

CARLIE BERGNAUM V PIANO STUDIO

POLICY HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES

2018/2019

Welcome! I'm excited to begin our work together. Understanding policies and expectations will help ensure a fun, successful, and musical experience.

LESSONS OVERVIEW

Piano students receive 47 scheduled weekly lessons from September through June, 1 group studio classes, and one formal studio recital. Please see the Studio Calendar for this year's complete list of scheduled lessons, classes, and recitals. Lessons are 30, 45, or 60 minutes long.

PRACTICE

Daily practice is essential and expected. Playing piano is a physical, mental, and creative exercise. Regular practice (including repetition) leads to physical mastery, which in turn allows us to express our musical ideas. At the end of each lesson, students have a specific assignment for daily practice, detailed in the assignment notebook. Practice assignments are carefully crafted in response to the successes and struggles of the lesson as well as the strengths and learning style of the individual student. The best indicator of enjoyment of a new activity is the feeling of growth. Nothing beats the feeling of having mastered something new and challenging. Students of all ages can tell when they're not progressing, and the result of not practicing is a steep decline into boredom. Students can also spot empty praise a mile away — so I don't give it. I fine-tune assignments that I believe are just challenging enough to help keep students on a roll of success, thereby maintaining their interest in music. Students who practice regularly stay in the zone of being able to master each assignment, and they enjoy piano because they feel they are excelling.

MATERIALS

Each student uses a set of 3-4 music books and an assignment notebook. I purchase the materials in advance and include the cost in the monthly invoice. The assignment notebook is our main point of contact. It details the practice assignment in manageable steps, provides recommendations for easier practice, and has a space for the student/parent to log practice. Students should always look at their assignment notebook.

EXPECTATIONS

Daily Practice: see notes on practice above, and make it a good habit! Attendance: Regular, on-time attendance with a polished assignment. Hands Ready to Play: Nails should be kept short to ensure proper technique. Playing with long nails is like trying to run in high-heeled shoes! Students always wash hands before the lesson.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In the lesson: Parents may attend the lesson or not. If you're not sure, my recommendation is not to attend, as students tend to focus and be more creative with fewer adult observers. With that said, parents and the occasional visitor (such as a visiting grandparent) are welcome. At home: Help instill a good practice habit from the get-go by making it a routine. Supervision isn't necessary, but provide the quiet time and ensure that the assignment notebook is being used. For older students, as activities and school demands increase, help your child continue to keep their practice routine. Remember that the biggest indicator of enjoyment is the feeling of growth and achievement. It's very important that older students feel they are moving past the "baby stuff."

STUDIO CLASSES & RECITALS

Three times per year, students gather for an informal, 75-minute studio class. This is a chance to play for each other in a supportive environment, to get comfortable with the energy of performing, and to build our community of pianists. Studio class also includes enrichment activities such as sight-reading, ear-training, and rhythm games. Studio classes are students-only! Recitals are festive events that celebrate the students' most polished work with friends and family. This year, our final spring recital will be Saturday, May 19, 11:00 in the beautiful Ensemble Room at Mills College.

EXTRA PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

I encourage students to take whatever performance opportunities appeal to them, from talent shows, to family gatherings, to formal auditions and evaluations. I support this by staying knowledgeable about recommended repertoire, registration, guidelines, and deadlines. Below are some examples:

Certificate of Merit is a schedule of evaluations offered through Music Teachers' Association of California (MTAC). Students learn pieces from a list of recommended repertoire, and perform 2-3 polished pieces for a panel of teachers for written feedback.

MTAC Recitals — in addition to our final studio recital, students may register for extra recitals in our community. Work must be highly polished for these events.

ABRSM Practical Exams — The Associated Board of the Royal School of Music is an internationally known curriculum and system of evaluations. Students play "exams" of assigned repertoire and scales for a panel of teachers, then receive grades and written feedback. Because ABRSM is quite rigorous and well known, students passing Grade 5 and higher are well-prepared to take college auditions.

ABRSM Theory Exams — Theory whizzes may want to skip the practical exam and challenge themselves by taking written theory exams. Students who follow this course become well-positioned to breeze through AP Music Theory in high school.

These organizations charge registration fees that are not covered in your lesson tuition.

TUITION & FEES

- 30-minute lessons: \$180/month
- 45-minute lessons: \$210/month
- 60-minute lessons: \$230/month
- Annual Registration Fee: \$35

From September to May, tuition is always a monthly rate. I do not consider it a “per lesson” rate as it also includes studio classes and the recital.

PAYMENT

Invoices are sent by email in the middle of each month and payment is due by the first of the month. You can pay online or bring cash or check to the lesson. You may also save a credit card for automatic payments.

SCHEDULING

From September through June, lessons are weekly and follow the set Studio Calendar (included with this packet). For scheduling purposes, I divide this time into two “semesters,” before and after winter break. Once you register for a lesson time, it is set for the semester. If you wish to change your lesson time due to a changing sports schedule or other activity, winter break is the best time to look ahead and make the change. If you are having difficulty with your lesson time, it may be possible to switch with another student, but that is not guaranteed.

Students are provided with a Studio Calendar that lists all lessons, breaks, special events, and make-up days. School district calendars in our area sometimes differ, so please refer specifically to the Studio Calendar to know when lessons are scheduled.

SUMMER SCHEDULE & TUITION

From July through August, lessons are on a flexible sign-up basis. Students sign up online for individual lessons, and can choose from a variety of times that accommodate ever-changing camp and travel schedules. Many students use this opportunity to try out longer or more frequent lessons to dig into a more ambitious project. (Did you beg to learn Hamilton or Harry Potter all year? Summer is the perfect time!)

Summer Tuition

Because of the flexible nature of summer lessons, we switch to a “per-lesson” rate, payable when you sign up. Due to some changes in the way I’m scheduling summer in 2018, the summer lesson rate is currently TBD.

ABSENCE & MAKE-UP POLICY

Please take special note of this policy in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

MISSED LESSONS ARE NOT REFUNDED

No-show or cancellation with less than 48 hours' notice: You have forfeited the lesson and it will not be made up.

Advance reschedule or cancellation: I provide one Student Make-Up Day per semester (see Studio Calendar). I can sometimes facilitate a conversation between students to switch times with each other, but this is at my discretion and not guaranteed.

Teacher cancellation: In the event that I must cancel, I will offer 3 options for an additional make-up day. Students who do not sign up for a make-up lesson will not be offered additional options.

Sickness: Do not come to your lesson sick. Many hands share the piano each day. If a student displays obvious signs of a contagious illness, I will contact the grown-up for an early pick-up.

Summer Absence Policy

Even though sign-up is flexible during the summer, the absence policy is not. Please choose carefully! When you sign up for a lesson, it is reserved for you and is not shown as an available time for other interested students. For that reason, I do not reschedule and/or refund missed lessons, even in summer.

Teaching Artist Commitment

I balance my teaching schedule with an active freelancing career. Your scheduled lessons are yours, and I do not accept conflicting gigs or rehearsals. However, for very extraordinary opportunities such as a tour or residency, I reserve the right to temporarily change my teaching schedule. In this case, I work with students individually to come up with the best option for that period of time, which may include prorated tuition, additional make-ups, or arranging for a sub. This is very rare. I always do my best to ensure that these two branches of my work dovetail with each other and inform one another.

WITHDRAWAL FROM LESSONS

If you need to withdraw from lessons, I appreciate as much notice as possible. To withdraw during the school year (September-May), I charge a \$50 fee in addition to the remainder of the current month's tuition. This is to partially cover the time I have reserved for you.

DISCONTINUATION

In an extreme situation, I reserve the right to discontinue lessons with a student at any time. Disrespect, continual lateness or absenteeism, or an ongoing breach of any studio policy may result in discontinuation. In this case, I will prorate the current month's tuition and refund any

portion that has not been used. The registration fee is not refunded.

INSTRUMENT

The best choice, if possible, is an acoustic piano. When playing an acoustic piano, the vibration from the hammer striking the string travels through the fingers, creating much more nuanced technique in the musician. A digital piano is slightly inferior in this way. It is a useful tool for imitating the sound of a piano, but the physical responsiveness is somewhat lost. Space and cost are more comparable between the two instruments than many people assume. Sound level is of course another practical consideration. If you are unsure, I am happy to discuss this in person. I have helped many families choose an instrument that is just right for their circumstances.

Requirements for a digital piano:

- Full range (88 keys)
- Fully weighted keys (keys have a bit of tension to mimic the heavier keys of a piano)
- Equipped with music stand and pedal
- Set on a sturdy stand or table at proper height (about 28" from floor)
- Bench at a height that keeps forearms level while playing - use folded towels or a firm cushion to increase bench height

A digital piano that doesn't meet these requirements doesn't work for piano lessons.

Parent/Guardian Agreement

☐ I have a copy of the Studio Policy Handbook. I have read it, and agree to adhere to all policies, including:

- ☐ Practice Expectations
- ☐ Absence & Make-up Policy
- ☐ Withdrawal & Discontinuation Policy

☐ I understand that my lesson time is set for the semester, and that changing my lesson time is not guaranteed.

☐ I agree to pay tuition monthly, due on the first of the month.

Parent/Guardian Signature & Date

Student Agreement

☐ Practice is my responsibility.

☐ I agree to practice what is in my assignment book every day. This is how I will get better at the piano.

☐ I agree to be respectful and have safe actions during my piano lesson.

Student Signature