



## Newsletter June 2021

### Zig-Zagging and Zooming!

We made it! We have managed a year of mixed-learning, on-line and in-studio learning. It was wonderful to see students back in person, for a while in September and then again after Easter. I was delighted that all continued on-line for the few months we had to. While zoom lessons aren't the same as face to face lessons they do have some benefits – I found that students became more independent at marking up their own music and working things out themselves. Of course, we all enjoyed using screen-share to play online theory games.

Some students have even preferred to stay on-line beyond lock-down, so I am very happy to see that technology can support us through changing times and suit everyone's preferences.

### Christmas Zoom Recital



The Christmas Zoom recital was a lot of fun. I think all students enjoyed being able to sit back and watch themselves on the big (or little!) screen, surrounded by family.

The Christmas Recital is an opportunity for students to display their amazing skills and also to inspire or be inspired by older and younger pianists. I always have requests from students after the Recital to learn pieces that they heard at the concert.

### Bench height

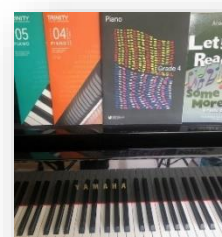
Playing the piano is a physical activity that requires good seating posture. While I have always had an adjustable bench, I have found that it doesn't adjust easily enough to accommodate the various heights of students, so I was thrilled to install my new hydraulic bench for students and a foot rest for younger students allowing me to adapt the bench to each individual's height with ease.

During zoom times I've been able to see posture of students in the home. Sadly, piano stools are sold for adults and don't take into account the 5 plus years children may be using a seat before they get to the 'standard' adult height. Being at the correct height enables freer playing and actually makes it easier to play piano. Notice the beautiful looking hand movements that a concert pianist makes – a lot is to do with the arm/hand position and is dependent on the height of the seat. See the pictures, and check if your child are they sitting at the correct height at home. If your bench is adjustable, please do adjust it to their height. If it isn't, please add a cushion to bring them to the correct height.



### Recorded exams

It's that time of year when the culmination of the hard work over the year gets presented in exam form. Good luck to students who are entering RIAM, LCM and Trinity College London exams for the summer session. This is the second year of recorded exams. Trinity will continue to offer a recorded exam in the future alongside their usual in-person exams while the other boards will revert to traditional formats once things have settled down.



For the past years I have been entering students into 3 different exam boards as each has it's own particular style of exam.


One of the advantages of RIAM (Royal Irish Academy of Music) is that the exam centre is easy to reach in the beautiful building at Westland Row beside Pearse Street Station. However, the exam is one day in the year! Advantages of LCM (London College of Music) & Trinity College London is the huge range of pieces to choose from each year.

Whilst RIAM offers 6 pieces (choose 3) LCM offers approximately 17 pieces and Trinity a choice of 21 pieces to select from. It is so important that students enjoy the pieces they will be working on over a year which is why I have branched out to other exam boards. If you are interested in exploring other boards do let me know.

### Some of my Personal Highlights of the Year

- ★ Seeing Pia performing at her 6<sup>th</sup> Year Graduation Ceremony at Skerries Community College
- ★ Seeing Joseph perform alongside, Sam, as part of Skerries Community College trad week. Joseph quickly learned how to do a trad accompaniment/vamp on piano to accompany Sam playing fiddle. Quite the duo!
- ★ Calum showing me the amazing Star Wars movie reel that he made for 6<sup>th</sup> Class Assembly with himself providing the soundtrack on piano!
- ★ Seeing Oscar perform at the Skerries Community College
- ★ Hearing the amazing result Moses got for playing a tricky version of the Entertainer as part of his substitute Junior Cert performance at school
- ★ Teaching particular pieces such as Maria White's 'The Bumblebee's Escape', G4 piece An Ancient Tale and Joe Hisahishi's One Summer's Day (from the anime movie 'Spirited Away'). Look up these pieces on YouTube to be in for a treat
- ★ Teaching the 12 Bar Blues & Boogie to adventurous students!
- ★ Taking on more adult students who show fantastic spirit in taking up piano later in life and get so much enjoyment from it.
- ★ Most of all seeing students flourish at the piano and getting such enjoyment from the music they are playing

### Skerries Piano Facebook page

I started this piano group page  [Skerries Piano](#) to showcase student's performances and to bring little items of musical interest into your lives. Due to the algorithms in facebook I would ask that you 'like' some of the posts so that they do feature in your feed. Please share any posts of relevance with your kids. It can be inspiring to see peers playing music and often leads to requests to cover particular pieces.

### Summer Challenge

As we're entering into summer I am launching this year's Summer Challenge. This is to encourage students to continue to play piano and listen to music over the summer. This has always helped reduce the summer slide. Students come back to lessons in September already used to playing their pieces and we are ready to move forward quickly.

Each student has received their own Challenge Sheet based on their age and level of piano playing. Please encourage them to join the Quest, put their sheet in a prominent place to remind them of it. Enjoy!



*Thank you for all your support during the year. Have a lovely summer.  
Piano is an activity for life!*