

**Proud to be Canadian!** is a book of six Canadian Folk songs. What a great idea to include *O Canada* for all students to be able to learn at a pre-reading level! Lyric sheets are presented at the end of the book to keep these songs “alive”. Minor hand positions are presented here. This book doesn’t have complex rhythms and the time signatures are 4/4, 3/4, and 6/8.

In conclusion, my recommendation is to visit Ms. Blench’s website: [www.primarychords.com](http://www.primarychords.com). You will find background information on all the pieces, some playing suggestions, and duet accompaniments for the Favorite Classical Composers and Proud to be Canadian books. I’ve never seen this kind of approach of extending the pre-reading experience before but definitely see the value in it! Interesting material!

*Jean Ritter – British Columbia*

## **FAVOURITE FESTIVAL AND ENSEMBLES**

### **Book 2**

**The Willis Company  
Hal•Leonard Publishing**

Favourite Festival and Ensembles is a collection of six duets and two trios for the later elementary to early intermediate students. The pieces are all rhythmically strong and feature dances and character pieces from various countries.

From Israel we have *Kibbutz Capers* by David Karp. From Spain we have *Petite Spanish Dance* by Carolyn Miller. From the Orient is the *Oriental Bazaar* by William Gillock. From the USA is *Polka* also by David Karp. From Spain and Cuba is *Western Bolero* by David Karp and William Gillock also gives us *Trepak*, which is taken from Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker*. The duet *The Chase* by Carolyn Miller and David Engle and *Pinwheels* by Katherine Beard serve to round out the collection.

Performance notes provide interesting facts and performance hints for the performers. Key signatures include C+, G+ and F+, which make these pieces very approachable for the spirited players.

Because of their rousing styles, the pieces in this collection would make excellent year end recital selections.

*Laureen Kells – Saskatchewan*

## **RHYTHM PRACTICE**

**by Susan Griesdale  
RedLeaf Pianoworks**

Written by composer, teacher, adjudicator and clinician Susan Griesdale of Redleaf Pianoworks, this is a book of rhythm practice. Graded in eight lessons, the rhythms move from quarter notes and half notes to more challenging concepts such as ties, eighth notes, rests, dotted notes and sixteenth notes. Rather than a comprehensive method, this is a practice book. Each lesson contains two pages of basic rhythm practice in 4/4 time, two pages of rhythm practice in varying time signatures, a page for the student to draw barlines in time signatures, two pages of two hand rhythm practice and finally, a test to be done at three different tempi. Instructions are given on how to use the metronome with the rhythm practice. This alone will enhance a student’s ability to read and reproduce rhythm. In early lessons, the notes are large and easy to read, in later lessons, with many more notes, the print becomes much smaller. Students may find it necessary to place a blank page above and below the example they are reading to isolate the rhythm from other exercises. Coil bound, these seventy nine pages provide worthwhile practice for students and an invaluable resource for teachers.

*Joyce Janzen – British Columbia*

## **MUSICAL PLANETS**

**Carolyn Miller  
The Willis Music Company  
Hal•Leonard Publishing**

This delightful collection of 8 pieces properly ordered in sequence, one piece per planet (excluding Pluto, now not labelled as a planet), entices equally boy and girl pianists. From the attractive cover to the remarkably fun pieces to play, Miller successfully uses creativity and imagination to emphasize fundamental technical skills. The Performance Notes not only give detailed helpful hints on how to perform each piece but they also give fun facts about each planet, keeping the creative juices flowing. Miller cleverly introduces the blues scale along with a standard 12-bar blues chord progression in the piece *Mercury Blues*. The pianist confidently handles this challenge of new sounds, by incorporating ones imagination of how to sound ‘like you are on the blistering hot planet of Mercury’. So much imagery to draw upon makes you want to flip to the next piece with excitement and anticipation as you soar in space to the next planet. *Vivid Venus* has Miller instructing the pianist that this piece is easier than it looks: don’t let the key signature scare you (G<sup>b</sup> pentascale). The sound of this piece will have you wanting to master it. Taking advantage of the metaphor even further, there are even ‘shooting stars’ in this exceptional performance piece. Miller uses a great deal of repeated patterning in her compositions to aid in the memorization, but brilliantly incorporates unique rhythms and lots of dynamics through-out.

*Sarah Lawton – Ontario*