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TITLE: First steps of a little artist- an introduction book for early beginners of piano and for children in special education

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PAGES: 151-153

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2687368>

Book Review

First steps of a little artist- an introduction book for early beginners of piano and for children in special education

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Article Info

Received: 28 August 2022

Accepted: 19 September 2022

Available online: 30 Sept 2022

Keywords:

Book review

Erman Türkili

Early piano education

Special needs music education

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Abstract

"First steps of a little artist" is a piano method that enables two-year-olds to make their first musical steps. But this teaching method does not aim to present child prodigies as early as possible. Rather, it is about holistic creative, cognitive, motor and emotional development through music-making by people with and without handicaps. In addition to young children, piano students with autism, cognitive impairments or mental illness have also been shown to benefit from this piano method. "First steps of a little artist" works with an intuitive, colourful notation system that explicitly encourages composing one's own works from the very beginning.

To cite this article

Sinsch, S. (2022). First steps of a little artist- an introduction book for early beginners of piano and for children in special education. *Journal for the Interdisciplinary Art and Education*, 3(3), 151-153.



Title: First Steps of A Little Artist

Author: Erman Türkili

ISBN: 978-605-80566-2-6

Publishing Year: 2021

Pages: 89

Publishing type: Paperback

Language: English

Publishing House: notacini

Figure 1. Cover of the First Steps of A Little Artist and Its Information

The lovingly illustrated tutor "First steps of a little artist" is much more than just a piano method. With his method, which is based on the latest findings in music education research, the author Dr. Erman Türkili enables very different target groups to access the world of music.

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A piano method for every learning pace

Playing an instrument should be fun. If the first encounter with the piano is enjoyable, pupils of all ages are motivated to dive deeper into the world of music. A sense of achievement and the feeling of being a musician from the very first note is conveyed by the "First steps of a little artist" method." The work is structured in such a way that it can be adapted to any learning pace. At the beginning, the piano is prepared with appropriately coloured stickers. Coloured circles are used for the right hand, triangles for the left hand. The stickers are easy to apply to the keyboard and just as easy to remove. The colours are then assigned to the notes. If desired, both systems can be used - letters or solmisation.

In this way, first sound experiences as well as rhythmic experiences are directly possible. This shows that the addressees of the book are not only trained music teachers. Interested parents, grandparents, curative teachers or even nannies and caregivers can learn together with the child and accompany it in its musical experiences. This low-threshold access at all levels is what distinguishes this teaching method among others and sets it apart from comparable works. Even those who do not have English language skills can benefit from the book. "First steps of a little artist" can be grasped intuitively.

Methodical approach beyond pure instrumental learning

First, the focus is on the right hand. With three different notes, students can quickly play their first piece. At the same time, one beat per note trains the rhythmic feeling. Teachers could, for example, mark the basic beat with claps or percussion or add a pulse in the left hand. Again and again, the author intersperses tips on fingerings or other challenges that have proven successful in his many years of music pedagogical practice.

After introducing the half and whole note, the tonal range is expanded step by step. Finally, the pupil uses all the fingers of the right hand, adds clapping to his performance and is soon allowed to venture into his first composition. This is also a valuable didactic approach. Because by creating his own little song, the student's self-confidence and self-efficacy are strengthened from the very beginning.

Learning the piano consistently, but with a lot of fun

The chapter on the right hand concludes with first polyphony. The author leaves it up to music teachers to decide whether to work with fixed fingerings from the beginning or whether flexibility is desired. From the second third of the book, however, it becomes apparent that correct fingering from the beginning is the better option. Exercises like the Joker Finger provide fun and relaxation in between.

If the concentration once slackens, there are colouring pictures and lots of animals with instruments to marvel at in the book. Once again, this shows how important it is that music lessons should be holistic and multidimensional and by no means just focused on the instrument. With a showcase piece by Mozart and various challenges, joy of playing and technical security are trained.

The author builds up the use of the left hand just as gradually and attentively as that of the right hand. Finally, both hands are brought together in units of increasing difficulty. The individual exercises focus on creativity, motor skills, cognitive training or coordination. The ears are also trained. One unit is dedicated to the perception of consonance and dissonance. This prepares the student for the final pieces, "Jingle Bells" and a lovely arrangement of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" - the first concert can come.

Overall, all the exercises in the book build on each other consistently and logically. Teachers do not have to meticulously follow the order. It is possible to combine exercises or skip units.

Flexible in almost any setting from early music education to music therapy

The colourful book is not only suitable for children from 24 months. For more than five years, the method has been used with children with autism and special needs. As experience shows, the target group can be expanded. "First steps of a little artist" can also be used very well with adults with cognitive impairments.

Inclusive ensemble playing is easy to realise with this method. Music educators can arrange voices appropriately to enable ensemble playing with others. Even grandmother and grandchild learn and make music together with "First

steps of a little artist". Since intergenerative music making is currently a high priority in music education research, the work makes a valuable contribution to this. The only disadvantage is that there is still no computer programme for arranging sheet music. At the moment, everything still has to be notated by hand with coloured pencils, but this can also be integrated excellently as part of an artistic process. "First steps of a little artist" is also much less complicated than comparable methods that work with animal symbols or directly with coloured notes on a line system.

The many exotic animals provide a non-verbal approach to piano students who do not speak the local language. This makes the book suitable for intercultural music education, for example with refugees. Familiar songs from the country of origin can easily be notated with dots and triangles. This builds a bridge to music therapy. In addition to therapeutic instrumental playing, therapeutic songwriting with "First steps of a little artist" provides a tool with which the patient can easily set his or her own song to music.

The system also makes it possible to quickly get back into music making after a break and to make measurable progress. This is ideal in settings with special security measures such as a prison or forensic psychiatry. Here, instruments can often only be used once a week under the supervision of a therapist. Experience in using the method in forensic psychiatry has also shown that patients suffering from schizophrenia can also benefit from the method, as the pace of teaching can be adapted to the clinical picture.

Conclusion

"First steps of a little artist" is a method for piano that stands for a contemporary and future-oriented music education. The work can be used with very different target groups in different settings and therefore enables comprehensive cultural education and participation. The potential of this method has not yet been exhausted. Follow-up volumes and editions with repertoire would be useful, preferably even more target group-specific, to enable continuous work over the years.

Biodata of Author



Sandra Sinsch is a music pedagogue, music therapist and specialist for historical music. She studied at the national music universities in Hamburg and Trossingen and was a scholarship holder of the German National Academic Foundation. From 2011 to 2016, she was a lecturer at the ITU State Conservatory in Istanbul. Today Sandra Sinsch works as a music therapist at the State Hospital for Forensic Psychiatry Saxony-Anhalt in Stendal Germany. The clinical pictures treated there are: Schizophrenic psychoses, personality disorders such as antisocial/dissocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder/emotionally unstable personality disorder, sexual preference disorders, intelligence deficits, brain-organic disorders, autism and ADHD. She uses active and receptive methods of Western music therapy as well as classical Arab and Ottoman music therapy. Sandra Sinsch is also working on her dissertation project: "Music education in the Forensic Psychiatry - conditional factors for strengthening resources and promoting participation, social learning and cultural education" at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. E-Mail: sinschsandra@gmail.com