

Sample Chapter:

Chapter 2

Methods, Metrics and Miracles

On any typical day in the busy community of South Bend, Indiana, students dutifully arrive at music studios ready for their piano lessons. Eager learners pursue traditional music studies with the careful direction of dedicated teachers. These students study and learn, practice and progress, as people interested in the arts have for years.

At the same time, in another part of town, other parents escort students to an unusual kind of music experience. These students are experiencing life in a dramatically different way. Parents pull into the parking lot of Ivy Court Inn and Suites (formerly The Jamison Inn), an all-suite condominium hotel nestled next to the campus of the famed University of Notre Dame. They accompany students up the steps and through the front door. Some students cannot walk or talk. Some cannot see or hear properly. Some are assisted by canes, walkers or

crutches. Parents ride the elevator with their children to the lower level conference area, down the hall and into a special music studio. Some suffer from various conditions and syndromes that affect their ability to function effectively in a world characterized by competition, power, speed and, most importantly it seems, winning. These are exceptional people with special needs. Most people think of youngsters taking lessons in their own neighborhoods. These exceptional students, however, travel a long way, coming from neighboring towns or, in some cases, nearby states. They receive innovative piano instruction and therapeutic music experiences tailored to their individual situations. They joyfully sing and dance, they laugh and clap their hands. They play pianos and other rhythm instruments made available through the generosity of private individuals and Shirk's Music Center, a leading retail music store in northern Indiana, and by the instruments' manufacturer, the Yamaha Corporation of America. They happily wave multi-colored scarves we call flags, and beat rhythm instruments of their choice. They study in facilities that have been provided without charge and dedicated solely to fine arts instruction by the hotel management and owners.

This is the story of these brave individuals who never thought they would be able to participate in music. It is told against the backdrop of the emergence of

the Foundation for Music and Healing, Inc. This non-profit charitable organization is a broad-based effort by passionate parents and caring members of the community who have banded together to create a unique service to meet the special needs of exceptional people with disabilities. This is the story of people of all ages and from all walks of life who have stepped forward to realize their dreams of making music. They have special needs or disabilities ranging from mild to severe, but they happily express music in their own way. It is the story of incredible courage, hope, love and support from families and friends who make financial provisions so that regular, private lessons may take place. It is the story of vision and dedication of parents, educators, health care professionals and community leaders who believe that everyone, regardless of circumstance, has a right to participate in and enjoy the performing arts.

Just as important, this is the story of the healing power of music . . .