

What should I do to get the most out of my piano lessons?

How should I approach my music lessons?

The first edition of our newsletter focussed on the needs of the teachers in our musical community, now, as promised, this second edition of the newsletter will focus on the student.

For the student the question is: “What should I do to get the most out of my piano lessons?”

This question is not as simple as it first appears, each student will certainly get something unique from their lessons, be it simply the joy of playing an instrument, the discipline of working on highly technical material or even the self confidence gained from performing or participating successfully in examinations. Certainly, the reasons for studying an instrument are as many as there are students, or even more, because some students enjoy music lesson for more than one reason.

Whatever it is that brings you to music lessons, there are some things which you can do to get the most of your one-on-one time with your teacher. Playing music is only fun when you can successfully express yourself on your instrument, and gaining that expression requires the discipline to work on technical material. Success in music exam is a function of both, you need to be able to demonstrate technical proficiency and show that you are “having fun”, which in music means expressing yourself.

To achieve this state of affairs there are some simple things, universal things which you can do:

1) Practice. Yes unfortunately spending any amount of time with a teacher will require you to have something prepared to avoid having the lesson degenerate into a practice session. While “practice” lessons are not necessarily a bad thing, they are not the best way to spend your time with a teacher.

2) Pretend to have practiced. No matter how much self-disciplined we are, sometimes it is hard to find the time or motivation to practice. While this is normal, it is important to recognize that it is not something to be desired even if you are only playing an instrument for fun. Often though, we can for short periods of time get away with concentrating really hard in the lesson and trying to play as if we had practiced. While this may be stressful, it is a good habit, since the easy way to reduce this stress is simply to practice. This is not to say you should lie to your teacher, although they will more often than not know full well whether you have practiced or not, but simply that you play trying to sound as good as though you had practiced.

3) Be disciplined. Arriving on time, paying attention, preparing everything that needs to be ready beforehand, all these things help you get more value from your time with the teacher. Your teacher’s skills are best utilised by getting as much music in as possible. Also, learning from a teacher one-on-one has a lot to do with mutual respect, and respect for your teacher’s time is an integral part of this relationship.

Finally, lest this entire newsletter be filled with do's and don'ts, don't hesitate to contact the school with queries or suggestions either in person or through the e-mail address given at the top of this newsletter. Everybody has unique reasons and expectations from music and by voicing them we can sometimes recognize those which may otherwise have gone unfulfilled. The school has many projects in the works for the future and your needs may be met by one of these already. We may not be able to assist in every request, but we will try our best to improve your musical journey where possible.