



## Newsletter December 2023

**What a fantastic season it has been!** It has been a delight to work with students, young and older alike, introducing them to new pieces, firing up their imaginations with new sounds and ways to play their music. I always aim to ensure that students are playing music that speaks to them; every student is an individual and has their own likes and dislikes.

**This year is the year of moving out from the studio and sharing music with the community.** This is developing our young pianists as performers. To this end, rather than stay on Zoom for our usual Christmas concert we are moving into the community instead – and hopefully encourage our pianists to share their talents more widely.

That's why I've taken a number of new initiatives:

### 1. Group performance lessons

Last May all students were invited to group Piano Performance Parties. This was a series of parties which aimed to give students a relaxed space to perform in front of their peers. It also gave an opportunity to discuss how to perform in public.



We looked at some performances online and discussed what makes a good performance and what made a less thrilling performance! We used prompt cards to discuss the story of the piece, and how dynamics help to create that story and all students commented on each performance in a constructive and thoughtful manner. After Covid, for many students this was their first 'live' performance: some were a bit nervous before playing but unsurprisingly once the ice was broken many students wanted to keep playing more pieces!



All enjoyed this relaxed performance opportunity so it is something I will run again during the year.

### 2. Silent Piano Festival



Another wonderful performance opportunity was the inaugural Silent Piano Festival held in the lush Stella Rathmines cinema in November. As this was the first ever Silent Piano Festival held in Dublin, I entered two Intermediate and Early Advanced students to this – James and Sam. The brief was to play music to accompany Buster Keaton Silent Movies - in the old tradition. This was an extraordinary opportunity which involved a lot of skills from the students. We were allocated 2 scenes from the movie 'The Boat' - the boys had to select music that they felt would fit the character of the scenes they would play to. They then had to adapt the music to the length of the scenes and the action in the scenes (eg playing loud chords when the character fell

out of his bed etc, playing slowly and calmly when the sea was calm). It was a phenomenal experience and one which I hope for more of my students to participate in next year. Watch this space!

### 3. Christmas concert at Loughshinny Nursing Home

Continuing the theme of developing our pianists as performers, and also with an aim to 'give back' to the community, I am thrilled to be bringing 10 students to play Christmas songs for residents of Loughshinny Nursing Home on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December. The students have all been working hard on bringing Christmas cheer by playing a range of traditional and modern Christmas pieces.

This is the first of our mini concerts for the residents. For our next performance I'll be bringing those students who weren't able to participate in the Christmas performance due to upcoming exams.

### 4. Live Studio Concert!

In Spring we will have a live studio concert in the Coast Inn in Skerries. This will be an occasion for student to wow their families. After Christmas all students will be working on their performance piece for the concert.

#### Keeping students engaged – what can you do?

Succeeding at the piano requires the involvement of 3 parties – the student, the teacher and you, the parents. No matter what age the student is, they all need your support and encouragement to practice regularly. You may be surprised to realise that even teens (and adults!) need reminders and gentle prods to get to it!

You can help by reading out their homework note assignments, reminding them that it is their regular piano practice time. Many students actually like their parent to sit in on their practice. Ask them if they would like that. Set them small goals – ask them to play their current piece on a particular day - giving them a little notice to practice!

Remember you are on their team - how can you be a good supporter of their hobby?

### Exam Results

Congratulations to students achieving phenomenal results in their MTB and RIAM exams.

A huge "Congratulations!" to the following students, for achieving Distinctions in their piano exams – Tadgh, Beau, Summer, Cara, Maeve, Emma, Max, Noah, Cara H, Louis, Eve, Aisling G, Laoise, Aisling H, Sarah. Achieving a distinction requires an all-round excellence in musicianship, accuracy in notes/rhythm, excellence in expression/dynamics and technical strength with scales and exercises. If any of these areas are weak it's near impossible to achieve a Distinction. So congratulations to all the above for managing all these areas in their exam performances.

### Term Times

Classes will finish on Monday 18 December and begin again on Monday January 8<sup>th</sup>. The Annual Calendar can be viewed on-line at [skerriespianostudio.com](http://skerriespianostudio.com)

### Enrolling for Lessons

Given the popularity of piano I have quite a waiting list for lessons but I prioritise siblings/parents of current students. If you are thinking about seeking lessons for a family member some time in the future please do let me know so that I can put their name towards the top of the waiting list.

*Wishing you all a wonderful and musical Christmas!*

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Skerries Piano Facebook page

Don't forget to keep an eye on the piano group page [Skerries Piano Studio](http://skerriespianostudio.com) to get a flavour for the various activities during lesson time.

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