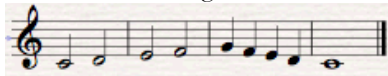


Transposing to All Keys

INFORMATION OVERLOAD OR BEGINNER'S BUILDING BLOCK?

By Cynthia Pace

In teaching a “beginner’s piece,” such as the one below, many approaches — Middle C, Multi-Key, and those in between — share areas of common ground. No matter



what their philosophy, many teachers might:

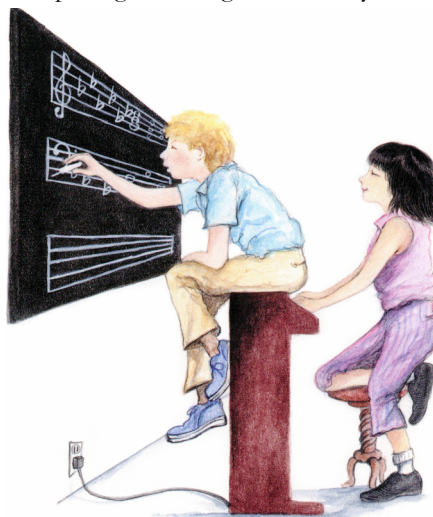
- Use game-activities and flashcards for learning notes C, D, E, F, and G — on the keyboard, and on the music page;
- Have students shape and sing the melody, and clap and “count” the rhythm;
- Have students pay attention to hand position, posture, etc. as they play;
- Have students listen to the quality of their sound, and introduce students to the idea of smooth, legato playing, varying dynamics, etc.

INTEGRATING CREATIVITY:

Transposing relates directly to CREATIVE VARIATION. Learning to change a pattern’s key, for instance, from C major to Bb major, leads smoothly to changing any of a pattern’s other elements. The possibilities are endless: modify a melody’s contours while keeping the old rhythm (for instance, “C-E-D-F,” instead of “C-D-E-F.”). Or, modify the rhythm while keeping the old contours, and so on.

Transposition— How Much & When?

But with respect to the question of transposition — how much and how soon? — teaching approaches diverge sharply. Middle C methods opt out of transposing, adhering to white keys



only for an extended time. Other approaches offer beginners limited transposing experience, restricting this to “easy” keys, such as G, F, D, or A.

Only the Multi-Key Approach utilizes transposition as a cornerstone of its sequence of learning. From the first lesson, Multi-Key beginners transpose to many different keys, and very soon, move to using all the black and white keys.

Benefits

Learning to transpose to many tonalities, from the beginning, offers countless benefits. These include:

1. **Faster Progress:** Transposing a piece means a student is repeating the piece, practicing it further. More practice means more progress.

2. **Reinforcement without Boredom:** By repeating a given “piece,” but in a varied way, that is, by transposing to other sets of keys, students are less likely to become “bored.” They also immediately and easily gain:

- **Strengthened Pattern-Reading and Pattern-Awareness:** In order to transpose to each new key, students need to pay attention to the piece’s note pattern;

...The Multi-Key Approach utilizes TRANSPOSITION as a CORNERSTONE of its sequence of learning.

- **Increased Listening Practice:** Each new key involves additional experience using the ear to help confirm the correct notes;
- **Broader Tactile - Technical Experience:** Students begin developing a tactile sense and necessary technique for playing black keys in addition to the white keys.

3. Enhancement of Future Reading in “Difficult Keys:”

“Down the road” a few lessons, when beginners encounter a piece notated in F# Major or another such key, this new key’s “terrain” will already be familiar to the fingers and the ear, thus greatly facilitating the student’s new reading experience.

4. **Development of Musical Playing:** Because skills vital to musical playing — listening to and sensing of patterns — receive expanded practice, musical playing, itself, is further enhanced by a Multi-Key approach.

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Too Difficult?



Transposing simply extends previous learning: An already familiar pattern is repeated on different keys.

More of a “jump” occurs when students begin another new piece, than when they transpose previously learned patterns.

5. Broader Musicianship

Transposing contributes to an awareness of a wider variety of sound early on. It broadens the scope of music available to students and enlarges their musical perspective.

Too Much Too Soon?

Often the question is raised, “If beginners are asked to play in Db, F#, and so on, isn’t this too large a jump for a student just starting out?”

Much to the contrary! Transposing is actually an EASY NEXT STEP that merely extends previous learning. In transposing, an already familiar pattern is repeated on different keys. What could be simpler?

- Transposing **uses the same note, rhythm, and finger patterns** already familiar to the students.
- There’s actually **more of a jump involved in starting another new**

piece, than in transposing a familiar piece to another key.

- Most students who start out transposing as beginners, see little or no extra difficulty in playing black-white key combinations. **Some students find black-white combinations and all-black-key patterns easier than white keys only.**

Transposing – Easy!

SAME Note Patterns as Original

SAME Rhythm Pattern as Original

NEW Set of Keys

Electronic gaming and computer keyboarding, widely favored by young students, involve keystrokes more complex than does transposing.

Conceptual Structure Expands Learning Potential

Early on, Pace students learn a broad variety of skills, including transposing and creating music. Many other

Reapplying basic concepts SIMPLIFIES and unifies NEW ELEMENTS as they are added.

programs either do not teach these, or present them much less extensively and at a later stage of instruction. The Pace Approach is renowned for presenting skills as basic concepts, and then globally interrelating these with the entire learning sequence (in keeping with Jerome Bruner’s Spiral Learning Theory). The Pace Approach focuses upon teaching students to

recognize and apply these basic concepts on their own, so that each student’s musical learning continues between lessons, and extends well beyond the term of formal instruction.

Teaching students to see/hear patterns in the first melodies they play (concept of melodic direction) immediately helps students with their reading. At the same time, this general pattern-recognition concept also readies students for their next steps — transposing music, varying it, listening to it in other keys, and so on. Further, each succeeding step, such as transposing or varying a piece, utilizes skills that

Because students learn more at an earlier stage, they have the opportunity to reinforce this learning for a longer period of their piano study.

simultaneously strengthen the student’s initial skills directly involved in performing the original music.

Because the Pace Approach continuously connects new material to already-familiar concepts, students learn more, as well as learn more easily. This is because reapplying basic concepts to each new level of learning simplifies and unifies new elements as they are added. Because Pace students learn more at an earlier stage, they have the opportunity to reinforce this learning for a greater period of their piano study. This enables students to retain what they learn, and to take from their piano studies the tools for lifelong learning, creativity, and musical enjoyment.

<http://www.leerobertsmusic.com> (info@leerobertsmusic.com)