

# *Review of Succeeding at the Piano*<sup>®</sup>

*Succeeding at the Piano “succeeds” at teaching the Fundamentals of piano study*

In the first Piano Pedagogy class at the university where I teach, Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the class studies piano methods. It is a time to look at the oldest methods, as well as the methods that are current today. Students compare and contrast a variety of methods, and then they create a written project and also give a presentation on their findings. I always enjoy these presentation days, because I am affirmed that SATP is a very special pedagogical and musical gift.

The SATP Method is a **holistic approach**, based on the idea that an effective piano teaching method offers the means to build a well-rounded musical foundation for life by engaging all aspects of the person: the ear, hands, mind and imagination. From the Prep level up through Grade 5, there are core components that are introduced and reinforced in overlapping ways that produce a synchronicity of musical growth. These core components are: reading and rhythm skills, an understanding of theory elements, musical creativity & imagination, expressive playing supported by detailed attention to technique, ear training, musicality, and a commitment to and ownership of mindful practice habits.

SATP strongly emphasizes all these components and clearly guides the student with effective tools and musical ideas, so that the student can gain independence from the teacher and understand how to advance his or her own practice and study. The SATP Method teaches bite-sized portions of technique, reading, practice strategies, touch releases, and rhythms in each unit. These very “do-able” portions, with plenty of guiding tips, encourage the student to put all those important components together to express musicality right from the start -- even in the simplest pieces.



At the same time, the SATP Method guides the teacher. Teachers are encouraged to interact with the student as they explore the pages and pieces of music, and to listen to the student as they learn to develop and rely on their own ideas and imagery to express the musicality of a piece. This makes the process a two-way method, where the teacher comes to believe in a student’s ability and potential to progress as the teacher constantly reinforces the progress a student is making. Through student-teacher feedback and interaction, aided by the activities and music presented in the series, a process of self-discovery takes place, which leads to even stronger encouragement, confidence, and progress.

And as the student advances in the SATP method, the method smoothly transitions a student into the study of classical pieces. From the earliest stages, there is attention paid to classical composers. Friendly illustrations of the composers Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart, for example, begin the series, piquing a child's natural curiosity. Simpler compositions from the masters and simplified arrangements of more complicated pieces, done by the same contemporary composers who write original music for the Method, invite even a beginner student to feel like this music is accessible to them. Also, the SATP Method provides the tools - proper phrasing, the history behind music and composers, rhythms, techniques - to prepare them for more challenging classical pieces. At the same time, other genres are explored and introduced as well: jazz, ragtime, contemporary pieces, folk music, etc. The appealing choice of music will keep a variety of students interested in sticking with piano lessons (not just those intent on pursuing advanced classical piano study).



The SATP method also has many supplementary books that correlate in skill level and difficulty with the SATP core books. The Succeeding with the Masters and Festival Series, for example, work hand-in-hand with the SATP books. There are also duet books, etude studies, holiday books, and recital books which further explore the multi-faceted genres of piano music. The contemporary composers featured in the SATP method are also featured in some of these other books, which means the high standard of musical quality can be found across the board.

Finally, the music - from all eras, including contemporary - has been thoughtfully designed and created for its musical appeal. It is expressive, soulful, intelligent, with interesting harmony and rhythm. Also, the music is fun to play. Because of this, the SATP Method music is up-to-date and relevant; it has a fresh quality to it that will appeal to many kinds of students of all ages.