National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy

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"Inspired but Unheralded: Those Who Can, Teach"

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Good Morning! It is truly an honor to have been invited to join you today. And while the invitati meet with this distinguished group was not exactly based on my lengthy career as concert pianist, I do feel a connection to keyboard pedagogy in general -- and to the leaders of this group in particular. First, I feel conr to the elegant Louise Goss, because she so graciously invited me to reserve this date on my schedule. (If yo ever opened an e-mail from Louise, you know what I mean by elegant and gracious.) And, I feel a certain bc Marvin Blickenstaff because he shares with me an Oberlin education-- and with my parents, the glorious Mer musical roots of Goshen College and acappella singing.

While I never had the privilege of meeting Richard Chronister, I proudly admit to a special bond wi Frances Clark. Little does she know her impact on me -- we are practically connected at the fingers. In fact occasion gives me an opportunity to acknowledge Ms. Clark publicly for her profound influence on r musician and as a scholar. Let me give you an example: in 1957, I was a freckle-faced nine year old living little prairie town in Nebraska. My dad was the Presbyterian minister and my mother directed the choir and piano lessons. And the only nine-year old kids who had ever heard of Alexander Tcherpenin and Kabalevsky were those who studied the Frances Clark Music Literature Series. We were probably the only America who knew <u>those</u> composers by name and <u>that</u> music by its sound.

To this day, I still remember that those wonderful books of great music were published by S Birchard. I still remember that the organization of the materials by period [baroque, classical, contemporary provided my first real introduction to music history by placing compositions stylistically in time. I still rer the impact of learning music of great composers and playing music of the highest quality. And although I really understand why at the time, I even remember feeling slightly more erudite than some of my friends wh

then studying piano in a book entitled Teaching Little Fingers to Play. So thank you, Frances Clark, for do kind of scholarly research and publication that has had, through it's basic integrity, a profound musical impa

By the way, the musical passions you awakened led me to the oboe, which was my majo conservatory. Of course, since I wasn't fond of practicing all those Hannon studies, I learned that hard work only pay off in the future. But in my case, laziness paid off immediately. Therefore, my keyboar deteriorated rapidly during my adolescence. I had to smile at the title of Bob Duke's brilliant and ever-engag speech: ("Eleven years of piano and I can't get a date"), because for me, upon entering college as a music edu major, it was "six years of keyboard and I can't pass out of class piano."

Seriously, now, what I want to accomplish this morning is to encourage you to reflect on the meani importance of good teaching. I want to explore some of the ways we have changed and how we must be resp to the future while maintaining basic principles of musicianship and musical quality. And, to conclude, I w humbly offer some recommendations to inspire our work when we return to our classrooms and studios this

A few moments ago, I revealed that I entered undergraduate school as a music education major. Of at Oberlin, that designation has about as much cachet as being a phys-ed. major at Harvard. In fact, in my er class of 105 students, there were only 14 of us self-declared "music ed" majors. You see, there was this perv and somewhat pernicious view among most of the students and many of the faculty that "if you can't play, y teach." And so, without regard for our personal aspirations and even without hearing us perform, the majorit conservatory inhabitants considered music education majors to be "inferior" musicians.

Is that the case today in your college? And if so, what are the implications for school music educat programs in particular? What does such a view (that lesser musicians become music teachers) portend quality of the musical education of our nation at large? It seems to me that the very best musicians ought to recruited as future teachers. And from that group, we ought to admit to our pedagogy and teaching certificati programs only those who have a genuine interest and respect for teaching and inspiring others. We need to h

more teachers who share the view of Benjamin Bloom whose wrote: "After forty years of intensive research
school learning in the United States as well as abroad, my major conclusion is: "What any person in the wor
learn, almost all persons can learn if provided with the appropriate prior and current conditions for le
[Bloom, 1985, p. 4]. I would emphasize that one of these conditions is having a teacher who believes in th
student and who makes that student feel worthy.

But other variations on the teaching-bashing theme persist. They likely will be with us for a long t
You know them: "Hey, give it a shot: if things don't work out, you can always, . . . teach!" Or here
continue to hear: "I'd really like to be a performance major, but my dad thinks I need a music education degr
have . . . something to fall back on." And the list goes on: applied music majors study with the "artist" f
while in many places, music education majors study with grad students. And in some colleges, music educa
majors (those who have actually declared their interest in teaching) get shorter lessons and fewer credit hours
applied studies.

Just think about the language: "if things don't work out," . . . she can "fall back" on teaching; . . .
would "never make it through the audition." No wonder the teaching profession is so devalued in our societ
even more sobering (at least for many of us here today) is the real punch line for that time-worn elitist
"Those who can, do; and those who can't, teach. But those who can't really teach, they teach teachers!"

I can tell from direct experience, however, that those sentiments are certainly not reflected by two of
very wonderful colleagues from Columbus: Dr. Becky Johnson at Capital University and Dr. Ken Williams
Ohio State. These are real musicians who not only can, but they "do." And I'm eternally grateful they are te
our teachers. In fact, at Ohio State, and now at Minnesota and many other leading institutions, Keyboard Pe
is part of the music education department. Even at the elite conservatories and graduate schools, most of the
called "artist-teachers" are at heart music educators.

Let's be realistic: I'm sure if you talk with Dr. Williams or Dr. Johnson (or with the music ed

faculty in your school), you will hear them bemoan the occasional music education major who literally can't Come to Jesus in whole notes. It is indeed the truth that we admit to our music departments the occasional player who can't yet read bass clef. And we know about that successful undergraduate percussionist with flar technique who nonetheless can't quite match pitch. Clearly, the time has come to address the musical compe we need to cultivate in our students. After all, let's face it honestly and squarely: most of the music students teach will find their niché in life as teachers--either in the schools or in their own studios--and not as concert Their musicality is vital. So where do we start?

Never before in the history of higher education in music have we been faced with such rich opportu influence both the content and the quality of music education in this country. As the burgeoning knot of bab boomers' children enters college, many will begin undergraduate school with the best musical education ever aided by their parents' best efforts and their affluence, mentored by a remarkable population of musically gifte teachers, and influenced heavily by both technology and a broad range of vernacular musics. And y musically educated are they?

Indeed, almost all begin their undergraduate careers as highly capable performers. And although son studio teachers may argue the point, most are expert readers. But beyond the audition results, alas, few reall very much about music, it's history, style periods, performance practices, and cultural contexts. Kab notwithstanding, I am amazed, for example, at the sheer number of undergraduate music education nationwide who have never heard of "32-bar song form," and yet they've certainly listened to My Funny Vale or Cherokee, or many other great standards. But that was never part of the music they studied. Why not? W didn't teach it to them -- neither in the studio nor in the college classroom. And almost none of these studen had any meaningful, directive experience with improvisation and composition. Providing them wi knowledge is where we come in. But will we? Or can we?

The last seven years have produced some very profound changes in terms of standards for music te It is probably not coincidental that new standards have come from both NASM and a coalition of music educ

professionals for K-12 music instruction. Interestingly, both cite the teaching and cultivation of improvisati composition skills as essential.

Just out of curiosity, how many of you are aware of these "national standards" for music educati MENC? Aha! It appears from this "show of hands" that just under 20% of you know about them. Given t familiarity, the one thing I would encourage you to do, so that we can begin forging some very im collaborations between the schools, our colleges, and the private studios, is for all of you to go to the website at www.MENC.org and read the standards. (MENC, of course stands for Music Educators N Conference, the National Association for Music Education.) This professional organization was responsible for publishing new, voluntary national standards for music education. I would encourage you to ponder then there are only nine in number, and they include singing, listening, playing, reading, improvising, composing arranging, connecting music to other subjects, connecting music to other art forms, and making critical decis about the music we hear. Indeed, these are very simple; all are things that the educated American should kno be able to do musically.

The NASM standard in composition reads as follows: ". . . students must develop composit improvisation skills. Approaches might include: imitation of various musical styles, experiences in composition, experimenting with various sound sources, and manipulating the common elements in nontrad ways."

MENC states it this way, applying the generic standard to both second-graders as well as high seniors: ". . . students [will] (a.) improvise simple harmonic accompaniments, (b.) improvise embellishments and simple rhythmic and melodic variations on given pentatonic melodies and melodies in m keys, (c.) improvise short melodies unaccompanied and over given rhythmic accompaniments, each in a cons style, meter, and tonality.

In the "Notes for Music Faculty and Administrators," NASM's directive contained this recommenda the standards "seek to ensure that students have basic competence in areas generally thought to be critical to t future development of music, especially in the United States. . . . The standard on composition and improvis is based on the belief of the NASM membership that professional musicians benefit significantly from study experience in the creation of musical works, because the musician's challenge of creating musical coherence re the integration of knowledge and skills in performance, theory, and historical styles and practice. It also dev the musical mind, hones analytical capacities, and develops sensitivity to the possibilities of musical structu (NASM Directive) I would add that it enables musicians to free themselves to think musically without nota and to begin to appreciate and refine an extremely sublime intellectual and artistic ability: the capacity to ma music extemporaneously and to embrace the time-honored oral tradition.

As Sam Hope wrote about these standards, ". . . the standards project leads us once again to conside of core values." Hope further advised: "Lets us also be wise enough not to promote the standards as a panac rather as a basic tool for fashioning the future that must be supported by the development of new tools and b wise use of tools we already have." (Hope, p. 38)

Here is what Scott Shuler wrote about the impact of the K-12 music standards on the deliv reshaping of collegiate music programs: "In one respect, the standards should make the task of colleg departments easier, as K-12 music curricula broaden to incorporate more comprehensive learning. W students admitted have received a more complete background in music, university faculty will be able to focu fostering depth of learning and pedagogic skills. Furthermore, having for the first time a clear set of standar guide what teachers will need to teach should help universities focus their curricula. If teachers need to know able to do what they must teach their [school-aged] students to know and be able to do, then universities mu develop undergraduate music education curricula that will empower future teachers to master and teac understandings" (Shuler, 1995). This means we need to collaborate with our colleagues in the studios, parti in keyboard studios.

Shuler also writes the following advice: "from another perspective, however, the standards universities with a major challenge. College music programs built on medieval European university and gui models can no longer meet the needs of teachers who are expected to function in a more global edu environment. Major reforms in traditional university practice will be needed to produce musicians and teach can help their students master all of the national standards. Implementing these reforms will require departm overcome several major obstacles" (Shuler, 1995).

Of course, it means we need to be responsive to change. These days, a graduate student who can play a 3-part invention or a Scarlatti sonatina but who can't improvise an accompaniment to Happy Birthday or play several choruses of a 12-bar blues is sadly out-or touch. And we need to emphasize as well the importance of listening. In my opinion, studio teachers who neglect to play exemplar CD's during the lesson are missing a great opportunity to teach more comprehensively. Is your CD player and remote within easy reach of your piano bench? And as each student comes to his or her lesson, what have you selected for that student to listen to during and after the lesson -- music that they perhaps wouldn't ordinarily hear? After all, you have studied that literature. You know it. They haven't and they don't! Where else are they going to hear it? Certainly, not on the street, and usually, not even in their homes.

If we are to change in response to the MENC standard of relating music to history and culture, we need to provide students with engaging stories of what the music they are studying is about and where it came from. For example, I was listening recently to the magnificent final variation of Ursula Oppens' performance of Frederic Rzewski's El Pueblo Unido, Ye Mas Sera Vencido. I realized that her performance would not have been the same had she not known its historical and political background -- that this was originally a folk song of bitter protest. Its chilling context was in response to the murderous dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile. (Like Rzewski, Sting also composed a song of sad protest against these same injustices.)

Yesterday, I heard an interview with 80-year old Bud Herseth, principal trumpet player of the

Chicago Symphony, talk about his final performance last evening at Rivinia. He reflected on playing the powerfully exposed trumpet solo that opens Mahler's Fifth Symphony. Herseth remarked that he could play it with far greater impact knowing this was funeral music for a German soldier. That extra bit of knowledge enriched the solo beyond mere notes and rhythms. When we encourage our students to value this sort of contextual meaning, they will perform with greater understanding, and in all likelihood, with greater musicality and depth of feeling. Certainly, knowing this type of contextualized information represents what Ernest Boyer calls "the scholarship of integration," an intellectual process in which we place what we know in a larger, interdisciplinary context where several different disciplines converge. (Boyer, p. 16)

Making these connections, stretching ourselves and our students for stronger and more scholarship, is our challenge for the future. I am hopeful that the future will hold more, not less, in the way collaboration among the pedagogy constituencies represented here today. In the recent and much-h document, "Vision 2020: the Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education" recently released MENC, music educator Cornelia Yarbrough contributed an article entitled "What should be the relationship b schools and other sources of music learning?" I would have thought that looking specifically to a "2020 visi the future, Professor Yarbrough might discuss the central role of the private teaching community as vital "oth sources of music learning" beyond our schools. That was the title of the article after all. But oddly enough, only mention of studio teaching in this fifteen-page article comes in this reference to technology: "How virtu music education become? The technology is now available to teach private lessons in piano and other instru via the internet." [p. 196]. I know you are going to be talking about the internet later this morning; but I w surprised, astounded frankly, that Professor Yarbrough never heralded the importance of studio teachers although she cited "traditional organizations such as MENC, the American Symphony Orchestra Leag ASCAP," [p.200], she never even mentioned MTNA!

I finished reading Dr. Yarbrough's article with her view of the future a bit mystified. Clearly, profes Yarbrough is a very intelligent person and an acknowledged leader in our field, but this gross oversight, whil

perhaps unintended, stands in stark contrast to Boyer's exhorting all of us in the academe to engage the comr and to collaborate with one another. The relationship between schools and "other sources of musical learning to be strengthened rather than ignored. We need each other not just to balance the relatively elite worlc private studio with the relatively egalitarian world of the public schools, but also to make sure that our colle universities do not become islands of self-serving importance and diminishing relevance. And so, we change, while we embrace the old. And of course, doing just that was one of the unique gifts of Frances Cla

It is often good and proper to embrace the old --much as Garrison Keilors' choir director did in the early 1960's. As he writes about his musical experience, "Miss Falconer had it in for boys. In choir everyday she looked around to see who hadn't learned his part--she could smell fear like an animal--and made him stand up and die for a few minutes" (p.296). Keilor goes on:

Miss Falconer is an elegant lady almost like a duchess compared to our mothers--she wears real jewelry and tailored suits and spike heels and white blouses with ruffles, and her glasses, studded with precious gems, hang from a pearl chain around her neck. She is so beautiful, like a lady out of a magazine, that when she looks at me, I can't look back at her, I look down. "Look at me,!" she barks. "How do you expect to sing in rhythm if you don't look at me? I'm here to direct you."

She has picked three hare songs by foreign composers with one name. "Serenade" by DesCanzi, "O Tall Papaya Tree," by Del Monte, and "April is in my Mistress' Face" by Morley. "April is in my mistress' face/And July in her eyes hath place/Within her bosom lies September? But in her heart a cold December." When I sing about her bosom, I think of Miss Falconer in her underwear with leaves between her breasts. Some of the tenors cannot sing "within her bosom lies September" without snorting and gasping because Bill Swenson once sang it "Within her bosom lies Bill Swenson."

"Perhaps," Miss Falconer mentioned once, "perhaps you could do your part for me so I know you have it. C time." ----- One at a time. Death; we all die inside. My heart has collapsed . . . she had, all by herself, cure of a long-standing fascination with choirs. She had almost cured me of music. (Keilor, pp. 296-299.).

Well, my friends, I think we are the ones who surely need to avoid "curing" our students of music. the ones who need to send them off to a lifetime of great fulfillment in and through music. So, in that regar have ten recommendations and an inspiring quote from Benjamin Bloom. First of all, I think we need to tal one another, particularly those of us in public schools and independent private studios. We need to become a community of musicians, scholars, educators. In that pursuit, I consistently encourage private piano teachers communities to contact the music teachers in their local elementary, middle, and high schools. Get to know school teachers by their first names! Become familiar with their programs! After all, your students bring to lessons all sorts of music they learned earlier in the day in their school choirs and bands. How well d musical concepts, those musical teachings, conform to what you teach? For those of you on college faculties your students' collegiate band, choir and orchestra rehearsals so you can hear the process of their music makir from the studio. These types of initiatives will help build a better sense of community.

Secondly, consult your jazz colleagues and those who teach jazz. Get to know something about h operate. Get to know something about the improvisational process. Go to the college and high school jazz l concerts. Show up where you are least expected! Learn some new literature; and learn how to be a bet listener.

Third, assess the resources you have at hand to teach theory and musicology; befriend other studio te music education faculty, and community members to discuss how and what to teach beyond the piano itself.

Fourth, seek out new CD-ROM materials designed to develop musical creativity in children.

Fifth, investigate the "web," share compositions, midi files, and improvisations with students in college or studio or public school.

Sixth, integrate advanced music education methods courses with arranging seminars; target

ensembles to play some of these arrangements.

Seventh, encourage applied faculty to use improvisation and composition exercises in their studio te

Eighth, invite percussion students and faculty to get the ball rolling; begin improvising on hand Host a "samba school" and ask your students to improvise on drums and on keyboard.

Ninth, find incentives for faculty to initiate course work and laboratory experiences in the a improvisation & composition.

Tenth, study the K-12 National Standards in Music Education. As your curiosity strikes, seek out documents.

In the book entitled Developing Talent in Young People, edited by Benjamin Bloom and publi 1985 by Ballantine, Bloom interviewed over thirty well-known concert pianists to find the secrets of their su What might you suspect one of those secrets to be? Bloom discovered it was the relationship between the st and the teacher! Here's a quote from one of the concert pianists: "I've always had ambitions. Before I hooke the piano it was mathematics and for a short time it was being an explorer. I mean, when I decided I wanted an explorer, I wanted to be a world-famous explorer. And then it was tennis when I was ten, and I really wor and practiced hard. It wasn't until I was thirteen that I really decided it was music I wanted to do. And that have been a temporary thing also, except at the time I latched onto a really fine teacher, an inspirational guy knew he really believed in me. I was somebody really special to him" [Bloom, 1985, pp 498-99].

Another pianist said: "My parents were openly encouraging. No question about that. They were vitally interested in what I was doing and encouraging, and they listened. But I don't remember any sense of stick being held over my head, nothing like that. It was encouragement that was the key."

Benjamin Spock was right. Kids learn more from teachers they love. And encouragement is the ke One pianist summarized his experience by saying: "I got the feeling from my teachers that growing musicall was very much worthwhile. They insisted I work for excellence." Ultimately, it's all about the music, isn't

In conclusion, it may be helpful to cite the words Bloom himself quotes from the work of John Gardner: "Excellence is not an achievement of demoralized or hopeless individuals. I'm not suggesting that those who achieve excellence are more cheerful or optimistic or carefree. They may be suffering, they may ha moments of despair, they may lack self assurance in many dimensions of their lives, but deep within them th have a hard core of conviction and self-trust that makes their achievement possible" [Bloom, 1985, p. 500].

Ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you to take your own hard core of conviction and self-trust and your many achievements and and bring that excellence to your students. Thank you very much.

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