

Melodies of Achievement

Successful Techniques Behind Performance and Recreational Group Piano Studios

By Dorla Aparicio and Marie Lee, ©2024
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Introduction

We both offer weekly group classes in our music schools. Here we compare our two types of successful approaches, recreational and performance based.

Who is your customer?

These are parents who want:

Recreational Studio

- A well-rounded child
- Their child to excel at playing the piano, but not necessarily compete
- Their child to develop discipline
- Their child to develop confidence

Performance Studio

- A well-rounded child
- Their child to excel at playing the piano, but not necessarily compete
- Their child to develop confidence
- Their child to develop discipline and **grit**
- **Performance opportunities**



What are your goals?

Recreational Studio

- Make music together
- Learn play the piano
- Develop music skills and knowledge
- **At home practice is encouraged for quicker progress, but not required**
- **One formal recital per year where all students are expected to participate**

Performance Studio

- Make music together
- Learn to play the piano
- Develop music skills and knowledge
- Build confidence
- **Home practice required**
- **Festivals and performances not required, but strongly encouraged**



Note how many similarities there are between the two approaches!

Now let's look at the differences...

Curriculum/Lesson Planning

Recreational Studio

- Multilevel, ensemble based curriculum
- Virtual Piano Studio
- Assessments

Performance Studio

- [National Federation of Music Clubs bulletin](#) for ensemble and solo festival repertoire
- Sonatinas for intermediates
- Multi-level and same-level ensembles for fall and spring performances
- Typical class includes: sight reading, rhythm activity, music theory, scale/chord work, method book piece, lead sheets, performance piece(s)

Teaching Techniques

Recreational Studio

- Tiered environment
- Learning out loud
- Learning Together

Performance Studio

- Same-level curriculum
- NFMC same-level ensembles and solos for festivals. I handle festival pieces in a different way than the other pieces I teach in class. (Per my [podcast](#) with Leila about preparing group students for festivals and exams)
- Audio and video recordings for home practice

Scheduling

Recreational Studio

- Once a week
- Students are scheduled Monday-Wednesday 3:30 - 7:00 PM
- 32 weeks September-May

Performance Studio

- Year round classes: 29 classes Sept-May, 8 classes June-August (prepping parts for Ensemble Festival in October)
- 45 minute classes for ages 5+
- 30 minute classes for preschool ages 3-5, parent attendance required

Performances/Recitals

Recreational Studio

- Christmas recital
- Spring recital



Performance Studio

Participation is always optional but strongly encouraged.


- [National Federation of Music Clubs Solo and Ensemble Festivals](#)
 - Sonatina Festival (local MTA event)
 - Holiday mall performance
 - Halloween recital
 - Spring celebration recitals
 - Class recitals in December
-

Assessment

Recreational Studio

- Proficiency Chart
- Group Piano Progress Report

Group Piano Progress



Name: _____

Level: _____ Date: _____

I - Informed G - Growing M - Mastered

Skills

Teamwork - willingness to play the piano with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independence - willingness to play the piano daily at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus - willingness to follow directions and complete in-class assignments.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Note Reading - ability to read the notes for assigned level.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhythm Reading - ability to read rhythms for assigned level.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finger Dexterity - follow the required fingering and improving on correct hand position.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional Information

What is required for my student pianist to move to the next pianist level?
Be able to learn the pieces in the current level without assistance.

What is required for my student pianist to participate in the Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations?
Be a self-learner, practice a minimum of 30-45 minutes 6 days a week, current level Pianist 3 or above.

What is required for my student pianist to enroll in private lessons?
At least one of the following: age 15 or older, completion of Pianist 4, preparing for college auditions.

Sample Rating Sheet

National Federation of Music Clubs

RATING SHEET FOR FEDERATION FESTIVALS JR 3-9

Name: Allie Uyeno	Jr X Adult	ID # 245849
Name:	Jr Adult	ID #
Name:	Jr Adult	ID #
Name:	Jr Adult	ID #
Event: Piano/Solo	Class: P4	
Required: Lady Alyson's Minuet	Composer: Vandall, Robert	
Choir: Study In C Major, Op. 125, No. 3	Composer: Diabelli, Anton	

JUDGE INSTRUCTIONS:

- Entrants do not compete against each other; each is rated on his/her own merits.
- Indicate strengths and/or weaknesses by + or - only in the table on the left; make supportive comments in Judge's Remarks area.
- All applicable factors should be considered in determining the final rating.
- Do not adjust or make personal additions to the official ratings indicated by NFMC; comments should support and reflect your final rating.

Performance Elements	Required	Choice
I. MEMORY	+	+
II. ACCURACY	+	+
Correct Notes	+	+
Marks of Expression	+	+
Note Values	+	+
III. RHYTHM	+	+
Appropriate Tempo	+	+
Continuity	+	+
Control	+	+
Steadiness of Beat	+	+
IV. TECHNIQUE	+	+
Body Position	+	+
Fingering	+	+
Hand Position	+	+
Pedal	+	+
Breath Control	+	+
Diaphragm	+	+
Fingering	+	+
Use of Bow	+	+
V. MUSICIANSHIP	+	+
Articulation	+	+
Balance	+	+
Dynamics	+	+
Interpretation/Style	+	+
Intonation	+	+
Phrasing	+	+
Tone	+	+

Judge's Remarks (use reverse side if needed)

Vandall - Beautiful tempo and legato. I love how you shape your phrases with clear and precise articulation. I want to get up and dance to this minuet with you. Be sure to watch your pedal, it got muddy on mm 20-28. Observe your E₂ in mm 16-18 as well. A very convincing and confident performance. Bravo!

Diabelli - Excellent memory work. Your dynamics and articulations (staccatos and ?) are spot on. LH accompaniment was a bit too loud on mm 8-12 and I couldn't quite hear those beautiful RH melody you're bringing out. Congratulations on such a well prepared performance. Bravo!

Add "+" if student receives honors

Circle Appropriate Rating: Superior (+) Excellent Satisfactory Fair Needs Improvement

Legend:
 SU - complete, outstanding performance; attention to all details, rapid recovery from minor slips (do not deduct from interpretation)
 EX - promising, strong performance showing accomplishment, minor discrepancies in details, slips detract from presentation
 SA - shows accomplishment, additional work needed in one or more areas for convincing presentation
 F - some commendable aspects, severe deficiencies in fundamentals show lack of preparation, not ready for performance
 NI - obviously poorly prepared and appears unconcerned with performance

Judge's Signature: *[Signature]* Date: 3/4/2023

Business

Recreational Studio

- Cost of group lessons
- Studio Policy
- Annual registration fee

Performance Studio

- Studio policies
- Tuition structure + book/supply fees
- Year-round classes
- No makeup classes
- Parental involvement

Performance Studio

- [30 piece challenge](#) (more songs passed off means more progress)
- [Piano Maestro Superstar](#)
- Sight Reading Society
- [NFMC Festival](#) rating sheets with comments from judges.

Retention

Recreational Studio

- Freedom
- Friendships
- Summer Piano Camps

Performance Studio

- NFMC festival trophies require a minimum three years to earn and then points keep building and trophies get larger
- Judge's ratings and comments give students further goals to work toward and validate me as a teacher
- Festival participation provides value, something high school students can add to a resume
- Ensemble festivals are the "music team" experience like a sports team or school band/orchestra. *We have A LOT to learn from school marching bands!*



Parent Education and Communication

Recreational Studio

- Website
- Video, text and email reminders
- Parent participation

Performance Studio

- More communication from teacher
- More parental commitment: consistent home practice, getting students to practice with performance tracks (all communicated digitally through the [PracticeSpace app](#))
- More time: extra rehearsals
- More money: registration fees, costumes

For Further Exploration

Recreational Studio

- <http://www.pianopyramid.com>
- [YouTube channel](#)
- [GroupIlluminatED](#) on-demand conference Code: DORLA50 for \$50 off

Performance Studio

- [Group Teaching Blueprint](#) by Marie Lee
- [Podcast](#) Prepping Group Students for Festivals and Exams
- [GroupIlluminatED](#) on-demand conference Code: MARIE50 for \$50 off
- [How to Teach a Group Piano Class](#)
- [Musicality Schools promo video](#)

Contact Us

Recreational Studio

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