

YAMAHA Presents:

Advantages of Using Technology in the Piano Studio

By Lori Frazer

It's no secret that teaching students in the year 2007 and beyond has some new challenges for the traditional piano teacher. Kids of today are more technology savvy and have more choices of how to spend their time than ever before. It is important that we address music students on their level and continue to help them to enjoy the benefits of making music for a lifetime. It's not necessary for the modern day piano teacher to have knowledge about every facet of teaching with technology, but an overall awareness is important.



Digital pianos of today have come a long way since their predecessors. The actions have been greatly improved and the piano sample sound is incredible. It's important to keep in mind that digital pianos will never replace acoustic pianos, but are excellent tools for the teaching studio and piano students for many reasons. One analogy I have always enjoyed is to imagine your kitchen. How many different ovens do you have? I have a conventional oven, a microwave oven, and a toaster oven. At first glance it might appear that this is a gross duplication of technology until you look at the strengths of each tool. This is the same idea as traditional acoustic pianos, digital pianos, and keyboards. They are tools with different strengths and weaknesses.

When using technology, one of the most basic applications is the use of pre-prepared software that accompanies all the various teaching methods. Almost every teaching method in print has floppy disk accompaniment that can be used with digital pianos. The benefits of using this tool are numerous!

- The most obvious benefit when you begin using accompaniment disks is how much timing improves! The students who use the disks from the first lesson are unaware that they are really playing with a modern day metronome! Using disks keeps the student from having to go back and re-learn areas with timing errors and really makes the student a great counter.
- Orchestrated disks also provide a lot of interest, especially to beginning students. How many times have you given a student a piece of music only to be told "that's not what it sounds like on the CD!" Of course the student is right, as publishers must alter the level of the difficulty of the arrangements for the beginning student. Disks provide interest and fun for the student.
- Disks can also be used to discuss music arranging. Parts can be muted and played individually so the student can get an idea of how a particular instrument of the orchestra may be performed. This is a great ear training and listening exercise!
- In addition, piano parts are generally recorded with left hand and right hand on individual tracks, so students may practice hands individually. This feature also comes in very handy for students with physical limitations who wish to study music. (Also helpful when a student announces they are quitting piano for a time, due to a broken arm. No longer an issue!)