

## Jazz Piano Lessons

### Mission Statement:

To Teach, in their home, on their own piano/keyboard , anywhere in the world, students how to play jazz piano, through a *Non Traditional* approach which emphasizes *Musical Concepts* , not notes. We do this through the thorough understanding of chord construction, jazz voicings, and arranging techniques. Students can then enjoy the lifelong pleasure that playing piano brings!

Have you ever overheard yourself saying any of the following:

- “ Oh, I only play when no one's around.”
- “ Well, I took lessons when I was a kid, but now I can't play a note.”
- “ Well, I can read music and everything, but it takes me forever to learn new songs”
- “ I can really play the guitar well, but I sit down at the piano and just struggle.”
- “ I just want to be able to play songs I like, you know?”

Relax . Help is here.

My name is Mark Miller. Years ago, my life was changed by a really good piano teacher, *Alan Swain*, and I have made my living as a pianist and teacher ever since.

### I've figured out a few things:

- **The traditional methods of teaching piano don't work for everyone.**
- **Adults learn differently from children.**
- **Learning to play classical music on the piano does not satisfy students who are interested in jazz or popular music.**
- **Scales won't teach you songs.**

**RESCUE YOURSELF AND YOUR PIANO FROM LONELINESS. TRY ME OUT.**

Two things you should know:

I have a revolutionary new way of teaching the piano to adults. You will learn more in one lesson than you learned in years of lessons as a kid. You will play songs, probably within a month.

**It Doesn't matter where you are.** I teach students everywhere – on the **phone**.

All you need is a piano or keyboard, and a headset or speaker-phone. The rest is up to me.

## Learning Musical Concepts

When we learn concepts, we attain and RETAIN knowledge! True Understanding of a concept is knowledge. Knowledge is lifelong, you don't forget it! Let me give you an example: Most all of you understand the concept of " addition". You don't have to " add" everyday to be able to add a year from now. You have mastered the " concept" or " theory" behind addition. The same applies to learning to play the piano.

If you understand the " concepts" of chord construction you can apply them at anytime. Let me give you an example: Take an " augmented" chord for instance. " Augmented" means raise the 5<sup>th</sup> a half step, and is indicated by a " +" sign in a chord symbol. Once you have knowledge of this you can play any augmented chord. You can play Bb + today or 20 years from now! The speed at which you can readily see that chord on the piano will depend on how much you practice, but you will always understand the " concept" of an augmented chord.

This is the key to learning to play the piano. **Learn 2 or 3 " concepts" every week** and apply them in songs so they become second nature , all the while playing beautiful music! It's really that simple.

**SPECIFIC CONCEPTS YOU WILL LEARN!**

Here are but a few concepts need to play the piano with “ understanding” knowledge, not “ rote memory”

1. Augmented
2. Minor
3. Sus 4
4. Major
5. Diminished
6. Circle of 5ths ( chord movement )
7. Tetra Chords
8. Closed Position Chords
9. Open Position Chords
10. Tertian Series Chord Construction
11. I, vi, ii, V7 , I progression
12. 7 diatonic triads in any respective key
13. 7 diatonic 7<sup>th</sup> chords in any respective key
14. iii for I Chord Substitution
15. vi for I Chord Substitution

All but a few of these “concepts” are ever discussed in “ classical” lessons, let alone practically applied in songs! However, if you are “ in the know”, or understand the “ concept” of the “ Circle of 5ths”, for example, you will be astonished at how many times it is used in popular music as well as Classical music, in fact it is the single most **pervasive harmonic tool in WESTERN CIVILIZATION MUSIC**. Knowledge of this harmonic progression will expedite your ability to memorize 10 fold! What a shame most students couldn't even tell you anything about it.

## Traditional or Classical Lessons

Let's look at how piano is traditionally taught and why we as educators must change the way we teach piano.

The typical piano student learns notes on the staff and begins to play repertoire after a certain period of time. But, by the time this student is playing 2 or 3 notes simultaneously, they have either lost interest or given up in frustration. If, on the other hand the student were taught all of his or her Triads in the first month, they could be playing from a lead sheet in just 3 - 4 weeks. This is a very realistic goal for a precocious 10 or 12 year old. Adults would learn all their triads in the very first lesson if they have played at all in previous years!

Now, with 30 –60 chords under their belts, the student is playing, at times, 4 notes simultaneously, the triad in the left hand and the melody in the right. But more important than the relative BIG sound, is the fact that the student is learning the theory of how chords are constructed. This gives them "LIFELONG" knowledge that will never change. As I ask my students, " How many chords do you need to play the piano, 500, 200 or 100?" . No, when you master 60 to 90 chords you've just about got them all!

It truly amazes me the number of students who come to me after 3, 4, even 6 years of lessons and don't even know how to construct all of the basic triads. These chords are the foundation of all music. But, on the other hand, if you are only being taught notes on a staff and century old repertoire, then what need would you have to teach CHORDS?

## “ MUSIC, THE INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE”

I'm sure you have probably heard this statement once or twice before. To me, this statement means music speaks to, and touches the emotions of all cultures and peoples. Music is such a powerful vehicle for touching and healing individuals and all of humanity that it deserves to be presented and taught in the most thorough and expeditious way possible so that the maximum amount of people can enjoy the benefits of a lifetime of making music. And in so learning, can improve the quality of life for all of us!

To help understand music as a language, it may help to compare it to, for instance, a spoken language like English. By making a comparison of the language of music to the language of English, I hope to illuminate the need for studying jazz/pop piano, specifically chords and their functions.

There are 26 letters in the English alphabet, there are 7 different letters in the musical alphabet, a,b,c,d,e,f,and g. Words are made up of combinations of letters, and so too, chords are made up of combinations of letters or notes. However, in classical music you read notes on a staff and rarely are taught to “ see” the notes as organized letters, or components of a chord. In jazz you are taught from the beginning to see multiple notes as making up a uniquely named chord. So while the classical player would see the notes C, E, G as separate notes broken up, the jazz player would immediately see them as a C major chord. So, who is going to “speak” the language quicker and more fluently, with better retention, the student who knows the alphabet or the student who knows the words! Language is words. And the words in the musical language are called chords. The good news is that while the English language has tens of thousands of words, the musical language has less than 200 “ words/chords”. Even better is that those 200 chords are variations on about 20 different “chord types”.