

# INTRODUCTION TO P.B.E.SYLLABUS™

Two decades in the making, the meticulously crafted approach has been evolving and improving since - Play by Ear Syllabus™ (Study of Contemporary Music Improvisation & Aural Techniques) . It is a teaching methodology that was written by an international team of teaching professionals and performing musicians, designed to make the experience of learning music and improvisation easily accessible to all ages, regardless of their experience with music. It helps any student, even a complete novice, to acquire essential musical knowledge and gain the ability to play the instrument in a reasonable span of time, without going through years of traditional or classical training. This is done possible using the modular approach, in which students can choose to learn what they like and apply them to the choices of songs they prefer. Because all students are from various walks of life, P.B.E.S™ ensures that what is learned will only complement and not conflict with previous music training (if any). Above all, the training never disregards the rudiments of music such as proper posture, fingerings and notation reading. It is the fundamental assurance that every student learns only what is deemed correct in the educational system of music.

Our courses, in-conjunction with P.B.E.S™, pave the way for anyone to attain their desired musical proficiency – be it as a subject of academic study, for proficiency of performance or for personal enjoyment. The courses available include Pop Piano Improvisation, Jazz Piano Improvisation, Pop Guitar Improvisation, Pop Vocal Improvisation & Pop Piano Junior. Each course comes in 8 levels of difficulty (with the exception of Jazz Piano Improvisation).

The holy grail of textbooks - the first book published by the Play-By-Ear publications, 'How to Play Pop Piano by Ear' (ISBN 981-05-2071-9 archived in National Library) in 2004, was the first primary textbook used for teaching. Today, P.B.E.S™ is a widely accepted teaching methodology available as a franchise in selected world centres, institutions and schools. Find out more at [www.play-by-ear.net](http://www.play-by-ear.net)

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# THE CHOICE OF SONGS

*"We listen to what we enjoy, so the learning process of playing what we like becomes an enjoyable experience. It may seem like common sense that one would be more motivated when learning what one likes, but P.B.E.S™ took this seriously."*

Today's contemporary music consists of a wide range of music genres such as Pop, Rock, Metal, Jazz, Rap, Hip-hop, Electronica and countless subgenres. Whether it is Bruno Mars, Justin Bieber, the Beatles, Jay Chou or Yiruma, learning music should never be daunting or tedious. The learning process should be nothing less than entertaining and engaging, whether it is oriented towards leisure or academic studies. It should be a natural process, accessible, pleasing and accelerated, especially for busy adults in today's fast-paced and stressful society. Having fun is ideally the top priority and in order to do so, you need to play the songs that you like. Find out more at [http://www.play-by-ear.net/songs\\_pbe.html](http://www.play-by-ear.net/songs_pbe.html)

Quite importantly, P.B.E.S™ ensures that all the relevant and necessary details of study are taught and that the understanding of important music rudiments and proper musical techniques are not compromised whilst having fun. We deem it our responsibility to ensure that you are learning the right things and at the same time, you benefit greatly by having fun doing what you love.

## Genres of Popular (Pop) Music

*Modern English Pop Artiste examples: Katy Perry, Maroon 5, Ed Sheeran, Taylor Swift, Charlie Puth, The chainsmokers, Miley Cyrus, Alan Walker, Demi Lovato, Onerepublic, Imagine Dragons, Justin Bieber*

*Modern Chinese Pop Artiste examples: Jay Chou, JJ Lin, Yoga Lin, Leehom Wang, Namewee, aMei, Jam Hsiao, Xiao Bing Chih, G.E.M., Mayday, Hebe Tien, Rainie Yang, Wen Yin Liang, Jason Zhang, Eric Zhou, Sodagreen*

*Classic English Pop Artiste examples: Beatles, Elvis Presley, Stevie Wonder, Queen, The Rolling stones, Billy Joel, Eagles, Europe, John Lennon, Elton John, Bruce Springsteen*

*Classic Chinese Pop Artiste examples: Teresa Teng, Sam Hui, Zhang Xiao Ying, Leslie Cheung, Alan Tam, Danny Chan, Wakin Chau, Anita Mui, Sally Yeh*

*J & K Pop Artiste examples: Hyorin, Jong Shin Yoon, Lee Soo-Young, Yoon Mi-rae, BoA, Younha, IU, SeungRi, JaeJoong, Eric Namm GD, Dean*

*Drama/Popular Movie/Anime OST examples: Descendants of the sun, Goblin, EKO next door, Moon Lovers: Scarlet Heart Ryeo, It's Okay, that's Love, Falling for innocence, Lala land, Pirates of the caribbean, Harry Potter, StarWars, Beauty & the Beast, Titanic, Frozen, Moana, Death Note, fma, Bleach, Cowboy Bebop, One punch man, Spirited Away, Naruto, attack on Titan, Darling in the franxx, Tokyo Ghoul*

*New age Artiste examples: Yiruma, Joe Hisashi, Yanni, David Lanz, Kevin Kern, Kitaro, Sinchikay, Secret Garden, Suzanne Ciani, Ryuichi Sakamoto*

*Jazz Artiste examples: Louis Armstrong, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, John Coltrane, Max Roach*

*Contemporary Worship Artiste examples: Chris Tomlin, Hillsong, Matt Redman, Don Moen, Cory Asbury, All Sons & Daughters, Sarah McMillan*

# THE MODULAR APPROACH

*“P.B.E.S™ is both a structured and personalised syllabus that uses a well-organised 'modular' approach, similar to that of assembling a puzzle. Our students may choose what they want to learn within the context of the syllabus but can weave through sections that they may have already acquired from their previous background.”*

The term 'music' is used extensively to describe a very broad art form. It covers all melodies, rhythm and even silence that is combined or separated. If we were to take just the present-day genres and subgenres of popular music and their relevant improvisational techniques, it would be virtually impossible to learn everything. Right down to learning how to draw a treble-clef on a staff, to understanding the controversy of applying the Augmented 4th chord in renaissance church music, the truth lays bare that we simply learn what is needed and preferred because even the most renowned musicians in the world are only capable of doing what they are best at.

For classical music, the objective is to simply be able to play accordingly. A common classical syllabus will be set by the examination board such as ABRSM, Trinity and LCM, that will require the preparation of 2-4 musical pieces in a year; for which the student will need to play these pieces adequately, to persuade the examiner of a deserved passing mark. It does not matter how the student eventually gets to it because you literally do not need to understand what you are playing. All that is needed is to play according to the scores, note by note and then replicate the song itself. Practicability is utmost important, for Classical music examinations. Once complete, you will then be on your way.

P.B.E. Syllabus™ is quite the opposite. It consists of modules that the students can choose, follow or skip. Students may also learn 'backwards' – that is returning to earlier subjects in more detail, which is an advantage for students who were self-taught. These modules are improvisational techniques and stand-alone musical subjects that can be acquired in either a linear or non-linear fashion and at one's learning pace to eventually apply to any song that is desired. For example, you may choose to learn how to harmonise your right hand melody before learning how to play broken chords with 9th notes on your left. Perhaps you could learn how to play in an accompaniment mode before learning to play in a solo playing style. Our P.B.E.S™ methodology does not encourage students to memorise pre-arranged songs - in our opinion, we view this approach ineffective and redundant. We want to build a student's musical skills by allowing them to go through the process of fixing a puzzle, gaining knowledge through it, acquiring the play and bettering their improvisational skills one step at a time. Students should eventually learn how to compose and re-arrange tunes at will.

Contemporary music is not to be replicated, if so, there is no need to learn in modules. For Classical music, yes you might want to replicate, but not for Pop. As modern musicians today, we do not do music covers by replicating the original. Otherwise, every YouTube cover would sound exactly the same as the original and would be receiving copyright infringements. Picture the greatest painters and artists using tracing papers or better still invest in the highest resolution photocopier for their work. P.B.E.Syllabus teaches the opposite of replication, where students can develop their own music rendition and ensuring the most suitable approach while yielding the best possible results.

# COMPLEMENTS YOUR PREVIOUS MUSIC TRAINING

*'Music is comprehensively broad, spanning over two centuries of genres. For those with classical or other musical backgrounds, the P.B.E.Syllabus™ acts as a supplement and does not replace or conflict what you have previously learned.'*

In every course of art, every classification or style has its own mastery e.g. in dance, music, calligraphy or paint. Interestingly, there are two common misconceptions about art:

The first misconception is that the modern contexts are usually less 'superior' to the founding eras. Everyone perceives contemporary art as spontaneous and extemporaneous. A less positive word to use is 'casual', compared to earlier days where art was perceived as being 'serious'. How would you compare a Mona Lisa painting to the 'Invisible art' of a plain white wall recently presented at an art exhibition? Or comparing the musical periods of Baroque (1600-1750), Classical (1750-1820) and Romantic (1810-1910) to today's Pop, R&B and rock era? The truth is that subjectiveness is more than one can debate. There is never a loss of discipline in every genre, era, or style.

The second misconception is that art becomes 'outdated'. Though literally it does mean so in certain respects, but the generalised people are constantly only moving 'forward' to what is new. 'Trend' and 'art' often get inappropriately associated and confused at the same time. For example, chasing for the latest album by Jay Chou and disregarding the older albums as obsolete. Sometimes, in the eyes of the modern society, it can be compromising for not following through with the "trend". The word 'old-fashioned' explains it all, if you are wearing a dress that was designed in the earlier century. Only if you keep an open mind, one can see that there is no life-span to art, as to what is been regarded as the 'in thing' and what is considered as passé.

Evolution is inevitable. The practice of Arts do not change over the centuries. They diversify into new categories, new breeds and new creative interpretations. Like a plant that has growing leaves, each leaf represents a sub-genre of its own, while the roots of the plants stay in one. The point we are bringing here is that, learning and eventually mastering any one aspect of a genre will never contest with other genres within the same classification of arts. For example, you can learn hip-hop dancing and ballet at the same time or computer designing and traditional poster painting. You could also learn Pop Piano and Classical Piano together - it can never conflict. They will only complement each other. What this allows you to do is to acquire valuable skills from multiple ways of playing, without getting lost in the sea of possibilities. Learning Pop, Jazz and Classical at the same time will only fill the gaps that you have and nurture you into a well-rounded musician.

# MODES OF TESTS

The courses that are in conjunction with P.B.E.S™ are either for strictly leisure based, academic or both. Students to level up to the next level will choose the following options:

- P.B.E.S™ casual evaluation
- P.B.E.S™ assessment
- P.B.E.S™ graded examination

P.B.E.S™ casual evaluation	P.B.E.S™ assessment	P.B.E.S™ graded examination
Only for students of Play by Ear Music School for use to upgrade to subsequent P.B.E.S™ levels	Only for students of Play by Ear Music School for use to upgrade to subsequent P.B.E.S™ levels	For students of Play by Ear Music School for use to upgrade to subsequent P.B.E.S™ levels and members of the public
Essential*	Optional	Optional
<i>*The casual evaluation is only an aided tool to help students move to the next level without any stress and formal assessment or examinations</i>		
No certification	Certification (P.B.E.S™ assessed)	Certification (P.B.E.S™ graded examination)
Learn at least 85% of all subjects and be able to implement at least 50% of all improvisation techniques within the current level	50 marks to pass based on P.B.E.S™ assessment criteria	65 marks to pass based on P.B.E.S™ graded examination criteria
Any time period within the course span	Any time period within the course span. Requires makeup lesson in replacement for assessment	2 sessions (usually June & Dec) Registration starts Apr and Oct respectively
Free	Using makeup lesson (one lesson credit)	Refer to exam fees

# P.B.E.S™ CASUAL EVALUATION

P.B.E.S™ casual evaluation - The evaluation will be conducted by the student's assigned PBE instructor during any period (after the minimum level duration) within the course. The student does not need to 'pass' the current level to be officially upgraded to the next P.B.E.S™ level. The instructor will perform the necessary check-list to ensure that the student has studied and learn at least 85% of all subjects and be able to implement at least 50% of all improvisation techniques within the current level. The P.B.E.S™ casual evaluation is perfect for students who prefer the course to be completely leisure based with no examinations or any form of point grading system.

To conduct the P.B.E.S™ casual evaluation, your instructor will sign the CE form and either submit on behalf of the student OR present to the student to be submitted individually to the administrative office. The subsequent P.B.E.S™ student textbook and other relevant materials will be provided to the student upon giving the CE form. There will be no certifications offered to the student for P.B.E.S™ casual evaluation. Should students opt for certifications, they should consider either the P.B.E.S™ assessment or the P.B.E.S™ graded examinations.

The P.B.E.S™ casual evaluation is only available for students of Play by Ear Music School and not for the members of the public.

# P.B.E.S™ ASSESSMENTS

P.B.E.S™ assessment - The assessment will be conducted by a different PBE instructor during any period (after the minimum level duration) within the course. The student will be assessed on the following elements:

30 marks      Song pieces (excerpt 1 from P.B.E.S™ Level 1 song booklet)

30 marks      Song pieces (excerpt 2 from P.B.E.S™ Level 1 song booklet)

10 marks      Aural test

25 marks      Improvisation

5 marks      Sight reading of fake sheets

Duration of P.B.E.S™ Level 1 assessment: 20mins

To pass, a minimum of 50 marks is required.

To conduct the P.B.E.S™ assessment, the student will require to book an assessment date with the administrative office using a accumulated valid. makeup lesson. Should the student has no makeup lesson credits, the student can choose to postpone any regular weekly lesson in replacement for the assessment. During the assessment, the instructor (tester) will assess the candidate based on the requirements and give a score. The instructor will provide the assessment form to the administrative office. Should the student pass the level, the subsequent P.B.E.S™ student textbook and other relevant materials will be provided to the student. An official certificate will be presented to the student within 60 days via mail.

The P.B.E.S™ assessment is only available for students of Play by Ear Music School and not for the members of the public.

# P.B.E.S™ GRADED EXAMINATIONS

P.B.E.S™ graded examinations - The examinations will be conducted by an official graded examiner. There are 2 sessions within a calendar year which usually falls on June and Dec. Registration starts on Apr and Oct respectively. The candidate will be examined on the following elements:

65 marks      Improvisation

5 marks        Sight reading of fake sheets

30 marks      Aural test

Duration of P.B.E.S™ Level 1 graded examination: 25mins

To pass, a minimum of 65 marks is required.

To conduct the P.B.E.S™ graded examination, the student will require to book an exam date with the administrative office. During the examinations, the examiner will assess the candidate based on the requirements and give a score. The result will only be revealed after 5 working days. An official score form together with the official certificate (should the candidate pass the exams) will be presented to the candidate within 60 days via mail.

The P.B.E.S™ graded examinations is available for students of Play by Ear Music School and for the members of the public.



# P.B.E.SYLLABUS™ LEVEL 4

Subject 4:1	ii-V-I progressions and substitute triads in improvisation
Subject 4:2	Advanced right hand fill-ins I
Subject 4:3/4	4-note right hand harmonization
Subject 4:5	Advanced 16th beat left and right hand patterns
Subject 4:6	Improvising with pentatonic & blues scale
Subject 4:7	Motifs as a source of improvisation
Subject 4:8	Creating an introduction with key modulation
Subject 4:9	Basic jazz theory applicable in Pop
Subject 4:10	Walking bass for Pop
Subject 4:11	Advanced forms of Pop reharmonization
Subject 4:12	Bossa Nova & other Pop Latin improvisation
Subject 4:13	Advanced rock piano
Subject 4:15	Advanced comping I
Subject 4:16	Ending with chord progressions Part 3
Subject 4:17	+ Song arrangements for bridges
Subject 4:18	Improvisation 3B
Subject 4:19	Level 4 Rhythm Training
Subject 4:20	Ear Training (Part 4)
Annex A	Recap/revision of Level 3&3B subjects

# NOTES