

Do Re Mi Studio: Fun For Young Pianists

By Sophie Braccini



Nathalie and Benjamin Kao present a duet as their teacher, Gordana Sakic-Petrovic, encourages them

Photo Sophie Braccini

Her country was still called Yugoslavia when Gordana Sakic-Petrovic started her career in Belgrade as a pianist and a teacher. Now settled in the Bay Area, the Serbian woman is developing a music school, Do Re Mi Studio, using a personal method that gives very young children the sound theoretical foundation Europeans deem irreplaceable, while using fun and accessible ways for them to grasp the concepts. The result was loud and clear during the end-of-the-year concert that Sakic-Petrovic's students performed for their families and friends at in the Community room of the Orthodox Church on School Street in Moraga.

Sakic-Petrovic wrote her thesis on musical education in

the '80s. She believes that the love of the arts needs to be taught very young, and her youngest students are 4 years old. She insists on the necessity to learn the theory behind the music, even at an early age, "there are ways to teach Solfège concepts (musical theory) in a fun and understandable way to very young musicians," she says.

Do Re Mi Studio classes are taught in a group setting. "My son enjoys meeting with his friends twice a week," says the mother of a five year old pianist, "they have a lot of fun together, they help each other and the group dynamic is excellent." Sakic-Petrovic keeps the groups very small, normally three or four students, and homogeneous. The chil-

dren meet for an hour twice every week, and for years will work with the same friends, those who started at the same time they did.

The results speak for themselves. Four and five year old children learn to play with both hands from the get go in September and by Christmas are able to play their first songs. At the end of the year performance, the audience was treated to pieces from Char-mac to Clementi to Tchaikovsky. The "older" students, ten and eleven year olds, express emotions in the way they play, "my son is quite shy and I had no idea how he was going to play," says the mother of a ten year old, "I am so enthused to hear him expressing emotions with the piano, it is very moving."

Sam has been Sakic-Petrovic's student for five years now, "I love to play songs which get harder and harder, and now I can put more spirit into them, I love to play for my mom and dad," says the entering OIS student.

Even the youngest ones like what they are doing. "Sometimes I don't like to practice every day," says eight year old Will, "but my mother gives me treats and I like to learn new songs."

The parents seem happy with the teaching and the results, "The way Gordana teaches the theory is very visual and easy to grasp," says Jane Kao, the mother of three young musicians, "the melodic way helps them to sing and they pick up the tunes fast."

The music studio is closed during the summer. Sakic-Petrovic spends July and August in her native country where her daughter lives. She will be back for a new season, starting classes the week of the Labor Day weekend. Interested families can reach her at g_doremi@hotmail.com or (510) 886-8449.