

1999

## PIANO INSTRUCTION

Teacher

address

Phone

Teacher's Piano Studio

Studio notes for parents of prospective students . . .

### Method

Every effort is made to develop the musical interests of the student within the realm of Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionist, and early 20th Century, supplemented with folk tunes, children's classics, Christian music, and popular pieces.

It is difficult to sum up a teaching style or philosophy in a few short sentences, but there are five factors I believe are critical to a student's success:

- The study of music, not exercises - the piano is an instrument to be played with the body, the ear, the mind, and the heart
- Development of superior reading skills
- Proper use of arm weight for tone production and elimination of wasted movements
- Understanding the 'pulse' of music and the importance of rhythm
- Ownership of the keyboard, acquired through a complete understanding of theory in action

It is the teacher who must help the student to find the will to continue. I take the responsibility of teaching very seriously and am eager to share what little wisdom I might have acquired over the years. I have a deep passion for music - and a strong desire to help young people discover their love for the piano.

I do not presume to even remotely approach the genius of Beethoven in my playing or my teaching, but I do continue to include in my teaching what is the basis for the passion in his genius: Beethoven cautioned his students not to be overly concerned with mistakes, for mistakes are forgivable - it is playing without emotion, without being part of the music, without caring, that is unpardonable.

### Recitals

Formal Spring Recital in late April/early May; Informal Fall Recital in late September/early October. Additional opportunities to play for others scheduled throughout the year at care centers and church or school functions.

### Books, tuition fees, & other places to put your money

Weekly half-hour lessons provided for students under the age of 10 at \$\$ a month; students age 11 and older enroll for weekly 45 minute lessons at \$\$ a month. All lessons payable at the first scheduled lesson of each month.

Expect to spend approximately \$\$ for beginner's books at the start of lessons. New students will also need a 3-ring binder for theory books and a spiral notebook for weekly assignment notes. Most students require an average of one or two new books every month. Books used during early years

are generally between \$\$ and \$\$\$. As students advance, the need for a serious music library demands books that generally average between \$\$ and \$\$ each.

A recital fee is applied to hall and piano rental, invitation and program printing, and refreshment expenses. Payable in two installments of \$\$ each, with March and September lesson charges.

A decent (not necessarily expensive) instrument is crucial to the continued interest and developing technique of the student and should be tuned a minimum of once a year. It is my firm and steady opinion that electronic keyboards and digital pianos are not suitable substitutes for acoustic pianos.

### Studio Music Clubs

The three Studio Music Clubs - Theory Club, Repertoire & Performance Club, and Composer Club - are offered as means of personal incentive. These clubs have no dues, no officers, and hold no meetings. To be accepted for membership into any of the clubs, the student must have acquired a specific knowledge of music theory, mastered a specific list of pieces, or completed specific research projects. For more information, see the Studio Music Club brochure.

### Practice

I do not generally require a certain length of time to be spent in practice -- I ask only that a practice session lasts as long as it takes to reach the goal and that practice need only occur on those days that the student also breathes. Parents and students should keep in mind the advancement rate is directly related to amount of time spent in thoughtful, concentrated practice. An average of 20 minutes a day will let the student "scrape by" -- an average of an hour a day will move the student to a much higher level of skill and enjoyment.

Even a student who loves music and has a strong desire to play the piano needs encouragement - not nagging - to practice. The excitement of beginning piano lessons often leaves a parent wishing their child would find something to do other than play the piano! Unfortunately, the honeymoon seldom lasts forever - the interest and the desire are still there, but the student eventually comes face-to-face with reality of the work and effort involved in studying such a complex instrument.

There are seven basic reasons a student does not practice - I take full responsibility for the first three:

1. The student does not know how to practice.
2. The study pieces are either boring (too easy) or frustrating (too hard).
3. The student is required to work exclusively on music that is not appealing.

Parents are responsible for the next three:

4. Practice sessions are too long for the student's age.
5. Practice is scheduled when other family members (or nearby friends) are engaged in games or watching a special show.
6. The instrument is not in reasonable condition and/or the practice room is not comfortable and/or too many distractions are in the room at practice time.

The student must bear responsibility (with the parents' guidance) for the most common reason of all:

7. The student must develop a character trait - discipline - in order to learn to schedule priorities and to understand there is not always enough time in the day to do everything, but to choose wisely those activities that are important. The piano requires the ability to study independently.

Even the very best teacher cannot do it all - the student is ultimately responsible for the work of mastering the piano - and ultimately deserves the credit for the accomplishment.

Annual Studio Awards

Achievement Medals

**Musicianship** - Recognizing continuous effort, reliability, and cooperation. To earn this award, a student must be faithful in daily practice, diligent in attention to detail, accept difficult assignments, and exhibit an exceptional eagerness to learn.

**Advancement** - Recognizing exceptional personal growth made over a period of time. To earn this award, a student must overcome individual obstacles and demonstrate substantial improvement in technique and a deeper understanding of music.

**Interpretation** - Recognizing ability to most closely represent the intent of the composer. To earn this award, a student must execute pieces with clarity of tone, evoke strong reaction from the listener, and project from the heart - all while maintaining integrity of the technical aspects of the music.

**Showmanship** - Recognizing style and composure during performance. To earn this award, a student must exhibit superior stage presence, serving as an inspiration to other performers. This involves projecting confidence, aspiring to please the audience, and performing with quiet grace and dignity.

**Composition & Arrangement** - Recognizing creative ambition and personal expression through an original composition. To earn this award, a student must compose a substantial piece of music following compositional and theory logic, resulting in a product that is pleasing and thought-provoking to a variety of audiences.

The Tracy Award for Excellence in Piano Study - Engraved plaque awarded to recognize a student's outstanding dedication to piano study, exhibited by achievement in each of the four areas of Musicianship, Advancement, Interpretation, and Showmanship. In addition, this student must be involved in piano activities beyond lessons and recitals (for example, UNL's Piano Day, LMTA's District Auditions, or making his or her talents available for performance at church services or school functions).

Dr. James Madison Tracy, 1837-1928, was born in Bath, New Hampshire. Showing musical ability at an early age, every advantage was given for his musical education. He studied with great masters in America and abroad, including thirteen months in the studio of Franz Liszt. Dr. Tracy was professor of piano at this country's leading conservatories. He gained national recognition as a teacher, pianist, critic, and author. It is estimated he performed in over 700 classical piano concerts and delivered nearly as many lectures on music and related topics. Tracy and his wife, Cateau, founded and directed the Liszt School of Music in Denver, Colorado.

## How parents can be encouragers

- Praise for your child's efforts and special accomplishments is important, but secondary to other actions and attitudes that are ongoing:
- Show your support by attending recitals and other performances; ask for a single piece concert after dinner the next time you have company. (Let the student choose an old and familiar piece.)
- Never complain about having to tolerate the music of practice time or the scheduling difficulty of fitting lessons into busy lives.
- Take an interest in weekly assignments. Student notebooks are used for the obvious reason of writing weekly assignments, comments specific to the current study pieces, and specific goals to accomplish each week. They can also provide an opportunity for parents to be involved with the learning process.
- Buy a classical music cassette or CD for a 'no special reason' present.
- Enjoy music! It is a gift from God!

"Sing to Him a new song - play skillfully on the strings. . ." . . . Psalm 33:3

## Statement of Commitment & Responsibilities

Successful mastery of the piano requires the forming of a three-sided partnership of instructor, student, and parent -

- Knowledge, experience, and direction from the instructor
- A commitment of time and diligent study from the student
- Support and encouragement from the parent

## My commitment as your instructor

I have a strong passion for music and take the responsibility of teaching very seriously. I am committed to providing only the best instruction for my students by:

Continually seeking to improve my teaching skills through research, study, observation, and workshop participation.

Developing in students an enthusiasm, respect, and love for music.

Discovering the uniqueness of each student and respecting differences of musical taste and personality.

Teaching a program aimed at developing the whole musician, not merely creating keypunchers.

Creating a studio atmosphere where students are free to feel comfortable and confident, able to recognize both the seriousness and fun of study.

Encouraging laughter and discovery.

Encouraging participation in musical activities beyond studio-sponsored performances and awakening a sense of responsibility in students to share musical talent with others, whether it be church, family, school, or community.

### Student Responsibilities

Even the most wise and competent teacher cannot master the piano for a student. The actual work of learning the piano - and the credit for success - rests with the student. These lessons belong to the student, who is responsible for:

Participating in setting weekly and long-term goals.

Bringing assignment notebooks, theory binders, and music books to each lesson.

Arriving at each lesson with the week's assignment completed.

Committing to practice a minimum of five days a week for the length of time necessary to meet the goal.

Understanding the amount of time spent in correct and thoughtful practice is directly related to the advancement rate.

### Parent Responsibilities

Parents are instinctively eager to provide support and encouragement for their children, especially when their children are studying an instrument as complex and difficult as the piano. Your support can be most effective by:

Communicating with your child and with me concerning progress.

Visiting the studio occasionally to observe a lesson.

Providing a quiet and undisturbed time for at-home practice.

Providing a decent and regularly tuned acoustic piano (not an electronic keyboard or digital piano) for at-home practice.

Assisting your child with formulating a practice schedule by providing guidance in making wise choices for use of time.

Agreeing to uphold the Studio Policies listed on the following pages.

### Studio Policies

#### Length of Term

Lessons are provided year-round, with a Christmas break from Christmas Eve through New Year's Day. Two additional breaks of one week each are scheduled at the instructor's discretion (two weeks' notice will be given in advance of these breaks).

The studio is closed for Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, and the Fourth of July. If scheduling permits, make-up lessons are offered but are not guaranteed for these one-day holidays.

Students wishing to enter competitions or LMTA District Auditions will be provided additional coaching as necessary and as time allows at no extra charge.

### Payments & Refunds

Tuition is payable by the month at the first lesson of each month. Monthly tuition fees are the same regardless of the number of weeks in the month, and regardless of the number lessons attended or missed during the month.

Refunds are not issued for any reason for missed lessons. The studio lesson time of 30 minutes or 45 minutes a week is only a portion of what is covered by the tuition fee. For every hour of studio teaching time, approximately one additional hour is consumed selecting and purchasing music for study, reading new student pieces, planning and organizing recitals, writing theory workbooks, writing programs, printing, studying piano instruction theory and technique, attending instructor workshops, preparing materials for auditions or competition, planning and organizing group performances and master classes, and improving my own repertoire for teaching purposes.

Book charges, recital fees, audition fees, and other miscellaneous charges will be invoiced at the last lesson of the month, with payment to be included with the next months' tuition fee.

### Make-up Lessons

A family vacation or other activity may occasionally make it impossible to practice between lessons, but a lesson should not be skipped simply because it was not possible to practice. There are, however, occasionally conflicts of schedule or illness that make it impossible to attend a lesson. For those occasions, every effort will be made to schedule a make-up lesson, either by offering an alternate time or, when practical, by extending lesson time by an additional 15 minutes.

### Eligibility for Recital Participation

As part of the routine preparation for recitals, group practice performances are scheduled at my home, at the studio, and at care centers/retirement centers.

In order to perform in the Fall Recital, a student must attend at least one scheduled practice performance.

In order to perform in the Spring Recital, a student must attend at least three scheduled practice performances - two of these three practices must be a performance of the score from memory.

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Teacher, Instructor

Address City Phone

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