

The Grandfather Clock

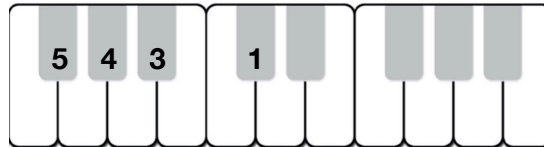


Stage 1

Start by exploring all the black keys on the piano (the pentatonic scale). Play them staccato (detached) to imitate the ticking of the clock. As this piece is about a Grandfather clock, you could choose which part of the piano you think best describes it!

Stage 2

An ostinato is a repeated pattern, and can be very simple. For example, place your left hand fingers on the black keys as follows:



Your pattern could then perhaps be finger 5 and 1, followed by 4 and 1, played at whatever register of the keyboard you have chosen.

Stage 3

Place your right hand fingers in a similar position, at least one octave higher than your left. This hand will play the melody while the left repeats the ostinato, but start by experimenting with the right hand alone. Try writing some rhythms in the box below to help you. Remember to keep them simple as you will have to play something different at the same time with your left hand, and you may want some of the melody to be legato (smooth)! You could try tapping the rhythms with your right hand, while your left plays the ostinato, and choose the ones which fit most easily.

Stage 4

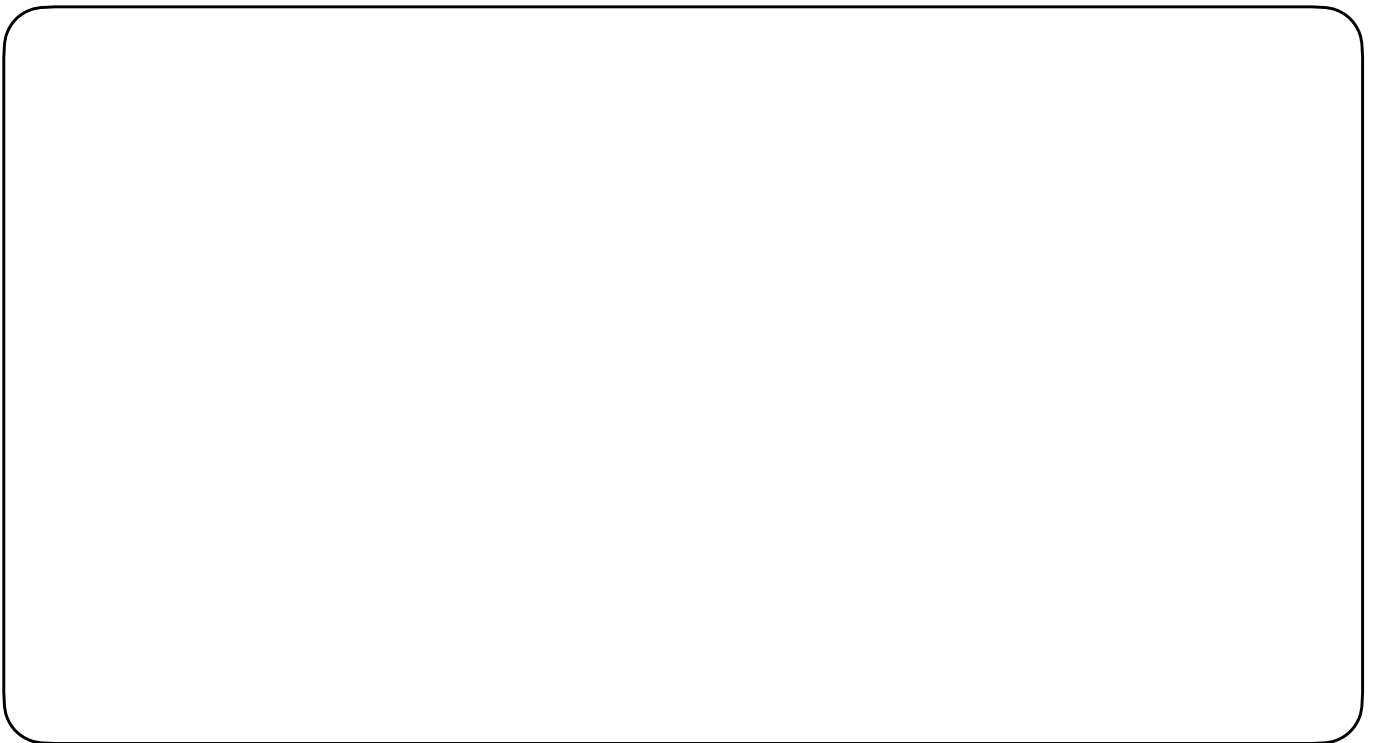
When you are happy, it's time to write down your ideas. Using the box below, put the rhythm in the middle, the right hand finger numbers above, and the left hand ones underneath. Make sure to align each hand correctly with the rhythm.

Stage 5

Now you need to give your piece character by adding performance directions. Decide whether it is soft or loud, fast or slow. Will there be any changes, sudden or gradual? When you are happy, write these down.

Stage 6

Now for an important musical skill-transposing. Your teacher will show you how to move a musical idea from the black keys to the white. Then it's your turn! Use the ideas you created with the black keys to move your piece onto the white key pentatonic scale. Then you could write the letter names and rhythm in the box below, or even transfer everything onto manuscript paper!



Practise playing The Grandfather Clock until you are ready to perform it. Now you have a composition to be proud of!

The Grandfather Clock

Use of the black key pentatonic scale is a simple but effective way to introduce a pupil to composition. The fact that all the notes seem to 'fit' harmonically is very satisfying for them, and its five-note structure is ideal for teaching the technique of ostinato. The association of the pentatonic scale with the orient can provide an excellent opportunity to invoke the pupil's imagination, although The Grandfather Clock shows that it can be used to create other styles of piece.

Stage 1

Help your pupil to explore the black keys, encouraging them to choose a register which they think best suits the piece.

Stage 2

Demonstrate a simple left hand ostinato at the chosen register, with your fingers arranged as on the pupil's sheet. Encourage your pupil to create their own ostinato. They may copy yours, but this is not a problem. There is plenty of time for them to develop the confidence to compose independently!

Stage 3

- Ask your pupil to clap some simple rhythms. If they find this difficult, encourage them to choose some words which could be associated with the piece, such as 'Grand fath-er clock-' and 'tick tock tick-ing clock'. It's a good idea to demonstrate how to clap the rhythms first, and then do it together!
- Help your pupil to write out their rhythms in the box, and make sure they can clap them fluently.
- Now ask them to tap the rhythms with their right hand. Suggest that they decide which rhythms are the easiest to coordinate for use in the piece. When they can do this comfortably, encourage them to add their left hand ostinato!
- Next suggest an appropriate position for your pupil's right hand, making sure that they will be comfortable when playing hands together. Help them to try creating different motifs using the chosen rhythms, and to combine them in the form of a melody. Demonstrate how to end on the home note. If your pupil is not very confident, play a game of question and answer, alternating who starts!
- When your pupil has created their melody, it is time to play the composition. They may find it helpful to start by playing a hand each, taking it in turns.

Stage 4

Now it is time for them to write down their piece! If the box on the pupil's sheet is too small, use a separate sheet of paper. Help them to put the right hand finger numbers at the top, the rhythm in the middle, and the left hand numbers underneath. Explain why aligning each hand with the rhythm is important for the performer.

Stage 5

Your pupil has now reached the exciting point of adding performance directions to their composition. Dynamics, articulation and tempo changes will all help to bring the piece to life. Help them to add markings to the score, in whatever form they choose!

Stage 6

Finally, introduce the important skill of transposition, by showing your pupil how to move the five finger position onto the white keys. Then help them transpose their composition onto the F pentatonic scale. Now they can write out the piece using letters and rhythm, or even, with assistance, transfer it to manuscript!