

## Piano-playing cat is YouTube star

It's not "Für Elise," but an on-key cat is wowing the Net.

By Amanda Rittenhouse  
For The Inquirer

From rags to ragtime.

A Philadelphia feline and former stray is tickling the ivories and hearts of YouTube viewers around the world. The video, listed on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) as "Nora, the Piano-Playing Cat," has been viewed more than 600,000 times in three weeks.

The video has received 21 YouTube honors, including February's third-most-viewed pets and animals video.

Nora's owner, Betsy Alexander of Center City, who is new to the YouTube Web site, said that Nora plays the piano daily and capturing her performing on video was not difficult.

She said Nora, a 3-year-old gray bull's-eye tabby, began playing the piano at age 1. Nora doesn't play songs, just notes.

"When she first started, she played two notes at a time and then learned how to play one note at a time. She sometimes reaches up to the black notes. She has a little bit of rhythm but I don't know if in her mind if that's a song or not. I don't know. You never know what's going on in their little heads," said Alexander.

Alexander, a composer, painter, private music teacher, and a musical consultant for the Society Hill Synagogue, adopted Nora from PetSmart. She describes her as a diva and the fattest cat of her six-cat house.

Since Nora's video debuted, Alexander has received e-mail from Spain, Italy, Canada and the United States, and online comments from Malaysia, Japan, Brazil and Argentina.

"Nora even got a valentine from Texas," she said.

To reward Nora's concertizing, Alexander gives her cat treats. Alexander denies YouTube rumors that she spreads catnip on her Yamaha Disklavier grand piano.

"I didn't teach her how to do it. She's just imitating and she actually plays when we're not here," said Alexander.

In the video, Nora provides accompaniment to her favorite song, the Bach "Minuet in G," with piano student Barbara Eberlein.

Eberlein has been a student of Alexander's for six years and usually takes lessons early Monday morning.

"I think that's why Nora likes to play with me most. I walk in first thing Monday morning and she jumps on the piano and starts playing. It's hysterical."

Eberlein said the cat runs downstairs when she hears the Bach minuet.

"Long before Betsy had the idea to videotape her, she would play. Some of her cats would inadvertently walk on keys but this cat just sat down with perfect posture and sometimes even played the same key. If I hit one key over and over that's what she'll do. If I play something with two hands she will use two paws," said Eberlein.

Alexander and Nora live and work out of their home with Alexander's husband, Burnell Yow, and five other cats, Miro, Rennie, Max, Clara and Gabby.

"She really has the personality of a great composer," Alexander said of Nora... . Maybe she's Beethoven. She puts her ear towards the piano, doesn't get along with the other cats, and definitely likes to be in the spotlight."



Eric Mencher / Inquirer

By tickling the ivories, Nora, who lives with Betsy Alexander in Center City, has tickled fancies on YouTube.

- [Videos of Nora, other feline piano players](#)