

Keyboard Studio of Dr. Bruce Berr
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Studio Information - Fall 2014

*This has important information about your child's lessons.
Please read this brochure through in its entirety.
This will always be available on the studio website*

GENERAL INFORMATION

All children have music inside them, and most begin piano lessons because they want to experience the thrill of making music. Perhaps they have heard older siblings playing an instrument, or maybe they have been experimenting at the piano and have become excited at the sounds they have been able to make on their own. The goal of this studio is to create a musical environment at each lesson so that every child's individual potential can become realized. This is not only for the purpose of making music at the piano, but also so that every student can become a better, more self-confident independent learner of any subject matter.

The teaching studio is located in my home in Glenview two blocks from Springman Middle School. Instruction consists of weekly private lessons in which repertoire, note-reading, technique, practice skills, and musical literacy are emphasized. Lessons are generally forty minutes in length, with fifty and sixty minute lessons available for intermediate and advanced students, as well as motivated elementary students. There are two semesters during the school year: Fall semester (September - December, usually fifteen weeks), and Spring semester (January - June, usually twenty-two weeks). Lessons are available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. The schedule approximately reflects that of the Glenview Public School system (District 34). Weekday lessons take place during after-school hours and early evening. Home-schooled children can take lessons during the day on Wednesdays or Thursdays up to noon. There is also a Summer Session in July; summer lessons are scheduled on an *ad hoc* basis, and occur on various weekdays. Continuing students are expected to take at least two lessons in the Summer Session.

Instruction take place in a bright spacious room equipped with a Yamaha C7 grand piano, and a Kurzweil digital synthesizer connected to a Macintosh computer used for sequencing. There is also complete audio and video recording capability. The waiting room has comfortable seating and a desk, as well as a small electronic keyboard with headphones on which students can warm up if they choose. The waiting room also offers secure wireless internet access, and houses the studio Sightplaying Library.

All students in 1st-6th grades receive a complimentary subscription to *Piano Explorer* magazine, which is written just for children!

Adult students: I also teach adults at all levels, including beginners. Most adult students take lessons every other week, and the commitment is from month to month, rather than on a semester basis. Scheduling is *ad hoc* each month. Lessons take place on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday mornings, certain evenings, or Saturday afternoons. Many adults find it fulfilling to play along with their children at the piano, or simply for their own enjoyment. Please see me for more details.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

It cannot be overstated: *parental involvement, support, and assistance at times is crucial to your child's success in studying music.* At the very least, most parents need to help children establish regular practice schedules, and assist them in managing that schedule when exceptional events interrupt the routine. You may need to simply remind your child that "it is time to practice now"; this is normal and is sometimes necessary with even highly motivated students. Or, you may need to get more involved if regular effective practice is not taking place. With many children, parents will also have to help to make sure that the student arrives at lessons with all required materials ready to go, such as assignment books, flashcards, music books, etc.

An important byproduct of learning to play an instrument is the fun and pride in sharing that music with family and friends. Since most children enjoy sharing their musical accomplishments with people close to them, parents can be a supportive catalyst. The more interest that is shown and communicated to your children about their practice and playing, the better: Ask to hear their finished pieces; encourage them to play for their friends or at school, church, or synagogue when possible; play the teacher duets along with them in their finished pieces if you know how to play.

Current methods of teaching piano to children are not necessarily the same as those used a generation ago, especially in the areas of note-reading and rhythm. Therefore, if you want to assist your child in home practice, please be consistent with the approach used during lessons in order to avoid confusion. If you would like more information, please contact me.

With most kindergartners or first graders, one parent will be asked to be present at each lesson in order to assist with supervising the child's home practice on a daily basis. With most other children, the parent is usually in the waiting room.

All announcements and billings from my studio are sent via e-mail, so please let me know if your e-mail address changes during the course of a semester.

SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE CURRICULUM

A few times a year, special events occur in the curriculum. "Listening Weeks" are scheduled in which most of the lesson consists of listening to recorded orchestral music and jazz for purposes of music appreciation, theory, and history. There are also "Consolidation Weeks" in which students review recently learned pieces so that many pieces can be brought up to performance level at the same time. Some students may also occasionally work on special projects at lessons involving composing, arranging, digital recording and editing, sequencing, or other useful musical activities. Specific information on these events will be announced periodically throughout each semester.

PRACTICE AT HOME

Consistency is important in learning, especially in music study. *Successful piano study requires consistent daily practice, from week to week, from month to month.* Regular practice assures steady improvement of musicianship and skills. Students are enrolled with the understanding that they have access to a piano or an appropriate electronic keyboard in their home on which to practice. The practice environment at home should be quiet and free from the sounds of a TV, video game, or any other distracting sounds. Students usually get the most out of their practice if it is scheduled ahead of time, and is at the same time each day.

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(Practice at Home continued)

Suggested daily practice (including playing finished pieces), five or six days a week:

- *students in K & grade 1: at least 20 minutes a day (or 10 minutes twice a day)*
- *students in grades 2-5: at least 30-40 minutes a day (or 15-20 minutes twice a day)*
- *students in grades 6-9: at least 45 minutes a day*
- *students in grades 10-12: at least one hour a day*

Most important: Getting to the piano almost every day. Frequency and quality of practice are more significant than duration of practice sessions during normal practice routines.

EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS NEEDED BY STUDENTS

At home

- A piano that is kept in tune and in good working order; see me if you need the name of a professional tuner/technician,
OR
- An electronic keyboard/synthesizer; see me for more information on which kinds are suitable.
- Most students will need to purchase a battery-powered or electric metronome after they have advanced beyond beginner stages. It does not need to be brought to lessons.
- Elementary-level students: A CD player to use with recorded CD accompaniments (they are a standard component of modern method series). A boom box kept next to the piano can be an inexpensive solution, or an iPod hooked up to an amplifier. (Built-in speakers in devices like iPads or iPhones do not produce sufficient volume nor bass sounds to be usable for this.)

Brought to lessons

- Flashcards and other support materials
- Current music books and sheet music
- A standard 3 ring binder for assignment sheets given at the lesson
- A book of blank staff paper

When students neglect to bring all materials to lessons, those lessons are impacted negatively. Depending upon the age and student-skills your child possesses, you may need to assist with this process until it becomes a successful habit on the part of the student.

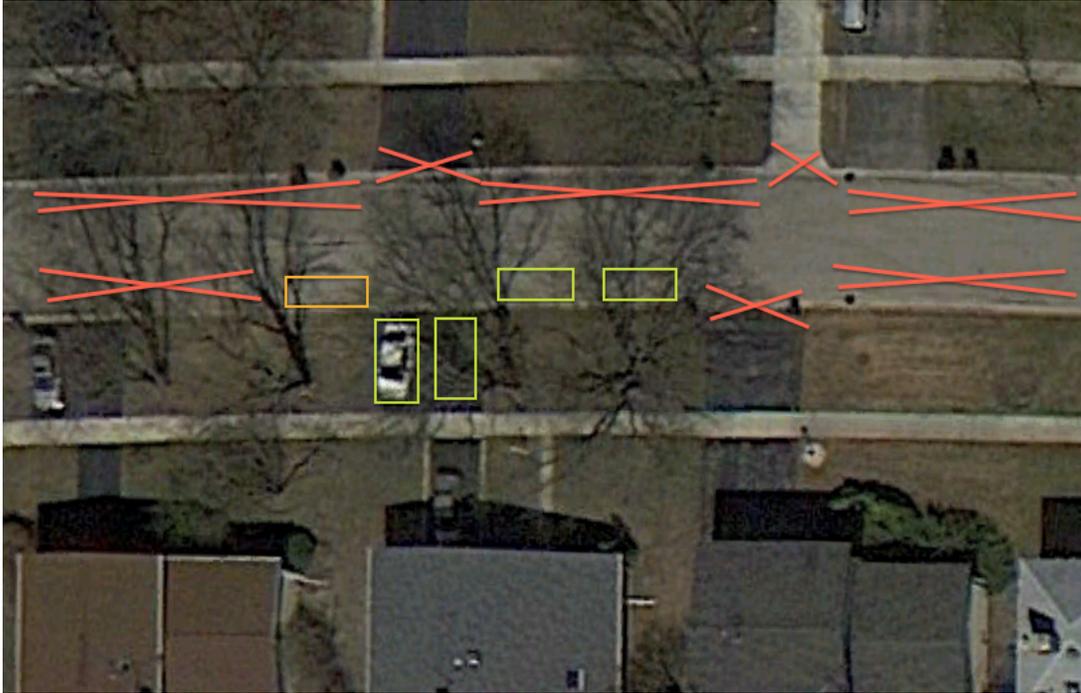
LESSON LOGISTICS

On the day of your lesson, please arrive a few minutes *before* your scheduled time so that your child's lesson can start on time and so the full lesson time can be received.

Please walk along the stone path on the lawn to the left of the house to the side entrance, and let yourself in. You will then be in the waiting room, which has a comfortable couch, some chairs, and a desk. There is a rest room to the right in the lower level.

Lessons may be videotaped as part of my research in piano teaching and ongoing work training younger piano teachers. Short excerpts of lessons are occasionally shown in academic and other professional settings. If you have an objection to your lessons being taped, please let me know.

Parking



Out of consideration to my neighbors, please park ONLY in spots that are marked in green. If all green spots are taken, use the orange one. Never park in a red zone.

If you must turn your car around, use only our driveway or a neighboring street—never use a driveway of one of our neighbors.

Please share this information with anyone who might possibly be driving your child to a lesson.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

MISSED LESSONS & MAKE-UP LESSON POLICY

One of the goals of this studio is for each student to experience the excitement of progress from week to week — *the key to that is consistent practice and consistent attendance*. If you must miss a lesson due to illness or other unavoidable emergency, please telephone (not e-mail) the studio by 10:00 AM the day of the lesson; if you know by the night before that your child is sick and will need to miss, I would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible. If such notice is given, the lesson will be made-up when it is missed for reasons of illness or personal emergency, but for no other reasons. No more than two make-up lessons for excused absences will be given each semester. Lessons missed by myself or due to religious holidays that are not already taken into consideration in the yearly schedule would also be made-up.

If heavy snowstorms or other extreme weather cause the Glenview public schools to be closed, lessons would be cancelled for that day and would be made-up. On Saturdays, if a heavy snowstorm (6" or more) occurs, the same would be true; in that case, students would be notified by phone early in the day about the cancellation.

For families with more than one child registered for lessons: If one child has an excused

absence, that child's lesson can either be made-up, or the time can be added to the other child's lesson that day; let me know when you cancel how you would like it to be handled.

Make-up lessons occur during specially designated days during each semester. Make-up lessons must be done in the same semester the original lessons were missed; they do not carry over to another semester.

Please notice that missed lessons will not be made up for any other reasons except mentioned above. For example, lessons missed because of sports activities, family vacations, school vacations that do not correspond to those of the Glenview School District, etc., or lessons that are cancelled at the last minute for any reason, are not eligible to be made-up. However, see the following section . . .

FAQ: What should I do if my child is mildly sick the morning of a lesson day – he/she is not well enough to attend school – but might feel well enough to go to the lesson later that day?

*Answer: **Cancel the lesson by phone before 10 AM.** That way, you are assured of being able to make-up the lesson later in the semester. If you cancel the lesson after 10 AM (for any reason), it does not qualify to be made-up.*

SWAP-A-LESSON OPTION

The Swap-a-Lesson option offers flexibility to families. If you must miss a lesson that does not qualify to be made-up (as discussed above) but are able to swap lesson times with another family for that week, then you are encouraged to do so. In order to qualify for this option, you must be willing to have other students occasionally ask YOU to swap lessons; you would give permission for your name, phone number (one at which you can easily be reached), e-mail address, and lesson day/time to be distributed, so that others may contact you for potential swaps.

The family that initiated the swap should contact me via e-mail as soon as complete and final details have been worked out between both families. I will then e-mail a confirmation to both families. However, if a miscommunication occurs and two families show up at the same time, preference will have to be given to whoever has the regularly scheduled time.

Swapping with a family whose lesson length is different than your own: No family will lose lesson time as a result of swapping. If Family A (normally taking a 60-minute lesson) swaps with Family B (normally taking a 40-minute lesson), both families will receive a 40-minute lesson. However, Family A will receive a credit of 20 minutes of lesson time, which can be made-up later in the same semester during regularly scheduled Make-up Lesson Days.

It is strongly recommended that all families participate in the Swap-a-Lesson Option by registering for it at the beginning of each semester. A swap list will be distributed via e-mail, and will be periodically updated so that the information on it remains accurate.

TUITION & ENROLLMENT

Elementary/intermediate students: Students enroll by the semester, and most are billed for tuition in several installments (I reserve the right to bill for the entire semester upfront in certain circumstances). Fall semester has two installments; Spring semester has three because it is longer; the Summer Session has one. Before lessons begin each semester, payment for the first part of the semester is due; throughout the semester, the bill(s) for the remainder of the semester will be sent. Tuition does not include the cost of music and other materials (see below). Tuition checks are not deposited until the day after the deadline for submitting the payment, so checks post-dated with the due date are always acceptable.

Currently enrolled students are guaranteed continuity from semester to semester (and from school year to school year) by participating in Priority Registration. This allows a family to either “lock-in” their current lesson day and time, or be given first priority in selecting a new time slot for the next semester. Priority Registration is offered in November for the following Spring Semester, and in June for the following Fall Semester. To participate in Priority Registration, a deposit must be paid for each student, and all signed and dated forms must be returned by the posted deadline. Also, to participate in Priority Registration for the Fall semester, each student must register for at least two lessons in the Summer Session preceding.

Students who do not make satisfactory progress or who miss more than 15% of their scheduled lessons may not be offered the opportunity to re-register for the following semester.

New students who are considering enrolling for lessons may schedule a 30-minute trial lesson at any time in the semester without any further obligation. This lesson may be paid for immediately following the lesson. New students who register after a semester is in progress will receive a prorated bill. If the semester is already more than one-third complete at that time, one payment would be made rather than partial installment payments.

Tuition Payments for Fall 2014 Semester (15 private lessons)

Two equal payments of:

40 minutes
\$345.00

50 minutes
\$431.25

60 minutes
\$517.50

Tuition installments must be paid in full before lessons can commence or continue. Tuition bills are sent out via e-mail, so please let me know if your e-mail address changes during the course of a semester.

Advanced and adult students: See me for more information about rates and scheduling.

OBTAINING EXTRA MUSIC FOR YOUR CHILD

Occasionally families wish to buy supplementary music for students as gifts, or because your child has expressed an interest in a particular piece of music from a movie or show. Extra music such as this can be highly motivating. For students to be successful with extra music, it is important that the music be at an advancement level that matches that of the student. This can be difficult for families to ascertain. Many arrangements of movie and Broadway scores are available in “Easy Piano” or “Big Note” versions, yet these are usually not “easy” at all—they are not at elementary levels—they are commonly mid- or late-intermediate. I am always happy to consult with families about this kind of music before you make your purchase so that you can be assured that your child will be able to successfully learn it in a reasonable amount of time.

RECITALS & HOLIDAY MUSIC PARTIES

There are Holiday Music Parties at the studio in mid-December, in which students play at the piano while families sing along! There is also a slightly more formal recital given in late May at a local auditorium or church—the Spring Recital. There is a \$15 per student Recital

Fee for this event, which is charged at the beginning of the Spring Semester to all enrolled students, regardless of whether they choose to participate in the Spring Recital or not (most usually do). This fee covers the cost of renting the auditorium, having the auditorium piano tuned, programs, etc.

Both of these performance opportunities are an important part of your child's learning experience. Children develop increasing self-confidence when they perform well, and when they hear other children their age performing well. I encourage you to plan ahead in your calendar so that your child can attend and participate.

Most students are usually well prepared for studio recitals and music parties. However, I reserve the right to not allow a student to perform in a studio event if I judge that he/she is not sufficiently prepared with adequate lead-time before the event, or, has scheduled other events close to the Recital that I judge may interfere with the student's ability to perform at their best that day.

PERFORMANCES NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE STUDIO

I encourage students to share their finished pieces with anyone and everyone! Performance opportunities abound: at church or synagogue, talent shows at schools, etc. To make sure that students are successful in these performances, I request that families let me know about them with as much advance time as possible *before* committing to anything. That way, I can determine if there is sufficient lead-time for the student to be fully prepared (a few months is best), and so that I can help the student choose repertoire at an appropriate advancement level and length.

FESTIVALS & COMPETITIONS

I am a member of the North Shore Music Teachers Association and the Music Teachers National Association, and therefore my students may participate in the festivals and competitions that are sponsored locally by these organizations. I do not require all students to participate. However, I do encourage students to consider taking part in some of these kinds of activities if they and their family are interested, and if the child is ready to do so. Each teacher may enter only a certain number of students each year, so there may be some years in which students will need to audition within my studio in order to participate.

STUDY OF OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Once a student has established effective daily practice habits at the piano, it can be advantageous to begin studying another instrument at school, particularly an orchestral instrument or guitar, or even voice after reaching adolescence. Doing so will allow the student to experience different styles of music, and will also facilitate participation in music ensembles at school. As long as a student is persistently diligent and closely limits his/her involvement in other extra activities (one cannot do everything – choices must be made at any age), concurrent study of two instruments can be successful. Study of more than two instruments at once is not recommended; however, participation in a chorus or choir is always a good idea.

SUMMER LESSON REQUIREMENT

Students who wish to participate in Priority Registration for the Fall semester are required to take at least two lessons in the summer before. This requirement will be waived for students who are both: 1. at mid-intermediate level or more advanced; and 2. who will be going into 7th grade or later.

PROGRESS REPORTS & CONFERENCES

Because there tends to be much casual communication between myself and parents between lessons, formal written progress reports are usually not necessary. However, such reports may be sent out occasionally if I don't get to speak to parents on a regular basis. Feel free to schedule a conference anytime to discuss your child's program and progress, or if you have any concerns. Please contact me prior to the lesson to make a separate appointment, since there are usually only a few moments between lessons. Conferences can also be by phone. The more communication that occurs between parents and myself, the better for the student!

"Little by little, one walks far." (Peruvian proverb)