Instructions Project

Learning to Read Piano Music

basic tutorial

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LEARNING TO READ

Piano Music

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Learning to Read Piano Music

Introduction

The piano began in form as a proto-piano/guitar around 500 B.C. by the Greeks. It took over a thousand years of evolution to reach our modern day piano. In 1709 Italian harpsichord maker, Bartolomeo Cristofori revealed his “pianoforte”, similar to a harpsichord and a clavichord. This was the time and place for the birth of the Italian Renaissance.
In preparing this document I learned that one of my favorite modern day compositions, “Cristofori’s Dream” written by David Lanz, was inspired by Cristofori’s piano invention. Please listen to this song and imagine how the world has changed and been enhanced by a most beautiful instrument, the piano. http://youtu.be/9wxrB41PMhw
Over the past 300 years the piano has been modified into various shapes, enabling a broad range of sounds. This instrument has the power to communicate countless emotions.

I congratulate you on your desire to learn how to read piano music. Much like understanding a different language, you will look at a sheet of music and be able to translate it into a message. Without this knowledge, the message would be lost.

Let’s begin

Learning to read piano music is similar to learning math. You must begin with memorizing the basic signs and symbols. This is where everyone starts, young and old alike if the desired result is to read music and thereby play the piano. After you can associate the written music with the actual notes on the keyboard you will be on your way.

The Treble and Bass Clefs

The treble clef is similar to a cursive G in appearance. It is also called the G clef or G2 because the center of the clef curls around the 2nd horizontal line. Notes written on the treble clef are higher in pitch and generally played with the right hand.

The bass [beys] clef is similar to the letter F. The two dots represent the two F horizontal lines. The bass clef is also called the F clef or F4 because the two dots in the clef symbol lie above and below the 4th horizontal line. Notes written on the bass clef are lower in pitch and generally played with the left hand.

The piano is a complex instrument. A seasoned player would not be able to identify its components.

Parts of an upright piano

The Grand Staff

Together the treble and bass clef make the grand staff. They are joined by a brace.

The Grand Staff

The bass staff and the treble staff are joined together by a **brace** to make the **grand staff.** A **leger line** is used between the two staves for middle C. Leger lines are also used above and below the grand staff to extend its range.

The notes with arrows are landmarks or guideposts. Learn to identify and find them quickly on the keyboard, as they assist in reading the notes surrounding them.

☑ Next notice the notes on the staff and their **corresponding positions** on the keyboard.

☑ A good way to orient yourself is by finding **middle C**.

LET'S MOVE ON TO STUDY THE NOTES OF EACH CLEF.

EACH KEY/NOTE ON THE PIANO CORRESPONDS WITH A LINE OR SPACE ON THE STAFF

7 letter pattern

You may have noticed there are only 7 letter notes assigned for the piano: A, B,C,D,E,F, and G. You may have also noticed a repeating pattern in the actual piano keys. Music, like math, is based on repeating patterns.

The Treble notes

The Bass notes

FIND A PIANO THAT YOU LOVE

Memorize the Notes on the Staff

Mnemonic sayings

An easy way to remember the notes is by memorizing a mnemonic saying such as **E**very, **G**ood, **B**oy, **D**oes, **F**ine for the lines of the treble clef. Another good saying is **E**very, **G**ood, **B**oy, **D**eserves, **F**udge.
The treble **spaces spell FACE**.

For lines of the base clef remember **G**ood, **B**oys, **D**o, **F**ine, **A**lways, or **G**ood, **B**oys, **D**eserve, **F**udge, **A**lways.
The bass **spaces spell ACEG** or **A**ll, **C**ows, **E**at, **G**rass.

Mnemonic sayings are a fun and effective way to memorize the notes of the grand staff.

What are Accidentals?

An accidental is a symbol that turns a note into a sharp, a flat, or a natural:

Sharp (♯): Play the note a half step above (to the right) of what is written.
Flat (♭): Play the note a half step below (to the left) of what is written.
Natural (♮): Play the note on its original key after having been sharpened or flattened.

Practice Page

☑ Practice **writing the notes** up and down the Grand Staff.

☑ First start with the **treble clef**—fill in all of the line note letter names followed by all of the space note letter names.

☑ Next practice the **bass clef**—fill in all of the line note letter names, followed by all of the space note letter names.

Here is a simple song to put what you have learned into action.
Practice! Practice! Practice!

Resources:

blueskymusicstudio.com
dolmetsch.com
learningtoplaypiano.net
piano.about.com
pianotricks.com
survey.cvent.com