

ten thousand stars studio

*I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing
than to teach ten thousand stars how not to dance.*

-e.e.cummings

Fall 2010

It's been a summer. And I, for one, am ready for the blank slate that the arrival of fall brings. Nothing like a fresh pile of empty notebooks and new sharpened colored pencils to get the adrenaline going again.

Being back in school has been illuminating on lots of fronts. Of course, it has been great to be intellectually stimulated and challenged (although I confess that the quantitative research class last spring was not exactly what I had in mind). Beyond that, it is good to be a student again because sitting on the other side of the student/teacher equation is humbling and enlightening all at once. I have been reminded that we fragile, vulnerable human beings never learn well under stress. When we feel threatened or insecure, our defenses rise to protect us and no good learning can take place.

The implications to the idea that we must feel safe in order to learn are huge. Although I do my best to ensure that students are happy and comfortable in our lessons together, there are a 101 ways a person can feel threatened---she might feel defensive because she knows she

didn't do her practicing thoroughly, or he might be embarrassed that he isn't understanding a concept quickly. Actually, the reasons are less important than the repercussions. If I am not constantly sensitive to this possibility, my enthusiastic teaching will be less than effective. New skills and difficult assignments have to be user-friendly or we don't get anywhere.

Of course, this goes for subjects away from the piano bench as well. Defensive learning is never our best approach. When we are stressed or tired, our nervous systems get, well, nervous, and are less willing to take risks. Even those risks that we might intellectually know are not life threatening. Our bodies' protective amour is really quite amazing.

As we tiptoe into a new semester (I like the idea of tiptoeing as it seems less ambitious right now. Or maybe it is just the crippled version of Amy speaking.), I encourage you to be on the lookout for signs that your child has reached his/her breaking point. The way around it isn't to necessarily stop and go watch a movie, although that too has its place. Usually, there are ways to convince our anxious and defensive nervous systems into

calming down and opening up again. I find this whole thing fascinating (which of course, is why I am pursuing this Ed Psych degree in the first place), and think the possibilities of working from a very thoughtful and mindful place are endless in the field of music lessons. I have a stack of blank notebooks and colored pencils ready to record our great inroads and discoveries and look forward to another semester together.

Contact Information

All updated policy information, newsletters, and studio's semester calendar can be found on my website:

www.tenthousandstarsstudio.net

I can be reached at: 505-573-5121 or at: amy@tenthousandstars.net

Make-up Lessons

Students are allowed one make-up lesson per semester free of charge. These will take place on Tuesday, November 23rd and Saturday, December 18th. If you know in advance that your child will miss a lesson, you are welcome to ask if I have another opening that same week. If I do, I'm happy to oblige. However, many (*many!*) weeks go by without a cancellation, which means I often do not have random spots available. If this is the case, you will have to take your free make-up lesson for the semester. Any additional lessons missed after that will NOT be made up.

Piano Tuners

If your piano is anything like mine, this has been a particularly rough summer for keeping it in tune. It's often a good idea to wait until a major seasonal shift to tune pianos, because they hold their pitch longer when the weather isn't changing. Ideally, tune your piano after the heat goes on for the winter.

Jean-Luc Matton: 259 2368

Fred Sturm: 345 2154

Semester Tuitions and Schedules

Semester tuitions are set based on 16 private lessons and 3 performance classes. Monthly rates are divided into 5 equal payments, each due at the first lesson of the month. Tuitions received after the 10th of the month are subject to a \$25 late fee.

Lesson schedule:

Semester tuition:

Performance classes

After all these years, I'm finally getting around to naming the different performance classes. Hopefully, this will help us keep them straight and give each group a sense of identity. ..

K-3rd grades: Little Mozarts. After all, my students are at least as precocious as Mozart was. As in the past, this group will generally meet on Saturday mornings from 9-10AM.

4th-5th grades: Beethoven Group. The one piece every kid in my studio recognizes is Beethoven's 9th. This group will generally meet on Friday afternoons from 4:30-5:45PM. Note slight time change.

Mid-high and High School: Chopin Gang. This was the group that decided last February to throw a birthday party in Chopin's honor. This group will be my Sunday evening—6-7:30PM—group. Except when that time doesn't work, which this semester is more times than not, unfortunately.

Performance classes are valuable for lots of reasons. Take it from one student who asked me one month why we weren't holding performance class. "But Amy," he argued with my reasoning that I thought December was particularly busy already, "We do really important stuff there."

Or ask the kid that said to me last night when I was telling him about a possible substitution for one performance class this semester: "But performance classes are fun." This would a high school senior. Boy, at that.

We do really important stuff that is true. However, the most important thing that comes from performance classes may be the community it builds between students, reminding them that they are not the only ones out there taking piano lessons and having to practice. It is this sense of "team" that often keeps kids motivated and inspired. The headaches of scheduling three performance classes for each group per semester are a small price to pay really.

For our November classes, we are going to do something special. The Mozart and Beethoven groups are going to go to Atria Vista del Rio (Indian School and University) on Saturday, November 13th at 1:00. We will spend about 40 minutes doing movement, etc activities (there is a big activity room at the facility perfect for our movement work) and then we'll give a short performance for the residents. Atria is a retirement home, not a nursing home, which means that all the residents are active and living fully independently. I have thought for some time that we should be sharing our music with folks in the community, this opportunity is perfect, as it comes just a week before our fall studio recital.

The Chopin group will also meet on Saturday, November 13th at 5:00 at my house. We will hold a short performance class for students to play their recital pieces for one another, eat a light dinner and then together go to the NMSO performance at 7pm. That evening is a Pops Tango night at the symphony, which should be a lot of fun. Tickets are not yet available, but I will be in touch about ticket prices when I get that information. Although the performance class part is mandatory in order to play in the fall

recital, the symphony portion of the evening is optional. However, I think this will be a fun cultural field trip for this group, and an event I hope to make a yearly tradition.

Small Groups

Last year I experimented with teaching small groups of elementary age students (2-3 kids) in lieu of one private lesson each semester. I loved everything about this---the chance to work more efficiently with kids at the same level and the rapport it built between students--- EXCEPT for the scheduling nightmare it created for me. So....this year I am going to use small groups as needed. They may substitute for your make-up lesson, or I might schedule one if I have a couple kids who need the same work at the same time. Or you may not get one this semester, and instead will have only private lessons and performance classes. All this is a system in progress, so thanks for your flexibility.

Fall 2010

August 16

Fall semester begins

August 27-28

Performance classes—
Mozart and Beethoven groups

September 3-6

Labor Day weekend;
No lessons

September 10

Performance class—
Chopin group

September 20

No Monday lessons

September 29

No Wednesday lessons

October 1-2

Performance classes—
Mozart and Beethoven groups

October 5

No Tuesday lessons

October 10

Performance class—
Chopin group

October 14

No Thursday lessons

November 13

**Performance class field trips---
All groups

November 20

Fall recital 7pm

November 23-28

Thanksgiving Holiday;
No lessons

November 23

Make-up lessons

December 18

Make-up lessons

December 17

Last day of semester

December 19-January 4

Winter break; no lessons

**required in order to play in fall studio
recital