

Musical Bumps from Tony

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Email- tony@tonygardner.com.au

Phone 0412686814

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Welcome Back again or for the first time!

I trust you all had a fantastic break from lessons. I hope some of you got some practice in somewhere if time and space allowed. I have had a fantastic holiday and I am feeling pretty refreshed. Tell me if you were able to see and hear some live music in the holidays. This really helps keep our musical energy alive. It is always really important to observe and appreciate other musicians at all levels of performance.



Over the last term it has been exciting to observe the musical growth of students who learn from me privately or in the instrumental programmes I direct

in schools. Whether a student is at the elementary or advanced stage does not matter to me. I always look at the bigger picture of a student achieving their personal best, loving their instrument and making music.

Once you achieve a level on your instrument and getting comfortable with the basics you can really start "making music". This is a stage which does not take very long. The making of music is very good for us! You should not be focussed on exams, contests or eisteddfods. All these things can help music making but should not be the single focus.

We all become stronger musicians when we learn more repertoire. Once you learn a piece of music, don't just put it away and forget it. Keep it there in your repertoire as you will never forget how to play it. You might even memorise it well. Many pieces of music I practice, I try to learn by memory. As a

jazz musician this is very important. If you don't know a piece by memory it is very difficult to improvise creatively on the melody. I guess what I am trying to say here is to always keep a repertoire of pieces handy.....you never know when your first "busking gig" may be. You might even consider doing some busking before and around Christmas. If this is so you could start developing repertoire soon so you might earn a few \$ around this time period.

We musicians also have to train. Regular practice is important!



As I said in the last newsletter...Practice makes better and not always perfect. We as musicians always seek to improve what we do. We do this for ourselves and also

for the listening pleasure of others. When you have worked on something at home, share it with your friends or other family members. I get a great deal of pleasure listening to students of all levels who have been practising. Remember short bursts of

Keep to the basics

No matter what instrument you are studying....keep to the basics. We, as well as athletes need to technically stay on track. By not practising regularly you will not get better. It doesn't matter how long you have been playing always practice scales and exercises. Work on your weekly set tasks and revise older pieces. Practice whenever you can. If you have a busy life with lots of things on, organise your time so music practice is part of that. Remember as I said in the last newsletter....practice more frequently but for shorter lengths of time. Last term I had a student tell me that she did not have time to practice. I said that I did not believe that at all. We all have time to do this. I suggested that throughout her busy schedule that she fit in many short practice sessions. The next week she informed me that she had an incredibly busy week and she fitted in 20 ten minute practice sessions over the entire week. She was obviously playing very well that week. You must make the time to do this as once you get control of the basics.....music making is so much fun as I mentioned earlier.

Got Wind Problems?

Haha! Not that kind of wind. As wind players we need to always focus on how we produce our sound. Am I breathing diaphragmatically? Is my embouchure and posture correct? Why am I out of tune? All these aspects are a lot for new musicians to keep under control.

Try this! Start your practice session with long notes. Don't just play the long notes but listen to the sound....Is the sound wavering? If so it could be the way you are breathing or it could be your embouchure (position of lips and muscles) or diaphragmatic pressure. Make sure your embouchure is correct and you are breathing directly from your diaphragm. Keep a nice steady stream of air and a well controlled diaphragm. Play for as long as you can hold a note. Do this for a few minutes every practice session. Daily practice of long notes is very important!

Move then onto your scales, technical work and then your pieces. Always try to keep to a routine.

It's all Black and White with piano stuff!

I owe a great deal of my gratitude to my second piano teacher. She was a bit of a "practice Nazi" but I learnt a great deal from her. I worked hard at developing a fluid and strong technique at the piano. I practised my major and minor scales across the whole range of the piano every working day of the week. I did hate this at first but what it gave me was an absolute freedom to whatever I wanted at the piano. It also gave me the freedom to study and apply chords to the contemporary and jazz aspect of my musicianship. It also helped the other instruments I play too.

I practised my scales through what is called the circle of fourths or fifths. I then transferred this to chordal practice the same way. Then I practised chord progressions as I knew that this would give me an insight as to how songs/melodies are put together. Getting these things together meant that my understanding of all styles of music was becoming clearer.

If you, as a piano player put the time in on a daily basis, working on your technique. You will feel the freedom that I experience at the piano. I can only tell you that it is a lot of fun.

As a performing musician I love to get together with my musical colleagues and push the limits with what we do. It is a wonderful thing that we work from the same chemistry.

HAPPY PRACTISING EVERYONE