

Catherine Leach Piano School
August Newsletter 2012

Dear Parents and pupils,

I hope you had a good summer break, enjoyed the Olympics and maybe some sunshine! And I hope all those at new schools and colleges are settling in well.

New Pupils

From January 2012 I warmly welcome, Ken, Claire, Oliver, Min min, Dave, Elena, Ella, Mike, Alex, John, Liam, Beth, and also Mary, Sam and Kate who start this term. I'm sad to say good-bye to Anna Ashcroft who has been with me for three years but due to moving areas has unfortunately had to cease lessons. You will remember Anna as Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz stealing the lime light with her delightful vocal and piano item at the last Christmas Concert. I do hope you will keep in touch Anna and take part in future events. You really did bring a great deal of pleasure and a special sparkle. Your brilliant and moving performances continued to be mentioned throughout all of this year by many who attended!

New term Date & Agreement Document

Please note the new document (on the website) specifying term dates up until Easter 2013. The Autumn term will run continuously until the Christmas break with no half term week. If you are planning to be away on holiday I will need to know A.S.A.P. otherwise I will assume everyone will attend lessons each week. Regarding all new pupils, if you have not already done so, I would appreciate it if you would print off, complete and sign and return this document A.S.A.P. Thank-you.

Emails and Lesson Payments

There are still only a handful of parents with whom I am in regular contact via email. This is such a useful way to communicate information efficiently, therefore if you are one of the parents I am not yet in regular contact with in

this way, please can you make a point of sending a brief message so that I have a record of your email address, many thanks. Also if you would prefer to pay via direct transfer via on line banking in future for lessons at the start of each month rather than by paying by cheque or cash, please let me know and I will give you my bank details. A few parents now pay via this method and it cuts out the hassle of dealing with payments at lessons and has so far proved so much better.

The Website

The delay in updating the website is due to the fact that my web designer Richard Booth has been unable to continue with the site work this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard for all his efforts in setting up a site which I do hope you have found informative and interesting to visit. Stuart Mo, Joshua's Father, has very kindly agreed to take over the site development. This is most kind and I am hugely grateful. Thanks so much Stuart!

Neil Smith Guitar Tuition

I have been informed recently that guitarist Neil Smith is taking on more private pupils at the current time. In previous years it would have been difficult to book lessons with Neil, as he has spent much of his time playing abroad and had limited availability for private tuition. As a top guitarist anyone having lessons with Neil will no doubt experience the finest instrumental training. Check out his website www.guitarstuk.com

Last Years Concert Events

Between September 2011 up until August 2012, highlights were the September potluck supper event, an informal gathering at St. Luke's Church Parish Hall, promoting and highlighting the Billinge and Orrell transition group's projects, at which my piano school were invited by Mandy Wellens-Bray to provide entertainment by way of their piano performances. This was a lovely opportunity for my pupils to take part and perform in an informal setting, rather than a formal concert. I felt there was much to be gained all round from the event, especially for the younger pupils. The evening was a

huge success. For further information on the projects check out the website www.billingeorrelltransition.org.uk

The 13th annual Christmas piano concert took place at St Lukes Parish Hall, the first time at this venue, enabling parents, Grandparents and friends of the piano school to attend, giving them to a special glimpse at what happens at this event which has tended to be just pupils playing to each other in the piano room in previous years). Performing to a larger audience in a large hall was indeed an experience for my pupils. Santa made an appearance and the event as with the potluck supper was talked about for months afterwards. Look out for the new photos soon to arrive on the web site of these events.

Ashton Under Lyne Sixth Form College

In October 2011 I started a post (one day a week) as piano teacher to the A Level Music (first study piano) students within the performing arts department at Ashton Under Lyne sixth form College. In May the music students took part in a brilliant end of year concert at the college directed by Mr Anton East head of music. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to all the students perform, not just my pianists but also the amazing guitarists, vocalists, and bands. Look out for the photo of four of my students at this concert.

One of these students Anthony Leung secured a place at Birmingham Conservatoire to specialise in composition and the other three in the photo, Chris, Hannah and Tom commence music related courses at Huddersfield University. I have loved teaching these students, their motivation, enthusiasm and thirst for music was considerable and was indeed an inspiration. Good luck to you all!

A Level Music Resource

Incidentally for anyone studying GCSE and A level music or in fact going on to do degree courses the educational website Anton East has designed is certainly worth consideration (to subscribe to) as a useful study aid tool. Check it out www.alevelmusic.co.uk A complete online resource for the study of A Level Music.

Tom Stott and his Bands

On the subject of A levels and bands, Tom Stott currently studying A level music at Runshaw College and currently preparing for grade 8 piano, has certainly demonstrated his talent, drive and amazing achievements via his own band The 'Hermitage' and involvement in connected bands which were showcased in a festival event at 'The Olive Garden' in Standish in July. I attended this packed event feeling that surely the whole of Standish and surrounding districts had attended such is the popularity now of these amazing bands.

Crosby Music Festival

In February this year two of my pupils Anna Ashcroft and Stefan Wilkinson Hill took part in the Crosby Music Festival. I was delighted that Stefan won medals coming first in both of the classes he was entered. This was such a thrilling achievement. The adjudicator was Mark Tanner (a concert pianist and abrsm examiner from Cornwall, who incidentally is also the pianist on Graham Lynch CD ' Undiscovered Islands' featured on his website www.grahamlynch.eu Look out for the picture of Stefan with his beautiful and cherished medals ! I am hoping more piano school members will take part in the festival next year.

' Sound Sketches ' - The exciting new piano music and Master Class with composer Graham Lynch in 2013

Prior to the Crosby Music Festival event, this composer Graham Lynch had already contacted me directly via epta asking if I would like to try out his two new volumes of 'Sound Sketches' on the piano school in order to get feedback from my pupils before they were fully launched. A remarkable coincidence that these two individuals were associates! I was delighted to try out the music and have some refreshing material to work with. After studying the music and finding it most educational, inspiring and interesting, I introduced some of the pieces in the books to my pupils and since then mostly everyone has purchased the books (after trying out a few of the pieces) and have all been preparing a piece for a series of mini videos which

will appear in a special feature on the Web site very soon and in preparation for a master class event to be held during 2013. All of these pupils are very much looking forward to meeting Graham when he comes up to Lancashire to present the master class. We are incredibly lucky bearing in mind that Graham lives in Penzance, Cornwall and he is incredibly busy as a composer and teacher!

I met up with Graham over the summer in London to discuss this. If your child is one of those still to be recorded for the website feature, and they will know themselves, please encourage them to prepare their piece as soon as possible so I can get the videos up on the site as well as onto Youtube. This beautiful new music has brought a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment over the last six months or so. You can order these books directly from the Sound Sketches Website www.soundsketches.co.uk

In addition it is possible to hear fragments of these pieces played by the composer and should you wish to hear the entire piece you can purchase the recordings for a few pence.

I will be hiring a suitable venue at some point during 2013 in order to organise and host this special master class event. This will be a very rare opportunity for each pupil to perform and share with an audience their carefully prepared favourite pieces in the presence of the composer. Being the first time the pupils have experienced a `master class` (and possibly for many parents and audience members also) I certainly anticipate the event will be truly memorable for everyone present as well as educationally stimulating. Following on from this and time permitting, I anticipate this event to also be an opportunity for all pupils to perform wide variety of carefully rehearsed music.

Once a date and details are set, I will highlight this on the website on the Sound Sketches special feature soon to arrive so do keep a watchful eye and make a note of the date and please encourage your child to prepare well. I think you will agree that to be performing a piece in the presence of the composer is quite a special and probably once in a life time event so I do hope everyone will support this event.

The new book 2 the red book has just been launched, so I am looking forward to helping pupils learn pieces from this book. I will be ordering some more of these books soon, so please do let me know as soon as possible if you would like me to order one for your child. If I order several books within one order the cost of postage is reduced, so worth bearing in mind. Also Graham has kindly agreed to sign each book with the pupil's name which makes them even more special! Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like a book ordering.

Shrek The Musical

In July I headed to London to see Carley Stenson an ex-pupil from several years ago (and ex-Holly oaks star) perform in the latest West end Drury Lane theatre show `Shrek` in which she stars as Princess Fiona. This follows her debut in the west end starring in the show `Legally Blonde`. I didn't get to see `Legally Blonde` so I was even more determined to see `Shrek`. Carley was sensational, and the entire show was brilliant. I would highly recommend it as fabulous family entertainment! Well done Carley, I am very much looking forward to the next one! And I am so proud of you! Do check out the pictures!

The Musicians Union

I also met up with Diane Widdison recently in London. Diane is the National Organiser for Musicians at the musician unions headquarters where I met her colleagues and we discussed the possibilities of the MU featuring videos (to be posted up on Youtube) of some of my lessons for educational purposes aimed at teacher training programmes at some point in the future. Obviously I will inform you before hand if your child is likely to be involved.

Up Holland High School Proms and the retirement of Alastair Roberts

In June, Helen Whimpany (my ex-pupil) and I attended a very special and the very last (in a series spanning 30 years) of Up Holland High School Proms concerts, which were originally set up by Alastair Roberts who retired from his position of Head of Music this Summer. It was a thrilling though also a touch sad occasion to say good-bye to Alastair who taught me and many of my students over the years. I am sure he will be greatly missed at the school. They don't come any better than Alastair! He is certainly legendary and has been a hugely inspiring and enthusiastic teacher to many, but I personally especially as a student at the school myself all those years ago have a lot to thank him for. We all wish him an enjoyable retirement.

Chetham's Piano Festival

This brilliant piano festival originally set up several years ago by Murray and Kathryn McLachlan, takes place annually during the last two weeks in August. As the teaching term has finished, I therefore just hope and pray piano school members will check this out, and attend if possible. If you have not yet attended with your child you have certainly missed out! I mention this in every newsletter each year! I attended an absolutely fantastic concert featuring the brilliant concert pianist Joanna MacGregor. I believe this was the first time she had made an appearance at the festival- based in London and incredibly in demand all over the world Chethams were lucky to have her along this time. She performed an interesting and varied programme of items including her own arrangements of some Piazzola Tangos, which were incredibly brilliant and exciting. Many of you may be familiar with her performances on many of the ABRSM exam CD Grade demos. It was truly a treat to hear her live, and this concert will certainly stand out in my mind as one of the most exciting I have attended.

Purchasing Books

As the purchasing of virtually everything via the Internet is becoming the `norm` I have decided that with regard to the purchasing of music books I shall in future leave this in your hands. I am finding many of my pupils (especially the teenagers) can find books cheaper on line than I can order them from Forsyth's or any other music shop. I will make a note (in your child's notebook) of the books I am recommending for your child, and I would be appreciative if you can order these books asap. If you are unable to find and order a book on line please let me know and I will order it for you.

Christmas Piano Concert 2012

This year I am inviting all pupils to a Christmas piano concert here at `The Old Vicarage` on Saturday 22nd December 2-5pm – arriving from 1.30pm for a prompt 2.00pm start. All pupils will be given invitations and may I ask you to encourage your child to practise their items in the weeks leading up to the event. Next year it may be that I decide to hire a larger venue. I should point out that in order to hire the hall again I will need to increase the charge per person as last year the event made a loss. I was hoping to raise funds for

a charity but in actual fact made a loss and underestimated cost of all expenses.

It is scheduled to be Saturday rather than Sunday with Christmas day falling on Tuesday. I felt Sunday was a little too close. This event will be for pupils only!

Gold Stars

With the gold star system (which has been in place for over a year now) proving to be incredibly, effective and a huge incentive to all pupils, I have decided to extend the ceiling age group to 13 years old (from previously ten). Basically the pupils are awarded a gold star at the end of a lesson where I am satisfied that all set targets have been tackled sufficiently, and a reasonable amount of progress achieved in each of the areas of study. Once ten gold stars have been awarded, the pupil can choose a prize. It was in reading Fanny Waterman's book 'On Piano Teaching and Performing' that I was inspired to introduce this highly motivating system. I wholeheartedly agree with Fanny Waterman that to quote in her words, "better results can be obtained this way than by telling a child that if they practice every day they *might* one day become a great pianist"... how very true indeed!

Please encourage your child to ensure they have worked on all targets set and remind them about the gold star award.

*****2011-2012 Exam Results*****

Before listing these I would like to highlight the fact that the Summer Term of exams had record breaking results in that four of my students, Joshua Mo, Bethany Hill, Anna Malinowski and Chloe Wilson- Moore all achieved full marks on one of their pieces. ! I am incredibly proud and delighted for you all. Well done! Truly an Olympic success!

Winter Term 2011

Practical Solo Piano

Richard Fisher Grade 3 Merit LCM

Theory of Music

Annie Hill Grade 2 Pass ABRSM
Joseph Sherry Grade 2 Pass ABRSM
Charlotte Hodson Grade 3 Merit ABRSM
Alice Heaton Grade 4 Merit ABRSM

Spring Term 2012

Practical Solo Piano

Stefan Wilkinson–Hill Grade 1 Merit ABRSM
Grace Whittle Grade 2 Pass ABRSM
Maria Malinowski Grade 1 Pass ABRSM
Anna Ashcroft Grade 3 Merit ABRSM
Christopher Hayman Initial Merit Trinity Guildhall

Summer Term 2012

Practical Solo Piano

Chloe Wilson- Moore Initial Distinction Trinity Guildhall
Anna Malinowski Initial Distinction Trinity Guildhall
Joshua Mo Grade 2 Distinction ABRSM
Bethany Hill Grade 3 Distinction ABRSM
Rebecca Brown Grade 2 Merit ABRSM

Theory of Music

John Mitchell Grade 1 Distinction ABRSM
Alex Barker Grade 1 Merit
Charlotte Hodson Grade 4 Merit

Practical Solo Violin

Elena Nam Grade 1 Merit Trinity Guildhall

Congratulations to you all!

With Very Best Wishes From *Catherine*