

2008

Promoting self-directed learning in adult piano instruction

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**Promoting Self-Directed Learning
in Adult Piano Instruction**

Rhonda Jane Mizok-Taylor

**Doctoral Research Project submitted to the
College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

**Doctor of Musical Arts
in
Piano Performance**

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**Morgantown, West Virginia
2008**

Keywords: Adult Piano Method Books, Self-Directed Learning

ABSTRACT

Promoting Self-Directed Learning in Adult Piano Instruction

Rhonda Jane Mizok-Taylor

More and more adults are studying music. Because of this, the number of adult method books has been increasing; however, when writing an adult method book, it is important for the author to remember that adults are more capable of independent learning by using their own previous musical experiences to understand new material. They may not wish to be completely dependent on a teacher for every aspect of instruction.

Using questions derived from Malcolm Knowles' book *Self-Directed Learning* and questions used by Hung-Ling Chen in the dissertation "An Investigation of Self-Directed Learning among Non-Music Major Adult Piano Learners in One-to-One Piano Instruction", three adult piano method books were reviewed to examine whether the adult piano method books promoted self-directed learning or teacher-directed learning. The books reviewed are *Adult Piano Adventures: A Comprehensive Piano Course, Book 1* by Nancy and Randall Faber; *Piano for Adults: A Beginning Course, Book 1* by Jane Smisor Bastien, Lisa Bastien, and Lori Bastien; and *Alfred's Basic Adult All-in-One Course, Level 1* by Willard A. Palmer, Morton Manus, and Amanda Vick Lethco.

Overall, many of the concrete objectives and concepts presented in the method books were thorough enough for an adult to understand on his own; however, most of the information was stated to the student, and very few opportunities existed for the student to discover information on his own. No choice was given to the student regarding repertoire selection, and with two exceptions, no references to any outside sources were suggested for locating additional music in the same style. No information was provided for the student regarding additional source material for further reading and comprehension of new concepts. With some very rare exceptions, the adult was not called upon to use his own previous musical experiences to understand new material.

Several recommendations for further research were made. These include researching student-teacher interaction during a lesson, devising self-directed projects and activities related to the piano, and reviewing additional method books, including advanced levels of adult piano method books.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

More and more adults are studying music. There are many different reasons for this increase. For example, attitudes that there is an age at which an adult becomes too old to play an instrument have changed. Also, playing a musical instrument such as the piano can not only provide a sense of accomplishment in adults' day-to-day lives, but may also offer physical and mental health advantages.¹ The benefits of older adult students playing the keyboard have recently been documented in a project called "Music Making and Wellness." Researchers found a significant decrease in the amount of anxiety, depression, and loneliness felt by the group of keyboard players studied, while the levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness stayed the same in the control group. Also there was a 92% increase in the human growth hormone (hGH) levels² in the keyboard-playing group, with no increase of this hormone in the control group.³ These findings suggest significant benefits to playing the piano as an older adult.

However, as Malcolm Knowles (on whose self-directed learning research much of this study is based) and many other researchers of adult education have observed, adults learn in a much different manner than do children. There are two

¹ Music Teachers National Association, "Music for Everyone . . . At Any Age," Music Teachers National Association Newsletter (Winter 2003): 1-2.

² This hormone contributes to energy levels, wrinkling, osteoporosis, sexual function, muscle mass, and aches and pains.

³ Frederick Tims and others, "Music Making and Wellness: An Idea Whose Time Has Come Backgrounder," (National Association of Music Merchants, 1999) available online at <<http://www.namm.com/wellness/backgrounder.pdf>>, Accessed 7 November 2005.

different types of learning: pedagogy and andragogy. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, the definition of pedagogy is "the art, science, or profession of teaching; especially, the study that deals with principles and methods in formal education"⁴ and the definition of andragogy is "the adult or science of teaching adults."⁵ According to Knowles, pedagogy is "literally the art and science of teaching children" and andragogy is "when we arrive at a self-concept of being responsible for our own lives, of being "self-directing".⁶ According to Knowles, pedagogy – also called teacher-directed learning – makes many assumptions about the student, including the following: 1) the learner has a dependent personality, 2) the learner's life experiences are of less value than the teacher's experiences, 3) the learner's ability to learn certain concepts is dependent on the learner's level of maturation, and all learners at the same level of maturation will be ready to learn the same concepts at the same time, 4) the learner's ability to learn is limited so that subject matter must be divided into organized units according to the content, and 5) the learner's motivation to learn is based on external reward and punishment.⁷

Knowles feels that andragogy, or self-directed learning, makes much different, and in many ways quite opposite, assumptions about the student, including the following: 1) the learner is progressively more self-directed as important growth in maturing occurs, 2) the learner's life experiences are an extremely important part of his resources for learning, 3) each individual learner, with his different life experiences, brings a different

⁴ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged* (2002), s.v. "pedagogy", accessed 13 March 2008, available from <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>.

⁵ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged* (2002), s.v. "andragogy", accessed 13 March 2008, available from <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com> (17 Mar. 2008).

⁶ Malcolm S Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner*, 5th ed. (Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998), 61, 64.

⁷ Malcolm Knowles, *Self-Directed Learning* (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1975), 20-21.

level of readiness for learning different concepts, 4) the learner's life experience has prepared the student for learning through problem-solving and task-accomplishing learning projects, and 5) the learner's motivation to learn is based on internal incentives including esteem, accomplishment and curiosity.⁸ With the process of andragogy, the adult retains control over the subject matter learned and process by which it is learned through choices and using the adult's life experiences to assist him in his learning process.⁹ The adult learner is very different than the child learner; the adult possesses superior intellectual skills, but some adults lack the physical coordination that comes naturally to some children. Therefore, some adults may make excellent progress as self-directed learners of all concepts and skills related to piano playing, while other adults may need some combination of self-directed and teacher-directed learning depending on the task. Thus, adult students present a unique opportunity and challenge to the piano teacher; unlike children, they bring a rich background of life experiences and a level of maturity to their piano lessons, and have the ability to function as what Knowles termed "self-directed learners".¹⁰

Purpose of the Study

In his 1996 study, Hung-Ling Chen¹¹ found that very little if any self-directed learning is fostered by piano teachers in adult private lessons.¹² Teachers need to relate differently to adults, compared to how they relate to children. In order to do this, there must be appropriate material for the teachers and adults to use in the instruction of piano

⁸ Ibid., 20-21.

⁹ In his book, *Self-Directed Learning*, Knowles does not distinguish between physical and cognitive learning.

¹⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹¹ Hung-Ling Chen, "An Investigation of Self-Directed Learning Among Non-Music Major Adult Piano Learners in One-to-One Piano Instruction" (Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, 1996).

¹² Ibid., 84.

lessons. It is important to know which books can encourage self-directed learning so that the adult student is able to use the skill of self-directed learning. The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to identify ways of incorporating self-directed learning into adult piano study and provide teachers of adult students a resource to discover which books promote self-directed learning for the student and 2) to examine selected adult method books to determine the extent to which they encourage the adult to use the process of self-directed learning. This has been done by examining selected adult piano method books using criteria adapted from Malcolm Knowles¹³ and Hung-Ling Chen¹⁴.

Selection and Investigation of Method Books

Since methods have been chosen from those catalogued in Pui Man Chan's¹⁵ extensive dissertation, only those published between 1980 and 2001 will be reviewed for this paper. Also, these publication dates allow the author to see if Knowles' idea of self-directed learning, (which was introduced in the 1970s) has had any impact on adult piano method books published subsequently. The books reviewed in this dissertation are *Adult Piano Adventures: A Comprehensive Piano Course, Book 1* by Nancy and Randall Faber¹⁶; *Piano for Adults: A Beginning Course, Book 1* by Jane Smisor Bastien, Lisa Bastien, and Lori Bastien¹⁷; and *Alfred's Basic Adult All-in-One Course, Level 1* by

¹³ Knowles, *Self-Directed Learning*, 105-107.

¹⁴ Chen, 111-112.

¹⁵ Pui Man Chan, "Catalog and Analysis of Adult Piano Method Books Published in America from 1980 to 2001" (D.M.A. diss., University of Miami, 2002).

¹⁶ Nancy and Randall Faber, *Adult Piano Adventures: A Comprehensive Piano Course, Level 1* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: The FJH Music Company, Inc., 2001).

¹⁷ Jane Smisor Bastien, Lisa Bastien, and Lori Bastien, *Piano for Adults: A Beginning Course, Book 1* (San Diego: Kjos Music Press, 1999).

Willard A. Palmer, Morton Manus, and Amanda Vick Lethco.¹⁸ The method books used in this study are not intended for use specifically in a college classroom for music majors or non-majors. These method books are appropriate for use with mature adults, who have more life experience to help them structure and direct their own learning. Only texts which are intended as the first book in the beginning year of piano instruction were selected because this is when the main concepts of basic piano playing are taught and this is when reliance on a method book is the greatest. All of the method books to be reviewed are considered “all-in-one” courses of study in a single text; no supplemental texts, such as theory or technique, are required, but all areas of study are included in this one book. Each of these method books is published by a major publisher of piano method series and has CD accompaniments available for use by the student.

Each piano method book was reviewed using a question and answer format where a list of questions was answered to determine whether or not the method book exhibits characteristics of self-directed learning. The questions were derived from two main sources: 1) the Malcolm Knowles book, *Self-Directed Learning*, and 2) the interview questions used by Hung-Ling Chen in the dissertation “An Investigation of Self-Directed Learning among Non-Music Major Adult Piano Learners in One-to-One Piano Instruction” adapted to apply to method books rather than to persons being interviewed. The list of questions used in this study appears in Appendix A.

Need for the Study

Most piano method book series are geared toward young children, with age-appropriate rates of introducing new materials; juvenile pictures, titles, and lyrics; and

¹⁸ Willard A. Palmer, Morton Manus, and Amanda Vick Lethco, *Alfred's Basic Adult All-in-One Course, Level 1* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1996).

even size of the printed material (e.g., font and musical notation). Method book presentation using overly-simplified repertoire and the rote method that children often work on may not be welcome by the older adult as his mind and thinking are more developed than that of children.¹⁹ With the adult's ability for more developed thinking comes the ability for self-directed learning. Also, giving adults more opportunity to play an active role in choices about what they are going to be learning may likely increase their enjoyment of piano study. While much has been written about the ideas involved in self-directed learning, until this time, nothing has been written to compare method books to discover which books actually encourage the use of self-directed learning.

Research Design

Chapter I provides an introduction to the study, discusses the purpose of and need for the study, defines terms and explains how method books were selected and investigated. Chapter II reviews related literature examining adult piano method books, reasons that adult students study piano, and learning style and self-directed learning. Chapter III consists of an analysis of method books and Chapter IV provides a summary and conclusions for the research and offers suggestions for further research.

¹⁹ David Walker, "Folk Tunes for Adult Beginners in Bartok's Music for Children," *Clavier* 40, no. 5 (May/June 2001):26-30.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Self-directed learning has been embraced by educators and trainers of adults in many disciplines. However, very few studies have examined this type of learning in the context of the piano lesson. Therefore, the following literature reviews include summaries of relevant sources in three related categories. The first group of reviews contains the literature written about adult piano method books. The second group examines the reasons that adult students study piano. The third group includes discussions of learning style and self-directed learning.

Sources About Adult Piano Method Books

Very few studies have reviewed adult piano method books. Five dissertations focus solely on the review of such texts. Pui Man Chan catalogued and analyzed adult piano method books written specifically for the leisure-age adult.²⁰ Gladys Watkins discussed how the author of the method book approached teaching a number of different skills²¹ while Victoria Covington worked more with the approaches to teaching music

²⁰ Pui Man Chan, "Catalog and Analysis of Adult Piano Method Books Published in America from 1980 to 2001" (D.M.A. diss., University of Miami, 2002).

²¹ Gladys Manigault Watkins, "An Analysis of Contemporary Class Piano Methods and the Establishment of Norms for their Evaluation" (D.M.A. diss., Catholic University of America, 1978).

reading in adult piano method books²². Aldona Naudzius analyzed the musical content of class piano method books,²³ and Debra Brubaker followed the growth of piano teaching and method books in America from 1765-1995.²⁴ Other reviews of adult piano method books include reviews found in teaching reference books, and numerous reviews of single books in music journals and magazines.

In 2002, Pui Man Chan cataloged and analyzed method books of particular interest to leisure-age adults by twenty-eight different groups of authors. Chan analyzed four broad categories of information —“Overview,” “Specific Content,” “Analytical Issues,” and “Additional Information.”²⁵ The “Overview” section describes the objective of the method (including both pedagogical goals and student accomplishment goals), the age group most likely to benefit from using this method, the format of the materials, the appropriate teaching environment, the availability of books and supporting materials, and the approaches to the study of music reading and counting.²⁶ The “Specific Content” section charts the number of music examples in each book.²⁷ The “Analytical Issues” section describes the presentation of musical concepts, the use of fingering, and the approach to music reading, melodic texture, and rhythmic meter.²⁸ The final section, “Additional Information,” details any unique features about each particular method.²⁹

²² Victoria Louise Covington, “Approaches to Piano Reading in a Selected Sample of Current Instructional Materials for Adult Beginners” (Ed.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1981).

²³ Aldona Kanauka Naudzius, “Analysis of Class Piano Books for Beginning Adults” (Ed.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1983).

²⁴ Debra Brubaker, “A History and Critical Analysis of Piano Methods Published in the United States from 1796-1995” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1996).

²⁵ Chan, 18.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16-20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-25

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

Chan drew no comparative conclusions regarding the discovery of content within the method books he cataloged and analyzed. Rather, his purpose in writing this dissertation was, “to provide a useful and informative teaching reference book on piano methods that are appropriate to use as basic material or the core of a students’ [*sic*] piano curriculum during the first year (more or less) of study.”³⁰

Almost twenty-five years before Chan’s study, Gladys Watkins analyzed eleven class piano methods to discern their content and approach to teaching certain skills to class piano students.³¹ The three major sections discussed by Watkins in her dissertation are basic music elements, functional keyboard skills, and keyboard musicianship. In these eleven methods, keyboard musicianship received the greatest amount of emphasis, with interpretation, performance and sight-reading material as the main topics in this section. The area which received the next greatest proportion of overall coverage was basic musical elements, with technical studies, music reading, independence and coordination of fingers and hands, and rhythm included in this section. Functional keyboard skills (which included harmonization, improvisation, and transposition) received the least amount of importance in these methods.³²

While Chan and Watkins analyzed method book content overall, Victoria Covington focused on the difficulty that many adult beginners have in reading piano music; her 1981 dissertation analyzed the different approaches to the development of this skill in ten different method books.³³ Covington analyzed method book content in the following seven areas: 1) types of musical material, 2) sequence of learning to read piano

³⁰ Ibid., 27.

³¹ Watkins, xix.

³² Ibid., 479.

³³ Covington, 3, 10.

music, 3) supporting life experiences, 4) analytical skills, 5) cognitive learning, 6) approaches to musical learning, and 7) content and approach to reading.³⁴ She found that the majority of musical material presented in all of the method books is contrived³⁵ musical material.³⁶ Her analysis revealed that the most common order in which supporting experiences were introduced is as follows: transposing, improvising, sight playing, singing, playing by ear, ensemble playing, moving to music, and composing. Finally she discovered that the most common analytical skill present was analyzing and identifying chords.³⁷

Aldona Kanauka Naudzuis examined class piano method books and compared musical content and instructional needs. Four areas were examined in this study: 1) the composers, adaptations and transcriptions, compositions for special events, and technical exercises used in the methods; 2) music theory, including rhythm, texture, form, scales and harmony; 3) reading music, playing by ear, improvisation, transposing, and ensemble playing; and 4) differences in format, visual aids, quality and design of publication.³⁸

Debra Brubaker analyzed landmark American piano methods from the last two hundred years within the context of their history, and provided an extensive catalog of American methods. According to Brubaker, “this thesis traces and documents over five hundred influential and representative methods in the United States, provides a descriptive analysis of content and teaching philosophy for each of the selected methods,

³⁴ Ibid., 3-4, 186, 188, 192, 194, 195.

³⁵ “The classification “contrived material” included all technical studies, exercises, drills, and reading material (including altered folk songs) written by the author of the book – or another composer – for the purpose of reinforcing a certain concept or providing practice in a certain type of pianistic problem.” Ibid., 9.

³⁶ Ibid., 186.

³⁷ Ibid., 192.

³⁸ Naudzuis, Abstract.

and presents the details within a historical context of cultural, societal and educational trends.”³⁹

Brubaker concluded that piano method books have undergone a significant change in the last two hundred years, with an even more drastic change occurring with the emergence of the technological age. While some feared the demise of the piano, in fact, a re-emergence has occurred with the advent of the capabilities of the digital piano, and with this re-emergence, a large number of new method books have been published. With many current method books, the common goal of making sure the method fits individual needs of the student is prevalent.⁴⁰

In discussing the emergence of method books designed for more specific age groups in the 1920’s to 1950’s, Brubaker offered the following observations about adult method books:

Adult methods, which were issued most often by the authors of children’s methods, generally kept the same pedagogical approach as their counterparts for children, but presented new musical elements more rapidly and used more music and illustrations appealing to adults....Their titles, design and explanations were adjusted for the adult learner who was able to understand musical concepts more quickly.⁴¹

Analysis of adult piano method books can also be found in piano pedagogy textbooks. In *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher*, Marianne Uszler⁴² analyzed twelve older-beginner piano method books. She considered ten different aspects of content: organization, reading approach, scales, chords/harmony, rhythms, technique,

³⁹ Brubaker, 1-2.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 494, 509, 510.

⁴¹ Ibid., 358-359.

⁴² Marianne Uszler, Stewart Gordon, and Elyse Mach, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (New York: Schirmer, 1991).

harmonization, improvisation, repertoire, and features.⁴³ Like Chan, Uszler did not provide comparisons among the method books; she simply created an information guide for teachers to use as a reference.

In *How to Teach Piano Successfully*, James Bastien⁴⁴ included a brief overview of some adult method books. Unlike the other reviews and analyses discussed, Bastien provided information on all of the different method books written by the selected authors, not only the adult method books. Rather than in-depth analyses of the method books, Bastien only included a few descriptive sentences discussing what is included in these methods.⁴⁵ However, to assist readers in performing their own evaluation of piano methods, Bastien gave an in-depth chart and a series of questions to consider about the texts.⁴⁶

While the authors cited above have examined adult method books with regard to content, history, or approach to teaching specific skills, none have investigated the learning style encouraged in these texts, or suggested ways in which the teacher can incorporate aspects of self-directed learning in their work with these texts.

Sources Examining the Reasons That Adults Study Piano

The increasing number of adults studying piano creates a continuing need to investigate why adults begin piano lessons and to identify their instructional goals.

Rebecca Grooms Johnson,⁴⁷ Chelcy Bowles,⁴⁸ and Michelle Conda⁴⁹ have all examined

⁴³ Ibid., 163-179.

⁴⁴ James W. Bastien, *How to Teach Piano Successfully*, 3d ed. (San Diego: Neil A Kjos Music, 1995).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 47-77.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 43-47.

⁴⁷ Rebecca Grooms Johnson, "An Investigation of the Initiating Interests of Two Sub-Groups of Adult Beginning Pianists Participating in a Class Piano Teaching Environment" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1982).

the interests and motivation of adults to study the piano, and Thelma Lou Cooper⁵⁰ and Peter J. Jutras⁵¹ have observed and described adult perceptions of piano study.

Rebecca Grooms Johnson surveyed two groups of adults (non-music majors taking an elective piano class and adults taking a continuing education piano class) to see what most influenced their decision to take piano lessons. The volunteers had to have studied the piano for no more than four years.

Johnson surveyed volunteers using a questionnaire with three sections. The first section established a personal profile about the participants. The second section ascertained their past musical history. The third section contained twenty-five possible reasons to study the piano; the participants rated each reason using a scale of one (“Was not really important to me”) to five (“Most influenced my decision to take piano lessons”).⁵² The reasons were divided into four separate categories: 1) Musical Skills, 2) Extra-musical, 3) Materials, and 4) Undefined.⁵³ Musical skills focused on the techniques of playing the piano. Extra-musical reasons identified the social interactions that would result from playing the piano. Materials listed different types of music the student might have wanted to learn to play during the class. Undefined reasons related to personal or introspective needs.

⁴⁸ Chelcy Lynn Bowles, “An Assessment of Self-Expressed Music Education Interests and Music Experiences by Adult Music Audiences: Implications for Music Education” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1988).

⁴⁹ Jane Michelle Conda, “The Late Bloomers Piano Club: A Case Study of a Group in Progress” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1997).

⁵⁰ Peter J. Jutras, “The Benefits of Adult Piano Study as Self-Reported by Selected Adult Piano Students” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, 2003).

⁵¹ Thelma Lou Cooper, “Adults’ Perceptions of Piano Study: Achievements, Experiences, and Interests” (D.M.A. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1996).

⁵² Johnson, 42.

⁵³ Ibid., 41-43.

Johnson's results revealed that the older adults in the continuing education class rated Extra-Musical reasons most influential in their decision to take piano lessons. Older adults were studying piano for personal reasons, and the desire to play for their own enjoyment received the highest rating. Also, the older adult wanted to learn to read music. The next most important reasons for taking piano lessons included wanting to learn to play chords, always wanting to play the piano, and having a piano at home that was not being used. The least important reasons for studying the piano were to play hymns in church, to help children with practice and lessons, and because they quit when they were younger and wanted to start again.⁵⁴

The non-music-major group offered some contrasting responses. The three most popular reasons for taking their elective piano course were 1) to play for their own enjoyment, 2) to learn to play chords, and 3) to play music of the 1980s. The three least popular reasons for studying piano were 1) because they had quit when they were younger and wanted to start again, 2) because they had a piano not being used, and 3) to meet people.⁵⁵

In comparing these two groups of students, the highest-rated reason for studying the piano was to play for their own enjoyment. Always wanting to learn to play the piano was also rated very highly for both groups. However, one of the most important reasons identified by the older adult students—having a piano at home that was not being used—was one of the least important reasons for taking lessons given by the non-music major group.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 59.

Johnson's findings suggest that since older adults and non-music-major piano students take class piano for different reasons, the instructor should keep the goals of each group in mind when planning for lessons. Both groups want to play for enjoyment, so pieces that are chosen should be pleasurable to play. The focus for the older adult may center more on reading music and chords, while the non-music major groups would enjoy playing more popular music. Keeping these different preferences in mind may create a more motivated and successful class of students who are willing and eager to learn the material presented to them.⁵⁶ Although Johnson did not mention self-directed learning, her findings regarding the motivational and other differences between older adult learners and non-music-major piano students might well impact aspects of learning style and presentation of material.

Chelcy Lynn Bowles assessed the interest of adult participation in music education, should the opportunity be offered. Four areas were investigated: 1) Attitude toward participation in adult music education, 2) Self-expressed music interests, 3) General education preferences, and 4) Music experience.⁵⁷ Bowles drew many conclusions from this study, including the following: 1) The adult music audiences that participated in this study had a positive attitude toward music education; 2) Developing music performance skills ranked highest in those surveyed; 3) The most popular choice of instrument was piano, with private lessons and instruction of classical playing techniques preferred; 4) In terms of academic courses, many survey participants were interested in courses that developed listening skills, broad-based musical history, and courses that had practical applications; and 5) Parental influences, a previous

⁵⁶ Ibid., 125-128.

⁵⁷ Bowles, 7-8.

background of musical knowledge, and self-motivation were reasons for a continued interest in music.⁵⁸ Bowles' findings can help those who plan and teach music education programs for adults to offer programs that are going to be of interest to adult students.

Jane Michelle Conda studied a group called the Late Bloomers Piano Club, (hereafter referred to as the LBPC) an organization for non-professional adult pianists (over the age of thirty-five) to have an outlet for performance. Members of this group exhibited four unique characteristics: 1) All of the members keep working at performing; 2) Members must perform whether they take piano lessons or not; 3) The members consider this group to be a support group for performing; and 4) The main goal of this group is to practice and play the piano.⁵⁹ The purpose of this study was to determine why the LBPC exists, how the group has changed and what strategies have been used over the development of the LBPC, and how relationships between the club members and the founder have changed and developed. This information was gathered through interviews (both formal and informal) and observations of the meetings, and through the study of relevant documents.⁶⁰

Conda categorized five areas of motivation for study: 1) childhood events, 2) purchase of a piano, 3) life-changing events, 4) hobby replacement, and 5) joining the LBPC.⁶¹ She also identified five factors that influenced the commitment to piano study: 1) previous piano study, 2) the desire to recapture youth, 3) the level of self-confidence, 4) extrinsic factors, and 5) intrinsic factors. All of the participants had a realistic view of

⁵⁸ Ibid., 150-152.

⁵⁹ Conda, 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 6-7.

⁶¹ Ibid., 99, 110.

the practice commitment, and the time and work required to play the piano.⁶² Finally, Conda found that the LBPC is an organization in transition; when the group began it was very small, but it has since grown and it has become more difficult to find common ground to please all of the participants.⁶³ Because this is a new organization, no one is sure of the direction it will take; however, all of the participants feel that this group is important and if it ceased to exist, a similar group would be formed to take its place.⁶⁴ Although Conda did not discuss self-directed learning, the existence of such a “support group” for adult pianists confirms adults’ willingness to take an active role in enhancing and promoting their own learning experience.

Thelma Lou Cooper surveyed adults to discover past and present attitudes concerning piano lessons, to recognize musical and non-musical interests, and to describe perceptions of home influence regarding music lessons. Of the participants that responded positively to past piano study, most said that their parents encouraged them to study, and reasons for lack of enjoyment of the lessons included that the lessons were boring, the teacher criticized too much, and the student did not like the music. Lessons were most often discontinued because of involvement in other activities.⁶⁵ Although Cooper did not discuss self-directed learning, the connection between teacher criticism (a characteristic of teacher-directed learning) and “boring” lessons suggests the possible benefit of adult learners following a more self-directed course of study with more reliance on self-evaluation and student selection of music.

⁶² Ibid., 111, 122.

⁶³ Ibid., 124, 127.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁵ Cooper, Abstract.

Peter Jutras surveyed adult piano students to discover the benefits that the students themselves felt they received from piano lessons. The highest-rated benefit was that of skill improvement in playing the piano. Personal benefits was the second-highest-rated category, with self-related benefits in this category receiving the highest scores, and more introverted personal benefits lower-rated in this category. Social/cultural benefits were the lowest-ranked category.⁶⁶

Though much research has been done concerning the motivation for adults to study piano lessons, no research could be found that investigated whether or not the materials used to teach the adults are actually meeting the needs of the adult student.

Sources Discussing Learning Style and Self-directed Learning

Learning styles and self-directed learning are very closely related. Richard Warren Tiller⁶⁷ investigated the extent to which learning style in the area of music differs from learning style in other non-musical areas. Malcolm Knowles has written numerous books on self-directed learning, and his theories are some of the most influential on this topic. Hung-Ling Chen used Knowles' ideas to determine whether or not self-directed learning was being used in private piano teaching. Lucy Guglielmino⁶⁸ devised an instrument to measure the self-directed learning readiness of a potential student. All of these sources acknowledge the importance of self-directed learning for the adult student.

Warren Tiller, realizing the importance of education tailored to the individual student, examined whether adults used the same learning style for non-musical learning

⁶⁶ Jutras, Abstract.

⁶⁷ Richard Warren Tiller, "An Investigation into the Extent of Congruency Between General and Music-Specific Learning Style Preferences" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1990).

⁶⁸ Lucy Madsen Guglielmino, "Development of the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale" (Ed.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1977).

that they used for musical learning.⁶⁹ The participants involved in Tiller's study, all of whom were currently involved in musical and general studies, were surveyed twice using the Productivity Environmental Profile Survey (PEPS). The first survey asked the participants to respond to the questions based on their experience in their musical studies, and the second survey asked the participants to respond to the questions from a non-music viewpoint.⁷⁰ In an analysis of these findings, Tiller discovered that there was enough of a difference in the two scores of the participants to conclude that there is a significant difference in the learning styles when participating in musical instruction as opposed to non-musical instruction.⁷¹ Tiller's findings suggest the importance of adapting instruction to the adult's learning style in piano lessons.

Malcolm Knowles' book, *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners, and Teachers*, describes steps for both learners and teachers, explaining how to plan, formulate and regulate a course that can be completed by means of self-directed learning. The first part of this book is addressed to the learner and the second part is addressed to the teacher. Knowles described the responsibilities of the learner and the teacher and then suggested how both can facilitate a first attempt for a self-directed learning experience.⁷²

Knowles defined self-directed learning as “. . . a process in which individuals take the initiative with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning

⁶⁹ Tiller., 1, 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Abstract.

⁷¹ Ibid., 74-75.

⁷² Knowles, *Self-Directed Learning*, 7, 9-13, 29-31.

outcomes.”⁷³ This idea of self-directed learning is in direct opposition to the teacher-directed learning which is currently found in many educational systems.⁷⁴

In his discussion to the learner, Knowles acknowledged that taking control of one’s own learning process will be a very different experience for most of those involved in a first attempt at self-directed learning.⁷⁵ According to Knowles, one of the most important steps in the self-directed learning process is designing a learning plan. In this plan, the learner describes what he will learn, how he will acquire the information, and how he will organize and analyze the results so that it may be reported. This learning plan is the foundation on which the learner will build his knowledge.^{76, 77}

Knowles described the new role of the teacher as a “Facilitator of Learning.” In more traditional instructor-directed learning, the teacher communicates to the student what he perceives as being important information, and determines a structural plan, content, and grade for the instruction. In contrast, a facilitator of self-directed learning is responsible for providing the students with a process structure, the resources to discover content, and an agreed upon learning plan that becomes a learning contract, in which the learner will agree how much or little work must be completed in order to achieve a certain grade.⁷⁸

Hung-Ling Chen examined the relationship between adult students and their piano teachers to determine whether the piano teachers were making use of an adult’s ability to use self-directed learning as a positive teaching tool. Chen “identify[ed] to what extent

⁷³ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 9-13

⁷⁶ Ibid., 25-27.

⁷⁷ Only the cognitive skills, not the physical skills, are addressed by Knowles.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 33-38.

the nurturing of self-directedness. . .takes place in non-music major adults' one-to-one piano study, and in what way it may have influenced the adults' musical growth."⁷⁹

The data were collected through interviews Chen gave to volunteers who had currently been taking piano lessons for at least four months, who were twenty years old or older, and who were not music majors. The data were then analyzed using Knowles' study of self-directed learning.⁸⁰

The study revealed very little self-directed learning taking place in these adult piano lessons. Most frequently, subjects allowed the teacher to make all decisions regarding what was being learned and played during the lessons. The volunteers' level of satisfaction with their music products depended in a large part on the approval of their teacher, and many were afraid to ask their instructor questions because of respect for her expertise. Many of the subjects were independent professionals in their own fields, but did not apply their problem-solving abilities to the piano.

The students did not feel that they were being given enough encouragement to help to push them through times when they became frustrated with their lack of coordination in playing the piano. The lack of encouragement as well as the strictly teacher-directed learning did not encourage the students to solve problems on their own, but left them always waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do next.

Chen found that the volunteers in this study were not making use of self-directed learning. In order to teach an adult student successfully, Chen concluded that the student must be given some choice in the selection of music being played as well as in what is

⁷⁹ Chen, 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 9-12.

being learned. The student also must be taught so that he realizes that his problem-solving abilities can be extended to playing the piano.

Lucy Madsen Guglielmino contended that many adults learn better in a self-directed manner rather than in a teacher-directed learning situation; however, Guglielmino realized that some personalities would probably be better suited to self-directed learning than others.⁸¹ In light of this probability, Guglielmino acquired a consensus from a group of experts as to the personality traits which characterize people who were highly self-directed learners,⁸² and devised an instrument to determine the self-directed learning readiness of an individual.⁸³

This new instrument helped identify the following characteristics which determine the self-directed readiness of an individual:

A highly self-directed learner, based on the survey results, is one who exhibits initiative, independence, and persistence in learning; one who accepts responsibility for his or her own learning and views problems as challenges, not obstacles; one who is capable of self-discipline and has a high degree of curiosity; one who has a strong desire to learn or change and is self-confident; one who is able to use basic study skills, organize his or her time and set an appropriate pace for learning and to develop a plan for completing work; one who enjoys learning and has a tendency to be goal-oriented.⁸⁴

Giglielmino concluded that the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) created for her study will be a reliable instrument for determining whether or not an adult will be a highly motivated self-directed learner.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Guglielmino, 1-2, 3.

⁸² Ibid., 3-4.

⁸³ The Delphi Technique was used to obtain the consensus from the experts where exact knowledge is unknown. This is a technique in which data can be reliably gathered from a group of experts without the difficulty found in typical decision-making committees because of the complete anonymity of the experts giving the data. Ibid., 21-22.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 73.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 72, 75

Self-directed learning is a topic that has been researched in many different areas, of adult interest, yet no research could be found investigating whether or not the method books that adults use promote the use of self-directed learning. Since some of the studies reviewed in this chapter revealed the willingness of some adults to take an active role in enhancing and promoting their learning experience, and exposed some adults' dissatisfaction with aspects of highly teacher-directed learning, they seem to support the need and potential benefits of further research in this area. By using questions taken from Chen and Knowles and applying them to the method books, this paper will determine whether or not three popular adult method books promote the use of self-directed learning, and will suggest ways of incorporating more self-directed learning into piano study when using these texts.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF METHOD BOOKS

In this chapter Faber's *Adult Piano Adventures, Book 1*, Palmer's *Adult All-In-One Course, Level 1*, and Bastien's *Piano for Adults, Book 1* will be reviewed. The review of each text will begin with a summary of how each group of concepts (e.g., rhythms, intervals, etc.) is introduced and a description of which teaching techniques are used throughout the text. Next, there will be a discussion of these presentations in relation to relevant questions adapted from Knowles and Chen (listed in Appendix A – Questions to Measure Self-Directed Learning). If a presentation meets the criteria outlined in one of these questions and can be considered to encourage that aspect of self-directed learning, then the relevant question will be identified by number (e.g., Q1, Q2, etc.) following discussion of the presentation. Since these questions will need to be referenced frequently while reading the following analyses, they are listed below in Table 1 for the reader's convenience.

Table 1: Questions to Measure Self-Directed Learning

- 1) Are the objectives clearly explained?
- 2) Is there a choice in what music the student is learning to play?
- 3) Are new concepts clearly explained, or is the student completely dependent on a teacher to explain the concept to him?
- 4) Are there opportunities for the student to make his own decisions concerning solving any difficulties in the piano study?
- 5) Are there suggestions for solving problems in the method book?
- 6) Is there a discussion of the interpretation of the music?
- 7) Are there suggestions for learning a new piece of music?

- 8) Are there any references for further reading for more explanation about a concept?
- 9) Are there suggestions for additional pieces in a certain style of music introduced in the method book?
- 10) How much of the book is instruction-based (telling the student information) and how much of the book is question-based (asking questions to help the student consider the answer)? Does the book elicit and use the student's ideas or simply tell the student what to do?
- 11) Does the book call upon the adult to consider his own previous musical experiences to explain concepts?

After discussing each text in this way, the three approaches to each group of concepts will be compared and contrasted with regard to self-directed learning. A final chapter will draw more global comparisons among the texts, giving special attention to the broader Self-Directed Questions that have not been addressed in earlier discussions.

Adult Piano Adventures: A Comprehensive Piano Course by Nancy and Randall Faber
Introduction to the Piano

In the "introduction to the piano" section of this text, the parts of the piano, proper posture, hand position, finger numbers, the damper pedal, high and low, up and down, the dynamics *piano* and *forte*, and the grouping of black keys are introduced. This is done through written descriptions, pictures, and some exercises reviewing finger numbers.

In this section, the objectives — learning the proper posture and understanding beginning concepts of playing the piano — are clearly explained (Q1). Furthermore, the individual concepts are also all clearly explained (Q3). Throughout the book, specific dynamic and pedal indications are provided by the authors; students are not encouraged to solve such interpretive problems for themselves (Q5). There is no discussion of interpretation (Q6).

Rhythm

Rhythm is explained as, “the duration of sound. These durations are counted with a steady beat, creating rhythm.”⁸⁶ The quarter note, half note, dotted half note, and whole note are explained all at the same time in a comparative chart. The rests and eighth notes are introduced separately. The authors suggested the use of a metronome to practice rhythms, and use of the following method to practice: first, practice by tapping or clapping the rhythm while counting out loud, and second, practice by choosing a key on the piano and playing the rhythm. Counting the rhythm is first explained using isolated note values, and then later, by the placement of the note within the measure. When the chart is first introduced, the student is instructed to play the rhythms listed on the chart using the above method; as note reading is introduced, the student is instructed to practice by first tapping or clapping the rhythm while counting aloud, and then to practice while playing the notes and saying or singing either the finger numbers, the letter names, or the counting.

When each new note or rest is introduced, the name of the new concept, the number of beats that it receives, and the names of the parts of the note are all included. For each new rhythmic concept that is introduced, a section is included for the student to practice only that new rhythm. The time signature is introduced immediately after the introduction of the staff, and the student has the opportunity to determine the time signature depicted by some “familiar melodies”.⁸⁷

Objective of practicing with a metronome (Q1) is clearly explained when the author explains that note values are counted with a steady beat, and a metronome

⁸⁶ Faber, 10.

⁸⁷ The three pieces that follow the introduction of the time signature are “Yankee Doodle”, “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”, and “Clock Tower Bells,” all “familiar melodies.” Ibid., 26.

provides a steady beat. With the inclusion of the chart and the detailed description of the notes, rhythm and beat, rhythmic concepts are clearly explained (Q3). The suggestions for learning a new piece of music (Q7) include using the metronome to practice, and the suggestions first to tap or clap the rhythm while counting out loud, and then play the piece. The portion of the book that deals with rhythm is instruction-based (telling the student information) rather than question-based (asking questions to help the student consider the answer) (Q10). The only time the student is asked to use his own previous musical experience to explain a concept (Q11) is after the introduction of the time signature. Following this introduction, the authors asked the student to write in the proper time signatures for familiar tunes, thus helping him apply this new information and better understand the differences between time signatures. The teacher can help to supplement the book in this area by asking the student to identify other familiar pieces or styles of repertoire (e.g., waltzes in 3/4 meter) depicting different time signatures.

Parts of the Staff

The parts of the staff are introduced and defined one at a time as the student needs them in the music he is playing. These parts include the double bar line, bar line, repeat sign, lines and spaces of the staff, brace, bass and treble clefs, and time signatures. All of these concepts are explained very clearly (Q3).

Note Reading

Note reading begins with a pre-reading section where the student plays pitches notated only by means of note names written inside the note-heads. Note reading on the staff begins with the introduction of the musical alphabet on the piano keyboard. Finding specific notes on the keyboard is explained by using the two-black-key and three-black-

key groups. Following pre-reading experiences with note names, the pitches on the staff are introduced by comparing keys on the keyboard with pitches written in the treble and bass clefs. For the five pieces following the introduction of the notes on the staff, the note names are still written inside the note-head and every finger number is written above or below the note; after this time, the student is expected to read the notes on the staff as he plays.

To assist the student in learning to read notes, intervals are explained.⁸⁸ The interval is described as the distance between two keys, including the first and last key. The intervals of the 2nd through the 6th are introduced, in both their melodic and harmonic forms. The description of each interval includes the number of keys spanned, a picture of the interval on the keyboard, the number of note names spanned, and the number of lines and spaces spanned on the staff; for the 2nd through 5th intervals, the different finger combinations used to play these intervals are also given. (The introduction of the 4th, 5th and 6th includes the number of lines and spaces spanned on the staff; however, since 2^{nds} and 3^{rds} are not introduced until after the introduction of the staff, the number of lines and spaces spanned on the staff is not included.)

The objective of learning to read music is clearly communicated at each new stage of the note-reading process; however, the teacher may wish to emphasize the importance of reading by interval even further (Q1). New concepts illustrating the relationship of notes on the piano keyboard to pitches on the staff are clearly explained (Q3). The absence of a finger number on every note requires the student to decide which fingers would work best for the intervals used (Q4); however, the inclusion of finger

⁸⁸ Intervals are discussed in the note-reading section of the Faber text because of references to learning new notes and reading notes according to interval. In the Bastien and Palmer texts, intervals are discussed in the theory section.

numbers in some key places for each piece (i.e., at the beginning of the piece or when the hand must change position) does give the adult some guidance as he plays. Highlighting the relationship between treble clef and bass clef to the notes G4 and F3 respectively provides landmarks for a student to help him identify pitches more easily in the center of the staff; however, the teacher would need to address any questions/problems related to playing intervals that include black keys (since this can cause some confusion and physical difficulty for adult students). When learning the primary chords in G Major, though, there is a note to the teacher that suggests that the student should move the right hand in towards the fall board in order to play the black key (F#) in the V6/5 chord more comfortably with the right-hand thumb (Q5). At the beginning of most pieces, there is an opportunity for the student to write in the name of the first note that he will play. This will help to ensure that the student is beginning the piece on the correct notes. Intervallic playing is emphasized, which also helps the student learn how to read a new piece of music. Whenever the student must move his hand to reach a note, the finger number is circled to highlight this change in hand position (Q7). Much of the information on learning to read notes is instruction-based, rather than question-based (Q10). To assist the student with remembering the sound of an interval, the teacher could suggest that the student think of familiar songs that begin with the interval he is learning (Q11).

Technique

At the end of every unit there are two sections: “3-Minute Technique” and “Music Theory.” The section titled 3-Minute Technique gives the student exercises that help the student to develop finger dexterity, while providing review of new reading concepts introduced over the course of the unit.

Theory

Many different concepts are covered in the theory section including pentascales, scales and chords. The pentascale is described as a five-note scale that consists of a whole step, whole step, half step, and whole step (WWHW); only the major pentascale is introduced in this level of the method series. The student is asked to play the pentascale in several different keys. Then the C Major scale is introduced as “the C pentascale plus two added notes: A and B (and the higher C, tonic).”⁸⁹ Then the following, more general definition of a major scale is given: “a major scale is made up of all whole steps except for half steps between scale degrees 3-4 and 7-8.”⁹⁰ The G Major scale is also introduced in the same way later in the book.

The primary chords (I, IV, and V7) of both the keys of C Major and G Major are introduced. The concept of inversion is included to explain how the chords I-IV⁶₄-V⁶₅-I are derived from the primary chords in each key. Lead-sheet notation and traditional Roman numeral chord symbols are clarified as additional ways of using the knowledge gained from the explanation of the chords.

The objectives of learning to play in a certain key (because melody and harmony are derived largely from the pitches in that key) are clearly explained (Q1). The concepts of the pentascale, major scale and chords are clearly explained and the authors are careful to clarify the interrelationships among them (Q3). In introducing the different parts of the scale, the student is encouraged to listen as he plays the first seven notes of the scale, and to pay attention to where scale degree 7 is leading (scale degree 8). In doing this, the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

student is being asked to consider his own ideas/impressions rather than being told where the 7th scale degree is leading (Q10).

Musical Form

Musical form is introduced when the authors identify the form of a sample piece by labeling each section and telling the student what the label indicates. Form is occasionally mentioned after this original explanation, but only in asking the student to label the sections of a certain piece using the letters given rather than asking the student to determine the form on his own.

While the authors do advise the student to determine the form of a new piece to simplify the learning process (Q7), the student is never told how this information can help him in learning and memorizing a piece (Q1). While the student is told that the overall structure of a piece is called musical form, he remains dependent on a teacher for a deeper understanding and analysis of the structure of a piece (Q3). A more complete understanding of musical form would require additional teacher explanation and guidance on how to delineate musical sections and then to compare and contrast these sections, to determine how each should be labeled.

Conclusion

Overall, this method promotes self-directed learning in a number of ways. Objectives for proper playing technique (e.g., posture), for practicing (e.g., use of a metronome), for learning to read music (e.g., use of G4 and F3 as landmarks), and for understanding and analyzing a piece (e.g., identifying its key) are clearly explained (Q1). Most of the concepts are also very clearly explained; the one exception to this is musical form, where the student would be very dependent on the teacher to understand clearly

how to analyze the musical form of a piece (Q3). There are a few opportunities for the student to make his own decisions concerning solving difficulties in piano study (Q4). The suggestions for learning a new piece of music focus mainly on rhythmic concepts and involve clapping and counting the rhythm, and then continuing to count out loud while playing the piece. Writing in the name of the first note of the piece is also suggested to assure the student that he is starting on the correct note (Q7). Most of this book is instruction-based (telling the student information) rather than question-based (asking questions to help the student consider the answer). The one exception to this occurs when the student is asked to play the first seven notes of the scale and is asked where the 7th scale degree leads to next (scale degree 8) (Q10). The only time that the student is asked to consider his previous musical experiences to explain concepts is when the time signature is introduced, and the student is asked to remember and play songs that he already knows in order to understand the differences between time signatures more clearly (Q11).

Unfortunately, the student is completely dependent on a teacher for many different things. Because there is no choice in the music that the student learns to play (Q2) and there are no suggestions for additional pieces to learn (Q9), the teacher must be familiar with other music at the student's ability level in order to recommend repertoire for further study. The teacher should also be able to direct the student to references for further reading for more explanation about a concept (Q8). In addition, the teacher needs to provide suggestions for solving problems encountered by the student, or to ask the student for ideas on how to solve his own problems (Q5). Finally, the student remains

completely dependent on the teacher for information about the interpretation of the music (Q6).

Piano for Adults: A Beginning Course: Lessons, Theory, Technique, Sightreading
By Jane Smisor Bastien, Lisa Bastien, and Lori Bastien

Introduction to the Piano

In the Introduction to the Piano section, the authors address many different topics including posture and sitting position, finger numbers, hand position, and keyboard geography. The hand position material includes two different exercises, Loose Fist Technique and First Joint Technique, to help the student more easily understand proper hand position. The presentation of all of these topics includes a written explanation as well as a picture to help the student understand the information better.

In this section, the objectives — learning the correct posture and sitting position, finger numbers, hand position, and keyboard geography — are clearly explained (Q1). These new concepts are clearly defined through written description, pictures, and practice suggestions to help the student realize the correct hand position (Q3). Because the finger numbers are only mentioned once, review of the finger numbers (as suggested by the authors of this method) would be required in order for the student to remember the correct finger numbers more quickly.

Rhythm

The author begins the discussion of rhythm by defining it as “the combination of short and long tones. . .”⁹¹ The quarter note and half note are then explained at the same time by a picture of the note and directions to count the note value or to use the name of

⁹¹ Bastien, 8.

the note to count.⁹² This is followed by three practice suggestions: 1) clap and count the rhythm out loud while keeping a steady beat, 2) practice playing the rhythms on the keyboard, and 3) count aloud while playing and hold each note for its full value while keeping a steady beat. This is followed by three practice exercises. The whole note and dotted half note are explained separately later in the book and the student is directed to practice these using practice suggestions numbers 2 and 3 described above. The quarter rest, half rest, and whole rest are introduced in a comparative chart that shows that any note and rest that share the same name receive the same number of beats. In the piece immediately following this introduction, the rests used are highlighted and discussed.

Eighth notes are introduced with a bit more explanation than the previous note and rest values. Two eighth notes beamed together are the first to be introduced. They are explained as being equal to one quarter note in duration. The authors suggested that when counting eighth notes, subdividing each single beat into two parts can be helpful. Once again, two options are given to count eighth notes: 1) counting the note value (“1 &”) or 2) using the name of the note to count (“**TWO** – eighths”). Only one rhythmic exercise is provided for practice, along with instructions for the student to clap it while counting aloud. The single eighth note is introduced in comparison to the beamed eighth notes and the quarter note, and the eighth rest is introduced as lasting for half of a beat. Two measures of music with numerical counting written below follow these explanations to illustrate the proper method of counting. Except for the additional explanation that a dot after any note is equal to half the value of the note, the dotted quarter note is introduced just as the quarter note was introduced; four familiar/traditional pieces are

⁹² The suggestion is to use “**Quar** – ter” to count a quarter note and “**Half** – note” to count a half note.

included after the introduction of the dotted quarter note to allow the student to understand this new note value through the playing of traditional pieces.⁹³

Time signatures are explained after the introduction of quarter, half, whole and dotted half notes. A chart accompanies the introduction of the 4/4 and 3/4 time signatures to show how many beats the quarter, half, dotted half, and whole notes receive in each meter. Along with the introduction of the time signature, the following new practice suggestions are included for use throughout the rest of the book: 1) write the counts in the music; 2) clap and count the rhythm aloud; 3) find your position on the keyboard, 4) play and sing (or say) the letter names aloud, and 5) play and count the rhythm aloud.

The objective of keeping a steady beat and how to do so (e.g., with the use of the metronome) would need to be explained more fully by the teacher (Q1). The time signature and number of beats each kind of note receives are clearly explained, and the student is encouraged to choose his preferred method of counting (Q4). However, if the student decides to use the name of the note for counting, (i.e., “**Quar** – ter” and “**HALF** – note”), a teacher would need to clarify that the quarter and half notes do not receive the same number of beats (Q3). The five practice suggestions listed above provide guidelines for learning a new piece of music (Q7).⁹⁴ Most of the book is instruction-based, rather than question-based (Q10); the student is not asked to consider his previous musical experiences to explain concepts except for the traditional pieces included after the introduction of the dotted quarter note (Q11).

⁹³ “London Bridge”, “Deck the Halls”, “America the Beautiful”, and “Angels We Have Heard On High” are included to help the student better understand the dotted quarter note.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 17.

Parts of the Staff

The parts of the staff are introduced and defined as needed in the music. The bar line, measure, and double bar line are introduced as part of the pre-reading section.

The parts of the staff are clearly explained (Q3).

Note Reading

After learning the names of the keys on the keyboard and learning in a pre-reading section which notes are used in a C-major pentachord⁹⁵, the student reads and plays his first pieces from notes with note names written inside the note-head. After playing seven pieces written in this manner, the student is introduced to the staff and the C major pentachord written on the staff all at the same time. While the next four pieces are notated on the staff, the names of the notes continue to be written inside the note-head; gradually, the names of the notes are only written in the note-head of the first notes for each hand in each piece, until the names of the notes are dropped altogether. Subsequent notes are introduced with a picture of a keyboard under the staff showing where the new notes are located on the staff in relation to their position on the keyboard. As the student becomes more advanced, he is introduced to a new note only by means of its name written inside the note-head. The author recommended naming and playing notes from flashcards for further review.

Early in the book, the objective of learning new notes is clearly explained, but as the student becomes more advanced, new notes are not explained as thoroughly (Q1, Q3). With few exceptions, at the beginning of each piece, there is a blank for students to fill in the name of the first notes of the right and left hands; this provides a landmark from which the student can read the notes and helps the student learn new pieces more quickly.

⁹⁵ Bastien refers to this as the “C 5-Finger Position.”

Until page 112 in the book, changes in hand position are signaled by a circled finger number; after this point, the authors tell the student that finger numbers will no longer be circled, so the student must be sure to check and see if a hand position change is needed. These inserted and circled finger numbers help the student to learn the piece more quickly (Q7). The book is instruction-based rather than question-based, except when the student is asked to name the first notes at the beginning of each piece (Q10).

Technique

From Chapter 4 through the end of the book, each chapter includes a page called Technic, described to the student as exercises designed to help develop hand and finger coordination, and to develop ease, control, and facility at the keyboard. The authors suggest that the student use these exercises at the beginning of each practice session to warm up for his daily practice. The student is prompted to practice these exercises three times daily at three different speeds: slow, medium, and fast.

The technique objectives are clearly explained (Q1).

Theory

The following theoretical concepts are presented in this text: major tetrachords, scales, chords, and intervals.⁹⁶ A major tetrachord is introduced as four notes which comprise two whole steps and a half step in ascending order; the authors also noted that when two such tetrachords are joined together by a whole step, a major scale is formed. The harmonic minor scale is explained in relation to its relative major. The only major scale introduced is C major, and the only minor scale is A harmonic minor.

⁹⁶ In accordance with the way intervals are presented and reinforced by authors of the Bastien and Palmer texts, they are discussed in the reviews of the theory sections for these texts. In contrast, intervals were discussed in the note-reading section of the Faber text because of references to learning new notes and reading notes according to interval.

The tonic, subdominant and dominant 7th chords are introduced in the keys of C major, G major, F major and A minor. The C major tonic chord is briefly introduced in the pre-reading section as three keys — C, E, and G — in the C major pentachord that are sometimes played as a blocked chord and sometimes played as a broken chord. The building of C major, G major, and F major tonic, subdominant, and dominant 7th chords is later explained in greater detail with a picture of the keyboard that shows the Roman numeral relationship of the chord to the scale degree, a picture showing the chord on the staff, and a picture of a keyboard showing the names of the notes used for the chord along with the finger numbers used to play each chord. The description of the dominant 7th chord also includes a picture of a staff that further explains where the 7th in the C and G dominant 7th chords comes from. The chords are presented in inversion with the explanation that for ease in accompanying at the introductory level, the student will play the chords in the arrangement given. Inversions are explained toward the end of the book as a different arrangement of notes in a triad.

The student is told that a letter placed over a note above the treble staff indicates the chord that should be played with that note. While this concept is not discussed again, many pieces throughout the book incorporate chord symbols in different keys and chord progressions that are introduced in this book. The A minor chord is very briefly introduced (along with the A minor scale) and is only shown in root position with the comment that the lower-case Roman numerals indicate minor chords.

The interval is described as the distance between two notes with melodic intervals consisting of notes played one at a time and harmonic intervals consisting of notes played

at the same time.⁹⁷ Seven different intervals are introduced (the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and octave) in the same way. The interval is pictured on a keyboard with a written description of how many, if any, keys are skipped to create it. Ascending and descending intervals are then shown on the staff in both harmonic and melodic forms. Written descriptions of whether the interval includes two line or space notes, or one line note and one space note are provided.

The rationale for learning to play chords and scales as well as intervals would need to be explained by a teacher (Q1). The authors discuss Roman numerals many times before explaining what they represent and why it is important to use Roman numerals. The difference between major and minor chords is never discussed, but otherwise the discussions of chords, scales and intervals in this book are generally clear (Q3). Some of the pieces include both chord symbols and a left-hand realization of those symbols, which allows the student to choose to read the realization, the chord symbols, or both to figure out what to play in the left hand (Q4). The student is expected to do some problem solving by figuring out fingering after the first finger number(s) of the piece is given; however, the authors do provide some assistance with additional finger numbers written in when the hand must move out of its beginning five-finger position (Q5). The written-in finger numbers and description/illustration of specific intervals should help the student recognize these intervals in new music more easily (Q7). Most of the theory-related content in this book is instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10). Shortly after a new interval is introduced, the student is asked to play a familiar piece incorporating that interval. However, the teacher may wish to add that the student can

⁹⁷ Ibid., 21.

remember the sound of a new interval more easily by recalling its use in a passage from a familiar piece (Q11).

Form

The only form discussed is the 12-Bar Blues, “a form in music based on I, IV and V chords.”⁹⁸ The chord progression is then presented. The student is given two pieces to play in this form.

A student not familiar with Blues, and the 12-Bar Blues specifically, may require more explanation to understand this form clearly (Q3).

Conclusion

The objectives and concepts related to learning correct posture and sitting position, finger numbers, tone, hand position, keyboard geography, new notes and technique are all clearly explained (Q1 and Q3). In addition, many other concepts are also clearly explained, including rests, time signatures, the staff, intervals, note reading, theory, scales, and chords (Q3). Allowing the student to select his own fingering, to choose his preferred method of counting, and to read chords from either chord symbols and/or written-out realizations all offer him opportunities to make his own decisions regarding how to solve difficulties in piano study (Q4). The student could be given additional opportunities to decide how he wants to overcome challenges by choosing his own chords with which to harmonize a melody (Q4). Since the text does not offer guidelines on how to harmonize a melody (Q5), the teacher would need to do this. The circled finger numbers used to highlight how and when to shift the hands do offer the student some assistance for solving problems (Q5). Many tools and procedures for learning a new piece of music are offered in this text, including practice suggestions,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 109.

writing in the name of the first notes in the left and right hands, and recognizing intervals (Q7); however, a teacher may need to point out the relationship between interval recognition and fluent sight reading. While paragraphs of biographical information about featured composers can be found throughout the book, no references for further reading (Q8) or for additional pieces in a given style (Q9) are provided. The book is mainly instruction-based rather than question-based, except for asking the student to identify the beginning note for both the right and left hands in most pieces (Q10).

The student is not completely dependent on a teacher to explain new concepts, since most concepts are explained adequately in the text; however, the teacher would probably want to provide additional information on the importance of intervals, on the significance of Roman numerals, and on how to check one's performance for a steady beat (Q3). There is no discussion of the interpretation of the music in this book, even though such discussion (e.g., related to swinging the rhythm and syncopation) seems imperative for proper performance of the 12-Bar Blues (Q6). The student would need to depend on a teacher for references for further reading about a concept or about composer biographies (Q8), and the teacher would probably want to suggest additional pieces in a certain style of music introduced in this method book (Q9). With the exception of the dotted half note, the book does not call upon the adult to consider his own previous musical experience to explain concepts even though most adult piano students have probably spent many hours listening to music and are likely familiar with a great deal of music (Q11).

Alfred's Basic Adult All-In-One Course: Lesson, Theory, Technic
Willard A. Palmer, Morton Manus, Amanda Vick Lethco

Introduction to Playing

The introduction to playing includes preliminary exercises to help the student prepare his hands for playing the piano, as well as information on how to sit at the piano, finger numbers, piano tones (which includes some discussion of basic mechanics of the piano), the keyboard, and the names of the keys. An isometric exercise for the hands, a description of a hand massage, and four reasons for playing with curved fingers are also included.⁹⁹ This is all done using pictures and written descriptions.

The rationale and objectives for learning the above information are clearly explained (Q1). All of the new concepts are clearly explained, although more review of the finger numbers would be needed for better recall (Q3).

Rhythm

Rhythm is described as the combination of notes (short and long tones with their lengths measured by counting) into patterns. Quarter and half notes are explained and the student is offered two different possibilities of how to count them.¹⁰⁰ The whole and dotted half notes are introduced in the same way. The dotted quarter note is introduced in comparison to the dotted half note, the eighth note is described in comparison to the quarter note, and the triplet (which is used in the last piece in the book) is described in comparison to the quarter note. The introduction of each new rhythm is followed by a rhythmic exercise that the student is told to clap to practice the new rhythm value. All of

⁹⁹ Palmer, 4-11.

¹⁰⁰ The student is instructed to count using either numbers (e.g., "1" for quarter note and "1-2" for the half note), or using the name of the note to count (e.g., "quarter" for the quarter note and "half note" for the half note).

the rests except the eighth rest are introduced in the context of a musical example; accompanying written descriptions identify the name and value of the rest, and tell the student how it should be performed. The eighth rest is explained in a box on the top of the page where it is used. The time signature is introduced at the same time as the grand staff. The authors also include one chart comparing the duration of the quarter note, half note and whole note in the 4/4 time signature. The 3/4 time signature is introduced at the same time as the dotted half note.

The suggestions for practicing provided at the beginning of the book also incorporate suggestions for learning the rhythm; the student is advised to clap the rhythm first, then play while singing the finger numbers, then play and count the rhythm, and finally play and sing the words (if applicable). On page 20, these suggestions are changed to clapping and counting the rhythm first, then playing and counting the rhythm and finally, playing and singing the words (if applicable). Students are advised to follow these amended practice steps throughout the remainder of the book.

The concepts (Q3) and objectives (Q1) related to rhythm are clearly explained by means of written descriptions/comparisons, a chart, and directions for performance. The suggestions for practicing will help the student to learn a new piece of music more quickly and accurately (Q7). The rhythm section of the book is instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10). The only part of the rhythm explanation that calls upon the adult's previous musical experiences is in the introduction of the dotted quarter note and the eighth note where, after the explanation, familiar examples of music are given as

further explanation and illustration of the dotted quarter note¹⁰¹ and the eighth note¹⁰² (Q11).

Parts of the Staff

The parts of the staff are introduced and explained as the student encounters them in the music. The staff, treble and bass clefs, measure, bar line, double bar line, repeat sign, brace, and time signature are all clearly explained to the student (Q3).

Note Reading

To begin note reading, all of the keys on the piano are introduced noting their position relative to the groups of two or three black keys. The right-hand C-major pentascale is then introduced and shown on the staff as well as on the keyboard. To learn the names of the notes, the student is given two pages with note names written inside the note-heads, and then two pages of written work directing him to identify note names. This process is repeated when the left-hand C-major pentascale is introduced. These pentascales for both hands are then shown together on the grand staff, with the note names written inside the note-heads for the next two pages once again. Then for the next several pieces, the notes in the first measure of the piece include note names inside the note-heads to help the student learn the names of the notes. New notes are introduced with a picture of the note on the staff and a corresponding picture of the key on the keyboard. They are introduced noting their position relative to a familiar or a new pentascale until towards the end of the method book, where the only introduction the student receives to a new note is the name inside of the note-head.

¹⁰¹ Excerpts from “Silent Night”, “Deck the Halls”, “Auld Lang Syne”, and “The Wedding March” are all provided for further explanation/illustration of dotted quarter notes. Ibid, 81.

¹⁰² The authors use four pieces to provide further explanation/illustration of the eighth note. The student plays “Good Morning to You!” and then is told that “Happy Birthday to You!” is the same piece only with eighth notes added. This same explanation is given for “Shoo, Fly, Shoo!” and “Skip to My Lou!”

The objective of recognizing the location of the notes both on the staff and on the keyboard is quite clear (Q1). Many finger numbers are provided to assist the student when he begins the piece, when he changes hand position, and (frequently) when he encounters a skip between notes (Q5). The information explaining intervals is mainly instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10).

Technique

Three sections in this method are devoted solely to technique: 1) The Leschetizky Solution,¹⁰³ 2) The Amazing Aerobics of Hanon, and 3) Hanon's Aerobic Sixths. In these sections, the importance of practicing musical exercises daily to make the hands strong is emphasized. A notation at the bottom of Hanon's Aerobic Sixths refers the student to additional Hanon exercises in other Alfred publications (Q9).¹⁰⁴

Theory

In this section, the student is introduced to the theory concepts of tetrachord, scales, chords, and intervals.¹⁰⁵ The tetrachord is defined as "a series of four notes [that] have a pattern of whole step, whole step, half step" (WWH).¹⁰⁶ The authors also stated that the notes must be in alphabetical order according to the music alphabet. After learning tetrachords, the student is told that when two of them are joined by a whole step, a major scale is created. The C major scale, G major scale and F major scale are all

¹⁰³ Theodor Leschetizky was a piano teacher who thought up inventive ways to solve technical problems at the piano; this exercise focuses on developing skill and dexterity with all fingers and strengthening the weakest fingers. Palmer, 57.

¹⁰⁴ The authors referred the student to the following books that contain additional Hanon exercises: Charles Louis Hanon, *The Virtuoso Pianist, Volume 1*, 2nd ed., ed. Allan Small (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1992) and Charles Louis Hanon, *The Virtuoso Pianist, 2nd ed.*, ed. Allan Small (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1992).

¹⁰⁵ In accordance with the way intervals are presented and reinforced by authors of the Palmer and Bastien texts, they are discussed in the reviews of the theory sections for these texts. In contrast, intervals were discussed in the note-reading section of the Faber text because of references to learning new notes and reading notes according to interval.

¹⁰⁶ Palmer, 98.

introduced in this way. The authors define a relative minor scale as beginning a major 6th above its relative major, and sharing its same key signature. The differences between the natural, harmonic, and melodic forms of the minor scale are also explained.

After the explanation of the scales, the construction of the I, IV, and V₅⁶ ¹⁰⁷ chords is explained and illustrated in the keys of C major, G major and F major; after an explanation of the difference between major and minor triads, the construction of the i, iv, and V₅⁶ chords is explained and illustrated in the keys of A minor and D minor. Before this time, the primary chords were used but their derivation from a scale was not explained until after scales were introduced. While the concept of chordal inversion is explained and presented as a way to move more easily from one chord to the next, the word “inversion” is never used in this method.

Intervals are introduced two at a time (with the exception of the 6th) and are all introduced in the same way. First, the interval is shown on a keyboard with an explanation of how many keys are skipped between the two notes of the interval. Then the interval is shown on the staff with the description of whether the interval is a line-line, space-space, line-space or space-line interval. The student is given the opportunity to play the interval as well as to write out intervals and identify them. The melodic interval is always introduced before the harmonic interval.

The rationale for learning to play scales and chord progressions (i.e., because they are often encountered in music) is clearly explained; however, the teacher would need to explain the importance of learning to read by interval (Q1). The concepts of tetrachords, scales, chords and intervals are also clearly explained (Q3). The absence of finger

¹⁰⁷ While the V₅⁶ inversion of the V7 chord is used and its derivation is explained, the author calls the V₅⁶ chord a V7 chord throughout.

numbers on each note within an interval requires the student to decide which fingers would work best for that interval (Q4); however, finger numbers are provided in some key places for each piece (e.g., at the beginning of the piece or when the hand must change position) in order to give the student some guidance as he plays (Q5). By learning and recognizing the distance between notes in intervals on the staff as well as on the piano, the student should be able to learn to read music much more fluently (Q7). The concepts are explained by presenting text that is instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10). The only time the adult is called upon to draw on his previous musical experiences is when a familiar piece is used to show how scales are sometimes used in melodies (Q11).¹⁰⁸

Form

The only specific form mentioned is “Formula for the Blues.” Here, the Blues is described as “a basic formula, that is, a standard chord progression.”¹⁰⁹ The twelve-measure formula is given and the student is told that he may play the Blues in any key by applying the formula to that key. In a footnote, the student is told that he may play the eighth notes “a bit unevenly: long short long short, *etc.*”¹¹⁰ “Call and Response” is mentioned as a technique used to build excitement in Jazz/Rock. The student is encouraged to “improvise different Blues Scale tones in the “response” measures.”¹¹¹ Syncopation, as part of the Blues style, is also discussed.

The objective of learning the formula for the Blues is clearly stated (Q1). The formula for the Blues is clearly explained (Q3). The author discussed the treatment of the

¹⁰⁸ The piece provided to illustrate how scales are used in melodies is “Joy to the World”.

¹⁰⁹ Palmer, 107.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 117. While Palmer suggests this improvisation, the Blues Scale is never explained.

eighth notes in Blues, Call and Response, and syncopation, all important stylistic features of the blues (Q6). Accompanying footnotes reveal that some of the blues pieces were taken from *Alfred's Basic Adult Jazz/Rock Course*¹¹², so if a student was interested in this style of music, the reference to this course would allow him to find other music in this style (Q9). Most of this book is instruction-based; however, telling the student to improvise different Blues Scale tones in the “response” measures of the call and response, encourages him to use his own ideas for playing the piece (Q10).

Conclusion

Overall, there are some ways in which this book promotes self-directed learning. Most of the objectives are clearly explained, although the teacher would need to explain and highlight the importance of learning to read by interval (Q1). While many concepts are clearly explained, other important concepts are not, e.g., concepts related to the importance of intervals, to the construction and function of primary triads, and to inversions. Furthermore, no mention is made of keeping a steady beat, and the relative duration of rhythmic values (e.g., that a half note is twice as long as a quarter note) needs to be highlighted (Q3). While the student does play chords in inversions, he is never asked to determine which inversion of a chord would ease technical difficulties, (i.e., avoid awkward leaps by creating smoother voice leading) and give him more options in harmonizing melodies (Q4). The only opportunity for the student to make his own decisions concerning solving any difficulties in playing relates to determining some of the fingerings in the pieces (Q4). The inclusion of some finger numbers, however, does provide guidance in solving potential fingering problems in the repertoire (Q5).

¹¹² Bert Konowitz, *Alfred's Basic Adult Jazz/Rock Course* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1998).

The only suggestions for learning a new piece come early in the book, when the student is given recommended practice steps that involve clapping, counting, playing and singing (Q7). While the student is not directed to any additional pieces in a given style of music, the authors do note that three of the pieces in this text are taken from *Alfred's Basic Adult Jazz/Rock Course* by Burt Konowitz¹¹³. Thus, if a student had an interest in this style of music, he could go to this Jazz/Rock book to seek additional pieces on his own. Also, the authors do refer the student to a book of additional exercises that a student can use to gain more dexterity at the piano (Q9).

This book is instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10). The only examples of drawing on the student's own previous musical experiences involve 1) asking him to play familiar pieces to provide further explanation for the concepts of dotted quarter and eighth notes, and 2) asking him to play a familiar piece to understand how scales are used in melodies (Q11).

The student is not given any choice in the music that he is expected to play (Q2). Very few suggestions are offered for solving problems, with the exception of fingering problems. Thus, if the student were to experience difficulty in executing a skill or understanding a concept, he would be dependent upon a teacher to help him (Q5). The authors do not include any discussion of the interpretation of the music, so the student would be completely dependent on a teacher to explain stylistic interpretation (Q6). Although the student is given several pieces in a jazz style, he is never asked if he has any other familiarity with that style (many adult students have heard jazz pieces before) (Q6). No references for further reading or for additional explanation about a concept are

¹¹³ Bert Konowitz, *Alfred's Basic Adult Jazz/Rock Course* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1998).

offered, so the student would be dependent upon a teacher to provide additional information or to recommend sources for further reading about a topic (Q8).

Comparisons Among the Three Selected Texts

This section contains a summary of the similarities and differences that were found among the three method books in the following areas: introduction to the piano, rhythm, intervals, note reading, technique, theory, and form.

Introduction to the Piano

This section in each of the books is very similar. Using word descriptions and pictures, the student is taught the basics of posture, hand position, finger numbers, and keyboard geography. These objectives and concepts are clearly explained (Q1, Q3). However, while students using the Bastien and the Palmer method books would possibly need more review than what was provided by the authors to remember the finger numbers accurately, the Faber text does have a section for the student to review only the finger numbers.

Rhythm

While the Faber text includes a comparative chart to explain the different rhythm values, the Bastien and Palmer texts include more descriptors to explain beginning rhythm values. In all three books, the eighth note receives much more attention and explanation than the other rhythmic values. In both the Bastien and Palmer texts, the student is given a choice of counting the rhythm values with numbers or using the name of the note to count the number of beats that it receives; however, in the Faber text, only counting with numbers is explained. In both the Bastien and Palmer texts, the

introduction of a new rhythmic concept is followed by a specific line of music for the student to clap and count to practice the new rhythmic concept; however, in the Faber text, only the introduction of the eighth note is followed by a specific line of music to practice this new concept specifically.

Only in the Faber text is the idea of using a metronome to keep a steady beat explained. In the Bastien text the student is encouraged to keep a steady beat, and in the Palmer text, there is no mention of a steady beat (Q1). In all three books the eighth note is clearly explained, but if the student chooses to use the name of the note to count the beat, a teacher would need to explain that even though the words "quarter", "half note" and "eighth note" have the same number of syllables, the notes do not receive the same number of beats. While young children without the necessary arithmetic skills are taught to chant such words in lieu of counting rhythms, adults should easily be able to count in the traditional manner (Q3). In all three method books, the authors suggest first counting and clapping the rhythm before attempting to play it; this suggestion is useful for solving rhythmic difficulties as well as for learning a new piece of music (Q5, Q7). All three methods are instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10). The student is only called upon to consider his own previous musical experiences when learning 3/4 time (Faber text) when learning the dotted quarter note and eighth notes (Palmer text), and when learning the dotted half note (Bastien text) (Q11).

Intervals

Intervals are treated in two different ways for these method books. In the Faber text, greater emphasis is placed on helping the student learn to read more quickly through interval reading; however, in the Bastien and Palmer texts, intervals are presented as

having more of an importance in music theory. The authors of all three books explain intervals using a picture of the keyboard (thus allowing the student to see how many keys are spanned for each interval) as well as a picture of the staff (thus allowing the student to compare how many lines or spaces are skipped to create each interval). The only exception to this is in the Faber book, where intervals of a 2nd and 3rd are introduced before the staff is introduced, so these intervals are not initially shown on the staff.

None of the authors explained that reading by interval (especially smaller intervals) can help the student learn to read music more quickly (Q1); however, they all explained intervals clearly (Q3). There are many opportunities for the student to make his own decisions regarding fingerings to be used in each piece (Q4); however, the finger numbers provided at the beginning of each piece and any time the hand moves from the original position can help the student solve potential problems (Q5). The thorough explanation given for the intervals will assist the student in recognizing them in music and may help the student read the music more fluently (Q7). Most of the information given about intervals is instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10). In all of the books, the introduction of a new interval is followed by a piece that emphasizes it. However, in order for the student to remember the sound of an interval more easily, the teacher may decide to ask him to name familiar songs that incorporate that interval (Q11).

Note Reading

In all three books, notes are first introduced by comparing their position on a staff to their position on the keyboard, and relationships between notes on the staff and their location on the keyboard are clearly presented (Q1 & Q3). The highlighting of the notes

F3 and G4 as important landmarks in the Faber text should help the student learn to read notes more fluently (Q5). For further assistance in reading notes, finger numbers are used throughout all three of the books, mainly in key places such as the beginning of pieces and when hand positions change. Also, the Bastiens recommend the use of flashcards for further review of the notes.

The first several pieces following the introduction of note reading include the names of the notes written inside of the note-heads. For a few pieces after that, the Palmer and Bastien texts include the names of only the first notes written inside the note-heads. In the Faber and Bastien texts, the student is asked to write in the names of the first notes throughout the majority of the remainder of the book (Q7); except for asking the student to name these notes, these books are instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10).

Technique

All three books have sections pertaining to technique and include exercises to help the muscles in the hands to develop better control. However, the coverage of technique is very different in each book. The Faber text has a page entitled “3-Minute Technique” at the end of each unit.¹¹⁴ The Palmer text has only three pages devoted to technique throughout the book; these pages are entitled “The Leschetizky Solution,”¹¹⁵ “The Amazing Aerobics of Hanon”¹¹⁶ and “Hanon’s Aerobic Sixths.”¹¹⁷ The end of each chapter in the Bastien text includes a technique piece that the authors instruct the student to play each day at the beginning of his practice time.

¹¹⁴ Faber, 20, 34, 42, 54, 62, 74, 82, 88, 96, 108, 120, 126, 134, 146, 152, and 166.

¹¹⁵ Palmer, 57.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 78.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 87.

The objective of playing technical exercises to become a better performer is clearly explained (Q1). The authors of the Alfred text referred the student to Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist in 60 Exercises*¹¹⁸ for further technical study (Q9).

Theory

Each author used a two-step process to introduce scales. In the Faber text, the major pentascale is introduced first and then the student is directed to form a major scale by adding on two whole steps and repeating the tonic. In the Palmer and Bastien texts, the major tetrachord is introduced first and then the student is directed to join two major tetrachords together with a whole step in-between to make a major scale. The Faber text includes only two scales, C Major and G Major. Following introductions of the C Major, G Major, and F Major scales in the Palmer text, the A minor and D minor scales are presented as the relative minors of C Major and F Major, respectively. In the Bastien text, only the C Major scale and its relative minor scale are introduced.

In all three books, primary chords are introduced in the keys presented. In each of the books, the chords are introduced before an explanation is given. Inversions are used in each of the books. Lead-sheet notation and Roman numerals are taught in each book.

The objectives and rationales for learning to play scales and chords are explained in the Bastien text, but not in the Palmer or Faber texts (Q1). With the exception of some Roman numerals in the Bastien text, the explanation of scales and chords is generally clear (Q3). In many of the pieces in all of the books, the author gives both the Roman numeral or lead-sheet notation, and the written-out realization of these chords, and the student has the choice of which to read to play the pieces (Q4). Most of each of the

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

books is instruction-based rather than question-based (Q10). Occasionally, the adult is asked to consider his previous musical experience such as when he is asked to listen to where the 7th degree of the scale leads (Faber text) and when he is asked to think of pieces that contain a scale (Faber text) (Q11).

Form

Form is treated very differently in the Faber text compared to its presentation in the Palmer and Bastien texts. In the Faber text, form is introduced with the labeling of sections according to thematic material. In both the Palmer and Bastien texts, the only form discussed is the 12-Bar Blues. The Palmer text provides more details related to this style with additional descriptions of uneven eighth notes, syncopation, and call and response.

In the Faber text, the objective of learning form is not clearly explained; however in the Palmer and Bastien texts, the objective of learning the 12-Bar Blues is clearly explained (Q1). In the Faber text, additional teacher explanation would be needed to clarify the form discussed. In the Palmer and Bastien texts, 12-Bar Blues is clearly explained (Q3). With the discussion of uneven eighth notes, syncopation, and Call and Response in the Palmer text, the student learns ways to interpret the blues more stylistically (Q6). With the explanations and discussions of form provided in all of the methods, the student will have an easier time learning a new piece of music (Q7). The reference to the *Jazz/Rock Course* in the Palmer text gives the student a resource for locating additional pieces in this style (Q9). Most of the explanations of forms in these methods rely on instruction-based teaching; but by allowing the student to decide how to label the sections of the pieces (Faber text) and by allowing him to improvise in the

“response” measures of the Call and Response sections,¹¹⁹ the student has the opportunity to use his own ideas in understanding and playing the piece, respectively (Q10).

¹¹⁹ Palmer, 117.

CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Summary

During the course of this paper, the method books *Adult Piano Adventures, Book 1* by the Fabers, *Piano for Adults, Book 1* by the Bastiens, and *Adult All-In-One Course, Level 1* by Palmer et al were reviewed to investigate the extent to which they promote self-directed learning. The review of each text began with a summary of how each group of concepts was introduced and a description of how each teaching technique was discussed. Then each concept was discussed in relation to relevant questions adapted from Knowles and Chen (listed in Appendix A – Questions to Measure Self-Directed Learning). If a presentation met the criteria for one of the questions and could be considered to encourage that aspect of self-directed learning, then this was noted along with the relevant question identified by number following the discussion of the presentation.

Conclusions

In this section, the questions that were addressed adequately in the method books as well as the questions that were not addressed adequately in the method books will be discussed.

(Q1)—Are the objectives clearly explained?

Overall, most objectives were clearly explained. One exception to this in all three method books is the failure to highlight the importance of learning to read by interval. This author also found slight deficiencies in other explanations in each book, with the student most dependent on the teacher to explain objectives in the Palmer text. While very young children may not look beyond the immediate task at hand, most adults need a clear understanding of the larger objective to direct their efforts most successfully.

(Q2)—Is there a choice in what music the student is learning to play?

None of these three books provides the student any real choice in selecting the music he learns to play. With very rare exception, new concept introductions are followed by only one or occasionally two pieces to reinforce them before the next new concept is introduced; therefore, in order for the student to grasp all of the concepts clearly, he must learn to play every piece in the method book, rather than selecting those that most appeal to him. Additional pieces should be included in the method, thus providing the student a choice in what music he selects to play to reinforce a given concept; also, providing more pieces to reinforce new skills and concepts not only would give a student choices in the repertoire he chooses to play, but would also be very helpful for an adult student who needs further study and review of more pieces to master certain physical skills. Although adding optional pieces may increase the cost of the method books, the benefit to the student would be great. Many children's method series include supplemental repertoire volumes that are coordinated with the main method books at each

level of advancement. While this could be useful for adults, references to other sources for additional repertoire at an appropriate level would also certainly be helpful.

(Q3)—Are new concepts clearly explained, or is the student completely dependent on a teacher to explain the concept to him?

Most of the new concepts are clearly explained with a few exceptions. In the Faber text, the concept of form would need to be explained more clearly. In the Palmer text, the most noticeable deficiencies occur in explaining a steady beat and the function of chords. While authors of method books for children just learning to read the English language usually provide very abbreviated written explanations and definitions, authors of adult texts should take advantage of the adult's greater capacity to read and understand more thorough concept explanations.

(Q4)—Are there opportunities for the student to make his own decisions concerning solving any difficulties in the piano study?

Students using all three method books have the opportunity to make decisions concerning solving any difficulties in two main areas of the piano study. First, after a student is given the fingering for the first note of the piece, he is left to decide the fingering for the remainder of the piece. Second, once Roman numerals and lead-sheet notation are introduced, the written-out notes, the Roman numerals and/or the lead-sheet notation are included in many of the pieces so that the student has the opportunity to choose which he would like to read in order to play the chords. A student who decides how to work to overcome his own difficulties or problems is likely to be engaged more deeply and more creatively in the learning process.

(Q5)—Are there suggestions for solving problems in the method book?

The two main suggestions for solving potential problems deal with rhythm and fingering. First, the authors in all three books suggest clapping and counting the rhythm of the notes in the piece before beginning to play it on the piano. Focusing exclusively on rhythm should help the student avoid potential problems when combining it with other aspects of performance. Second, at the beginning of the piece, and anytime the student must move from the original hand position, a finger number is given to help the student play the piece more easily. These latter fingering cues not only draw the student's attention to shifts in hand position, but also offer a suggested means for negotiating these shifts. Giving the student suggestions for solving these and other problems encourages him to try to solve them.

(Q6)—Is there a discussion of the interpretation of the music?

The only discussion of the interpretation of the music occurs in the Palmer text with the discussion of uneven eighth notes, syncopation, and call and response to help the student more easily understand the blues style. Interpretation of the music in the texts should be discussed. Even at this early stage of instruction, the authors should provide some meaningful guidelines and suggestions for interpretation so that the adult student is not completely dependent on the teacher for this information for every piece. For example, the student should be advised to play a melody louder than its accompaniment, and given other elementary guidelines for interpretation.

(Q7)—Are there suggestions for learning a new piece of music?

The authors do offer some suggestions for learning a new piece of music. These include clapping the rhythm before beginning to play a piece and writing in the names of the first notes of many of the pieces in the Faber and Bastien method books. Students are also introduced to intervals and musical form. Understanding the form of a piece can help the student learn the piece more quickly. Other suggestions for learning specific pieces (e.g., practicing at a slower tempo at first, practicing hands alone, etc.) would also be helpful and would likely reinforce advice offered by the piano teacher.

(Q8)—Are there any references for further reading for more explanation about a concept?

No references are offered for further reading about a concept. Authors should note where an interested student can find more information regarding interpretation or any other new concept presented. With the large volume of online information currently available for adult piano students, and the many methods and supplementary books geared toward adult pianists, most adult students would probably appreciate suggestions leading them to recommended sources of information.

(Q9)—Are there suggestions for additional pieces in a certain style of music introduced in the method book?

Only two examples of additional pieces in a certain style of music are introduced in these method books. They are both contained in the Palmer text. For further technical

study, the author referred the student to *The Virtuoso Pianist* by Charles Louis Hanon¹²⁰; for additional pieces in the blues style, the student is referred to *Alfred's Basic Adult Jazz/Rock Course*.¹²¹ These are the only references in any of the method books to additional pieces in a certain style of music. Authors should include suggestions for additional pieces in a certain style or at a certain level of proficiency. Suggesting additional repertoire for further study would encourage the student to learn more pieces, (especially those that might complement the selection of repertoire in the method book) and would provide additional opportunities for skill acquisition.

(Q10)—How much of the book is instruction-based (telling the student information) and how much of the book is question-based (asking questions to help the student consider the answer)?

All three of the methods are mostly instruction-based rather than question-based. The few exceptions include asking the student to name the first note of many of the pieces in the Faber and Bastien texts, asking the student to identify the form in the Faber text, and asking the student to improvise in the response section of the piece that includes call and response in the Palmer text. The authors should ask leading questions so that the student can figure out his own solutions and discover new information rather than only being told new information. Additional questions for the student could promote learning through musical investigation and discovery, rather than simply through memorizing facts.

¹²⁰ Charles Louis Hanon, *The Virtuoso Pianist, Volume 1*, 2nd ed., ed. Allan Small (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1992) and Charles Louis Hanon, *The Virtuoso Pianist*, 2nd ed., ed. Allan Small (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1992).

¹²¹ Bert Konowitz, *Alfred's Basic Adult Jazz/Rock Course* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1998).

(Q11)—Does the book call upon the adult to consider his own previous musical experiences to explain concepts?

There are few instances when the student is called upon to consider his own previous musical experiences to explain concepts. These include working with some time signatures (Faber text), note values (Bastien and Palmer texts), and scales (Faber text). The authors should consider the adult's previous musical experiences to a greater extent; unlike very young children, adults have probably heard a great deal of music over the years and can draw upon these experiences in skills like interval-recognition, distinguishing major and minor keys, etc..

Recommendations for Further Research

The following avenues should be pursued for further research on self-directed learning for the adult student. More research should be conducted on the teacher-student interaction in the adult piano lesson in terms of promoting self-directed learning. Self-directed projects and activities related to piano study should be designed for the adult. Future researchers should then measure the achievement of students who used a text that promoted androgogic learning and who were taught in a self-directed manner; student achievement could also be measured in specific areas of content (e.g., repertoire, sight reading, technique, etc.) as well as in various forms of learning (e.g., physical learning, cognitive learning, aesthetic learning/musical interpretation, etc.). Other adult piano method books (including those for non-keyboard music majors) should be examined for their promotion of self-directed learning. Future research should also consider physical skills in relation to self-directed learning. Also, more advanced levels of method series

should be examined to see if more self-directed learning is encouraged as the student's knowledge and ability level increases.

It is hoped that this project has inspired authors of future adult method books to promote self-directed learning whenever possible.

APPENDIX A

The following questions were adapted from sources by Malcolm Knowles¹²² and Hung-Ling Chen¹²³ and were used to examine the adult piano method books in this study.

- 1) Are the objectives clearly explained?
- 2) Is there a choice in what music the student is learning to play?
- 3) Are new concepts clearly explained, or is the student completely dependent on a teacher to explain the concept to him?
- 4) Are there opportunities for the student to make his own decisions concerning solving any difficulties in the piano study?
- 5) Are there suggestions for solving problems in the method book?
- 6) Is there a discussion of the interpretation of the music?
- 7) Are there suggestions for learning a new piece of music?
- 8) Are there any references for further reading for more explanation about a concept?
- 9) Are there suggestions for additional pieces in a certain style of music introduced in the method book?
- 10) How much of the book is instruction-based (telling the student information) and how much of the book is question-based (asking questions to help the student

¹²² Malcolm Knowles, *Self-Directed Learning* (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1975), 20-21.

¹²³ Hung-Ling Chen, "An Investigation of Self-Directed Learning Among Non-Music Major Adult Piano Learners in One-to-One Piano Instruction (Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, 1996).

consider the answer)? Does the book elicit and use the student's ideas or simply tell the student what to do?

11) Does the book call upon the adult to consider his own previous musical experience to explain concepts?

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