MU School of Music
Dr. Janice Wenger, Keyboard Area Coordinator
Meghan Speed, Group Piano Coordinator

Specifications for Digital Keyboards
Group Piano for Majors I, II, III, IV

Because the current piano lab is too small to distance appropriately and we have too many students to divide and schedule into smaller sections, we have decided that all Group Piano levels will be offered as distance courses in Fall 2020 and perhaps also in Spring 2021 if the virus persists.

The majority of work in the Group Piano classes will be asynchronous, requiring students to present playing assignments recorded on a video device (cell phone, tablet) and uploaded for the teacher. Classes will meet once a week synchronously for attendance and questions, but those will be via Zoom and not in the piano lab. You will NOT need to be at a piano for the synchronous class meetings. Majors with scheduling conflicts for the synchronous classes will be accommodated.

Research as of now implies that there is a smaller risk of contracting the virus from touching potentially infected surfaces; however, it is not zero, so we are writing today to have you consider the best solution for your participation in this class. We are planning at this time to have a limited number of practice rooms and possibly the piano lab open for you to use for class practicing, preparation, and assignments. These will require hand sanitizing and masks for use. However, some of you may not be comfortable sharing those heavily-used keyboards with multiple other students, thus raising your risk. In addition, any group piano student who chooses to isolate themselves or wishes to be very cautious about touching common surfaces may want to consider providing their own keyboard in their dorm or apartment this year. We wanted you to know this now, while there’s time for you to research and purchase one.

You may already own or have assured access to an acoustic or digital piano on a daily basis during the semester. Or, if you decide you need to purchase one for your own use, we are providing some minimum specifications for this class, listed below. When shopping, you might also want to consider purchasing a better or larger keyboard than these; think about what uses you might find in your musical career and contemplate a larger investment now that might serve you for many years to come. The MU Bookstore is planning to stock a few keyboards, if you are interested.

Caution: Although you may find some excellent deals on new or used instruments from known brands online, be cautious about purchasing a low-cost instrument made by an unknown manufacturer, new or used. My survey of online reviews revealed frequent issues with durability, mechanical function, and electrical systems on the cheaper off-brand instruments, rendering them possibly unusable in a few weeks.

Minimum standards:
- Digital piano keyboard, 61-key or larger (88 keys is full size)
- Full-size keys (no children’s model with shorter or narrower keys)
- Volume control
- Headphone jack (helps for practicing in your dorm or apartment)
- Foot pedal for sustaining (usually has to be purchased extra for $15-25; be sure compatible)

Highly desirable specifications: (but usually mean more $$)
- Music rest – to prop up your textbook or scores on top of the instrument at a viewing angle
- Touch-sensitive keys – so that your fingers control how loud or quiet the tone is
- USB and/or MIDI Port – some have one or the other, a few have neither
- Recording capability for audio files
- Bluetooth for headphones or other devices, usually more expensive
- (Keyboard stands are not normally included, but could be bundled or purchased extra)

Brands that are usually reliable: Casio, Roland, Yamaha, Korg

GOOD ONLINE REVIEW SITE with more details about specifications; also has 88-key reviews
https://catchypianos.com/best-61-key-keyboard-reviews/

-June 12, 2020