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INTRODUCTION

Learning from the styles of the masters has always been central to music pedagogy. For years, these styles were drawn almost wholly from European classical traditions. When jazz, blues, and rock began to be incorporated into music education, it was often as a dessert, a departure from more serious studies. More recently, however, these styles have commanded new attention and respect in the world of pedagogy. The challenge now is to find educational materials that do justice to these styles and are compatible with traditional, classically-based teaching methods.

The goal of the *Masters for Piano* series is to provide exciting and stimulating pieces for keyboard students while inviting them to explore the traditions and great artists of jazz, blues, and rock. Unlike many student-level pieces of a popular nature, the *Masters for Piano* format allows the student to associate the music he or she is playing with an actual artist. It is clear that a student's motivation increases greatly when he or she associates an assigned piece with real music—music by influential, well-known personalities who are amply represented on recordings. This can enhance the student's sense of pride and set the stage for learning about other great artists in any style. The personalities presented in the *Masters for Piano* series are not meant to represent the “best” or “most important”; rather, each is simply part of a diverse cast of great artists. These artists cover a wide spectrum of styles and time periods, and each has left a rich legacy for musicians and music lovers.

Teachers and self-directed students using the *Masters for Piano* series need not be experts in these styles. While these books are rooted in traditional piano pedagogy, the pieces themselves remain true to the styles that inspired them. They can be used as technical studies, recital pieces, or repertoire for just jamming out. Teachers can be comfortable knowing that in studying these pieces, students will receive reinforcement in reading, rhythm, fingering, phrasing, and other important areas. Students need only enjoy themselves as they explore some wonderful styles and artists. The bottom line is that the music is both educational and fun.

The pieces in this book are arranged progressively, starting with some that are suitable for beginning keyboard students. By the end of the book, the pieces incorporate more challenging technical elements and stylistic nuances.

Enjoy!