

SWEET SOUND *of* MUSIC

How Music Benefits Fort Bend Kids

Written by Jennifer Heath Photography by Marisa Hugonnett



Ethan Mader enjoys learning to play the piano



Sarah Mader was the first in her family to take music lessons, learning to play the violin



Julia Mader began playing the violin after watching her sister, Sarah, practice



Sarah Conroy is only 5, but is already taking piano lessons

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When Julia Mader's older sister, Sarah, began taking violin lessons, Julia wanted to learn how to tickle some strings, too. "I became interested in the violin because my older sister played, and I wanted to be like her," says Julia, 11. Even though she was the second violin player in the family, she never played second fiddle, becoming a talented musician in no time. Her mother, Tami, encourages Julia, her sister, Sarah, and their brother, Ethan, to enjoy music through violin or piano lessons.

At some point in their children's lives, many Fort Bend families will find themselves wondering how their children can begin music lessons, when they should start, what instrument they should play, and where they should go for lessons. Fortunately, there are many resources in Fort Bend for families interested in getting their children involved in music.

Budding Beethovens

Do you have a little guy who loves to bang on the coffee table? Or does he treat the clothes hangers like they're his electric guitars? Young children are often naturally attracted to making sounds, listening to music, and beating out rhythms. "Nurture that interest, be an encourager and be patient," says Pauline Cooper, music director at Bach to Rock in Sugar Land. Many music instructors suggest getting preschoolers involved in some type of group music class. There are options like Gymboree Play and Music or Kindermusik. These classes let children learn about rhythm, beat, and tempo while mixing in a few basic instruments such as maracas, drums, and blocks.

For older children, Lloyd Ernstes of World Music in Sugar Land, suggests bringing them into a music shop and letting them try out different instruments before selecting which one the child will play. "Learning music is more than a hobby, it's like learning a new language," says Ernstes.

Finding the Right Instrument

"Piano is an excellent first instrument for a young child," says Cooper. "The lessons, which incorporate reading music, give a good, solid foundation. The student can transfer to a different instrument later and will be able to carry the sight reading skills with them in the study of the next instrument." String instruments, like violins, also make good first instruments, because they come in small sizes that can fit well in a child's hand. "When Sarah and Ethan were about 8 and 7 years old, we had a cousin who gave us a child-size violin and we had a dear friend who gave us her spinet-size piano," says Tami Mader.

There are many different options of finding instruments. Besides buying, families can rent instruments, find used options, or, as in the case of the piano, look into smaller-scale versions, such as keyboards.

Learning the Language of Music

Local music stores help students connect with teachers to study an instrument in either a group setting or via private lessons. "Parents can expect a positive experience both for themselves and their children through private music lessons," says Skiles Kelley with Rockin' Robin Music Lessons. "Activities associated with music provide many valuable opportunities for family activities and entertainment. Music lessons stimulate the student and expose them to new ways of thinking, along with providing positive re-enforcement in their development as young adults."

Other parents look for student musicians to help their children get a start in music. "We used Clements High School students as their first teachers," recalls Mader. "Those high school girls were very talented musicians and were so encouraging, praising everything Sarah and Ethan did." For children, music lessons generally last 30 minutes, and cost anywhere from \$15 to \$40 per session. Parents are encouraged to stay for their children's lesson, so they can see what progress is being made and add suggestions when practicing at home. "It is sad to notice that the parents sometimes expect their child to be an expert in the

field soon and perform well in a few months or years," says Ravi Varughese with Springs of Life Arts and Music. "But this is like a language and it will take quite some time to learn the basics. Each child will be different in the level of understanding and so a personal touch is always necessary in their development in music."

Added Benefits

Your budding musician also will get a bonus when learning an instrument. Many studies link higher math and reasoning skills to students who play music. "Many studies have shown that brain development is enhanced by learning a musical instrument," says Kelley. "It has been my experience after teaching for over 25 years that children who learn a musical instrument are more self confident, happier, and in general, feel better about themselves. They do better in school and are more able to appreciate different points of view."

Regular practice of an instrument, which is key to success, also can be useful in other aspects of children's lives. Practice time means time away from TV, video games, and cell phones. Participating in music also often encourages friendships with others who are also learning the art, such as in school bands and orchestras, and this often motivates children to continue learning their instrument. "When I hear good pianists, it motivates me to work to get better," says Ethan Mader, 15. He adds, "I would tell other kids interested in playing to stick with your interest. It will really make you happy." SLM

JENNIFER HEATH is a writer and mother to Ryan and Landry, both future rock stars.



Anna, Ethan, Julia, and Sarah Mader all share a talent and love of music

Fort Bend's Music Resource Guide

Wondering where to start? Try some of these local music shops for instruments and lessons.

Bach to Rock Music School

435 Sartartia
Sugar Land
281-313-7625
Offers lessons in bass, guitar, percussion, piano, and violin for children 4 and older.

Collins Music

1301 FM 2218
Richmond
281-342-7878
Offers lessons in guitar, percussion, and piano for children 5 and older.

Colony Music Studio

2859 Dulles Ave.
Missouri City
281-208-0900
Offers lessons in guitar, piano, and violin for children 4 and older.

Crescendo School of Music

2503 South Main St.
Stafford
281-261-2385
Offers lessons in guitar, percussion, and piano for children 5 and older.

Fort Bend Music Center

12919 S.W. Fwy.
Stafford
281-494-5885
Offers group lessons in guitar, percussion, and piano for children 2 and older and private lessons in brass instruments, flute,

guitar, percussion, piano, saxophone, and violin for children 7 and older.

★ **Gymboree Play and Music**

3340 FM 1092, Ste. 120
Missouri City
281-208-4302
Offers music classes for children at least 6 months old.

Kindermusik

3 area locations
Offers music classes for children 7 and younger.

Music and Arts Center

2567 Town Center Blvd.
Sugar Land
281-980-5777
Offers lessons in clarinet, flute, guitar, percussion, piano, and saxophone for children 5 and older.

Rockin' Robin Music Lessons

9029 Hwy. 6
Missouri City
281-778-2378
Offers lessons in banjo, bass, clarinet, flute, guitar, harmonica, mandolin, percussion, piano, saxophone, trombone, trumpet, and violin for children 5 and older.

Rosenberg Music Company

934 Third St.
Rosenberg
281-342-2353
Offers lessons in bass, guitar, percussion, piano, and violin for children 5 and older.

Smack Guitars

6302 Hwy. 6
Missouri City
281-499-7128
Offers lessons in guitar, harmonica, percussion, piano, and violin for all ages.

Springs of Life Arts and Music

610 FM 1092
Stafford
281-499-4593
Offers lessons in guitar, keyboard, percussion, and piano for children 3 and older.

Success Music Studio

3546 Hwy. 6
Sugar Land
281-565-2703
Offers lessons in banjo, bass, guitar, mandolin, percussion, piano, and ukulele for children 3 and older.

Sugar Land Music School

16103 Lexington, Ste. J
Sugar Land
281-313-5695
Offers lessons in bass, cello,

guitar, piano, violin, and viola for children 4 and older.

World Music

3750 Cartwright Rd.
Missouri City
281-403-1615
Offers lessons in accordion, banjo, baritone, bass, cello, clarinet, flute, guitar, mandolin, percussion, saxophone, trombone, trumpet, violin, and viola for children 4 and older.

Wu's Fine Violins

15510 Lexington Blvd.
Sugar Land
281-565-7088
Offers lessons in bass, cello, violin, and viola for children 4 and older.

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