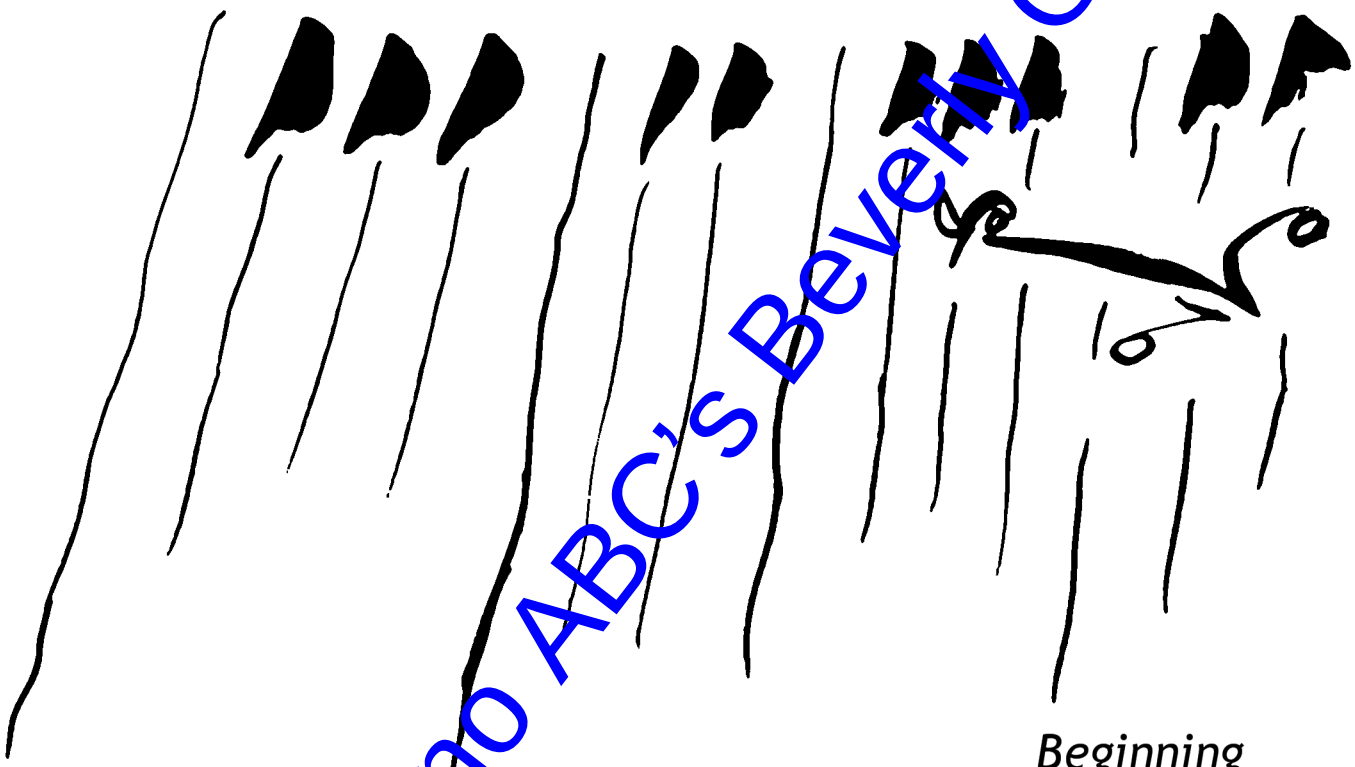
A Unique, Student-Friendly Piano Method for the 21st Century

Piano ABC's



Beginning at the Beginning

An easy yet comprehensive approach to reading music and playing piano

Level One

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Illustrator, François Arnaud

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Patent No. 7,453,036 B1
Joy of Piano Publishing
pianoabcs@gmail.com

Beverly Grace Joy

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A Time to Go *

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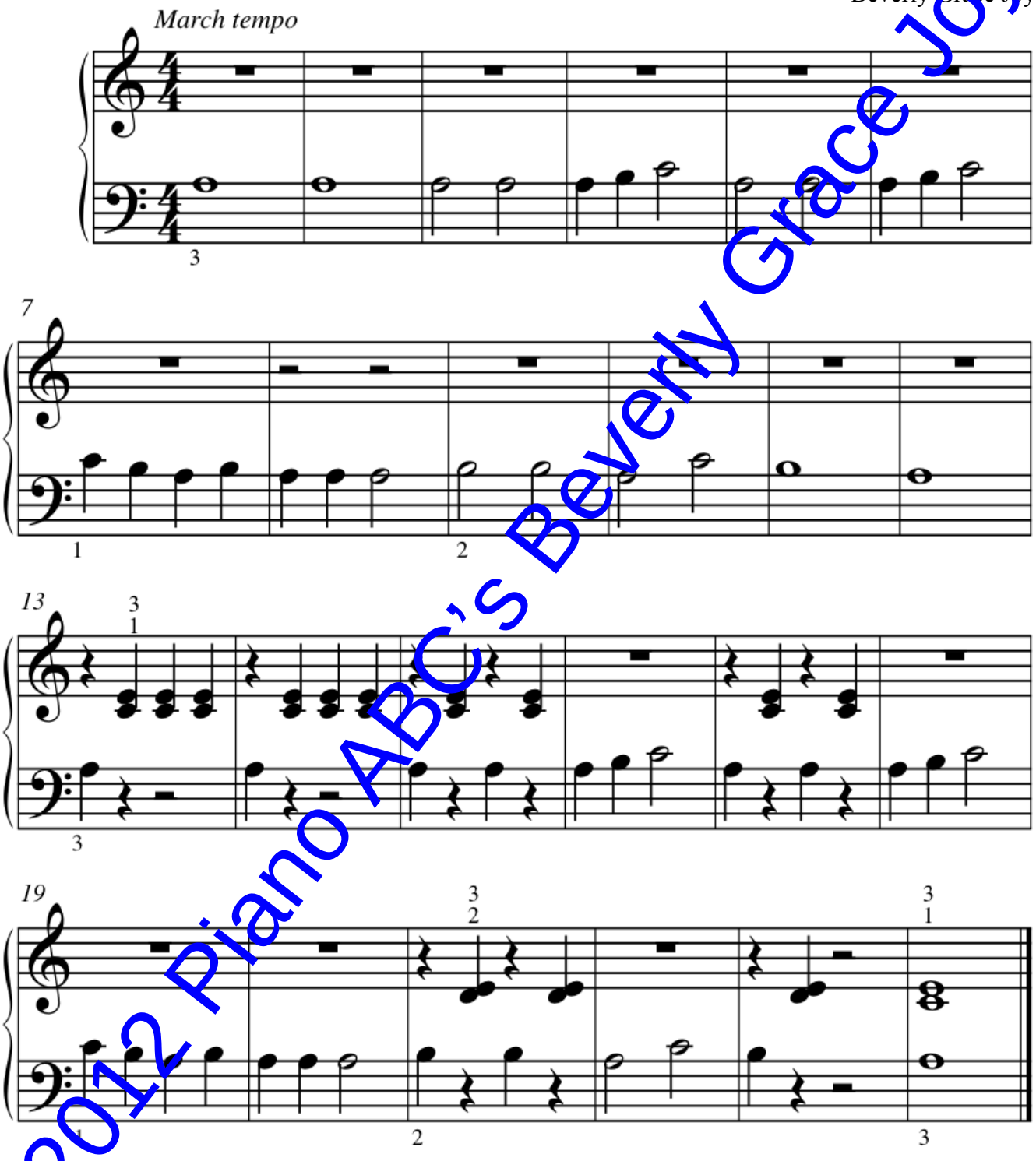

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* *When teaching these pieces, help students to allow non-playing fingers to rest on the keys.*

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The Busy Caterpillar *

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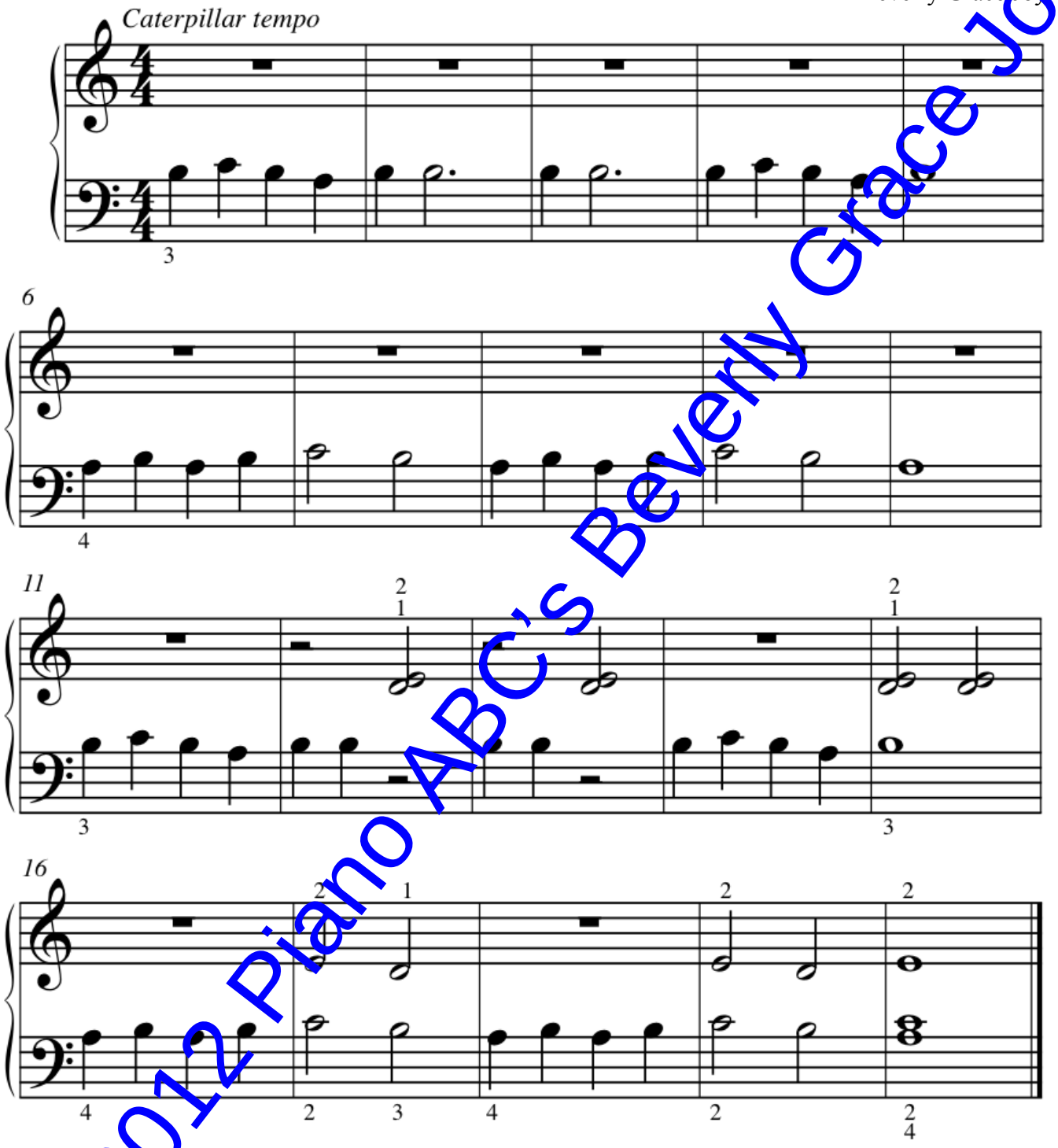

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* *Because extended legato playing frequently induces tension in the small (interosseous) hand muscles, the articulation should be non-legato throughout (except for a few pieces near the end that introduce two-note slurs and one which introduces three-note slurs on the right hand only).*

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Musical Chairs Trick

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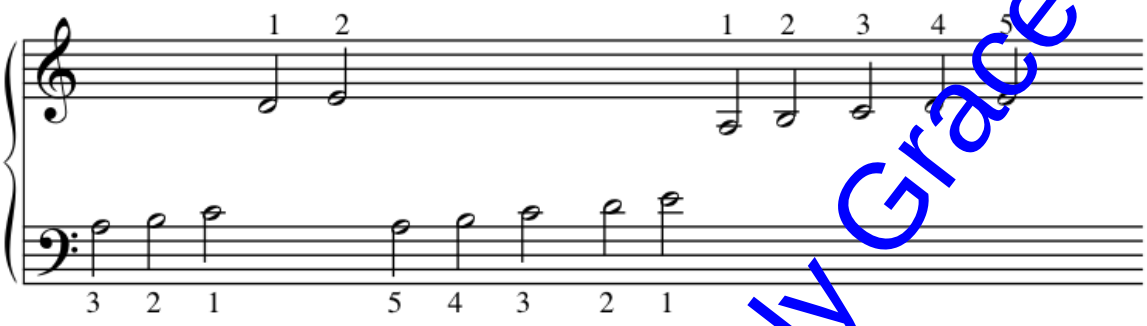
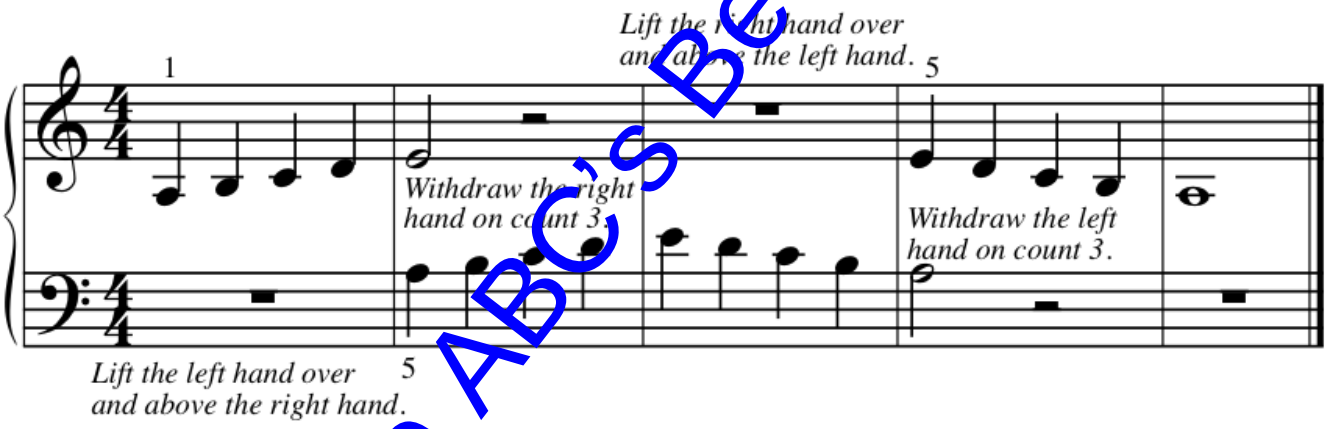
OLD NOTES, NEW WAYS TO WRITE THEM



If you have played "Musical Chairs," you know that everyone practically sits on someone else in order to be able to sit on a chair when the music stops. Your hands are going to play "Musical Chairs".



Teachers: This week would be a good time to skip ahead a few pages and get started on "Drop and Glide 1."

NEWS YOU CAN USE!

New Musical Sign: A ***TIE*** ⁀ *is a* ***MUSICAL PLUS SIGN****. It adds the note values together.*

4 counts + 4 counts = 8 counts

3 counts + 3 counts = 6 counts

2 counts + 2 counts = 4 counts

Students: On page 51 you will play your first ***TIE*** *in "A Foggy Afternoon." Play only the first note, but hold for the total counts of both notes added together.*

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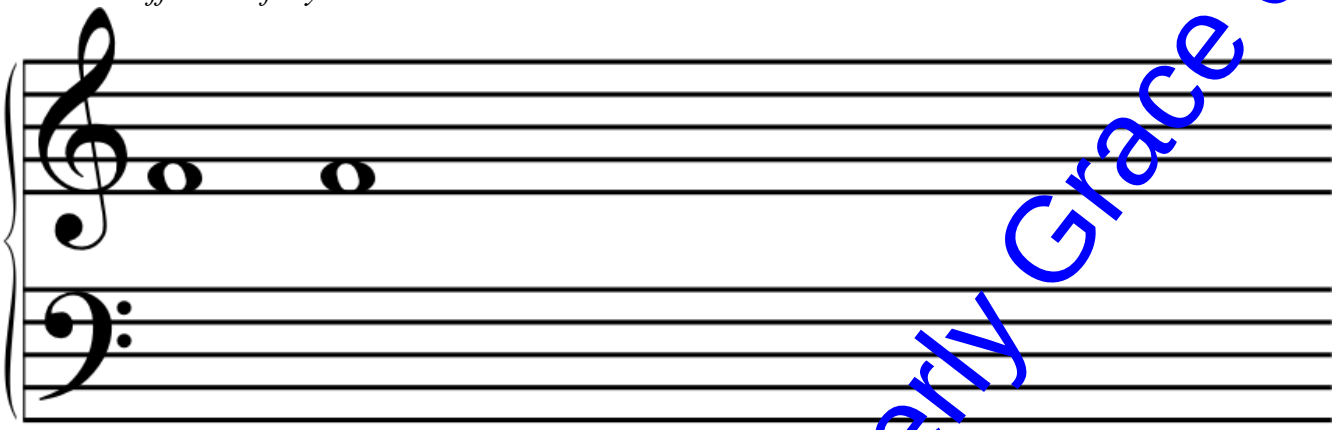
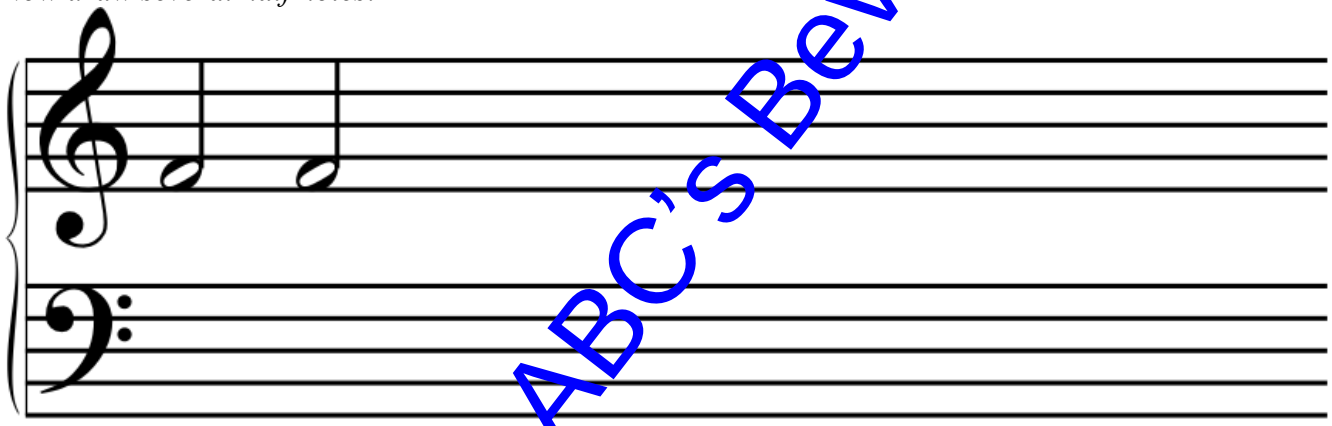
My F Page

F is the note inside the lowest space (first space) of the Treble Clef.

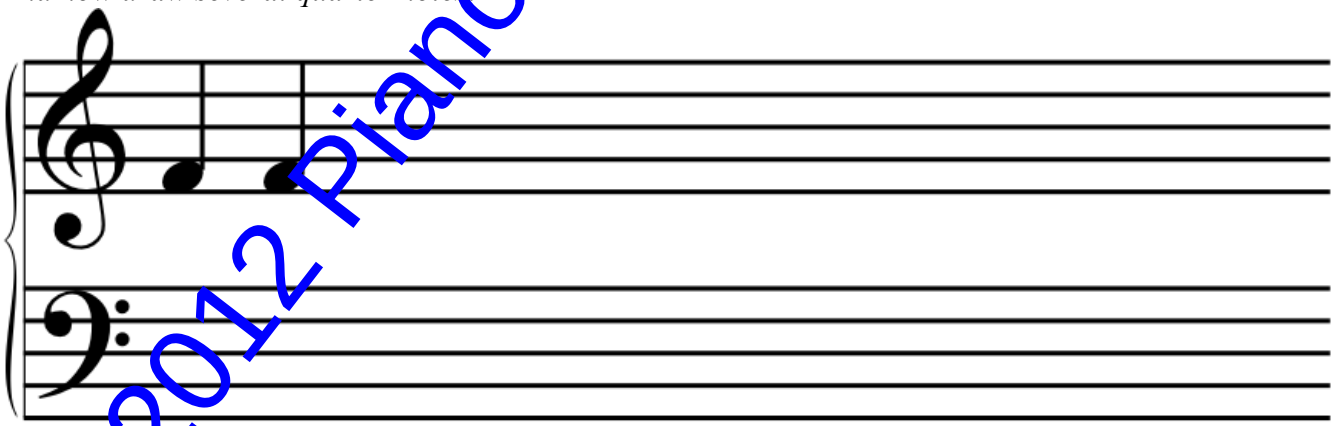
Use this staff to carefully draw several whole notes:



Now draw several half notes:



And now draw several quarter notes:



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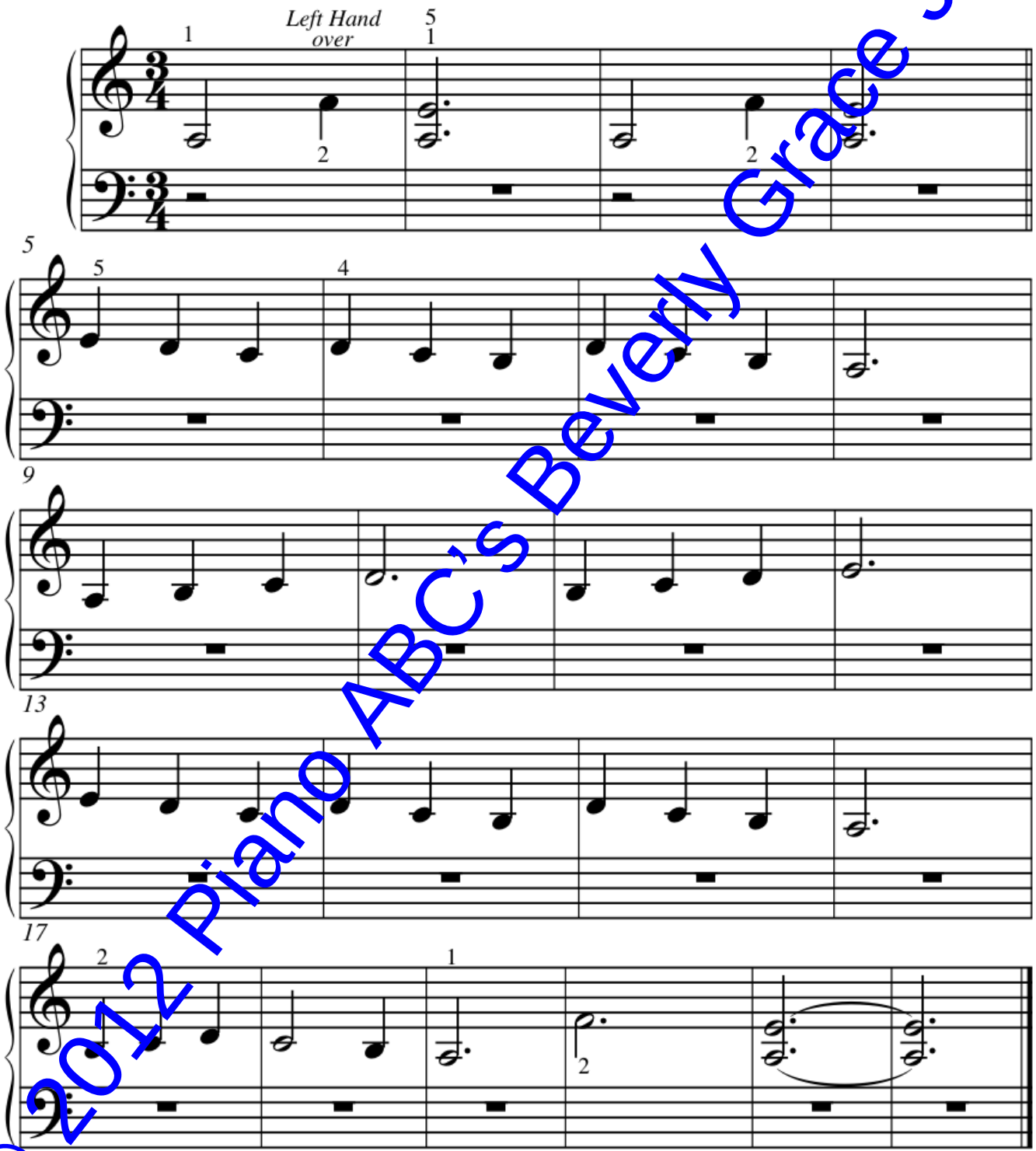
A Foggy Afternoon

Beverly Grace Joy

This piece has an Introduction. How can you tell?



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Taking Turns

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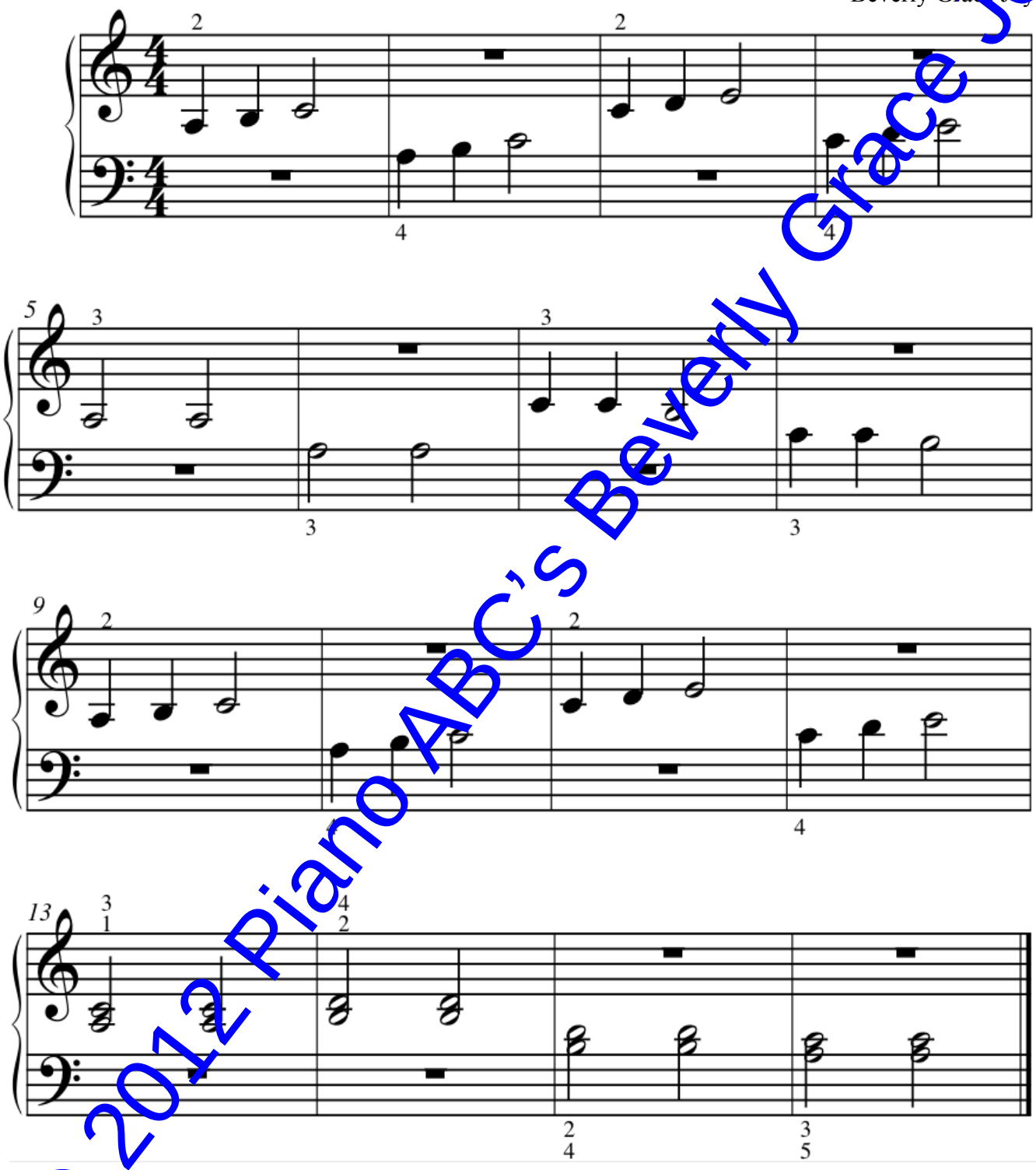

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On a New Road

Beverly Grace Joy

D's and E's Are Climbing Higher

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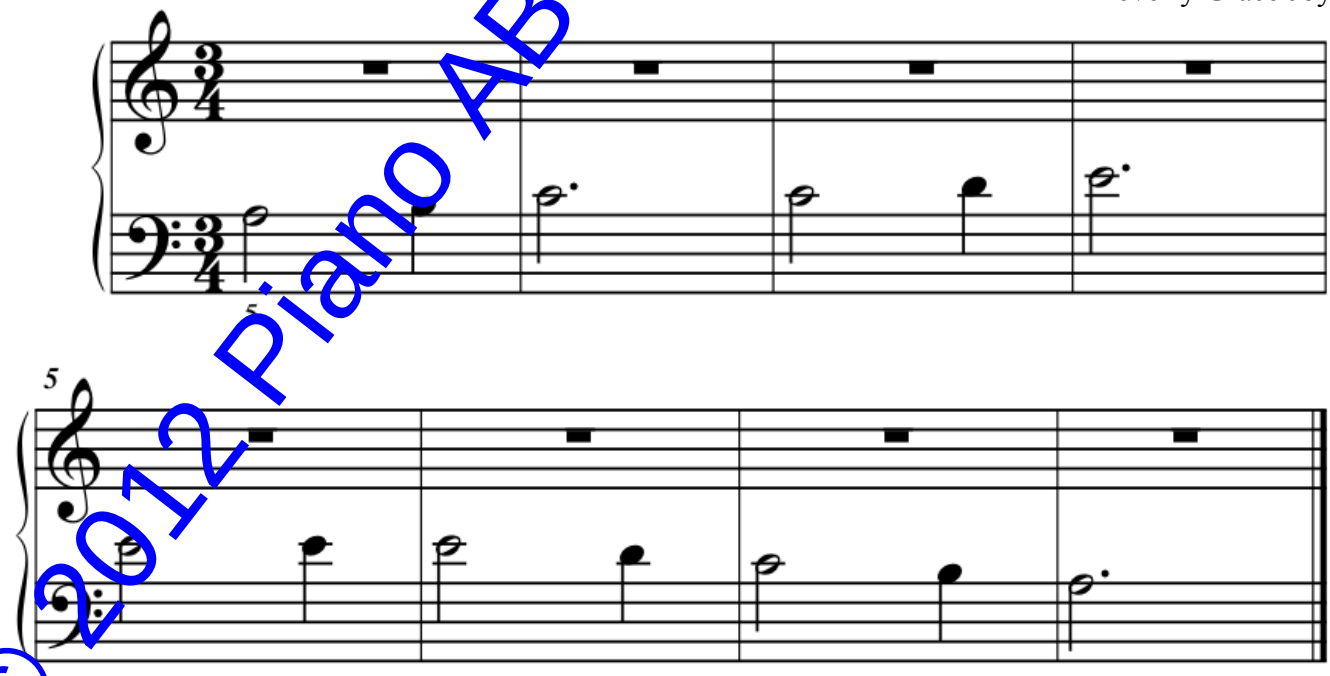

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Stomping Dance

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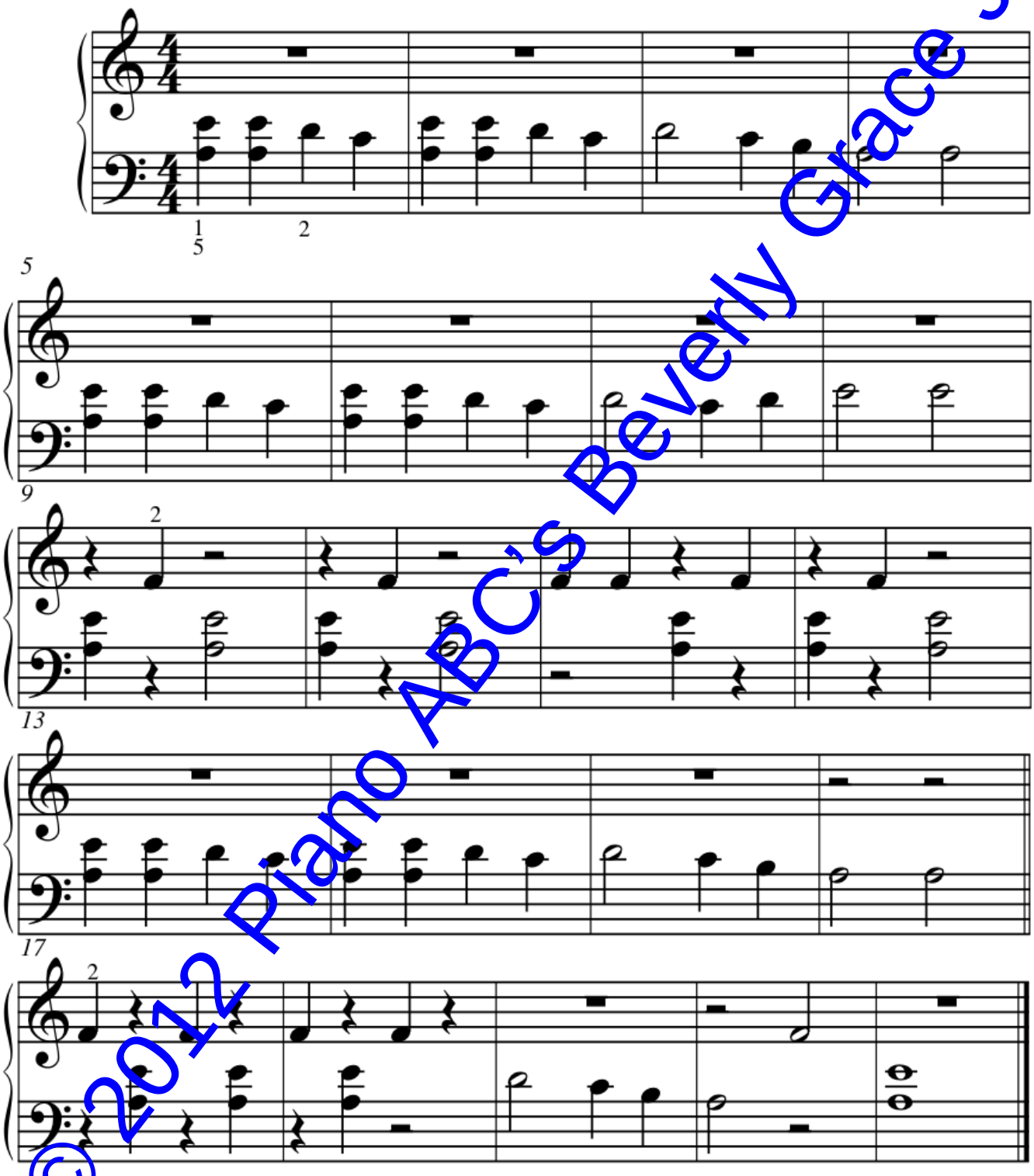
This piece has a Coda (final ending section). Can you see where it starts?



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There are curved lines at the end of "Floating." Some are SLURS, and some are TIES.

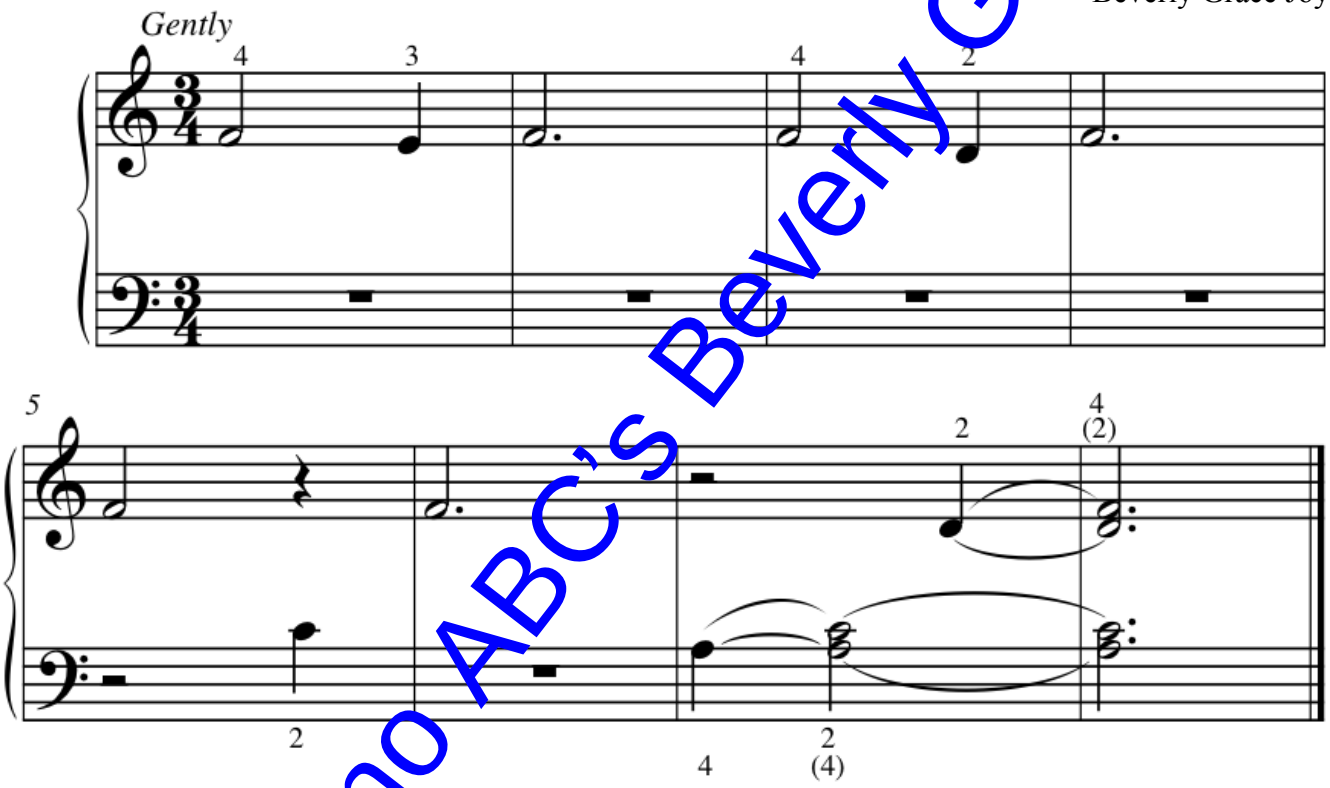
A SLUR connects different notes, and it means to PLAY SMOOTHLY from note to note.

A TIE connects notes that look as if they are repeated--notes on the same line or space, but you PLAY ONLY THE FIRST NOTE AND HOLD for the combined value of all the notes connected by TIES.

In "Floating," the "A" is held for one, plus two, plus three counts. The "C" is held for two plus three counts, and the "D" is held one plus three counts.

Floating

Beverly Grace Joy



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Drop and Glide 1, 2, and 3 (Slurs)

The curved lines below are SLURS. Connect smoothly from the first note to the second note in each set.

With a supple wrist, gently lift the forearm and hand, and lower to the first note. Allow the forearm to lead the hand and fingers while keeping the wrist released. The arm motion will be seen nearer to the wrist. Allow the elbow joint to remain supple.

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Copy Cat

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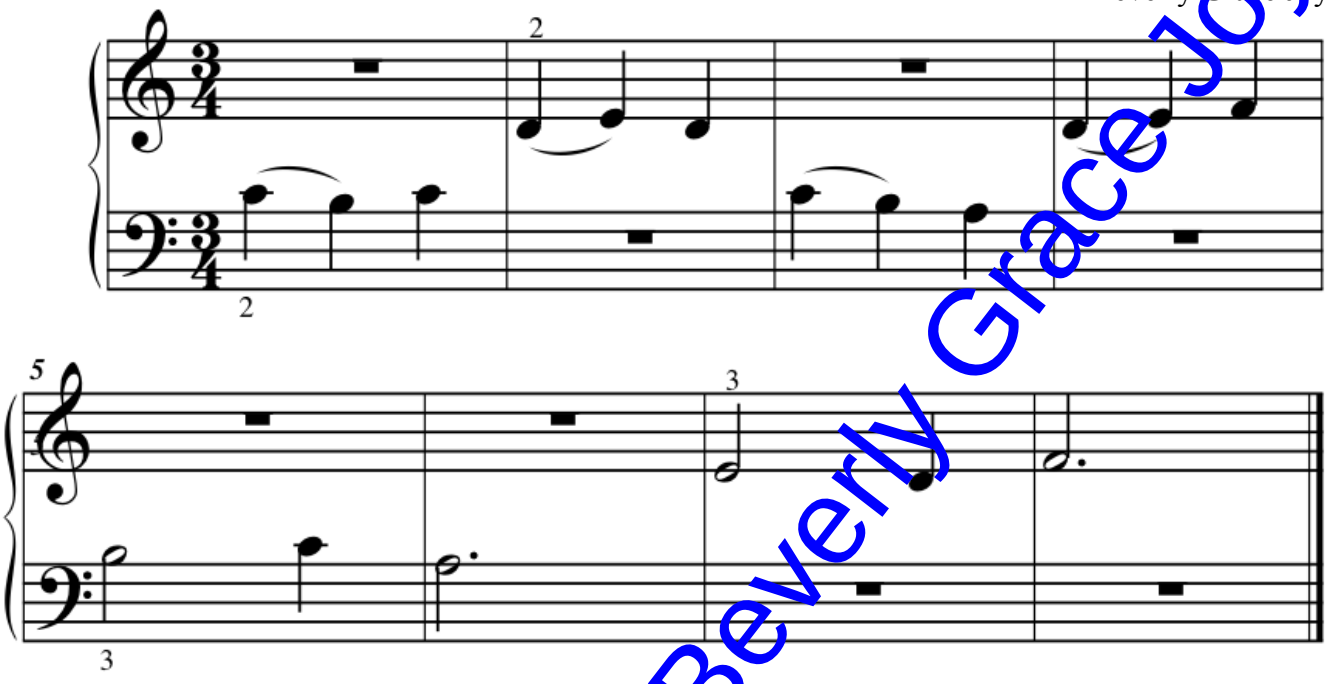

Puppet Show

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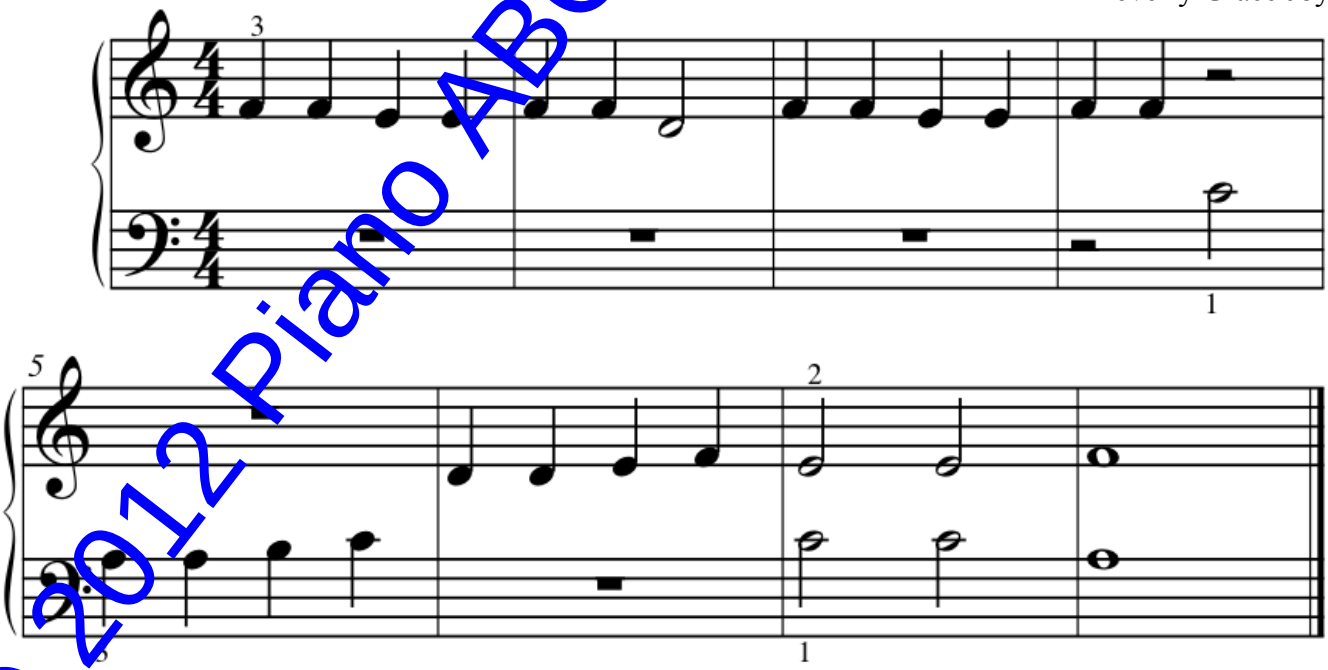

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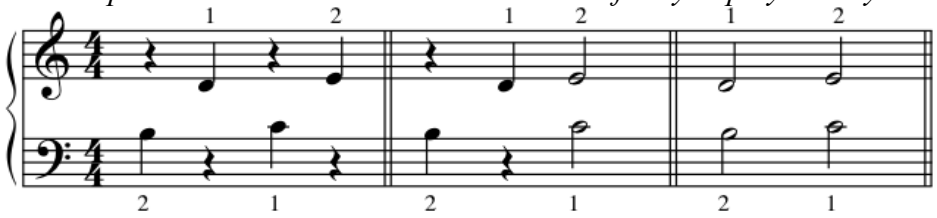
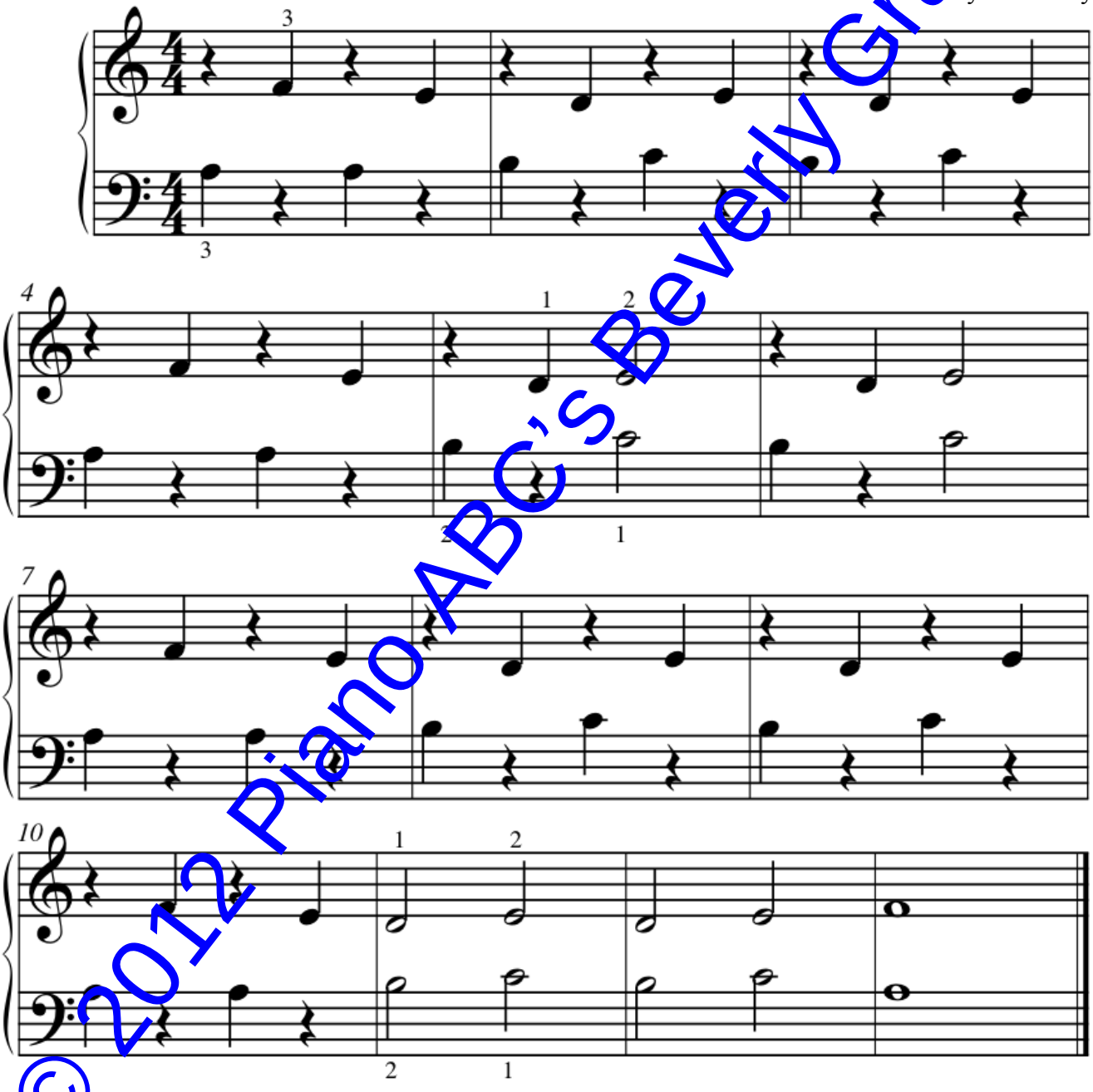
Warm-up – Here are three measures to learn before you play "Mitzy . ."



Mitzy and Her Twin Brothers

Beverly Grace Joy



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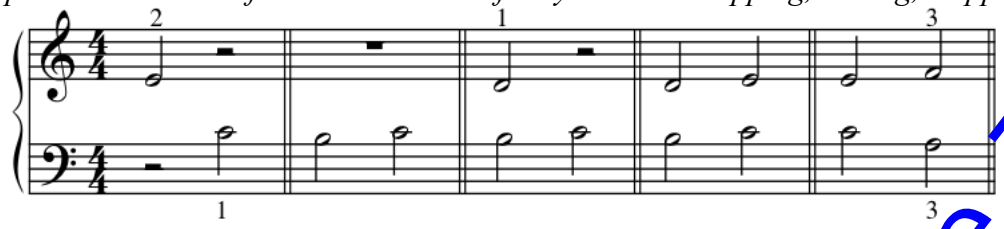
Warm-up - Practice each of these measures before you learn "Slipping, Sliding, Hopping F's"



Slipping, Sliding, Hopping F's

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Leisurely

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Whirling Around

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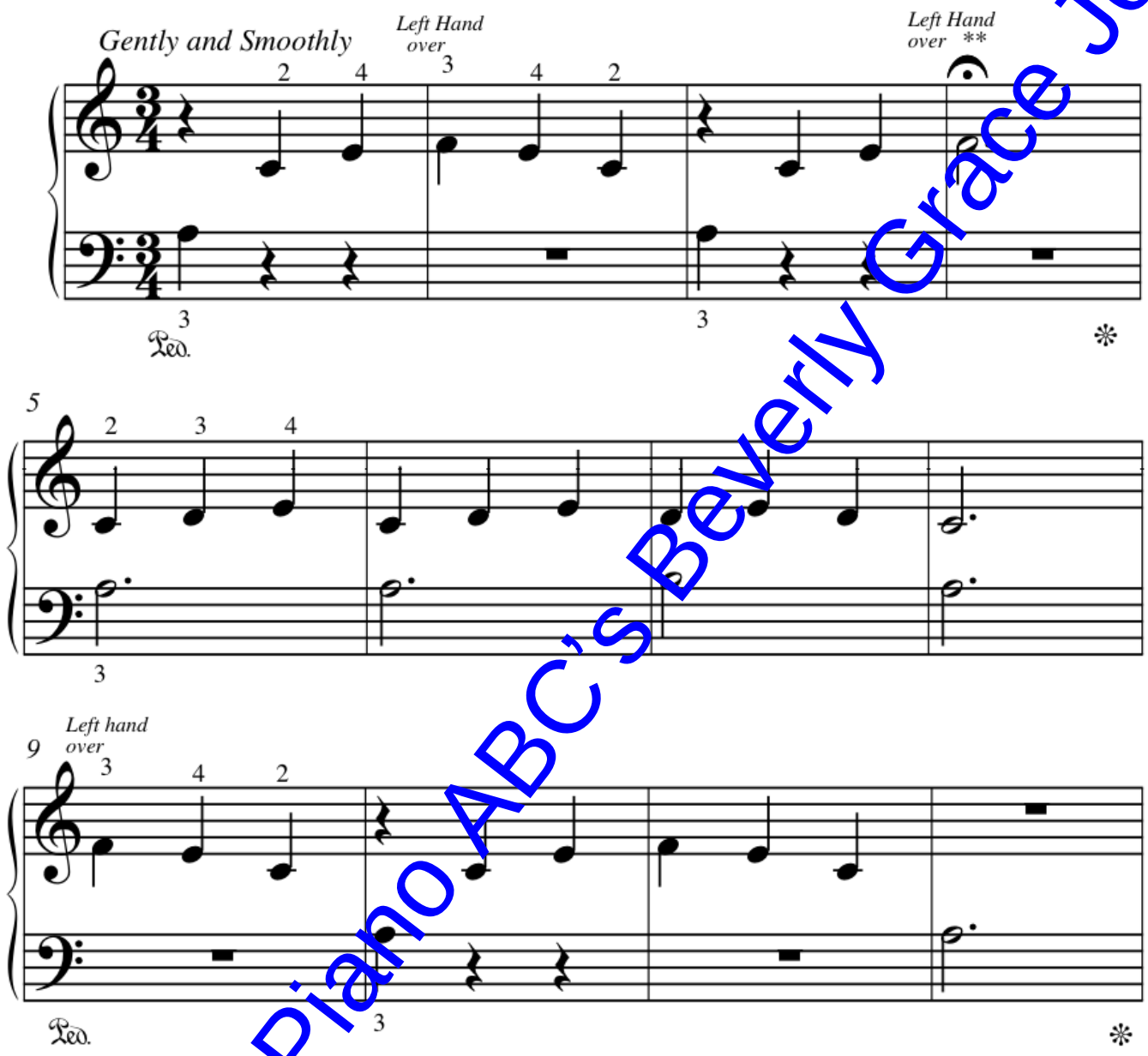

*Students: After you are comfortable playing "Whirling Around," your teacher will show you how to use the Damper Pedal which is the pedal on the right. We used it several weeks ago when we learned to play "Gentle Breezes and "Restful Waves." Perhaps you had someone help. If you cannot reach the pedal, it is time to have someone help. You will just have to tell them when to press the pedal and when to let go. The pedal is depressed when you see the "Ped." sign, and it is released when you see the " * " sign.*

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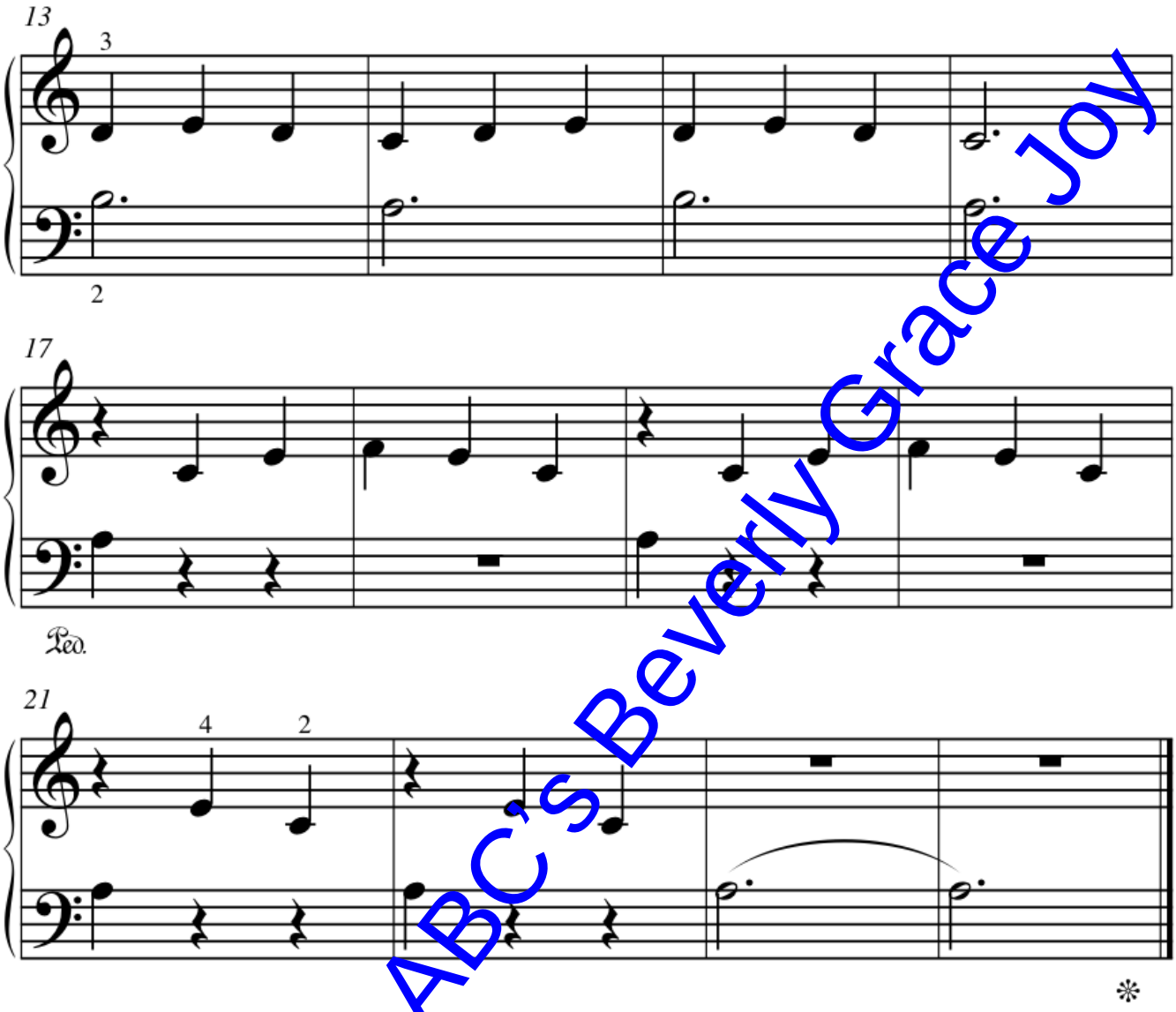

Students: Do you see the sign (𝄐) above the dotted half note in measure 4? It is a FERMATA. Sometimes people call it a "bird's eye." Why do you think they might call it that? As is so often the case with musical terms, FERMATA is an Italian word, and it means to hold this note longer than normal. Some people say to hold it for twice as long, or even longer. Think about how long you would like to hold this note.

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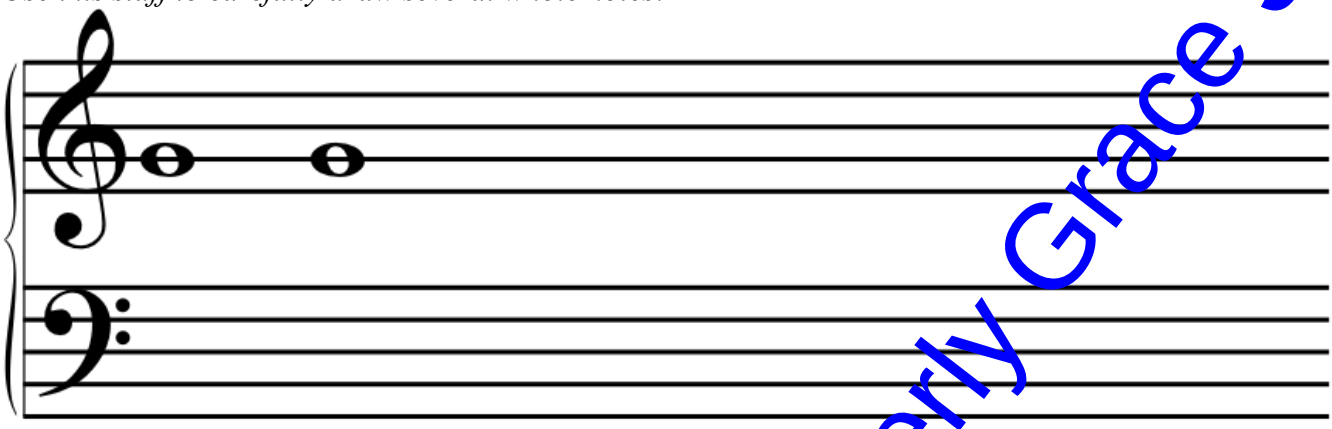
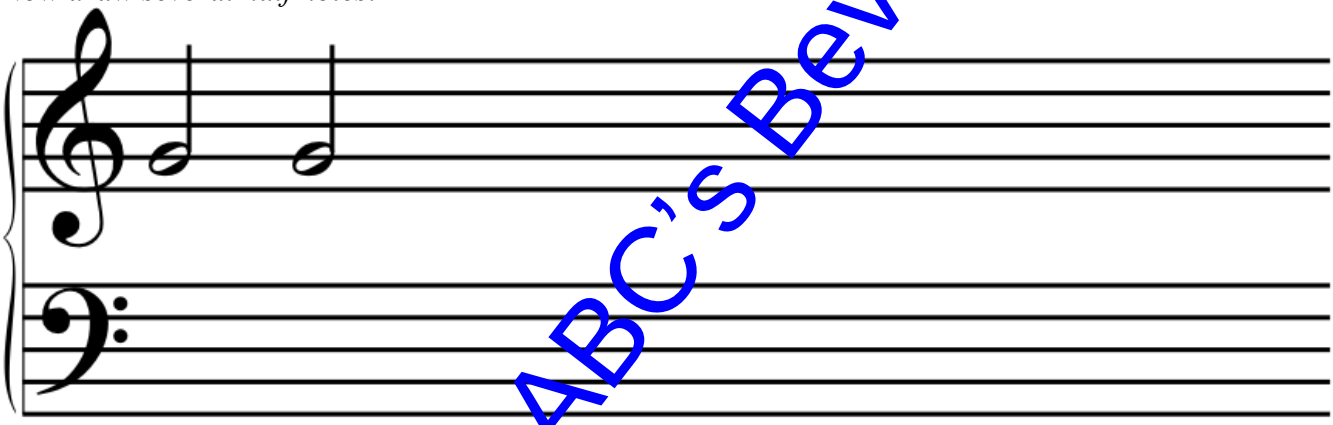
My G Page

G is the note on the second line of the Treble Clef.

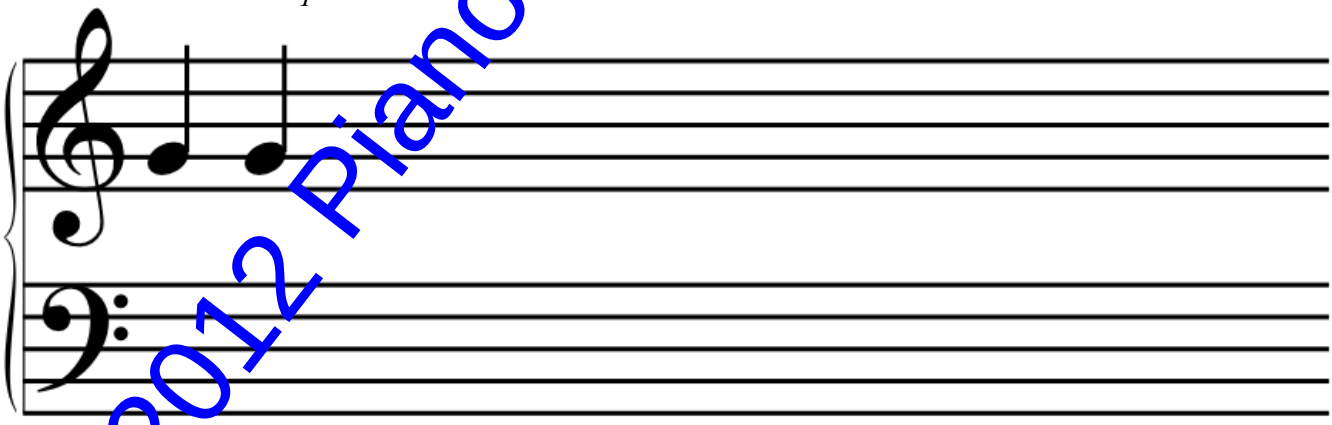
Use this staff to carefully draw several whole notes:



Now draw several half notes:



And now draw several quarter notes:



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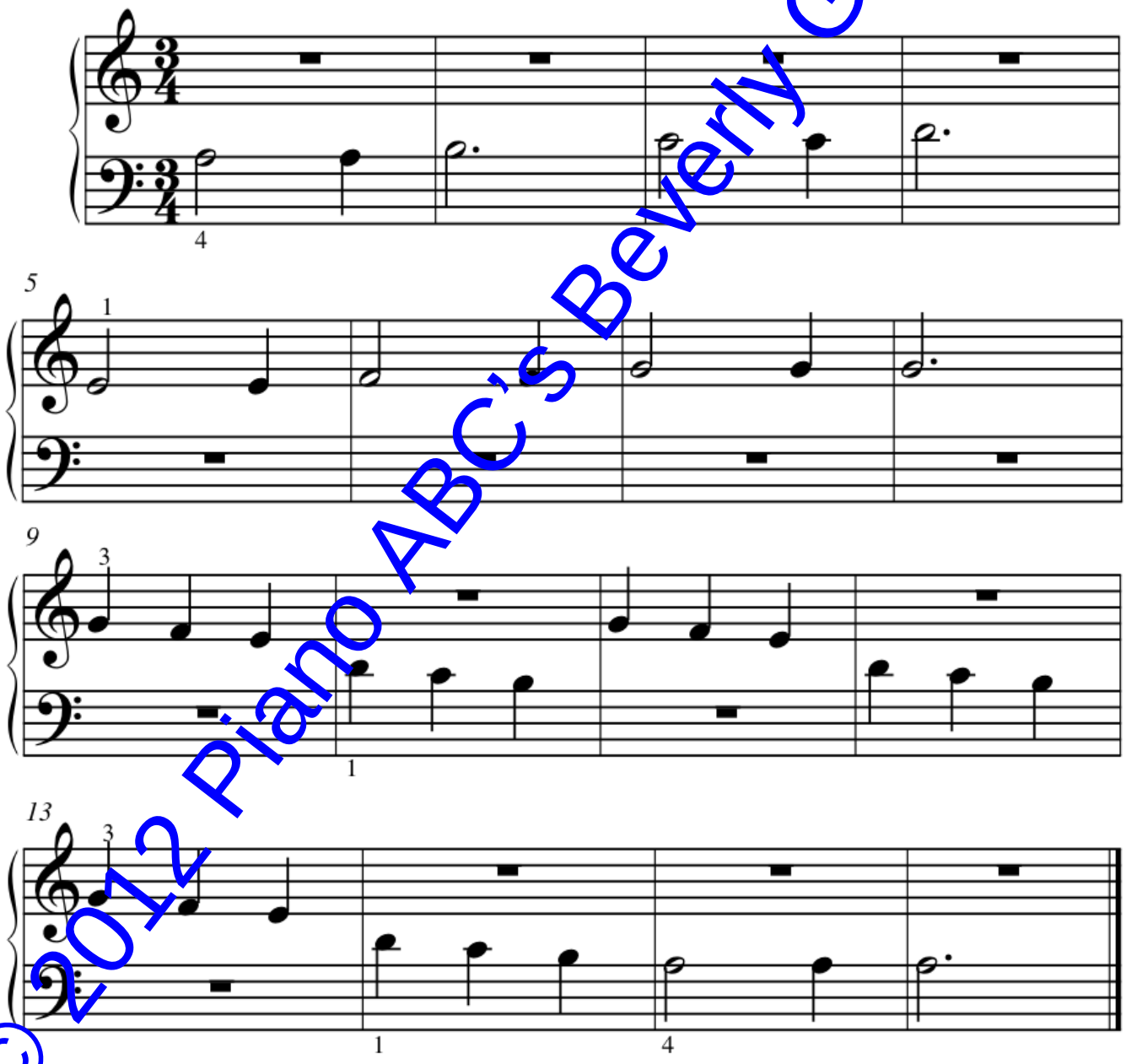
Warm-up 4

Say the musical alphabet forward, then backward five times. Next say the notes for Warm-up 4 before playing it.



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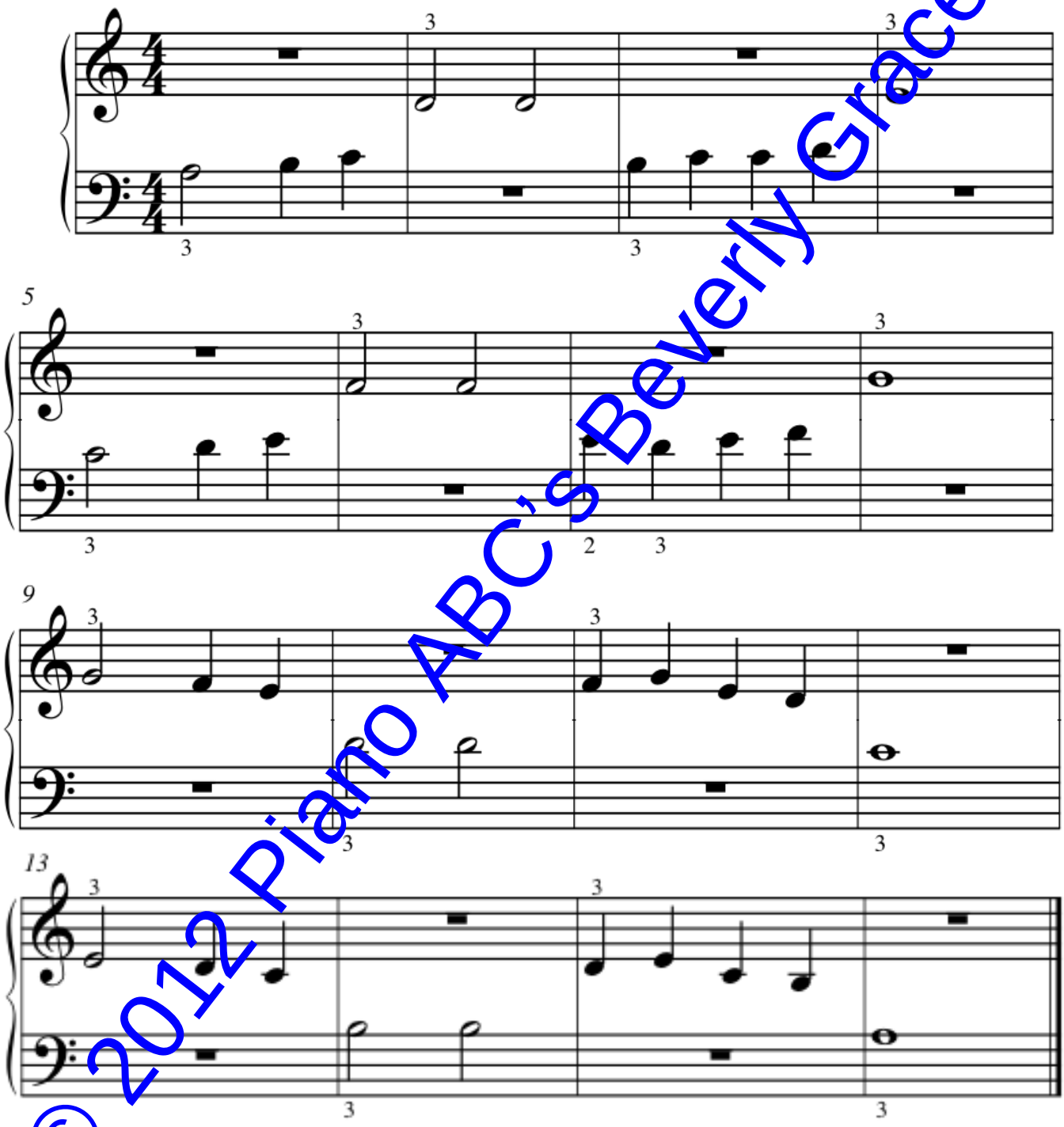
A Stairway Up and Down

Beverly Grace Joy

Find and play all third finger notes. Then read the notes and play.
Remember to move up and down the keyboard step by step.



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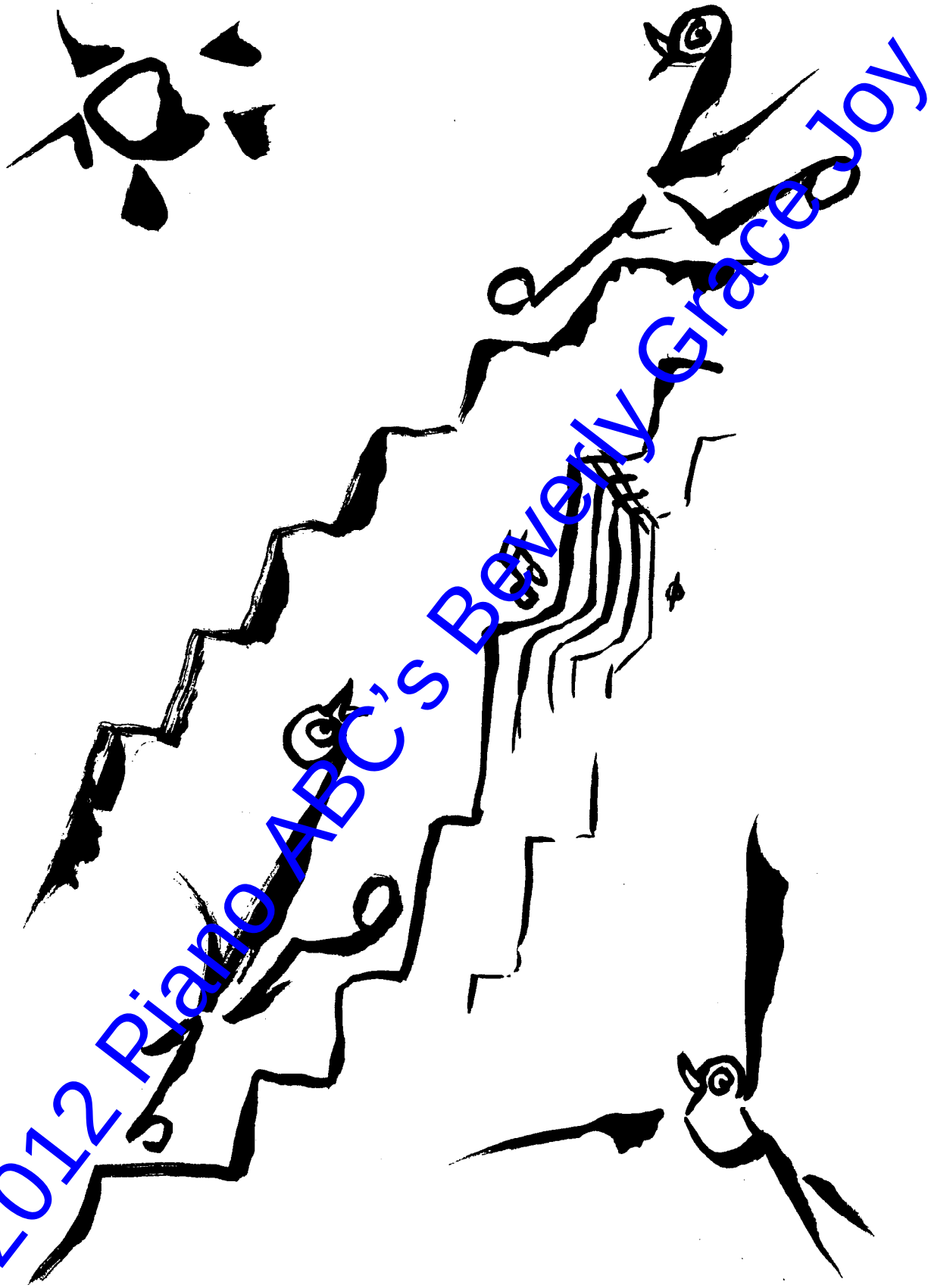

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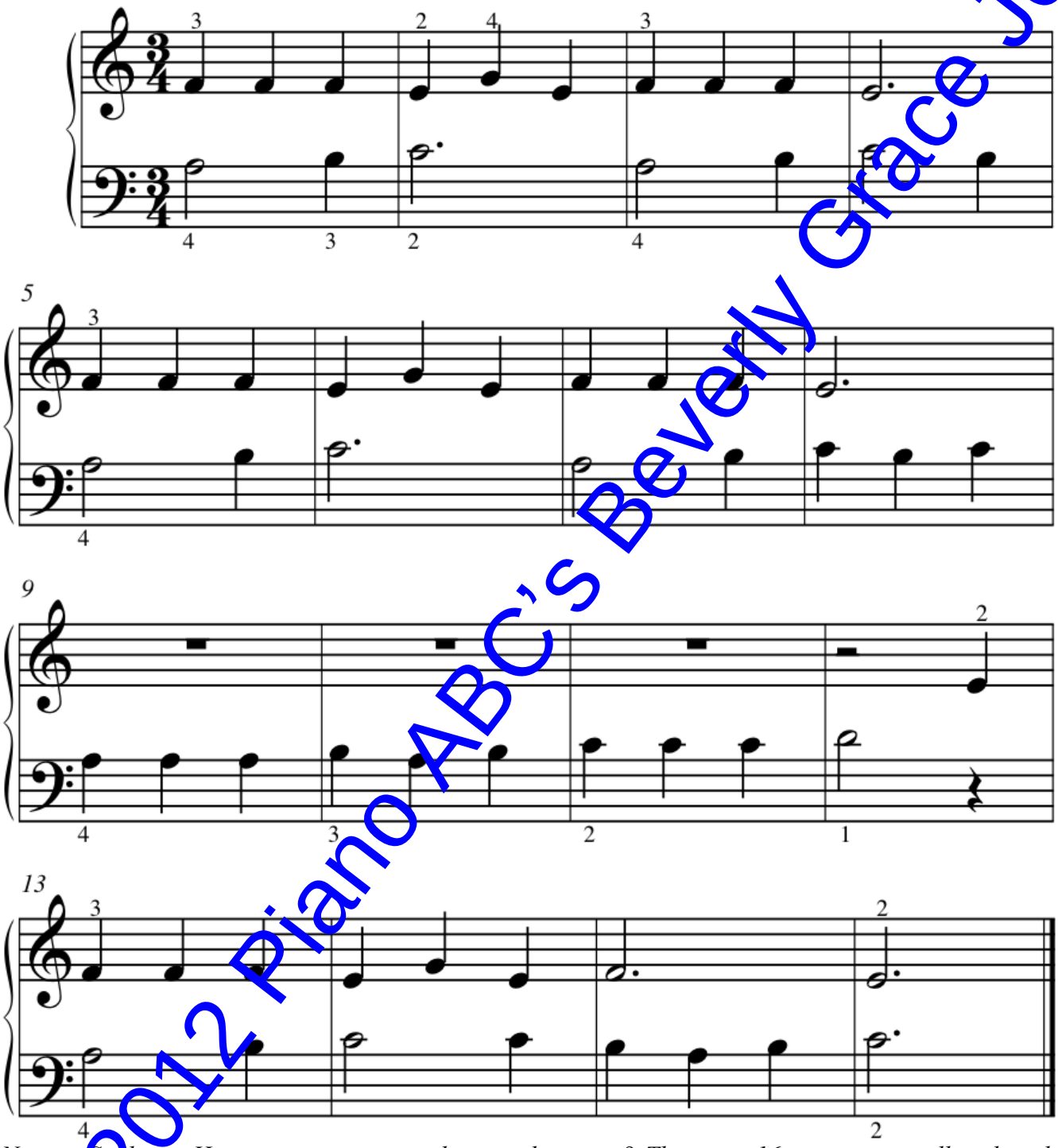
Rainbows and Sunbeams

Beverly Grace Joy



Note to Students: How many counts are there in this piece? There are 16 measures in all and each measure has 3 counts. 16 x 3 = 48, so there are 48 counts in this piece. Remember this little math exercise.

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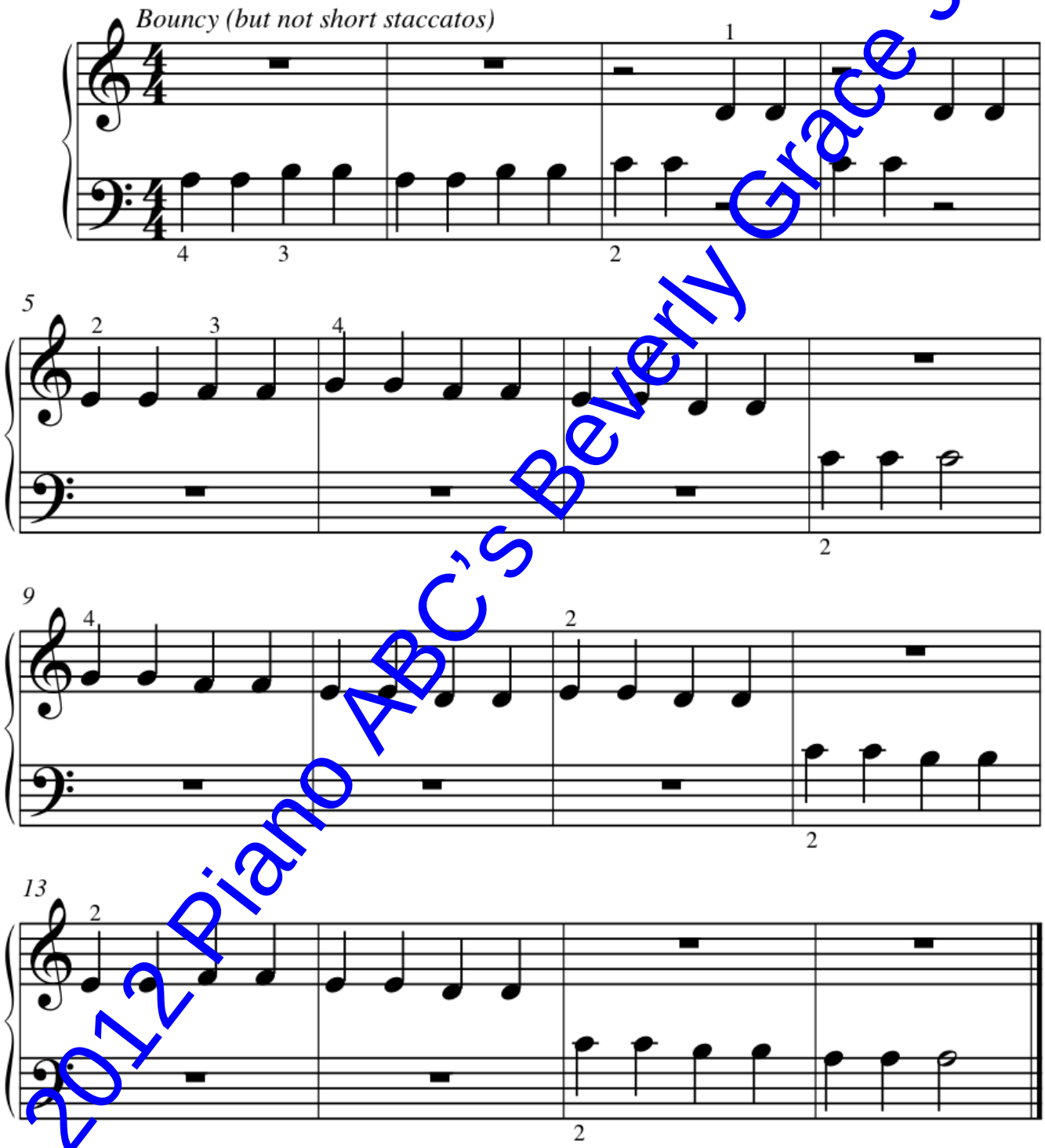
All About Bouncing

Beverly Grace Joy

Can you learn "All About Bouncing" all by yourself?



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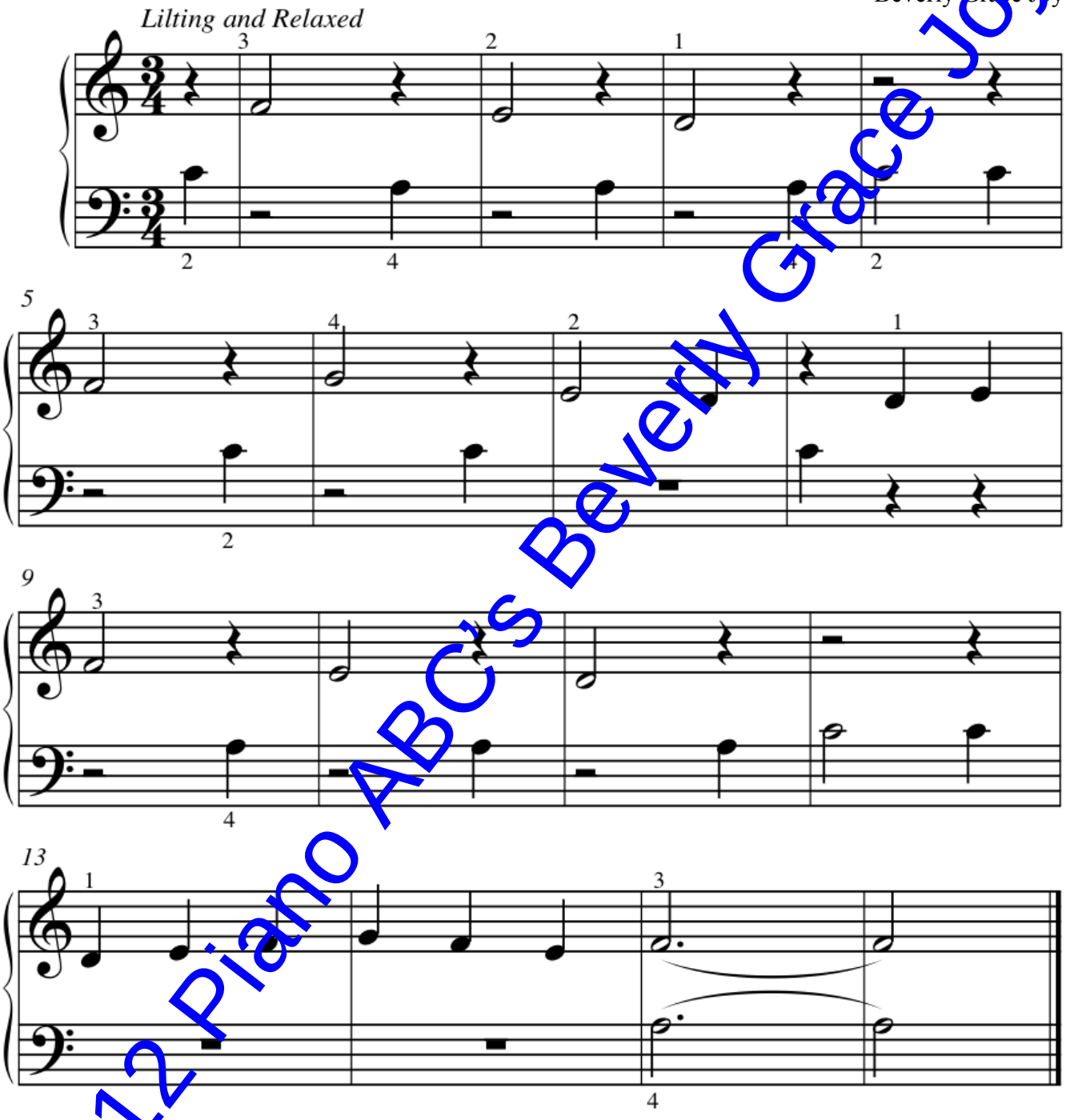
A Hot Air Balloon Ride

Beverly Grace Joy



Note to Students: Remember that "Rainbows and Sunbeams" had 48 counts. "A Hot Air Balloon Ride" also has 48 counts, but one count was "borrowed" from the last measure, and it is found at the very beginning. When this happens, we call the first and last "measures" incomplete measures. The piece starts on count 3 not count 1, and the beginning quarter note is called a "pick-up note" or "anacrusis."

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Intervals – 3rds

Remember, an INTERVAL tells us

how close two notes are to each other, or

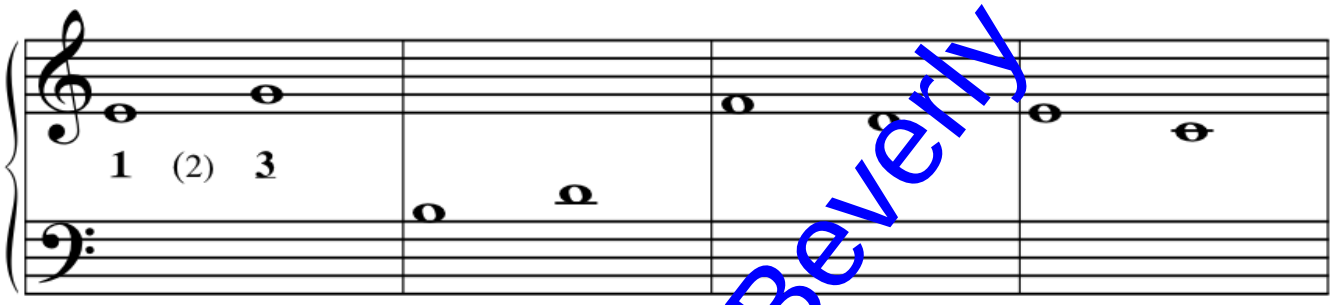
how far apart two notes are from each other.

When there is a SKIP of ONE NOTE between TWO NOTES,

when there is a SKIP of ONE KEY between TWO KEYS,

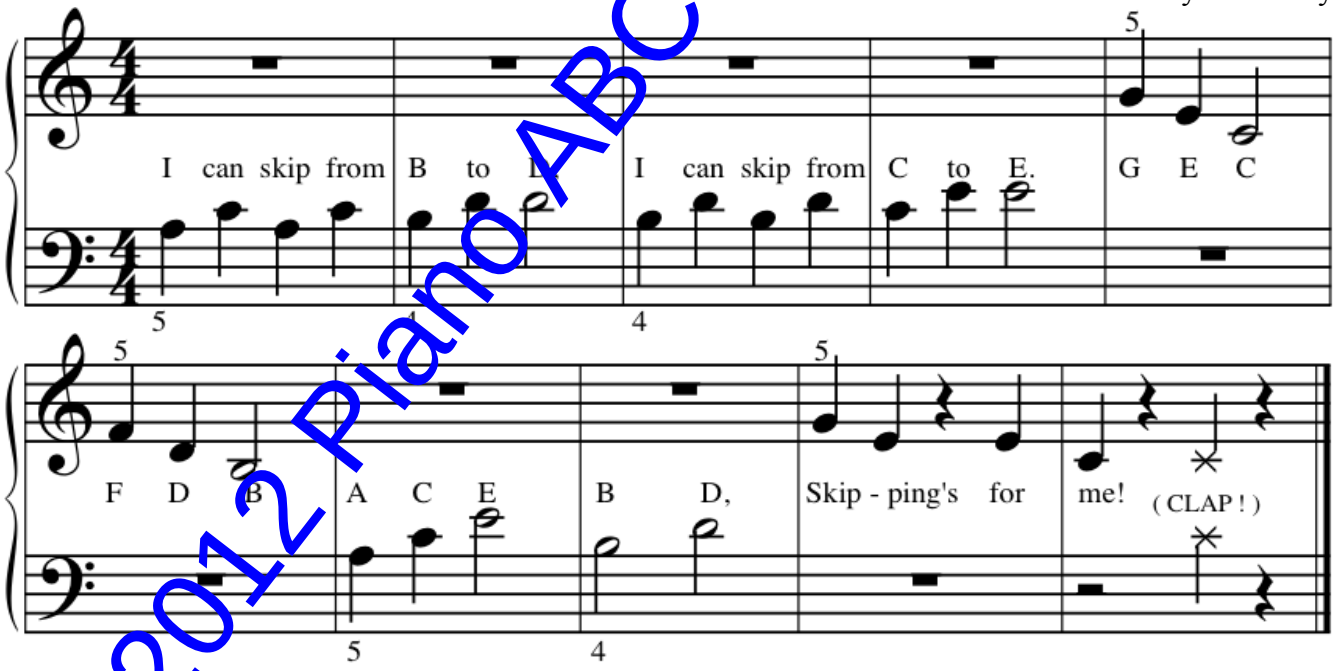
when there is a SKIP of ONE LETTER NAME between TWO LETTER NAMES,

*we say the INTERVAL is a **third**. Count the first note to the next note:* ***1*** *-* *(2)* ***3***



Skipping's for Me

Beverly Grace Joy



Did you notice that intervals of thirds move from ***a line*** *to the* ***next line*** *and* ***skip a space*** *or from a* ***space*** *to the* ***next space*** *and* ***skip a line****?*

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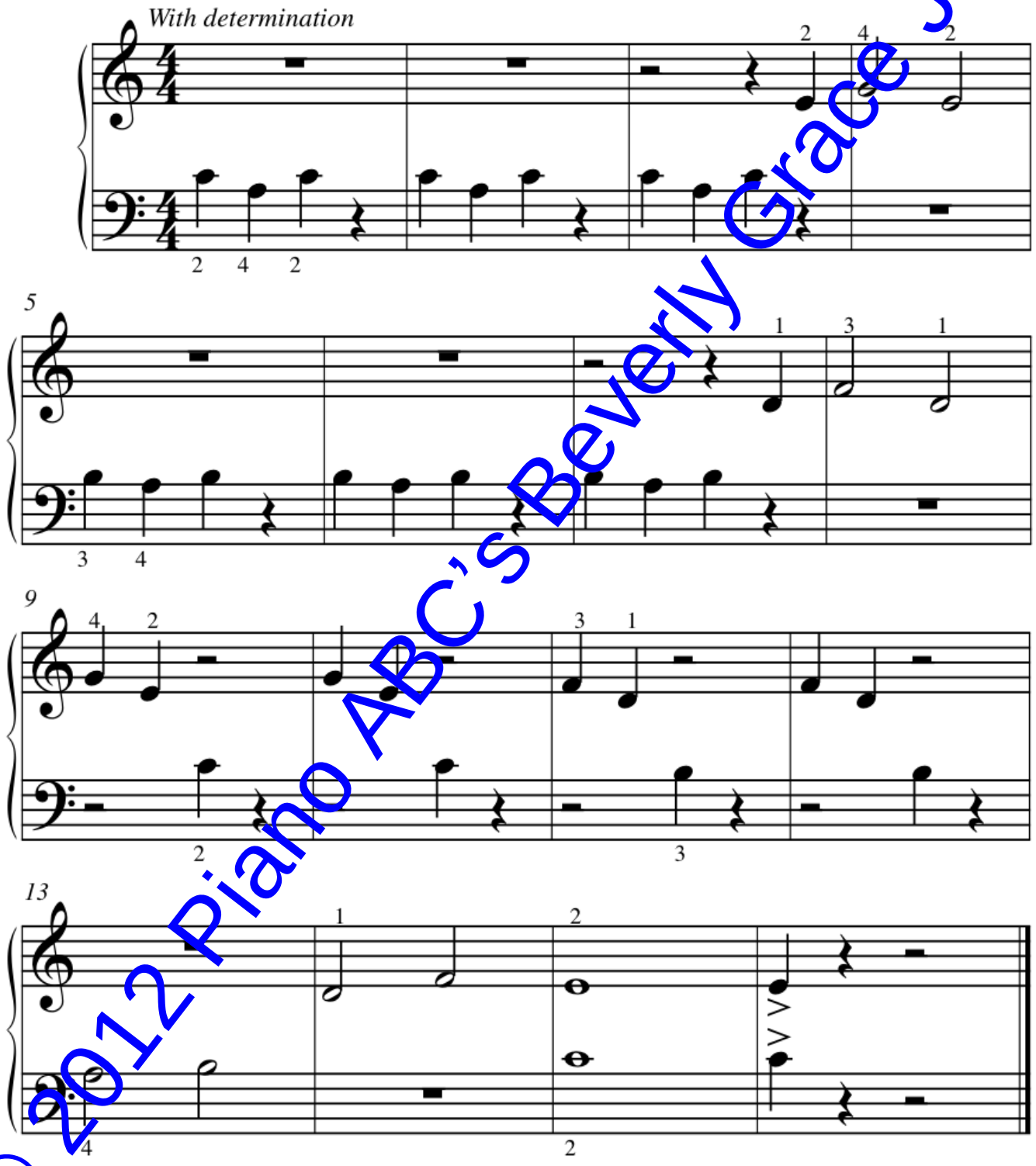
*Two **accents** (>) appear in the last measure. These mean to play a bit louder and energetically.*

Where is My Umbrella?

Beverly Grace Joy



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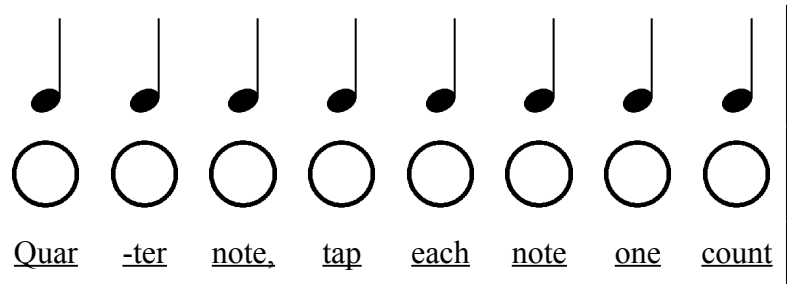
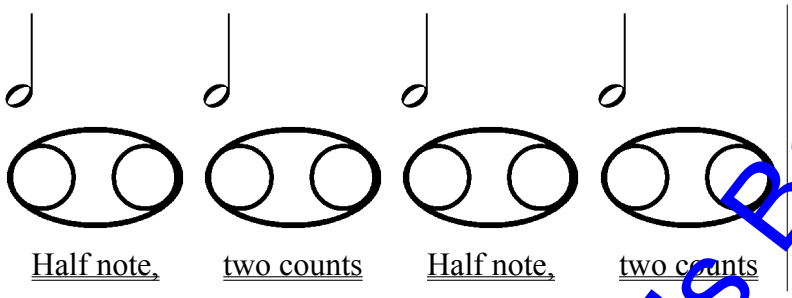
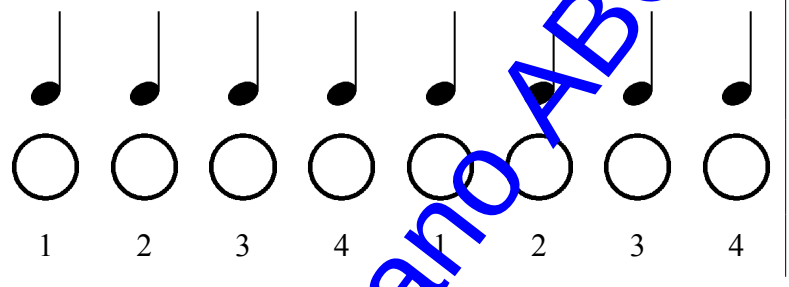
More about Counting and Rhythm

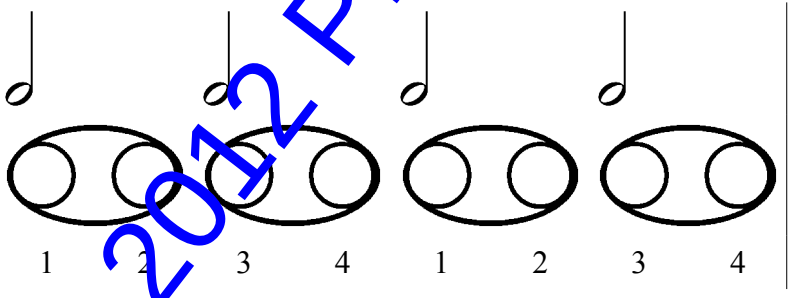
As we review quarter notes and half notes, notice that on this page the circles correspond to the quarter notes and to the one-count pulse. The joined circles correspond to the half notes and show two one-count pulses. Tap and count these examples.





Another way to count (the way we counted when we conducted):





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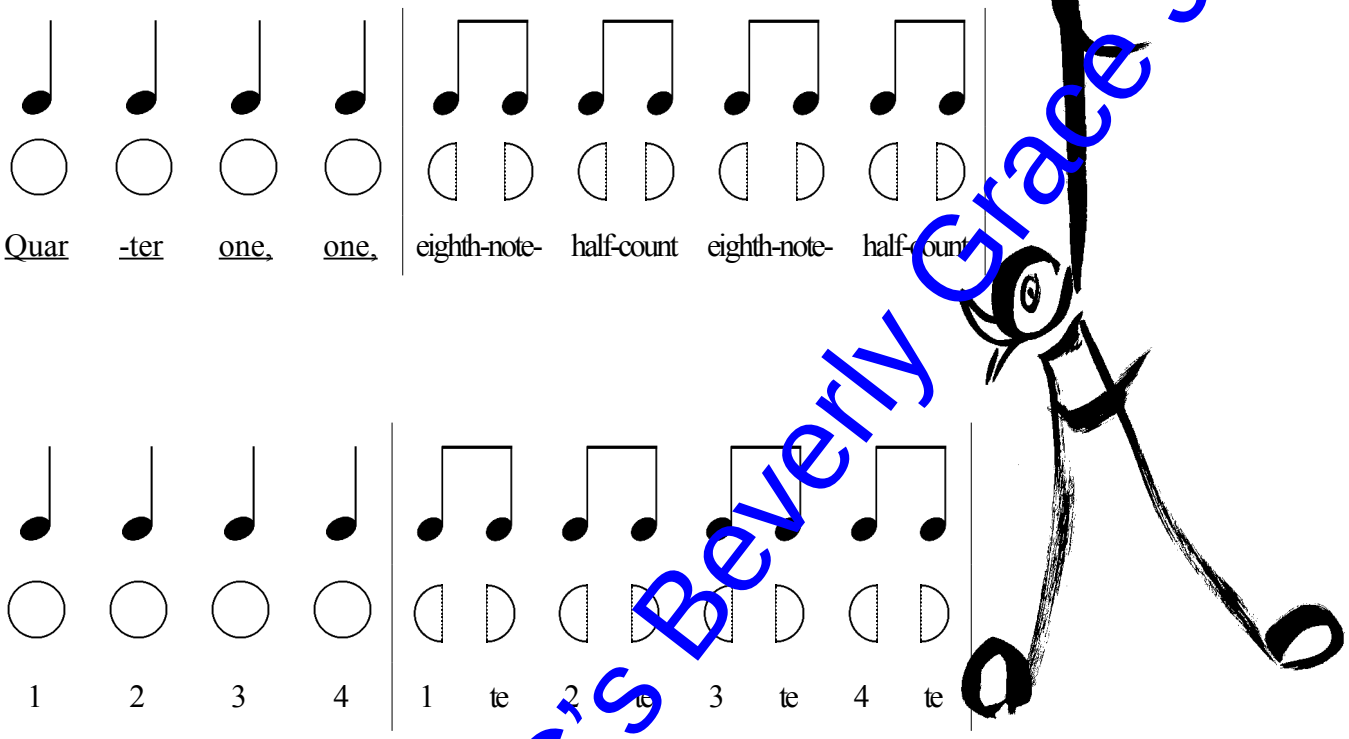
New types of notes (that go a little faster)

Half circles correspond to the eighth notes providing a visual representation of these half count notes:



To think about -
The metrical counts "1 - 2 - 3 -" or "1 - 2 - 3 - 4 -" should move at an even pace. The "te" should be fitted exactly halfway between the numbers whenever it is spoken and the eighth notes are played with the "1 te 2 te etc." - twice as fast as the quarter notes (whether tapped or played).

Setting a metronome at 60 (one quarter note beat per second), if "1 - 2 - 3 - 4 -" are each spoken once on each click, then "1 te 2 te 3 te 4 te" will be spoken twice as fast. The result then would be that the "1 - 2 - 3 - 4 -" are still spoken on each click of the metronome with the "te" between the clicks.

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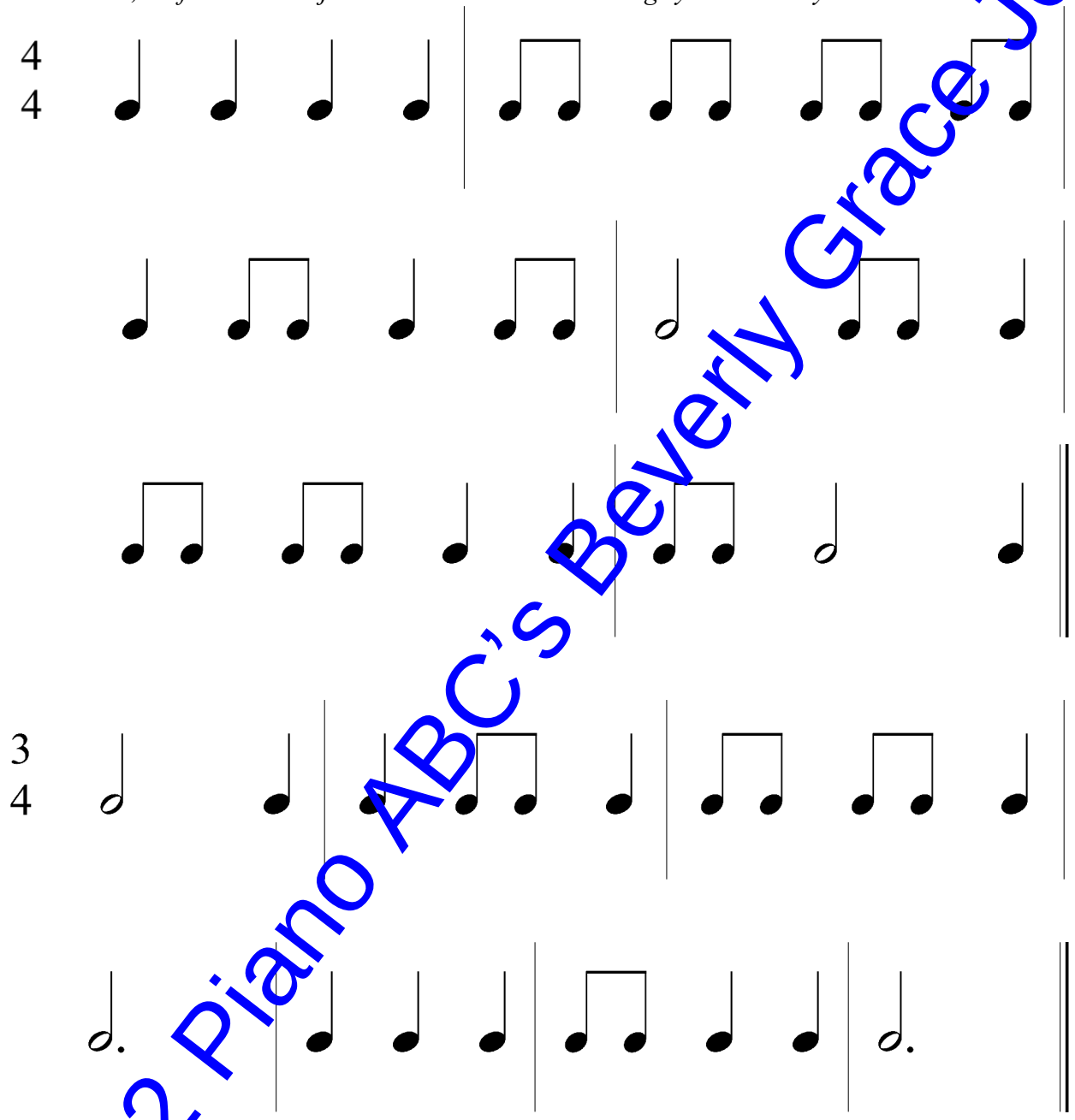
Counting and Rhythm Practice

Write in the circles, half circles and joined circles and the counting symbols with your teacher.



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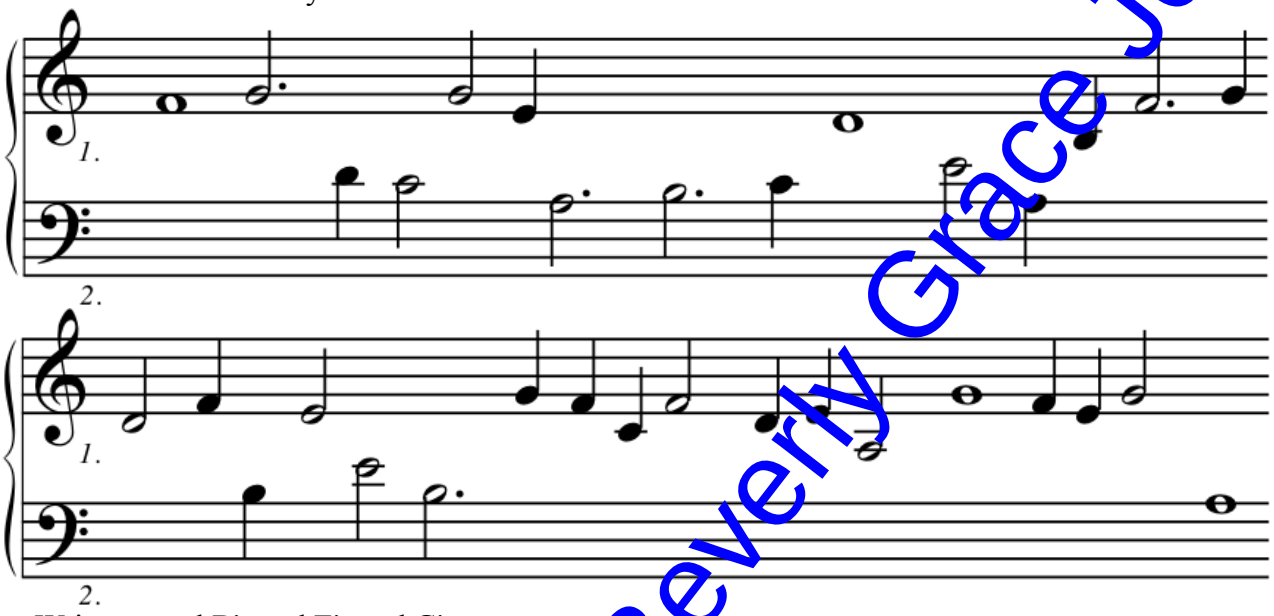
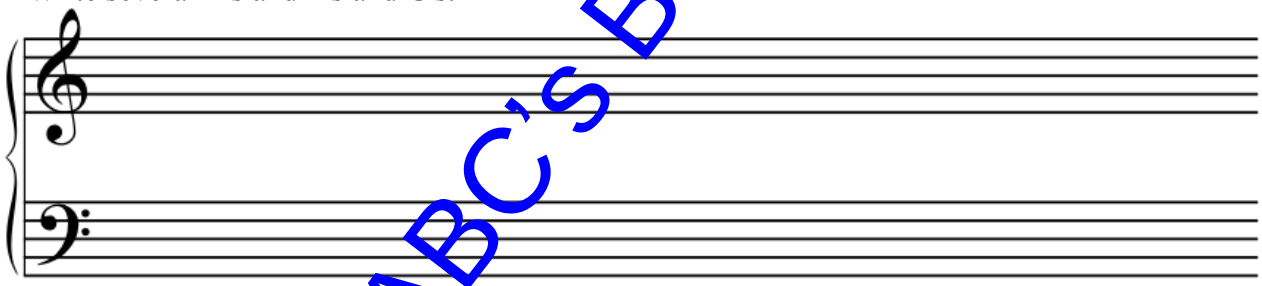
Check-up 3

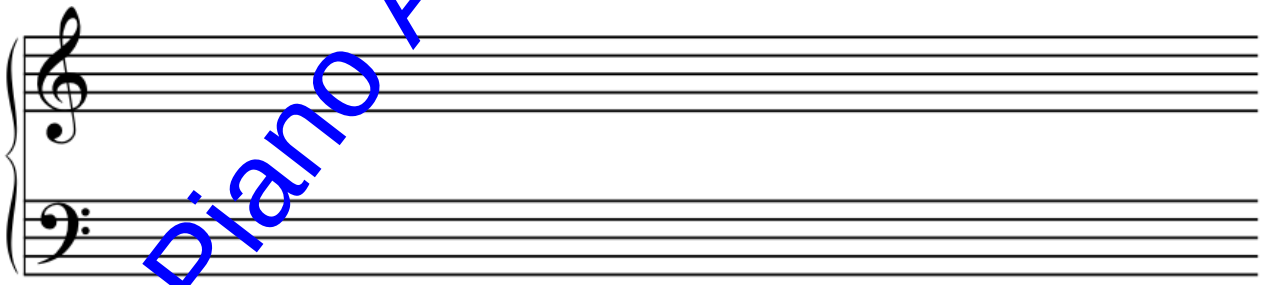
1. Name the notes with letter names.
2. Tell how many counts each note receives.



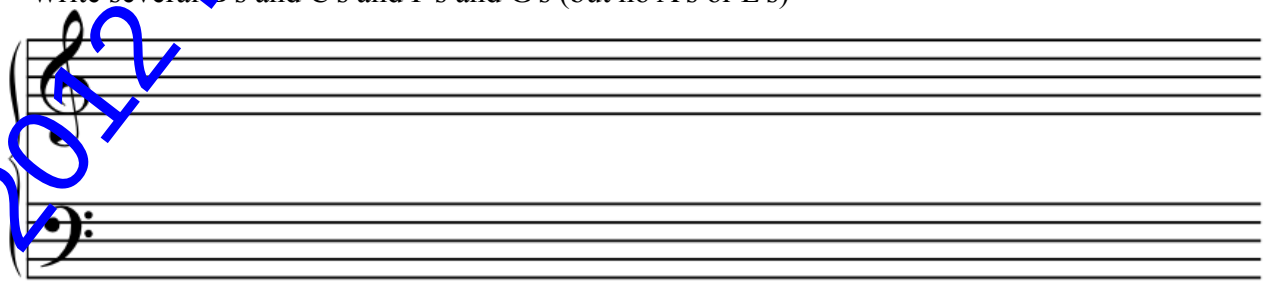
Write several B's and E's and G's.



Write several A's and D's and F's.



Write several B's and C's and F's and G's (but no A's or E's)



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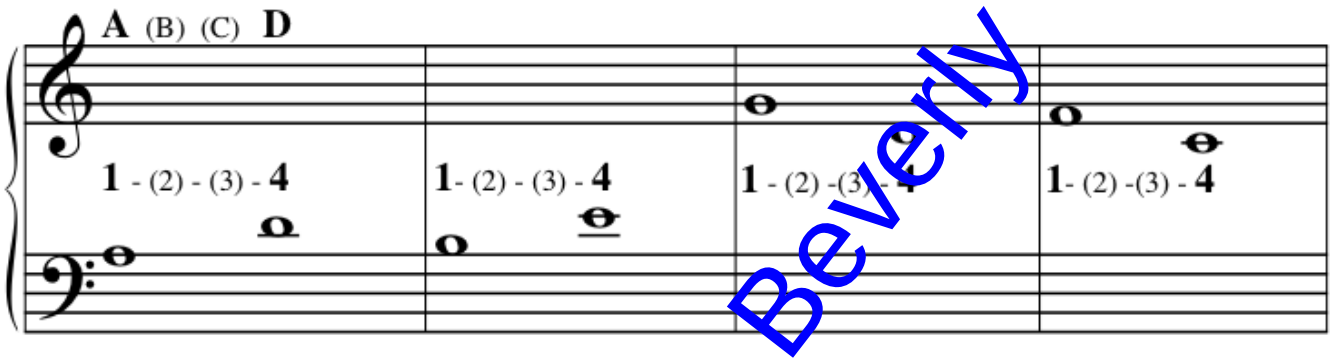
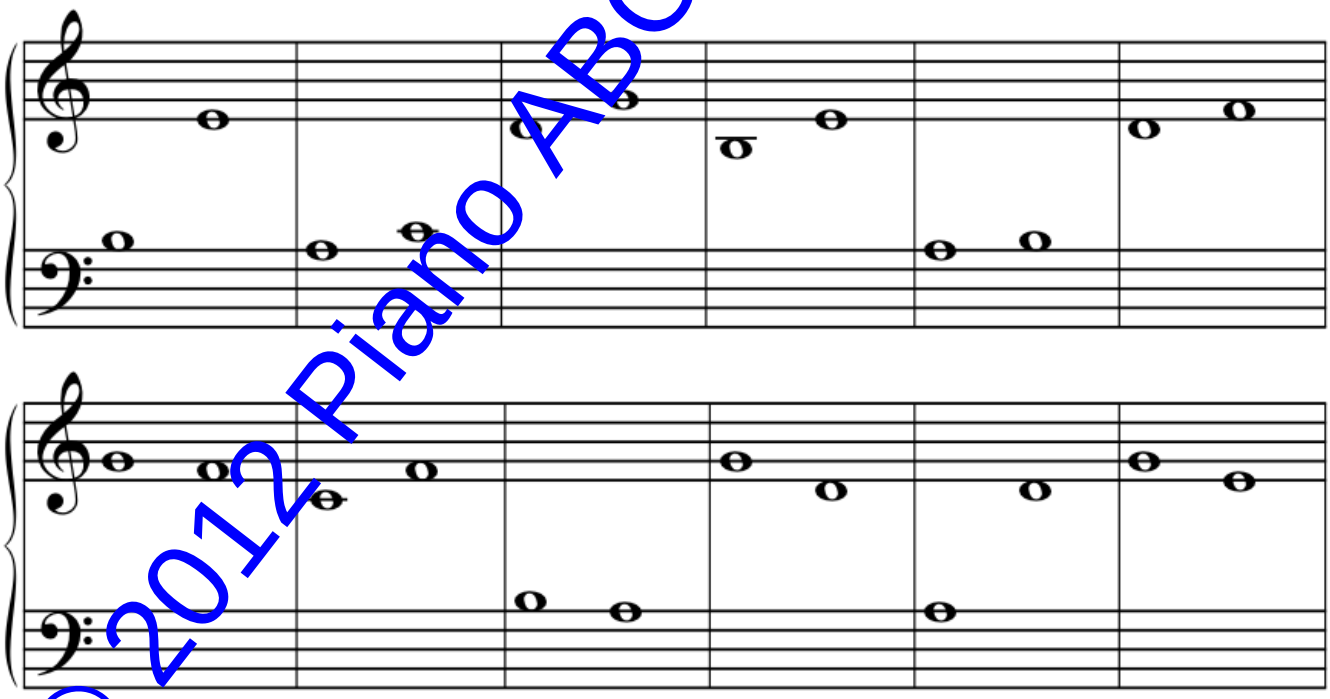
Intervals – 4ths

*Remember, an INTERVAL tells us how close two notes are to each other, or how far apart two notes are from each other. As the SKIPS become larger, we must be careful to count every line and space, starting with the first note and counting until we reach the next note so we know how large the INTERVAL is. When we count **1** - (2) - (3) - **4** from the first note to the next note, we say the INTERVAL is a **fourth**.*



In the examples below, first, name all the notes with letter names.
Then, identify the fourths (write 4th), thirds (write 3rd), or seconds (write 2nd).



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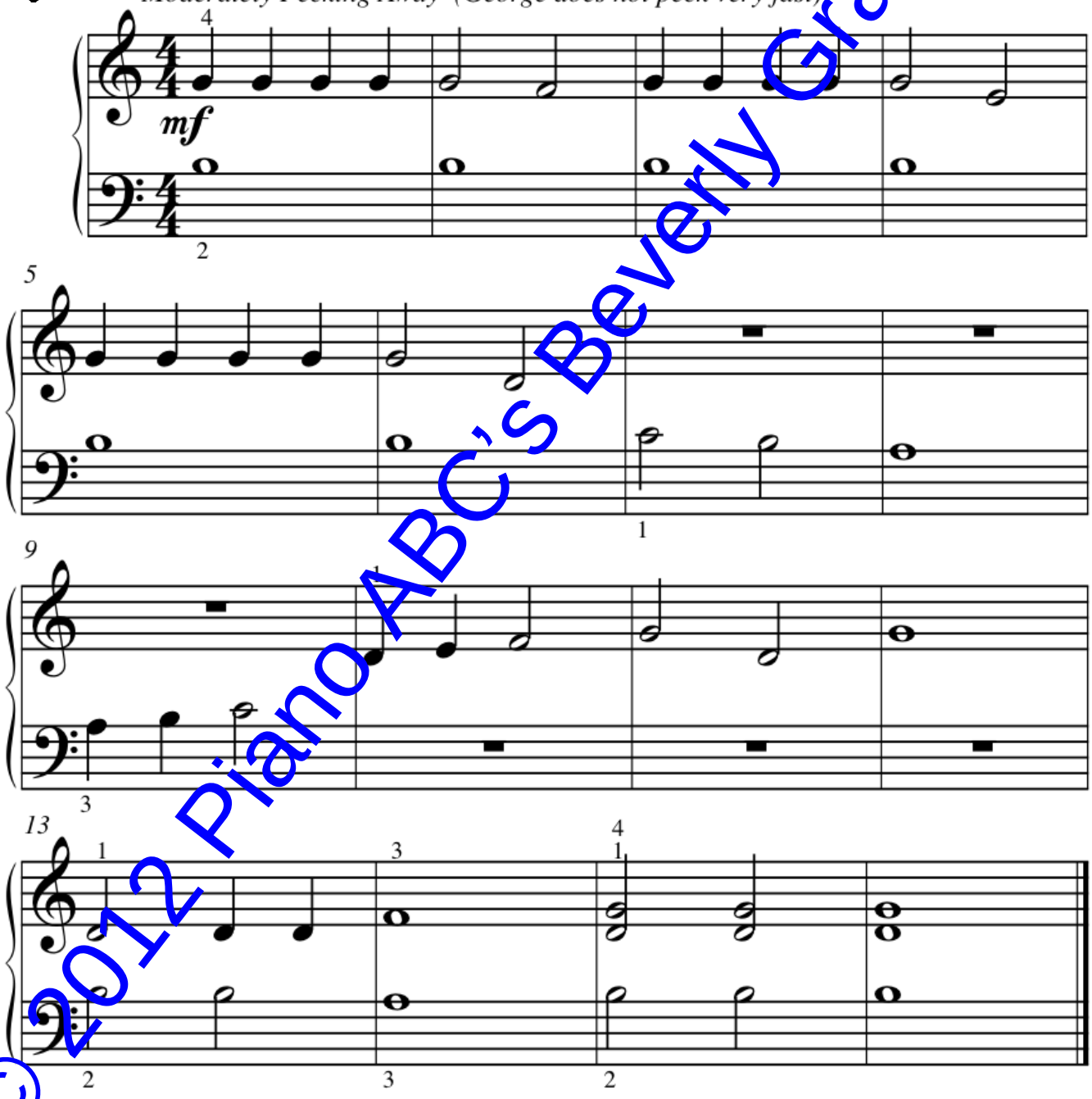
George the Woodpecker

Beverly Grace Joy

***mf** is an abbreviation for mezzo forte, and it means to play moderately loud.*

Moderately Pecking Away (George does not peck very fast)



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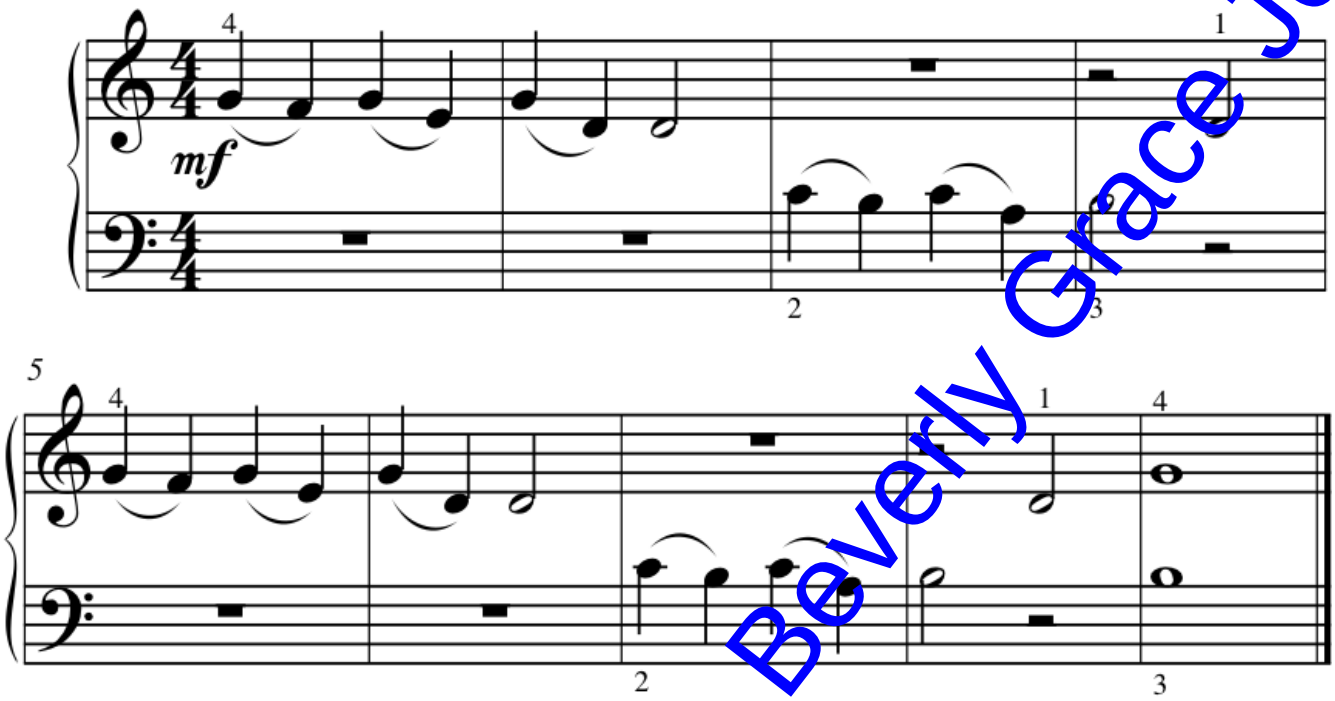
On the Jungle Gym

Beverly Grace Joy



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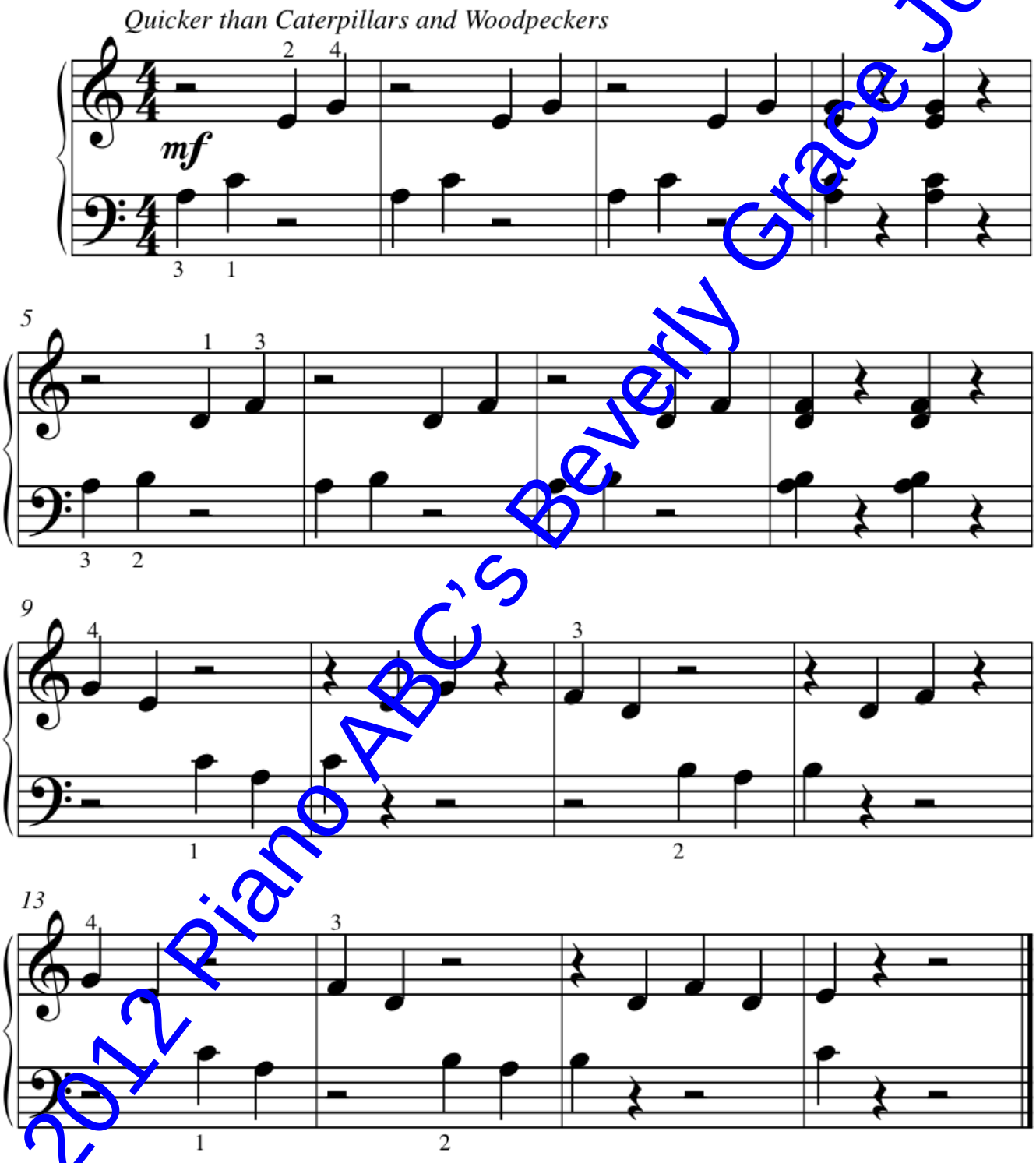
Quick Dance

Beverly Grace Joy



How many thirds can you find in "Quick Dance"? _____ *How many seconds?* _____

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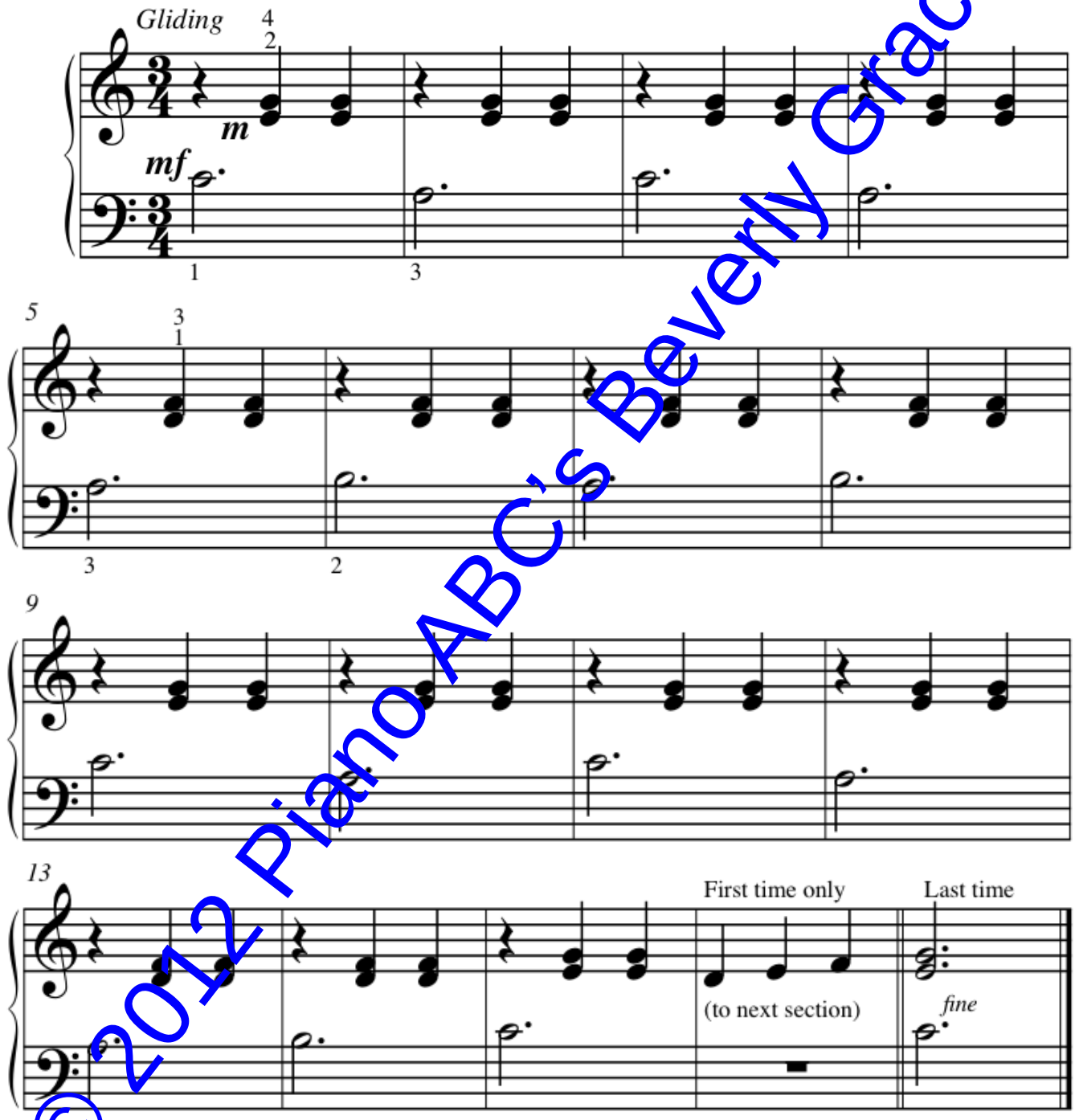
Skating on the Icy Pond

Beverly Grace Joy

*Introducing a new dynamic marking, **'m'**. As you have learned, 'mf' means moderately loud; and we will learn **'mp'** which means moderately soft. But, what is between? I have added **'m'** which means moderately – not loud and not soft but in the middle. Also new is Dal Capo (D.C.) al fine which means to go back to the beginning (Capo) and play to the end (fine).*



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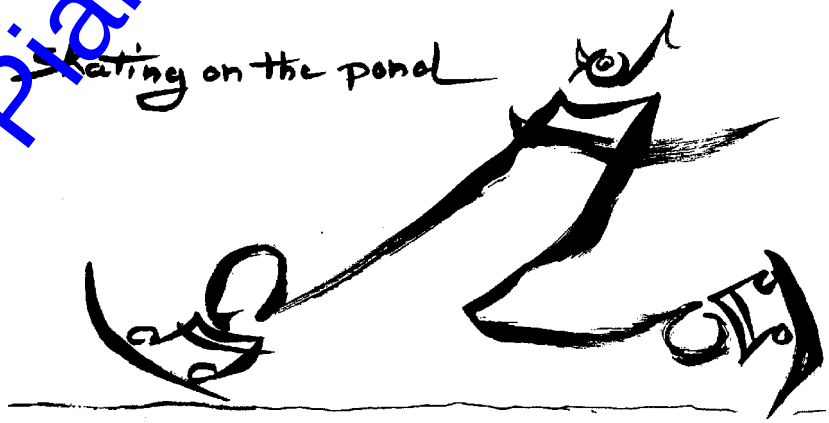

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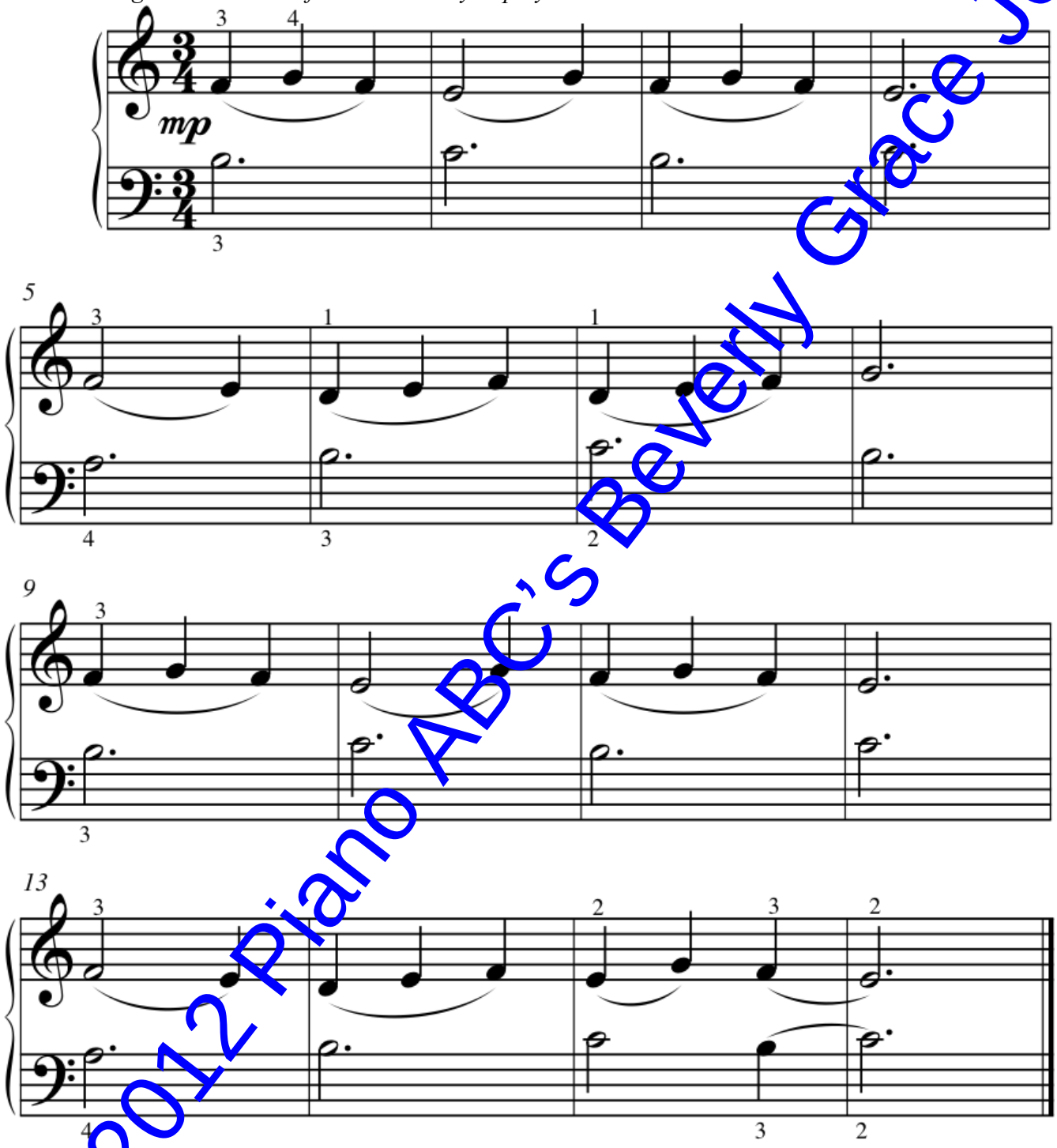
Carousel Waltz

Beverly Grace Joy

Imagine the motion of a carousel as you play.



*Students – Did you notice the **mp** in the first measure? This is an abbreviation for mezzo piano which means to play moderately softly.*

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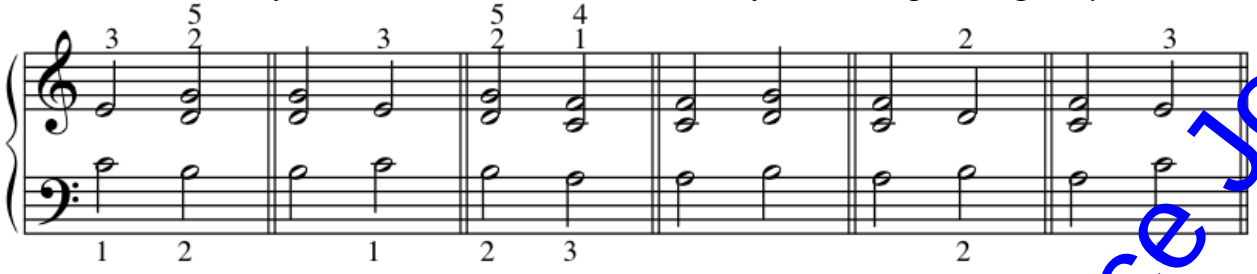
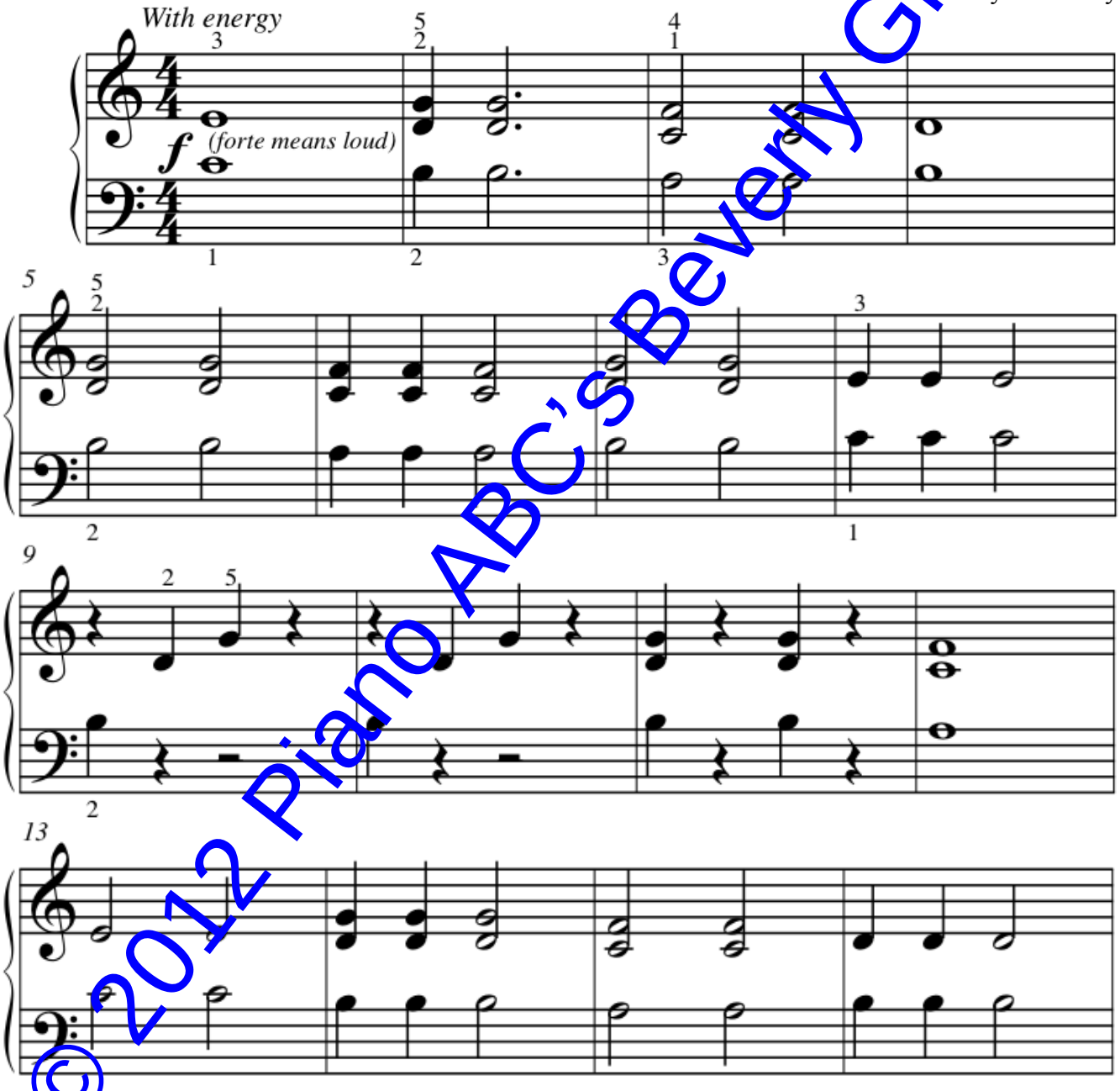
Practice each of these sets several times this week before learning "Taking a Joyride"



Taking a Joyride

Beverly Grace Joy



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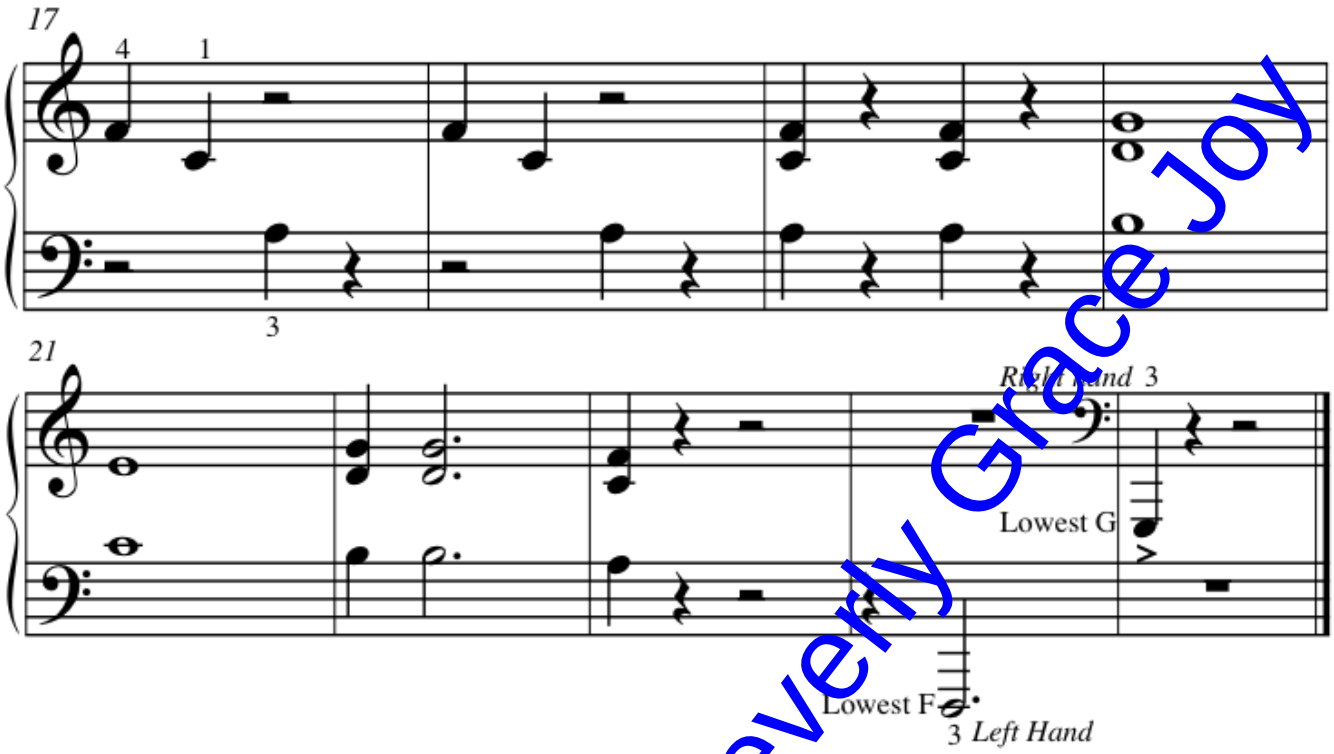
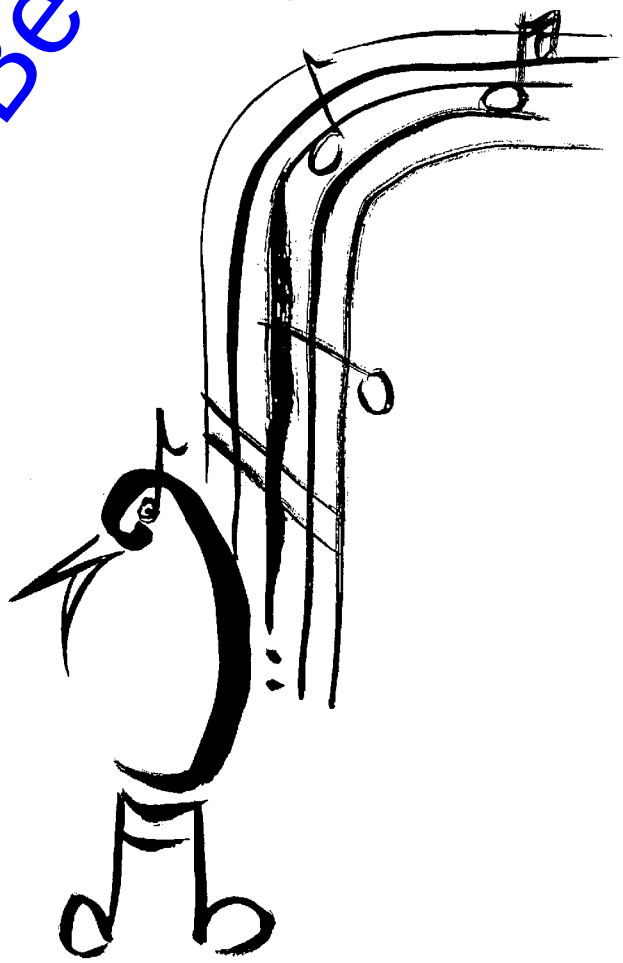


Taking a Joyride is a challenge and will take a little more practice because it is your graduation piece from Level One of Piano ABC's. But you can do it!



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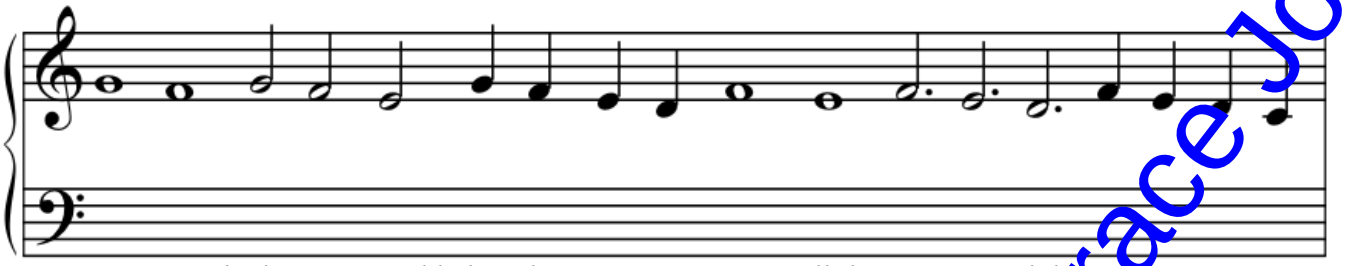
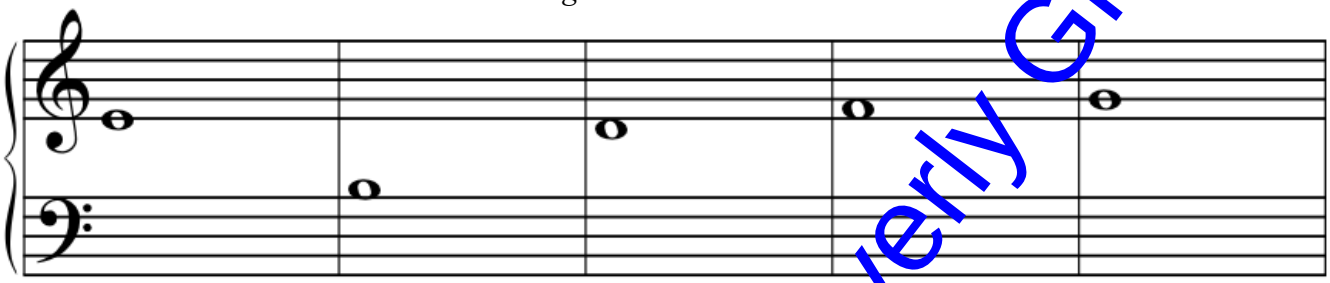
Check-up 4

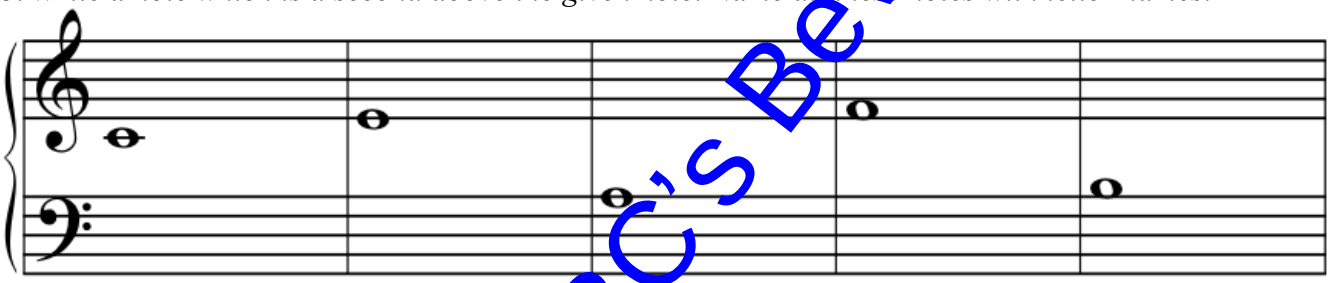
1. Name the notes with letter names.



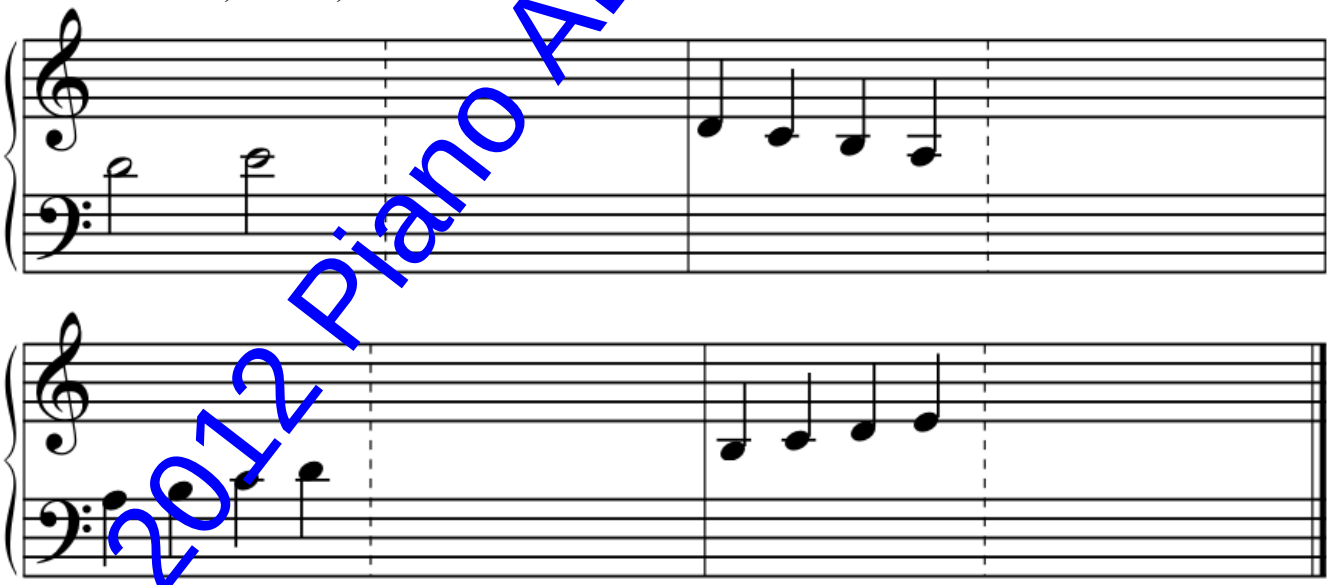
2. Write a note which is a second below the given note. Name all these notes with letter names.



3. Write a note which is a second above the given note. Name all these notes with letter names.



*4. Look at the notes in measure 1. Write these notes another way in measure 2. Do the same with measures 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8.**



* *You may want to study the notes in the piece, "Musical Chairs Trick."*

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For the teacher

TECHNICAL TRUTHS

Collective technical wisdom from teachers and methods both past and present, can be summarized in certain fundamental "truths. "

Technique is the means by which we make music, and the very foundation on which we build our music making. It is not *what* we play or sing, but *how.*

Healthful technique is the best coordination of the *whole body*, directed by the mind, with the instrument.

Healthful technique must be based on sound biomechanical principles. This will eliminate confusion or disagreement and ensure accurate, reliable and consistent principles for future generations of musicians.

Technique based on sound biomechanics serves individual artistry and all stylistic requirements. Historically, musicians have believed that a standardized technical approach would dull artistry and not serve all styles. Sound biomechanics facilitate style and enhance individual musicianship.

Technique, as physical coordination, must be taught through the senses—kinesthetic, tactile, aural and visual—in a hands-on manner, from the simplest to the most complex coordinations. Athletes are taught their technique, or "basic form," in such a way.

Healthful technique is injury-preventive. Discomfort, fatigue, pain and injury are unnecessary and result from inefficient body use and mal-coordination. As injury-preventive technique becomes more widespread, the need for medical intervention will diminish.

Healthful technique is a skill, not a talent, and all musicians have a right to acquire it. Conceivably, future students and their parents will be aware of this truth and request such a technique.

Healthful technique is greatly influenced by holistic health—physical, mental and emotional, as well as ergonomics—the condition of one's instrument and the comfort and safety of one's work environment. Teachers must educate students, parents, administrators and vendors about the importance of quality instruments, ergonomically sound chairs, adjustable benches and pleasant, acoustically healthful practice areas.

FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS OF A HEALTHFUL TECHNIQUE

The following are some general guidelines and exercises for developing healthful, well-coordinated technique in all instruments, as well as information and resources to aid in the quest. These guidelines are not specific to every instrument, but are a starting point for building the subtle and complex coordinations appropriate to every instrument.

Playing an instrument or singing should be an exhilarating, not a debilitating, physical experience. Developing such a healthful, injury-preventive technique for any instrument requires the following:

Kinesthetic awareness
Efficient muscle use
Optimal skeletal alignment

Kinesthetic Awareness

Kinesthetic awareness is the key to a free, healthful technique. It is the sixth, and largely forgotten, sense. It informs a person of movement and the state of his or her muscles. Traditionally, technique emphasizes movement alone. But equally important is the ability to sense the degree of muscular contraction. Kinesthetic awareness give one this ability.

Efficient Muscle Use

Every instrument has certain muscular requirements. One must determine the minimum amount of muscular use needed to achieve the maximum artistic result. Efficient muscle use—using the right muscles at the right time with the right amount of contraction—allows one constantly to refresh the muscles, avoid fatigue, listen to oneself and be in control of the entire experience. It also allows the joints to be sufficiently stable when supporting weight and free while moving.

Optimal Skeletal Alignment and Balance

Optimal skeletal alignment and balance are essential in allowing the various systems of the body to function well. A human's skeletal design balances strength of support with flexibility of movement. The head/neck/spine/ relationship is especially important for healthy neuromuscular functioning. There is a global epidemic of head, neck and back imbalances. These create chronic muscular tension and pain and lead to numerous debilitating neuromuscular and musculoskeletal conditions. Given the enormous demands on musicians, any skeletal imbalance or excess muscular tension depletes energy and undermines the ability to function at one's best.

An excerpt from "Essential Skills for Promoting a Lifelong Love of Music and Music Making," by Barbara Lister-Sink, American Music Teacher, April/May 2005

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Acknowledgments

This project has been a labor of love. I have experienced the blessings of grace, joy, creative energy, and an extra measure of strength for this task due to prayerful intercession of many dear friends.

Approximately eight months after the initial creative work on Piano ABC's had begun, MTNA graciously awarded me a Teacher Enrichment Grant (which they have since renewed two additional times) to study Well-Coordinated, Injury-Preventive Technique at Salem College with Barbara Lister-Sink, who has continued to contribute helpful and thoughtful suggestions[*] as this method has developed. This learning experience has been transforming and has enhanced, informed, and clarified my understanding of keyboard technique, for which, I am very grateful to both MTNA and Ms. Lister-Sink.

Renowned pedagogues, Suzanne Guy and Dr. James Lyke have reviewed this method, and their warm encouragement, interest, and helpful suggestions have been invaluable. Closer to home, Dr. Rebecca McCord has afforded me the benefit of her expertise in several areas. The family of Dr. Taeseong Kim has provided personal and professional assistance as well as loving support.

My own students who have cheerfully learned piano using this method have been a wonderful source of pleasure as they enthusiastically and without prompting picked out their favorite pieces. Their apt response to the pedagogical presentation as well as perceptive questions and comments challenged my own understanding of the learning process and aided the development of this method in very practical ways.

My sons have always been ready to lend a helping hand. Daniel spent countless hours setting up pages on the computer that were beyond my present level of skills (and continued helping upon returning home to France). Stephen has helped in several very practical ways and encouraged from the beginning. Nathan has always been more than patient in guiding me through complex computer operations (from two states away!). Philip has made several insightful suggestions.

François Arnaud graciously shared his wonderful artistic talents in creating the unique and engaging illustrations that enhance the pages of these piano studies.

***

Resources

The following are highly recommended to anyone interested in the activity of teaching or playing piano.

1. *Barbara Conable's helpful introductory book, "What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body"*
2. *Thomas Mark's excellent text, "What Every Pianist Needs to Know About the Body"*
3. *The award-winning DVD, "Freeing the Caged Bird" by Barbara Lister-Sink (for more information see: www.freeingthecagedbird.com)*

* pp. 6, 8, 12, 29, 47, 48, 56

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Illustrations by F. Arnaud
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75018 Paris

http://www.atelier-arnaud.com
http://avantlabstractionfarnaud.blogspot.com/

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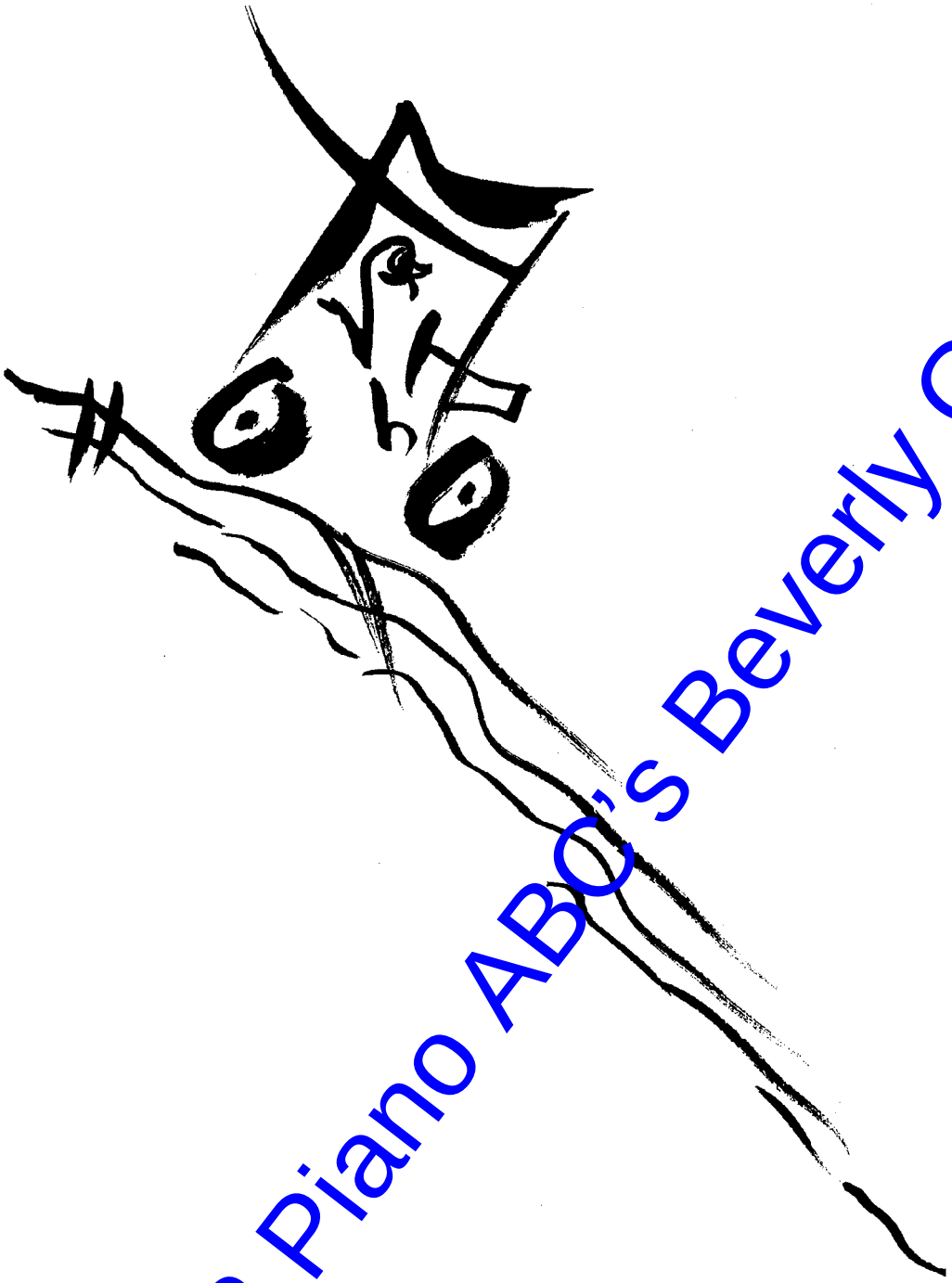

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