

Functional Approach as a Beginning Method for Teaching and Learning Piano Accompaniment in Music

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ABSTRACT

Piano playing is an integral skill in music education in which students require mastery of the fundamental concepts and principles in terms of piano instruction, as well as in teaching-learning processes. In the part of teaching, which is the piano pedagogy, facilitating learning in playing the piano serves as a ground to develop individuals on a particular skill in each grade level in accordance with the learning competencies enumerated in the Music Curriculum Guide by the Department of Education. This article aimed to describe the context of the functional approach of piano accompaniment to make an easy way of learning the piano accompaniment in the most convenient and fastest time, as well as to accompany certain music or composition in minimal learning time. The practical way of learning piano skills is the observation and use of musical elements through their functions. In this approach, there are four identified components in learning and playing the piano accompaniment: musical elements and functions, musical patterns, musical piano accompaniment styles, and musical piano composition. By this process of learning, gradually, the manner of playing, the style, the elements, and other components of piano accompaniment will be combined to modify and to discover the aesthetic value and characteristics of music composition as well as the wisdom of the music itself.

KEYWORDS: *beginning method, functional approach, music, piano, piano accompaniment*

INTRODUCTION

Playing the piano is a long-term commitment if you want to be a good pianist. No matter what your goals are, you will have to spend a good deal of time developing your skills through practicing. Learning piano should stimulate the ability and capacity beyond oneself to promote music appreciation in line with the students' factors of learning.

Practice techniques employed by musicians and instrumentalists are sometimes formulated by previous experiences, personal bias, and media persuasiveness while such sources may provide productive rehearsal strategies, additional information regarding mental and physical rehearsal techniques might allow them to structure more efficient practice sessions that maximize time management and improve musical performance (Brooks, 1995). Fundamentals in piano such as its nature and characteristics, development in instructions - the functional approach for applied piano, understanding piano playing concepts and principles are important in the formulation of various strategies and techniques of learning piano courses to ascertain that effective learning would be achieved.

Theoretical Perspective

The Functional Approach idea focuses on the function of the mental processes which involves consciousnesses (Gordon, 1995). In musical terms, this approach signifies the importance of the rudiments of music - its principles, theory, and functions, to apply for a specific piano skill, and to

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deliver in the most authentic and aesthetic manner of performance. In addition, this idea was an alternative approach to structuralism (Karl, 1997), which is developed in the exploration of an abstract and specifically musical form in improving and developing another set of musical ideas or functions.

THE FUNCTIONAL APPROACH IN MUSIC TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

The practical way of learning piano skills is the observation and use of musical elements through their functions. In this approach, there are four identified components in learning and playing the piano: musical elements and functions, musical patterns, musical piano accompaniment styles, and musical piano composition (Tabuena, 2018).

The Context of Functional Approach in Piano Playing

The context of the functional approach of piano accompaniment is to make an easy way of learning the piano in the most convenient and fastest time, as well as to accompany certain music or composition in minimal learning time. The functional approach of piano playing is a kind of programmed instruction, an instructional design, to guide accompanists in the learning processes of acquiring intended skills and playing techniques. According to Kristinsdóttir (2001) in his article entitled Developments into Programmed Instruction, programmed instruction was among the first, in historical significance for instructional

developments and analytical processes, important to instructional design that is based on the behavioral learning theories.

In the beginning of the 60s, Bob Mager wrote a book in the praise of behavioral objectives. It is built on the simple conclusion that if one defines learning as a change in behavior, then the teacher may be wise to define the aims or objectives of his lessons in terms of the behavior patterns he wishes to establish. According to Mager, the essential ingredients in behavioral objective are: (1) a statement of what the student should be able to do at the end of the learning session (the terminal behavior), (2) the conditions under which he should be able to exhibit the terminal behavior, and (3) the standard to which he should be able to perform - the criteria (Romiszowski, 1997). Based on the aforementioned standards, a functional approach was developed and used as one of the practical ways of piano playing as illustrated below:

Table 1 Behavioral Objectives and the Corresponding Component of the Functional Approach

Behavioral Objective	Functional Approach
Terminal Behavior	Musical Elements and Functions
Conditions	Musical Patterns and Musical Piano Accompaniment Style
Criteria	Musical Piano Composition

By this process of learning, gradually, the manner of playing the style, the elements, and other components of piano accompaniment will be combined to modify and to discover the aesthetic value and characteristics of music composition as well as the wisdom of the music itself. In addition, functional piano playing is an approach designated for individuals to master the rudiments of music and its application towards a specific set of music, typically observed through a composition, whether in exercises, drills, or music pieces.

The following are the four identified components in learning and playing the piano: musical elements and functions, musical patterns, musical piano accompaniment styles, and musical piano composition (Tabuena, 2018).

MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND FUNCTIONS

The first component of piano playing in the functional approach is the awareness of musical elements involved as well as their specific functions. The primary purpose of this component is to establish the understanding of musical elements into practice as well as to introduce to piano learners the basic foundation in piano playing and in interpreting piano pieces. What are those musical elements that need to understand the nature of piano playing? These are the clefs, time signatures, notes and rests values, and other musical terms and symbols to enrich the level of musicality, to learn how to read music, and to express the skill you wanted in the art of piano accompaniment. Musical elements involved both theory and concepts in music education and other related courses which could help individuals to understand the nature of music, as well as in piano accompaniment. In this process, we need some ways to tell the pianist what notes to play and how to play them - and this is the written music, and written music involved

many symbols and patterns to understand the piano playing or simply reading a piece.

In order for a learner to analyze music, they should familiarize themselves first with the elements of music such as melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, form, timbre, and texture. These elements of music identify distinct characteristics in music composition, and for the music to acknowledge its parts, styles, and content. It could help the piano learner to understand the music through these foundations of musical elements.

MUSICAL PATTERNS

The melodic and rhythmic patterns serve as the basis for accompanying the sample phrase. The musical patterns could be express through the following: interval, scale, pitch direction, rhythmic patterns, and mixed patterns. Interval is the distance or difference in pitch between two notes; when the two notes are played together, they form a harmonic interval; when one note follows the other, it is a melodic interval. The scale is a progression of single notes upwards or downwards in steps (chromatic, pentatonic, diatonic, etc.). Further, pitch direction is the movement of a melody in different directions (ascending, descending, stationary, or mixed). A rhythmic pattern is a series of different and/or same note values that are grouped together to make a discernible regularity of beat. On the other hand, mixed patterns are a combination of two or more different patterns.

MUSICAL PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT STYLE

Accompaniment may vary from single notes to complex harmonic expressions, yet in most of the compositions, some of its accompaniment styles may subordinate to the melodic line. With the background knowledge of previous components of the functional approach, you could be able to play the piano technically in relation to the location of the melody. The following are some of the styles in piano accompaniment: part-writing accompaniment, drone accompaniment, rhythmical accompaniment, arpeggiated accompaniment, and mixed accompaniment (Winold, 1966).

Part-Writing Accompaniment

Part-Writing Accompaniment is an accompaniment that has a chord for each note in the melody. This style of accompaniment was adopted from hymns which are usually written and/or arranged in a four-part chorus with the rules of part-writing in SATB (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) styles. In addition, the characteristic of this accompaniment is said to be metrical as it portrays the rhythm of the melody.

Drone Accompaniment

Drone Accompaniment is a traditional style of accompaniment usually heard in church during the mass using a pipe organ or any related piano instrument which has one chord sustained while several notes of the melody are played. At times, the chord/s or the accompaniment lasts for a measure (a whole note or more than of its value). This style of accompaniment was adopted from its musical term drone which means a note or chord which is continuously sounded throughout most of the piece.

Rhythmical Accompaniment

Rhythmical Accompaniment is the reversed of the drone accompaniment in which several similar or different chords

are sounded against one note of the melody. The variation of this style of accompaniment which is usually used of the same chords repeatedly is called Simile Accompaniment or Repeated Chord Accompaniment. In musical terms, simile means similar, directing the musician to continue performing a previously notated indication (Burrows & Jones, 2006).

Arpeggiated Accompaniment

Arpeggiated Accompaniment is the reversed of part-writing accompaniment which has the notes of the chords sounded successive instead of simultaneously. This style is adopted to a musical term arpeggio which means a chord is broken into a sequence of notes – a broken chord may repeat some of the notes from the chord and span one or more octaves played or sung in a rising or descending order. There are different ways to perform an arpeggiated accompaniment:

Alberti Bass Accompaniment – is a common form used in 18th-century music consists of broken or spread chords arranged in a regular rhythmic pattern named after Domenico Alberti (1710-40), the first composer to use it extensively. The notes of the chord are presented in the order lowest, highest, middle, highest (Kuhn & Gale, 1999) or vice-versa with a condition in which the root of the chord is on the beat of the composition or music.

Broken Triad Accompaniment – is composed of the root of the pattern, third and fifth note of the scale respectively, and of its family chords composed of third intervals moving upwards. This style could also be extended beyond the scale making a ninth, eleventh, or thirteenth chord.

Perfect Melodic Intervals Accompaniment – is the use of the three perfect interval names such as the: perfect fourth, perfect fifth, and perfect octave. For example, prime to perfect octave (then repeat), prime to perfect fifth (then repeat), prime to perfect fifth to perfect octave, or from prime to perfect fourth to perfect fifth go back to perfect fourth to perfect octave, etc. It could also be mixed with the other melodic interval such as the major third, and others (e.g. prime to perfect octave to major tenth).

Alternate Root- Triad Accompaniment or simply ART Accompaniment is a style where the bass of the chord sounded first, followed by one or more soundings of the chord in the upper part – it could be played only by left hand or by both hands.

Mixed Accompaniment

Mixed Accompaniment involved many combinations of the previous style of piano accompaniment.

MUSICAL PIANO COMPOSITION

In order to execute the learning processes in (a) musical elements and functions, (b) musical patterns, and (c) musical piano accompaniment styles, musical notation exercises in different style and manner of playing could be helpful for the development of the skills in sight-reading, coordination of musical elements, and piano playing techniques and other processes. The last component of piano playing in the functional approach is the piano piece itself, sometimes referred to as a piano composition, which had been designed in accordance with the previously acquired piano skills. Some of the piano pieces are focus on one aspect of the

element of practical piano playing which tends to create a relationship and distinction with the style, form, and character between a composer and the composition itself.

Table 2 Sample Outline Lesson for Piano Accompaniment using the Functional Approach

Components	Sample Lesson
Musical Elements and Functions (meter, rhythm, rudiments, and symbols)	Triple meter, lento, scale and accidentals, fermata and repeat sign
Musical Patterns (interval, scale, pitch direction, pattern)	Interval of second, diatonic scale, descending (first four measures), ascending (fifth to the tenth measure), scale pattern
Musical Piano Accompaniment Style	Alternate root-triad accompaniment
Musical Piano Composition	Given music piece

CONCLUSION

Playing the piano is not only fun and entertaining; it also provides great exercise for your brain considering the four identified components in learning and playing the piano using the functional approach. The self-discipline and determination needed to practice a piano regimen on a regular basis give a special awareness about the process of learning that carries over into their music lives. Music notation also challenges a piano student to determine how long notes must be played for, how many beats there are in a measure, and which note gets one beat during that measure, as the first component in the functional approach; in which, the practical way of learning piano skills is the observation and use of musical elements through their functions. In this approach, there are four identified components in learning and playing the piano accompaniment: musical elements and functions, musical patterns, musical piano accompaniment styles, and musical piano composition. By this process of learning, gradually, the manner of playing, the style, the elements, and other components of piano accompaniment will be combined to modify and to discover the aesthetic value and characteristics of music composition as well as the wisdom of the music itself.

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