

Practice Guide

Posture and Hand Position:

- ◆ Always use 'good posture'-keep feet flat on the floor or on the pedal if your piece requires pedal.
- ◆ Try to keep your shoulders relaxed.
- ◆ Are you using a good hand position?
- ◆ Are your fingernails too long? Do they need to be trimmed?

Be consistent with the fingering – decide what works best and then stick with it!
If your teacher has marked specific fingering, use it!

Are you using the correct rhythms? Are you counting (either with numbers or words)?

Try not to play too fast – be patient! How does it sound? Are you listening? If you can't hear all of the details, you are probably playing too fast. Allow yourself to play only as fast as you are capable of 'hearing' everything that needs to be heard!

Make sure you observe all the markings on the music:

- ◆ Key Signature: Are there any sharps or flats written in the key signature?
- ◆ Accidentals: Are there any sharps or flats written on the page? Remember, accidentals last throughout the measure!
- ◆ Rests - rests should be silent.
- ◆ Articulation: slurs, staccatos-short, legato-smooth, non-legato?
- ◆ Dynamics: pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff, crescendo, diminuendo
- ◆ Tempo Markings: The tempo marking is written at the beginning of the piece in the top left corner. Other tempo markings can also occur such as: A Tempo, rit., rall., accelerando...

Are you playing with feeling? Are you trying to create an image or tell a story?

Are you using the pedal? Listen carefully. Experiment! Keep your heel in contact with the floor.

Tone production –listen to the quality of the sounds you are producing.

Are you having trouble with a particular section? Try these ideas:

- ◆ Practice the Rhythm Alone (clap and sway the rhythm, tap the rhythm, rhythmic read...)
- ◆ Review each Hand Separately and either count or use special words like 'TA'
- ◆ Check the Fingering
- ◆ Sing and Play the right hand part and/or the left hand part
- ◆ Backwards Chain: mark off special places to start and go from each of them to the end of the section. The first starting place should be towards the end of the section – the last starting place will be the beginning of the section
- ◆ Parallel Practice: try practicing two parallel sections. If there are two sections in the piece that are similar, compare them and review them one after the other to understand what is the same and what is different about each one. This will help you to feel more secure with each of the sections.
- ◆ Add-a-Note: this is great for long runs and scalar passages. Start with just one note and then add one more note. Make sure you use the correct fingering and that your hand feels 'balanced' and 'secure' on the last note. Keep adding just one note until you reach the end of the passage..
- ◆ Use index cards to mark your progress. Each time you play the passage well, move the card.
- ◆ If after 7-10 times, you still are still unable to play the section correctly, try dividing the section into 2 or 3 smaller 'mini' sections. Also consider playing more slowly

By all means **play** the piano but don't forget to **practice!**