

Common Systems (Methods) of Piano Teaching

There are many simplified "cookie-cutter" piano teaching methods here in the U.S.A. Each has a series of books for students to buy. Here are just a few of the more common methods seen:

Suzuki Method - This curriculum is well-established in the U.S.A. and Japan but is not popular with expert teachers. A huge drawback is that the students typically cannot read music and depend upon mimicry. Students also lack a strongly developed technique and do not develop the skills needed to teach themselves. When lessons stop, the ability to play new music stops.

Alfred / Bastien / Faber / Thompson / etc... Methods - Students who have been raised on these and similar methods have limited ability in reading and have an vastly undeveloped technique. The curriculums are highly-simplified and splashed with cartoon pictures. The slow pacing assures that a student will not out-grow the abilities of a minimally-qualified teacher too soon.

"Miracle Methods" - These are numerous and promise the 'miracle' of learning piano online, easily, in just a few minutes a day, or "learn to play piano in 2 weeks", etc... As with "get rich quick" or "muscles without exercise" schemes, these methods are not for the serious music student. Some abilities in life require an expert, gifted teacher, and shortcuts cannot be bought for a dime.

Music Centers - There are many brands of music-oriented after-school programs, music 'camps' and vendors offering "fun", "cool" musical activities. This is music-themed daycare. The teachers have very limited music ability or education. These are an expensive alternative to standard daycare. Students never learn to read music or play properly. You'll pay a lot and learn little-to-nothing.

CAUTION

You should not have to purchase a series of books to begin piano lessons. "Cookie-cutter" curriculums are slow-paced by design and are commonly used by teachers with limited music knowledge. After a year the student has a collection of useless books and will have learned little.

Teachers who push a series of books onto students often do so to make extra money and to lock-in students into their lessons. RED FLAG: Any book that shows more cartoons than music or has notes floating in empty space is to be avoided. That is not how music is taught.

Methods that claim learning to read music isn't important or is too hard for a beginning student is one that sets a student on a "dumbed-down" path that will surely produce "dumbed-down" results. Get a great teacher, learn to read music and you'll know it forever.

Music theory and theory-based Ear Training are essential. Your teacher should provide his/her own theory material or use a proper theory book. A student must learn the fundamentals of music in order to learn how to teach himself. A teacher who skips music theory and/or ear training is not a real music teacher.

A curriculum that bypasses the repertoire of the Masters deprives students of pedagogical and cultural benefit. There is much great music from the Masters of the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern eras that is both accessible and beneficial to all students.

You should not have to sign a long-term contract. Many music centers and afterschool programs and even some teachers seek to "lock" students into expensive contracts. By the time the students and parents realize the money is being wasted on useless lessons, it is too late to recover the money. Instead, a month-to-month payment is what you should look for.