

# ONE OR MORE

## The benefits of group and private instruction

While the private lesson offers a one-to-one relationship with the teacher, the group lesson stimulates healthy interaction among students and is particularly efficient for expanding and integrating musical concepts taught in the private lesson. The **combination** of private and group atmospheres intensifies students' exposure to music and provides both individual attention and group reinforcement.

At *Music By Mickey*, our students benefit from the combinations of:

- **Private study with monthly group lesson supplements**
- OR
- **Class study with monthly private lesson supplements**

*Which is better for the student? That decision is best made by knowing the student and his/her learning style and personality.*

Private lessons focus on the individual learning style of a student. This is a one-on-one lesson recommended for those who want individual instruction.

*When the private lesson is a supplement to the group lesson format, students learn supplementary music and receive reinforcement of concepts learned in the group lesson.*

Focus on: music concepts such as rhythm, reading, technique, musicality, theory. Classical, jazz, traditional, popular, and contemporary music will be taught based on skill level.

Group piano provides a fun musical encounter with other students. Research shows that most people learn best in groups. Interaction between students enhances healthy competition with more accurate musical ability and performance skills.

*When the group lesson is a supplement to the private lesson format, students perform for each other, reinforce musical concepts learned in the private lesson, and develop ensemble skills.*

Focus on: keyboard geography, technique, musicality, composition, accurate rhythm and note reading, theory, ear training, ensemble work, games, operettas, use of sequenced disks. Classical, jazz, traditional, popular, and contemporary music will be taught based on skill level.

Group teaching is not a new idea—it has been around since the 1820's. Group teaching is not new to *Music By Mickey*, either. With our expanded facility and our new piano lab, we are able to offer these lessons again! Group teaching doesn't replace private teaching, but it offers additional choices.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF PRIVATE LESSONS**

1. One-on-one attention
2. Traditional method of learning piano
3. Moves at student's pace
4. Student guides lesson material: private method book chosen to match student's individual personality and learning style
5. More flexible lesson scheduling
6. Allows students to broaden their musical experiences
7. Exposes students to a variety of piano materials
8. Encourages students to develop skills in problem solving

#### **ADVANTAGES OF GROUP LESSONS**

1. Provides confidence in playing for others
2. Aids students in developing rhythmic security
3. Provides opportunities for supervised practice
4. Stimulates critical listening as students hear other students perform and comment on these performances
5. Allows students to broaden their musical experiences
6. Exposes students to a variety of piano materials
7. Provides a friendly-competitive atmosphere and peer encouragement
8. Fosters an atmosphere that is conducive to effective teaching of functional skills such as sight reading, transposition, harmonization, improvisation, and composition
9. Social environment (like band, soccer, scouts)
10. Facilitates the performance of ensembles including duets, trios, quartets and multiple piano ensembles
11. Encourages students to develop skills in problem solving
12. Students get a better perspective on the challenges of learning piano
13. Establishes a sense of group spirit and group dynamics that increases motivation
14. Fosters the development of communication skills
15. Allows students to learn from peers as well as from the teacher
16. Provides a setting where drills and exercises can be more interesting and motivating
17. Increases attention span allowing the lesson time to be longer than private lessons

What do others say about group lessons?

- "When students in a group evaluate each other, they internalize the criteria for themselves and it helps them improve as they practice."
- "In groups, students have a sense of responsibility to themselves and to the other students."
- "The small group provides a wonderful atmosphere for students to exchange ideas and thereby fosters creativity and enhanced self-esteem from peer approval."
- "The group format establishes an environment for creative, collaborative learning and encourages students to take risks."
- "When students hear opinions different from their own and their teacher's, it encourages creativity and experimentation."

### **1) We're new to piano lessons. Which should we choose?**

If, after reading the descriptions of the different types of lessons, you are unsure as to the best musical decision for the student, please contact Mickey (848-2045) for a personal assessment.

### **2) We've been taking private lessons. Should we change to a group format?**

Private students who may benefit from a group setting are those who are:

1. Overextended—too busy to practice difficult repertoire, but who can manage some practice and are still interested in learning.
2. Unmotivated—that half-hour private lesson is interminably long for the student, and individual practice at home is like pulling teeth.
3. Immature—ready to learn, but can't sit still and concentrate for long periods of time.
4. In need of more challenge—racing through the material and could use more improvisation, supplementary pieces, etc.
5. Seemingly confused—will they ever learn to read music?

Group lessons might be just the answer for these students and for the teacher. The group approach is NOT a second-best compromise. Group lessons still require good practice habits for good progress. Group lessons can reduce some of the stress for busy students who occasionally need less practice pressure. And children who really don't seem interested in lessons will enjoy music activities and stay involved in music.

Improved music reading skills is one of the greatest benefits of the group learning experience, as students have the opportunity to use their music reading in games, ensemble experiences, music writing, and discussions with other students. The abstract process of music reading becomes clearer through all these different kinds of "hands-on" activities, in a completely non-threatening setting. Some children feel threatened when they don't know the correct answer or don't feel prepared. These children will be more successful when playing and responding in a group, rather than a one-to-one situation.

### **3) I am/My child is not at a beginner level. Should we change to a group format?**

Private lessons (with a group supplement) are preferable for students who have passed a Level 3 piano method. These students need to have expanded individual time with their teacher because they are working on difficult and lengthy repertoire. The teacher, student, and parent will need to make this decision together.

### **4) We've been taking private lessons. Should we continue this format?**

Stay with the private lesson format if:

1. You do not fit any of the student descriptions in question 2
2. The student seems to be self-motivated and has established good practice habits
3. The student has progressed beyond level 3
4. You and the teacher are pleased with the results of private study so far

## **FOR THE STUDENTS**

Everyone learns differently. Students learn from each other and can be “turned on” to music by each other. A competitive atmosphere is not the goal of group lessons, but success is contagious. If one student learns a difficult piece, often the whole class will want to try to learn the piece as well. “*I can’t*” becomes a phrase of the past.

Participating in ensemble and group activities helps develop sight reading, musicianship, and rhythmic skills. Students learn that you can’t stop (or even hesitate) to search for the right note, the rhythm must be steady AND it’s fun to coordinate dynamics, tempo changes, and other expressive elements when you are part of a group.

## **FOR THE PARENTS**

Caring parents often agonize about making the correct decision regarding music lessons for their children. When? What kind? With whom? And group teaching presents yet another choice—one they probably know little about. Most parents who took music lessons probably took private lessons—with mixed results. Parents need to know that both private lessons and group lessons are good. But group lessons do offer some particular benefits for both parents and students. You won’t be calling the teacher to say, “*I just can’t get Johnny to practice!*”

In group lessons, children will be participating in activities which are fun and which can provide positive lifetime feelings about learning and music. The children will be learning with their peers—and parents are well aware of the importance of peer influence. (If other guys are doing it, it must be OK.)

## **FOR THE TEACHER**

In the end, it is the teacher’s duty to help students “enjoy the journey” of learning music. *Music By Mickey* is all about offering a personalized approach to our students’ enjoyment of music. By offering these two combinations of piano study, we can help our students achieve the best possible results with a positive musical experience!