

### APPROACH TO TEACHING PIANO

What is the **Harmony House** method? The collective wisdom gained from 27 years of teaching music.

Though I tend to favor the *Bastien Piano Library* system of books for my beginning students, my actual method of teaching is uniquely my own and expands far beyond the books I use. It is more of an “approach” than a “method” - broad and varied, highly personalized to each student, and ever evolving. As a non-traditional piano teacher who has preserved and adapted core elements of the ‘traditional way’ to fit our modern times, my approach is based on intuition and personal connection with each individual student. As they grow and change, so must I, to keep up with their needs.

My **Mission** in teaching is *“Together we discover your Inner Master, through the power and love of music.”*

A **master** seeks to be the very best they can be at their craft. We all have an “Inner Master,”  
and discovering this higher Self is challenging, empowering, and fun!

I seek to fulfill my mission by striving for the elusive balance between what each students *wants*,  
and what they *need*, to grow into their highest potential.

For example, I empower my students to choose and create their own music, *while* guiding them  
to ensure a broad and balanced variety, as well as good habits, as they continue discovering what they love about piano.

Much of my instruction comes down to removing obstacles we all have to higher learning, which I call “learning how to learn.”

As we gradually learn how to achieve mastery in the fundamentals, and then more specialized areas of music,  
we also learn to apply these same tools and skills to our whole life, because everything is connected.

It takes focused effort, and the challenge of balancing the *effort* with the *fun* - is what keeps my fire burning as a teacher.

### PEDAGOGY

I use this term to mean “the content of what I teach.” I intend to one day publish my own series of method books.

Until then, here is a summary:

#### The musical concepts and skills I teach

- An in-depth study of the music language (theory)
- Sight-reading
- Piano technique and artistry
- Reading chord charts, playing by ear & improvisation
- Advanced ear-training & harmonic analysis
- Singing while playing, & harmonizing with voice
- Performance technique, solo and group “jamming”
- Repertoire development – *students choose!*
- Different musical styles, including world music
- Composing/song-writing & recording

#### The structure of lessons

In general, students are always working on three to four different “tracks.” Each lesson includes some time on each track, although various circumstances will sometimes narrow the focus down to two or even one track. Roughly speaking, these tracks are:

- 1) Warmup exercises, focusing on **music theory & technique**
- 2) **Reading** the notes, at progressive and contrasting levels of difficulty
- 3) Maintaining a **Repertoire** of songs, covering a balanced mix of styles and skills
- 4) **Playing by ear**, musical **creativity**, and other **specialized skills** based on the list above

In structuring each lesson, I always look for the ideal balance. I seek to emphasize strengths and strengthen weaknesses.

Students are empowered to take initiative, learn accountability, and be proactively responsible for their own learning.

Practicing assignments are given with strong emphasis on good practice habits, goal achievement, and internalized motivation.

Students who fall short on their practicing goals are held accountable in a respectful and spacious manner,  
then empowered to break through the challenge to reveal the Master within.

And perhaps most important of all, we keep it **FUN!**

To feel the true power and magic of music, it **must** bring out joy!