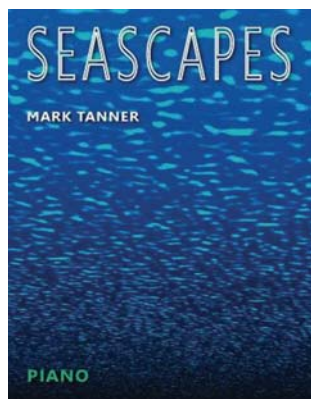


up in Beytelmann's pianistic approach, and I can think of few rivals in this idiom - I'd urge you to get yourself a copy if Santa left you a few pesos this Christmas. **Mark Tanner**



Seascapes

ISMN: 979-0-57998-135-0, £9.99

Seascapes (Grades 1-3)

Dreamscapes

ISMN: 979-0-57998-136-7, £9.99

Spartan Press Music Publishers Ltd

Dreamscapes (Grades 4-5)

This is the first book in a series of four ranging from grade 1 to post grade 8. Twenty delightful piano pieces evoking the life of the sea and its inhabitants, with enticing titles, like **Escape from Alcatraz**, **Sharks in Shallow Waters**, **Winkle Picking**, **Seahorse Gymkhana**, **Flying Fish** etc. Mark Tanner gives an interesting Foreword, explaining how and why he started composing; that "musical imagination is a priceless gift...." One can certainly imagine the scenes during this nautical journey. Particularly imaginative is **What the Penguin Saw** with 2 bars in the middle where one can almost see the penguin slipping down the ice trying to get away from whatever it is it saw, and at the end, we are still left wondering "What DID the Penguin see?" **Seven Crabs go Line Dancing** set in a reggae style, great fun to play, and pupils surely will ask the question, "why Seven crabs?" Indeed, the answer is not obvious, why indeed are there 'Seven' crabs? **Waves and Waves and Waves** is a beautiful little piece, with its tempo suggestion of 'gently tumbling,' the relentless ebb and flow of the tide kept moving with the quaver rhythm.

Consideration has been given to page-turning, with a page left entirely blank purely for this purpose - always a pleasure to see. **Treading Water** is another piece, very cleverly written with arpeggiation movement to imitate the gentle hand and arm movement required to tread water successfully. Perhaps the key signature of six sharps could be considered a little demanding for the level this book is aimed at in **A Humming Mermaid** with many accidentals throughout also. **The Lonely Albatross** has a suggestion to "keep the pedal depressed throughout - but listen carefully." To reach the end without changing the pedal at all, then encourage your students to listen to the harmonic sounds that are produced and left behind, whilst the pedal is still depressed is magical.

The second in this series is just as delightful a package as the first book. Tanner tells us in his Foreword how he "helps teachers to use improvisation or composition to enliven their teaching." The first piece of fifteen, **Night Warrior** (with a nod to William Walton) has a very surprising change of genre at bar 38, and would certainly evoke a good discussion into the introduction of improvisation, as it demonstrates how simple it can seem. **Dreamweaver** is a divine little compositional beauty. **Four and Twenty Blackbirds** with its curious tempo direction of "blousy" has found its way in, though it is doubtful these days that the children will know of the nursery rhymes we were all brought up on unfortunately. **Sands of Time** and **Something Strange Growing in the Potting Shed** are particularly enjoyable to play. **Forty Winks** actually does have forty bars of a Latin style rhythm, and **Counting Sheep** could provide a good discussion on how many sheep are actually counted in your interpretation of it - are they going through the fence, (notes tied over the bar-line perhaps) or are they jumping over (intervals of 4ths, 5ths and 6ths to count)? It certainly would get the students paying attention to the structure of the piece. One possible

error found is in the metronome suggestion of **Slumber Song** which is in 9/8 time, with the suggestion of crotchet = 110. Trying this at dotted crotchet at 110 appears a little fast for the title of the piece, and perhaps dotted crotchet at 88 might be more suitable. There were a number of times when it was felt the tempo direction did not quite match what was felt.

Both books are very clearly presented, with attractive covers. Dynamic and pedalling directions are plentiful, print is clear and spacious, with a note on top of some of the titles to give a suggestion of the style written e.g. 'with a nod to Mozart' above **Sawfish Sonata**. Other than the curious tempi marking, and sometimes questionable speeds, these both are excellent publications, and should be invaluable to all teachers today. **Liz Dewhurst**

Jenny Macmillan reviews Sounds Write publications

I'm unsure how I missed these Sounds Write books which were published between 2004 and 2011 - probably because they sell by recommendation rather than advertising. They are useful, honest, enthusiastic (but not exaggeratedly so) and realistic. The A5 booklets lack professional production (which doubtless keeps the price down), but are nevertheless attractive and well illustrated with simple line drawings. The pages look good - undaunting - each page not too dense. Sounds Write pride themselves on superb customer service, including a returns policy with cash refund even if theory books have been half completed.

My child won't practise!

by Gillian Baskett, 80p

At 80p, this is an ideal book to give to parents of new pupils. It is a concise guide to enable parents to support the teacher's work. All the ideas are sound and go straight to the point. It will take a parent only 10 or 15 minutes to read through it quickly - and it can be referred to time and again.

The element I like best, perhaps, is its honesty: "After the initial enthusiasm of a new instrument or music lessons, the actual practising may become a chore" and "Music should be enjoyable, but unless regular practice is undertaken, the fun will never truly materialise" - parents need to understand these points. It is also supportive: "If you're not musical you may not feel you can help your child, but you can. This book sets out to show you how."

The book gives a list of straightforward ideas to inspire practice - it's good for parents to see in what simple ways they can support their children:

- using charts,
- scheduling practice,
- offering rewards,
- using lucky dips for scales/pieces/tricky bars,
- using a stop watch,
- playing ensembles,
- recording a 'performance',
- arranging informal concerts.

There is a valuable section on the importance of listening to music - what to listen out for and what pieces to listen to - followed by a one-page brief history of western music. A double page of basic note values is given for parents who don't read music. This booklet dates from 2004 and readers need to update "tape it" to "record digitally on mobile, video camera or laptop".

Weekly Practice Notebook

by Gillian Baskett, £1.35

Again, I can't praise this practice notebook highly enough. Two A5 pages at the beginning cover a few basic but essential practice tips. For example:

- if you don't manage everything one day, balance your practice by playing the other things next time;
- you will progress much faster with a little practice as often as you can, rather than a long practice occasionally;
- play all or part of the task slowly;
- clap parts or all of a piece;

- choose one hard bar, or section, and try to play it correctly three times in a row;

- set a target and give yourself a reward.

This is all intelligent, practical, common sense that experienced teachers instil in their pupils at every lesson. It's always good to have it printed in a book for pupils (and parents) to see every time they practise. Most children like to have a visual reminder of their progress. Even if used for only a few weeks, this practice notebook will help develop regular practice habits.

“Can we do another?”

Musicianship Games and Exercises

by Sallie Ranken, £4.70

These are simple, uncomplicated, basic games for developing musicianship in pupils. Many of these activities you will already have devised for yourself with your pupils, but no teacher will have all of these at their fingertips.

Teachers can select relevant games according to the needs of the pupil - games to improve, for example:

- sense of beat and rhythm,
- understanding of tempo,
- knowledge of pitch, intervals and key,
- ability to improvise, harmonise, read, practise.

The games can be done at each lesson with individual pupils in a couple of minutes, or at greater length. They can be used with two pupils in a ten-minute overlap of lessons, or with small groups of children. They can be repeated at home.

A few quibbles. The use of “she” throughout instead of “pupil” is slightly irritating. Teachers are recommended to tell their pupils that “fingers have a memory of their own the more relaxed you are the better this works” - precisely - it's not pointed out that finger memory is very likely to let you down when under stress, e.g. during a performance, so it is better to develop aural, visual and analytical memory. Not all activities are described clearly

- but with over a hundred activities, there's plenty here for any teacher.

I have a large collection of similar musicianship activities which I use with small groups, and I shall definitely expand it to include these Sounds Write games. It is so useful to get away from the instrument and develop musicianship. We're not trying to develop just pianists, but musicians.

Music Fun theory workbooks

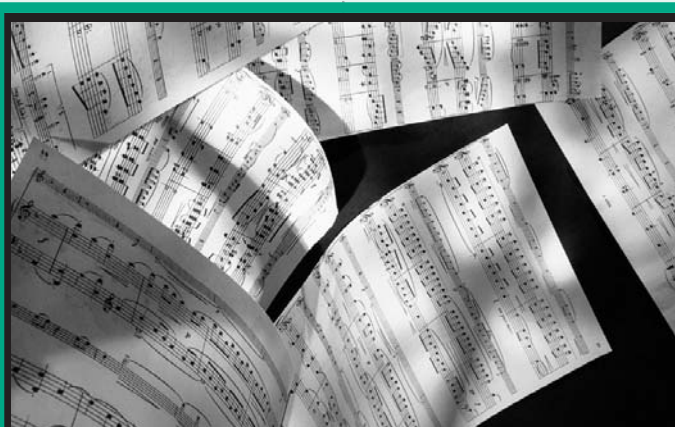
by Gillian Baskett, £2.75

Music Fun theory books are based on a child-friendly approach - children discover the rules for themselves. Teachers need to discuss each lesson's assignment with the pupil who can then work through the exercises on their own. The books move fairly fast and would definitely suit some teachers and pupils extremely well. The A5 size booklets have pastel coloured pages with attractive line drawings - unfussy and unassuming.

They are not suitable for very young children (aged 3-6ish) - too much reading and writing required; nor for older children (over about age 10) - too childish; nor for teachers who like to hand over a theory book and instruct pupils to work through it on their own. So I estimate they would be ideal for 7 to 9 year old pupils of teachers who take the trouble to explain theory as an integral part of the lesson. These children could make fast progress through the available grades from 1 to 3.

I would recommend My child won't practise! be given to the parent of every new pupil. Those parents who respond positively to this booklet might well be interested to read and learn in greater depth how to support their child musically using my own book, Successful Practising.

I strongly recommend all music teachers look on the Sounds Write website (www.soundswrite.co.uk) for more information about this useful and exciting range of materials. Jenny Macmillan



Composers Competition 2013

The Composers Competition was established in 1997 to encourage creativity through composition for the piano. This has been extended to include the choice of a composition for piano and up to four other instruments or voices. There are now six classes, covering all ages from the under-tens to full or part-time students in tertiary education who study either with a Member teacher or at an establishment that is a corporate member. There is also a class for Teacher Members.

New for 2013

The time limit for categories 1 to 3 is 4 minutes. Categories 4 to 6 have been increased to 6 minutes.

In addition there are three new classes for electronic keyboard compositions (including sequencing if wished) in 3 age categories. The time limit is 4 minutes for 11 and under and 16 and under. A 6 minutes time limit is set for the open class.

Categories for participants:

1. Open to pupils aged 10 or under.
2. Open to pupils aged 12 or under.
3. Open to pupils aged 15 or under.
4. Open to pupils aged 18 or under.
5. Open to student members or to students, either full or part-time and of any age, of EPTA members
6. Open to teacher members of EPTA UK.
7. Electronic Keyboard Composition class (including sequencing if wished)
(i) 11 and under (ii) 16 and under (iii) Open

Winners may be invited to play at a special composer's concert at an EPTA UK one day conference. A prize of a full scholarship to attend the Chetham's International Summer School and Festival for Pianists in August will be awarded at the discretion of the adjudicator.

Closing date for entries: to arrive by Friday 17th May 2013