First Lesson - Introduction

In a typical First Lesson, I would introduce at least three concepts:

- Circle of Fourths (as well as the Circle of Fifths and why we prefer the Circle of Fourths)
- **Thirds** (Major and minor); I would show the student the two formulas, plus I would have had them try a few. their assignment would be to learn them around the circle in 12 seconds.
- **Triads** (Major and minor) They would learn the formula, fingering, and set up a goal to have them learned in 12 seconds, hands together. They would also know about Tertial Harmony.

I would point out that harmony is made up of chords, and chords are made up with thirds. When presenting the formulas for thirds, I usually just have them count half steps... it is easy, and even the youngest students can do it.

Thirds & Triads;

Major Third; 4 half steps... (0-1-2-3-4)... having the students start with "0" helps them find the correct third almost every time. You can certainly show them the half steps... but picking a note, and counting (0-1-2-3-4) works great. Eventually, you can show them the relationship to scales, other intervals and theory.

Triads...

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Major (4 + 3) minor (3 + 4)
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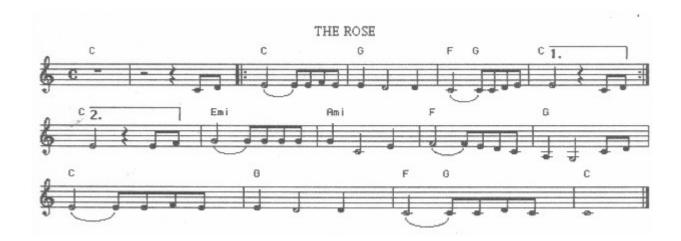
Remember, they are using half steps... the top note becomes "0" as they count the second half of the triad.

Every week, I would time them until they have the thirds, and triads under 12 seconds. Some kids get really fast... to help them see that this is something they can accomplish, I might spend some time on only two thirds... I would use some memory devices (visualization, perspective, distortion)... I would then time the two thirds.. once they can play them, I would count up to 12 at that speed and show them the time on the stop watch... it is usually right around 3 - 4 seconds!

Part of the learning concept, is Space Repetition.. two a day... in a week, they have all 12 thirds, and triads learned.. in 12 seconds!... some will take longer, but they know if they spend any consistent time, they will have them passed off.

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First - Lead Sheet...



Right Hand:

Melody

- As Written
- 8va
- 16va
- In Octaves

Embellishments

- Neighboring Tone (upper, lower)
- Grace Notes (explain the various types)

Other Considerations

- Stylize Melody; Thinking like a singer, modifying the note values but not the measures.
- Rubato... (analogy; notes on a rubber band)

Left Hand:

Chords

- Block
- Broken

Alberti Bass (Repeated Chordal Pattern)

- 531
- 53135
- 53131313
- 5131
- Etc.

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I also might give them the Lead Sheet (Fake Sheet) a week before without any instruction, just to see what they might come up with. Then I would present the ideas for the Right Hand, as well as the Left Hand. Plus have them try the Lead Sheet one more week, using some of these new ideas.

In future lessons, and most likely with new Lead Sheets, I would start to include one or two new concepts. The new lead sheets would also become progressively harder, a few more chords, melody difficulties, and style changes (ballads, pop, jazz, latin, rock, etc.)

Some of those ideas would include:

- Harmonization (parallel, traditional vertical harmonization)
- Fills (broken chords, inversions, scales)
- Easy counterpoint (8va-Maj7-6th)
- Pivot Patterns
- Voicings

When ever you feel it is appropriate, talk to the students about the demographics Range considerations;

- Left hand chords (how low should you go with closed position chords, how high)
- Tenths (how low, how high)
- Right hand melody
- Fills (where to place them)

More Ideas for the Left Hand would eventual include:

- Tenths
- Tenth Variations (inverted, added extensions)
- Tenths with Chords
- Tenths with Added Root Tones
- Tenths with Added Passing Tones
- Tenth Routines (Stride Piano)
- Modified Tenth Patterns (BND, Pivots)

A Few More Advanced Ideas...

- Various Patterns
- Arpeggios
- 10^{ths} with Chords Arpeggiated
- Scale Patterns
- Voicings
- Counterpoint (RH, and LH)
- Rhythm (Syncopation, Swung Eighths, Ghosting)
- Styles (Jazz, Latin, Pop, Classical, Soft Rock, Bossa Nova, Rumba, Samba...)

Depending on the age of the student, and even their interest, I might stay with the simple lead sheets for quite some time. All of these skills will also help them in composing their own music.

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