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Summertime Practice Tips

Summer adventure awaits—camping, beach trips, and outdoor fun! This can also mean less time at the piano. Here are some tips to keep fingers in shape over the summer:

1. Oldies but goodies!

Summer is a great time to play through old songs students have already learned. Polish 'em up and put on a show at the next BBQ.

2. Provide encouragement! Let your child know how hard she/he worked this last year and how proud you are. Start talking about the next recital (November) and songs he/she might want to play.

3. Stay involved! Look over your child's lesson book and ask him/her to show you some basics about note reading and theory. Take the time to learn about the piano. Your interest will likely inspire your child to want to show you how it all works, which means time spent at the keys.

4. Go hear lots of live music outdoors! Listening is a special kind of practice, too.



Little Bird Recital, Truckee High School Auditorium, May 19, 2018.

See more recital photos and post your own at the [Little Bird Cluster page](#).

Little Bird Music Joins Music Teachers' Association of California

Little Bird Music was recently admitted into the Music Teachers' Association of California (MTAC), a professional organization committed to the highest level of music education. "The mission of MTAC," according to the organization's Web site, "is to pursue excellence in music education and advance the music teaching profession through innovative programs that foster artistic growth and achievement." Little Bird students can now participate in programs such as Certificate of Merit, the Piano Concerto Solo Competition, Improvisation, Solo and Ensemble, and Composers Today.

Certificate of Merit is a nationally recognized program that offers students ages five and older opportunities to study a standard curriculum in performance, technique, ear training, sight reading and music theory. During the school year students prepare for a performance assessment and music theory exam held each spring.



"Sometimes when I listen to music it pulls me into different stories, and all those stories connect somehow, but I don't know yet how. Sometimes music makes me feel some emotions I don't know how to name in any language."

—Aleksandra Vayner, age 8



"I like the song 'In the Hall of the Mountain King' by Edvard Grieg. I like it because I like the pictures that I have in my head when I listen to it."

—Anya Vayner, age 6

Upon successful completion students receive an official MTAC certificate for their level. Alice Cotter, Little Bird Music owner and instructor, completed the program as a young student herself. "Certificate of Merit prepared me for studying music theory and composition in college at UC Berkeley," she said. Cotter went on to earn a Ph.D. in music from Princeton University.

Little Bird Music is the only music school in the Truckee-Tahoe area to participate in MTAC and Certificate of Merit. Talk to Alice about signing up for any of the programs. For more information about MTAC, visit www.mtac.org.



Little Bird Student Profile

Jordy Guldman, 17 years old, started playing the piano at age six. At age 11 he picked up the trumpet and is now an avid composer. He is also a varsity cross country runner, big mountain skier, and whitewater kayaker. His favorite subject in school is music. Below he reflects on his musical influences, compositional process, and love of music.

I've been interested in music since I was super little. I've always loved listening to it, so playing was a natural extension of that. I play the kinds of music I listen to and this keeps me interested in whatever it is that I am playing or composing.

My biggest musical influences are probably the friends I play with. Having musicians around me that push me helps me expand my horizons and see music differently. My mentors like Alice and Ralph Alessi also inspire me to push myself further and get better. I also listen to a lot of jazz and some of my favorite artists right now are Miles Davis, Chet Baker, Ambrose Akinmusire, Avishai Cohen, and many more.

My compositional process is evolving constantly. When I first started I would write a melody all the way through and then make up chord changes that made sense with the melody. It then evolved into starting with a melody fragment, harmonizing it, then writing chords for the rest of the song and finishing the melody after. Then I started writing the chords all the way



Jordy Gouldman on trumpet.

Musical Brain Food

Here are some of the many things your brain does when you play the piano:

Sight reading activates the visual cortex and occipital lobe.

Using both hands independently fires up the primary motor cortex.

When we play the piano we listen and adjust our playing accordingly. This activates the auditory cortex and temporal lobe.

The prefrontal cortex works hard when we use performance techniques like dynamics, articulation, and expressive timing to capture emotion.

Pianists have to know where all the notes are without having to look at the keyboard. This kind of spatial awareness involves the parietal lobe, cerebellum, and primary motor cortex.

Wow! That's amazing! Read more about playing piano and the brain [here](#).

Gouldman cont'd:

through and then doing the whole melody after. Now I do a hybrid of all of these depending on the song.

My advice to beginning students trying to compose would be to improvise on their instrument of choice. Play whatever you feel or hear in your mind and try to just have fun with it! It might not sound good at first, but the more you do it the better you will sound and it will be a very fun process as well. When you get something you like you can work on writing it down and refining it into a full composition. I think the most important thing is to have fun and be creative, and improvising is the perfect way to do this.

I love all of music. Playing the trumpet is meditative and a great means of expression, and it is mentally stimulating to play. Composing is a little more intellectual, but you get similar effects. Introducing original compositions to a group can also be an interesting challenge because explaining the vision of a song can be difficult. Bigger groups pose bigger challenges. When it comes to recording you get even bigger challenges. My friend Christian and I put out a duo record called "Kings" (named after the song) and even with just the two of us there were challenges in getting it out. That record in general however was an instance of the relaxing qualities of playing music. It was just the two of us having fun playing music in his basement. I am currently working on recording an album with a full ensemble, which is proving to be a much bigger task!

—Jordy Gouldman, May 2018

A little bird told me...

Student Accolades and Awards

March 2018

Vincenzo Pellegrino (17) wins first place in the Rotary Instrumental Solo Contest for his piano performance of Beethoven's "Pathetique" Sonata No. 8, Adagio cantabile. He also wins a command performance of the same piece at the Solo and Ensemble Festival at Sacramento State.

April 2018

Jordy Guldman (17) receives a full ride scholarship, awarded by the Reno Youth Symphony Orchestra, to a summer camp at the School for Improvisational Music in Brooklyn, NY.

May 2018

Samantha Osborne (15) wins acceptance to the Senior Piano Camp at the University of the Pacific in July. She also takes fourth place in the Nevada State Old-Time Fiddle Contest.

Frances Hamilton (16) works with refugees on the island of Lesbos in Greece. "I couldn't believe how positive these people were," she said. "They have so many dreams." This fall she will be spending a semester in South Africa with The Traveling School, a program designed to empower young women to make change in the world.

Congratulations to all!



"I like music and playing piano. I think it's a really good instrument to play. It gives me a warm-up for my hands to do stuff."

—Elijah McDonald, age 9



"I love finishing the set of piano books because that means I can move on. It makes me feel really good and proud."

—Cooper Mennick, age 6

Upcoming Events

July 10-14 – Moody's 14th Annual Jazz Artists in Residence, week-long world class jazz in Truckee

Sunday, July 29, 11am and 12:15pm – Classical Tahoe Family Concert "All About Rhythm" in Incline Village

Sunday, October 14, 2pm – Little Bird Music field trip to the San Francisco Opera to see Puccini's Tosca