

Teaching Strategies for Piano

PLAY- PREPARE- PRACTISE

- ✓ Remember prevention is better than correction
- ✓ look for difficult jumps in the music
- ✓ practise the shift with correct fingering
- ✓ find a relation to the shift (i.e. octave, 3rd 5th etc)

1. 1ST BEAT PRACTISE

- ✓ Play the 1st beat notes of each bar

2. PEDALLING

- ✓ Demonstrate different options (over pedalling, full pedal to a bar/ phrase 1/2 pedal, 1/4 pedal)
- ✓ Ask students for their input on what sounds best
- ✓ Show them how and where to pedal

3. Muscle Memory

- ✓ Repeat units/ bars phrases slowly (1/4 speed/ 1/2 speed) and loudly (unmusically) to reinforce notes and fingering

4. Even tempo

- ✓ Part of a good technique is an even beat/ pulse
- ✓ Insist on counting
- ✓ Encourage metronome practise
- ✓ Explain the metronome
- ✓ Explain metronome markings!! I have heard of some children who thought their metronomes only click in crotchet beats!!

5. 1 bar + 1 beat

- ✓ Separate pieces into 1 bar + 1 beat units
- ✓ This helps students read through bar lines!!!
- ✓ Practise these units repetitiously

WHY UNIT PRACTISE??

- ✓ *the average human brain only remembers up to 7 digits at a time*
- ✓ *try remembering 3699 (look away and repeat after 1 reading)*
- ✓ *now try 183856740609382659578 (look away and repeat after 1 reading)*
- ✓ that's why mobile numbers are in 4 units + 3 units + 3 units
- ✓ we remember small chunks at a time... so do the same thing with music and new elements
- ✓ 1st unit practise
- ✓ 2nd segment practise
- ✓ 3rd practice whole piece

LEARNING VS PRACTISE- *in lesson show your students how to practise!!*

6. ALL NOTES DETACHED, THICK & HEAVY

- ✓ This type of practise- although it sounds awfully unmusical- helps learn notes and establishes muscle memory
- ✓ encourage students to use arm weight (and check shoulders are relaxed)

7. 3x1

- ✓ slow vs fast
- ✓ 3x slow and 1x fast- (units, segments and whole piece)

8. Sing notes

- ✓ by letter name
- ✓ by finger numbers

9. Repeat each note 4 x

- ✓ helps in difficult passages

10. Interpretation

- ✓ ask what is the *mood* of the piece (provide adjective flash cards- available in Notes- Terms cards and Worksheets at www.lorenas-music.com.au)
- ✓ create your own titles for songs
- ✓ create stories to songs
- ✓ use cards to play a know piece in the mood of the selected card!
- ✓ You can also use - temperatures (hot, cool, warm etc)
- ✓ - colours (red, pink, indigo etc)
- ✓ - tastes (sweet, sour, bitter etc)
- ✓ - texture (silk, felt, sandpaper, wool etc.)

11. Voicing

- ✓ play isolated melody with correct fingering slowly
- ✓ use arm weight and a flexible wrist = beautiful sound

1 - play outer note (melody *mf*) and inner note of accompaniment (*p* & staccato)

2 - play melody and bottom note of accompaniment

3 - then play each step non staccato but still *p* in accompaniment

12. Impulse practising

- ✓ use 1 bar + 1 beat unit practise
- ✓ do this slow then fast

13. Regrouping

- ✓ play units backwards!
- ✓ play with eyes closed
- ✓ start in the middle of phrases
- ✓ start on the last beat of a bar

14. 8x to perfection

- ✓ repetition of sections/units or 2 note groups are the key to success
- ✓ use buttons/ stickers or coins to pass from 1 side of the piano to the other to count repetitions
- ✓ tell students how concert pianists use 8x8 repetitions to perfection!!!!

15. 80% tempo

- ✓ Before any exam or performance this is imperative!
- ✓ increases concentration skills
- ✓ increases internal beat awareness
- ✓ increases muscle memory
- ✓ even 60% tempo is extra good on top of 80%!

16. Go for CONTRAST!

- ✓ Stop for a few beats (a bar) before each dynamic change
- ✓ overdo each dynamic marking (e.g. p= ppp , f= fff)
- ✓ swap dynamic markings (e.g. p=f, f=p)