

Freelance Pianist List

Professional Guidelines for Student Pianists

Vocal and instrumental students within the School of Music are responsible to secure their own accompanist for most lessons and curricular performances. To facilitate a student's ability to find reliable, professional, and courteous accompanists, the School of Music distributes the Freelance Pianist List to applied professors who share the list with students in their studios. Without freelance pianists, many School of Music performances would not be possible. Thank you for offering your professional services to help meet this need.

The Freelance Pianist List is an endorsement of your high level of skill and your reliable professionalism. If unforeseen questions arise about professional standards or musical expectations, your applied professor is an excellent resource to consult. As the School of Music Staff Accompanist, I am also readily available and happy to serve as a resource. Standard professional practices for regular accompanist duties are outlined below. Student accompanists on the Freelance Pianist List are expected to abide by these professional standards.

- **Music:** Only commit to accompanying students whose music you can perform at a high standard of excellence. Discuss the music selection(s) before committing to accompany any student. If you are not familiar with the title of the music, ask to see the musical score (emailed or in-person). If you are unsure that you will be able to master the music, it is often best not to commit to accompanying the student, though your applied professor will also serve as a reliable guide when making a final decision. When you commit to accompany a student, communicate that music is needed, as a minimum, 3-4 weeks in advance of the first rehearsal and more time may be needed for recital preparation.
- **Agreements:** Before committing to accompany a student, ask for the expectations of the student and professor in addition to the music that will be learned and performed. Consider making a simple written agreement including the expected time and method of music delivery, rates, planned rehearsals, and planned performances.
- **Rates:** Payment is usually billed for in-person rehearsal or performance time and does not include practice time. For student accompanists on the Freelance Pianist List, recommended rehearsal and lesson rates regularly fall between \$20-30 per hour (undergraduate students) and \$25-35 per hour (graduate students) depending on the professional experience and required skill level of the accompanist. An additional and reasonable fee commensurate with the time commitment and performance expectations may be charged for performances (studio classes, area recitals, masterclasses, recitals, juries/reviews, etc.). Payment is usually made near or at the final accompanied performance of the semester, though some students prefer to pay after each engagement.
- **Rehearsals:** Ask for the approximate tempo at which the student plans to perform a piece and learn the music in advance of rehearsals. Always meet to rehearse before attending a lesson and rehearse between any lessons to apply feedback that was received. As a minimum, plan to attend at least 2 lessons before a mid-semester performance (studio class, jury, masterclass, etc.), and plan to attend a minimum of 3-4 lessons to prepare for a jury or review performance. For recitals, consider scheduling weekly 30-minute meetings (alternating between rehearsals and lesson attendance) with the student whose recital you are accompanying.
- **Communication:** Professional etiquette recommends replying to inquiries within 48 hours of an email being received, even if the answer is "no". If you are unavailable, thank the student for his or her inquiry and reply that you are currently unavailable to meet the need.

- **Coaching:** Student accompanists can mention musical errors (note and rhythm errors, for example), but student accompanists should not give coaching advice for technique.
- **Rescheduling/Cancelling:** Be punctual and notify others at least 24 hours in advance if you need to cancel a rehearsal. Remember, reliability is one of the most important aspects of professionalism. Cancel rehearsals sparingly and only when necessary. In extreme circumstances (illness, injury, etc.), a substitute may be needed for commitments. Take responsibility to find a substitute if these unexpected circumstances arise. Express your sincere apologies to the professor and student if you are unable to secure someone and direct them to contact me at kparker48@liberty.edu. Cancellations due to overcommitment or unpreparedness are unacceptable and unprofessional. When you agree to accompany a student, you are communicating that you have the time, skill, and commitment to follow through with the agreement. Make sure all rehearsals, performances, and expectations for the semester are clear and agreed upon before you commit.
- **Absentees:** If a student you agree to accompany cancels a rehearsal with less than 24-hours notice, you may still charge the student for the planned rehearsal if this was previously discussed in your semester agreement. If the student is absent for two or more rehearsals, you are released from your agreement to accompany the student and may communicate the student's need to find another accompanist.
- **Removal:** The presence of a student's name on the freelance pianist list is considered an endorsement of that student's abilities and professionalism. If a professor, staff member, or student complaint is received regarding a student accompanist, I will reach out to the student accompanist to schedule an in-person meeting to discuss strategies for growth. If a second complaint is received, a second in-person meeting will be scheduled to discuss necessary steps to implement for future accompanying engagements. If a third complaint is received, the student will be removed from the Freelance Pianist List. An in-person audition can be scheduled in a subsequent semester to request reinstatement of a student's name on the Freelance Pianist List.
- **Community Pianists:** These guidelines are intended for student accompanists and serve as a resource for community-based pianists only as reasonably applicable.
- **Final Notes:** You are a student first and foremost. Only say "yes" to the number of students that you can accompany while maintaining high standards of excellence for your own curricular program. If you pursue excellence in all of your work, people will hire you again and recommend you to others. Take responsibility for all of your commitments, always seek to do your best, be professional, and be courteous. Let Colossians 3:23-24 be your ultimate guide.☺ I am here to support you. Please feel free to contact me at kparker48@liberty.edu if needs arise.

Mrs. Kim Parker, Staff Accompanist
Liberty University School of Music

I agree to abide by these professional standards for the duration of my time as a freelance pianist listed on the Liberty University School of Music Freelance Pianist List.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Name (Printed): _____