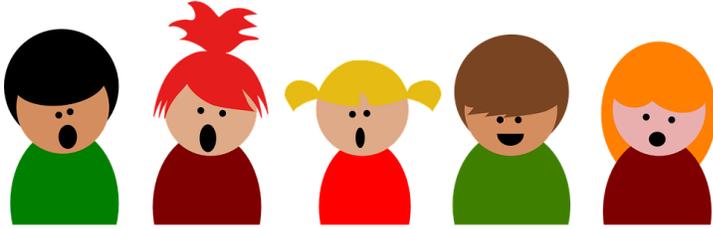


## Getting the Most out of Group Classes



One of the things that is different about studying piano through the Suzuki Method as opposed to a traditional track is the **group class**. In addition to weekly private lessons and daily practice, our children have a place to bring it all together and learn with and from their peers. It is often a student's favorite part of music lessons because it is in a fun, social atmosphere. **Learning in community** is one of the foundational goals of holding group classes. During group class, kids have a chance to observe and be observed. They are motivated by what their peers are doing, and excited for the chance to show what they have learned. **Learning to listen** to others perform and give positive feedback is another skill that comes with attending group class. Children learn to be empathetic in their comments and support of their friends, and in turn are supported themselves. Tied into this is the practice of **performing**. Performing, for most of us, can be a scary thing. However, being able to perform for others is absolutely essential to learning an instrument well. The preparation for the performance helps move students more quickly to their goal. It improves focus and confidence. When children are able to "practice" performing, in a non-stressful and repeated way, performing for recitals or for other people becomes normal and enjoyable. Other goals of the group class are to learn pre-reading and **music reading skills**, as well as reinforce **memory, musical vocabulary, rhythm and tonality**. Every class involves the building blocks of **music theory**, and whether they are new concepts, or a reinforcement of what we do in lessons, it is information that will help them to be better musicians. In addition, an **introduction of composers** from the Classical (and sometimes Jazz!) tradition lays the foundation for music appreciation.

### Expectations for Group Classes

**100% attendance** - Much of what we do each month hinges on what was introduced the month before. In an ideal world, we would have group classes every week (!) and would have more chance for repetition and review. With only one class a month, we

have less time to spend on each activity. If your child must miss for any reason, please let me know and I will give you a brief outline of the class at the next lesson.

**Parent attendance** - (\*See below for changes due to Covid) As with private lessons, parents are expected to stay for the group classes, at least until the child is in Book 2. Bring your notebook to the group lesson and take notes, just as you do during the private lesson, and review those things throughout the month. There will be a tiny bit of (fun!) homework each month, and while your child is still young, they need their parents to help them be prepared for the next class. Provide your child with a 3 ring binder to keep their information and pictures of composers, as well as any other musical information you would like to keep handy.

*\*Please note, if lessons are in person this year, we will only be hosting the students. Parents can drop them at the front door and pick them up on the porch at the end. Once the world is a healthier place again, we will host one parent with the child again. We may choose to hold the group classes online again for the foreseeable future. If this is the case, parents can and should attend right along with their child for all the reasons mentioned above. This will provide the best odds for successful music learning.*

**Behaviour** - I want the group class to not only be educational, but also fun and relaxed. I normally don't need to discipline in my classes, but I do need your help to set the stage. Make sure your child knows ahead of time what is expected of them, and I will do my best to make sure they know that from the first day, as well. It *is* in my home, so there is a less formal feeling, however, I would like to keep crawling around under the piano and excessive talking to a minimum. As an observing parent, you do not need to reprimand your child during the class as I will usually find a way to bring them around. However, if it becomes too much, I will have a conversation with the parent and child after the class. Otherwise, I welcome all the beautiful ideas and amazing participation that they have shown in the past!

**Preparation** - At the end of each class we have our performances. Ideally it will be a piece that is completed and is not the most recent working piece. This gives them the confidence to play well, and the chance to practice performing a piece with which they will have the most chance of success. Sometimes I make an exception, especially if some motivation is needed, and a child will perform a piece they more recently learned. But I prefer that they play something ready, polished and destined to create a successful experience. Even if it's a piece they have played 3 times already, that is OK! Please remind your child that professional pianists play the same repertoire for 20 years! During the week ahead of the group class, practice the piece 5x each day to

prepare. Also, review the password and composer from the previous class so they are ready to share.

**Make friends!** - Before or after group class, chat with another parent, share tips that work for you, ask for ideas that have worked for them. This is the other reason for community - to share ideas, tools and best practices! If a parent ever wants to organize a parent get-together, this would really enhance the music lesson experience and I would be happy to help organize it, then step back and listen. There is so much wisdom among the parents, and it would be fantastic to share it.