

TAKE NOTE

The newsletter brought to you by the Centre for Musical Arts
'Bringing Music to Everyone'

WHAT'S INSIDE?

Humans of CMA

2

The Towering Giant of Music

The Power of Music and the Importance of Music
in Education

3

At What Age Should I Start Music Lessons

HUMANS OF CMA

ON THE COVER

SARA AL HASHIMI
CMA ALUMNA

I absolutely love magic and magicians. If I could choose to have a talent it would be the ability surprise people with magic tricks that leave them stunned!

I left home for university in the USA last year. It was my first time being so far away from family and friends and in the beginning, I found everything so overwhelming.

I felt that I needed to be perfect and should know what I was doing, especially as I had been awarded a scholarship to be there; it was a big weight on my shoulders. I didn't want to look silly in front of others because I was in this big prestigious college. But I have learnt since that, that almost everyone felt the same!

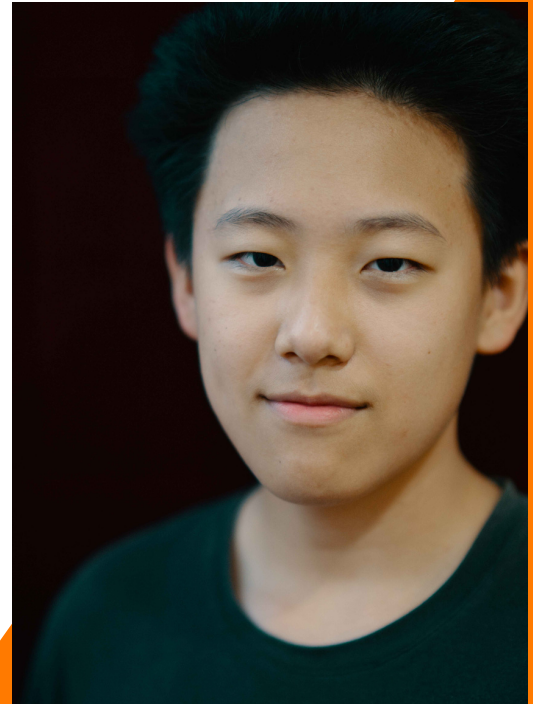
So now I remind myself everyday 'Just Take It One Day At A Time'.

ZHAOJIN CHU
CMA PIANO STUDENT

I think my most marked characteristic is my ability to focus a lot about things I enjoy.

If I had to think of a talent I'd like, I think being a jack of all trades would be interesting.

What's important to me is, If you're gonna do something, do it well!



THE TOWERING GIANT OF MUSIC

BY LOLA AKWABI
PIANO SPECIALIST

Do you listen to Classical music? If so, how frequently do you do so? If not, have you ever considered it? For a long time, Classical music remained an elusive art; one in which, it was assumed, was the preserve of a select few – those who had studied it, those who enjoyed it (or pretended to!) and those with the finesse that goes with the finer things in life. Fortunately, there has been renewed interest in this art in the recent past, thanks to the various institutions and personalities who continue to champion it. In addition, technological development has played its incredible part in making this art accessible to persons who would not have otherwise been exposed to this art.

I grew up listening to Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn – the usual Classical music greats, who my father was constantly playing on his turntable. I encountered it as a teenager as a necessary addition to my already packed academic schedule.

As I grew older, I was exposed to many more composers through various forums and my fascination for it grew

steadily and to-date, I fall in love with it afresh each time I listen to it.

I love Mozart's indescribable beauty, Sir John Rutter's beautiful choral works, I adore Bach's unwavering sturdiness, I love Tchaikovsky, Verdi and Brahms in almost equal measure. I love Scarlatti, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Palestrina, Gershwin, Handel, Rachmaninov, Gesualdo, Scriabin, Dufay, the list is endless... However, my heart and soul belong to Beethoven – the towering giant of music, the revolutionary who changed the course of musical history for eternity.

In my childhood I listened to his Moonlight Sonata and Sonata Pathétique endlessly. I listened to the first movement of his 5th symphony countless times. I listened to his other symphonies which were a constant item on classical music programs featured on radio stations. Something always moved within me whenever his music played. It went straight to the depths of my soul.

Interestingly, it would be a long time before I would listen to any of his piano concertos. The very first one I heard was the third movement of his second piano concerto. Something in the catchy melody and playful nature of that piece remained in my mind for a long time... I didn't even know, at the time, that he was the composer. [Listen to it here](#) as performed by the great Martha Argerich)

One day whilst chatting with one of my

bosses I mentioned that my favourite composer was Beethoven. When he returned from holiday, he brought me Alfred Brendel's recordings of some of Beethoven's piano sonatas and Murray Perahia's recordings of his 3rd and 4th piano concertos. From Brendel's recordings, the Tempest stole my heart. And then I heard the monumental Emperor concerto and my fate was sealed.

How is it possible for one man to hold such power over my life? Haven't I been bewitched by Mozart on numerous occasions? Doesn't Bach send my spirits flying to the high heavens; does not Chopin melt my heart with his magical Barcarole? What about Vivaldi's underrated arias? All these great masters keep me going back again and again to this noble art. You will find me listening to Bach most of the time – I and various musical greats consider him the alpha and omega of Classical music. And yet, there is Beethoven – in his indomitable, towering and inimitable glory.



THE POWER OF MUSIC AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN EDUCATION

BY ANDREW MCCOY
SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR AND
BRASS SPECIALIST

The fifth episode of the Take Note podcast has been published this weekend.

In this week's episode, I talk to Taaleem CEO, Alan Williamson, a fellow Celt, who feels passionately, as I do, that music, drama, art, sports are just as important for children as the STEM subjects.

Traditionally, these are the 'extra-curricular', the 'nice to have' subjects.

As a musician, it is incomprehensible to me that schools could bypass music as a core and important subject. Unfortunately in my places across the world, especially in the UK, the weighting of the curriculum is on the STEM subjects; Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths. While of course these subjects are incredibly important and essential to equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to go out and become important and necessary members of society, music and the arts have, in my opinion, an equal importance.

In many cases, there is a certain myopia when it comes to the role in which arts education plays.

To use the example of learning a musical instrument; It is not just about going through the motions of learning the physical technicalities and mechanics of how that instrument produces sound. There is so much more to the process and the experience of 'Making Music'.

On the face of it, yes, we have to learn how to make a sound, whether that's pressing a key on the piano, plucking or bowing a string or blowing or buzzing into a tube - I have always poked fun at myself by saying, I spend my life blowing hot air down a metal tube! - but that is only the beginning.

The physical act alone, of playing a

musical instrument is only the beginning. The thing that has always fascinated me about music, is how multi-disciplinary and faceted it is. If we look at all the different parts of the brain which are required to play an instrument; the visual cortex, the parts of the brain required for motor skills, logical thinking, problem solving, emotional response...the list goes on and on.

Research states time and time again how music is directly linked to literacy and language; Susan Hallam, UCL, "The way we process musical sound is the same way we process speech", and that musical movement builds motor skills.

It is also recognised as aiding the development of listening skills, attention span and concentration as well as helping to build self-esteem and self-confidence.

My favourite example of this idea of music and speech is the work of Diana Deutsch, Professor of Psychology at the University of California. One of the aspects of her work is on the concept that music actually came before speech, and that speech is music. In 1995 she discovered the 'Speech-to-Song' Illusion. I urge you to have a listen and a read [here](#), but in essence, what she showed, was that if you isolated a small recorded phrase of speech within a sentence and looped it over and over again, suddenly it no longer sounds like speech but like song.

In our everyday lives, we may not be consciously aware of it, but when someone is talking to us, how much of the meaning of the message do we take from the actual words versus the tone, pitch and inflection of how it was said?

If you removed the words and only listened to the 'music' of the message, would you be able to get the general gist of the message?

Coming back, full circle to the original idea of the podcast and this article, music as a subject is so much more than just a nice hobby to have, or a career to pursue. Music aids in the development of so many aspects of our brains, whether that be focus, concentration, creative, problem solving or logical thinking. Not to mention, one of the most enjoyable aspects of music making for me, the social interaction with other people and musicians both inside and outside school.

Long may music education continue to remain important and relevant!

AT WHAT AGE, SHOULD I START MY CHILD'S MUSIC LESSONS?

BY SIMON LAM
PIANO SPECIALIST

It is a common question that many parents ask me.

While in CMA we usually accept students from 6 years old for individual piano lessons, my answer to that question, of course, is not as simple as that.

Most teachers would probably agree that the best age to start is between 6 to 9 years old. Learning the piano involves learning highly complex tasks which include fine motor skills, hands-eye coordination, and reading music in two different clefs. Older students would definitely find it easier to learn and make progress. For that reason, if you are a little unsure about how much interest your child has in learning an instrument, perhaps it is better to wait for a little longer.

How about younger students who are really interested in learning the piano? Mozart famously started learning the piano at the age of 3 and composed his first composition at the age of 5. Nowadays on social media, it is not difficult to find videos of children learning at a very young age and even child prodigies playing the piano at a very high standard. That of course does not mean every child is able to start learning at 3 years old. Personally I have taught some 4 years old children, but those are rare cases. Nonetheless, it is not unusual for me to accept children at 5 years old. There are several factors I would need to consider if a child is ready. First and the most important - the child is comfortable being in a one-on-one setting. Very young children may find a one-on-one learning experiment rather frightening, and some children at that age do not have the attention span required. Furthermore I would need to consider that the child is able to recognise patterns of the keyboard, have some independent movements of their fingers, and show interest in learning an instrument.

After all, every child is different. It is very important to talk to an experienced piano teacher who is able to give you very honest advice. If you are not sure, you are always welcome to ask our advice at CMA!