

## Jonah Mittman's Musical Journey

For the past ten years, Jonah Mittman has been on a personal journey of musical discovery. He has stayed with piano through a variety of teachers and a family move, and has flourished through OMTA's festivals and Syllabus program. Since winning the use of a grand piano from the Piano Santa Foundation in 2023, Jonah's development has only deepened, with the accomplishment of the final OMTA Syllabus level nearly within reach!

Ask Jonah about classical music, and his answers convey a rare depth of understanding of musical expression. Regarding his personal technique: "The topics of arm weight and quick, quiet playing have been a big focus." And regarding the theory behind Bach's music: "It's exciting to figure out how the melodic themes move and change shape between registers during the course of each piece." To Jonah, learning new pieces and accomplishing OMTA levels are more than just completing assignments on a list; he has discovered within himself a real love of classical music, and he is actively pushing himself to develop his ability to express it.

While his primary focus has been the pursuit of excellence in classical music, he enjoys a wide variety of explorations: Jazz, Pop, J-Pop, and film soundtracks. If not listening to Classical 89.9, Jonah typically tunes into the Jazz Station, 89.1. He has learned many solo-piano versions of pieces by the movie composer John Williams, particularly the various 'Star Wars' themes. And while he has already accompanied his high-school orchestra on Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, he dreams of performing Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue with a full orchestra.

Jonah also enjoys competing on his high school's Cross Country and Track teams, enjoys reading Sci-Fi and Fantasy novels, and is currently working through a good chunk of Stephen King's bibliography. With the little spare time he has left, Jonah volunteers as a member of his school's student council and as a student ambassador, while also volunteering time to accompany Valley Catholic's vocal liturgy band.

Board Member Sam Krulewitch observes that PSF is "grateful to play a small role in enriching and encouraging Jonah's journey of personal development, as it leads to new musical opportunities in future." These include both outward goals, such as majoring in music at university, and inward goals, such as developing his inner ear to express ever-deeper emotions. Krulewitch adds "we can't wait to see what he accomplishes next!"



*Jonah Mittman with his grand scholarship piano.*



*The pianos from PSF and many, many amps!*



### PSF Program Basics

PSF was created in 1994 to provide music education opportunities for children, particularly in underserved populations, in the Portland metropolitan area. The three main focuses of our programming are:

- (1) **Merit and Need-Based Scholarships:** placing pianos in students' homes,
- (2) **Community Placement Grants:** placing pianos with deserving community organizations,
- (3) **Music Lending Library:** providing access to over 1,750 music books.

In support of these programs, we provide in-home piano tunings and maintenance, offer educational opportunities, and sponsor student recitals throughout the year. Please see our website for information.

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### The Piano Santa Foundation

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Phone 503.245.6269

You can support PSF with a donation of any size at [www.pianosanta.org/donations](http://www.pianosanta.org/donations)

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# PSF Donates Pianos to AMP

Artists Mentorship Program (AMP) is a fantastic local organization that supports homeless youth, a profoundly vulnerable population in Portland. Their mission statement is to “support youth navigating the trauma of homelessness by creating community, relationships, and music and arts mentorships so that esteem is enhanced, confidence is fortified, and pathways out of homelessness are built.” AMP had contacted PSF in late 2022, requesting two pianos for use by homeless teenagers and young adults. Although most PSF community placements are loans, we made an exception by outright giving AMP two quality pianos to support their mission.

This past year has been a challenging one for AMP, due to multiple floods and subsequent floor installations. However, the space and the organization have emerged like a butterfly as a large, welcoming, bright, vibrant, and beautiful space. The walls have been painted by talented local street artists, and the work rooms, cubbies, and shelves are now fully stocked with art supplies, guitars, drums, our two pianos, many other instruments (including a beautiful painted piano for the stage), and many, many amps!

A year ago, the organization was serving 12 youths per night, providing a well-rounded meal, safe space, and an outlet for self-expression through many forms of art, poetry, and music. One year later, 50 to 60 youths gather at AMP every evening. In addition to arts mentorship, volunteers help participants to get matched up to social services as needed. At its core, the facility has become family for many of these young people. Young mothers bring their small children along, and are at ease knowing their children will be cared for while they can pursue their social and artistic outlets. The participants come back night after night and develop what will surely be life-long relationships with each other, mentors, and volunteers.

The pianos donated by Piano Santa are well used and treasured. They are stored side by side in a small practice room to allow for teaching, duets, regular practice, and compositions. Many of the participants have had some exposure to piano throughout their lives, and treasure the opportunity to return to the instrument they love so much.



## Ben Graves, PSF Board Member

The profile of Ben Graves on the PSF website is impressive—he is incredibly diverse in his past and current music presence. But how did he get here? And what can we learn from his journey?

Ben's entrance into music stems from at least two basic experiences: he had multiple relatives who were musicians, playing bluegrass, country, rock, etc., and he grew up in Tennessee near Memphis and Nashville, so he was surrounded by an intense musical culture.

Playing music brings with it lots of benefits, Ben believes. For one, he says "I'm never going to be bored." Other benefits Ben hopes kids considering music will discover are: the great friendships—often lifelong friendships—that

can spring up when making music; the ability to soak up cultural aspects from around the world spurred specifically by experiencing other cultures' music, and; the positive influence on brain development from dedicated music learning along with the boon this provides to other academic studies. And, not least, music provides a meditative opportunity, a buffer against stress and angst—that is, in addition to practice and learning for technique and performance, music provides "a safe place," a method of contemplation and relaxation, even at early stages of musical ability.

So how does a prospective student get inspired to pursue music, professionally or otherwise? And how does a more advanced music student stay inspired? Ben offers some suggestions:

- Develop a support system. Have friends, especially parents, play music with you, or let them regularly and gently nudge you toward practice and performance.
- Do things that will push you—for example, scales and technical studies.
- Do things that will make you happy, on whatever instrument you choose.
- Listen to what inspires you. Hear how other people approach a particular piece you are working on. Listen to recordings, but also "go out and see the music"—go to live performances, get inspired by other musicians.

Most importantly, the passion has to be there—and if it is, follow it!

## GRACE NOTES

Our heartfelt thanks go to the following individuals, businesses, and foundations for their support of PSF programs, as well as to the many anonymous donors who have made generous contributions. Your support makes all the difference! If your name is missing from this list (and you wish to be added), please call our office, and we will be sure to make the correction in our next edition.

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## Upcoming 2024 Events

Fall Showcase  
September 14, 2024

Winter Recital  
December 7, 2024

*Time and location details will be  
announced at a later date.  
Please check our website or follow  
us on Facebook for updates.*

*PSF students at 2024 Spring Recital.*