



GSM Program Overview: Information for Potential Students

I. The Russian traditions:

The Program is based on the Russian traditions of musical and instrumental training. The main goals in this approach are to learn to play an instrument with a fine touch, beautiful tone, and exactness of rhythm, as well as to develop an imaginative mind and expressive soul. Study of the chosen instrument consists of developing sight reading skills, technical skills, and mastering a repertoire. Technique, i.e. scales, exercises, and etudes, are to be studied regularly and consistently. Good sight reading is not difficult for many students. It is simply the result of careful and regular preparation in daily practice. Each student's repertoire should be carefully selected to meet the student's technical capability yet challenging enough to ensure continuing development of technique and musicality.

II. The GSM Curriculum:

The GSM Curriculum was created in 1991 and revised in 2008-2009. Currently, it includes requirements for each instrument with musical disciplines by levels from Preparatory level to Level 12. The curriculum allows flexibility to adjust to the individual abilities of the student and to an appropriate pace of study, as well as flexibility in selecting the pieces for a student that will best motivate their learning.

III. Choosing the number of lessons per week:

A student's progress depends on several key factors: the number of lessons per week, parents' involvement, and effective collaboration between student, teacher, and parents. Twice-a-week instrumental lessons are recommended because we have determined that this schedule will allow the student to develop better habits in posture, hand position, using proper muscles, and so on. The student will also be able to learn more material and have more frequent input from the teacher, which is important at the beginning to build the foundations for later success. However, a single weekly lesson is common and, with parents' assistance at home, will produce good results as well, though the progress will obviously be a bit slower. **In either case, parent presence at the lessons is recommended and help at home is required.**

IV. Components of each instrumental lesson at GSM:

The important components of each lesson are 1) Sight Reading—learning the notes; 2) Technique—developing the finger technique; 3) Theory—learning the foundations of music theory in order to understand music they play; and 4) Repertoire—learning of the selected music pieces. During the lessons student is working on musicality, musical expressions, and character as well as on personal confidence and presentation.

V. GSM books:

The books used in the program are selected very carefully for each student with a consideration of the student's ability to learn, his/her age group, and individual taste. It is very important for music to be appealing to the student to become a motivational force for learning. Books as well as pieces required by the GSM Curriculum have appealing melodies that trigger the student's imagination and stimulate expressive playing.

VI. GSM's accountabilities:

The teachers are accountable for their work. There is a process of periodical teacher evaluations by GSM's musical director. There is also faculty collaboration during various discussions at the regular faculty meetings. Finally, there is accreditation process which holds the faculty & administration accountable by WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges). The students in turn demonstrate their accountability through their performance in the school's Evaluations and Recitals.

VII. GSM's collaborative work:

At GSM collaborative work is an important part of our program, setting us apart from other music educational establishments. Throughout the musical director's tenure at GSM, she has collaborated with teachers to guide students' progress, to assist teachers in selecting proper material, and to advise in handling various individual issues. In our efforts to provide GSM students with collaborative expertise, we offer periodic individual consultations to all students who would like to have another expert opinion. Over the years, the musical director has regularly conducted private consultations apart from the normal lessons with the student's teacher. Such consultations provide a student with another angle of interpretation or technical aspect of his or her performance, which can be extremely useful. Such collaboration does not diminish the work of the main teacher, but rather enriches it.