

Pattern Play[®]

Inspiring Creativity at the Piano

Forrest Kinney

I believe that for the first time my students and I are not merely reciting notes, but really creating music.

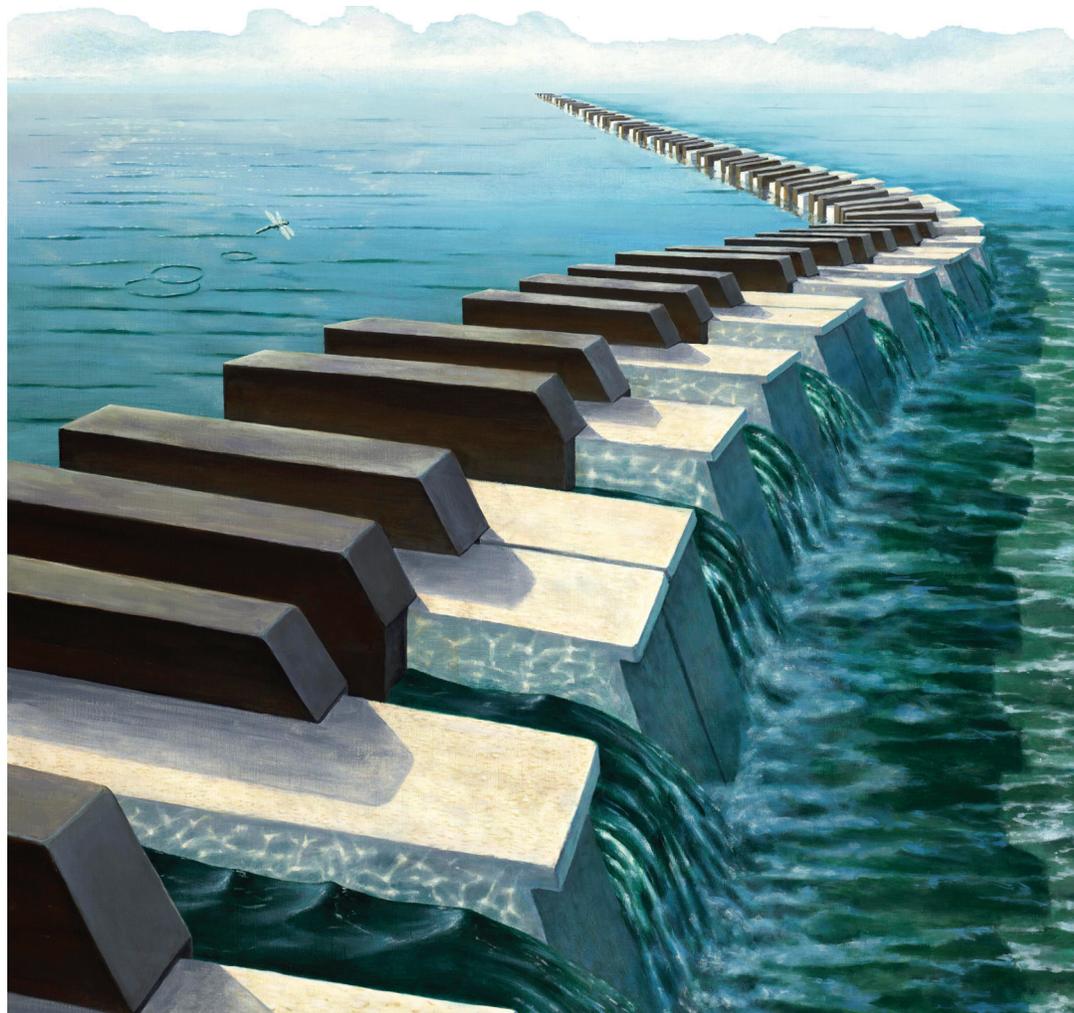
—Gena Horiatis, music educator

We improvise new sentences each day. Why not melodies and rhythms?

We are fluent speakers because others talked with us for many years. The **Pattern Play**[®] books give teachers and students a way to have musical conversations (**duets**), which lead to the ability to improvise **solos** with confidence and ease.

Teachers can add a creative dimension to group classes since most of the pieces in the **Pattern Play**[®] books can be played as **trios** or **quartets**.

Both teachers and students learn what they need to know by playing and creating with rich, quick-to-learn musical materials. Even beginners can have a rewarding musical experience at the piano.



◆ THE FIRST PAGE

All of the pieces in the **Pattern Play**® series are presented in the same four-page layout. When you understand how to play one piece, you understand how to play them all! Every piece begins with a duet. The first page provides the *Bass* player (usually the teacher) with the materials for making a repeating accompaniment that creates a rich, supportive environment in which the student feels invited to create melodies. This is not only an enjoyable activity in itself, but the student is gently led into solo playing. Let's look at *Reflecting*, a favorite piece of many students and teachers.

PATTERN

In each piece, the *Bass* person plays a short accompaniment called a **PATTERN**, repeating it many times and letting it vary in response to the *Treble* player's melodies. Repeat signs in these books mean to repeat as many times as you like.

VACATION

There is also a contrasting accompaniment called a **VACATION**. The *Bass* player moves between the **PATTERN** and **VACATION** many times to create a satisfying longer form.

VARIATIONS

Many pages have *Variations* which are examples of ways that the **PATTERNS** and **VACATIONS** might vary as you repeat them.

IDEAS FOR CREATING

Each page has additional suggestions of ways to create music with the **PATTERN** and **VACATION**. On this page, the *Bass* player is encouraged to create counter-melodies.

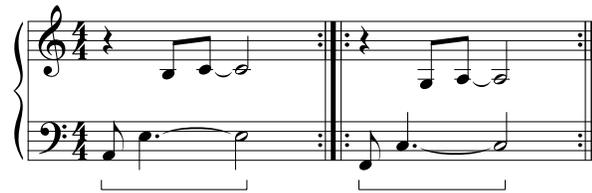
Duet (Bass)

◆ Reflecting

Imagine a mirror that reflects feelings we can hear rather than images we can see. That is what music is. Music reflects feelings rather than appearances—interiors rather than exteriors—and sounds out what is hidden deep within us.

As your partner's melodies float through the sky, let this **PATTERN** be a calm lake reflecting them.

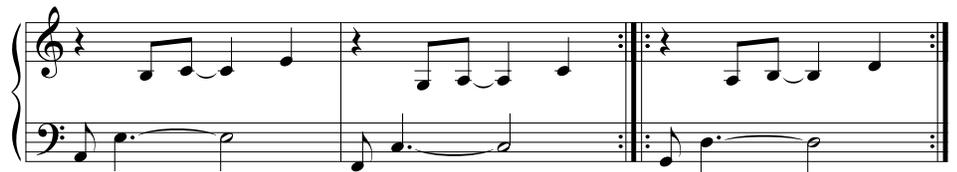
PATTERN



VACATION



Variation



Ideas for Creating

You can add melodies with your right hand using white keys.



◆ THE SECOND PAGE

The second page of each piece is for the *Treble* player (usually the student), who is invited to improvise melodies in the rich environment provided by the *Bass* player. Once *Treble* players can create freely, they are ready to begin learning how to accompany themselves. Though the *Bass* parts are often too challenging for beginners, even first-lesson students can improvise melodies with their teacher.

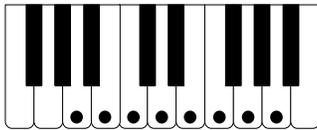
Duet (Treble)

*Calm waters
give true reflections.*



Melody

Create melodies in A minor. Use one or both hands.



A minor

Ideas for Creating

Explore the sounds of sixths, thirds, fourths, and other hand shapes.



The image and accompanying words on the second page are there to stimulate the imagination and stir up feelings.

MELODY

The *Treble* player is given the notes of a scale to create with. The keyboard graphic is for beginners who can't yet read.

IDEAS FOR CREATING

These suggestions are now about making melodies—things to try and sounds to explore.

When a new scale or chord is introduced a short section titled *Music Theory* that explores and explains the new musical materials is included. This page didn't need it.

◆ THE THIRD PAGE

The third page of each piece explores ways that a person can improvise as a soloist. After playing both parts of the duet, some students will be ready for this next step almost immediately, while others may wish to spend more time with a partner. Everyone is different!

PATTERN AND VACATION

Here, the **PATTERN** and **VACATION** of *Reflecting* are written as a left-hand part to be played by the soloist.

VARIATIONS

These *Variations* suggest ways that the solo version of the **PATTERN** might change as it is repeated.

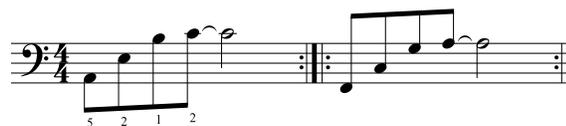
IDEAS FOR CREATING

The *Ideas for Creating* now relate to the solo experience. Here, the melody is played in sixths.

Solo

With your right hand, improvise melodies on white keys (A minor) above these accompaniments. In addition to playing single tones, explore sixths, thirds, and other hand shapes.

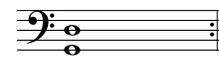
PATTERN



VACATION



You may wish to begin by playing these simple fifths in your left hand rather than what is written above. Start by playing sixths with your right hand.



Variations

PATTERNS reflect our feelings and our growth as musicians, so they will naturally want to change over time.



Ideas for Creating



◆ THE FOURTH PAGE

The fourth page of each piece either explores more ideas for the soloist or reveals how to play the PATTERN as a trio (on one piano) or quartet (on two). Here's the fourth page of another popular piece in **Pattern Play® 1, Blues on Black**. Note that the *Middle* and *Bass* players can choose to play either a simple PATTERN and VACATION (a good place to begin) or a more challenging 12-Bar Blues Pattern.

TREBLE

The *Treble* player is given a scale with which to make melodies. In a quartet, two *Treble* players take turns making melodies.

MIDDLE

The *Middle* person adds harmony and rhythm by playing these pairs of notes in various rhythms.

BASS

The *Bass* person plays a bass line with one or both hands. He or she is encouraged to vary the rhythms of the notes, but not the beat!

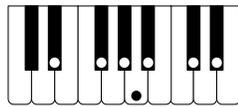
Trio or Quartet

First decide whether the three of you will be playing just the PATTERN and VACATION or the full 12-Bar Blues PATTERN. The *Bass* player starts, the *Middle* person joins in, then the *Treble* person makes melodies. Create quartets on two pianos by having the two *Treble* players alternate playing melodies.



Treble

Improvise with black keys and A's. Together these make the E \flat blues scale.



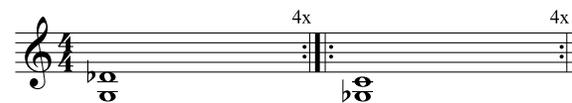
E \flat blues



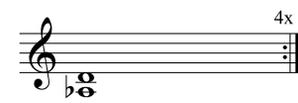
Middle

Vary the rhythms of these notes in response to the *Treble* players and *Bass* lines.

PATTERN



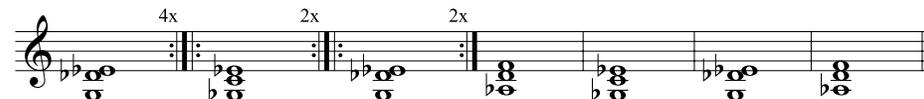
VACATION



OR

12-Bar Blues PATTERN

You can play just the two lower notes, or all three for a fuller sound.



Bass

Vary the way you play the four notes in each bar, but don't lose the beat! Feel free to use both hands. When playing the PATTERN and VACATION, signal to the *Middle* person when you are ready to change to the VACATION and when you return to the PATTERN. If you choose to play the 12-Bar Blues PATTERN, then it's not necessary to signal.

PATTERN



VACATION



OR

12-Bar Blues PATTERN



Music is feeling, not sound.

—Wallace Stevens, poet

The **Pattern Play**® books are about more than improvisation and the foundations of music composition. In essence, they are about rediscovering the refreshing beauty of music by allowing it to flow from our feelings and be different every time.

Since we can learn the PATTERNS quickly and begin playing with them immediately, we are given a way to make music that is guided directly by our intuition, allowing us to experience both creativity and artistry.

Because the PATTERNS can be varied endlessly, both beginning and advanced pianists will find that their favorite PATTERNS will keep growing along with them, becoming dear and trusted friends over the course of a long, creative life.

Pattern Play® 1

- Explore world-music (African, Persian, and Irish), classical, and popular styles
- Improvise on all black keys and all white keys
- Improvise using major, minor, and blues scales
- Create music with intervals and triads

Pattern Play® 2

- Explore world-music (Japanese, Spanish, Caribbean), Medieval, classical, jazz, and blues styles
- Improvise using modes (Dorian, Lydian, etc.)
- Create music with seventh chords
- Create accompaniment patterns with intervals and triads

Pattern Play® 3

- Explore world-music (Brazilian), classical, jazz, boogie, blues, and popular styles
- Improvise using scales and modes with one flat and the “major blues scale”
- Create music with triads and 7th and 9th chords

Pattern Play® 4

- Explore moods and imagery in music
- Improvise using scales and modes with one and two sharps
- Create music with triads and 7th, 9th, 13th, sus, and diminished chords

Pattern Play® 5

- Explore moods and modes of key signatures with two sharps or flats
- Improvise in various keys within the same piece
- Create your own PATTERNS and VACATIONS

Pattern Play® 6

- Improvise with scales and modes in key signatures with three sharps or flats
- Create improvisations with longer PATTERNS and VACATIONS
- Compose your own PATTERNS using more complex harmonies

“As a classically trained musician, it seemed to me that playing without written music was a skill always beyond my reach. Pattern Play® has enabled me to improvise with freedom and creativity.”

*—Bonnie Hampton,
piano teacher and
performer*

The author would like to express his deep and lasting gratitude to Akiko Kinney for her invaluable contributions to this project. Thanks also to Dr. Andrew Hisey for his many helpful suggestions.



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