

Introduction

I think you are going to love playing the piano. I know *I* do. I'm not extraordinarily talented and I don't claim to be a great pianist. But I know that playing the piano has added greatness to my life. As one who has gone through the struggles of learning how to play, and then of how to teach others to play, I offer my ideas hoping that you may experience the greatness without going through so much of the struggle.

You can learn to play the piano with confidence and competence. Of this I am certain. I have seen enough people start at *Mary Had A Little Lamb* and climb all the way to Beethoven Sonatas to know that anyone can do it. And it's not about talent. Your musical abilities will develop, regardless of where you start. If you are committed, positive, and persistent, "piano player" will become part of who you are. With this book, I would like to support your effort with practical and philosophical ideas that would have eased my own journey, had I known them from the beginning.

On the practical side, my goal is to give you a bird's-eye view of your piano journey so that you may have an understanding of where you are and where you are headed. The details involved with learning to play the piano could easily overwhelm and frustrate you, unless you already know *what* you need to learn and *how* to approach learning it. So I've reduced things to six basic elements that will be your foundation of piano and music skills, along with four areas of piano study in which you can work to build that foundation.

The six basic elements are:

- 1. Keyboard awareness and topography**
- 2. Fingers and fingering**
- 3. Technique**
- 4. Rhythm and counting**
- 5. Ear**
- 6. Music**

The four areas of piano study are:

- 1. Tunes**
- 2. Scales and chords**
- 3. Music reading**
- 4. Learning and memorizing piano music**

Scattered throughout the book, you will find links to the True Piano Lessons website (look for the [TPL](#)) which lead to more specific instructions within a particular element or area. But try not to get caught up in those specifics just yet. This book is more about giving you an overall concept to guide your approach and the organization of your daily piano time. And... uh... you just might find an occasional suggestion regarding that thing we pianists call *practice*.

Actually, *practice* gets its own chapter.

Once you start down the piano path, you will quickly realize that *practice* is really what it's all about for the piano player. My original list of the piano skills elements included *practice* as the number one element, for it is undoubtedly a skill in and of itself. Then, as I organized and refined my thoughts I began to realize that it was not one of the elements, but rather the catalyst for developing the elements. *Practice* is where all the true work happens, where you become a pianist and a musician. Your piano foundation will be built, element-by-element, concept-by-concept, with your consistent daily routine at the piano. So, I'm hopeful that you will find the *practice* chapter helpful with all the practical details you need to become a proficient and effective piano-practicer.

Woven in and out amongst all the practical ideas, you will find philosophical threads that will help you bind it all together. Piano technique, chords, notes, scales, arpeggios, music reading, rhythm, composition, memorization, practice method... these are the nuts and bolts of piano playing, and they will be the material focus of your time at the piano. But dive into it all without considering the *why?* and the *what for?* and you are likely to conclude that it's not worth it. *I think I will take up the piano; I've always wanted to learn to play piano*, most commonly leads to *I had no*

idea it was this hard, or I just don't have the talent. Piano taken up on a whim, taken lightly, often lasts just a few weeks or months.

You can avoid this premature collapse of your piano-playing career by establishing a solid, thoughtful philosophy towards what is really a life-changing and life-enhancing decision. To make the piano and piano music a real part of your life is no small thing. The time, energy, and effort you are going to put into it can only be justified if in your mind and soul you come to the serious conclusion that it *is* worth it.

As one who has devoted countless hours over a period of 36 years to learning and teaching this instrument and its music, I would like to help you establish just such a belief. Approach your piano journey *knowing* without a doubt that it is a journey worth taking, and you will overcome the inevitable obstacles with ease and even amusement.