

THE BRANDEIS PIANO CONSERVATORY HANDBOOK



CURRICULUM

The Conservatory's curriculum reflects its faculty's extensive experience to superbly prepare our students for a complete and diverse musical education. Our faculty has competed (and received top prizes) in state, national, and international competitions, performed solo recitals, as orchestral soloists and ensemble concerts throughout the world, received doctorate degrees in piano performance working with the profession's greatest piano teachers, and taught at some of the major music schools in the United States. The curriculum of our program includes:

- Weekly, one-to-one private lessons focus on a student's short and long-term goals carefully selected repertoire and technical exercises to effectively support those works.
- Group performance classes are scheduled to enhance the private lesson experience.
- The "grammar of music," i.e. music theory instruction, is individually tailored to the student and focuses on keyboard functional skills.
- Music history is also incorporated into the educational experience.
- Students are introduced to the collaborative arts through duets, ensemble work with other students, or with the teacher.
- An introduction to the Recording Arts is also offered to the students to broaden their experience through hands-on experience in the professional on-site recording studio, [BPC Recording Studio](#).

THE PARENTS' ROLE

Parents can and should support the fulfillment of student responsibilities and encourage progress. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or concerns. We suggest parents sit in on the child's lessons occasionally to monitor their progress. Additional recommendations include:

- 1) Remain aware of your child's assignments for practice, theory and listening assignments.
- 2) Monitor your child's practice times. Check the practice chart.
- 3) Be sure that your child reads and studies the assignment notebook on a regular basis.
- 4) Review the studio policies with your child. Be sure that your child understands his/her responsibilities.
- 5) Provide opportunities to attend live concerts and listen to professional recordings.
- 6) Have other household members cooperate in setting a regular practice time that is free from distractions.
- 7) Be sure that your child arrives for the lesson on time. For very young children, please check to see that all lesson books and materials are brought to each lesson (check in the assignment notebook).

8) It is completely normal for even the most dedicated and capable music students to experience occasional brief slumps in progress and/or interest. Encourage your child through these natural periods by reminding him/her of his progress thus far. Remind him of all of the additional benefits garnered through music study. These periods are a normal part of his growth process and, with patience and diligent work, they will pass soon.

9) Ask your child to perform for you every so often. Let him or her know that you enjoy the playing and the music being played and appreciate their efforts and achievements.

STUDENT PERFORMANCES

Taking advantage of various performance opportunities, as well as the studio's repertoire classes and recitals, is highly encouraged to students of all ages at the Conservatory. A calendar with dates of these events will be passed out at the Fall semester. Students usually gain a great deal of experience and self-confidence from these performances but only when sufficiently prepared. Students should notify the teacher as early as possible of upcoming performances outside those "sanctioned" by the studio – playing for the PTA, a local talent show, a church event, or a competition. Advance notice is necessary so that the teacher can help the student prepare properly. If not adequately prepared, it might not be in their best interest to perform.

PRACTICE PROCEDURES AND EQUIPMENT

1) Practicing as close as possible to the same time each day helps practicing to become a part of life's regular routine. It is inadvisable to save practice until everything else is finished. This creates the psychological disadvantage of "left over" energy for a project done during "left-over" time. Practicing will frequently be omitted if not formally scheduled.

2) A daily minimum practice time schedule will be assigned to each student. The practice chart should be recorded in each day; the visual reminder is an incentive to increase the practice time, and an accurate record is valuable as a diagnostic tool.

3) The assignment book is an important instructional manual, and important suggestions concerning execution of musical and technical ideas are often included in the assignment book, but **only when regularly consulted during the week.**

4) Video camera or audio recording device: for playing back lessons taped at the studio and testing compositions in the practice sessions. A composition should be recorded and played back while following in the printed music score and studied for dynamics, accuracy of notes and tempo, articulation and expressiveness. The student should make corrections in the score IN PENCIL. Listening to a recording of one's own playing allows the student to "hear it as the audience does."

5) A piano that is kept in tune and good working order is essential for optimum progress. As a point of comparison, a tennis student would quickly become discouraged and most likely quit if expected to "make do" with an inferior tennis racket or one with no resilience or a hole in the webbing. Development is frustrating and slow. Therefore, it is recommended that the student's piano be regularly tuned and serviced (approximately every six months is recommended by manufacturers). To aid the student's technical development, the piano should be in a quiet, well-

lighted section of the house, and should have a standard piano bench or artist bench (i.e., no kitchen chair being used as a “bench”).

6) Metronome: An electronic metronome is the best style to use, and is a critical tool for any musical study. We can recommend certain brands and models if there are any questions.

7) Dictionary: Music is a language. When learning any language the student must learn vocabulary. The faster the musical vocabulary is assimilated the quicker and easier the progress, with the internet being an excellent resource (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_musical_terminology among many others). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, or *The Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music*, are all available at bookstores or music stores. The Conservatory has dictionaries in several languages, a set of the *New Groves Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, and other research materials available for reference, but their use is for in-studio only.

8) A student or parent is expected to order and purchase all music books and materials as soon as they are assigned.

9) The student should set aside some listening time each week. WRR-FM (101.1) radio station, Public Television, classical music videos, and free or low cost live performances listed in the daily papers are good means for developing a knowledge of composers and the repertoire, understanding of musical styles, and the ability to be a discriminating listener. The Conservatory library has recordings available for check out by the student and parents on a weekly basis. ***This is crucial for musical development!***

LOCAL MUSIC STORES

Penders Music Co.

2650 Midway Road
Suite 230
Carrollton, TX 75006
(972) 818-1333

Nadine’s Music Manor

15th and Independence
Prairie Creek Village
Plano, TX 75075
(972) 423-7884

MAIL ORDER MUSIC

Hutchins & Rea www.hutchinsandrea.com (800) 753-BACH (2224) Based in Atlanta, Georgia, it is a very dependable source with a huge inventory. They have no credit card minimum and music is usually received within two or three days shipped via UPS. Regular hours are 9-5 and 9-12 on Saturday. They have a 24-hour dedicated fax line at (770) 455-1492.