

Keyed Up

P I A N O



**Self-Taught
Piano System**

Play!

The Secret Formula

To Unlock Your Talent,
Break Free of Sight Reading, And
Play the Way You've Always Dreamed

by Joseph Pingel

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Please direct all inquiries regarding this book, distribution, affiliation, improvements, suggestions and anything of interest to Joseph Pingel.



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I wanted to be a rock star when I was a kid. I was good on the guitar at an early age and used guitar-chord knowledge to teach myself piano (after a couple years of lessons).

That changeover from one instrument to another drove home some music theory concepts that rocked my musical world. I made some unobvious discoveries; discoveries missed by most musicians out there. That's what this book is about.

No matter your musical skills, you will either acknowledge and recognize the rare insights I share here or aspire to understand them better.



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The Road To Independence

Playing piano independently and breaking free of sight reading music is the hope and dream of many piano players. Many people settle for less than they are capable of simply because they don't know where to turn once lessons come to an end. Don't be one of them.

You're not that far away from realizing your true potential. With the right direction, countless hours (and even years) can be cut off the learning process by discovering answers to the most pressing questions you may not have even thought of yet. The answer to independence is to discover the hidden secrets of the self-taught musician.

My Discovery

I started piano lessons at age 14. Already a good guitarist, I figured learning piano would be just as easy but I was wrong. The whole piano-lesson process seemed unduly cumbersome and slow. It was fun learning, but in a short period of time disillusion set in practicing classical music.

Every song was memorized through rote repetition . . . to play a song over and over again to eventually remember it by heart. However, memorizing that way seemed like a mindless reflex of fingers without purpose. I didn't understand what I was doing and knew it wasn't the right path to become the rock star I was hoping to be.

After two years of lessons I quit. There had to be a better way to learn to play the way I wanted. However, finding any decent self-teaching materials turned up nothing other than variations on the same old standard methods. It was very frustrating *until I stumbled upon the answer.*

One day while sight-reading Bridge Over Troubled Waters by Simon and Garfunkel, I looked down at my hands and realized the chords being played had identical fingering positions; just on different parts of the keyboard.



Figure 1: Fingering for Ab, Db and Eb chords were identical but on different parts of the keyboard.

This reminded me of “barring” chords on the guitar using one fingering position all the way up the fretboard. A light popped on in my head and I made a life-changing discovery.

You Can Learn to Play the Piano Exactly like Learning to Play the Guitar



. . . that is, just learn the chords and play it.

On the surface, this may seem like just a simple observation, but as simple as it may seem . . . it's not very obvious.

We think of the guitar as an easy instrument where you learn 3 chords and start playing a song immediately. When you learn enough chords on the guitar you get really good, really fast.

The piano is no different. It's a stringed instrument the same, used to play chordal accompaniments.

You come to discover that just like learning chords on the guitar, learning chords on the piano is the first step to mastering the instrument. You can get *really good, really fast* by doing this.

Making the "Play Piano Like Guitar" discovery was a huge game-changer for me. **You don't have to be a guitar player to understand and harness the tremendous power of this concept.**

Watching the video below will open your eyes to the roots of the Self-Taught Piano System. Comparing the piano teaching process to the guitar may seem like an odd place to begin. However, this kind of thinking instills a different frame of mind that makes learning piano so much easier.

WATCH IT NOW. This first video sets the stage for all videos that follow.

[Click Here to Watch Video #1 on Play Piano Like Guitar](#)

The Piano Player's Rite of Passage

Being self-taught is a state of mind that oddly enough, has little to do with having ever taken lessons in the past. Whether beginner or formally trained, self-teaching is a piano player's rite of passage. You learn to play independently through introspective thinking; by taking everything you know about music and putting it all together.

When all the parts are assembled, you discover the keys to playing by ear; improvisation; interpretation and composition. It creates an "enlightenment" beyond an average understanding, and sets in motion your ability to play piano independently and break free of sight-reading music.

Self-teaching has been around since classical times and is the primary way most of the classical greats learned their craft. Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and all the composers shown below are just a fragment of self-taught classical composers that shaped music as we know it today.

While some think this is impossible, in many ways classical composers are no different than modern-day, jazz masters; many of whom are self-taught as well. Whether classical or jazz, both compose and improvise extremely complicated music.

Classical Self-Taught Masters



Bach



Beethoven



Brahms



Haydn



Mozart



Chopin



Schumann



Mahler



Stravinsky



Wagner



Schubert



Debussy



Liszt



Mussorsky



Telemann



Rimsky-Korsakov



Elgar



Rossini



Dvorak



Berlioz



Verdi



Bartok



Borodin



Khachaturian

Musical Standards Change Over Time

Musicians today are not much different than those in the 1700's. The masters of yesterday wrote in styles and on difficulty levels that were the musical "norm" of their days. To think that anyone could learn to play that well on their own is almost inconceivable compared to today's standards, but it's true.

Had music not changed over the centuries, the greatest popular musicians today would still be writing classical music on the same difficulty level as the early masters, and we'd be listening to it on top-40 radio. But that's not how it is.

Music evolved and literally anyone today has the potential to become a master provided they have basic self-taught skills. Not surprisingly, most of the greatest contemporary composers attribute their skills and knowledge to being "self-taught" as well.

Contemporary Self-Taught Masters



It's more than just a coincidence. Like self-taught classical composers, this list of modern-day masters makes us realize that the common link is more than "natural ability" or "God-given gifts." Self-teaching is a process that can be isolated and taught. It's not a mystery; it's tangible.

“Self Teaching Is Something That Can Be Taught!”

Unfortunately, self-teaching is often discouraged; misunderstood; dismissed as inconsequential; and often scorned by formally-trained musicians and academia. Of course everyone is entitled to their opinions. While most people will agree that higher education is a good thing, I don't believe "scorn" and "discouragement" of self-teaching is a position most of the greatest composers of all time would agree with.

The Dilemma of Self Teaching

Overall, formal piano training is geared to keep you in a *following* mode for life rather than teaching you how to play freely. Instruction is centered around classical execution, fingering scales, sight reading and graduating to more difficult pieces as you progress.

Such is the world of standard piano lessons. Standard lessons are designed to teach you to become a concert pianist. If that is your goal, then I commend your dedication. Keep taking those lessons, get a degree in music and hopefully in 10-15 years you'll reach your goal. I'm not out to discourage you but to simply point out that it's a tough road.

Those who don't want to continue on to classical greatness often find themselves growing weary of lessons after a couple years. They learn the basics of reading music, technique and how to get around but eventually feel like they've hit a ceiling.

They took it as far as they could . . . had hoped for more but came to a resolution they aren't the "chosen ones"; those who just understand how to play by ear, improvise and have fun on their own. They'll never be a rock star.

Many musicians with great potential are confused when piano lessons come to an end. Some feel like they "missed the boat" to playing independently or by ear. It's hard to rationalize how after taking many years of lessons you still don't "get it", but that's just how it is. Time to quit.

. . . But You're Not a Quitter

In your gut you **KNOW** you have the skills needed to succeed so you go on your own personal quest to figure out what you didn't learn in piano lessons. After extensive searching, you discover it's nearly impossible to find books that give you direction and answers to your most pressing concerns.

“The Biggest Problem Is Finding Good Materials That Point In The Right Direction”

Beyond lessons we are left in a general state of confusion. There are too many choices with courses -ala carte- on learning chords, music theory and playing by ear. Then there's Youtube that's like fishing in the ocean. Good or bad, you're pulled in every musical direction; uncertain of what's best and most important to your rapid progress.

For many, it's the final nail. You don't know where to turn and don't know enough to figure it out on your own. This is when a lot of potentially great musicians give up their dreams.

[Click Here to Watch Video #2 on The Self-Teaching Process](#)



The Four Components of Self Teaching

The Self Taught Piano System extracts and consolidates the most relevant information from countless theory books, courses and personal experience. It adds context to the content and points out hidden concepts that are nearly impossible to learn on your own.

The end result is a big-picture perspective; a flash infusion of musical intelligence before your time; rare gems of hidden knowledge and wisdom; and years of subtle and golden insights you don't have to learn the hard way.

Self-taught insights super-charge your knowledge and accelerate your playing far beyond standard piano methods. You learn to replace complicated thinking with a much simpler point of view broken down into six (4) specific components of independence:

#1 - Learning The Basic 24 Chords and Their Inversions

This is an unwaivering, proficiency *requirement* that cannot be sidestepped. There are 12 major chords and 12 minor chords that set the foundation of music; a degree of knowledge called "Command". Command is the #1 goal to work towards because nearly everything in music is measured by it. Chords are to music what the multiplication tables are to math.

Chords are used as mathematical rulers to keep track of the numbers system, music theory, transposing, playing by ear and improvisation. Chords give you freedom and are the key to everything.

Knowing Chords Puts You in The Top Ranks of Piano Players in The World!

This is no exaggeration. Only 5% (or less) of all piano players in the world know their chords. Those who do are the ones that can get around on their own. They know how to lead without having to rely on sheet music. While that may seem like an exclusive club, it's not very hard to join.

This 5% number says a lot about what's not happening in modern piano lessons today. Chords are not a priority over sight-reading and technique. Often chords are not taught until many years down the road (if at all). Even then, the training is disjointed without any good materials to teach the entire skill and there is no focus on independence as the end-goal.

The self-taught approach is a far more methodical, complete and goal-oriented way of learning that uses a regimented system that leaves no stone unturned.

[Click here to watch Video #3 on Chords](#)

#2 - Building Chords The Easy Way

The formal way of learning chords is a cumbersome procedure. A common explanation reads: “Chords are built in a distinct scale order for each key. The order for building a major chord is 1-3-5-7b-9-11-13” This diagram illustrates:

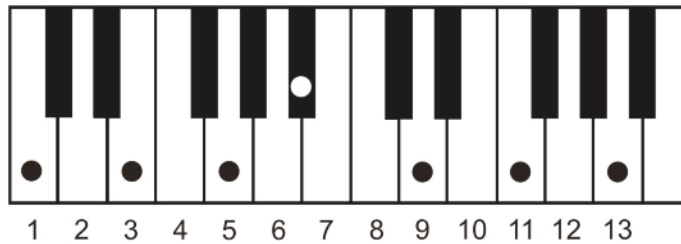


Figure 2: C13 - Building Chord Order Up to 13ths starting on C

Although the explanation above is correct, it is too technical and difficult unless you’ve memorized all the scales. Most of us haven’t, so learning to build chords this way has some major roadblocks and problems that discourage us before we get started.

- Problem #1:** *It’s slow.* You must stop and calculate each scale for each key of whatever chord is being built.
- Problem #2:** *It is a cumbersome, two-stage process.* You must first “decode” the numerical tones and then “recode” them into alpha names to add to the chord.
- Problem #3:** *There’s too much detail to memorize.* Keeping track of twelve scales and being able to recall the note orders (at an instant) is nearly impossible for most people.
- Problem #4:** *The building order of notes is only specific to the root position.* We think “1-3-5-7b-9-11-13” where the lowest 3 numbers (1-3-5) are the root position chord. However, when building on top of a 1st inversion, the order is inverted to “3-5-7b-1-9-11-13” and for a 2nd inversion “5-7b-1-9-3-11-13”.

Did you get all that? Most people don’t and that leads us to problem #5:

- Problem #5:** *You feel frustrated and defeated.* It’s mentally exhausting to figure out the process over and over again for each and every chord. Because it’s so hard, it makes you feel unprepared, confused and inadequate for the job. You just want to give up.

The Solution: Self-taught musicians *don’t even factor-in any of the problems shown above.* Using one simple tool to keep track of everything, it’s a snap to build chords in any key, using any inversion and at any time. Once you learn the secret, you can throw the chord book away.

[Click Here to Watch Video #4 on Building Chords](#)

#3 - Getting a Handle On Music Theory

Music theory is taught in a way that often dwells on too many facts that do not add context to content. Countless courses, theory books and college texts cover every factual detail from A to Z which creates “information overload”.

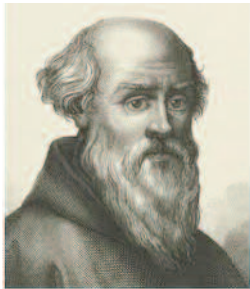
When there is too much information, it dilutes our understanding of the subject and leaves us confused as to what’s important and what’s not. With too many choices, you quickly find yourself wandering around in “no-man’s land” trying to find your way. Having no sense of direction is what stands in the way of most people advancing quickly.

The self-taught musician realizes that music theory is more than just facts; that without context, facts alone mean nothing. The ability to manipulate those facts means *everything*.

You might be thinking, “Well, that’s just fine, but I don’t think theory is relevant for me because I don’t have much experience.” Don’t sell yourself short for the need to understand theory from the very beginning. Music is just like any other science or process.

- You don’t have to be a great mathematician to harness the power of multiplication tables;
- You don’t have to be a great writer to make good use of the alphabet;
- You don’t have to be a great baseball player to play the game.

However, in all cases you’ve got to know the rules *up-front* so you have direction. We don’t teach music theory that way. Why not? We lost our way . . .



Guido of Arezzo

A Short History of Music: Guido of Arezzo (the ultimate self-taught musician) invented music notation around 1013 A.D. His system was bare-bones; based on numbers and letters and presented in a simple format made easy for *anyone* to understand.

His system gives you a “big picture” view of how the entire puzzle fits together and operates like a fine-tuned machine. It provides a definitive overview of music theory that is complete.

“The Concept Of “Completeness” Is What’s Missing From Modern Music Education”

Arezzo’s discovery is the seed from which everything grew. It is music theory in its purest form. Over hundreds of years, the system transformed into such a whale, that Arezzo’s once-simple “complete” system got buried in an ocean of *infinite* facts from which we can no longer extract the most important elements. Arezzo is all but forgotten.

[Click Here to Watch Video #5 on Music Theory](#)

#4 - How To Play By Ear, Improvise, Compose And Master Sight-Reading

“Playing by ear” is the ultimate final frontier of playing independently. So many people secretly hope to stumble across the Holy Grail that blesses them with the ultimate shortcut to mastery with little effort; that one encompassing concept that will turn on the light.

“Playing by ear” is defined many different ways. Some believe it to be a “natural talent” or “God-given gift.” Others lean towards knowing tips and tricks of style. The rest tend to view playing by ear more literally as the ability to identify tones and the quality of a trained ear to identify notes, intervals and specific keys with either “relative” or “perfect” pitch.

There is validity in all those positions but a more pragmatic understanding is that playing by ear includes a little bit of each and more than just one isolated fragment of the skill.

This course adds one facet to playing by ear that is never referenced in any information out there; that is, the REQUIREMENTS both physically and mentally that are the results of experience. There are many parts to the moving machine.

A journeyman plumber must know how to sweat pipes; a requirement that cannot be sidestepped. Likewise, to be a play-by-ear master requires knowing chords as a prerequisite, theory specific to that skill, a good ear, some natural talent and on-the-job experience. Playing by ear is a culmination of all the different courses of the Self Taught Piano System.

This is a never-ending subject and I am constantly adding to it.

[Click Here to Watch Video #6 on Playing By Ear](#)