



# Inspiring Artistry Repertoire Project

A Piano Magazine subscriber-exclusive digital resource

**Chris Madden presents:**

**“Mandarin Orange” from *In My Lunchbox* by Judith Lang Zaimont**

## Preparation and Presentation

**Context:** pieces that are helpful to have experienced or played before approaching this one

- “Charlie Chipmunk” from Piano Safari
- Amazing Grace
- Any tune that employs the pentatonic scale

**Get Ready:** creative activities to explore before the first encounter with the score to prepare a student for deeper engagement and more immediate success

- Improvise on black-key pentatonic patterns: the teacher plays an accompaniment and allows the student to experience the pentatonic scale via all five black keys. One or both hands may be used.
- Sing pentatonic melodies and note the “resting tone.” After singing, encourage students to play the melody on black keys.
- Once students can sing and play pentatonic melodies on black keys, encourage them to transpose them to white keys. F will be the easiest starting tone.

**Initial Focus:** features to pay attention to first; priority steps in reading and absorbing the music

- Simplify the visually complex key signatures. While students might be intimidated by two contrasting key signatures between the hands, they can easily understand that the piece will be played using only black keys.
- Identify the mixed meter: have students circle the changing time signatures in mm. 18-19 and clap these measures to ensure rhythmic and metric understanding.

**Coordination Essentials:** physical skills and drills for common technical challenges in the piece

- One challenge is achieving wrist flexibility in order to play the interval of a fourth with fingers 3-5. Depending on a student’s hand size, this could be a large interval to play using these fingers.
- Two exercises can help:
  - Play an ascending series of 4ths on white keys, focusing on a relaxed “drop and roll” motion that outlines a wrist “smile” on each new interval.
  - Practice Hanon’s Exercise No. 1, which emphasizes allowing the elbow to lead and letting a relaxed wrist follow.

**Expressivity:** ideas to connect with the expressive and musical nature of the piece

- “Mandarin Orange” requires students to create seamless legato between the fingers. To connect with the title of the piece, a teacher might ask a student to place their hand on top of an orange or other ball and roll it around to feel the concept of weight transfer that is required for finger legato.

**Look Forward:** approaches to set up for success with refinements that will need attention a few weeks down the road

- There are several places in the piece where a repeated note needs careful shaping so as not to become too heavy or vertical (e.g. the A sharp in mm. 1-3). Ask the student to play four A sharps in a row with various crescendo/decrescendo shapes to turn their attention to this nuance.
- Timing the climax of the piece at mm. 34-35 might be difficult, especially when considering the composer’s notated breath mark to indicate a lift and expressive timing. Ask the student to sing this phrase with a neutral syllable like “ta,” then subdivide and slow down leading up to the climax to help make the arrival more convincing.