Why I Play the Piano Essay

I want to share music with people. Some of my earliest memories of music come from sitting in the car with my mom on the way to school. The drive usually took around thirty minutes to an hour, and during that time, my mom would play classical piano music, especially *Chopin*. I remember sitting in the car and listening to the piano fill the silence during our long drives. At the time, I knew little about classical music or understood how difficult the pieces were. I knew that I liked the way they sounded: Sometimes calm and peaceful, other times powerful and dramatic. I wanted to know what it felt like to create my own style of music. I still remember the first time sitting in front of the piano; I enjoyed playing the different notes and playing freely. The only thing that I was afraid of was not playing it correctly and using both hands to play.

I started playing the piano around the age of 6. My parents found this music store in a shopping mall that teaches many different instruments. Unlike other piano classes, my first teacher decided that she wanted me to learn about “JESUS”! She spent the first 20 minutes of class reading the bible and praying. Then the last 10 minutes were spent learning very little, maybe a couple of notes. As a six-year-old who simply wanted to learn how to play, I felt frustrated because I couldn’t learn anything. I had finally gotten this chance to learn, but I felt like I was barely learning anything. This continued for one and a half years until I started to complain to my parents about the teacher, so we decided to get a new teacher. Even though my first experience with my first teacher was disappointing, I did not want to quit piano. During that year and a half, my mom continued playing piano music during the car rides to school. Listening to those pieces reminded me why I wanted to learn the piano in the first place. I imagined myself being able to play the same pieces one day and share music with others. I knew I wasn’t learning much from my teacher, but my passion for piano was still there with me.

On the first day with my second teacher, I stood in the studio with my parents, waiting for this teacher we’d never seen before or heard of. They were already late for the lesson, and there was another teacher at the studio who didn’t have a student during that time and offered to teach me instead since he was looking for more students. This is how I met my current teacher, “Boris”. He didn’t start with the basics and went straight to teaching me a new piece of music, which was very different from my other teacher. At first, I was really scared of Boris because his face looked scary. I was intimidated by how Boris had this serious expression and rarely smiled. Since he was Russian, he had a strong accent, so I wasn’t used to the way he spoke, which made him seem more intimidating. As an introvert who didn’t like talking to a lot of people, especially people that I’ve never met or don’t know. I was afraid of getting yelled at or getting looked down on. Although I was afraid of making mistakes during my

lessons, practicing at home with my mom was completely different. Every day, we would sit next to each other at the piano for one hour. Whenever I played the wrong note, we would sometimes joke around. Instead of feeling pressured to play everything perfectly, I would relax more. These moments made practicing feel less something I had to do and more like something I looked forward to. I realized that piano wasn't just about learning notes or playing correctly. It was a way for me to spend time with my mom and create memories together. As I continued taking lessons with Boris, I slowly realized that my first impression of him was completely wrong. Even though he rarely smiled, he was actually patient and wanted me to improve. Whenever I played the wrong note, he would help me understand what went wrong. Over time, I became less afraid of making mistakes and began to understand that making mistakes was a normal part of learning. Boris taught me that becoming a better pianist wasn't about being perfect but having the patience and determination to keep improving.

While learning with Boris, I got to learn a lot of new pieces and learned many different genres, such as jazz and classical. I really enjoy learning jazz music because it can be catchy, and it makes people enjoy it and start dancing. My favorite song to play is called *Tango*. Boris showed me that making mistakes did not mean I'm bad at the piano—a mistake was just something I needed to improve and work on, and that helped me to be confident. Every time I played the wrong keys or played too fast, we went back to it and went over the mistake that I made. I felt like I learned so much more from my mistakes and improved. I learned that improvement was so much better than perfection. He also taught me what musical is; it's the difference between playing it soft and hard. Making it seem like it's a dramatic part and how it leads up to the main chorus.

During the pandemic, we had this system where we would do the class online, in which I would have to use three different devices: one to show my piano, the next to look at my teacher's piano, and last to have the metronome, which is an app for counting beats. This lasted until quarantine was over, when we were informed that the store where I've done all my piano classes is closing and moving to a different location. We decided to keep the online lessons; this continued for 3 months, until he wanted to do something new, which was coming to my house to teach, since it was easier to teach me new things. This also allowed me to know that my teacher really likes to drink coffee, so every time he comes, we always make him a cup of coffee. This shift helped me get to know my teacher more personally, since we got to know what he prefers and doesn't. It also allowed us to talk more because we had more time to talk without anyone waiting for us to be finished. He told me some of his hobbies, such as that he does karate once a week and also swims and bikes every day. I got to learn that Boris is a fuller person, not just a piano player.

I also started to understand why accomplishing something difficult on the piano is rewarding. The biggest reason why I continue playing the piano is that I enjoy learning new things and want to share music with other people. The best reward that I've received was winning first place twice in piano because it showed my parents that everything they put me through for piano class was worth it. Every Tuesday and Saturday driving me back to San Francisco so I could do my piano class. Spending more than 1.5K a year so I'm able to have piano lessons. Before, I always didn't have time to do in-person classes because I had many different extracurriculars, such as dance and art classes, but now, after I quit all my other activities, I see my teacher once or twice a week, depending on whether he has other students who live near my house who need to do in-person classes.

Looking back, I am grateful that I had this experience with the piano; it allowed me to understand the reason why I should practice because of the fear that my old piano teacher showed me. Boris showed me how encouragement and practice can improve how you play and the emotions you want to put into it. The difference between my two experiences with different teachers taught me that the person who teaches you can influence you in a way that you can see yourself and believe in what you are capable of doing and enjoying it. The most important thing that piano taught me was that struggling with something doesn't mean you're not good at it or give up. It's the patience, effort, and approach that you take. Someone who's there to believe in you and there to support you the whole time. If I hadn't met my current teacher, I would have never known how to play an instrument that I enjoy and never discovered what it could do for me in the future. Learning the piano is important in this day and age because many hobbies are getting replaced by AI, and the piano doesn't require technology, only your fingers.