

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Why This Book Is for You	1
How to Read (and Listen to) This Book	2
Part I: Warming Up to the Keyboard	2
Part II: Getting Sound Down on Paper	2
Part III: One Hand at a Time	2
Part IV: Living in Perfect Harmony	2
Part V: Technique Counts for Everything	3
Part VI: So Many Toys, So Little Time	3
Part VII: The Part of Tens	3
Icons Used in This Book	3

Part I: Warming Up to the Keyboard 5

Chapter 1: Meeting the Keyboard Family 7

The Acoustic Ones	7
The inner workings	8
Pianos	9
Lids	10
String layout	11
Keys and hammers	12
Harpsichords	13
Pipe organs	15
Other wooden boxes with funny names	16
The Electric Ones	16
The nuts and bolts (and knobs and buttons)	16
Synthesizers	17
Electronic pianos and organs	18

Chapter 2: What Your Parents Never Told You About Posture 19

To Sit or Not to Sit	19
Chairs versus benches	20
Chairs	20
Benches	21
Stands and racks	22
It's All in the Hands	23
Arch those fingers	24
Pick a finger, any finger	25

A Serious Pain	25
Feeling cramped	26
Carpal tunnel syndrome	26
Chapter 3: Eighty-Eight Keys, Three Pedals, Ten Fingers, and Two Feet	29
Blake's E-Z Key Finder	29
The white keys	30
The black keys	31
Pedal Power	32
Piano pedals	33
Electric keyboard pedals	34
Part II: Getting Sound Down on Paper	35
Chapter 4: Following Horizontal and Vertical Lines	37
Thou Art with Me, My Clef, My Staff, and My Notes	37
“Humoresque”	38
Employing a staff of five	39
Hanging from a clef	39
Treble clef	40
Bass clef	41
Double Your Staff, Double Your Fun	44
Grand staffing	44
Squeezing in the middle	45
Climbing up the staff and beyond	46
Lines Heading North and South	47
Don’t Stop ’Til You Get Enough	48
Chapter 5: Joining the Rhythm Nation	49
The Beat Goes On	49
Measuring the beat	49
Breaking things up with vertical lines	50
Shopping for barlines	51
Note Lengths: Serving Some Musical Pie	52
One piece at a time	52
Half the pie	53
The whole pie	54
Mixing up the pieces	54
Faster, Faster, Alley Cat	55
Eighth notes	56
Sixteenth notes and more	56
Triplets love chocolate	58

Metric Conversions	58
Common time (4/4 meter)	59
“ A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight ”	60
Waltz time (3/4 meter)	60
“ The Beautiful Blue Danube ”	61
March time	61
“ Can Can ”	62
Time keeps on slipping	62
“ Changing It Up ”	63
“ Add-ons ”	64
Chapter 6: Changing the Beaten Path	65
Taking a Rest	65
You can leave your hat on	66
Quarter rests and more	67
“ Waiting for a Note ”	68
Pick Me Up at Four	69
“ When the Saints Go Marching In ”	70
“ Oh, Susannah ”	70
Adding Time to Your Notes with Curves and Dots	71
Ties	71
Dots	72
Dotted half notes	72
Dotted quarter notes	72
“ Scheherazade ”	73
“ I’ve Been Working on the Railroad ”	74
Dotted eighth notes	74
“ Swanee River ”	75
Playing Off the Beat	76
Swing and shuffle time	76
Syncopation	77
“ The Kitchen Sync ”	78
Part III: One Hand at a Time	79
Chapter 7: Playing a Melody	81
Let Your Fingers Do the Walking	81
Positions, Everyone	82
C position	83
“ Frere Jacques ”	83
“ Ode to Joy ”	84
Thumbing a ride to B	85
“ Skip to My Lou ”	85
Good stretch, pinky!	86

“Kum-bah-yah”	86
Stretching C position to the limits	87
“Chiapanecas”	87
G position	88
“This Old Man”	88
Getting more out of your positions	89
Cross your fingers and hope it works	89
“Minuet”	90
Cross over to a new position	91
“Row, Row, Row Your Boat”	91
Chapter 8: Scaling to New Heights	93
Building a Scale, Step by Step	94
Minor Renovations, Major Innovations	95
Major scales	95
“Danny Boy”	97
“Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”	98
Minor scales	98
“House of the Rising Sun”	100
Breaking the rules	101
“The Farmer in the Dell”	101
“Greensleeves”	102
Alternative Scales	103
Harmonic minor scales	103
Melodic minor scales	104
Blues scale	104
Chapter 9: Hey, Don’t Forget Lefty!	107
Exploring the West Side	107
Moving into position	108
Getting used to the new neighborhood	109
Playing More than Drills with Your Left Hand	110
South-paw scales	110
Left-hand melodies	111
“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”	112
“Little Keyboard”	112
Accompaniment patterns	113
Three-note arpeggios	113
Four-note arpeggios	115
Adding the Left Hand to the Right Hand	117
“Yankee Doodle”	118
“On Top of Old Smoky”	119

Part IV: Living in Perfect Harmony.....	121
Chapter 10: The Building Blocks of Harmony 123	
Measuring Harmony on a Scale	123
Interval shorthand	125
2nds	126
3rds	127
4ths	128
5ths	129
6ths and 7ths	129
Octaves	130
Building Harmony with Intervals	131
Playing two notes together	131
Adding intervals to the melody	132
“America, the Beautiful”	132
“Piano”	133
Encouraging lefty to join in	134
“Marianne”	135
“I’m Called Little Buttercup”	136
“Aura Lee”	137
“Auld Lang Syne”	138
Chapter 11: Understanding Keys 139	
Home Sweet Home	139
A whole ring of keys	140
“Good Night, Ladies (in the key of C)”	140
“Good Night, Ladies (in the key of F)”	141
Leaving and returning to the “home” key	142
Using Keys to Play Music	143
Reading key signatures	143
“Worried Man Blues (in the key of G)”	145
“Worried Man Blues (in the key of D)”	146
Finding keys the E-Z way	146
Key signatures with sharps	147
Key signatures with flats	147
Whoops! Taking back the key signature	148
“The Star-Spangled Banner”	149
Chapter 12: Filling Out Your Sound with Chords 151	
Pulling the Chords	151
The Anatomy of a Chord	153
Major Chords	154
“Down by the Station”	155

Minor Chords	156
“ To a Wild Rose ”	157
Exploring Other Types of Chords	157
Augmented and diminished chords	158
“ Rags and Riches ”	159
Adding suspense to your chords	160
More Four the Money	161
“ Lullaby ”	163
Reading Chord Symbols	164
“ Bingo ”	165
Standing on Your Head	168
Putting inversions to work	168
Flipping the notes fantastic	169

Part V: Technique Counts for Everything 171

Chapter 13: Dressing Up Your Music.....	173
Articulate the Positive	173
Articulation symbols	174
The power of articulation	174
“ Camptown Races ”	175
Will You Say Grace?	175
“ Pop! Goes the Weasel ”	176
Just Trillin’	177
“ Trumpet Voluntary ”	179
Don’t Miss the Gliss	180
“ To Gliss Is Bliss ”	182
Trembling Tremolos	183
“ Also Sprach Zarathustra ”	184
Dynamically Speaking	186
Speaking Italian in volumes	186
“ Polovtsian Dance ”	187
Widening the range	187
Bird beaks: Gradual shifts in volume	188
Chapter 14: Great Grooves	191
Great Left-Hand Accompaniment Patterns	191
Fixed and broken chords	192
Chord picking	194
Octave hammering	194
“ Picking and Grinning ”	195
“ Octaves in the Left ”	196
“ Jumping Octaves ”	197
Bouncy intervals	197
“ Rockin’ Intervals ”	198

“Berry-Style Blues”	199
Melodic bass lines	200
“Bum-Ba-Di-Da”	200
“Boogie-Woogie Bass Line”	201
Great Intros and Outros	201
Applying intros and outros to songs	202
The big entrance	203
The “Get Ready, Here We Go” intro	203
The “Rockin’ Jam” intro	203
The “Sweet Ballad” intro	204
The “Killing Time” intro	204
The “Saloon Salutations” intro	205
Exit, stage left	205
The “I Loved You, You Left Me” outro	206
The “Let’s Load Up the Bus” outro	206
The “Last Call” outro	206
The “Shave and a Haircut” outro	207
Great Riffs to Impress Your Friends	207
The “Bernstein Would’ve Been Proud” riff	208
The “Love Me Like You Used To” riff	209
The “Classic Boogie” riff	210
The “Hank the Honky-Tonk” riff	211
The “Chopsticks” riff	212
Chapter 15: Perusing the Aisle of Style	213
Classically Trained	213
Sweet Suite	214
“This Old Man Wore a Wig”	215
Rhapsodic intervention	215
“Dixie a la Grieg”	216
Rockin’ around the Keys	217
Rocking ingredients	217
Slamming and jamming	217
“Jerry Had a Little Lamb”	218
Singing the Blues	219
Clues for the blues	219
12-bar ditties	220
Changing it up	222
You’re a Little Bit Country	224
Country-style cooking	224
Finger-pickin’ good	224
“Michael, Ride Your Horse Ashore”	226
Pop Goes the Piano	226
Popular picks	227
Topping the charts	227
“Go Tell Aunty Rhody You Love Her”	228

Soul Searching	229
Saving your soul	229
Motown sounds	229
Funky sounds going round	230
“Home on the Motown Range”	231
“For He’s a Funky Good Fellow”	233
All That Jazz	234
Jazzing it up	234
It’s up to you	234
“Yankee Doodle Went to a Jazz Club”	235
Substituting chords	236

Part VI: So Many Toys, So Little Time 239

Chapter 16: Finding the Perfect Keyboard	241
To Hum or Not to Hum: Electric or Acoustic?	241
Buying acoustic	242
Pros	243
Cons	243
Buying electric	243
Pros	243
Cons	244
Picking the Perfect Piano	245
Taking location into account	245
Getting all the pedals you deserve	245
Finding good buys (and avoiding the shams)	246
If you’ve heard one, you haven’t heard them all	247
Looking at some specific brands	247
Selecting an Electric Keyboard that Lasts	248
Avoiding obsolescence	249
Knowing the features you want	250
Looking at some specific brands	251
Other electric keyboards	252
Before You Drive It Off the Lot: Sealing the Deal at the Store	252
Take it for a spin	253
Love it and leave it	253
Never pay the sticker price	254
Getting the Most Out of Your Gadgets	255
The world of MIDI	255
Sequencing and recording	256
Putting it in sequence with MIDI	256
Recording the old fashioned way	256

Chapter 17: Raising Your Keyboard	259
A Good Place to Live	259
Making It Shine	260
Calling Dr. Help for a Check-up	262
Tuning acoustic keyboards	262
Keeping electric keyboards happy	263
Technical support lines	263
To the Emergency Room	264
Making Moving Day Worry-Free	265
 Part VII: The Part of Tens	267
 Chapter 18: Ten Types of Performers and Their Recordings	269
Old Masters	269
Johann Sebastian Bach	269
Ludwig van Beethoven	270
Franz Liszt	270
Sergei Rachmaninoff	270
Mastering the old	271
Virtuosos	272
Martha Argerich	272
Vladimir Horowitz	272
Evgeny Kissin	272
Wanda Landowska	273
Arthur Rubinstein	273
Virtuous listening	273
Child Prodigies	274
Josef Hofmann	274
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	274
Stevie Wonder	275
Kids, gather 'round	275
Hip Cats	275
Dave Brubeck	275
Bill Evans	276
Herbie Hancock	276
Thelonious Monk	277
Art Tatum	277
Jazz up your collection	277
Mysteriosos	278
Van Cliburn	278
Glenn Gould	278
Sviatoslav Richter	278
Not-so-mysterious recordings	279

Wild Ones	279
Jerry Lee Lewis	279
Liberace	280
Little Richard	280
Wild about their recordings	280
Chart-Toppers	281
Tori Amos	281
Billy Joel	281
Elton John	281
Topping the charts	282
Southern Stars	282
Ray Charles	282
Floyd Cramer	282
Dr. John	283
Scott Joplin	283
Cooking up a collection	283
Mood Enhancers	283
George Winston	284
Yanni	284
Enhancing your mood	284
Song-Spinners	284
Duke Ellington	285
George Gershwin	285
Fats Waller	285
They wrote the songs	286
Chapter 19: Ten Ways to Go Beyond This Book	287
Studying Method Books	287
Using Reference Books	288
Buying Music to Play	289
Types of printed music	289
Varying formats	290
Fake books	290
Where to buy printed music	291
Gigging with Others	291
Piano duets	292
Ensembles	292
Bands	292
Listening to CDs	293
Perusing record stores	293
Shopping online	294
Visit libraries	294
Join record clubs	294
Borrow from friends	295
Attending Live Concerts	296
Exploring the Internet	296
Pianos at the Movies	297
Realizing You're Not Alone	298

Chapter 20: Blake's Ten Teacher-Tracking Tips	299
Question #1: Whom Else Have You Taught?	299
Question #2: How Long Have You Been Teaching and Playing?	300
Question #3: What Do You Think of Mozart?	300
Question #4: Would You Mind Playing Something for Me?	301
Question #5: What Repertoire Do You Teach?	301
Question #6: How Do You Feel about Wrong Notes, Mistakes, or Lack of Practice?	302
Question #7: What Methods Do You Use to Teach Piano?	302
Question #8: Where Will the Lessons Be Given?	303
Question #9: How Much Do You Charge?	303
Question #10: Do You Have Annual Student Recitals?	304
Appendix A: Glossary of Musical Terms	305
Appendix B: About the CD	313
Index	317
<i>Book Registration Information</i>	<i>Back of Book</i>