



PIANO ALIVE

at Encore Creative Center

Info Pack

In-Person Multi-Keyboard Group Learning
Online and Printed Class Companion Materials (*NEW for 2023-2024!*)



"Class is done? That felt 2 minutes!" -10 year old Piano Alive student

"It's hard to believe that such serious music can be presented in a way that's just so fun." - Piano Alive Parent

"This program has brought me so far so soon. I wish this was how I was taught piano when I was a child, but at least now I can know piano this way for the rest of my life." -Adult Piano Alive Student



What is Piano Alive?

Piano Alive is a holistically-graded music method for all ages to progress through, within a group setting. Based off **practical theory**, it enables pianists to **love playing** both **on the page** and **off the page**, and know **the why** and **the how** behind it. Younger ages learn through color and games, older ages learn through **musical "math"** and quizzes, and everyone learns through **real-world creative collaboration** and songs that don't bore learners or listeners.

Piano Alive connects students with a range of learning styles to music as a whole, with piano as the tool to express themselves and experience excellence in technique, application of amazing theory that matters, and the joy of group playing.

This refreshing method has been developed over the past several years by full time instructor and pianist Danika Starrhart. The results are proven to provide an exceptional foundation and creative springboard in piano -- the kind of method and pedagogy we wished we would've had in past generations!

Our track record shows... 95% of students who take a trial class sign up for one or more seasons. 80% of students who have complete a Piano Alive season are still studying/playing piano today. Long-term Piano Alive students transition seamlessly into learning whatever classical pieces they desire, writing songs and improvising intelligently, and playing in groups with confidence.



About Danika Starrhart

Known for inspiring the highest potential from her students and her welcoming, down to earth nature, Danika has been a full time music teacher for 20 years. She is a consummate creative performer on the piano who has released multiple vocal-instrumental albums, and her compositions have won awards both in film festival circuits and in statewide and national singer-songwriter associations. As a symphonic composer and multi-instrumentalist, Danika has conducted local orchestras and performed at concerto level on 7 different instruments. She currently performs with her group Starrhart Symphonic, scores independent films, and owns Encore Creative Center in Idaho.

Piano Alive Class Levels

- Pre-Practice, age 3-5* -- intro to Concept Group A**
Active and exploratory, but with no weekly assignments
- Ready-to-Play, age 4-6* -- Concept Group A**
The youngest beginners who are ready to practice at home
 - Level 1, age 6-8* -- Concept Group A+B**
 - Level 2, age 6-8* -- Concept Group C**
- Level 1, age 9-12* -- Concept Group A+B+C**
- Level 2, age 9-12* -- Concept Group C+D**
- Level 3, age 9-12* -- Concept Group D+E**
- Teen-Adult Beginner -- Concept Group A+B+C+D**
- Teen-Adult Advancing Classical -- Concept Group E+F**
- Teen-Adult Advancing Off-the-Page -- Concept Group E+G**

**all age groups are average recommendations*

***see following page for concept group specifics*

Be assured it is normal to spend a year or more in any one level (but also fine, on some exceptions, if the student is able to move forward more quickly). Every class week is a new adventure you'll never tire of.

All review is not redundant, but is covered in a way that provides new perspective on ever-present foundational skills.

Concept Groups

(see following pages)

Concept Groups are a basic framework to attempt linear measurement on what is naturally a holistic process of absorption that strengthens by time and use. Different students will master different concepts on different weeks at their own development pace. Class groups are small enough where each student's progress is noticed, and personalized tips and challenges are able to be provided.

You and/or your teacher will check every area you are **confident** in to help determine your Piano Alive placement! Any unchecked concepts are what you can expect to learn within each level. You will never regret having more reinforcement, strengthening, and ear training at whatever level you enter into.

Remember to always be bold to ask about any concept you're curious about, even if it's before or after your current concept group placement.

Concept Group A

- Identify high/low sounds and directions
 - Identify finger names
- Move each finger independently in bubble shape
 - Keep steady beat at three different speeds
- Create distinct volume (dynamic) differences
 - Clap quarter note/rest rhythm patterns
 - Identify sets of 2 black keys/3 black keys
 - Identify C, D, E
 - Identify F, G, A, B
- Play 5-finger scale in C: CDEFGFEDC, each hand
 - Play 5-finger songs in C, each hand
 - Identify clefs and space vs. line notes
 - Play intervals 2nd-5th in each hand

Concept Group B

- Name C-G on each clef
 - Play 5-finger scale in C, hands together
- Play 5-finger melodies with two hands together in unison
 - Repeat short melody pattern across each octave
- Clap and count quarter, half, dotted half, and whole notes/rests
 - Play and identify intervals up to an octave
 - Play full octave C Major scale with crossing
 - Play 5-finger scales in Am, Dm, G
- Transpose 5-finger songs between C, Am, Dm, and G
 - Improvise a one-handed melody in position
 - Find C, F, G major triads across the piano
 - Understand and play block vs. broken chords
- Play and transition between I and V7 chords with eyes closed
- Play songs with one hand on melody and the other hand on I to V7 chords
 - Identify and play dynamic range markings
 - Understand 3/4 vs. 4/4 time signatures

Concept Group C

- Understand major to minor scale relationship
- Play 3 relative major/minor scales and know their key signatures
 - Identify and play primary and secondary chords
 - Create and follow 4-chord patterns in beat
 - Improvise on top of chord accompaniment
- Improvise thoughtfully with one hand in free positions
 - Sightread to the quarter beat
- Understand common articulation markings
 - Play rounds and duets with the class
 - Play 2 hands with opposing rhythms
 - Play cross hand arpeggios
 - Read easy lead sheets
- Clap and count up to 16th notes/rest (Beat Tree mastery)
 - Memorize melodies with chords
- Understand 6/8, 9/8, 12/8, and cut time signatures

Concept Group D

- Use circle of fifths
- Understand and use chord families
- Play 6 relative major/minor keys, multi octave, hands together
- Understand and memorize whole/half step patterns for major/minor scales
 - Sightread to the eighth beat
- Understand and play inversions all across the piano for 6 majors/minors
 - Use clean pedaling in songs
- Create and play 8-bar chord patterns
 - Play multi-position songs
 - Add trills to songs
- Understand pentatonic and melodic and harmonic minor scales
- Understand and use suspended chords
 - Play easy pop charts
- Play simplified classical literature
 - Memorize whole songs

Concept Group E

- Play 12 relative major/minor scales (hands together and octave blocks), arpeggios, and inversions
 - Mix scales and mix inversions
- Understand and play the 12 bar blues form
 - Sightread to the sixteenth beat
- Understand and play augmented and diminished triads
 - Play intermediate classical literature (think Sonatas)
 - Play rock or pop charts of choosing
 - Play easy ragtime (syncopation)
 - Play new age genre

Concept Group F

- Understand and express dynamic contouring of a song
 - Understand and use speed reading techniques
 - Analyze structure of sheet music and song form
 - Sightread anything, slowly
 - Understand complex meters
 - Simplify sheet music
- Play advanced classic literature (think Joplin, Debussy)

Concept Group G

- Understand 3rd stacking to create any chord (7th, 9th, and beyond)
- Understand physical-emotional content and relationship of chords
 - Create moving melodies from the mind
 - Play consciously by ear
 - Dress up chord charts and lead sheets in various genres
 - Expand simpler sheet music on the fly
 - Improvise advanced melodies and chords from scratch
- Improvise in call and response collaboration with the class
- Create chords and harmonization for an existing melody