

The Soundboard

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Autumn Into Winter 2010-2011

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THE AUTUMN PIANO PARTY

Sunday, November 14 • 2:00-3:30pm
Grades K-7

THE PIANO COFFEE HOUSE

Friday, November 19 • 7:30pm
8th Grade through High School

ADULT REPERTOIRE PARTY

Thursday, November 18 • 8:30pm



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Practicing in Sections

One of the best practice techniques to learn a piece faster and easier is to practice in sections. The three main parts of this strategy are: **1) Daily Goals, 2) Three Times In A Row Perfectly, and 3) Good Starting Points.** This technique helps in a number of different ways. Here's how.

It Fixes Problems Before They Start.

When you practice in sections you fix problems right away, and don't have to take more time later to undo the mistakes. If you play a piece straight through from beginning to end (or even just a few lines) you will forget the mistake you made at the beginning of the piece and make it again and unfortunately ingrain the mistake in your fingers.

Daily Goals. Make a goal to focus on one section a day, and get it down really well. Be reasonable with yourself, though — it could be four, two, or even one measure as a goal for a day. Try to spend at least 10 minutes

a day on a piece, and half of that should be working out new sections, and half maintaining previously learned parts.

Three Times In A Row Perfectly. When you play in sections, make sure that you play through a section many, many times. You will know a section pretty well if you can do it three times in a row perfectly (including no pauses!). The number for a difficult section should be 20-30 times each section. This might sound like a lot, but if it only takes you 9 seconds to play a section, that means you can play that difficult section 20 times in 3 minutes! For such a short amount of time you can really get a lot done. This is the way you learn a piece in less time, as well being able to play the piece at a faster tempo.

Good Starting Points. If you make a mistake in the middle of a section, go back to the beginning of the section — don't just go back a note or two. Good starting **Practicing in Sections** cont. page 2

Tips for Adult Piano Students

Because music is so universal, most every tip given to the younger child applies to the adult piano student. My first tip is to not overlook the tips given to children — there is much to gain on a deeper level (e.g. self-confidence).

Patience With Yourself. The most important tip for adult students is to be patient with yourself. Don't get frustrated if you do not pick up skills as quickly as a young child. Do not expect to learn things as quickly as a seven year old — things can come to you slowly but surely.

Concentration and Understanding. Take advantage of the maturity you have over the younger learner. Your concentration and ability to focus can bring you far in your practicing. While a younger student might get bored with playing a section two or three times, you can focus on

Tips cont. page 3



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How to Mark Brackets in Sections

We all know that practicing in sections helps us learn pieces faster. But how do we know what a section is? Here's some things to look for.

Use Pencil! You might change your mind as to where good starting points are.

Look For 4-Measure Phrases First.

Many great composers, classical, pop, or any genre, write in four measure phrases. This is because it is natural for the human ear. This goes hand in hand with the "Question-Answer" style of writing music, which is also fundamental for writing good music. Also, you can break down four measure phrases into 2 and 2 measures many times too, which can be helpful for practicing harder spots.

Look For Phrase Marks. Composers might have already given you the answers! Look for the phrase or slur mark over the melodies. Beginners' music may not have these printed in easier scores, though.

Look For Pick-up Notes. When you count out your four measures, remember the pick-up notes usually don't count as

the first measure. Start counting with the first full measure.

Overlapping Phrases. Sometimes the end of one phrase is the beginning of the next. This can also help you practice transitions between sections so you don't pause.

End of Sections Usually End With Long Notes on Strong Beats.

A long note could be a whole note, dotted half note, or half note (sometimes shorter), but look for the patterns of them too. If it happened once, it will probably happen again. Strong beats in 4/4 time are the first and third, the first beat in 3/4 time pieces, and the first and fourth in 6/8 time.

For Songs With Words, Look For Punctuation Marks.

Again, the composer might have already done the work for you with punctuation. Look for periods, commas, exclamation points, semi-colons, question marks, and the like.

It is usually a good idea to practice writing these out with your teacher for help, but don't let that stop you from trying! That's why even teachers use pencil! ♪



Practicing in Sections *cont. from page 1*

points (the beginning of each section) aids analyzing memory. When you learn a piece in sections, it helps you to be able to pick up in the middle of your piece in a performance. If you do make a mistake, you can start from many places, not just from the beginning of the piece.

A Pause Is A Mistake. Fix it right away! If you don't you will pause at that spot all the time. Keep it smooth.

Hands Separately, Then Together. You have to be able to play a piece hands separately up-tempo before doing it hands together. If you can't do it hands separately, how could you do it hands together?

Start Slowly, Then Build Tempo. There is always a tempo so slow that when you play even difficult sections, that you can do it without mistakes. Then all you have to do is gradually build the tempo. This makes for few mistakes and very little wasted time. Remember, as you are learning a piece, you must read the note, fingering, and counting all at once — don't only do notes first and then figure out the fingering! This just means you learned it twice, doubling your effort. Make sure you go slow enough that you can count along with it. The more you do it, the better you get. ♪



MUSICAL GIFT IDEAS

AVAILABLE AT THE STUDIO

Call or email to order.

Quality Metronomes — (\$35 to \$65) Please see sheet for details. All made by Wittner.

- Taktell Super Mini Metronome (\$35)
- Taktell Piccolo Metronome (\$45)
- Traditional Heavy Plastic Metronome: (\$65)

Alfred Music Dictionary — (\$6)

Definitions • Composers • Theory • Instrument and Vocal Ranges • More 330 pages. Can increase every student's musical understanding.

Alfred Music Games — (\$15) On CD

for Mac and Windows. Alfred Music Games will deliver important lessons on the basics of music -- disguised at a set of easy-to-learn games. If you're a beginner with no prior training, this makes learning the essentials of music theory easier than you ever dreamed. Games Included: Name That Key, Note Name Race, Cross the River (musical Terms), Counting Game, Under the Sea (Scales), Melodic Intervals.

AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE

iPods, MP3 Players, or Portable CD-RWs (\$30 & up) Available just about everywhere these days. A valuable tool for music listening.

Recording Devices. Digital or analog recorders, simple cassette tape recorders (mini or regular size), and even many iPods (nanos and iPod Touches) can do this. This is for recording yourself so you can hear what you need to practice more.

iTunes Music Gift Certificate — (\$10 & up) Great gift in stocking. Good opportunity to buy classical tracks/albums and to try new music. Buy at Apple's site.

Keyboard — (\$200+) Great for middle school and high school students to practice late at night with headphones — can rekindle music enthusiasm. Don't bother with ones around \$100-150 — they are not worth it. See our website or call for advice and an information sheet.

The Autumn Events

THE AUTUMN PIANO PARTY

Sunday, November 14 • 2:00-3:30pm
Grades K-7th

This is an informal party where students play any pieces they want, (or just come and listen). Families can bring friends, brothers and sisters, or a parent to help out, too. We play the piano, have food, play games, and meet new musical friends!



THE PIANO COFFEE HOUSE

Friday, November 19 • 7:30pm
8th Grade through High School

The studio's Piano Coffeehouse is a great musical hangout opportunity for a Friday night! We have over 22 students in this range, and students can bring a friend as well, who are all welcome to play piano, sing, or perform other instruments, too. We have pizza, play piano, hang around and talk, and meet new musical friends. And, no, it's not just coffee!

ADULT REPERTOIRE PARTY

Thursday, November 18
8:30pm

The Adult Repertoire Party is one of the studio's best aspects of our adult program! Our 15 adult students (and friends and family welcome) come to hear new pieces you would like to add to your repertoire, show a work in progress, and get helpful feedback. We discuss practice and performance techniques, and have wine and cheese, coffee and tea, and other refreshments.

Tips for Adult Piano Students *cont. p1*
playing it more to make sure you have it down solid.

Your ability to understand your piece is another great advantage. The more you can understand chord relationships, scales, fingering, and rhythm, the more secure your piece will become for you. Do a chord analysis for each measure to understand it better, and you will learn the piece faster as well as having it stay in your memory longer.

A Mature Ear. The mature ear can hear the differences in volume and expression in pieces, mostly because you have been exposed to more music. Listen to how good musicians use expression and try to imitate it.

Give Yourself Goals. Each day and each week you should have a goal you strive for with your music. Make sure these expectations are attainable. Be reasonable

with yourself. You might even be surprised at how quickly you did it.

Choose Pieces Wisely. You want a piece that you can play well, not necessarily the hardest one you can play. If you know a piece you want to play, ask your teacher to get the version that is right for you. There is so much music available today. Ask your teacher for a recommendation — you will have more fun playing a piece that is a style you enjoy and one that will let you grow musically.

Maintain a Repertoire. Have a few pieces ready to play for people and play as often as you can for others. Performing is an important part of your learning.

Relax and Enjoy Your Playing. Music is something to look forward to and enjoy every day. Have fun! ♪

12TH ANNUAL FOOD & COAT DRIVE

After Thanksgiving, the Studio will be hosting a food and coat donation drive to help the needy in our local communities. Please join us in support by bringing a donation of non-perishable food or new or used coats to the studio. Any donations are greatly appreciated. What to bring:

- **Nonperishable Foods & Items.** Canned food, cereal, coffee, paper items (like napkins), diapers, & cleaning materials. **(NO GLASS)**
- **New or Used Coats.** Please make sure coats are clean before donating them.

Who The Drive Helps: The donated food and coats will be going to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, a local community outreach program to help the needy in all of New Jersey. They distribute to homeless shelters, food pantries, residential programs, soup kitchens, child day care programs, and much more throughout the state.

*"...in truth it is life that gives unto life
—while you, who deem yourself a giver,
are but a witness." (Kahlil Gibran)*



The Spring Piano Coffee House



Adult Student Spring Recital

Counting Out Loud

One of the best practice techniques to learn a piece faster and easier is to count out loud. Counting helps a number of different ways.

Aids Analyzing Memory. Please notice the title of the article is not “Counting To Myself In My Head.” Counting out loud forces the brain to be involved, not just what “sounds right” (auditory memory) or “felt OK” (motor memory). Remember analyzing memory is the best kind of memory that will stay with you longer. When you can count your piece out loud, you have a greater understanding of its rhythm.

Learning It Right The First Time. Counting out loud helps you learn a section correctly the first time, and we all know how difficult it is to un-do a wrong rhythm.

How Does Fingering Help Me Play Better?

Simply put, fingering helps you learn your pieces faster and play better. How?

Accuracy. Careful fingering helps you learn your pieces faster because when you use correct fingering right from the start, you won't have to relearn in later. And you know whenever you have had to change a fingering once you ingrained it one way, it sure is more work to fix than to have learned it right in the first place.

Speed. In faster pieces, correct fingering allows you to play your pieces faster because your fingers are already in the right spot.

Control and Expression. In slower pieces, correct fingering is useful so you can play smooth, legato, with control for dynamics and expression.

Why Should I Write In The Fingering?

You figure out the fingering ONCE and then simply read it once you have carefully chosen a good fingering. If you don't write a fingering in where you need to, you have to figure it out every time you come to that spot, often choosing wrong and different fingers every time you play it.

You see patterns. This, of course, helps you learn your pieces faster.

It builds good fingering habits.

Helps Coordinate Your Hands. When you count out loud, your hands can see what notes happen at the same time.

Write In The Counting. It is recommended that you write in the counting on your music (in pencil) and check that it is correct with your teacher. It is easier to learn and read this way.

Start Counting Hands Separately. You have to be able to count a piece hands separately up-tempo before doing it hands together. If you can't play it Hands Separately, how can you play it Hands Together?

Count And Play Slowly At First. If you can't count an easier rhythm, how will you be able to count a harder one in a harder piece? Make sure you go slow enough that you can count along with it, and gradually you will be able to count faster. ♪

Tips For Writing In Fingering.

USE PENCIL.

Make your fingering clear and legible. You are the one who has to read it.

Fingering is normally written OUTSIDE the staff. That is, above the treble clef and below the bass clef staves. This is so it is clear which numbers are counting and which are fingering.

Keep close to the note head.

General Fingering Rules.

Fingering that is printed in the score usually indicates a hand position change or is preparing you for a change.

Fingering that is NOT already printed in the music means you should use the fingers that are already there or use normal fingering of the scale of the key you are in.

Try to avoid thumbs on black notes. There are obvious exceptions to this, such as one hand playing octaves or sixths.

Try to avoid using two pinkies in a row. (The “Karate Chop”) This invites mistakes and choppy playing (not legato or smooth). ♪



THE PIANO BUDDIES PROGRAM

We're introducing something new at the studio: the Piano Buddies Program. It's a great way to share your love of music with a friend! Sign up with a friend at the studio, or ask your teacher to set you up with a friend (or two) to be partners together! Here are some ideas of activities for you and your partner:

- You and your partner meet once a month at each other's houses and play songs for each other.
- Share lists of your favorite pieces and songs.
- Learn a duet together! Ask your teacher to suggest one if you'd like.
- Play for each other and list what was good and what can be improved upon for that month.
- Pick musicians/composers you'd like to study, and watch on YouTube/iTunes, etc. for example: 2 Classical, 2 Popular or Broadway, etc., 2 Jazz
- Make a list for your teachers of which pieces and composers you listened to, and what were your favorites.
- Contribute to the student advice column in our newsletter and share what you've learned.

Tell your teacher today that you are interested, and we'll get you started! ♪

THE JUNIOR MUSICAL CLUB OF WESTFIELD

The Junior Musical Club of Westfield is a performing group of 8th grade through high school musicians from Westfield and the immediate area, united by their interest in classical music. To audition for membership, please ask for the forms at the studio or ask your teacher for more information.

Our studio is getting students ready for the February 2011 audition — come join us!