

## Development of Proficient Musical Skills

There are countless opportunities for a skillful pianist. I see learning music not as a reason to learn solely for one's own enjoyment. I see learning music as an avenue to serve others. The more proficient a student is in their instrument, the more occasions they will have to step up to the plate and offer their services. There are three things a student should keep in mind to develop his musical skills to the best of his ability so that he is ready to serve.

The first area is spending the time necessary to work at his instrument. Music is a time commitment. There are rarely shortcuts to learning a skill well. A student must be intentional about the time he sets aside for his instrument. Ways of doing this include the following:

- Simply add practicing to the student's homework assignment. This may seem like a brain twister, but practicing should be treated like homework: it is due and it is important.
- Set aside a specific time to practice each day of the week. Schedule it ahead of time.
- Be aware of what might be distracting or hindering. Eliminate those items to the best of your ability (i.e. tablets, phones, tv's, radio, busy time of day, etc.) and/or schedule around them.

Practicing, just like homework, should not be treated as a when-you-want, or a how-you-want. The student respects the teacher's time and his own when he diligently practices his lesson plan each week.

Being diligent is a second area the student must pursue. Diligence is having the initiative and persistence to thoroughly work at something that is difficult. Learning an instrument will provide many difficult assignments and tasks. Diligence is key to staying the course in thoroughly learning one's instrument.

Thirdly, a student will develop proficient musical skills by studying multiple areas of music. One who is solely classically trained will excel as a concert pianist. However, when a pianist is needed to accompany a congregation, more knowledge is required than a study of the four musical eras. Improvisation, chord progressions, lead sheets, extensive knowledge of scales and proficient note reading is crucial to becoming a proficient pianist. This is true of all instruments.

A musician who puts in the time necessary to grow in his area of music, chooses to be diligent even when the going gets tough, and studies to become a well-rounded

instrumentalist is well on his way to doing just that. This is the way to develop proficient musical skills.