

Guide for piece no. 6:

«The Thumb Song»

Quickstart:

1. With this piece, the use of white keys is introduced. The white keys are symbolized on the staff by black circles (quarter notes) or white ellipses (half notes).
2. Exercises should be conducted to memorize the two keys C and F which are introduced here for the first time (See examples below in section: Exercises to memorize the two keys C and F).
3. The piece is available in three different presentation modes (in common with “The Triplet- and Twin-keys Song”):
 - **Presentation mode 1:** Big tone symbols. The piece stretches over 3 pages. All three pages are played consecutively. Each page contains only one staff showing the tone symbols for both hands. The first two of the three pages should be worked through in two ways: First, with the pages set up in portrait orientation (reading direction from top to bottom) and then in landscape orientation (reading direction from left to right). If the pupil masters these two pages with ease, he can immediately proceed to presentation mode 2.
 - **Presentation mode 2:** Small tone symbols. The piece comprises two pages, each containing one staff. At least the first page should be worked through in two ways: First, with the pages set up in portrait orientation and then in landscape orientation. If the pupil masters this page with ease as well, he can also proceed directly to the next presentation mode.
 - **Presentation mode 3:** Small tone symbols. The whole piece is printed on one page that contains two staves. The two staves are separated by a thick gray line. In presentation mode 3 the page should mostly be set up and read in landscape orientation.
4. The -button (play) and the -button (full score) are only available in **presentation mode 3**.
5. When the pupil's part is accompanied by the teacher's part, it has to be played one octave higher than written; otherwise there will be collisions between the parts.
6. The pages with blank staves which are inserted between the individual presentation modes of the piece are provided for writing and composition exercises (Detailed description see below.).
7. The teacher's part is not only intended as a mere accompanying part, but should also be used to make improvisation exercises with the pupil (Detailed description see below.).

Detailed guide:

(with explanations, teaching ideas and background information)

Functions

- The whole score with ordinary notes (pupil's and teacher's parts) can be displayed by tapping the -button (piano 2). The button is only available in **presentation mode 3** in which the entire piece is printed on one page.

- The accompanying part of the piece can be played back by tapping the -button (play). This button is only available in **presentation mode 3**.
- This guide can be opened and closed again with the «?»-button in the upper right corner of the menu. The guide can also be closed by tapping the «X».
- The foremost content displayed on the screen (guide text, pupil part or score) can be printed by tapping the -button (printer).

Preparatory Information

- With this piece and with the subsequent pieces the pupil is supposed to learn step by step the names of all white keys from C to B directly. It is therefore important that the key names are actually learned with the respective pieces in which new keys are presented. Only in this way will it be ensured that the pupil can name the keys directly, without, for example, having to "count up" from c when an f, g or a is to be found. Naming notes on the staff is introduced later (see: "The Sun and the Sea").
- Both hands have a fixed playing position.
- When the pupil's part is accompanied by the teacher's part, it has to be played one octave higher than written, otherwise there will be collisions between the parts.
- The piece is available in three different presentation modes:
 1. Presentation mode 1: Big tone symbols. The piece stretches over 3 pages. All three pages are played consecutively. Each page contains only one staff showing the tone symbols for both hands.
 2. Presentation mode 2: Small tone symbols. The piece comprises two pages, each containing one staff.
 3. Presentation mode 3: Small tone symbols. The whole piece is printed on one page that contains two staves. The two staves are separated by a thick gray line.
- The lyrics of the piece help in understanding the rhythm and memorizing the finger numbering.

Changes in the notation system and the way of playing compared to the previous piece

- With this piece, the use of white keys is introduced. The white keys are symbolized on the staff by black circles (quarter notes) or white ellipses (half notes).
- The staff is reduced to a system with three lines. It thus corresponds exactly to the staff that was used for the "Triplet and twin keys song".
- The pupil's part consists of a monophonic melody with which the pitches are split up between both hands.
- The title of the piece is "The Thumb Song" because a thumb (mouse hand) is used for the first time.
- It is also the first time that the 4th finger (bear-hand) is used on a white key.

How to proceed in the piano lesson

- It is important to remind the pupil that **squares and rectangles** still represent exclusively the **black keys**.
- It must be explained that the **rounding and ellipses** which are introduced here, represent the **white keys**.
- The lesson should be started with the piece's **presentation mode 1** (big tone symbols). Initially, the first page of the piece has to be set up in portrait orientation so that the terms "bear hand" and "mouse hand" appear at the top edge of the page.

- Then the first page of the “Triplet- and Twin-keys Song” in presentation mode 1 is placed in portrait orientation next to the previously set up first side of the current piece. The teacher then discusses together with the pupil the differences between the tone symbols of the two pieces.
- Thereafter, the “Triplet- and Twin-keys Song” is taken away, and the pupil continues working with the first page of the “Thumb Song” in presentation mode 1 (**still in portrait orientation**). In presentation mode 1 only one staff per page is shown which, however, contains the tone symbols of both hands. The reading direction is from top to bottom (vertical reading direction).
- Now is the pupil should place the hands in position:
 - The fingers 1-2-3-4 of the mouse hand are placed on the keys F, G-flat, A-flat and B-flat.
 - The fingers 4-3-2 of the bear hand are placed on the keys C, D-flat and E-flat.
- Now the pupil can try to play the first page. The melody begins with notes played by the bear hand.
- If the pupil masters playing the first page in portrait orientation, then the sheet is **turned 90 degrees to the left** so that the illustrated keyboard is displayed on the left edge of the page. **The reading direction is then from left to right as on a regular staff.** Now the pupil can try to read and play the piece in this way.
- If the pupil feels that the new (horizontal) reading direction is too difficult to read, then the page could at first be **turned by only 20 degrees** to the left. Then the angle can be gradually increased, as the pupil plays, up to 90 degrees. Most pupils reach 90 degrees during the first or second time they play.
- If the pupil masters the first two pages of the piece in presentation mode 1 in both reading directions with ease, then he can immediately proceed to presentation mode 2 (small tone symbols). If this is still too difficult for the pupil, then he should just continue with page 3 of the presentation mode 1.
- **Presentation mode 2** should also **be started first in portrait orientation**. Then the sheet should be rotated to landscape orientation.
- If the pupil is able to play the first page of the presentation mode 2 in both reading directions with ease, then he can directly proceed to presentation mode 3. Otherwise, he should just continue with the second page of the presentation mode 2.
- In **presentation mode 3** the sheet music should be setup and read mostly in landscape orientation.

Didactical information

Exercises to help memorizing the two keys C and F:

1. The pupil should try to find the C key and the F key in different octaves and play them. The pupil can find these two keys in the following way:
 - C is the bear-neighbor to the black twin keys.
 - F is the bear-neighbor to the black triplet keys.
2. Reaction competition:

The teacher and the pupil are sitting at the piano. They don't have their hands on the keyboard. Then the pupil says either F or C. Whoever finds and plays the chosen key first gets one point. Whoever gathers 5 points first wins. The game is even more fun when played with a group of pupils.
3. Running competition:

First, a specific key is chosen, for example, a “C.” Then its different locations on the keyboard are to be found as quickly as possible. The task now is to pass along the keyboard and play every single C, starting with the highest C and continuing down to the lowest C. When all c-keys have been played, one walks back to the high keys on the right side of the piano and starts over. The pupil begins. When the pupil has reached the middle C, the teacher follows and attempts to catch up with the pupil within three laps. Of course, the teacher can also begin, and the pupil follows. The game is even more fun with more than two players, but then one might need two pianos.

Improvisation exercises:

- The teacher's part can be used to make improvisation exercises with the pupil.
- Similar to the approach of the "Triplet- and Twin-keys Song" it makes sense to start with only a few notes.
- Since the piece's key is D-flat major and the teacher's part consists of many different chords, it would be advisable to make the first improvisation experiments with the keys D-flat, E-flat (bear hand) and F (mouse hand).
- **It is important to improvise with the individual parts of the piece separately at first.** Otherwise, the sections get too long and it is too difficult for the pupils to develop suitable patterns for the individual parts.
- Gradually the keys A-flat and B-flat (mouse hand) can be added. These supplement the key selection to a pentatonic scale based on D-flat.
- In addition to this pentatonic approach there are of course many other ways to start with, for example, by selecting the keys D-flat, E-flat, G-flat and A-flat, every hand would then get two keys to play with, etc.
- It could also be improvised with just one hand alone. Typically, this is done with the right hand, which traditionally is the melody hand. With the current piece the keys F, G-flat, A-flat and B-flat would be used. However, it may of course also be experimented with only the left hand. With the current piece the pupil uses the keys C, D-flat and E-flat, and courageous pupils could also add the E-flat.

Reminder

- Writing exercises should be held with the five black keys and with the two white keys C and F (See also comments in the guide for the "Triplet- and Twin-keys Song" in the paragraph "Didactical information."). For this purpose the writing-notes-worksheets which are inserted between the respective presentation modes of a piece can be printed out.
- **It is important to build a repertoire of 4-8 pieces. The pupil should be able to play those pieces in the following ways:**
 - a) Without looking at the keys on the piano, but instead actively reading along in the music. (haptic orientation)
 - b) Without reading the music but looking at the keys. (playing by ear)
 - c) Neither reading the music nor looking at the keys. (haptic orientation and playing by ear)
- When the repertoire begins to include too many pieces then some of the oldest ones can be dropped. The favorite pieces of the pupil should be kept in his repertoire for as long as possible.
- It is advisable that the teacher plays his part by memory.