



Building Lifelong Pianists

January 2024 Newsletter



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Table of Contents

Student of the Month:
Shelby Moss

Page 1

Piano Lessons: What's the Point?

Page 3

Baldwin Piano Sale

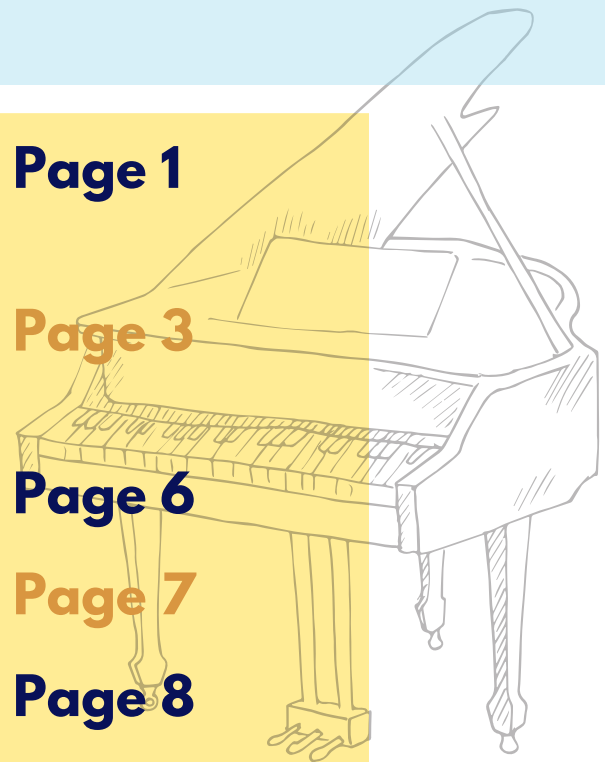
Page 6

Fall Recitals Recap

Page 7

Upcoming Events!

Page 8



Student of the Month: Shelby Moss



Q: What professional music positions do you hold, and what is your academic background in music?

A: I am currently the Chorus Teacher at Clemmons Middle School, a Music Assistant at FBC Greensboro, an Alto with the Bel Canto Company, and a community leader for the Triad Youth Choir, INSPIRO. My academic background begins with singing in church choirs around preschool, and I have

been doing it ever since! I never picked up an instrument, so voice has always been my main focus. I went to UNCG, where I received a Bachelor of Music in Music Education with a concentration in Choral/General Music.

Q: As a music educator and conductor, what is the utility of taking piano lessons for you?

A: Not only does taking lessons help strengthen my understanding of music as a whole, but I am able to provide a better experience for my students. With strengthening my skills in lessons, I am able to be a more confident/attentive teacher, because I am not as worried about fumbling at the keys.

Student of the Month: Shelby Moss

Q: What has been your favorite experience so far as a TMA student?

A: My favorite part is the laid back nature of my lessons.

Q: What is something that has been unexpected about your piano lesson experience?

A: It is way less stressful than the piano experience I had in college, which makes me excited to practice and attend my lesson each week. Something I would not have said in college.

Q: What has been different about your piano lesson experience with TMA compared with your group piano class in college?

A: My lessons with TMA are far more individualized, compared to the basic framework of group piano lessons. In college, piano lessons were structured the same for each student. At TMA, I am able to set goals for playing piano and my lessons are structured to help me reach those goals. I am able to slow down and focus on the skills I need, and move faster through the ones I am already familiar with. Overall, my experience at TMA has been far more helpful and enjoyable!



Piano Lessons: What's the Point?

By Alek Wasserman,
Triad Music Academy
Instructor/Founder

As we roll into the new year, I think it's as good a time as any to ask important questions about piano learning. The first question any piano student, parent, or teacher should ask is, "why do we learn to play the piano in the first place?"

In order to adequately answer that question, I personally have to reflect on my 23 years of piano playing.

Learning to play the piano has had a much larger influence on my adult life than any other activity I tried when I was a kid.

My quest to pursue music as a lifestyle led me to leave my home state of Wisconsin for Ohio, and later North Carolina. Being a pianist has been part of every job I've had out of school.

I've been a public school music teacher, a US Army pianist, a piano teacher, and now an entrepreneur because of my desire to play the piano.

Clearly, the piano has had a huge impact on my own personal experience. But before I dive further into the specifics of WHY we learn to play the piano, I want to take a moment to talk about a few reasons WHY NOT to take up piano playing:

Test Scores. We've all heard the clichés. While it's true that musicians tend to be stellar students, this makes learning the piano about something other than its own sake.

Appearances. Let's call a spade, a spade. The piano is seen by many people as a status symbol. This again makes the piano invalid for its own sake, and can create stressful environments for both students and teachers. Students in these situations often don't develop a true love of the instrument, so they don't practice.

Ego. This one is similar to the above, but it usually applies to more advanced students. You are probably not the next Martha Argerich, and that's okay! Your sense of self-worth should not be tied to an instrument.

Piano Lessons: What's the Point?, cont.

Now that we've got that out of the way, let's look at the life lessons that the piano has to teach us:

Hard Work & Perseverance. Playing the piano is difficult, and it takes years of guided practice and dedication to master! Students who learn to play the piano, learn very quickly that it isn't for the faint of heart. You don't always make progress with every single practice session, but consistent habits breed results.

Critical Thinking. What is the correct staccato touch for a passage, based on its musical context and historical performance practice? Are there any other contributing factors to influence the interpretation? Playing the piano is, at its core, an intellectual exercise as much as it is a physical act.

Responsibility. Any daily obligation is going to teach a student responsibility. Piano doesn't usually start out as a daily activity, but it will at some point become an everyday aspect of life for serious students.

Appreciation of the Arts. To some extent, literacy in one artistic medium carries across to other media. I'm not saying that I could write a romance novel because I know how to play the piano. But knowing how to identify motivic development in piano sonatas helps me recognize foreshadowing and thematic ideas when I'm watching complex TV shows. Someone who has learned to play the piano at a high level will be able to, at the very least, recognize well-crafted art in other media, and appreciate the work that went into it.

Social Skills. Playing the piano is a form of communication, like any other art form. Every performance is a chance to share musical ideas with an audience, and to practice the norms and expectations that come with that experience. This is without even mentioning ensemble playing, which is one of the greatest aspects of playing an instrument. Imagine all of the friends you can make in a lifetime of accompanying choirs and playing chamber music!

Piano Lessons: What's the Point?, cont.

Ultimately, the reasons I've given for learning to play the piano only scratch the surface; there are so many other benefits that come from lifelong piano learning.

I want to clarify one other aspect of piano lessons, while we're here. Many passionate high school pianists consider their options for studying music in college. In my opinion, most of these students should double major in music and another subject, or minor in music. The reality is that it's very difficult to make a career in music. Why take the risk when you can major in engineering instead?

(Yes, I hold three degrees in music.)

BUT, for a slim percentage of piano students, music is a must. The idea of spending the first four years of their adult life doing anything other than diving into the piano does not compute for these students.

A percentage of these music lovers also have the technique and musical skills to "make it" as musicians.

For these few students, I am more than happy to guide them towards post-secondary music auditions, and this demographic of students is partly why TMA holds three masterclasses a year with local collegiate piano professors.

There is a TMA alum from my studio who currently studies at [Berklee College of Music](#), and I will always be proud of him. Any student who commits to lifelong piano learning commands my respect, but it does not have to involve academic study or professional musicianship.

My goal for our lifelong piano learners is that they can functionally play for their own musical fulfilment, however they personally define it, and that they are fervent supporters of the piano who can articulate all of these points for themselves.

With all of these ideas in mind, I have to ask - what is your point in deciding to take piano lessons?



Happy

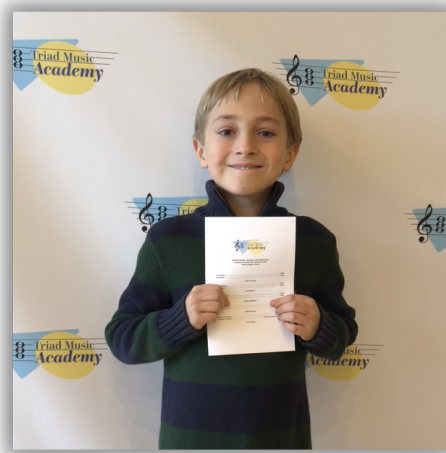
NEW YEAR
2024

TMA SALE
ONLY \$4,975



Fall Recital Recap

On Saturday, December 9th, TMA held two recitals at Piedmont Music Center. The first program featured 24 students from the studio of Lead Instructor Alek Wasserman. The second recital was short and sweet, with performances from 9 students in the studios of Instructors PG Hazard and Shannon Lindegren. Congrats to all of our lifelong pianists!



Upcoming Events!

Annie Jeng Masterclass

Saturday, April 13th @ 4:00 PM

[Piedmont Music Center](#)

Annie Jeng
Assistant Professor of Piano &
Piano Pedagogy, UNC-Greensboro



Select Triad Music Academy students will be chosen to perform. Email alek@triadmusicacademy.com if you would like to watch!

TMA Spring Recital

Saturday, June 1st @ 4:00 PM

[Piedmont Music Center](#)

Recitals open to all Triad Music Academy students. Email alek@triadmusicacademy.com with any questions!

***Recital may be updated to different times for different teachers' studios, TBD. Any changes will be communicated in advance by email.