

News and information

We're nearing the end of term one of the 2011/2012 academic year. My little academy of music has grown a little more from thirty-six students last year to forty-three piano, theory, Junior and Leaving Cert. students this year due to demand! Below is some news and information.

Christmas Concert

I will be hosting a Christmas concert on **Sat 10th December at 6pm** to give all of my students an opportunity to perform. This concert takes place in **Fatima Hall in Dominican College, Wicklow Town**. Any and all family and friends are welcome.

All piano students from beginners to advanced will be on the programme. Performing is an important and rewarding experience for musicians, especially for piano players as the piano is not naturally a very social instrument to learn (there are few opportunities to join orchestras etc) and there can be few performance opportunities. **Wicklow Glee Club will also perform** on this occasion. If your young musician cannot perform please let me know as soon as possible.

The concert will end before 8pm, there will be complimentary drinks and treats during the interval. Tickets are available at the door €4 per adult, kids and teens are free (fees cover cost of running the concert).

Adult Glee Club Workshop

I will be doing an **Adult Glee Club Workshop in January!** A once-off opportunity to sing popular songs in harmony and learn a few movements to go with them. The workshop is open to adults aged 16+ and will take place on 28th Jan 2012, 4.30-6.30pm in Fatima Hall, Dominican College. Just €10 to take part. No experience is necessary, fun guaranteed! Booking through me or at darablack.com (from 21 Nov).



Piano Exams

Six young pianists will sit Royal Irish Academy of Music piano exams in Wicklow on 25th Nov. Grades range from Primary to Grade 4. They have been busy practicing their exercises, pieces, sight and aural tests for the last few weeks. Best wishes to them in the exam!

The **next exam period is in February/March 2012**. The deadline for applications is in early January. I'll be in touch with several parents soon to arrange to put applications through for your young musicians.

For students and parents of students who have just bought their first piano exam album and are starting to learn exercises and pieces for Preliminary grade, here is some **information about piano exams**:

- Students prepare:
 - Three pieces of music of their choice (out of six) from the RIAM piano album,
 - Exercises in the form of scales and arpeggios – these are listed at the front of the piano album,
 - Sight-reading – playing, clapping and, from Grade 1, singing,
 - Aural tests – clapping back and singing back,
 - Theory – students will be asked to explain terms and signs found in their chosen pieces.
- Piano exams take place three times a year: pre-Easter (Feb-Mar), post-Easter (Apr-May-Jun) and pre-Christmas (Nov-Dec). If there's a date in the exam period that you'll be away for you can request not to be called for an exam that day.
- Wicklow piano exams usually take place in Marlton Stud in Wicklow Town.

- Students will be informed of their exam date at least three weeks in advance.
- Students must have the RIAM piano album with them to sit the exam.
- Awards are: Pass (60-69%), Merit (70-79%), Honour (80-89%) and Distinction (90% +)
- It takes three to six weeks for results to come back. Students will get a result sheet and a certificate.
- Anyone can apply to the RIAM to sit an exam, however I usually submit one application on behalf all my students. This means all of my students will be examined on the same day. Parents will be asked to forward the exam fees to me and I will make one payment to RIAM.
- Exam fees depend on the grade, a full list of fees is available on the RIAM website (riam.ie).
- I offer students a mock exam the weekend before their exam date so that they know exactly what to expect on the day.

Keyboards and Pianos

A short note on keyboards versus pianos: **Touch-sensitive, piano-sized keyboards** are needed from beginner level in order to study piano as we learn about articulation (short/long/detached/smooth) and dynamics (loud/soft) from early on. Non-touch sensitive keyboards are not ideal as they cannot produce these effects. Touch-sensitive keyboards cost roughly €150.

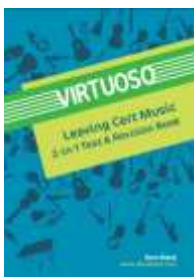
From Grades 1 or 2 students should graduate to a **piano or electric piano**. I notice a huge difference in playing (and exam results) between those students who have touch-sensitive keyboards and those who have pianos or electric pianos at this level. Neil O'Brien in Churchtown refurbishes used pianos and sells them – he would have pianos suitable for beginners from €700 and sometimes less (01-2983284).

For electronic pianos I would recommend visiting a large shop such as Pianos Plus or X music to try out electric pianos and to price them and then ring around smaller shops to compare prices. My own electric piano came from a small music shop and was discounted as it had been used as the display model.

Also check on sites such as **ebay and adverts.ie** for second-hand touch-sensitive keyboards and electric pianos.

For piano tuning and repairs I recommend Mark Redmond (086 6002485).

Virtuoso: Leaving Cert Music



I have just written and published a book for Leaving Cert. music. **Virtuoso: Leaving Cert. Music is a 2-in-1 text and revision book - a comprehensive guide to learning and revising the Leaving Cert. music course.** All areas of the course are explained fully and clearly, there are revision and exam-taking tips given along the way and each chapter ends with an ultimate summary to make studying easy. All parts of the listening and composing papers are covered.

Virtuoso: Leaving Cert Music is just €19.95 and is **available from me** (personally or through my website) **and from Opus II in Dublin and Pro Musica in Cork.**

darablack.com

My website now has a **section for current students** with information such as term dates and the list of used books for sale available at the click of a button. This can be found in the "Lessons and Courses" section of darablack.com

On top of that, darablack.com is a source of information about the work that I do and a free source of information for students, parents and teachers on learning an instrument and studying Junior & Leaving Cert. music.

Online and correspondence courses are available as well as Junior Cert notes and music-themed stationary.

