

KeyNotes Piano Studio

Studio Handbook and Policies

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Welcome Letter

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to my thriving piano studio! I am so excited that you have chosen KeyNotes Piano Studio to begin or continue an exciting journey through music and piano. Since 1996, I have been offering the finest piano lessons in the comfort of your own home in Tallahassee. Because I deeply believe in the intrinsic value of a musical education, I take the responsibility and trust that you have placed on me very seriously, and assure you that you and your loved ones will receive nothing but the finest possible instruction.

This handbook has been carefully designed to assist you in making the most out of your piano instruction. A great amount of effort has gone into the creation of this document. Please read it thoroughly and consider implementing the ideas contained within it. As usual, I'm always available to answer any additional questions or concerns that you may have.

Thank You,

Jaime Garcia-Bolao

Learning an instrument successfully depends on the three parties involved...

The Three Parties

Although the instructor assumes responsibility for piano lessons, learning will rarely be successful without the effort of all three parties involved: Student, Parent(s), and Instructor

The Student

Carefully prepares for each lesson through careful and thoughtful daily practice. Once a student has been accepted for study after the initial interview, it is expected that practice will take place on a regular basis. Remember: students should practice six (6) days a week! Please rest on one day of your choice, but not the lesson day. It is actually best to practice shortly following a lesson, as a great portion of knowledge acquired may be lost otherwise.

A student is also responsible for keeping track of the practice time. This assists the instructor in the evaluation of the student's progress, commitment and understanding of the material. In addition, points toward the Awards Program are issued based on recorded practice times.

The Parent(s)

The success of a young piano student is usually directly proportional to parental involvement in the learning process. Regardless of musical background, every parent can work with the instructor to make piano lessons a positive, rewarding experience. Here are some suggestions:

- * Encourage the student with active interest in practice sessions. Parents may need to supervise practice. This is especially important for students age 6 and younger.
- * Be responsible for providing the student with an environment conducive to learning. This means providing the student with a well lit, quiet, pleasant environment, and an adequately maintained instrument.
- * Express enthusiasm for accomplishments. This provides a strong incentive for the student to continue making progress. Reviewing the lesson with the child and playing the role of audience at least once a month also shows your continued interest in the child's improvement and underscores the importance of consistent practice.

- * Most important: establish a definite schedule for practice is essential to developing a commitment to lessons. Unless practice time is given a high priority, it will probably not take place. Locate the piano in an area free from distractions.

The Instructor

One of the hallmarks of a good educator is a drive to keep learning. One of the hallmarks of a professional is the drive to keep abreast of the field.

Mr. Garcia-Bolao is a member of MTNA (The Music Teachers National Association), FSMTA (Florida State Music Teachers Association), the Tallahassee Music Teachers Association, and the American College of Musicians.

New Student Interview Session

Before starting lessons, each new student is interviewed at the student's home with no obligation. The interview gives the instructor a chance to get acquainted with the student, determine her or his degree and source of motivation, existing abilities, etc. It also allows for the parents to become familiar with the expectations, policies, and resources available to the student.

The majority of students are accepted. Only those who seem dead set against piano lessons, suffer from any major behavioral or emotional problems, or have learning disabilities the instructor feels inadequately trained to handle, may be denied admission. If a student is denied admission, an e-mail will be sent to parents explaining the reasons and possible remedies, together with a referral list of other local piano instructors who may provide a better fit.

Student etiquette

Instructor's Arrival at your Home

The Instructor makes every effort to be at your home on time. You will be contacted if the lesson might be delayed over fifteen minutes. If nobody is home upon my arrival, I will typically wait fifteen minutes. If a student must leave the house before the lesson time without prior notice, please leave a note on the door, or call me directly at (850) 322-8746

Please have your student's materials (books, etc.) and a chair ready for me, as this can save some time.

Parents' Observation of Piano Lessons

Generally speaking, observation of instruction is not recommended due to typical loss of concentration and behavioral changes that often occur in the presence of parents. However, parents do have the right to observe their child's lesson, and under no circumstances will they be denied that right.

An exception should be noted in the case of young students (6 and younger). It is beneficial for the parent to observe the last ten or so minutes of the lesson, to be better able to understand assignments and help the student with practice throughout the week.

During the Lesson

For the benefit of both the instructor and the student, a parent or a sibling, age 18 or older, must remain in the home during the lesson. *At no time during the lesson should a minor child be left with the instructor the only adult in the home.* This is to protect both the child and the instructor from any allegations or suspicions of misbehavior. If an emergency situation should arise that would require the adults to leave the home, the instructor will be happy to schedule a makeup lesson.

Rewards System

This system rewards students for consistent practice, completion of levels, and attendance and performance in recitals and master classes. Students earn points from each of the areas and are presented an award at the spring recital.

Points are earned as follows:

- * 5 points – Awarded for every 15 minutes of practice (practice must be recorded in assignment book).
- * 25 points – Awarded for completion of a level.
- * 25 points – Awarded for participation in a dress rehearsal.
- * 25 points – Awarded for participation in a Neighborhood Master Class.
- * 50 points – Awarded for participation in the Holiday, Spring, or Summer Recitals.
- * 75 points – Awarded for attending a classical music/jazz/blues recital or concert in Tallahassee (A copy of the concert or recital program is required).

Music Awards

- **(Student must perform in the Spring Recital to receive award).**

- * 900 points – Ribbon
- * 901-1500 – Music Pin
- * 1501-2000 – Medal
- * 2001-2500 – Small Trophy
- * 2501-3000 – Large Trophy
- * 3001-3500 – Plaque

Practicing Guidelines

As a music student, your son or daughter often brings home a weekly assignment with a number of elements. There are new pieces to be learned, pieces to be memorized, challenging sections, etc. In addition, from time to time, there are technical exercises, pieces to be composed and written work specifically designed to reinforce the various musical concepts that we may be working on at the time. Completing all of the assigned work from week to week is essential to the satisfactory progress of your child.

- * Students will determine their weekly practice commitment within the following suggested framework:
 - Levels 1-3: 20+ minutes, six (6) times per week, minimum.
 - Levels 4 and above: 40+ minutes five (5) times per week, minimum.

Some students may find it necessary to practice a little bit more, while others may require less practice time. The most important factor, however, is that the student has some contact with the instrument on a daily basis with as few interruptions as possible.

Contact with the Instructor:

It is of the utmost importance to me that my clients are able to contact me whenever they need assistance or guidance.

Phone

The Studio's phone number is: (850) 322-8746

Since I spend much of my time teaching, I usually do not answer phone calls when you place them. However, I always check my cell phone after I am done teaching every lesson, so that I get and respond to any messages that clients leave right away. Messages left during normal studio business hours (M-F 12:00-08:00 P.M.) will be returned on the same day.

Texts and emails

You can also text me at any time at (850) 322-8746.

I also usually receive e-mails on my wireless device instantaneously. The studio's e-mail address is: info@keynotespianostudio.com

Facebook

Although I often befriend many of my students' parents on Facebook, it is not a very effective way to contact me regarding official studio business, as I do not receive those interactions right away.

Studio's Website

The studio website can be found at: www.keynotespianostudio.com, and it is filled with useful information, resources, and announcements, such as directions for recitals, group lessons, etc.

Tempo: The e-Newsletter of KeyNotes Piano Studio

Tempo is the official e-newsletter for KeyNotes Piano Studio. In conjunction with the Studio's Website, it is a great tool to become informed about everything going on in the studio, including performance dates, practice tips, must-attend recitals in Tallahassee and much more.

When Lessons are Missed

Student Illness

Because I teach many children and adults throughout the area, I ask that you call and reschedule your lesson in the event of a contagious illness. It is unfair to the child, the instructor and all other students to carry on in such circumstances. A makeup lesson will be scheduled when a student is sick.

Inclement Weather

Whenever a hurricane or tornado watch or warning has been issued in the area or, if after evaluation, I consider driving conditions to be hazardous, lessons may be canceled. You will receive as much advance notice as possible, depending upon my location and situation. A makeup lesson will be scheduled.

Makeup Lessons and Cancellations

Every effort should be made to attend every scheduled lesson. If a lesson must be missed, a makeup lesson will be offered at a later date.

Please give as much notice of missed lessons as possible. If the student misses a lesson, **no refund or credit will be issued**. A makeup lesson must be scheduled instead.

To cancel a lesson with less than 24-hours in advance, please call or text the instructor at (850) 322-8746, if you are able to provide more advanced notice, you may e-mail your cancellation or rescheduling request to: info@keynotespianostudio.com

Likewise, should the instructor be unable to attend a lesson, a makeup lesson will be provided at a mutually convenient time.

No makeup lessons will be provided if no notice is given to the instructor.

Studio Swap Lists

Understanding that students sometimes have conflicts, and at the same time realizing the importance of attending lessons faithfully, a studio swap list will be published for students who are within driving distance of your home. Students who choose to be on the swap list will receive a copy listing the names, lesson times, and phone numbers of all students requesting to be on that swap list. Students can then rearrange lessons for important and unavoidable conflicts. Please notify me in advance of any swapped lesson times.

Recitals and Other Studio Performance Opportunities

Every student at KeyNotes Piano Studio, whether child or adult, beginner or advanced, has multiple performance opportunities each year. The backbone of these are the three studio-wide recitals, which take place in August, December and May of each year in the world-class performance facilities of the Florida State University College of Music.

Each is a wonderful opportunity for students and parents to meet and get to know each other. It is also a fantastic chance to see the students "in action." Students, especially, not only get to show off their skills and accomplishments, they also gain motivation from seeing others students of different levels play--and a sense of perspective by watching those just starting as well as those far in advance of themselves.

Before each of the three recitals, each student must perform a dress rehearsal in front of his or her peers. Additionally, once every two months, a Neighborhood Master Class is offered for students to showcase pieces currently in progress. For more ambitious students, festivals and competitions are available throughout the city, state, and country.

Additionally, one benefit for adult students at KeyNotes Piano Studio, is our monthly meetings, in which just the adults gather, and play for each other. While this meeting is voluntary, many students find that playing for each other both encourages and inspires them.

For more information about our next meeting, please consult our [calendar](#).

Though the recitals are not mandatory, students are all strongly encouraged to participate. Scholarship recipients are required to perform. All parents should encourage their children to

attend. Remember that, in most cases, we learn music to share it with others and, therefore, performing is a vital part of the music training experience. Students do not pay a separate fee for performing in the recital. However, given the investment of both extra time and financial resources by the instructor, performance and preparation leading up to recitals, including the dress rehearsal, are counted as *two lessons*. Therefore, there are no lessons the two weeks following recitals.

Recitals and master classes are usually followed by a reception with food and beverages. Every student is presented with a certificate of participation.

Dress Rehearsals

Students participating in Studio recitals are required to perform a dress rehearsal in front of their peers prior to the recital.

Recital Etiquette

Student recitals can be tremendously fun and valuable experiences for young pianists. Unfortunately, they can also be a source of some stress and anxiety if preparations aren't complete and certain practices aren't followed. There are guidelines and rules of behavior all performers and audience members should follow during all recitals or concerts.

Audience members must remember the purpose of their visit to the recital hall - to listen quietly, actively and appreciatively to the music being offered by the performers.

PERFORMERS

- * Performers should wear appropriate attire. Girls in knee-length or longer dresses or slacks, boys in dress pants and buttoned dress shirts with ties preferred, or suits. No spaghetti straps, no platform shoes, flip-flops, or athletic footwear. Please do not wear dangling, jingling jewelry.
- * Of course, no one should feel obligated to spend money for new clothes. The overriding principle should be to simply do the best you can with what you already have on hand, and remember that proper attire shows respect to your audience, as well as to yourself, and what you have accomplished.
- * Remember to practice in your outfit, shoes included.
- * Once it is your turn, rise quickly and walk up to the stage. Adjust the bench, pause and collect your thoughts, and begin when you are ready.

- * Performers must bow at the beginning and at the end of the performance. Instructor and Student will practice bowing properly.
- * Arrive at the requested time in order to learn where you are to sit and receive instructions for the performance.
- * Once the recital begins, please listen and be quiet.
- * Respect the other performers. Unnecessary noise from whispering, talking, candy wrappers, etc. during a program is not acceptable. Reading, studying, playing video games, and writing letters during a program are also inappropriate.

AUDIENCE

- * Recitals are a special occasion and so it is customary to dress nicely.
- * Please arrive a little early in order to find a comfortable place to sit.
- * Make sure all your invited guests understand the importance of arriving on time. If they arrive late, it makes it difficult for those performing.
- * Please invite as many friends and family members as you'd like. Our recital hall has lots of room, and can accommodate likely as many as you'd like to invite. And if not, then a standing room only crowd would be a fantastic crowd to have, and a wonderful problem to deal with!
- * Turn off all cell phones and any electrical devices that may produce sound.
- * Once the recital begins, please listen and be quiet. Crying babies should be taken out. They are not happy, and neither is the audience or the performer!
- * If you arrive late, please wait to enter between pieces when you hear applause.
- * Do not enter the recital hall or switch seats while someone is performing.
- * The soloist will bow and your response is to applaud politely!
- * No whistling, yelling, or other loud methods of congratulations, especially prior to the performance please. If a performer is focused and ready to play, but becomes distracted with the "cat-calling" and "whooping" it can really throw off his or her performance. While boisterous congratulations are meant to show support for the performer, it may actually cause unintended problems instead. The best way to show appreciation for the performance is with thunderous applause, and an occasional "bravo" at the end of an especially great performance.
- * Compositions that have movements or suites are, in general, performed without applause in the middle.
- * Respect the performers. Unnecessary noise from whispering, talking, candy wrappers, etc. during a program is not acceptable. Reading, studying, and writing letters during a program are also inappropriate.

- * *Please stay until the performance or event is completely over. Attending a recital so that other families will serve as audience to your student, and then leaving before the other performers have finished is rude, inconsiderate and unacceptable. If you have other obligations or matters to attend to before the recital is over, please do not attend.*
- * Flash photography is not appropriate during a performance. You may videotape and/or take flash photography as the performer is approaching or leaving the piano.
- * Enjoy! Your presence is the greatest affirmation!

Attendance at Non-Studio Recitals and Concerts

Students are encouraged to attend as many live music performances as possible. Listening to a recital or concert can be a highly motivational experience. To this end, a link to the schedule of recitals at the Florida State University College of Music, as well as other local performance venues are included on the studio's website. The College of Music offers well over 500 recitals and concerts every year as well as three full-length opera productions. The case majority of these recitals are free of charge. From time to time I offer recitals in the Tallahassee area. Information and complimentary tickets are mailed to students and their families well in advance.

Performances resources other than the College of Music at FSU are listed under the tabs “resources” and “music in Tallahassee” on the studio’s website: keynotespianostudio.com

Competitions and Festivals

A number of students develop the confidence and motivation to perform in competitions and festivals. In addition to performing in several recitals each year, these students are encouraged to enter competitive audition at the local, state, or national levels.

Entering competitive auditions promotes a higher level of finished artistry in students and develops a high degree of confidence in public situations in which stress and anxiety have to be effectively controlled. Entering auditions helps prepare students to withstand the pressures of competitive sports, public speaking and other, similar activities.

Additionally, significant public and press recognition as well as cash awards can be earned by the highly motivated. For these students, as part of their training, I arrange for a number of opportunities to play in public at various venues around Florida and the rest of the United States.

Academics

Evaluations

An evaluation form will be provided to the student and parent(s) two times per year: in December and May. This form contains an in-depth review of the materials and topics covered in that time, recommendations for the student and parent(s), an evaluation of the student's performance and progress, and an overview of goals for the upcoming lessons.

Evaluation of the Instructor

Parents, in conjunction with students also have a chance to evaluate my performance as their instructor twice a year, in January and May. This is done anonymously through an online questionnaire.

Conferences

Parents, students and instructor will hold a conference to discuss progress and any other pertinent issues when the student evaluation is ready. Scheduling instructions will be e-mailed prior to the conference.

Parents and instructor may also choose to hold an additional conference from time to time. Please contact me at least two weeks in advance to make any necessary arrangements.

Tuition

Lessons are paid by month only, in advance. No payments for individual lessons are accepted. Each coming month's tuition is due at the last lesson of each month. For example, tuition for September is due at the time of the last lesson in August. Starting in August of 2011, parent(s) will receive a statement at the time of the third lesson via e-mail. The statement includes lesson fees and the amount for purchased items, such as books, etc. (if I have purchased them on behalf of the student). Payment is accepted in checks or cash, although checks are preferred. Please make checks payable to KeyNotes Piano Studio.

A late fee of \$15.00 will be assessed if fees are not paid by the last lesson of each month. If there is ever a problem, simply call me and arrange late payment. No fee will be charged if arrangements are made in advance.

Returned checks will be assessed a \$25.00 fee. If two checks are returned within a one-year period, all future payments will only be accepted in cash.

Please contact the instructor directly about current tuition rates.

Fifth Lessons

When any given month has five lesson days (i.e. a student has lessons on Mondays and there are five Mondays in a given month), the fifth lesson will not increase the tuition bill. These extra lessons are counted toward Thanksgiving, Christmas and Spring Breaks. This means that, for instance, in December only two lessons will be scheduled, but your tuition bill will be the same as had we met four times, since we had some extra lessons earlier. The monthly tuition remains the same for the months of November, December and March.

Summer Lessons

Due to the intensive and demanding nature of piano lessons, students are expected to enroll in piano lessons during the summer term on those weeks when they are available in town, and perform in the Summer Recital. Suspending piano lessons for the entire summer break, amounts to not receiving instruction for one fourth of the entire year.

Taking into consideration Christmas, Thanksgiving, Spring and weeks-after-recital breaks, students already get several weeks off per year.

Students not enrolling in summer term, forfeit their spot in the studio.

Music Purchases

As an additional convenience, music and other materials are purchased for you and billed to your account. Additional music may be purchased from Beethoven & Company, located at 1415 Timberlane Rd. (in Market Square) Ste 210. They can also be reached by phone at 850-894-8700, and fax at 850-894-8707. It is always a good idea to call ahead and make certain that the required materials are in stock. Otherwise, they can be ordered by phone or through their website.

Two ways to Save \$\$!

Referrals

As the owner of a small business, I heavily depend upon referrals from my current customers in order to find new ones. That is why, as a token of my appreciation for continued support, it is my policy to credit accounts \$100 toward tuition for each referral that leads to enrollment.

To receive the \$100 credit, the following conditions must be met:

- * The referred student must enroll

- * A referral to a family with more than one student counts as only one referral.

Please note that there is no limit on the number of referrals that may be given and, therefore, to the number of tuition credits that can be earned as long as there are time slots available for new students.

Accounts will be credited the month following the enrollment of the referred student.

Scholarships

A limited number of scholarships are available each year for deserving students. A student becomes initially eligible after six months of study. The following scholarships are currently available:

- * **The Whole Note Scholarship:** The student is awarded full tuition for three months.
- * **The Half Note Scholarship:** the student is awarded 50% of tuition for three months.
- * **The Quarter Note Scholarship:** The student is awarded 25% percent of tuition for three months.

All Scholarships also include a diploma (suitable for framing) honoring the student for receipt of the scholarship. Scholarships do not cover lesson materials (books, etc.).

In addition, while holding a scholarship, the student must:

- * Uphold the same standards of conduct and excellence that (s)he displayed prior to the award
- * Perform in at least two of the three yearly recitals.

The Scholarship Evaluation Process

As part of determining scholarship qualifications, each prospective recipient is given a comprehensive examination during a regularly scheduled lesson. The examination test the knowledge of all material covered during the preceding twelve months. A committee of five parents of former scholarship recipients, a former scholarship recipient, and the instructor will review each applicant. The panel members volunteer their time to make the process as objective and unbiased as possible.

Scholarship consideration is by invitation only. Students and parents are contacted regarding the application process by the beginning of November. The application process is free of charge. Any parent wishing to volunteer for the committee should contact me. Parents whose students are currently being considered for a scholarship may not volunteer for the committee. Scholarship winners are announced each year during the awards ceremony at the May Recital.

Disciplinary Process

Termination of Lessons

Parents and students must be aware that teaching piano is my passion, and also my livelihood. Although I do not make families sign lengthy contracts, I require *Two months'* *advance notice* for termination of lessons. This notice can be verbal, or via e-mail.

Warning, Probation and Dismissal

When a student displays inappropriate behavior, lack of satisfactory progress, inconsistent practice habits or habitual lesson cancellations, the student and parents will receive a letter of warning. This letter outlines the source(s) of friction or dissatisfaction, proposes possible solutions, and offers the possibility of scheduling a parent-student-instructor conference.

A probation letter is e-mailed to the parent(s) when the student has received a warning and the situation has not improved after a reasonable amount of time (usually two to four weeks). The scheduling of a parent-student-instructor conference with the intent of finding solutions is mandatory in order to continue instruction.

If, after a student has been placed on probation for a period of at least one but no more than two months, the situation has not been resolved or improved, the parent(s) will receive a dismissal letter. Lessons will then be discontinued, and all unused tuition for that month will be refunded.

The Instrument

Piano Maintenance

The piano is the most important tool for a piano student. Although that statement may seem very obvious, most pianos are not kept in proper working condition.

To keep your instrument performing its best over the longest possible amount of time requires regular maintenance: tunings, regulations, voicing, etc. The backbone of any maintenance program is regular tuning. These tunings should occur as needed to compensate for changes in humidity and temperature as well as movement of the strings from use. A rule of thumb is that tunings should be done often enough to hold the pitch between A439 and A441. Depending upon the weather, conditions at your home and the condition of your instrument, this will probably mean two to three tunings per year. Please be aware that, while tuning your piano is not cheap, the damage done by avoiding proper maintenance is likely to be far more expensive. If you would like some hints on how to keep your instrument in tune for longer periods of time, please feel free to ask me or contact your piano technician.

Buying a Piano

Buying a piano is one the most important investments you will make toward becoming a proficient pianist. Unlike other household goods, pianos are designed to last 50 or more years, so long as you provide them with proper and consistent care.

Parents are sometimes tempted to purchase a very inexpensive and poor-quality piano initially, to gauge whether the student will continue with lessons for the long term. Although that approach is somewhat understandable, it has two pitfalls:

- * Buying a low-quality piano may actually impede the progress of the student, so that he or she becomes uninterested and discontinues lessons.
- * A well cared for piano, will depreciate relatively little over the years so that, if the student ceases to be interested in the instrument, or simply needs to upgrade to an even better instrument, the used piano may be traded or sold for close to the amount of the original investment.

For these two reasons, I highly recommend buying a good quality, reliable instrument, even if it is used. Most families will be well served by the two major Japanese manufacturers: Kawai and Yamaha (find the links to those manufacturers below).

Tallahassee has been served by [Jim's Pianos](#) for a number of years. Jims carries a wide variety of pianos for every level of purchase.

For those who are willing to travel to purchase a piano, I recommend [Piano Works](#), located in Duluth, Georgia. They provide many pianos to the College of Music at Florida State.

Piano Manufacturers

There are many piano brands to choose from when buying a new or used instrument. Likewise, the price of a piano can range from thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Below, you will find links to the websites of some of the major current piano manufacturers. The ones with an asterisk (***) are brands that I highly recommend and like the cost code, these go down to a single asterisk. The links are further categorized by their cost from \$ to \$\$\$.

**[Baldwin](#) \$\$

**[Boston](#) \$\$\$

**[Essex](#) \$\$\$

***[Fazioli](#) \$\$\$

***[Kawai](#) \$\$

*[Pearl River](#) \$ (Very poor quality)

**[Steinway](#) \$\$\$

**[Yamaha](#) \$\$

**[Young Chang](#) \$\$

For more information about piano prices and quality, and more detailed information on how to choose a good piano, please visit [Blue Book of Pianos](#) or purchase [The Piano Book](#).