



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



January at the-piano-studio.com

It's 2017...2017...2017. At the start of a New Year, it always takes me a little while to remember to write 2017 in my student notebooks. 2016 was an easier year because you could always turn the "5" into a "6" if you forgot, but changing a "6" to a "7" is a little more difficult. :-D *Happy 2017 everyone!*

YEAR IN REVIEW

Last year, a lot of my work focused on the **40 piece challenge**. (Yes, I started the new one this past September, but I am already woefully behind!) And I keep

promising myself that I will incorporate this in my piano studio! But then I get sidetracked by other projects, exams, recitals, and life!

I also got the chance to interview some really great pianists and teachers in the ***Conversations series***. We chatted with different pedagogues about: teaching adults, being a concert pianist, rhythm cups, and Piano Safari. I'm looking forward to adding to that section of the website.

LOOKING AHEAD

I started the New Year by posting my **study guides to the Royal Conservatory of Music's Preparatory Levels A & B**. Boy, these were a lot of work!! If you haven't checked them out yet, go have a look! You'll find composer bios, short guides to teaching / practicing the repertoire, and recordings (at performance tempo). I decided to do this because a) I've taught these songs to so many students that I was considering getting a t-shirt made to explain certain songs b) some of my students couldn't find good recordings of the music c) I was looking for something to fill up all that free time I have... lol.

I plan to make PDF copies of these pages available on the website (for a small fee). Of course now that they are out, people are already wondering when the next levels will be done! I was hoping to have time to bask in the feeling of my accomplishment before diving in again, but looks like I'll have to get busy! Ha!

More than just a teacher...

I have so many students that are over-stressed. This phenomenon is affecting not only my adult students, but even some of the children. With hyper-scheduling, high expectations, and not enough time, I have more and more students that are looking for healthy solutions.



While some of my adult students may jokingly suggest that learning piano is NOT relaxing, for the most part, we need to remind ourselves that music is therapeutic.

One young student who was treated at the Children's Hospital for depression, surprisingly told me that music was not allowed in the ward because it could disturb other patients! I was flabbergasted. For me, music has always been where I could lose myself--either in listening, or playing. (By the way, he showed up at my piano studio for a lesson a few hours after he was released and is recovering well!)

Piano teachers are so much more than "just" a music teacher, they are part coach, part cheerleader, part psychologist, part friend, part disciplinarian, part

listener. I also think a major part of our job is to teach others to find that love of music in themselves.

The diagram illustrates a lead sheet for a song. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody line consists of four measures: a whole note G4, a whole note Bb4, a quarter note D5, and a quarter note A4. Chord symbols 'C7' and 'F' are written above the first and third measures respectively. The lyrics 'WI - KI - PE - DI - A' are written below the notes. Handwritten labels include 'CHORD SYMBOLS' pointing to the C7 and F symbols, 'MELODY' pointing to the notes, and 'LYRIC' pointing to the text below the staff.

Article: How to Play A Lead Sheet (Basic)

I love this image of what a lead sheet is (Thanks, Wikipedia)!! A lead sheet is basically a shorthand version of a popular song that usually contains lyrics, the melody line, and the harmony in the form of chord names.

One of the most popular articles at the-piano-studio.com website is "How to Play a Lead Sheet". This basic mini-lesson is what I use to teach popular tunes to teenagers and adults, in addition to their regular studies.

Playing from a lead sheet teaches students a lot about reading chords and making their own arrangements of songs. One of the biggest rewards in learning lead sheets is that the student is playing recognizable music right away. Some of my beginner students experience a "disconnect" with their playing: I will ask them to sight read a piece and then ask them what they have just played. Most of them will give me a blank look: they were concentrating so hard on getting notes and rhythm right, that they forgot to engage their ears!! Playing lead sheets reminds them that they are making music!

Exam Tips

I guess I *really* have exams on the brain, but whether you are a student, parent, or teacher, it is always handy to have a few extra tips for navigating the exam process.

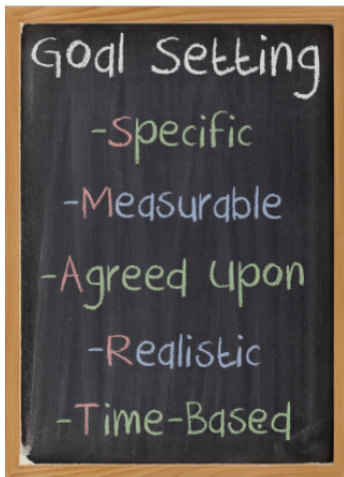
For those that are new to the examinations, I will often send an e-mail containing information like the marking scheme, the exam requirements for the student's specific level, what to



expect, and how to register.

In the last few lessons before an exam, my students and I will usually run through several mock exams. It gives them an idea on what needs improvement, any concerns they may have and what to concentrate their practice on. We talk about technique, we talk about how to handle nerves, and we talk about what are the one or two most important things that we want to get across in our song. For the younger students, it is helpful to ask them what kind of mood each piece should create.

There's even a little mini-checklist that I have on the-piano-studio.com website that covers reminders and things like: cutting your nails, marking your exam pieces with a sticky note or bookmark for the Examiner to find easily, listening carefully to what the Examiner asks for when doing the technical requirements, etc. A handy resource to have!



It's always exciting to come back from Christmas vacation eager to reconnect with your students and set goals for the New Year. We take a few minutes to talk about what worked last year, the progress they've made, and what our plans are for the New Year.

Have you heard about **SMART** goals? (See picture). They apply so well to learning piano and I think it's a great acronym to remember!.

Coming soon to the-piano-studio...

Study guides, study guides, study guides! That is my huge project for 2017! But in between the guides, expect more 40 piece challenge videos and an interview that I am really excited about!!!



Until next time!


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