

Collins
MUSIC



GET SET!

PIANO



Christmas Crackers

Teacher's Guide



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Get Set! Piano: Christmas Crackers

Welcome to *Get Set! Piano: Christmas Crackers*. The aim of this book is to provide enjoyable seasonal material that will continue to develop a pupil's musicianship from October through to Christmas. It brings together simple arrangements of carols from around the world, traditional carols from England and Wales and a selection of original pieces. Many carols come with a duet part for a teacher or older student to play; these are designed to make the student the 'star' of the performance, while giving them a satisfying musical experience. Scattered throughout are 'fun facts' containing background information about the pieces.

The purpose of this guide is to help you maximise the use of *Get Set! Piano: Christmas Crackers* with your students. Unlike many other beginner Christmas carol books, this one is packed with additional opportunities for teaching and learning: from notation quizzes to aural activities, transposing to playing a round. Motivation to practise has been given careful consideration and, with this in mind, we have included a selection of 'colour me' illustrations for pupils to fill in as they learn the pieces. There is also a practice advent calendar available to download [here](#) – you can use it with all your students, even if they are not using *Get Set! Piano: Christmas Crackers*!

All the material has been tried and tested with students, and their feedback has been incorporated. Every effort has been made to make the arrangements musical, enjoyable and accessible. We hope you enjoy teaching from this collection and, most importantly, that your students are enthused and fulfilled playing from it. We'd love to hear from you, so if you have any queries, do please get in touch with us at email: education@harpercollins.co.uk.

Warmest wishes

Karen Marshall and David Blackwell, 2018

What's in the book?

We've provided a bumper crop of 32 carols and pieces – plus additional carols offered as sight-reading pieces – presented systematically in a gradual progressive order. The first 14 pieces are designed to be used alongside *Get Set! Piano book 1* (starting from page 21 in the first tutor book). These pieces are for the very first stages of learning: they use an octave around middle C, from G bass clef to G treble clef, in five-finger patterns, and take the student to around Prep Test level. The 18 pieces in the second half of the book are at *Get Set! Piano book 2* level, and move on to Grade 1 standard (two stretch up to Grade 2). Dynamics, articulation, part playing and chord voicing have all been gradually introduced and incorporated, and this systematic progression ensures the pieces can readily be used alongside any popular method book.

Attached to many of the pieces are activities and opportunities for creativity – from marking the pulse to tapping rhythms, identifying dynamics to understanding notation. There's a piece to improvise ('Snowflakes', p. 11), some Christmas Bells to play by ear (p. 30) and even a carol to transpose ('While shepherds watched their flocks', p. 35). French time names have been gently introduced, and these can help students with their rhythm (a full list of these can be found via a quick google search online).

Ensemble playing

Fifteen of the carols have a duet accompaniment, and these provide a wonderful opportunity to develop your students' ability to maintain the pulse but also to model expressive playing, particularly with regard to phrasing. The Christmas round ('Christmas is coming', p. 33) is another fun way to improve ensemble playing. Experiment with different numbers of students with this round. It can be played two beats apart, so if you have two pianos then even eight players could attempt it! Tuned percussion (chime bars, glockenspiel or xylophone) can be used to play an ostinato – a simple C and G chord in minims works well.

Note reading and ledger lines

Aspects of notation are introduced sequentially and different note-naming activities have been incorporated throughout the book. In addition, several carols have been arranged to provide practice of particular details of notation that students can find challenging, including: bass clef consolidation ('Once in royal David's city'), treble clef ledger lines ('Ding dong! merrily on high') and bass clef ledger lines ('God rest you merry, gentlemen').

Sight-reading

Pages 22–3 provide a range of activities to support the development of sight-reading skills. There are opportunities to practise reading sharps and flats, and activities to encourage observation of tempo marks, ties, rests, key signatures and dynamics. In addition there is a focus on rhythm reading, but also exploration of the hand positions and notation used within the Grade 1 sight-reading tests of various examination boards.

Scales and arpeggios

Scales and arpeggios are vital forms for all pianists, and within *Get Set! Piano Tutor book 2* a series of 'scale trails' is provided to consolidate children's learning. In this Christmas collection, 'The bells of Christmas' (p. 30) explores the scale of G major ascending and descending, while on the opposite page students can consolidate the scales and arpeggio shapes of C major, D major, A natural minor, E harmonic minor and F major using four bars from the original piece.

Opportunities to sing – sound before symbol

A number of carols are comfortably within a student's singing range, such as 'Ding dong! merrily on high', 'While shepherds watched their flocks' and 'We three kings'. Singing these will increase a pupil's confidence in singing while also help learn the piece. In addition, these carols provide opportunities for singing back (e.g. play just two bars from the piece for the student to sing back), thus incorporating aural activity in the lesson.

Spread of keys, time signatures and note values

The book includes a full range of key signatures – up to two sharps and two flats, major and minor. Time signatures have also been considered; in the beginning stages they include 4/4 and 3/4, and in the second half of the book 2/4, 2/2 and compound time signatures are also used. There are note values in different rhythmic patterns from semibreves to semiquavers, and swing is included along with syncopation.

Additional online material

In line with the philosophy of *Get Set! Piano*, we have provided free online materials to teachers to enhance the offering in the book. These include:

- This teacher's guide
- Arrangements of:
 - In the bleak mid-winter (five-finger tune with teacher accompaniment)
 - Rocking carol (five-finger tune with flats, with teacher accompaniment)
 - In dulci júbilo (easy hands together including ties)
 - O Christmas tree (hands together, Prep Test level)
 - Coventry carol (more difficult with an opportunity for expressive playing)
- Practice Advent Calendar

These can all be found on the Collins website, [here](#).