**The benefits of Piano for Seniors.**

I find myself at this stage of teaching my piano and voice students, that I have quite a number of adult students, particularly senior citizens. That is totally fine by me. I thoroughly enjoy teaching adults of any age.

I think most people are aware of the benefits of learning the piano: the cognitive benefits for senior citizens, and keeping your mind sharp with the daily challenges of piano study. But I see other benefits for my students, benefits that are not mentioned when you look up “the benefits of learning the piano for seniors” in google search.

I see every week as I teach my seniors, that they make every bit as much progress as children do in their studies. It all depends on how much they practice. And perhaps I’ve been lucky, but my senior students tend to practice diligently. They practice every day and therefore they make good progress as the weeks go by.

Seniors generally have more time and if they make piano study their priority they can really improve. Often seniors have this seriousness about learning that children sometimes don’t have. In their lives they have learned the value of taking lessons, the value of learning. It is the same for me. If I take a class, I think I am a lot more into it than I might have been earlier in my life. I appreciate it so much more. Therefore, seniors are fun to teach!

Here are some well-known benefits for seniors in studying the piano: 1) Cognitive improvement. Piano playing has been proven to increase neural connections and overall brain function. 2) Piano playing reduces stress. While you are focused on practicing the piano, it takes your mind off of other worries. 3) Hand/eye coordination. When playing the piano, you need to read the grand staff. The grand staff is made up of the treble clef for the right hand and the bass clef for the left hand. That is putting it in basic terms. You need to coordinate reading the grand staff and translate that to playing your right hand and left hand together. Most instruments do not involve quite this level of complexity.

4) Playing the piano can be very good for arthritis and other physical issues with your hands. I have a personal experience with that. When I was thirty, I got carpal tunnel from a grueling data entry job. It was so bad that I couldn’t lift a fork to eat. I got the majority of my hand strength back by playing the piano. As long as you go at your own pace and don’t push yourself beyond your endurance, the piano can be very therapeutic for your overall hand strength and health.

These are just a few benefits of playing the piano for seniors but I find in talking to my senior students that there are many more that are not generally talked about. Here is a quote from one of

my students. Margaret writes:

Music in My Life

“Music has a very special place in my everyday life, playing makes me feel fulfilled and satisfied. The rewards are varied and the challenges are worthy. Learning theory causes me to concentrate long and hard on an activity. I feel my capacity to understand expand as I learn more. Playing music is a rewarding release of the tension of learning.

Starting with a mixture of hesitating tones and beats after some practice, I can play pieces of all kinds of music that each bring me different feelings of comfort, control, relaxation, pride, resolve, fortitude, and entertainment. My day is not complete without playing piano.”

I found in talking to my senior or adult students that there are many reasons they enjoy their piano lessons that are entirely different from the scientifically proven reasons. For example, some of my students love theory. Theory is the written musical homework that goes along with learning the piano. Theory is a great challenge for the mind. Some like the social aspect of their lessons. The lesson itself and meeting other like-minded people. More than anything, I would say that learning music gives this overall sense of accomplishment as you take each piece of music from a place where it is at first difficult to play to a place where the piece flows easily.

Some students come to me having taken piano lessons as a child, and having regretted dropping those lessons as a child. This sort of regret is overcome as they pick their lessons back up again and push their level of playing beyond the level they reached in their childhood.

The rewards of learning the piano are many and there are different ways to approach the journey. I am always surprised at how many adults turn towards music. I think it can be a wonderful addition to your life. But it takes patience, especially if you have never played an instrument before. Give it six months before you make a decision as to what it is adding to your life, or if you feel you are making progress. If you practice you will improve. But sometimes not until months into your journey can you really notice that you have moved forward in your progress.

Piano is an excellent outlet for any adult, particularly seniors!

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