

Teaching and performance notes

Supersonics Book One

1. Spooky

This piece is useful for developing dynamic control and a smooth legato. It may also serve to introduce a student to the concepts of flats and ties. Take care that the tied notes are held for their full lengths and that the melodic line is very smooth and soft - it really must sound "spooky".

2. Jimmy Jams

This piece can prove to be quite addictive to students! Jimmy Jams helps develop a good shape to the right hand through the use of the two flats and the movement over the top of the thumb. It also serves to extend the note-reading range of students. This piece is named after one of my students (as well as being a particularly bad play on words...).

3. Tiptoes

The rhythm for this piece (and for most of the pieces in this book) can be learnt effectively using the French rhythm names (i.e. ta and ti-ti). Take careful note of the different articulations. As is suggested by the title a crisp, clean staccato is required.

4. Finger Twister

Get those fingers twisting! This piece makes the most of a limited tonal range through the use of accidentals to add interest. Other fingering patterns are possible but may reduce the "twistiness" that is essential to this piece.

5. At the Track

Another piece that is useful for developing good rhythmic and technical skills. Make sure that you observe the accents as they give the piece its forward drive.

6. Off the Beat

Before you play this piece it is beneficial to learn the rhythm away from the instrument. A "combined" rhythm of ta ta ta ta ti-ti ti-ti ti-ti ti-ti, etc can be clapped first. Once this is mastered a tapping exercise of L L L L LR LR LR LR (L=Left, R=Right) can be learnt. For this the student can tap on their knees, table, etc. After this this piece should be considerably easier to conquer! Obviously an effective staccato touch is required for this piece.

7. I'm Grumpy

To fully achieve the "grumpy" sound required for this piece you must observe all the markings on the score. This piece is useful to begin developing a student's sense of musicality through linking emotion and performance.

8. Going Undercover

Another catchy tune! This piece is great for finger independence and coordination between the hands. A preliminary tapping exercise may be useful before attempting lines three to five (i.e. Together R, Together R, etc).

9. Over the Top

This piece is based on the 12 bar blues progression. It is quite a simple piece yet several technical skills are being developed. Staccato touch and jumping in the left hand, moving around the thumb in the right hand and coordination between both hands all combine to make this piece a useful piece in a student's development.

10. Top C Turvy

The title for this piece is both a play on words and a reference to the fact that I drill my students with the phrase "3rd space top C". As I really want my students to remember where this note is there are many top C's in this piece! Make sure that you put all the dynamics in. A warning, however - this piece can get stuck in your head...

11. The Tarantula

This piece is useful for reinforcing good horizontal reading skills. The majority of right hand intervals are "steps" and as the piece is in a d minor hand position it can help students "locked" into a c major position. The title is a play on words as the piece is in the style of a tarantelle.

12. Feel the Beat

Another piece to really get those fingers working. Feel the Beat help to teach a relaxed rotational movement of the right hand wrist. Make sure that this piece doesn't get progressively faster - you really must "feel the beat".

13. Creepy Crawlies

Creepy Crawlies can be used to effectively teach the two-note slur. Make sure that the "down-up" movement of the wrist is drilled in both hands. Aim for a crisp staccato touch for notes not using the two-note slur pattern.

14. Drive

This piece is useful for promoting coordination between the hands. Also, the student gets to play a glissando!

15. Sparky

This fun little piece as named after the dog of one of my students. As is directed at the start it should be performed "playfully". Sparky is useful to help develop coordination between the hands.

16. Run

It is best to use a preliminary tapping exercise before you attempt this piece (LRR LRR LR, etc). Once this rhythm is mastered this piece should fall into place easily enough. As the title suggests, Run! can be played quite fast if the student can handle it.

17. Winter's Day

Listen for a smooth right hand melodic line and ensure that the dynamics are carefully observed to effectively realise this somewhat sad piece. The major modulation in the middle section should contrast with the outer sections - the metaphor of the sun breaking through the clouds is useful here.

18. Coconutty

This piece is not as daunting as it looks on the page. As long as you count out the long notes correctly and observe the correct fingering Coconutty should not present any huge challenges. Look for the patterns throughout the piece to enable easier note-reading.

19. Tika-Tika-Ti

This piece should follow the three-step process outlined for earlier pieces that have challenging rhythms - 1. create a combined rhythm (tika-tika ti-ti ti-ti ti-ti) 2. divide this rhythm between the hands using a tapping exercise 3. attempt the piece on the instrument. Be sure to observe the different articulations (staccato and the two-note slur).

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