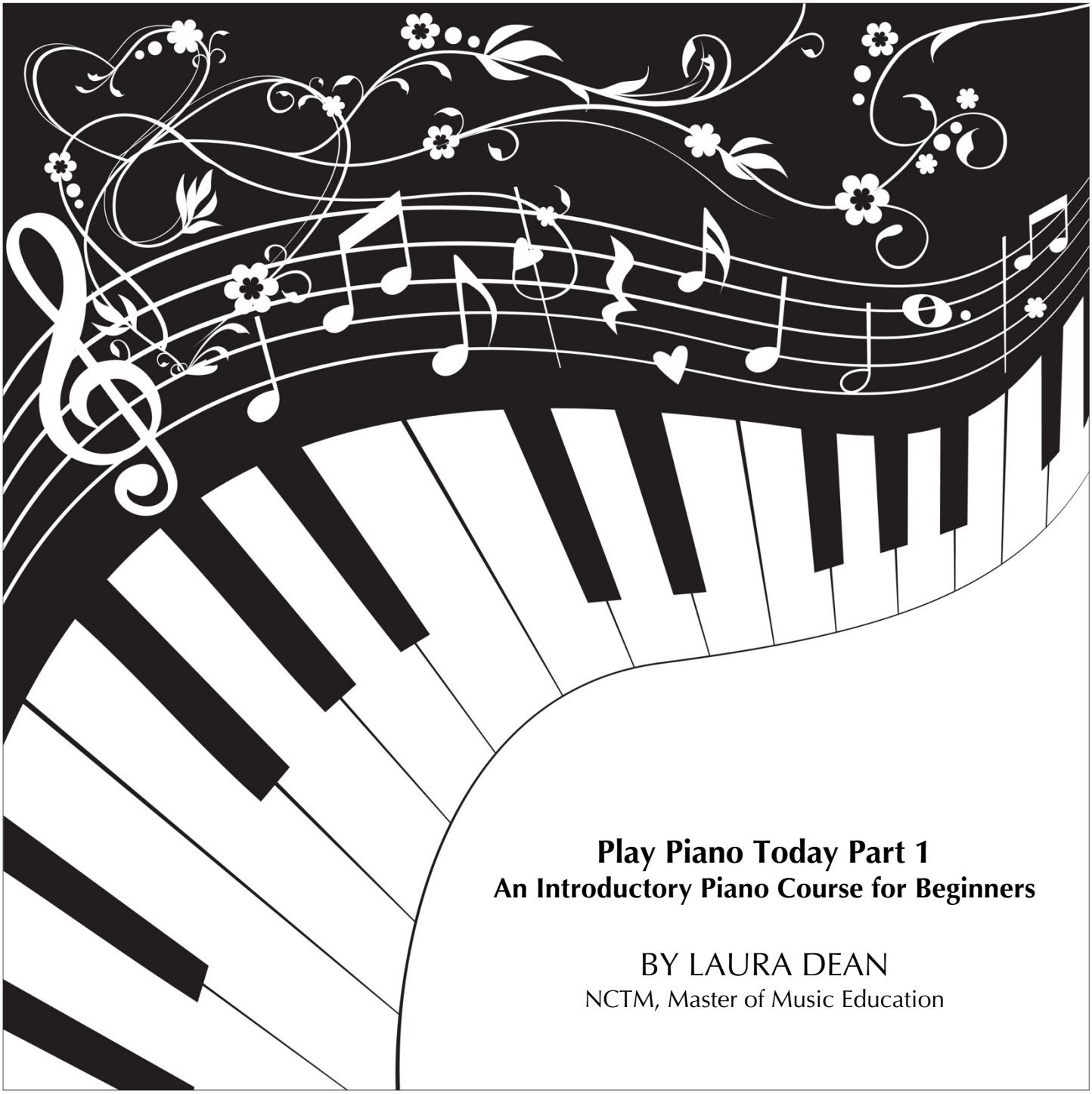

Play Piano Today Part 1

An Introductory Piano Course for Beginners

BY LAURA DEAN
NCTM, Master of Music Education

Table Of Contents

Introduction and Overview
- Introduction 3
- Overview 3
- Equipment/Instruments for this Course 3
- The Play Piano Today Lesson Book 3
- Getting the Most from this Course 3
- First Assignments 4

Unit 1: Let's Begin
- Sitting at the Piano or Keyboard 5
- Finger Numbers/Hand Position 5
- Practice Time: Finger Numbers 5

Unit 2: The Piano Landscape
- Getting to Know Your Way Around the Keyboard 6
- Black Key Exercises 6
- The Musical Alphabet 6
- White Key Exercises 6

Unit 3: First Songs in the C Position for Hands Alone
- C Position 7
- Stepping Up and Down Right Hand 7
- Stepping up and Down Left Hand 8
- Rocking on C and G Right Hand 8
- Rocking on C and G Left Hand 9

Unit 4: Reading and Clapping Rhythms
- The Rhythm Tree 10
- Rhythmic Terms 11
- Counting and Clapping Rhythms Part One 11
- Table of Rests 12
- Counting and Clapping Rhythms Part Two 12-13

Unit 5: Introducing the Treble Staff
- Treble Clef Staff 14
- Space Notes and Line Notes14
- C Position for Right Hand 14
- Study in Steps for Right Hand 15
- Study in C for Right Hand 16
- Study in Skips for Right Hand 16
- Row Your Boat 17

Unit 6: Introducing the Bass Clef Staff
- Bass Clef C Position Left Hand 18
- Five-Finger C Scale for Left Hand 19
- Left Hand Arpeggios 19

(Unit 6: Continued)
- Etude of Steps for Left Hand 19
- Etude of Skips for Left Hand 20
- Lovely Left Hand Melody 20
- Ode to Joy 21

Unit 7: Introducing the Grand Staff
- Diagram of the Grand Staff 22
- Overview of the Grand Staff 22
- Middle C Position 23
- Practice Time Middle C Position
- First Minuet 24
- Some Folks 24
- Bluebird 25

Unit 8: Playing Expressively with Dynamics
- Table of Dynamics 26
- Busy Fingers 27
- Echo Etude 27
- Little Liza Jane 27
- Eighth Note Etude 29
- The More We Get Together 29-30

Unit 9: Articulations – Playing with Legato and Staccato
- Legato 31
- Introducing Legato 32
- Peaceful Chant 32
- Morning 33
- Octave Etude 33
- G Position 34
- Introducing Staccato 34
- G Major Five Finger Scale 34
- Petite Etude 35
- Be Still My Beating Heart 35
- Summer Rain 36

Unit 10: Putting it all Together!
- When the Saints Go Marching In 37
- Happy Birthday 38-39
- Worried Man Blues 39-40
- Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star with a Variation 41
- Congratulations and Next Steps 42
- Laura Dean, Bio 42

Introduction and Overview

Watch the video: "Play Piano Today Part 1, Introduction and Overview." (04:06)

Introduction

Welcome to ***Play Piano Today***! If you are an absolute beginner, this course is for you! If it has been several years since you touched a piano, and you need a review, this course is for you too! I'll be your guide as you view the instructional videos, study the lessons, learn valuable practice skills, and play your way through the exercises and songs included in the book. Not only will you be playing music on the piano, but you'll also be learning the language of music including reading rhythms and notes on the musical staff as well as recognizing various musical symbols. I've been teaching piano for 30 years; this introductory course utilizes my years of experience, and hopefully, will motivate and guide you in a conversational manner. May this course awaken your inner musician and inspire you to **Play Piano Today!**

Overview

In this course you will learn how to:

- recognize notes on the piano keyboard.
- read and play a variety of rhythms.
- read notes on the musical staff.
- play a variety of beginning piano exercises and pieces.
- practice effectively and independently.

You will learn a variety of pieces including the following and more:

- "Ode to Joy"
- "Row Your Boat"
- "Little Liza Jane"
- "Morning"
- "When the Saints Go Marching In"
- "Worried Man Blues"
- "Happy Birthday"
- "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star with a Variation"

Watch the video: "What You Will Need for This Course." (05:27)

Equipment/Instruments for This Course

- An acoustic piano or a digital keyboard of 88 keys, (or smaller such as a 77, or 61 keys).
- If you have an acoustic piano, ensure that it is tuned for an optimal music making and listening experience.
- A comfortable bench or chair.
- A device for watching the videos and downloading course materials (smart phone, tablet, or computer).
- Good lighting that enables you to see both your piano keys and your sheet music clearly.

The *Play Piano Today Lesson Book 1* (PDF)

The Play Piano Today book is a 42-page PDF that may be accessed on a tablet, computer, or smart phone. I recommend printing the book all at once and putting the pages into a three-ring binder. A hard copy is suggested because it will be easier to read. A hard copy provides the perfect place to jot down notes on the music while you are viewing the videos.

Watch the video: "Getting the Most from This Course." (02:12)

Getting the Most from This Course:

- This course uses a combination of the *Play Piano Today* book along with instructional video lessons. When working your way through the course, use both tools in tandem for the full learning experience.
- Watch the video lessons as instructed in this **Play Piano Today** book. Practice the accompanying exercises/pieces on your own—you can go back to the video lessons as often as you'd like.
- **I suggest staying on each piece until you can play it with effortlessness and ease three—five times before moving onto the next piece/exercise.**
- As you learn new songs and exercises, continue to review exercises and pieces that you have already learned to strengthen your note reading and playing skills.
- Practice the songs and exercises from your current unit and past lessons for 20-30 minutes five days a week and you will see steady progress!
- On average this course should take somewhere between 4-6 weeks to complete with watching the videos and practicing 20-30 mins 5 days a week. **(Of course, some people will take longer, and some will complete the course in less time)**. Units 1-4 will take less time to complete, while units 5-10 may require more time as the pieces become more challenging.
- Complete the playing exercises and pieces in each unit before moving on to the next unit.
- When you get to the end of the unit, challenge yourself to play all the pieces from the unit in a row.
- If you can play each exercise/piece in the current unit smoothly and with ease, then you are ready to move on to the next unit.

First Assignments: Preparing to Play

1. **Prepare your instrument and practice space.**
    - Create a distraction free practice space for your piano lessons and practice.
    - Set up your piano or keyboard. If you are using a keyboard, I recommend using an adjustable sturdy keyboard stand for an optimal seated practicing position.
    - Your position on your chair or bench should be at a height that allows your forearms to easily reach the keys without being too close to your instrument, and your arms should be parallel to the floor.
    - Check your practice space for good lighting on the piano and on your sheet music.

2. **Print out the book and put the pages into a folder or a three-ring binder** or download the book to your electronic device and make sure that you can see the pages on your computer, tablet, or iPad. You will need to place the pages of music in front of you on the music rack to practice.