



POWER TOOLS TO EMPOWER YOUR TEACHING

DISCLAIMER: Due to the constant changes in the world of technology, what you are about to read is not anywhere close to being complete or up to date. If I really like an app, I write about how I use it in my column, "One App at a Time" at 88PianoKeys.me. It is my intent that this collection of "stories" about my app experiences will spur you to explore individual apps yourself. This will help you secure the apps that work for you and reassure yourself (if there was ever any doubt) that you made the right investment with your iPad.

HOW CAN THE IPAD BE USED DURING LESSONS?

Consider your iPad not just a tool, but a power tool. With the help of innovative developers, there is no limit to the capabilities of this little-over-a-pound device.

With this transformative power, I find myself using the iPad during just about every lesson because it can morph into a:

1 METRONOME

require all student families to secure a metronome, but they do not always heed my instructions. Now, with the availability of free metronome apps, physical metronomes have become a moot point (ahh..we really do like our freebies, don't we). Because of its relative ease of use, I usually recommend *Steinway's* metronome app (*free*). The app is (as with most) available for more devices than just the iPad. Of course you can also purchase metronome apps that may be better and offer more features (*free* - \$1.99 or more). In the end, I'm just happy my students have some kind of metronome in hand.

2 SCORE READER

The top score reader or sheet music viewer for the iPad appears to be forScore (\$6.99). I don't use this power tool as much as I would like but I know I will grow more accustomed to doing so in the future. Recently, I played at a memorial service only bringing my iPad with Pdfs of the sheet music loaded into forScore. It felt strange having no physical sheet music but all worked well and I left the service with no paper trail. Essentially any Pdf can be read on the iPad. Score readers such as forScore allow you to read, turn pages and even mark and highlight the score. Some apps even record you as you play and feature a metronome.

As I encourage students to learn the latest pop tunes, I often buy scores from <u>Musicnotes.com</u>. Most of my purchased downloads are automatically synced to my iPad. I usually print off a copy for my students, but it is nice to have a copy of it on the iPad for viewing at the lesson.

One more thing: to my delight, I have found a blue-tooth-operated foot pedal remarkably handy for turning pages while playing from a score on the iPad. Read more about that fabulous accessory in Chapter 11.

3 LEAD SHEET GENERATOR

Thanks to my good friend and colleague, Bradley Sowash, I was introduced to iReal b. (\$7.99 with inapp purchases available). The app allows you to create chord charts.

Here's Bradley's description on how he uses the app:

Q: How do you use the iReal b app with your students?

A: I use iReal b to create rhythm section backing tracks for my students' current scale/chord drill of the week. I also strongly urge them to practice their pop/jazz repertory with it (there are hundreds of free pre-made tracks on the users forum).

Q: What are the benefits?

A: It is so much more fun (and addictive) to practice to a drum machine or rhythm section than to a metronome. I can tell immediately when a student has actually practiced with iReal b because their beat is steady, the groove is deeper and their confidence shows.

Q: Do you have students purchase the app too?

A: Yes, it's \$7.99. There are also in-app purchases of additional style packs for the same price but they aren't necessary for student work. Not all of my students use it but I wish they would.

Q: Anything else you wish to add?

A: This app serves the same function as Band in a Box, which I've used for years. With BIAB, I sent home MIDI files so they could practice with their computer and I still use BIAB for students who are not app-capable. However, I prefer that they use iReal b because the tempo and groove are adjustable on their end. This app is cheaper and does not include some of the features of Band in a Box but students don't need all the extra functionality of BIAB anyway.

INCLUDE? So, now that I'm sold, here's a brief video of me (Leila) using the app WITH the additional Piano Chord option

4 SLOWDOWNER

While I was attending a workshop about the latest tech gadgets for musicians, one item was showcased that slowed down any iTunes or CD track. As I usually feel the need to fidget during presentations such as this, I wondered if there might be an app that would do the same thing. My web quest on my iPad took me to Anytune. My apologies to the presenter as the rest of the hour I was engaged in downloading and learning all about this app.

Anytune - (\$14.99)

This is invaluable to me as a pianist and a teacher of those who enjoy playing pop music. Many times, sheet music is not available or the arrangement is not as close to the original as a pianist would like. This app slows down any tune in a device's iTunes library - just one of the many favorite features of this power tool.

The app also can change the pitch of any tune. This can be incredibly helpful, especially for a rookie. For example, if a student wants to learn a favorite popular tune by ear but is most comfortable playing it on the white keys, the tune can be imported from the iTunes library to <u>Anytune</u>. If the original key is not C or A minor, with a quick tap on the plus or minus button, the tune can be transposed up or down to match the student's key preference. The app provides all the benefits of playing with a "band" without the hassle of working around all those tricky black keys.

My video (in my early video-making days) demonstrates my relative ease with navigating through the app's features. If I can do it, you can too! FYI: After the video was posted, I discovered that this works well in landscape mode very nicely, and you can double tap the slider to return to the starting values such as the original tempo and pitch. Here's the link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAzawsYaL5w.

5 RECORDING STUDIO AND MORE

Garage Band

This extraordinary software program has been modified as an iPad app. I'm still unraveling how best to implement this power-packed app for use in lessons and lab assignments. Here are just a few possibilities I've uncovered so far:

- Smart Drums: Some students benefit much more playing with a full drum section to dictate the steady beat vs the drone of a metronome. With the Smart Drum instrument option, you can create a rockin' back beat within seconds to suit a current student piece. This can be recorded, looped and edited as much as you like. Once the back track is created as you wish, it can be sent to your iTunes library or emailed. Students can enjoy playing along with their custom-made back track at home.
- Smart Instruments: The patterns supplied with a single tap provide an overwhelming palette full of colors with which to create spectacular tracks. Won't go into details here, but seeing how easily outstanding sounds can be generated by the Garage Band app, I foresee a fabulous creative assignment for my budding composers/arrangers.
- Audio Recorder: Using either the iPad microphone or an external microphone connected to your
 device (learn more in Chapter 11), your iPad brings a recording studio to your home, no traveling
 necessary. If the sound is not to your liking, there are plenty of ways to tweak or equalize it until it
 pleases you. Of course, the recording can be sent directly to iTunes to share with friends and
 neighbors.

6 LESSON NOTE BINDER

Moosic Studio

Wow, sometimes I wish I could start all over. Well, that may be an overstatement, but there's something about the tools offered to piano teachers now a days that are so nifty and savvy. Not surprising that I would say something like this as you know I'm a huge fan of iPad apps (duh) and any tech tool that enhances my teaching style. If I was forced to begin again, I'd be highly interested in using a recently released iPad app called Moosic Studio to keep my studio in order.

What intrigues me the most about Moosic Studio is the fact that this app was developed by a husband for his wife, a piano teacher. No one is aligned to the daily woes and needs of a piano teacher more than a spouse. Can you imagine the luxury of having someone in-house who listens and builds a product to suit your personal studio needs? Once you take a look inside the app, you'll see that this teacher married well:-).

Usually I like to write about apps that I've experienced first hand, but I must admit, I have not yet employed the app to its full potential. I already have a system in place for scheduling, etc and because of time constraints, I can't foresee changing over to this system right now. That being said, for any of you who are launching a studio, looking for a way to streamline lesson scheduling or desperate for a means to organize your studio with the ease of an iPad, here's a fine solution.

MY POINT OF VIEW

Instead of providing a general outline of the app's features, let me zero in on a favorite. As I make it a point to follow-up lessons by emailing lesson notes, I was particularly interested in seeing how Moosic Studio provides lesson feedback. I was pleased to find a fabulous system obviously custom-made for piano teachers. Once student general information has been entered, tapping on the individual's name will lead to a screen where a great deal more information can be stored for that particular pianist. One category is labeled Assignment History. Selecting this option will take you to an array of additional category titles with sub menus.

- · Lesson Dates of all past lessons
- · Attendance: On Time, Late, No Show
- Books: Brought Books, Did Not Bring Books
- Lesson Event/Performance: Outstanding, Good, Needs Improvement
- Teacher Comments (not shared with students)
- Lesson/Event Notes
- Circle of 5ths: Hands (together, separately), Pentascales, Tetrascales, Scales, etc...
- Assignments: Add Book Assignment, Sight Reading, Apps/Online, Notes
- Attach Media: Audio Recordings, Video Recordings, Timed Events

All of these items can be selected and completed during the lesson. There is ample space to write comments and yes, even make video and audio recordings that can be shared with a student via Dropbox and other apps. However, the most extraordinary portion of the app is that all these menu items mentioned above are neatly organized into a lovely template that can be:

- Printed at the lesson
- Opened in another app such as Dropbox, Kindle, Notability, forScore, iBooks, Evernote, Google Drive
- Emailed directly to the student.

Oh my, I've been looking for something like this that totes versatility and ease of communication with student families and finally found it!

THE DEVELOPER'S POINT OF VIEW

From my conversations with Carlos Fontiveros, the developer, it is clear he is continually updating Moosic Studio and adding new features to piano teachers' wish list. Below is his description of the latest updates:

"We've come out with an update for Moosic Studio and the big focus was to re-design the Lesson Assignment sheet. The initial Version 1.0 sheet was not optimized at all and included every assignment whether it was entered or not. This also caused the Lesson Assignments to be multiple pages which is not good for anyone. The re-design fixed this by making each assignment dynamic. Each Assignment section only shows up on the sheet if the teacher has assigned something. If they haven't, it won't show up on the printed/emailed page.

We also added some more Instrument Types and Skill Levels to match some of the more popular music series books.

We're actively working on the update that I think everyone wants to see and that is Billing and Invoicing.. You can see the mock-up screen shots up close on my Facebook page.

This is going to be a huge update that I know will solidify our place in the music studio management space. After this update, we'll be adding the following:

- Student Repertoire Tracker
- Studio Notes (centralized place for teachers to jot private notes, assign notes to a student or individual lesson)
- Ability to import CSV files for Students/Parents and also music libraries"

This description uncovered a small portion of what this powerhouse app offers. In addition, it seems Moosic Studio will have strong support from the developer. I imagine there is pressure to please as his number one customer lives in the same house. To get the full scoop check out the app website www. moosicstudio.com for a rundown of all the features.



With heftier price tags, these apps are heavy hitters and are packed with potential. They could prove intimidating and the learning curve steep but DON'T miss out. They are worth the climb.

[A] breadth of offering [in your instruction]...means that if students are starting to grow weary of a studio activity they're currently enrolled in, they can switch to another activity and still stay in your studio. This gives you a huge advantage over the "Static" studios that offer traditional weekly lessons only: the only way their students can meaningfully change what they're doing is to leave. -Philip Johnston²

OTHER APPS THAT FALL INTO THIS HEAVY-DUTY CATEGORY INCLUDE:

- · Home Concert Extreme
- iMovie
- Keynote
- Notestar
- · and more...

I could go on and on. This brief chapter barely scrapes the surface of the power tool apps available for your iPad that are capable of igniting every lesson. Imagine what the future holds.