

National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy

Wednesday, July 18, 2001  
Hyatt Regency Oak Brook  
Oak Brook, Illinois

Pre-Conference Seminar: Toward a Pedagogy for the New Millennium

Breakout Sessions: Bachelor's Degree

Both sessions devoted to a discussion of the undergraduate pedagogy opened with research findings presented by Victoria Johnson. Her research included a survey of undergraduate pedagogy degree programs and revealed variety in course content and availability of programs. Despite these differences, the study displayed similarities in choice of core texts, focus on elementary level teaching, interest in technology and observation practices.

Initially each group broke into a discussion of the validity of an undergraduate pedagogy degree. Participants agreed that the degree is valid and needed, for many students terminate their study at the BM level. Participants further agreed that through teaching the pianist develops his or her own playing. A concern that students should not begin pedagogy courses during the first year was expressed. A show of hands revealed that only 5% of the programs represented offered pedagogy study to the first year student.

Discussion participants listed a variety of concepts and skills a pedagogy student should gain from their experience. These included the importance of having practical experience with both individual and group instruction; acquaintance with methods and repertoire; strong playing skills; and the ability to diagnose and remedy problems. A primary concern was the development of a thorough curriculum within the limited time frame.

Report prepared by Rachel Snyder

## Breakout Sessions: Master's Degree

Panel members included Phyllis Alpert Lehrer, Ann Milliman Gipson, and Rachael Short. Lehrer, internationally known performer, teacher, clinician, author, and Professor of Piano at Westminster Choir College of Rider University (Princeton, NJ) contributed the perspective of the pedagogy teacher and moderated the discussions. Gipson, as Associate Professor of Music at Oklahoma Baptist University (Shawnee), coordinator of the piano pedagogy program, and instructor of applied and class piano, served as the degree expert. Short, a May graduate of the Master of Music in Piano Performance and Pedagogy program at Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX) represented the student perspective.

### Session One

Session one opened with a summary of Gipson's dissertation research (published in 1991), which involved the survey of graduate piano pedagogy core courses from 128 schools, listed in the directory of degree programs. Gipson found that graduate programs in piano pedagogy are unique from other degree programs in the variety of experience and knowledge that incoming students bring to the programs. Graduate students may or may not have undergraduate experience with pedagogy classes or emphases, they may come from music education backgrounds, or their experience may have been exclusively focused on piano performance. Teachers of graduate piano pedagogy classes are faced with the challenge of accommodating these varied backgrounds.

Gipson found significant differences in the emphases of the courses offered in Master's and Ph.D. degree programs. Pedagogy classes offered at the Master's level tend to focus on fundamental teaching concepts, basic teaching elements, and application to

beginning students. Ph.D. courses typically highlight group piano methods, piano literature and teaching strategies. Considering the extent to which teachers must personalize the curriculum of such degree programs, the following questions were raised: (1) how well is the Master's degree student being prepared at each school, in each program; and (2) should Master's degree programs include certain universal elements of focus?

The role of observation at the Master's level came under discussion. Many programs that include internship teaching under supervision involve the observation of the graduate student teacher by 1-3 faculty members, with written or verbal feedback. The question was raised that if graduate students are critiqued by different teachers, each with unique teaching styles, is this conducive to the discovery and development by the student teacher of his or her own teaching style, or does the student teacher plan lessons designed merely to earn positive reviews? On a positive note, however, feedback following observation can assist graduate student teachers in developing analytical skills, allowing them to anticipate challenges as they prepare to teach and to evaluate their own teaching efforts.

Short urged that observation by graduate student teachers of faculty members serves a critical role. As student teachers gain comprehension of educational fundamentals, observation of effective teaching helps to de-mystify the teaching process. Student teachers then find themselves in a position to emulate that which has been proven successful, while bringing to each experience their own perspective and style. Ensuing thoughts included team-teaching options, involving the pairing of graduate students with faculty members in cooperative efforts, thereby facilitating observation of and by both parties simultaneously.

Session one concluded as participants brainstormed ways to boost the Master's degree program. Suggestions included the following: (1) graduate students should teach as much as possible; (2) graduate students should be trained in learning theories (3) graduate students should develop the skills of sequencing material and planning lessons with short-term and long-range goals; (4) piano pedagogues must collaborate with music educators, to broaden an otherwise exclusive focus.

## Session Two

Following opening introductions, the discussion took a decidedly different turn. Short's summary of personal experiences and ensuing thoughts concluded with a challenge to educators to ask graduate students what they would identify as necessary components of their education. One participant offered the following model for consideration:

- Emphasis at the undergraduate level should include basic pedagogical concepts in order to develop self-awareness in performance and teaching.
- Emphasis at the Master's level should be on experiential learning.
- Ph.D. programs may be reserved for in-depth specialization.

Attention was again brought to the fact that flexibility at any level is essential given the unpredictability of students' backgrounds. One participant suggested that interviews be held in order to assess students' backgrounds and to facilitate the development of an appropriate curriculum.

Phyllis Lehrer delivered a challenge to educators to avoid isolation by familiarizing themselves with and utilizing all available resources. The following list includes those resources as identified by Lehrer. Campus resources such as Educational Psychology and Music Education programs may provide exposure to learning styles and theories. Private teachers in the community who have demonstrated excellence in the field of teaching could be paired with graduate student teachers for conversation and observation. This arrangement would most likely involve a small honorarium for the "master teacher." Lehrer encouraged the participation of graduate student teachers in professional organizations such as MTNA and local MTA chapters. She further offered that graduate students would benefit from a course (or even one unit) devoted to the topic of "Developing a College Course" and another to the business aspect of teaching music.

The second session concluded with the consensus that Master's degree programs must be as thorough as possible with a broad scope, leaving specialization to the Ph.D.

programs. The goal of Master's degree programs must be to prepare graduate students to be the best possible teachers in a variety of venues.

Report prepared by Rachael Short

### Breakout Sessions: Doctoral Degree

The discussion of the Doctoral Degree in Piano Pedagogy was chaired by Martha Hilley, Coordinator of Group Piano and Pedagogy at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Jane Magrath, Professor and Director of Piano Pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma, served as the degree expert; and Peter Jutras, who is completing his doctorate at North Texas State University, was the student representative on the panel.

Both sessions were well attended and were filled with lively discussion. Much of the discussion focused on the vast differences between programs that are currently in place. Some programs emphasize a performance component, others stress pedagogical research, while other programs focus on a varied teaching experience.

Many students enter the doctoral program when they already have established families and their spouses may have careers. Enrolling in a doctoral degree program may necessitate an uprooting of the family or choosing a program that is within commuting distance. For those students, freedom to choose emphases and flexibility on the part of supervising faculty are most desirable.

If one aspires to a collegiate teaching position, the minimum requirement is an ABD (all but

dissertation). Therefore, doctoral programs provide a necessary stepping stone for job applications. All of the participants in these discussions seemed dissatisfied with this situation, but agreed that it is the reality of the system in which we function.

In contrasting the goals of the masters' in piano pedagogy and the doctorate, it was expressed that the MM can be thought of as a time for professional training, internship teaching and the learning of practical skills. The doctorate years, in contrast, provide the opportunity to explore the broad philosophies, ideas, concepts, historical precedents, and theories that shape our profession and will help lead the profession into the future.

Report prepared by Peter Jutras

### Breakout Sessions: Non-Degree Programs

Dr. Janet Lyman of Indiana State University chaired these discussions. She was assisted by Louis Goss, Chairman of the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy, and Martha K. Smith, an independent teacher from Arlington, VA.

This discussion attracted about 25 people, most of whom were either already involved in the training of prospective teachers through Non-Degree programs associated with college or universities, or those who were interested in starting such programs. The following goals for students in such programs were articulated:

- Improve ability to perform creditably
- Be able to play the teaching repertoire at recital standard
- Understand basic pedagogical principles, including lesson planning
- Be able to teach composition, sightreading, and theory from beginning levels

Students in Non-Degree programs should be able to choose a focus area such as working

with young children, class piano, individual, or group instruction. Practical experience should progress from observation of master teachers to team-teaching to solo teaching under observation, live or videotaped.

Other discussion topics focused on:

- integrating non-degree and degree programs with the appropriate faculty
- coping with varying levels of student commitment
- enabling “catch up” for people transferring from other career fields

Cathy Albergo, MTNA Certification Chairman, who was present, indicated a strong interest in working with non-degree program faculties to link their certificate requirements with the new MTNA certification process.

Report submitted by Martha K. Smith

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