

THE CRESCENDO

March / April 2015

A Publication of **BARTLETT MUSIC ACADEMY**

Vol. I, No. 1

Getting the Most Out of Practice

Dr. Kenneth Freeman

Practice can be a source of stress for parents and their students enrolled in private music lessons. The good news is that practicing does not have to be boring or a source of conflict between parent and child. Here are some helpful tips to make the practice sessions in your home more enjoyable for everyone involved and more productive.

Schedule a regular practice time. It is important to make a daily appointment to spend time with your instrument. The reason is that the probability of actually practicing significantly goes up when a regular rehearsal time is established. For instance, some families find that 20 minutes of practice while dinner is being prepared is very convenient. Like any other scheduled event, it is important to have a clearly defined beginning and ending time.

Consider having multiple sessions with shorter durations. What do you do when your piano teacher suggests 45 minutes of practice each day, but your student can barely stay on the bench for 20 minutes? Why not include two 20 minute sessions in your schedule? By breaking up the sessions, the practice time is more manageable, ends before frustration sets in, and allows the child to gradually increase their time spent at the instrument.

Have clearly defined, measurable goals for each practice session. Your private instructor can be a helpful resource here. Trying to learn a new piece can be overwhelming to young students. However, it can seem less daunting to address only the rhythm of a specific passage or just the left hand in the first line. This gives the practice time a clear purpose and helps the student see that progress is being made. Additionally, goal-oriented practice is less likely to evolve into playing the piece mindlessly. Such repetitive playing is not only largely unproductive, but can become detrimental to the musical development desired. If the child sees that they are accomplishing something through diligent practice, they are more encouraged to continue. *(Continued on reverse)*

Students of Bartlett Music Have Successful Outing at All-West Tennessee Band Convention

We would like to extend a hearty “Congratulations” to all of the students who participated at the All-West Tennessee band competition. We would like to extend special recognition to the following individuals who chaired at the All-West Convention from February 12-14, 2015: Debra Adamolekun, Kayleigh Bunn, Ben Chipman, Rachel Christopherson, Robbie Eng, Johnathan Feehan, Haley Ford, Phillip Hubbard, Lora Kelly, Matthew Lee, Michael Lum, Nicole Miller, Derrick Nguyen, Daniel Orleans-Lindsay, David Orleans-Lindsay, Lindsey Parker, Wade Price, Walt Price, Julia Stewart, Ethan Wales, Timothy Wales, Lindsey Weber, Nicholas Winkler, and Jordan Wright.

Summer Music Camps at Bartlett Music!

You will not want to miss the exciting Music Camps coming to Bartlett Music this Summer. Registration is limited, so please contact BMA today to register or to learn more about our enriching music camp offerings. Summer Band Camps are TBA.

(The following dates are subject to change)

May 14 & 17 - **Let's Go to a Show: Kiss Me, Kate** explores the music of Cole Porter. Camp includes a lecture and dinner, with tickets to *Kiss Me, Kate* at Playhouse on the Square.

June 1 - 5 - **Gold Rush! Nuggets of Notes**

June 1 - July 6 - **Music Theory I**

June 2 - July 7 - **Music Theory II**

June 4 - July 16 - **Group Piano Lessons**

June 8 - June 12 - **Meet the Composers I**

June 15 - 26 - **Rhythm Menagerie** - 2 week rhythm camp

(continued on reverse)

March/April Birthdays:

3/1: Frederick Chopin - the great Polish composer, wrote many piano works that are part of the standard piano repertoire.

3/4: Antonio Vivaldi - Baroque composer most famous for his *Le quattro stagioni (The Four Seasons)*.

3/21: Johann Sebastian Bach - Baroque composer widely regarded as the greatest composer ever.

3/22: Andrew Lloyd Webber - composer of modern Broadway classics such as *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

4/1 Sergei Rachmoninov - Russian late-Romantic era concert pianist and composer.

4/29 Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington - American jazz legend, pianist and bandleader.

Upcoming BMA Holidays:

We will be Closed for the Good Friday/Easter Holiday Weekend on Friday, April 3rd, and Saturday, April 4th. Please make a note of it!

A Note from the Managers:

We are proud to present the first edition of *The Crescendo!* We hope that you find this to be an informative source of information about what's happening at the Academy. Future editions will include events that you don't want to miss, spotlight segments featuring our brilliant faculty members and students, music trivia, holiday scheduling, and much more.

We welcome your comments! Please email to: manager@bartlettmusicstore.com

Melissa & Bobby Shettles, Management

Upcoming Music Camps, continued:

June 29 - July 3 - **Meet the Composers II**

July 6 - 17 **Rhythm Menagerie**

July 27 - August 31 - **Music Theory II**

July 28- September 1 - **Theory III**

Getting the Most Out of Practice, Continued:

Intentionally compliment the student's progress. Everyone likes to receive encouragement and praise. As the adult in your young musician's life, you are their primary cheerleader. Let your child know how much you enjoy listening to them play and comment on things that are getting better.

Provide incentives for practice. Call it an incentive, a prize, or a bribe...but offering a special treat when a goal is reached can be a powerful tool. Why not grab an ice cream cone after their weekly lesson if they have practiced five days this week? Schedule a trip to a fun movie when they have successfully memorized the recital piece. Your studio teacher may also use incentive programs to encourage students. Stay informed about studio challenges and try to build excitement for them at home as well.

Turn practice into a game. There are lots of neat ideas that can restore the fun of practice. My favorite practice game at the moment is called "Three Pennies." A student has a specific goal they are trying to reach in the practice session. Three pennies are placed on the left of their music stand. Each time they successfully play the passage, a penny is moved to the right. When an error occurs (as it inevitably will!), all the pennies on the right are returned to the left. Keep going until all pennies are on the right hand side and you will notice that the passage has significantly improved due to the multiple repetitions. To add variety, consider substituting marbles, chocolate kisses, or action figures for the pennies.

Provide performance opportunities. Part of the fun of learning to play an instrument is getting to perform for an audience. Performance opportunities do not have to be limited to formal programs presented by your studio instructor. Have a mini-recital after dinner for your family to celebrate the student's progress. Apps like Skype and FaceTime provide opportunities to perform for friends and family who don't live nearby. Consider inviting one of your student's friends who is also studying an instrument to bring their family over for a "play date." Don't forget about playing in school or church either. Just make sure that you give your young musician advance notice about the performance and keep it fun and positive.

Keep a practice log. Practice logs can be valuable tools for every musician. Ideally, this written record of practice sessions details the duration of the practice as well as what was rehearsed. It can also be an easy place to write questions about the music to discuss with your teacher in your next lesson. Many teachers will gladly review practice logs with the student and parent and can offer advice to make your practice time even more productive as you move forward.

Remember that valuable practice does not only include playing the instrument. Students can spend a portion of their practice time completing theory worksheets assigned by their teacher, listening to examples of quality playing online, and carefully examining their music for details they might have overlooked. It is sometimes easy for parents to forget that thinking about music during practice sessions looks very similar to in-depth thinking associated with traditional homework. Sometimes thoughtful silence is necessary to understand what the music demands.

Practice is an essential part of the musician's daily life. Just as going to the gym develops the muscles in our bodies, regular thoughtful practice sessions build good habits that will equip the student with the necessary skills for many years of enjoyable playing.