

## **11 great reasons group class is more than worth the effort** by MaryLou Roberts

**1 Playing as part of a group imitates a real performance.** Children learn to play with others around, listening and feeling more at ease with the idea of sharing music with others. Later in life, the skill of performing or talking in front of a group will be more natural.

**2 Playing in group increases flexibility.** Students are asked to play at a wider variety of speeds or different dynamics than they do alone. Learning to be in a group and follow another person's idea creates a better world.

**3 Playing in group reinforces a steady pulse, and more importantly not stopping for a mistake, following others, being a leader.** This strengthens review pieces, so that the students are better prepared with greater skills to move on to higher levels, express themselves more clearly and enjoy the music more.

**4 Playing in group creates community.** Children are encouraged when they see another child doing well. Children learn from their role models, the other kids. A mother I know wanted her daughter to learn Italian, her mother spoke some, but her daughter was resistant. When she took her to a class where other children were learning Italian, she joined right in without hesitation.

**5 Any memory slips are covered by the other players with no embarrassment.** Mistakes are taken in stride. The ability to play on after a mistake is exercised, so that mistakes don't trip the students up. An occasional mistake is not the end of the world.

**6 Playing in group makes it more fun to review.** Children don't often play the review pieces enough, but for a group concert, they will, and be more interested in doing a good job. As adults, we know how much easier it is to exercise with someone else or in a group than alone.

**7 Playing games in a group setting renews and refreshes the music,** and it becomes more alive and current. Often children think they are playing loud enough, or soft enough. Through group playing, they learn by example just how loud or soft.

**8 Children learn in group to happily follow a leader, and still be themselves.** Following without feeling a loss of identity helps students be strong enough to learn from others, and give the leader respect.

**9 Children hear the next pieces that the others are playing and feel more motivated to practice.** When children arrive to group class, they hear where they have been, and where they are headed. This gives them pride in their accomplishments and momentum to go even further.

**10 We foster a cooperative spirit in group class.** We are all there encouraging each other, helping each person to learn. Learning is enhanced by a non-threatening environment.

There may be times when we need to have a balance between the needs of the group and the needs of the individual. If it is a shared compromise, teachers and parents will find it workable. For example, missing one sports practice per month, and missing one group class per month works temporarily. Parents can balance the activity level for their children, so that there is enough energy to benefit from that activity. It is up to parents to share their values about balancing activity level, helping children learn how to handle these situations.