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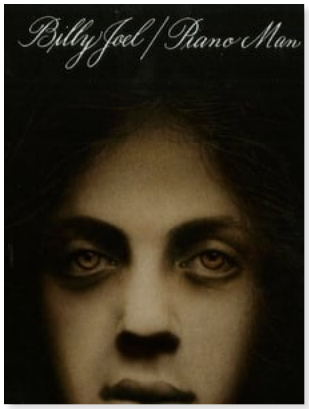

Captain Jack

Billy Joel

♪ Level 50/100 (Ambitious)

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CAPTAIN JACK

Words and Music by Billy Joel

"Captain Jack" is an early Billy Joel narrative about a teenage loner living on the fringes of New York City. Joel captures the essence of a young man with too much time on his hands and no clear idea of his future, placing the lyrics in the second person so the listener becomes the subject. "Captain Jack" is either a drug or the dealer who brings it, and the artificial escape from a "one-horse town" never fills the emptiness inside. The protagonist has "everything"—cool clothes, a brand new car, a girlfriend—yet is never satisfied, and he tries to fill his hollow heart with drugs and seedy hangouts. But ultimately, though he hasn't found the answers to his emptiness, he sees it all coming to an end in the line, "Well, you're twenty-one and still your mother makes your bed, and that's too long." Joel's story is one to which most people can relate: the feeling that in our teen years, nobody truly understands us because in reality, we don't understand ourselves. "Captain Jack" is a timeless story that resonates decades after its inception. As long as there are teenagers struggling with self-discovery, "Captain Jack" will remain a poignant story and song.

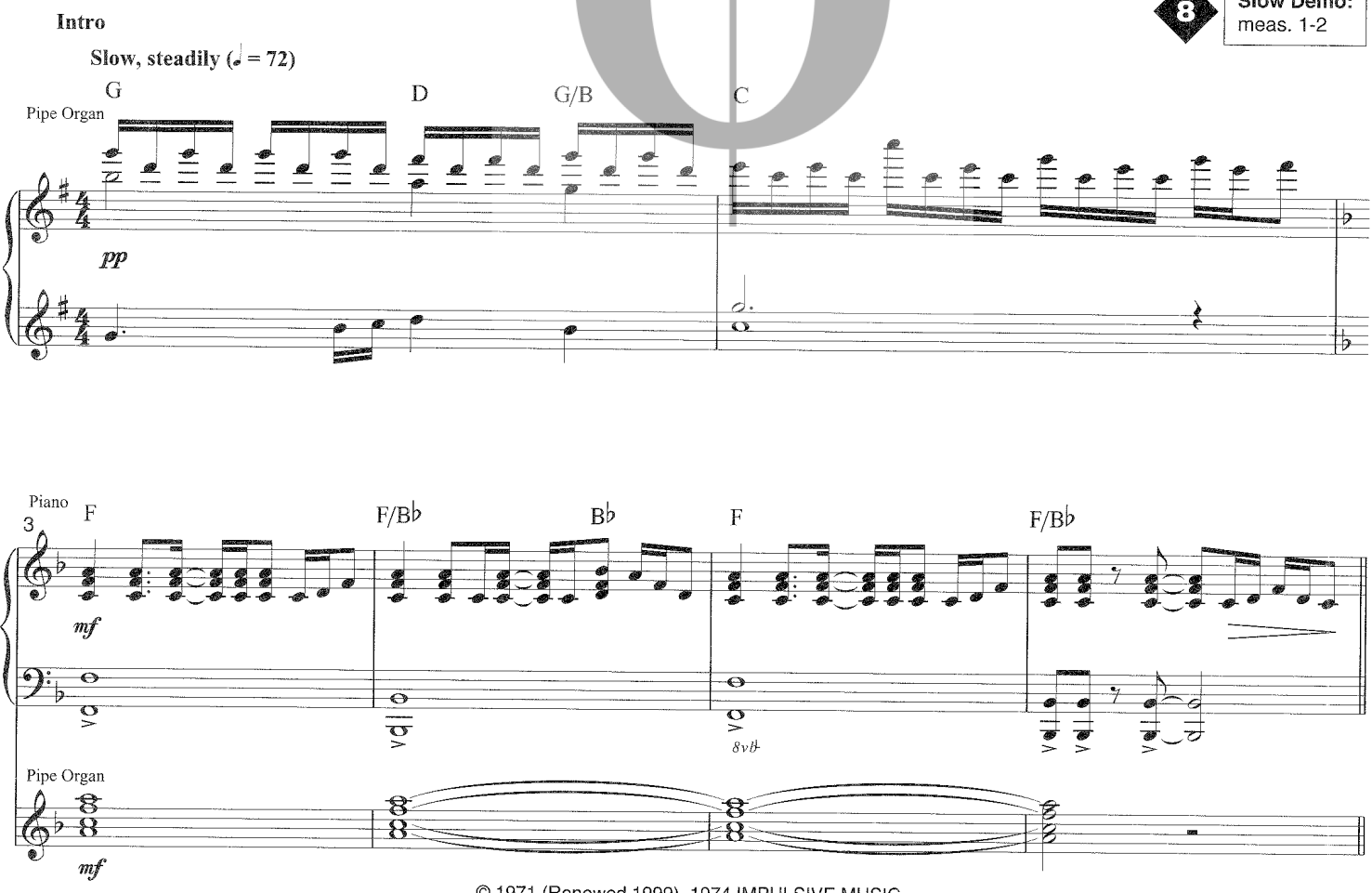
Figure 5—Intro

The first two measures of the intro (played on pipe organ) are comprised of a 16th-note figure in the right hand and a simple line in the left that implies the noted chord structure in the key of G. (This brief statement in G might seem odd now, but Joel is foreshadowing the chorus.) The C chord in measure 2 acts as a *pivot chord* (a chord present in two keys): the IV in G, and the V in F. When the piano enters in measure 3, he oscillates between the I and IV chords (F and B♭).

Fig. 5

7 Full Band

8 Slow Demo: meas. 1-2



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