

# BENEFITS OF MUSIC EDUCATION

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Music is a language imprinted on our hearts and stamped into our being. The God who created us created music, and he designed us to enjoy it. Before we are even born, the rhythm of our mother's beating heart sets us on a path of musical delight. More than just engaging our ears, music engages our hearts. Music speaks to us on a level beyond our intellect; it has the ability to touch us deeply. It is the universal language that we do not need to speak in order to understand. You might have no musical training, yet you know what it is to have music speak to you.

With training and practice we can learn to speak it as well.

Learning any new language is tedious work. Not only must we learn to decode symbols on a page, we need to know what sound accompanies each one. It's slow and disjointed. It's filled with mistakes. You learn basic words and terms, not really sure how they will all come together to produce anything meaningful. Before you know it you're able to string a sentence together; or you play a simple melody. It's a glimpse of what's coming, but fluency is a ways down the road. There is so much more to learn before it begins to feel natural. Before you can sit down to read a book or have a conversation in a new language, before you can sit and play a piece of music, you will need to commit to a lot of study and practice. Eventually fluency will greet you as a well earned reward.



My heart leapt with anticipation as I ran home from school, and my lungs swelled with the fresh springtime air. I was eight years old, and this was the day I had been waiting for: today was my first piano lesson! I watched the clock impatiently, and when the time was right I bolted out the door. I had two options to get there, so of course I took the shortcut.

Fifteen minutes later I was back at my house, feet cold, socks muddy, face soiled by tears and my brow furrowed in frustration. The shortcut had found me ankle deep in the mud and now I was late for my first lesson.



My mom assured me she would call and postpone until next week. She got me cleaned up and settled my anxious heart. This was the beginning of my music education journey. I started in the mud, humbled. I started where anyone learning something does: at the beginning.

I did eventually make it to my first lesson. And the one after that. I seized the opportunity to learn to play an instrument: a chance none of my 4 older siblings had been given. Yes, it was tedious at times (scales, anyone?). Yes, there were days (and weeks) that I didn't want to practice. But were my nine years of piano lessons worth it? Absolutely. And I wanted that for my kids.



Given the fact that we homeschool and I know how to play the piano, people are often surprised to hear that I do not teach my own kids how to play. When we were considering music lessons for our oldest son, a friend of mine wisely counselled me to have someone else teach him from the start, even though I was capable of teaching him for the first few years. As I joyfully shoulder the burden of teaching my kids all their other subjects, I don't want music to be an afterthought that gets the least of my delight and energy. At the end of a school day I'm tired and my patience sometimes runs thin: I don't want that to be the place my kids learn to play music. I want their passion for music to be ignited by someone who has the energy to teach from joy. Don't we all have memories of a teacher who loved what they taught, and found that their delight was contagious? That's what a good music teacher does! That's what our piano teachers have done for our kids.

If you want to get your child started with music lessons but have no idea how to find a teacher, start asking around! Talk to people in your area and ask for recommendations. I'm sure you'll find that people who have a teacher they love are more than happy to tell you about them.

Whether you decide to find a teacher to help your kids learn music or you venture to teach them yourself, I believe there are great benefits to pursuing a musical education. Here are just some of them:

### **CREATIVE AND INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT**

Often we tend to pigeon-hole people into being either creative or intellectual. It's that whole left-brained or right-brained stereotype: our daughter is artistic, but our son builds LEGO like a little engineer. Often we think these strengths are mutually exclusive, but music draws on both areas. Is music an art? Absolutely. Is it precise and logical? Yes. To speak the language of music well, a musician has the ability to marry two things that often seem to be at odds with one another.





## **A MEANS OF SELF EXPRESSION**

Some of our kids have no trouble expressing their thoughts and feelings: you don't even have to ask and it all comes tumbling out. Others are closed books and it can be difficult to figure them out. Maybe we even expect the expressive ones to be musical, and those who are less free with their emotions to want to talk about facts over feelings. When the basics of learning to decode the language have been mastered, music is a medium through which anyone can express themselves.

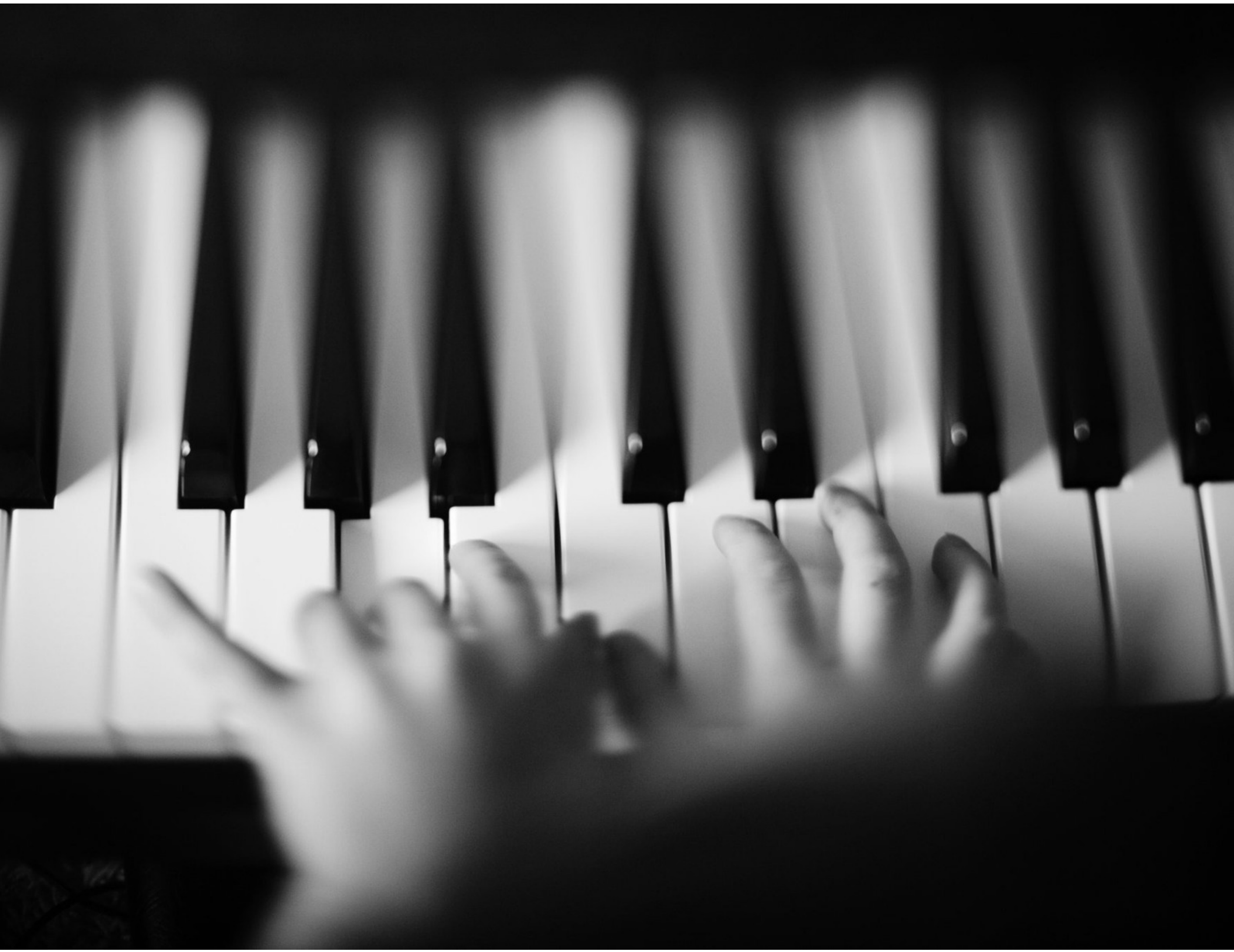
Whether openly emotional, or someone who keep their feelings locked up, music gives our kids an avenue to let those feelings out with beauty and vulnerability. Music teaches both restraint and expression.

## **GROWTH IN SKILL AND CONFIDENCE**

I love seeing the victory in my kids' eyes when they master a song that they had previously deemed to be too difficult. Doubt gives way to belief, and the limits of what is possible lift to new heights. A song that might have begun with jolting rigidity as a melody was first learned now flows smoothly and sings with emotion as a triumphant child sees that they once again had what it took to do something they didn't think they could. They learn to believe that they can accomplish great things, and are driven to compete with themselves for their best possible performance.

## **SHARING WITH OTHERS**

The ultimate end to all this creative and intellectual expression and growth is not to have children who think very highly of themselves. The ultimate goal I have in providing my kids with a rich musical education is to raise kids who know that their gifts and abilities are not for serving themselves. As a Christian, I believe that our lives are meant to be lived in service of others, as Jesus served us by laying down his life. Sharing the ability to play music is a very practical way to bring joy to others as well as a great way to serve the church, since we are a people who love to sing! We sing to the God who created us and put a song in all our hearts, and it is my hope and prayer that my kids will one day want to use their musical abilities to bless the church. As the church, all the music we create and enjoy on this earth is preparing our hearts for a great homecoming party at the end of days when Jesus welcomes us home. What a glorious song that will be!





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kim is wife to Clay and homeschooling mom to five awesome kids. She is a follower of Jesus living the unexpected adventure of being a church planter's wife in SK, Canada. She dabbles in gardening, bakes for stress relief, and always starts the day with eggs and an Americano.

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