

A COMPARISON OF *ALFRED'S GROUP PIANO FOR ADULTS*,
BOOKS 1 AND 2, WITH *PIANO FOR THE DEVELOPING MUSICIAN*

A Research Paper
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Weiqing Tang
University of Northern Iowa

Abstract

The purpose of this research paper was to compare and contrast two group piano textbooks, *Alfred's Group Piano for Adults* and *Piano for the Developing Musician*, in attempts to discover similarities and differences of teaching methods between these two books. Both textbooks were examined and compared using thirteen criteria. These thirteen criteria included: (1) Pentascales, (2) Scales and arpeggios, (3) Sight-reading, (4) Harmonization, (5) Chord and chord progression, (6) Ensemble, (7) Pedal, (8) Improvisation, (9) Solo repertoire, (10) Accompaniments, (11) Form, (12) Style period, and (13) Appendix and index. These thirteen criteria were identified based on: (1) overview of both textbooks and (2) author expertise of pedagogical knowledge in the area of group piano for the beginner, and (3) consultation with supervising professor. This paper includes definitions of the criteria, sections dedicated to the comparison of each criterion and author conclusions.

A Comparison of *Alfred's Group Piano for Adults*, Books 1 and 2, with *Piano for the Developing Musician*

Introduction

Before I came to the United States, the idea of teaching piano in groups was totally unknown to me. I began to learn piano when I was five years old in China. For many years, I always took private lessons with my piano teachers. I thought that was the only method possible for learning to play piano. After I graduated from Shanghai Conservatory of Music, I also gave private lessons to my students. After coming to the United States for graduate studies, I was introduced to my first group piano classroom. I was curious to see how this works and who takes this class. I doubted whether the possibility of teaching ten piano students at one time was possible in this particular laboratory setting. However, after a one-year internship course, I learned to teach in this group setting.

The students who take group piano classes are undergraduate music students whose primary instruments are not piano. Some play other instruments and some are singers. Having experienced this method first hand, I have become convinced of its efficacy. I would like to be able to introduce this method of teaching beginners in groups to China. Most music schools in China only give private piano lessons. If group piano class is available in China, more students will have the opportunity to learn piano very efficiently while saving teaching resources and building a sense of community.

There are many textbooks for this purpose in the United States. Two frequently used textbooks for teaching music majors their “piano proficiency” skills are *Alfred's Group Piano for Adults (AGPA)* by E.L. Lancaster and Kenon D. Renfrew and *Piano for the Developing Musician*

(*PDM*) by Martha Hilley and Lynn Freeman Olson. Alfred's is currently in its 2nd edition and consists of two books containing 26 units per volume with the intent of covering each unit in one week for a year. Alfred's produces a "Teacher's Handbook" containing detailed lesson plans for each week. Book 1 is on paper and Book 2 is on the web. *PDM*, currently in its fifth edition, is contained in one volume with 14 units. It uses the web for an online instructor's manual and also for supplementary material. Both methods are intended for four semesters of work in two years of study.

The two textbooks used in this study were selected for the following reasons: (1) Recommendations from supervising faculty member and a faculty member from another university, both of whom teach group piano, (2) familiarity with one of the textbooks from using it to teach an undergraduate piano class and (3) comparison with another text that had previously been used at the university. The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast these two texts, discovering the similarities and differences present in these two methods and drawing some conclusions of my own.

Organization and Overview of *Alfred's Group Piano for Adults (AGPA)*

As stated in Alfred's "Foreword," the text is easy to use. "Theory, technique, sight-reading, repertoire, harmonization, improvisation and ensemble activities are taught thoroughly and consistently throughout the text."¹ Each unit has something new to be learned and something old to be reviewed from a previous unit. New objectives are stated in the beginning of each unit. That helps students to understand the main points of the unit and focus on that information especially. Typically, units present reading exercises, solo repertoire, and melodies

¹ E. L.Lancaster and Kenon. D. Renfrow, *Alfred's Group Piano For Adults, Book 1* (Van Nuys: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.), p.3.

for harmonization and transposition. These skills increase in difficulty as the students' progress. Some instructions for sight-reading are suggested in the book, such as identifying the key of each example, checking the indicated tempo, dynamics and articulation. All of these are very good tips for students before they begin to play. Often about two solo repertoires are provided in each unit. The choice of repertoire fits the objective presented in the unit. For example, if a unit presents minor scales, the author will include a piece in minor mode rather than major. A unit for "Intervals and Other Keyboard Basics" includes practice with staccato and slur articulation.

Harmonization and transposition always play an important role in each unit. With the increasing knowledge of chord progression, from tonic and dominant to the addition of subdominant and then to secondary triads and secondary dominants, students are required to do more complicated harmonization and transposition through Books 1 and 2. But this process is quite smooth; harmonization begins with intervals in the accompanying hand before advancing to triads. Additionally, some duet repertoire for harmonization and accompaniment and some group ensemble pieces really add a lot of fun for the classroom. Sometimes, pairing students up to work on skills together adds communication and camaraderie. Review worksheets are included at the end of every several units to help define students' understanding of the material.

Organization of *Piano for the Developing Musician (PDM)*

In *PDM*, a preliminary chapter occurs at the beginning of the book. The purpose of this chapter is to help those students who have no keyboard background. It introduces some basic concepts of piano playing, such as the staff as related to the keyboard, good hand position, finger numbers and some five-finger patterns, and suggestions for good reading. From Unit 1, a

selection of “ Exemplary Repertoire,” “a carefully chosen compositional work opens each chapter and forms the basis for discovery of the pedagogical goals to come.”² A page of heading contains “Inquiry” and “Performance” prior to the printed repertoire. The “Inquiry” section includes tips for observations of patterns, shifts and fingerings, etcetera. The “Performance” section states practice suggestions. After the repertoire there are “Topics to Explore and Discuss” which may include some names and terms for further study and which “integrate music history and performance practices into the piano classroom.”³ Some examples of these were chorale style versus keyboard style, alternating meters versus variable meters, and John La Montaine.

Next, “Related Skills and Activities” are presented in each unit with sub-headings in the following order: Technique, Reading, Keyboard theory, Harmonization, Transposition, Improvisation, Ensemble, and Composition. To end each unit there are two to three examples under the heading of Subsequent Repertoire.

In the Technique section, *PDM* provides a series of drills and etudes which develop finger and hand technique. These help students’ fingers and hands become independent and coordinate when they play hands together.⁴ For example, one chapter focuses on articulation, so staccato and short slurs appear in the drills for both hands. By playing these drills, the students prepare to handle the technique in the future pieces.

In the Reading sections, “Compositions and excerpts address the challenge of reading and sight-playing music at the keyboard. A variety of styles and keys are used as are a variety of

² Martha Hilley, *Piano for the Developing Musician*, Fifth Edition (Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning), p xviii.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

score configurations and clefs.”⁵ Through playing this section, the ability to read may be improved step by step. The level begins with simple intervallic reading of two notes and progresses to reading an entire piece with many accidentals. The ability to sight-reading is very important in piano performance in order to learn more efficiently and quickly.

In the Keyboard Theory sections, the book provides much information about music theory in relation to the keyboard. For instance, one example shows how to play a keyboard style cadence pattern in different keys, I-V7-I, with the leading tone resolving to its neighboring tonic in the soprano voice.⁶ Having this knowledge will help students configure accompaniment patterns when they do harmonization and transposition. There is also an abundance of keyboard theory content available on the *PDM* website.

The Harmonization section includes “Melodies from folk and other composed sources, as well as original melodies.”⁷ Different styles of music along with suggested accompaniment styles have been provided. By the end of the units, usage of major and minor modes in combination with primary, secondary, secondary dominants and even altered harmonies are explored. The Transposition sections provide further opportunity to exercise “this skill of musicianship and application of theoretical understanding.”⁸ As requested, the students transpose the piece to an indicated key, such as from C major to E major and A major or at the interval of a tritone.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, p 172.

⁸ Ibid, p xviii.

The Improvisation sections are included because “the ability to express oneself freely at the keyboard grows from an understanding of the melodic and harmonic components of music.”⁹ For some students, this might inspire them to be creative. In each composition section, students are given brief compositional assignments to improve their ability both on repertoire and in theory. The ensemble sections provide group cooperation and communication while developing listening and rhythmic skills. It is always good training to learn to play with others.

At the end of each chapter, subsequent repertoire is included. “Additional collections of keyboard literature, many with brief study suggestions, offer pedagogical reinforcement and the opportunity to go further with an idea.”¹⁰ These encompass a wide range of styles from Renaissance to modern music, including pieces such as Pachelbel’s *Sarabande*, Bartok’s *Mourning Song*, and Funkhousin’s *Jazz Blues Etude*.

Comparison of Both Methods

Thirteen criteria in these two books were chosen to be compared. These thirteen criteria were identified based on: (1) overview of both textbooks and (2) author expertise of pedagogical knowledge in the area of group piano for the beginner, and (3) consultation with supervising professor. .

Comparison Criteria Definitions

Pentascals: The scale using the first five notes of major or minor scales.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Scales and arpeggios: Scales are groups of seven notes played in an ascending and descending order either major or minor. Arpeggios are the tones of a chord in rapid succession rather than simultaneously.

Sight-reading: Reading and playing the music simultaneously without any advanced preparation.

Harmonization: Providing harmony for a melody.

Chord and chord progression: Different types of chords and the way how these chords progress within a specific melody.

Ensemble: Piano ensemble exercises divide the piano class into separate parts.

Pedal: Introduces how to use the pedal on piano.

Improvisation: Creating melody with the right hand according to the chord given.

Solo repertoire: Selections used to develop performance the skills

Accompaniments: Piano accompaniment part with a vocal or instrumental line.

Form: Information on the formal structure of music

Style period: Information on all the main style periods of music

Appendix and index: Appendix include scales and arpeggio of scale and arpeggio fingering charts and glossary of terms. Index contains lists of compositions arranged by composer or by title.

Pentascals

Both books introduce the pentascals. The concept of pentascals is really important for the beginner of piano, because it consists of the first 5 notes of a major or minor scale, easily played by one hand with five fingers, one finger per note. It also teaches the student to hear

tonally within a key. In *AGPA*, it appears in Unit 3, and in *PDM*, it appears in Chapter 2. In *AGPA*, it takes 4 units from Unit 3 to Unit 6 to learn and review the major and minor pentascales. The ability to play pentascales chromatically is required by *AGPA* in Unit 4 for major and Unit 6 for minor. The Reading sections provide some small pieces in five finger patterns and request transposition to a close key. That is a practical exercise for the use of pentascales. Before playing the small piece, playing the pentascale in a particular key helps students to feel and hear the key and to do some related transposition. In *PDM*, only the major pentascale is introduced. Appropriately, both books include Bartok's "Study" as a reading exercise. Also, there is another kind of pentasacle called Blues Pentascale which appears in the Improvisation section of Chapter 7 of *PDM*. "The blues pentascale is 1, 4, and 5 of a major pentascale with a flat 3 and an added flat 5."¹¹ In Chapter 8, it is further expanded to include a lowered 7th.

Scales and Arpeggios

Scales and Arpeggios are required in both books and play an important role in the process of all the units. In *AGPA*, the major scales are divided into three groups and presented in order from 1 to 3. Group 1 includes C major, G major, D major, A major and E major, creating a circle of fifths. Group 2 includes B major, G flat major, D flat major and F major. Group 3 includes B flat major, E flat major and A flat major. The grouping of these scales is based on common fingering. For example, in Group 1 major scales, all the scales are played with the same fingering in each hand, right or left. In Group 2, all the two-black-key groups are played with 2 and 3, and the three black-key groups are played with 2, 3 and 4. In other words, the long fingers reach into the black keys and the short thumbs connect the groups. It is an easy way for students

¹¹ Ibid, Hilley, p177.

to play the scales by memorizing the scales in groups. The same thing is true in minor scales. All the minor scales are also divided into three groups. Each group has similar fingering presented in the book. For playing arpeggios, *AGPA* provides two octave fingering for all the major and minor keys. The selection of fingering for arpeggio largely depends upon the distance between the first and third scale degrees and the combination of black and/or white keys for the comfort of the hand. Book 1 presents major and minor triads, arpeggios and Book 2 includes both dominant and diminished seventh arpeggios.

At the end of each book of *AGPA*, the author provides a two-octave Scale and Arpeggio Fingering Chart in Appendix A. Only finger numbers are given in the chart with black dots above the appropriate fingers to indicate a black key. It presents a clear image to help students to memorize the technique in all the major and minor keys.

In *PDM*, the major and minor scales are also put in groups and located in the technique sections of each chapter. These groups are presented by categories of black-key-group major scale, white-key major scales, white-key minor scales, and black-key-group relative minor scales. Special keys according to fingerings, such as F major/minor scale fingering, C sharp and F sharp minor scales and B flat and E flat major scales are given in the last chapters. Unlike *AGPA* in which each scale and arpeggio is written out on the staff, *PDM* only presents a main concept about fingerings and the rules of how to use these fingers. There is not as much detailed information for each scale on the staff or with fingering numbers given. In addition, all natural, harmonic and melodic minor scale forms are required in *PDM*, whereas, only minor harmonic scales are required in *AGPA*, making the requirement more involved by comparison.

Sight-reading

Both books have sight-reading sections. Besides some small music pieces, the sight-reading sections also include rhythmic and rhythmic ensemble reading. In *AGPA*, the reading section is designed to fit the presented objective of the unit. For example, in Book I, Unit 5, the objective of this unit is to play minor pentacles and minor triads beginning on any key. The reading section of Unit 5 provides three small pieces in minor keys, and students are required to also transpose to close keys. In addition to grand staff reading, score readings are provided in Book 2, from two parts to four parts. Some instruction about how to practice is also presented before each piece, such as for the right hand to play, soprano and alto play together, and for the left hand to play alto and bass play together, soprano, alto and tenor, then four parts. It is good training for any conductor, choral or instrumental.

In *PDM*, the pieces in the sight-reading section also fit the materials presented in the technique section before that. For instance, in Chapter 5, the black-key-group pentascales were drilled in the technique section, and the black-key-group reading was presented in the reading section. The materials that were introduced in the technique section help students to handle the technique required in the reading section. On the other hand, the reading section provides practical exercises for the student to consolidate the knowledge they learned in the previous technique section. It also has choral reading and instrumental accompaniment reading to improve the student's ability to listen to the whole piece when they collaborate. Sometimes the fingering is not given in the reading. The melody sometimes turns around or shifts occur. Students are asked to plan a fingering before they play. Again, this seems more involved and demanding for the student; *AGPA* would be more specific.

Harmonization

To strengthen harmonization skills, both books include a special section in each unit. Learning to hear harmonically is very important for beginning adults. In *AGPA*, there are two types of harmonization, with Roman numeral given and with no Roman numeral given under the staff. The harmonization begins with playing the roots of I and V chords while the right hand plays the melody within five finger patterns in major keys. At the head of the section, the rules of harmonization are stated by the author, such as “Use tonic when most of the melody notes are 1, 3 and 5. Use dominant when most of the melody notes are 2, 4 and 5”¹² etcetera. As music majors, the students have already been introduced to these concepts in music theory courses. Use of just one note in the left hand along with easy melodic five-finger patterns in the right hand allows students to play an entire piece. This provides a good opportunity to review playing the pentascales in both hands in the key of each piece. Having them feel the hand position in a particular key is very helpful to them for playing the piece successfully. After each harmonization, students are required to do an “easy” transposition to another key, usually a whole or half step away, such as from d minor to e minor, A major to G major and so on. The chord usage expands to supertonic, mediant, submediant, and secondary dominants in Book 2.

Harmonization with Two-Hand Accompaniment is also featured in *AGPA* with the instruction, “Using the indicated chords, create a two-hand accompaniment for the following melody by continuing the pattern given in the first measure.”¹³ This is an additional method of harmonization found in *AGPA*. In *PDM*, a similar style of two hand accompaniment is introduced, but the chord names are not given. Also, *PDM* supplies additional melodies and suggestions for harmonization on the internet. As in *AGPA*, the harmonization begins with tonic

¹² Lancaster and Renfrow, p.52.

¹³ Ibid, p112.

or dominant in blocked or broken 5th intervals at the very beginning and then proceeds to more complicated harmonies including secondary dominants. Usually, the accompanying style is suggested before each melody, such as “broken chord”, “two-handed” and etcetera. In *AGPA*, harmonization is always followed by transposition, whereas transposition is an individual section in *PDM*.

Chord and chord progression

In *AGPA*, types of chords are introduced throughout Book 1 and Book 2, from tonic to dominant, subdominant to secondary (ii, iii, vi) and finally secondary dominants such as V7/V, V7/ii, V7/iii chords. Typical usage of these chords is presented in chord progressions.

Examples appear right after the chord is introduced in the unit. For example, in Book 1, the dominant and dominant seventh chords are introduced in Unit 11. Practicing the chord progression I-V7-I in all major keys is required to provide comprehension within the same unit. In Unit 12, when the subdominant chord is introduced by the author, the chord progression I-IV-I is presented, and again students are required to practice this chord progression in all major keys and later in minor keys. Besides these basic progressions, more complicated chord progressions such as I-ii6-I64-V7-I and I-V7/iii-iii-V7-I are listed in several units of Book 2. The fingerings for the chord progressions are indicated in the book very clearly. Through practicing these minor or major chord progressions in particular keys, students will be much more familiar with the keyboard harmony and better prepared to do the harmonization and transposition.

In *PDM*, chord progressions are also presented throughout the whole book. Like *AGPA*, it begins with a very basic chord progression in the Keyboard Theory section of Chapter 3. It is called “triad chain.” The triads are played consecutively in root position up and down each major pentacles, acting as I-ii-iii-IV-V-IV-iii-ii-I. Students are even expected to jump in root position from I to V and others. The *progression in closest-position* common for smooth keyboard writing, is not introduced by the author until Chapter 4. At that point, the tonic is either in root position or in first or second inversion. After that, minor chord progressions, ii-V7-I progressions, secondary chord progression, and borrowed chord progressions are presented in the rest of the chapters. This differs from *AGPA* in the fact that *PDM* does not provide any fingering

instruction for the chord progressions in the *Keyboard Theory* sections, while *AGPA* always does. Also, the *progressions using borrowed chords* is an entirely new concept not presented in *AGPA*.

It introduces the effect of altered harmonies.

Ensemble

For ensemble playing, both textbooks provide many selections for the students in the group piano class to experience listening to each other. In *AGPA*, this begins in Unit 3 with examples in three or four parts, each containing melody, two-hand accompaniment and chordal-root harmony as the main parts of ensemble playing. Above the melody, the chord names are given for each change. But the two-hand accompaniment part and roots-of-chord parts are not written out in each measure. The accompaniment styles and notes are written out in the first several measures of each piece. After that the students should continue to play their parts by following the example based upon the chord names given in the rest of piece. This exercise increases the students' ability to get familiar with chord positions on the keyboard and find the closest one. Students in a group piano class may be divided into several groups. Each group may play one or take turns playing every part in the ensemble. The students need to learn to listen to other parts and play together to complete the ensemble. Additionally, *AGPA* provides several duet pieces in both *Books 1* and *2*. This allows for pairing of students in the room to work together, providing a sense of challenge and fun within a shared endeavor.

In *PDM*, the ensemble repertoire covers more types than *AGPA*, including piano duets, choral music, accompaniments, and alto clef reading. The first ensemble piece in *Chapter 1* is for a rhythm ensemble performing with clapping rather than playing the keyboard. The ensemble repertoire usually contains from four to six parts, which is more than the numbers of parts

completing the ensembles in *AGPA*. Also no chord names are generally given throughout the pieces, with one exception being *Country Dance*, where one of six parts is required to improvise on chord tones; Roman numerals are provided underneath that part. Another difference is that normally each part uses only one hand. Only in some duet pieces does *PDM* present both parts requiring hands together simultaneously. *PDM* writes nearly all the parts out fully, requiring greater reading ability and less practical application of theoretical knowledge than *AGPA*.

Pedal

Both books introduce the use of pedal in the beginning of the book. *AGPA* presents the use of pedal in Unit 8 of Book 1. *PDM* introduces pedaling in Chapter 4. Both of them have the same graphic explanation. The use of the graphic explanation provides a very clear instruction to the students as to how to use the pedal when the sign appears. Points in the graphic show the different times when the pedal is put down, when the pedal is released up, and how long the pedal is held.

In *AGPA*, a pedal practice exercise using intervals of 5ths, 6ths, and 7ths with a pedal on each interval is provided. After that, overlapping pedal is introduced to produce legato sound. The instruction for overlapping pedal is provided to “let the pedal up and press it down again immediately. The pedal must come up exactly at the instant the notes come down, as if the pedal ‘comes up to meet the hand.’”¹⁴ The harmonic interval of a 5th, 6th, and 7th is played by the left hand with the application of overlapping pedal to make a legato connection. This is a good exercise to begin the cooperation and balance of the foot and hand at one time. *AGPA* also points out that listening is very important when students use the pedal. In the rest of Unit 8, pedaling

¹⁴ Ibid, p113.

technique is applied in other sections, such as *Harmonization with Two-Hand Accompaniment*, *Solo Repertoire*, and *Reading*.

In *PDM*, after introducing the basic concept of pedaling, overlapping legato pedal exercises are presented in the technique section of Unit 4. Beginning with the C major pentascales, the student is asked to connect one note to the next with the pedal. The students then connect one note to one chord, followed by one chord to another chord with pedal. In the rest of this chapter, the *Reading* section and the *Subsequent Repertoire* section, requires students to make many applications of their pedal technique. In the *Repertoire* sections of both *AGPA* and *PDM*, overlapping pedal is the most frequently used type of pedaling.

Improvisation

Both books include improvisation, but the requirement of improvisation is not same. Furthermore, each chapter of *PDM* has an improvisation section, while not every unit of *AGPA* includes improvisation. In *AGPA*, the method of improvisation is one fold. Besides black key improvisation and five-finger improvisation in the very beginning of *AGPA*, most of the improvisation is headed *Improvisation from Chord Symbols*. The instructions for this improvisation include, “Using the chord progressions below, improvise RH [right hand] melodies while the LH [left hand] plays the suggested accompaniment style... You can use the suggested rhythm for your improvisation or create your own rhythm to complement the accompaniment.”¹⁵ It then lists *Rules for Improvisation* such as “1. When the tonic chord is used, play mostly scale tones 1, 3 and 5 in the melody...3. Most improvisations begin and end on

¹⁵ Ibid,p.157.

tonic. 4. The ear should always be the final guide in determining which melody notes to play.”¹⁶

Often, when a new chord is introduced in a specific unit, a *Improvisation from Chord Symbols* section will appear in that unit. This is a good way to review and feel the chords on the keyboard.

In *PDM*, the style of improvisation is diversified. From the beginning, like *AGPA*, the students are asked to improvise the melody within a pentascale or two- and three-black key groups. Moreover, with increasing expansion and introduction of chords, different types of improvisation appear. Besides the traditional improvisation in which chord progressions are given, there is also improvisation of a right-hand melody consisting of chord tones, improvisation of melody within modal scales, and blues improvisation. The improvisation in *PDM* places more emphasis on jazz than does *AGPA*. Examples of walking bass and typical blues progressions in different keys are given in the book, which orients students towards jazz and modern music. *AGPA* contains more traditional harmonic emphasis throughout the books.

Solo Repertoire

Solo Repertoire is an important part of both *AGPA* and *PDM*. In *AGPA*, “each unit has at least one repertoire piece that may be used for performance or study. A section of supplementary repertoire is contained in the back of the book for those students who need additional music or for teachers who like a wider choice of music for students.”¹⁷ Before each solo repertoire selection, words of instruction are always presented. These instructions guide students as to what to do “Before playing” and “While playing” and also help students to form good habits for reading, analyzing and playing music on the keyboard. Before playing, students are advised to

¹⁶ Ibid,

¹⁷ Lancaster and Renfrow, Book 2, Foreword, p.3.

consider the key signature, tempo, rhythm, hand position, hand crossovers, large leaps and repeat signs, etcetera. While playing, students are reminded to listen for the balance between hands, slurs and staccatos, pedal changes, dynamic changes, etcetera. The solo repertoire includes a wide range of music from the 17th century to the 20th century. As with each unit having a new objective, the solo repertoire of each unit also teaches something new in the music. With the students' increased improvement of technique and music theory, the repertoire advances step by step.

In *PDM*, there are two sections related to repertoire in each chapter. The first, which appears in the very beginning of each chapter, is called *Exemplary Repertoire*. Another section called *Subsequent Repertoires* appears at the end of each chapter. In *Exemplary Repertoire*, instruction is presented before the repertoire under the headings of “Inquiry” and “Performance.” Inquiry includes the instruction of hand motion, repetition, fingering, etcetera, with the function of “Inquiry” being similar to the “Before playing” in *AGPA*. It is a way to draw attention to points of the piece. “Performance” includes tips for dynamic shading, articulation, adding ornamentation, trading parts, and some specific practice tips for technique. Each selected *Exemplary Repertoire* provides a good emphasis on new material in that chapter. Unlike *AGPA*, where the additional *Supplemental Solo Repertoires* unit is positioned in the back of the books, *PDM* provides at least two or more supplementary repertoires at the end of each chapter called *Subsequent Repertoire*. Before *Subsequent Repertoire*, some brief instructions are also provided. Meanwhile, students are invited to go to the *PDM* web site for additional reading suggestions for some of the pieces. The style periods of repertoire show a wide range from Baroque to contemporary music. Also, the authors of *PDM*, Martha Hilley and Lynn Freeman Olson, contributed a large amount of their own compositions throughout. This is not the case in *AGPA*.

Accompaniments

Accompanying can provide good practical training for awareness when making music with other players and singers. Many instrumental and vocal accompaniments are provided throughout Book 2 of *AGPA* as well as in a supplemental section devoted to the topic. There are no fingerings given for the piano part. Students are asked to “1. Transpose the [instrumental] line to concert pitch..., 2. Work out appropriate fingerings for the accompaniment, and 3. Play the accompaniment while the teacher or other class member plays the [instrument] line transposed to concert pitch.”¹⁸ In vocal accompaniment, students are usually asked to “1. Play the vocal line, 2. Play the accompaniment while the teacher or another class member sings or plays the vocal line.”¹⁹ Again, fingerings are not given for the accompaniment part. Sometimes chord names are given for every change, especially in more complicated accompaniments. In *PDM*, short fragments of instrumental transposition with accompaniments are presented. These are not titled works. A few easier vocal accompaniments are included which are titled. .

In *AGPA*, some modes related to major (Ionian) and minor (Aeolian) such as Dorian, Phrygian, Ionian, Lydian, and Mixolydian, are introduced in Unit 25 of Book 2, the last unit of new information. As each mode is introduced, exercises include the scale, triads and inversion, harmonization and improvisation. In *PDM*, the harmony of modal music is also introduced near the end in Chapter 11. Students are asked to play diatonic triads for particular modal scales as an

¹⁸ Ibid, Book 2, p.378.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.386.

exercise and evaluate melodies and harmonize them to highlight their modal qualities. This

seems more challenging than *AGPA* by comparison.

Form

In *AGPA* there are some basic music forms such as theme and variation, three-part, and rondo which were introduced in several units of Book 2. Appropriate Solo Repertoire provides further definition. In contrast, however, *PDM* never discusses these forms.

Style period

One interesting unit in Book 2 of *AGPA* is called “Musical Style Periods.” The periods include Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Contemporary. Besides some introduction of special features of that specific period such as the harmony, forms, expression, rhythmic patterns, and well-known composers, a small reading piece for the specific period is provided. This unit offers students an opportunity to review all the main musical style periods and observe the development of music history through the ages.

Appendix and index

At the end of *AGPA*, there are four appendixes in Book 1 and five appendixes in Book 2. These include *Scales and Arpeggio Fingering Charts*, *Dominant and Diminished Seventh Arpeggio Fingering Charts*, *Glossary*, *List of Compositions* (by composer) and *List of Compositions* (by title). *PDM* refers the reader to find Appendix A, B and C from previous editions now on the website. Then at the end of *PDM*, a Glossary, Index of titles, and Index of Composers are included. The most significant difference between these two books is inclusion of all the fingering charts by the authors of *AGPA*. This is a helpful reference for all pianists, students, and teachers.

Conclusion

By comparing *Alfred's Group Piano for Adults (AGPA)* with *Piano for the Developing Musician (PDM)*, we can see the differences and similarities between them. In my opinion, both *AGPA* and *PDM* are excellent textbooks for group piano classes, though they are appropriate in various circumstances.

AGPA book 1 (360 pages) and book 2 (405 pages) contains a total of 52 units which present the information with much more detail than *PDM*. There is plenty of fingering instruction for the scales and arpeggio, chords, inversions, rules of harmonization. It seems to be an easier book for the student who is a true beginner of the piano. *AGPA* provides fewer new objects and gives more instruction and practiced exercises in each unit.

By comparison, *PDM* seems to be a more challenging book. *PDM* only has 14 chapters (388 pages) that attempt to cover all the material the authors deem important but cannot provide the detailed instruction or description behind each new objective and chapter. It may be a better choice for the students who have already had some piano background and music theory knowledge. For a further improvement, *PDM* is a good choice for more advanced students who want to learn some jazz and modern piano playing. *PDM* also includes more instrumental transposition and accompaniments as well as choral excerpts for open score reading to prepare students for teaching and conducted ensembles.

Although *PDM* is contained in one volume, it has a large amount of supplemental material available on the internet. Students can take advantage of this resource to obtain more updated material. *PDM* could be seen as a "high tech e-book." This saves paper and money and is a helpful feature with this book. *AGPA* does not involve the internet.

Although I have never taught from *PDM*, I prefer *AGPA* to *PDM*. *AGPA* is well organized and descriptive. Even if there was no teacher available, students could still learn piano with this book step by step on their own. All the new material is covered thoroughly. New material is presented in a reasonable and orderly way. Because *PDM* includes all introductory material in one “preliminary” chapter, the teacher is really needed to proceed through the material. Consequently, in my opinion, *PDM* does not fit the student who is a really beginner of piano. A lot of material presented in *PDM* seems very challenging for a student with no piano background.

Teaching group piano is totally unique experience for me in the United States. Although I have some experience of giving private piano lessons to the children in China, it is still not easy for me to teach adults in group piano. Although I can have a better communication with adults who are already music majors on some instruments or voice and thereby has some basic music knowledge, it is still challenging to handle 10 students at a time in the lab. I look forward to the opportunity to advance this method of group teaching in this country as well as my own.

Table 1. Comparison of Textbooks

Elements of instruction	<i>Piano for the Developing Musician</i>	<i>Alfred's Group Piano for Adults</i>
Pentascale	Major Scale	Major and Minor scales
Scales & Arpeggios	Divided into groups by Black key group, natural, harmonic and melodic minor. Keys are required.	Divided into three groups by fingering. Only harmonic minor scales required.
Reading	Besides basic music reading chord reading and instrumental Accompaniment reading	Basic music, rhythmic and rhythmic ensemble reading
Harmonization	No chord number is given, No transposition followed by harmonization. Additional suggestions in choosing harmony are provided on the internet.	Roman numerals are given or no roman numeral are given with two hands accompaniment. Transposition always followed by harmonization.
Chords	Basic chord and chord progression, borrowed chord progression, no fingering instruction provided	Basic chord and chord progression, no borrowed chord progression, fingering instruction provided.
Ensemble	More types such as piano duet, choral music and etc. More reading ability are required	One type
Pedal	Overlapping pedal	Overlapping pedal
Improvisation	Available in each chapter, different style includes Jazz	Not available in each unit, one type, traditional harmonic emphasis
Solo Repertoire	Two sections in each unit related to repertoire: Exemplary Repertoire and Subsequent Repertoire.	One section in each unit, additional supplemental repertoire positioned in the back of the books.
Accompaniment	Short fragments of vocal or instrumental accompaniment	Many vocal and instrumental accompaniment
Modes	Basic modes related to major/minor keys, more challenging for exercise	Basic modes related to major/ minor keys
Form	Not introduced	Introduced
Style period	Not introduced	Introduced

Appendix& Index Not introduced

Scales and arpeggio fingering charts for all major/minor keys introduced