

HISTORY OF MY TALENT

Article by Raymond Boucher

Piano playing wasn't something I was attached to until I was in my pre-teen years. Although I received a piano as an 11th birthday gift from my grandmother, it was around 7-9 years of age that I played songs on my electronic keyboard just by memory. Back then, I never thought much about having a big talent in music - it was a small pastime I did on occasion when I had nothing else interesting to do. When I got my own upright piano later on, however, my grandma knew someday I would be proficient in the activity. To instigate the start of my growth, she and my mother gave me private piano lessons with Arthur Bellucci, the Choir Director of Albertus Magnus College.

My first years of piano practice, as expected for anyone starting a new activity/hobby, were an interesting experience for me. Learning the basics of how to replicate simple melodies on piano was similar to learning mathematics for the first time in grade school. My teacher encouraged me to take my time to memorize notes after playing them for me, and I found some songs in Basic Course Book 1a of Alfred's Basic Piano Library addicting to play, such as "Rockets," "Sea Divers," and "Indian Song." I had similar tastes for Basic Course Book 1b, as well, and my first piano recital in 2013 was something special to my family and me.

One thing that was apparent to my mom, however, was how I didn't always seem to practice new songs twice every day. At the time, I found it was not really that important in comparison to my other hobbies and school, but she always thought I should practice twice a day for the best possible results each following lesson. When I was around 13 and was steadily progressing through Book 1, my mother encouraged me to practice for half an hour a day. At first, this seemed challenging to me, considering my attachment to reading books and playing video games, but I reluctantly agreed. Practicing for 30 minutes a day just became something that was normal to me.

Despite the hurdles with time management, I found new favorite songs to play on the piano such as "Maleguena" and "Cathedral Bells" from Prep Course Level E, and some of the blues pieces from Prep Course Level F. On occasion, I would even ask my teacher if I could learn songs from sheet music, such as Edvard Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King". For a time, I also learned holiday songs on piano, ranging from "Carol of the Bells" to "Jingle Bell Rock" to "Let It Snow".

My growing skills in piano would develop further upon my learning in Basic Course Levels 3-6. I would find myself learning more advanced patterns and note/chord structures. I gradually learned how to modulate my tempo for specific songs and on a whim I even offered to fully learn

Dukas' symphonic poem, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice", famously known for its appearance in Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. I recently started learning excerpts of Peter Tchaikovsky's score to the holiday ballet *The Nutcracker* as well as "Moonlight Sonata" by Ludwig van Beethoven.

If it's something that my mom, my grandmother and even I knew about my piano playing, it's that I was talented even at a young age. Early on, I would

make a good impression by attempting to play Claude Debussy's "Clair de Lune" by ear, which impressed my grandmother a lot. I would eventually compose a few original works and a suite of songs for my high school capstone project: an unofficial musical based off of the Canadian-French animated movie *Leap!* (known as *Ballerina* internationally).

My journey to become a better piano player has been going strong, and I hope I continue to play music on a regular basis.

Photo of my most recent piano recital taken from my mother at the Church of the Redeemer, in New Haven, CT, on June 2, 2019.

