



STEINWAY & SONS

PIANO FOR BODY, MIND AND SOUL



Mitchell Gaynor M.D., in his book *Sounds of Healing*, demonstrates that music has therapeutic physical effects including reduced anxiety, heart and respiratory rates; reduced cardiac complications; lowered blood pressure; and increased immune responses.

KEYS TO BETTER THINKING

In addition to the proven body benefits of regular play, piano practice can also boost cognitive and intellectual abilities. Playing piano, in other words, makes us smarter. Research through the years has demonstrated that musical training

There has always been a recognized trinity between the mind, the body, and the therapeutic qualities of music. And the piano, specifically, has been a long-recognized source of remedy for those seeking escape and creative expression. But recent years have also offered a wealth of scientific studies that demonstrate our instincts have always been correct: playing the piano offers proven benefits—from physical and intellectual to social and emotional—to people of all ages.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Who knew? Those piano lessons we took when we were young offered specific physical benefits to our developing bodies. And piano lessons and practice can also, it turns out, improve the physical health of adults and the elderly. Dr. Arthur Harvey, retired professor at

University of Hawaii at Manoa, published a study through the American Music Conference that details the vast physiologic benefits generated by regular musical practice. One obvious boon of regular piano playing, Harvey found, is the sharpening of fine motor skills in children. But playing music, according to Harvey's research, also "activates the cerebellum and therefore may aid stroke victims in regaining language capabilities." Additional research revealed that group keyboard lessons given to older Americans had a significant effect on increasing levels of human growth hormone (HGH), which is implicated in slowing such aging phenomena as osteoporosis, energy levels, wrinkling, sexual function, muscle mass, and aches and pains. The physical benefits of piano playing are even more far reaching.



taps into similar areas of brain function as those used in spatial intelligence and even math. In fact, kids who continue their playing through their teenage years average about 100 points higher on the SAT. In 1994, research revealed,

undergraduates who majored in music had the highest acceptance rate into medical school, at 66%.

In a study conducted by E. Glenn Schellenberg of the University of Toronto at Mississauga in 2011, researchers split 132 first-graders into four separate groups for after-school activities. One group was given singing lessons, one was given drama lessons, another piano lessons, and the last was offered no after-school instruction. All of the students' IQ's were evaluated at the end of the year. Those who participated in the piano lessons saw an IQ increase of 7 points, while the other groups saw an increase of 4.25 at most. The researchers concluded that the fact that piano education requires one to be focused for long periods of times contributes to the greater IQ gains in the piano-playing group.

STRIKING A CONTENTED CHORD

As if the physical and cognitive benefits of regular piano playing were not enough, studies also show that time at the keyboard offers emotional advantages, as well. In fact, research reveals that those who are involved in creating music on a regular basis experience less anxiety, loneliness and depression.

Barry Bittman, MD, of the Body-Mind Wellness Center in Meadville, Pennsylvania, created a study to gauge stress levels among 32 volunteers. The volunteers were put through a stress-inducing activity—attempting to assemble a difficult puzzle while incentivized by a monetary prize—and then were told to “relax” afterward using a variety of different methods, including reading magazines and playing keyboards. The volunteers also gave blood during the study, and the blood was tested for the



activity of 45 stress-related genes. In the group that played keyboard to relax, the results showed a significantly higher reversal in the markers for stress-related genes than in the other groups.

“With ongoing research,” Bittman concludes, “recreational music-making could potentially serve as a rational stress-reduction activity, along with other

lifestyle strategies that include healthy nutrition and exercise.”

Add to this data the other benefits that come from piano playing—increases in work ethic, diligence, creativity, self-reliance and perseverance—and the result is a veritable symphony of good news for your body and your soul. Ready to tickle the ivories?

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