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A Practical Magazine on Early-Level Piano Study

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2000

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KEYBOARD COMPANION

A Practical Magazine on Early-Level Piano Study

Spring 2000 • Volume 11, Number 1

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This issue's cover art is titled *The Well-"Tempered" Clavichord* by Billie Nugent

Reprinted from Keyboard Companion, Summer 1993

All of us have heard those lecturers who struggle valiantly to convince us that the only control we have over the sound we make at the piano is the velocity at which the key goes down. They back up their pronouncements with convincing, scientific proof and most of us continue to have none of it. We aren't willing to believe that the "human touch" begins and ends with controlling the speed with which the hammer hits the strings.

The number and variety of those things which pianists claim do have an effect on the piano sound approaches the number and variety of pianists in existence at any one moment. None of these ideas and practices enjoy general agreement among pianists and many are in total, and sometimes violent, opposition to others. Most do agree, however, that playing the piano is a very personal thing, and what one does physically at the piano has some effect on what the listener hears.

The personal touch begins at the very beginning when the teacher places a child's hands on the keyboard in preparation for playing the first piece. It is hard to imagine doing this without actually touching the child's hand, although this may represent the first disagreement among early-level piano teachers. Some teachers hold that a student should never be touched, that it is improper teaching behavior which the teacher must avoid. Putting aside the legendary rap on the knuckles with a ruler, the vast majority of teachers, however, punctuate their words of wisdom with gentle physical reminders throughout every lesson they teach. Who of us has not carefully positioned each finger in the center of a white key to help a student know how to avoid playing in the cracks? How often have you gently pushed the hand up from below to form an arch? How many times have you softly placed your finger tips in the middle of a student's back as a reminder to sit tall, or lightly placed your hands on both shoulders to encourage a release of tension?

The picture on this issue's cover, which shows an adult hand gently holding the hand of a child, easily reminds us of the many times we have helped yet another beginner embark on the road to exciting music-making at the piano. Just as this picture is worth a thousand words, the right touch during a lesson on technique is often worth a thousand remonstrances. Helping the student create the physical properties of playing which lead to a relaxed and natural approach to playing is surely one of the most important things we teach. Can it be done without personal contact between teacher and student?

The purpose of KEYBOARD COMPANION is to explore questions like this. We invite you, as always, to tell us your answers to this and all the other questions we pose in this magazine from issue to issue.

Richard Chronister 1930-1999

The first issue of Keyboard Companion was published in the Spring of 1990 but the germ of the idea was formed more than forty-five years ago when Richard Chronister was in graduate school in Tulsa University. While attempting to do research on his favorite topic, early-level teaching, and experiencing frustration at the lack of references, he vowed then and there that if given the time and means, he would publish a magazine on just that subject.

Now, ten years after the first copy appeared, we are publishing what for us will be the final issue of Keyboard Companion. The ultimate decision on what is to become of the magazine will be decided at a later date.

I am so grateful to all the editors of KBC, our wonderful staff, the writers who have contributed articles, the advertisers who placed their trust in us, and the loyal subscribers, many of whom have been with us since the first issue.

Thank you.

Marjore Chronister

The Magic Triangle: Teacher/Student/Parent

Barbara Kreader, Editor

Barbara Kreader has continued to teach in her independent studio in Evanston, Illinois since 1974. She is also Senior Editor for Educational Keyboard Publications for Hal Leonard. Her previous responsibilities have included faculty member of Northwestern University's Division of Preparatory and Community Music, editor of Clavier magazine, and editor of Baldwin's Soundboard newsletter.

What Do You Do With A Student Who Hates To Play The Piano?

by Barbara Kreader

My all-time favorite *Far Side* cartoon shows a hulking elephant commanding center stage in a small concert hall. He sits precariously perched on a piano bench before a concert grand. The caption reads, "What am I doing here, for Pete's sake. I am a flautist!"

We all know that unprepared, out-of-control feeling. It arises in our dreams of the impending test for the course we forgot to attend and it presents itself in waking life often enough to give an unconscious anxiety to our moments of feeling organized and on top of our lives.

This issue's article came together quickly and seemed amazingly on track. I polled 25 students, who responded to the question, "What do your parents do to support your music practice and study?" I typed up the answers, added a few comments of my own, and sent the article via e-mail the day before the deadline. I felt especially smug about my "goodness" and "professionalism," because I managed this despite being on an arduous workshop tour throughout New Zealand, Australia, and Asia.

"Pride goeth before the fall." I sent the e-mail from Hong Kong via my rented laptop computer. Did I print out a hard copy for myself? No. Why not? "I am in Hong Kong for only 26 hours. I am giving workshops for 12 of those hours. I can stagger down to the hotel desk and struggle through a Chinese/English description of how to find the Business Center or I can fall into bed and get some much needed rest for tomorrow's flight to Taiwan." I punted and crashed. So did the article. It flew off into cyberspace.

The next month produced a flurry of polite but anxious telephone calls between editor and author. Not wanting to appear a total flake, I tried to sound calm. Like the elephant, I made a good show of sitting at the piano. "Maybe I won't have to tell anyone I slept instead of printed." The computer rental company assured me they would access the article and send it on. This quelled my fear of being found out until they called and said, "It's gone."

Now what? I tried to reassemble the article. I had to tell all of the polled students I was a techno-failure. Most of them attend the summer camp where I am supposedly in charge. Will they mutiny the next time I say, "Everyone must go on the hike!" now knowing the chinks in my professional demeanor?

Most of the students e-mailed that they no longer had their original responses and couldn't come up with new ones in time for the deadline. How could they be so organized as to clean out their e-mail? I have every document I have ever written—except for the article, of course!

The editor's telephone calls became more insistent. Frantic, I went to my favorite restaurant, ordered a comforting dish from childhood and sat in silence. The answer came: "Give up. Start over. Be who you are in front of everyone. Write something else." I imagined a second frame to the *Far Side* cartoon. The elephant rises from the piano bench and says, "I know you paid to hear a piano performance, but I am going out to get my flute. If you are here when I get back, I'll play what I really know."

> *"Davey thinks his son enjoys his piano lessons because he gets to play computer games and eat Snoopy burgers after it's over."*

Sometimes life asks us to be vulnerable. When we perform we try to hide all of our idiosyncrasies and limitations. Maybe we would do better to simply give up and work with them. Trusting that hope, I give you an article about teaching in Asia. It seems to want to write itself.

When we think of our Asian students, we think of their discipline and dedication. We marvel at the family support. Asian parents are willing to drive long distances, pay large fees, and stand by during long hours of practice so their children can access the musical part of themselves. They treat teachers with honor and respect.

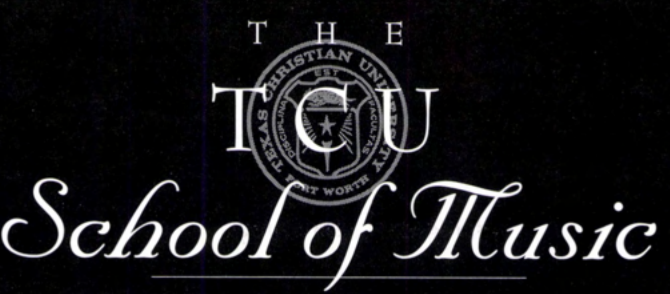
SINGAPORE

These were the preconceived notions, based only on my own observations, that I took with me to Asia. Arriving in Singapore, I felt my awe of the Asian work ethic strengthen. This island country off the Malay Peninsula consists of only 225 square miles. Its people continue to work night and day to stay competitive with the big-guy countries. Because Singapore's only resources are its harbor and its people, this is not an easy task.

Cab drivers often act as a country's philosophers, Singapore included. Every one I met boasted of the strides Singapore has made in the last 40 years under Lee Kuan Yew by speaking in specific numerical measurements: the tonnage of shipping coming into Singapore's harbor compared to that in Hong Kong; the increasing literacy rate; the size of the airport in terms of both air and human traffic. Over and over I heard the phrases, "Everything here is planned," and "Once you are on top, you have to work even harder to stay on top." The country struggles to compete at the level of the largest capitalist nations while avoiding what Singaporeans consider to be those countries' social stigmas, among them crime, guns, drugs, and fractured families.

Davey Sim and Lina Loo of Music Plaza, a large Singapore music store, acted as my hosts during my visit. The level of preparation stunned me. Lina had been up most of the night preparing large stock orders, huge food layouts and a stage that included a beautiful banner, a Bosendorfer piano, and a high-end Clavinova. The 125 teachers who attended understood and spoke English well while I struggled to say "Good Morning" and "Thank you" in Chinese.

After the clinic, Davey took me on a tour of *Music Plaza*, located in a newly restored shopping mall. Their Yamaha School has 300 teachers and 30,000 students, including Davey's five-year old son. Davey pointed out that mom and dad can drop off their children for a full afternoon of lessons while



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they shop and run errands. An hour group or private instrumental lesson can extend into an hour ballet lesson at *Music Plaza's Yamaha Ballet School*. The students can then go next door to a computer/video arcade, which features large-screen games. The children hang out there until their parents, now into their third hour of freedom, pick them up. The family can then head for dinner to the Snoopy Restaurant located on the same floor of the mall. Davey thinks his son enjoys his piano lesson because he gets to play computer games and eat Snoopy burgers after it's over. Talk about the Americanization of the piano lesson! Singapore has outpaced us.

HONG KONG

The stunning new bridge between Hong Kong and China marks this new, uneasy relationship. Unlike Singapore cabs, which plod along at the speed limit for fear of setting off the government-required tattle-tale buzzer, Hong Kong taxis cruise the sharp corners of the concrete embankments at 160 km an hour—twice the speed limit. Seat belts are nowhere to be found. In this city that makes New York look spacious, the possible purchases available in every shop overwhelm even the most addicted shopper. Big Macs, iMacs, Micky Mouse, and every designer item ever created are available at bargain rates, although it takes a moment to divide every shocking price by the exchange rate of eight to realize the economy of each buy.

Kitty Tam from *Tom Lee Music* orchestrated the three, three-hour workshops with apparent ease. The teachers sat patiently during each break, even during the evening presentation that stretched from 5:30 to 8:30 P.M. When I asked Kitty about the usual Hong Kong dinner hour, she replied, "Anytime between 8:00 and 10:00." On a typical day, Kitty leaves work at the store around 6:00 and takes a 30 to 45-minute train ride home to her family. She stops at the market each evening to purchase fresh fish or a newly slaughtered chicken and then goes home to cook and help her two children with their homework.

In Hong Kong the question that first arose in Singapore began to repeat itself: "What do you do with students who hate to play the piano?" With usual American practicality, I replied, "I would suggest they study ballet or take up soccer instead!" This answer continually surprised the questioner, who usually responded with something like, "But they only dislike it because they are being stubborn or lazy." When I demurred and said, "If children feel involved in the choice of what they are studying and are playing music that excites them, they usually practice with energy. In my view, laziness and stubbornness often arise from boredom or feeling forced to play music they dislike."

Naturally, a lively discussion followed. Teachers in Asia, like those in the United Kingdom, teach according to the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music Examination system. Both *Music Plaza* and *Tom Lee Music* feature walls of Associated Board materials, beautifully produced and edited volumes of carefully-graded theory, technique, and repertoire. The series includes sample tests of piano playing at all levels. In essence, teachers teach to the test and an excellent one it is.

When I described the more diverse U.S. system of testing that allows for various possibilities, such as the MTNA state syllabi or American Guild of Music auditions, Asian teachers found this confusing. "How can you know if children and teachers measure up to a common standard?" "How do parents know how well the child is doing or if the teacher is adequately prepared to teach them?" These are excellent questions, of course. A common examination system gives students a container for their study, one that enables them to push their skills to the limit. They feel a part of a long-standing ritual of study, a sojourner along a traditional path others have followed.

The downside of this approach is the possible loss of the child's artistic voice and creative input. When the motivation comes from the outside, children sometimes feel forced and reluctant. They look to others to tell them how well they are doing rather than developing a sense of their own progress from within.

Of course, some United States' teachers don't believe in testing students at all, an incomprehensible thought in Asia. When I described the parent who tells the teacher, "I just want my child to have fun," a considerable shaking of heads occurred. Yet American children generally enjoy their music study. Our diversity and devotion to individualism has its plus side in the involvement of the child in the choice of what, when, and how much they study. When the child is invested in the learning process, creativity and inventiveness soar. Children are more willing to master difficult skills when the motivation comes from within.

The downside occurs when the child fails to develop the discipline and dedication necessary to make good music or when they learn only music already familiar to them and not of a high quality. Learning is not always "fun"; sometimes it is hard work. Outside standards do exist. All children sense this and want to meet them. They appreciate a teacher who will hold out that yardstick and encourage them to measure up.

The Associated Royal Board of Music system affects other aspects of piano study in Asia. In Hong Kong teachers are paid according to the level the student is currently preparing to pass. The higher the level, the higher the teacher's pay. A typical Hong Kong teacher preparing a student for a Level 1 examination commands an hourly fee in U.S. dollars that is two to three times the rate United States' teachers receive. This reflects the esteem in which Asian families hold music teachers and the importance they place on music in their children's lives. It also means young men and women can enter the field of piano teaching and expect to support a family. The workshop audi-

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ences in Asia were filled with eager, gifted, well-trained young teachers, who teach full-time. This scene is in sharp contrast to the typical United States' audience, which is mostly peopled with older men and women who teach part-time, and either depend on a spouse or a second or third job for further support.

TAIWAN

Taipei, Taiwan makes Hong Kong look spacious! Five cars jockey around in three lanes, while six or seven mopeds weave in and out at random. House numbers and road names confuse even the native-born. The overall building effect is one of endless egg cartons piled side-by-side and top-on-top. Houses and apartments open off ribbon-narrow alleys.

Taiwan, still reeling from the huge earthquake that lengthened the country by several miles and narrowed it by a few more, is now asking itself if it has spent the last 30 years so bent on progress that it has sacrificed spiritual and social values. The daily paper's lead story discussed this change in the country's priorities along with the psychological aftereffects of being in an earthquake.

A new 6.4 quake hit the country minutes after I landed, yet the Taiwanese seemed outwardly unfazed. Work went on. In fact, in Taiwan the pace is double that of Singapore and Hong Kong! The usual three-hour workshop stretched into seven hours with translation. My generous and congenial hosts, David and Esther Hua, own *Tien Yin Publishing*. This gregarious, intelligent couple enticed over 600 teachers to three workshops! Viola Chang, the able translator, ("When you didn't make sense, I went ahead and clarified your point.") has a degree from North Texas State University and has studied at the New School, and at various music schools in the United States.

The Taiwanese teachers' hunger for learning and dedication inspired me. They sat and sat and sat, their attention never wavering. They sent tens of questions to the front, all in beautiful Chinese characters, which Viola translated for me. Again, they wanted to know about the student who is reluctant to study and were especially excited by the discussions of children's different learning styles. A laughter of recognition bubbled through the room when I described various students, such as the fellow with his own fingering system or the child who can always think of a way the music could sound better by changing a few notes.

Our teaching systems may differ, but children are everywhere the same.

I came home from Asia inspired to push my students a little harder. Davey Sim, Kitty Tam, David and Esther Hua, Viola Chang, and the teachers who shared their experiences with me embodied a hunger for learning that only hard work and effort can fulfill. Their willingness to make that effort reignites my own. May I kindle it in my students. ▲

> *"If children feel involved in the choice of what they are studying and are playing music that excites them, they usually practice with energy."*

The Other Teacher:
Home Practice

Elvina Pearce, Editor

Elvina Pearce studied piano with Isabelle Vengerova and pedagogy with Frances Clark. She is a founding member of the Board of Trustees of the Frances Clark center for Keyboard Pedagogy and serves as a Vice President. She has presented recitals and workshops in over forty states plus Canada and the Republic of China, and Australia and is also a nationally recognized composer.

What Do You See When You Watch Your Students Practice? Part Two.

by Elvina Pearce

No matter how much time we spend at the lesson instructing students in how to make the best use of their practice time, the best way to find out how successful we've been is to watch them practice. I try to take a few minutes of each student's lesson and do just that, and it is always a revelation! In this department of the previous issue of Keyboard Companion, Jennifer Merry and I discussed some of the things we had learned about our students' practice habits using the sit/watch (and don't talk!) method, and in this issue, Beth Jones joins me in presenting more of the same. ▲

by Beth Jones *I was very pleased overall with his solid playing and with the results...*

During last summer's term, I took a few minutes out of a number of lessons to watch my students practice. While observing them, I made notes in a journal listing the practice steps they used, things they said, and the results of their practice, along with notes about what we discovered together. I have thoroughly enjoyed this project! The short observation sessions have been very revealing, and we've had fun evaluating the practices. Below are summaries from some of my journal entries:

June 8th: I played a brand new piece for Daniel—*Distant Lights* from *Explorations* by Bruce Berr (Hal Leonard). He labeled the piece's form, ABA[1].Then I asked him to practice the first eight measures the way he would if he were at home. He used the following procedure:

1) Played just the RH changes (read the RH in the treble clef and didn't observe the 8va sign in mm. 5-8).

2) Play-counted the RH with two restarts for missed chords. (Clef sign was observed this time.)

3) Played the LH (position changes only) and then play-counted the LH as written.

4) Play-counted hands together (HT) with a full, rich tone. (Correctly played a previously missed chord.)

5) Played HT again with added musical signs.

6) Played HT a third time (this time observed the 8va sign).

When Daniel was finished, I told him how impressed I was with the logical sequence of his practice steps. Clearly, he is capable of bringing in other newly-assigned music just as carefully worked out as *Distant Lights! I* had him circle the beginning bass clef and the 8va sign and suggested that he use a pencil more often during his home practice.

June 22nd: Today I asked to hear Daniel play *Swinging* from Sound Reflections, Book One by Elvina Pearce (Alfred Publishing Co.). "That was perfect except for one spot. Would you find that place in the music and work on it right now?" Daniel decided to drill a RH shift by preparing his finger carefully so he wouldn't play in the cracks. I was really pleased that he thought of including this "play-prepare" step, I told him so, and then asked him if there was anything else he wanted to do with the spot. Since he hesitated, I said, "How about playing the whole line that includes the spot? Where might this phrase start?"

June 8th: Alex had appeared in an honors recital the previous weekend and confessed that he had been focusing mainly on the recital material, only practicing for one day the etude he was about to play. I explained that this was the perfect opportunity for both of us to learn what he had accomplished in that one day and asked, "What would you do right now to practice it?" He proceeded to play the whole piece at a slow tempo, hands separately, with a very full and even tone, surprising himself with how solidly he played.

"What a secure job that was, Alex! How will you go about putting this piece hands-together?" He replied that he'd "do the whole piece hands separately and then play the first section hands together. Then I'd also go over any spots in the first section." So I said "Why don't you do that with just the *second* part right now? We'll pretend you've already put the first part hands together."After Alex played through the second section one time, he went back and played two missed spots, one time each. My comments: "That was a fine practice; now do each spot *three* times, then play the whole section again. "After this, I said "Your sound was very full and even. Since this piece is called a study, the title reminds you to think about your hand position, especially your fourth and fifth fingers which

will help maintain the good sound you're getting."

June 15th: In observing Alex practice another study (this time working on building tempo), I again had the opportunity to observe him discover how capable he is of working well on his own. He accomplished a good deal in a short amount of time: "You did all of that in just five minutes; think of how much progress you can make with your entire repertoire assignment each day." I had been feeling that he needed to cover more ground in his daily home practice and was now convinced this was possible. I am looking forward to a challenging year of progress for Alex, and given the winsome expression on his face that afternoon, he is, too.

June 8th: After hearing my performance of Tony Caramia's *March* (from *Six Sketches*, The New School for Music Study Press), Jason was asked to work out the A section. He proceeded to sightplay the *entire* piece hands together with all the notes correct, but at a tempo that was too fast for consistently accurate rhythm. Then he played the piece again at the same tempo, starting at the B section and going to the end.

I was totally surprised at how easily he had read the piece! This confirmed that my goal with Jason needs to be giving him larger repertoire assignments containing more challenging pieces. I told him how thrilled I was with his ability to read new music so easily at this level and that all his fingerings and notes were accurate. When asked why he had played the whole piece instead of just the A part, he replied, "I thought you asked me to sightplay the piece." Next I asked him to practice just the A section, but he proceeded to work on both the A and B sections during the next two minutes.

I decided not to say anything more about misunderstood directions. Instead, we improved upon *March* by choosing a slower practice tempo with Jason writing the appropriate metronome indication in his music. Then, with the metronome on, he counted one full measure and played several measures to be sure he would be able to practice the whole piece comfortably at home using the chosen tempo. During the lesson I gave Jason metronome tempos for several other pieces listed on his assignment sheet.

June 29th: Michael had missed about six weeks of lessons due to a right arm injury, and now he was feeling much better and able to resume study. The first piece I heard today was a movement from Vandall's *Sonatina No. 2 in G* (from *Four Original Vandall Sonatinas*, CPP/Belwin). As I listened, I thought that the tempo he had chosen was too fast for comfortable left-hand shifts, and some of the right-hand eighth notes were tonally uneven. When he finished, he said he didn't feel he had played well and explained, "I was using all the wrong fingers for some reason and that messed me up." "When that happens, what could you do next? Please show me by practicing the A section." He then proceeded to follow a really creative practice plan, only to be frustrated with the results; throughout the five-minute practice session there were numerous sighs and head shakes. A good-natured boy, he smiled when I said I imagined his practice at home included a lot of sighing. I told him practice could become more satisfying for him, and he confirmed that his "slow, thoughtful, medium-loud" practice usually needed a fuller tone along with a slower tempo. For his assignment due the following week he was to play the movement hands together *only once* daily, with a full tone, at the tempo of ♩= 72 (or slower if needed for secure fingerings and shifts of register). His goal was to be really pleased after just one playing.

July 6th: At this lesson, I told Michael I was curious about the results of his "one-try-only" daily practice and asked him to play the sonatina once with the metronome, exactly the way he'd done at home. He did an excellent job of maintaining a slow, thoughtful tempo, showing that he had faithfully practiced exactly as assigned. Michael then tried an *a tempo* run-through right at the lesson with terrific results and only one small spot that wasn't fully secure. I was very pleased overall with his solid playing and with the results he had gotten in five days of practice. He had taken my journalling project quite seriously, and I will continue to use the journal during some of his future lessons.

It is exciting to consider how much can be accomplished when students consistently apply more of their practice tools to their entire assignment. These short observation sessions have been rewarding for me personally because I have gained valuable information about my students. They took pride in demonstrating what they are capable of doing on their own and seemed motivated to improve the quality of their practice in order to experience more success and progress. ▲

Beth Jones teaches at the North Central College Piano Academy in Naperville, Illinois, where she served for eleven years as the Academy's director. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from DePauw University, and a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from the University of Alabama.

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One of the things that I am especially curious about is how my students approach an ordinary everyday practice session. Meg is in the fifth grade and at one of her recent lessons I said: "Let's begin your lesson today by pretending that it's yesterday and you have just gone to the piano to do your daily practice. Show me what you did." Meg opened up her notebook to her assignment sheet and started with a piece (an elementary level arrangement of the Paderewski *Minuet*). She counted aloud (Hurrah!! . . . this has been a major emphasis during this past year . . .), and played hands together. In one spot, she played the wrong rhythm. She also added the pedal (which we had never discussed at a lesson and which I will work with later on because she is not yet ready to deal with syncopated pedaling). When she finished, she played the whole piece again, but faster (and of course played the same wrong rhythm again).

Then she went on to a second piece, this time an arrangement of a theme from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. She counted off one measure of rhythm before beginning, and once more, played the piece hands together, counting aloud. Because she chose too fast a tempo, she made several errors and had numerous hesitations. (At this point I was thinking, "After she finishes playing the whole piece, will she go back and practice the spots, and if so, will she work hands separately first at a *slower* tempo?") She did go back to the spots, but unfortunately, she omitted the *hands separate* step and played at the same too-fast tempo as before. Next, she repeated the whole piece (still counting) but of course with no improvement. This time, she ignored the spots and proceeded to play the whole piece a third time, (still counting), and now she added the dynamics. (So far I've found out one thing for sure—counting aloud was becoming part of her practice habit as she did so throughout all three playings.)

Following the Mozart, she played a third piece *The Shepherd's Pipes* by Salutrinskaya. Once again, she counted out loud, and she played very slowly and with added dynamics. Although she missed some right hand notes in three separate phrases, she never practiced the RH alone. Instead, she went back to the beginning and played the whole piece again, hands together, and of course making the same mistakes as before.

Next she played *Vivace* by Gurlitt. She chose a very slow tempo and counted aloud. After just a couple of measures, she stopped and started over again, this time playing at a much faster tempo. She played this piece only one time, and her performance was not only accurate but very spirited. Although I usually try to keep my mouth shut during these observations, at this point I couldn't resist interjecting, "Great job!"

The last thing on her practice agenda was Kabalevsky's *Little Song* from Op. 39. When she played it she paused at the end of nearly every measure because her chosen tempo was faster than she was able to coordinate the hands together playing of the notes occurring on the first beat of each measure. As she started to play the piece again at the same tempo, I stopped her and asked her to play **only** the hands-together notes, (the "verticals"), leaving out all of the in-between notes. We began with just two measures, then four measures, and finally, all eight measures. I had her practice the together-notes-only both with her eyes open and then with eyes shut. (The latter really enhances tactile sensitivity.) And of course, we proceeded very slowly. Finally, I asked her to play the whole piece, as written, at ♩ = 60. There were no longer any hesitations and she was pleased. I asked her to describe the practice steps she had just used to get rid of the hesitations and we put these on her audio cassette practice tape as a daily reminder of what to do at home.

We ended by analyzing her practice session, and of course I began by complimenting her on everything she did well (particularly her counting aloud, and the interpretation of *Vivace*). I told her that I was surprised that she had started with pieces instead of with her technique warm-ups, and I asked her why she thought that these were always listed first on her assignment sheet. She got the point! I also quizzed her about why she omitted doing her theory assignment. She really had no answer for this. (What I learned during this observation is that most probably Meg's practice at home is mostly just a play-through of pieces. She probably spends very little time on anything else such as technique and theory and this, of course, explains why she was not as successful as she might have been with these two areas in her recent performance auditions.) We discussed the relationship of time spent on the above two items and correlated this with her test results. Of course, I shall continue to place technique and theory first at the lesson and also on the assignment to reinforce their importance. This observation of Meg's practice confirmed that she still has a *long* way to go in assimilating practice habits that will produce maximum success in a minimum amount of time.

Another area I like to check out is what a student does with a brand new piece when the teacher makes no suggestions whatsoever. Melissa is a 10-year-old student who transferred to me a year ago after having

had a year of previous study. At one of her recent lessons I assigned the Kabalevsky *A Little Joke* from Op. 39.

A Little Joke

DMITRI KABALEVSKY

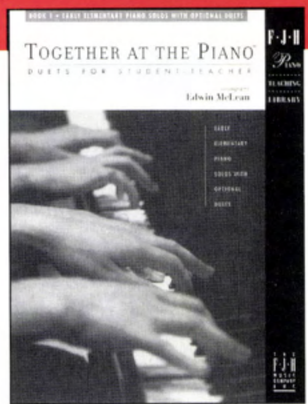
I asked her to show me how she would work it out at home. She began by playing the RH alone, counting "one-&-2-&", but missed the change to quarter notes in measure 8, playing the second one on the "&" of beat one rather than on count two. She also missed a few notes along the way. Next she went back to the beginning and played the first eight measures again, RH only, still counting and still missing notes and the rhythm in measure 8. Then she went back to the beginning and played the LH alone This time she did *not* count and she played the LH as triplets rather than as an eighth and two 16ths. Next, she played the 1st 8 measures, 2 times, hands together, without counting, missing notes, and playing all of the notes as 8th notes. At this point I jumped in because it was clear that matters were not going to improve. Analyzing a new piece and designing a practice strategy based on its structure was not yet a part of Melissa's habit. So we discussed the piece's title and then I played it for her and asked her to be ready to mark and label its parts when I finished. She decided that it had two sections and she concluded that they would be labeled "A" and "A prime." Next I asked her to study the LH in measure one and then to block these first three notes. "What kinds of intervals are these?" She said, "Thirds." I then asked her to look through the LH in the rest of the piece. She discovered that it was made entirely of 3rds, and that this was also true of the RH. Next I asked her to block the LH triads in line one, 2 times, then the same with the RH, and finally, hands together, blocked. (She quickly discovered that her two thumbs were always on adjacent white keys, and that the two hands always moved the same distance and direction.) Our next step had to do with rhythm. I suggested that since this piece contains 16th notes, it would be wise to say "One-ee-&-uh" for each quarter note beat so that each 8th note would last as long as two 16ths, and each quarter note as long as four 16ths. I asked her to tap and count the rhythm of measure one several times, and then to tap and count mm. 7 and 8, saying "one-ee-&-uh" for each beat, and we wrote this counting in for measures 1 and 8. Then I had her record herself tapping and counting these two patterns on her audio cassette practice tape so that she would have an accurate model for the rhythm during the coming week's home practice. Our final step consisted of her playing and counting mm. 1 and 2 and 7 and 8 at ♪ = 100. Since she was successful in her first attempt, I had her repeat it and this second time, we recorded it on her practice cassette tape. Then we summarized the practice steps on the tape.

Although I wasn't surprised that Esther did not yet have a logical way to approach a brand new piece, the observation of her attempt was very helpful in pointing up the things that still need much emphasis at the lesson, i.e. structural analysis first, since this is what provides the clues for what to do in practice.

I hope that this article encourages you to spend some lesson time watching your students practice if this is not already a part of your regular teaching agenda. It's not only fascinating but also highly instructive as we plan and teach each week's lessons.▲

"Although I usually try to keep my mouth shut during these observations, at this point I could not resist interjecting...great job!"

Teachers, take note!



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Setting The Standard for the 21st Century

Independence Day: Music Reading

Richard Chronister, Editor

Richard Chronister, editor of Keyboard Companion, was president and educational director of National Keyboard Arts Associates and a founder and executive director of The National Conference on Piano Pedagogy. He has been active in developing piano teaching materials and piano teacher training programs for more than forty years. He is known throughout the music world for his frequent lecture tours and many contributions to the field of piano pedagogy.

How Is Teaching Different On Other Instruments?

by Chelcy Bowles

Challenges of Reading Music for the Harpist

There are many challenges associated with reading music while playing harp, some of them probably unknown to those who have not had experience playing the instrument or are unfamiliar with the pedal mechanism that makes the modern harp a chromatic instrument. Teachers who have piano students that want to study harp can have a tremendous influence on the future harpist's ability to read well. Indeed, because both instruments require reading in treble and bass clefs simultaneously, most harp teachers recommend the study of piano prior to studying harp. Before going into specific problems associated with reading music on the harp and recommendations for the piano teacher to help develop skills, a brief description of how the modern pedal harp works should help in understanding those problems for teachers not already familiar with the instrument.

The concert or pedal harp—the one used in orchestra and for most of the music written for harp in the last two centuries—has 44-47 strings tuned diatonically to C Major—essentially the white keys on the piano. To accomplish chromaticism, there are spring-loaded pedals at the base of the harp which are connected with rods through the straight column at the front of the harp to a complicated mechanism in the curved neck of the instrument. There are seven pedals, one for each note of the scale, and each pedal affects all of the like notes on the instrument (e.g., the D pedal affects the D strings in all octaves). Each pedal has three positions—flat, natural, and sharp. To change a string from a natural pitch to a sharp or flat pitch, the harpist either presses (to sharp) or releases (to flat) the pedal affecting the string needing alteration.

This brief explanation of the chromatic mechanism reveals one of the most obvious and challenging problems of music reading, and the one most distinctive difference from reading music at the piano—executing chromatic changes with the feet rather than the fingers. The harpist generally sets the pedals to the key signature at the beginning of a piece, then changes pedals as accidentals occur and returns the pedals to the key at bar lines as necessary. Failure to change a necessary pedal results in, of course, the wrong note (a persisting wrong note until the harpist can figure out what needs to be done while continuing to play the music). It is common practice to write upcoming pedal changes with letters names directly into the music before actually playing a piece of music. Indeed, it is considered rather unethical to ask a harpist to sightplay music without the opportunity to mark pedal changes in advance, except for the purpose of mental exercise. Marking pedals is an intellectual task rather than a musical one, and can be done without actually playing the instrument.

A second set of challenges are those associated with visual tracking. Unlike reading music for instruments that do not require seeing the instrument while playing, harpists must look at the instrument quite frequently, since the hands are completely off of the instrument once the string is plucked and spatial orientation can be lost. And, unlike piano, there is little peripheral vision afforded to the harpist between the music stand which sits to the left of the instrument and the strings to the right of the body. The harpist must essentially turn completely from the music to see the strings and the eyes must completely leave the strings to read the music. (This is further complicated when a third visual element is introduced with a conductor or ensemble member.) Apart from the never-ending quest for the development of spatial orientation between the fingers themselves and between the hands and the strings, the harpist must be able to read many notes in a single glance and must learn to memorize quickly in order to execute passages that require visual contact with the harp.

As mentioned above, most harp teachers suggest that students wanting to play pedal harp learn to read music at the piano. Even if the student plays another instrument (other than piano), reading both clefs is essential and is best learned at the piano. In addition, it is much easier to visualize theoretical concepts when the relationship between the notes on the page and the notes on the instrument is actually visible. To help the future harpist in developing reading skills, the piano teacher might :

1) include more activities that stress theoretical understanding of music;

2) have the student look through music before playing to locate chromatic changes;

3) include exercises which require the student to read ahead in the music and take in several measures at a time;

4) include exercises which require quick memorization of measures or passages.

Obviously, these are exercises that would benefit any developing pianist or other instrumentalist as well! ▲

Chelcy Bowles is Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Continuing Education in Music at University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is the harp instructor in the UW-Madison School of Music, maintains a private studio, and is on the faculty of the National String Workshop. She performs traditional pedal harp repertoire and has a special interest in historical harp technique and improvisation. She currently performs with the Madison Symphony Orchestra and with The Snug, an instrumental ensemble specializing in traditional Irish music. She is former editor of Harp Forum *in* American String Teacher.

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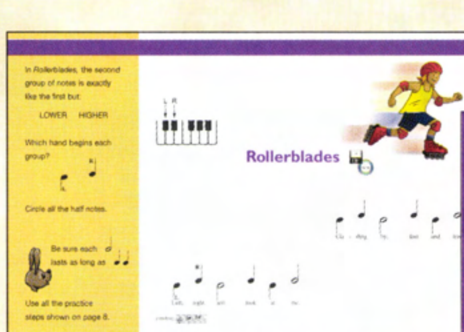

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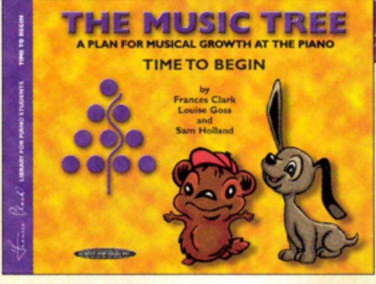

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During my 25 years of teaching music privately, in elementary and junior high schools and universities, I have been fortunate to have had several students who studied both keyboard and brass instruments with me simultaneously. As a performer, I perform on both piano and horn. This situation has given me many interesting opportunities to compare and contrast the skills needed to perform, and therefore teach performance, in both areas. Rather than consider teaching differences for all types of wind and brass instruments as to their reading needs, I will focus on the teaching of reading for brass players in comparison to the reading needs of keyboard players.

While analyzing the methods for teaching reading to keyboardists and brass players, I compared the similarities and the differences. Both methods are similar in that the ultimate goal is the development of musical skill, having the visual perception of the printed page translated into the motor skills of performance. Ultimately, this translation needs to occur with an automatic brain function. The reader/performer should be unaware of the mental processing. As teachers our job is to facilitate the steps to develop this brain process.

With the above goal in mind, the initial steps to reading on any instrument become the recognition of position on the staff and it's relationship to pitch, and the recognition of note value and its relationship to musical time. At this point, the differentiation between teaching to keyboardists and teaching to brass players begins to appear.

Staff position and its relationship to pitch

The very nature of the instrument designs dictates the change in reading methods. To a keyboardist, the position of the notes on the staff signifies the visual spatial relationship between the white and black keys on the keyboard. Playing the respective white and black keys determines the pitch. To the brass player, the position of notes on the staff signifies the aural intervallic relationship of pitch and how it is achieved on a brass instrument. This difference of visual versus aural relationships is probably the most significant aspect of the difference in teaching methods.

Brass players cannot press the right fingers down and achieve the pitch indicated by the printed music. The process has several more motor skills involved; all of which must be coordinated perfectly. Sound is produced on brass instruments by blowing air through the lips. The air causes the lips to vibrate, and the vibration causes sound. The pitch is changed on the hollow tube of the brass instrument via subtle changes of the opening or aperture between the lips in relation to air speed. The valves on most of the brass instruments and the slide on the trombone serve merely to change the length of the hollow tube. The change in length determines the available pitches of the overtone series determined by the laws of physics. Inside the mouth, the tongue is used to interrupt the column of air briefly by touching the roof of the mouth as in saying the syllable "tu" or "toh" (depending on the instrument). This interruption of the air column determines the articulation of the notes. The fourth skill is the use of the fingers or arm (again, depending on the instrument) to depress valves or move the slide to change the length of the hollow tube. Therefore, air, lips, tongue, and fingers work in combination to produce the pitch as read from the page. The brain is the controller of all of the above.

Teaching reading to a brass player requires that each of the four motor skills be addressed relative to how the printed page is reproduced by the performer. To develop the proper use of air and lips relative to what is visually perceived on the page, the teacher must introduce what is normally called lip slurs. The lip slur study is based on the tones available in the overtone series of each possible valve combination or slide position. Since the overtone series in its most fundamental pitches begins with the intervals of fifths, fourths and octaves, the student is repeatedly viewing those intervals on each series and learns to read, hear, and perform those intervals as a solid foundation to air and lip coordination. There is no comparable counterpart to this aural and motor skill development on the keyboard.

On the keyboard, conceptual transfer of spatial perception, i.e. intervals, is realized as spatial position on the keyboard. A fourth on the page translates visually to four white keys, in its most basic form. On a brass instrument, the spatial perception of intervals translates directly to an aural fourth. There is no visual counterpart. Therefore the teaching of reading of the intervallic relationships on the page is taught differently to brass players. The visual recognition of intervals is taught using aural intervals from simple songs that the student knows. This aural translation gives the students the ability to know where to place the pitch on the brass instrument relative to the many options available to them on the overtone series of each fingering combination. For example, a written fourth must sound like the fourth in the opening of "Here Comes the Bride." The student practices the interval of the fourth on the instrument on all scale degrees and on all scales. This is done with and without written music in front of them. Eventually the eye perceives the written fourth on the page and the fingers, lips, air column and tongue translate the visual pattern of a fourth to an aural sound.

Articulation on a brass instrument is produced mainly by the tongue. Therefore the reading of articulation markings requires the motor skill development of the tongue. This is achieved by practicing studies that provide repetition of accents,

Richard Chronister
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slurs, staccato, and the numerous other articulation markings that occur. Again, the motor skills needed by brass players are in no way comparable to that of a keyboardist, and therefore the teaching must accommodate the development of the appropriate skills.

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Note value and its relationship to rhythm.

Another aspect of music reading that is different for brass and keyboard players is the fact that keyboard players read from multiple staves simultaneously and can produce multiple notes. Brass players, on the other hand, read a single staff at a time and produce one pitch at a time. Visually, the keyboard player perceives the harmony and rhythm of the composition as they play it. Keyboard players can see how the rhythm of the piece fits together in a vertical fashion. Most of the time, brass players see only the one line that they are playing. Therefore, the brass players' visual perception of rhythm must be taught extremely carefully. Brass players must be taught to "think" the name of the count that they are performing at any given moment. Keyboard players are able to speak the counts aloud as they play. This difference in counting technique at the early stages of learning an instrument is an integral part of music reading.

The largest portion of most keyboard players' performance time is spent playing solo. Brass players spend most of their performance time playing in ensembles. Teaching ensemble concepts to brass players who only visually read one line at a time becomes the norm. Brass players approach rhythm from an aural standpoint in relation to note values they visually perceive on the printed page. They must listen to the other players to perceive the music as a whole. The vertical aspect of rhythm that keyboard players see on the page allows the keyboard player to perceive rhythm visually with respect to the other pitches. Teaching music reading as a collection of pitch, rhythm, and harmony is again related to the visual aspect of music reading as seen by the keyboard player, and the aural aspect of brass playing as their single line becomes a part of the whole ensemble.

In addition to independent rhythm perception, brass players must be taught to perform their pitch independently within the ensemble. Therefore the aural realization of the visual pitch on the staff must extend beyond the interval perceived in relation to the staff itself, and become a part of the rhythm and harmonic fiber of the whole ensemble.

Reading and musicianship

Beyond merely creating sound, both keyboardists and brass players use the brain to achieve musicianship skills such as interpretation, style, soul, and the pleasure of performance. Musicianship on all instruments is a complex procedure involving motor skills, mental skills, and the most difficult to quantify: emotions. The development of these skills is a long process that is dependent on the motor skill development in conjunction with emotional maturity. This becomes another layer of perception and realization dictated by the reading of music on the page. s

Again, the visual perception on the page sets in motion entirely different motor skills in the keyboard and brass player's techniques, thus requiring different teaching methods for keyboard and brass players. Both keyboard and brass players must fine- tune motor skills to perform maturely. Only when the physical aspects are mastered to the point that they are able to display what the emotions perceive from the printed page does realization occur in performance.

Keyboard players realize style using dynamics and articulation; thereby emoting through the arms, fingers, and feet on the pedals. Brass players realize the printed dynamics and phrasing utilizing the fingers, air, and tongue in cooperation with emotional maturity. The teaching of reading and realization on the keyboard involves the development of external motion on the part of the limbs. The teaching of reading and realization on brass instruments involves internal organ control of the lungs which produce the air column via intake and expelling air through the lips, causing vibration and thereby sound. The motion of the tongue and motion of the fingers are external motions like the keyboard player uses.

Therefore, teaching reading on a brass instrument involves the addition of teaching the internal motion of breathing at appointed times in the printed page. Phrase reading skills must be developed immediately for brass players. They take in air to produce the sound at phrase endings, or rests. If they don't take in air, there's no sound production and therefore no music. If they don't take in enough air, they can't produce sound for the entire phrase. Students must be taught to perceive musical phrases visually in order to breathe correctly, thus training the lungs, and produce the sound aurally.

This article is only the beginning of an analysis of the teaching differences of reading music for keyboard players and the same skills in brass players. During my thought process, I have realized that the most significant difference involves the critical necessity to teach aural skills to brass players. This is not to say that keyboard players don't need aural skills. Aural skills greatly enhance the performance of keyboard players. For brass players, aural skills are essential to actual realization of the printed page at the fundamental level of producing the correct sound at the correct time. ▲

Nancy Weckwerth received her Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, her Master of Music degree in horn performance from the University of Miami, and the Certificate in Composition for the Music Industry (Film Scoring) from the University of Southern California. She has taught privately for 25 years in addition to holding teaching positions for the Pasadena Conservatory of Music, Music for America, Inc., Humber College in Toronto, and California State University, Los Angeles.

...it is considered rather unethical to ask a harpist to sightplay music...

Let's Get Physical: Technique

Scott McBride Smith, Editor

Scott McBride Smith is Executive Director of the International Institute for Young Musicians *in which capacity he directs summer programs involving some of the nation's top artist-teachers and students. He is a contributing editor of* Piano & Keyboard *magazine and has recovered from his early bad practice habits to become a well-known clinician and private teacher in Southern California.*

What Do Videos On Technique Have To Offer Teachers of Early-level Students? A Conversation with Barbara Lister-Sink

by Scott McBride Smith

It's my opinion many people's idea ofmusic teachers as old-fashioned, nit-picking spinsters with hair up in a bun, enforcing discipline with a ruler, is way off base. To the contrary, I think piano teachers are often ahead of the curve. We all knew, for example, that piano study did great things for people's lives, long before scientific research showed it to be true. And we have always been interested in learning more about the correct way to play the piano, both to avoid injury and enhance pleasure.

Modern technology has given us a new tool for learning, the educational video. These not only explain technique (books can do that), but demonstrate with real performers in real time the principles of correct usage. Barbara Lister-Sink's *Freeing the Caged Bird* (Wingsound, P.O. Box 10912, Winston-Salem, NC 27108) is a case in point. In this beautifully produced and presented video, Lister-Sink presents a step-by-step explanation of a technical approach that, in her opinion, produces artistic and pain-free pianism, based on the principles of appropriate muscle use, good coordination, and optimal skeletal alignment.

After watching the tape several times for my own education, I sent her a list of questions that I thought might clarify her approach for the readers of Keyboard Companion.

Scott McBride Smith: Why did you choose to make a video on technique rather than a book or edition of music?

Barbara Lister-Sink: I'm so glad you asked this because it is one of my greatest concerns, this tendency through history to assume that a book on technique will be effective. Either I am hearing a very different drummer, or we musicians just refuse to face the obvious physical and athletic side of playing the piano. I do not mean to cast aspersions on my distinguished colleagues, both present and past, who have written about technique. Before the advent of modern technology, books were the only means of communicating teaching/technical approaches, aside from actual, hands-on experience. I suppose we teachers just got into the habit of using the written word to pass technical knowledge along through history. It may also have something to do with the fact that keyboards were developed during a blossoming of rational and scientific thought—Descartes' "I think, therefore, I am," rather than, "I sense, therefore I am." In fact, the senses have been historically downplayed or distrusted as the Devil's instruments, so to speak. And many musicians in this century, thanks to the knuckle-busting finger schools of the 19th century, have believed that any emphasis on the athletic/physical side of playing would diminish their artistry.

> *"Either I am hearing a very different drummer, or we musicians just refuse to face the obvious physical and athletic side of playing the piano."*

Technique is, first and foremost, a physical, kinesthetic experience. How, then, could a written description or definition of technique serve to teach a very physical experience? We may describe poetically or scientifically the kinesthetic sensations of a golf swing, the smell of a rose, the taste of a strawberry, or the texture of velvet, but the actual experience of each defies description through words. And it is the experience of the physical sensations that we need to communicate in teaching technique. Furthermore, the written word is probably the least effective means of all forms of verbal communications for communicating technique. It is open to outrageous distortion, especially with repetition over time.

The word relaxation comes to mind. This happens to be my least favorite word and one of the least understood in our field. One pianist's idea of relaxation technique might lead to a well-supported, efficient body use at the piano, another pianist's meaning of relaxation might lead to a sloppy, unsupported, lump-like, floppy approach. For example, what Tobias Matthay actually taught about relaxation was probably very different from what we think he taught. Words such as weight, posture, and natural are other terms that could be completely misunderstood or distorted after they left the horse's mouth, so to speak. Communications experts tell us that it is not so much the words that we use but the body language, inflection, and tone of voice to which we actually respond. At best a verbal description, if spoken with the appropriate inflection and tone of voice, might lead the body into certain physical/muscular states and skeletal alignments. But this approach would be quite chancy and one I would certainly not rely on for effective communications.

None of this is to say that a video on technique will teach these sensations. My chief fear has been that *Freeing the Caged Bird* will be used as an instructional tool, rather than an educational one. I never intended for it to instruct or to transmit the sensations of well-coordinated technique. It can't. I produced it because I wanted pianists to know that discomfort, pain, and injury were not necessary, that well-coordinated technique is a skill that any keyboardist can learn. The video was a means of getting that information, that message of hope, across to pianists who had not been as fortunate as I was in being cured of injury and retrained. And while the thousands of details of visual images, videography effects, tone of voice, etc., were scrutinized for integrity and clear communication, I knew that all of it was still subject to misunderstanding. I feared that pianists would think that imitating the visual gesture of the basic stroke, for example, would give them the actual sensations and appropriate muscle states of this coordination. It is something I have to live with—that this video won't further confuse and complicate the field of piano technique!

I also made a video because I wanted to demonstrate visually the rock bottom prin-

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ciples of good body use at the piano as I had learned them over 25 years of study, physical therapy, body re-education, and self-discovery. I felt these fundamental principles were the necessary starting point from which the viewer's self-awareness and kinesthetic awareness could develop. And it is only from this point of kinesthetic awareness that a well-coordinated, healthy technique can truly be built. Visual image had a better chance of demonstrating these coordinations than mere words. Another point of making a video was to give a visual impact, from start to finish, of my particular system of teaching the sensations and movements of healthy technique. I wanted viewers to see, even if they couldn't experience it kinesthetically, the organic, step-by-step developmental approach, from the production of one sound to a Rachmaninoff etude. The whole process is extremely organic, logical, and interconnected. It is not a mystery. And I wanted the viewers to see how a young child could apply these principles to the simplest piece, not just how an advanced pianist looked and sounded. I wanted to demonstrate technical mastery on every level.

SMcBS: What are the basic principles of good technique?

BL-S: 1) Healthy technique is an activity of the WHOLE BODY. We cannot separate the activities of the fingers, hands, arms, shoulders from the rest of the body, and especially not from the central nervous system housed in the brain and spine. Therefore, I begin instruction by working together with a body education/awareness instructor from the center of the body (spine and torso) out to the periphery. Usually, my partner is an Alexander Technique instructor, although I also refer to the Feldenkrais instruction and have older pianists read a marvelous book by Thomas Hanna titled *Somatics* (Perseus Press, 1988). I also require them to read Alexander Technique expert Barbara Conable's *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body* (Andover Press, 1998). Matthay, Whiteside, and Ortmann, to name a few of the technique gurus, also advocated this approach.

2) Healthy technique is synonymous with good coordination, or the harmonious working together of all the parts of the body, visible and invisible, moving or resting. It is also synonymous with FLOW of energy throughout the whole body into the piano. Most problems occur when there is some kind of blockage to energy flow.

3) Healthy technique is using the body at the piano to the body's and the piano's best mechanical advantage. The whole mind/body system is set up to function well—cardiovascular, neuromuscular, sensory-motor systems—if certain biomechanical guidelines are followed. These are:

a. Optimal skeletal alignment: This starts with the spine maintaining its natural flexibility and length so that information flows throughout the body; dynamic balance of the torso on the sitting bones, not the tail bone or upper legs, while we are sitting at the piano; balancing of the head on the spine so that the deep spinal muscles support the head rather than the trapezius (shoulder) and superficial neck muscles (which eventually leads to a lot of discomfort, pain, and injury); allowing the arm bones to hang as pendulously from the shoulder sockets as possible; and, finally, aligning the lower arm bones and the hand/finger bones in the best way to support weight only at the moment of sound production and energy transference into the key. For me, this means using the natural arches of the arm and hands, as I explain on the video—lining up those lower arm bones and hand bones so that they form two arches which work beautifully together at the moment of weight bearing. The trick is NOT to preset, with unnecessary tension, the bones in the air before landing. The actual alignment can be seen by looking in a mirror at the natural curve of the hand.

b. Efficient muscle use. One of the greatest causes of discomfort, pain, and injury is inefficient muscle use—misuse, overuse, underuse, ill-timed use, etc. Accumulated muscle tension is the biggest culprit, especially in the extensor muscles, the extrinsic muscles of the hand (from the wrist to the elbow) and around the wrist area. Low-wristed, high-fingered techniques are especially implicated. But the tension from tight shoulders and neck muscles can impinge nerves in the spine and cause referred pain in the arms, wrists and hands, as well.

As every good athlete knows, the muscles need to recover continually as we engage in an activity. For example, most pianists are never trained to recycle the arm muscles while their fingers are moving. It is a very high-level skill and must be learned step-by-step. The problem is that most pianists, young and old, are not aware of the state of their muscles in the first place. They do not know what a fully released muscle feels like. So how can they be expected to release their muscles continually if they have never identified the feeling? This is one of the reasons that in my retraining program or in starting a child or an adult, I begin with overall body and muscle awareness and control. Most people think of control as contracting, but real control means regulating the ebb and flow of muscle tension. The first component of the basic stroke incorporates the necessary lifting of the forearm that allows

the extensor muscles (top of the forearm) to release and even to stretch a tiny bit, and the wrist joint to be free. Thus they are continually refreshed and do not accumulate tension. Combining this with more and more notes per stroke is a skill which is gradually acquired, but which, I might add, is not really all that complicated, once the basic mechanism of release is mastered.

4) Healthy technique is not necessarily synonymous with certain motions. The most critical factor is the state of the muscles. I demonstrate this very easily by playing two notes with the basic stroke. Both times, the gesture looks well coordinated, free, and natural. However, one of the times, the muscles are very tight inside, but in an invisible, microscopic way; the other time, the muscles are in a much more released state. Usually, the observer cannot tell the difference, even from very close by.

5) This brings me to the next important principle. Healthy technique can only be taught through the senses, primarily the kinesthetic sense in a very "hands-on" way. A student would have actually to feel the state of my arm muscles to tell the difference between the tight and the more efficient way of playing described in #4. I realize this could raise enormous questions nowadays with the fear of litigation, sexual harassment, etc. I always teach my own students and trainees how to touch in an extremely professional way—only with permission of the student; only with the tips of the fingers; very lightly usually and on the head, neck, upper back, arms, hands, fingers; and only if the video camera is running. I tape every lesson, zoom in a lot for more careful scrutiny, and require an outline of the lesson each time. This way it places the whole process on a very professional level with very clearly defined rules and parameters. Trust and integrity are major requirements in teaching for us all. I reiterate this daily with my trainees and students.

6) Healthy technique must be taught one step at a time and each step must be mastered before going on to the next level of coordination. Technical mastery for me means when the body and brain have absorbed the sensations and motions to the point of automatic or reflexive response. In other words, I allow the student to begin work or pieces or studies that incorporate two notes per stroke when she or he uses the basic stroke coordination automatically on single notes or chords. I find, time after time, that if I skip a stage, rush ahead too quickly, or allow a compromise of any kind to each stage that the quality of the whole training program is seriously diminished. In fact, it's quite mathematical. If we begin with only say 90% percent of the coordination at the beginning, then we have already diminished its integrity. Even if the first stage of coordination is mastered and we accomplish only 80% of the next stage, the whole program is now at 100% x 80% = 80%.

Of course, the teacher has to swing from the chandeliers to engage the students' imagination enough to stick with it. Over the years, even though my college students have grown to expect the approach I take and the trainees have seen the video and know what to expect, everyone is astonished at how fundamental I get with this, starting with the skeletal alignment and state of muscle tension in the whole body. I have had to develop very creative ways to transmit this knowledge kinesthetically. I call it Technical Boot Camp. Work is done is small groups (2-8) where everyone can observe and help and encourage everyone else—and also get a lot of good laughs out of it along the way!

I have a number of trainees who are teachers of the very young, however, who have devised all sorts of imaginative, creative and fun (yes!) ways of teaching healthy, whole-body coordination, step-by-step. I frequently travel to their classes and fine-tune the coordination a bit, but I am constantly astonished and deeply gratified to see the wonderful ways they use to get these principles across. This is, of course, another whole article or video!

The question of using music or not during the training process is complex. For very young children, they are so beautifully supple, that it is usually not difficult to train the coordination with the ear and simple reading after the first half-year or so. I have seen many fine examples of this from my own trainee's students. For the older beginning adults, or the pianists who need retraining, staying away from notation is important in the beginning stages as they focus just on the sensations of good coordination and on building kinesthetic awareness, the key to all of this. If they are really injured, pianists will gladly stick to the steps and actually begin to enjoy the slowed-down pace and the feeling that they are finally getting in touch with their bodies and can master these coordinations. They also feel marvelous as their bodies begin to release long-accumulated muscles tension and re-align themselves. They themselves will often tell me they want to slow down more in the process. But this happens only after they have begun to feel these marvelous sensations of freedom and seeming effortlessness.

SMcBS: How do we apply these principles to early-level students?

BL-S: I answered this a bit in the former question. However, I would like to say that it is absolutely essential that the teacher,

him or herself, have this training first and have it truly. The teacher must not just pay lip service to whole-body awareness but must also have had some training in it, as well as in the specific coordinations at the piano. I realize this is a HUGE AMOUNT to ask now, but we have made a start. I also think that with the growing health consciousness in our country (fostered by us immortality-seeking Baby Boomers!), we will see more and more parents who desire this healthy approach for their children. Many teachers will realize that this is simply a part of life. I only wish the overall body use and awareness, in terms of using the body well in daily activities such as walking, sitting, typing, driving, sports, etc., were taught as part of Physical Education in school. This would eliminate a lot of training for the piano teacher.

As it is, the teacher needs to know enough about spinal alignment, muscle state, the basic stroke, etc., to monitor the student's progress and to disallow any mal-coordinations to creep in. I realize not every teacher can go the whole nine yards with this and that some children and parents simply will not care enough to see it through. But I have found that the teachers I train, and myself as well, who present the information in a clear, concise, imaginative way, who proceed in a clear step-by-step manner (so that young children know when they have mastered a stage and are rewarded and praised for it), and who themselves are happy and enlivened by the process of building a healthy technique to serve the music—these are the teachers to which parents flock and for which students gladly work.

The key, I believe, to teaching this or anything else is both having the knowledge and having effective, age-appropriate means of communicating that knowledge. One cannot exist without the other. And THAT is my next video!

SMcBS: Are there special exercises for young students?

BL-S: The first exercises I do are purely physical ones related to overall body use, movement, kinesthetic sensation, etc. Then I have them explore the piano, inside and out. Then I connect them with the SOUND of the instrument as it relates to their body use. And finally, in adhering to the step-by-step principle, I graduate the material, once they are past the no-music stage, starting with the Hannah Smith *Progressive Sight-Reading Exercises* (Hal Leonard). These are really simple, not encumbered with details of phrasing, articulation, dynamics, etc., so the student is free to focus on how the body feels and how the coordination flows in the beginning stages. There are also a number of them on each stage. This gives the student a chance to groove or make automatic the physical response. Bartok's *Microcosmos* (Boosey & Hawkes) are preferred by some, especially adults in retraining, but I find them rather dissonant and complex for most young students. There are any numbers of very, very simple collections out there. What I always recommend in the very first stages are any pieces or volumes which are short (eight measures maximum), clean (no markings), utterly simple and consistent rhythmically (all whole notes, then half, then quarters, then eighths or a very simple combination,—too much sight playing challenge completely throws the focus off of the state of the body—alignment and muscles), and with lots of white space around them on the page to cut distraction away from the kinesthetic sensations to a minimum. In that way, the mind can focus on the physical sensations. The trick is to achieve that perfect balance between under and over-challenging—not to bore and not to over demand (good luck!). Some user-friendly pieces (folk tunes, popular melodies, etc.) might be easy enough to stimulate them musically without distracting them from coordination. Obviously, this is a delicate balance because they are studying piano for the music, not the technique.

SMcBS: Anything to avoid?

BL-S: Boredom or over-challenge, either technically or musically, as well as skipping steps in the process. Their musical souls need to be fed at all times, either by hearing the teacher play a lot while they are doing the very simple stuff, by having the teacher play along with lovely accompaniments while they are doing the simple strokes (though not too distracting an accompaniment or they will lose their composure and focus). More specifically, I would avoid a lot of talk and explanation. Young students learn by doing and sensing and experiencing.

I also never criticize during this process and continually praise and encourage the student. She or he needs to feel alert, happy, trusting and confident in the lesson. I do everything I can to foster this. There is no right or wrong, just a kind of balancing act between coordination and mal-coordinations. Also, I would avoid anything dull or confusing or ultimately non-music related. I constantly give examples and refer back to music making. I also reassure them that this is a temporary but necessary part of the learning process so that they will be able to make wonderful music the rest of their lives in a healthy body and mind. We are laying a solid foundation and foundations aren't glamorous (it might be fun to drive the class out to an actual construction site one day and show them a foundation).

SMcBS: Do you recommend any specific pieces or methods?

BL-S: Without being specific, I answered this above,—I like the uncluttered, clean methods which allow space for the child's imagination or which don't distract him from awareness of the body and of the sound. The old methods which were full of white space or line drawings where the child could draw a picture or color in the drawings were, I believe, pedagogically sound. Nowadays, we have really exciting, colorful, creative method books. But I wonder how much room is left for the child's imagination or whether the child is not being over-stimulated or distracted. When I teach, I want to help the young person develop her own creativity, kinesthetic awareness, concept of sound, and imagination. I believe we need more time and space in general, and much less clutter, in our present society. Our lesson times and methods books are no exception, in my opinion. ▲

Barbara Lister-Sink is an internationally acclaimed soloist and chamber musician. A graduate of Smith College and the Utrecht Conservatory, she was keyboardist for the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra and has collaborated with many renowned artists, including Arnold Steinhardt, Doriot Anthony Dwyer, and the late Jan deGaetani. She is currently Artist-in-Residence at Salem College in Winston-Salem, NC.

The Technique Postbox

Pondering this difficult decision with trepidation. . .

Lucille C. Tallman, Momence, Illinois, writes: "Your article on Do All Hands Fit the Keyboard, Autumn 1999, brought to mind the following amazing story." Ms. Tallman belongs to ISMTA, MTNA, and the local chapter of Kankakee Valley Music Teachers Association. " Our entire local association subscribes to Keyboard Companion and all agree that it is our very favorite. Keep them coming!"

I have a former student, Karen McMillen, who is a multi-talented girl in many facets of life. She has graduated from college and is pursuing a Master's degree at the present time. As one of my most advanced piano students she has performed at many functions, mainly dedicating her playing to sacred music. She was my assistant in group piano teaching for several years. She loves children and readily identifies with them. Karen is one

of six children in her family and is a caregiver and hard worker, volunteering to help wherever needed. This past August she assisted her father in carpenter work, while still taking classes at our local college. She had a serious accident while using a saw and partially severed the index finger on her left hand. When being told that amputation was necessary to avoid further pain and infection, she asked the Doctor if she would still be able to play the piano. The interesting fact that the doctor told her was, in order for her hand to compensate, he would have to remove all of the index finger including the upper joint, so that the middle finger and thumb could freely make the adjustment. Pondering this difficult decision with trepidation, Karen almost immediately said "DO IT, if this will let me play my piano" A week later, arm and hand bandaged except the tips of her remaining fingers, she came to church and smiling tearfully said,"I'm still playing the piano." Three weeks later, with bandages off and only a hairline scar, she played our digital piano in church as I played the organ. She also played a solo during prayer time. At first I thought it was a cassette tape from our sound system. It was done so perfectly and with so much expression. Our entire congregation was in awe and I can't begin to tell you the feelings I had for this beautiful courageous girl. In her own words she says *"My middle finger seems to know that it has to take the place of the index finger and just does it. My hand aches if I play the piano for too long, so I'm not pushing my self too hard right now, but I can tell already that I'll be able to adapt. My fingers are naturally long, so that makes it a little easier to compensate for the missing one. I'm starting to get used to the way my hand looks now. I can do just about everything I did before, just a little slower in some cases. My hand is still very tender and I still have a constant tingling in my missing finger with occasional phantom pains. I still have moments of sadness and times I wish it had never happened, but even so I wouldn't trade the way this has pulled me closer to God and to my family. Only God can give peace at times when nothing makes sense."* Later she came to me and said she was working on something very special. Just two weeks later on Sunday, October 24th she performed the *Moonlight Sonata* combined with a sacred hymn for the offertory. It was a masterpiece. She received an ovation mixed with joy and tears, some being her own and many being mine and others. She has since accepted a new job along with her college studies and has found a program on the internet to relearn typing. In spite of all that has happened, she has never lost her beautiful smile and is an inspiration to everyone around her. She would be the first one to tell any piano student to *Make the piano your special friend and use the GIFT OF FINGERS to bring musical joy to someone's heart.* ▲

"Three weeks later, with bandages off and only a hairline scar, she played our digital piano in church as I played the organ... at first I thought it was a cassette tape..."

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Partners in Time:

You and Your Piano

Madeleine Crouch, Editor

When Madeleine Crouch was learning to play the piano, she made the mailman stop on the front porch to listen to her latest pieces. She continues to ponder all things musical as executive director of several music industry associations, including the Retail Print Music Dealers Association, the National Association of School Music Dealers, and the International Society of Bassists.

How Do You Teach Piano to Handicapped Children?

by Madeleine Crouch

What would you do if, after setting up a first lesson with a new student over the phone, the parent added, "Oh, and by the way, Johnny is legally blind." Or fill in the blank with "He's been deaf since age five," "She can only use her right hand," or "He's a very slow learner." Would you change your mind about giving that child lessons?

Many piano teachers have little, if any, experience giving lessons to children with disabilities. That's probably because the parents of these children are not thinking of piano study as an outlet. But the lure and accessibility of the piano is strong, and someday, a mother may give you a call because she believes that music will benefit her handicapped child.

As I looked for background information on the subject, I discovered more information about the relatively new field of music therapy than I found piano method books for disabled children. *Music therapy* is the prescribed use of music by a qualified person to effect positive changes in the psychological, physical, cognitive, or social functioning of individuals with health or educational problems. And, simply stated, *music education*, even special education, is about teaching children and adults to become proficient in our universal language.

When asked about the differing goals of music therapy and music education, Marcelle Vernazza, a pioneer in teaching piano to special-needs children, believes they have much more in common—the ultimate enjoyment of, and pleasure in, experiencing music making. Although she's been retired for over twenty years, this lively lady of ninety is still active teaching family writing to seniors, and writing children's stories herself. Her brochure for the National Piano Foundation, *Piano in the Education of the Handicapped Child*, is full of practical advice for the studio teacher faced with the challenges—and joys—of working with learning-different children for the first time. ▲

Special education children play the piano...

by Marcelle Vernazza

The piano is a place where open communication is possible for disabled children. Their participation can be geared to any instructional objective. Motor skills are developed in many different ways. The pace of learning and time spent practicing can be flexible. And always, the children can touch and feel their performance results.

Can handicapped children play the piano? The answer is yes. Actively participating in music is very important in their overall education. Technique can be adapted and goals individually tailored. Playing the piano combines auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic and analytic skills. Special education children play the piano by combining their impaired skills with normal or even excelling skills in both the usual and, sometimes, unusual ways.

There are a number of strategies to teach music reading to learning-different children, including the substitution of letters, numbers, a color code, or simple geometric shapes for standard music notation. The teacher must have great patience, be firm but understanding, and be flexible enough to change plans whenever the situation demands it. You must have the musical training not only to choose appropriate music, but also adapt it when necessary. As when working with other children, the teacher should periodically evaluate the experiences and progress of their special-needs students with their parents.

The parents of disabled children should be actively involved in piano lessons. Parents can reinforce the lessons at home by setting up a stable learning environment, with regular times scheduled at the piano. They should search for a teacher or music therapist who understands the specific handicap involved, and most of all, someone who will be dedicated to helping their child.

Slow Learners

With the right support system, these children will especially enjoy piano lessons and profit from them. A more leisurely teaching pace, adjustments for attention span, pleasurable repetition and easy-to-play materials that reflect their interests will help them:

- Develop self-control and concentration.
- Develop physical coordination and purposeful movement.
- Enjoy sequential, challenging study without pressure or competition.
- Improve emotional development by providing an outlet for expression and communication.
- Develop good social habits and attitudes.
- Experience a balance of security and independence.
- Improve listening habits.
- Provide pleasure and entertainment for others.
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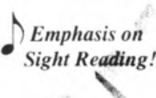

posed the music. Lessons for these children become meaningful demonstrations.

Children with Hearing Impairments

These children need to become aware of the difference between silence and sound. The percussive quality of the piano makes it a particularly good auditory help for developing this awareness. By putting their hands on the back of the soundboard or on top of the piano, these children can feel the vibrations as they watch someone play on the keyboard.

Children with residual hearing generally hear tones in the lower register far better than tones in the high registers. The piano, with its wide range of pitches, is a complete workshop in itself. Confine playing to the lower part of the keyboard if the child hears only these tones. They can learn to identify strong accents, as in a march or a waltz. They can learn to tap out rhythms on the keyboard, and match them with foot movements, and even dance steps.

Hearing aids, amplifiers, and floors are all making the performance and enjoyment of music more accessible and enjoyable to the deaf and partially deaf. Playing the piano can be a pleasurable experience as well as an educational activity for children with hearing impairments.

Children with Visual Impairments

In piano study, children with visual impairments have an opportunity to compete with sighted children. Even children with limited or no sight can find their way about on the keyboard by touch, using the black key groupings as landmarks, substitutes for visual cues. Piano lessons for these children:

- Develop auditory skills.
- Help them think and act independently, make decisions and solve problems.
- Increase intellectual and muscular memory.
- Give children an opportunity for emotional release.
- Act as a strong socializer and leisure time activity.

Music Braille makes the study of great piano literature available to the blind. Learning by listening to recorded music is another study technique used by some. Blind children can find piano lessons to be a joyful experience.

Children with Learning Disabilities

As we learn more about normally intelligent children who have learning problems, we find more ways to help them. Playing the piano may be a beneficial activity for the hyperactive child with a learning disability. Piano study requires these children to sort out and sequence the actions needed to perform. It also improves their visual motor sequencing, the ability to remember and reproduce a sequence of visual stimuli.

Piano study helps them think logically through the process of sitting at the piano, deciding which hand to use, what keys to press, and which way to move to find high or low tones. It stimulates auditory and visual discrimination. Assignments may be planned to fit the individual attention span and ability. Best of all, piano lessons can inspire interest without tiring the student, and actively involve these children in making music.

Children with Emotional Problems

Sometimes children with emotional problems find a secure outlet in modified piano lessons. At first some of them may be reluctant to touch the instrument, but later can work out their hostilities in this indirect but acceptable way. Piano study directs their attention to immediate results, like the discovery of a satisfying combination of tones, the sudden realization of a musical concept, a newly created melody, a successful performance. Piano study helps to coordinate muscles, nerves, and mind in a practical way. Since language is not a barrier in piano study, the use of the piano by a therapist may also help to reach a withdrawn or autistic child.

Easy Keyboard Experiences

Pre-reading rote keyboard experiences can be adapted to physical and other handicaps. These experiences can include directed exploration of sound concepts such as high and low pitches, loud and quiet intensities, or long and short durations. This kind of exploration can be reinforced with games and stories. Students can develop a sense of rhythm by keeping time on one or more tones as part of a duet or as an accompaniment to chanting or singing. This may occasionally be possible while listening to recorded music with parent or teacher. Independently, students can explore melody and rhythm on the black keys in natural pentatonic combinations. Other easy keyboard experiences include:

- Playing melodic fragments of two or more notes.
- Playing two- or three-note chords with the dominant hand to keep time and supply the harmony for singing simple songs.
- Playing short melodies with one hand or two hands in unison.
- Picking out familiar melodies by ear or developing new melodies with the help of the parent or teacher.

The Benefits of Piano Study

Piano lessons for special education students have a great carryover into daily life. Playing the piano is an emotional stabilizer, an intellectual discipline, either a relaxant or an en-

ergizer, a motivation to use the hands, an orderly sequential activity, a creative experience, a means of communication and a way to express pent up emotions. Success, even in the simplest playing activity, develops self-confidence and a feeling of accomplishment. ▲

Marcelle Vernazza is Professor Emeritus of Music of San Francisco State University. She is the author of two books, Music Plus: For the Young Child In Special Education *and* Basic Materials for the Piano Student, *both out of print, but still available in libraries, and a number of articles.*

Back to the editor

Set attainable goals and hold frequent parent-teacher conferences...

If you're interested in learning more about special education and also the field of music therapy, contact:

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I'd love to hear from Keyboard Companion readers who want to share their experiences working with children who have special needs. And when the day comes that you receive a call from the parent of a handicapped child inquiring about lessons, accept the challenge. Set attainable goals and hold frequent parent-teacher conferences to monitor the child's progress and enjoyment. You'll find that the professional, mainstream studio skills you've been honing day to day are a sufficiently strong foundation for tackling special education. Besides, you know how to improvise, don't you?

In our next issue, it's your turn, students! The question will be: *How do you feel when you're waiting for your turn to play in a recital?* And here's an assignment for teachers with a sense of adventure. While your students are waiting to play in your next recital, hand them a piece of paper and pencil, and ask them to jot down their thoughts in an impromptu diary entry. Then gather them back up and send them to me, Madeleine Crouch, 4020 McEwen, Suite 105, Dallas, TX 75244, fax 972/490-4219, or e-mail to mad@dondillon.com for publication in a future issue of Keyboard Companion.▲

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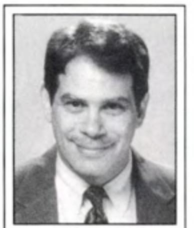
The Heart of the Matter:
Rhythm



Bruce Berr, Editor

Bruce Berr is an associate professor of piano and Coordinator of Piano Pedagogy at the Chicago Musical College of Roosevelt University. He is an educational composer, has written articles for the major keyboard journals, and frequently presents workshops on various topics important to piano teachers. He is currently involved in creating a library of pedagogical videotapes for instructional purposes.

How Do You Teach The Rhythm Challenges in Beethoven's Sonata in G, Op. 49, #2, 1st Movement?

by Bruce Berr

Imagine a movie which might open in the following way: First, a bright flash of light accompanied by a short brass-choir chord. Then, a brief but exciting view of water waves cresting over a pier, then washing ashore. This is immediately followed by a line of people marching steadily and purposefully somewhere, then they suddenly are whisked off-screen. As this happens, the original bolt of light reappears but this time is preceded by a quick crescendo of brightness and sound. The whole sequence happens again, but is seen now through a clouded lens, creating softer edges and movements and slightly dimmer light. And all of this happens in the short span of only about fifteen seconds!

The imagery may not be familiar but perhaps the underlying gestures are. This somewhat idiosyncratic but definitely whimsical scene could very well be a cinematic interpretation of the frenetic opening eight measures of Beethoven's Op. 49, #2.

How many other Classical pieces commence with so many disparate gestures so close to each other, each with its own distinct rhythm and feel? Triplets and eighth notes try to mix like so much oil and water, dotted rhythms and quarters intertwine. It is no wonder that the opening of this popular and expressive sonata is so formidable for many students who encounter it for the first time.

Our two authors explore not only this extraordinary opening but other sections of the movement that challenge our students to play artistically and accurately. ▲

by Helen Marlais

...no playing should occur until the rhythm is ingrained in the mind...

In order to grasp the true spirit of this sonata movement, the rhythm must be played with exuberance and accuracy. The student who can do this is better able to attain the overall goal of communicating their interpretation to an audience. I'll concentrate on the exposition in order to shed light on the entire movement; the beginning eight measures are shown above.

I always have my students start a new piece at the lesson so that I know that they will practice correctly at home. Concentrating on the first four-bar phrase, I have the student tap the rhythm to feel the correlation between the triplets, quarter notes, and eighth notes. In the beginning stages when the student is practicing slowly, it is beneficial to count this movement in 4/4 instead of cut time. I believe that no playing should occur until the rhythm is ingrained in the mind, and both hands can rhythmically coordinate themselves. The student can easily see that the second phrase (mm. 5-8) is an octave higher than the first phrase with a change in the left-hand texture. I have the student again tap the rhythm. At this early-advanced performance level, once the student has the rhythm firmly under control, hands-together playing can be done immediately. For the first week, I assign only the first eight bars. A student who learns a short section perfectly will have the confidence and ability to apply the same practice strategy to the rest of the movement.

We all know that rhythm problems frequently occur around trills (mm. 4 and 8). The entire interpretation of the piece can be interrupted with a poorly negotiated trill! The cardinal rule in learning how to play trills is to practice the section without the trill in order to establish the rhythm. Have the student practice m. 8 without the trill, counting out loud an eighth-note pulse; the eighth notes in the left hand are already supplied for the student so it will be relatively easy to feel this pulse. Once this is solidified, have the student concentrate on m. 4, still counting a steady eighth-note pulse, even though the eighth notes in the left hand are not present. After practicing m. 8, m. 4 will be much easier to play! Be sure to have the student practice the entire measure which houses the trill all the way to the downbeat of the following measure in order to fully feel the resolution of the steady eighth note pulse. Once the student has mastered this at a slow solid pace, then the sixteenth-note termination can be added, making sure that it comes after the "and" of beat two. Again, it will be easier to practice m. 8 first, and then work on m. 4.

For those students who have trouble feeling a steady inner pulse, going from eighth-note sections to triplets and vice versa will be challenging (mm. 14-15, and mm. 19-21).

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So that the student feels the beat with large gestures, try the following practice steps: Have the student walk a quarter note pulse while clapping two measures of eighth note pulses. Then, while walking, have the student clap two measures of triplet pulses and then two measures of eighth note pulses and vice versa. This helps to ingrain the two different rhythm patterns (triplets and eighth notes) along with the underlying quarter-note beat.

The most challenging sections in this movement are the appoggiaturas in the extension sections (mm. 36, 40, 75, 103, and 107). At the lesson, have your student tap, count, and then play the section first without the appoggiatura in order to establish the triplet pulse. In contrast to the practice strategy used with the trills, the student should practice the section with the appoggiatura in the first week because these appoggiaturas all start on the downbeat and are part of the melodic line; they are not ornamental.

An excellent way to learn this appoggiatura is to juxtapose m. 73 of the Rondo movement from Beethoven's G Minor sonata, Op. 49, No. 1 with m. 36 of this sonata. (See examples below.)

In the G minor sonata, the left hand supplies steady sixteenth notes against the exact same rhythm pattern in the G Major sonata, making it easier to play and understand the rhythm. A teacher can create an exercise for the student along this same vein. The student can practice m. 36 with a left hand Alberti bass sixteenth-note figure, or the left hand figure can be reduced to even eighth-note triplets. (This is also in the Rondo, m. 108-110) Once the student feels how the right and left hand notes line up together, the measures are ready to be played as written.

To hear the segment performed as described, listen to a short audio clip on the KEYBOARD COMPANION website: www.keyboardcompanion.com

The ear must be the student's guide in making sure that the appoggiaturas do not disturb the distribution of the principal notes that follow. Accuracy must come before speed in order for the ear, body, and mind to fully understand all of the motions needed to execute the passage easily.

Incidentally, not all appoggiaturas in Beethoven's sonatas are played starting on the beat. For example, in the Pathetique sonata, Op. 13, mvt 3, the appoggiaturas sound better played before the beat, because the notes on the beat strongly outline a tonic chord.

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In the fourth movement of Op. 2, No. 2, m. 28, the appoggiatura again is played before the beat, because the sforzando written over the main note implies its natural impulse to sound on the beat.

However, in this G major sonata, the appoggiaturas sound best played ON the beat because the appoggiatura is part of the triad. Other clear examples of an appoggiatura played on the beat, this time for dissonance and accent, can be heard in Op. 31, No. 3, first mvt, mm. 18-21 and in the first movement of the Waldstein sonata, Op. 53.

To hear this excerpt played in this way, listen to the short audio clip on KBC's website.

Since we want our students to be able to take the same basic principles of rhythm and apply them to any piece they learn, here are a few rules of thumb for impeccable rhythm:

1. Never let a student play a piece without rhythm. It is better to have a child play extremely slowly or hands separate for awhile with a clear idea of the rhythm, rather than ingraining incorrect figural patterns and fluctuating tempi which will be very difficult to fix later.

2. Have a student count out loud while practicing sections. This process is an invaluable tool. The link between the brain, the ear, and the motions of the arm and hand are reinforced by audible counting.

3. Once the best fingerings have been determined, insist that the student use them all of the time. There is no easier way to trip up the rhythm than by using faulty fingering.

4. Have your student isolate the rhythm problem spots in the sonata movement and practice them. Instill the habit of practicing these rhythm challenges slowly with focused attention in order to feel and learn the motions of the body.

5. Have your students listen to recordings of other Beethoven sonatas. Their ears will begin to hear how noted pianists execute the rhythm, and how the rhythm contributes to the shaping of the musical phrases. ▲

Helen Marlais is a pianist and coordinator of piano pedagogy at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is an active performer and clinician and holds a doctoral degree in piano performance and pedagogy from Northwestern University.

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by Janet Hickey *There are not too many Beethovens...walking through the studio door.*

I remember the first time I taught this charming "little" Beethoven sonata to a high school transfer student. I introduced the first theme, went through several counting routines and sent her on her way, expecting to hear great things at her next lesson.

Here's what really happened at the next lesson—in the first measure, the half note was reduced to a quarter. The eighth notes in both mm. 3 and 4 were mutated into 16ths. I quickly discovered that this little gem is deceptively simple to look at, fairly easy to read, but chuck full of rhythmic twists.

Years later, I am once again reminded of the teaching challenges of Op. 49, #2. Last week a new eighth-grade transfer student came in for her second lesson on this sonata. At her first lesson, we had tried numerous rhythms, body movements, etc., to help her work out the main theme on her own. When she returned, she played the trill in m. 4 perfectly but the last three eighth-notes were played as quarters, along with some other surprises.

Beethoven's music is loaded with rhythmic intensity. How do we as teachers impart to our students that inner sense of pulse, the heartbeat that breathes life into a great work? (There are not too many Beethovens or gifted rhythm makers walking through the studio door).

Here's a plan for my current student in hopes that these steps may lead her to higher levels. She may not need this much drill; it's too soon to tell. I'll mainly aim to keep alive the shape and spirit of the sonata as we do the preparatory work.

I'll concentrate on a few key areas:
1.Time Signature
2. Alternating between triple and duple patterns
3. Playing the ornaments
4. The rests

1. Time Signature of ¢—Alla breve (cut time)

The typical student benefits from first treating the 2/2 as 4/4. I have them do slow counting in 4/4—to grasp note values, rhythm changes, rests, dotted notes, trills, etc.—plus be able to use a metronome without dozing off between clicks, which can be a problem in cut-time. Even ♩= 44 can seem fast at this stage. We'll clap, tap, and count out loud before ever making contact with the keys; this seems to be the best way to grasp rhythms and ward off future problems. Unfortunately, as we all know, a great deal of time needs to be spent fixing problems later if they are not prevented in the first place.

But then as soon as possible, I like to get the feeling of 2 ingrained, because sometimes students get stuck in 4/4 as if the piece were glued together and might fall apart if you move it! Alla breve can be experienced with arm swings, conducting, a two-step dance, singing—whatever it takes to get the feeling of the meter in their bones. I tried this with my new student and will keep returning to it until she feels it in her whole body, not just her fingers. It's a great way for students to discover their own rhythmic sense.

Deliberate slow counting of "1 an 2 an" and also works for the

rhythmically astute student able to bypass the 4/4 routine. It is also a very good way to make the transition from 4 to 2, once the 4/4 is secure.

2. Alternating between Triple and Duple patterns (which is a pervasive rhythm characteristic of this sonata).

Triple to Duple: The measures that begin with a half note (mm. 1, 5, 53, etc.) are related. The half note proclaims the opening of the sonata and each main section, and gives the work stability and continuity; therefore the half note must receive full value. To help do this (and not be tempted into shortchanging it due to the surrounding rhythm patterns), count each beat as a triplet—1 a la 2 a la 3 a la 4 a la 1—crossing over the bar line to beat one of the next measure (which is duple).

One way to prevent the triplets in m. 1 from corrupting the single RH eighth note in m. 3 is to think of the lone RH eighth note as being the other half of the LH beats. This works well in subsequent sections (such as m. 7) in which a single RH eighth follows LH eighth notes.

For the ties in mm. 53 and 56, whisper (or barely say) the "3" in the first note of the triplet on beat 3: 1 a la 2 a la _ a la 4 a la. Add the next measure to each of the half note measures. Strongly establish the quarter note pulse and go from the triplet to the duple with rhythm drills. Play and count 1 a la 2 a la 3 a la 4 a la 1 an 2 an 3 an 4 an 1.

Duple to Triple: We switch gears in mm. 4-5, 14-15, and many other similar places by counting 1 an 2 an 3 an 4 an 1 a la 2 a la 3 a la 4 a la. We switch back again in places like mm. 19-20. A strong pulse and counting routine can help the student to get this.

The transition between eighths and triplets at mm. 74-75 heralds a change in both rhythm and harmony. Highlighting these differences helps students rhythmically and in their memorizing.

Audio on the Web

To hear this excerpt played in this way,
listen to the short audio clip on KBC's website.

3. Playing the ornaments.

Now for some fun! Students either freeze when they see these lovely little decorative notes, or they play them as if they were the most important notes on the page. It can be quite a task getting them to play evenly and gracefully and yet still keep the beat. Make sure the feeling of 4/4 meter is firmly established before teaching the trills.

If one chooses to execute the m. 4 trill and its termination with five notes (starting the trill on the written note), count 1 2 3 4 5 on the preceding quarter note with RH only. Notice that this same trill at m. 8 has eighth notes in the accompaniment. Here, you may choose to break the trill into a (3+2) or (2+3) combination so that each eighth note in the LH aligns with a note in the RH.

For the turn in m. 12, play A-G-F# as a sixteenth-triplet on the 2nd half of beat 1 while counting 1 a-a-an 2 an 3 an 4 an.

To hear this excerpt
played in this way,
listen to the short audio clip
on KBC's website.

The trill at m. 109 is best played as six notes, starting with the note above the notated trill note. If the student counts 1 2 3 4 5 6 on beats 3 and 4, the LH fits right in with two counts per eighth note. (You could start the entire measure counting 6 per quarter beat).

All grace-note appoggiaturas, such as those at m. 36, are played on the beat. Even m. 42 should be played as an accented appoggia-

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tura with two even eighth notes. (Ed. note: Performance practice for this era would also suggest the possibility of the notes being played unevenly: the first note as two-thirds of a triplet, the last note the remaining third.)

4. The Rests.

Rests should have the same length, speed, and intensity as notes, and yet there tend to be many neglected silences in students' playing of this movement. By changing how students count aloud, they can become more sensitive to the dramatic impact of rests. At m. 20, the student can alternate between speaking the counts that have notes and whispering the counts that have rests:

1 an 2 an 3 an 4 an

After this, then have them back up and add the previous triplet measure. The rests and the fermata in the final two measures of the movement need to be projected to give this movement closure. I ask students to count the end as shown below: **1 a la** 2 a la **3 a la** 4 a la **1 a la** 2 a la 3 a la 4 a la hold the rest, AMEN!! ▲

Janet Hickey maintains an independent studio and is a member of the piano faculty of North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. She has served as Program Chair of the Naperville ISMTA, has led master classes, and is active as both a performer and a clinician. She holds a bachelor and masters degree in piano performance and pedagogy, and an additional masters degree in vocal performance.

"By changing how students count aloud, they can become more sensitive to the dramatic impact of rests."

From the Inside Out: Motivation

Joyce Cameron, Editor

Joyce Cameron, NCTM, an independent piano teacher in Ohio, will soon complete a Master's of Arts degree in Experimental-Human Factors Psychology and has begun a new job as an analyst of technical information about ergonomics. Her initial work assignments have drawn heavily upon her experience in piano teaching and writing, as well as her newly acquired knowledge of ergonomics.

How Do You Develop Rapport With Your Students?

Joyce Cameron

Rapport is widely recognized as an important component of successful teaching (e.g., O'Connor, 1987; Schmitt, 1976). In the context of this article, the term "rapport" directs attention to the quality of the teacher-learner relationship, and to the importance of this relationship in the process of teaching. In the words of Schmitt (1976, p. 1), "Rapport is a delicate balance of two persons dancing to one beat." That is, the teacher and the learner are involved in a relationship of mutual respect, of common expectations, and of shared goals.

As usual, the two contributors to this issue of KEYBOARD COMPANION provide very different insights into how they work to develop rapport with their students. Suzanne Guy describes how her efforts to establish and build rapport begin the moment a student begins to climb the stairs to her studio and how she uses an "Imagination Celebration" questionnaire to assist her in gathering information that she can then use in developing rapport. Susan Bruckner focuses on the importance of language, and of body language, in establishing rapport. Interestingly, these two contributions reflect two essential skills for building rapport: (1) listening and (2) noticing non-verbal behaviors and responding appropriately (Schmitt, 1976).

As you read these two contributions, consider using the ideas of these contributors as a stimulus for reviewing how you listen to your students. Do you listen to their words? Their ideas? Their likes and dislikes? Their concerns? The notes they play? The music they make? Do you ask them questions to which you expect a written response? And, how do you use this information to aid you in building rapport? Then, observe your own abilities to notice both non-verbal behaviors such as posture, breathing, facial expression, and gestures, and verbal behaviors such as speech patterns and tempo. And, again, how do you use this information consciously to build rapport and to enhance your teaching? The ideas expressed by these two respected teachers may give you insights into new possibilities and new opportunities. ▲

by Suzanne W. Guy

The student is the star, whatever the setting.

Teachers and students develop a relationship over time, not overnight. They usually begin that connection under less than ideal conditions—total strangers in an unfamiliar setting (for the students). Transfer students are then asked to play an instrument they've never seen or heard before and probably answer some questions that require cognitive thought (not reflex response). No wonder they feel put on the spot. New students have no idea about what they're signing up for as a beginning pianist.

Over the years, I've stayed awake nights dreaming up a workplace that invites students into a world of sensory stimulation. Thus, the initial rapport begins wordlessly and immediately. When a students walks through the double doors and up the stairs into my studio, there are two ceramic plaques at eye level. One says, "The sky's the limit" and shows a ladder reaching up to the moon; the other is a big, burly cat with wings on which sit birds and mice. It says, "dream on." The tour into Musicland leads directly to a door-size poster that announces, "Music transforms you" as notes morph into butterflies. There are photographs everywhere of present and past students, group and individual poses alongside posters, postcards, and pictures of famous composers. After all, every noteworthy musician begins with the first lesson, and everyone eventually studies with the same teacher—the score at hand. I want students to know immediately we're all in this together, if possible, for a long time.

By the time the student has climbed the stairs (the equivalent of the closed curtain opening to reveal scenery and sets on stage), a quick scan of the music studio reveals toys; plush animals; books about music, art, and dance; children's picture books, scrapbooks, and two shiny black grand pianos. I think of my music room as a stage for theater, a canvas for art, a platform for poetry, and a studio for dance. The student is the star, whatever the setting.

Of course, if I articulated all my visions and dreams for each student upon that initial meeting, they would be overwhelmed and would run away. "From this day forward," I tell everyone, "I will gradually become less necessary in your musical life."

To establish rapport more naturally, I hand the student an "Imagination Celebration" sheet with 30 questions to answer at the conclusion of a 30-40 minute audition/interview. None of the questions mentions music, piano, or practice. Yet, the answers have everything to do with music, piano, and practice. Most students answer briefly, but a few offer details, and many responses are surprising!

The portion of Imagination Celebration shown here includes the initial instructions and about a third of the 30 questions. Here are some of the more outrageous answers. To the question about animal preferences, I had a student add, "wolf" in the blank following "other."

The most interesting answer I ever received for the question about one "magical day" was, "I would turn our house into an aquarium. My brother and I would swim to sleep when it got dark. We could float to school." Every question that could be stretched to include marine life was answered accordingly!

From another interesting student, I received responses that followed a theme. Question after question related to baseball

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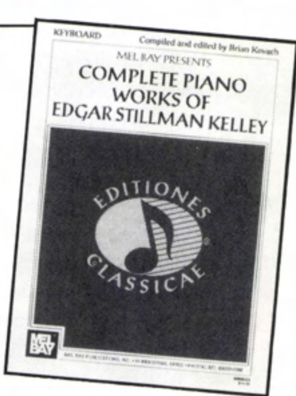

By Brian Kovach. Edgar Stillman Kelley (1857-1944) was an American organist, pianist, composer, and music critic. During his career he spent some time studying Chinese music, and its influence can be seen in his compositions. Many of the works were inspired by literary and theatrical influences. The pieces include *Alice in Wonderland; The Flower-Seekers; Confluentia; Lyric Opera Sketches for a Waltz Chorus; Polonaise; Lyric Opera Sketches for a Gavotte Movement; Album-Leaf "Happy New Year!"; Ballet Episode;* and *The Headless Horseman.* This collection of Kelley's colorful and dramatic piano solos has been collected by Brian Kovach, one of America's most sought-after musicologists and performers. It brings much deserved attention to the work of this fine composer. Appropriate for the intermediate to advanced pianist.

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with the climax in the question "I want to be Mike Piazza (catcher for the New York Yankees) when I grow up." The ever-hopeful piano teacher is always looking for students who dream of being pianists, but Margaret answered "a major league baseball pitcher."

I remember spending hours thinking up questions and scenarios that would draw out even the most reluctant student. I have an accordion file that protects and stores the answer sheets from many precious students. They are all alphabetized and handy for reference. I have found so many motivational tools to use from the student's own words to help me in selecting repertoire and in coming up with pertinent images for just the right interpretation of a descriptive piece. I have also found ways to allay performance anxiety and simply to be in closer touch with every student according to his or her secret wishes and special needs. ▲

Suzanne Guy is an old piano teacher and a new author. A regular CLAVIER columnist, she has authored or co-authored four books, most recently The Music Box, *a children's book about the invention of the piano. She has also inspired teachers with pedagogy lectures and master classes throughout the country and overseas.*

IMAGINATION CELEBRATION

The Magic of Music Studio
Suzanne W. Guy

Student's Name ______________________ Date ____________

Getting to know you—that's what I'd like to do. It will help me, and it should be fun for you, to answer the following questions. Read all the way through, think for a day or two, and then come back to answer them at one sitting. Hand in at your first lesson.

Suggestion: Sit in a comfortable chair by a window, preferably on a sunny day. Have a nice cool glass of water nearby to drink and to notice its clarity. Write away and enjoy connecting your thoughts as you string words together.

When I have free time I like to: ______________________.

I am a dog-________cat-________other-________lover.

Suppose you could go anywhere, be anyone, do anything on one magical day. Describe such a scene in a short paragraph:

____

____.

If you had a magic wand, what would your favorite teacher be like______________

____.

I like to read mysteries________ non-fiction________ self-help stuff________
poetry________ heavy, educational books________ I really do not like to read________

My most boring class at school is ______________________.

A reward I like to get is ______________________.

I want to be ______________________ when I grow up.

My hero is ______________________. (male or female)

© Suzanne Guy. Used by permission.

by Susan Bruckner *Breathing is the highest indicator of when it is or isn't OK to move on...*

Backstage, just moments before a concert, the drummer Ringo Starr was more excited than usual. A new rock and roll group, who called themselves the Beatles, had invited him to sit in as their drummer for a concert. Their former drummer, Peter Best, had quit and they were searching for a replacement. The hall was packed to capacity. The Beatles decided to showcase Ringo by sending him onstage alone to do a solo ahead of the group. As he walked onstage, the surprised audience began to boo and hiss. They began to chant, "We want Peter; we want Peter" over and over.

Most performers would consider this their worst nightmare come true. What Ringo did in this true story is nothing less than brilliant. He gave up his planned solo, and instead began to imitate the crowd's angry "We want Peter" rhythm on the bass drum. Slowly the audience began to clap and stomp their feet to the rhythm, giving up their verbal abuse. He then took this rhythm and turned it into a grand improvisation, winning the overwhelming approval of the audience. By the time he was done the crowd was cheering him on with thunderous applause and the rest is, of course, history.

We can learn much from this worst case scenario about rapport strategies. Ringo's ability to go with the energy of the angry crowd, rather than fight or hide from it, reminds me of an Aikido master The master receives the energy of his attacker by leading it on its continuing path, meanwhile getting out of the way. Ringo's ability to tune in strictly to the pure rhythm of the chant, and to use its energy, became the difference between victory and defeat for him.

In the classroom and studio, teachers use similar rapport strategies all the time. When faced with obvious "mismatching" of personalities, or negative attitudes, how do we win students over to a productive working relationship?

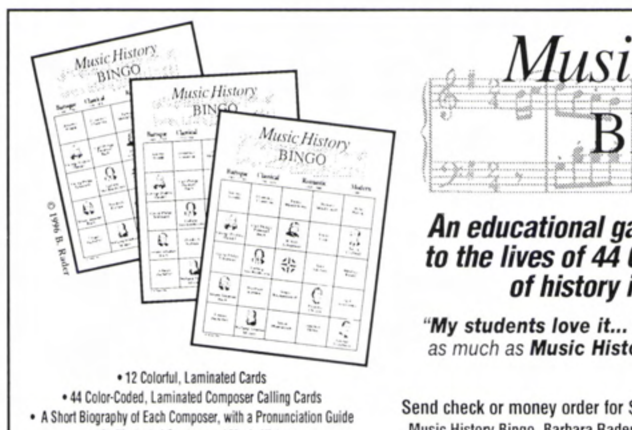
The discipline of Neuro-linguistic programming, or NLP, offers what I consider to be the nuts and bolts of rapport skills. I have studied for many years to be *conscious* of what we do well as teachers when building rapport with others. I highlight the word "conscious" because most teachers wouldn't stay in the profession if they didn't already have a high degree of innate communication skills. The big pedagogical distinction comes when we use the word "conscious." Surprisingly few good communicators can tell you just what it is they are doing that is working so well most days. Then, on an "off" day, they are left without a strategy to remedy a difficult situation. A list of what constitutes an "off day" might include Fridays, the day or week before holidays, the first snow or rainfall of the season, an overtired, hungry, or emotionally upset student, etc.

Specific rapport-building rules of thumb in NLP are to:

Mirror roughly 50% of physiology. [1]
Mirror roughly 75% of facial expressions.
Mirror voice pattern 100% (envelope, speed, and cadence).
Mirror sensory language patterns 100% (visual-auditory-kinesthetic). [2]
Notice breathing as the strongest indicator of resourceful state.

I recently taught a pedagogy course at the Stanford Suzuki String Teachers Workshop. As I went over the mirroring techniques above, a teacher asked the question, "Doesn't the student see right through it when you mirror them like this?" My reply

was to tilt my head at the exact angle she tilted hers, hold my hands in the same position as hers, furrow my brow like hers, and answer with my voice at the same pitch, speed, and cadence she used, and say, "My experience has shown that a student virtually never sees any reason to suspect any sneaky behavior on my part." Note that I also matched her visual sensory word choices by using two visual words myself: "shown" and "sees." I purposely mirrored her 100% on every parameter just to see what the group's reaction would be. No one even suspected that I was modeling the very patterns I was talking about with her! I actually had to stop and point out to the group that I was intentionally mirroring her 100% on all counts!



In addition, Ringo's story offers four key elements for rapport to take place. They were his flexibility, quick perception, ability to pace with the audience, and ultimately lead them away from their behavior. The first two, flexibility and perception, work in tandem. One's sensory acuity, or accurate reading of a situation, often causes the original plan to be changed. Borrowing from the world of corporate trainers in nearby Silicon Valley, I have often heard it said that "the person with the most flexibility will have the most influence." Teachers can have an agenda about what a student needs to be doing next developmentally and musically. Yet knowing "what" doesn't always help if we don't consider "how" to best achieve results.

For example, I was working with a teenage student who needed to do some work on voicing within the hand. I had planned on starting right out with some exercises to help her tackle this challenge. She came to her lesson with much less enthusiasm than usual. I had to make a quick judgment about the efficacy of sticking to my plan. Instead, I acknowledged her obvious mood (pacing) and asked, "Are you overwhelmed with school work lately, or having a bad day today?" The old adage, "Students don't care what you know until they know that you care" holds true for all ages, from pre-schoolers through adults. So with the reply that she was having a bad day, I began instead with a skill I knew she enjoyed, sightplaying a duet. Meanwhile, I kept my eye out for an example of voicing within the hand in the duet that I could segue into after rapport was gained (leading).

"Pacing and leading" is a pedagogical term I use to describe this process of achieving rapport and then carefully leading away towards either a skill or a learning style that is less preferred. As Mark Twain once said, "Habit is habit, and not to be flung out the window by any man but coaxed downstairs a step at a time."

The whole point of rapport, pedagogically speaking, is to expedite the process of getting to the place where the student would not think of going on his or her own. For example, a student who is highly visual, may not want to play by ear or from memory. Yet these skills are precisely the ones that will build musicianship and open new doors neurologically for that student. By first establishing rapport through the student's visual preference, a skilled teacher will find a way to lead the student towards the less preferred auditory strategies. Visual imagery and metaphors as well as visual sensory-based language such as "see," "picture," and "imagine" all help this student feel a greater sense of rapport.

Breathing is the highest indicator of when it is or isn't OK to move on from pacing to leading. When a student is breathing deeply and comfortably this indicates the state of resourcefulness necessary to move on. It's helpful to mix sensory language in a sentence when transitioning. For example, "I can picture the soldiers marching in their uniforms and now I wonder if you can also listen for the sound of their boots clicking precisely against the pavement?" (visual to auditory).

All of this is truly less technical than it may sound. Just as musicians play exercises to build a flowing technique, so too must teachers build a repertoire of rapport skills to do our very best job in every situation. Bringing these skills to the conscious level insures even the most gifted communicator a much higher degree of rapport and influence. ▲

> *As Mark Twain once said, "Habit is habit, and not to be flung out the window by any man but coaxed downstairs a step at a time."*

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Editor's Note:

[1] In this context the term "mirror" means to "match" specific aspects of an individual's verbal and non-verbal behavior (based on O'Connor, 1987). [2] In an earlier issue of KEYBOARD COMPANION, two contributors introduced the idea of the three sensory modalities (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) in the Motivation Department of Spring, 1992.

Susan Bruckner is a pianist on the faculty of Cabrillo College in Aptos, California. She gives frequent workshops on learning styles, rapport skills, and non-verbal communication stills in the studio and classroom. She is author of the book, The Whole Musician: A Multi-Sensory Guide to Practice, Performance and Pedagogy.

It's Never Too Late:

Adult Piano Study

Brenda Dillon, Editor

Brenda Dillon continues to hang out on that bridge between music industry and academia. Currently educational consultant for Roland Corporation U.S., this bridge led her previously into the music educator world on behalf of Coda Music Technology, the piano world on behalf of the National Piano Foundation, and the materials development world as a consultant to various companies. She enjoys the diversity of this bridge and hopes to never fall off it.

What Are Your Best Success Stories About Adult Students?

by Brenda Dillon

Our four writers who address this question confirm what I have long suspected about those of us who teach adult students. We get as much or more from the experience as our students. There is such an irony here; the adult piano student population consistently expresses their gratitude to us, and yet, we are even more grateful that we are getting to participate in this learning process with them.

Not only are we getting to partner with someone through the music-making experience, we are also getting to know people like Betty Oka's student, Martin, who survived cancer, and throughout his ordeal held on to his dream to someday be well enough to play the piano. Or about Nicole Tobin-Donnelly's student, Carol, an Australian mom who desired to take stringent exams in piano and music theory, while working part-time and raising two children. Not only did she pass them with honors, she is now confident enough to jam with her husband, an experienced guitarist.

Sandra Stewart writes about en elderly student of hers whose wife had died and who was looking for something to help fill the empty hours at home. In spite of his crippling arthritis, he was pleased that he now shared a common interest of his late wife. Lisa McGowan writes that success may sometimes seem small, but it is hard earned. Her student, Shirley, a school secretary, found success in acquiring the skill to play a favorite hymn as an offertory at her church.

If you are not teaching adults, I hope you will consider doing so. As these teachers have found, it's ultimately a gift to yourself. ▲

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by Betty Oka — *I want to develop a hobby that I can enjoy into retirement.*

I will always remember Martin, who enrolled in my community college class in his late thirties. Martin started piano lessons at ground zero, along with twenty-four other aspiring students in the class. Some students had prior piano experience as children, but professed to have forgotten everything. Yet their fingers had not forgotten, and in a short time these students far outpaced the ones who really had no background.

Martin did his best although he told me, "No matter how much time I spend practicing, I feel as if I am always behind the class. As someone who has always done well in classes, it is a challenge not to feel disheartened by my slow progress in the face of other people's seemingly easy success." I tried to encourage him, and one day I asked him why he had decided to learn to play. "I don't want to come to the end of my life and regret that I never learned to play. I watched my father die of melanoma, and one of the last things he said to me was that he regretted never having learned to play the piano—tickling the ivories he called it."

With his persistence, playing became a permanent part of Martin's life and he made slow improvement. After just over a year of lessons Martin was diagnosed with cancer. Two surgeries and aggressive chemotherapy left him too weak even to sit at the piano. He experienced numbness in his fingers and toes and permanent tinnitus. Nevertheless, he held on to his dream to someday be well enough to play the piano.

Martin's cancer treatment was successful, and he soon came back to the piano class. Feeling that he had to begin again rather than continue with his previous class, he convinced the school counselor to permit him to re-take the classes.

Martin's second interruption was after he had progressed to the fifth semester and he floundered in the recital (which served as the final exam). He felt so badly that he closed his piano and could not even look at it for a year. One year became four as other priorities supplanted the time needed for the piano. Eventually, his love for the piano got the better of him, and he began to feel as though the piano was a friend.

Once again, he returned to the college and took a step back to repeat an individual class before moving into his previous ensemble class. Performance anxiety was a huge problem for Martin. He said, "You tell us never to stop playing in the middle of a piece, but there is little to compare to the helplessness of sitting at the piano bench in total confusion, trying to catch up with my partner after I lose my place or my fingers freeze up. At that moment, the notes and keys that I know so well become strangers."

After reading several books such as, *The Inner Game of Music* and *Soprano on Her Head*, Martin learned that he was not alone in this anxiety. However, the most helpful thing in this regard was seeing another adult ensemble student perform badly in her recital. She sulked back to her chair very despondently. Martin said, "I felt sympathy for her, but at the same time thought *so what*? I knew that she had tried her best. I reminded myself that if I can dismiss a poor performance by another student then I ought to be able to do the same for myself."

Having been through life threatening cancer, Martin realized that no one has literally died from a bad piano performance. Little by little, he has reduced his stage fright by sitting in the front row and trying to remain unaware of the audience until after his performance. He has also practiced with a tape of his partner's piece as recorded by the teacher and tried an accelerated tempo when practicing at home.

Martin recently said to me, "It means a lot for me to learn to play the piano. This is an important personal goal, both for my present and also for my future. Always having focused on career, I want to develop a hobby that I can enjoy into retirement. I am working just as hard on learning piano as I am preparing financially for eventual retirement. I also enjoy the pleasure that my wife seems to get when I learn a piece, especially

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one that she knows. Now I am learning *Give My Regards to Broadway* for this semester's ensemble recital, and she is ready to lace up her tap shoes."▲

Betty Oka is Chair of Keyboard Studies at Pasadena Community College, Pasadena, California, and specializes in group piano instruction.

---

by Nicole Tobin-Donnelly *...the only thing she could remember...was the ruler rapping her knuckles.*

In February, 1997, I had only my second adult student commence with me. I was quite tentative since my first adult had quit after a few lessons, citing her children's commitments as the reason, but I had always believed after the first lesson she wouldn't stick at it, as she hadn't practiced regularly at all (and as we all know, you can certainly tell!).

So when Carol started with me, I used Alfred's *Adult All-In-One* course again, as I had spent nearly two hours in my local music store looking at various methods before taking on the first adult student. Repertoire is of the utmost importance—they want to quickly play something they know, and that other people know.

Carol had studied piano from the nuns at her local Catholic school for six months or so as a child, and the only thing she could remember from that experience was the ruler rapping her knuckles. She came to me after her children started school and she really wanted to learn, so that when she had them commence lessons, she would be able to help them. (Very noble indeed—isn't it a shame all parents aren't this dedicated?)

By mid-May she had almost finished the first book, and asked, very casually at her lesson, "Do you think I would be able to sit a Grade One piano exam at the end of the year?" After I almost had a heart attack (as no one had ever progressed quite that quickly before), I told her I'd like her to start attempting a Grade One theory book first. The next lesson, she forgot her theory book, which led me to believe she hadn't done any. Isn't that what many children do when they haven't completed the work you have assigned them? Shame on me for being so uncharitable, because she came to the very next lesson with her theory book entirely completed. So I gave her a copy of a past exam paper and she made a score of 95% Not bad at all.

After that, we started discussing the various examination boards in Australia. She didn't want to do classical exams, not yet anyway. So we settled on ANZCA (Australian and New Zealand Cultural Arts) as they had both a modern and a classical syllabus. This syllabus, at the Grade One level, allows pieces such as *Morning Has Broken*, *Greensleeves*, *Scarborough Fair*, etc., from John Brimhall's *All Gold for Easy Piano*, *Scoobie Du Wup* from Australia's Kerin Bailey's *Jazzin' Around* series, and *Sneaky Business* and *Just Struttin' Along* from Martha Mier's *Jazz, Rags and Blues* series.

So on September 18, 1997, Carol sat Grade I piano and achieved Honors result. She sat Grade 2 theory of music in October of 1997, and achieved Honors result for that exam also. In May of 1998, within days of each other, she sat Grade 2 piano and Grade 3 theory of music (including basic harmony and melody writing) achieving Honors for her practical and a credit for her theory. In October of 1998, she sat Grade 3 piano and achieved 86%— just scraping into Honors.

This year, she is sitting Grade 4 piano. She is finally doing some classical pieces and *Für Elise* is her free choice. Her other pieces are Kerin Bailey's *Latin Break* and *Riff Raff Rock*, as well as Martha Mier's *Red Rose Rendezvous*. *Für Elise* is the only piece without syncopation! Getting the scales up to speed in semiquavers is the only place she is struggling. She does daily Hanon exercises without prompting and does daily sightplaying. She intends to sit Grade 4 theory of music in October, 1999, which includes figured bass, the writing of melodic minor scales, two-part melody writing, modulation, and a general knowledge of the form, time and character of the dances of the 18th century keyboard suites. No easy task in less than three years—especially working part-time, and raising two very polite and well-behaved children!

Although the progress has now slowed, she is still full of enthusiasm every week. She is confident enough to jam with her husband, who is an experienced guitarist. She is playing repertoire she enjoys, some of it recognizable by visitors to her home, which is so important to the adult student.

Her children are getting ready to sit Grade 2 theory of music, and she gives them a weekly half-hour theory lesson at home. As I didn't have vacancies when she wanted them to start, they study piano with another colleague of mine in the Cairns and District Music Teacher's Association.

One day Carol will no doubt tell me she doesn't need lessons any more. This will be one of the saddest days of my life, but at the same time, one of the most professionally fulfilling. She has the ability to do her own diploma, even though I don't think she considers it an option at this time.

I believe adult students can be some of the most rewarding students you teach. They will stimulate you both intellectually and creatively, if you approach them in the right way and make their lessons enormous fun for both of you. You will certainly gain a new friend along the way. I only have one

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THE JOY OF FAMILY MUSIC SINCE 1987

other adult student now, and he is progressing quite well too, except he thinks he is the only adult to have a problem with a stiff 4th finger! ▲

Nicole Tobin-Donnelly is President of the Cairns and District Branch, Music Teachers Association of Queensland, Australia. She studied piano from the age of six and did a Commerce degree at James Cook University in Townsville. She is now midway through a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in music pedagogy and politics. She has 25 private students and 30 Kindermusik students.

by Sandra Stewart *...I look at my adult students as a special breed...*

I have been fortunate to work with many adult students during my teaching career, both at my home studio and at adult programs offered through colleges and music stores. I'm sure that we all feel fortunate to have worked with many wonderful students, but I look at my adult students as a special *breed*, one that is self-motivated and eager to learn. However, as I pondered my choices of individual examples to discuss, I realized that it is important to first define the word *success* as it is used in this context.

After soul-searching, I came to the conclusion that it is absolutely true that I measure the success of adults quite differently than younger students or college music majors. My stories of success with adults do not evolve around competitions won or ratings earned at other festivals, but rather the personal goals and satisfaction that each adult student has gained from learning to make music at the piano. The reward of teaching these students, beginners or advanced, are part of my *success*.

Early in my career, I taught piano in a music store several evenings a week. I still remember one of my very first adult students, an elderly gentleman who had lost his wife and was looking for something to help fill the empty hours at home. Although he understood basic music reading from singing in his church choir, he had never played an instrument. After our initial interview, I began with some basic knowledge about the keyboard, and then asked him to place his hands in a C major position. To my horror, his hands and fingers were terribly crippled with arthritis.

At first I questioned the wisdom of continuing with lessons, but when I realized how serious he was about this venture, we began in earnest. While I would like to brag that he achieved a proficiency that was astounding and his arthritis was miraculously cured, this was not the case. Playing remained a struggle for him, and he was never able to get beyond an elementary level. The success of this story lies in the personal joy and love that he discovered in music through the piano and the difference it made in his life. He expressed a changed outlook, for although he still missed her, he now shared a common interest with his late wife.

Several years later, I found myself living in Norfolk, Virginia, where a lot of Navy personnel are located. One of the Navy wives I taught had taken lessons during high school and had continued to play on her own as she traveled the world with her career husband. This lady was a nurse by profession and had never performed piano outside her home. When we began our lessons, she told me of her secret desire to play piano in her church.

Her accompanying skills were quite lacking, of course, and her knowledge of basic chords needed review. She worked tirelessly on learning how to play from a lead sheet with chord symbols until she became proficient playing different styles in this manner. Sightplaying, transposition, and improvisation skills were enhanced after she enrolled in a music theory class at a local community college. In addition, she worked on standard Classical piano literature in our lessons. Today she is the primary pianist at a large church in her area. A success story? Yes!

During my first year at Jacksonville University, I had a female student in her mid-thirties who was returning to college to earn a Bachelor's degree through the College of Weekend Studies. While her degree program was in business management, she was able to take applied piano as an elective. She expressed how sorry she was that she had quit lessons as a child (ever heard that one before?) and stated that her goal was to learn to play Beethoven's *Für Elise*. As we began lessons working in a first-level adult method book, she rented a piano for her home practice. To my amazement, she became one of the most diligent and fastidious students I had! Needless to say, she performed *Für Elise* and much more in her three years of study. The instrument that sits in her home now is a new grand piano.

Unfortunately, not all adults who study piano are able to keep up with the required consistency of lessons and practice. Often the stress of career and family life, plus the lack of uninterrupted time for practicing, cause students to drop lessons after a short time. However, my adult students have provided some of the most interesting and enjoyable lessons, regardless of the level of proficiency. These students may not be performing on the concert stage, but because of their personal aspirations and accomplishments, I consider each of them a grand success! ▲

Sandra Stewart, NCTM, received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano pedagogy from the University of South Carolina. She has taught piano to students from age six to sixty for over twenty-five years. Currently, she is Chair of the Vocal Music Department at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville, Florida and is an adjunct assistant professor of piano at Jacksonville University.

by Lisa Iwasaki-McGowen — *The look of surprised elation as Hanon patterns are played...*

My best success stories about adults are not really my stories, nor are they my successes. These are the success stories of some rather remarkable people—my adult students. It has been a source of great pleasure to me to participate in their success, but my role in this process has been simply to help, to open them up to new possibilities, to use whatever expertise I have in the art of music-making at the piano to help them achieve new levels of success all the time.

One definition of success I think of with adult students might seem small, but it is hard-earned. On a week-by-week basis, there is the success of a student finally able to nail down the fingering of a particularly *noodly* passage. Or the student who has so successfully drilled scale patterns that they are played consistently, comfortably, and well. The look of surprised elation as Hanon patterns are played at speeds never before even contemplated. Both student and teacher delight in the ability to apply these and other skills to an ever-widening repertoire with ease and advancing levels of musicianship. This is the type of success in which I am most closely involved, encouraging as much experimentation and practice as possible both in the lesson and at home in the practice room.

These numerous small steps accumulate rapidly, and it is good for both student and teacher to look back on the accomplishments of any given six-to twelve-week period. I think back to the businessman who learned to read music, and who now has the skills to look at any score, and however painstakingly, play through it with a basic understanding of how the printed score translates into sound. There was also the student who delighted in playing a Burgmüller piece from memory, and with great ease and expression, after struggling with coordination for weeks. Sharing the struggle, offering encouragement, giving as many concrete suggestions and tips as I can offer up, showing real patience in letting students find their way is all I really do. It is the student who does all the work, which is why the student gets all the credit as they develop in technical and musical skill.

The acquisition of skills aside, success in music is often measured in performance and evaluation. The growth in ability and increased confidence needed to share one's music with others is another aspect of music-making I have witnessed in a number of students. Caroline, a young grandmother, acquired all of the skills necessary to prepare for a piano exam, including memorized repertoire, etudes, scales, triads, sightplaying, and ear tests. Shirley, a school secretary, acquired enough skill to prepare (and I mean really prepare) a favorite hymn, and then gathered up enough courage to play it as the offertory in church. Rick and Nancy held an informal recital for friends and family in Rick's home, complete with

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Thank You Richard Chronister..

Musician, Teacher, Role-model, Advisor, Editor, Friend.

My teaching career and my businesses would not have proceeded without his influence and encouragement, and I am just one of so many...

Karen Koch, NCTM

In Memory of Richard Chronister - A few of his many words of wisdom for teachers.

"Something is wrong in any piano lesson that isn't mostly filled with the pleasure of music making." KBC, Autumn 1995

"Our goal is not note naming, counting, and curved fingers. Our goal is music making that lasts a lifetime." Keyboard Companion Magazine, Autumn 1990

"Let's determine that our students' memories of this year's piano lessons are going to be about the excitement of making music at the piano." KBC, Autumn 1995

"Let's not settle for our cozy, insulated position that served the past so well...it's the future that counts." KBC, Winter 1999

"Now and then we need to become our own pedagogy teachers and create situations that tell us something about our teaching." KBC, Autumn 1999

"...we recognize that the music industry - music publishers, piano and keyboard manufacturers, and the many smaller companies and individuals who provide all kinds of services and products for piano teachers - is a vital part of piano education." KBC, Autumn 1993

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solos, duets, and a poetry reading. Beth, George, Nancy, and Rick overcame nerves to play for a large audience in an all-adult recital.

As with most performers, overcoming anxiety and dealing effectively with day-to-day frustration in practice are true examples of success, as the desire to make music, the drive to achieve a certain standard, and the willingness to share it with others comes through.

This brings me to the final level of success these students have demonstrated. This goes beyond pianistic achievement, into the realm of personal development. My students have learned a lot about themselves, about what kind of people they are. One has learned, in this new context, as well as in others, that he works best under a deadline, albeit at the last minute. (I have learned that I have to live with this.) Another has discovered that she can perform in public with surprising ease. A few have worked to be able to play with other musicians in the family—to play duets with a son, or to accompany a daughter who studies violin. Sharing music together has enhanced special bonds with family and friends. In so many ways, simply through being involved in music, by studying piano for whatever reason, these amazing people have enriched their own life experience, and in letting me be a part of the process, they have enriched mine as well. ▲

Lisa Iwasaki-McGowan teaches in Rochester, New York, where she is a faculty member of the Eastman School of Music, Community Education Division. Currently a student of Fernando Laires, she brings much of what she has learned in her own study to her teaching.

Friends of Richard Chronister are invited to attend a Celebration of the Life of Richard Chronister at 5:00 p.m. on March 25, 2000, immediately following Pedagogy Saturday at the MTNA Convention in Minneapolis. Hosts will be MTNA and the Francis Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy. It is hoped that all who knew Richard as friend, mentor and colleague will join in this celebration.

MTNA has established a Richard Chronister Endowment Fund in the MTNA Foundation for Teacher Enrichment program. This program is designed to give financial assistance for educational projects which will further the musical and pedagogy training of studio teachers. Contributions should be made to:

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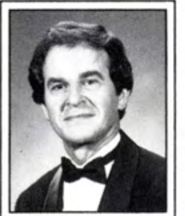
Putting It All Together:

Repertoire

Marvin Blickenstaff, Editor



Marvin Blickenstaff is on the faculty of Goshen College in Indiana where he teaches piano and lectures in piano pedagogy and literature. This past summer he traveled from Alaska to France with lecture presentations for piano teachers. He is the director of the Goshen College Workshop for Piano Teachers and Students held each June. His most recent publications are editions of Bach, Beethoven, and Grieg (Carl Fischer).

How Does The Student's Reading Level Influence Your Repertoire Assignments?

by Marvin Blickenstaff

This question resonates with bias. What teacher would not sit up tall and, with a slightly lifted chin, announce somewhat pompously "I never over-assign repertoire. My students all can read their new assignments accurately at a slow tempo."

Would that the world were so! I have been as guilty as the next teacher in misjudging a student's ability to deal with a newly assigned piece. The resulting process is slow, laborious and even painful for both student and teacher. Seldom is the reward at the end worth the long journey required to reach the goal.

I'm quite sure that Keith has feelings about that. Keith is a nine-year-old I inherited last fall. His interview folder had copies of programs in which he had appeared, including a recital of student audition winners in a small New York City recital hall. At our first meeting I asked Keith to play for me, and his reluctance was obvious. He had brought music books, but could play only a few hesitant measures from selected pieces. I was struggling to find the connections between Keith's NYC recital experience and his inability to read from his books. When I asked him what his all-time favorite piano piece might be, he was quick to select the Brahms Waltz in A-flat Major. He played the first phrase or two. Then he stopped and could not proceed. He confessed that he had forgotten the rest of the piece, but reported that this was the piece he had played in New York after having won a competition. "How did you learn such a difficult composition?" I asked. "Well, I really worked very hard because I did not have much time to learn it. My mother drove me to NYC every day for lessons until I had the piece learned." My heart went out to Keith, who could now only play the opening phrase of his (very expensive) Brahms Waltz,—only a few measures of his all-time favorite piece.

Keith is a determined, disciplined, hard-working nine-year old with superb parental support. Our curriculum has focused on improving his reading skill and finding repertoire to match. The pieces are not by Brahms, and this elementary repertoire may not become Keith's all-time favorite. But it is sufficient reward to see the smile spread across Keith's face when I announce that he has learned a piece perfectly in one week. For him, that is a very new experience.

Bradley is the same age as Keith and also has wonderful support at home. He had one year of lessons before we met, and during that first year of study he focused mainly on one Bach Minuet. Last fall when our friendship began, Bradley could name notes on the grand staff, but was confused about their exact location on the keyboard. But he is very bright, and the smiles are spreading frequently across his face, for he, indeed, is finishing several pieces each week. In a recent lesson he exclaimed "This is fun! Last year I was on the same piece [for what seemed to be] all year long!"

Someone might ask about the difference between Bradley and Keith spending an extended period of time on their pieces, and a high school student spending most of the year on an audition program or contest piece. College students certainly devote a full year working on their senior recitals. There may be some similarities between Keith, Bradley and the senior recital which we would not readily recognize. For the boys, their Brahms and Bach were a learning hurdle similar to the senior recital. The technical demands were as challenging to them as the Chopin Ballade on a senior recital. And for Bradley and Keith the amount of material to learn (given their non-ability to read) was as overwhelming as if a senior were to start next week on an entirely new recital.

The concern for the Bradleys and Keiths focuses on the disparity between their reading level and the repertoire assigned. So much was not being learned during the time they spent with that one difficult piece. Their fundamental keyboard skills (reading, theory, etc.) were not being strengthened because the level of the material assigned was far beyond their comprehension. The lack of fundamental musical skills only confirmed their total dependence on the teacher (witness Keith's daily trips to NYC for lessons). And—perhaps the most unfortunate aspect—they were not enjoying the process.

Something is not right with this picture. It is clear that both Keith and Bradley were proud of their end accomplishments. Keith was, after all, part of a NYC recital and Bradley received special recognition for his performance of the Bach Minuet. But those rewards are slight in comparison to the hours of practice drudgery and the anger and frustration necessary to get them to that point. Their foundation was flawed, and they lacked the skills necessary to help them progress to the next level of development. One could imagine Bradley and Keith perched on the ladder of piano study, one or two rungs above the lowest ones, but quite immobile. No one has taught them how to climb. How frustrating for them to be placed on the ladder and stranded, not knowing how to progress to the next level.

The great majority of students in Keith and Bradley's situation would have resisted sufficiently to cause the inevitable phone call from parent to teacher. "Bradley is throwing fits about practice. I can't take the tension in our home any more. We're stopping piano lessons." Yet another "piano drop-out." I am concerned that piano drop-outs now become life-time classical music drop-outs. This is a concern not only for our profession but for the lives of the students. A life without Beethoven—how tragic! Although I have no hard research to back the claim, my hunch is that many students become disenchanted with piano lessons and ultimately (within a year or two the statistics show) stop their lessons—dropping piano because they cannot read the music assigned. Each day's practice is an attempt to decipher a notation which they do not understand—a notation which stands between them and the music.

So how do we avoid the "Keith Syndrome" of spoon-feeding a (too) difficult piece to a student whose reading and/or technical level exist well below the demands of the piece? When we use a course of study, the problem is solved to a great extent by the authors who have thought carefully about the gradual progression of materials. The problem often occurs when we

venture out on our own and select supplementary materials and repertoire for students who are no longer in method books. All of us recognize the non-verbal messages from the student when the assignment is discouraging. Some of the signals are physical (less animation in voice and face, slumped shoulders as the student approaches the piano, etc.) and some are musical (inaccurate playing, little or no progress from week to week, etc.)

Is there a check list which helps us determine the appropriate level for a new assignment? I believe we are on target with a new repertoire assignment:

1) if the student can play a reasonable portion hands together, slowly and accurately, in the first week. This suggestion flies in the face of those of us who tend to assign hands separate practice for a week or two before hands together playing. Assigning hands separate does not address the goal of learning to read hands together. It also prevents the student from experiencing the music (harmonic color, melodic shape) from the beginning. When I was a college student in a piano pedagogy class, the statement "First experiences are lasting" seemed too simplistic for further thought. How profound and how helpful that statement has proved to be. That the student experiences the music from the very first week must be our goal.

2) if the student can tap and count the rhythms accurately from the beginning.

3) if the student can work out portions of the piece independently.

4) if it has no more than two new concepts (a new rhythm, unfamiliar accidentals, a new hand coordination, etc.)

5) if the student has had sufficient technical preparation. That preparation may entail experience with the key and basic harmonies of the key. It may also mean some preparatory encounter with the technical figures in the piece.

6) if a gratifying tempo and expressivity can be reached in a reasonable amount of time. Six weeks of hands separate, slow playing is not a rewarding musical experience.

7) if other work can proceed simultaneously. Bradley and Keith focused intensely on one piece for an extended period of time: "the whole year" in Bradley's recollection.

My wife often points out the frequency with which children are used in TV commercials. Our defenses are lowered when we see children advertising a product. Children seem so innocent and guileless, so uncommercial. In the end, however, the children are being exploited for a commercial goal. I sometimes wonder if we piano teachers are not guilty of exploiting our students for our "commercial" goal. Is our goal in assigning difficult repertoire the public recognition of our pedagogical prowess? Unfortunately, when we over-assign, the student's musical interest is not being served. A difficult piece performed well on a recital or in a contest may be the frosting on the cake. We need to cut deep inside and see whether or not the cake is made of enriched flour and raw sugar. Is the student's musical foundation solid, and does that foundation support further progress and development?

When Keith and Bradley exclaim with confidence "Got it!" after one week of practice on a new piece, we both smile in celebration of their success. Together we are building a foundation which will serve them well in their musical future. And signs are already appearing that some of the progress does not even need to be "together," for their growing skill affords an independence. "Together" we are very proud of that musical independence and skill. ▲

Marvin Blickenstaff, who has recently relocated to Collegeville, Pennsylvania, is well-known among piano teachers for his workshops, recitals, and publications. He has held college teaching positions in Kansas, North Carolina, and Indiana, and is currently teaching as adjunct professor of piano at Lebanon Valley College (PA) and The College of New Jersey as well as in Princeton, NJ, at the Westminster Conservatory and The New School for Music Study.

The Repertoire Postbox

They affectionately refer to this as the "grandma speed."

Jennifer Powell, an independent teacher in Dallas, writes in response to the question posed in a recent Repertoire column "How do you check that a recital piece is well memorized?"

There are many ways to reinforce memory. I wish to share the memory techniques used most frequently with my students. First, having a student play through the entire piece hands separately by memory helps enormously. With the hand containing the melody, this is usually easily done. The hand with the accompaniment is more challenging. This activity not only helps a student's memory, but increases an awareness of subtle patterns, phrasing, secondary themes, and balance in the supporting hand. Very small details, such as a forgotten rest, become more important when scrutinized in this way.

Secondly, extreme tempo changes provide another memory exercise. My students practice fast pieces from memory at a very slow speed. They affectionately refer to this as the "grandma speed." This will often expose any weak places in the student's memory. landmarks in the first few pieces, but soon the student wants to choose them. Students like to impress me that they can start at any point in the piece. This confidence is a wonderful asset.

The third technique is to review harmonic progressions and patterns in a piece. The differences between similar sections of a piece need to be reviewed. For example, comparing the exposition and the recapitulation in pieces in sonata form help the student to clarify confusing spots.

My fourth suggestion is to establish "memory landmarks" throughout the piece. Depending on the size and difficulty of the piece, anywhere from three to twenty landmarks can be practiced. If a stumble or memory slip does occur in a performance, the student is encouraged to proceed forward to the next landmark. (We discourage going backward to restart or, even worse, starting over at the beginning.) I assign landmarks in the first few pieces, but soon the student wants to choose them. Students like to impress me that thy can start at any point in the piece. This confidence is a wonderful asset.

While we all know that every student has his or her own individual strengths and weaknesses when it comes to performing, as teachers we can make every effort to prepare them for a strong performance and, therefore, a successful experience. Also, practicing a slow work at a faster speed encourages a more "global" memory. ▲

"Students like to impress me that they can start at any point in the piece."

Tomorrow Today:

Technology

Sandra Bowen, Editor

Sandra Bowen thinks of her piano studio as a playroom filled with favorite toys she shares with her students. A self-confessed electronic junkie, she has been trying to hook other teachers through her guidebook to technology, Electrify Your Studio. *In spite of the foregoing, she holds degrees in Music History and Literature from Mills College and has done postgraduate work in music education at Stanford University.*

How Do You Use Technology In Planning and Executing Your Summer Camps?

by Sandra Bowen

Summer always presents me with a challenge: what can I plan that will excite the kids and inspire me? As you might expect, technology is often involved. Ten years ago I had an article published in *Clavier* with the scintillating title, *Summer Music Project*. I still use that plan every three or four years.

This crowd-pleaser has each student orchestrate a piano piece, sequence the parts (record in layers), and record it to a stereo tape (next time I do it, it will be to CD!). The kids learn about historical style, form, instrumental timbres, harmony, and maybe a little counterpoint. The great thing about this program is its flexibility—it can be simple enough for a beginner, but the boundaries are limitless for an advanced and adventurous arranger.

Each student begins with a classical work, but the carrot for many kids is the possibility of doing a popular piece. I've had students do versions of the '50s tune, *Lollipop* (heard in the movie, *Stand By Me*), the theme from *Somewhere Out There*, and Santana's *Oye Como Va* that fooled professional musicians into thinking they were the originals! The student who arranged *Oye Como Va* even printed out parts and performed it as a keyboard ensemble with his friends (also my students) at a recent Clavinova Festival.

My project for next summer is quite ambitious: each student will create a score for a short scene from a film. A horror movie would be a natural, but action scenes would work well, too. The kids will have the same options that professionals do—they can create original music, borrow from the classics, and add sound effects. I'll let you know how it turns out!

Our writers for this issue have all kinds of ideas about how electricity (infiltrating computers and keyboards) can be your studio's best friend. Shana Kirk from Colorado used a very sly marketing tool to drum up business for her camp. Katie Evilsizer and guest clinician Sharon Kunitz, both of New Mexico, slyly procured a venue for their camp as well as other services from a local college. In addition to being innovative piano teachers, these women are also shrewd businesswomen. Read on. . . ▲

by Shana Kirk *...we wanted to create something a little more dynamic...*

This summer at *Discover Music Learning Center* in Littleton, Colorado, we decided to attempt our very first day-camp program. From the outset, ensemble playing was to be a major focus, but we wanted to create something a little more dynamic than the same old piano duets. Inspired by some technological innovators in our field (namely Joy Carden, Susan Ogilvy, Eileen Knox, and Paul Sheftel) we pulled together as much digital equipment as we could find and launched the project.

Our equipment for the project consisted of: 1 Roland MT-200 sequencer, 1 Yamaha PSR 520 keyboard, 1 Kawai Heritage 400 digital keyboard, 1 PC laptop running *Roland Visual Music Tutor* (makes the computer into a sequencer), 2 CD players, and 2 Yamaha YST-M15 portable speakers with subwoofer (thump!).

In order to get parents enthused and involved, we hosted a sort of open house where a few students showed off our wares. Each studio featured a different electronic element of the camp: one had listening stations for music appreciation class, one had kids playing ensembles with digital accompaniments, and one was a hands-on musical discovery station in which everyone (not just piano students) tried out playing along with MIDI parts and accompaniments (we found some enticing materials that could be easily taught to non-players by rote). The open house, along with some attractive mailings, filled the camp to capacity both weeks it was offered.

The camp itself was structured in groups of three or four students, arranged by age rather than by level. Luckily, many ensemble collections allow for discrepancies in playing ability and are easily modified to accommodate an exceptionally strong or weak player. We felt that being among peers was more important in summer camp than making sure everyone's skill level matched. The actual daily schedule was broken into three one-hour classes—Ensemble, Sightplaying and Improvisation, and Musicianship.

For the ensemble classes we used several pieces arranged for keyboard ensemble, as well as modifications of duets, all with MIDI accompaniments. Since we wanted the students to be able to see their progress within the one-week time frame, we tried to keep the ensemble levels just above the students' sightplaying abilities, but below their normal level of study. In addition to the obvious benefits of gaining a better sense of pulse and sensitivity to other players, the ensembles were especially productive in building confidence in otherwise timid performers. The MIDI disks maximized these benefits by allowing for a more organized sequence of learning.

First, the class listened to the full, up to tempo version of the ensemble, visually following along in the score. Then each student sightplayed his or her part to assess problem spots. If there were kinks to be worked out, they could have a five-minute "practice blitz" in one of the empty studios (one of the advantages of a multi-studio school) or at a keyboard with headphones. With everyone back together, the next step was a slow run-through of a few measures or the entire piece, depending on difficulty. The students had great incentive to focus through this step, as the next step allowed for integration of the exciting MIDI sounds. First, the class played slowly with just the rhythm track, then we gradually stepped up the tempo; finally we added the other tracks. By muting tracks that doubled the students' parts, we were able to create a

professional-sounding finished product for the performance party at the end of the week. We used a ton of different materials for these classes, but following are some of our favorites.

Elementary Level:

Party Cat (Hal Leonard Piano Library Ensemble Set Level 1) is a thumpy rock tune with great brass sounds.

Chinese Lanterns (*Festivities* by Paul Sheftel, published by Carl Fischer) is actually written as a duet, but by dividing the treble and bass parts we got a really easy four-part ensemble that sounds much more difficult than it is.

Go Tell Aunt Rhodie (*Folk Songs From Around the World 1B*, arranged by Paul Sheftel, published by Alfred) is also a duet, but by splitting the parts we could even accommodate two pre-reading students. Kids really love the accompaniment, which is sort of bluegrass punctuated by goofy "bells and whistles."

Intermediate Level:

Boobadooba (*Duet Yourself* by Paul Sheftel, published by Alfred) is a funky sort of groove with an ostinato. This one was really popular with the 12-year-old neo-hippies in the group.

Ice Cream (*Duet Yourself* by Paul Sheftel, published by Alfred). I think the kids liked this one because it sounds a little like video game music. Two players play distinctly separate parts that are challenging to integrate (watch those neurons fire!).

The sightplaying segment of the program benefited greatly from the use of MIDI. We got double use out of our ensemble sets by making the Elementary ensembles the sightplaying materials for the Intermediate class. For the Elementary class, we used some of the easier pieces from *Folk Songs*, as well as *A Tune a Week*, also by Sheftel, published by Carl Fischer. With the accompaniment spinning in the background, students were less concerned with correct notes than with keeping up. An informal survey of the students' private teachers afterwards showed a measurable improvement in the elusive skill of "continuous play."

Most of the improvisation exercises were designed for ensemble sans MIDI, but we did make good use of Faber and Faber's *Discover Blues Improvisation* (published by FJH). It has simple, well-sequenced exercises for playing in that particular genre—great for the classically fixated contingent of the school. Some students who felt the accompaniments were a little square used only the swing drum tracks to allow for a little more harmonic freedom. Another use of technology in the improvisation class was the choice of voices on the sequencer as well as on the Yamaha keyboard. One duo made quite a popular offering by using atmospheric sounds with choir oohs and aahs in something they called *Winstonesque*. The Musicianship classes were open to a variety of topics such as history and theory and only used one rather antiquated form of technology—the CD player.

We were very excited to have pulled off the camp this year and are looking forward to expanding the idea next year. ▲

Shana Kirk teaches piano at Discover Music Learning Center, *a multi-status school in Littleton, Colorado, as well as in her Denver residence. She is a performer and marketing consultant for Yamaha Disklavier Pianos, freelances as a writer and collaborative player, and is a graduate student at the University of Denver.*

by Katie Evilsizer

..."buy one, get one free" three day Music Camp.

I am a music teacher living in a comparatively rural area of New Mexico where oil and gas production is the principal industry and real men (of all ages) ride horses, drive pick-up trucks, and cheer equally for the Dallas Cowboys and Denver Broncos. It is a constant challenge to try to ensure that music, art, and drama get equal time in the competition for the attention of our youth. These children are involved daily in school, one or more sports, 4-H, jobs, church activities, social activities, and who-knows-what-else. There's nothing wrong with any of these activities—we just want to make sure that they are also aware of things like playing an instrument, singing and how much pleasure music can give them throughout life.

Borrowing a popular marketing ploy, we offered a "buy one, get one free" three day Music Camp. Each child who was involved in music lessons could invite a friend who was not and that child could attend for free. We ended up with thirty students, ages 10-16. Three levels of proficiency were determined and activities were designed accordingly. These included a piano master class, ensemble performance, composition, music history, folk songs, folk dance, ear training—and COMPUTERS!

Frankly, we worried if computers might be considered "old hat" by now since most of the kids are more computer literate than most of the music teachers. Wrong. We had invited Sharon Kunitz of *Maestro Music* in Albuquerque as Guest Clinician, and even though the evaluations showed a variety of responses to "Circle the three activities you enjoyed the most," the computer games (old and new) proved to be the overall favorites in the Intermediate and Elementary groups. As would be expected, the Advanced group was more interested in performance skills but they also enjoyed some competitive rounds of *Note of Fortune* and were somewhat surprised by their initial scores on *Rhythm Drill*.

Our local San Juan College helped us out by providing sponsorship for our camp in the form of the use of the Music Department teaching and practice rooms (including the piano lab), public relations and secretarial support. They even produced beautiful certificates for each student!

I would be glad to furnish other particulars to anyone who requests them (800 Apache, Aztec, New Mexico 87410, 505-334-6265). Clearly, in this type of situation where varying degrees of musical proficiency (including "none") were represented, the computer activities were a lifesaver. Each student could plug in—even the little guy who wrote in "Lunch Break" as his favorite activity, also circled "Computers."

Sharon will now fill you in on the details. ▲

Katie Evilsizer has a private studio in Aztec, New Mexico. She is Outreach Chairman for The Professional Muisc Teachers of New Mexico (PMTNM/MTNA) and is on the Fine Arts Committee of San Juan College. She is 76.

by Sharon Kunitz

Friends were permitted to share keyboards and work as teams.

Katie Evilsizer invited me to be the guest clinician at the music camp sponsored by the Fine Arts Advisory Committee at San Juan College in Farmington, New Mexico. The three day camp would offer a variety of music and dance activities for students ages 10-16. The students were divided into three groups according to their musical skill levels, and the groups rotated daily through the 45-minute classes in ensemble, composition, computers, folk dancing, sing-a-

long, and music history. My responsibilities were to teach the keyboard ensemble, composition, and computer sessions. With the diversity in student skills, it was obvious that there would be opportunity for improvisation in the lesson plans!

Our first concern was the availability of technology. The college had a lab of twelve keyboards available for the ensemble and composition classes. Unfortunately, the college computer lab was committed to another group, and we were forced to provide our own computers. The local school system offered two Apple IIe computers and one staff member had a Macintosh Performa. With the limited number of computers, I decided that music games and general music software would be the best bets given the disparity in students' musical knowledge.

The ensemble class quickly filled the keyboard lab with strains of *Michael, Row the Boat Ashore* arranged by Robert Vandall and published by Myklas Music Press. Most students already knew the melody and the arrangement offered four parts with differing degrees of difficulties. Even students with minimal or no keyboard knowledge were able to learn some parts by rote or from other class members. At the final hour of camp, a program was presented for family and friends, and the performance of this ensemble was one of the most popular events of the camp.

Composition classes also used the keyboard lab. Some attendees were band and orchestra students and not familiar with the piano keyboard. Since the composition class required some kind of notation, students quickly learned the names of the keys on the keyboard and notated them on the staff or simply wrote letter names. Friends were permitted to share keyboards and work as teams.

Experience has revealed that the biggest challenge to composition is getting started. To insure prompt work in such a limited amount of time, I devised a game format to prompt students' decisions. Specific parameters were determined and written out on slips of paper. The students would then draw from categories of tonality, tempo, and time signature. For tonality, they would draw from C, G, or F major. Tempo choices were *andante*, *moderato*, or *allegro* and time signatures were either 3/4 or 4/4. Within fifteen minutes of the opening of the first class, the students were writing melodies with the determined tonality, tempo, and time signature.

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The limited number of computers required creative lesson plans. Software programs by *Maestro Music, Inc.*, email SLKunitz@aol.com, were user-friendly. The Apple IIes displayed a *Note Name Drill* for two days. Since most students had knowledge of treble staff note names, each student did a practice one-minute drill before the contest began. The student identifying the largest number of correct notes in the one-minute time period was recognized as the winner. Another popular program was *Rhythm Drills* in which students input the notated rhythm and a percentage score is tabulated. The winner was the student with the highest number of 100% scores. The third day, *Music Games* was played. Two students could play the game, thus enabling more students to actively participate. Even those not at the computer keyboard would crowd around and offer helpful hints! The intensity was evident in every computer activity.

The Macintosh Performa featured *Scales and Ear Training—Intervals* programs. Also available from Maestro Music, Inc., these two programs operate from a hybrid CD (Mac/Win) and offered challenging drills for the group of advanced students. There were specific drills for major scales and key signatures; major, perfect, and minor intervals were tested auditorily. These programs were not as much fun as the games, but the students recognized the need for improving these skills and dutifully worked on them.

A survey from the students revealed that the computers were the favorite camp activity. The students were not intimidated by technology. With the small number of computers available, we had to be flexible with the schedule. It was vital that the students be kept active, learn something positive, and be able to contribute to tomorrow's fine arts community. Their eager and enthusiastic participation confirmed these goals. Our job? To develop new ideas for the next camp session! ▲

Sharon Lohse Kunitz, the author of Maestro Music's *software, is also a teacher, composer, and adjudicator. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree in piano pedagogy from the University of Colorado, an M. A. in music history from the University of Denver and has additional studies at Augsburg College and the University of Washington. She has taught in colleges and public schools in several states and now teaches in her studio in Albuquerque.*

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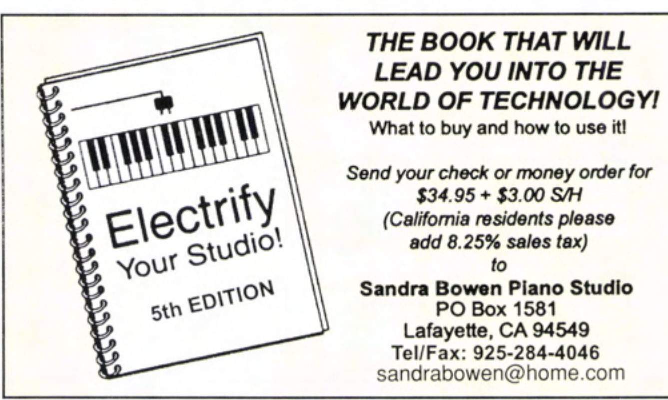

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The Technology PostBox

...software program...to create statements for billing...

Dear Sandra, **I always read your column with a great deal of interest.** Can you tell me if there is a software program for Macintosh that I could use to create statements for billing purposes? Currently I do this by hand and would like to keep records on the computer. Sincerely, **Janet van Houten**, Sheridan, WY

Dear Janet, **I've checked around and have not been able to find a billing program for independent music teachers written for the Macintosh.** There are two excellent Windows programs addressing this need for PCs: *Studio Teacher's Assistant* (Gamut Music, 800-380-7338), and *Time Signature* (Casa de la Musica, Inc., 612-851-8872, www.casamusica.com). Macintosh owners are probably best served with a general accounting program such as *QuickBooks* or *Quicken Home & Business*, both from Intuit (check out your local Price Club, Costco, or similar store). I know several teachers who use these programs for billing and record keeping for their studios. Sandi ▲

KEYBOARD COMPANION TECH TIPS

Readers often write asking about notation programs. There are several new high end products you might want to check out: *Finale 2000* (www.codamusic.com), Mac/Win, free demo; *Opus* (www.sincrosoft.com), Mac/Win, free demo; and *Sibelius* (www.sibelius.com), Mac/Win, free demo. Both *Finale* and *Opus* have little brothers that won't require the pink slip on your car—Coda Music produces *Print Music* and Sincrosoft offers *Amadeus*. Both are excellent entry-level programs (and, for most of us, the only notation programs we'll ever need).

While you can get product information at the manufacturer's web site, you can usually get better prices elsewhere. Here are some of my favorite places to shop for software: Burt & Company Discount Music Supply (www.burtnco.com), Computers & Music (www.computersandmusic.com), Kellys Music & Computers (www.kellysmusic.mb.ca/), and Lentine's (www.lentine.com). Happy shopping! ▲

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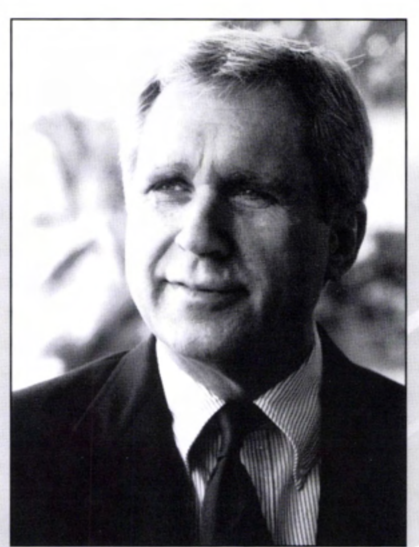

Richard Chronister

June 9, 1930 — December 31, 1999

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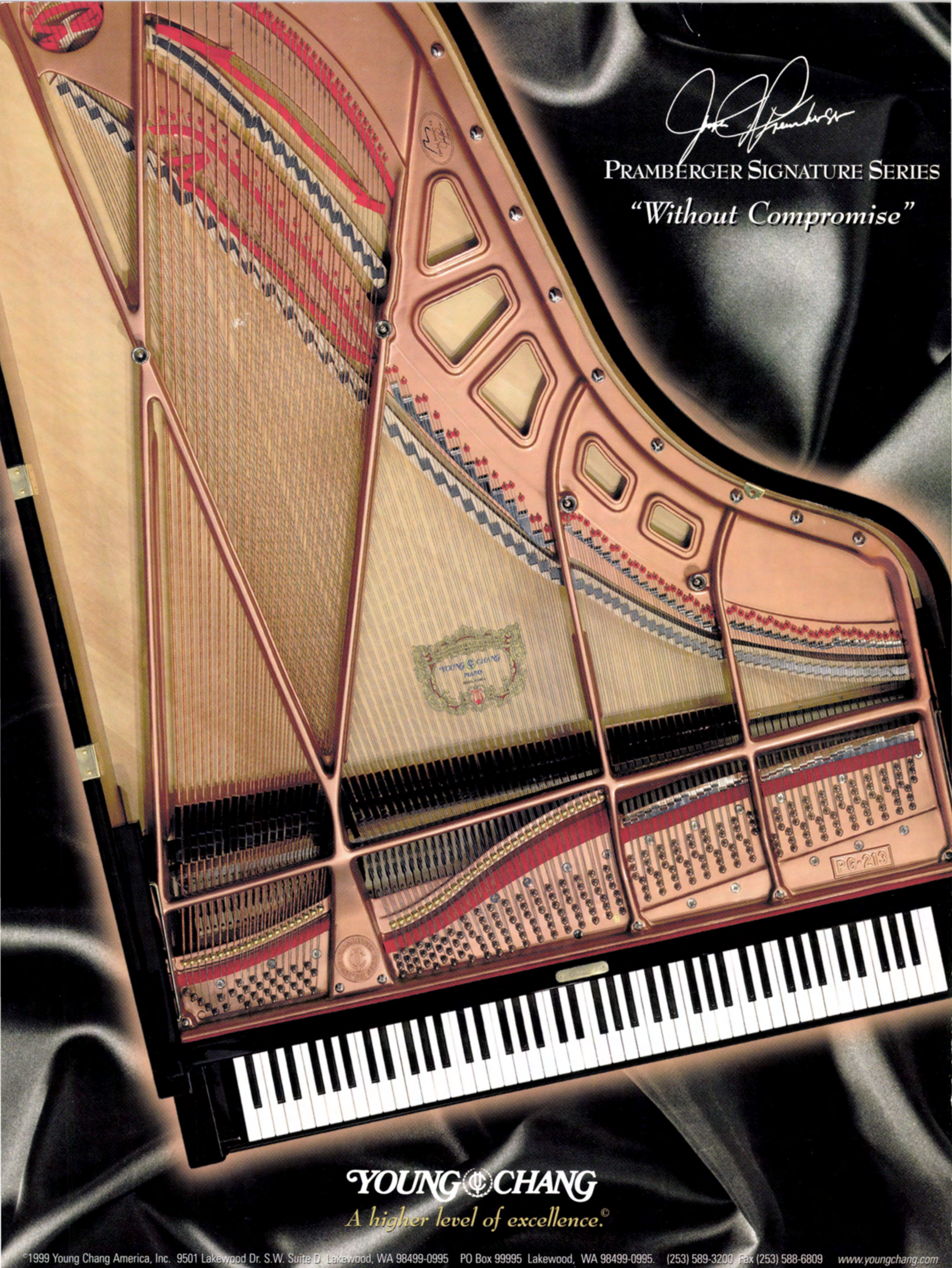

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