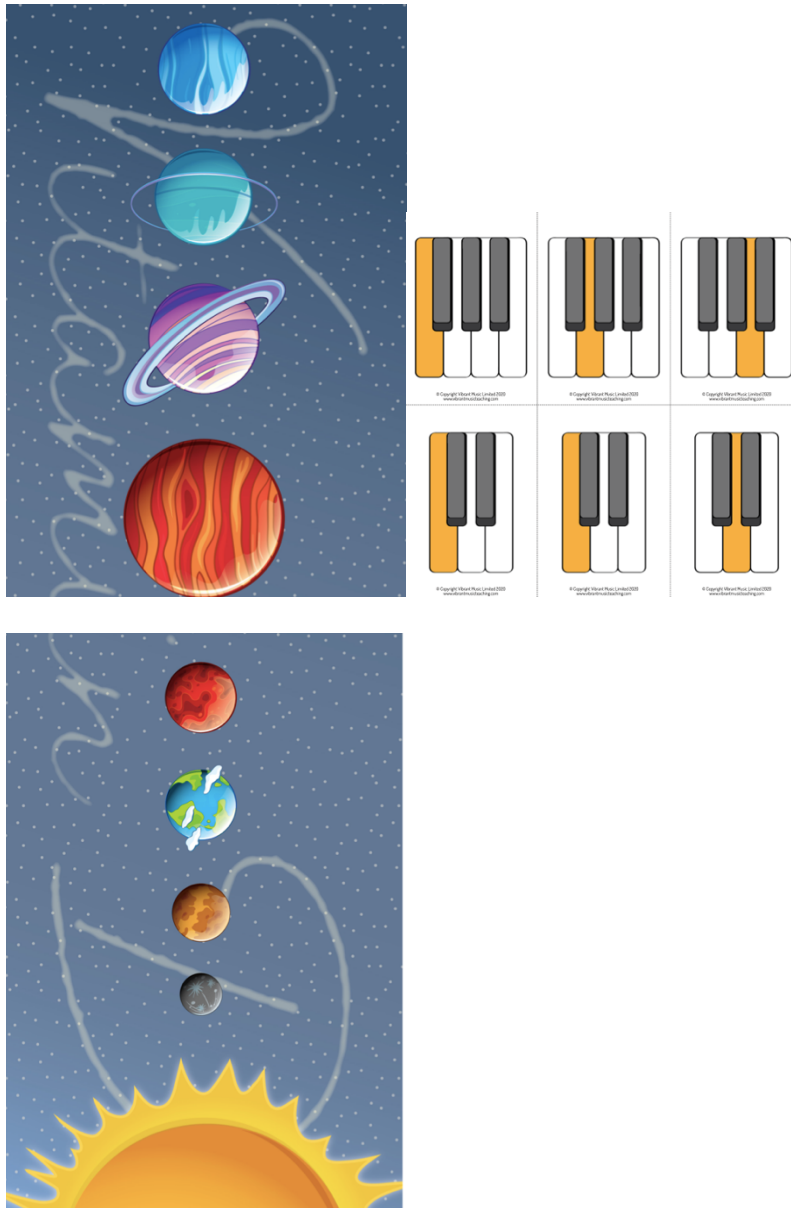


Figure 2.33: “Vitamin D” by Vibrant Music Teaching



## Primary Triads

Beginning with identifying the root, third and fifth on the *Boom Cards* will familiarize the students with how the triads are built (fig. 2.34). Moving from identifying the notes on the keyboard, the *Sproutbeat* worksheet covers writing the primary triads on the staff (fig. 2.35). Finally, the game, “Roman Race,” requires students to sort the cards with chords to match the correct roman numeral (fig. 2.36). This helps students quickly analyze chords and match it to the corresponding roman numeral.

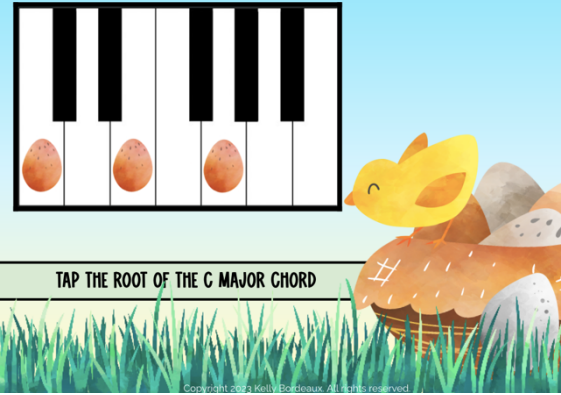
<p>Figure 2.34: “Root Position Major Chords—Identifying Root, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>” <i>Boom Cards</i> by Kelly Bordeaux Piano</p>	<p>Figure 2.35: “Primary triads” Worksheet from <i>Sproutbeat</i></p>
 <p>TAP THE ROOT OF THE C MAJOR CHORD</p>	<p>Name: _____ Date: _____</p> <p><b>Primary Triads</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Write the <b>letter name</b> of the root for each triad in the box.</li> <li>2) Draw the <b>key signature</b> for the major key on both staves.</li> <li>3) Build the tonic (I), subdominant (IV) and dominant (V) triads in <b>root position</b> on the <b>treble staff</b>.</li> <li>4) Draw the <b>root</b> of each chord on the <b>bass staff</b>.</li> </ol> <div data-bbox="893 1050 1412 1218"> <p><b>D Major :</b> I IV V</p> </div> <div data-bbox="893 1239 1412 1407"> <p><b>A Major :</b> I IV V</p> </div> <div data-bbox="893 1428 1412 1596"> <p><b>E Major :</b> I IV V</p> </div> <p>Copyright © 2017 by E.S. Mar LLC www.SproutBeat.com</p>

Figure 2.36: “Roman Race” by Vibrant Music Teaching



The countless supplemental resources presented in this chapter prove valuable for student’s music theory education. The supplemental resources give numerous suggestions to go along with the concepts learned in the various piano theory lesson books. Along with *Boom Cards*, *Sproutbeat*, and board games, the many options of apps could also be utilized to supplement learning. Adopting these resources further enhances the immersion of students in their music theory studies to retain the fundamentals for college-level music theory.

### CHAPTER 3– TEXTBOOK ASSESSMENT

Reviewing four common college-level textbooks from first semester theory courses reveals which piano lesson books adequately prepare students for higher-level study of music theory. The textbooks to review include *Music Theory Remixed: A Blended Approach for the Practicing Musician* by Kevin Holm-Hudson, *Music in Theory and Practice* by Bruce Benward and Marilyn Saker, *Contemporary Musicianship: Analysis and the Artist* by Jennifer Sterling Snodgrass, and *Harmony in Context* by Miguel A. Roig-Francolí. While there may be overlap in the information from the piano lesson theory books, the college textbooks include more in-depth examination of the topics. Comparing the piano lesson theory books and college-level textbooks exposes any gaps that need to be filled between the two levels.

Typically, college theory textbooks commence with music fundamentals. Some textbooks spend more time on fundamentals while others just devote a few chapters. For example, *Music Theory Remixed: A Blended Approach for the Practicing Musician* by Kevin Holm-Hudson covers the fundamentals in the first five chapters, while *Contemporary Musicianship: Analysis and the Artist* by Jennifer Sterling Snodgrass dedicates most of the textbook to fundamentals.

College-level theory textbooks and piano lesson theory books differ in how quickly they progress from one concept to another. Piano lesson theory books disperse

information over several books including frequently drilling and reviewing concepts taking a number of years to complete. In contrast, college-level textbooks typically progress more quickly through the material due to time constraints and assume that students have prior music theory experience. I will cover the dissimilarity in pacing between these levels and how this can affect students entering college-level music theory. Understanding this disparity in pacing is important for both piano teachers and college theory instructors allowing piano teachers to recognize how to prepare students for the expectations of college-level music theory. Furthermore, college theory instructors benefit from understanding the fundamentals students glean from pre-college study.

The use of learning spirals in college textbooks will be examined. Learning spirals encompass revisiting compositions for several concepts. Learning spirals promote retention of the information since students revisit the concepts frequently. By having the concepts become gradually more complex, students can take more time to process the information.

*Music Theory Remixed: A Blended Approach for the Practicing Musician* by Kevin Holm-Hudson:

*Music Theory Remixed: A Blended Approach for the Practicing Musician* by Kevin Holm-Hudson initially covers the keyboard and the grand staff. By beginning with the keyboard, Holm-Hudson underscores importance of understanding basic keyboard knowledge for music theory comprehension. The first five chapters focus on fundamentals such as chord qualities, seventh chords, and inversions which were

included in *Just the Facts*, *Basics of Keyboard Theory*, and *Celebrate Theory*. Chapter six introduces counterpoint and voice leading which starts going beyond the scope of most of the piano lesson theory books. *Celebrate Theory*, *Just the Facts*, and the AP level of *Basics of Keyboard Theory* cover four-part writing which allows students more practice with this imperative concept prior to college-level part-writing. This textbook also utilizes treble, bass, alto, and tenor clefs which were all included in *Celebrate Theory*.

The first chapter of *Music Theory Remixed: A Blended Approach for the Practicing Musician* introduces the three different forms of the minor scale. The piano lesson books introduce this concept later in the series. For example, *Just the Facts* includes the natural minor scale in book seven and the harmonic and melodic scales in book eight, *Piano Adventures* introduces natural and harmonic in level three, *Basics of Keyboard Theory* introduces natural and harmonic in level two, and *Celebrate Theory* in level four. Furthermore, the second chapter of this book introduces modes followed by intervals showing significantly faster pacing than the typical piano lesson theory books. The textbook quickly covers all the intervals and then adds the different interval qualities. In the piano lesson theory books, the interval qualities are not introduced until later in the series. *Just the Facts* introduces this in book six, *Piano Adventures* book five, and in book three for *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Celebrate Theory*. These two examples highlight how the pacing differs between the books geared towards pre-college lessons, which are typically designed to last over a span of years, and college-level textbooks.



A drastic differentiation exists in the use of prose compared to music examples between the Holm-Hudson textbook and the piano theory books. The Holm-Hudson textbook utilizes large paragraphs to explain concepts, while the piano theory books provide more examples and leave it up to the teacher to explain the concepts more in-depth. The Holm-Hudson textbook tends to be verbose and could benefit from including more music examples.

This textbook includes some learning spirals by gradually building music theory concepts to become more complex. The intervals develop from just numbers, to quality, and culminate in consonant versus dissonant. Repetition of compositions to learn different concepts is another learning spiral and is only included once in this textbook. Schumann's *Arabesque* Op. 18 begins as a listening example and progresses to teach prolongation by revisiting this piece for analysis.

*Music in Theory and Practice* by Bruce Benward and Marilyn Saker:

*Music in Theory and Practice* heavily focuses on fundamentals and most of it would have been covered in the piano lesson books, except for the *Piano Adventures* series. The textbook does not require previous music theory knowledge but assumes that students possess the capability to play an instrument. Volume one gives adequate space for volume two to progress beyond the scope of music theory fundamentals. This textbook is similar to *Celebrate Theory* since both highlight clef transposition, species counterpoint, and chorale writing.

The rate at which this textbook progresses begins fast-paced and briefly introduces intervals by number only and then immediately to learning about interval quality. Interestingly, the textbook claims that students need no previous knowledge of music theory for this book yet moves at a quick pace indicating that this textbook might be more successful if student's had some previous theory knowledge. Initial introduction to augmented and diminished intervals occurs much earlier in this textbook compared to traditional piano lesson theory texts. Typically, piano lesson theory texts introduce perfect, major and minor intervals for an extended period of time prior to augmented and diminished intervals. For example, *Celebrate Theory* addresses augmented and diminished intervals in level six whereas, *Music in Theory and Practice* introduces these in chapter three.

In this particular textbook the ratio between explanations and music examples resembles the setup of the piano lesson books. While there were not many examples on intervals based on size only, there were more illustrations for the other sections. Providing a plethora of examples provides students the opportunity to put the information in to practice.

*Music Theory in Practice* includes learning spirals similar to the Holm-Hudson such as gradually adding more information about intervals. For example, students learn about major and minor scales in chapter two and then learn about major and minor intervals in the subsequent chapter. This resembles the structure of *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Celebrate Theory* since they apply chapter format and gradually build on

information learned within that chapter. In addition to the learning spirals with the concepts, the repeated pieces include new information each time. For example, “The Ash Grove” appears once to cover cadences and again to have students add the harmonic progression to the melody.

*Contemporary Musicianship: Analysis and the Artist* by Jennifer Sterling Snodgrass:

*Contemporary Musicianship: Analysis and the Artist* utilizes mainly popular music for analysis with a lesser amount of classical music. The piano lesson theory books differ in that they mainly incorporate classical or folk music. Similar to the *Piano Adventures* series, the college textbook covers lead sheet symbols. Providing a visual aid, the first chapter briefly covers the keyboard. However, this textbook encourages students to use their guitar to play the lead sheet examples as well as employing the traditional piano method approach.

The textbook introduces intervals after the major and minor scales which may be difficult for students having no previous theory knowledge. Among the piano lesson books, *Celebrate Theory* resembles this college textbook by also focusing on scales first and then the intervals. The separate chapters dedicated to major and minor keys provides students more time to process the information. Some other college texts, such as the Holm-Hudson, include major and minor keys in the same chapter and do not go as in-depth. The focus on fundamentals in this textbook leaves less space for more advanced concepts like counterpoint and part-writing. Therefore, *Contemporary Musicianship:*

*Analysis and the Artist* might be an ideal option for students with no previous music theory knowledge.

This textbook takes a more lighthearted and less scholarly approach and goes deeper into explanations of the fundamentals. There are not many abstract music examples, but there are frequent “real” music examples from popular to classical music. The textbook encourages students to explore new information aurally and then learn the details of the concept. For example, the student listens to a fourth on the piano, A-D and F-B, and identifies the difference between the two. They aurally identify the intervals first then learn to analyze and write them.

As with all the textbooks surveyed, Snodgrass utilizes spiral learning within each chapter. The chapter-based format does not provide the opportunity for necessary review for proper retention. This textbook does utilize spiral learning by incorporating the same compositions to teach different concepts. For example, “Vaga Luna” by Bellini can be seen in the section on roman numeral analysis and the section on non-chord tones. *Just the Facts*, one of the piano lesson books, incorporates spiral learning throughout each unit and gradually builds on information.

*Harmony in Context* by Miguel A. Roig-Francolí:

*Harmony in Context* commences with an image of the keyboard to support visualization (fig. 3.1). This image highlights the connections between the notes on the keyboard and staff. Furthermore, the textbook refers to the keyboard when introducing intervals and accidentals by mentioning the black and white keys. The textbook

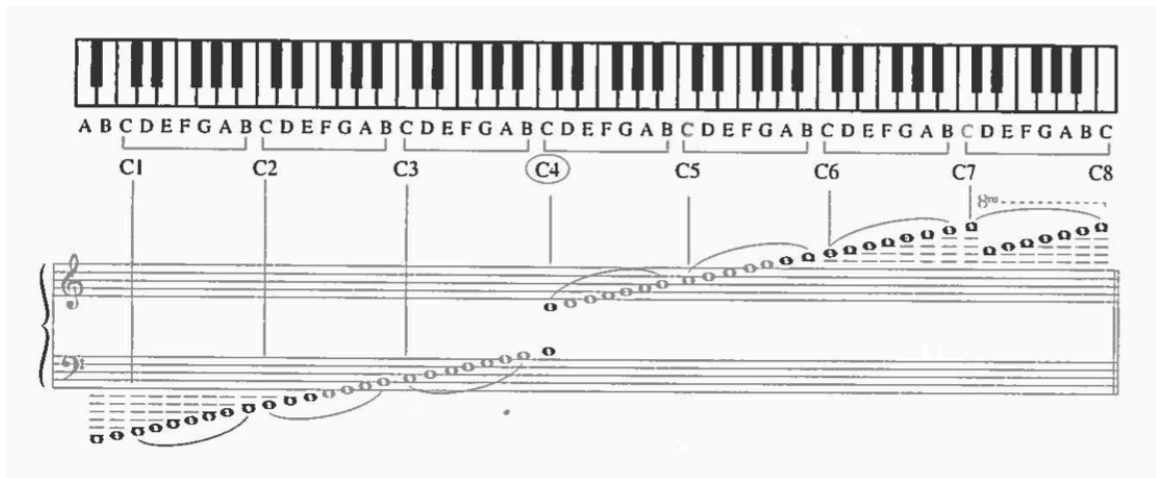
encourages students to refer to the piano when learning about the diatonic scale.

Interval inversions can be seen in *Celebrate Theory* and *Just the Facts* which prepares students for this concept introduced early on in *Harmony in Context*. *Basics of Keyboard Theory* does not include interval inversions until the AP level theory book. The fundamentals portion covers first, second, and fourth species counterpoint, but does not use counterpoint to teach intervals. *Celebrate Theory* begins teaching counterpoint in level nine which gives students levels nine and ten to already practice writing counterpoint. Roig-Francolí and *Basics of Keyboard Theory* incorporate more complex concepts like modulating to closely related keys and augmented sixth chords. In chapter twenty-five, *Harmony in Context* begins to delve into modulating to distantly related keys, a concept more advanced than the piano lesson theory books progress.

Similar to the piano lesson theory books, *Harmony in Context* introduces consonant and dissonant intervals in chapter A and scales in chapter C which differs from the other textbooks reviewed. Intervals are one of the first concepts covered while the other textbooks delay until chapter three or four. *Harmony in Context* introduces the size and quality of intervals after learning the note names. Contrastingly, the textbook covers counterpoint early on, differing from the other textbooks. The introduction to counterpoint happens prior to tonic and dominant triads but after consonant and dissonant intervals. Counterpoint in the piano lesson theory books is not taught until around books nine and ten for most series.

Roig-Francolí incorporates spiral learning by including the same pieces at least twice, each time introducing different concepts. For example, Chorale 14 “O Herre Gott, dein göttlich Wort” by J.S. Bach covers imperfect versus authentic cadences and later for harmonic analysis. Spiral learning within each chapter resembles the previous textbooks. For example, chapter E introduces chords, then triads, then seventh chords. This gradually builds on the basic information of chords to more specific examples. For example, students learned about root position triads for two chapters before learning first inversion. The similar abstract examples gradually introduce new information while including the previous learned concepts. For example, the major and minor intervals and augmented and diminished intervals have similar abstract examples.

Figure 3.1: Example from *Harmony in Context*<sup>31</sup>




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<sup>31</sup> Miguel A. Roig-Francolí, *Harmony in Context* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill Education, 2020), 3.

*Harmony in Context* displays very lengthy explanations and not many examples. The piano lesson theory books include more music examples rather than prose. Roig-Francolí could benefit from incorporating more music examples to provide students the opportunity to practice the concepts rather than just reading about the ideas. This textbook would probably do well to help students who learn independently.

The college theory textbooks examined utilize composing as one of the main forms of applying knowledge. *Basics of Keyboard Theory* and *Just the Facts* include little to no composing assignments. Students must learn the basics of composing prior to college to help alleviate the gap between pre-college and college-level music theory since composing becomes more complex at the college level. Composing immerses students in multiple theory concepts at once which demonstrates learning spiral. Also, the use of the keyboard graphics to explain concepts in the textbooks suggests the importance of the piano in understanding music theory.

Comparing numerous college theory texts and piano lesson theory books highlights the need to bridge the gap between these two levels of learning. Some of the college textbooks focus more on fundamentals, such as *Contemporary Musicianship* and *Music in Theory and Practice*, which would probably be more beneficial for students who have had no previous music theory knowledge. Others move at a quicker pace, like *Harmony in Context* and *Music Theory Remixed: A Blended Approach for the Practicing Musician*, and do not include as much focus on the fundamentals. Previous experience in music theory proves beneficial when using these textbooks.

Even with the textbooks that include fundamentals, they fail to go into as much depth as the piano lesson theory books. This indicates that previous training in music theory leads to bridging the gap. Considering most college students take several classes at once, sufficiently immersing themselves in the material proves difficult which leads to less comprehension of music theory. The fast pace learning in the college textbooks falls short of providing students ample time to process and comprehend the concepts.



## CHAPTER 4– LEARNING STYLES AND LESSON PLANS

Jeanine Jacobson explains the three learning styles which are visual, aural, and kinesthetic.<sup>32</sup> I will present ideas geared towards these learning styles and how they could be implemented with different aged students to garner a solid foundation in music fundamentals. The first will be for younger students in private piano lessons and group music classes to learn about music theory. Diversifying how students learn theory at a young age assists in retaining information as part of a strong foundation for their college-level study. The second encompasses an accelerated keyboard program for older students in a classroom setting. An accelerated keyboard lesson plan assists teachers in implementing this curriculum. The accelerated keyboard program helps fill the gap students face entering college by preparing them with some keyboard skills and proficiency in both treble and bass clef.

The private piano or group music classes for younger students and accelerated keyboard lesson plans incorporate all of the learning styles mentioned by Jeanine Jacobson. Playing an instrument and understanding the music through theory requires visual, aural, and kinesthetic tasks. Therefore, implementing the aforementioned ideas

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<sup>32</sup> Jacobson, 37.

enhances the students' comfort level encountering the different modes and creates well-rounded musicians.

Incorporating the three learning styles allows students to interact with the concepts in various ways leading to greater retention of the information. This enables an easier transition to college-level music theory which requires ability to listen (aural skills), analyze (visual skills), and the capability to play passages for comprehension (kinesthetic skills).

Students profit from visual aids to better grasp the concepts. Eloise Ristad's book, *A Soprano on Her Head*, caters to visual learners, offering many visual aids for the students. Ristad's ideas provide other ways for students to interact with their studies. An innovative example turns the staff on its side to help students of both target levels see the correlation between the notes on the piano and those of the staff with the staff horizontally aligned with the keys (fig. 4.1).<sup>33</sup> Ristad also stresses the importance of students recognizing patterns and uses intervals as the most basic example of a pattern.<sup>34</sup> She then builds on this idea by including reading chords by shape.<sup>35</sup>

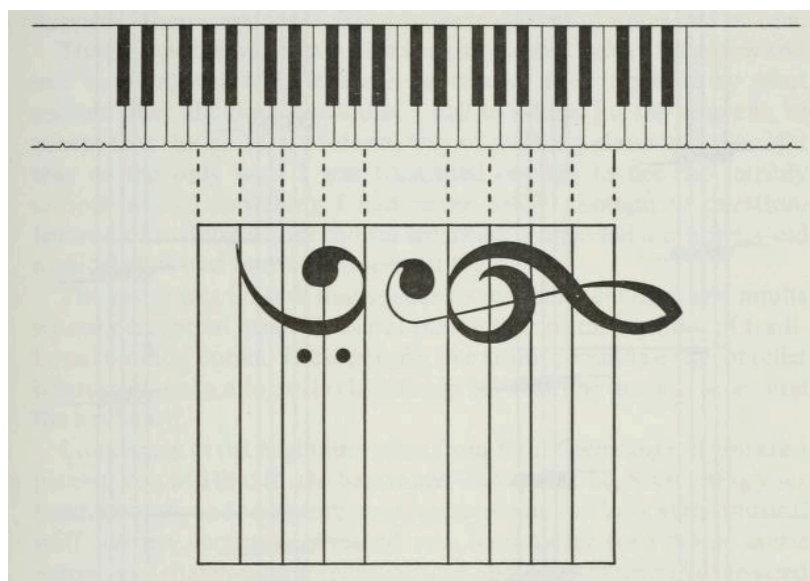
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<sup>33</sup> Ristad, 91.

<sup>34</sup> Ristad, 86.

<sup>35</sup> Ristad, 87.

Figure 4.1: Turning the Staff on its Side and Showing the Correlation Between the Keys and the Staff.<sup>36</sup>



Visual aids employed in the lesson plans assist with student comprehension. I mainly use board games to support the visual aid aspect, but with a combination of board games and the visual aids Ristad puts forth, students can focus on the same concept in varying ways.

Rather than just using visual aids as suggested by Ristad, I incorporate a more interactive approach. The board games I utilize incorporate many visuals, but I take this one step further and have students demonstrate the examples on the piano which is an

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<sup>36</sup> Ristad, 91.

example of kinesthetic learning. The games suggested supply visual aids as well as a fast-paced way for students to review certain theory concepts.

I will also argue the effectiveness of students learning concepts before they understand what they mean; this will be referred to as experience before knowledge and will help students have an easier transition to college-level terminology.<sup>37</sup> Students listen to examples of concepts and describe the difference between the sound. For example, by first listening and then playing a major versus a minor interval on the piano students hear and feel the difference between the intervals. Nancy Shackelford presents the idea of having the student play thirds on the piano and then using a floor staff to discover that thirds move from line-line or space-space. Furthermore, Shackelford recommends incorporating technique, theory, and performance as a means to teach students fundamentals.<sup>38</sup>

### Young Student Lesson Ideas

David Elkind argues that young students, approximately ages 3-12, learn best through play since it allows them to “create new learning experiences.”<sup>39</sup> Playing games

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Lively, “D.A. Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning: Implications for the Development of Music Theory Instructional Material,” *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, no. 19 (2005): 79.

<sup>38</sup> “How do you... Help Students Connect Concepts from Music Theory with Learning and Interpreting Music,” *American Music Teacher* (2022), 10.

<sup>39</sup> David Elkind, *The Power of Play: How Spontaneous Imaginative Activities Lead to Happier, Healthier Children* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007), 1-3.

engages students in drilling concepts rather than simply using flashcards. I argue that games can appeal to the three learning styles: visual, aural, and kinesthetic alike. The game suggestions for young students will be supplemental ideas to accompany their group or private music instruction.

Research has shown the benefits students receive by studying music at a young age. This suggests the importance of emphasizing music in pre-college study for young students. In a study on how music effects development, the researchers discovered that children who studied music benefited neurologically and behaviorally.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, author Ken Bain highlights that young students have less previous information that will conflict with new material which tends to happen with older students.<sup>41</sup>

Students' instruction commences with intervals, the basis for so much of music theory. In fact, many popular piano methods, such as *Piano Safari* and *Celebrate Piano*, begin with teaching intervals even before the note names. I will provide an overview of fundamental theory concepts and ideas for young students that cater to the different learning styles of visual, aural, and kinesthetic. I will also provide suggestions for improvisation and composing activities which assists students to think creatively and

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<sup>40</sup>Assal Habibi, Antonio Damasio, Beatriz Ilari, Matthew Elliott Sachs, and Hanna Damasio, "Music Training and Child Development: A Review of Recent Findings from a Longitudinal Study," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1423, no. 1 (2018): 73–81, doi:10.1111/nyas.13606.

<sup>41</sup>Ken Bain, *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Harvard University Press, 2004): 26-27.

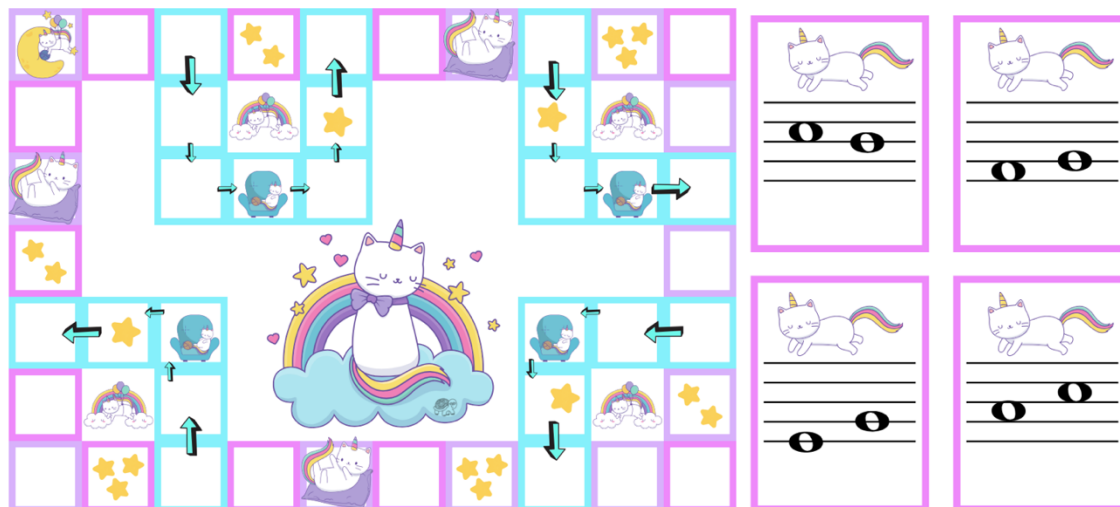
utilize more of their music theory knowledge. The lesson ideas geared toward the young student could be utilized in private or group settings. This section focuses on building theory fundamental concepts to aid in preparing students for college level music theory.

### Intervals

Games reinforce the capability of the students to quickly recognize patterns and chord shapes that allows them to learn advanced concepts more efficiently. Students should distinguish between seconds and thirds early in their studies. By incorporating several games and activities on this topic, students' retention level increases due to repetition of skills. For students to make the aural and visual connections in the games, they should be playing the examples on the piano.

One such board game by *Busy Little Turtle*, "Magical Caticorn," requires students to move one space for an interval of a second, or two spaces for an interval of a third (fig. 4.2). This solidifies in students' memory that one note away corresponds to a second and two notes away corresponds to a third. If possible, students should play these examples on a piano, so they can feel the difference between the two small intervals.

Figure 4.2: Magical Caticorn. Game focusing on 2nds and 3rds<sup>42</sup>



When students struggle to understand a concept, I try to create games or activities to aid in comprehension. One such example only requires a magnetic white board or some staff paper. Assign the student an interval and then have them mark the interval on a magnetic staff white board, then play the interval on the piano. This helps students who struggle to understand intervals since they practice with marking the intervals and playing them numerous times. Another example of a non-board game activity is to have students roll a dice and use erasers to mark the intervals. For example, if a student rolls a two, they place an eraser on C and another on D. If using a normal board game die, students only have the option of a sixth as the largest interval. This gives students a visual of what the

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<sup>42</sup> Georgina Wilson, “Magical Caticorn,” <https://www.busylittleturtle.com/magicalcaticorn>, 2023.

intervals look like on the piano. Typically, students grapple with quickly finding intervals larger than a fourth, so this gives them the opportunity to practice this skill.

Improvising in a specific key utilizing certain intervals allows students to focus on only the assigned intervals. For instance, students initially improvise just using seconds and thirds. As students progress in their knowledge of intervals, they can improvise with all of the intervals that move from line-line or space-space (thirds, fifths, and sevenths).

The composition project is similar to the improvisation exercise. Provide a starting and ending note for the students and advise them to only use specific intervals. This requires students to pay close attention to the intervals and plan ahead to make sure they only use the assigned intervals.

Group activity:

- Required materials: piano keyboard mat or rug
  - Students pick a partner (or assign partners)
  - Each pair steps onto the piano keyboard mat and the teacher calls out an interval
  - The pair works together to determine the interval and stand on the correct keys
  - Once the students are on their correct keys, play the pitches on the piano and have the students sing the pitches
  - Repeat this several times



### Accidentals: sharps, flats, and naturals

Sharps, flats and naturals can be taught through exploration of the different keys. For example, students play a C and ask them to move up to the very next key (let the student know that this is called a half-step). Tell them they just played a C#! Have the student write the sharp on staff paper in front of a C on the staff. Practice this with a few more keys and tell them sharps are not always black keys. Have them play an E and then move up to the very next key to see that E# is a white key. Repeat this same process with flats.

- Explain that sharps and flats effect the same note for the whole measure
- Write out a few measures utilizing sharps or flats and have the students circle all of the notes that are sharp or flat
- Finally, introduce naturals and that they cancel out the sharp or flat

Playing a game assists students in remembering that the sharp or flat remains in the whole measure, unless there is a natural sign. Utilizing a simple melody with accidentals, students begin on the first note with a token. They roll the dice and move forward that many notes and state if that note is sharp, flat, or regular. This requires them to pay attention to previous notes to determine if the current note has a sharp or flat.

An aural activity would be to play a note on the piano and then raise it (for a sharp) or lower it (for a flat) and have the student identify if the note is sharp or flat. Aural learners benefit from this activity by identifying the difference between the pitches.

Writing the notes on the staff gives students the opportunity to apply this activity visually as well.

Group activity:

- Required materials: piano mat or rug
  - Put students into pairs
  - Ask one of the students to stand on any key
  - Ask the other student to move up or down a half step from their partner
  - Ask them to identify if they are a flat or a sharp

#### Major five-finger scale

Young students typically learn the five-finger scale before learning the whole major scale. Using erasers or tokens, mark five notes of the C major five-finger scale on the piano and have students distinguish between a whole-step or a half-step. As they discover the whole and half-steps, have them write the words down. After identifying the interval, instruct them to begin on a different key and use the pattern again to find the correct notes. Let the students know that some of the keys may be black. Once they have figured out the correct notes in a five-finger scale, the students improvise patterns using the five pitches. Finally, the students repeat the exercise several times for reinforcement.

Play a five-finger pattern and play some notes incorrectly. The student identifies which notes are incorrect and fixes them. A similar activity could be done for listening. Play either a correct or incorrect five-finger pattern and have the student identify if the key is correct or incorrect just by listening. By allowing the student to swap roles with the

teacher, the student takes on a more active role in their learning. If students are in a group setting, they could teach their peers, an activity suggested by Elizabeth West Marvin.<sup>43</sup> For example, split the students into pairs and one would act as the teacher and help their partner fix the incorrect notes they play in the pattern.

Have the student compose using a specific key. They can figure out the notes of the five-finger pattern on the piano first, and then write them out on staff paper. From these notes, students can compose a melody of the five-finger pattern using the staff paper as their guideline for which notes to incorporate. This helps them practice writing the note of the 5-finger major scale and knowing which notes to use.

Group activity 1:

- Required materials: paper sheets with a W for “whole-step” or H for “half-step” on them
  - Choose five students and assign them a W or an H
  - Have the students arrange themselves in order to build the major five-finger scale
  - Give the students a starting note and have them now name their position within the 5-finger scale

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<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth West Marvin, “Music Theory Pedagogy in North America: Training the Next Generation,” *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 32, 66-67.

- For example: if the teacher says G the second student would say they are the note A
- Group activity 2:
  - Required materials: sheet with piano keyboard and blank staff
    - Put students into pairs
    - Have them work together to color the correct notes on the keyboard for a major 5-finger scale
    - Have them work together to write out the notes on the staff for the major 5-finger scale

#### Minor five-finger scale

Once students are comfortable with the major five-finger scale, move on to the minor version.

- Play any major five-finger pattern and then change it to minor
- Ask the students if this sounds different and if they can name which note is changed
- Once they have identified which note is different, ask them to determine the whole-step and half-step pattern
- Use tokens to mark the keys on the piano and have students practice this several times beginning on different keys
- Have the students improvise once they have the tokens in the correct spots

Play either a major or a minor 5-finger scale and have students listen. Ask them to identify if the scale was major or minor. If it was major, ask them to show how to make it minor. If it was minor, ask them to show how to make it major.

Group activity 1:

- Required materials: papers that have a W or H on them
  - Pick five students and assign them as a whole-step or a half-step
  - Have the students arrange themselves in the correct order for the minor five-finger scale pattern
  - Give the students a starting note and have them state what position they are in the pattern

Group activity 2:

- Required materials: piano mat or rug
  - Choose five students and assign them as a whole or half-step
  - Have the students arrange themselves in order for the major five-finger scale
  - Now ask them to turn the major five-finger scale to the minor five-finger scale
  - Ask them which note changed and what it is called

#### Accelerated keyboard program

An accelerated keyboard program for high school seniors or college freshmen creates a smoother transition to college-level music theory. This program gives students a

strong foundation on music theory concepts and improves their keyboard skills. This would especially be of interest to high school instrumental and choral instructors in preparing their students for college-level music theory. The program would ideally be offered as a ten-week summer program prior to beginning college. By the end of this program, students can play simple piano pieces and understand the included music theory concepts.

This curriculum employs many learning techniques to help students apply the information. For example, the use of learning spirals gradually builds on previously learned information. The program uses experience before knowledge as a method for students to learn the concept independently with minimal guidance from the teacher. The goal of this kind of learning foreshadows the abstract and independent thought required of college-level music theory. Finally, the program accommodates the different learning styles through activities that promote aural, visual, and kinesthetic learning.

The program assumes that students already know basics such as note values, time signatures, and most music terms and will focus on acquainting students with basic piano skills as a foundation for studying music theory. I will include a brief introduction to note names since not all students read both clefs. There will also be a review of intervals to help students efficiently sight-read piano music. I will use the Supersonics “Quick Start

A” method by Daniel McFarlane to assign pieces for students to practice each week during the course.<sup>44</sup>

#### Week 1:

The first week’s goal encompasses acquainting students with the notes on the piano and basic note reading by providing visual aids. The improvisation activity included allows students to feel the difference between seconds and thirds. Finally, the introduction of seconds and thirds culminates in the three assigned pieces for practice for students to apply this skill on the piano.

- Acquaint the students with the contour of the keyboard on the white keys
- Suggested activities:
  - Having students play all the groups of 2 and 3 black keys
  - Students play all CDE’s and FGAB’s in a scalar pattern
  - Having students identify certain notes on the piano
    - Doing this after they have found all the CDE and FGAB groups helps solidify individual note names and their ability to recall where placement of the notes
  - Distributing a worksheet where students must identify note names (fig. 4.3)
- Introduce the grand staff to students

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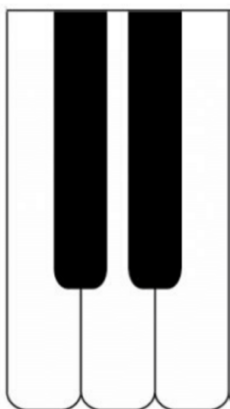
<sup>44</sup> Daniel McFarlane, *Quick Start A*, [www.supersonicsplus.com](http://www.supersonicsplus.com).

- Distribute a visual of notes on the grand staff with the keyboard (fig. 4.4)
- Assign a worksheet for students to write the notes
- Begin introducing intervals
  - Show seconds and thirds on the staff
  - Have students play different examples of seconds and thirds on the piano
  - Assign a worksheet where students must mark seconds and thirds such as one from *Sproutbeat* (fig. 4.5)
- Have students improvise on the piano using only seconds and thirds
- Assign student pieces to practice for the week
  - “Stepping Up and Down” (fig. 4.6)
  - “Skipping” (fig. 4.7)
  - “Graceful Waltz” (fig. 4.8)

Fig. 4.3: White Key Identifying Worksheet

Mark the notes indicated

Which key is C?



Which key is B?

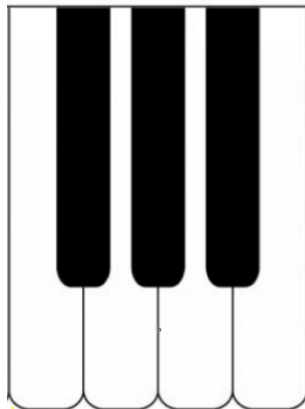




Figure 4.4: Grand Staff Visual

### The Grand Staff

The BASS STAFF and TREBLE STAFF when joined together by a BRACE, make up the GRAND STAFF.

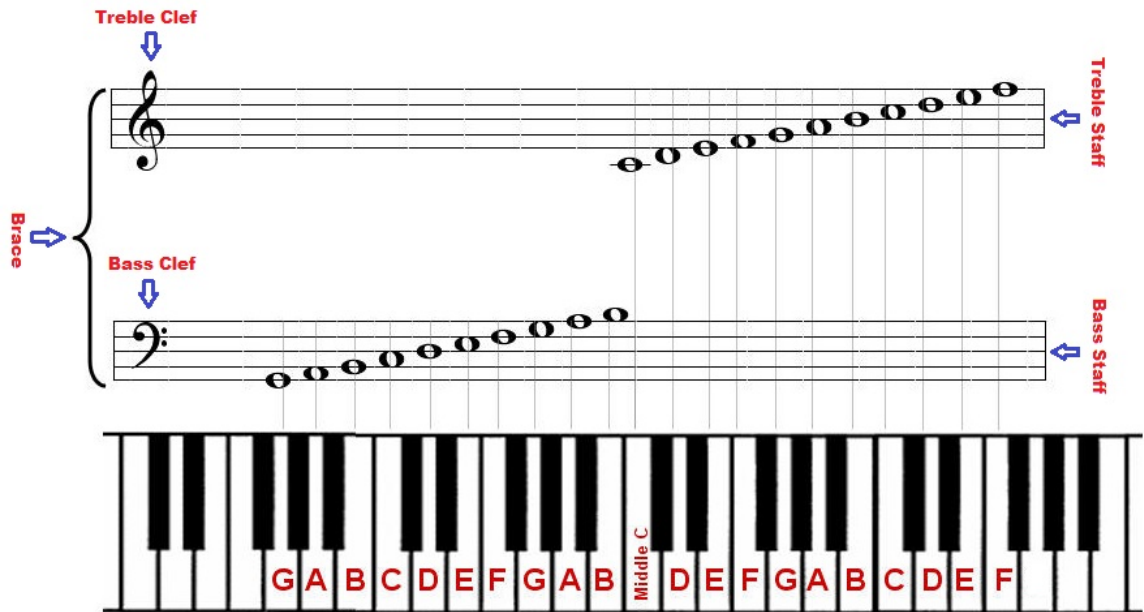


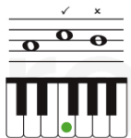
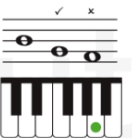
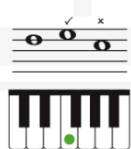







Figure 4.5: Identifying Seconds and Thirds

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Intervals of 2nd and 3rd**

 Draw ✓ and ✗ on the keyboard based on the given intervals.

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www.SproutBeat.com

Figure 4.6: “Stepping Up and Down” by Daniel McFarlane

Studio-licensed to marissaspiano@gmail.com until 14th April 2024.

**STEPPING UP  
AND DOWN**

Technique: Lift Off  
New note: G

At a comfortable speed

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Figure 4.7: “Skipping” by Daniel McFarlane

Studio-licensed to marissaspiano@gmail.com until 14th April 2024.



🔄
✅
★

Techniques: Lift Off and Rocket Launch  
New concept: skips

**At a comfortable speed**




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Figure 4.8: “Graceful Waltz” by Daniel McFarlane

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# Graceful Waltz

Technique: Lift Off  
New concepts: triple time and dotted half notes/minims

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## Week 2:

The main goals this week include learning more intervals, accidentals, and scales. Reviewing previously learned information through activities assists in students' ability to retain the information. Gradually building on the aforementioned material, students learn about fourths and fifths and relate the intervals to each other through memorization of


patterns. In order to further student's knowledge of the notes on the piano, they learn about sharps and flats as well as how to play the C-major and A-minor scales.






- Play a game with students to review the white keys:
  - Call out note names and have students quickly find that key on the keyboard
  - Show students pictures of the keyboard with specific keys marked and have them call out the note name
- Review note names on the grand staff
  - Write notes on the grand staff on the board and have students quickly name that note and play it on the piano
- Review seconds and thirds
  - Show students flashcards of intervals and have them name the interval then play it on the piano
- Introduce fourths and fifths
  - Explain the pattern of the intervals
    - Seconds and fourths move from line-space or space-line
    - Thirds and fifths move from line-line or space-space
    - Have students write and play seconds and fourths, then thirds and fifths to see the similarities between them
- Introduce sharps and flats


- Explain that sharps bring the notes up a half step and flats bring the notes down a half step
- Have students practice playing different sharps and flats on the piano
- Distribute a short quiz on sharps and flats such as the one from *Sproutbeat* (fig. 9).
- Assign scales for students to practice:
  - C-major
    - One octave, hands separately
  - A-minor
    - One octave, hands separately
- Assign pieces for students to practice:
  - “Look! Both Hands!” (fig. 4.10)
  - “Piano Pro” (fig. 4.11)
  - “Don’t Let Go” (fig. 4.12)
    - This one may need some extra introduction and provide the students practice tips since it requires both hands to play together






Figure 4.9: Sharps and Flats Worksheet from *Sproutbeat*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

 **Flats & Sharps**  
Match each note to its correct key.



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[www.SproutBeat.com](http://www.SproutBeat.com)



Figure 4.10: “Look! Both Hands!” by Daniel McFarlane

Studio-licensed to marissaspiano@gmail.com until 14th April 2024.



# Look! Both Hands!

Techniques: Lift Off and Rocket Launch  
New concept: reading in both clefs

🔄
✅
★

**At a comfortable speed**



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Figure 4.11: “Piano Pro” by Daniel McFarlane

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**Piano Pro**

Techniques: Lift Off and Rocket Launch

At a comfortable speed



The sheet music for "Piano Pro" is written in 4/4 time and consists of four systems. Each system has a treble and bass staff. The first system includes fingerings: 1, 3, 5, 3 in the treble staff and 5, 1 in the bass staff. The second system has a treble staff with eighth notes and a bass staff with quarter notes. The third system has a treble staff with quarter notes and a bass staff with quarter notes. The fourth system has a treble staff with eighth notes and a bass staff with quarter notes, ending with a double bar line.

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Figure 4.12: “Don’t Let Go” by Daniel McFarlane

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**Don't Let Go!**

Technique: Lift Off  
New concept: hands playing together

At a comfortable speed

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### Week 3:

The main agenda for week three incorporates learning the scale patterns and more intervals and their qualities. Introducing the white key scales, C-major and A-minor, in the last week assignment allows students to experience the major and minor keys prior to learning how they operate. This week, students identify the placement of the whole and half-steps and learn how to memorize the scale patterns. Students simultaneously learn

about intervals and scales to prepare them for college texts which typically introduce scales and then intervals. By incorporating interval qualities after introducing the scale patterns, students can refer to the scale for the interval. Furthermore, aural learners benefit from the activity included to introduce the quality of intervals by sound before symbol.

- Have students warmup with C-major and A-minor scales
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Introduce the whole and half-steps
- Have students determine the whole and half-step pattern of the major scale
- Group activity to build the scale:
  - Assign students to groups of eight and assign a name to each student (ex. “tonic”, “whole”, or “half”)
  - Assign different groups either major or minor as their key
  - Have them organize themselves in order to build the scale and then play it on the piano

Another exercise could be to have students show their fingers together to indicate when there is a half-step in the pattern, or their fingers spread apart to indicate a whole-step.<sup>45</sup> As Diane Urista has explained, this would be more of an individual exercise.

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<sup>45</sup> Diane Urista, “Engaging the Moving Body in the Music Theory/Aural Skills Classroom,” in *The Norton Guide to Teaching Music Theory*, ed. By Rachel Lumsden and Jeffrey Swinkin (New York: W.W. Norton Company, Inc., 2018), 128.

- Introduce the sixth and seventh
  - Remind students of the patterns for the intervals: odd-numbered intervals are either line-line or space-space and even-numbered intervals are either line-space or space-line
  - Have students play a seventh going from C-B and then from C-Bb and ask if it sounds different
    - This is to start showing them the difference between major and minor intervals
  - Have students play a sixth going from C-A and then C-Ab to hear the difference between major and minor sixths
- Begin introducing perfect, major, and minor intervals
  - Explain perfect fourths, fifths, and octaves
    - Show how these intervals are the same within both major and minor scales
  - Show the difference between major and minor thirds with a drawing such as the one seen in figure 4.13. This shows the number of half-steps for the minor versus the major third. This can be done to show the other intervals as well.
- Assign scales for students to practice
  - G-major and E-minor
- Assign pieces for students to practice

- “Dynamic Duo” (fig. 4.14)
- “Build it Up” (fig. 4.15)
- “Lord of the Keys” (fig. 4.16)

Figure 4.13: Minor Versus Major Third

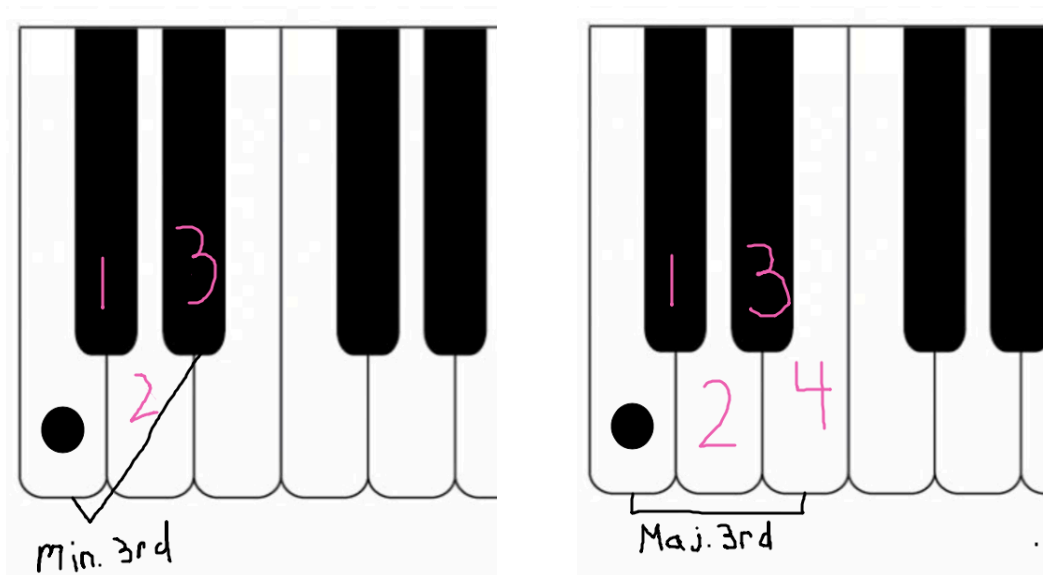


Figure 4.14: “Dynamic Duo” by Daniel McFarlane

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**DYNAMIC DUO**

Techniques: Blast Off and Lift Off  
New concepts: *staccato*, *forte*, *piano* and whole bar rests

At a comfortable speed

Figure 4.15: “Build it Up” by Daniel McFarlane

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# Build It Up

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🔔

👍
🌟

Technique: Blast Off  
New concepts: quarter note/crotchet rests and *crescendo*

**At a comfortable speed**



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Figure 4.16: “Lord of the Keys” by Daniel McFarlane

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# LORD OF THE KEYS

Techniques: Blast Off and Lift Off  
New concept: half note/minim rests

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#### Week 4:

Learning how to build triads and analyzing key signatures outline the fourth week’s main goals. Students continue their studies of the scales in the circle of fifths order by adding D-major and b-minor. Furthermore, emphasis on the memorization of interval patterns enables student preparedness for one of the earliest fundamental

concepts taught in the college-theory textbooks. Understanding intervals leads to quicker note recognition in melodies as well as figured bass comprehension. Students previously learned about interval qualities and this week takes it one step further by introducing triads as major or minor thirds stacked. By playing these triads on the piano, students can visualize the patterns as well as feel and hear the triads. Therefore, they will begin learning to play lead sheets in one of the assigned pieces for the week. Once students have learned the triads, they learn about key signatures and how to identify the tonic from the key signature.

- Have students warmup with the G-major and E-minor scales
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Review which intervals move from line-line or space-space
- Review which intervals move from line-space or space-line
- Review interval qualities
  - Assign worksheet such as one from *Sproutbeat* (fig. 4.17)
  - Call out intervals and have students rotate playing them on the piano
- Introduce triads
  - Show how triads are two thirds stacked
    - Major triad=major third plus a minor third (fig. 4.18)
    - Minor triad=minor third plus a major third (fig. 4.18)
  - Have students build different triads and play them on the piano using this formula

- Assign triad practice
  - Have students play the scales learned so far (C and G-major and A and E-minor) along with the triads of each scale degree in ascending and descending order
- Introduce key signatures
  - Show students the order of sharps and flats
  - Show and explain the circle of fifths
  - Explain how the last sharp and up a half-step will reveal the tonic
  - Explain how the second to last flat is the tonic for flat keys
  - Assign a worksheet where students must mark the keys in the circle of fifths (fig. 4.19)
  - Have students play a game such as this one suggested by Stefanie Dickinson:<sup>46</sup>
    - Students must quickly write the assigned key signatures on the board
    - If they are assigned F-major, E-major, and D-major, they write these keys out

---

<sup>46</sup> Stefanie Dickinson, “Music Fundamentals Games,” in *The Routledge Companion to Music Theory Pedagogy*, ed. By Leigh VanHandel (New York: Routledge, 2020), 38.

- Once they have written the keys, they create a sentence using the letters such as “Johnny fed the alligator”
- Assign pieces
  - “Let’s get Loud” (fig. 4.20)
  - “Triple Treat” (fig. 4.21)
- Students will also begin learning to play lead sheets at this point from “Pop School” level 1 by Daniel McFarlane
  - “Momentum” (fig. 4.22)
    - Play just the left-hand chords
      - Students may need assistance working out the correct notes
    - Isolate the melody
    - Encourage students to try to play with both hands after practicing separately

Figure 4.17: Perfect, Major, and Minor Intervals

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Intervals**

Draw a note and necessary accidental to make each given interval.

Perfect 5th down    Major 3rd up    Perfect 4th up

Minor 3rd down    Minor 2nd up    Major 2nd down

Major 3rd down    Minor 2nd down    Perfect 5th up

Major 2nd up    Perfect 4th down    Minor 3rd up

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Figure 4.18: Draw a Major Triad to Show Students the Interval Qualities Used

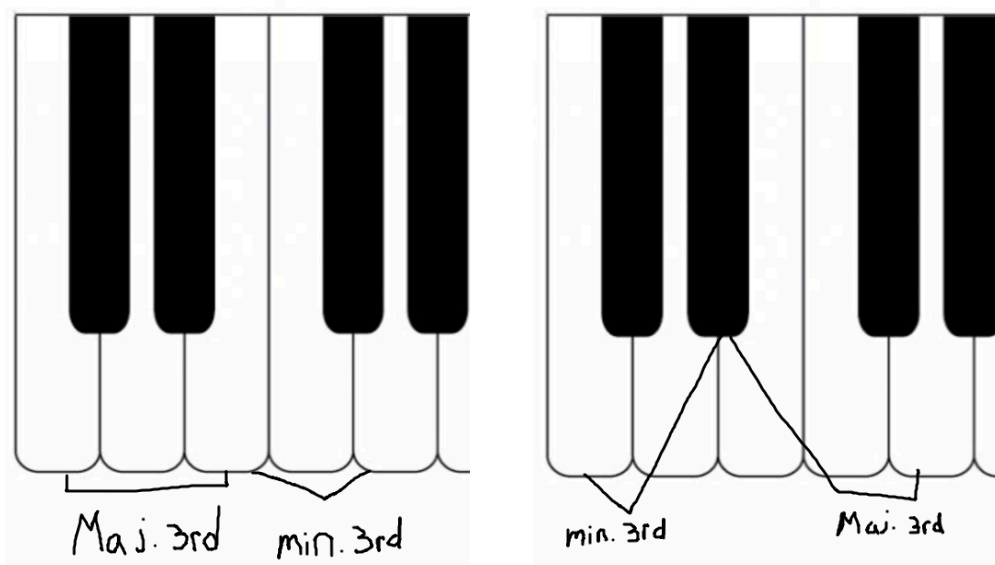

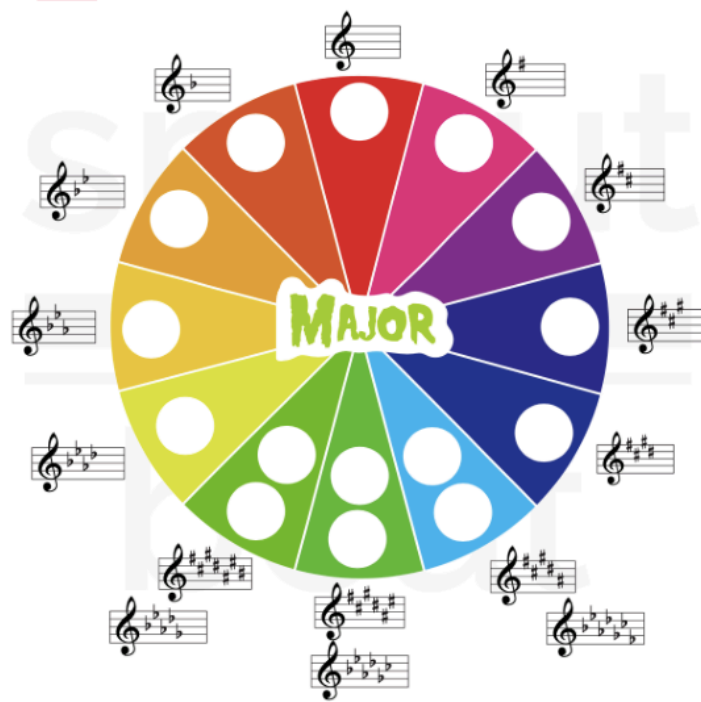


Figure 4.19: Circle of Fifths Worksheet from *Sproutbeat*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Circle of Fifths**

 Name the major key for each key signature.



The diagram is a circle divided into 12 colored segments. In the center of the circle is the word "MAJOR" in a green, stylized font. Each segment contains a white circle for a key signature. Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each with a key signature. The key signatures are: C major (no sharps or flats), G major (one sharp), D major (two sharps), A major (three sharps), E major (four sharps), B major (five sharps), F# major (six sharps), C# major (seven sharps), F major (one flat), Bb major (two flats), Eb major (three flats), and Ab major (four flats).

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Figure 4.20: “Let’s get Loud” by Daniel McFarlane

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**Let's Get Loud!**

Techniques: Blast Off and Lift Off  
New concept: whole bar rests in triple time




**At a comfortable speed**



Figure 4.21: “Triple Treat” by Daniel McFarlane

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# TRIPLE TREAT

Technique: Blast Off  
New concepts: *mezzo forte* and *mezzo piano*

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✓
★

**At a comfortable speed**





Figure 4.22: Momentum by Daniel McFarlane

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Play one octave higher

C Em Am G

5 C Em Am G

9 Dm Em F G

13 C Em Am G C

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## Week 5:

Primary and secondary triads, the diminished triad, and analysis highlight the main goals for this week. Students again review previously learned concepts and pieces prior to adding new information. The new information of primary triads builds on the previous knowledge of all diatonic scales, incorporating a learning spiral. Tell the students the primary triad scale degree names and have them discover the triads on the

piano. This is an example of experience before knowledge since students already knew how to play the chords but did not know the names. This process repeats when introducing the secondary triads. When presenting the secondary triads, students describe how the seventh chord sounds dissimilar to the other chords. This encourages aural skills by listening before understanding the concept. After learning triads, students put this into practice through analysis. Analyzing some pieces prior to college can prepare students for more complex analysis and helps with visual learning.

- Students warmup with the G-major and E-minor scales as well as the diatonic triads from the C and G major scales and A and E-minor scales
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Review “Momentum” from the last session
  - Have students review the chords in the left hand
  - Have students play the right hand alone
  - Students very slowly play with both hands
- Introduce primary triads
  - Write out the chords in the C-major scale and label I, IV, and V
  - Practice this with the G-major scale and have students point out which chords are the primary triads
  - Have students build the F-major scale (pick one or several students to write it on the board) and then label the primary triads
- Introduce the remaining triads

- Write out the triads in the C-major scale again and label ii, iii, vi, and viio
- Ask students to listen to the viio chord, does it sound different from the major/minor chords?
  - Show how the diminished chord is made up of two minor thirds (fig. 4.23)
- Explain how the secondary chords in the major key are all minor except for viio which is diminished
- Practice analyzing the chords of other scales starting with G-major and then F-major
  - Have students build the triads on the piano and then write it out on staff paper
  - Students then label the chords with the correct quality
- Analysis
  - Now that students have had a foundation in playing and learning chords, analyze a piece such as “Prince of Denmark’s March” (fig. 4.24)
- Assign the F-major and D-minor scale and blocked triads to practice for the week
- Assign pieces to practice for the week
  - “Sad Steps” (fig. 4.25)
  - “Flutter-E” (fig. 4.26)
  - Assign a new “Pop School” piece
    - “Together Again” (fig. 4.27)

Figure 4.23: Diminished triad

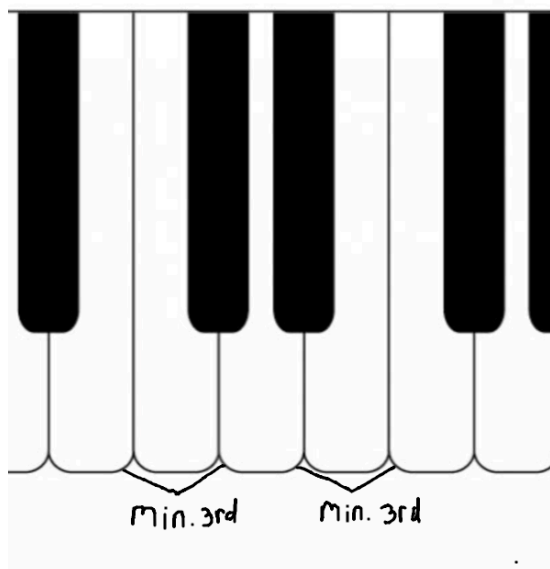


Figure 4.24: “Prince of Denmark’s March” by Jeremiah Clarke mm. 17-25

A musical score for the piece "Prince of Denmark's March" by Jeremiah Clarke, measures 17-25. The score is written for piano and features a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. The measures are numbered 17 through 25. The score ends with a double bar line at measure 25.

Figure 4.25: “Sad Steps” by Daniel McFarlane

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**SAD STEPS**

Technique: Lift Off  
New concept: flats

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Figure 4.26: “Flutter-E” by Daniel McFarlane

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**FLATTER-E**

Techniques: Blast Off and Lift Off  
New concept: rules for accidentals

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Figure 4.27: “Together Again” by Daniel McFarlane

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Play one octave higher

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## Week 6:

Scale degree names and the three forms of minor outline the new concepts for week six. Again, building on the previous information, students learn the scale degree names which leads to further comprehension of the scales. By this point, students have become well-acquainted with the minor scale since they played several. Therefore, they begin learning about the three forms of the minor scale. Utilizing aural skills again,

playing the scales on the piano and having students identify the altered notes leads to recognition of the modifications between these scales. By reviewing previously learned scales, which is a learning spiral, students gradually begin to implement this concept. The analysis for the week incorporates the A-minor key and students can identify which form of minor the piece includes.

- Students warmup with the F-major and D-minor scales and blocked triads
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Review primary and secondary triads
  - Draw the triads on the board and have students go up one by one to mark the triads (ex. Student 1 marks the I chord, student 2 marks the ii chord, etc.)
- Introduce scale degree names
  - Write out one of the major scales students have learned (C, G, or F) and write the scale degree names
  - Pick seven students and assign each of them a scale degree name
  - Have the students arrange themselves in the order of the scale degree names
- Review the minor scale pattern
  - Have students play the A-minor scale and name the whole-steps and half-steps
- Introduce the three forms of minor scales: natural, harmonic, and melodic



- Begin by playing the different minor scales and see if students can identify which notes are altered
- Explain that the natural minor scale is the same as the minor scale pattern students learned
- Show students that the harmonic minor scale has a raised seventh
- Show students that the melodic minor scale has a raised sixth and seventh when ascending and is back to natural minor when descending
- Analysis
  - Analyze Waltz in A minor by Chopin (fig. 4.28)
- Assign students the A natural, harmonic, and melodic minor scales to practice
- Assign pieces to practice:
  - “Mountain trail” (fig. 4.29)
  - “Hidden Valley” (fig. 4.30)
- Assign new pop piece:
  - “Forever” (fig. 4.31)

Figure 4.28: “Waltz in a Minor” by Frederic Chopin mm. 1-16

**Valse en la mineur**  
**Opus posthume**

Allegretto KK 4b, 11

The musical score is written for piano in 3/4 time, key of A minor. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 1-4) features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a harmonic accompaniment of chords. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-12) shows the melody moving to a higher register. The fourth system (measures 13-16) concludes the piece with a final cadence.

Figure 4.29: “Mountain Trail” by Daniel McFarlane

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# Mountain Trail

Technique: Radar Wrist  
New concept: phrasing

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Expressively



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Figure 4.30: “Hidden Valley” by Daniel McFarlane

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**HIDDEN VALLEY**

Technique: Radar Wrist  
New concept: skip + 1

Expressively

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Figure 4.31: “Forever” by Daniel McFarlane

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Play one octave higher

Am F C G

5 Am F C G

9 Dm Em F G

13 Am F C F G C

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## Week 7:

Triad qualities in the natural and harmonic minor keys and the augmented triad encompass the new material for this week. Frequent review of previous concepts enables retention of the information. To review the three forms of minor scales, writing the scales on the board and analyzing them as a class promotes visual learning. Another visual activity includes writing the triads of the minor scale in natural and harmonic form and

having students identify the alterations. Another activity incorporates visual, aural, and kinesthetic learning by writing a diminished, minor, major, or augmented triad on the board (visual), having the student play the chord on the piano (aural), and analyzing the intervals on the piano (kinesthetic). This promotes chord analysis, an integral portion of college-level music theory.

- Students warmup with the A minor scales, all three forms
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Review the different form of minor scales
  - Draw the A natural minor scale on the board
    - Have the students say which scale degree is changed for the harmonic minor
    - Have students say which scale degrees are changed for the melodic minor
    - Repeat this with e minor and d minor
    - Play the different minor scales and have students name the scale
- Introduce the triad qualities in the natural and harmonic minor scales
  - Write out one of the minor scales students have learned and mark the triads for the natural minor scale
  - Change to the harmonic minor scale and ask the students to identify the altered triads (III+, V, viio)

- Introduce the augmented triad and explain that it is two major thirds (fig. 4.32)
- Review major, minor, diminished, and augmented triads
  - Write triads on the board and have students play them on the piano
  - Ask what intervals make up the chord
  - Ask what quality the chord is
- Assign the E-minor scales/blocked triads (natural, harmonic, and melodic) and have students review the G-major scale
- Assign pieces to practice for the week:
  - “Morning Bells” (fig. 4.33)
  - “Running” (fig. 4.34)
  - “That’s Hot” (fig. 4.35)
- No new “Pop School” piece this week

Figure 4.32: Augmented Triad

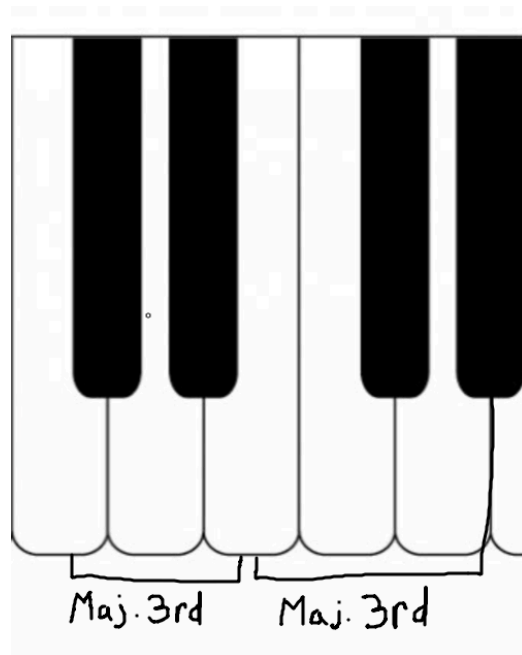




Figure 4.33: “Morning Bells” by Daniel McFarlane

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# Morning Bells

Technique: Radar Wrist  
New concept: contrary motion

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**Expressively**




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Figure 4.34: “Running” by Daniel McFarlane


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# RUNNING

Techniques: Radar Wrist and Blast Off  
New concept: eighth notes/quavers

With a steady beat




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Figure 4.35: “That’s Hot” by Daniel McFarlane

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# That's Hot!

Techniques: Radar Wrist and Blast Off

At a comfortable speed



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## Week 8:

This week mainly focuses on reviewing pertinent information learned so far through a variety of activities to promote retention of the concepts. The one new concept this week introduces relative major and minor keys. Because students played many of these scales, they now only have to add the terminology to their knowledge. This reveals another example of experience before knowledge.

- Warmup with the E-minor scales and blocked triads
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Play a relay race to review the primary and secondary triads as well as the scale degree names
  - Put students into small groups
  - Students in the group will take turns playing triads on the piano and writing the chord on staff paper
  - Students must also name the scale degree once they have written the triad
  - The team to finish fastest wins!
- Relative major and minor keys
  - Ask students to play the C-major scale and A-minor scale
  - Ask students to play the G-major scale and E-minor scale
    - What do these scales (C-major and A-minor and G-major and E-minor) have in common?
    - What is the relationship between the two tonic notes?
  - Explain that students can discover the relative minor by going down a minor third from the major tonic key
  - Practice by having students figure out the relative minor of different keys
- Analysis

- Have students analyze the key signature and chords for  
“Elevation” by Louise Farrenc (fig. 4.36)
- Assign D-major and B-minor scales/blocked chords
- Assign pieces:
  - “Epic Beat” (fig. 4.37)
  - “Running Scared” (fig. 4.38)
  - “Say it Again” (fig. 4.39)

Figure 4.36: “Elevation” by Louise Farrenc mm. 1-8

**Elevation by Louise Farrenc**

Org. *p legato*

8

Figure 4.37: “Epic Beat” by Daniel McFarlane

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**EPIC BEAT**

Techniques: Radar Wrist and Blast Off

At a comfortable speed

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Figure 4.38: “Running Scared” by Daniel McFarlane

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# Running Scared

Techniques: Blast Off and Radar Wrist

🔄
👍
★

Quite fast



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Figure 4.39: “Say it Again” by Daniel McFarlane

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**Say It Again**

Technique: Blast Off

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## Week 9:

This week introduces several new concepts such as inversions, figured bass, slash chords, and dominant seventh chords. By employing an improvisation exercise incorporating a chord progression, students can be adequately prepared to add new information to this knowledge. Furthermore, reviewing the key signatures through different activities engages students in recalling this information. Introducing chord inversions along with figured bass shows students that the figured bass indicates the

intervals in the inversion. This also highlights the importance of students achieving mastery in their knowledge of intervals prior to learning figured bass. The activities encourage exploration through seeing the teacher demonstrate the inversions on the piano (visual learning) playing examples on the piano (aural learning) and using the correct fingering (kinesthetic learning). A brief introduction to slash chords provides students another way to analyze and understand lead sheets. Finally, teaching the dominant seventh chord helps students discern the scale degree names as well as the intervals. After students have completed the activities that incorporate the learning styles, they analyze a piece with dominant seventh chords to recognize this chord in a “real” music example.


- Warmup with D-major and B-minor scales/blocked chords
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Have students play a chord progression and improvise the right hand
  - It could be a simple chord progression such as I-IV-V-I and repeat this progression
- Review key signatures
  - Write key signatures on the board and have students call out the key
  - Have each student write on the board a different key signature
- Introduce chord inversions
  - Show students on the piano how moving the notes around is the same chord
  - Have students play the primary triads in C-major

- Have students play the inversions for each primary triad
  - Make sure they use the correct fingers for the inversions
  - Demonstrate how playing a chord progression with inversions can make it easier instead of jumping to the chord
- Introduce figured bass
  - Show the chords and inversions on the piano
  - Have students analyze the intervals
  - After students have said what the intervals are, show how this would be written as figured bass
- Introduce slash chords
  - Explain that if a lead sheet says G/B that this is indicating which note will be on the bottom of the G chord and tells them which inversion to play
- Assign new “Pop School” piece:
  - “When the Sun Shines” (fig. 4.40)
    - This piece utilizes inversions
    - Have students work out the left-hand chords on the piano
- Analysis
  - Analyze the key signature and chords for *In der Fremde*, Op. 39, no. 1, mm. 1-4 (fig. 4.41)
- Introduce dominant seventh chords




- Using the key of C-major, have students write out the dominant chord and play it on the piano
- Ask them what a seventh above G is
- Ask them what this note is called (leading tone)
- Show on the piano and staff what the dominant seventh looks like
- Analyze a piece, such as “Feed the Birds” from Mary Poppins, using the dominant seventh chord (fig. 4.42)
- Assign A-major and F#-minor scales/blocked chords
- Assign new pieces for the week:
  - “Texting” (fig. 4.43)
  - “Waltz it Up” (fig. 4.44)

Figure 4.40: “When the Sun Shines” by Daniel McFarlane


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# When the Sun Shines

Play one octave higher



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Figure 4.41: *In der Fremde*, Op. 39, no. 1, mm. 1-4

1 Nicht schnell.

*p*

Aus der Hei - math hin - ter den Bli - tzen roth da

4

kom - men die Wol - ken her.

*pp*

Figure 4.42: Feed the Birds from *Mary Poppins* mm. 52-59

52

skies. All a - round the ca - the - dral the saints and a -


D min: V7 i V7 i

56

pos - tles look down as she sells her wares.

cresc.




Figure 4.43: “Texting” by Daniel McFarlane




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# Texting

Techniques: Blast Off and Radar Wrist



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Figure 4.44: “Waltz it Up” by Daniel McFarlane

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**Waltz It Up**

Technique: Blast Off

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## Week 10:

The final week focuses on reviewing all concepts learned thus far culminating in a composing project to put these concepts together. One of the review activities involves figuring out the notes in any scale the teacher might call out. Due to time constraints, this program only includes some scales so students might not know the proper fingering for the scale. In order to solve this potential issue, students may play with just finger two since to focus on playing the correct keys. The scale degree and chord review requires that students recall the name of their assigned chord as well as the notes in that chord.



Encouraging students to refer to the piano for this assignment helps them to connect the visual and aural aspect. Analyzing three different pieces allows students to practice this skill prior to college. Finally, the composing project connects all the concepts that students have learned and prepares them for composing projects in college.

- Warmup with A-major and F#-minor scales/blocked chords
- Pick one student for each piece to perform the previous assignments
- Review the circle of fifths
  - Split students into teams
  - Have each team fill out the circle of fifths
  - Whoever finishes first (and accurately) wins!
- Review relative major and minors
  - Ask students to play a major scale (if they have not learned the correct fingering, they may just use finger two to play it)
  - Then ask students to figure out what the relative minor is and play the natural, harmonic, and melodic forms
- Review scale degree names and qualities
  - Pick seven students and assign each a name (ex. “tonic” or “leading tone”)
  - Have them arrange themselves in order
  - Tell them the key (ex. B harmonic minor) and have each student announce if their chord is major, minor, augmented, or diminished
  - Students may look at the piano to assist them

- Practice analyzing the keys for three different pieces
  - Keyboard Sonata in Eb Major, mvt. 1, Moderato by Marianne Auenbrugger (fig. 4.45)
  - Hine Ma Tov Arr. Neil Ginsberg (fig. 4.46)
  - Thinking out Loud by Ed Sheeran (fig. 4.47)
- Spend some time composing a piece as a class to put together what students have learned
  - Have students pick a key
  - Ask one student to come up and write out the key signature
  - Ask them what the primary triads are in this key and have them play the triads
  - Ask students what the secondary triads are and have them play the triads
  - Call one student up at a time to write out one triad from the key as an example
  - Have them begin and end on the tonic triad
  - Each student will pick a chord and write it on the board along with its roman numeral and figured bass
    - Encourage students to use inversions to make the chords easier to play
  - Once the chord progression has been written, have students compose their own melody

Figure 4.45: Keyboard Sonata in Eb Major, mvt. 1, Moderato by Marianne Auenbrugger

**Keyboard Sonata in Eb Major, mvt. 1, Moderato by Marianne Auenbrugger**



Figure 4.46: Hine Ma Tov Arr. Neil Ginsberg

Flute

*mf*

Piano

*mf*

5

*mf*

*p*

The musical score is for the piece 'Hine Ma Tov' arranged by Neil Ginsberg. It is written for Flute and Piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/8. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The Flute part begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The Piano part also begins with *mf*. The second system starts at measure 5, indicated by a '5' below the staff. In this system, the Flute continues its melodic line, while the Piano part features more intricate arpeggiated patterns. The Piano part concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking.

Figure 4.47: Thinking out Loud by Ed Sheeran

Moderately  
♩ = 80

When your legs don't work like they used to be - fore  
When my hair's all but gone and my mem - o - ry fades

and I can't sweep you off of your feet,  
and the crowds don't re-mem-ber my name, will your mouth s  
when my hands

taste of my love?  
strings the same way, Will your eyes still smile from your cheeks?  
I know you will still love me the same.

This program gives students an opportunity to learn music fundamentals prior to beginning college. By learning the basics of playing the piano, students can be better prepared for college-level study. Emphasis on chord theory encourages students to begin recognizing chord patterns necessary for analysis at the college-level. Finally, introducing analysis in this program enables students to apply what they have learned to a musical example.

The goal of the program helps bridge the gap between pre-college and college-level music theory and provides students a solid foundation to build upon in college-level music theory. Due to time constraints and group setting, the accelerated keyboard program moves at a quicker pace than private piano lessons. The accelerated keyboard program is designed to prepare students for the first few chapters of a typical college theory textbook.

## **CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION**

Through the many activities and lesson plans presented, the goal of bridging the gap between pre-college and college-level music theory becomes more achievable. Preparing students prior to college for their music theory studies could lead to them attaining greater success in their classes. Compiling distinctive resources for teachers to apportion delivers a more comprehensive music theory education for students. By providing many supplemental resources and activities as presented throughout this thesis, students can better develop their music theory skills and be well-prepared for college-level instruction.

Discussions with piano teachers revealed the popularity of gamifying lessons to incorporate music theory. Building off this premise, I provided several diverse lesson plans incorporating games to give teachers a resource to include these activities in their lessons. The lesson plans also included improvisation activities as recommended by several teachers.

The piano teachers highlighted catering to student's different learning styles by providing activities that address each learning mode. For example, aural learners could benefit from the listening exercises where the teacher plays incorrectly, and students discern and correct the error. Visual learners could benefit from the games where students must show the different scales on the keyboard mat and the board games. Finally,

kinesthetic learners could benefit from the improvisation exercises. Many of the teachers mentioned the importance of incorporating all learning styles regardless of the student's preferred learning style. The lesson plans provided allows students to interact with the material in a variety of ways helping bridge the disparity between pre-college and college-level music theory.

Selecting a comprehensive theory book to aid students on their music theory journey prepares students for college-level music theory. Comparing and contrasting the piano lesson theory books helped to reveal which series could best prepare students for college-level music theory. While each had different strengths and weaknesses, *Celebrate Theory* offers the best choice for a comprehensive theory book option. *Basics of Keyboard Theory* does not go as in-depth or include composition activities like *Celebrate Theory* but still propounds a solid foundation in music theory fundamentals.

Including supplemental materials in addition to the piano lesson books enhances students' learning. I provided specific game examples to go along with certain concepts to help teachers see how these concepts align. The plethora of available apps to choose from enables instructors to provide students with more resources to solidify learning concepts. Specific examples outlined from *Boom Cards* and *Sproutbeat* offers a step-by-step guide for teachers to incorporate for material retention.

Comparing how the college-level theory textbooks introduce fundamentals and the knowledge students gained from piano lesson theory books suggests the importance of learning fundamentals prior to college. The brief summaries of the college-level theory



textbooks help teachers to analyze how best to prepare students for the fundamentals sections of college-level music theory. A better grasp of music fundamentals prior to college-level music theory eases the transition into more complex theory topics.

The young student lesson plans give teachers suggestions on how to supplement student's learning with theory activities. The flexible lesson plans work in private or group settings and can be adapted for older students. The lesson plans allow students to learn about music theory at a young age and immerse them in the topic. This will allow students more time to process and retain information and give teachers ample time to build on the fundamentals of music theory.

The accelerated lesson plan can support students who play another instrument in learning the basics of piano and how to use the piano to understand music theory. Adapting the keyboard as a visual aid develops students' understanding of music theory. By utilizing the guide included in the accelerated keyboard program, teachers can adequately prepare their students for some of the fundamentals encountered in college-level music theory. This flexible lesson plan could be offered as a summer course to immerse students in the topic prior to the start of the academic college year. The accelerated piano course could also be offered as part of class time in a high school orchestra or choir.

The aforementioned resources, when viewed individually, could be overwhelming for teachers to know how to properly implement the activities. However, the included lesson plans and activity suggestions give teachers a framework to guide their students in

their music theory education. Effectively implementing these resources and employing the strategies outlined endeavors to bridge the gap between pre-college and college-level music theory creating more well-rounded and prepared musicians.

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## VITA

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