

The Meaning of Keyboard Musicianship

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Based on several decades of teaching experience, this paper argues that the keyboard provides a valuable resource for studying theoretical concepts such as harmony, voice leading, modulation and transposition. It suggests that for pianists in particular, the beginnings of true musical literacy may be acquired by even the youngest students, and that the sooner the connections are made between theory and practice, i.e. between notation and sound, the easier it will be for students to gain confidence in improvisation, theoretical analysis, sight-reading, transposition and rapid learning.

This paper aims to use the Conference theme, “Connections”, in relation to the meaning of Keyboard Musicianship, and to demonstrate the relevance for all pianists of a practical approach to theory. In order to qualify for the AMEB’s Sixth Grade Practical exam, all candidates are required to pass Third Grade Theory. While one might argue that this should be regarded as the minimum expectation, it is clear that many students—and perhaps all too many teachers—regard theory as a completely separate subject. John Cage, by his own admission, had no interest in harmony: given the choice between studying it more closely or coming up against a brick wall, he chose to spend his life ‘knocking his head against that wall’.¹ Elementary theory exercises are usually found to be quite satisfying, but when students begin to study the rules of counterpoint and four-part harmony, they often find the task so daunting that they simply give up. Music theory in the form of written exercises is usually introduced with considerable caution and therefore lags far behind the notational complexity of works being studied for performance. Unfortunately, there are many piano teachers who regard themselves as incapable of teaching harmony and analysis at an advanced level; some even recommend that it is better taught by a specialist. By placing an emphasis on Keyboard Musicianship from the very beginning of a child’s tuition, however, teachers will find that the keyboard may be used in a practical way to develop the recognition of basic theoretical concepts. As a result, theory exercises (such as the writing of scales, the composition and transposition of melodies, or the harmonisation of cadences) become much easier. At best, the written work simply acts as confirmation of what has already been aurally understood: students may begin to write what they hear, and hear what they write.

Jazz and Classical Performance

Classical musicians who have undertaken any formal tuition in jazz will probably have found the experience surprisingly edifying. Jazz performance is a creative art. Students of jazz are constantly constructing music which is based on a series of given chord changes. They must first learn hundreds of ‘standard’ tunes and many different basic rhythms. They are then taught how to improvise using appropriate scales, modes and rhythmic patterns in order to construct their own individual versions of the songs. Eventually they develop their own riffs and rhythmic patterns, even their own individual style. Some of the results might be

¹ John Cage. *Autobiographical Statement*. <http://www.newalbion.com/artists/cagej/autobiog.html>. (10 June, 2007).

more successful than others, but these musicians are performer-composers—they learn to play by ear, not from a score.

Classical performance, on the other hand, has become a re-creative art. Students of classical music are constantly reconstructing music which has already been notated, usually in very great detail. They often do this without understanding that their music is also based on a series of chord changes. They are usually reprimanded for any ‘improvisation’ and criticized for altering rhythmic values. Instead, they are required to pay attention to all the markings in the score, to perform the music accurately and with stylistic credibility, even if this means trying to understand how the music might have been performed in the 18th and 19th centuries. There may well be some jazz pianists who wish they had studied ‘classical’ music or taken their early piano lessons more seriously. It would probably be fair to say, however, there are many more classical pianists who wish they could improvise, so it is clearly the classical performers who need help.

What is Keyboard Musicianship?

At tertiary level, students preparing for practical examinations, competitions and concerts often work within a limited timeframe. As a consequence, many students train ‘performance’ skills, but spend little time focussing on the musical analysis of works being studied. While it is possible that every piano teacher may have a different view of what is meant by Keyboard Musicianship, for the purposes of this discussion I refer to any exercise which will strengthen the student’s understanding of the notation of tonal music and the way it works. While Keyboard Musicianship need not preclude the odd written exercise, it might be regarded simply as ‘theory at the piano’. We might think of it as the ‘connecting link’ between classical music and jazz; the musical language is, after all, one and the same. Keyboard Musicianship has nothing much to do with the finer points of piano technique, and one could say that it has nothing at all to do with style or interpretation, but it has everything to do with the language of music. As students progress towards the more advanced levels, they often experience problems which may stem directly from the fact that, unlike jazz pianists, they are often given too much specialised instruction in technique and interpretation at the expense of basic theoretical concepts. We can begin by looking more closely at just one of these problems—the dreaded ‘memory lapse’—and the reasons for its common occurrence.

The Memory Lapse

In the early years of learning, many students memorise with ease. This is usually encouraged because it is assumed that students will play more accurately, pay greater attention to details of musical expression, and be free to project their own interpretation. It is commonly accepted that the more a student practises, the better will be the results; and this is usually the case. Those who practise most are often those who play from memory. The danger is, however, that an over-reliance on muscle memory is often gained at the expense of a more analytical approach to the music. This is nowhere more apparent than when students break down in the middle of a performance, and have to start again from the beginning, or from the start of a certain section. Perhaps in lessons, and with reference to the score, they might pick up again from the bar in question; but even then some students do this only with difficulty. They are usually bad sight-readers. Such problems often

begin to occur around 5th or 6th grade, when the performers are likely to be in their early teens. Interestingly enough, it is at this point that many classical pianists give up, while at the same age those who have taken a more creative, perhaps even a more intellectual approach to the keyboard, begin to flourish. Those more interested in contemporary popular styles might find themselves joining a band, or spending hours working on their chord charts.

There are many stories about pianists who are blessed with what is called a ‘photographic memory’. For example, Walter Giesecking, on discovering that he had prepared the wrong Mozart Concerto for a concert appearance in London, is reputed to have learned the new work in five days, mostly by studying the score. This was perhaps a remarkable feat, but we need to understand what is meant here by a ‘photographic memory’. Here is his own explanation:

When I began to play in public, I didn’t have the time to practise new works at the piano. Then I hit on the idea that it was better to work through the musical texts with the eyes rather than the fingers, especially when learning complicated pieces like the atonal music of Stravinsky, Hindemith or Schoenberg. I absorb them more securely by reading. I study them in the train; the notation imprints itself on my memory and once it is anchored there, nothing can drive it out. Then it’s enough just to flick through the score to make sure that no note is missing in my memory book. Besides, I can rely on my well-exercised fingers—they’re not dumb! When the mind commands them, they do as they are told . . .²

It seems reasonable to assume that, as he read the music, Giesecking became aware of the form of the piece, the key centres, chord progressions and modulations. Knowing the difference between an F sharp and a G flat, he was able to read the notation well enough to hear the music, and was subsequently able to transfer the appropriate muscular movements, most of which he had rehearsed anyway, to the new works. In his mind, there was a logical and naturally close connection between the written score, the sounds which it symbolised and the physical movements necessary to execute the performance.

Memory lapses often occur when students either fail to remember how the music continues, or—and this is more likely—when they remember exactly how the music continues, but lose their way physically on the keyboard. Years ago, piano teachers would recommend (or even insist) that students write out their pieces from memory. This assumed, of course, that they understood the notation. It is doubtful whether such a practice is still in vogue, but at the more advanced levels it is evident that many students who memorise their work do so in a way that has more to do with muscular memory and the physical topography of the instrument than with the typography of the score, or the understanding of form, chords and key centres. They are often remembering the patterns of the black and white keys rather than the tonal structure of the music in question. Were they able to understand the notation well enough to hear the music that it represents, their ‘photographic memory’ might perhaps be tapped more often, and certainly their ability to recover from temporary mishaps would be vastly improved.

² Cited in “Walter Giesecking”, *Die Grossen Interpreten*. (Geneva: Verlag R.Kister, n.d.) 12. Transl. D. Weekes.

Technical Work

Lest it be thought that there is no time in piano lessons for extra work in the area of Keyboard Musicianship, it seems logical to begin with technical work. For the most part, young pianists preparing for examinations learn scales in unison and in contrary motion, chromatic scales, major and minor arpeggios, dominant and diminished sevenths. The current AMEB syllabus requires examination candidates to present scales in only three or four of the 12 keys and prescribes parallel modes (B major and B minor) rather than relative keys (B major and G sharp minor). The scales are usually practised and delivered over 4 octaves, one octave apart, beginning and ending on the keynote. The same is true for arpeggios; although in the higher grades these are also played in inversions. Candidates are not, however, required to play any chords or cadences.

This technical routine is usually learned and presented from memory, with emphasis placed on hand position, ease of movement, evenness of tone, variety of touch, and control of dynamics. There are major concerns with this approach, however, in that often, when students are asked to spell the names of the notes they are playing, they cannot do so correctly. Consequently one finds that scale passages which occur in a Beethoven Sonata are not identified as scales; dominant and diminished seventh chords are misread; applied dominants are not recognised, and modulations can be a complete mystery. In anticipation of “General Knowledge” testing, key centres are often pencilled in by teachers at the last minute and quickly rubbed out prior to the examination. The kind of technical work described above might prepare students physically for the successful execution of the passage work and accompanying figures found in their pieces, but it is often carried out in a routine manner, with no thought given to musical grammar, spelling, key centres, or chord types. When practising scales and arpeggios, more often than not students are automatically strengthening their fingers through repetitive exercise, but they are not necessarily conscious of the intervallic patterns associated with various keys, modes and chord types. The former can be done while reading a book. The latter requires an altogether different kind of intellectual focus.

Scales and Chords

It is not unusual to find that tertiary students—some of whom are advanced pianists—are not fully cognisant of the fact that scales are spelled with consecutive letter names. Once they have reached a certain level of pianistic confidence, this illiteracy is difficult to remedy, but such a situation can be prevented in the early stages of learning by naming the notes as the scales are played at a slow tempo. The scale of F sharp major does not contain an F, and the scale of A flat minor does not contain a B. Spelling, grammar and syntax are as important in the study of music as they are in the study of English. If there is no disciplined approach at the beginning, the results further down the track are all too obvious.

Chords, by contrast, are spelled using alternate letter names. When asked to spell a dominant seventh chord based on D flat, students will often nominate D flat–F–A flat–B (instead of C flat), or C sharp–F (instead of E sharp)–G sharp– B. One of the best exercises for chord spelling is the one devised by Dick Grove in his comprehensive 3 volume work, a combination of text book and workbook for

jazz students.³ He simply draws up a series of boxes containing nine segments (see Ex.1), and the letter name of one note is placed in the first square in the first row, in the middle square of the second row, and in the last square of the third row.

Example 1: Dick Groves Spelling Boxes

1	3	5
B		
	B	
		B

1	b3	5
E ^b		
	E ^b	
		E ^b

1	b3	b5
F [#]		
	F [#]	
		F [#]

1	3	#5
A		
	A	
		A

Numbers on the top of each box indicate the quality of the triad to be constructed, and students must fill in the correct letter names, with the appropriate accidentals. Such boxes may be drawn up at any time and can be filled out on the bus, in bed, or while waiting for breakfast. They can be checked by the student at the keyboard, and/or randomly tested during lessons. The fundamentals of chord spelling are thus indelibly printed in the mind, and when all four triads have been mastered, the boxes simply grow to incorporate 16 squares which are used for spelling the various types of seventh chords.

Key Signatures

Most theory books and piano methods introduce new keys and key-signatures at a very gradual pace. If students are to understand their pieces even at an early intermediate level, however, they need to know *all* their key signatures. These may be introduced in various ways, the easiest being to find the notes on the keyboard to which these key-signatures belong (see Ex. 2). If one begins with the C below Middle C to find sharps to the right, and the C above Middle C to take flats to the left, they fit perfectly, and playing the notes on the keyboard helps to confirm that they are ‘fifth-related’.

Example 2: Fifth-related Keys

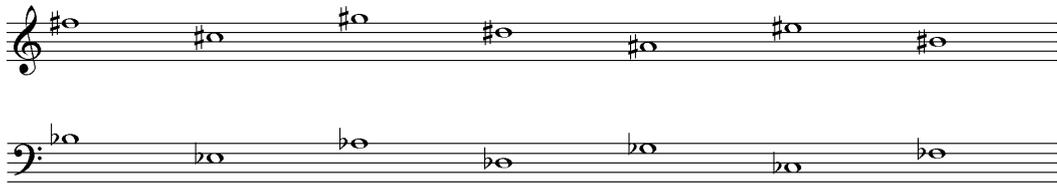
No K-S	1 sharp	2 sharps	3 sharps	4 sharps
No K-S	1 flat	2 flats	3 flats	4 flats

The same method may be used for learning the order of sharps and flats, which are once again ‘fifth-related’. While acronyms are often used and possibly hard to avoid, playing the notes on the keyboard—if practised regularly—is just as secure. Later one can suggest that the student visualise the written symbols (in

³ Dick Grove. *The Encyclopedia of Basic Harmony and Theory Applied to Improvisation on all Instruments*. (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1985, formerly Dick Grove Publications, 1975) 62.

both treble and bass clefs) as they play the notes (see Ex. 3), thus cementing the relationship between the written notation, intervals, and sounds.

Example 3: Key Signatures



When it comes to identifying (rather than writing out) key-signatures, most students know that the second last flat names the key. Less familiar, however, is the fact that the last sharp is the leading note and therefore also indicates the key, which is the next letter name and one semitone higher (see Ex. 4).

Example 4: Naming the Keys



Without this knowledge, musical notation can appear to be an on-going mystery of infinite complexity, an open-ended puzzle with no solution in sight, a never-ending battle. If all the keys and key-signatures are introduced in the early stages of learning, students are able to recognise the advantage of a closed and logical system which appeals even to the very young. Any musical score may then be viewed without the student feeling overwhelmed, or worse still, uninitiated.

The Circle of Fifths

Once these concepts have been understood, the familiar 'Circle of Fifths', which appears in so many guises in so many books, may be regarded as a simple diagrammatic representation of the relationships between the 12 keys. It can be explained as a sort of 'Alice-in-Wonderland' clock, where the figure at the top is a zero, there are 3s on either side, 6 is at the bottom, and the 5s on either side double as 7s. If the scale of C major has no sharps or flats, then it stands to reason that the scales of C sharp or C flat major must have seven sharps or seven flats. Do any of our students ever play the scale of C flat major? Can they 'see' it on the keyboard? If not, how are they to recognise it, or its cousin A flat minor, in a Schubert Sonata? Few students realise that the key of F sharp (or G flat), with six sharps (or flats), represents the tritone interval of 6 semitones from C, or in other words the midway point between 2 C's, or that there are really only 3 intervals—the second, third and fourth—because the others can be seen and heard as their inversions, the seventh, sixth and fifth. Once armed with the facts, students begin to appreciate keys and key relationships in a visual context, and it is interesting to note that the simple elegance of these mathematical and spatial concepts is not lost on young children.

To understand key relationships aurally, the next step is for students to put these ideas into practice by playing around the circle of fifths at first clockwise, making a series of plagal cadences (see Ex. 5). This simple routine of playing

chords in root position and in inversion often catches students by surprise, especially if they are not yet familiar with the spelling of all 12 keys. Of course it can be executed in many different ways using any number of rhythms, but the aim eventually is to complete it at a steady tempo, and in such a way that the chord progression is seamless, i.e. that the key change occurs with voice-leading by step.

Example 5: The Circle of Fifths (Clockwise)



Students should name the key and the notes of the chords as they play, and it is recommended that, at first, they repeat the keys of B, F sharp and C sharp, mentally respelling them as C flat, G flat and D flat in order to continue through the cycle. When this has been mastered, the exercise can be repeated anti-clockwise so that the result is a series of perfect cadences, and eventually the dominant seventh can be added (see Ex. 6), in various inversions.

Example 6: The Circle of Fifths (Anti-clockwise)

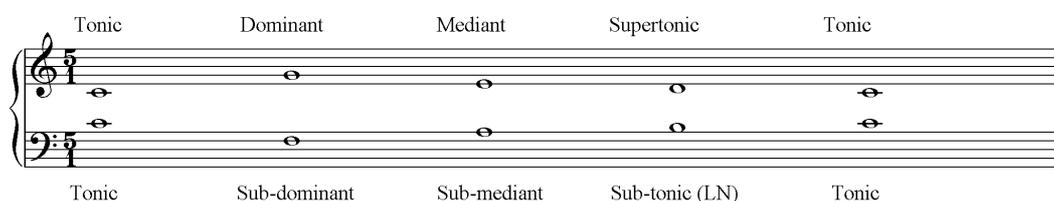


Thus students become comfortable with the spelling of all 12 keys; they get a feeling for the chords under the hand and they understand how the keys relate to one another in sound. They are subsequently less intimidated by complex key signatures and soon learn to recognize key relationships in their pieces. Much more important, however, is the idea that the student can actually begin to improvise at the keyboard, with no score, and with growing certainty that the notes they choose will make perfect musical sense.

Scale Degrees

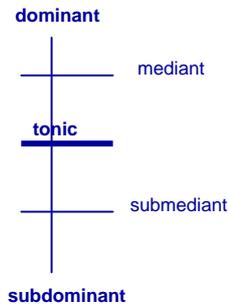
Clearly there is also a need to introduce the correct terminology for scale degrees: tonic, supertonic, mediant, subdominant etc. (see Ex. 7). Many students memorise them by simply saying the names one after another, applying them in linear fashion to the notes of the C major scale. If they are introduced at the keyboard, however, they can be much more clearly understood:

Example 7: Scale Degree Terminology (1)



Taking a vertical rather than a horizontal approach makes much more sense (see Ex. 8), and gives a clearer idea of the balance between dominant and subdominant harmony that is so central to the nature of tonal music. The mediant lies mid way between the tonic and dominant, and the submediant between the tonic and subdominant. The rest is easy.

Example 8: Scale Degree Terminology (2)



Major, minor and modes

Although most students have no trouble learning their major scales, there is a tendency to think of them always as beginning and ending on the keynote, or tonic. In order to hear how they might be used in a musical composition, it is useful to present them in a more melodic fashion (see Ex. 9), as shown in this next exercise. The harmonisation shown here is of course only one possibility, and can be added at a more advanced level.

Example 9: Melodic Scales

With minor scales, it is helpful to ask students to play the following pattern in all keys (see Ex. 10), in order to understand the relationship between the major and natural minor scales.

Example 10: Major/Minor Scale Connection

When asked why the harmonic minor is called the ‘harmonic minor’, remarkably few students are able to explain that the raised seventh is used in order to establish the harmonic relationship between the dominant triad (which is always major) and

the tonic. The perfect cadence in a minor key means that the V chord must contain a major third, the leading note. The pattern can therefore be reversed for the harmonic minor (see Ex. 11).

Example 11: Minor/Major Scale Connection



For classical students, melodic minor scales only ever seem to ascend, because the pattern most frequently taught descends as the natural minor scale. Once the major and minor scales are familiar, the melodic minor scale can also be understood as a major scale with a minor 3rd. Adding one accidental to lower the third seems easier than raising both the 6th and 7th degrees of a minor scale, but this is naturally a matter of preference.

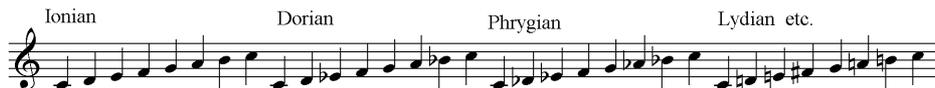
As for the modes, it is easy enough to rattle them off and name them by playing the C major scale from C–C, from D–D (Dorian), from E–E (Phrygian) and so on (see Ex. 12), but this provides no audible differentiation, as the ear retains its belief in C as the keynote, or tonic.

Example 12: Non-differentiated “Modes”



Playing all the modes from the same keynote, however, is a much healthier exercise (see Ex. 13) because it allows the student to hear and identify clearly the different patterns of tones and semitones peculiar to each mode.

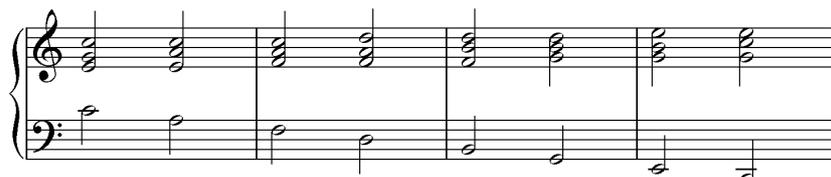
Example 13: Audibly Differentiated Modes



Harmony

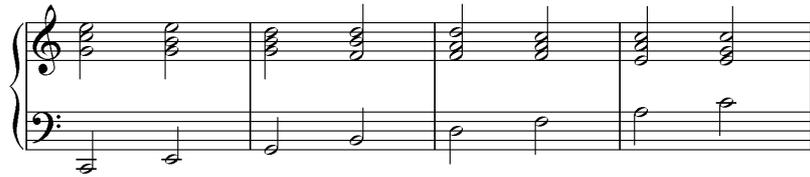
Perhaps the most basic principle of harmony is that the bass notes, or fundamentals, are of prime importance. It is interesting to ask students to consider the different aural effect of the following 2 diatonic progressions. In the first (see Ex. 14), the root of the chord is always one third below that of the previous chord.

Example 14: Third-related chords, descending progression



In the next progression (see Ex. 15), the bass ascend in thirds.

Example 15: Third-related chords, ascending progression

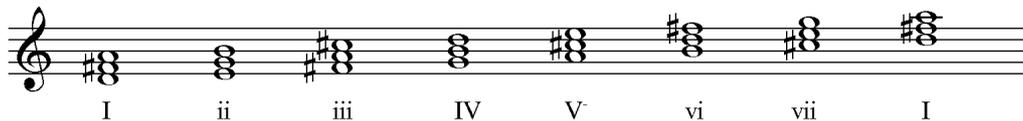


Aside from the rather strange effect of the diminished triad in root position, the harmonic effect of these two progressions is entirely different, and most students can hear this. They usually say that the first is ‘stronger’, or ‘more predictable’, or in some cases even ‘less interesting’, while the second is ‘weaker’, ‘less predictable’, or even ‘more interesting’. Their explanations for this rarely include the fact that, in the second example, each new bass note has already been heard in the previous chord, and is therefore not entirely new to the ear. Sometimes a demonstration such as this can produce real excitement as there is suddenly a logical explanation for what might otherwise have been considered a purely subjective reaction. This kind of understanding is crucial to an appreciation of what is termed ‘functional harmony’, and can lead to more advanced practical exercises.

Scale Degree Triads

The first is simply a matter of playing and naming the scale degree triads (see Ex. 16) in all keys.

Example 16: Major Scale Degree Triads



This can be done in conjunction with the technical work, and it can also be regularly revisited (in the relevant key) before a work is played, so that the student is routinely aware of which chords are most likely to occur in a particular piece. In translating this exercise to the relative minor (see Ex. 17), students immediately get a feel for the use of the diminished triad on ii, and become aware of the fact that there are also 4 major chords in a minor key, since usually only the triad built on the dominant needs the accidental. (While some theorists advocate the use of the raised 7th also for chord vii, the major VII occurs more frequently in practice.)

Example 17: Minor Scale Degree Triads



The Cycle of Fifths

This next exercise might be regarded as critical for a thorough understanding of harmony (see Ex. 18), and can eventually be practised in all keys, in both diatonic major and minor. However, it is important to stress that the naming of chords and scale degrees is an essential part of the assignment. The numbers I-IV-vii-iii-vi-ii-V-I should be as familiar to students as their own telephone number; in fact, a colleague once insisted that it should be found in every musician's DNA. Here it is, in the diatonic major and minor.

Example 18: The Cycle of Fifths in Diatonic Major and Minor

I IV vii iii vi ii V I
 i iv VII III VI ii V I

At a later stage, this routine can be extended to demonstrate how the chord relationships work on the flat side and sharp side respectively. By artificially constructing a row of fifth-related major chords, we reveal an on-going series of perfect cadences, any one of which might be extended in order to tonicise that particular key. On the flat side (see Ex. 19), we get a clear example of the Neapolitan Sixth.

Example 19: The Cycle of Fifths – Flat Side

I IV bVII bIII bVI bII⁶ (N6) V I

On the sharp side (see Ex. 20), we can show how easy it is to move immediately into a key which is as far distant from C as F sharp, simply by using appropriate voice-leading. (The progression is, of course, analogous to the use of the Neapolitan Sixth in the previous example.)

Example 20: The Cycle of Fifths – Sharp Side

I⁶ #IV VII III VI II V I

Analysis

One of the main problems with analysis is that many students are not familiar with the concept of ‘tonicisation’. The term itself is no more difficult to learn than words like ‘exposition’ or ‘recapitulation’, and the concept can easily be explained. Particularly in the lower grades, when pieces are relatively short, the idea of modulation is often inappropriate, and in any case ‘tonicisation’ (which is by nature temporary) occurs much more frequently in music than real modulation. All the examples shown here use a very simple method of written chord analysis, where small Roman numerals are used for minor or diminished chords, and large Roman numerals for major chords (or augmented triads, should they occur). Any chord which does not belong in the home key is shown in relation to that key by prefacing the Roman numeral with the relevant accidental. Hence, if we are basically in the key of E flat major, and we come across an A major chord, it becomes \flat IV; A minor would be \flat iv, F sharp major would be \sharp II, and so on. This avoids all the complications associated with V/vii, etc. and as soon as the I–IV–VII–III–VI–II–V–I pattern is familiar, any two of these numbers, in this order, so long as the first is major, can be recognised as either a perfect cadence, or—as is much more likely to be the case—an applied dominant.

Extended Cadences and Applied Dominants

Once all the keys, scale degree triads and various cycles of fifths are familiar, it is a short step to playing extended cadences in all keys. When students become comfortable with keyboard harmony, they may experiment in any key with various chord progressions, beginning with the extended cadence (see Ex. 21) in the major key, I–vi–ii–V–I, or i–VI–ii^o–V–I in minor.

Example 21: The Extended Cadence

I vi ii V I i VI ii⁶ V i

Three simple rules usually take care of the voice-leading, and are best summed up by the 3 C’s:

1. Use Contrary motion in the outer parts, i.e. learn to move the hands in opposite directions whenever possible;
2. Keep Common notes in the same place on the keyboard; and
3. Use Chromatic movement, i.e. semitone steps, whenever possible.

Once the extended cadence is mastered, it is very easy to demonstrate how any progression—including this one—can be expanded by the use of applied dominants (see Ex. 22), as in the following example:

Example 22: Applied Dominants

I III⁴ vi VI⁴ ii⁶ II⁵ V V⁷ I

Tonicisation and Modulation

The concept of tonicisation is most easily demonstrated by playing any simple chord progression, stopping on a chord other than the tonic, and adding a II–V–I (or ii–V–i) in that key (see Ex. 23) before resuming the progression, as follows.

Example 23: Tonicisation

I vi IV v I I⁷ IV vi⁶ ii V⁷ I

Even when analysing Sonata movements, this concept is very useful for passages of roving harmony, where a real modulation is difficult to justify because the new key is not established for any length of time. By now, however, students should be ready to construct their own modulations in skeleton form by finding a chord which belongs diatonically to two different keys, and then building back-to-back extended cadences in each key (see Ex. 24). The written analysis now shows the chord common to both keys as the pivot chord, and the key change is reflected in the Roman numerals.

Example 24: Modulation

Key: Eb I vi ii V I IV vi ii I⁴ V I

Key: Ab I

Improvisation

At the Elder Conservatorium of Music, Keyboard Musicianship is a Prerequisite for Accompanying, which normally begins at Level II. Of all the exercises which students prepare for these classes, none is more frightening—or, in the end, more popular—than the one in which students are asked to improvise over simple diatonic accompaniments by using scales and arpeggios in a given key. First, they prepare various 8–bar or 16–bar accompaniments in all 12 major and minor keys, and while one student repeats this chord pattern, another is asked to create something (i.e. improvise) on the second piano. A simple melodic line will do. Once they get over the initial shock, the results are often surprising, and

in a practical sense it certainly tests (and improves) students' aural skills. The follow-on exercise (see Ex. 25), using the II-V-I pattern through all 12 keys, is sometimes regarded with fear and trepidation until it becomes clear that the same major scale (rearranged as three discrete modes) can be used to improvise over all three chords.

Example 25: The II-V-I progression



For those who actually ‘take off’, the Jamey Abersold backing tracks⁴ used by jazz pianists can also provide an incentive for gaining a familiarity with the keyboard which is quite different from that found by the routine practice of set repertoire. In the long run this knowledge helps students to understand their pieces in far greater detail, from the inside out, as it were.

Sight-reading and Transposition

If the Keyboard Musicianship exercises outlined above are included in the daily—or even weekly—practice routine, there are also untold benefits in the areas of sight-reading and transposition. When reading and learning new works, students have a better understanding of key centres and feel greater familiarity with chord relationships in the more remote keys. They also improve their aural recognition of cadences and are more sensitive to the practical implications of applied dominants; they are less intimidated by accidentals and much more conscious of the part they play in real modulation. In the area of transposition, the ability to read, hear and play intervals is of the utmost importance, and the transference of simple chord progressions into any other key becomes a more natural process, rather than a daunting intellectual challenge. Aural and improvisational skills are developed to the point where visual dependence on the score is less critical, and the music may be easily transposed.

Conclusion

By now it should be clear that regular work in the area of Keyboard Musicianship is of immense value to the serious music student, since it provides an insight into the theoretical concepts behind the conventional notation of musical sound. While some of the examples given here might seem fairly advanced, they can all be easily explained, and very few serious pianists are lacking in intelligence. Some of our best pupils, at the age of 17 or 18, turn their minds to sensible professions like medicine, law, commerce or economics. By then, if they cannot play *Happy Birthday* in all 12 keys, if they cannot transpose a simple folk tune into any key by ear, or if they cannot read through the slow movement of a Haydn Sonata just for the sheer joy of hearing the music, then we might just have missed the opportunity to teach them what was most important: an understanding of the language of music itself.

⁴ A good example is “Volume 3, The II-V-I Progression” from the Intermediate level *Play-A-Long Book and Stereo CD set*, © 1974 Jamey Abersold, JA Records, New Albany IN 47150.

About the Author

An honours arts graduate from the University of Melbourne and the recipient of a DAAD Scholarship for study in Germany, Diana Weekes began studies in musicology at Munich University before completing her Meisterklassendiplom in performance at the Musikhochschule. A major prize-winner in five international competitions, she has had an active career in performance and teaching, and in 2007 completed a PhD in composition at the University of Adelaide. Formerly a full-time lecturer in music at the Flinders Street School of Music, she is now Senior Lecturer in Keyboard at the Elder Conservatorium of Music where she also co-ordinates the Chamber Music and Accompanying courses.

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References

Note: The system of harmonic analysis described in this paper was originally devised by my colleague, Dr Geoffrey Moon, at the University of Adelaide. It is used throughout his book, *The Tonal System*, which remains unpublished. There are, however, many text books covering the harmonic series, functional harmony and analysis, most of which still indicate applied dominants as V/ii, V/vi etc. The following list includes some of the books containing worksheets or written exercises that the author has found useful for teaching purposes.

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