

WHAT AGES SHOULD I TEACH?

RMM is an effective way to introduce people of *all* ages to the joys of music making. It was created to provide an alternative pathway for anyone who has been discouraged or intimidated by the performance-based approach. Although adults have been the primary focus of RMM since its inception, teachers should realize that *RMM is not age specific*.

For teachers who prefer working with children, RMM may be the perfect solution to reduce the dropout rate. Children who can't seem to thrive in the traditional system could elect to join an RMM group class where enjoyment is emphasized over performance. Teenagers who lack the time to embrace formal training could still engage in music making through RMM.

But because the adult market represents such an immense opportunity for the musical community (as discussed in the Foreword), *teachers are encouraged to begin RMM classes with adults*—particularly baby boomers and seniors. This demographic group must be attracted to music making *now*, before they choose other ways to spend their time and resources. And while children have many avenues of musical instruction available to them, adults have few such programs tailored to their specific musical aspirations. RMM fills a void in the adult segment and offers the piano teaching profession a unique opportunity—one that should not be ignored.

Ages and Venues

The venue selected for RMM teaching will often dictate the ages of students who enroll.

- Senior centers and retirement communities will typically reach an older crowd. Some programs will specify “55 and older” for activities, but will usually accept participants who are younger. Strive to be inclusive whenever possible.
- College and university classes can attract students of multiple ages, from college students to “50-somethings.” Seniors may avoid these venues due to parking issues and a reluctance to attend classes in the evening.
- Music stores, places of worship and home studios can attract a wide range of ages depending on the time of the day classes are taught. Retired adults and mothers of young children prefer daytime classes. Working professionals prefer evening classes because of work schedules.

Keep in mind that older adult learners can sometimes be intimidated by teenagers, so avoid mixing these two age groups (unless you're certain they can get along well).

People in all of these age groups have a common desire to learn to play the piano in a non-stressful environment. Teachers should decide which demographic groups are the best fit for their personality and teaching style and select venues (and music) that will best attract and retain people from those groups.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I CHARGE?

The answer to this question depends on several factors, including *where* to teach, *whom* to teach and what other teachers in the area are charging.

Where to Teach

Some regions of the country have a higher cost-of-living than others. Lesson fees should reflect those differences. For example, a session taught in New York City or Boston might be twice the cost of an identical session taught in a small rural town.

Whom to Teach

When the majority of enrolled students are retired and living on modest fixed incomes, fees might be considerably lower than the fees one might charge in an affluent retirement community. This may seem unfair, but consumers understand that costs of goods and

Creating a Flyer

The following sample advertisement contains several key elements that should be included in any RMM promotional piece:

- A headline with accompanying subtext that gives hope of success to those who have always wanted to play the piano.
- A photo of people having fun at the instrument. If there is sufficient space, include several photos showing various age groups participating. Photos should feature people who represent the specific demographic group you want to attract.
- Words or phrases that describe attributes of the learning environment—including fun, freedom from stress, health/wellness benefits and the opportunity to make new friends.
- A specific call to action. In this example, the call to action is an invitation to attend a preview lesson. The phrase “class size is limited” may help to create a sense of urgency. Be sure the ad states clearly what you want the reader to do and how the reader should respond.

YOU CAN PLAY THE PIANO



We Promise.

Want to play your all-time favorite songs?
Thought it was **too late** to learn to play?
Played **years ago** and want to try again?

A Recreational Music Making Class Is Your Answer.





Classes are taught in supportive groups and offer the following:

- A stress-free environment, beneficial to your health and well-being.
- An ideal setting for meeting new friends and having fun.
- A trained music instructor who will help you learn without frustration.

Contact us today to attend a **FREE Preview Lesson**
during the week of Month, Dates.

Your Music Studio
Phone; Email address; Website
Physical address and zip/postal code
Directions to studio

(See page 51 for full-size example.)

3. Go around the class and let each student play the melody.
4. If necessary, keep simplifying the melody until everyone experiences success.

Ensemble Playing

Turn any piece of solo music into an ensemble piece by dividing it into separate parts that are played with different orchestral sounds. For example:

1. Have one student play the bottom note in the bass clef with a double-bass sound.
2. Another plays the entire left hand part with soft strings.
3. Another plays the right hand part with a piano or electric piano sound.
4. Another plays the top treble clef note with a flute sound.

Ensemble playing is valuable for *any* player, not just RMM students. It develops students' listening, counting and collaborative skills. It also allows the class to study the character of various instrumental sounds. Take time to discuss why certain timbres are better suited for the treble or bass clef parts. Give the class time to experiment with different sounds.

There is also a wide array of music published for piano ensembles. The composers and arrangers of such pieces usually suggest specific sounds for each part. Classes can use the assigned sounds as a starting point and then experiment with other sounds.

A Note Regarding Traditional Students

Teachers who wonder whether their traditional students might enjoy the RMM approach will find ensemble playing to be the perfect way to introduce such students to RMM. Individual practice and performance are often solitary experiences for traditional students. Also, students who always play alone can develop bad habits, such as stopping after making a mistake, or slowing the tempo through difficult passages and rushing through easier ones.

For these reasons, ensemble playing can be both exhilarating and enlightening for traditional students, offering them the chance to interact with other players, enhance their listening skills (for maintaining steady tempo and balanced dynamics) and exercise creativity in the use of sounds, melody and rhythm. Other aspects of RMM—learning to play popular songs, understanding chords and lead sheets, and experimenting with improvisation in a group setting—may also be exciting to students who have not experienced these activities before. RMM may rejuvenate their love for the piano!

Quick Practice During Class

Some musical concepts are best learned when they are practiced immediately after they are explained. Piano labs allow this to happen in a group setting without the resulting cacophony of trial-and-error playing that can cause stress for some students. (Some people prefer to make their mistakes privately.)

After explaining the concept, ask students to practice with headphones for a minute or two. The teacher can walk around the room scanning for expressions of confusion or frustration. These contortions alert the teacher that a moment of clarification or encouragement is needed. When the headphones come off, the class should play the concept together. To make this more fun, ask students to play the concept (as a group) the way they did *before* the short practice session. If it sounds bad, enjoy a good laugh together. Then, play the “new and improved” version to hear the benefits of a few minutes of practice.



“RMM classes are absolutely crucial to the future of our industry.”

—RMM Retailer

Chapter 9 PARTNERING WITH RETAILERS

Chapter 3 described ways that teachers can partner with piano retailers when RMM classes are taught *outside* a retail store. This chapter will examine the natural alternative: partnering with a retailer to create an RMM program *inside* a music store. It will rely upon the insights of active RMM retailers in providing answers to the following questions:

- What do retailers think about RMM?
- What do retailers see as their greatest challenge in establishing RMM classes?
- What traits are retailers looking for in an RMM teacher for their store?
- How is compensation determined for in-store teaching?
- What resources can a retailer provide to assist the RMM teacher?

THE RETAILER PERSPECTIVE

Four successful piano retailers were invited to provide their perspectives on in-store RMM teaching. The participants were:

- Bill Dollarhide, Dollarhide’s Music Center (Pensacola, FL)
- Christi Foster and Deborah Story Carter, Foster Family Music (Bettendorf, IA)
- Robert Scott Richardson, Reifsnnyder’s (Lancaster and Mechanicsburg, PA)
- Wayne Reinhardt, Schmitt Music Company (Minneapolis, MN)

All of these retailers were early adopters of the RMM concept. The following information is based upon their comments and experiences.

What do retailers think about RMM?

Not all piano retailers have music education programs. But the savvy ones understand that education is vital to their existence. Specifically, they see RMM teaching as the critical link to a huge segment of the population (adult learners) that has been underserved by the musical community.

One member of the retailer panel, Robert Scott Richardson, commented, “RMM classes are absolutely crucial to the future of our industry. Obviously, I want to sell pianos, but RMM is bigger than that. As I’ve talked to students and have seen their excitement, I’ve learned that my ‘home run’ is seeing students who are genuinely happy about playing the piano. As they enjoy music making, they become our friends...and, eventually, they become our customers.”

Christi Foster of Foster Family Music said, “It would be fairly quiet in our stores without a thriving lesson program. Because of the RMM classes, students come in early. We have the opportunity to socialize and get to know them. Our goal is for our teachers and sales staff to become trusted experts and advisors to our students. The increased store traffic from in-store lessons has not only increased sales, but also the awareness of our store in the community as RMM classes have generated a buzz with the local press.”

These types of comments are quite common among retailers who have experienced