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INVESTIGATION AND RESEARCH ON PIANO LEARNERS' CAREER IN SOUTHWEST HUNAN PROVINCE

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Abstract

The reason for selecting the southwest Hunan region as the research object of this paper is firstly, the author has been teaching in the southwest Hunan region for many years and knows the current situation of piano education in this region very well; secondly, the southwest Hunan region is an economically underdeveloped region and relevant research is still relatively insufficient; again, although the southwest Hunan region is relatively economically backward, the scale of piano education is growing year by year. The author uses questionnaires and interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the career survey of piano learners in this region and uses theoretical knowledge to conduct scientific analysis and research on its findings in order to further explore the problems that exist in the career of piano learners in southwest Hunan, and to put forward constructive suggestions in an effort to make a proper study and exploration of piano education in southwest Hunan through scientific methods.

Keywords

southwest Hunan; piano learners; career; development

Chapter 1 Introduction

With rapid economic growth and increased living standard in China since the reform and opening up, piano learning has become more common nationwide, spreading from most populous cities to other urban areas. Nevertheless, each region has its unique characteristics due to the disparity in the geographical and

human environment. Southwest Hunan represents the southwestern part of Hunan province, which refers to the city of Huaihua, Shaoyang, and Yongzhou. The author will investigate and study the problems and phenomena encountered in the teaching in southwest Hunan, analyze them objectively using his own experience and theoretical analysis, and strive for the article's authenticity and application.

1.1 research background and aim

This paper will focus on southwest Hunan (i.e., southwestern parts of Hunan, including Huaihua, Shaoyang, and Yongzhou), which has a population of approximately 20 million. Piano learners of different ages in this region are boosting yearly and have reached tens of thousands nowadays. Piano education is currently a vital aspect of China's piano culture industry's development, and aggressively expanding piano instruction for the general public would provide favorable conditions for the industry's growth. The Ministry of Education has made instrumental music an essential part of the basic education music curriculum in the process of supporting the reform of the basic education curriculum, which gives a larger space and development conditions for the popularization of piano education. A piano is a necessary carrier for the progress of music education. However, what is the actual situation of career progress of piano learners in southwest Hunan? To gain a deep understanding of the above research question, this study developed a survey on aspects of the popularization of piano education. With analyzation of quantitative data and problems identified in the survey, this research reminds piano educators that they ought to take personal and professional responsibility for the advancement of piano instruction, as well as collaborate with society to create a conducive atmosphere for its advancement.

1.2 research methodology

This research conducted an empirical survey among every city in southwest Hunan (including Shaoyang, Yongzhou, and Huaihua) to investigate the popularity of piano education and various factors that affect piano learners. Questionnaire-based surveys and interview-based surveys are the main tools. Subjects of the survey include piano learners, piano educators, parents of learners, training institutions and social organizations, and so on. After sorting, summarizing, and analyzing the questionnaires, the information obtained from the questionnaires is summarized. This article further addressed the development of piano learners' careers in southwest Hunan in-depth in conclusion. To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the empirical data, the author discussed with some subjects in the process of returning the questionnaires.

1.3 current status of research

In recent years, a number of music education professionals and piano educators have published monographs or papers on the subject of piano education,

for example, Piano Learning Guide (Wei,1993), Children's Piano Teaching and Counseling (Dan, 2004; Vodolagin et al., 2021), Reflections on the Current Situation of Children's Piano Education (Chen,2008), Survey Study on Children's Amateur Piano Education in Less Economically Developed Areas -Shaoyang, Hunan Province as an example (Zhao, 2012; Vasyliev & Vasylieva, 2021), Survey and Research on the Current Situation of Piano Accompanying Industry - Taking Yongzhou Area in Hunan Province as an Example (Cai and Zhao, 2020; Vishlenkova & Sharykin, 2021), Survey on the Piano Learning of Middle School Students in Huaihua (Xia, 2017) and so on. There is no theoretical research on the career growth of piano learners in southwest Hunan, and domestic research on the career development of piano learners is still in its infancy, with a paucity of research on less developed areas in Hunan province. This research seeks to make up for the shortage by taking the southwest Hunan region as an example to investigate concerns related to the career development of piano learners.

1.4 importance of the research

On the one hand, this study is a valuable attempt and innovation, compared with the up-to-date research, in investigating the career development of piano students in new regions (southwest Hunan), and it may provide future academics who are interested in studying and exploring the subfield with a theoretical basis.

On the other, this research takes the piano learners' career development in southwest Hunan as a unique research area. Unlike earlier studies, which have mostly focused on interview descriptions, this study, to draw an objective conclusion, analyzed the career process and influencing factors of piano learners from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. Thus, this article takes a more objective and in-depth look at the limitations and misunderstandings surrounding piano learners' career growth in the region.

2 A study of factors related to the career development of piano learners in southwest Hunan

2.1 The musical basis for the career development of piano learners in southwest Hunan

There are many factors associated with the career development of piano learners in southwest Hunan, which can be broadly divided into two parts: personal and environmental factors. Personal factors include psychological and physical attributes, personal experiences, etc., while environmental factors include family, school, community, society, culture, economy, policies and values, etc. These factors, when combined with the study of piano learners' career development, can be divided into two main components: firstly, the musical foundation and musical attributes of the piano learner; and secondly, environmental factors, including family, teachers, school, peers, society, culture, economy, policies and values, etc.

In short, musical foundations are the abilities that have a special aptitude and potential in music, which can be developed in a good learning environment later in life, and which show excellent musical achievement.

2.2 Comparison of the musical career development of piano learners with excellent musical talent and piano learners with average musical ability in southwest Hunan

The developmental journey of musical ability for students with the potential for excellent musical talent is different from that of the general population. Empirical research indicates that the development of musical ability in the average child to the point of pitch mastery proceeds along three lines: (1) the establishment of the boundaries between the highest and lowest notes of a phrase, i.e. the structure of the pitch range or tonality; (2) the establishment of the appropriate rhythm or direction of notes within a phrase; and (3) the stability and relationship of individual pitches to form the scale organisation of the pitch of a song.

An analysis of the population of piano learners in southwest Hunan shows that piano learners with exceptional musical talent demonstrate distinctive musical abilities at an early age, they tend to be significantly more sensitive to pitch and more attentive to music than the average child, and these discoveries of their own musical talents are often related to their family members or close friends. From the analysis in this paper, it is clear that learners with a talent for piano have a more confused career development than the average learner, and that they are not only different from the average child in terms of their professional ability, but they are also quite good in other areas of learning, so it is often said that children who can learn piano well are equally good at their studies. Their career development process, however, is characterised by a great deal of hesitation, confusion and difficulty in making choices compared to other children because of their many strengths. The resolution of this confusion is inevitably linked to the support of their parents at home, their own interests and hobbies, the form of teaching of their teachers, the competition among their peers and the influence of the social environment, which makes their piano education process very different from that of the average child.

2.3 Factors affecting the career choices and development of piano learners in southwest Hunan

The development of an individual's piano education requires the identification of his or her own aptitudes, interests, ambitions and limitations. In this developmental process, personal characteristics, family background, social environment and the interplay between them become factors of choice in the development of piano education, thus determining the direction of the individual's unique development. Because of their unique attributes, they naturally have a wider range of interests and potential than other students, which is reflected in their personal developmental and counselling needs than the average student and

can lead to problems in choosing piano education.

For current piano learners in southwest Hunan, decisions about the development of their piano education are mostly made at the behest of their parents and teachers, with their own wishes often ignored by adults. The reality is that the majority of parents and teachers do not systematically consider and evaluate developmental plans, and only decide on lifelong choices in relation to the general performance of their students. As a result, piano learners can encounter many problems when developing their careers.

- (1) They find the traditional career exploration programme to be both impractical and compulsory.
- (2) Career choices are complicated by their multi-directional abilities and interests and focusing on one ability can make the career exploration process difficult.
- (3) Frustration in the learning of culture for many.
- (4) Becoming inactive in the pursuit of success in order to avoid failure.
- (5) The high expectations of parents, teachers, self and society create pressure and limit choices; many piano learners need early career decisions and commitment to future development options because of the longer period of professional training they have to undergo in their careers.
- (6) Piano learners see professional performance as a method of self-expression by which to build their lifestyle, thus consuming a great deal of time and energy on related professional studies.
- (7) A tendency to feel isolated due to different learning interests from their peers.
- (8) There is a lack of adult role models with knowledge or creativity in areas of interest to music students.

As a result of the above problems, most piano learners nowadays choose their career decisions through the demands of their parents and teachers.

While piano learners, like other specialised studies, attract the envy and learning of their peers, parents and peers at school naturally assume that with their abilities they will easily succeed in their career development, and fail to provide them with timely and relevant career guidance. This lack of guidance often leads to twists and turns in their career choices.

There are many factors associated with career development, which are summarised in the following areas.

- (1) Personal factors: including self-expectations, abilities, talents, interests, achievements, motivation, etc.
- (2) Family factors: including early childhood experiences, parental role models, etc.
- (3) Social factors: including educational experiences, influence among peers, mass communication, etc.
- (4) Socio-economic factors: including social class, gender discrimination, human resources, etc.
- (5) Environmental factors: including opportunities and possible resistance encountered, etc.

- (6) Psychological factors: These include fear of failure, fear of success, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation and role conflict.

2.4 Problems and characteristics in the career development of piano learners in southwest Hunan

For current piano learners in south-western Hunan, decisions about their career development are mostly made at the behest of parents and teachers, with their own wishes often ignored by adults. The reality is that the majority of parents and teachers do not systematically consider and evaluate career planning, and only decide on their students' lifetime choices in relation to their general performance. As a result, piano learners can encounter a number of problems when developing their careers.

- (1) They find that career exploration programmes in the traditional sense are both impractical to guide and compulsory.
- (2) Career choices are complicated by the fact that they have multi-directional abilities and interests and focusing on one ability can make the career exploration process difficult.
- (3) Many people become frustrated with the learning of culture.
- (4) Becoming inactive in the pursuit of success in order to avoid failure.
- (5) High expectations of parents, teachers, self and society create pressure and limit choices; many piano learners need early career decisions and commitment to future development options because of the longer period of professional training they have to undergo in their careers.
- (6) Piano learners see professional performance as a method of self-expression by which to establish their lifestyle, thus consuming a great deal of time and energy in related professional studies.
- (7) Tendency to feel isolated due to different learning interests from their classmates.
- (8) There is a lack of adult role models with knowledge or creativity in areas of interest to music students.

As a result of the above problems, most piano learners nowadays choose their career decisions through the demands of their parents and teachers.

3 A quantitative study of piano learners' career development in southwest Hunan

Regarding the beginning of piano learning and the development of learning habits of piano learners in southwest Hunan, the author conducted extensive research and surveys among several piano training institutions in the southwest Hunan region, including Tianyin Art School of Shaoyang, Black and White Key Piano Art Center of Shaoyang, Chenle Piano Art Center of Shaoyang, Zhiyin Art Training School of Yongzhou, Le Yin Art Training School of Yongzhou, Star Art Piano Art Center of Huaihua, Fibel Piano Art Center of Huaihua, Shaoyang college, Huaihua

college, Hunan university of science and engineering, etc. Based on the recovered questionnaires, the statistical analysis of the personal basic information questionnaire is as follows. The total number of surveys is 600, but there are 591 genuine questionnaires after removing 9 invalid questionnaires. The following are the statistics results based on the questionnaires:

Statistics on the occupation of parents of piano learners.

Father's Occupation

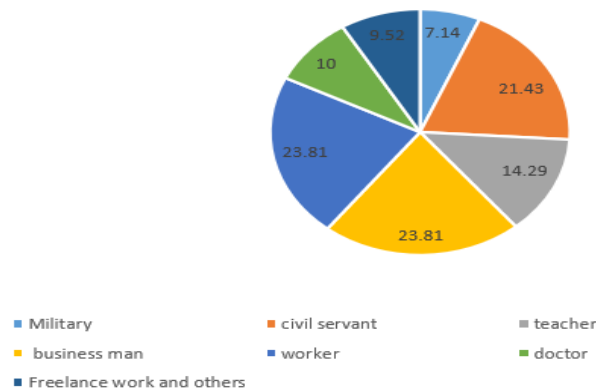


Figure 1

Father's occupation: ① Military ② Civil servant ③ Teacher ④ Business man ⑤ Worker ⑥ doctor ⑦ Freelance work and others
 ① for 7.14%, ② for 11.43%, ③ for 14.29%, ④ for 23.81 ⑤ for 23.81 ⑥for 10%
 ⑦ for 9.52%

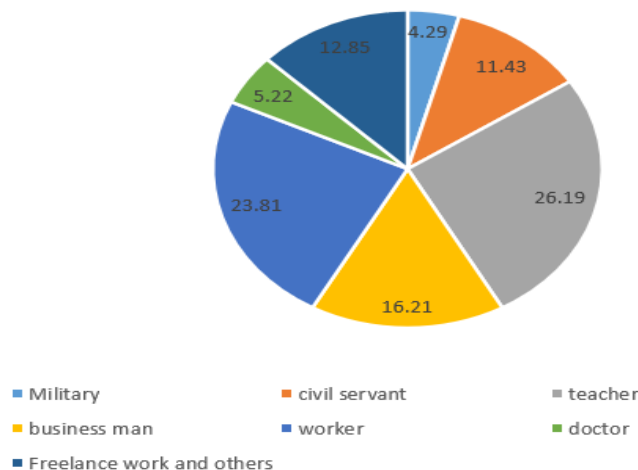


Figure 2

Mother's occupation: ① Military ② Civil servant ③ Teacher ④ Business man ⑤ Worker ⑥ doctor ⑦ Freelance work and others
 ① for 4.29%, ② for 11.43%, ③ for 26.19%, ④ for 16.21 % ⑤ for 23.81 ⑥for 5.22%
 ⑦ for 12.85%

According to the questionnaire, the fathers of piano students are most likely to be businessmen and general workers, with a combined total of 47.62%, followed by civil servants and teachers, with a combined total of 25.72%; military families, doctors and freelancers and other professions are less common. The largest number of mothers were from teachers and workers, with a combined total of 50%, followed by business; military and doctors were less represented.

This indicates that at the level of the father's and mother's occupation, merchant families with a certain economic base and families of ordinary workers in society have a higher proportion of investment in their children's art education. The reasons for this are: (1) Families are financially well off and have sufficient financial means to spend on their children's art education, to improve their children's cultural and artistic training and to enhance their children's future social competitiveness; (2) As the family is the most common component of society, parents have the traditional expectation of their children to "become a dragon", and because of the media's propaganda on the arts, they believe that learning the arts, especially piano, is an elegant profession with a superior sense of social respect, thus guiding their children to engage in piano studies. (3) One of the parents is a teacher or civil servant, who encourages their children to take up piano studies because of their high cultural level and their interest in art studies.

Piano learners learning start period

piano learners learning start period

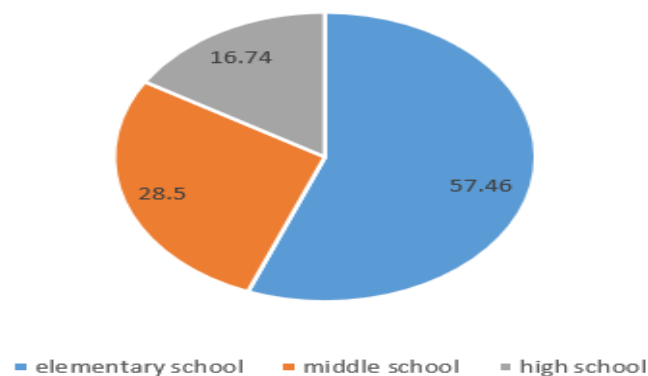


Figure 3

- ① elementary school ② middle school ③ High School
① for 54.76% ② for 28.5% and ③ for 16.74%.

According to the survey, it is shown that the majority of piano students begin their studies in elementary school, representing 54.76 percent, with 28.5 percent in middle school and 16.74 percent in high school. The reasons why they started piano learning in that period differ. Piano students typically begin their studies in elementary school, because it is the optimal age to begin playing the instrument. In junior high school, teens argue that they have limited access to piano learning, at the same time, many families are unaware of their musical talent. The urge to

get admission to higher education is the main reason for starting piano lessons in high school, and to reach that aim, they followed their parents' and teachers' advice and started piano learning.

Take part in a musical performance

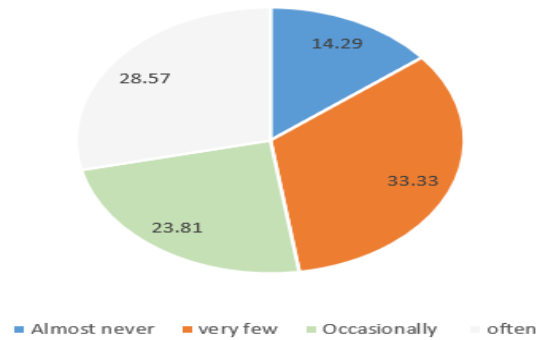


Figure 4

- ① Almost never ② Very few ③ Occasionally ④ Often ⑤ Always
① for 14.29%, ② for 33.33%, ③ for 23.81%, ④ for 28.57%

During their academic career, only 28.57% of students were given regular performance opportunities and 23.81% had occasional performance opportunities. Performances are a necessary part of the music learning experience, and having more opportunities to be on stage can be a great help in overcoming anxiety when playing, as well as greatly improving self-confidence.

Study of music theory

study of music theory

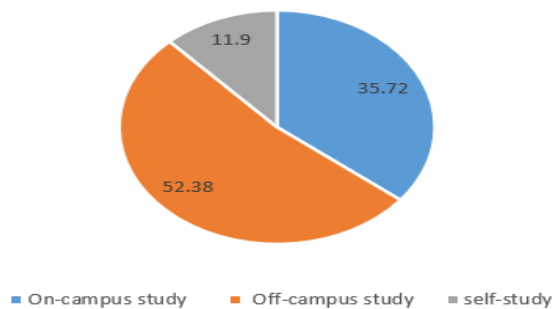


Figure 5

- ① On-campus study ② Off-campus study ③ Self-study
① for 35.72%, ② for 52.38%, ③ for 11.9%

shows that 35.72 percent of piano students study music knowledge at school, 52.38 percent hire extracurricular tutors and 11.9 percent study on their own. It can be seen that the majority of students study semi-professionally and professionally ways. School and self-study can make up for the lack of systematic study of music. Based on the statistical data, most of the music theory learning for piano majors is systematically studied outside of school. From this point of view,

there is a huge shortage of basic music education in our schools, which can no longer meet the needs of learning.

Piano learner's parental accompaniment

piano learners parental accompaniment

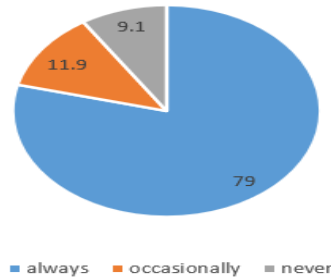


Figure6

- ①always ②occasionally ③never
- ①for79%, ② for 11.9%, ③ for 9.1%

The statistics above reveal that the performance of parents accompanying piano students is relatively average, with 79% accompanying more often, followed by 11.9% accompanying occasionally, and 9.1% not accompanying during the learning process. It further indicates that piano learning is a dual process of self-cultivation and parental supervision. Learning the piano has a certain degree of tedium, especially in the long-term monotonous practice process. Thus, it is natural for every beginner to feel bored. Students' self-interest in learning and parental supervision are important factors to ensure lasting practice, and parental supervision and coercive behavior are inevitable.

Statistical results of important factors related to the career development of piano learners

Important factors

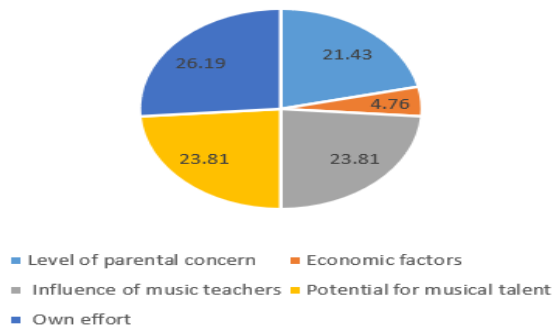


Figure 7

- ① Level of parental concern ② Economic factors ③ Influence of music teachers
- ④ Potential for musical talent ⑤ Own effort
- ① for21.43%, the ② for 4.76%, ③ for 23.81%, ④ for 23.81%, for ⑤ for 26.19%.

In terms of the important mechanisms for success in piano education, there are four dimensions that are relatively even: 23.81% of students believe that they are successful in their piano studies because they are musically gifted; 23.81% of students also believe that they are influenced by their teachers and that a good piano teacher not only helps them with their skills, but also has a great impact on their personality and world view. A good piano teacher does not only help students with their technique but can also have a great impact on their personality and world view through teaching, so it is only logical that students consider their teachers to be an important factor in their success. Only 4.76% of the students thought that success was due to financial factors, perhaps because piano learning is a huge investment, so without a certain amount of financial support, learning cannot be sustained. Without a certain amount of time and practice, success is not possible.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

A career is the continuous development of each individual throughout their life, including the accumulation of activities and experiences in family, school and society, which shape their unique way of life and development. In this paper we define a piano learner's career as the whole process from the beginning of a piano learner's studies to the beginning of a career and the way of life and learning associated with this process. On this basis, and in the context of the subject of this study, we define a piano student's career development as the process of self-growth from the beginning of musical awareness to the manifestation of one's own musical qualities and the acquisition of learning support from the family and piano technique training from the teacher, including factors related to one's own qualities, interests, abilities, parent-child relationships, the acquisition of learning and life experiences, social and environmental influences, etc. The whole process of self-growth.

As a result of our analysis and research, we feel it is very important to make recommendations in several areas in order to help piano learners, piano teachers, parents and those who are interested in youth music education, and to provide reference for other future research.

For piano learners in southwest Hunan, the following points are particularly important.

- (1) Understanding your musical potential: Piano learners should be aware of their own abilities and limitations and be able to draw up a clear blueprint for their future.
- (2) One should expand one's horizons and study music outside the realm of classical music to create different musical styles and genres, e.g. through composition and arrangement to create new world music.
- (3) Establishing the right values: The music workplace is nearing saturation and the learning journey is long and arduous.
- (4) Parents should have an open attitude: parents should respect the professional competence of the school and the music teacher. The correct

attitude is: more support and encouragement, less criticism and less pressure.

For those who have piano teaching, some practical responses will benefit piano learners. For example.

- (1) Planning for a specialist music curriculum: from kindergarten, primary school to senior secondary school, there should be a specialist music curriculum with a clear outline and precise indicators to measure.
- (2) Improving the sight-singing and ear training courses: It is advisable to refer to foreign countries to determine the principles of teaching, such as whether to use absolute pitch training or relative pitch training.
- (3) Application of the arts-based curriculum: The music curriculum can be linked to other arts courses, giving students the opportunity to experience different forms of artistic expression.
- (4) Improve the examination system: It is advisable to change the school examination system.
- (5) For students who have the talent and ability to learn piano, we should allow them to focus more on their musical studies and reduce the pressure on their cultural studies so that they can devote more energy to their piano studies.

Concluding remarks

As we come to the end of this paper, we feel that there are two points that we can raise as a conclusion. One is the content and the other is the methodology. These two points are the most important take-aways from the study and will have positive implications for subsequent research. We are convinced that if these findings of the piano learners' career development study are put to good use in practice, they can lead to a real integration of several objects such as piano learners, parents, teachers and schools, forming a synergy and a strong guarantee of piano learning career development.

This paper provides an insight into the factors associated with piano learners, from their own musical abilities and attributes to the musical foundations of their families, including their parents' musical preferences and values, which should also be adjusted accordingly. The career development of piano learners in south-western Hunan presents a variety of colours from a superficial point of view, depending on the individual and family environment. We have adopted a scientific research approach and systematically conducted an empirical analysis of the various mechanisms involved in the piano education process, objectively summarising some general and specific patterns of piano learner development with Chinese characteristics.

Firstly, they have good musical talent themselves and their parents have high recognition and expectations of their embodied musical ability. They begin to learn piano with the selfless support and care of their families, who not only need to have the financial basis for learning, but also the constant encouragement and

support, supervision and reinforcement of their parents during the learning process, and provide them with all kinds of information materials. Secondly, they develop a strong interest in learning piano through the careful teaching of their teachers, whose teaching style, professional ethics, dedication, musical ideals and charisma deeply influence and touch them in this process. Finally, through their own hard work, their willingness to endure long periods of loneliness and tedium, they make great progress in their studies, become one with the music, make it an integral part of their lives, achieve career recognition and affirmation in their piano career, and embark on a career as a professional piano teacher or performer.

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