



## PORTLAND METRO PERFORMING ARTS

WWW.PDXMETROARTS.ORG

503-408-0604

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### Help Your Child Get The Most Out Of Their Music Lessons

#### 1. Starting at the Right Age

For children, starting at the right age is a key element to their success. If a child is put into lessons too soon they may feel overwhelmed, frustrated and want to stop lessons. The last thing you want to do is turn a child off to music just because they had an unpleasant experience which could have been prevented. Waiting until the right age will allow them to progress much faster.

##### **PMPA age recommendations**

**Age 6 and under**—If a preschooler has a desire to start music, a group introductory class will give them a good foundation in music basics which will be helpful in later private lessons. At this age, private lessons generally do not work as the child has not yet experienced the formal learning environment of school and learns more effectively through the game-oriented group environment. Our Creative Music class is an excellent option.

**Piano & Violin**—At PMPA first grade is the youngest that we start children in private piano lessons. At this age they have begun to develop longer attention spans and can retain material with greater ease.

**Guitar**—9 years old is the earliest we accept guitar students. Guitar playing requires a fair amount of pressure on the fingertips to press on the strings. Younger students generally have smaller hands and inadequate strength to play comfortably.

**Flute**—Due to the need for lung capacity we start classes at age 9. By then students also have the ability for the breath control needed to effectively play.

**Voice**—Private and semi-private vocal classes begin at age 12. Due to the physical nature of voice lessons; proper breathing techniques, development of the vocal chords and breath control; younger bodies are not yet developed enough for the rigors of vocal technique.

#### 2. Have Fun

Music should be something that you enjoy for a lifetime. Try not to put unrealistic expectations on yourself or your children to progress too quickly. Everyone learns at a different pace and the key is to be able to enjoy the journey.

#### 3. Take Lessons in a Professional Teaching Environment

Learning music is not just a matter of having a qualified teacher, but also having an environment that is focused on music education. In a professional school environment, a student cannot be distracted by TV, pets, ringing phones, siblings or anything else. With only ½ to one hour of lesson time per week, our environment can produce better results since the only focus at that time is learning music. Students are also motivated by hearing peers who are at different levels. At PMPA lessons are not just a hobby or side-line for the teacher but a professional commitment.

#### **4. Make Practicing Easier**

As with anything, improving in music takes practice. One of the main obstacles to music training is the battle between parents and students over practice. Here are some ways to make practicing easier and more effective.

**Time**—Set the same time every day to practice so it becomes a part of a routine or habit. This works particularly well for children. The earlier in the day the practicing can occur; the less reminding is required by parents. Also consider reserving one of PMPA's spaces, for a nominal charge, several times a week for practice.

**Repetition**—Especially for a young child, 20 to 30 minutes can seem like an eternity. Instead of rehearsing in one block, use several smaller moments instead. Practice the assigned work several times each day. The child then pays attention to the music rather than the clock.

**Rewards**—Praise is the most coveted award; there is no substitute for a pat on the back for a job well done. You can also provide occasional rewards for successful practicing. In class our teachers will also see the positive results of the students practicing.

#### **5. Use Recognized Teaching Materials**

PMPA uses excellent materials that have been developed by professional music educators. These materials are researched, continually upgraded and improved to make learning easier. This ensures that no important part of learning will be left out.

#### **6. Performances**

It is important that students be given an opportunity to perform in a supportive environment. PMPA has appropriate performance options for all levels of students. The Open House Concert, held each year in June, is an informal concert that provides even the youngest musicians with a positive un-pressured performance experience. It is also helpful to take your child to live concerts or watch them together on TV as often as possible. Seeing musicians onstage provides encouragement for students to continue their own training.



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