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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE FABER SERIES *PIANO ADVENTURES*
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PIANO PEDAGOGY

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Mississippi

Martha F. Monroe

December 2018

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the *Piano Adventures* method books written by Randall and Nancy Faber. The series was thoroughly researched and developed for ten years before it was published in 1993. Since that time, the series has been enhanced and has added numerous additional books of repertoire, technique, and improvisation. An online application has been created to help not only students, but also to provide teaching tools and guides for teachers. With the inclusion of technology at the forefront of all education, the Faber series has opened the door for students through a new approach that connects the student with online videos and accompaniments that foster continued interest and development of piano skills. An in-depth interview with Dr. Randall Faber explains their mission and purpose of the method with a focus on competence, motivation, and reinforcement. A survey was also given to 103 piano teachers in Mississippi in order to gauge their opinions on the *Piano Adventures* series with its multi-key approach, diverse repertoire, and approach to technique and artistry. The study indicates the wide use of the series, the importance of the variety of repertoire, and the unique feature of the *Technique and Artistry* books.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Robert Austin Monroe. Without his encouragement and support I would not have been able to complete this lifelong goal. His patience and understanding of the importance of my goal enabled me to complete this dissertation with confidence and determination. I also thank my family and friends who encouraged me throughout the entire process of writing about my passion--the art of teaching piano.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Alan Linder Spurgeon, Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Music at the University of Mississippi, for his time, encouragement, and contribution of musical, theoretical, and historical knowledge. I also honor the memory of my piano professor, Dr. Ralph McDowell Taylor, at Mississippi College for his musical guidance and support in helping to develop my understanding of piano performance and the important elements of piano pedagogy.

My thanks to gatekeeper Betsy Henrichs who opened the door of the Faber Music Institute to me. Finally, I am deeply indebted to Dr. Randall Faber for his generosity of time in sharing his knowledge, expertise, and philosophy. This experience gave me a true insight into the pedagogical and personal benefits, and ultimately the mission of *Piano Adventures*. All musical examples in this study were given ©Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the history of piano methods is examined, and the changes and innovations that were made in the mid-20th century are explored. Biographical information is given about Nancy Trithart Faber and Randall Scott Faber showing how their interests in piano pedagogy merged. The birth of *Piano Adventures* is explained with its concepts, sequencing, technique, and variety of literature. The series has been published in many languages and has now been connected to computer technology in order to enhance piano instruction.

In recent years the number of students who are taking piano lessons has declined. The dropout rate is high and usually occurs between the second and third year of study. There appear to be fewer pianists today to accompany soloists, choirs, and other musical productions, not to mention pianists who perform alone and those who teach piano to the pianists of the future. Research has shown that there are various reasons for the decline in piano study.¹ Social activities, sports, and other group activities are now more available to young students than in the past. The discipline of learning, practicing, and performing at the piano has become increasingly rare to the present generation. The diminishing number of pianists and the reasons for this situation are worthy of serious consideration and examination.

This researcher has used several piano method series through many years of teaching. I have found the Faber series to be the best suited to my students. I sought to be completely unbiased in my evaluation of the materials but, because of my familiarity with and admiration of

¹Eugenia Costa-Giomi, "I Do Not Want to Study Piano!," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* (2004): 57.

the series, it is possible that some researcher bias is unavoidable.

History of Piano and Methods

The status of the piano and the study of piano have greatly changed in today's society. For much of the 20th century, many homes in America had a piano. It was the home entertainment system long before the era of electronics; families would play and sing together, or listen to their children's practice and performance. Studying the piano was considered a privilege, a part of education and culture for children in middle to upper class society. Playing the piano was the perfect hobby for a well-bred lady, and it became firmly associated with women. As a result, at this time in history, female pianists far outnumbered their male counterparts.²

In the first half of the 1900s technological advancements, research on piano technique, new piano method books, music journals, professional music organizations, and the growth of college music programs occurred. At this time, there were also no standards for private piano teaching. Therefore, a vast array of different methods and approaches to teaching were used. Despite all of this, many piano teachers resisted change to new ideas and concepts, and the training received by some teachers was very inadequate.³

Maria Montessori, who established the Montessori schools and was a pianist herself, devoted her life to helping children learn. She said, "Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words, but by experiences in a dynamic environment, one arranged and directed by an adult who is prepared for the mission."⁴

²Debra Brubaker Burns, Anita Jackson, and Connie Arrau Sturm, "Unsung Heroines," *The American Teacher* (2003) : 24.

³Connie Arrau Strum, Michael James, Anita Jackson, and Debra Brubaker Burns, "Celebrating 100 Years of Progress in American Piano Teaching-Part II: 1950-2000," *The American Music Teacher* (2000-2001): 24-25.

⁴Charles Blanchard, "*Positive Piano*," (Lexington, KY: Honest Knave, 2015) , 441.

Around the mid-20th century, teachers began to stress the relationship between intellectual and physical factors in piano performance. Current pedagogical thought views piano study as a humanistic discipline, requiring teachers to understand their students as individuals.⁵ Instead of having everything in one book, between 1950 and 2000, book formats and illustrations changed and included several correlated books at each level. Later, method writers combined new approaches with multi-key and intervallic reading and also included rhythmic activities, improvisation, and ear training.

Out of necessity today, independent studio piano teachers have developed a profession with issues of marketing, scheduling, lesson fees, policies, and bookkeeping. Using a variety of repertoire, method books have become more attractive in appearance with more appeal to today's students. The Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) encourages professionalism and works to raise the standards as a whole for teaching. Various attempts have been made to help address the high dropout rate and the declining number of school age students by this organization. Unfortunately, MTNA represents only a small percentage of piano teachers.

Today, in the 21st century, piano teachers have access to training, innovative methods, and more materials than in previous decades. Most likely, increasing the overall level of professionalism among independent music teachers will result in higher quality musical training for the American public which can possibly lead to greater music appreciation and skill, fewer "dropouts," and increased public support for music programs and activities.⁶ Consistency in using the most effective method series and taking advantage of continuing education avenues most certainly will elevate the professional level and respect for the private piano teacher.

⁵Ibid. 25.

⁶Ibid. 28.

Nancy Trithart and Randall Faber

Nancy Trithart began study with her choir director-piano teacher mother at age three. She continued to play piano, and at age seven, she wrote little songs. She grew up in Nashville and studied classical music at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music. Composing projects were not suggested in private piano lessons. She said, "Looking back on this makes me realize how important teaching harmony and composition is for today's piano teacher. Engaging the student through composition is a way of taking a personal interest in the student--perhaps on a deeper level than learning only to perform pieces."⁷ As she continued to study the piano, her mother and later her high school piano teacher instilled a deep love of the piano and its music.

Nancy was admitted as an undergraduate student at the Eastman School of Music as a composition or performance major. Choosing to be a piano performance major provided the opportunity to immerse herself in practicing the piano. She stated, "I do believe that as one increases their ability at their instrument, they also broaden their tools for composing."⁸ Nancy transferred to Michigan State University and completed her Bachelor of Music degree in composition. Graduate studies followed at the Milton Avery Graduate School of Fine Arts at Bard College, where she received her Master of Fine Arts degree in composition. She studied composition with William Albright, a pivotal teacher for Nancy, and also studied with Joan Tower, Charles Ruggiero, and British composer Nicholas Maw. Since then Nancy has received many honors including being named Knoxville Songwriter of the Year in 1989. Other awards that she received were being named "Distinguished Composer of the Year" in 1998 by Music Teachers National Association, and her composition won the 1994 National Flute Association

⁷Nancy Faber, interview with FJH Music Co., Inc, (2003). www.faberpiano.com (accessed January 2017).

⁸Ibid. 2.

Professional Chamber Music Competition. Ms. Faber's music has been heard on network television, public radio, and in piano recitals of teachers around the world. In addition, she received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Michigan State University in 2015.

At the age of sixteen, Nancy began to teach piano lessons. She taught first in her mother's piano studio and later continued to teach and compose. In 1977, Nancy went home for a summer vacation and was encouraged to attend a Robert Pace piano workshop that was being held at a local music store. "That chance meeting changed the course of piano teaching history when two students met and later teamed up to become husband and wife, better known as Faber and Faber."⁹

Randall Faber was also born into a musical family in Grand Rapids, Michigan. An important influence in his musical background was his grandmother who was a concert pianist. He began studies at the age of eight and studied with Lucille Dinsmore for ten years. Randy credits Mrs. Dinsmore for teaching him the value of routine and hard work which led him to a scholarship to Interlochen music camp. It was at Interlochen that Randy made the decision to pursue music as a career. During this time in his life, he played in a rock band and won accolades in numerous classical music competitions. At the age of nineteen, he signed a pop recording contract where he recorded and at the same time attended college. Today, he often mentions the influence of popular songs from George Gershwin and Jerome Kern to the Beatles, country, and jazz.¹⁰ Randy was also publishing and working with Frank Hackinson, the founder of Columbia Pictures Publications. Working in a rock band gave him improvisation skills and a

⁹Helen S. Tarchalski, "An Interview with Faber and Faber." *Keyboard Companion* (2006): 56 (accessed November 29 2017).

¹⁰Suzanne Guy, "The Partnership At the Piano Of Nancy and Randall Faber," *Clavier Companion* (January 2003): 9.

clear understanding of pop styles, which would prove to be most valuable in his future. He enrolled as a piano performance major at the University of Michigan in 1974. His teachers at the University of Michigan, Charles Fisher and Eugene Bossart, transformed his playing.¹¹

Randy received three diplomas from the University of Michigan which include a Bachelor Degree in Piano Performance in 1977; a Master's Degree in Piano Performance in 1986; and a Master's Degree in Instructional Design in 1987. In 2003, he received a doctorate in education and human development from Vanderbilt University. Dr. Faber has toured the United States and numerous countries as a concert pianist giving recitals and lectures. He was a Convention Artist for the Music Teachers National Association Conference and a master teacher for the World Conference on Piano Pedagogy, National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy, and the National Piano Teachers Institute. He is a Steinway Artist and has appeared on public radio and television broadcasts. Also, he has presented his research at international conferences and has been recognized as a Visiting Artist at universities throughout North America and Asia.

In 1977, during his senior year in college, Randy taught group piano at a local music store. Nancy and Randy met in the basement of King's Keyboard House in Ann Arbor, Michigan where they attended a Robert Pace piano teaching workshop. "Nancy was the only teacher there under fifty, and I was the only guy. We were engaged within a year."¹²

The Beginning of Faber and Faber

Nancy and Randall Faber soon began to write and test teaching materials in their studio. Their house was a small, two-bedroom home in Ann Arbor with seven pianos and four electric

¹¹Randall Faber, "Artist-Educator Review," PianoEducation.org. (1999) : 2 (accessed January 2018).

¹²Helen S. Tarchalski, "An Interview with Faber and Faber," *Keyboard Companion* (2006): 57.

pianos. Students were involved in the choice of repertoire and were asked their opinions about everything. Major re-writes were done where they gave students homemade copies of the pieces they composed.¹³ They worked long, hard hours each night and continued to test materials with students in their small studio-house. There were four teachers with one hundred students. Ms. Faber stated, "Teaching is how we get into the students' heads in order to figure out how to make our publications work, so we certainly continue with our own teaching."¹⁴ After seven years of developing and teaching, the Fabers worked at Belwin-Mills. They joined F.J.H. Music Co. and published a six-level supplementary series called *PreTime to BigTime Piano*. Then in 1993, they published *Piano Adventures* and have continued to revise, to write, and to add supplemental books.

The Faber series is now well-established across the country and has been expanded around the world with its international editions, which are customized to reflect the culture and folklore of each language, country, and region of the world. The *Piano Adventures* series has been translated into Spanish, German, Dutch, Korean, Taiwanese (traditional Mandarin), Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Anglicized for Australia and the United Kingdom. The Faber team has traveled to numerous countries to establish a professional connection with music educators who are trained in a series of master classes and workshops. According to Betsy Henrichs, the administrator of the Faber Piano Institute, in the past eight years from 2009 to 2017 the Faber series company has sold 18,702,704 method books throughout the world.¹⁵ This fact is a contributing statistic that explains the success and widespread use of *Piano Adventures* by

¹³Ibid. 60.

¹⁴Ibid. 60.

¹⁵Betsy Henrichs, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

piano teachers not only in North America, but also on other continents.

The Fabers have spent years studying the cause and effect of the dropout problem and have tested concepts and teaching techniques in their own pilot piano studio. By establishing the Faber Piano Institute in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Fabers have influenced piano students and teachers around the world. The motivation for writing *Piano Adventures* initially was to address the dropout rate in the second and third years of piano study. They have now authored over three hundred publications for piano instruction. Students often did not relate to pieces in the prevailing method books. As a result, many students failed to become confident readers, needing theory skills and an opportunity for a multi-key approach. Further, a composite approach to ensure multiple skills was coordinated with the reading process. The primary focus was to offer enjoyable and recognizable pieces at an appropriate level of difficulty. A secondary focus also was to introduce the technique and artistry approach to playing. Technical gestures were implemented for the purpose of musical expression. Finally, all repertoire in the *Piano Adventures* series is "pianistic" and leads to a musical shape which is designed to promote expressive playing.¹⁶

Piano Adventures first appeared in 1993, and since that time the Faber team has continued to write, test, and revise repertoire for every method. Numerous supplemental repertoire books have been written to expand on different styles of music: *Classics, Jazz and Blues, Popular, Rock and Roll, Hymns, Ragtime and Marches, and Holiday selections*. The

¹⁶Randall Faber, "Artist-Educator Interview." PianoEducation.org. (1999) : 2 (accessed March 2018).

functionality of playing is extremely important in teaching. This concept means to have music students play music that they can relate to and that is important to them. Connecting to a song is vitally important and provides a sense of motivation to continue study. Additionally, they have written the *Accelerated Piano Adventures* for older children, *My First Piano Adventures* for preschool children, and the *Adult Piano Adventures* series, which includes online videos and its own supplementary library. Supplemental books include the *Hanon-Faber The New Virtuoso Pianist*, *The Piano Literature Collections*, *Piano Sonatinas*, and *The Keyboard Artist* series. The *Achievement Literature* series contains individual pieces from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Impressionistic periods. Finally, in keeping with teaching and technology, the *Piano Adventures* Player app, which is designed for i-Pad and i-Phone, features accompaniments that allow students to experiment in rhythmic practice, sight reading, proficiency, and improvisation. Effective guidelines, that can be used by students and their parents, are a valuable tool located in each student lesson book.

The Faber series is all-encompassing from beginner through adult levels of method books. In addition, the Fabers have created books in many genres and styles that appeal to all kinds of student interests. Further, they have developed teaching videos for students and teachers that enable them to actually see and to experience technical aspects of playing. A Technique and Artistry application online has been created for teacher training in order to aid in the development of musical, artistic lessons for every child. Professional development offerings are currently available from the Faber Piano Institute for any teacher who has enrolled on the website. Derek Pollschuk, an associate professor of piano and director of piano pedagogy at Michigan State University, states, "The *Piano Adventures* series is an incredible resource. Its success is attributed to a method based on meticulous research of learning styles, expert

compositional craftsmanship, and rock-solid pedagogical principles."¹⁷

¹⁷<https://www.music.msu.edu/news>. (March 3, 2015) (accessed October 15 2018).

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter of related literature, the influence of Frances Clark and her philosophy is discussed, particularly concerning her series *The Music Tree*. Other piano series are also reviewed and compared in articles from periodicals and dissertations. The study examines the important role of supplemental material in all piano series. In addition, the information collected for this study is from an interview and a piano teacher survey.

In research studies, particularly in several dissertations, we find conclusions that are drawn from evaluations of current piano method series. Each piano method is evaluated with its different strengths and weaknesses. At times, the teaching of concepts may appear in a different order, and books may lack cohesiveness in lesson, theory, or other supplemental material.

The Influence of Frances Clark

Frances Clark created a beginning piano method called *The Music Tree*, first published in 1955. *The Music Tree* used off-staff notation with an intervallic approach to reading. According to Allison Hudak, Frances Clark was one of the most important piano pedagogues in the twentieth century. Having transformed the procedures of beginning instruction with the creation of her own method book series, she taught teachers how to prepare, to present, and to reinforce new musical concepts with children.¹⁸

When Clark began teaching piano, there were twelve standard piano method books

¹⁸Allison Hudak, "A Personal Portrait of Frances Oman Clark Through the Eyes of Her Most Prominent Students and Collaborators" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2004), vi.

available for piano teachers. At that time, she noticed that there were often too many new concepts on a page and that there were too few pieces requiring students to practice the concepts presented. Her view was that the new concepts presented in these books were not presented with sufficient reinforcement pieces and did not allow the students enough time to synthesize the information. There was neither companion theory books, nor exercises in improvisation, composing, transposition, harmonization, ear-training, technique, or ensemble. Clark believed that reinforcement allowed a student to apply concepts in sight-reading, improvising, transposing, and harmonizing, eventually developing the student into a complete musician.¹⁹

With the assistance of Louise Goss, Clark began to organize musical concepts, skills, and repertoire by level, eventually leading to the creation of *The Music Tree* and the six levels of the core curriculum in *The Frances Clark Library*. She worked with pianists of all levels, from early beginners to concert artists. Importantly, she based her teaching on the belief that music should be taught according to sound principles of teaching and that all learning should proceed from the student's own experiences.²⁰

Frances Clark believed that the student could be guided in a natural way, not hurried or forced, to discover a new musical concept. Consequently, she wrote:

We are dealing with perception--with seeing, hearing, and touching. We begin by making sure, first of all, that the child hears. This is not passive hearing; it is active hearing. It is the same with seeing. The child is not only seeing, but he is also aware of what he is seeing. It is the same with touching. These three arts, seeing, hearing, and touching, must develop simultaneously from the beginning. As soon as technique gets ahead of musicianship, we are lost. As soon as musicianship gets ahead of technique, we have a frustrated student. As soon as everything gets ahead of how to practice, it takes

¹⁹Ibid. 4.

²⁰"The Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy," *The National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy 2001: Conference Program*: 36 www.claviercompanion.com (accessed August 2018).

too long to learn the repertoire. All three aspects of learning must go hand-in-hand.²¹

Frances Clark's legacy continues through the work of her former students. Sam Holland explained, "Few would disagree that Frances is the most important leader in the field of piano pedagogy in America in the twentieth century. No one who teaches piano, no current piano method, and no piano pedagogy course is untouched by her thinking."²² Clark was satisfied that she had created a piano method that incorporated all of her ideas in allowing students to be complete musicians at every stage in *The Music Tree*.

Rebecca Grooms Johnson has written a detailed description of piano methods in the *Clavier Companion* Journal. "*The Music Tree* is a series that sparked a revolution in pedagogic thought."²³ The reading uses an intervallic approach to teaching reading, and rhythm is often demonstrated through the swinging or moving of the arm. The textbooks, divided into units, include warm-ups and various creative activities including composition, improvisation, and harmonization. The repertoire includes works by Clark and Goss and also by other pedagogical composers. Genres are varied with a contemporary sound. Technique is approached with warm-up drills, but instructions on how to play the notes with a relaxed and well-shaped hand are generally left for the teacher to provide. "The look of the series-clean and unadorned- reflects its pedagogic philosophy throughout. This method is built on meticulous attention to sequencing with careful and extensive preparation for each new concept."²⁴

²¹Fred Kern, "America's First Lady of Piano Education," *Clavier* 25 (1986): 14 (accessed November 2017).

²²Allison Hudak, "A Personal Portrait of Frances Oman Clark Through the Eyes of Her Most Prominent Students and Collaborators" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2004), 43.

²³Rebecca Grooms Johnson, "A Survey of Current Methods: *The Music Tree*," *Clavier Companion* (May, 2010) : 1 (accessed July 2018).

²⁴*Ibid.* 1.

The Music Tree, first published in 1955, was revised in 1993 adding more folk songs, pop music, and rock tunes. New technology allowed Clark and Goss to create CDs and floppy disks to accompany the texts. Each unit was expanded to develop finger independence, facility, and tonal control as well as steps to composing. Warner Brothers then approached Clark and Goss to revise their materials again. *The Music Tree* is an elementary series containing eight books in order to form a step-by-step plan for musical growth at the keyboard that covers every phase of elementary musicianship. Clark's *The Six Level Core Curriculum* takes students from early intermediate to early advanced levels incorporating literature from several centuries as well as technique, theory, and supplementary collections. Frances Clark spent a lifetime developing piano materials that best exemplified what she felt were the essential components in a well-rounded piano education. Through each revision process of what became known as *The Music Tree*, Clark carefully reexamined her own beliefs in creating a structured sequence of learning and modified her books so that they contained the most applicable pieces that the student could easily master through guided instruction. Allison Hudak states, "Her materials continue to be used today, and through those music books, her legacy as a piano pedagogue continues."²⁵

The James and Jane Bastien Series

Perhaps Frances Clark inspired others to publish piano method books which are designed to be more updated and to meet the needs of total musicianship. Following Clark in creating a piano method series were James and Jane Bastien with their series *Bastien Piano Basics*. Originally published in 1985, this series begins with pre-staff reading black and white key pieces. All of the primer level songs have words, and some have teacher accompaniments. The

²⁵Allison Hudak, "A Personal Portrait of Frances Oman Clark Through the Eyes of Her Most Prominent Students and Collaborators" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2004), 213.

lesson books present a multi-key approach where intervals are introduced along with five-finger hand positions from the beginning. Rebecca Grooms Johnson said, "Bastien was one of the first series to use large, extremely colorful graphics. The pictures become smaller in the upper level books, and the graphics do not become concurrently age-appropriate."²⁶ The repertoire books are filled with original pieces and arrangements of folk songs in a variety of styles. No teacher duets are included in any levels. *Theory* books contain a variety of drills and games to support and to reiterate the concepts presented with very few activities for improvisation. Technique is taught with etude-like pieces that explore and expand technical challenges of the pieces in the *Lesson* books. There are Teacher Guides in hard copy or online, as well as CDs with orchestral accompaniment. Johnson's summary concludes with, "This series, with its strong multi-key approach, probably works best with students particularly interested in keyboard skills and perhaps playing in a jazz or rock band, rather than students (or teachers) who are more repertoire-based in their interests and goals."²⁷

The Alfred Premiere Piano Course

Another often used piano method series is the *Alfred Premiere Piano Course* written and collaborated in 2005 by Dennis Alexander, Gayle Kowalchuk, E. L. Lancaster, Victoria McArthur, and Martha Mier. In her dissertation, Bethany Muck evaluated the Alfred series, which does a good job of balancing learning to play the piano with other skills, including ear training, sight reading, and composition. Because of this, it appears to offer a comprehensive music education. However, its delay in presenting certain key concepts (scales, key signatures, and more dynamic marks) can be a roadblock to some aspiring pianists. According to Muck, the

²⁶Rebecca Grooms Johnson, "A Survey of Current Methods: *Bastien Piano Basics*," *Clavier Companion* (March, 2011) : 1 (accessed July 2018).

²⁷Ibid. 1.

major downfall to this series is the quality of the music in level 1A.

Muck found that one of the unique aspects of this series was introducing students to the bass clef in the beginning to prevent them from becoming weaker bass clef readers. Also, rhythms are read in multiple-note patterns rather than as single notes forcing the student to look ahead. This series' approach to rhythm is unique. "Unit chanting" is used where students are taught different rhythm patterns for each level. Reinforcement of new concepts and skills occur in all of the supplemental books.

While consistently reviewing piano method series, Rebecca Grooms Johnson found that the series uses an eclectic reading approach with a strong emphasis on landmark notes and intervallic reading. Rhythmic teaching begins with unit-counting and then quickly moves to metric with the introduction of time signatures. The *Workout* activity book provides technical exercises that address specific issues in a given piece and suggestions for efficient practice. The *Imagination Station* book offers creative activities including playing by ear and improvisation. Other books that support the *Lesson* and *Performance* books are *Fun Zone* (games and puzzles), *Now Hear This* (ear training exercises), and *Now Play This* (sight reading exercises). Johnson writes, "An excellent beginning emphasis in this series on steps, repeats, and recognition of notational direction."²⁸

Review of Methods

In all, Johnson reviewed ten piano methods including Randall and Nancy Faber's *Piano Adventures* series. The Fabers introduce the grand staff which is used throughout notation, the reading approach is eclectic, and note values are taught with unit and syllabic counting. Pieces in later levels feature increasingly challenging swing and syncopated patterns. In the *Lesson*

²⁸Rebecca Grooms Johnson, "A Survey of Current Methods: *Alfred Premiere Piano*," *Clavier Companion* (March 2010): 1. (accessed July 2018).

books, "Discovery" suggestions help students identify intervals, chords, scales, patterns, and other concepts that enhance sight-reading, practicing, and memorization. "Creative" suggestions provide ideas for the application of theory, improvisation, and composition.

In the Faber series, the *Theory* books include sections on "Eye Training" (sight-reading) and ear training, making it easier for these often slighted skills to be incorporated into lessons. Opportunities for transposition and improvisation are included throughout. The *Technique and Artistry* book approach is the strength and the unique aspect of this method. Johnson feels that these books are "an excellent reminder that good technique is about much more than playing many notes fast. If it's not musically expressive, it's just typing."²⁹ Further, *The Piano Adventures Teacher Guide* is explored page-by-page on the website. Videos are available for teachers and students to see actual technique demonstrations. Also, there is a Discussion Forum as well as a Newsletter which features articles and teaching tips. In addition, CD accompaniments are available for all books. Johnson's review was published in 2009, and several supplemental books have been added since that time.

Other in-depth research also evaluated the *Piano Adventures* series. Takako Hayase compared the Faber *Piano Adventures* with a well-known Japanese piano method series by Akira Miyoshi using the Royal American Conservatory Examination (RACE) standards. Hayase's description of the Faber method is based on three main points: using exercises to let students discover new topics and gain long-term memory, choosing the best timing in assigning new materials, and inserting the best choices of repertoire.³⁰ The Fabers provide creative discovery

²⁹Rebecca Grooms Johnson, "A Survey of Current Methods: *Piano Adventures*," *Clavier Companion* (Nov/Dec 2009): 34-35 (accessed July 2018).

³⁰Takako Hayase, "A Comparison of Akira Miyoshi Piano Method with Nancy and Randall Faber's *Piano Adventures* Based on Royal American Conservatory Examination (RACE)" (Ph. D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2006), 17.

activities where students are exposed to and experience a new topic through these activities.

"Discovery" pieces are in the lesson books which link piece and activity, and additional activities are correlated in the theory book. As for timing, the Fabers combine a variety of compositions between discipline and fun activities. The objective of each piece is clearly stated in each unit, and the various types of repertoire strive to produce students who are able to play many different types of music. Many of the pieces contain lyrics that will allow students to also sing along.

Both series contain colorful visual images. The objective here is to help students associate a piece with a programmatic meaning that is intended to stimulate expressive playing. With the Faber repertoire being more diverse, both series include repertoire of the four musical periods and vernacular music which represent their ethnic cultures. Another difference between the two methods is that there are teacher accompaniments in each Faber composition though Level 3B. Miyoshi's accompaniments travel from one register to another which requires the teacher to stand behind the students in order to reach both registers.

A major difference between the two methods is that the Faber series also has orchestrated accompaniment CDs that go along with the *Lesson* books. Various instrumental ensembles are used such as orchestra, jazz band, marching band, and rock combo. Other differences are that Miyoshi introduces major and minor keys equally, and Faber introduces only major keys in the first three levels. Faber includes short, biographical sketches of composers, whereas Miyoshi does not. Faber *Theory* books contain exercise writings for students in order to comprehend new elements. Conversely, Miyoshi's method does not have a separate theory book, but rather it describes small portions of explanation or tables to teach theory concepts.

In the RACE grading system, there are distinctive differences in the two methods. Both methods show strengths and weaknesses and arrive at the same destination at different times.

Hayase says, "In addition to a superior aesthetic presentation, ideally teachers and students want to use the method that provides a quality curriculum."³¹ She concluded that if graduates of the Miyoshi method would like to proceed to further advanced levels, they will need to study from well-known composers' works. Hayase ends with the remark, "I hope both Miyoshi and Faber methods will be available in both Japan and the United States and will contribute to the growth of future pianists."³²

Another dissertation, written by Julie Ann Ballard, analyzed ten piano method series using the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) standard-based elements. This organization, now known as the National Association for Music Education (NAFME), developed nine national standards for music education excellence in response to the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," which was passed by Congress in 1994. The purpose of Ballard's study was to investigate the variety of repertoire, the development of skills for creating music, and the variety of key, meter, and other related music reading experiences in piano methods published from 1994 to 2006.³³ Interestingly, no other content analysis of piano methods was found containing direct reference to the MENC National Standards for teaching and learning music.

Ratings were given for the variety of repertoire in each series: poor (0), fair (1), good (2), and excellent (3). Repertoire was also placed into one of seven categories: author composed pieces, non-author composed pieces, western art music, folk and traditional songs and tunes, nursery and play songs, multicultural music, religious music, and popular music. Only two of the ten received a (3), one received a (2), 3 received a (1), and four received a (0). The Faber

³¹Ibid. 96.

³²Ibid. 97.

³³Julie Ann Ballard, "An Analysis of the Music Content in Ten Piano Methods 1994-2006) for the Elementary-Aged Beginning Piano Student for MENC National Standards Based Elements" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2007) 6.

Piano Adventures in 2007 received a (1). However, it should be noted that series with 70-79% author-composed repertoire and 2% or less in each of 3 other categories were also given a fair (1) rating.

The same rubric rating scale was given for music-creating activities. Only one method received a (3), three methods, including Faber, received a (2), one received a (1), and four received a (0). The third area showing variety of key, meter, and other related music reading components was divided into three tables with different scoring. Three methods had the greatest variety of keys with the other seven having basically the same variety of keys. All series contained basic meters with a few additional meters used by five of the methods. A fair rating was given to four methods, including Faber, for not using a variety of keys and meters and other music-reading concepts.

Technology with CD accompaniments for lesson book repertoire was also included in eight of the ten method series in order to encourage ensemble playing. The overall ratings in implementation of the National Standards 2, 3, 4, and 5 for variety of music, creating music, and reading music were as follows: two received excellent ratings, one received a good rating, two, including Faber, received fair ratings, and five received poor ratings. Hopefully, these ratings have changed in the last ten years with improvements and enhancements in these ten particular series.

An important facet of every piano method series is that it should reflect comprehensive musicianship. This philosophy was developed in the 1960s and continued through the 1970s to encourage teachers to go beyond technical and performance aspects. Theory, history, composition, improvisation, and ear training instruction were then encouraged to be included in method book curriculum. The success of students in the private music studio relies heavily on

the instructional material chosen by the teacher. Frances Clark was an innovator in changing the way materials looked, the way music reading was approached, and the introduction of creative activities. Because of her work and the Comprehensive Musicianship philosophy, master-teachers completely changed the way piano instruction was planned for lesson time. No longer did students play piece after piece, but now time segments were devoted to theory, improvisation, and technique. In Kimberley Sundell's thesis, she wrote, "The piano teacher was seen as a bridge between the two worlds: being a performance teacher dealing with repertoire, performance practices, and technique, as well as being an educator that needs to be knowledgeable about educational topics such as learning styles and psychology and provide a comprehensive music experience that would include activities/skills in improvisation and composition."³⁴

The first question Sundell asked was: "Do piano method books include the categories central to comprehensive musicianship in their curriculum through activities in aural skills, composition, improvisation, music history, music theory, and performance practices?" Of the twelve methods in Sundell's sampling, Faber ranked second and *Celebrate Piano* ranked first with the highest rate of inclusion of all categories. Of the subcategories represented, ensemble presented in the form of teacher duets was contained in all of the methods, as well as improvisation and transposition. Music theory was represented with written exercises, and the least represented category was music history.

At the time it was published in 1993, Faber *Piano Adventures* included all categories except music history, which is now included with short biographies of the master composers that accompany their selected pieces. Faber gained the highest inclusion rate in written exercise

³⁴Kimberley Sundell, "Survey of Eighteen North-American Piano Method Books: Repertoire Selection and Categories" (Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2012) 21.

with ninety-eight activities, thirty-three percent of the total number of comprehensive musicianship activities. The series also includes supplemental books in theory and technique. Another important feature of the Faber series is the use of symbols to represent different activities such as discovery and creativity. These symbols are presented at the bottom of the page. Additionally, instructions and analysis questions are presented at the top of the page in the Faber series.

Sundell asked the question, "Are activities introduced in the lesson book, or mainly in supplemental books?"³⁵ With one activity every 1.6 pages, Faber *Piano Adventures* had the second highest ratio (*The Music Tree* had the highest ratio). Another highest ratio number was that of the analysis category with Faber having an analysis activity every 1.4 pages. Clearly, *Piano Adventures* encourages active participation with written theory exercises, technique activities, improvisation and composition opportunities. These objectives satisfy the requirements of the comprehensive musicianship philosophy that was established so many decades ago.

Yuanyuan Lu surveyed eighteen piano method series in North America in 2012 to provide piano teachers with information to assist them in choosing suitable books for their students. This study was designed to allow teachers to choose a method book that focuses mainly on certain categories of repertoire. In addition, her work provided a way for teachers to choose a method that exposes their students in order to learn a wide variety of different repertoire.³⁶ Classical and popular music were considered to be the most important categories. All method books included folk/traditional examples of music. Additionally, all eighteen series

³⁵Ibid. 66

³⁶Yuanyuan Lu, "Survey of Eighteen North-American Piano Method Books: Repertoire Selection and Categories" (Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2012) 16.

contained supplementary books, such as technique, performance, or solo books.

Lu's study further focused on thirteen different categories of repertoire in the methods reviewed. Some method books included twelve categories of repertoire out of the thirteen. On the other hand, other methods contained as few as four categories. The Faber series used ten different categories. A second focus of Lu's thesis was the use of multi-cultural/ethnic elements. Classical music, which often represented the country where it was written, and folk music were represented in seventeen of the methods. All eighteen method books had representation of author-written repertoire and were in the style of folk or ethnic music. The Faber method contained 67.21 percent of author-written repertoire. The overall average for author-written repertoire was 60.98 percent with Faber using folk/traditional from seven different cultures/ethnicities. With an awareness of ethnomusicology, the Fabers promote diversity of cultures by writing their international editions. Their frequent travels to foreign countries, that have translations of *Piano Adventures*, have given them insight into the folk/traditional examples that tell the story of each ethnicity.

The final comparative study was conducted in a dissertation by Yieng Chyi Chen. The study concentrated on dividing the elements of performance into individual skill sets, introducing and developing them, and then combining them. These most fundamental areas are: note learning, technique, and rhythm. Chen investigated three important contemporary method series for beginning piano students, comparing their similarities and differences and commenting on their strengths and weaknesses for students with different natural abilities.³⁷ By reviewing this study, a teacher can determine which method might work most successfully for individual students.

³⁷Yieng Chyi, Chen, "A Comparison of *The Music Tree*, *Piano Adventures*, and *Hal Leonard Student Library* for Beginning Piano Teacher" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alabama, 2013). 1

Chen's work focused on *The Music Tree* (2000) by Frances Clark, Louise Goss, and Sam Holland; the *Hal Leonard Student Library* (1996) by Barbara Kreader, Fred Kern, Phillip Keveren, and Mona Rejino; and *Piano Adventures* (2003) revised by Nancy and Randall Faber. Chen first points out that basic rhythmic values and dynamics are usually included in pre-reading sections along with learning to read notes. She often refers to the importance of pre-reading as described by Dr. Rebecca Johnson, editor of *Perspectives in Pedagogy*: "Pre-reading experiences open up the entire keyboard without using ledger lines, developing the recognition of the groups of two and three black notes, and logically lead to learning the names of the white notes. All of this is experienced without the distraction of the grand staff."³⁸ These three methods all use black keys at the beginning of study just as Chopin chose to start with the black key scales in the nineteenth century. Jane Magrath writes "Chopin did not begin with C position because it is not the most natural hand position: the scales with the most black keys were taught first because they felt more natural under the hand."³⁹ The three methods begin in different ways. *Piano Adventures* carefully discusses body posture, hand positions, and direction of movement up and down the keyboard. This series gives imaginative details in teaching a curved hand position and touch.

The Music Tree focuses on reading and listening with two main cartoon characters who teach in order to accompany students through the learning process. This series uses quarter notes in the first pages without teaching the rhythmic meaning. Simply, their purpose is to teach students how to distinguish right hand from left using the stem direction of the quarter note.

The Hal Leonard Series uses the first three pages of its method book to teach high and

³⁸Ibid. 3.

³⁹Jane Magrath, "Chopin's Teaching." *Clavier Companion* (May 2010): 2 (accessed July 2018).

low on the keyboard with finger numbers and a preparation for musical pulse. This series uses "feeling a heartbeat" to understand regular beat and pulse.

In the first pieces of each method book, *Piano Adventures* uses finger numbers which make sense, and Chen states that this is her preference. This series reduces the difficulty of the first piece by asking the students to use the longer fingers on one hand only. Additionally, students are asked to play on eight octaves, so that they are familiar with the entire keyboard.

In *The Music Tree*, the students read notation moving up the keyboard first, then down. Since students know that stem-up indicates right hand and stem-down indicates left hand, they can learn how to play up and down by themselves. This series has a philosophy of "discoveries and using what you have discovered."⁴⁰ The two main animated characters of the series make explanations on the page for the high and low registers.

The *Hal Leonard* series avoids the problem of flattening or curling fingers by using the third finger instead of the second finger. Students in this series put both thumbs behind the first joint of both third fingers. This technique gives more support and eliminates the flat finger problem so often found in beginning lessons.

Interestingly, the three methods transition from pre-reading to reading in diverse ways. *Piano Adventures* uses the grand staff with landmark notes: middle C, treble G, and bass F. *Hal Leonard* uses the five-line staff to introduce treble and bass clefs first and then moves to the grand staff. *The Music Tree* introduces the staff in stages by first using only two lines, then three and more to learn intervals. Here the grand staff appears at the very end of the first book. Not surprisingly, the most common way to learn treble clef space notes is to spell the word

⁴⁰Ibid. 7.

"FACE" and to learn the treble line notes as the first letter of "Every Good Boy Does Fine."⁴¹

Perhaps the strength of *The Music Tree* is its intervallic reading. This process allows students to read and to play comfortably all over the keyboard very early on. Intervallic reading also facilitates transposition. The other two methods use mixed approaches labeled as the "eclectic reading approach." For example, *Piano Adventures* is focused on Middle C and multi-key reading. The ability to read music is then developed by integrating three skills: (1) discreet note recognition, (2) intervallic reading, and (3) multi-key understanding.⁴²

Most piano technique books include reinforced hand positions, 5-finger patterns, chords, pedals, legato and staccato, and other terms. Chen points out that *Hal Leonard and Piano Adventures* both offer well-written technique books. *Hal Leonard* presents the technique book as an interesting musical fitness plan. The authors of this method state that playing the piano is a physical activity, and the technique book includes warm-up exercises that lead to etudes.

Piano Adventures entitles its technique book as "*Technique and Artistry*," and the book is organized into units that correspond with the lesson book. This book includes "technique secrets" and "artistry magic" designed to encourage students to think creatively in terms of sound quality and musical character. The Faber series is the first to use all five fingers in the primer book, and students are usually excited to be able to use all five fingers in the early pieces. On the other hand, *The Music Tree* approach is very different. This book is organized around landmark notes and intervals, whereas *Piano Adventures* begins teaching many basic techniques earlier than the other two methods. Chords are presented earlier, starting with the open fifth intervals.

The Music Tree introduces slur and legato in the first book, but the other two methods

⁴¹Ibid. 9.

⁴²Ibid. 11.

wait until the second book. Using the damper pedal to assist with legato phrases is approached in two ways: one is to press the damper pedal down as the note is played, and the other is the syncopated pedal technique or pressing the damper pedal down after the note is played. Neither *The Music Tree* nor *Hal Leonard* includes detailed instruction on how to use the damper pedal. According to Chen, *Piano Adventures* gives higher quality instruction presenting pedal use step-by-step. In fact, an entire page of drills appears in book 2B. A well-designed practice for right hand alone and pedal alone is also presented with additional reinforcement in the Faber series.

Without question, rhythm is the foundation of all playing. There are two aspects to rhythmic training: understanding note values and playing with a good sense of rhythm.⁴³ *The Music Tree* introduces quarter and half notes and then includes the quarter, half, and whole rests all together. On the other hand, *Piano Adventures* treats each rhythmic value separately and gives two or more pieces for reinforcement. In *Hal Leonard*, the rest seems to appear too early, and the method needs more pieces for reinforcement. In this series, there could be too much information for the first unit, and the pace is too fast. *The Music Tree* uses counting by note value (numerical) and then metrical counting, while *Hal Leonard* directs students to metric counting before the time signature is even introduced. *Piano Adventures* uses numerical and syllabic approaches at first and then introduces metrical. Nevertheless, it is the only series that uses syllabic counting.

Supplemental Material

The final area to be analyzed focuses on the supplementary books. Here, *Piano Adventures* and *Hal Leonard* offer a variety of genres to motivate students. These supplemental collections are a great tool for personal musical growth and for helping students experience the joy of playing the piano. *Piano Adventures* offers the following categories: popular, favorites,

⁴³Ibid. 21.

classics, jazz and blues, rock 'n roll, kid's songs, hymns, ragtime and marches. Furthermore, *Piano Adventures* has a wide variety of music in its performance book including famous tunes, compositions from different periods, folk songs from different countries, boogie and jazz, plus Faber's own compositions. *Hal Leonard* supplemental materials are selections from popular piano, showcase solo, showcase solo pops, patriotic, Christmas, classical themes, traditional hymns, composer showcase, Jewish songbooks, technique classics, piano ensembles, and duet books. *The Music Tree* offers three books: *Keyboard Technic*, *Keyboard Literature*, and *Student's Choice* which includes different styles of music that students may explore.

In conclusion, Chen evaluated each of the three method series for their strengths. She writes that *The Music Tree* is the pioneer of intervallic reading moving at a slower pace and including more reinforcement material. *Hal Leonard* provides the largest supplementary collection, allowing the teacher to find a certain type of music for an individual student. Finally, *Piano Adventures* presents an outstanding approach to teaching technique by giving a wide variety of music with well-written arrangements that use imaginative titles in order to engage the student. Chen states, "*Piano Adventures*, which is the best seller of piano methods on the market today, is the one that I recommend for beginning teachers to consider first."⁴⁴ It is important for piano teachers to be knowledgeable about the various methods of piano instruction and the variety of repertoire in order to make the appropriate choice.

Interview and Survey Research

Upon completion of a significant amount of research, my paper will examine the Faber *Piano Adventures* series as a choice for piano instruction for students. A large portion of my information has been documented by interviewing Dr. Randall Faber at the Faber Piano Institute

⁴⁴Ibid. 30.

in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the spring of 2018. During our time together, Dr. Faber explained his philosophy and the various inner workings of the institute in regard to teaching, publishing, online instruction, and international promotion of the Faber method.

Another extremely important source of data was obtained through a survey of 103 piano teachers in Mississippi. Twenty-four questions concerning experience, methods used, and specifically, the *Piano Adventures* were asked in an online survey. Teachers who participated in piano festivals, who are church accompanists, and who were recommended by faculty members from universities in the state took part in the survey. The specific information about the Faber series and the number of teachers who use it provided substantial data from teachers who recommend this particular piano series. Strengths and weaknesses in the method series used were also evaluated as well as how other method series compare to *Piano Adventures*.

CHAPTER III

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FABER

The Fabers' philosophy of teaching piano is outlined in seven categories in this chapter. The goals for piano study focus on reading music, having pianistic repertoire, and exhibiting technique tools. The second important concept or category for teaching is self-reflection. Other categories are to develop student self-esteem, create enjoyment in lessons, and be cognizant of timing in lesson assignments. Motivation and its effect on students is an important facet of teaching. Finally, the Faber mission of connecting mind and heart in playing is explained.

The pedagogical philosophy of the Fabers began in their teaching studio. In a 2013 interview conducted by Brendan Lai-Tong at the Music Teacher's Association of California Convention, Dr. Faber stated that he and Ms. Faber felt that piano teaching material was not up to the potential of students. He stated, "The methods of the day were too pedantic and were written to teach some specific piece of information, not to play musically or to play with artistry."⁴⁵

Goals for Piano Study

The Fabers' goal is to improve the sequences of instruction. The ability to read music is developed by effectively integrating three skills which are: discreet note recognition, intervallic reading, and a multi-key understanding. These are all carefully sequenced and reinforced to

⁴⁵Brendan Lai-Tong, "Interview with Randall Faber," (Music Teacher's Association of California Convention 2013): 2 (accessed November 2017).

ensure success.⁴⁶ A second goal is to make the repertoire more artistic, more expressive, and more pianistic. The "Technique Secrets" and exercises deliver the pianistic tools to play with ease and expression, and the "Artistry Hints and "Artistry Pieces" take student awareness of sound and musicality to new heights. Dr. Faber said, "Technique is the model and artistry is the outcome. Give a full palette of technique--it is three-dimensional and ties to the sound."⁴⁷

Pianistic pieces develop fluent piano technique. The pieces are written to encourage freedom at the keyboard, to promote a relaxed wrist, and to suggest gestures that carry the hand across the full range of the instrument.⁴⁸ The vast variety of repertoire is designed to meet each individual student's need at the appropriate time and at the appropriate level of difficulty.

Self-Reflection of Teaching

The foundation of their teaching philosophy is based on four important tenets. First, reflect on your own teaching style and relationships with the students. Private piano teachers should not try to duplicate the way they were taught. The teaching style and attitude of a teacher makes the difference between good lessons or bad lessons. With good teaching, most students progress step-by-step and are not overwhelmed by being expected to give a polished performance at every lesson.⁴⁹ Self-reflection gives the teacher and the student an opportunity to be more successful by correcting situations in the lessons. Observing one's self offers a person

⁴⁶Randall Faber, "Why Use *Piano Adventures*?" <https://pianoadventures.com/resources/for-teachers/why-use-piano-adventures> (accessed January 2018).

⁴⁷Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI,.

⁴⁸Randall Faber, "Why Use *Piano Adventures*?" <https://pianoadventures.com/resources/for-teachers/why-use-piano-adventures> (accessed March 2018).

⁴⁹Suzanne Guy, "The Partnership at the Piano of Nancy and Randall Faber," *Clavier Companion* (January 2003): 7 (accessed November 2016).

clues on how to improve, how to change teaching tactics with certain students, and how to present information in a different way. In a 2018 workshop for piano teachers in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. Faber stated, "Be reflective about what you are doing. Put a professional development lens on. It is always worthwhile to sharpen our tools and be reflective."⁵⁰ He previously has said, "No matter how inspiring the teaching, how engaging the curriculum, and how focused the student practice, assessment rounds out the instructional sequence. Achievement tracking can provide a meaningful acknowledgment of competence gained and a feedback loop that has potential to uplift our profession."⁵¹ Music teaching is not just about the mechanics of technique and the interpretation of music. This fact leads to the second tenet: self-esteem.

Developing Self Esteem

Each student is a unique individual, and investing in the student develops the basis of communication and relationship where learning occurs. Dr. Faber's idea is: "The belief in students is paramount. Self-esteem is attained as students work for and reach difficult goals; it invariably gives students a sense of accomplishment whenever they do more than they thought possible."⁵² The impact on a child can be profound because a teacher can influence a child's thinking. Ms. Faber's belief is: "If a young student's sense of self is enhanced week after week in piano lessons, we are more likely to develop a fine musician. Self-esteem can be enhanced through several avenues: learning to fluently read music through pieces that the student loves, creative activities that draw on the student's own imagination, and a sense that the teacher cares

⁵⁰Randall Faber, Faber Piano Workshop. Birmingham, AL (August 2 2018).

⁵¹Steve Betts, "An Interview with Randall and Nancy Faber," *Clavier Companion* (March/April 2014): 17 (accessed October, 2017).

⁵²Ibid. 7.

for them personally."⁵³ Ultimately, the Faber philosophy of teaching is student-centered and is designed to give each student personal success. "One of the things we feel strongly about is that we have to be able to take a person and help him to be everything that he can be, to sharpen the person's sense of personal skill. Personal success is important, and there's a sequence in developing personal success."⁵⁴

Enjoyment in Lessons

The third element of the Faber philosophy is the goal of bringing joy to every lesson. For young students, Ms. Faber suggests the inclusion of singing, rhythm instruments, and improvisation in lessons. Dr. Faber also focuses on having fun lessons with elementary students. "A spirit of enthusiasm, upbeat adventure, and discovery are the secrets to having students look forward to seeing the teacher week after week."⁵⁵ Their criteria for young students ages 5-11 is to promote "happy pianists" who are motivated by exploration, adventure, fantasy, and discovery. Making lessons enjoyable by having fun activities with the students makes lessons fun for the teacher, and this idea strengthens bonding. Older students ages 12 and up must feel rewarded by experiencing accomplishment, and the basic key is sophistication of material--not the rate of quick advancement.

The Importance of Timing

Finally, the Fabers' philosophy emphasizes not having students race through the levels of learning. It is important to take time to build the foundation in piano study. Timing is

⁵³Nancy Faber, FJH Music Company, Inc, "Focus on Nancy Faber." (2003) www.faberpiano.com. (accessed October 2016).

⁵⁴Helen Tarchalski, "An Interview with Faber and Faber," *Clavier Companion* (2003): 5 (accessed December 2016).

⁵⁵Suzanne Guy, "The Partnership at the Piano of Nancy and Randall Faber," *Clavier Companion* (January 2003): 9-10 (accessed November 2017).

everything in selecting music, and a good teacher will look for a certain amount of challenge and excitement in that music. "All too often students tackle music that is too difficult for them to master. What might have become a favorite piece suddenly is a source of discouragement if it is assigned too soon," says Dr. Faber.⁵⁶ The Fabers are now a well-defined, disciplined team who believe that a piano student should understand that meaningful learning requires hard work. Students have the need to be nurtured for self-esteem, but also for discipline, which produces accomplishment. The solution proposed to this situation is that the Fabers have experimented and spent a decade testing their series before publication to ensure success with students. By talking with and observing students in lessons, they have mastered the types of repertoire that are pedagogically sound and at the same time are interesting and appealing to students. Much time has been spent on solving technical issues and finding ways to teach lyrical playing that encourages students to continue with a degree of satisfaction and accomplishment. The great pianist, Josef Hofmann, once said, "Find your pleasure in the endeavor and not the accomplishment."⁵⁷ The Fabers emphasize the importance of the sequence and the process of the end product. There are other piano method books that are effective, but abundant attention has been devoted to the motivational and developmental stages in music study in the *Piano Adventures* series.

Factors of Motivation

In his dissertation, Dr. Randall Faber discusses Bloom's theory with its three stages of talent development: (1) an exploratory phase, with a focus on fun and learning through exploration; (2) a "get-down-to-business" phase, characterized by focus, hard work, and a

⁵⁶Ibid. 7-8.

⁵⁷Charles Blanchard, "*Positive Piano*," (Lexington, KY: Honest Knave, 2015) 38.

professional teacher-student relationship; and (3) the master-teacher/student-disciple mentoring relationship of conservatory or professional study.⁵⁸ In addition, Dr. Faber discusses Robert Glaser's three phases of monitoring and support in the development of expertise: (1) external support, (2) transition, and (3) self-regulation. Faber placed Bloom's three stages of talent development over Glaser's three stages of expertise development to create three stages of piano study with the following characteristics: Stage 1--Teachers engage children's interest and enjoyment through selecting music with which the children connect. This stage provides extensive learning and emotional support for children's knowledge and skill development, as well as being the sole, or at least primary, source of feedback. Stage 2--Teachers withdraw some of their emotional and learning support, introduce new music literature with which children have less connection, and guide adolescents to be more self-monitoring. Stage 3--Teachers account for only one source of feedback with the other sources being outside listeners and the student's continual self-monitoring during deliberate practice.⁵⁹ The fact that Dr. Faber earned three degrees from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in human development and education definitely contributes to the well-designed series that is child-centered and focuses on motivational and musical skills for students. He believes: "The experience of personal competence, engagement, and intrinsic motivation appears to provide a foundation from which life skills can develop."⁶⁰

In his dissertation, Dr. Faber introduced the Facilitative Factors Model as a new developmental model of motivation. The first stage studies competence, reinforcement, and self-

⁵⁸Randall Scott Faber, "Motivational and Developmental Stages in Piano Study," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2003), 2.

⁵⁹Ibid. 2.

⁶⁰Ibid. 1.

esteem. These factors interact synergistically to increase engagement in music study. In an interview with Dr. Faber he stated, "Competence is the core of teaching, and it must have cognition and ownership. With self-esteem an individual must feel unique and in reinforcement the individual must have respect for the source of reinforcement."⁶¹ Faber's model has become a fundamental tenet of the Faber method. It has become essential to the success of the *Piano Adventures* series.

Intrinsic motivation is the goal of every teacher for his or her student. The student acknowledges the amount of time, energy, and focus necessary to complete a musical task. A smooth transition can occur when the teacher has laid the foundation for motivating the student, and consequently, the student can motivate himself to daily practice and challenges. Dr. Faber discusses "nature versus discipline." "The key word is versus--not either or. Nurture the ability to have discipline. Nurture competence by instilling discipline. Nurture versus nature is the interaction of genetics and environment. A student has a genetic predisposition, and it may not be manifested in environment. The best case scenario is combining both. Here is where you find intrinsic motivation where the student motivates himself."⁶²

How can piano teachers develop intrinsic motivation in their students? Teachers experience frustration from students who do not practice, who are not attentive in lessons, and who are not engaged in technical and expressive elements of playing. Dr. Faber believes the time that a student studies piano is critical to discover talent in the student. Conversations with parents can explain the skill-building stage where long, sustained effort is necessary. Today's society is full of activities, and the child can be better served to choose where his or her talent

⁶¹Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁶²Ibid.

and interests are.

Another problem that teachers face today is that they feel the professional characteristics in teaching dominate the nurturing role. "Hammering through the business part of the lesson brings down the self-esteem of the student. This leads to a vicious cycle that brings motivation down. Keep professional characteristics, but rest on communication skills."⁶³ Often teachers do not know what their objective is for each individual student. Every student will not become a music major or concert pianist. We do not know what role music will play in a student's life. In an interview in 1999, Dr. Faber said:

The benefits of piano lessons extend well beyond skills of piano playing. Students learn discipline, learning strategies, aesthetic perception, coordination, patience, perseverance, and other tangible benefits. These positive attributes come not all at once, but over the years and years of consistent lessons in a supportive environment. The teacher should focus on nurturing a love of music, the student on building a disciplined routine, and the parent on providing a foundation of long-term commitment.⁶⁴

The Faber Mission

The Faber mission is to develop musical minds and hearts. The Fabers studied the cultural approach of piano pedagogy in China. Much of the playing in that culture is by rote and imitation with little spontaneous creativity. In China, they found that there is much speed-playing and precision, but there is not much focus on expression and interpretation. The more important aspect is qualitative, the expressive nature with meaningful interpretation and individuality. Dr. Faber explains, "The mindset has to come from both sides of the brain: the analytical approach from the brain and the creative approach from the heart. What is important is to integrate both, wiring the brain to the heart. The need is to wire the analysis and creativity

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Randall Faber, "Artist-Educator Interview." PianoEducation.org. (1999), 6. (accessed February 2017).

to self-agency and self expression that is meaningful to the individual."⁶⁵ Not only is music meaningful to the individual, but it is also meaningful to those who hear it. Expressing emotion is something to be shared generously with others. Beethoven was noted for saying, "Coming from the heart should in turn find its way into the hearts of others. Genuine art comes from the inside out."⁶⁶

The mission statement of Nancy and Randall Faber is to develop all the knowledge and technique of the brain and at the same time to open the heart for expression and interpretation. Their goal is to develop the potential in every child to succeed in not only piano, but also in society. The Fabers believe:

Piano playing can be a lifetime of enjoyment, a lifetime of contribution to society, a demonstration of how to achieve a significant skill, self-esteem, self-empowerment, artistry, and respect for sensitivities and aesthetic thinking. Respecting the amateur is respecting the love of the art which is more integrated into society. Piano students will experience a sense of adventure of learning.⁶⁷

The power of music is transcendent and reflects something greater than ourselves. The letters A-C-E is an original acronym that the Fabers use: A--to analyze or to understand the tools in music, C--to create or to have something to say with the tools, and E--to express or to communicate something with meaning that touches someone who is listening. Dr. Faber states, "When a student has experienced A-C-E, he has a sense of personal worth and has the courage to express something meaningful."⁶⁸ These concepts can be applied to any field of endeavor

⁶⁵Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁶⁶Charles Blanchard, "*Positive Piano*," (Lexington, KY: Honest Knave, 2015) 400.

⁶⁷Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁶⁸Randall Faber, Faber Piano Workshop. Birmingham, AL (August 2 2018).

because they teach how to learn, practice, concentrate, create, communicate, and achieve.

The essence of the Faber mission is to help students and their teachers in the study of piano. The Faber Piano Institute was expressly established for this purpose. The Faber Foundation was also created for further study and to give scholarships to deserving students. Ms. Faber's compositional interest and Dr. Faber's improvisational skill forged a series that is valuable to piano students and teachers. Their ideas are focused in a service mode. When speaking to students and teachers, Dr. Faber said, "Focus on what you can contribute to society. We believe self esteem for students is important, then develop their identity as a musician. Lastly, be in a service mode and build a legacy for life."⁶⁹ Their philosophy is aligned with the idea of "servant leadership" coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1977. "A servant leader is one who is focused on others rather than himself or herself and puts the needs of others first."⁷⁰

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Natalie Steele, "Three Characteristics of Effective Teachers," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 28 (2) : 75 (accessed February 2018).

CHAPTER IV

TECHNIQUE AND ARTISTRY

The combination of technique and artistry is a unique feature of *Piano Adventures*. The "technique secrets" in the series are explained and illustrated in this chapter. The value of technique connected to artistry is also included in the final section.

Franz Liszt stated, "Technique should create itself from spirit, not mechanics."⁷¹ Once the mechanics of technique have been learned by a student, the art and interpretation comes more easily. It is easy to recognize when a student plays musically or mechanically. The word technique is derived from the Greek word "technika," meaning art and craft. The Fabers believe that technique and artistry are intrinsically bound together. "The journey of *Piano Adventures* is one of developing technique and artistry, not only for students, but also for the artistry of educators. The Faber focus is on how technique is taught, how it is sequenced, and how it is developed step-by-step to bring out the 'musical character' of all students."⁷²

Technique and artistry are embedded throughout the *Piano Adventures* curriculum. "At each level, the books present 'technique secrets' which are essential pianistic movements, gestures, and touches. These secrets are sequenced and presented in a scaffold of progressing skill development."⁷³ It is critically important that the fundamentals of good technique are taught from the beginning of study, no matter what the age of the student. Learning these skills early on

⁷¹Charles Blanchard, "*Positive Piano*," (Lexington, KY: Honest Knave, 2015) 37.

⁷²Faber Catalog and Desk Reference, (Hal Leonard, 2017-2018).

⁷³Ibid.

will be a factor to encourage students to continue study because they are expressing emotion with technical tools. Dr. Jane Magrath states, "To achieve a fully developed technique, it is essential that the focus be primarily on how the sounds and gestures are produced and on listening perceptively to evaluate success."⁷⁴ Listening, in the form of ear training, is the essence of knowing and recognizing a beautiful tone. Often it is beneficial to put aside the musical score and have the student listen to the sound alone. Experimenting with tones and colors allows students to play expressively. Eye training and ear training together produce knowledge of a pianistic sound and interpretation. "The Fabers artistry is taught through demonstration, imaginative metaphors, and well-chosen repertoire. Each lesson should contain artistic engagement, physically, and expressively."⁷⁵

In each level of the series, the books include technical concepts with easy-to-understand analogies for the student. Practical examples to demonstrate the concept are also provided in order that students will recognize the pattern when applying to the repertoire. The *Technique and Artistry* books in each level of study have been well-reviewed by several notable piano pedagogues. For example, Mark Hallam Sullivan writes: "Kinesthetic concepts are continually reinforced through short pieces and studies that emphasize articulation, dynamic control, balance, voicing, and the development of good sound and expressive legato. The *Technique and Artistry* books keep the emphasis where it should be--on listening to the sound and creating mood."⁷⁶

⁷⁴Jane Magrath, "What are the Most Important Aspects of Technique to Cover in the First Years of Piano Study?," *Clavier Companion* (December, 1993) : 1 (accessed June 2018).

⁷⁵Faber Catalog and Desk Reference, (Hal Leonard, 2017-2018).

⁷⁶Mark Hallam Sullivan, "The Latest: *Piano Adventures* by Nancy and Randall Faber with Victoria McArthur," *Piano & Keyboard* (September, 1998): 62-63 (accessed December 2016).

Katherine Fisher, who co-wrote the *Piano Safari* series with Julie Knerr, reviewed the *Technique and Artistry* element of the Faber series. She states, "I value the fact that the *Technique and Artistry* books teach students how to apply correct technique. I appreciate how this method seeks to demonstrate that appropriate technique is not simply a separate entity but contributes to the artistic performance of the piece."⁷⁷

The long-time editor of *Clavier Companion*, Rebecca Grooms Johnson, wrote that the *Technique and Artistry* books are a strength of *Piano Adventures*. "Each book contains 'technique secrets,' which explain what technique an exercise is emphasizing, and 'artistry magic' features, which present concepts related to phrasing and musical playing."⁷⁸

Examples of Technique Secrets

The goal of the *Technique and Artistry* books is to teach expressive playing and to engage the student to feel emotions and to play more musically, not mechanically. In my interview with Dr. Faber, he explained that touch and sound and the physicality of playing gives the sense of expression that touches the heart. When the series was written, the Fabers hoped that *Piano Adventures* would give a deeper understanding of patterns and what makes music. "Using the 'discovery questions' and 'technique secrets' in the books builds a strong base for what the student is all about, instead of just playing piece to piece."⁷⁹

The *Technique and Artistry* books feature the following "technique secrets" or physical concepts and also offer helpful comments throughout each book.

⁷⁷Katherine Fisher, "Appropriate Technique Contributes to Artistic Performance," *Clavier Companion* (October, 2009) 36 (accessed January 2018).

⁷⁸Rebecca Grooms Johnson, "A Survey of Current Methods: *Piano Adventures*," *Clavier Companion* (November/December, 2009). 34 (accessed October 2017).

⁷⁹Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI, 5 April 2018.

Primer Level Technique Secrets

1. Good posture (Karate Pose)--Sit straight and tall on the front part of the bench. Check the distance from the keyboard by putting your arms straight out in front of you with relaxed fists. Your knuckles should touch the fallboard.
2. Rounded Hand Shape (Blooming Flowers)--Rest your right hand lightly on the white keys in a loose fist. In slow motion let your fingers open, like the petals of a flower, to a curved hand position. Your wrist will rise as your fingertips and thumb hold your hand in position.
3. Firm Fingertips (Making O's)--Press the tip of your 2nd finger against the tip of the thumb. Make a round O. Repeat for the other fingers with the thumb.
4. Arm Weight (Heavy Wet Ropes)--Let your arms dangle straight down from your shoulders. In slow motion, bring your arms up. When your hands reach the height of the keyboard, let your arms drop completely relaxed into your legs.
5. Correct Thumb Position (Thumb Perch)--Silently place your right hand on the white keys with the thumb "perching" on the side tip. Your other fingers should rest gently on the keys. Do the same with the left hand.

Patterns using steps and skips build finger independence. The technique of preparation in which one hand prepares while the other hand is still playing is presented. A "call and response" skipping pattern is then played in contrary motion. These "technique secrets" guide beginning technique, and "artistry magic" pieces apply the technique secrets throughout the book. Artistry means playing the music with expression or feeling. One should think of painting a musical picture. A pianist with artistry plays with excellent rhythm. A pianist with artistry does not hesitate at the bar line. A pianist with artistry can play from one hand to the other hand without a

"bump" or hesitation. A pianist with artistry can play one hand forte and the other hand piano. A pianist with artistry always prepares the next hand position. One hand moves to a new position while the other hand is still playing.⁸⁰

The *Technique and Artistry* book begins with Level 1, and the following examples illustrate how to apply each "technique secret." All musical examples copyright ©Faber Piano Adventures are used with permission from the publisher.

Level 1 Technique Secrets

Figure 1.

Round Hand Shape--Place hand on knee cap for proper position.

Repertoire reinforcement--

Technique Secret:
round hand shape
Warm-up with *Hand Cups* (p. 2).



This piece uses only **tonic** and **dominant** notes.

- Hint: Begin crossing the left hand over while the right hand is still playing.

Gymnastics

Smoothly

⁸⁰Nancy and Randall Faber, *Primer Level Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 1995).

⁸¹*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 1*, 28. © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 2

Relaxed Wrist (Wrist Float-off)--Pretend a balloon on a string is attached and pulling your wrist upward.

Repertoire reinforcement--

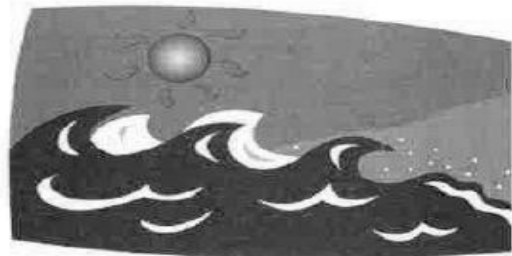
 **Technique Secret:**
relaxed wrist

Warm-up with *Wrist Float-off* (p. 2).

- When playing from a **white key** to a **black key**, let your hand roll forward (toward the piano).
- As your fingers “walk up” to the black key, your wrist will rise *slightly*.

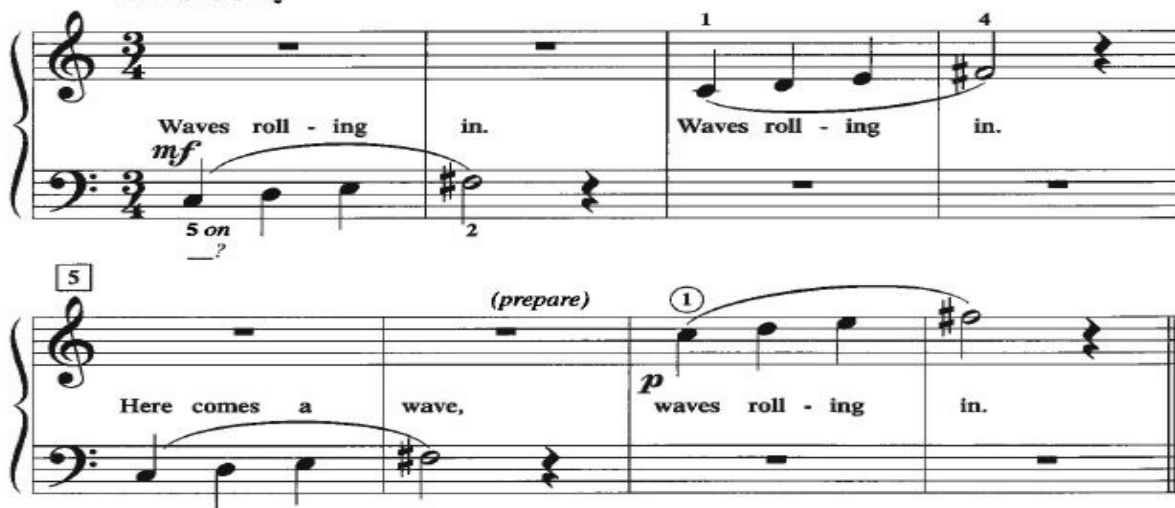
Play L.H. 
walk up

Play R.H. 
walk up



Waves Rolling In

Rather slowly



Waves roll - ing in. *mf* 5 on

Waves roll - ing in. *p* ①

Here comes a wave, (prepare)

⁸²*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 1, 26.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 3

Light Hand Bounce--Perch thumb on the side tip and lightly tap a rhythm.

Repertoire reinforcement--

Technique Secret:
light hand bounce

Do *Woodpecker Taps* (R.H., L.H., then H.T.)

Use this rhythm: $\frac{3}{4}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ :||



Baseball Game

Rhythm Hint

- Drop into **beat 1** of each measure.
- Play beats 2 and 3 lightly, staying close to the keys.

Light and happy

Play 3 times
(or you're out!)

Musical score for 'Baseball Game' in 3/4 time, featuring piano and mezzo-forte dynamics with fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, 5.

The score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef staff has a key signature of one flat and contains four measures of music. The first measure has a dynamics marking *p* and a fingering number *1* with a slur over notes 2 and 3. The second measure has a dynamics marking *mf* and a fingering number *1* with a slur over notes 2 and 3. The third and fourth measures also have a dynamics marking *mf* and a fingering number *1* with a slur over notes 2 and 3. Above the treble clef staff, there are fingering numbers 5, 3, and 1. The bass clef staff contains a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The second system starts with a box containing the number 13 and continues with similar notation and dynamics.

⁸³Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 1, 32. © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 4

Finger Independence (Finger Talk)--Silently play finger pattern with round hand position

Repertoire reinforcement--

Technique Secret:
finger independence

Do *Finger Talk* (R.H., L.H., then H.T.) using this pattern:
5 - 3 - 5 - 3 - 4 - 2 - 4

- First play on the closed piano lid.

Hint: Both hands use the **same fingering**.

Moderately



Busy Machine

84

Students play a skipping pattern up to higher octaves using the wrist float-off technique. Bravura sound is produced when hands play together and then drop with arm weight into dramatic, pedaled chords. Artistry means playing the music with expression or feeling. A pianist with good technique prepares the next hand position. In music, playing the dynamics creates "musical colors." To play with artistry, a pianist must listen. An artistic ending puts the finishing touch on a piece.⁸⁵

⁸⁴*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 1, 22.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

⁸⁵Nancy and Randall Faber, *Level 1 Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 1994).

Level 2 Technique Secrets

(Examples from the Level 2 of Accelerated *Piano Adventures* series for older beginners)

Figure 5

Firm Fingertips--Press each fingernail on closed keyboard lid.

Repertoire reinforcement--



Technique Secret: firm fingertips

Do *Finger Inspector* (p. 4) as your daily warm-up.

Technique Hints

- First, play hands alone. Listen for **even 8th notes**.
- Now play slowly, hands together. Listen for the fingers striking exactly together.
- Gradually work up to a faster tempo.



Paris Taxi Ride

Name the 5-finger scale. _____

Running for the Taxi

Steadily

1. *f-p on repeat*

5 4 5 1 2 1 5 1 2 5 1 3 5

86

⁸⁶*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2A,6*. © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 6

Light Thumb--Tap on the side of the thumb.

Repertoire reinforcement--



Technique Secret: light thumb

Do *Light as a Feather* (p. 4)
as your daily warm-up.

Smooth Sailing

Andante

mp

thumb extension

The image shows two systems of musical notation for the piece 'Smooth Sailing'. The first system is marked 'Andante' and 'mp'. The top staff is in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature, containing a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature, containing a sequence of half notes: G3, B2. Fingering numbers 1, 3, 5 are shown above the first three notes of the top staff. A circled '1' with a downward arrow labeled 'thumb extension' is positioned above the fourth note (C5). The second system continues the piece with the same notation and fingering (1, 2) for the top staff. A circled '5' is shown above the first note of the second system's top staff. A bracket under the bottom staff of the second system indicates a measure rest.

87

⁸⁷*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2A*, 19. © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 7

Wrist Float-off--Let your wrist rise in slow motion and move to the next note.

Repertoire reinforcement--



Technique Secret: wrist float-off

Do *Moon Walk* (p. 5) on A's as your daily warm-up.



Chord Etude No. 2

(Am, Dm, and Em Chord Study)

Andante

mp A minor broken chords

f A minor blocked chords

8^{va}

(prepare)


⁸⁸*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2A, 26.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 8

Fast Fingers--Use the pattern 5, 3, 1, 2, 3 on closed keyboard lid.

Repertoire reinforcement--

Counting the Jewels
(G minor 5-finger scale)



Moderato

Technique Secret: fast fingers

mf Count - ing all my gold and count - ing all my sil - ver,

1 2 3 2 1

3

1 3 4 5

f I'm the rich - est pi - rate, Yo! Sail the sea! (2 - 3 - 4)

1 3 4 5

8va

89

5. Hands Together Coordination--Play hands together with appropriate motion.

Crescendo and diminuendo are important tools for playing with expression. Every piece has a mood. Bring out the exciting rhythmic mood of a piece with your fine technique and artistry. Music does not stand still in time, but has forward motion. Articulation helps the music to "dance." A pianist with artistry can keep a steady beat, even at a slow tempo. A pianist with artistry can play hands together with precise rhythm as the fingers play with changing articulation and dynamics.⁹⁰

⁸⁹*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2A, 23.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

⁹⁰Nancy and Randall Faber, *Level 2A Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 1997).

Figure 9

Arm Weight (Heavy Arms)--Sit tall and let your arms hang completely relaxed at your side. Slowly lift your "heavy arms." When your arms reach the height of the keyboard, let them drop completely relaxed into your lap.

Repertoire reinforcement--

TECHNIQUE SECRET

Technique Secret: arm weight
Do *Heavy Arms* (p. 36) as your daily warm-up.

Touchdown Tune
Key of G major

With vigor *f* **Traditional**

Count: 1 2 3 4 1 2 and 3 4

Let's go, team!
R.H. (3) crosses over the L.H.

8va

91

⁹¹Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2B, 56. © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 10

Slur Gesture (Painter's Brush Stroke)--Imagine the smooth brush stroke of a painter as your wrist will rise slightly through the slur.

Repertoire reinforcement--

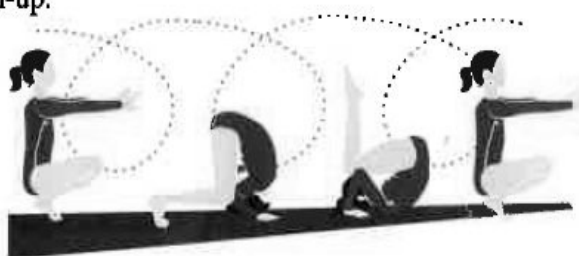


Technique Secret: slur gesture

Do *Painter's Brush Stroke* (p. 36) as your daily warm-up.

Technique Hints

- Play each group of slurred notes with **one gesture** rather than as five *separate* notes.
- Your wrist will rise *slightly* with each slur. The last note of the slur should be very light.



Forward Rolls

(for R.H.)

Smoothly

mf Wrist is float-ing off, wrist is float-ing off, wrist is float-ing off, etc.

Continue the pattern UP beginning on B and C.

⁹²*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2B, 40.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 11

Light Thumb (Weightless Thumb)--Place your hand in C position and silently tap your thumb 8 times on C. Cross the thumb under D and repeat tapping, then E and repeat tapping.

Repertoire reinforcement--

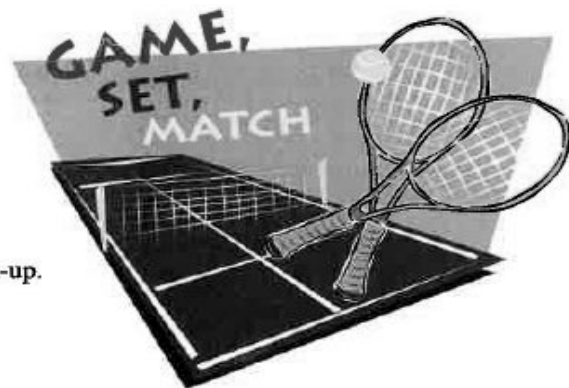


Technique Secret: light thumb

Do *Weightless Thumb* (p. 37) as your daily warm-up.

Technique Hints

- A *light* thumb will help you play these two-hand slur gestures.
- Roll from one finger to the next for a smooth *legato*.



Tennis Match!

Flowing

Ma - jor chord, *mf* mi - nor chord, Ma - jor chord, mi - nor chord, Ma - jor chord,

93

⁹³*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2B, 42.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 12

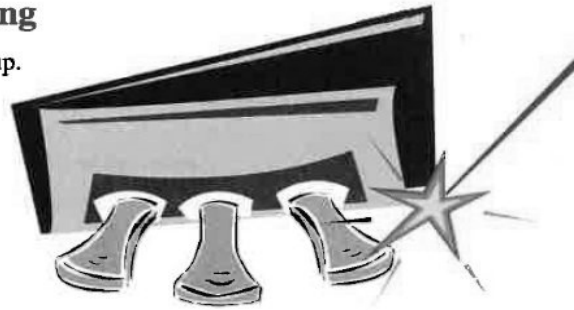
Connected Pedaling (Exercise: Pedal Pushers)--With heel on the floor say, "Up, down, hold it" in 4/4 time. In 3/4 time say, "Up, down, hold." In 4/4 time say, "Up, down, up, down."

Repertoire reinforcement--



Technique Secret: connected pedaling

Do *Pedal Pushers* (p. 37) as your daily warm-up.



Practice Hints

- Play the C scale using **only finger 3**.
First play hands alone, then hands together.
- Now add the pedal. LISTEN CLOSELY!
Connected pedaling will make the scale sound *legato*.
- Play at a **slow, medium, then fast** tempo.

Pedal Pizzazz

Smoothly

94

A pianist can play several notes with a single motion. "Drop into" accented notes using arm weight. Play each group of slurred notes with one gesture rather than as five separate notes.

⁹⁴*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 2B, 52.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

The harmony should be played softer than the melody. Doing this is called playing with balance. As you play, stay close to the keys and keep your wrists flexible.⁹⁵

Level 3A Technique Secrets

Figure 13

Round Off--Use an upward wrist motion toward the piano for the end of a slur.
Repertoire reinforcement--

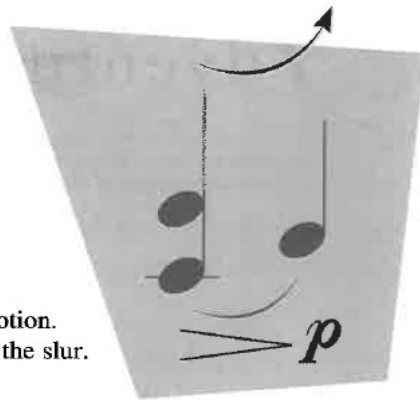
Technique Secrets

1. The first secret is ROUND-OFF.

Sighing

In music, the last note of a slur is usually played softly. This can be called a *round-off*.

To softly “round-off” slurred notes, use an upward wrist motion. **Roll your hand forward** (toward the piano) for the end of the slur.



- Practice round-offs for the slurs below. Listen for a “soft sigh.”

R.H.

L.H.

⁹⁵Nancy and Randall Faber, *Level 2B Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 1997).

⁹⁶*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3A, 2.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 14

Relaxed Wrist for chords--Let your wrist move down, then up or "take a bow."

Repertoire reinforcement--



TECHNIQUE SECRET relaxed wrist for chords

Do *Wrist Takes a Bow* (p.2) as your daily warm-up.

First practice the **L.H. alone**, setting a steady beat.

"Cushion" each L.H. interval with a small *down-up* motion of the wrist. This will keep your hand relaxed.

Bittersweet Blues

Moderately slow ($\text{♩} = 88$) Key of ___ major



mf

4

97

⁹⁷*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3A, 19.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 15

Rotation--Pretend you are turning a key in a lock.

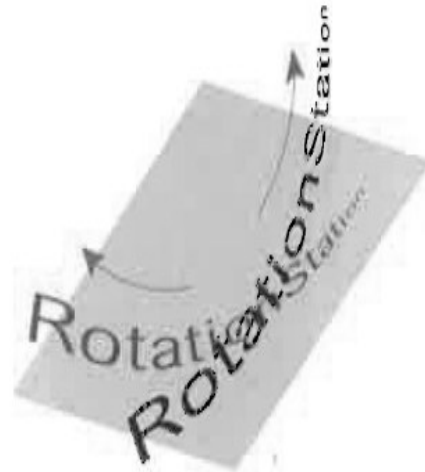
Repertoire reinforcement--



rotation

Do *Rocking* (p.3) as your daily warm-up.

Notice the feeling of **rotation** as you play *Rotation Station*.



Rotation Station

Allegro (♩ = 120-132)

R.H.

Musical notation for the right hand of "Rotation Station". It consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The tempo is marked as Allegro with a quarter note equal to 120-132 beats per minute. The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns with fingerings 1-5, 1-5, 1, and 1. The second staff contains three measures with fingerings 1-2-3-2, 1, 1, and 1.

mp

Transpose to F major.

⁹⁸*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3A, 8.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 16

Pedal Rhythms--I. Pedal lifts on beat 1 and down down on beat 2. II. Depress pedal immediately after a chord is played.

Repertoire reinforcement--

TECHNIQUE SECRET

pedal by ear

Do *Pedal Rhythms* (p.3) as your daily warm-up.

Pedal Hint: Depress the pedal *immediately* after beat 1 and hold through the measure.

Keep your wrist relaxed as you make graceful lifts from octave to octave.

Canyon Echo
(for L.H. alone)

Andante
Count: 1 2 3 4 5 6

mf 5 (echo) 5 (echo) 5 (echo) etc.

Continue the pattern beginning on F, G, A, B, and C.

99

For full, rich chords use a down-up motion of the wrist. This will "cushion" the weight of your arm. The faster the tempo, the lighter the playing. Listen for musical direction in your playing. As you play final forte chords, use small "wrist bows." To do this will help you play with a full, round tone. Triplet patterns up and down the keyboard build finger dexterity. Each forte drop into the keys ends with a soft round-off. Circular under-and-over wrist motion is presented with one-octave arpeggios.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3A*, 15. © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

¹⁰⁰Nancy and Randall Faber, *Level 3A Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 1998).

Level 3B Technique Secrets

Figure 17

Closed Hand for Scale Passages--With palm up, bring fingertips and thumb together. Notice the cupped hand, turn hand over, and look for tall knuckles.

Repertoire reinforcement--

 **Technique Secret 1:**
closed hand for scale passages

Warm-up with *Finger Fireworks* (p. 2).



Jigsaw Puzzle

16th-Note Rhythms

Rhythm Pattern: 

Steady (♩ = 72-92)



101

¹⁰¹*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3B, 34.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 18

Up-Touch--From the surface of the key, "spring off" with active fingers and forearm thrust. Use a quick, upward wrist motion.

Repertoire reinforcement--

**Technique Secret 2:
the up-touch**
Warm-up with *Finger Springs* (p. 2).



For L.H., think *down* on beat 1
and *up-touch* on beats 3 and 4.

Syncopated Triads

R.H. Study with Blocked Major Triads

Cheerfully (♩ = 88-112)

Stay close to the keys!

Count: 1 + (2) + 3 + 4 +

f *p* *f* *p*

¹⁰²*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3B, 25.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 19

Voicing the Melody--The melody must "sing" over the accompaniment.

Repertoire reinforcement--

Technique Secret 3:
voicing the melody
Warm-up with *Melody Maker* (p. 3).



Bel Canto means "beautiful singing." Imagine---

- Your R.H. is the singer. Use arm weight for an expressive, warm tone.
- Your L.H. is a soft guitar. Play with *light* fingers, close to the keys.

Bel Canto

Study in Balance in A Minor

Very slowly ($\text{♩} = 60-72$)

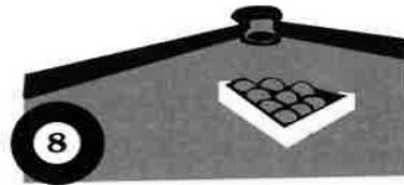
¹⁰³ *Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3B, 7.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 20

Open Hand for Extensions--With palms down rapidly close, then open your hands.

Repertoire reinforcement--

Technique Secret 4:
open hand for extensions
Warm-up with *Hand Toss* (p. 3).



- First play the L.H. alone. Remember the F# and C# from the key signature.

L.H. Octave Bounce

With a steady beat ($\text{♩} = 112-132$)

f-p on repeat

• Transpose to **C major**. 104

A pianist who performs with artistry can play a melody expressively with the left hand. A pianist with artistry can change articulations easily. Create drama with all the dynamic markings. Contrast forte and piano touches for two tiers of sound. These technique secrets develop fluency and fast fingers. The artistry magic pieces explore the contrast of fast finger work and sonorous tonal colors.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 3B, 20*. © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

¹⁰⁵Nancy and Randall Faber, *Primer Level Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 2009).

Level 4 Technique Secrets


Figure 21

Alignment--The balance of arm weight should be in a straight line through your forearm, hand, and to the knuckles over the fingertips.

Repertoire reinforcement--



Playing in Sharp Keys

 **Technique Secret:**
alignment

Warm-up with *Balance Beam* (p. 2).

D

D Scale in Octaves

Listening carefully



mf

5


106

¹⁰⁶*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 4, 28.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 22

Drop and Follow Through--Drop with arm weight to release a "spark" of energy that carries your fingers through a pattern.

Repertoire reinforcement--

 **Technique Secret:**
drop and follow-through
Warm-up with *Spark the Pattern* (p. 2).



Return of the Scale Monster!

Op. 599, No. 69

- First practice slowly. Listen for even, steady scales.

Carl Czerny
(1791-1857, Austria)
original form*

Allegretto

5 3 1 3 2 1

3 4 2 1 3 5 1 3

5 1 3 5 1 3


107

¹⁰⁷*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 4, 30.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 23

Weighted Tone--To produce different "tonal colors" change the amount of arm weight.

Repertoire reinforcement--

 **Technique Secret:**
weighted tone / empty fingers

Warm-up with *Tonal Colors* (p. 3).



- Listen for “two voices” by holding the thumb while the other voice is played.

Inner Voices

Moderato
C minor

5 D minor

108

¹⁰⁸ *Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 4, 24.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

Figure 24

Half Circle/Full Circle--Wrist circles help transfer arm weight for proper alignment on each finger.

Repertoire reinforcement--

Technique Secret:
half circle / full circle
 Warm-up with *Lead with the Wrist* (p. 3).



Brushstrokes
 (for L.H. alone)

Expressively

mp

5 2 1 5 2 1 5 2 1 5 2

5

pedal simile (pedal similarly)

Key change:
 Major

109

A motive and sequence offer a drop and follow-through gesture. The artistry magic pieces help practice shaping phrases that use a two-hand gesture. They also are prepared with effective exercises and etudes. Artistry at the piano requires effective technical gestures to create contrasting tonal colors, such as balance between the hands. In contrast to a closed cupped hand for scale passages, an octave study requires an open hand for extensions.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹*Piano Adventures Technique and Artistry Book, Level 4, 25.* © Copyright Faber Piano Adventures. Used with Permission.

¹¹⁰Nancy and Randall Faber, *Level 4 Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 2012).

Level 5 Technique Secrets

1. Up-Touch/ Down-Touch--Use a gentle up touch with intervals of thirds.
2. Advanced Wrist Circles--Shape two-octave arpeggios with fluid extended wrist circles.
3. Hand Toss--Use a hand toss and light thumb for speed.
4. Voicing--Give brilliance to forte by voicing the right hand above the left hand.
5. Conductor's Upbeat--Use to prepare the forte drop into opening chords.

Although there is no *Technique and Artistry* book for this final level, these technique concepts guide students into early advanced playing with a high degree of sophisticated, physical movement. The artistry magic pieces in this level explore a new depth of technical and artistic challenges. It is easier to play a piece by recognizing chords than by reading every individual note.¹¹¹

In addition, The Faber Piano Institute website has a Teaching Library available to enhance the *Technique and Artistry* books. The 30 "Technique Secrets" present a developmental framework of pianistic gestures for expressive playing. This approach integrates the knuckles, wrist, and forearm in fluent support of the fingers for tension-free control and a wide palette of music expression.¹¹²

Focus of Technique

In the Primer Level, the focus is directed toward seating distance, tall knuckles, and control of the fingertips with the thumb position determining the height of the wrist. In Level 1, the "wrist float-off" develops an upward motion of the wrist for phrase shaping, and the light

¹¹¹Nancy and Randall Faber, *Level 5 Technique and Artistry*, (Hal Leonard, 1997).

¹¹²Randall Faber, <https://technique.faberpiano.com>. (accessed June 2018).

hand bounce facilitates a wrist staccato touch. Level 2A emphasizes finger independence with a "play-relax" mode. The light thumb exercise removes tension associated with a gripping action. Once again, the "wrist float-off" gesture promotes graceful arcs when playing. Level 2B combines the drop of arm weight with an upward "wrist float-off" to produce an expressive slur gesture. A light, independent thumb is also applied to scales and accompaniments as well as pedaling.

Level 3A introduces the "round-off" for a two-note slur, and chords are cushioned with the wrist and forearm rotation. Wrist circles are addressed for one-octave arpeggios. Level 3B, which includes a closing hand through extensions and speed as well as fluency, are demonstrated. Level 4 explains alignment and relates it to wrist circles and arm weight. Finally, Level 5 uses all technique concepts in review with a more sophisticated approach.¹¹³

It is important for teachers to demonstrate gestures and to observe when students are learning and practicing these tools that enable them to play fluently. Modeling is the key that allows students to see their teacher-mentors apply technique to the keyboard. One of the most valuable tools that the Fabers provide for students are videos on the "technique secrets" found at their Technique and Artistry website. Dr. Faber guides students through the actual movement and gestures for each level of the *Technique and Artistry* books. Using the videos, the teacher can demonstrate each "technique secret" to ensure that the student has complete understanding. "Learning to play with excellent technique is best achieved when students are able to focus their attention on physical gestures and resulting sound rather than notation. Artistic elements such as phrasing, inflection, tonal control, and rubato are best taught by briefly putting aside the score

¹¹³Ibid.

and simply asking students to listen."¹¹⁴

Recently, additional technique books have been published to enhance the material introduced in the *Technique and Artistry* books. *Scale and Chord Books 1 and 2* directly address the obsolete tradition of mindless drilling to encourage a grasp of scale and chord practice. Each degree of the scale is assigned meaning fundamental to revealing melodic direction and harmonic intent. "The Fabers advocate for a more three-dimensional approach to piano technique, prescribing technical gestures for efficient and relaxed use of the wrist and body."¹¹⁵ Their approach reinforces elements of fun and adventure and at the same time motivates the students to practice technique concepts with interesting and challenging material.

At some point perhaps Nancy and Randall Faber studied the philosophy of the great pianist and teacher, Frederic Chopin. Jane Magrath writes about Chopin and his ideas about technique:

Technique never was to be mechanical in Chopin's studio, and he never separated technique from the production of a cantabile tone. Chopin was especially concerned with the suppleness of the wrist and with having the student move easily in a lateral position on the piano. He believed the evenness of scales depended on equal strengthening of all fingers using five-finger patterns and a light thumb.¹¹⁶

The absence of technique training often produces an average student who learns only notes and rhythms and tends to omit the elements of expression and emotion. This weakness can also prohibit communicating a musical idea when playing for others. Imagery, metaphors, and musical ideas are absent when a student only plays in a mechanical, not musical, manner. Nancy

¹¹⁴Katherine Fisher and Julie Knerr, "The Role of Rote Teaching in the Development of Reading, Technique, and Artistry," *Clavier Companion* (July 2015): 3-4 (accessed June 2018).

¹¹⁵Betsy Henrichs, "Piano Adventures Announces a New Approach to Scale and Chord Practice," faberpianoadventures.com. (accessed March 2018).

¹¹⁶Jane Magrath, "Chopin's Teaching." *Clavier Companion* (May, 2010): 2 (accessed March 2018).

and Randall Faber combined their careers of performance and composition. By doing so, they have written music, exercises, and now have devised new ways to practice exercises and etudes with accompaniments in order to enhance the piano student as a total musician. From the Primer Level book, students are instructed to play a story or present a musical idea using the "technique secrets." This practice reinforces the idea of making the piano student claim identity as a musician.

The Value of Technique and Artistry

In a 2018 workshop for piano teachers in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. Faber spoke in depth regarding the concept of "technique and artistry."¹¹⁷ Through demonstrations he addressed and explained the physical manipulation of technique and also that the sound of artistry is achieved best in the marriage of the two principles. By taking advanced virtuoso technique and incorporating it at each level, a student will play with more fluency, virtuosity, and expression. Developing technique early will manifest itself by saving practice time, avoiding frustration, and playing musically for the student. The proper use of arm movement gives vibrancy and offers different colors of tone. The use of wrist circles also allows the arm to be relaxed and enhances more fluid playing. The Fabers have created videos in the Skills Library on their website to provide the foundations of arpeggios, scales, and repeated notes. There are also videos that focus on gestures for the "Artistry Magic" repertoire.

Mirror neurons are part of the body's electrical system that fire thoughts. The body reacts to what the eyes see, and music has always been associated with motor activity. The production of music involves well-coordinated motor actions that produce the physical vibrations of sound. The experience of music involves the perception of purposeful, intentional, and organized sequences of motor acts as the cause of temporally-synchronized auditory information. Playing

¹¹⁷Faber Piano Workshop. Ellis Piano Store, Birmingham, AL (August 2, 2018).

an instrument is implemented by the human mirror neuron system from the large-scale movements of different notes to the tiny, subtle movements of different timbres.¹¹⁸

The connection between music and motor function is evident in all aspects of musical activity. For example, we dance to music, we move our bodies to play musical instruments, and we move our mouths and larynx to sing. "Music is a communicative signal comprised of patterns whose performance and perception are governed by combinatorial rules, or a sort of musical grammar (Sloboda, 1985)."¹¹⁹ Organization integrates lower-level units to form more complex higher-level units, and in the case of music, this involves combinations of both sequential and simultaneous elements such as notes, rhythms, phrases, chords, chord progressions and keys to form an overall musical structure.¹²⁰ When students hear or see an example, they are immediately able to process it. This important idea can be reinforced by modeling demonstrated by the teacher, and in the case of the Faber series, by using the videos. These videos are designed to help both student and teacher in learning gestures of the arm, wrist, and fingers in order to ultimately combine "technique and artistry."

Scale and Chord Book 1 includes a chart for all major/minor, five-finger scales and primary chords. Also, improvisations, pieces to transpose, and opportunities to harmonize appear in this book. *Scale and Chord Book 2* includes one-octave major and minor scales, scale variations, one-octave arpeggios, and chord progressions to transpose. Further, the newest technique book is the *Hanon-Faber The New Virtuoso Pianist*. The emphasis here is to exhibit dexterity and gesture without tension. Warm-ups, preceding the selected exercises from Hanon's

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Istvan Molnar-Szakacs and Katie Overy, "Music and Mirror Neurons: From Motion to Emotion." *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* (December 2006): 235-236 (accessed September 2018).

¹²⁰ Ibid. 236.

The Virtuoso Pianist, ensure correct gesture and relaxation with an updated approach.

The new "Sight Sound Story" element of piano technique is presently being perfected for professional development from the Faber Piano Institute, and it will be available for teachers who are registered on the website. This online opportunity will explore the following: sight--visual models of physical movement, sound--aural models of beautiful sound, and story--oral commentary for understanding. The renowned pianist Vladimir Horowitz said, "To be able to produce many varieties of sound, now that is what I call technique. I think each pianist must ultimately carve his own way, technically and stylistically."¹²¹

¹²¹Elise Mach, *Great Pianists Speak For Themselves*. (Dodd, Mead, & Company, New York), 117.

CHAPTER V

THE SURVEY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the Faber *Piano Adventures* series and to evaluate the importance of the *Technique and Artistry* books in developing musical playing from the very beginning of piano study. A survey was given to 103 piano teachers in Mississippi in the spring of 2018 in order to investigate piano methods used and to specifically investigate their opinions about the *Piano Adventures* series. Survey questions were asked relating to the strengths and weaknesses of piano method books, particularly those in the *Piano Adventures* series.

Sample

Mississippi piano teachers were invited by email to participate in an online survey. Teachers were recommended by college and university music faculty, keyboard festival participants, area music teacher associations, and church musicians. Participants reside in fifty different cities or communities statewide. Teaching experience ranged from one year to sixty-seven years, and approximately 93 percent were female while approximately 6 percent were male. The age span of the teachers was: 25-35 (9.71%); 36-45 (10.68%); 46-55 (18.45%); 56-65 (34.95%); and 66 or older (26.21%). Their levels of education reported were: High School (2.91%), College (55.33%), Graduate School (33.01%), and other variations (8.75%). The number of students per teacher ranged from 1 to 69 with lessons taught in homes, schools, and churches.

Data Collection

The piano method survey was administered through Survey Monkey, an online survey software company that includes data analysis, sample selection, bias elimination, and data representation tools. Questions in the survey included one word, multiple choice, and open-ended answers.

Measures

The 24 question survey was divided into three categories: (1) questions 1 through 6 focused on personal information about the teacher and a description of his or her piano studio, (2) questions 7 through 14 asked about the method series primarily used; and (3) questions 15 through 24 were designed only for teachers who have used the Faber *Piano Adventures* series. (See Appendix B pg. 111).

Confidentiality and Institutional Review Board Approval

The survey was administered through email, and the responses were viewed only by the research collector. Teachers were emailed a link in Survey Monkey to complete the survey. "Piano Teacher Survey " (Protocol #18x-268) was approved as Exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(#2) by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Mississippi.

Results

The three piano method series that were used most often by teachers were the Faber *Piano Adventures* series, the *Alfred Premiere* series, and the *Bastien* series. Survey respondents indicated that 37 teachers used the Faber *Piano Adventures*, 22 teachers used the *Alfred Series*, and 13 teachers used the *Bastien* Series. Seven teachers used a combination of Faber and Alfred series, and 2 teachers used a combination of Faber and *Bastien* series. Twenty-two teachers used other method series which included *Piano Safari*, *Piano Pronto*, the *David Carr Glover* Series,

and the *John Thompson Series*.

Teachers also described what they liked best and least in the method books that they used. Teachers were asked if they used the theory book that is included in the series that they use, and also if they use supplemental material outside of their series. Sixty-eight percent of teachers used the theory book in the series, and 91% of teachers used supplementary materials. There were numerous comments about trying to select the appropriate method series for each individual student, suggesting that this consideration influenced which series was selected for each student. Further, the teachers evaluated the duet material and the correlation of all books in the series that they use. On a scale of one to five, with 1 being low and 5 being high, teachers ranked the effectiveness of duet material at 3.71%, and the correlation between lesson book and other books in the series at 4.48%.

Seventy-eight percent of those sampled had used the Faber *Piano Adventures* series, while 22% had never used the series. In question 16, the teachers were asked what they liked best about the Faber series. Seventy-five teachers responded, and the prevailing opinion of the teachers was reflected in the following comments:

"I like the coordination between the lesson, theory, and performance books."

"Ear training is included."

"I like the variety of supplemental books they offer. I can always find a particular style that a student is interested in learning."

"It uses a logical and stepwise manner of progression in a manner that is natural and enjoyable."

"Emphasis is on building technical skills, including great tips."

"The creativity is very appealing to young students."

"The Faber series offers a positive learning experience that incorporates a consistent and progressive style of musical education that makes it easy for students to understand

the piano methods."

"The series gives the students, who are really practicing, more to do to improve their technique."

"Besides the correlation of books, I like the fact that it teaches students how to transpose from early on in the series."

"The series explores outside of the basic hand positions."

Question 17 asked what teachers liked the least about *Piano Adventures*. 46 teachers responded with the most frequent comment coming from 11 teachers who stated that the series moved too slow. Other comments included:

"I do not enjoy some of the pieces, though overall I really like the method. It is what I use prior to using the *Piano Pronto* series.

"I find there is not much use of familiar melodies."

"There is too much off-the-staff reading in the beginning."

"Sometimes it explores too much and makes it hard for beginner students to read the notes."

"Some of the pieces are too short, and students finish the books too quickly."

"I do not like separate books for theory, technique, etc."

In questions 18 through 21, on a scale of one to five, with 1 being low and 5 being high, teachers were asked to evaluate the "discovery activities" and creative activities." "Discovery activities" appear in the lesson and performance books at each level. These activities provide review and also increase the student's awareness of musical concepts. The teachers ranked the "discovery activities" as 71% effective. "Creative activities" provide a sense of adventure and fun while experimenting with the repertoire in the levels, and the "creative activities" were ranked as 73% effective. The "technique secrets," discussed in Chapter 4, were ranked as 75% effective, and the *Technique and Artistry* books received a score of 75% effective. Question

twenty-two asked: "Does the repertoire cover a wide variety of styles and genres in the pieces?" Seventy-five teachers responded with 69 answering yes and only 1 answering no.

Fifty-five teachers gave an evaluation of what distinguishes the Faber *Piano Adventures* series apart from all the other method books. Three recurring comments were made. "The compositions hold the interest of the students, are playable, have age appropriate illustrations, and promote good music reading because of their appeal. The second unique aspect of the series is the variety of repertoire and styles of music. Teachers commented that the series presents an approach to music studies that is exciting and covers a broad spectrum of musical styles. Also, it has many options for different types of learners because the repertoire is so extensive. The third observation addressed the use of the *Technique and Artistry* books." Though many teachers responded with just the title of these books, comments included how students play more freely and musically by learning the technique gestures. Specific comments pertaining to the question about why the *Piano Adventures* series is different from other methods included the following:

"The Faber series updates and adds to its series more often than other methods."

"There is quality of repertoire in every level."

"It is interesting and appeals to the intelligence as well as the musicianship of the student."

The final question asked teachers if they would recommend the Faber series to new piano teachers starting their career. Approximately 35% of them said it would be their number one choice. 48.35 % said the Faber series would be one of two methods that they would recommend, and finally, 16.48 % answered that they would not recommend the Faber series.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Choosing a Method

Considerations for choosing a piano series are discussed in this chapter with special attention given to the importance of the series having student appeal and satisfaction. The study shows that the variety of repertoire and the teaching of technique and artistry are factors of great importance in any series. These areas may possibly relate to causes of attrition in piano study.

Little research has been undertaken in order to examine the method books currently used by private piano teachers. The research is limited on content and objectives, as well as on student and teacher long-term outcomes. Before the effectiveness of method books can be measured, it is important to examine which method books are the most utilized by piano teachers. How should the effectiveness of a method series be measured? Traditional method books emphasize reading and understanding music symbols. In addition, there have been numerous surveys utilizing questionnaires to ask teachers what concepts should be included in method books and in what order these concepts should be presented.

A comprehensive music series should provide standards or objectives that meet the needs of each student. Many teachers have the philosophy of "using what works for you," and this approach has made research on effectiveness of method books difficult to assess. An important issue for any method series is for it to be pedagogically sound. An effective series must explain the basic elements of melody, rhythm, and harmony. At the same time the series should also add technique and expressiveness to these basic elements, thus creating a whole entity.

Patty K. Nelson, Trena Wilkerson, and Betty J. Conway performed two pilot studies to determine what methods piano teachers use and in what order musical concepts are introduced. The first study administered a questionnaire to forty-seven music teachers in the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas Metroplex. All teachers used either the Faber or Alfred series. The second pilot study was conducted with nineteen piano teachers from North Central Texas and Oklahoma. Most of these teachers used Faber, Alfred, Hal Leonard, or Bastien.¹²² In 2015 Patty Nelson conducted a survey with the total membership of the Music Teachers National Association. Five hundred sixty-two piano teachers, who used seventy-eight different method series, participated in the survey. Fifty-nine percent of the teachers used Faber's *Piano Adventures*. The conclusion of this study indicated that teachers choose the method series that they believe will meet the needs of each individual student.¹²³

In my 2018 study of piano teachers in Mississippi, the most often used method series were Faber, Alfred, and Bastien. From this study, evidence was found showing that a series should include a wide variety of music and repertoire that motivates the student. The study further revealed that the progression of lessons, availability of supplemental material, and the correlation of all books in the series were important features when considering what series to choose.¹²⁴ Perhaps the most effective teachers are those who use current, up-to-date method books and are looking for ways to develop aural skills, improvisation, and composition. They are

¹²²Patty K. Nelson, Trena Wilkerson, and Betty J. Conway, "Two Incarnations of a Study Questionnaire To Determine What Piano Teachers Use and What Order Musical Concepts Are Introduced," *MTNA Journal* (September 2013): 201-28 (accessed January 2018).

¹²³Patty K. Nelson, "Piano Curriculum: What Order Do Teachers Introduce Concepts, What Method Books Teachers Are Using And How Do the Method Books Align With Jerome Bruner's Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic Learning Theory," *MTNA Journal* (2015): 13-31 (accessed January 2018).

¹²⁴Martha F. Monroe, Piano Teacher Survey, (June 2018).

not merely teaching piece after piece. In 1994, The Music Education National Conference (MENC), now known as the National Association for Music Education (NAFME) provided a guideline for music teachers that includes the following: performing on instruments, alone and with others; improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments; composing and arranging music within specific guidelines; reading and notating music; listening to, analyzing, and describing music, and evaluating music and music performances.¹²⁵ These standards particularly apply to the study of piano and should be viewed as a priority in choosing a method series.

In older method books of the mid 20th century, creativity was rarely presented or explored. The traditional series contained piece after piece to be learned and often included a concept in the piece. The study of music theory slowly began to be introduced, and ultimately the focus was placed on performance in recital and moving on to the next level. On the other hand, musical creativity today is fostered through the teaching of improvisation and composition. Many teachers lack improvisational skills and are tentative about teaching this concept. The importance of teaching improvisation conveys a feeling of ownership or to be engaged. Marvin Blickenstaff said, "Students who can improvise have a sense of freedom and ownership of the keyboard that most of our traditional students do not possess."¹²⁶ Improvisation enhances an understanding of harmony and music theory and also makes creative expression possible. Method series, which have been written since the 1990's, now strive to include creative activities, composing, transposing, and improvising on previously-learned material. The intended purpose for creating *Piano Adventures* was to develop a method that appeals to students and promotes

¹²⁵Julie Ann Ballard, "An Analysis of the Music Content in Ten Piano Methods 1994-2006) for the Elementary-Aged Beginning Piano Student for MENC National Standards Based Elements," Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2007), 2.

¹²⁶Ibid. 21.

creativity. It was also written to address the problem of students who drop out from the study of piano. Because students often did not appear to relate to the repertoire in the existing series, the Fabers tried to write fun, recognizable pieces that were pianistic and lyrical, with a special focus on expressive qualities.

Attrition in Applied Music Study

Numerous children begin to take piano lessons every year, and the beginning stage is full of enthusiasm and excitement. This stage continues and adds a feeling of achievement when the student is successful with a completed task or is able to play a piece outside of the lesson.

Researchers and piano teachers have studied the problem of piano student drop out for many years. This complex problem is not easily solved because of the individuality of those involved. Comeau, (1998) and Biggs, (2010) estimate that the dropout rate for piano lessons in the U.S. is eighty percent after two to three years of study. American piano teacher Theresa Chen, cited in Karen King's thesis, says that most students quit taking lessons between the ages of twelve and fourteen. She states, "This age is the period where piano takes away from the student's free time, is hard to learn the music concepts, and requires a lot of hard work that the child does not have diligence for."¹²⁷

In her thesis, King cites that parental involvement is critical to student success as well as encouragement for continued study. King also referred to an online discussion on the website Piano Teacher Central, which has 12, 318 members, that states there are three primary reasons given for students leaving piano lessons: parents who will not follow through with disciplined practice, overscheduled lives, and the lack of desire and effort to consistently work hard at a

¹²⁷Karen King. "Parting Ways With Piano Lessons: predictors, invoked reasons, and motivation related to piano student dropout." (Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2016), 4.

challenging task.¹²⁸ Without question, commitment and motivation are factors that are necessary for any discipline, study, or endeavor. Researchers Pitts, Davidson, and McPherson (2000) made a direct connection between the psychological needs required for motivation and music student dropout. Children who maintained motivation after twenty months of learning were more self-critical, reflective, and conscientious in their practice. They further showed that students who are intrinsically motivated place value on playing an instrument such as enjoying the sound, engaging with the music itself, or playing as a source of personal pleasure. As a result, these students are less likely to drop out.¹²⁹

Teachers can often identify students who are potential dropouts. There can be loss of interest, lack of perseverance, unwillingness or lack of time to practice, heavy schedule demands, and parental attitudes. It is very important for students, parents, and teachers to identify the motive for taking piano lessons. Taking lessons to appease parents or because their friends are taking lessons will usually lead to a short-term study. Dr. Faber states, "Playing piano can be a lifetime of enjoyment, a lifetime of contribution to society, a demonstration of how to achieve a significant skill, builds self-esteem, self-empowerment, artistry, and respect for sensitivities and aesthetic thinking"¹³⁰ Students who possess intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy have competence as well as confidence and come to embrace their identity as a musician.

In a three-year study of children taking piano lessons, Eugenia Costa-Giomi, Patricia J. Flowers, and Wakaha Sasaki found that dropouts missed more lessons and also practiced and achieved less. In this study, she found the clearest indications that a student is likely to drop out

¹²⁸Ibid. 7

¹²⁹Ibid. 2

¹³⁰Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI.

of piano lessons are lack of motivation and diminished achievement.¹³¹ Practicing habits reinforce learning, and the repetition of skills are vitally important to playing. Those students, who take the time to practice and to nurture their ability, can find great satisfaction in playing. Students who do not have a practice commitment when beginning lessons, or who do not develop a plan for practice are in danger of dropping out within the first year. If students feel that they are not making progress, most likely they will stop practicing. Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe wrote,

It may be that children's investment of time, effort, and energy in the acquisition of a music skill provides a unique opportunity for children to obtain tangible evidence of their own hard work in both the short and long term, especially because the result of their efforts is manifest in an art form that is at once personal, expressive, and esteemed by others.¹³²

Student Appeal and Satisfaction

As stated earlier, studies have shown that highly-motivated piano students see music as a part of their lives and their identity. Feelings of satisfaction act as a source of positive reinforcement contributing to intrinsic motivation.¹³³ The satisfaction of performing encourages children to participate in an activity where they anticipate having a good time, feeling good, and having positive self-esteem. The goal in education perhaps should ultimately be to move the child towards a love of learning or personal satisfaction. Self-esteem is developed when

¹³¹Eugenia Costa-Giomi, Patricia J. Flowers, Wakaha Sasaki, "Piano Lessons of Beginning Students Who Persist or Drop Out: Teacher Behavior, Student Behavior, and Lesson Progress," *Journal of Research in Music Education* (Fall 2005): 237-244 (accessed September 2016).

¹³²Robert A Duke, Patricia J. Flowers, and David E. Wolfe, "Children Who Study Piano with Excellent Teachers in the United States," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 132, (Spring, 1997): 81 (accessed March 2017).

¹³³Nora A. Rife, Zachary M. Shnek, Jennifer L. Lauby, and Leah Blumberg Lapidus, "Children's Satisfaction with Private Music Lessons," *Journal for Research in Music Education*, 49, 1, (April, 2001): 22 (accessed March 2017).

students play pieces they love and also enjoy participating in creative music activities in the method books. Another integral part of a successful lesson is to have an environment where students are comfortable, feel accepted, and know they will enjoy what they are doing. In keeping with this, *Piano Adventures* was designed to relate to students and to provide materials that they are interested in and can enjoy. The Fabers concluded that enthusiastic students begin their studies with the expectation of fun. If this expectation is not fulfilled, continuing piano study may be in jeopardy. The series is sequenced for learning, creating, and exploring in order that students can proceed to the next level with competence and a sense of adventure.

John Dewey believed that when students are actively involved in learning, they will be motivated and will achieve to a greater extent. He also said, "To be playful and serious at the same time is possible, and it defines the ideal mental condition."¹³⁴ Teachers can incorporate play and playfulness to enhance learning experiences. Fun examples of techniques, interesting titles of pieces, and puzzle-like activities stimulate students to learn important concepts in creative ways. Hungarian-American psychologist Csikszentmihalyi contends that when students are fully engaged and their abilities match those required by a task, they achieve a sense of equilibrium and tend to find the activity more enjoyable, rewarding, and they experience "flow," the continuance of the activity after it has ended.¹³⁵ This feeling in itself is its own reward for the student.

When students are motivated intrinsically, they engage in activities of searching for their own needs, curiosities, and interest. Jane McGrath says, "I require two things of my students:

¹³⁴Adrian Skilbeck, "Dewey on Seriousness, Playfulness, and the Role of the Teacher," *Education Sciences* (2017): 2,5 (accessed August 2018).

¹³⁵Chad West, "Motivating Music Students: A Review of the Literature," *Update: National Association for Music Education* (2013): 14 (accessed August 2018).

they must be curious and they must be enthusiastic. My role as a teacher is to create an environment where those around me are curious, enthusiastic, and ultimately committed to whatever task or challenge is at hand. If one is enthusiastic and curious, the chances are that he or she will become committed."¹³⁶ Students often lose interest in lessons because they perceive learning activities as "nothing new." This situation brings about the critically important need to present a wide-range of styles and repertoire. Selection of repertoire is one of the most challenging aspects of motivating and keeping students interested as they learn musical concepts.

Repertoire

Lesson content may lead to continuing study of the piano when the students themselves are involved in the selection of supplemental materials. Being creatively challenged and being engaged in the genre of music often stimulates students to practice and to achieve more. The research of Dyal (1991) recommends the need for a varied musical education, with a mixture of styles and moods, and implies that teachers must present their students with personalized options rather than standardized assessments.¹³⁷ When students enjoy the repertoire they are practicing, they perhaps assume a creative ownership associated with musical identity. Adding contemporary music, jazz, popular, or movie-theme pieces to practice can help students maintain their enthusiasm for playing. A variety of music also gives a sense of "something new" added to the foundation that they have already established.

The Fabers believed that students did not relate to the existing method books when they developed the *Piano Adventures* series. Throughout the process of writing the series, they tested

¹³⁶Jane McGrath, www.janemcgrath.com (accessed June, 2018).

¹³⁷Karen King, "Parting Ways With Piano Lessons: predictors, invoked reasons, and motivation related to piano student dropout." (Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2016) , 94.

each piece for interest and the degree of motivation it presented to the students in their private studio. In every piano studio there is probably a wide range of musical tastes and styles desired by the students. Dr. Faber states:

The motivational impact of customizing for the student can be dramatic. In addition to harnessing the magnetic attraction to an individual's favorite musical sounds, the process personalizes piano study. This shift of control from teacher to learner constitutes a major move toward intrinsic motivation. We find more attentiveness, better retention, more practice, and a significant change in the communication dynamics. The right music makes all the difference.¹³⁸

Students tend to be more motivated if they can relate to the music. It is difficult to work at something you do not connect with. Allowing students to have a voice in choosing supplemental repertoire promotes ownership of their pieces and reinforces personalization of the lessons. Playing in a variety of genres can also provide opportunities for students to achieve and to perform for family, friends, or groups to which they belong. Of particular value is when students are able to play a style of music they have been accustomed to hearing. This arrangement can only reinforce the study of piano and the appreciation of all kinds of music. Further, the reference to love of music is not narrowly defined. In a presentation for a Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) convention in 1991, the Fabers stressed the importance of matching repertoire to individual student preference. "This is when a plethora of pedagogically-arranged music publications brought popular music, jazz, and blues into the piano teaching field with Faber, Hal Leonard, and Alfred Publications."¹³⁹

It is true that a successful musician is one who has developed competence in skills and technique, has explored many different genres and styles of music, and has assumed the identity

¹³⁸Randall Faber, "Lyric Playing and 'Personal Sound'." www.faber.com (January, 2016), 1 (accessed June 2018).

¹³⁹Randall Faber, "Motivational and Developmental Stages in Music Study." (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2003), 15.

of "musician" or in this case, "pianist." Dr. Faber wrote, "A successful musician is one who can play the style of music he or she desires and can do so for the enjoyment of others. A successful music educator is one who helps a student get there."¹⁴⁰

The Teaching of Technique and Artistry

Learning to play the piano is a very complex process. A child's mental and cognitive perception of music notation and sound helps to shape not only their thought process, but also their physical actions in making the music. Pianists must be able to recognize and connect information from visual, aural, and physical senses. Pianists need to take the visual information from the placement of the hand from the music, aural input from their instrument, and the physical input from the arm, hands, and fingers. The expressive element of a piece must come from the sound first. The sound is the focus, and the gestures are produced to complete the idea. Because of the lack of research on expressive performance, it is still largely unknown how much music teachers use movement in their teaching.

All instrumental musical sounds are produced by human movement. A musical performance can be expressive with tension and release, physical movement and energy, and a range of arm, hand, wrist, and finger manipulation. Teachers define the process by which a performer develops expressiveness as technical skill plus interpretation plus creativity or spontaneity.¹⁴¹ A musically expressive body is the body connected to the instrument. In the Brenner and Strand study (2013), teachers noted that they believed it was important to teach the physical relationship to the instrument from the first lesson and during every lesson thereafter.

¹⁴⁰Randall Faber, "Randall Faber-Artist-Educator Interview." PianoEducation.org. (December, 1999) 4 (accessed January 2017).

¹⁴¹Brenda Brenner and Katherine Strand, "A Case Study of Teaching Musical Expression to Young Performers," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, 1, (2013): 84-85 (accessed March 2017).

They also stated that the least expressive student was the one who did not move freely.

Piano instruction books in the first decades of the twentieth century were primarily focused on correct fingering, good embellishments, and good performance. Piano technique was practiced first, and issues related to interpretation and expression were practiced last. The two concepts were separate entities. We now know that children can express emotion and musical ideas as early as preschool age. Children can learn to express phrasing, rhythm, and emotion by shaping music through gestures and movements. Particularly in phrasing, something as simple as incorporating the movement of the wrist can shape the phrase. A common problem for many students is a stiff or locked wrist which causes tension and inhibits fluency in playing.

Chapter 4 of this study explicitly illustrates how specific movements of arm, hand, and wrist facilitate musical interpretation. Wrist movements discussed are: having a relaxed wrist, the float-off technique, rotation of the wrist, and making half and full wrist circles. The balance of arm weight, the idea of drop and follow-through, and the alignment of the arm all affect musical ideas. Examples of how to use a closed-hand technique for scale passages and an open-hand for large extensions of intervals provide the technique that allows for better execution and expression. It is vitally important for teachers to identify the essential gestures that make up good piano technique and to teach these to their students from the very beginning. Even young musicians are able to add expressiveness to musical performances.

It is well documented that a viewer can perceive expressive nuances from a musician's body language only. Jane Davidson has conducted several studies on expressive movements in musical performance relating the overall perceived expressiveness to musicians' movements. Davidson investigated which parts of a pianist's body conveyed the information used for judging

expressiveness.¹⁴² The results from these studies conclude that specific emotional intentions in music performance can be communicated to observers through movement. The beauty of the music is the ultimate goal of performance, and technique is the vehicle for that goal.

¹⁴²Jane Davidson, "Visual Perception of Performance Manner in the Movements of Solo Musicians," *Psychology of Music*, 21,2 (1993): 103-113 (accessed September 2018).

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

Why Use *Piano Adventures*?

A simple, practical definition of method in regard to piano lessons is that it is a series of graded teaching books on a particular subject. Piano teachers often question what series to use to begin teaching, or what materials to give to students after they have completed their method series. Results from my 2018 teacher survey confirm that teachers want to use a series that provides a quality curriculum. Further, they want to trust a series and to believe that by staying with it their students will become fine pianists.¹⁴³

Piano Adventures challenges existing standards for piano pedagogy. An analysis should include at least five areas: (1) an approach to reading, (2) pianistic and artistic music, (3) student appeal, (4) technique and artistry, and a (5) supplementary library that motivates practice. In the first area, approach to reading, three skills are integrated--discreet note recognition, intervallic reading, and a multi-key understanding. The note recognition teaching prevents students from equating a particular note to a particular finger. It teaches the precise relationship between a note and the keyboard. Also, it allows for a free and balance drop of the arm and hand into the finger and avoids the overuse of two thumbs on C. In addition, it reduces the student's dependence on preset hand positions. The intervallic reading approach requires that students identify the note name, write it on the blank, then set the hand accordingly. Students read by the contour of the

¹⁴³Takako Hayase, "A Comparison of Akira Miyoshi Piano Method with Nancy and Randall Faber's *Piano Adventures* Based on Royal American Conservatory Examination (RACE)" (Ph. D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2006), 17.

musical line--step or skip, up or down. This approach promotes fluency, recognition of melodic pattern, and understanding of the musical line. The multi-key approach ensures that the student learns the major and minor finger patterns. This approach also teaches the fundamentals of transposition and basic chord recognition.

The hallmark of the Fabers is pianistic arranging with pieces that feel and sound right at the piano. The pieces require effective use of the damper pedal, and they incorporate essential pianistic gestures, motions and phrase shaping that are integral to playing. Pianistic pieces develop fluent piano technique. Pieces are written to encourage freedom at the keyboard, to promote a relaxed wrist, and to suggest gestures that carry the hand across the full range of the piano.¹⁴⁴

A method series can only be as good as its music. Often in music education, functionality takes the main focus, but the focus must be where music, as the essence of expressive nature, is connected to the heart of the child.¹⁴⁵ The goal of studying the piano should be to not merely become "a piano player," but an artist who communicates emotions and feelings through music. Lyric playing is the ability to project and to beautifully shape a melody. In lyric playing, the goal is to bring the melody to the forefront with intention and sensitivity. Lyricism requires sensitivity to the contour of the melody. From the very first books of the series, ideas are suggested by title of the piece, a picture, or printed lyrics in order to encourage communication through playing. By experimenting with touch and sound, students take

¹⁴⁴Faber, Randall. "Resources for Teachers." www.faberpiano.com 1-3 (accessed December 2017).

¹⁴⁵Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI.

ownership of a piece and develop their own "personal sound."¹⁴⁶ This is a very important element which leads the student to enjoy piano lessons and to experience great satisfaction.

In Chapter 5, many comments were made in relation to the appeal of the music to the student. Nancy and Randall Faber devoted ten years of pilot testing to ensure that the repertoire had student appeal before publication in their books. The pieces suggest stories, ideas, and emotions which are illustrated appropriately for performance goals. In Julie Ann Ballard's study of MENC National Standards, she found that *Piano Adventures* does an exemplary job in using "good music" in the lesson book repertoire. "The music is diverse in sound and delightful in appeal. Many series suffer from the lack of compositional skills in the authors, although this was not the case in the Faber series."¹⁴⁷

Choosing the right repertoire and presenting it in a way that students enjoy are essential objectives for every teacher. Great teachers guide their students throughout the learning process and should never assign repertoire that is more difficult than the student can handle. Ingredients of teaching include the student in the learning process, explore creative and appealing repertoire, and keep the needs of the students at the forefront in a positive manner. The responsibility of a piano educator is to use the proper repertoire, technique, and artistry to motivate and to instill a love of continual learning with piano study. Dr. Faber stated:

Touch and sound and physicality of playing gives the sense of expression touching the heart. We like to think that the "Technique and Artistry" facet of our series gives a more deeper understanding of patterns and what makes music. If the teacher applies the scales, transpositions, and ties it in with the ear, the student can feel comfortable with all genres. The same fundamentals apply to all kinds of music. The "discovery questions" and

¹⁴⁶Faber, Randall. "Lyric Playing and Personal Sound." (2016) www.faberpiano.com 1-4 (accessed December, 2017).

¹⁴⁷Ballard, Julie Ann. "An Analysis of the Music Content in Ten Piano Methods (1994-2006) for the Elementary-Aged Beginning Piano Student for MENC National Standards Based Elements" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2007). 75-76

"technique secrets" build a strong base for what the music is about, instead of just piece to piece.¹⁴⁸

The *Technique and Artistry* books treat technique broadly as the means for musical expression. These books keep the emphasis where it should be--on listening to the sound and creating the mood. The attributes of artistry are realized in the acronym A-C-E- Analysis, Creativity, and Expression. *Piano Adventures* provides essential pianistic movements, gestures, and touches that include a scaffold of skills. The heart of technique and artistry is how to teach it, how to sequence it, and how to develop it step-by-step in order to bring out the "musical character" in students. In the Faber series, students can learn by demonstration, imaginative metaphors, and well-chosen repertoire. "Teaching is not a science; it is art and craft. Develop the educational technique and artistry with new applications, approaches, and insights."¹⁴⁹

The Fabers believe that knowledge needs review so that it will endure in long-term memory. Skills need practice so that they become automatized or played without conscious attention. Review and repetition become basics for teachers and students. Knowledge is consolidated with review to move forward. Repetition is used to make well-executed skills become automatic. All of these will prepare students to face new challenges. When a student moves too fast through difficult repertoire, he or she loses the opportunity for review and repetition. Jerome Bruner coined the term "spiral curriculum" to describe reviewing concepts already learned before adding something new. This procedure integrates knowledge, instead of just accumulating facts. Each time a concept is revisited, it is clarified for more precise understanding, and this process is addressed in the *Theory, Technique and Artistry*, and

¹⁴⁸Randall Faber, interview by Martha F. Monroe, 5 April 2018, Faber Piano Institute, Ann Arbor, MI.

¹⁴⁹Randall Faber, pianoadventures.com, "A Year of Technique and Artistry." (February, 2017) (accessed February 2018).

repertoire books.

The majority of Mississippi teachers surveyed, as well as dissertation research participants, agree that one of the major strengths of *Piano Adventures* is the wide variety of the supplemental library available. Every level includes books that will motivate students with genres they are interested in and will also include teacher duets which enhance ensemble playing. Supplemental series are:

PreTime--Primer Level.

PlayTime--Level 1

ShowTime-Level 2A

ChordTime,-Level 2B

FunTime-Levels 3A and 3B

BigTime--Level 4

These books include *Classics, Christmas, Kids' Songs, Hymns, Popular, Rock n Roll. Folk, Jazz and Blues, Ragtime and Marches, Favorites, and Disney.*

In addition, *Scale and Chord* books and the *Hanon-Faber New Virtuoso Pianist* book have been added. There is a *Pre-Reading Approach* for ages 5-6 with *Lesson* books and *Writing* books with stickers and manuscript books available. For older students, there is an *Accelerated Book* series as well as an additional *Piano Adventures* series for adults. Other supplemental books are also listed in the Appendix.

With the use of technology now at the forefront of all learning, teachers can consider expanding lesson time that is intended for the computer. There are many tools available which facilitate technique and make drills of scales, arpeggios, and patterns more interesting to practice. Students can use these creative tools to spark interest and to foster motivation with apps on the

Faber website. There are live Web Master classes and 140 technique videos developed for students to use. A student link is presently being tested that includes a link for teachers to access videos for professional development. This access can be viewed by students, and it empowers teachers to be more effective with students. The *Piano Adventures Player App* is a mobile app on MIDI players, iPhone, or iPad. The app provides interactive play along with accompaniments to engage imagination using fun and creative arrangements, to reinforce model performances, to explore a wide variety of musical styles, to build ensemble playing skills, and to make at-home practice more productive.

Findings of the Research

Nancy and Randall Faber wrote *Piano Adventures* to address the critical dropout situation that exists today. They believe that too many people view music as an extracurricular activity, not a skill that can nurture students in piano study through discipline and artistry. Teaching style and teaching methods have changed, and today there is much more focus on developing self-esteem in students which leads to accomplishment.

The Fabers believe that the music is the principal source of motivation for students. The Faber Institute in Ann Arbor, Michigan is the physical base where they continue to develop and to test materials, to teach students from kindergarten through senior adult years, and to conduct teacher training. Their ten years of pilot-study concerning what repertoire appeals to students has made their series one of the most successful in the world. *Piano Adventures* has been translated into Spanish, German, Dutch, Korean, Chinese, and Anglicized with Italian and Japanese in pre-publication now. The international editions are customized to reflect the culture and folklore of each language, country, and region of the world.

The principles that are integral to the Faber identity are the sequenced correlation of each

book at every level which reinforces musical concepts, the inclusion of the *Technique and Artistry* books which combine technique skills and artistic expression, and the availability of the supplemental books which promote interest and motivation to the student. Most importantly is the Faber philosophy which is designed to cultivate the potential in every child. The Fabers stress that the teacher is expected to provide appropriate challenges and reinforcement that allow the student to perceive personal competence and to enhance self-esteem.¹⁵⁰

The Faber philosophy can easily be compared with Erich Fromm's idea of humanistic psychology which promotes well-informed choices and values, self-realization, creativity, and the development of each child's unique potential. Putting this idea into practice is accomplished by placing priority on the individual needs and interests of each student and by allowing students to make choices. Giving a child the opportunity to study the piano will not guarantee that he or she will become an accomplished pianist. However, every child cannot make a contribution to music, but music can make a contribution to every child. The Faber philosophy believes that everyone who studies piano should be respected. Playing the piano can foster a lifetime of enjoyment and a lifetime of contribution to society. Respecting the amateur pianist is having a respect for the love of the art. One of the most important objectives for piano teachers is to prepare students for a life filled with music, whether they eventually perform, teach, work in music-related careers, or simply support the arts by attending concerts.

Nancy and Randall Faber have spent a lifetime of contributing to students and teachers all over the world with their child-centered piano pedagogy ideals. Their method series encourage a student to be everything he can be, to sharpen his sense of personal skill, and to develop his personal success and self esteem. Bennett Reimer's philosophy says that the main purpose of

¹⁵⁰Randall Faber, "Motivational and Developmental Stages in Music Study" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2003), 211.

music education is to develop every child's potential to understand and to appreciate the art of music, and consequently to gain access to the richness and beauty provided by this high-quality aesthetic experience. The goal of musical instruction, therefore, is not just simple pleasure or transitory enjoyment, but rather it is a lasting appreciation and deep understanding of musical art.¹⁵¹

From piano pedagogy periodicals, dissertations, and the Mississippi Piano Teacher Survey four considerations surface as important in choosing a piano method series. First, the series should be pedagogically sound, explaining all the basics of piano instruction and in particular, include technique and musicality. Second, the series should include a variety of repertoire to meet the needs of all students on the spectrum. Students should relate to their repertoire and need to be exposed to many different genres of music. Third, the series should provide opportunities for creativity. Improvisation enhances understanding of harmony and theory, rhythmic exercises, games, and puzzles reinforce concepts and cultivate interest. Transposition allows students to better understand theory and harmonic structure. Finally, the series should promote feelings of satisfaction which are a source of positive reinforcement contributing to intrinsic motivation.

Piano Adventures has been written with pedagogically sound thought and repertoire, and it focuses on the aesthetic beauty of sound which is produced by the model of technique and artistry. The purpose of the sequenced application enables students to exhibit motivated practice which ultimately produces success and accomplishment. The repertoire is appealing, brings satisfaction and enjoyment in piano study, and can enhance a lifetime of appreciation for all music. This method series has succeeded in joining the concepts of human psychology and

¹⁵¹Bennett Reimer, "The Curriculum Reforms Explosion and the Problem of Secondary General Music," *Music Educators Journal*, 52,5 (January, 1966): 38 (accessed September 2018).

musical enjoyment. As Frances Clark said, "Teach the student first, the music second, and the piano third."¹⁵² According to many piano pedagogy surveys, *Piano Adventures* has been used, recommended, and validated by numerous teachers not only in the United States, but throughout the world.

Future Research

Studies suggest the need for more surveys and research into method series because there is limited research focusing on method series and even less research focusing on the effectiveness of these. Additional research could be conducted on whether current method books are correlated with child development theories. Today, we need teachers for many different kinds of students who are exposed to different styles of music. Students seeking something outside of the "traditional repertoire" may be more likely to continue piano study if given choices. Future research can give more insight on how to motivate students. Choosing the appropriate series can provide the opportunity for a child to develop mentally, physically, and emotionally in the world of music. Future research studies could possibly analyze the following questions:

1. In what order do piano teachers use the books in a method series?
2. Do piano teachers use supplemental material in addition to a series?
3. How can piano teachers create a learning environment that facilitates providing choices in repertoire?
4. Which method series are the most effective with students who plan to continue long-term study?
5. How can piano teachers build upon the unique abilities of each student?
6. Can a longitudinal study be done to record the peaks and valleys of student motivation

¹⁵²Frances Clark, <https://claviercompanion.com> (September/October 2018) (accessed August 31 2018).

which will give insight into which types of motivation are most prominent and effective at various points?

7. How can the notion be changed that taking piano lessons is exclusively an elementary/early middle school activity, rather than a lifelong discipline?

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APPENDIX A
FABER PUBLICATIONS

FABER *PIANO ADVENTURES* PUBLICATIONS

My First Piano Adventures

Lesson Book A with CD and Online Audio
Writing Book A
Lesson Book B with CD and Online Audio
Writing Book B
Lesson Book C with CD and Online Audio
Writing Book C
Christmas Book A, B, C
The Little Yellow Practice Book
The Little Blue Manuscript Book
Sticker Book
Book A, B, C, Bravo Packs

Piano Adventures Primer Level

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Technique and Artistry Book
Performance Book
Sightreading Book
Teacher Guide, 2nd Edition
Gold Star Performance with Audio
Popular Repertoire Book
Christmas Book
Lesson Book Enhanced CD
Popular Repertoire CD
Primer Level Bravo Pack

Piano Adventures Level 1

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Technique and Artistry Book
Performance Book
Sightreading Book
Gold Star Performance with Audio
Popular Repertoire Book
Christmas Book
Lesson Book Enhanced CD
Popular Repertoire CD
Level 1 Bravo Pack

Piano Adventures Level 2A

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Technique and Artistry Book
Performance Book
Sightreading Book
Gold Star Performance with Audio
Popular Repertoire Book
Christmas Book
Lesson Book Enhanced CD
Popular Repertoire Enhanced CD

Piano Adventures Level 2

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Technique and Artistry Book
Performance Book
Sightreading Book
Christmas Book
Gold Star Performance with Audio
Popular Repertoire Book
Lesson Book Enhanced CD
Popular Repertoire Enhanced CD

Piano Adventures Level 3A

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Technique and Artistry Book
Performance Book
Popular Repertoire Book
Sightreading Book
Christmas Book
Lesson Book Enhanced CD
Popular Repertoire Enhanced CD

Piano Adventures Level 3B

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Technique and Artistry Book
Performance Book
Sightreading Book
Popular Repertoire Book
Christmas Book
Lesson Book Enhanced CD
Popular Repertoire CD

Piano Adventures Level 4

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Technique and Artistry Book
Performance Book
Sightreading Book
Popular Repertoire book
Christmas Book
Popular Repertoire Enhanced CD

Piano Adventures Level 5

Lesson Book
Theory Book
Performance Book
Popular Repertoire Book
Popular Repertoire CD

Other Piano Adventures Materials

Practice Time Assignment Book
Flashcards in-a-Box
Scale and Chord Book 1
Scale and Chord Book 2
Achievement Solo and Duet Sheets
Skill Sheets

Piano Adventures Accelerated 1 and 2

Lesson Books 1 and 2
Theory Books 1 and 2
Technique and Artistry Books 1 and 2
Performance Books 1 and 2
Accelerated Reading Books 1 and 2
Popular Repertoire Books 1 and 2
Lesson Books Enhanced CDs 1 and 2
Popular Repertoire Book CDs 1 and 2

Piano Adventures Adult Books 1 and 2

All-in-One Course Book 1 and 2
All-in-One Course Books with CD/DVD
Adult Classics Books 1 and 2
Adult Popular Books 1 and 2
Adult Christmas Books 1 and 2
Adult Christmas Books CDs 1 and 2
Adult Book Bravo Pack 1

Piano Adventures International Editions

Korean
German
Dutch
Taiwanese
Anglicized
Chinese
Spanish

Other Series

PreTime Piano Supplemental Library
PlayTime Piano Supplemental Library
ShowTime Piano Supplemental Library
ChordTime Piano Supplemental Library
FunTime Piano Supplemental Library
BigTime Piano Supplemental Library

Other Publications

Pre-Reading Christmas-Primer
DuetTime Christmas Books Level 1 and 2
Once Upon A Rainbow Books 1, 2, and 3
I Can Read Music Books 1, 2, and 3
Discover Beginning Improvisation with CD
Discover Blues Improvisation with CD
Dinosaur Stomp
Music Notes-Quick and Easy Guide to Music Basics

The Developing Artist

Hanon-Faber, The New Virtuoso Pianist
Preparatory Piano Literature with CD and Online Audio
Piano Literature Books 1, 2, 3, 4 with CDs and Online Audio
Piano Literature for a Dark and Stormy Night
Piano Sonatinas Books 1, 2, 3, 4
Selections from the Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach
Prelude in C--J.S. Bach
Solfeggietto--C.P.E. Bach
Für Elise--Beethoven
Sonata in G Major--Beethoven
Sonatina in G Major--Beethoven
Rondo alla Turca--Mozart
Sonata in C Major--Mozart
Prelude in D flat Major--Chopin
Tarantella--Pieczonka
Clair de Lune--Debussy
La Fille aux cheveux de lin--Debussy

The Collaborative Artist

Bettylan Roulade (Advanced Flute Solo)
Curiouser and Curiouser (Clarinet, Saxophone, Piano)
Curiouser and Curiouser (Flute, Viola, Piano)
Joy to the World (Flute, Cello, Piano)
Silent Night (Flute, Cello, Piano)
Three Characters (Violin, Viola, Piano)

The Keyboard Artist

Three Easier Waltzes--Chopin
Three Mazurkas--Chopin
Four Lyric Pieces--Grieg

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Questions

1. What is the city or town in Mississippi where you teach?
2. How many years have you been teaching piano?
3. What is the average number of students you teach in a year?
4. What is your highest level of education: high school, college, graduate school?
5. What is your age?
6. Are you male or female?
7. What piano method series do you use most?
8. How many years have you used this series?
9. If you use supplemental material other than your primary series, what do you use?
10. What do you like the best about your series?
11. What do you like the least about your series?
12. Do you always use the Theory book in your series?
13. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how do you rank the duet material in your series?
14. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how do you rank the correlation between the lesson book and the other books in the series?
15. Have you ever used the Faber *Piano Adventures* series?
If you answered #15 yes, continue with the survey.
16. What do you like best about the *Piano Adventures* series?
17. What do you like least about the *Piano Adventures* series?
18. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how do you rate the "discovery activities?"

19. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how do you rate the "creative activities?"
20. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how do you rate the "technique secrets?"
21. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how do you rate the *Technique and Artistry* books?
22. Does the repertoire cover a wide variety of styles and genres of pieces?
23. What is the unique aspect of *Piano Adventures* that sets it apart from other series?
24. Would you recommend the Faber *Piano Adventures* series for a new, beginning piano teacher to use?

VITA

Martha Frances Houston Monroe was born in New Albany, Mississippi and graduated from W. P. Daniel High School. She attended Mississippi College and graduated from the University of Mississippi with a Bachelor of Music Education degree while also receiving the Outstanding Pianist of the Year Award. She studied piano for a year at the Ecole Normale de Musique, Paris, France receiving a Diploma in Piano. Returning to Mississippi College Martha received a Master of Music in Piano Performance. She later received the Specialist in Music Education degree from the University of Mississippi. She was awarded the Carnegie-Melon fellowship for doctoral studies.

Her teaching career spans over fifty years as a piano teacher. She also taught elementary music for seven years at Westminster Academy in Gulfport, Mississippi and was a choral music teacher for ten years at Long Beach Middle School, Long Beach, Mississippi. Martha was a choral director at Tupelo Middle School for two years and also taught Fine Arts classes at Tupelo High School. She has been an adjunct faculty member at the University of Southern Mississippi, William Carey University, Pearl River Community College, Northeast Mississippi Community College, Itawamba Community College, and Blue Mountain College. Martha was named Mississippi Outstanding Music Educator of the Year (1999) by the Mississippi Music Educators Association.

Martha has given piano performances throughout Mississippi and also at Carnegie Hall. She has given organ performances in cathedrals throughout Europe including St. Peter's Basilica, Rome; Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris; La Madeleine, Paris; St. Mark's Basilica, Venice; St. Chiesa di Ognissanti, Florence; St. Martin-in-the-Field, London; Covent Garden, London; Dom Cathedral, Salzburg; and St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna.