

## EPWORTH SUMMER MUSIC INSTITUTE, 2001

In the second year of the Epworth Summer Music Institute, 40-45 youth took two one-hour piano lessons per week for the nine-week session. Around 550 lessons were given during the summer.

The piano teachers came from Epworth Church, tutors from the Tutoring Program, ads in the Reader and ads on the Internet. The teachers were: Bryan Apolinar, Timothy Biel, Jennifer Howitt, John Jenkins, Victoria Miller Biel, Eleanor Bilby, Olga Ilagan, Kimi Nishi, Beth Palmer, Tho Pham, Maurice Thomas, Elaine Tormey, Aileen Tormon, Franki Williams, Tami Woodruff, Didi Yabes, and Katherine Ziegler. Also helping were: Jackie Albert, Joseph Montalvo, Judy Montalvo, Rosetta Pillow, Barbara Taylor, and Cheire Taylor.

The Epworth Summer Music Institute was made possible by grants from the Chicago MOST Initiative, the Chicago Community Trust, the Chicago Bar Foundation, the United Methodist Foundation, and the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

### STUDENT PROGRESS

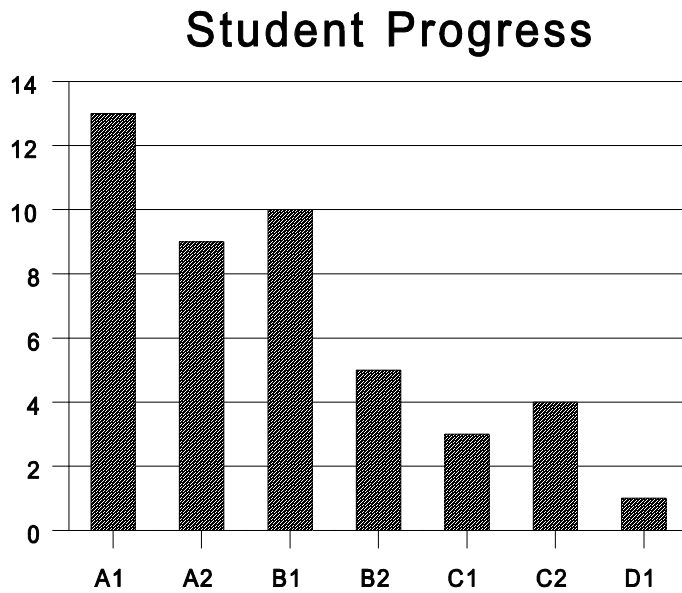
As we began the second summer of giving students piano lessons, we thought students would have forgotten everything from last summer and that we would have to start all over, since most of the students didn't practice during the year. We were wrong! Students remembered basic things, like how to put their hands on the keyboard, how to read music in general, the sound of the keyboard, and how to play certain pieces. The students reviewed a little and then began to learn more. New students were eager to begin.

The students used Alfred's Preparatory series because it has gradual instruction, with pieces which sound good without a lot of practice. We wanted students to enjoy playing something that sounded good.

Two hour-long lessons per week

concentrated the learning and gave more piano time to students not able to practice on their own. Students progressed around a full book during the nine-week session, with students in middle and late elementary school progressing faster than younger children.

Here is a chart of the books the students were working in by the end of the summer. (Some students had taken lessons one year and some two.) By the end of the summer, thirteen students were playing in the first half of Book A, nine students were playing in the second half of Book A, etc. One student was playing

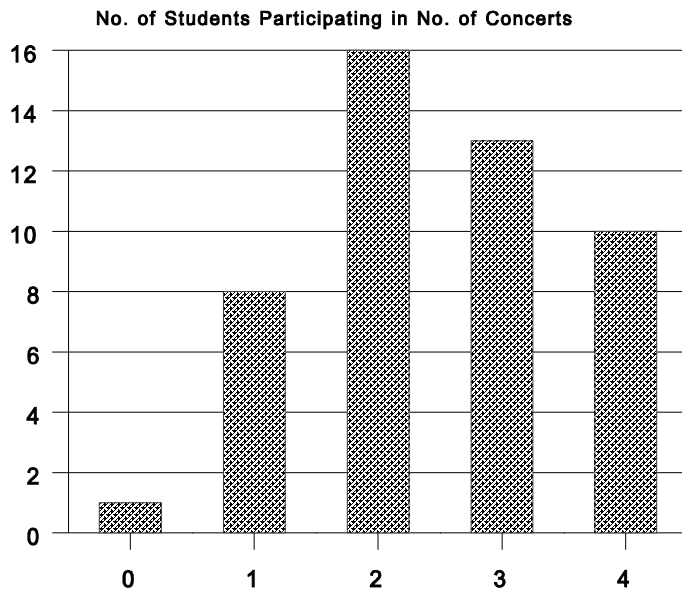


at the beginning of Book D by the end of the summer.

*Number of Students in Each Book*

## RECITALS AND CONCERTS: COMMUNITY SERVICE

Thirty-eight students performed in the first recital; around 85 people attended. Everyone enjoyed it. Around 70 people attended the final recital on a hot August night, in which 33 students performed. Altogether 47 students performed in at least one recital at Epworth.



Many students also went on trips to perform at other places, as service to the community. Fifteen to twenty students went on each trip, some playing at one other place, and some playing at two other places. Thirty-eight students performed in at least one other location. On the left is a chart of the number of concerts each student performed in.

### The Trips to Perform: Kiwanis Club

Heavy rains were forecast, and the students were scheduled to walk to Calo Ristorante to perform for members of the Kiwanis Club. At the last minute Michele de St. Aubin, teacher at Wilmette Jr. High School who coordinates the eighth grade

tutors in the Saturday tutoring program, said she could drive. She drove two van-loads of children in a pouring rainstorm for a safe and dry trip. Mrs. Trinh, whose three children played, asked her boss if she could be late to work so she could drive. She drove her children and their two cousins. All sixteen students and six adults got to the restaurant safely.

At the restaurant, the children sat at a long table with white linen table cloths and fancy white napkins. The children drank water out of crystal goblets. There were several pitchers of soda on the table, all they could drink. This may have been the first time some of the children had been in a formal restaurant.

The members of the Kiwanis Club made the children feel at ease. The president, Nancy Buckler, joked with the children and organized everything.

The children played their recital pieces while Kiwanis Club members ate lunch. The children also sang two rounds with the Kiwanis Club members: "Are You Sleeping?" and "I Love the Mountains." For the last piece, the children formed a circle around the tables where the Kiwanis Club members were sitting. It was a striking finale, a high point to culminate the program.

After the concert, the Kiwanis Club provided several large pizzas for the children to eat. The children had been looking forward to the pizza for weeks (that's how they identified the trip when they talked about it), and they ate every last piece.

The children enjoyed the trip, and the Kiwanis club members enjoyed seeing children they had heard about in the Epworth Tutoring Program. One of the members, Gunther Marx, has tutored for several years in the Tutoring Program, and he and several children knew each other.

The Kiwanis Club of the North Shore was a partner with the Epworth Tutoring Program in sponsoring the Summer Music Institute. In November 2000 after hearing about the Music

Institute of 2000, the Kiwanis Club said it would like to buy two keyboards to help the program. We took one of the keyboards for the children to perform on when we went. When Nancy Buckler, president of the Kiwanis Club, saw the keyboard we purchased, she said, "I thought we gave money for two tiny, toy keyboards. That is a BIG keyboard!"

**Carmen Manor Nursing Home** It was the first blue sky day with a cool breeze in two weeks. Nineteen students, four teachers, and three parents walked the twenty minute walk to Carmen Manor Nursing Home, a small home for mentally retarded adults. Nineteen students said they would come, and nineteen showed up.

The concert was on the lawn. The students organized themselves according to their order in the program, forming a line on the lawn. The presence of the children, amplified keyboard music, bright sunshine, and blue sky made a festive day for the residents of Carmen Manor. As the concert went on, more and more residents and more and more staff came outside to hear the students play. At the end of the concert, the students went around and greeted the residents, who enjoyed the concert. One resident said, "That took a lot of work."

**Methodist Homes and Services** Fifteen students played pieces on the piano or keyboard, while residents of the Methodist Home ate dinner. This was an interactive concert, with seniors and children both involved. Students passed out programs to the residents, and some of the residents immediately become acquainted with the children. One resident said, "That's Shonesha!" She already knew her name. Another resident spoke out after a student had played, "That's talent!" Another resident said, "This helps their self-esteem." Another said, "This takes a lot of work." When Barbara and Cheire Taylor were playing "Heart and Soul" as a duet, several residents sang along with them. When the residents joined with the students in singing "Are You Sleeping" and "I Love the Mountains," the whole room resounded with song. One resident had been grouchy before the children came, but when the children came and the music started, her heart lightened. The students brightened her day.

The students played their pieces well and sang well. All of a sudden in the middle of the concert, there was a strong smell of urine in one part of the room. When someone mentioned this to a student, the student said, "That's OK." A photograph shows her later plugging her nose.

Parents who chaperoned on the trip thought this was a wonderful experience for the children. A father who doesn't live with his children came to see them perform. He was almost in tears as his children were playing. He said, "They should do this more often. They get to know the senior citizens as people."

**PARTICIPANT RESPONSES** **Comments from Students** After playing a duet with her teacher, 7-year old Malori said, "I like it when we do that." Another time she looked over at her grandmother and said, "I done good, didn't I, Grandma?"

An 11-year old student who has difficulty with schoolwork was excited about a piece she had learned to play on the piano. She came to a teacher and said, "I want you to hear this!"

Eight-year old Nancy said, "I want to play in Book F." (She was playing pieces in Book B.) The last two weeks of piano lessons she said, "I don't want piano lessons to end."

Isamar's teacher gave her a piano book to take home, even though 7-year old Isamar didn't have anything at home to practice on. Isamar said, "Maybe my father will buy me a

keyboard.” During the summer, he bought her a keyboard.

Yesenia’s teacher told her to practice her piece a lot for the last recital. When she came to the recital 8-year old Yesenia announced to her teacher, “I practiced a lot. All night.”

**Response from Parents** After the first recital Ms. Tripp said, “That was spectacular! I was particularly surprised at how well two of my foster children played. The piano lessons are therapy for my foster children!”

Jermaine and Dominique’s mother said, “I can’t believe how well organized this is!”

Alice’s mother said, “My daughter wants to keep learning more.”

Iris’ mother said, “This helps my daughter concentrate.”

Krystal’s mother said, “And they’re learning to read notes!”

Ms. Mangrum felt the piano lessons and performances were important for her two daughters. On the day of the last recital the family was on Chicago’s South Side, but she brought them (along with her baby in a stroller) an hour ride on the El so they could perform in the final recital. Ms. Mangrum was awarded Parent of the Year for the Epworth Tutoring Program in May 2001.

**Comment from a Teacher** After the students had left one day, Elaine Tormey said, “I always feel good when I’ve been at Epworth.”

**Stories of Individual Students** Last April on a trip to the Carmen Manor Nursing Home, 7-year old “**Red**” acted thoughtlessly and immature, like a 2-year old. His foster mother said he had regressed and “forgotten everything” at his last placement. At Red’s first and second piano lessons in June, we thought he wouldn’t be able to read notes or play the piano. His brain seemed not to be connected. At the third lesson Red played the piece he couldn’t play at the second lesson, and he began learning, little by little. In the fifth week, Red started playing, on his own, a piece his teacher hadn’t helped him with. He was reading the notes! His brain was connected!

During the last week of lessons, his foster mother remarked that Red couldn’t read at school yet. Red chimed in, “I was reading in summer school!” Maybe reading piano music helped Red learn how to read words. Perhaps the piano lessons were a turning point for Red.

Fourteen-year old **Jermaine** has low self-esteem; schoolwork (particularly math) is hard for him. When Jermaine played a piano piece well, his piano teacher said, “You learn fast, Jermaine.” He replied, “I don’t learn fast in school.” His fingers are very wide: four fingers side by side play five notes. One day he said, “These fingers aren’t very good.” His teacher pointed out that at every lesson he played with more and more agility; he always played fast, and he always played accurately; furthermore, he played repeated notes much faster than his teacher could. He said, “I just shake my hand.” In odd moments after that he played fast repeated notes again, listening to the sound. Once when he was concentrating hard on learning a difficult piece, he said, “This is harder than school. ... Well, they’re both hard.” But he was concentrating, and he was achieving.

The day before the first recital 12-year old **Crystal** dropped in and wanted to take piano lessons. We told her we didn’t have enough teachers, but she could sit at a keyboard and play. She came another day, and we still didn’t have enough teachers. She came the day before the last recital and sat down at a keyboard next to 10-year old **Krystal**. Krystal taught Crystal how to play a

piece, and Crystal worked up a variation on it. We said she could play it the next day at the recital.

She learned another piece and said, "I'm a fast learner!" The teacher said, "You sure are!" Nine-year old **Fernando** always had trouble concentrating on homework during the school year, but he learned piano pieces quickly and well. His best friend Alex always did well in schoolwork, but one day at the piano lesson he was fooling around on the keyboard. From a neighboring keyboard Fernando called over to Alex, "Focus, Alex, focus!" Then as an aside to his piano teacher he said, "I don't know where I got that from!" But he continued, "Focus, Alex, focus!" We had such confidence in how well Fernando played that we asked him to play first at the first recital. He was pleased and played his piece perfectly.

With two weeks left of the Music Institute, 11-year old **Monique** was only part-way through Book B. She wanted to finish the book by the end of the summer session, so she came to Epworth for extra lessons. She worked hard, mastered the difficult pieces by practicing them over and over, finished Book B, and began playing pieces in Book C the last week!

Fourteen-year old **Barbara** was playing so well, coordinator Beth Palmer suggested, "You're almost at a level where you could play some simple pieces to accompany the Cherub Choir" (a group of children aged seven and under). Barbara is a shy person; sometimes she is stubborn; and she doesn't like to do difficult schoolwork. But she said, "Show me the music." "Show me the music!"--Beth Palmer was taken aback. There wasn't any real Cherub Choir at that time. There weren't any specific pieces around. But Barbara would be waiting. So Beth made an arrangement of a piece that the Youth Choir already knew and that they could sing, an arrangement that was easy but still sounded good. She brought the music to Barbara, and Barbara began practicing it immediately. It was quite good after two days. They scheduled a rehearsal with the Youth Choir, and on the day of the rehearsal, Barbara said, "I'm ready." The Youth Choir sang slowly, and everyone stayed together! Beth Palmer told them, "You are all very good musicians to stay together like that." They scheduled a performance for a church service, and it sounded so good people didn't even know that a student was playing the piano! They performed it again for the final recital. In the middle of the piece, Barbara got lost, but *she found where to come in again!* That is remarkable for a student performer. We are proud of Barbara.

At the beginning of the summer 13-year old **Sandy** had a short attention span. Every two minutes she pressed the buttons on the keyboard to play automatic music. It was hard to get her to concentrate on the piece her teacher was helping her with. Her mother wanted her to take lessons and always encouraged her to come, but she was often half an hour late for her lesson. We had to convince her to leave her friends and come in to take piano lessons.

Gradually Sandy began to do better. The last two weeks she came on time. She began learning faster. One day she learned four new pieces! She began playing on the piano instead of a keyboard, and for the last recital she sounded like a pro. She and her teacher Elaine Tormey talked about setting up time each week to continue playing the piano during the year.

From the beginning 12-year old **Alice** practiced with a fury. She often practiced at Epworth for 2-3 hours straight. She had a keyboard at home and practiced there day and night. The piano books we sent home with her came back with letters under every note, so determined was she to learn to play. One day she spilled peroxide on her keyboard and it wouldn't play. She still kept

working hard at Epworth and would like to continue playing the piano.

### **COMMUNITY PIANO PROGRAM**

We advertised this as a “Community” Piano Program because it was for the children of the community, it dealt with the children as a community, and it created community.

The children came as groups to the piano lessons: family members came at the same hour, friends came at the same hour. Some students were taught in pairs, although most were taught individually. We wanted the children to feel that it’s normal and expected that they would be able to play the piano. When students came to the lessons with their friends, they just expected that they would come. Most of the families did not have a tradition of expecting that their children would play the piano. Now parents want their children to learn, which grew out of this program.

As students got used to the idea of playing the piano, they worked harder at it. Krystal’s mother said that Krystal was more interested this year, and she did much better than last year.

Children were very aware of what other children were learning, and positive peer pressure started to develop. “What book is Crystal in?” “What page is LilRita on?” “Where’s LaDonna?” “I want to play the same piece that Alex is playing.” Students wanted to get ahead and play the piano as well as their friends. As the weeks went by during the summer, more and more students also wanted to play the piano instead of the keyboard. Piano lessons are starting to take hold.

### **YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

To develop youth leadership we encouraged students to help other children learn to play the piano.

Ten-year old Jackie A. came consistently to teach three or four other children. Four teenagers also taught other students. Several students helped other children at various times. Students also took photographs and announced at the concerts. The high point of student leadership was when the students decided, on their own, to line up in order of their position on the program in the recital at Carmen Manor Nursing Home.

### **COMMUNITY YOUTH CHOIR**

During the school year there are weekly rehearsals of the Youth Choir, which develops the children’s voices. This summer, as part of the Music Institute, we wanted to broaden the base of the Youth Choir, so we offered choir rehearsals at two different times each week. Ten children took advantage of it. We gave cassettes of the songs to four other children so they could practice at home.

The first rehearsal of some of the new children was discouraging. None of the six could match pitch, there was no tone, and there was hardly any sound. At the second rehearsal, there was a little more tone, a little more sound, and more pitch matching. By the third rehearsal they sounded as if they could be part of the regular Youth Choir. We forget that in order to be able to sing, you have to sing, and their school has hardly any music.

**TWO TRIPS AS A REWARD** In August ten students ages 6-9 went to the “Music Makers” exhibit at the Kohl Museum in Wilmette to learn about how instruments produce sound. The children explored the exhibit intently and had a good time doing things in the rest of the museum. They had their “picnic” on the museum’s patio in the rain.

Seventeen students ages 9-16 went by el to the Cultural Center in downtown Chicago to hear the Rick Shandling Jazz Trio--piano, bass guitar, and percussion. The students ate their lunch in the Randolph St. Café and listened to the jazz. After the concert, in great exhilaration they *ran* down Michigan Ave. sitting in every chair and couch which were part of the public art exhibit, *Suite Home Chicago*. They wanted to see the couch created by Ellen Gradman, head of the Art Section of the Saturday Tutoring Program. Ellen's beautiful couch, a laminated collage, "The Seat of Inspiration," is in front of the Whitehall Hotel on Delaware Place. The students had their picture taken on the couch.