

Instrumental Study Guidelines

At Community Music School we approach each student as an individual and tailor our instruction to fit his/her background and goals. However, based on our many years of experience teaching students of all ages and levels, we have found that the following conditions are important to each student's success:

For Everyone

- desire to learn
- possession of your own instrument (or access to an instrument) for daily practice; the instrument must be in working condition and tuned, if a piano
- purchase of music which the teacher requests, as soon as possible
- regular attendance at lessons
- scheduling of daily practice time (as agreed upon with the teacher) in a quiet place, free from distractions and interruptions

Adults (in addition to the above)

- realistic expectation of progress and the acceptance of some frustration when the body does not respond as quickly as the mind

Children (in addition to the above)

- minimum age, depending upon the individual child's maturity and the availability of an instructor with the interest and skills in teaching younger children (see chart on page 2)
- readiness to accept and follow directions
- readiness to relate to a non-parental adult
- ability to concentrate for about 30 minutes on musical activities
- realization that progress may occur in very small steps, especially with young children

For Everyone

Please come to the first lesson and/or interview (see below) prepared:

- to play (if you have previously studied or played on your own) **or** to bring a sample of music you have played before (which will indicate the level you had reached).
- to discuss goals you may have in mind relating to your study.
- to tell us any limitations or conditions which may affect your study (occupational, physical, etc).
- to bring your instrument (if not piano).
- to bring your electric keyboard or the brochure describing it (if you intend to use it for home practice).

Instrumental Study Guidelines (2)

Note to Prospective Keyboard Students

Sophisticated keyboards can open up interesting sound and computer-linked possibilities. They are especially appropriate for people wishing to perform in the rock, pop or jazz fields or those intending to use a keyboard linked to a computer for notation/editing, arranging, composing or orchestrating activities.

We recommend a keyboard with at least 61 full-sized keys for everyone. Keyboards with small-sized and fewer keys are very inadequate for even a beginning experience with a child.

Students who wish to concentrate on learning pianistic skills and music composed for the piano will find that they will soon need a larger, more sophisticated keyboard - one with a pedal attachment and more than 61 touch-sensitive keys. Eventually, the teacher may also insist that the student have regular access to an acoustic piano.

Prospective 5 and 6 year-old piano/keyboard students (and others having special needs or concerns), must schedule an interview with Kenneth Atkinson, Chairman of the CMS Piano Department. Please call 884-4887 to schedule this 15-minute interview. (There is no charge for this interview).

The purpose of the interview is:

- to confirm that all or most of the conditions previously mentioned do exist (in order to prevent future disappointment on the part of the student and the School) or to recommend that lessons be postponed until the child is "ready." There are other musical options for a child who needs more time and experiences.
- to match each student with an appropriate teacher (depending upon the student's background, skills and goals).
- to give the teacher some advance information on each new student's background and skills.
- to complete the registration process outlined on the next page.

**If you must cancel or reschedule the interview,
please call 884-4887 in advance.**

Instrumental Study Guidelines (3)

Home Practice

There is a direct correlation between musical progress and consistent home practice between lessons. We have developed a procedure for setting practice goals and the Music Practice Record as a tool for students, parents and teachers.

The teacher and the student will talk about good practice, including designating a time each day for practice and evaluating the conditions under which good practice should occur (no television on in the background, no sibling distractions, etc.). They will discuss a realistic practice goal which involves both length of time each day and the number of days each week practicing should occur. The teacher will then introduce the Music Practice Record as an easy way for the student to keep track of his/her practice.

Crucial to the process is the support of families in planning for home practice on a regular basis and assisting the student in completing the form. The Music Practice Record contains a place for a parent/caregiver to initial confirming that the practice was done. (At the teacher's discretion, teens may omit this step.) The form should be brought to the lesson each week. At the end of the 13 weeks covered in each form the teacher gives the form to the Executive Director and the student begins a new form. The student's name is entered into a raffle for each week he/she has met the practice goal. Practice goals may be renegotiated during the year.

Ruth W. Marcy Scholarship Competition

CMS students of all ages and levels are encouraged to participate in the Marcy Scholarship Competition held each February. An application with guidelines will be distributed to each student and teacher in November.

Open House and Performance Exams

For the past two years CMS has held **Open House Weeks** in the spring. (Previously, teacher prepared written evaluations.) We now invite parents to come to their child's lesson specifically to chat with the teacher about things such as progress and lesson preparation, practice goals, recital and exam participation, skills and more. We hope that this is also an opportunity for parents to become better acquainted with the teacher (or even to meet for the first time) and to ask questions they may have.

Instrumental Study Guidelines (4)

Performance exams for students of all ages and levels are held each May. Although exams are held at the Elmwood location, students from all sites are involved. We hope that parents will support their child's participation and that adults will choose to be involved. Our exams are intended to be positive, motivational experiences that accomplish several things:

- give the student the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of certain skills* and to feel satisfaction from having succeeded in doing that.
- provide an incentive for each student to practice more diligently, knowing that teachers other than his or her own will be listening to the exam.
- provide parents and adult students with the assurance that the School is overseeing the quality of instruction.

Because of excellent performances during exams and notable progress over previous exams, some students will be selected to receive a Special Commendation or Honors Certificate. Others will be chosen to perform in the annual Honors Recital, based on outstanding, memorized performances.

*These are specific fundamentals on which students work during their first years of study. They are important building blocks for successful playing or singing at more advanced levels. The skills range from identifying notes, note values and time signatures to demonstrating various technical skills such as playing staccato or legato or playing patterns and scales or chords.



If you have questions after reading this document, you may either contact us via E-mail or call us at 884.4887 or you may come to 415 Elmwood Avenue