

MICHIGAN PRIME IS PRODUCED BY

signature media



Signature Media reserves the right to reject any advertisement. All advertising published in Michigan PRIME is subject to the conditions stated in the applicable rate card, copies of which are available at

615 W. Lafayette Blvd. Detroit, MI 48226
Phone: 313.223.3333 • Fax: 313.496.4958
Copyright 2013 Signature Media, a division of the Detroit Media Partnership*

Publisher: Dale D. Parry
Editor in Chief: Theresa Falzone
Sales Manager: Matthew J. Fasang
Multimedia Editor: Allison Loerch
Graphic Designer: Ruth Ann E. Messing
Product Marketing Specialist: Monica Kushnier
Operations Specialist: Dana Holmes

www.michiganprime.com

Michigan
PRIME

Learning to Play Music at Any Age

Picking up an instrument offers benefits to older adults

By Joyce Wiswell

If Cindy Burrier has any regrets about waiting so long to learn the harp, it's that her mother never got to enjoy hearing her play.

"My mother always loved the harp," says the 71-year-old Royal Oak resident. "I wish she was here to hear it."

Steve Klaper, 59, has been playing guitar since he was a teenager, but it wasn't until recently that he started getting really serious.

"I've played a little every day for most of my life, but I didn't have any theory background at all," says the Oak Park resident, who is studying in a cantoral program that requires him to learn musical theory.

"If I had learned this stuff in the beginning, it would have made things so much easier."



Cindy Burrier of Royal Oak says playing music is the antidote to stress. Photo by Christian O'Grady.

MUSIC

Delving Into Music

Burrier and Klaper are proof that it's never too late to learn to play an instrument and perhaps even delve deeply into how music works.

"My stores are full of senior citizens - who we affectionately call active retirees - who have always dreamed of playing an instrument," says Jim Evola, 56, the third-generation owner of Evola Music, which has four locations in Michigan. "People are retiring healthier and earlier. They understand they have to keep their body active and their mind, too. The benefit of music is that both parts of the brain are working equally and in sync. And it gives a sense of purpose."

Most of Evola's older clients learn to play a "Virtual Orchestra" keyboard, which features a standard piano sound as well as full musical accompaniment at the push of a button.

Evola Music offers low-cost classes at three of its stores and seven senior centers. Students can initially borrow the keyboard to learn and practice on, and approximately 70 percent go on to purchase one at prices of \$2,000 to \$5,000, according to Evola.

"We have people from 50 to 95 years old in the program," Evola says. "It's rare that you run across someone who doesn't wish they had learned to play an instrument. Instead they say, 'I wish my parents hadn't let me cave so easily.'"

The reason so many kids do quit music lessons,

says Randy Leipnik, 59, is that the teaching is done backward by requiring that students learn to read notes before they experience the sheer joy of playing by ear.

"Music education is still in the 1600s," says the Beverly Hills resident, who has spent his career in the music industry but only recently resumed offering private lessons.

Leipnik is a self-described evangelist for his Semper Method, in which students begin by simply listening to music, then sing it, clap it, play it and lastly, learn to read and write it.

The mature set, Leipnik says, actually has some inherent advantages when it comes to picking up an instrument. "At this age, you've got all your cognitive stuff happening. You can focus, and you've learned how to learn. Now you can have fun."

A Mood Booster

Burrier says she always enjoyed the keyboard but only recently turned her attention to the harp. "I knew if I really wanted to get serious about learning it, I needed to take lessons," she says. She turned to Kelly Yousoufian, who owns the Michigan Harp Center in Clawson.

"At least half my students are older than 55," Yousoufian says. "It used to be that you could only have a large pedal harp - and those are the price of a car. Now you can get a good, small lap

harp for about \$700, and people are saying, 'I can really do this.' My oldest student started at age 79, so when people who are 55 or 60 say they are too old, I tell them that they'll have to wait 19 years to start."

Burrier says she tries to practice both the harp and keyboard for a half hour each day, and it's an antidote to stressful times.

"Music is so important," she says. "After a hard day to come home and start playing music, it lifts your heart. And it's never too late to learn anything - it doesn't mean you're going to be a performer or take it on the road."

On the subject of teaching an old dog new tricks, Klaper quotes his mother.

"She used to say, 'The time goes by anyway.' If you do anything a little bit every day, the time goes by anyway. And in a couple of years, you realize you're pretty good."

Leipnik's goal is to get people paying attention to the "800 pound gorilla in the room" - the piano they probably already own.

"In metro Detroit, there are thousands of pianos unused," he says. "When you let people play and have fun, all those lonely, dusty pianos will not just be pieces of furniture."

"No one is going to laugh at you," he adds. "It's pure fun. If you could bottle this, it is what fun would look like - and it has no hangover. 🍷"

more info at SemperMethod.com