

2021

Behavioral Objectives of Elementary Level Piano Study

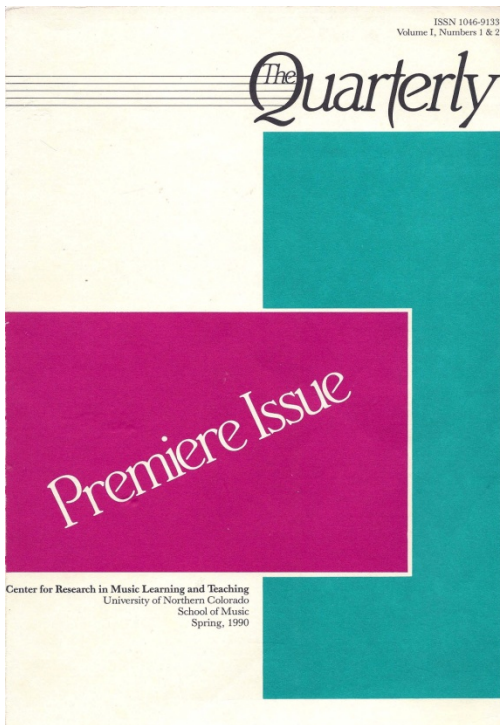
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Recommended Citation

Albergo, Cathy (2021) "Behavioral Objectives of Elementary Level Piano Study," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 16 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol16/iss1/12>



Title: Behavioral Objectives of Elementary Level Piano Study

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Source: Albergo, C. (1990, Spring). Behavioral objectives of elementary level piano study. *The Quarterly*, 1(1-2), pp. 74-80. (Reprinted with permission in *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(1), Summer, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/>

It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

Behavioral Objectives of Elementary Level Piano Study

By Cathy Albergo

William Rainey Harper College

Piano pedagogy has emerged as a major field of study. To establish and upgrade standards, methods, and pedagogical techniques, piano teachers across the nation have joined together to investigate two of the most important issues in any pedagogy: what to teach, and how to teach it.

These questions can be extended: What is the content of a program of piano study at each level of study, and what should piano students be able to “do” at the end of the elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels? These questions are crucial to improvement, but seemingly the hows and whys of teaching have remained largely unanswered for the field of piano study.

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As a unique field of study, piano pedagogy has become an important discipline in the training of future piano teachers and in shaping current professional practices in piano teaching and learning. Within this discipline, piano pedagogues are investigating effective teaching strategies and methods. These investigations have resulted in the call for more specific standards and objectives for piano study and a movement toward a more structured basis for organizing piano education.

Historically, many piano teaching techniques have been founded on the European conservatory or performance approach to teaching. All too frequently, piano teachers, isolated in private studios and away from colleagues and pedagogy classes, fall into the habit of “teaching the way they were taught”, often without a real plan or structure for their pedagogical work. They may engage in “crisis teaching”, preparing for the next recital, contest, or theory exam; or they may rely solely on the method book to provide sequencing of the teaching materials. A few teachers may simply drift from lesson to lesson and year to year, guided by little more than the characteristics of each student and how much that student practices. In such cases, it is the student, rather than the curriculum, who dictates how much and what is accomplished.

Research Procedures

In support of a more systematic approach to piano pedagogy, this investigator examined current objectives for beginning piano study from eight American piano methods and a survey of leading piano pedagogy teachers. The investigator compiled objectives and phrased them in behavioral language similar to the wording of objectives used in other fields of education.

To determine the stated and implied behavioral objectives for the elementary level of piano instruction, the researcher analyzed the eight American piano methods reviewed in the 1982-84 *Piano Quarterly* series of articles entitled “The American Beginning Piano Method”. These methods were: *Alfred’s Basic Piano Library*, *The Bastien Piano Library*, *the David Carr Glover Piano Library*, *Keyboard Arts: Basic Music Study Program*,

Mainstreams in Music, Music Pathways, The Music Tree: A Plan for Musical Growth, and The Robert Pace Materials.

The investigator compiled the objectives from each method by conducting a content analysis of each method, and by analyzing the *Piano Quarterly* review of each method. In addition, the author's response to that review of his or her method, advertising flyers, promotional materials, and written or recorded teacher's guides were also analyzed. The resultant objectives were then organized into eight separate documents, one for each piano method in the study.

Because the investigator inferred objectives as well as recorded author-stated goals, the author of each piano method was asked to confirm the objectives for his or her piano method by responding to two questions for each objective. Question A: Do you agree that this is an objective for your piano method? and Question B: What is the relative importance of this objective in your piano method? Eleven authors responded, at least one author for each book, and affirmed the explicit and implicit objectives.

The composite list of behavioral objectives for the elementary level of piano study was formulated by collapsing the data from the behavioral objectives pertaining to the eight piano methods. This composite list was used as the basis for a second survey which was used to organize the objectives into four behavioral categories: playing, listening, creating, and knowing/understanding. This survey was distributed to 319 experienced piano/pedagogy teachers who attended the October, 1986, National Conference on Piano Pedagogy in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Two hundred and forty surveys were returned for a response rate of 75.2 percent.

The respondents to this survey were experienced teachers interested in piano pedagogy: 88.4 percent had taught from 8 to 20 or more years; 77.1 percent indicated that they taught elementary level; and 94 percent of the respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Based on the responses of the teachers, the investigator derived 57 behavioral objectives for elementary level piano

Albergo: Behavioral Objectives

instruction. The objectives were listed by category (playing, listening, creating, and knowing/understanding) and in order of importance (essential, important, and nice to do) as indicated by the teachers. The composite list contained eight objectives which were not accepted by piano teachers but which were emphasized by the authors of five or more of the piano methods; these are listed as optional objectives.

Educators have long supported the importance of a well-structured curriculum and the use of behavioral objectives as a means to ensure maximum teaching success. Indeed, "few of us would construct a house without highly detailed blueprints, nor would we build a bookcase or design a dress without specific plans, but how many of us have walked into our classrooms with our objectives held only generally in mind?" (Gerhard, 1971, p. 163). Still pianists comment: "Piano teaching as a profession more often is happened upon than planned, and not as much careful consideration is devoted to choosing a curriculum and understanding teaching strategies as might be expected" (Bianchi et al., 1978, p. 6). "Piano teaching is still, by and large, geared to teaching the student to perform pieces on a recital" (Chronister, 1977, p. 3).

The list of common objectives for elementary level piano instruction is presented here as a pedagogical guide for independent piano teachers, piano pedagogy students, authors of elementary level piano materials, and music educators. It is an initial attempt to aid teachers in specifying objectives, selecting instructional materials, planning and organizing a curriculum for elementary level private or class piano instruction, and in evaluating student progress.

The list should not be considered an inflexible list of objectives for every student, but an adaptable guide for students and teachers. For example, the piano teacher may start with this list of behavioral objectives, adding and deleting objectives to make the program serve the goals of teacher and student. The difficulty level of the objectives may also need to be adjusted to fit the talents and needs of the individual student. Thus the

list of instructional objectives constitutes a framework from which a flexible curriculum designed specifically for each student or class can be created. The number of objectives, level of difficulty of the objectives, and length of time it takes to achieve those objectives will and should vary according to the age of the student, the student's specific goals, and the strengths and weaknesses of each student or class.

Readers should note that these objectives are written in the behavioral language used in other educational fields, a language unfamiliar to most piano teachers. These behavioral objectives are statements of what the student will be able to do at the end of a given period of instruction. As a general rule, these objectives suggest behaviors which should be observed in the students at the end of approximately two to four years of piano study, the exact number of years depending on the age and ability of the student. Piano teachers should keep in mind the following four points:

1. This list does not indicate *how* the objectives are to be taught; it indicates *what* is to be taught.
2. The objectives do not indicate which materials or piano "methods" should be used. After selecting the objectives for a student or class, the teacher chooses the method.
3. These objectives do provide a basis for the evaluation of student progress. Students should be evaluated on how well or the extent to which they exhibit the various behaviors outlined in the list of objectives.
4. These objectives are primarily cognitive or psychomotor objectives evidenced in common piano methods. Teachers should add their own expressive or affective objectives.

Behavioral Objectives for Elementary Piano Instruction

Upon completion of the elementary level of piano instruction, the student will:

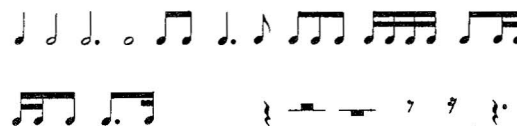
Playing

Essential Objectives

1. Perform prepared elementary level solo repertoire in styles such as:

Folk and traditional songs
Specially composed pedagogical pieces for children
Easy baroque, classical, or contemporary compositions
Easy arrangements of piano, vocal, or orchestral literature
Hymns and religious songs

2. Perform prepared elementary level duets and ensemble repertoire.
3. Given the score of a composition, demonstrate the ability to read music by reading and playing any note within a five-octave reading range from low F to high G, including accidentals such as sharps, flats, and naturals.
4. Given the score of a composition, demonstrate the ability to read music by reading and playing repertoire written in selected major keys (C, D, E, G, A, etc.). May be extended to all major keys.
5. Given the score of a composition, demonstrate the ability to read music by interpreting musical symbols such as: 8va, loco, repeat sign, 1st and 2nd ending, D.C. al fine, D.S. al coda.
6. Given the score of a composition, demonstrate the ability to read music by interpreting musical symbols such as pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff, sfz, cresc., dim., accent, slur, phrase, staccato, rit., a tempo, fermata, damper pedal, and una corda pedal markings.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by performing repertoire with rhythmic security and a strong feeling of ongoing pulse.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by performing repertoire with the following note and rest values and symbols:



Tie, Upbeat

9. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by performing with a flexible but secure curved hand position which is relaxed and natural.

Important Objectives

10. Perform elementary level piano repertoire by memory.

11. Perform elementary level piano repertoire with as polished a performance as possible (should-sound).

12. Perform for friends, family, others.

13. Given the score of an elementary composition easier than the study/performance level, demonstrate the ability to read music by sight reading the composition in a slow tempo with no more than five melodic or rhythmic errors.

14. Given the score of an elementary level composition, demonstrate the ability to read music by reading and playing the repertoire written in selected minor keys (a, d, e, etc.).

15. Given the score of an elementary level composition, demonstrate the ability to read music by reading and realizing Roman numeral chord symbols for the I and V7 chord in major and minor keys. (May be extended to include the IV chord in some major and minor keys).

16. Demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by performing elementary level repertoire with the following time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 3/8, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8, and 2/2.

17. Demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by performing elementary level repertoire while counting the rhythm aloud.

18. Demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by performing elementary level repertoire with tempo terms such as Allegro, Moderato, Andante, Adagio, Alla Marcia, Presto.

19. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by performing with control of touch and expressive elements and the ability to project the musical meaning of the piece.

20. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by playing technical drills and exercises to develop finger strength and facility.

21. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by playing major and minor five-finger patterns, hands together.

22. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by playing major scales, two octaves, ascending and descending, hands separately, using traditional fingering in selected major keys (C, G, F, etc.).

Nice To Do Objectives

23. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by playing the I, V7(6/5), I chord progression, hands together, in major and minor keys. (May be extended to include the IV 6/4 chord).

24. Demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by performing elementary level repertoire with simple syncopated rhythms such as eighth-quarter-eighths, etc.

25. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by playing major and minor triads in root position, first, and second inversion using traditional fingering.

26. Given the score of an elementary level composition, demonstrate the ability to read music by reading and realizing letter name chord symbols for major and minor triads and dominant seventh chords (C, gm, D7, etc.).

Optional Objective

A. Demonstrate the development of basic technique by playing harmonic minor scales, two octaves, ascending and descending, hands separately, using traditional fingering, in selected minor keys (a, e, d, etc.).

Listening

Essential Objectives

27. Listen for and discriminate between musical and expressive elements such as high and low sounds, legato, staccato, piano, forte, etc.

28. Listen for and distinguish between major and minor sounds.

29. Listen for balance between melody and accompaniment.

Important Objectives

30. Listen for and distinguish between tonic and dominant sounds.

31. Recognize and name intervals by ear: 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths, 6ths, 7ths, and octaves.

Nice To Do Objectives

32. Identify the sound of leading tone to tonic.

33. Identify which measure of a notated musical example is played by the teacher.

34. After hearing a short musical idea played by the teacher, play back the same musical idea.

35. Given an altered performance of a notated musical example, listen and mark any changes made to the example, "editing" the notation to make it conform to the changes heard.

36. Play familiar tunes and folk songs by ear.

Optional Objective

B. Given a short notated musical phrase and the starting pitch, sight sing the phrase using a neutral syllable such as "la".

Creating

Important Objectives

37. Given a notated melody in a major or minor key, transpose the melody to a given major or parallel minor key.

38. Given a notated melody in a major or minor key, harmonize the melody with primary triads, (I, IV, or V7 chords).

39. Given a notated musical question phrase in a major or minor five-finger pattern, improvise, in an appropriate style, a parallel or contrasting answer phrase.

40. Compose a piano piece using suggested elements or musical ideas (pieces need not be notated).

41. Compose piano pieces which express the student's own original musical ideas (pieces need not be notated).

Optional Objectives

C. Given a chord progression, key, and time signature, compose a melody which fits the harmony.

D. Compose variations of a given melody by changing the melody, rhythm, harmony, touch, or the place on the keyboard where it was originally played.

E. Given a notated melody in a major or minor key, add an accompaniment pattern such as blocked, broken, waltz, Alberti, rhythm, walking, or boogie bass styles.

Knowing/Understanding

Essential Objectives

42. Given a piano piece or theory example and a brief prestudy period, name the major or minor key signature.

43. Given a piano piece or theory example and a brief prestudy period, identify repeated patterns or sequences.

Important Objectives

44. Given a piano piece and a brief prestudy period, discuss and demonstrate efficient practice procedures for a new piano piece.

45. Given a piano piece and a brief prestudy period, learn a new piano piece without the help of a teacher.

46. Given a piano piece and a brief prestudy period, discuss what musical elements would be necessary for a successful performance of the piano piece.

47. Given a piano piece or theory example and a brief prestudy period, analyze and identify the form of the piece (AB, ABA, ABA', Variation, etc.).

48. Given a piano piece or theory example and a brief prestudy period, label intervals: 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths, 6ths, 7ths, or octaves.

49. Given an elementary level piano piece and a brief prestudy period, plan and write in the necessary fingerings for the piano piece.

50. Add missing notes or rests to a musical example.

51. Add missing bar lines to a musical example.

52. Given a piano piece or theory example and a brief prestudy period, identify and name major and minor triads in root position only.

53. Notate major key signatures.

54. Notate major scales.

55. Notate intervals of a 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, or octave from a given note.

56. Notate major and minor triads in root position only.

Optional Objectives

F. Given a piano piece or theory example and a brief prestudy period, analyze and label the primary triads in any major or minor key with roman numeral chord symbols (I, IV, V7).

G. Notate dominant seventh chords in root position only.

H. Notate the I, IV 6/4, I, V 6/5, I chord progression in major and minor keys.

I. Demonstrate a knowledge of music history and classical composers by naming the baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary periods and by listing at least two composers from each period.

Affective Behavior

Essential Objective

57. Demonstrate a positive attitude toward music in general and toward piano study and performance by participating in or evidencing one or more of the following behaviors:

a. Attending a variety of concerts including piano, orchestral, or other "classical" concerts and demonstrating proper deportment and attention.

b. Participating in piano recitals and competitions, or passing examinations in theory or over the syllabus.

c. Performing frequently and enthusiastically for friends, family, and others.

d. Accompanying a church group, choir, glee club, or a folk, pop, or jazz group.

e. Experimenting with and exploring new developments in keyboard technology such as synthesized keyboards or computer software and new forms of music.

f. Showing an acceptance and respect for the performances and music of others.

g. Practicing efficiently without being prompted.

h. Playing a variety of music both by ear and with the music without being prompted.

i. Improvising and/or composing original musical ideas.

Summary and Conclusions

The authors of methods books do have objectives for their piano methods, but they rarely state them in the texts or put them in behavioral language. In this study, the majority of the objectives were inferred, thus the authors have left it up to the teacher to discern the objectives accompanying the musical material. For some books, almost all of the objectives were formulated by the researcher because few if any of the objectives were stated or implied in the text materials.

The text authors appear to assume or "trust" that the piano teacher will intuit the purpose of the exercises and musical selections to be learned.

Equally troubling was the disparity between the desired objectives of the teachers and those posited by text authors. The authors included more listening and creating objectives than did the teachers, and rated the listening and creating objectives higher in importance than did the piano teachers. The teachers accepted the listening objectives but included fewer than half of the creating objectives. Teachers rated the objectives from both categories relatively low in importance. There appears to be an unequal balance among the four major categories of desired objectives. The objectives for playing and knowing/understanding greatly outnumber the objectives for listening and creating in the methods and in the lists constructed by teachers.

One conclusion from these data is that both authors and teachers teach what they are comfortable with, and this has usually been centered on the visual, technical, and theoretical aspects of piano playing. Music reading, performing repertoire, technical progress, note spelling, and theory drills are all extensions of the visual and kinesthetic aspects of piano playing. These objectives were included and rated as relatively important by the authors and teachers. More subjective components of the aural aspect of music, such as improvisation, were relatively unimportant as indicated by the responses of authors and teachers.

Piano educators have long recognized the need for objectives to give direction to piano teaching and to help organize the study of piano, but little or no research has been conducted. The findings in this research were only the initial effort at compiling a list of behavioral objectives for elementary level piano study.

Recommendations to piano teachers include the following:

1. The findings of this research may be useful for introducing piano pedagogy teachers and students to the behavioral-objectives approach. The derived list of objectives may serve as a guide for the elementary level of piano

study. Choosing teaching materials based on the desired outcomes for a class or student would be a new approach for piano pedagogy, even though outcomes-based education has been used in music education for years.

2. The authors of piano methods should make their intentions and goals clearer to piano teachers by including a list of objectives for the elementary level and for each separate level of their method. The list of objectives derived through the research could serve as a basis for the authors to write objectives for their methods. Teachers may also use the proposed model of objectives to clarify expectations to their students.

3. The list of objectives may serve as a basis for a comprehensive piano curriculum for elementary level piano teaching.

4. The use of behavioral objectives should shift the emphasis from a teacher or materials approach to a student-centered approach to piano teaching.

5. Piano teaching organizations such as the Music Teachers National Association and the American Guild of Piano Teachers have established syllabi and Guild examinations for students. These examination systems include no national standards, common curriculum guidelines, or objectives. The objectives explicated in this study may provide some common ground. This list of objectives could serve also as a basis for further development of the MTNA or Guild examination systems.

This investigation of behavioral objectives for the elementary level of piano study was based on the premise that the time has come for the piano teaching profession to formulate, structure, and implement common objectives for piano teaching. The present list of behavioral objectives will enable piano teachers to construct both long- and short-term goals for their students and ensure a well-rounded educational curriculum. Piano

“methods” are the primary means by which teachers achieve their musical objectives. With a well-planned curriculum of behavioral objectives, an experienced teacher may use any piano “method” or devise her own materials as long as she achieves expected objectives.

In recent years, great strides have been made in piano pedagogy, but piano teaching is still far from being a carefully planned profession. All piano teachers wish to be successful. A carefully structured program of objectives is one method of increasing the potential for truly successful piano teaching. □

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