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About the author

Peter Deneff grew up in a musical home, exposed to classical music, Greek songs, and the Beatles. After several years of classical piano lessons with Leaine Gibson, he began jazz studies with the world-renowned pianist and David Bowie band member, Mike Garson. During this time he also studied many ethnic styles that influenced his composition and playing. He studied music composition and film scoring at California State University Long Beach, where he earned his Bachelors and Masters degrees in classical music composition. While at CSULB, Deneff composed his *Three Greek Dances for String Quartet*, which has been performed in the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Peter has written many best-selling books for Hal Leonard, and has produced and recorded numerous arrangements for Yamaha, Hal Leonard, and PianoDisc. His original music and scoring was featured in the award-winning Charlie Sheen film,

Five Aces. In 2012, Deneff composed the score for the feature film *Love of Life*. In early 2013, his involvement with the Hollywood animation community afforded him the opportunity to write the score for the short film *The Annies: 40 Year Retrospective*, which was presented as one of the highlights of the 2013 Annie Awards at Royce Hall, UCLA, and featured the legendary voice actress June Foray. Also, in 2013 Deneff scored the film *A Journey into the Holocaust*, produced by Paul Bachow.

Peter's stylistic versatility on the keyboard has allowed him to perform with a diverse assortment of artists such as Enrico Macias, Ebi, Tierra, Ike Willis (of Frank Zappa), Sonia Santos, Ramon Banda, Ritchie Garcia, Jerry Salas (of El Chicano), and Chalo Eduardo, as well as jazz greats Brandon Fields, Tom Brechtlein, Robert Kyle, Bruce Babad, and Bijon Watson.

Deneff's original project, *Excursion*, features mostly original works in a style best described as ethno-jazz. *Excursion's* sound is a blend of Brazilian, Cuban, Greek, Armenian, funk, classical, and progressive jazz. The group has been featured twice at the Playboy Jazz Festival and regularly performs at Herb Alpert's Vibrato Jazz Grill and the World Famous Baked Potato in Hollywood.

On the academic side, Peter has taught at Musician's Institute Hollywood, Orange County High School of the Arts, Cypress College, Fullerton College, and is currently an adjunct faculty member at Long Beach City College.

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Introduction

The study of Latin music is a broad and daunting endeavor for almost any musician. With its numerous sub-genres and country-specific musical conventions, a musician can easily be overwhelmed and confused as to where to start. Pianists are no exception. Being a rhythm section member as well as a melodic lead, piano players have a lot of ground to cover when it comes to learning how to play Brazilian, Cuban, Flamenco, and other Latin styles.

Specifically, the pianist must be rhythmically and technically capable enough to play montunos, (distinctive rhythmic motives that serve as a major driving force in some Caribbean music), they must have a certain grasp of jazz voicings, they must understand the comping styles of the various sub-genres, and they are often called upon to improvise in an idiomatically appropriate way. While this book does not attempt to address all of these stylistically, it does contain useful and fun material for developing the ability to physically execute various technical problems as they relate to Latin styles.

This book is intended as a sort of Latin sequel to Charles Louis Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises*, a classic of piano literature that has been pushing pianists' technique to the limit for nearly 150 years. When this book is mastered, you will find that your technical prowess will be at a new level. The exercises in this book are perfect for either the beginner or the professional and can even benefit pianists of other genres such as jazz or classical. They may be practiced as quickly as they can be played cleanly and accurately. Some tips that I like to keep in mind when practicing these exercises include the following:

- Start very slowly, deliberately, and staccato. This builds articulation.
- Always use a metronome. The metronome will help you develop your sense of time and help you build velocity.
- When you master an exercise at a given speed, increase the tempo one notch on your metronome.
- Keep your fingers curved.
- Don't tense up.
- Push yourself, but stop if it hurts!

These exercises can and should be learned in all twelve keys (if they aren't already written that way) because it is important to feel at ease with any harmonic center. Mastering and being able to visualize chords and melodies in any key is vital to being a master pianist and improviser. You must learn all the "roads" of the keyboard so you don't ever get lost!

The main thing to remember is to have fun with these exercises, be creative, and find new ways to incorporate these techniques into your music, Latin or not. Last but not least, do not get discouraged. Technique doesn't happen overnight; it may take weeks or even months to master some of these exercises. It will certainly take longer to master them in all keys. Pace yourself, and you will succeed in mastering this book and be well on your way to becoming the next great Latin pianist!

Happy practicing,

Peter Deneff

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$\text{♩} = 90$

The musical score is written for piano in a common time signature (C). It consists of six systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 90. The first system includes fingering numbers: 1 2 5 in the treble and 5 3 1 in the bass. The second system has 1 2 in the treble and 5 3 in the bass. The third system has 1 2 in the treble and 5 3 in the bass. The fourth system has 1 2 in the treble and 5 3 in the bass. The fifth system has 1 2 in the treble and 5 3 in the bass. The sixth system has 1 2 in the treble and 5 3 in the bass.

$\text{♩} = 80$

The image shows a piano score for page 7, measures 1 through 10. The score is written in 2/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 80. It consists of five systems, each with a treble and bass clef. The first system includes fingerings: 5, 2, 3, 5, 3, 2, 4, 3. The key signature changes from two flats to three sharps at measure 6. The music features a mix of chords and melodic lines, with some notes marked with asterisks.

♩ = 100



The first system of musical notation consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 100. The music begins with a treble staff containing a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes marked with '2' and '3' above them. The bass staff features a sequence of chords and single notes, including a triplet of eighth notes marked with '1', '2', and '3' below them.



The second system of musical notation continues the piece. The treble staff shows a continuation of the eighth-note melody with some rests. The bass staff continues with a similar rhythmic pattern of chords and notes.



The third system of musical notation shows a key change. The treble staff has a key signature change to three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) indicated by a double bar line and three flat symbols. The bass staff also reflects this change with a key signature change to three flats.



The fourth system of musical notation continues in the new key signature of three flats. The treble staff features a more active eighth-note melody, while the bass staff maintains a steady accompaniment.



The fifth system of musical notation concludes the piece in the key of three flats. The treble staff ends with a final chord, and the bass staff provides a concluding accompaniment.