

Improvisation Explorations

HOW TO USE

- These cards are designed to be used with the Mini Musicians One curriculum for group preschool music classes.
- Introduce each card one at a time (generally one at each lesson) and discuss the scene before demonstrating the improvisation pattern.
- The music samples shown on the card are only used as an illustration for teachers/parents to understand the pattern and should not be played note for note.

ASSEMBLY

- Print out the game cards (pages 2-17) double-sided.
- Cut along the dotted lines.
- Laminate if desired.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Through improvisation young students learn about the different types of sounds the piano can make: loud and soft, short and long, low and high. They can also explore left and right hands, cross-body movement and playing with arm weight. Almost all these patterns use only finger 2 (occasionally finger 2 + 3 or a fist) to play so that students do not need to use their fingers independently as doing so before they are ready can lead to tension and poor technique.

DEEP LAKE



RAIN SHOWERS



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WHISTLING WIND



RAYS OF SUN



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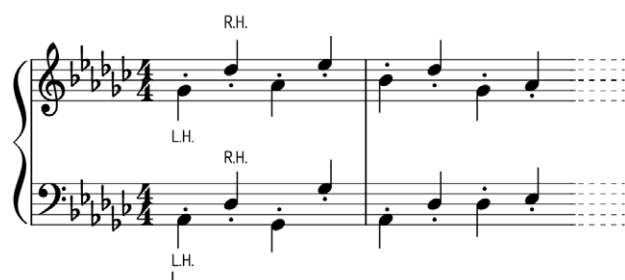
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RAIN SHOWERS

Play black keys alternating between left and right hands. Make short staccato or pitter-patter sounds.

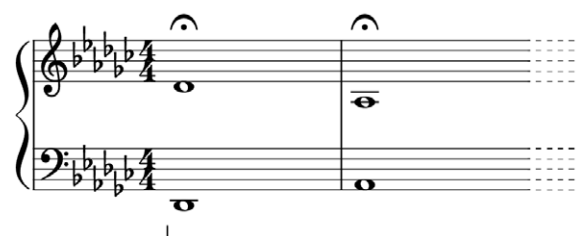


Practise this first away from the piano by tapping fingertips on a table or closed piano lid while saying "pit-ter, pat-ter" or "left, right, left, right".

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DEEP LAKE

Play low and long black keys. If sitting at the higher side of the piano play the lowest keys that you can comfortably reach.



Try saying "long and low and slow" while you play to help you remember to hold the notes.

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RAYS OF SUN

Play black keys starting high and then large descending intervals before starting at the top again.



Practise this on the closed piano lid first by starting on the right and jumping down with one finger. Make rainbows in the air as you come down and say "sun-shine fal-ling" as you move to reinforce the pattern.

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WHISTLING WIND

Play any close together black keys in the pattern left-right-left.



Practise this first away from the piano by tapping fingertips on a table or closed piano lid while saying "whistling wind" or "left right left".

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FOREST FLOOR



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GENTLE STREAM



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WATERFALL



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LITTLE PUDDLES

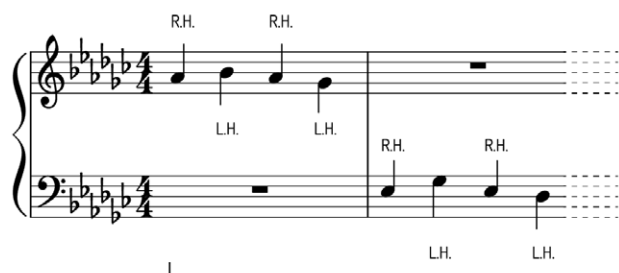


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GENTLE STREAM

Create a turn on the black keys by hopping over and back with your left hand.

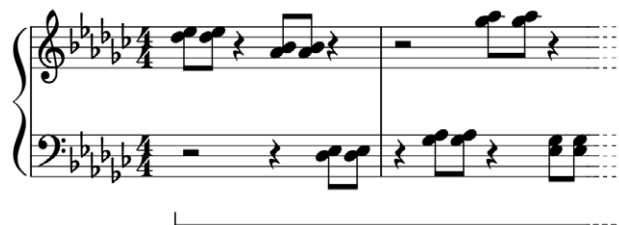


Practise this first away from the piano by tapping fingertips on a table or closed piano lid while saying "and over and back" or "right, left, right, left". (This is the most challenging pattern in this set so don't worry if you can't get it right away.)

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FOREST FLOOR

Play two close together black keys at the same time with finger 2 of each hand.



Discuss the soft crunching sounds made when we step on twigs on the forest floor and say "crunch crunch" or "snap snap" as you play.

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LITTLE PUDDLES

Play clusters of three black keys with rests in between.

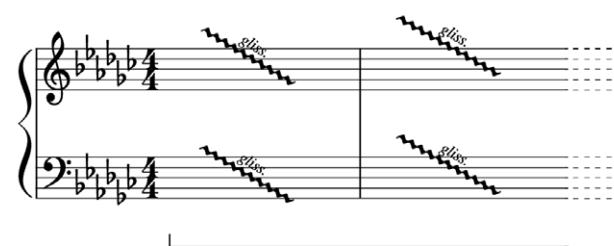


Think about splashing in puddles and how you would need to pause and get ready before jumping into the next one – it wouldn't happen with a steady beat. Practise splashing in imaginary puddles together.

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WATERFALL

Play descending glissandos on the black keys.



Try to time this so that your glissandos start at the same time. Watch your partner and play as a team.

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SCUBA DIVER



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ROWBOAT



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CORAL REEF



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SPIKY SHELLS



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ROWBOAT

Play white keys starting on any key and stepping up the piano in the rhythm pattern ♩. ♩

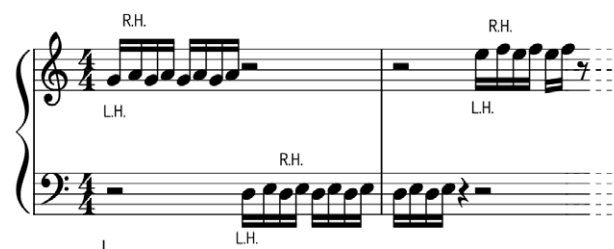


Say "row-boat" as you play this pattern together to help maintain the rhythm and play together.

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SCUBA DIVER

Play two side-by-side white keys, alternating between them as quickly as you can.



These are basically trills, to imitate the scuba diver's bubbles rising to the surface. Leave gaps in between the bubbles for the best effect.

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SPIKY SHELLS

Play random white key staccato notes with big gaps in between each one.



Practise this first away from the piano and imagine walking across the sand into the sea and stepping on the occasional spiky shell which makes you say "yee-ouch!" and jump up. Walk together on tippy toes and jump when you hit a spiky shell. Then practise with your fingertips on a hard surface, jumping quickly away as you touch the spiky shell.

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CORAL REEF

Play two side-by-side white keys, and then step your right hand away and then back towards your left hand.



Practise this movement away from the piano first by tapping fingertips on a table or closed piano lid while saying "step-ping up and down".

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STEAMBOAT



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SLIMY SEAWEED



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ROLLING WAVES



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WHIRLPOOL

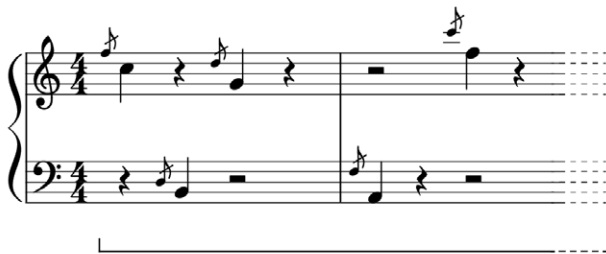


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SLIMY SEAWEED

Play any white key with your right hand and then quickly interrupt with a longer note in your left hand.



Practise this motion on a table or closed piano lid. Imagine slipping on the slimy seaweed and falling from one hand to the other.

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STEAMBOAT

Play white keys which are one key (a third) apart in the rhythm pattern ♩ ♩

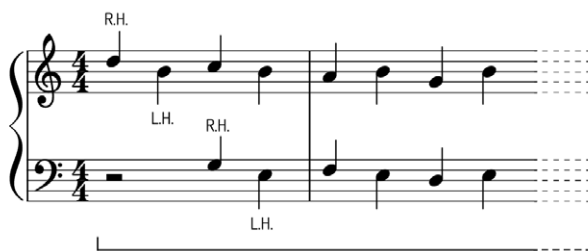


Practise this while saying "honk hooonk!".

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WHIRLPOOL

Start with your hands one key (a third) apart and step your right hand over your left hand and back to create the whirlpool.



Practise this many times while saying "whirl-pool, whirl-pool, o-ver, o-ver, back back" to help you remember the pattern.

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ROLLING WAVES

Roll upwards on (roughly) 3 white keys with your fist.



This pattern should be performed one at a time. Practise watching and listening to your partner's wave before playing your next wave.

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SAND DUNES



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TUMBLEWEED



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SWEET AGAVE



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PRICKLY CACTI



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TUMBLEWEED

Roll up and down on a group of 3 black keys with your fist.



Practise this in the air to work on the up and down motions needed and say "roll up, roll down" while playing.

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SAND DUNES

Step up and down any three black keys.



Say "climb up and climb down" while playing this pattern to reinforce the movement.

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PRICKLY CACTI

Play a single black key staccato then jump straight up from this key and land on a cluster of black keys.



Practise this on the closed piano lid first and say "jump....ow!" to remember the pattern of touching the prickly cactus and then landing on the cluster of keys (the yell).

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SWEET AGAVE

Play B with one hand and any black key with the other hand.



This pattern should be performed one at a time. Practise watching and listening to your partner's sweet agave chord before playing your one.

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CALM OASIS



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DUST DEVIL



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MAGIC MIRAGE



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ACACIA TREE

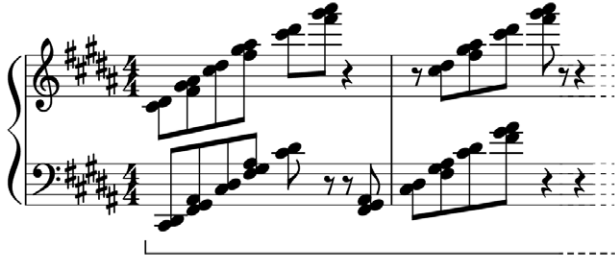


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DUST DEVIL

Play the group of two black keys with one hand and then the group of three black keys with the other, moving up the piano quickly each time.



Take a little pause each time before starting the next dust devil on a low group of two or three black keys.

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CALM OASIS

Play slowly and gently on Bs and black keys.



Imagine the calm shimmering waters of the oasis as you hold each note.

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ACACIA TREE

Play random clusters of 3-4 black keys.



These groups mimic the cloud-like formations of the acacia tree and should be different lengths to represent the different clumps of branches.

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MAGIC MIRAGE

Play fairly slowly and gently on Fs and black keys.



Include plenty of Fs to create the slightly spooky or mysterious mirage effect.

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CLOUD FLUFF



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SPARKLING STARS



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RAINBOW



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ECLIPSE

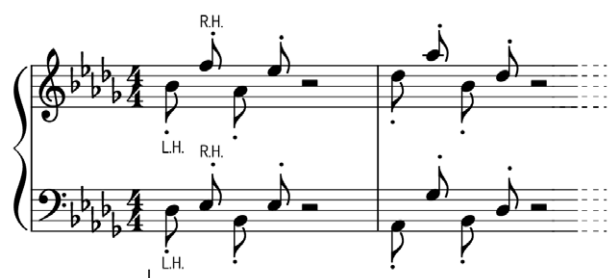


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SPARKLING STARS

Play black keys alternating quickly between left and right hands and then pause before playing the next group.



Practise this first away from the piano by tapping fingertips on a table or closed piano lid while saying "twin-kle spar-kle" or "left, right, left, right".

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CLOUD FLUFF

Play black keys alternating slowly between left and right hands.



Try saying "fluf-fy" while you play the notes to keep the beat steady.

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ECLIPSE

Play two black keys together and then two white keys together.

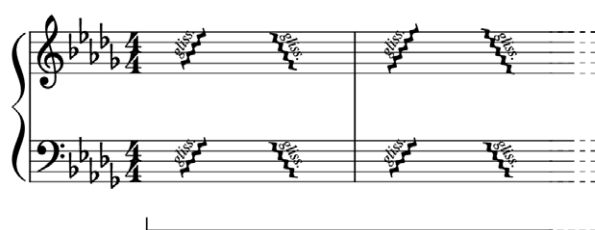


This can be done with finger 2 from both hands or finger 2 and 3 of one hand.

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RAINBOW

Slide up and then down on the black keys.



Create a mixture of big and small rainbows by doing shorter and longer slides.

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AIRPLANE



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SUNSET



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HOT AIR BALLOON



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SUNRISE

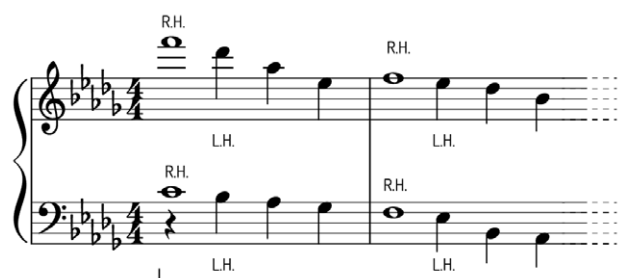


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SUNSET

Play a C or an F with your right hand and then descending black keys with your left hand.

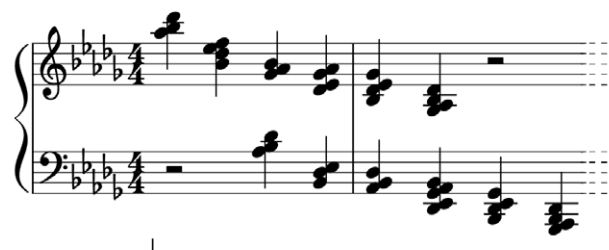


Say "sun is set-ting" as you play each pattern and play the same number of notes each time.

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AIRPLANE

Play clusters of black keys going down the piano and get louder and then softer as you go.

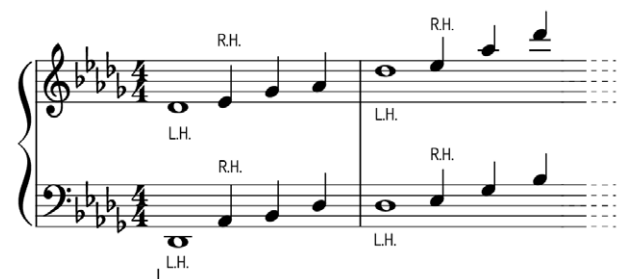


Imagine how you would hear the airplane softly from far away and how it would roar past you and then disappear into the distance.

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SUNRISE

Play a D flat (bottom of the two black keys) with your left hand and then ascending black keys with your right hand.



Say "sun is ris-ing" as you play each pattern and play the same number of notes each time.

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HOT AIR BALLOON

Play the pattern D flat-F-A flat (D flat major arpeggio) going up the piano.



Think of this in terms of the pattern it makes on the piano to remember it: bottom of the two black keys, F, middle of the three black keys.

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