

Preface

All piano teachers love to discover music that is easily learned, easy to teach but sounds difficult. That's what this book is all about. The pieces in this book are constructed entirely of major triads.

I use these pieces with my beginners in their first term. The music is taught initially by rote after we cover the pentascales and triads in all keys.

The music sounds (and looks) difficult, which is always a hit with the students (and their parents)! My students ask to play them after they hear their peers play them and they love sounding so 'accomplished' at such an early stage in their young careers!

People have asked me for advice on how I teach my own students. So I have added some instructions in the next few pages.

An Introduction to This Book

How it all got started

This book is a collection of triad etudes that worked well for my own students. IMPORTANT: All the music in this book uses only MAJOR triads.

I would teach the triads and then play a jumping game with the student.

- I'd play C chord, then D chord then back to C chord. I'd ask the student to copy this. Then I'd repeat it but this time I'd jump an octave – for fun!
- The student was immediately intrigued and challenged and wanted to try it. I'd play with different triads to expand the game.

It occurred to me that I should write pieces that actually have a theme/melody. Some students were so adept that I began writing pieces with more jumping, even in both hands.

- For the very early level, after they had learned all 12 triads, I'd teach initially by rote – ie: showing them the hand movement on the keyboard and telling them all the triad names.
- The next level would be to identify the root of the chord and write it in the score. This was always a great reinforcement of note reading.
- As students progress, many were eventually able to read the chords. (NOTE – triads are chords and sometimes I use the word chord, sometimes I use the word triad. They are interchangeable.)

Table of Contents (TOC) in order of difficulty

The TOC lists the pieces in order of difficulty so the easier ones can be introduced first.

- Easy – One hand playing, repeating chords, same chord in both hands, chords move in the same direction for both hands or minimal movement up or down the keyboard.
- Trickier – Chords jump in opposite directions, different chords for each hand at the same time, syncopated rhythms.
- Oddly, sometimes when a student receives a new book they ask to see the most difficult piece. Direct them to the last piece in the book – Three Cornered Hats. You can make that a goal!

Study Pages

There is a STUDY PAGE for each piece to walk through the learning process step by step showing how to approach each piece.

Student Composing

After learning some triads and playing the jumping game, have the student compose their own triad piece! They have the building blocks. They just need to add their imagination!

How I teach the triads

- I introduce 3 at a time: One set a week (if they are ready). They are grouped by the keyboard black and white pattern.
 - C/G/F – affectionately known as the marshmallow chords
 - D/E/A – the ‘hamburger’ chords
 - Db/Eb/Ab – the Oreo cookie chords
 - F#/B/Bb – the ‘oddballs’.
 - I write down the note letters in the dictation book and write flat and sharp signs - but I call them ‘black note F’ or ‘black note B’ instead of saying F sharp or B flat. Eventually I interchange ‘black note’ and sharp/flat. They don’t even notice!
 - For homework they have to colour them on the keyboard sheet. (See sheet on the next page). They have two sheets in their binder to cover 12 triads.
 - At the next lesson I always play the jumping game.
- Once all 12 triads are learned I do a hangman test. If they play the chord correctly when I ask for it, they are safe. If they get it wrong we hang a body part. They have to get 75% overall before we move on to triad pieces.

How I get 'beginner hands' to play triads

- This is a game too. First they play finger 1, then 5 in five finger position. Back and forth several times. Then I ask for the two notes at the same time. Keep the ball shape in the hand.
- Then finger 3 wants to join in the fun and starts 'knocking on the door' while fingers 1 and 5 are holding down the notes. Important to keep all the fingers 'curved and tall'. Knock, knock, knock.
- Last step is to let all three notes play together at the same time.
- This usually takes about two weeks and they can do it.