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Sarah -15 years old

What happened
to Sarah?

Jan 20th, 2011

Dear Alan,

I have been playing piano for the past eight years and to be honest I haven't enjoyed the majority of it. It was really fun back when I started but the novelty soon wore off. I would scream and cry when my mum told me I had to practise, and when I eventually ended up practising, I would shorten the amount of time left on the egg timer that sat on the piano (to tell us how much longer we had to practise for) while no-one was looking. I couldn't wait to get up to Grade 6 level and do my exam because after lots of pleading with my parents, they decided that if I complete my Grade 6 exam I was allowed to quit. I hated piano and I thought I was terrible at it. However in 2009 I did gain some confidence in myself, because for the first time ever, I got to perform at the Final Performance Evening of the 2009 Piano and Soloists Competition. I have never done particularly well in the competition, so you can imagine my surprise when my performance of a very short and easy Grade 4 piece won 1st prize against my competitors' performance of a very difficult Grade 8 piece. After this I started to enjoy piano a lot more although it still wasn't something that I was very passionate about.

When the 2010 Piano Competition came around I wasn't expecting to win again as I was competing against two very skilled pianists. When you got up to talk about the three performances and announce the winner, I was so nervous I could see myself shaking. You started off by only talking about Maggie and Wayne's performance and my heart sank because I was now convinced that 1st and 2nd place would be between them and I was going to come 3rd. So when you finished off by saying "And that's why I give 1st place to Sarah, I was just as surprised as I was on the night a year ago, and I was so happy and relieved. Your performance of *Fantaisie Impromptu* was incredible; I was so amazed that fingers are able to move that quickly.

The song lingered in my head for weeks after the night. My dad bought me a brand new digital piano for winning the competition. If it's really early in the morning or really late at night I can just turn the volume down or I can put headphones in, meaning that I can practise whenever I want without disturbing anyone. A book called "50 Greats for the Piano" came with it and as I was seeing which songs were in it I saw the words "*Fantaisie Impromptu Op.66*" and it looked kind of familiar (At the time I had never heard of Chopin or any of his well known works). Later I discovered it was the song that you played at the competition. I was still in awe of your performance so I promised myself that I would learn it in the hope that maybe one day I would be able to play it as good as you (with lots and lots and lots and lots of practise!). I want to thank you for inspiring me, it is because of you that I have discovered my true passion in life. And it is also because of you that I have discovered the magical world of Chopin. He is definitely my favourite composer. Also, thank you very much for all the CDs. I love them and I listen to them all the time. I hope to see you again in the future!

Sarah Webster

P.S. I did my Grade 6 piano exam in November (with no intentions of quitting afterwards!) and I got a Pass with Honours which I was very proud of.

P.P.S. What's your favourite Chopin song? Mine's *Grande Polonaise Brillante* which I am learning at the moment.



MASTERCLASS AND CONCERT PROGRAM SECOND SEASON 2011



A mentoring program with a difference

After the success of our first season, it is with pleasure we announce three separate options for the second season of The Masterclass-Concert Program:

Alan Kogosowski - Pianist



Piano. 2011 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Franz Liszt, the most exciting performer who ever lived Alan Kogosowski, described by the London Times as "a pianist of *grande panache*" for his Liszt performance will be giving all-Liszt recitals including transcriptions, Hungarian Rhapsodies and Mephisto Waltzes.



Sally Cooper - Violinist

Violin. Outstanding young Australian virtuoso violinist Sally Cooper will give a masterclass on the Friday, then a full recital on the Saturday night programme comprising *Spring* from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Beethoven's *Spring Sonata*, with a selection of popular showpieces in the second half, including *Meditation*, *Zigeunerweisen* and *Csardas*.



Emily Xiao Wang - Soprano

Vocal. Superlative soprano Emily Xiao Wang will give a masterclass in vocal technique and presentation on the Friday, then a full recital on the Saturday night, programme consisting of great opera arias, songs and musical with selections from *My Fair Lady* and *The King and I*, in which she took a starring role at the State Theatre in 2010.

You are indeed the master and the four student performers were superb! This is such an incredible opportunity you are giving these young people and we wish you all the very best with building the reputation of the Masterclass Program. You are having an incredible impact on these young people.

Helen Hughes,
Principal, Strathcona Girls'
Grammar

My friends from school who came along and do not normally listen to classical music were also thoroughly engaged throughout the concert.

I do not know how to express my thanks to you for giving me the most wonderful opportunity that any aspiring musician could wish for, and I would like to say many 'thank you's' for this. I have learnt so much along the way, both musically and about my abilities.

Louisa Guo,
Sacre Coeur

Sarah is my student, and you have inspired her immensely!!! Since the piano competition (she came first in Intermediate Section) she only wants to play and learn Chopin. She spends hours by the piano instead of computer, and tries and tries and... We are talking about a girl who wanted to give up in the last 2 years. Mother is very pleased. Inspirations like this reflect your work and dedication to music.

Marta Majka, Piano lecturer,
Ivanhoe Grammar School

Performances, promotional materials and concert organization will all be handled by the Masterclass Program. All the school need do is enclose flyers in appropriate mailout (e.g. with school magazine). Schools will also benefit financially by receiving a percentage of the ticket sales.

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To Enlighten and Inspire*