

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 . . . that is, to play a song over and over again to eventually remember it by heart. However, memorizing this way seemed like a mindless reflex of fingers without purpose. I didn't understand what I was doing and it didn't seem like 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



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

You don't have to play the guitar to get a lot out of this concept. 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 pretty good, pretty fast.

The piano is no different. It's a stringed instrument the same, used to play chordal accompaniments just like the guitar. Similarly, learning to play chords is the key to playing well, fast.

**We're not talking *kind* of good.
We're talking REAL good**

It took about a month getting comfortable with chords and my self-training easily outpaced everything I had learned in the previous two years of lessons. By just knowing the chords, I could play better than most people who had played a lifetime.

For either guitar or piano, learning chords is the fastest and most effective way to take your playing to the next level.

Learning chords is the first level of control.

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 theory 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, self-taught 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



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.

If music had not changed over the centuries, the greatest popular musicians today would be writing classical music on the same difficulty level and we'd still 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 everyone will agree that higher education is a good thing, "scorn" and "discouragement" of self-teaching are not positions 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.

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 quite simply, it’s a skill that isn’t taught in standard lessons.

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

Regardless that you feel you have the skills needed to succeed, finding books that give you direction and answers to your most pressing concerns is nearly impossible. Don’t look to standard piano methods. Their goal is for you to keep taking lessons and don’t give you insights on how to take over where lessons leave off.

There are too many choices with courses -ala carte- on learning chords, music theory and playing by ear, and 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.

The Self Taught Piano System is specific to what you are searching for. It consolidates the most relevant information to be extracted from countless theory books, courses and online materials. It adds context to the content and points out hidden concepts that can only be derived from a lifetime of experience. The end result is a big-picture perspective that gives you 20 years of insight and experience before your time; experience you won’t have to figure out on your own.

Getting this overall perspective leads to independence much faster than any other option available to you. You learn to dismiss complicated thinking and replace it with a much simpler self-taught point of view that can be broken down into four (4) different courses:

- [24 Chords in 10 Lessons](#) - The basic major and minor chords and their inversions;
- [Chord School](#) - Building chords using the numbers system of music;
- [The Science of Music](#) - The limited framework of infinite musical expression; and
- [Play By Ear Piano](#) - How to figure out songs, improvise, compose and master sight-reading

Course #1: 24 Chords In 10 Lessons

This is a model for learning chords that uses a simplistic approach of grouping chords with similar fingering positions (just on different parts of the keyboard). Through grouping, you learn 3/4ths of the chords (that's 18 out of the 24) in just 6 lessons.

What's even more exciting is to learn those chords and *all their inversions* with just 15 fingering positions. That's less positions than the number of chords being learned!

The Unwaivering Goal

Learning the 24 chords is a proficiency requirement that cannot be sidestepped. So much depends upon chords when it comes to understanding how to get around independently and learning the skill of command for life. Chords are the key to the numbers system, playing by ear and improvisation. Chords are also the gauges of music theory, transposing and the major scale.

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

Only 5% (or less) of all piano players in the world know their chords. You join a very elite group of players that understand the difference between leading and following. This course covers five things that relate to memorizing and playing chords:

- 1.) Command - Setting a Short-Term, Reachable Goal;
- 2.) The Four Chord-Transition Movements;
- 3.) Developing a Natural Sense of Rhythm;
- 4.) How to Memorize Chords Quickly; and
- 5.) Flash Cards

1.) Command - Setting a Short-Term, Reachable Goal



Command is the ability to play (and recognize) the 24 basic major and minor chords and all of their inversions.

Instead of spoon-feeding these chords slowly, this course makes it a reachable goal to learn the 24 chords with a system that is inclusive, specific and regimented.

This skill is taught with a purpose that is a lot easier to reach when the end is clearly defined.

2.) *The Four Chord-Transition Movements*

There are only four universal movements used to transition between chords in all keys. These movements keep your hand from having to jump back and forth on the keyboard as much. The less movement, the fewer mistakes and the smoother your playing.

Repeating these movements over and over again teaches your hand to memorize the “reflexes” of common chord changes. In no time, those changes become a second nature and execute on autopilot without even thinking about them.

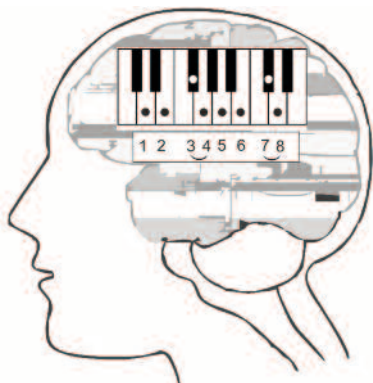
Better yet, the transitions are the same in all keys. The first lesson is the template for all lessons that follow. In other words, with each lesson, the chords change chords but the exercises and movements stay the same.

3.) *Developing a Natural Sense of Rhythm*

Learning rhythm on the piano is like riding a bike or strumming on the guitar. At first it takes a little practice to develop finesse. After that, it becomes a natural ability and playing in rhythm with both hands gets easier.

There are two common bass patterns used throughout the course to develop rhythm. Both of these bass patterns are used in at least 90% of the songs *ever written*. They are the most universal bass patterns in music.

4.) *How to Memorize Chords Quickly*



Memorizing the chord positions is the key to command. “Grouped” chords are fairly easy to finger but they all look the same. The challenge is to be able to identify them on the keyboard.

Learning to identify similar looking chords is easier when more than one sense is involved. The Self Taught Piano System uses touch, vision and flash cards to simplify the process and drive home retention.

Touch: Linking memorization with a sense of touch is powerful. The two (2) main exercises of the course drill the four common chord-transition movements. Your hand starts to form the positions and stretches as a second nature.

Vision: With every exercise, emphasis is on analyzing the movements, memorizing the positions and naming the chords. The focus is on your fingers and not on written music.

5.) *Flash Cards:* Flash cards are a quick way to memorize chords. They provide a system to test yourself over and over again. This systematic practice is a mental skill and can be done away from the keyboard with great effectiveness.

The brain is a lot smarter than your fingers and quickly outpaces proficiency. When you know what to do, it then just becomes a matter of your fingers doing it; mind over matter.

Remember, most of the chords look the same but have different names as they shift up and down the keyboard. Although there are only 3 different fingering positions per group, the goal is to be able to identify them in nine different spots up and down the keyboard. Analyzing the cards and repetition are the keys to memorization.

The Flash Card Deck Defines EXACTLY What Needs to be Learned

The flash cards define the reachable goal of the course. By conquering one set of grouped chords at a time, the stack grows incrementally. Reviewing the deck of memorized cards reinforces knowledge and isolates trouble spots to work on.

Learning chords is a methodical process. The rules for identifying the names of the different positions are the same for all the groups which means you don't have to relearn (or apply) different rules every time a new chord-group is introduced.

Course #2: Chord School

The formal way of learning chords is a very 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:

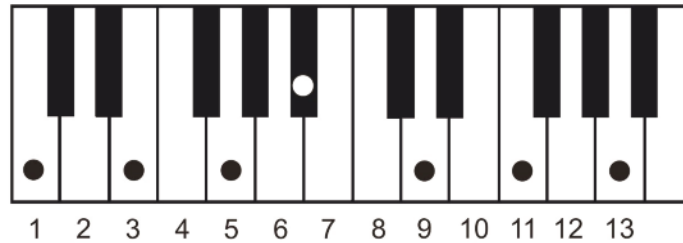


Figure 2: C13 - Building Chord Order Up to 13ths starting on C

Although the explanation above is correct, it is too technical and leaves too many holes in your comprehension. Learning to build chords this way is extremely difficult to understand because:

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 “decode” and “recode” process.* The process is to “decode” the numerical tones first and then “recode” them into alpha names to add to the chord (making it a two-stage process).

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: *Building is specific to the root position.* It follows the 1-3-5-7b-9-11-13 order of the **root** position. Building on top of first or second inversions is more complex.

Problem #5: *It's frustrating and defeating.* It leaves the average musician feeling frustrated to master the process and defeated trying to figure out an easier way.

In my opinion, **no one could concoct a harder way to learn this skill than the way it is presently taught.** This way of building is a very difficult obstacle to overcome. If you feel confused, you're not alone. It's a major reason why people 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.

Course #3: The Science of Music

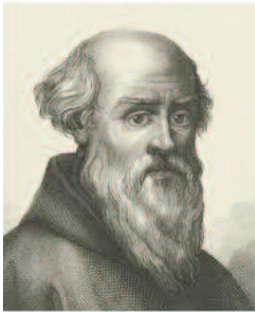
Music theory is taught in a way that often dwells on too many facts that do not add context to content. Countless courses, theory books and college texts cover every factual detail from A to Z but music theory is more than just facts. When there is too much information, it dilutes our understanding of the subject. Let me explain.

A car salesman might stress reliability, safety, comfortable leather interior and other things relevant to you making an intelligent decision.

However, if the salesman sells the car *like we teach music theory*, he takes you back to the shop, opens a huge book and starting on page 1 begins . . .

“The right front wheel hub includes a ball bearing and race assembly guaranteed to withstand 25,000 pounds of gravitational pressure. . .”

You see? That’s just too much detail to be of any use. We’re more interested in understanding the “big picture” that makes sense of it all. With too much information, *it’s nearly impossible to separate the important from the unimportant.*



Getting Back To The Basics: Guido of Arezzo (a Benedictine monk) created our modern day system of music notation around 1013 A.D. to teach chants to his fellow monks. His original invention is simple, easy to understand and totally in context to what you need to know to see the big picture.

“The Science of Music” is based on Arezzo’s system and provides an encompassing overview of music theory **that is complete.**

It is this simple, encompassing “completeness” that is missing from our musical education. Today, we focus on extraneous facts and theories that lead us astray of the core principles that make sense of music theory. Over hundreds of years, music evolved and the once-simple science -that explains everything- was diluted into an ocean of endless facts.

“The Science of Music” lays out the big picture of music theory as Arezzo described it. It’s short in length, specific and easy to understand. It isolates music principles in a way that is obvious, simple and applicable to accelerated knowledge.

Course #4: Play By Ear Piano

“Playing by ear” is the ultimate final frontier of playing independently. Those seeking information on this subject always hope to stumble across the Holy Grail of understanding. It is our hope that somewhere out there is one encompassing concept that will turn on the light.

Some people think playing by ear is a “natural talent” or a “God-given gift.” Others think it is knowing specific tips and tricks of style. The last definition is more literal that playing by ear is the ability to identify tones and the quality of your ear to stay on key.

There is validity in all those positions as a group. Playing by ear is more than just one isolated understanding. 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. Along with chords comes *specific theory*, a good ear, natural talent and experience that define the skill. Playing by ear is a culmination of all the different courses of the Self Taught Piano System.

Here’s what is included in “Play by Ear Piano”:

- The Play By Ear Discovery - The ultimate understanding of music
- 3 different approaches to play by ear
- 10 basic rules that always apply to the skill
- 15 solid methods of figuring out songs
- 10 most-commonly-used progressions in music;
- 21 practical inside tips and tricks to playing by ear;
- 6 exercises to improve proficiency; and finally
- 9 insider secrets on how to think like a master

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