

Richard Smith



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Musical Education

My formal musical education began with piano lessons at the age of 14, and flute lessons a year later. Aged 17-19 I studied at the Royal Academy of Music (piano, with Graeme Humphrey, flute, and composition). After a further year of piano with Graeme Humphrey, I studied music at the University of Sheffield, where I continued my piano studies with John Irving. After winning the Julian Payne First Year Prize, I graduated in 1986, winning both the Mrs Stewart Blake Dissertation Prize and the Mrs Stewart Blake BMus Prize. My subsequent musical education was at King's College London: MMus (1987) and PhD (1994, with Professor Arnold Whittall).

Teaching Experience

My first sustained teaching experience was in 1980 as one of the founding members of the Young Arbury Music Makers. I took up teaching again in 1989, firstly to fund

the end of my doctoral research and then to support my growing family; and piano teaching has remained my sole profession ever since. For the past 28 years I have maintained a very full and successful teaching practice of approximately 35 weekly pupils. During this time I have taught children as young as 5 through to 18, and have guided many to much exam success.

Teaching Philosophy

I teach as I have been taught, and aim to give all my pupils a sure and sound classical technique. But with regard to repertoire I always try to be as sensitive as possible to my pupil's enthusiasm, and this often involves jazz and pop. It is hardly ever necessary, even for exams, to ask pupils to learn what they regard as an unappealing piece; the time and effort devoted to practice should always be directed to a musically satisfying end. Thus if a pupil's own enthusiasm dominates the choice of repertoire, the music itself is the most compelling (and the longest lasting) motivation and inspiration.

I am equally happy to teach those who want to learn solely for the pleasure and fun of music as those who also want to take exams. Whilst I am always aware of what high standards music making can reach, I never regard the aim of teaching to be the attainment of any particular standard, for my aim above all is the attainment of potential, be this ever so humble or high-flying.

I believe that one of the most important things a teacher can impart is healthy and productive practising habits, because, despite the importance of lessons, musical instruments are really learned when the teacher is not there – at home, between lessons.

If I can be said to have a teaching philosophy it may be summed up as “teaching music, teaching the piano, but teaching an individual”. By this I mean that I think of myself as teaching music first – teaching what magic it is that we can unlock with our own two hands – and then teaching the piano – the particular techniques of the instrument. But I also recognise that all my pupils are individuals, and I try to understand as best I can how music fits into their sometimes complex and busy lives. Lastly, I believe my teaching has benefited greatly by my experience of being

a very active parent. Annual Concert

Every year I organise a 'Summer Celebration of Piano Music', which gives my pupils an opportunity to perform before an audience. Besides the obvious benefits to both musical and personal maturity which the accomplishment of playing in public offers, it is so good for my younger pupils to hear my older pupils perform and to see what they may achieve; and it is equally good for my older pupils to see how far they have come. These summer concerts are always heart-warming occasions, much enjoyed by pupils and proud parents alike (not least for the tea and homemade cakes afterwards!)

Exams

I have always enjoyed teaching the ABRSM exams, and during the time I have been teaching in Cambridge I have entered many pupils for the full spectrum of exams with much success. I am also very experienced in teaching Theory and have guided many to their Grade 5.

Practical Matters

My teaching practice is based in the villages of Histon and Impington, but I also teach in Cottenham, Rampton, and Willingham; I teach in my pupils' homes and in my own home. My teaching hours are approximately 3.30-8.30pm on weekdays and 9am-1pm on Saturday mornings. I have had an Enhanced DBS check but I am happy to supply as references the contact details of numerous families I currently teach. I am always pleased to advise about buying or upgrading a piano, digital piano, or keyboard. Email: blomsmith@aol.com

Disclosure and Barring Service: yes

Qualification: BMus, MMus, PhD

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