

BACK TO SCHOOL

ON THE COVER

North Hollywood-based Southern California Piano Academy offers music lessons in-person or online

By Clint Lohr

The Southern California Piano Academy in North Hollywood represents 80 years of music instruction on two continents. They recently opened a secondary studio in Santa Barbara.

The music school's website details how all instructors are degreed, professional musicians who teach their art to musicians at all levels, as well as children from area families. The instructors include alumni and faculty from the music schools at UCLA, Cal State Northridge, Montreux Jazz Conservatory in Switzerland, USC, Tulane University and the Grove School of Music.

Instruction is even available via Skype sessions for private lessons and international students in advanced jazz studies, conducting, composition and classical piano studies.

Laurie Robinson, one of the school's directors, who is a published composer, songwriter and vocalist, said that consistency is important in music lessons, and most of her local students come from the Valley and the Hollywood Hills. Robinson says they range in age from five to senior citizens.

"We recommend, especially with beginning students, finding an instructor who is easy to get to. Parents and adults have a lot to manage these days, and getting to music lessons and practicing should be easy to accomplish. However, many of our advanced kids and adults come from farther away in the L.A. area, specifically because they prefer to study with us. Students really need to be able to play music that is personally meaningful to them, so we always save room for this as an adjunct to their traditional lesson plan.

"For adults," Robinson continues, "it's 100 percent based on their long- and short-term goals." Today she says many of the children's favorites include the popular music of video games and film, like "Star Wars" "Harry Potter" and "Mario Bros.," traditional blues, even artists like Katy Perry and Lady Gaga. She says children "inevitably choose music that is far more advanced than their current level of study. They are driven to master it because they love it."

"For example, popular music can have very advanced rhythmic counterpoint and subdivisions, as complicated as parts of a Bach Fugue. "But the kids don't know that. They just like to play the music. We can put a proper Fugue in front of them far earlier than waiting for their method book to catch up," Robinson said.

The school also offers a detailed handout on how to get started learning the piano, whether it be on a grand piano or small electronic keyboard. "An expensive instrument should never be a barrier to learning for anyone," she said.

Southern California Piano Academy is located at 5435 Cabuenga Blvd., Suite E, in North Hollywood. For further information visit SoCalPianoAcademy.com or call (818) 505-6846.



Max Watson, age 11, at the piano during kids' masterclass at the Southern California Piano Academy.



Maestro Emmanuel Fratianni and Laurie Robinson, professional musicians and educators, bring their expertise as directors of the Southern California Piano Academy.

ON THE COVER PICTURE:

Owen Southey, age 11, at the piano with instructor Jackie Miclau, during his music lesson at the Southern California Piano Academy.

Photos by SoCal Piano Academy.