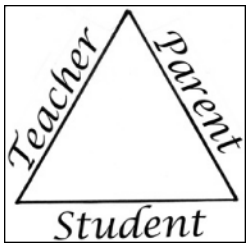
Franconia Fine Arts
Studio Handbook
2023/2024

Successful piano teaching and student learning derive from more than just the effort and skill of the teacher. They require the dedicated involvement of three or (as family structure indicates) four people.[1]



The basic responsibilities of each person in the triangle are:

- **Teacher:** Teach the student not only how to play, but how to practice.
- **Student:** To practice properly and learn to play the piano.
- **Parent(s):** Support the student and ensure that he/she practices.

If all members of the triangle are performing their responsibilities properly, then the triangle will remain intact and the piano study will be successful, fulfilling, and rewarding. The following information will further clarify each member's responsibilities.

1. Teacher Responsibilities:

a. To nurture the mind, spirit, and talent of each student and foster a lifetime love of music.
b. To be prepared for each lesson and clearly articulate practice requirements and performance suggestions.
c. To help the students set musical goals and feel that they have a voice to express their ideas and opinions in the lessons.
d. To provide one-on-one coaching to each student, being sensitive to his/her learning style and working at his/her pace and level.
e. To teach the essentials of playing the piano, including:
    i. **Technique,** which is creating the building blocks to produce great sound. Piano playing is not just matter of fingers playing keys, it is a "full-body sport.":
        1. Scales in all major and minor keys.
        2. Arpeggios in all major, minor, dominant seventh, and diminished chords, with inversions.
        3. Chord progressions in all major and minor keys, including dominant seventh and diminished triads.
        4. Finger exercises, specifically those by C.L. Hanon. Beginning students start with Schaum's "Fingerpower" books before progressing to Hanon exercises.
        5. Etudes (musical studies) and velocity studies. Students begin with books of easy études before moving into velocity studies.

[1] Baker-Jordan, Martha, DMA, *Practical Piano Pedagogy: The Definitive Text for Piano Teachers and Pedagogy Students.* Warner Brothers Publications, 2003-2004

ii. **Repertoire**. The canon of keyboard music is vast, and students are always provided the opportunity to select pieces to study for recitals, festivals, and other events. Wherever possible, the chosen pieces are at a moderate level of difficulty higher than their current music book and technique levels. This promotes a sense of accomplishment when the pieces are learned, and almost invariably motivates the student to progress more rapidly into more demanding and interesting repertoire.
iii. **Music theory,** which teaches students the terminology of music and the foundational concepts of how it works.
iv. **Sight-reading,** which teaches students to quickly read music and creates independence in discovering new music separately from the teacher.
v. **Ear-training,** which enables students to discern what they are hearing without music so written music will "make more sense," as they will be able to hear in their head what the written music should sound like. Ear training will eventually help the student to improvise and possibly be able to "play by ear."
vi. **Compositional skills**, which help the student to write their own music and structure it in a logical and meaningful way.
vii. **Music as a part of history and cultures,** which give the students a sense of how their music is relevant and meaningful in the larger perspective.
viii. **Performance etiquette**, which teaches students to be confident performers and good listeners in recitals and performances.

2. Student Responsibilities:

a. Be respectful and attentive to the teacher.
b. Bring all necessary materials to every lesson.
c. **Practice** (see paragraph 4 below).
d. Have fun.
e. Apply steady and patient effort. It helps to know:
i. You are learning a whole *new language*! Musical notation and markings are an entirely new alphabet, which takes time to learn and apply in increasingly complex presentations. In addition to reading from left to right, students will learn how to simultaneously follow the notes up and down on the staff, process the information, play what is being read, then adjust what they are hearing to produce good sound..
ii. Playing the piano is a *physical skill*. Just as in soccer or other sports, pianists need to play a lot of exercises and drills to hone their skills. They need to be aware of many things besides the notes on the page. Their body needs to be aligned properly, shoulders relaxed, arms loose, wrists up and flexible, and fingers firm. Then a pleasing sound following the composer's markings must be produced.
f. Communicate with the teacher. In their lessons, students can expect to work on the required assignments and pieces they've been given, but they also are strongly encouraged to:
i. Bring music they want to work on.
ii. Tell the teacher if there is a song they want to play
iii. Write their own songs. They can play or sing them for the teacher, who will help them work on it together and put on the finishing touches!
g. Stay organized: Students need the following materials to stay organized both at home and when coming to and from lessons:
i. Books
ii. Tape flags to use as bookmarks
iii. 1" binder

iv. 5 tab binder dividers, tabbed as follows:
    1. Lesson sheets
    2. Theory
    3. Technical Exercises
    4. Music
    5. Miscellaneous
v. Pencil pouch containing colored pencils, a regular pencil, and a highlighter
vi. Tote bag (even if it's just for storage).

3. **Parent Responsibilites:**
    a. **Observe.** Parents are encouraged to observe lessons at any time, except when I feel strongly that the student would do better without the parent observing. When this is the case, I will discuss it with the parents.
    b. **Supervise Practice.** The practice plan written at each lesson and shared on Google Drive contains complete details on what is to be practiced, at a minimum, each day. Tape flags should be used as bookmarks for the pages in the books that are to be practiced. In addition to reading the practice plan, check through the assigned pages in the piano books for teacher notes and suggestions. Some common items to watch for in practice plans are:
        i. A list of specific page numbers in lesson, technique, performance, and other music books to be practiced.
        ii. Written theory assigned for homework.
        iii. A list of pieces to be reviewed each day.
        iv. The name of the piece currently being memorized.
    c. **Become a Musical Partner.** I highly recommend the book *Music Lessons: Guide Your Child to Play a Musical Instrument (And Enjoy It!)* by Stephanie Stein Crease. This is a wonderful book to have on hand to help guide the student to musical success. Other helpful resources include:
        i. *Raising Musical Kids: A Guide for Parents (2nd Ed)* by Robert A. Cutietta
        ii. *Your Musical Child: Inspiring Kids to Play and Sing for Keeps* by Jessica Baron Turner, M. A.
        iii. *Practicing the Piano: How Students, Parents, and Teachers Can Make Practicing More Effective* by Nancy O'Neill Breth.
    d. **Ensure the Student Has Required Equipment.**
        i. **Piano.** My students MUST have an instrument to practice on. I am happy to provide assistance in selecting an instrument within the student's budget that is acceptable for the student's playing level. Some local piano retailers also have rental and leasing plans for acoustic and digital pianos.
            1. Pianos/Instruments:
                a. Grand pianos are preferred, as they are superlative and matchless instruments to gain technique and musicality.
                b. Upright pianos are acceptable, depending upon the make, model and age of the instrument.
                c. Digital pianos along the lines of the Yamaha Arius series (weighted, hammer-action keys and all pedals) are acceptable through the early-advanced stage of piano study. After that, a piano is needed that can help the pianist achieve the tonality, touch, and shading of more intricate repertoire.

d. Digital pianos that are touch-sensitive, placed on an X-stand, and with one pedal are strongly discouraged. They are not sufficient to meet the technical and artistic requirements of daily practice.
e. 66-key keyboards are not permitted. From the very beginning of study, the instructional method requires the use of a full piano keyboard to understand the concepts of high and low and to allow the student to play the music in the lesson books.

2. Other required equipment:
    a. **Adjustable Bench.**
    b. **Footstool.**
    c. **Metronome.**
    d. 3-hole punch
    e. Pencil Sharpener
    f. **Supplies** (see paragraph 2.g.)

4. Practice Requirements:

a. How quickly students progress depends on how much they practice. I will assign a specific practice plan (lesson sheet) at each lesson. They will have songs, written homework, and exercises to finish each day. When they have completed the lesson sheet assignments, they have done the minimum required.
b. Each student is expected to practice a minimum of six days per week.
c. Students and/or parents may contact me with any and all practice questions! E-mail and texts are the preferred means of communication.

5. **Virtual Lesson Equipment:** The primary platform for conducting online lessons is FaceTime, with Zoom or Skype as the backup means. The optimal equipment that should be used by a student is a laptop, condenser microphone, and uninterrupted internet connection. It is strongly encouraged that the student's laptop be connected to a CAT-5 internet cable, or that the student's device is the only device in the home that is using WiFi during the lesson. Please contact the instructor for equipment recommendations and instructions for using Zoom.

6. **Performances:** Participation in studio recitals is required for all students except under extenuating circumstances. Interested students may also participate in Springfield Music Club festivals and Northern Virginia Music Teachers Association festivals and competitions.