



Community Education Winter 2024

Piano for Beginners

Instructor: Aron Bernstein, M.M., B.M.

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Community and Continuing Education webpage: <https://www.clark.edu/cce/>

Be the pianist you always wanted to be! Whether you took lessons a long time ago or never, this class is expertly tailored for beginning students who want to see immediate results. Gain a solid understanding of scales, chords, intervals, rhythm, and further sight-reading skills. We will also learn to improvise, compose our own music, and play as an ensemble. Let's demolish the myth that you're either musical or you're not. From Beethoven to Broadway, Ragtime to Rock, we'll build a lasting foundation of skills and the confidence to meet new challenges.

Learning Outcomes: as a result of taking this course, students will:

- 1) Learn to play dozens of songs and pieces from a variety of genres, starting with the very first class.
- 2) Acquire the basics of rhythm and meter and put them to use in class ensembles.
- 3) Begin a vocabulary of chords and chord progressions that can be used to harmonize many popular and classic melodies.
- 4) Learn to improvise music with a minimum of knowledge—and, more importantly—reduce any fear of improvisation.
- 5) Begin to read music and develop the ear-eye connection.
- 6) Have fun with the knowledge that everyone has something to bring to music! It's all about what you do with what you've got.

Course Schedule:

- Week 1, Jan 9: Keyboard geography, good piano posture, introduction to rhythm and solfege, pentascales, learning your first songs on the right hand, improvisation.
- Week 2, Jan 16: Introducing the left hand, our first ensemble playing, more rhythm, introducing meter
- Week 3, Jan 23: Learning staff notation, clefs, beginning to sight-read, learning the I and V7 chords.
- Week 4, Jan 30: Improvising with I and V7 chords, playing two-hand melodies.
- Week 5, Feb 6: Hand extensions and finger techniques, more ensemble playing, half-steps, sharps and flats, transposing music.
- Week 6, Feb 13: The C Major Scale, chords in C major, further sight-reading and improvisation.
- Week 7, Feb 20: Chord progressions and learning accompaniments, more repertoire. Begin the Twinkle Ensemble
- Week 8, Feb 27: Arpeggios, more fun with chords and accompaniments.
- Week 9, Mar 5: VOLUNTARY end-of-class recital, perform solo pieces and the Twinkle Ensemble, learn final pieces. Bring lemonade and blueberry muffins!

Suggested Materials:

Breaking Barlines: my online music theory course with free video lessons and downloadable materials. <https://breakingbarlines.com>

Piano: 2nd Time Around by James Bastien and Jane Smisor Bastien, Kjos West, 1981

Class Evaluation: I am very interested in your feedback about this course. I am always striving to teach music more effectively, and I would welcome any comments or ideas you may have. Class evaluations are done by email. Sometimes the email will be delivered to your “junk mail,” but we can assure you it’s from Clark College only. Your responses are completely anonymous. If you do not see your evaluation immediately after class, look in your junk mail and send it to your email address. **Looking for classes?** Visit our Community Education webpage: <https://www.clark.edu/cce/>

Inclement Weather: If the college cancels due to icy conditions, you can find this on the college website: www.clark.edu. If Community Education concludes that the weather is too hazardous, we may also decide to cancel this class. In that event you will receive both a phone call and email. Make certain that we have your correct contact information by viewing the class roster.

Aron Bernstein has been a music instructor for twenty-nine years in the San Francisco and Portland Areas. He received his Masters of Music in theory and composition at Western Oregon University, and has taught music theory and history at Lewis and Clark College, Clackamas Community College, and for the Portland Youth Philharmonic. As a pianist, he has also taught at the Hoffman Academy, Westside Music School and the Harmony Road Music Center. He is the owner and creator of Breaking Barlines, an online music theory course available for free. A composer for thirty years, his works include chamber music for piano, strings, and winds, choral settings of his own poetry, and a symphony for full orchestra. He was Western Oregon University Music Department's Outstanding Graduate Composer for 2013-2014.