



QUARTER NOTES

News | Profiles | Events



"Starry Night" (1888) by Vincent van Gogh, Musee d'Orsay in Paris.

Summer Motivators

Summer is here! It's time to relax, unwind, and unplug. So how can we encourage students to sit down and play the piano this summer, especially when the outdoors beckon? Michaelleen Doucleff, in her book *Hunt, Gather, Parent*, looks to other cultures for insights into what motivates children. She outlines three ingredients that spark the most powerful kind of intrinsic motivation: connectedness, autonomy, and competency. Below are ideas for how we might use these ingredients to help students want to practice the piano this summer.

1. **Connectedness.** When children feel connected with their family, teachers, or friends, the more they'll want to work to accomplish common goals. You might set up a weekly family concert night or have your child organize a neighborhood talent show. By creating fun goals that

Harmony of the Spheres

A recent *New York Times* tribute to the 50th anniversary of Joni Mitchell's 1971 album 'Blue' got me thinking about the forces of harmony in music. "Harmony," as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary*, refers to "the simultaneous sounding (i.e. combination) of notes." We often think of harmony as a fixed concept that implies orderliness, beauty, and pleasure. Yet the power of musical harmony relies on the balance — and inevitable friction — between dissonance and resolution.

Daniel Levitin, a neuroscientist at McGill University, writes that "Joni got right into people's emotional centers in the brain." He describes how her song "*My Old Man*" uses a G-sharp minor 13th chord, a chord that could be rearranged and renamed as a major chord. She creates "this state of ambiguity that she had always tried to retain in the chords... there's a lot of points where you don't know if she's playing a major or a minor because she leaves out the third. That's powerful."

Musical works are forms of storytelling. Composers and songwriters both follow and subvert the rules of harmony that have been established over hundreds of years. The implication is that great artistic minds, whether Joni Mitchell, Jimi Hendrix, Charlie Mingus, or Vincent van Gogh, somehow bring tradition and innovation together. It's a contradictory impulse

include others, students may find a strong internal drive to practice.

2. **Autonomy.** Children (and adults alike!) love the confidence that comes from being self-reliant, especially when their actions are connected to a community of family and friends. Create opportunities for children to make their own decisions to do the task. For example, you might remind your child that they organized an upcoming show for friends and you expect them to practice a little each day. But you leave it to the child to decide when in the day to practice and what they'll play. When we aim for reasonably minimal interference as parents, we send the message that our kids can handle situations on their own.

3. **Competency.** It's important for kids to feel like they're competent in a task and that their contribution will be valued. You might have your child pick three favorite songs they worked hard on over a period of time but they can now play with ease. Rather than use praise (i.e. "great job; you're amazing!") to make a child feel competent, simply acknowledge the hard work and tell them that their contribution matters. You might say, "Wow. You put a lot of time into learning those songs! Hearing you play them makes me feel calm and happy." Even if their contribution isn't perfect or what we expected, our acknowledgment of their efforts helps them feel confident they can keep learning and growing.

When kids feel connected, autonomous, and competent, the act of sitting down at the piano will be easier, more joyful, and rewarding.

— to merge the old ways with rebellious new ones. Yet the best works of art are about learning to live with these kinds of oppositions: old and new, pain and joy, concord and discord.

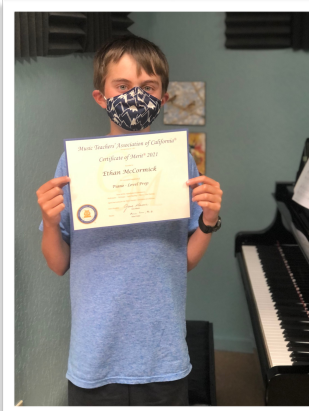
A song like Joni Mitchell's "Little Green" tells a story of mother and child — her own child she gave up for adoption. It's a painful tale, one of vulnerability. Her melody weaves through unstable harmonies that eventually find their place. "It's almost like Joni, through her music, granted me permission to feel everything," said the rapper Mustafa. "She's telling truths that people haven't confronted yet, like love and hope and sorrow all happening at once." It's true that we may never solve our problems in real life, but we might find a compensatory solution through song.

To all Little Bird Music students and families: listen to music this summer. Pick an album or song. Sit down, and really, truly listen. You'll hear harmony as a dynamic principle, sometimes dissonant, sometimes consonant, always changing and wanting to move someplace. As listeners, we can simply be aware of the push-and-pull forces of harmony and observe how they gravitate towards the beauty we're all seeking.



"The best part of doing Certificate of Merit was that I learned how to read music better!"

—Elijah McDonald, age 12



"Getting feedback from the Certificate of Merit judge was great. It'll only make me better. The scales and the sight reading were really helpful, too."

—Ethan McCormick, age 12

Certificate of Merit and National Piano Guild Audition Winners

Although we've only seen each other over a screen for the last 16 months, Little Bird Music students have met many musical milestones. All students, whether or not they did Certificate of Merit or Guild, should feel proud of their hard work during this challenging year.

For those who participated in Certificate of Merit and/or the National Piano Guild Auditions, congratulations! Certificate of Merit, sponsored by the Music Teachers' Association of California, is a comprehensive piano curriculum that covers technique, sight reading, performance, theory, and ear training. Students spend six to eight months preparing to perform in front of a judge and take a theory and ear training exam. Even though this year's evaluation was held online, students excelled. The following Little Bird students earned the prestigious California State Honor: **Aleksandra Vayner, Angus MacFadyen, Anya Vayner, Bettina Routhier, Callum Gustafsson, Cruz Snover, Elianna Shahoian, Elijah McDonald, Ella Nishimori, Ethan Gustafsson, Giuseppe Juliano, Ingrid Cotter, Parker Braud, Riley Braud, Simon Foygel, Stella Foygel, and Sylas Deinken.** Avery Buchanan, Cal Nishimori, Cooper Mennick, Drew Hansen, Ethan McCormick, James Gordon, Kanan Deinken, Kaya Hollis, Natalie Hamby, Riordan Brown, and Tyler Daniel completed their exams with strong passing scores.

A record number of 34 Little Bird students participated in the National Piano Guild Auditions this year. The program, which has been around since 1929, invites students to prepare between five to twenty memorized pieces to be performed for a judge. In return, students receive a certificate of achievement and a detailed report card with supportive feedback and tips for improvement. It's a wonderful opportunity for students to set and achieve meaningful goals.



National Piano Playing Audition certificates were awarded to 34 Little Bird Music students this year.



Certificate of Merit awards.

The Little Bird Music 2021 National Guild Piano Audition Winners are: **Adrian Shahoian, Anna Shefftz, Anna Stabel, Anya Vayner, Avery Buchanan, Bettina Routhier, Cal Nishimori, Caleb Shefftz, CJ Fogg, Cody Cotter, Cooper Shaffer, Cruz Snover, Cullen Conley, Elianna Shahoian, Ella Nishimori, Hadley Holway, Ingrid Cotter, James Gordon, Jules Jones, Kanan Deinken, Kaya Hollis, Keegan O'Brien, Mackenzie Henasey, Molly Daniel, Natalie Hamby, Nicole Rekhtman, Parker Braud, Riley Braud, Samantha Osborne, Simon Foygel, Stella Foygel, Sylas Deinken, Tyler Daniel, and Zane Fogg.** Congratulations!

Students of all ages and levels are invited to participate in Certificate of Merit and the National Guild Piano Auditions. Talk to Alice if you are interested in participating next year.

“Keep doing music” - encouragement from Little Bird graduating senior

Congratulations to Samantha Osborne, member of the Forest Charter School 2021 graduating class!

Samantha has been a Little Bird Music piano student since 2016 and will continue her musical education at Florida State University in the fall. Her background in music extends beyond the piano. As an oboist in the Reno Youth Symphony Orchestra for four years (two of those years she played principal oboe), she has performed on tours to Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco and Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. She also played oboe and English horn with the Toccata-Tahoe Symphony. Samantha, too, is a skilled violinist and composer. She soloed on fiddle with the Reno Philharmonic Young People’s Concerts and played in the Bowers Mansion Bluegrass Festival. One of her compositions was performed at the Jazz and Beyond Festival in Carson City and the Artown Festival in Reno. She has also performed throughout her community — in churches, hospitals, and senior centers in Truckee. Samantha is the recipient of the Reno Youth Symphony Senior Award, as well as a merit scholarship from Florida State University, where she will major in oboe performance.

Samantha’s advice to young musicians is to never give up. “Keep doing music! Stick with it. Don’t



Samantha Osborne will study oboe performance at Florida State University this fall.

stop just because it’s hard,” she said. “You don’t know where music will take you, so even if you don’t like your situation at the moment, it won’t hurt to keep doing it no matter what.”

As a multi-instrumentalist, Samantha sees piano as one of her greatest assets. “Piano helps me with theory and to see oboe and violin in terms of orchestral groups; a big score can always be reduced into a piano arrangement. It’s not just one voice; there’s a lot of variety and textures, so you can use it in a lot of different situations. Playing the piano is also very relaxing and enjoyable.”

Upcoming Events

July 7 - August 25: Music in the Park, Truckee Regional “Salty” Gebhardt Amphitheater

July 9 - September 3: Free Concert Fridays - Music on the Beach, Kings Beach State Recreation Area

July 13 - August 31: Tuesday Bluesdays, free outdoor concerts at the Village at Squaw Valley

Saturday, July 10 at 6pm: TOCCATA-Tahoe Classical Series, Truckee Regional Park Amphitheater

Sunday, August 8 at 11am: Classical Tahoe Music Maker Faire & Family Concert, Incline Village, NV

Wednesday, August 11 at 7:30pm: Reno Phil Plays the Music of James Bond, Greater NV Field, Reno