

# PIANO SAFARI® REPERTOIRE BOOK 1

## TEACHER GUIDE: INTRODUCTORY UNIT

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**Step 1:** Relate high and low sounds on the piano to animal sounds. Search the internet for audio clips of monkey and walrus sounds. Instruct the student to play high and low sounds on the piano.

**Step 2:** Play the **Animal Improvisation Game** several times in the course of the first year of study. Steps for this game are presented on the next page.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Learn the high and low registers of the piano
- Relate sounds on the piano to sounds in nature

## ANIMAL IMPROVISATION GAME

The **Animal Improvisation Game** helps students imagine and relate sounds in nature to sounds on the piano. I have found that this game works well with children from ages 4 to 11 in a group class, but it can be modified for use in a private or partner lesson also.

To see a video example of the Animal Improvisation Game, visit Instructional Videos at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com).

- Step 1:** Ask the students to name some animals. Draw the animal (or write the names) on a whiteboard.
- Step 2:** Choose one student to point to an animal on the board without letting the other students see.
- Step 3:** The teacher improvises music to fit the animal (low, scary music for lions; high, fast music for mice, etc.).
- Step 4:** The other students in the class raise their hands to guess what animal you are improvising based on the list on the whiteboard. You call on them to guess.
- Step 5:** When someone guesses correctly, mention why the music represented that animal sound. "Wow. That did sound like mouse music, because it was high and fast, just like a quick, squeaky mouse."
- Step 6:** Erase that animal from the whiteboard. The student who guessed correctly chooses another animal from the whiteboard. Repeat from **Step 3**.
- Step 7:** After you have played some of the animal music and feel like the students understand the game, ask the student choosing the animal, "Do you want to play or do you want me to?" This allows students who want to improvise to do so while not forcing shy students to play if they are not comfortable. Eventually, all the students will want to play the improvisations.
- Step 8:** When you have reached the last animal on the whiteboard (for example, a horse), ask the students, "Who has some good horse music?" and let them all play their horse music.

# STEADY BEAT. HOT CROSS BUNS KNERR

# INTRODUCTORY UNIT MUSICIANSHIP. ROTE PIECE



I usually teach **Steps 1-4** at one lesson and **Steps 5-6** at future lessons.

**Step 1:** Have the student listen to this piece on his Listening CD several times before introducing it.

**Step 2:** Listen to a clock if you have one that ticks. Then set your metronome to 100 and tap to the beat (or march, swing arms, or play a drum). Then let the student set the metronome to various tempi and tap to the beat. Tapping is preferable to clapping, because tapping is a more pianistic movement. Clapping is sometimes too complicated for young children when trying to stay with the beat, because they sometimes have trouble telling whether the beat is on the clap or on the rebound from the clap.

**Step 3:** Brainstorm together to choose another object that has a steady beat. Instruct the student to draw a picture of it in the box.

**Step 4:** Teach the student the *ostinato* Student Part to "Hot Cross Buns" by placing his Finger 2's on the correct notes and moving his hands and arms in the rhythm to help him play. Play the Student Part with him.

**Step 5:** Once he can keep a steady beat, add the teacher accompaniment.

**Step 6:** You may also teach the student the melody of "Hot Cross Buns" by rote. The student should use Finger 2 for all notes and can keep the hand in a loose fist with just Finger 2 extended. Play each phrase and have the student imitate. Then put the phrases together.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Learn that music has a rhythmic pulse
- Play a steady beat using a full forearm motion

## DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Steady rhythm

**Step 1:** Follow the instructions on the pages.

**Step 2:** Practice the following Rhythm Activities throughout the first year of study to reinforce and automatize rhythm. These activities may be done in a private lesson or in a group class.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Learn notation for basic rhythmic values
- Learn syllables for counting each note value
- Learn the terms and symbols for measures and bar lines
- Internalize a rhythmic pulse

## RHYTHM ACTIVITY 1: TAPBACKS

**Step 1:** Chant and tap a one- or two-measure rhythm, for example:



Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta Ta

**Step 2:** The student taps and chants back the rhythm. You can use the Rhythm Patterns with animal names also, in this instance, "Zechariah Zebra." See **Mini Essay 8: Philosophy or Rhythm** under Pedagogical Resources at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) for more information.

**Step 3:** You and the student continue to chant various rhythms antiphonally without stopping the rhythm. You tap and chant the rhythm, and the student imitates.

**Step 4:** This exercise can be varied by playing on a drum or tapping on the head, knees, etc.

## RHYTHM ACTIVITY 2: STUDENT TAPBACKS

**Step 1:** The student plays a rhythm on the drum or taps it.




**Step 2:** You imitate the student's rhythm exactly, even if the rhythm is not in a meter or is very complicated. Hearing you tap back his exact created rhythm will develop the student's ear.

## RHYTHM ACTIVITY 3: RHYTHM CARDS

**Step 1:** Create rhythm cards that are in proportion to the rhythmic value of each note. For example, quarter note cards (one beat) are one inch wide and have a quarter note written on them. Half note cards (two beats) two inches wide. Two eighth notes together (one beat) are one inch wide, etc.




**Step 2:** Arrange the cards in a row, using the following three Rhythmic Patterns often:

- **Zechariah Zebra**  Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta Ta
- **Kangaroo**  Ta-ti Ta
- **Tall Giraffe**  Ta Ta Ta-2

These **Rhythmic Patterns** correspond to the **Technical Exercises** the students will learn. I also find it helpful to create rhythms that repeat or invert. Children love discovering the hidden patterns. Finding patterns in music is an important step for fluent sight reading.

You and the student tap and say the rhythm you made, using both syllabic counting (Ta's) and animal names. For example:

						
Ta	Ta	Ta - 2	Ta - ti	Ta - ti	Ta	Ta
Tall	Gir -	affe	Zech-a -	ri -	ah Ze -	bra

- Step 3:** Next instruct the student, "Make a rhythm using 8 cards." The student makes the rhythm and you and the student tap and say it.
- Step 4:** Next, say, "Make a rhythm 8 cards long that has a Zechariah Zebra." Tap and say it together.
- Step 5:** If you have a group class, have each student to make his own 8-card rhythm. Then ask each student to tap the rhythm in front of him (his own). After everyone has tapped and said his rhythm, the students rotate one place to the right so they are in front of their neighbor's rhythm. Go around the table and have everyone tap and say the rhythm in front of him. Rotate one place to the right and repeat until the students return to their original place at the table.
- Step 6:** Occasionally, let the class create a long rhythm chain using all the cards. The goal of this step is to add joy to music study, not necessarily to be rhythmically perfect, since practicing short rhythm patterns is more useful than reading long ones. However, joy is important! When students look back on their piano study, they will likely always remember how you let them make a long rhythm chain using all the cards!

#### **RHYTHM ACTIVITY 4: WRITING RHYTHMS**

- Step 1:** Ask the student to write quarter, two eighths, and half notes on a whiteboard or on paper. Reinforce the name of the note and its rhythmic value. "This is a quarter note. We say 'Ta' when we see it. It gets 1 beat."
- Step 2:** Add other note and rest values as they are introduced in the book. This is the precursor to written rhythmic dictation, which can be introduced later.

## RHYTHM ACTIVITY 5: RHYTHM CARD DICTATION

This activity is extremely important for aural development. This will be very easy for some students and more challenging for others. Keep working until it is easy for all students.

For young children, I prefer to use rhythm cards for dictation rather than written dictation, because young children may not be able to focus on remembering the rhythm pattern and writing at the same time. To avoid frustration, written dictation should be delayed until children are fluent writers.

**Step 1:** Tap and say "Ta Ta Kangaroo."

**Step 2:** The student taps and repeats what you said and then uses the rhythm cards to make the rhythm.



**Step 3:** You and the student tap and say the rhythm while looking at the cards to see if the student made the rhythm correctly.

**Step 4:** Repeat with other rhythms and animal rhythm patterns.

## RHYTHM ACTIVITY 6: ENSEMBLE RHYTHMS

**Step 1:** The student taps steady quarter notes saying, "Ta Ta Ta Ta," while you tap half notes, saying nothing. When you think the student can concentrate on keeping his rhythm going, say, "Ta-2 Ta-2" for your half notes while the student continues with quarter notes.

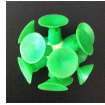
**Step 2:** Trade parts. The student taps half notes while you tap quarter notes.

**Step 3:** Repeat with whole notes, dotted half notes, and eighth notes. This is a first step toward confident ensemble playing. Use a drum or other Orff instruments to add variety.



## RHYTHM ACTIVITY 7: SUCTION CUP RHYTHMS

**Step 1:** Create four measure rhythms on cards and stick them to a window, mirror, or large whiteboard. Buy a ball that has suction cups (found in the party section of Target or other stores).



**Step 2:** The student throws the suction cup ball at the cards. It will stick to the mirror/window or to the card if it is laminated. Take down the card that the ball lands nearest.



**Step 3:** You and the student tap or play this rhythm card on a drum, piano, or on the fallboard. You may also choose to provide maracas or other Orff instruments. I like to have several stations so the student practices playing the same rhythm in a variety of ways. For example, we play the same card at the drum station, the maraca station, and the hopping station (to get out some excess energy!).



**Step 4:** Repeat **Steps 2** and **3** until all cards are completed.

Of course, all these activities are not necessary to effectively learn rhythms. However, they do make the experience more joyful. At the beginning of study, anything you can do to playfully engage the student will help him not only enjoy learning rhythms, but internalize them and feel confident and excited about the process.

**Step 1:** Use the page to explain to the parent and child the proper height and distance from the bench. Emphasize the need for correct posture to be maintained at home from the beginning of study. This means that the parent will need to find some large books or carpet squares to place on the bench, since many benches are too low for children. Emphasize that cushions or pillows should not be used, as they do not provide a solid base of support.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Learn the importance of proper height and distance from the piano
- Educate the parent about setting the bench appropriately at home

The parent should purchase a footstool or pedal extender for children who cannot reach the floor, as dangling feet do not provide a firm base of support. I purchased my pedal extender from [www.dphmusic.com](http://www.dphmusic.com) and have been very happy with it. Parents can purchase a pedal extender and resell it to another student when their child outgrows it. It is well worth the cost, as small children may need to use the pedal extender for several years.



**Step 2:** Ask the student to check your posture at the piano. Put the bench too close or too far away so the student can correct your sitting position.

**Step 3:** Take a photo of the student and have him critique his posture.

**Step 4:** Ask the parent to take a photo of the child at home at his own piano to be sure he is at the correct height and distance from the piano.

**Step 5:** Continue to check bench position with every student at the beginning of every lesson.

Forming a good piano hand shape is one of the most important tasks of the teacher and student in the first months of piano study. A good piano hand shape will not form itself! It requires work and constant attention until it is automatic. Do not put off piano hand formation, hoping it will become easier in the future!

**Step 1:** Have the student to stand with his arms relaxed by his side. Show him how his hands naturally have a good piano hand shape.

**Step 2:** Have him to sit on the bench and lift the hands gently to the keyboard.

**Step 3:** Discuss the components of a good hand shape from the page.

**Step 4:** Do the **Fuzzy Piano Hand Shape Activity**, described on the next page.

**Step 5:** Take a picture of the student's hand and discuss how it looks. Also have him check your hand or his parent's hand.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Learn the components of piano hand shape
- Understand the importance of piano hand shape

In the first few weeks of playing pieces, the student will be gaining control of the arm and fingers. He may not be able to have a perfect piano hand shape because of lack of coordination or very weak fingers. Provide encouragement and keep striving for a proper piano hand shape, while realizing that most students take several weeks to “find their fingers” and gain coordination.

In general, students are gaining this coordination throughout the Introductory Unit and Unit 1, which has pieces on black keys. Black keys are easier to find in terms of patterns on the keyboard but are more difficult to play technically. We have found that if we are encouraging and gentle in forming the hand shape in the Introductory Unit and Unit 1, knowing when to be picky and when to move ahead, students can refine their hand shape during Unit 2 when they start playing on the white keys, which are technically easier to play. We continue to refine the hand shape throughout *Repertoire Book 1* and through the *Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards for Book 1*.

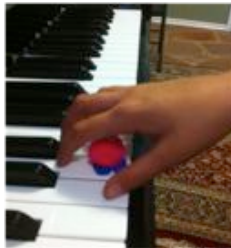
See **Mini Essay 5: Technique Basics for Beginners** under Pedagogical Resources at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) for more information.

## FUZZY PIANO HAND SHAPE ACTIVITY

This idea is modified from Mary Craig Powell's version, where she uses a pencil kitty to check position. Thanks to Mary Craig Powell for all she taught me when I was researching for my dissertation!

I created these Fuzzies with pompoms, googly eyes, and foam feet I cut out. I do the following activity for several lessons at the beginning of study:

- Step 1:** From a relaxed position by his side, the student brings his hand up to the piano and places it on the keyboard.
- Step 2:** Fuzzy starts on the student's shoulder to check that it is relaxed. I tell the student, "Shoulder's up!" Fuzzy gets scared because he is afraid of heights and lets out a squeak. "Shoulder's down." The student puts his shoulders down, and Fuzzy is relieved.
- Step 3:** Fuzzy walks down the student's arm. There should be a nice smooth road (arm) for Fuzzy to walk across on the forearm, with no hills or valleys in the wrist.
- Step 4:** Fuzzy walks down the gently curved fingers.
- Step 5:** Fuzzy goes in his house by walking through the space under the bridge of the hand between the thumb and Finger 2. This is to check that the thumb is on its corner and the bridge is tall. If the thumb is flat or the bridge is collapsed, either Fuzzy will not be able to get into his house, or the roof will collapse and injure Fuzzy!



Several analogies I have found that appeal to children when working on piano hand shape:

- **For a wrist that is too low:** "Sharks swim down there, and they are getting ready to eat your hand. Keep it up above the sharks!"
- **Pencil of Doom:** I hold a pencil (sharp end up) under the student's hand to keep him from dropping his wrist too low.
- **Flat hand:** "Oh no! You just squished **Fuzzy** in his house. Let's see if he can get it!" Put Fuzzy under the child's hand
- **Flat fingers with collapsed end joints:** "Oh no. Look at those **pancake fingers**. They are all flat. We don't want pancake fingers!"

**Step 1:** Close the fallboard. Tell the student, "We are going to tap Finger 1." Do not say, "Tap your first finger," as this may be confusing to young children who do not know that "one" and "first" mean the same thing. Tap Finger 1's (thumbs) HT (Hands Together) with the student, saying, "1 1 1 1." Be sure the student is tapping on the corner of the thumb with good piano hand shape.

### OBJECTIVE:

- Learn that the fingers each have a number

**Step 2:** Repeat with Fingers 2, 3, 4, 5 HT.

**Step 3:** Call out finger numbers in random order while you and the student tap.

**Step 4:** Ask the student to close his eyes, and repeat **Step 3**.

**Step 5:** Repeat this at each lesson until mastered.

**Step 6:** Once the student is competent with tapping single fingers hands together, you can add the following variations.

- **Rhythm Pattern Variation:** "Finger 1, ready go. Zechariah Zebra (while tapping Finger 1's in



rhythm). Finger 3, ready go. Zechariah Zebra," etc.

- **Single Hand Variation:** "Tap RH Finger 3." "Tap LH Finger 2."
- **Ring Variation:** Buy plastic rings and say, "Put the pink ring on RH Finger 5." "Put the green ring on LH Finger 3."
- **Sticker Variation:** "Put a red sticker on RH Finger 2." "Put a blue sticker on LH Finger 3." etc. until both hands are decorated.
- **Double Finger Variation:** "Tap Fingers 2 4 together." "Tap Fingers 1 3 together."
- **Simon Says Variation:** Playing Simon Says helps students learn to listen and follow directions.
  - "Simon says play Finger 3."
  - "Simon says play Finger 1."
  - "Simon says put your hands on your head."
  - "Simon says run across the room and back three times."
  - "Simon says play Finger 2."
  - "Simon says jump up and down ten times."



Encourage the student to listen to the Piano Safari® Listening CD for Repertoire Book 1 from the beginning of study to prepare to play this and future Rote Pieces, Folk Songs, and Technical Exercises. Hearing these pieces in advance will make them easier to learn by rote and will allow the student to aurally internalize details of rhythm, sound, and phrasing before playing the pieces.

I teach this piece at the very first lesson. Present as many or few steps per lesson as the student can handle based on age and ability. Young students may only work through **Step 3** at the first lesson. Other students may complete **Step 8** at the first lesson. **Steps 9-14** can be taught at subsequent lessons.

Tell the parent that there is a Reminder Video at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) for reference at home.

The student plays the entire piece with Finger 2 or Fingers 2 3 held together. The student may hold his hand in a loose fist with Finger 2 extended or with the thumb bracing Finger 2 under the first knuckle. Generally, students who try to play this piece with the hand in a regular piano position end up with fingers that are tight, sticking up, or curled, what I call "pterodactyl hands." Hence it is better for the student to play with the loose fist or braced Finger 2. Free arm movement and control of larger muscles is the focus of this piece.

The notation is for teacher and parent reference only. The student learns by imitation through the following steps.

Many of the pieces in *Repertoire Book 1* have Instructional Videos and Performance Videos to aid in teaching these pieces and exercises. Please see [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) to watch these videos.

- Step 1:** Play and sing the piece for the student, with teacher accompaniment.
- Step 2:** Play m. 1 of Student Part, singing "1 2 1 2." Student imitates.
- Step 3:** Play m. 2, singing "Go-ing up." Student imitates.
- Step 4:** Play m. 1-2, singing "1 2 1 2 Go-ing up." Student imitates.
- Step 5:** Repeat with m. 3-4, singing "1 2 1 2 Go-ing down."
- Step 6:** Repeat m. 5-6 (same as m. 1-2).

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Learn a patterned piece by rote
- Gain control over the forearm motion

**DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?**

- Steady rhythm
- Relaxed forearm motion

**Step 7:** “Now for the special ending!” Play m. 7-8 singing “1 2 1 2 1 2 3,” “mi mi re re do do do,” or the lyrics. Any of these three will work.

**Step 8:** Put all phrases together.

**Step 9:** Once the student can play the piece well, some students that have good fine motor control can be asked to play with a firm end joint, rather than a floppy or collapsed one, on Finger 2. Some children will not have the control to play with a firm end joint at this point. If this is the case, don't worry. The student's technique will progress as he becomes more coordinated over the first weeks of lessons. It is more important at this point that the student has a relaxed and comfortable forearm motion than that the fingertip is firm.

**Step 10:** When the student is confident and can play the piece correctly by himself, add the teacher accompaniment. If the student has trouble, be sure that you are using enough of the **Insurance Teaching Strategy** and that you are not skipping any steps. See **Mini Essay 7: Teaching Strategies** under Pedagogical Resources at pianosafari.com.

**Step 11:** Have the student play in different octaves of his choice to create a Chipmunk Family (Low = Grandpa Chipmunk. High = Baby Chipmunk). If you have a stuffed chipmunk, have the student close his eyes, and have the chipmunk play the group of two black keys in the octave he wants the student to start. Children love to see where the chipmunk will have them play next!

**Step 12:** Have the student play the piece with the LH. Place a sticker in the boxes as the student masters the RH and LH variations.

**Step 13:** Have several students or family members play together in different octaves.

**Step 14:** Create a story with the student, playing in different tempos and octaves to match the story. For example, as you vamp on the teacher accompaniment, say:

- “Once upon a time, Brother Chipmunk went out to play.”
- Student plays at moderate tempo in the middle of the piano.
- “As Brother Chipmunk was in the woods, he heard a screech. He got really scared and ran towards home.”
- Student plays the piece fast.
- “When he got home, Mama Chipmunk soothed him and said it was probably just the neighbor practicing his kazoo. Shhh, Sister Chipmunk is taking her nap.”
- Student plays the piece up high and slowly.

# HUNGRY HERBIE HIPPO

## TRADITIONAL, ARR. KNERR

# INTRODUCTORY UNIT

## ROTE PIECE



I introduce "Hungry Herbie Hippo" at the very first lesson. Beware that students love this piece so much that they tend to drive their parents crazy by playing it over and over. I would like to thank Carolyn Shaak for my first introduction to the benefits of transposing this piece.

Tell the parent that there is a Reminder Video at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) for reference at home. The student should also listen to this piece on his Listening CD.

The student plays the entire piece with Finger 2 or Fingers 2 3 together. The student should have his hand in a loose fist with Finger 2 extended. This is not a time to concentrate on piano hand shape. Rather, free arm movement and control of larger muscles is the focus of this piece.

I typically teach **Steps 1-6** at one lesson and **Steps 7-10** at future lessons until all transpositions are learned.

**Stems up = RH. Stems down = LH**

**Step 1:** Start with the G-flat version (on black keys).  
Play and sing the piece for the student.

**Step 2:** You the RH while playing the LH part using the student's Finger 2. You are holding his finger and controlling it. Play the piece.

**Step 3:** Tell the student, "You play your note (LH Finger 2) after I play each of my notes." Teacher plays a note, student plays his LH note, teacher plays the next note, student plays his LH note, etc. Hold up his hand at the end "cheeseburger" so he does not play the LH there.

**Step 4:** Play m. 1 HT (Hands Together). Student imitates. If the student has trouble keeping the LH from moving to play other notes, put some sticky tack or tape on his LH finger and stick his finger to the key. If you make it fun, he will think it is great to have his finger stuck to the key.

**Step 5:** Play m. 1-2. Student imitates.

**Step 6:** Tell the student, "We play the first part three times and then keep going down to the cheeseburger." Point to the keys as necessary to help the student remember where to play next. If you have a stuffed hippo, have the student close his eyes, and have the hippo play the octave where he wants the student to play (high, low, middle).

### OBJECTIVES:

- Play hands together
- Gain control over the forearm motion
- Experience transposition
- Develop coordination

### DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Rhythmic energy
- Even rhythm
- Ability to play fast after practice
- Ability to play all transpositions without pennies



- Step 7:** When the student has mastered the piece, add the teacher accompaniment. Play the introduction to the accompaniment and say, "Ready go" on the last two beats before he starts so he will know when to start playing. After several repetitions, the student will be able to hear on his own when to start playing.
- Step 8:** To teach the transposition to B, put the penny and nickel in the position shown in the picture on the second page of this piece (penny on A#, nickel on B). (You can also use flat marbles, which will be less likely than coins to fall between the keys.) Play the piece for the student, telling him, "Skip the penny note and end on the nickel note." Then show him where to put his hands and have him try it. Older students can place the penny, nickel, and fingers themselves according to the picture.
- Step 9:** For the transpositions to C, F, and G, put the pennies in place (for young students) or have the student put the pennies in place according to the picture (for older students). Play it and say, "Skip the penny notes." Then let the student play. It is not necessary for the student to know the names of the white keys to play this piece. He can refer to the picture and spatially know where to put the pennies and how to find his starting position based on the groups of two and three black keys.
- Step 10:** When the student is confident, add the teacher accompaniment (available in the Appendix at the end of *Repertoire Book 1*, or for download at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) under Accompaniment Transpositions). Start the accompaniment introduction at various tempos to see if the student can match your tempo. Play all five transpositions in order.



Arm weight is the perhaps the single most important component of piano technique. It is easiest to learn at the beginning of study.

Tell the parent that there is a Reminder Video at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) for reference at home.

**Step 1:** The student should listen to this exercise on his Listening CD before learning to play it.

**Step 2:** Have the student stand with his arms by his side. Say, "Pretend that you are walking across the plains of Africa and you see a sleeping lion under a tree. You tiptoe up to the lion as he sleeps and lift up his arm. Do you think his arm and paw would be heavy or light?" Student answers, "Heavy." You say, "That's right. That's the kind of arms we want when playing piano; heavy, sleeping lion arms. Let me check your arms. Are they asleep?" Gently move the student's arms a bit back and forth to see if they are loose. Have him move your arms or his parent's arms to feel loose and stiff arms. Incidentally, almost all children will have loose arms. The parents have a more difficult time finding their own loose arms!

**Step 3:** Put your hand in your lap. Bring it up over the keys and drop your whole hand onto the piano with a loose arm. Student imitates, making a loud sound with a loose arm. If the piano hits the piano with a stiff arm, ask him to make his arm looser and demonstrate again.

**Step 4:** Take the student's hand and hold his LH Finger 2 by the nail knuckle joint. Bring it from his side up to the piano and use his hand to play Lion Paw, dropping on D loudly. You should be doing all the work while the student is relaxed. Don't worry about hand position at this point. The goal is a loose arm, but the fingers should all be in a piano hand shape, not in a fist. The wrist should be low as the student holds the note so that the arm is completely relaxed after playing the note. Repeat with RH Finger 2.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Feel the sensation of a relaxed arm
- Create a loud tone by dropping with arm weight

**DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?**

- Relaxed arm
- Loud, round tone that is not hitting the piano
- Relaxed arm after playing while holding the key

In summary, the sequence for the **Lion Paw Technique** is:

- Arm comes up from lap above the keyboard about 4 inches
- Arm and hand drop with Finger 2 on D
- Wrist and arm relax downward, lower than normal playing position, to be sure the arm is completely relaxed. Check for loose arm by moving it slightly to make sure it is flexible, not stiff
- Arm comes up out of the keys, with a loose wrist and the hand following
- Arm rests in the lap

**Step 5:** Let the student try the Lion Paw alone, dropping Finger 2 on D. If the child hits the piano with a stiff arm, draw attention to the difference in sound between a relaxed arm drop (round, rich, *forte* sound) and hitting the piano (harsh, unpleasant sound).

**Step 6:** For young students, buy a stuffed lion and pretend he is sleeping. When the child plays a good Lion Paw, the lion wakes up startled because the child played so loudly with such a relaxed arm. Young students are more motivated to startle the lion than to play correctly for the sake of their piano technique. Also, have the lion choose which finger the student plays by touching the finger with the lion's paw. The lion stays asleep if the sound is not loud or if the child is banging on the piano with a stiff arm rather than dropping with a relaxed arm. Only a proper Lion Paw will wake the sleeping lion.

**Step 7:** When the student has found his arm weight and can successfully play a good Lion Paw on D, it is time to play the exercise in rhythm as notated. To help the student know which D in which octave to put fuzzies on the three D's. Play the teacher accompaniment with one hand while your other hand plays the student part an octave displaced from where the student plays. This allows the student to see and absorb the correct motions through peripheral vision. (I call this the Teaching Strategy of **Technical Osmosis**.) As you and the student play, you can prompt him to play (in the picture below, for LH), "pinky fuzzy...green fuzzy...yellow fuzzy...yellow again...green fuzzy...pink fuzzy."



# KING OF THE AFRICAN DRUM

## KNERR

# INTRODUCTORY UNIT

## ROTE PIECE



I usually teach **Steps 1-5** at one lesson and **Steps 6-10** at subsequent lessons.

Tell the parent that there is a Reminder Video at [pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com) for reference at home.

**Step 1:** Have the student listen to this piece on his Listening CD before introducing it.

**Step 2:** Play and sing the piece for the student. Then have the student improvise on a drum, if available, while you play the piece.

**Step 3:** The student should sit or stand in front of the lower half of the keyboard so he can reach all the notes.

**Step 4:** Play m. 1-4 for the student saying "Ta 2 3 4. Ta 2 3 4" for the whole notes. Use good **Lion Paw Technique**. The hand can either be in a loose fist, with Finger 2 extended, or in a regular piano hand shape. Arm weight, rather than refining hand position, is the focus of this piece. For the *tremolo* in m. 3 (divided between hands), the speed of *tremolo* repetitions is not important. The goal is to make an exciting noise. Count, "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" for the student to know how long the *tremolo* lasts. ("5" is the downbeat of the next measure, where the student lands on the D.) Student imitates. If the student cannot reach the pedal, use a pedal extender, or the teacher or another student can depress the pedal.

**Step 5:** Play m. 5-12 RH for the student, counting "Ta-2, Ta-2, Ta-2, Ta-2, 1 2 3 4 5." Student imitates while you point to the keys from above.

**Step 6:** Student plays m. 5-12 RH while you play LH.

**Step 7:** Play RH of m. 5-12 and "Lion drumming" parts (m. 8, 12) in the LH (you are omitting the LH parts in m. 5-7, 9-11). Student imitates.

**Step 8:** Then have the student add the missing LH parts, m. 5-7, 9-11, to play m. 5-12 HT.

**Step 9:** Student plays the entire piece, noting that the end is the same as the beginning. If the student has trouble moving from the position in m. 1-4 to the position for m. 5, place two Fuzzies on the D's the student will begin on in m. 5. This will provide a visual reference for the new position, allowing the student to move to the new position in rhythm. Once the student is confident, remove the Fuzzies. I call this the **Mark the Leaps** Teaching Strategy.

**Step 10:** Have the student play the piano while you or another student plays the drum.

### OBJECTIVE:

- Play a piece that uses the **Lion Paw Technique**

### DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Heavy Lion Paw drops on the whole notes
- Relaxed arms throughout
- Steady rhythm