



Piano Matters by www.the-piano-studio.com



If you're like me, the summer seemed to vanish in the blink of an eye! Where did it go?!! Our studio compacted the work week from five days into three full ones. But who am I to complain? I got a whole summer of four-day-weekends!! This summer saw some new registrations of adult students and (for some unknown reason) a whole slew of little ones from 3-7! They are so fun to teach: kids have excellent imaginations, say exactly what they think, arrive ready to have FUN, and love to sing, play and dance. It would be so great if every student could connect with their innocent, non-judgmental, younger selves. What would YOU do if you didn't care what other people thought?

NEW this month at the-piano-studio.com

the-piano-studio is excited to post an interview with composecreate.com's Wendy Stevens, creator of the fantastic Rhythm Cup Explorations series. Did you ever see Anna Kendrick's audition in the Perfect Pitch movie? Accompanying herself by tapping and manipulating a plastic cup provided the inspiration for Wendy's product. It was created as a fun way to teach rhythm to students in individual or group lessons. Drop by and check out the article!

40 Piece Challenge

Elissa Milne is the creator of the 40 Piece Challenge.

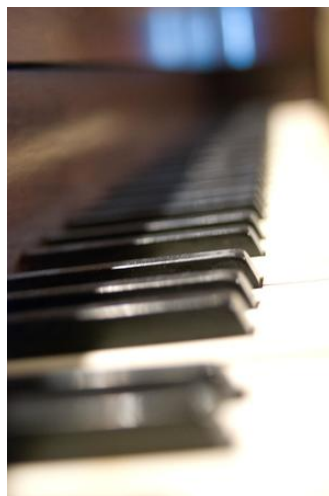
In the challenge, students are invited to learn 40 new pieces in a certain period of time, say a school year (10 months). Why? Having a goal and learning huge amounts of repertoire increases stylistic interpretation abilities, improves sight reading skills, builds technique, fosters appreciation of new composers and new music, and encourages practice.

Last year, teachers were invited to participate and I got to see firsthand these improvements for myself! The new one starts in September!! Come join us!



Inspiration

Are you a member of Netflix? I loved this documentary on Seymour Bernstein. This film follows Seymour as he talks about why he left the concert stage to pursue a career as a teacher. I don't want to say much more than that. Go check it out!



Practice Tips - Learning a New Piece

Learning a new piece can be overwhelming. But it doesn't have to be. Breaking up a piece into manageable-size chunks is the key to learning a new piece well.

Surprisingly, the very first thing to do when learning a new piece is to LOOK at it! In my own practice sessions, I will often analyze a piece before even touching the piano. Some simple questions that I like to ask are: which clefs are being used, what key is it, what is the time signature, who composed it, does the title tell you anything about how you should play it, can I divide the song into sections, is there an overall form or pattern, is there a metronome marking, are there music terms I need to look up, what time period or era was the music composed in, etc.

Next, comes the choice of whether you want to hear a (hopefully good!) recording or just dive in. That is a personal choice that is often hotly debated among teachers. Some people don't trust their musical and/or aural ability and prefer to rely on the expertise of others. Other people prefer not to let other performers influence their interpretation of the piece. I personally like to give it a read-through before I hear anybody else play the song...unless I'm stuck!

When you are finally at the piano, it's important to play the piece SLOWLY and ACCURATELY with correct notes and rhythm. I can't stress that enough. It's so much easier to work to gradually increase the speed as you can handle it. 'Unlearning' mistakes takes so much more work than doing it right in the first place!

One question people will often ask me: Do you practice it hands separately first and then

slowly put it together? It really depends on the piece, but the majority of the time, I dive in with both hands. Much more satisfying and efficient with practice time!!

I think this is a topic I will re-visit. I feel an article coming on!



Until next time!

Elena Fortin


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