

# Teaching the Joy of Music

*"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember.  
Involve me and I learn."* ~ Benjamin Franklin

## Individualized Instruction

At Teaching the Joy of Music, the teachers enjoy motivating students and helping them to enjoy the music that they play. We strive to make the study of piano and playing music engaging, fulfilling, and fun. We recognize that every student is different ~ some want to learn classical music and perform in competitions or festivals while others just want to be able to play the piano for fun and enjoyment for their families. Because everyone has their own needs and desires, our teachers really work to cater towards each individual student and help them achieve their goals and dreams in music. Our teachers' ultimate goal is to enable our students to find their own, unique strength in music and help them develop their natural abilities. We desire each student to love the music that they create and to feel proud of their accomplishments! While there may be times of discouragement and frustration, which is a normal part of learning a new instrument, we try to be sensitive to these feelings and teach students how to work through them so they can fully appreciate the joy that follows hard work. Our teaching style is filled with a strong sense of dedication and commitment to our students. A supportive atmosphere with honest yet positive criticism enables students to become self-motivated, independent learners. We teach our students through discovery learning, by asking questions and having students think on their own rather than merely giving instructions and corrections.

We are firm believers in the benefits of music study for all individuals, regardless of age and ability. Studying a musical instrument develops not only a lifelong appreciation and love for music, but it is also an opportunity to enhance other life skills including creativity, confidence, concentration, dedication, diligence, perseverance, and patience. To accomplish this, we require each student's active participation in the charting of the course of study we jointly pursue. Since music is to be enjoyed, it is essential for each teacher to discover what a student's interests are and what he wishes to learn about. We prefer to give the student a choice in the music he plays. It's important to find pieces that they are excited to learn! We strongly believe that interest in the repertoire is the best self-motivator for students.

Although an emphasis is placed on classical repertoire, the curriculum is always tailored to the student's interests and goals.

Our teachers believe that teaching must be matched to the student's learning style, not student's learning matched to the teacher's teaching style. Therefore, teaching style, curriculum, and approach must be flexible, varied, and individual. The teachers learn the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student and adapt to it without compromising excellence, to both nurture the strengths and strengthen the weaknesses. We strive to reach out to both the most and least advanced students and to use a variety of techniques to relate to different learning styles and student experiences. Teaching the Joy of Music won't be the right match for parents who would like to groom their children to be competition winners or performers. We are process-oriented instructors, versus product-oriented. However, if students are naturally inclined to perform, achievement-oriented in piano, or intrinsically thrive on competitions, we absolutely support and feed their desires to develop their full potentials so that they can reach their highest achievement possible.

## Foundation First

In current times, the piano and music are taken for granted. Children do not really want to *learn* but are more interested in quickly playing a popular song simply by copying someone who can already play it. Too many people are more interested in seemingly fast results, rather than a true underlying foundation of knowledge that creates a life-long musician from the inside out. Our teachers emphasize *building a strong music foundation first* ~ beginning with the basics of reading music (notation and counting) and music theory (understanding certain patterns that occur in music). Once a student learns the basics, they are never limited in what they can learn because they can pick up any piece of music and play it ~ without the need to copy someone else.

Only after these fundamentals are acquired are we then able to hone each student's musical skills into a more sophisticated style through ever-advancing training in areas such as technique, tone, and phrasing ~ in other words, learning how to play *musically*. Many people think that once they learn the notes, they have mastered the song! This is far from accurate. There is so much more to music than just learning the notes. Our teachers strive to help each student understand the art of playing their instrument musically. We encourage them to really listen to the sounds they are creating. Our long-term goal is for them to gradually

become their own teachers so that when they practice at home they will be able to independently assess their playing on a higher level.

Ultimately, we desire to create *musicíans*, not mere mimics, each with their own unique heart, soul, mind, and musical gifts. With each student, we endeavor to instill a love for the piano and for all music. We want to show them the beauty and wonder of classical repertoire. Our teachers do their best to make sure every student has complete confidence in themselves and their musical abilities. We want them to be proud of who they are and what they can accomplish!

## Lesson Plans

We work diligently to prepare and plan out all of our lessons. The lessons are a blend of piano performance, theory, ear training, and sight reading. Also, we try to incorporate some additional knowledge about the composers and different styles/periods of music. Along with striving to make the lessons very pleasant, we also patiently teach them all the skills they need to successfully perform on their instrument.

## Shared Responsibility

Parents, the student, and the teacher are like a three-legged chair. Together, we can maintain the delicate balance needed for musical success.

## Parent Responsibilities

The parent can assist by requiring daily practice before play time, and by giving encouragement and praise for their child's good efforts. Bringing the student on time to the lesson, purchasing the required materials, and playing classical music in the home are all helpful for the child's growth.

- ❖ **Support and motivate your child.** Your enthusiasm and commitment to this endeavor is crucial to your child's success. Let your child know that you love to hear them play the piano. Celebrate their successes whether it is a good recital performance or mastering the next piece in the book. Be generous with your praise and encouragement. Find places for them to perform – for relatives and friends, at your place of worship, at school. Be proud of their accomplishments large and small.

- ❖ **Communicate with the teacher.** Let the teacher know when things are going well and when they are not.
- ❖ **Help your child find time to practice.** Spend time at home. Limit your child's activities. Make music a priority. Create a quiet, undisturbed place for practice.
- ❖ **Supervise practice.** Parents are encouraged to sit with their child to help with the details of the practice assignment if they can create a positive experience for both themselves and the child. For elementary students, this means sitting with them during their daily practice to help them stay on task and follow written directions. Older students need you to periodically check on their progress and listen to their playing.
- ❖ **Observe lessons** occasionally so you can see and hear what the expectations are for your child.
- ❖ **Provide a quality instrument** – a piano with good action, a pleasing tone, and correct pitch. Tune the piano at least once a year.
- ❖ **Attend concerts and listen to classical music** with your child. Attend a concert once a month. Turn the radio to classical music.

### Student Responsibilities

The student must practice daily with an attentive desire to improve at each session, taking responsibility for his effort and time invested. Students are responsible to be prepared for and actively participate in each lesson and to communicate honestly with the teacher.

- ❖ **Practice intelligently.** Follow the instructions your teacher discusses at your lesson. Practice the whole assignment ~ not just your favorite piece.
- ❖ **Use a pencil.** Do your activity or theory book assignments, write in fingerings and dynamics, and make notes in your music or notebook.
- ❖ **Use the metronome.**
- ❖ **Keep your fingernails short.**
- ❖ **Bring all your music** to the lesson. This is your responsibility, not your parents'. They don't always know which books you need.
- ❖ **Come to lessons with a positive attitude.** A positive attitude will make every challenge easier to overcome. Try your hardest at each lesson ~ attempting is often more important than succeeding.

- ❖ **Ask questions** if you're not sure about something. If you don't understand, it's my fault, not yours. It's my job to teach you in a way you understand.
- ❖ **Share your music** with your family and friends, at your place of worship, at school, and anywhere else you can think of.

## Teacher Responsibilities

An important motivator for the students is the teacher's example as a musician. Teachers must continually develop their skills with continuing education in teaching and performing. The teacher is responsible to express clear expectations for students; to help them reach their goals; to design and organize effective learning activities; to provide information and give direction for students to find further information; and to accept, consider, and respond to students' learning needs throughout the year.

- ❖ **Be knowledgeable** about technique, literature, music theory, history, and pedagogy.
- ❖ **Continue to learn and explore new ideas** on teaching and performance.
- ❖ **Motivate students** to give their best each day.
- ❖ **Plan a unique curriculum** for each student based on his or her learning style, ability, and personality.
- ❖ **Be enthusiastic** about making music.
- ❖ **Guide each student to musical independence.** Help each student develop the necessary skills to become an independent learner.