



NEW HORIZONS NEWS

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PIANO FUSION, SCOTTSDALE, AZ

88 Keys and Counting!

Submitted by *Diana Cobb*

About two and a half years ago, I opened the *Wall Street Journal* and found a prominent article highlighting Roy Ernst and New Horizons Music. As a lifelong musician, I immediately slowed down my reading to explore the details. The first thing that rang a bell was the fact that Mr. Ernst had been a long time professor at the Eastman School of Music, my alma mater. Reading on, I discovered that we shared many ideas about the power of group music in adult populations, but I also felt left out.

I am a pianist, and pianists are generally solitary souls. We cannot join bands and

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orchestras. We usually spend our musical lives alone in our homes. Some of us are quite good, but often no one has ever heard us perform! At any rate, I was not able to deposit that WSJ article in the recycle can. I kept coming back to it, wondering “Would this New Horizons concept be possible for pianists?” I finally worked up the courage to contact Roy with my crazy idea of a keyboard ensemble and he immediately endorsed and encouraged it.

The rest is history. Quiet, cautious “piani-



imals” stepped out of their caves and created Piano Fusion! All levels, from beginners to pros, were welcomed, encouraged, and have continued to coexist in the most harmonious way. There are so many notes in piano music that there is always something for everyone to play, whether it is a simple treble melody, a solo, a duet, or an amazing improv to cover a few wrong notes! We have no “divas” or inflated egos, just a wonderful bond created by the love for piano. SEE PIANO FUSION — continued on page 3

PIANO FUSION — continued from page 1



Piano Fusion celebrated the world's most well-known 88-keyed instrument on the 88th day of the year, "Piano Day 2019," at the incomparable Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, AZ. Museum guests enjoyed "pop-up" performances by Piano Fusion, which featured works by Liszt, Gershwin, Rachmaninoff, Handel, and an 8-hand (!) composition by Cecile Chaminade. Click on the image above to watch the full performance.

Some of our members share their thoughts:

SUSAN MITCHELL When I joined Piano Fusion, I had no idea what to expect. But what I found was the kindest group of people who all love to play the piano. We get together, play all sorts of pieces and the music from all these keyboards just fills the room. Sometimes the music gets away from us and we stop, laugh, regroup and try again. It is so different from playing alone. For me, it meant so much to get together with people I quickly thought of as friends and create something beautiful just for the joy of it.

DEBORAH JENSEN Piano Fusion lights my fire! It rekindles embers within of deep need and innate desire to get back to playing my piano and making music with others again after many years' hiatus.

Our hallowed Thursday night practices are so much vibrant and enveloping fun. We are salty, serious, sweet, and in a mind spot of being free from cares of our days as we play and learn and listen to each other. It gives us impetus to grow and practice our art both alone and in a group.

Performances—outdoors and in—send little shivers of nervousness and excitement up our spines. And then—oh, the good feeling after of having accomplished and shared what we love and are privileged to do with others!

Piano Fusion is a living breathing entity that I feel very grateful for. Piano Fusion is precious!

KATHIE CLARKE After a very rewarding yet demanding 46 years as a nurse and neuroscience clinical nurse specialist, my life-long dream was to spend my days in retirement

developing and honing my piano skills. Even in my wild-est dreams I never imagined meeting Diana Cobb and her piano group and becoming part of her dream to develop a Piano Fusion family. I have to admit I'm working harder now than I ever did during my working career but I'm loving every minute of it, and I'm realizing dreams truly do come true. Comraderie, collaboration and the opportunity of playing with some of the most talented and gracious pianists that make even me sound great!

KEVIN JULIEN I have experienced a lot of growth as musician and as a person in the past year; much of which I attribute to my participation in Piano Fusion.

Through Diana Cobb's project, I have been introduced to a lot of music that is new to me as well as the intricacies of playing piano music for up to eight hands.

I have had many joyful moments rehearsing and performing with the group.

I am continually learning from others in our group as well as Diana. I have noticed a marked improvement in my sight reading ability and my piano technique.

These developments have fed into my own work as a writer and composer.

SHOKO W I learned piano as a child but I neglected my old passion for a long time until I found Piano Fusion. Now I am having such a good time learning new songs and playing piano together as a group. With performance opportunities, different genre of songs to play, and interesting arrangements, I am having a blast! It is wonderful to share the love of piano music with talented members of Piano Fusion.

LINDA EDWARDS Piano Fusion has been a great way to come together with others who enjoy playing piano. It is an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends with a common interest. It is a mix of those who read some music to those who have played for years. It's fun to hear the arrangements come together, and what is cool is you don't have to worry about playing all the notes or skipping over notes because someone in the group will more than likely be playing them. Whatever your ability, Piano Fusion provides the means for pianists to be part of a group, who enjoy playing and giving back to our community with the gift of music.