

ADAM GORDON HERD

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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STUDENT-LEAD COMPOSITION

Creative ways to overcome technical difficulties
(and stubborn students)

CREATING AN ETUDE

Helmi (13) was hesitant to choose an etude to include in her program as she complained “they all sound too hard.” To combat this, I decided we would compose our own etude.

Helmi had previously struggled with chromatic scales, so I decided on a chromatic etude.

First, we worked on the chromatic scale using the snake and crab method and then started making compositional choices, prompted by my questions

COMPOSITIONAL PROMPTS

What note should we start on?
Should we go up or down?
What chord would sound good with this?
Should these chords be on the strong beat or the weak beat?
If this piece is about a possum in a clock, what would happen after this in the story?
What would that sound like?

RESULTS

In the end we came up with a great etude that was easy to learn, vastly improved Helmi’s chromatic scale playing, reinforced Helmi’s understanding of various aspects of notation and most importantly, Helmi loves playing this piece which she wrote (mostly) herself!



WORKSHOPS: BODY PERCUSSION & IMPROVISATION

Fun activities to complement regular piano studies

"TEEMAVIIKKO" ACTIVITIES

Each semester my current music institute takes one week off regular teaching in order to offer activities that students wouldn't normally have time for in their weekly lessons. Here are three recent examples of the activities I have designed and taught:

"STOMP! CLAP! SLAP!"

BODY PERCUSSION FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS (AGES 6 - 10)

Simple and fun tasks to encourage young children to:

- make up their own rhythms
- teach and learn from their peers
- perform in an ensemble setting

Through the use of flash cards, rhythm words and the teacher's demonstration, students were taught a simple body percussion rhythmic pattern as an example

Students were then asked to invent their own 2 bar rhythm which they later had to teach to their own partner / group.

The workshop ended with a combined performance of the students' own rhythms (in canon) and the original teacher's rhythm.



WORKSHOPS: BODY PERCUSSION & IMPROVISATION

Fun activities to complement regular piano studies

Tatata-ke

Notation by Adam Herd
adapted from Global Music Berlin

Hands
Snap
Clap
Chest
Thighs

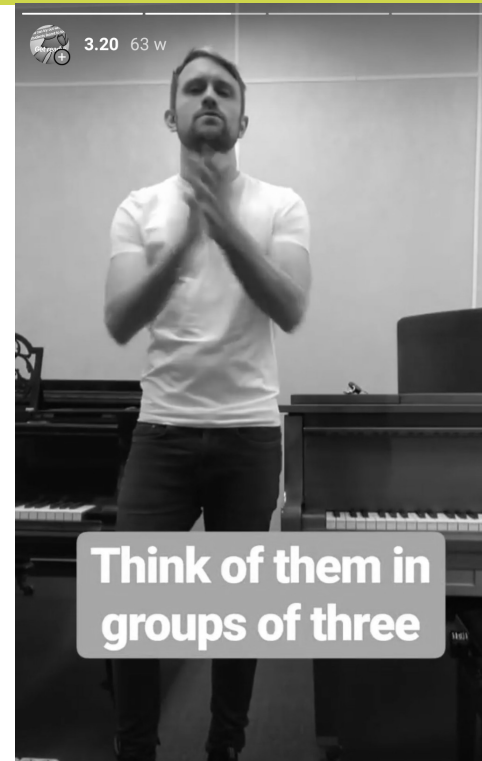
Feet
Forward
Side to side
Back

3

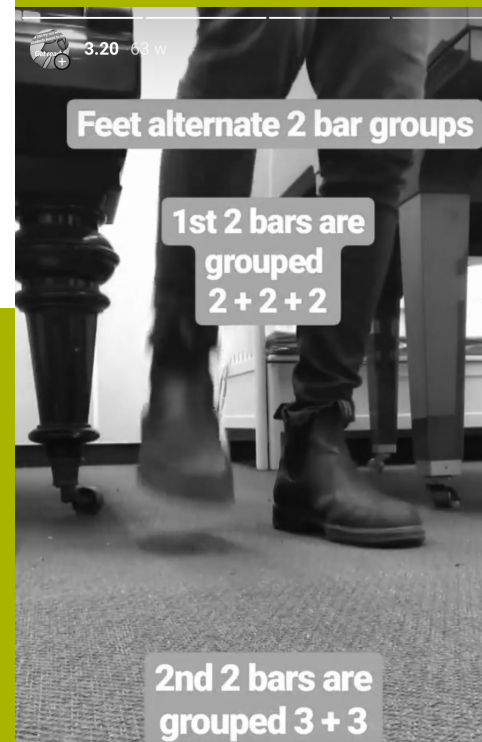
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Stems up = right foot
Stems down = left foot



"TATATA-KE!"



ADVANCED BODY PERCUSSION

This is a rhythm adapted from a Global Music Berlin workshop. Students were taught the verbalizations of "ta-ke" ("ta" for strong beats "ke" for off-beats) We started off verbalizing and clapping basic "ta-ke-ta-ke-ta-ke" eighth note patterns with feet also marching on the "ta" beats. We then progressed step by step to the syncopated rhythm of the "Tatata-ke!" piece

The final step was to introduce the rotating pattern of 4 movements, thigh, chest, clap, snap and to perform this to the "Tatata-ke!" rhythm while the feet are marching the 6/8 pattern. For those who were capable, a hemiola was added to the foot pattern every 2nd bar.

I also uploaded a video tutorial for the students to revise afterwards at home.

WORKSHOPS: BODY PERCUSSION & IMPROVISATION

Fun activities to complement regular piano studies

I CAN IMPROVISE!

BAROQUE

This was a two-part ensemble workshop, run once for beginner pianists and once for intermediate pianists. The focus was on encouraging confidence in improvising using two different departure points (Baroque music and Blues music) but using similar methods (rhythmic variation and motivic repetition) in an ensemble music setting.

In the Baroque workshop students were given an excerpt from Handel's G minor Passacaglia (this idea was adapted from Sirkka Kärkkäinen).

The Beginner students were each given a single line of notes from the chord progression.

After listening to the work and then playing through the arrangement several times (6 students on three pianos) we used rhythmic flash cards to get ideas for different variations the students could play on their own line. These were then adapted into the performance - students each had 4 bars to do their own "solo" (using rhythmic variation on their own line) and then would return to playing the accompaniment (their line of unaltered notes from the chord progression). The same process was then used for motivic repetition. This was a fun course which the students really got into!

Passacaglia HWV 432 / 6 (g minor)

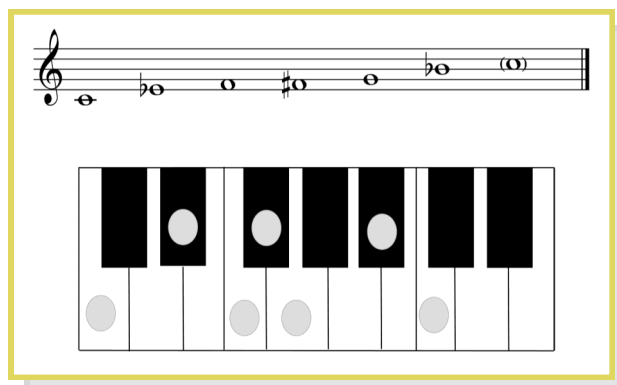
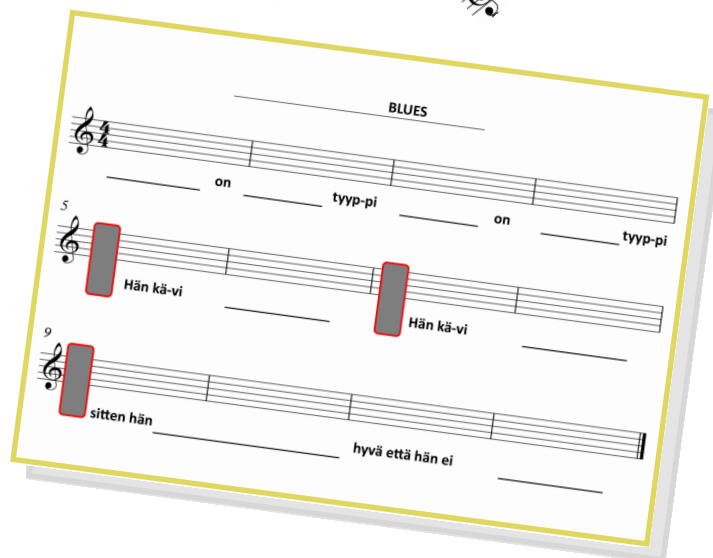
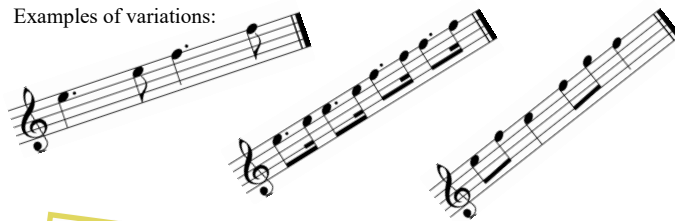
Händel



Treble part, first two bars:



Examples of variations:



BLUES

The Blues impro workshop started off with a visual puzzle. On the back of each puzzle piece was a chord symbol from the 12-bar blues progression. Once the puzzle was solved it was hung on the wall, displaying the 12-bar blues. We then split into three groups and each group was given either bass line, chords, or blues scale. These were then switched around until everyone had played through all three parts. To create our blues melody, we used rhythms from the lyrics/story which the students made up (with prompts). We then played many times through the 12-bar blues pattern, alternating between groups playing bass line, chords, or solo. For the solo we used the same techniques of rhythmic variation and motivic repetition from the Baroque workshop, only this time, our material was the blues scale.

SOLUTIONS TO LEARNING IMPEDIMENTS

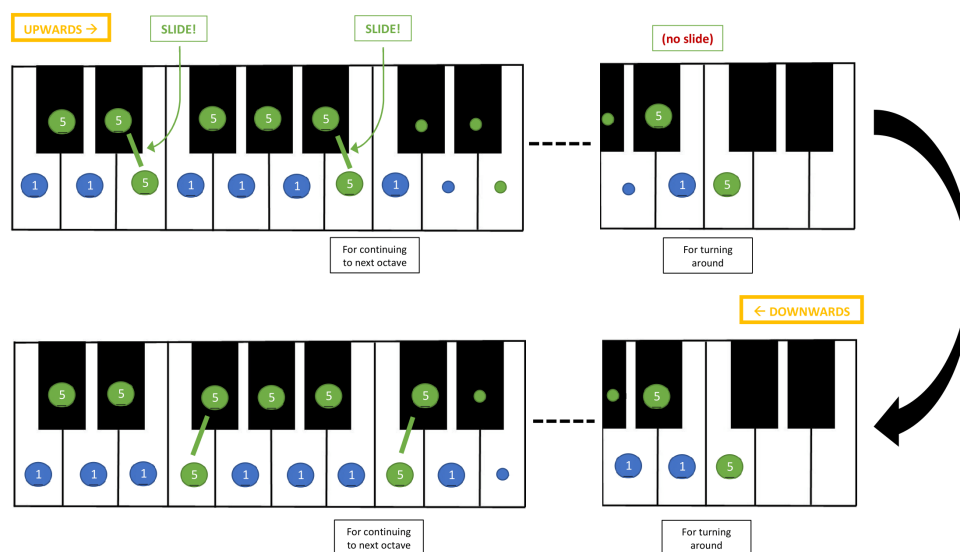
FINDING SOLUTIONS

Throughout my years of teaching I have taught various students who have had some impediment to learning the piano in a regular way. I thrive on the challenge of finding solutions for them and am overjoyed to see them succeed. Most recently I have been working with a 12-year-old student who has a congenital hand anomaly (syndactyly). This student has only a thumb and pinky finger on her

right hand. This has indeed been a challenge. Poor word choice or too much attention towards her right hand could lead to the student being upset, so boundaries and operating methods need to be developed. Extra care needs to be taken in repertoire choice. If a piece contains a harmonic interval of a fifth or greater in the right hand, being unable to play the interval could upset her (even if it was explained that this

could be rearranged).

Here is an example of a guide for playing a legato chromatic scale that we came up with. The student herself chose “1” and “5” as designations for her fingers after I had suggested “upper” and “lower” thinking that “1” and “5” might somehow be insensitive.



KEEPING FOCUS, CHANGING METHODS



CLASS OUTINGS AND CONCERTS

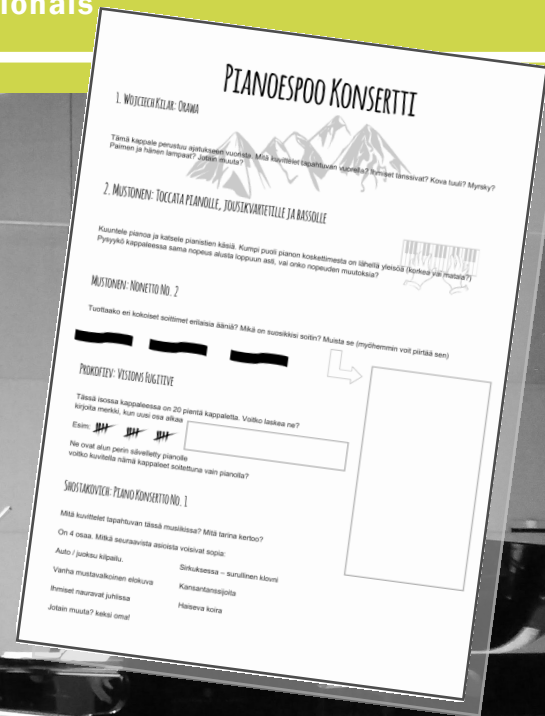
Inspiring students and exposing them to new art forms
Inspiration from peers and professionals

CREATIVE EXCURSIONS

I always encourage my piano students to attend any concerts in which I am playing. As well as this, once a semester I try to organize a class outing to attend a live music performance.

I often arrange worksheets for my students, or question/discussion time during interval, which is then followed up in their next lesson.

This is an example of my piano class's 2017 trip to a PianoEspoo concert (ASO and Olli Mustonen) with a worksheet that I created for my students in both Finnish and English.



EXPERIMENTING: NEW TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE LEARNING

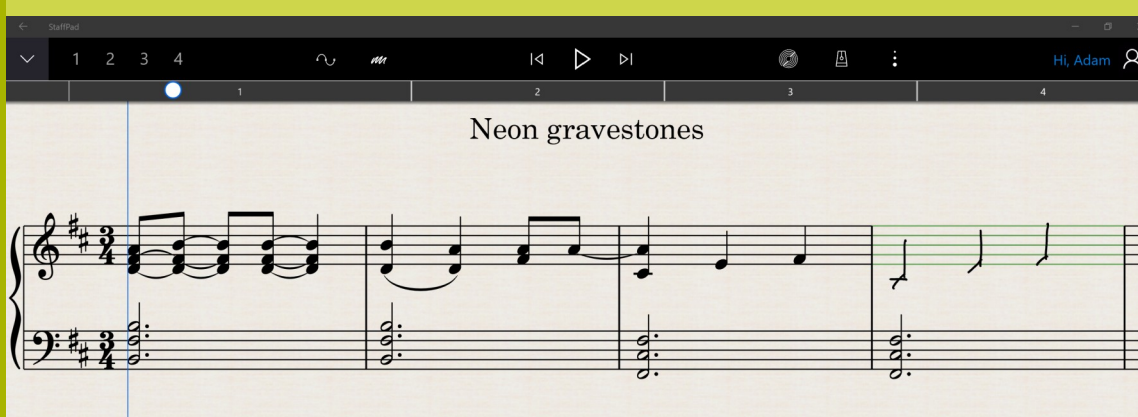
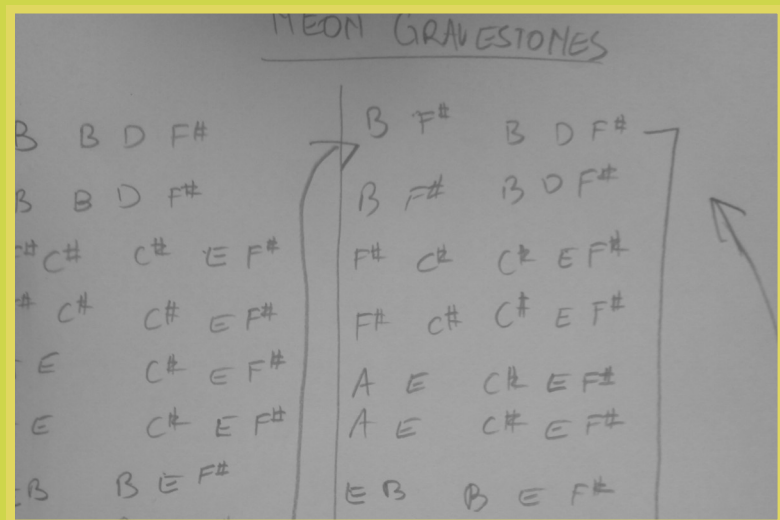
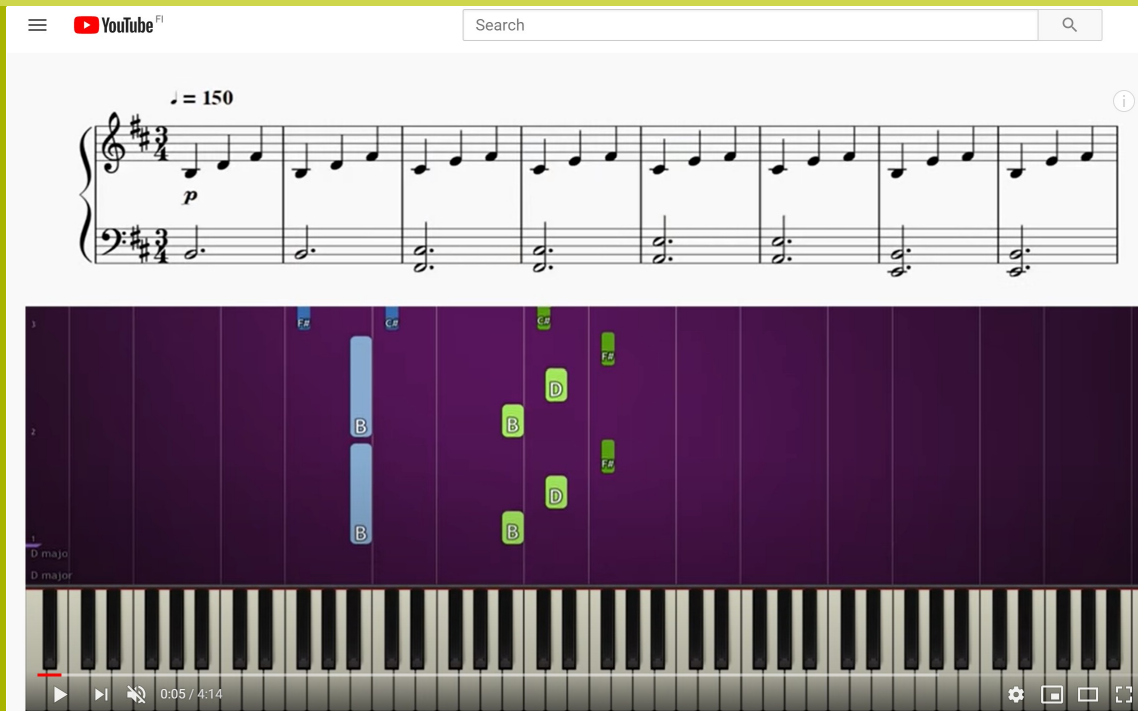
I am always interested in anything that will help my students to learn more effectively and to enjoy their playing and practicing more.

SYNTHESIA-STYLE YOUTUBE TUTORIALS

While I am a firm believer that the ability to read music notation is a cornerstone of a well-rounded piano education, I have come across situations where creativity is needed.

One transfer student of mine, who came to me after learning for many years in the Suzuki tradition, burst into tears at being asked to read a short and simple passage of music. Her playing skills were quite advanced, but she became anxious when we went back to cover the basics of note and rhythm reading.

I decided that we would work instead from a YouTube visual tutorial, playing a popular song of her choosing. She then wrote the music out, using her own system of notation which she was free to invent. Finally, we turned it into standard music notation together in class.



LEARNING IN THE TIME OF CORONA

For everyone, this coronavirus period has been a challenge – especially when it comes to teaching a musical instrument. However, I have enjoyed finding as many new and interesting solutions as possible

RECORDING PERFORMANCES

One of my students was asked to play Debussy's Arabesque no. 1 at her school's graduation ceremony, but once it became clear that the graduation ceremony would be held on-line, my student needed to record

the performance instead. To get the best result, the student came to my house on a Saturday and with 3 cameras and my audio recording hardware, I recorded and then edited her performance which opened the

school's ceremony. The pride and delight on my student's face when she watched it back was one of the sweetest things ever.



Torkkelin kevät- ja ylioppilasjuhla | Helsingin kaupunki

Inbox x



Benita Broms

to me

Sat, May 30, 6:42 PM (3 days ago)



Dear Adam,

Here is the link to Amélie's Graduation Celebration. Her piano playing opened the virtual event and we could not be prouder parents! Thank you once again for your talented teaching!!! 🎹🌟

https://www.hel.fi/kuvat/fi/uutiset/torkkelin_kevat_ja_ylioppilasjuhla

Lähetetty iPhonesta

Reply

Forward

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MuseScore 3: He's_a_pirate*

File Edit View Add Format Tools Plugins Help

87.5115% Page View

Concert Pitch

He's_a_pirate*

He's a pirate

Hans Zimmer
sovitus: Eero Erkinheimo

Toinenkerta 8va

6

10

14

1. 2.

REMOTE TEACHING MUSIC NOTATION

I like to change up the format and method of my students' lessons in order to keep them motivated and engaged. This was especially important during the self-isolation period.

One way I found to do this was to use the "screenshare" feature and develop my students' notation skills. With my student, Eero we did the following:

Eero learnt by ear *He's a Pirate*, by Hans Zimmer (Pirates of the Caribbean). We would listen to a YouTube recording or I would play sections of it on the piano. Rhythmic patterns were figured out by assigning the phrase "CocaCola joudaan" to the beats "one and two and three and."

We then used the free program **MuseScore** to notate what Eero had learnt. He opened the program on his computer and shared his screen with me while I gave instructions or advice. After working on only the A section in the lesson, by the next lessons he had completed the B section by himself.

LEARNING IN THE TIME OF CORONA

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FINDING THE RIGHT COMMUNICATION SOLUTION FOR EACH STUDENT.



While my preferred method of video lesson was using Zoom with a two camera set-up (side view for face and hands, overhead view for demonstrations) I found that some students couldn't download the program on their computer. This meant I had to investigate a vast array of alternate solutions including: Telia Chat Plus, Skype, Whatsapp video chat, Google Hangouts, Discord, Facebook Messenger video and Jamulus (for simultaneous ensemble playing).



I have also been very active in assisting my colleagues and friends with advice, IT support and general help in getting them online and teaching smoothly. As a result of this I was asked to teach an adult group lesson online over the summer and this has become one of my favourite classes!

