

# GET GOING!

*Now you're on track, Erica Worth expands your horizons beyond the piano bench*

## SHAPE UP

Sitting at the piano for long periods can create all kinds of tension in your body. Loosen up with yoga or Alexander Technique. Guildhall School of Music piano professor Nelly Ben-Or runs twice-yearly courses in piano playing that include the application of the Alexander Technique. Says Ben-Or, 'The Alexander Technique teaches a clear conscious awareness for the improvement of one's total mental/physical coordination. It "fine-tunes" a player for a way of learning and performing music that saves time and energy often spent in wasteful, mechanical, mindless practising that can lead to problems of strain – even injuries.' Find out more about these courses at [www.pianocourseswithalexandertechnique.com](http://www.pianocourseswithalexandertechnique.com).

Another piano-specific activity is Piano-Yoga, which aims not only to improve technique, but also to 'establish a sense of well-being that enhances development as a pianist,' says Piano-Yoga's director, GéNIA ([www.piano-yoga.com](http://www.piano-yoga.com)). 'Through a combination of technical finger exercises, pure yoga and relaxation classes and performance psychology, Piano-Yoga students learn how to build strength and suppleness in their fingers and hands, safely increase hand span, improve concentration, establish good posture at the piano, master different qualities of sound, develop rhythm and articulation, improve sight-reading, conquer performance nerves, release tension during performance, organise piano practice and unlock individual interpretation.'

It may seem premature to worry about injury when you're starting out, but taking care of your body now can pay dividends later. The British Association of Performing Arts Medicine website ([www.bapam.org.uk](http://www.bapam.org.uk)) has tips for performing without pain and warm-up exercises.

## TUNE IT UP

If you have an acoustic piano, you'll need to get it tuned (twice a year is ideal). An obvious place to find a tuner is through the shop where you bought your piano or any reputable piano showroom in your area. The Pianoforte Tuners' Association ([www.pianotuner.org.uk](http://www.pianotuner.org.uk)) has a search engine for finding a tuner, as well as helpful suggestions for piano care and maintenance. The Piano Technicians Guild has a similar search facility for US pianists ([www.ptg.org](http://www.ptg.org)). The Association of Blind Piano Tuners' website ([www.uk-piano.org](http://www.uk-piano.org)) is also well worth a visit.

## ACCESSORIZE YOUR PIANO

Are you sitting comfortably? If the answer is 'no' or 'maybe', it may be time to upgrade your piano stool. Bonners Music Superstore ([www.bonnersmusic.co.uk](http://www.bonnersmusic.co.uk)) and Fletcher Newman ([www.fletcher-newman.co.uk](http://www.fletcher-newman.co.uk)) are good places to hunt one out. Then there's that all-important metronome. We love the Wittner models at [www.wittner-gmbh.de](http://www.wittner-gmbh.de) – see the playful penguin on this page. You can find metronomes in most good music stores; in London, try Chappell of Bond Street ([www.chappellofbondstreet.co.uk](http://www.chappellofbondstreet.co.uk)) and Schott ([www.schott-music.com](http://www.schott-music.com)). Or try to win a metronome through our competition on page 4. And what about a fall stay, to prevent the lid from slamming shut? These can be retrofitted to most pianos. In London, contact Markson Pianos ([www.marksonpianos.com](http://www.marksonpianos.com)).

Weather affects acoustic pianos, so consider a humidifier, which is installed inside your instrument. They can range from the most basic (from £50 at [www.fletcher-newman.co.uk](http://www.fletcher-newman.co.uk)) to the Damp Chaser Piano Life Saver System (from £520 at [www.davidfrypianos.co.uk](http://www.davidfrypianos.co.uk); the manufacturer's international site is [www.pianolifesaver.com](http://www.pianolifesaver.com)).



## DELVE INTO A BOOK

*Pianist* should be keeping you busy with 40 pages of sheet music to play and plenty of articles to read, but you might still need a volume on a specific composer, a theory book or even a sight-reading book. For sight-reading, there's Paul Harris's *Improve your sight-reading!* (Faber) and John Kember's *Piano Sight-Reading* series (Schott). For quick help with theory, try *The AB Guide to Music Theory* (ABRSM).

There are an endless number of step-by-step series (see this issue's Sheet Music review for the latest). Look at [www.boosey.com/learn-piano](http://www.boosey.com/learn-piano) for an idea of all the different types of learning books that are out there.

The best sources for music books are specialist music shops such as Chappell of Bond Street, Music Sales ([www.musicroom.com](http://www.musicroom.com)), Boosey & Hawkes, Schott Music and Foyles (all in the UK) and, for US online sales, [www.sheetmusicplus.com](http://www.sheetmusicplus.com).

## SIGN UP FOR A COURSE

There's an array of piano courses and workshops that go on all year round – with some geared towards beginners and re-starters. Benslow Music Trust in Herefordshire ([www.benslow.org](http://www.benslow.org)) runs courses all year long, as does City Lit ([www.citylit.ac.uk](http://www.citylit.ac.uk)) and Morley College ([www.morley-college.ac.uk](http://www.morley-college.ac.uk)), both in London. Then there's the well-known Chetham's Summer School for Pianists in Manchester ([www.pianosummerschool.com](http://www.pianosummerschool.com)). Look out for *Pianist's* annual summer learning section for full listings. You can participate at an amateur music festival all over the UK throughout the year. Find out more at [www.federationoffestivals.org.uk](http://www.federationoffestivals.org.uk).

## LISTEN IN

Never underestimate the value of listening. Live concerts are great, but you can broaden your musical horizons even within the cosiness of your home through the ever-faithful radio. In the UK, there's BBC Radio 3 (90.2FM; [www.bbc.co.uk/radio3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3)), which broadcasts a range of classical, jazz and spoken word programmes; and the ever-popular Classic FM (99.9FM; [www.classicfm.co.uk](http://www.classicfm.co.uk)). In the USA, besides National Public Radio, there are many regional classical music stations (see [www.classical.net/music/links/radio.php](http://www.classical.net/music/links/radio.php) for a list). If you own an iPhone or iPad, explore radio broadcasts all over the world with the TuneIn Radio app.

## DISCOVER YOUR JAZZ SIDE

If it's jazz you're looking for, there are plenty of books and courses. The Jazzwise Summer School in Surrey, for instance, offers combo sessions, masterclasses, ear training and theory seminars for all ages and abilities. ABRSM publishes a step-by-step 'how to' guide to playing jazz entitled *Jazz Piano from Scratch*, while Boosey & Hawkes offers the *Exploring Jazz Piano* series. You can even try jazz lessons online at [www.jazzpianolessons.com](http://www.jazzpianolessons.com). And if you're looking for a jazz piano teacher, there's an organisation that can help: the Jazz Piano Teachers' Association ([www.japta.org.uk](http://www.japta.org.uk)).