



Building Lifelong Pianists

October 2023 Newsletter



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Table of Contents

Student of the Month

Finding Balance: Piano Safari

Fall in Love with Pianos

Ieva Jokubaviciute

Masterclass Recap

Upcoming Events!

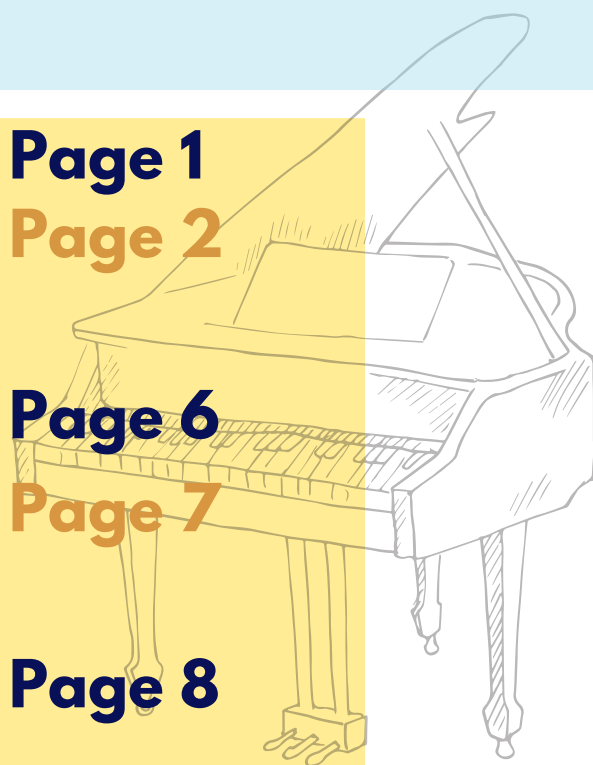
Page 1

Page 2

Page 6

Page 7

Page 8



Student of the Month: Sophia B.



Q: What other activities do you do besides music theory and playing the piano?

A: I like baking, reading, and watching YouTube videos (whatever the algorithm gives me).

Q: What do you like most about learning music theory?

A: Learning music theory helps me understand the music better, which makes it easier to learn my pieces.

Q: Which musicians or genres do you like to listen to?

A: I enjoy Olivia Rodrigo and Taylor Swift. I also like to listen to the other students at piano recitals.

Q: Why did you decide to take music theory lessons?

A: I wanted to understand the music better! It's working so far.

Q: What has been your favorite experience at Triad Music Academy?

A: Lots of things! I enjoyed our masterclass with Dr. Shteinberg from UNCSCA.

Finding Balance: Piano Safari (Eclectic Piano Method)



By Alek Wasserman,
Triad Music Academy
Instructor/Founder

"Finding Balance" is a new monthly series in the TMA Newsletter based on a simple premise: no one piano learning method is perfect. Every method book has its pros and cons, and every student needs individual adjustments for their own needs. In this opinion series, we will explore what different piano books have to offer, as well as their flaws.

This month's edition of "Finding Balance" features a very unique method book series, Piano Safari.

Unlike the other method books I've previously covered, Piano Safari does not fall neatly into one method book category. Thus, it is considered to be an "eclectic" piano method. See our [Intro to Piano Method Book Types](#) for more info, but "eclectic" is basically an umbrella term for piano method books that adapt aspects of multiple other methods.

Naturally, this can be achieved in numerous ways, so we will not attempt to cover all eclectic piano methods together.

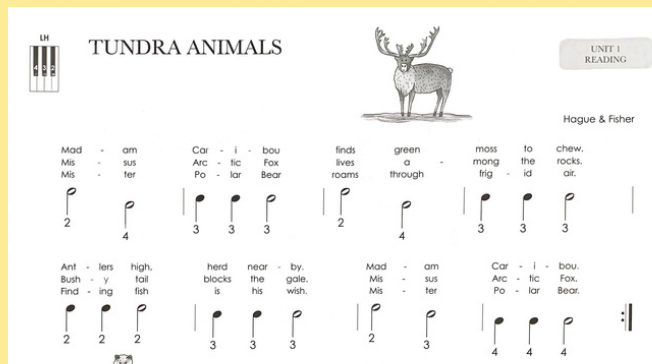
In the case of Piano Safari, its eclectic approach is basically a reimagining of [The Music Tree](#), but with the influence of both the Middle C and multikey methods and much faster pacing.



Piano Safari: Repertoire Book 1

The first few pages of Piano Safari are meant to be taught in an entirely rote fashion (without the student reading music). In its next phase, the book mixes in more rote pieces with intervallic-style compositions that have an obvious influence from The Music Tree: Time to Begin.

Finding Balance: Piano Safari, cont.



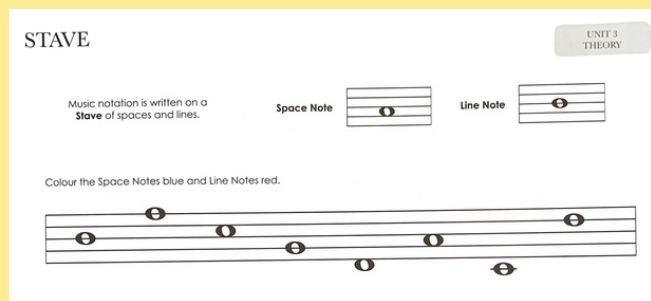
Images protected under Fair Use (§ 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976).

The final section of the book reaches a combination of Grand Staff and hands-alone note reading. Piano Safari categorizes its repertoire as “rote,” “reading,” “challenge,” “technique,” and “folk.”

Due to the book’s fast pacing and large amount of material, the second book in this series is more akin to the third or fourth book in many other piano method series. Generally speaking, Piano Safari books take longer to complete than other method books.

So what does Piano Safari do right? Well, honestly, just about everything!

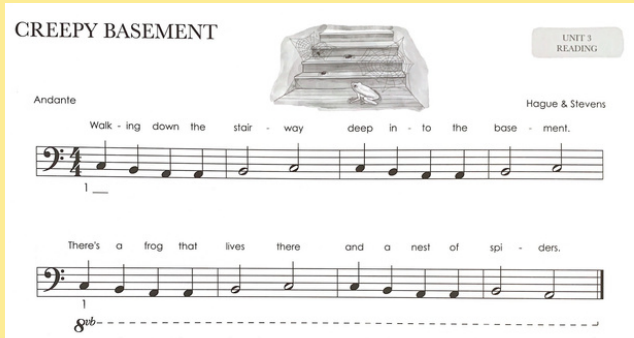
Piano Safari is highly engaging for students (most pieces are accompanied by drawings of animals), and it includes very imaginative supplemental materials. This is the only method book I’ve ever taught from that instructs students to learn with colored pencils. That may seem like a small thing, but it motivates kids heavily!



Piano Safari note reading activity.

Once the book gets into note reading, it takes an interesting approach; many pieces are hands alone, and its main landmark notes are Treble G and Bass C. Piano Safari is unique in using Bass C as an initial note reading landmark, and thus creates a wider range of sounds for students to explore.

Finding Balance: Piano Safari, cont.



Piano Safari piece using Bass C as a landmark.

There are hands together pieces, as well. In Book 1, these pieces often use a **Middle C** handshape, but that quickly expands into different positions in the second book. I personally love this about Piano Safari because it makes the music accessible for students without the general Middle C pitfall of being stuck in a single hand position.

Overall, Piano Safari shines because of its imaginative mix of influences from different method book styles, affording students a fun and well-rounded introduction to the piano.

So now let's critique Piano Safari a little. There isn't much I don't love about this series, but it has two areas

in which it struggles.

The first area of improvement is that some of the music in the first book, in particular the rote material, is a bit aspirational for beginning students. I personally find it to be a **Catch-22** when the book asks students to practice difficult music which they cannot read. This type of learning relies solely on memory and a strong knowledge of the keyboard, which they have not yet developed at that point. As a result, I don't always assign the rote pieces. That said, this is a relatively minor issue in one aspect of the book.

The second area of improvement is ironically for piano teachers, rather than for students. Piano Safari can be very difficult for a teacher to figure out at first because of its dense structure and its mixture of teaching priorities. This is not a book that I would recommend for a brand new piano teacher, but more experienced teachers may feel a sense of renewal from trying a unique series like Piano Safari.

Finding Balance: Piano Safari, cont.

So how do I find balance with Piano Safari? This is a tricky one because of the book's fast pacing combined with its obvious marketing towards elementary school children. I have personally found that Piano Safari works best with upper elementary students (3rd-5th Grade) that are starting piano for the first time.

Even though its material is paced to almost match with accelerated beginner books in other series, middle schoolers are not likely to want to work with a book that has music about Fuzzy Wuzzy the Bear.

On the same token, younger elementary students may feel overwhelmed; the middle portion of Piano Safari Book 1 is essentially by itself equivalent to the entirety of The Music Tree: Time to Begin.

To compensate, I assign Piano Safari exclusively to 3rd-5th Grade students (and the occasional academically advanced 2nd Grader), and I don't require its use from my teachers.

Even though Piano Safari is a relatively difficult series to get used to, its well-rounded and motivating approach can provide a beautiful introduction to the piano. If the right student starts with Piano Safari, they are destined for success!

The "Finding Balance" series only reflects my own opinions. TMA Instructors are encouraged to express their own piano teaching beliefs and use method books of their own choosing so they are free to teach as their best selves. We create uniformity across TMA studios by offering the same recital and masterclass opportunities to all students, as well as Unlimited Lesson Support. Most importantly, all TMA students have exclusive access to the same library of online piano learning supplements. At the time of writing, we have over 30 items written from a method book-neutral perspective.

Fall in Love

with a new to you piano



All of our Pre-Loved Vintage and Showcase Pianos are available to our TMA Family at discounted prices.

Call (336) 724-9612 or come to the store today to speak with Chris.

October 2023

 **PIEDMONT**
Music Center

Ieva Jokubaviciute Masterclass Recap

On September 30th, six of our middle school-aged students performed in a duet masterclass taught by Ieva Jokubaviciute from Duke University. Our pianists were exposed to new ideas in ensemble playing and musicality. Congrats to our lifelong piano learners on their commitment to chamber music and collaborative piano education!



L to R: Duke University Piano Faculty Ieva Jokubaviciute; TMA Instructors Alek Wasserman & Shannon Lindegren; Piedmont Music Center Owner Chris Fulk



TMA Students of Alek Wasserman and Shannon Lindegren



Upcoming Events!

Myron Brown Masterclass

Saturday, Nov 4th @ 4:00 PM

Piedmont Music Center

Myron Brown
Associate Professor of Music,
Winston-Salem State University



Select Triad Music Academy students will be chosen to perform. Email alek@triadmusicacademy.com if you would like to watch!

Triad Music Academy Child Student Fall Recital

Saturday, Dec 9th @ 4:00 PM

Piedmont Music Center

Recitals open to all Triad Music Academy child students. Email alek@triadmusicacademy.com with any questions!

Upcoming Events!

Triad Music Academy Adult Student Fall Recital

Saturday, Dec 9th @ 5:30 PM

[Piedmont Music Center](#)

Recitals open to all Triad Music Academy adult students. Email alek@triadmusicacademy.com with any questions!