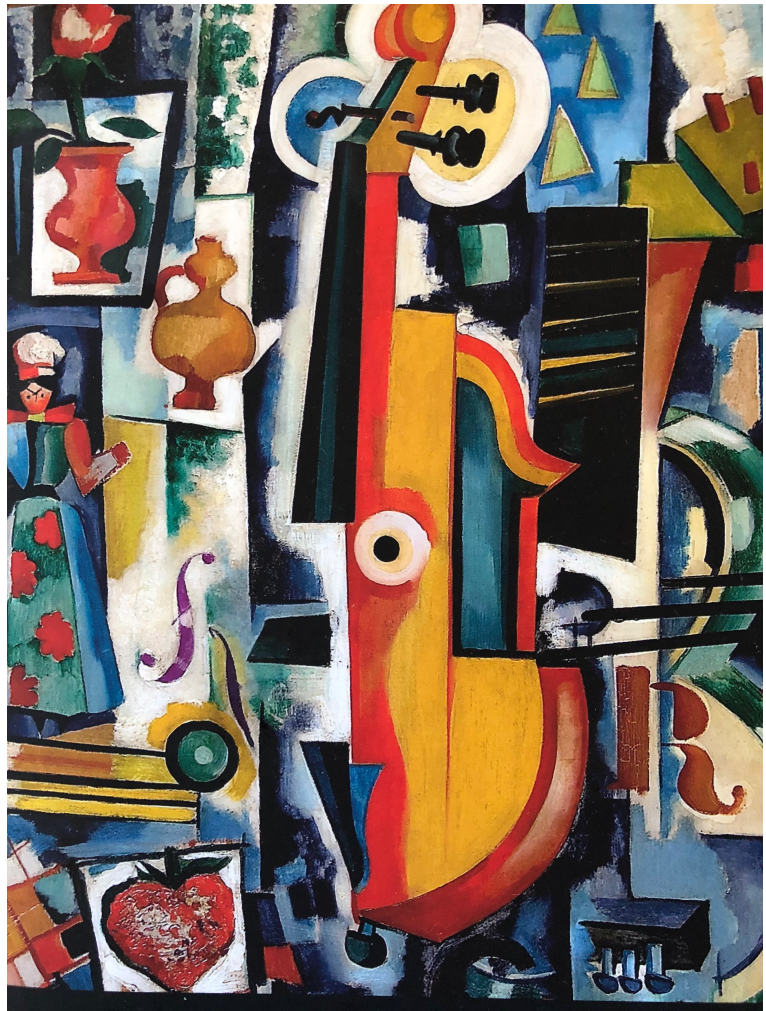




## Balancing Act

How do we find that delicate balance between encouraging our kids to be the best they can be and not wanting to push them too hard? When it comes to playing the piano, everybody has different goals and expectations. It's important that each family finds its own routine, but even that can be challenging at times. Below are a few ideas that might help parents navigate the fine line between helping their kids make meaningful progress and keeping that process joyful:

- On the drive home after each lesson, talk to your kids about what they learned. Even if it's just for a minute, sit down with them at the piano and ask them to show you what was covered. Listen with curiosity and passion. Your enthusiasm is contagious!
- Try to create a realistic and predictable routine that encourages playing. Maybe it means waking up a few minutes earlier in the morning or playing for the family after dinner.
- Free play is practice, too. Kids make important connections when they explore the keyboard. Improvisation is also a great outlet for creative expression.



Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso (1887-1918), © The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation / Scala / Art Resource, NY.

## Music and Culture: 2020 Summer Camps at Little Bird Music

This summer, Little Bird Music will offer three separate immersive camps on Music and Culture. Students will have the opportunity to learn about Western and non-Western music traditions, jazz, film music, and popular music as expressions of culture, society, and ideas of belonging.

*Balancing Act cont'd....*

- Remind your kids that it's okay if something seems hard at first. Feeling afraid of challenge is normal. It's not exactly pleasant to experience frustration or failure. But if we encourage them to keep trying, little by little, they'll learn to hold space for these kinds of struggles. They'll also learn the joy that comes from having had the courage to move through difficulties, not just with piano but also with other pursuits in life.
- "There's no courage without vulnerability," says social researcher Brené Brown. Learning anything new, let alone mastering an instrument, requires this very combination. Brown often cites the Buddhist teacher Joan Halifax's idea of the "strong back, soft front, and wild heart." Brown says, "It's about being brave and afraid at the same time. If I raise my kids to have that wild heart that can be grit and grace, tough and tender, excited and scared, that can hold the tension of those things, that's all I can ask."



Camps are geared toward students ages seven and older with at least one year of piano study. Each day, students will be exposed to a range of engaging musical and visual examples alongside thoughtful, age appropriate lectures about specific topics. They'll participate in roundtable guided conversations that encourage open dialogue and critical thinking. Students will then take part in hands-on assignments, whether music composition, songwriting, outdoor activities, or visual art projects that intersect with the topic at hand. Camp sessions will include a field trip involving a live music experience. Alice Cotter, who has taught these types of courses at Princeton, UC Berkeley, and UNR, will tailor the camps to the age group. She'll also bring in guest speakers and musicians to further enrich our study.

The mission of Little Bird Music summer camps is to encourage curiosity and engagement with music from a number of perspectives and to provide opportunities for students to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between art, music, and culture.

To sign up, please email [alice@littlebirdtahoe.com](mailto:alice@littlebirdtahoe.com).

Enrollment will be capped at 10 students per camp session.

Session dates, timing, location, and cost are listed below:

**Session 1: July 20-24, 2020** (Monday-Friday, 9am-1pm) at Little Bird Music; cost \$385/student.

**Session 2: July 27-31, 2020** (Monday-Friday, 9am-1pm) at Little Bird Music; cost \$385/student.

**Session 3: August 3-7, 2020** (Monday-Friday, 9am-1pm) at Little Bird Music; cost \$385/student.





Samantha Osborne at a Little Bird Music recital in 2018.

## Little Bird Student Profile

*Samantha Osborne, age 16, has been playing the piano since she was six. In addition to being an accomplished pianist, she is currently the principal oboist in the Reno Youth Symphony Orchestra. Samantha also plays oboe in the ensemble Toccata and violin in various small ensembles in Reno. Below she reflects on her musical journey.*

My mom encouraged me to take piano lessons as a kid. It wasn't until I was 11 when I first started really liking it. I remember playing something challenging and fast (it was C.P.E. Bach's Solfeggietto in C Minor), and I realized, "Hey, this is really cool!"

My favorite composers are from the Romantic period (1830-1900): Chopin, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky. I really like Chopin's piano works because of the melodies. The same goes for Tchaikovsky in his orchestral works. I can't quite say what it is, but there's something unique that I like about Beethoven's Sonatas, *Fantaisie Impromptu* by Chopin, Symphony No. 4 and Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky. I'm drawn to these pieces because of the melodies.

Romantic music is totally different from other time periods. It's more songlike, and there's more emotion. Baroque and Classical music focus on harmonies, and it's not as emotional. Contemporary classical music is very open, sometimes dissonant. It's Romantic music that makes me happiest and gives me energy.

When it comes to the process of learning, I play a piece over and over until I get comfortable with it, and then I fine tune it. Most of learning a piece is just mileage: doing it again and again. The hardest part is getting the notes comfortable, and once I get that down I can focus on little things like phrasing and details to take it to a new level. There's definitely a transition between getting all the details and then internalizing the piece and playing it from memory. It all takes time, many months, sometimes years to really get a handle on a piece. Soon enough, the pieces are in my soul. It's a lot of work, but all of this makes me better. It feels good to look back and see my growth as a musician.

My advice for young students is simple. Stay with it. Even if you don't like piano now, you will like it later. You don't have to practice for an hour a day, but make it consistent. Playing for 10 minutes a day is way better than an hour a week. When I was little, I'd get candy (M & M's) if I practiced for a certain amount of time. Most of it was my mom asking me to practice. But I'm so happy she did, because music is my life now.

What I love most about playing music is meeting other people who also like music. Playing music takes me to a different place, an emotionally different place. It makes me more present in the moment. And that makes me happy.

—Samantha Osborne, February 2020

## These little birds told me...



"My favorite part of piano is when I get to play bouncy staccato."

–Natalie Hamby, age 7



"I like that the piano is very big, and I love the music I play on the piano. I like practicing with my dad."

–Fletcher Mooney, age 6



"I love playing chords and playing legato. I also like when I move hand positions."

–Mason Walker, age 7

## Upcoming Events

Here are just a few of the cultural happenings in our area this spring:

**Tuesday, February 18 at 7:30pm:** Ladysmith Black Mambazo presented by the Center for the Arts in Grass Valley

**Sunday, February 23 at 12:55pm:** Bolshoi Ballet Live from Moscow Simulcast of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* in Reno

**Saturday, February 29 at 9:55am:** MetHD Live from New York Opera Simulcast of Handel's *Agrippina* in Reno and Grass Valley

**Wednesday, March 4 at 7:00pm:** Buddy Guy, Jimmie Vaughan, and Charlie Musselwhite at the Mondavi Center at UC Davis

**Saturday, March 14 at 9:55am:** MetHD Live from New York Opera Simulcast of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* in Reno and Grass Valley

**Saturday, March 21 at 7:30pm:** Reno Philharmonic plays Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* at the Pioneer Center in Reno

**Saturday, April 25 at 2:00pm:** Little Bird Music Spring Recital at the Truckee High School Auditorium



"Playing piano is fun. Songs like 'Heart and Soul' are difficult, but playing them makes me get in my calm zone."

–Angus MacFadyen, age 9