Developing Ensemble Skills
Benefits

• Ability to keep going
• Maintaining a pulse
• Working with others
• Hear lines differently
• Developing good musical reflexes to respond quickly to change
• Encourages students to think about music in a broader and more flexible context
Skills

- Learning to count
- Being part of a team
- Sacrificing notes to maintain the beat
- Develops excellent sight-reading skills
- Enhance greater flexibility in your playing
- Adjust to others in sound
- Reflecting dynamic changes as an ensemble
Different types of piano ensemble?

• Piano Duet (2 pianists)
• Accompanying an instrumentalist
• Piano with more than 2 players
• Accompanying a singer
• Working with a vocal chamber group
• Accompanying a choir
• Playing in a jazz band

• Accompanying a choir
• Orchestral piano
• Repetiteur
• Concerto playing
• Multiple piano duets
Piano Duet

• Balance extension from just two hands
• Rhythmic foundation
• Releases the harmonies and harmonics of the piano
• Bass notes set up
• A sniff, wrist movement to indicate a start
Piano accompanying

- Get used to the ability to drop and add beats
- Know how to tune an instrument and advise how to get it in tune
- Balance of the melody- can you hear the soloist?
- Let the soloist dictate the speed
Chamber music

- Matching sounds to the instruments
- Learning to give a good lead
- Be supportive to your colleagues
- Learning to give effective, constructive criticism
- Working out similar lines
- Poker faces for errors
- Using the score to bring others in
Orchestral Playing

• Following a conductor
• Responding to what you see versus what you hear
• Playing with instruments around you to create a bigger picture
• Learning when to come through a texture and when to balance within it
• The necessity for efficient counting
• One job within many- no ‘I’ in team
Piano within an ensemble...

Prepares you for Concerto playing!
Choral accompanying

- Know how to give vocal warm-ups
- Cycle of 5ths - helps to develop chordal understanding
- Practise being able to play 2 lines at the same time - great skill to enhance contrapuntal playing and understanding
- Score reading and developing an ear for intonation
Repetiteur

• Following movements rather than a conductor
• Developing skills in improvising within a style
• Working in 8-bar phrases
• Working collaboratively across the arts with different types of artists
Playing piano in a jazz ensemble

- Play one note well
- Notes are your friends
- Develop chords and notes that you already know
- Playing in time is crucial
- Have a go and learn from your mistakes
Tips

• Practise with a metronome
• Don’t be afraid to admit technical difficulties
• Do not start until everyone is ready
• Inexperienced players generally tend to rush semiquavers and fast passages
• Praise first - improve upon second
The ‘all-round’ musician

An interlocking range of skills, knowledge and understanding is needed in order to develop successfully into a well-rounded musician:
Reliable ‘all-round’ assessment

An interlocking range of tests is needed to provide a valid, well-rounded, accurate musical assessment:

- Performance skills
  - (Pieces/Songs)
- Listening skills
  - (Aural tests)
- Technical skills
  - (Scales & arpeggios)
- Creative skills
  - (Jazz exams and Practical Musicianship)
- Notation skills
  - (Sight-reading)
- Knowledge & understanding
  - (Theory exams)