

Guzel Bilyalova

Studio Handbook and Policies

August 2017–May 2018

Welcome Letter

August 1st, 2017

Dear Parents and Students,

I'm very excited about the upcoming school year and the continuation of piano lessons. Welcome to another year – I hope you have had a restful summer.

Please read this letter very carefully. You will find Handbook, calendar, Studio Agreement in the Library and Downloads section in the Student Portal. This letter will be in the News and Blog Posts section.

Please fill out completely studio agreement, and bring this form with you for the first lesson or email it to me. This will save me a lot of time when I fill out applications for Contests, Festival, Competitions, Rally and etc.

Lessons will begin August 14 and will end May 24. Holidays for the year are as follows and are listed on the calendar: Thanksgiving (November 20–24), Christmas (December 21–January 3), Mardi Gras (February 12–16), and Easter (March 30–April 6). The dates not yet set are the Christmas recital in December and the End of the Year recital in May. If lessons are canceled due to storm in the Fall, make-ups will be taken from the Thanksgiving Holidays.

Monthly fee based on how many lessons in the month. You will receive invoice by email 7 days before billing date.

\$30 Registration fee will be added to the first bill. This one-time fee not only pays for the lesson time, but also includes preparation time, curriculum planning, instrument maintenance, studio libraries, studio licensed material, printed materials and supplements, teacher continuing education, and professional organization memberships.

Please read the handbook with regards to tuition payments and missed lessons. Tuition is due before the first lesson of each month unless you make other payment arrangements with me. *Because I had several issues with payments coming in on time, I will be enforcing a \$5 late fee this year.* If your payment is late, you will receive an email and the late fee will be due before the 20th or the student will not continue lessons the next month. Another very important change: *I will not do any rescheduling of lessons unless it is permanent.* I spent an inordinate amount of time last year rescheduling times, which took away from lesson planning and preparation. If I need to make any changes to the schedule you will know well in advance and I will find the most convenient possible time for your lesson. If there are cancellations I will make up missed lessons on a first come, first serve basis.

Please read the studio handbook carefully and call/email me with any questions you may have.

I am looking forward to a highly productive year – thank you for choosing me to teach your child.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of their lives and expose them to beautiful music!

Sincerely,

Guzel Bilyalova

Mission Statement

To share the gift of music by teaching students the specific skills of musicianship and musicality necessary to playing the piano, and to help students develop the confidence to share that gift through performance.

Parent Guidelines

Successful Lessons

Although the instructor assumes responsibility for piano lessons, the learning process is enhanced and is made successful with the effort of all involved: Student, Parent(s), and Instructor.

The Student

Students should carefully prepare for each lesson through careful and thoughtful daily practice. **Once a student has been accepted for study after the initial interview**, it is expected that practice will take place on a regular basis, and optimally six days (6) days a week! Choose one day to rest of your choice, preferably not the lesson day. Practicing shortly following a lesson is actually best, as the lesson material is fresh in the hands.

The Parent(s)

Parental involvement is essential in the learning process. Regardless of musical background or capability, parents can work with the instructor to make piano lessons and practice a positive, rewarding experience. Here are some suggestions:

1. Encourage the student in practice sessions by reminding them of practice directions on the assignment pad. It is especially important for parents to be an active part of the practice sessions with students age 6 and younger.
2. Provide the student with a well-lit, quiet, pleasant environment and an adequately maintained instrument.
3. Praise the student for accomplishments. This is a strong incentive for the student to continue making progress. Be an audience at least once a month—this encourages the student's continued interest and improvement and affirms the importance of consistent practice.
4. Most important: establishing a definite schedule for practice is essential to maintaining the commitment to lessons. Unless practice time is given a high priority, it will probably not take place. Locate the piano in an area free from distractions.

The Instructor

A good instructor is one who has a drive to educate themselves on a continuing basis in order to provide the most up-to-date information to their students. Ms. Bilyalova is a member of the following professional organizations: MTNA (The Music Teachers National Association) and NOMTA (New Orleans Music Teachers Association).

Practicing Guidelines

Students bring home a weekly assignment with a number of elements. There are new pieces to be learned, pieces to be memorized, challenging section*s, etc. In addition, from time to time, there are technical exercises and written work specifically designed to reinforce the various musical concepts that we may be working on at the time. Completing all of the assigned work from week to week is essential to the satisfactory progress of your child.

Students will determine their weekly practice commitment within the following suggested framework:

Grades K–3: 20+ minutes, six (6) times per week, minimum.

Grades 4 and above: 40+ minutes five (5) times per week, minimum.

Some students may find it necessary to practice a little bit more, while others may require less practice time. The most important factor, however, is that the student has some contact with the instrument on a daily basis with as few interruptions as possible.

New Student Interview Session

Before starting lessons, each new student is interviewed at the student’s home with no obligation. The interview gives the instructor a chance to get acquainted with the student, determine her or his degree and source of motivation, existing abilities, etc. It also allows for the parents to become familiar with the expectations, policies, and resources available to the student. The majority of students are accepted. Only those who seem dead set against piano lessons, suffer from any major behavioral or emotional problems, or have learning disabilities the instructor feels inadequately trained to handle, may be denied admission. If a student is denied admission, an e-mail will be sent to parents explaining the reasons and possible remedies, together with a referral list of other local piano instructors who may provide a better fit.

Recitals and Other Studio Performance Opportunities

Every student in the Destrehan Piano School has multiple performance opportunities each year. There are two studio-wide recitals, which take place in December and May of each year. Each is a wonderful opportunity for students and parents to meet and get to know each other. It is also a fantastic chance to see the students “in action.” Students, especially, not only get to show off their skills and accomplishments, but also gain motivation from seeing other students of different levels play—and a sense of perspective by watching those just starting as well as those far in advance of themselves.

Competitions, Auditions, and Masterclasses

Each student is encouraged to participate in city and state auditions, competitions, and masterclasses other than the Christmas and End of the Year recitals. Entering competitive auditions promotes a higher level of finished artistry in students and develops a high degree of confidence in public situations in which stress and anxiety have to be effectively controlled. It also helps prepare students to withstand the pressures of competitive sports, public speaking, and other similar activities. All parents should encourage their children to participate in at least one audition or competition during the year. Remember that, in most cases, we learn music to share it with others and, therefore, performing is a vital part of the music training experience.

The teacher and parents can decide together which events the student is ready for based on schedule and difficulty of repertoire. If a student does not complete preparation for an event and the fee is paid, no refund will be given. Please be aware that no special arrangements can be given for performance times for the competitions, which are based on the number of students who participate citywide. Fees for events range from \$15–\$30 payable usually a month before scheduled date.

Recital, Masterclass, and Competition Etiquette

Student recitals, masterclasses, and competitions can be tremendously fun and valuable experiences for young pianists. Unfortunately, they can also be a source of some stress and anxiety if preparations aren't complete and certain practices aren't followed. Here are some guidelines for performers and audience members.

Performers

Performers should wear appropriate attire. Girls in knee-length or longer dresses or slacks, boys in dress pants and buttoned dress shirts with ties preferred, or suits. No spaghetti straps, no platform shoes, flip-flops, or athletic footwear. Please do not wear dangling, jingling jewelry.

Of course, no one should feel obligated to spend money for new clothes. The overriding principle should be to simply do the best you can with what you already have on hand, and remember that proper attire shows respect to your audience as well as to the judge and yourself, for what you have accomplished.

Remember to practice in your outfit for a recital, shoes included.

Once it is your turn, rise quickly and walk up to the stage or performance room. Adjust the bench, pause and collect your thoughts, and begin when you are ready.

Performers should bow at the beginning and at the end of the performance for recitals. Instructor and Student will practice bowing properly.

Arrive at the requested time in order to learn where you are to perform and receive instructions for the performance.

With regards to Recitals, once the recital begins, please listen and be quiet.

During Recitals respect the other performers. Do the same at competitions. Unnecessary noise from whispering, talking, candy wrappers, etc. during a recital program is not acceptable.

Reading, studying, texting, and playing video games during a recital program are also inappropriate.

Recital Audience

Recitals are a special occasion and so it is customary to dress nicely.

Please arrive a little early in order to find a comfortable place to sit.

Make sure all your invited guests understand the importance of arriving on time. If they arrive late, it makes it difficult for those performing.

Please invite as many friends and family members as you'd like. Turn off all cell phones and any electrical devices that may produce sound.

Once the recital begins, please listen and be quiet. Crying babies should be taken out. They are not happy, and neither is the audience or the performer!

If you arrive late, please wait to enter between pieces when you hear applause.

Do not enter the recital hall or switch seats while someone is performing.

The soloist will bow—please applaud!

No whistling, yelling, or other loud methods of congratulations, especially prior to the performance please. The best way to show appreciation for the performance is with thunderous applause, and an occasional “bravo” at the end of an especially great performance.

Compositions that have movements or suites are, in general, performed without applause in the middle.

Please stay until the performance or event is completely over.

Flash photography is not appropriate during a performance. You may videotape and/or take flash photography as the performer is approaching or leaving the piano.

Enjoy! Your presence is the greatest affirmation!

Tuition, Billing, and Missed Lessons

Private Lessons

Tuition Fees

Tuition fees are based on how many lessons in the month and can be paid by semester or monthly. Fees are as follows: \$33.00 per half-hour lesson, \$44.00 per 45-minute lesson, and \$55.00 per hour long lesson. Discounts are given in 20% increments if there is more than one student in a family (so a half-hour lesson becomes \$26.40). **Books fees will be charged separately as new books need to be purchased.** Tuition is due by the 10th of each month or a \$5 late fee will be assessed on the following month's tuition. If there is ever a problem, simply call me and arrange late payment. No fee will be charged if arrangements are made in advance. Returned checks will be assessed a \$25.00 fee. If two checks are returned within a one-year period, all future payments will only be accepted in cash.

Missed Lessons and Cancellations

Every effort should be made to attend every scheduled lesson. You can cancel the lesson before 24 hours prior your scheduled time and pick a makeup lesson in the Student Portal. No makeup lessons will be provided if no notice is given 24 hours prior the lesson to the instructor and system will not allow to schedule a makeup lesson. Please choose to cancel your lesson in the event of a contagious illness, iè, your student has fever, has been to the doctor within the last 12 hours or is coughing, sneezing or nauseated. Many people come through my studio each week—and I prefer to not infect them.

Lessons missed by the teacher will be either made up if absolutely necessary at a convenient time for both student and teacher or credited to tuition fees in May. Students may participate in a studio swap list—if interested, please let the teacher know and a list of names and phone numbers will be provided. It will then be the responsibility of the parents to arrange any changes and contact the teacher with that change. The teacher will make no changes unless it is permanent.

If you don't want a make-up lesson,

Termination of Lessons

Parents and students must be aware that teaching piano is my passion, but also my livelihood. Although I do not make families sign lengthy contracts, I require one month's advance notice for termination of lessons or the following month's tuition will be due. This notice can be verbal or via e-mail.

Helpful Information

Contact with the Instructor

Parents and students are free to contact me whenever they need assistance or guidance.

Phone Number: 504-914-9066

Since I spend much of my time teaching, I usually do not answer phone calls when you place them. However, I always check my cell phone after I am done teaching every lesson, so that I get and respond to any messages that clients leave right away. Messages left during normal studio hours will be returned as soon as possible. You can also text me at any time at the number listed above, provided the text is very short. Please do not send me long extended messages (more than 2–3 lines).

I also usually receive e-mails. The studio's e-mail address is:

guzel@destrehan-piano-lessons.com.

Music Purchases

Additional music may be purchased from LaFargues Music Store. They can also be reached by phone at 504-831-3008. It is always a good idea to call ahead and make certain that the required materials are in stock. Otherwise, they can be ordered by phone. Their address is: 1828 Veterans Blvd, Metairie, LA 70002 (One block west of Bonnabel Blvd. at the corner of Helios Ave & Veterans Blvd).

Summer Lessons

Due to the intensive and demanding nature of piano lessons, students are expected to enroll in piano lessons during the summer term on those weeks when they are available in town. **In order to keep your spot during the next year, the student must attend at least 4 lessons during the summer.** Suspending piano lessons for the entire summer break amounts to not receiving instruction for one fourth of the entire year.

Taking into consideration Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Spring breaks, students already get several weeks off per year.

During the summer, I am offering an opportunity called “Intensive Study,” where students get an opportunity to take daily lessons for one week. Some of my students are beginning to participate in various competitions and this would be a fantastic opportunity for them to work on pieces for those competitions. This isn’t only for those who want to participate in competitions, however. Any student would benefit from the “Intensive Study.” The student could also work on various other skills that we don’t have time for during the year such as sight-reading, ear training, musicianship, and/or theory.

Buying a Piano

Buying a piano is one the most important investments you will make toward becoming a proficient pianist. Unlike other household goods, pianos are designed to last 50 or more years, so long as you provide them with proper and consistent care.

Parents are sometimes tempted to purchase a very inexpensive and poor-quality piano initially, to gauge whether the student will continue with lessons for the long term. Although that approach is somewhat understandable, it has two pitfalls:

Buying a low-quality piano may actually impede the progress of the student, so that he or she becomes uninterested and discontinues lessons.

A well cared for piano, will depreciate relatively little over the years so that, if the student ceases to be interested in the instrument, or simply needs to upgrade to an even better instrument, the used piano may be traded or sold for close to the amount of the original investment.

For these two reasons, I highly recommend buying a good-quality, reliable instrument, even if it is used. Most families will be well served by the three major manufacturers: Yamaha, Kawai, and Young Chang. New Orleans has two good piano stores: LaFargue’s Pianos and Hall Piano Company, providing a wide variety on instruments at varying costs. I will be glad to help in any way possible when you are ready to purchase or to upgrade your present instrument. For those in need of a piano tuner, I recommend Matt McWilliams (504-669-9071).

Miscellaneous Information

All students should have a well-maintained piano (tuned once a year) and a metronome.

Fingernails must remain short.

Gum chewing is NOT allowed in the studio- please dispose of gum before entering.

Please bring something to keep younger siblings occupied and quiet in the room.

Parents may attend lessons at any time.

Please park ONLY in my driveway or in front of my home.

Please make sure the student has all necessary books for their lessons each week.

If a student arrives for a lesson and the teacher is not here, please wait 15 minutes before departing in case the teacher is caught in traffic.