

While going every week for piano lessons with Pauline did not make me a pianist, it did leave a deep, lifelong impression. Entering through a side door, I would slip onto the piano bench, get out my music and wonder if I would be able to play this week's assignment for her. Very shortly, Pauline would enter and - without fail - make me feel as if this was a special time of the day for her.

Though she would soon realize I had not practiced much, this did not seem to faze her or detract from our connection. She would sit down, search for one of her stubby pencils, and begin the lesson.

I was always relieved when it was time to pick out a new piece. I would move over and make room for Pauline on the piano bench. Listening to her was magical for me. She would flip through the piano book, playing pieces such as The Spinning Wheel or The Tarantella so effortlessly. While we both knew it was highly unlikely that I would master the tempo and liveliness they required, in that brief moment after she stopped playing all seemed possible.

The song would be selected, the helpful comments written down, and next week's date written at the top. I never felt ashamed about my lack of talent. Quite the opposite - when the lesson was over, we would talk and Pauline would solicit my views and opinions on a range of topics. Or maybe she was planning a meal and needed help in the kitchen, and we would continue our discussion over food preparation. Although I was not becoming a pianist, I was studying with one of life's master teacher and finding my voice.

Allison Martyn