

Pavelka is making music simple

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Janita (Brockel) Pavelka considers music a second language. That's why she's so excited about a revolutionary method of teaching piano called Simply Music.

According to Pavelka, Simply Music is a remarkable Australian-developed piano and keyboard program that takes a "playing-based" based approach to learning music.

She said the program has students playing great-sounding contemporary, blues, jazz, classical and accompaniment pieces from their very first lessons.

"It is a fun and natural way to teach and learn to play the piano," Pavelka said. "People need to know how to speak before they learn how to read and spell words, therefore the reading process is temporarily delayed with Simply Music."

Originally from Selby, Pavelka said she has been using the Simply Music method of teaching music for four years now in her piano studio in Bellevue, Nebraska where her students range in age from age 6 to 76.

In her experience, this has been the most productive and well-rounded method to teach piano. Her students are total beginners, students with prior experience, people with special needs, and people who believed they were not musical. The Simply Music method is based upon the premise that everyone, without exception, is naturally musical. "If you can walk and talk, we can teach you how to play piano." states Pavelka.

Pavelka said, "At first, I was a traditional teacher who taught as my teachers had taught, but found that students were struggling with the 'reading-based' approach, where students can only play as well as they can read the music. Some students found this approach slow, laborious and frustrating." She said it hurt to see her students quit taking lessons because playing and reading music became a chore.

"It would break my heart as a teacher because I wanted my students to have piano as a life-long companion," said Pavelka.

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She states in the 'reading-based' approach, a student can be reading up to seven different languages at once. Pavelka said reading correct notes, rhythm, dynamics, lyrics, fingering, pedaling and order and continuity all at once could be why some people become discouraged and overloaded with information.

Music reading is introduced after the student has a repertoire of 30 to 50 songs, generally after one year of lessons and is broken down into single thought processes. First, the reading of rhythm is introduced, followed by the reading of notes.

"Playing the piano is not very easy," she said, "but this approach makes it much easier and more enjoyable to learn."

There are eight Simply Music teachers in the Omaha, Nebraska area, but none in SD, she said. Doug Russell, who is also from Selby originally, uses this unique approach to teaching piano in Blair, NE.

Pavelka said, "Both Doug and I took lessons from Mrs. Irene Buechler from Bowdle, and then in high school he took lessons from Mrs. Betty Kuehl from Selby and I traveled to Aberdeen for lessons from Mrs. Hall."

Pavelka's parents are Carrol and Jan Brockel of Selby. Craig Brockel of Mobridge is Pavelka's brother.

Pavelka believes this new method of teaching and learning piano is the most effective method she has ever seen or used. "Simply Music has renewed my love for teaching the piano," she said.

For more information, visit www.omahapiano.com, or else call Janita Pavelka at (402) 293-5577.

-Tara Halbritter