

Huntington Piano Lessons Newsletter

April 2013, by Helena Almborg

Quote of the month

“Whether you play for one person or for one hundred, by sharing your music you can greatly enhance your sense of joy and success as a music maker” **Shelley Katsh** “The Music Within You”

From my Piano Bench



Thank you parents and students for another successful and happy recital. I am already looking forward to our next one.

How many of you, while listening to a recital performance that delights the audience, thought to yourself, “Mmmm, I wish that was me playing! I always wanted to play piano.”

I bet, immediately after that happy thought, your brain started coming up with excuses...

“Ah, I am too old to learn to play the piano”

“I am not musical, I will never learn how to play”

“I am too busy, I will never find the time to practice”

“Nah, I will never be good, so what’s the use?”

“Maria is the musical one in the family, not me”.

Well, I have good news for you. Music can help you feel younger, so being old is actually a good reason to start learning.

Many people feel more invigorated, energized and relaxed after playing.

If you think you are not musically inclined, you can still learn to play the piano, the same way you learned to play tennis, or paint or knit. You don’t have to be “talented”. You can do it for fun.

If you think you are too busy to practice, look at your kids’ schedule! They find time to practice, because you find time for them to practice. Find time in your day to do something for you. Make the time. Ten to fifteen minutes a day is enough to start.

If you are worried about not becoming a great musician, think about other things that you do, even though you are not the best in the world. All of us have activities that bring us enjoyment, regardless of how ‘good’ we are at them.

In addition to all the benefits above, think about how happy your kids would feel if you, for once, needed *them*. I witnessed this when a mother of one of my students decided to take a piano lesson. It was her first lesson and her kid was ecstatic! She even forgot she wasn’t feeling well and stayed through the lesson to “help” mommy find the notes on the piano.

After that successful first lesson, the daughter promised that she would make mommy practice everyday! Nothing like a bit of pressure to get things done :-)

Besides learning something fun and exciting, once you begin to practice yourself, you will appreciate the effort your children put into their lessons, and you will understand how amazing and brave your kids are.

Give it a try, you might like it! I am looking forward to seeing you playing on that Steinway really soon!

On a lighter note,

Interesting that last June, in Italy during a Meeting of the European Neurological Society, two different studies revealed how music benefits the brain, and coincidentally not only music but how specifically playing piano or keyboards benefits the brain.

The first of these studies demonstrated that *“test persons with no musical background were not only visibly more skilled after completing two weeks of regular exercise on a piano keyboard, their brains also changed measurably.”*

What does it mean? Simply put, playing the piano leads to better coordination and more balanced action between left and right sides of the brain. [Other studies, not presented at this meeting, revealed that playing the piano is the only activity that uses left and right sides of the brain at the same time.] In addition to better brain usage, this study also showed significantly enhanced responses to the nerve impulses to the finger muscles.

The second study involved non-musically trained individuals that practiced the piano with a metronome (!!!) during 30 minutes for 10 days. The findings reported an improved dexterity in all the participants and also substantial changes in the gray matter volume. The group that used the metronome while playing the piano had their brain’s gray mass changed even to a greater extent. Hooray for metronomes!!

Ok, what is the gray matter all these studies are proving that playing the piano helps grow? The gray matter includes regions of the brain involved in muscle control, sensory perception such as seeing and hearing, memory, emotions, and speech. Wow, a pretty important area to improve, don’t you agree?

In conclusion “Practicing music drastically and effectively accelerates self-optimization of certain brain activities, as two studies demonstrated. “

Let’s get those fingers running over the keyboard and don’t forget to use the metronome.