

Teaching Advanced Piano Course

Sample Articles

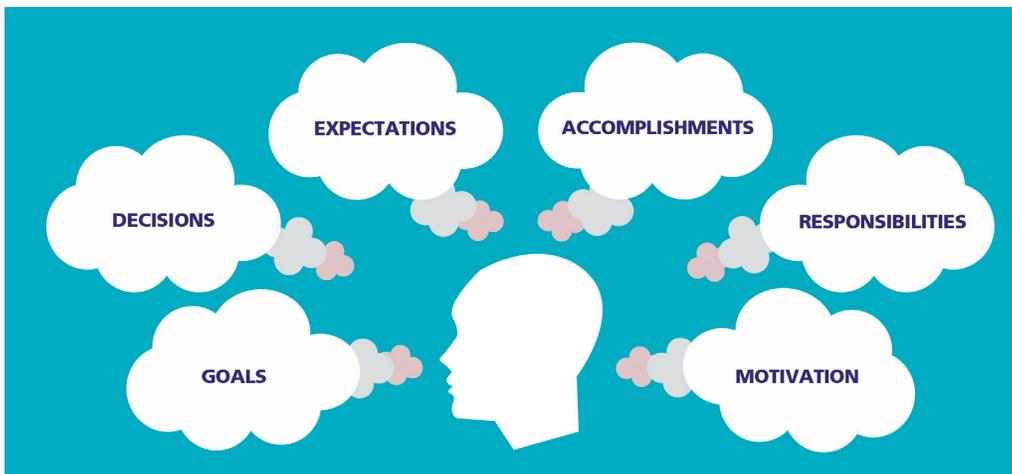
Each module has between five and ten comprehensive articles with images, sound clips, musical examples, and interactive graphics. Here are a few excerpts from the Advanced course.

WEEKS 1–2: The Advanced Student Teacher and Student – An Evolving Relationship

Mentoring

As students develop the experience and skills needed to work on advancing repertoire, a maturing process is also taking place—they are growing up and getting older. In the mid-teen to young adult years, students become increasingly independent and more conscious of themselves as decision-makers and goal-setters. The world around them is beginning to both expect and recognize responsibility, accomplishment, and motivation.

What does this mean for the evolving student-teacher relationship?



WEEK 4: Musicianship Cognition, Pattern Recognition, and Intermediary Drills

Encouraging and Building Fluency

If students need an intermediary exercise to prepare to play this particular example, teachers should have students block the left-hand chords (twice per measure), while playing the right-hand notes on each beat, at a quick tempo. Then, students could fill in the right-hand notes, while still blocking the left hand, and finally, perform the excerpt as written. Teachers might experiment by highlighting the skeleton or circling pattern chunks for those students who appear to fixate on specific pitches, rather than scanning an entire beat, pattern, or measure. See the sample below—from Etude op. 27 no. 3 by Kabalevsky:

WEEK 7: Romantic Repertoire Formal Elements

Schumann's *Vogels als Prophet* (The Prophet Bird) from *Waldszenen* (Woodland Sketches), op. 82 (Level 10) draws inspiration from the natural world. Cast in a ternary form, the A sections are characterized by disjunct leaps (outlining diminished thirds and tenths, diminished fourths and elevenths, and diminished fifths and twelfths) that arrive on accented non-chord notes. A very brief six-measure chorale in the parallel key of G major incorporates a yearning rising figure and serves as the B section.

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Discussion Forum Sample

Weekly discussion forums provide an opportunity for you to learn and share with like-minded colleagues in a moderated setting. In-depth conversations, aligned with each week's topic, allow you to exchange strategies and teaching tips with teachers from across North America.

Week 5: Strategies for Teaching Contrapuntal Music

How do you teach a contrapuntal piece, for example Bach's Fugue in C Minor, BWV 847 (Level 9)? What are your teaching strategies for teaching a contrapuntal work?

For teaching contrapuntal music, I love the motto "slow and steady wins the race." Here's a plan to introduce Bach's Fugue in C Minor, BWV 847 for 15-20 minutes per lesson over four lessons.

Week 1: Listen, Internalize, and Move

Lesson: Introduce the fugal form and compare to 2-part inventions and dance pieces. Possible analogies are singing a round, juggling 3 balls instead of 2. Finish up with listening to a recording and discussing the mood(s).

Assignment: Listen to a different recording 2-3 times every day (suggest Schiff & Landowska for one recording, but let the student pick the others). Have them take note of the tempo, articulation, dynamics, and feelings. For added benefit they should listen with eyes closed on occasion, and tap, conduct or do corresponding dance steps.

Week 2: Explore Horizontally – Identify Voice Parts, Rhythm, and Terms

Lesson: Highlight each voice in mm. 1-9 with a different color. Define and label terms: subject, countersubject, subject fragments and inversions. Circle notes by term and label groups (e.g., S, CS, Sf, i for inversions - Si). Compare and contrast the shapes of the subject and countersubject (steps, skips, up, down). Tap the subject 2-3x in rhythm and then do mm.1-9. Note that the subject is a 2-mm. group – experiment with pulse (every measure or every 2?).

Assignment: Student completes highlighting the top, middle, and bottom voices. Tap and sing each voice 2-3x for a couple of days, then play individual voices and explore phrasing options 2-3x daily. Use a metronome to experiment different tempi. Label remaining subjects, countersubjects, subject fragments, and inversions. (No HT or ornaments yet.)

Week 3: Explore Vertically – Broad Structure, Cadences, and Tonality

Lesson: Review assignment. Play each voice while student plays another. Introduce terms: exposition and episodes. Have student identify end of exposition and the final subject statement. Compare and discuss intervals and tonality in each statement of the subject. Experiment with articulation HS, connect 16ths, detach 8ths – when is it OK to break this rule? Identify tonality and chords for each subject, and mark cadences in the exposition. Does 2-mm. rhythmic pattern continue after exposition?

Assignment: Record each voice individually on phone or electric keyboard and play 2 voices at a time in practice with a recording of the 3rd. Experiment with phrasing, articulation, and dynamics based on favorite recordings. Mark remaining cadences. Start HT practice for mm. 1-9 only, play legato at first until navigation is with ease, and then add articulation.

Week 4: Merge Horizontal and Vertical Ideas – Begin HT Practice

Lesson: Review assignment. Beginning at mm. 7-13, work through HS and HT and practise playing all 3 voices. Explore ways to keep the voice flowing when it switches hands or is in combination with other voices. Explore ideas for pedal and ornamentation.

Assignment: Focus on mm. 1-13 HT. Practice in small fragments or measure to measure to achieve flow. Master this section at a steady tempo before assigning remaining measures.



Chris

Saturday, September 10, 6:15 PM

Really interesting to see how many different ways the same thing can be taught! And also when we have to adapt to different students' needs or learning styles. Another reminder that there isn't just ONE right way!

Evan

Saturday, September 10, 10:23 PM



The first step I take in teaching most pieces is to listen to a variety of performances of it. For the fugue this is even more important, and I would encourage the student to listen to recordings such as Glenn Gould and Angela Hewitt on the piano, as well as a harpsichord performance of the piece. The student will be able to clearly hear the differences of the instruments.

I learned about a new performer this evening! I had never heard of Anthony Newman (I guess I need to listen to more harpsichord music!). VERY interesting! He plays double keyboard instruments, but doesn't use the top keyboard. For anyone who listens to more harpsichord music – is this typical?

These pieces sound SO DIFFERENT on the piano. What really caught my attention in Newman's playing was the rubato he used in the C Minor Prelude! He practically screeched to a halt a couple of times – I've never heard that much rubato...even when someone like Pollini plays it. I like the way he finger pedals those top notes in the C Minor Prelude as it makes a lovely line, and he has some interesting ideas for ornaments in the fugue. In the D Minor Prelude he has the most interesting start – he holds those first 2 Ds, and then, blasts off. I did notice a couple of hiccup stops at key sections in the piece.

I really like how each artist puts their own stamp on these pieces, and how hearing them will help our students do the same.

Thanks so much for sharing your thoughts, everyone!

Carmen

Saturday, September 10, 10:48 PM



In addition to the lesson material and 'homework' Chris listed, I find playing duets for each part helps me identify areas where a student needs more work. It is also a great way to solidify each section and improve memorization!

Alice

Sunday, September 10, 1:08 AM



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