

# Piano News

## September 2011

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### First Group Lessons Coming Up!

Monday October 10 & Tuesday October 11 will be the first group lessons for 2011 – 2012. I am still fine-tuning the placement for students at this time, and in general, the schedule you see below will hold, but there may be still be a few changes. I'm trying to work around student activities yet still maintain continuity with age and ability levels. **Please let me know if this schedule will NOT work – if I don't hear from you, I will assume it's good to go!**

### 2011 - 2012 Group Lessons

Monday	3:30 - 5:00
Name	Grade
Julia	3
Lydia	3
Madison	2
Alli	4
Amy	4
Ashley K	6

Monday	5:30 - 7:00
Name	Grade
Roman	6
Gianna	5
Katie	5
Jakob D	6
Genevieve	4
Simon	5
Sebi	3

Monday	7:00 - 8:30
Name	Grade
Andrew	9
Carrie	8
Wayne	11
Olivia S	8
Olivia C	7

Tuesday	3:30 - 5:00
Name	Grade
Blake	6
Micah	6
George	6
Nicole	6
Kelsey	5
Grace	5
Annika	5

Tuesday	5:30 - 7:00
Name	Grade
Sam	8
Ashley	7
Solveig	6
Lauren	9
Cale	8
Claire	8

Tuesday	7:00 - 8:30
Name	Grade
Peter	9
Makenzie	10
Michael	10
Emma	10
Rebecca	11
May	12
Zac	9

### STUDENT LESSON TIME EXCHANGE REQUEST:

Nicole Brookshire - Tuesday from 7:30 – 8:15 pm – would like to permanently exchange times with another student who is earlier in the day (no earlier than 4:00 pm). If you think this time slot would work better for you, please contact me.

## Mini Recitals – Friday October 28 – Covenant Methodist Church

4:00 p.m. 5:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.

- I am happy to place students into a time that is convenient for your schedule as long as the 3 performances have approximately the same number of students.
  - I have heard from a couple of families at this time, but please check your calendar.
  - Again – same as group lessons – if I don't hear from you, I will assume any of the above times will be OK.
- **I cannot accommodate performance order requests (please don't ask...).** I always find a fun, interesting way to determine performance order, and if I accept even one request, I must accept all, and the recitals will become a scheduling nightmare.
- I will distribute the recital assignments during group lesson week, so please let me know by Friday, October 7 if you have a preference.

## MAKE UP LESSONS & LAST MINUTE CANCELLATIONS

I am happy to make up lessons within the following guidelines:

1. If the student is ill, and sufficient notice is provided. I realize that students can become ill at the last moment, but in most cases it is possible to provide 4 hours notice that a student is sick. That gives me the opportunity to schedule another student, who may have missed a lesson, to come in their place.
2. If a student is out of town for 4 days during the week. There generally is no place to make up this type of absence – Please provide a minimum of 1 weeks notice unless there is an emergency situation (funeral, accident, etc.).

If for any OTHER reason, the student is unable to attend their normal lesson time, they will need to exchange lessons with another student or simply miss the lesson (regular tuition applies – no credits). I am happy to provide an Exchange & Contact List – just let me know. Students **MUST** exchange with another who has the same lesson length (45 min. or 60 min.).

## MUSICIANSHIP EXAMINATIONS

Last January, many of you participated in Musicianship Exams, which tests students in the areas of Theory, Technique (scales, chords, arpeggios), Ear Training & Sight Reading. This event will take place again in January of 2012.

I am happy to enter students again, but because of the level of preparation necessary for this event, I will only enter those students who are able to work independently to achieve the necessary skills during their at-home practice. Guidance and mentoring will be provided, but most of the work will happen outside of the normal lesson time.

If your child is interested in participating, please contact me.

## Piano Practice Guidelines & Recommendations for Students AND Parents

After 20+ years of teaching I have come up with a few general guidelines and recommendations for piano student success. Remember that success has many definitions. Maybe they want to accompany the church choir, or play in ensemble with friends, or be in a “band”.... and the occasional student even wants to study music in college! To me, the “successful” student ends up being able to understand, read and play music for enjoyment. But to do that requires practice, and it is my job as their teacher to provide reasons to practice – hence all of the group lessons, recitals, master classes, adjudications, Musicfest and all other performance opportunities and competitions.

I work hard to instruct them how to make the most out of their practice time and get the most from their lessons. Parents are an important part of the success – plus you’re paying for the lessons and providing transportation (even students who drive are in cars supplied by the parent!). While each student is unique and their learning needs are specifically addressed at each lesson (the benefit of private instruction), most students will fall into one of the following categories.

### **1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who are in 1<sup>st</sup> thru 6<sup>th</sup> grade (Early – Mid Elementary Level):**

- Approximately 30 minutes of practice 5 times each week.
- These students are generally in method books (Lesson, Performance, Theory) and have small scales assignments and possibly sight reading or technique.
- *Parents should be monitoring, encouraging and very involved in the daily practice routine.*
- *Parents are encouraged to attend lessons at least once a month.*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> year students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older (Mid – Late Elementary):**

- Practice assignments should take 35 – 40 minutes to complete.
- Students may have moved out of their method books, or are in later levels (2A and above).
- Scale assignments are a little more involved (no more than 5 minutes of total practice time).
- There may also be a technique book, sight reading assignment or other practice which is assigned to fix a specific issue.
- *Parents can take a small step back from the practice routine; parents need to be sure the student has enough time to practice and help establish good a schedule for the student.*
- *Parents should attend lessons every now and then so they understand the educational process.*

### **4<sup>th</sup> year students and 5<sup>th</sup> grade thru 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Early Intermediate – Mid Intermediate):**

- Practice should take 40 – 50 minutes minimum.
- Students are generally studying advancing scales and/or technique assignments.
- Most students are no longer in method books, but are playing early intermediate through late intermediate literature.
- Music will be a mix of classical, contemporary, jazzy, and/or popular.
- There are usually at least 3 pieces that a student is preparing, one of which will be the next performance piece.
- *Parents should not have to monitor or force the student to practice. At this stage it becomes more of a choice for the student – although strong encouragement and assistance from the parent to help with time-management issues is essential.*
- *Parents no longer need to attend lessons, but are welcome to drop by if they feel there is an issue or the student needs the support.*

## **Advancing Middle School and High School Students:**

- Practice should be a minimum of 50 – 60 minutes, 5 days per week; this is an average, knowing that on some days there is little to no practice, but on other days, more.
- Most students know their scales, and they are mostly used for warm-ups.
- Music is getting longer and becoming more classically based. At this level the music is difficult enough that students are practicing almost exclusively in sections, with frequent use of the metronome and various practice drills.
- *Students should be working independently and only relying on parents to help with time management issues along with transportation to and from all the piano activities. Students at this level should be keeping their own calendar and taking sole responsibility for their piano success.*
- *Parents should NOT be attending lessons at this stage – it is important for me to establish independent, instructional relationships with the students, which is almost impossible to do if a parent is in attendance.*

Progress should be made on their assignments to the best of their ability and understanding. I expect that at each lesson I can congratulate the student on the improvement I've heard, and we can take the next step to learning more. **I NEVER LOOK FOR PERFECTION – BUT I ALWAYS LOOK FOR PROGRESS!** The reality is that if students don't practice on a regular basis and use the correct practice instructions, there is no progress. If there is no progress, then it becomes a waste of everyone's time and the parent's money.