

My musical teaching

Understand, listen, experiment, create.

I don't simply want to teach a student to play the piano. I want to help them become a **musician**: someone able to listen, to understand, to make choices, to transform what they learn and, step by step, to create on their own.

1. Where my way of teaching comes from

This way of teaching came to me almost naturally, like a logic that imposed itself. But one thing made it clear: studying the lives of composers. Knowing their story, their context, their beliefs and what was expected of them helped me project myself into the art of music itself.

I found in them a search for truth and self-expression, a quest for expressive and human freedom, pursued with mastery and respect for the rules of their art. Their lives became guides for me: respecting others, not giving in to overwhelming emotion, staying in control without giving up intensity.

Musical freedom is built within the rules, not against them.

2. The why behind the how

If there is one thing I refuse in a lesson, it is a student repeating a bar without knowing *why* I am asking them to practise it that way. They must quickly understand the why behind the how: where the problem comes from, and how to solve it.

When a student gets stuck, I first ask them to take their hands off the keyboard, breathe, step back, and look for the solution using the reading and logic they already know. Only if they are truly stuck do I give them a tip to get out of it.

IN THE LESSON

Sometimes I leave a student alone for three minutes with a chosen bar. They must remember how a problem is solved, and apply it without me. That is where independence begins: when the student no longer needs their teacher to know how to practise.

3. What a lesson looks like

Everything described in this document does not happen in a single lesson: it is a path built gradually, over months and years, at each student's own pace.

In a music school, the instrument, music theory and harmony are taught in separate classes. In private lessons, everything comes together at once. It is a constraint, but also an opportunity: every idea is immediately connected to the piano and to the piece being studied. Each lesson follows the same structure, adjusted to the student's level:

Technique. Scales for thumb-under and hand shifts, with attention to steady rhythm, evenness of every note and relaxed hands and fingers.

Harmony. The degrees of a scale built as triads, from the first to the seventh, then the fun of moving from one to another: 2, 4, 5, 1... Depending on the level come inversions, arpeggio patterns, borrowed chords and modulations.

Repertoire. Before sight-reading, we analyse two or three systems together to anticipate what will happen musically: time signature, key, tempo, articulations, accidentals, modulations. Then the student reads the piece, and I answer their questions. Hands separately, in blocks of four or eight bars, once, twice, three times; then hands together, very slowly; then we move on.

This prepared reading changes everything: the student no longer reads note by note, they recognise shapes. An Alberti bass becomes a broken chord; a cadence is anticipated before it is played.

4. The notebook, home and parents

Every student has a notebook. It is not just for homework: it is a **lesson notebook**. I write down what to practise, but also much of what was said out loud: explanations, tips, reasons.

Between lessons, the student applies what we did together. I ask for methodical practice, where understanding comes first. A student who knows why they practise a certain way practises better, and can practise alone.

With the youngest students, I also introduce the parent, or parents, to the approach from the start. They understand how it works and can support their child at home during the first months, when that support matters most. The lesson notebook then becomes a link between the lesson and home.

Then, often after a few months, the child goes well beyond their parents' level and no longer needs them to practise. Like training wheels on a bike, this support is meant to disappear once balance is found.

5. Entering music through harmony

Music does not begin with a definition but with an experience: a sound, a tension, a resolution. Theory then puts words to what the student has already heard. I teach through a loop: **do → listen → understand → name → manipulate → create**, and every new idea starts it again.

Harmony can be approached very early, in a concrete, hands-on way. Triads, inversions and voice leading show why some progressions feel natural, tense or conclusive. Little by little, notes are no longer isolated keys: they become relationships, functions, structures. Many students end up putting it in their own words: *"everything is connected."*

IN THE LESSON

For a young student, C major becomes the "head of the family" of their chords, and A minor its "little brother". Simple images that still lay the foundations of key and relative minor, before they even know the names.

6. A piece at their level, a "challenge" piece

I offer the student two or three pieces to choose from, classical or more modern, but always pianistically interesting. I also ask them to suggest pieces they would love to learn, and we see together what is possible. If a piece is too difficult, I can simplify it: the joy of playing music you love matters too.

Above all, the student always works on two pieces in parallel: one at their level, and a more ambitious **"challenge" piece** that pulls their level upwards.

A JOURNEY

I met one of my students when he was six. Together we applied everything described here. The big change came the day I gave him a very ambitious piece for his level: once that challenge was mastered, even more demanding works became within reach. He is now fifteen and studies at a major conservatoire in Paris. Every journey is different, but this one shows what a well-chosen challenge can open up.

7. From gesture to phrasing

From the very first lessons, every gesture is tied to an intended sound: posture, breathing, flexibility, articulation, dynamics, quality of touch. Respect for the score is part of this discipline: dynamics, articulations, rests and the composer's markings are the very language of the work.

Singing plays an important role. Singing a phrase helps find its shape, the intention behind a dynamic, the breathing of the music.

8. From the studio to the stage

At Studio Angelus, students are surrounded by acoustic pianos, a synthesizer connected to a computer, microphones and production software. After a while, they can record themselves.

Recording works like a mirror: students hear themselves from the outside and finally hear what they really produce, not what they think they play.

They also discover that stress is not the same everywhere. In the studio you can do another take: you aim for perfection, and every detail matters. In concert you only get one chance: you must prepare, handle the stress, control your emotion without extinguishing it, accept imperfection and keep going, and shape the sound so the audience understands what you play. Experiencing both teaches two different relationships to mistakes.

The studio teaches attention to detail; the stage teaches you to share.

9. Learning to transform, and to create

Every idea learned should become something you can manipulate: an accompaniment simplified to reveal its structure, a passage reduced to its harmonic skeleton, a progression transposed or rearranged, a motif transformed. Piece after piece, the student builds a **personal musical vocabulary**, a toolbox they can reuse in their own music.

Creating is therefore not kept for "later". An exercise can become raw material: putting degrees in the order you choose, inventing a variation, improvising from a technique, building a short piece.

IN THE LESSON

Sometimes I ask a student to change the instructions of an exercise themselves. They are no longer just solving a problem I set: they learn to build their own musical problem. And often the real breakthrough of a lesson is the moment the student hears what they have just invented.

10. Children and adults: same substance, different form

The substance of my teaching is the same for everyone; only the form changes. Children learn fluidly, without asking too many questions. Adults question, have to relearn and reconsider; they connect every musical gesture to years of everyday movements. I don't speak to a child the way I speak to an adult, but I expect the same understanding from both.

There is no single way in, either: gesture, listening, logic, images, rhythm, curiosity. A student who cannot read music yet can already feel and understand harmony.

In early music classes and in some specialised settings, especially with children who need other ways of learning, music becomes a concrete support for working on listening, attention, interaction and expression, without reducing the child to an academic goal.

Students preparing for a conservatoire, adults starting or returning, children in early music classes, autistic children supported by specialised services: the audiences change, the conviction stays the same. **Everyone can understand music, in their own way.**

11. Music where everything is connected

For fifteen years I have lived music in many forms: I compose, arrange, sing, write lyrics; I record, mix and perform live, from classical to jazz. These activities are not separate from my teaching: they feed it. Harmony sheds light on arranging, singing on phrasing, the stage on how to work on a piece.

Music production thus opens the door to arranging, and even orchestration. Students learn that each instrument, the flute, the violin, the horn, has its own range and colour. And that understanding comes back to the piano: many works in the repertoire are conceived as an orchestra reduced to the keyboard. A bass imitating the cellos, a horn call, a melody sung by the strings: a student who has arranged on a computer hears those colours in the score, and tries to bring them out. **Understanding orchestration enriches interpretation.**

IN THE LESSON

A progression invented in a lesson can become a real piece, arranged and then recorded in the studio. Creating then leads to something concrete that the student can listen to, keep and share.

Even **Harmolink**, the app I designed, follows this logic. It makes harmony visible: students see degrees, inversions, tensions and modulations react to what they play. But the tool never replaces the instrument or the ear. It helps you understand what you hear more quickly, and then do without it.

12. One direction: freedom

My teaching can be summed up in six movements:

1	Experience	Hear, play, feel.
2	Understand	Look for the why behind the how.
3	Name	Give words to the experience.
4	Manipulate	Transform, simplify, elaborate, transpose.
5	Create	Improvise, invent, write, make choices.
6	Become independent	Know how to practise, without constantly relying on the teacher.

These movements are not crossed once and for all: they come back with every new idea, from the very first lesson to the most demanding works.

The goal is not to train a student who flawlessly executes what they are told. It is to shape a musician who is aware, curious, demanding and gradually free: able to understand what they play, hear what they do and create from what they have learned.

Discipline is not the enemy of freedom. It is one of its means.