

Hello Everyone,

The end of the year is only a month away and for some students school has already finished whilst others have left Australia to visit relatives overseas. However, for most of us we still have 1 to 2 weeks of lessons remaining (finishing on Saturday 12th) before the holiday season starts.

Holiday Lessons

I must admit that I am tired of hearing the line "Oh, I've been really busy with...[assignments, tests, home work, assessment, exams or other extra-curricula activities]" which seems to have become a standard student response when asked how their weekly practice has gone. It wouldn't be so bad if I knew that the 11 weeks of holidays (20% of the year!) was being used to catch up with practice. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case and so we are seeing a trend towards longer exam preparation time, last-minute panic practice (mega stress!) and worsening exam marks. Now is the time to book in lessons, push the practice and catch up or just get ahead! If you want to supercharge your progress then go ahead and book in 2 lessons per week!

In the past we have closed the studio for most of the Christmas holiday. However, because many students are just not getting enough practice done during the school term, and with many parents keen to keep kids going over this time, we have decided to set some special days and times aside for lessons as set out below.

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| Week 51 | Tuesday 15/12/2009 to Saturday 19/12/2009 |
| Week 52 | Monday 21/12/2009 to Wednesday 23/12/2009 |
| Week 1 | Tuesday 05/01/2010 to Thursday 07/01/2010, Saturday 09/01/2010 |
| Week 2 | Monday 11/01/2010, Wednesday 13/01/2010 to Saturday 16/01/2010 |
| Week 3 | Tuesday 19/01/2010 to Saturday 23/01/2010 |
| Times | Monday-Friday: 9:00am-12:00pm 4:00pm-7:00pm Saturday: 9:00am-12:00pm |

Why Theory is Important

Theory exams are a compulsory AMEB requirement if you want to receive your piano exam certificates. But more than just a prerequisite, theory is an important part of learning and understanding the music you play.

As I often say to my students, "I see the music score (notes) completely different to you. You see each brush stroke whilst I see the whole painting". For example, I may look at a line of music as a simple pattern of 3 to 4 different types of broken chords in the key of d minor which might take me a few seconds to realize and play.

On the other hand a student would see the same line of music as 32 individual notes with nothing 'tying' them together. They just look like many black dots on a page! This is what theory can do. Take you from seeing a bunch of unrelated notes to logical groups and sequences of related notes.

Holiday Group Theory Programs

A few years ago we ran group theory classes during the school term in preparation for AMEB exams and they were very successful, much cheaper for parents and they didn't take away piano lesson time. Unfortunately, we had to desert these classes because scheduling groups became too difficult. However, we will be trialling an intensive theory program in January for grades 1 to 4 consisting of two 2 hour lessons per week. Our goal is to cover all the topics (or reinforce them for those who have previously started) to blitz the exam in May 2010.

Classes will consist of 2-6 students and will include a short break in the middle with refreshments provided by us to keep the kids' minds alert. Each 2 hour session will be \$50. Bare in mind that the cost of these classes is

less than 50% of what many of you are currently paying us for individual theory tuition in the piano lesson. So, if you need to do theory or are currently preparing for an exam then this is a fantastic opportunity to do so.

2010 Queensland School Term 1:

The 2010 school term dates for term 1 are Wednesday 27 January to Thursday 1 April

Supervised Practice Sessions

About 15 years ago I ran a little experiment with Matthew, a young (7 -8 yrs) student who was struggling to improve in his piano. After talking to his mum I determined that he was definitely practising enough hours per week but she wasn't sure if he was practising properly because she didn't know music. Matthew assured me he was practising correctly and doing what I asked, but I wasn't convinced. So, I offered to have him come around every afternoon for a week just to practise so that I could control every minute of his time at the piano.

I simply made him practise properly and the results were staggering. He accomplished more in that week of perfect practice than he had been able to do alone in months by himself. I wasn't giving him a normal lesson; I was simply controlling his practice and making him think carefully, focus properly and use our practice methods - which frustrated him I'm sure.

What I learnt from this exercise was (1) Often a student doesn't know what correct practice is (although, if they have been with us for any time they should!), (2) most young children don't have the mental capacity to practise properly alone; they just don't have the discipline required, and (3) a parent needs to tightly supervise practice at home for many years if they want to see good progress. Even recently I have seen young students do very well in their first few years of learning and then I notice a sudden drop in progression and I later found out that it was because the parent had stopped supervising their practice and had hoped the student could do it themselves. Unfortunately, this level of independence usually takes much longer than parents hope. Just ask my own mum!

So, to help those parents who don't have the time or knowledge or if you just want to do some quality pre-exam, going-to-fail-unless-we-get-a-miracle practice we are offering supervised practice sessions with Naomi Harris (AMusA) or Iris Fung (AMusA) at \$20 for 30 minutes or \$35 per hour session.

Practice Charts

Starting in 2010 we would like all students to have a practice chart and fill it in every week. This will help us to track your child's practice and progress. It is amazing how fast the days and weeks slip by with little practice happening and having a practice chart helps keep it 'in your face'. Practice charts can be downloaded at www.treviano.com/studentzone/ and printed to fill in.

Congratulations Naomi Harris

Congratulations to Naomi Harris who has been accepted into the Queensland Conservatorium of Music for 2010.

Naomi, who has been studying with us since she was 5 years old will now have the privilege of studying piano full time with Oleg Stepanov, the husband of our last teacher Natasha Vlassenko. Work hard Naomi, good luck and take full advantage of the next few years because they will fly by. Although leaving us as a student, Naomi stays on as a fellow teacher for 2010 and we will look forward to hearing her play in our next studio concert :-).

Studio Concert 2010

No, we haven't deserted our studio concert and yes, we will be having one soon. Early 2010 is most likely so we will keep you posted.

QuickNotes Online

Our newsletters are now available at our [Student Zone](#). Just log in using student and piano4me.

Happy Holidays,

Nicholas, Katrina, Christy and Naomi