

Studio Policy and Philosophy

Before going over the details of my policy and teaching philosophy, I need to bring my expectations to your attention. I want this to be a positive experience for my students, and for it to enrich their lives and help them achieve their goals, so everyone involved needs to be aware of what is necessary for success. The learning process takes cooperation and understanding from all parties, and so I expect the following from students and their parents:

Practice! I will never require ridiculous amounts of practice from students, and I will always give them assignments based on what will help them improve the fastest and with the least work. But, this still requires follow-through. Remember, practice doesn't happen for my sake, it happens for the student's sake. In order to get better a student must work to make it happen, and, as is always true in life, anything that will truly make a person happy and make their life better is going to require commitment. Make the time to do something that you can look back on and call Living. I promise you won't regret it. Parents, this applies doubly for you and your children. They will plateau and become bored if they don't practice consistently. It is built into my system that practice should be objective based and not take too much time, so please make it a priority. Your children will deeply thank you someday.

Give me feedback. I consider myself a fairly perceptive and sociable person, and I work hard to understand and then give my students the teaching styles and assignments they need to be successful and enjoy their studies. I'm not perfect and all-knowing though! In order for me to give my students the best possible experience, I need to know what experiences are good and which are bad. If you're frustrated with anything, not understanding my lessons, or not sure what we're spending our time on is something you're interested in, please let me know! I want my students to be happy and fulfilled, so please let me know if I can do anything differently.

Trust me. I have studied the piano my entire life, and I've received a great deal of formal and informal instruction. I really do know what I'm doing and how to help my students excel. I greatly want for this pursuit to add value to my students' lives, and help them go where they want to go in the musical world. Tell me what's desired and expected, and then trust that I'm doing everything needed to make those desires happen. Keep in mind that progress in the piano takes place exponentially. It is slow at first, but as students apply the time and gain competence in skills, they will get better faster and faster. The work will pay off. I'll say more about this in a moment.

I feel these expectations are very reasonable, and will make our professional relationship rewarding and effective. I want to make people happier, and these are my way of making sure that has a chance to happen.

In terms of other matters of studio etiquette or policy:

Payments. Payments are handled on a monthly tuition basis. On the last lesson of each month, the next month is paid for in advance, regardless of the current balance. In the case of missed lessons, makeup lessons are given, which can be done either as an extra lesson on another day, or as an extension of the normal lesson time on a day that would allow it. This is done to stabilize the studio's incoming payments, to help maintain a simple payment routine, and keep the amount of lesson time enjoyed by students consistent.

In order to give other students a chance to use missed time slots for makeup lessons, notice of rescheduling is needed before noon the day of the lesson in order to receive a makeup. When I cancel an appointment I will give a makeup lesson, and if I am forced to do so with less than proper notice, I will give two makeup lessons.

Sheet Music. At higher levels, sheet music for almost the entire classical repertoire can be found for free, since it is now public domain. However, at the beginning levels there is very little (interesting) music available. We will be using inexpensive repertoire books (between \$4 and \$7 every few months) for the beginning levels. I will purchase these as needed, and students or parents will reimburse me. If you want to play particular published pieces or to participate in official competitions you will need to purchase sheet music yourself.

And in regards to my teaching philosophy:

I believe, and have read many things to support, that any person can be proficient at the piano. It doesn't take a lifetime of bitter toil and the sacrifice of all other pursuits. In fact, other pursuits will almost certainly make one a better pianist! *However*, this doesn't mean you'll be playing all of your favorites in a month. It takes work, and it is hard. I am obsessed with making the quest to be excellent as short and easy as possible though, and it is definitely worth it. If you trust me, as we learn sometimes difficult music theory that you can't see the point in, do drills and exercises to build skills you don't quite understand, and learn pieces that aren't your favorite or learn them in ways you think strange, believe me when I say it will all pay off, and sooner than you may think. Theory will make improvisation possible, will help your memory and understanding of the music you play, and even help you to sightread faster. Having good technique will make it easy to play your favorites, and easy to improvise and play by ear. Music is an incredible addition to life. Give it the chance it needs to take hold in your mind.

I've found that the Classical tradition is the most rigorous and complete, so it's the perspective I teach from. It will most solidly prepare students for every other musical challenge, and will give them the strongest foundation. I've seen many shortcut methods of teaching the piano, and they can give you some short term results, but without a strong foundation, it quickly becomes clear how little has been learned, and how little versatility has been gained.

I can safely say that if students trust me and follow through with their studies, they will be able to play the music they love not only with proficiency, but with versatility and power, and can even become enabled contributors to the musical world. I also promise that if you give it some time, you'll come to appreciate and enjoy the Classical tradition much more than you think possible!

So there it is. Please tell me if you have any suggestions or problems, and I'll be happy to work them out with you. I love bringing music into others' lives. Thanks for joining me in this great pursuit!

Thanks,

Blaine Hansen