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A Case Study of Using Five-Finger Pattern Approaches Piano Improvisational Application in Normal University

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Abstract

This case study is the teaching report of the process and the result of the junior students majoring in music from the Zhaoqing University, the Normal University in China, Guangdong, who had well-trained to play Five-Finger Pattern as the fundamental knowledge in Piano Improvisational Application Course.

A student graduating from Normal University will become a primary or secondary school music teacher who needs to accompany students' singing during the class. Therefore, Piano Improvisational Application is the required course in the curriculum of the Music Department. However, most students receive the frustration experienced due to Piano Improvisational Application is an integrated subject that coordinates professional music knowledge with the piano playing in a certain level. Hence, it is necessary not only to simplify and systemize the course but define the improvisation here as function harmony, a song accompaniment, and a song transposition rather than the Jazz Improvise.

Five-Finger Pattern is typically the first five notes from a major scale: Tonic- Whole Step- Whole Step- Half Step- Whole Step. Even though it requires all five fingers to play the five notes, it excludes the problem of piano fingering. The hands are in one position as one major key.

Students are able to say the pattern out and play all twelve major keys on the piano keyboard without any difficulties after few lessons. The result of the students who play five-finger pattern shows three benefits: firstly, after students practice the pattern, the fingers become more independent and flexible to be on the black keys with different hand shapes. Also, the coordination of two hands reacts much faster. Secondly, the five-finger pattern is the fundamental of scales, arpeggio, chord, and basic function harmony, which includes tonic, dominant, and pre-dominant note. Thus, students can play the five-finger pattern melody with simple harmony (root-note). Third, students master transposition because they are so familiar with the hand shape on each key that they only call for fingering without thinking about the specific notes.

This method helps the students from Normal University more about their teaching skills for the future. Lastly, the five-finger pattern can not only be played in major key but extended to minor key, pentatonic, mode, and significantly enhanced the abilities of improvisation.