
Piano Method Review:

Piano Adventures Series by Randall & Nancy Faber

by Joy Morin



Introduction

The Piano Adventures series is written by Nancy and Randall Faber, a husband and wife team residing in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Piano Adventures was first published in 1996. Beginning in 2011, the Fabers began releasing revised Second Editions.

Piano Adventures is a piano method intended for the beginner student age six and up.

Related Methods:

- My First Piano Adventures, books A, B, and C — for 5-6 year olds.
- Accelerated Piano Adventures, Books 1 and 2 — for the older beginner.
- Adult Piano Adventures, Books 1 and 2.

Website: pianoadventures.com.

Overview

ORGANIZATION

- **Levels:** Primer, Level 1, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4, 5.
- **Teacher's Guide?** Yes, the Primer Level Teacher Guide with DVD is available for purchase. There are also helpful teacher videos available at pianoadventures.com.
- **Core Books:**
 1. **Lesson Book:** The main book that introduces new concepts and provides pieces that use the concepts.
 2. **Performance Book:** This book provides additional pieces that follow the new concepts in the Lesson Book. The pieces are generally longer than the pieces in the lesson book and could potentially work well for performance settings.
 3. **Technique & Artistry Book:** This book discusses technique concepts and provides exercises and pieces that use the concepts.
 4. **Theory Book:** This book reinforces the concepts being learned in the Lesson Book by providing worksheets and written activities.
- **Optional Books at Each Level:** Sightreading Book, Christmas, Gold Star Performance, Popular Repertoire.
- **In-Book Organization:** Each book is divided into chapters. Each book also has a helpful Table of Contents outlining when certain concepts are introduced.
- **Available Supplements:**
 - Pre-Time to Big-Time Library — providing Popular, Favorites, Classics, Jazz & Blues, Rock N' Roll, Ragtime & Marches, Kids' Songs, Hymns, Christmas, Jewish Favorites, and the new Faber Studio Collection (containing a mix of styles).

AESTHETICS

- **Layout:** Overall, the pages are clear and mostly uncluttered. Some pages contain helpful practice tips and extensions for students.
- **Illustrations:** Colorful, although with a “clip art” look.

DEVELOPING MUSICIANSHIP

- **Reading Approach:** Eclectic. The first note on the staff is Middle C, but the next notes are the landmark notes Treble G and Bass F soon followed by a discussion of the intervals step versus skip. The whole course is a gradual multi-course, with occasional transposition exercises for certain pieces.
- **Rhythm:** The counting approach is numeric at first (p. 14), and then metric (p. _). New rhythms are introduced gradually and reinforced through a few pieces across the books. The majority of the pieces have teacher duets on the bottom of the page, which is a wonderful tool for developing rhythm playing.
- **Theory:** The Theory book matches well with the concepts learned in the Lesson Book. The instructions are clear and the activities are both enjoyable and educationally effective.
- **Technique:** The Technique & Artistry book contains exercises with helpful descriptions and illustrations for technique concepts, accompanied by pieces that utilize the skill. The Technique & Artistry Book complements the work being completed in the other books.
- **Ear training:** Ear training activities are included in the Theory book.
- **Improvisation/Composition:** The theory book contains occasional improvisation pages.
- **Quality of Music:** The pieces are imaginative and motivating, utilizing a wide variety of articulations and styles, including: classical, folk tunes, jazz/blues, pentatonic, rag, world music, and more. The pieces are well-written and very pianistic.

IN DEPTH

When/How Notable Concepts are Introduced:

- **Rhythm Concepts:**
 - Bar lines are introduced on p. 29 in the Primer Level Lesson Book. Time signatures are introduced (starting with 4/4 time) on p. 44. 3/4 time is introduced on p. 47.
 - Eighth notes: p. 10 in Level 2A Lesson Book.
 - Compound meter (3/8 and 6/8 time): around p. 20 of the Level 3A Lesson Book.
- **Note Reading Concepts:**

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- Pre-Staff notation: The first half of the Primer Level books uses three different types of pre-staff notation that gradually progress to staff notation. The pre-staff notation allows the young beginner to become accustomed to rhythm, fingering, dynamics, the entire keyboard, and more before being exposed to staff reading. Progression:
 1. Finger number reading. p. 10.
 2. Rhythm with finger numbers. p. 14.
 3. Rhythm with letters and finger numbers. p. 26.
 - Staff notation: p. 34 in the Primer Level Lesson Book.
 - Accidentals: Sharps and flats are learned around p. 30 in the Level 1 Lesson Book.
 - **Theory Concepts:**
 - Key Signatures: not officially introduced until p. 30 of the Level 2B Lesson Book. However, the idea of “being in a key” is explored earlier through the use of 5-finger scales.
 - Primer Level — Middle C position and C major 5-finger scales.
 - Level 1 — G major 5-finger scale.
 - Level 2A — D, A, Dm, and Am 5-finger scales.
 - Level 2B — C, G, and F 1-octave major scales.
 - Level 3A — D major scale.
 - Level 3B — Am and Dm.
 - Level 4 — E, Em, and B.
 - Level 5 — F#, Gb, Db, Ab, Eb, Bb.
 - Transposition: Throughout the method, students are encouraged to transpose their pieces to other five-finger scales (there are optional activities below the pieces).
 - Triads: around p. 40 of Level 1 Lesson Book.

OTHER COMMENTS

A strong piano method with wonderful music.