**Proceedings from the**

**2002 National Group Piano/**

**Piano Pedagogy Forum**

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**August 2–3, 2002, University of Cincinnati**

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**National Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Forum**

**Steering Committee**

Laura Beauchamp, Lenoir Rhyne College

Michelle Conda, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music

Barbara Fast, University of Oklahoma

Andrew Hisey, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music

The second National Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Forum (GP3) was held August 2–3, 2002, at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. This intensive, two-day forum was specifically designed for college and university group piano and piano pedagogy teachers. The first day was devoted to group piano teaching and the second day focused on piano pedagogy. Similar to the first forum held in 2000, a unique feature of the conference was an on-sight library consisting of syllabi, proficiency requirements, and other course materials brought by participants. These were available for browsing throughout the forum.

A complimentary welcome reception was held August 1, on the Rooftop Garden of the conference hotel, the Vernon Manor. The reception was sponsored by the Yamaha Corporation and Vernon Manor.

The Forum began with a day devoted to the teaching of group piano. The opening panel presentation focused on group piano and piano proficiency. Five representatives from different types of institutions shared how the piano proficiency is handled at their schools. Panelists included: Glenna Sprague (Oakton Community College), Andrew Hisey (Oberlin Conservatory), Cynthia Benson (Bowling Green State University), Tim Shook (Southwestern College), Timothy Shafer (Penn State University). Questions discussed included:

* How many semesters of instruction and hours per week are required of students in
* different majors?
* What mechanism do you use to place incoming students at the appropriate point in the sequence?
* What are the proficiency requirements?
* What process was used to arrive at the requirements? What, if anything, would you
* change and why?
* What procedures are used for certifying and/or documenting your piano proficiency?

Two rotations of small group discussions followed the panel presentation. Additionally, participants filled out a questionnaire related to various components of piano proficiency at their respective institutions.

The afternoon featured four presentations on group teaching techniques. Participants rotated and were able to attend all four sessions. Presenters and topics were: Michelle Conda, “Teaching Popular Chording in the Group Piano Setting;” George Litterst, “Putting it All Together: Using Personal Computers in the 21st Century Piano Laboratory;” Ann Milliman Gipson, “Facilitating Group Interaction Within the Piano Class;” Martha Hilley, “Web-Based Instructional Support for Group Piano.”

The afternoon concluded with a presentation by Connie Arrau Sturm, “Video Excerpts to American Group Piano Pioneers.” Using excerpts of videotapes from her doctoral research, Dr. Sturm illustrated and discussed components of successful group piano teaching.

The first day of the conference was brought to a close with a complimentary reception hosted by MTNA (Music Teachers National Association).

The second day of the forum was devoted to teaching piano pedagogy at the college level. The opening panel discussion topic was “Perspectives on Pedagogy Teaching: “How do you Teach Beginning Teachers to Teach Beginning Technique?” Panel members included Jane Magrath (University of Oklahoma), Mary Craig Powell (Capital University), and Sam Holland (Southern Methodist University). The morning concluded with two small group discussions on the following topics: “Share your favorite technology-focused assignment or project from your pedagogy course,” and “Share your favorite non-technology-focused assignment or project from your pedagogy course.”

The afternoon began with a presentation by Lynda Metelsky, Senior Examiner at the

Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, “Perspectives on Pedagogy Teaching: Testing and Evaluating Pedagogy Students at the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto.” Her presentation was followed by two rotations of small group discussions on the topic: “How do you test and evaluate the work of pedagogy students in courses and internships at your institution?”

The afternoon concluded with self-selecting small group discussions in which

participants were asked to meet with colleagues who work in situations similar to their own. The three designated groups were: people who teach at undergraduate institutions whose loads are limited to the piano area, people who teach at undergraduate institutions whose loads include work in other areas (theory, aural skills, music appreciation/history, administration), and people who supervise graduate students.

The following reports of the various panel presentations, individual presentations, and small group discussions serve as the forum proceedings.

**Panel and Group Discussions: *Across the Spectrum: Group Piano and Piano Proficiency Requirements***

**Reporter: Linda Christensen**

The following is a summary of current practices and trends in group piano and piano proficiency, as discussed at the second meeting of the National Group Piano/Piano Pedagogy forum. The report below is the compilation of comments from the panel discussion and two small-group breakout sessions. The panel consisted of representatives from different types of colleges and universities. Panelists included: Glenna Sprague (Oakton Community College), Andrew Hisey (Oberlin Conservatory), Cynthia Benson (Bowling Green State University), Tim Shook (Southwestern College), Timothy Shafer (Penn State University). During two rotations of discussion groups, teachers shared the practices of their programs, including what they teach, how it is taught, and how their school handles piano proficiencies.

**Q:** How many semesters of group piano are required?

**A:** Most institutions require four semesters of group piano for all music students, with an additional two semesters required for vocal and choral majors. One institution requires only two semesters for instrumental majors.

**Q:** How are freshmen and transfer students placed within the group piano sequence?

**A:** Placement auditions are given either in orientation or during the first week of classes. For those students who do test out of one or more semesters, a waiver is given, but no course credit is given.

**Specifics of Proficiencies at various institutions:**

**Scales**

The vast majority of teachers indicated including all major and minor scales on the piano proficiency exam, ranging from two to three octaves. There was some disagreement as to whether scales should be required hands together or hands separate. Rationale for hands together included coordination, hand independence, and discipline. However, many stated that hands-together take too much time from other important skills. It was generally agreed that scales serve a purpose related to music theory, and that memorization and fingering are important.

**Arpeggios**

While all panelists reported that they require major and minor arpeggios hands together from two to four octaves, the smaller discussion groups revealed that many do not require them hands together, and some stated that arpeggios are too difficult to include on a proficiency exam due to the facility required. Many participants include dominant and diminished 7th arpeggios in addition to the major and minor ones.

**Chord Progressions**

All of the panelists reported requiring primary and secondary chords in keyboard style. One assigns chord progressions in class but does not include them on the proficiency exam.

**Sight Reading**

The majority of teachers include sight reading of a some sort, including melody with accompaniment, harmonization, a hymn, an accompaniment, and reading a score. There was much discussion about when the students are given the sight reading example for a proficiency exam. Answers varied from a preparation time of 24-48 hours for a harmonization example, and 30 minutes to “at sight” for other types.

**Repertoire**

While the number of selections required and the level of difficulty of the repertoire varies, the teachers indicated that memorization is neither important nor required.

**Improvisation**

Although improvisation was is not generally reported as being included on proficiency exams, the skill was discussed in many of the breakout sessions. One of the groups discussed why improvisation should be included in group piano. Reasons included the ability to apply the concept to other instruments, the opportunity to expand on knowledge of harmony, the reiteration of musical concepts, and the possibility of having students start solving problems for themselves.

**Grading**

There was much discussion about grading, particularly in light of the current assessment movement present in many institutions. Many teachers give some sort of daily grade, whether it is a daily quiz or a grade based on daily preparation. For the exams, including proficiency exams, the two main types of grading were a checklist and giving a percentage for each skill. It was agreed that having some sort of quantifiable grading system is becoming more important, as students are challenging grades more often. Some participants suggested recording exams on MIDI disks or videotape in case the grade was challenged later.

**Conclusions**

While there are many different ways of teaching group piano classes and administrating 10 piano proficiencies, this reporter was able to make some general conclusions from the written reports of the sessions.

* Piano skills are a crucial part of a music student’s education.
* Although our class size, scope, and teaching methods and materials vary widely, we as group piano teachers all seem to agree that functional skills are essential. The skills discussed most at this forum were scales, arpeggios, chord progressions and harmonizations, sight reading, repertoire, and score reading.
* Group piano and theory are so closely related that many institutions are correlating the curricula.
* Grading and assessment continue to be difficult to quantify; however, it is becoming increasingly necessary to have a less subjective way of grading. There is continued interest in meeting together in such a form as this to share syllabi, teaching techniques, and other ideas.

**Linda Christensen** teaches class piano, group piano, and music technology at Wayne State College. She holds a BA in music from Weber State University, an MM in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from Southern Methodist University, and a Ph.D. in Music Education/Piano Pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma. Her pedagogy teachers have included Sam Holland, E. L. Lancaster, and Jane Magrath. Her piano teachers have included Ed Gates, Alfred Mouledous, and Mary Ray Johnson. Dr. Christensen is active in the Music Teachers National Association and the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy, where she chairs the Future Trends in Piano Teaching committee. She has been published in *Keyboard Companion*, and has served as educational consultant for the 2000 edition of *The Music Tree*. In addition to her regular academic schedule, Dr. Christensen has been a faculty member at many summer piano camps focusing on music technology for children, and has also been musical director and pianist for many theater companies in Washington, Utah, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Texas.

**Michelle Conda Group Teaching Presentation: *Teaching Popular Chording in the Group Piano Setting***

**Reporter: Lisa Zdechlik**

In Michelle Conda’s session, *Teaching Popular Chording in the Group Piano Setting*, participants were taken on a nostalgic journey of pop and rock classics that Michelle has adapted for use in her non-music major and music major piano classes at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. We were also treated to Michelle’s joyful approach and her upbeat voice as she played and sang her way through the examples that followed. Michelle provided a handout that included fingering outlines or a basic chord chart for each selection. Michelle cited two reasons that she uses lead sheets with her students: 1) it helps students learn this classic music, and 2) it teaches students to read lead sheets. Michelle’s approach to teaching these pieces was clear, direct, and attuned to precise steps that students would need to take to achieve success in their playing. As her students, we were immediately involved in making music, her approach ensuring our success.

Michelle began with the 1962 hit, *Alley Cat*, demonstrating how students can be immediately involved in playing *Alley Cat* with the use of two simple block chords, C and G Major. Michelle first asked us to play a C major chord with our right hand instructing, “notice that your fifth finger is on G; lift up your whole hand and move to the G chord.” Not leaving any movements to chance, Michelle choreographed the movement from the C chord to the G chord with a large kinesthetic cue of lifting her own left hand (mirroring our right hands) and a verbal cue to “lift the hand.” When we were proficient in playing the C and G Major chords, Michelle guided us to play the harmonic progression of *Alley Cat*: C - C - C - G - G - G - G - C -. Michelle verbally led the group through the progression as she played a vivacious rendition of *Alley Cat*.

We played two verses of *Alley Cat*, accompanying Michelle with our C and G chordal accompaniment as she played the melody and accompaniment. As we moved into the refrain, Michelle noted, “this uses the F chord and the D chord,” referring to the D chord as her “anti-oreo chord.” At the end, following Michelle’s cue to “sting it,” we brought *Alley Cat* to a striking close. By learning *Alley Cat* in this manner, students have fun, they are immediately successful in playing, and they begin to develop a sense of harmony and form.

Michelle teaches the *Baby Elephant Walk* to introduce students to the boogie-woogie style. A smooth transition is made from the full chords of *Alley Cat* to realizing the chords in the boogie-woogie pattern of *Baby Elephant Walk*. Perfect fifths, the variable third, and eighth notes are introduced. Michelle indicated that, while students experience playing the eighth note in this piece, she doesn’t officially teach eighth notes at this point. Michelle begins by prompting students to play the Perfect 5th of the C chord, then the flat 3, then the natural 3. As Michelle led us through this musical example in the workshop session, we gradually evolved from the Mama Elephant’s Walk in quarter notes to the baby elephant’s walk in eighth notes, and finally to a full-blown 12-bar blues *Baby Elephant Walk*. Without a break in playing, Michelle refined our boogie-woogie style 12 with quick verbal directives of “staccato” and “bounce your wrist.” Suddenly, we were in stride with Michelle, playing boogie-woogie; and, we didn’t know how we got there. Of course, our getting-there was the result of expert teaching, where the teacher had skillfully moved us from the known (the chords of *Alley Cat*) to the unknown, creating a boogie-woogie pattern. All this occurred in the time of two minutes. As soon as our left hands were fluent in the boogie-woogie style, Michelle introduced Henry Mancini’s melody to our boogie-woogie bass line. It was obvious that students would thoroughly enjoy this. Michelle pointed out that in moving up to the F chord, one has to cross over one’s body; hence, she prefers to have students move from the C chord down to the F chord. Another tip was that it doesn’t really help to cue students to move by position, e.g., the C major position to the F major position, because the third finger ends each pattern. Michelle warned that this is a “bug” that needs to be worked out in the teaching of *Baby Elephant Walk*.

Once students have experienced moving around the keyboard with chords, Michelle introduces *Heart and Soul*. Most humans have learned *Heart and Soul* from their best friends, but at the workshop session we had the benefit of learning Michelle’s new spin on this old favorite. Michelle demonstrated a rhythmic variation, based on boom-di-a-ta. Prepping our left-hand thumb on C, Michelle outlined the infamous bass line, cuing our fingers 1(C)- 3(A)‹ 5(F) -4(G). When participants were familiar with the bass line, Michelle added the right-hand chords in a two-hand accompaniment, using the rhythm of boom-di-a-ta (boom being the left hand, di-a-ta, the right hand). After we were comfortable with the coordination of this two-hand rhythmic pattern, Michelle introduced the familiar arpeggiated variation. We alternated between the two patterns, taking our cue from Michelle’s indications to “chunk” it (block it) or break it up (arpeggiate it). Varying the accompaniment style in this way develops flexibility and rhythmic coordination in students.

From *Heart and Soul* we progressed to *Fiddler on the Roof*, Michelle guiding us to simply convert the two-hand boom-di-a-ta accompaniment of Heart and Soul to a straightforward boom-chick between the hands (boom in the left hand; chick in the right hand). After we practiced “boom-chicking” the opening C and Db Major chords and chunking the Eb and Db major chords, we enjoyed a verse of *Fiddler on the Roof*. C - C - Db - C - C - C - Db Eb Db (block) - C - C .

Moving on to the Beetles’ style with *Let it Be*, we played a more complex version of a two-hand, broken chord accompaniment style. Here the left hand played the root note of each chord while the right hand realized the full chord in an eighth note rhythm. Again Michelle’s directives were impeccably clear. She explained, “Play the chord in the right hand. Now we are going to break the chord in half; play the top two notes; roll down to the tonic note with the thumb.” Even though she does not officially teach eighth notes to her students at this point, Michelle shows the eighth notes of the right hand on the board to stress their rhythmic movement. Hence, students experience eighth notes through playing *Let it Be* and Michelle has embedded readiness for the time when students begin to read eighth notes. Once our right hands were comfortable with the rocking eighth notes, we added the root note of each chord with the left hand. When teaching beginning 13 students how to coordinate this accompaniment between the hands, Michelle emphasizes that whatever way your left hand goes, the right hand, in position, follows. As we got into the groove of this Beetle’s hit, Michelle broke into singing, “speaking words of wisdom, let it be.”

The ballad style of *Love is Blue* followed with a variation of the two-hand accompaniment of *Let it Be*. Here, the left hand plays and holds on the strong beats one and three, while the right hand complements this with a broken chord on &-2&-3&-4&. Michelle also uses this ballad to introduce seventh chords.

*Make Me Smile* uses a double thumb technique in the left hand (LRRLLRRLL) to create a typical rock style accompaniment in dotted rhythms. The right hand uses root position and sus chords, playing on &2& and &4& while the left hand is heard on 1--&3--&1, etc.

Michelle concluded the session with John Lennon’s *Imagine*, referring to this as the “ultimate” Beetles. The progression uses inverted chords and seventh chords: C Cmaj7 - F/C - C Cmaj7 - F (repeat for 5 total) - C/E - Dm7 Dm7/C - G7 - G7 (block). Although Michelle hasn’t formally taught inversions at this point, she introduces the inverted/slash chords to her students by saying C/G is a C chord “with-a” G in the bass. This two-hand accompaniment is similar to *Let it Be*, the right hand rocking the chord in eighth notes, the LH playing the bass line. Michelle also taught us the familiar chromatic run (A-Bb-BC) heard at the end of each two-measure segment of the opening four measures.

This was a fun, joyous, captivating session! Michelle’s upbeat spirit and talent in imparting the style and capturing the essence of each of these pieces left each of us with a fresh approach to introducing chords, practicing chord progressions, teaching accompaniment styles, and making music with our students with these truly “classic” pieces.

**Lisa Zdechlik**, is Assistant Professor of Class Piano and Piano Pedagogy at the University of Arizona. An active performer, educator and clinician, she has presented workshops on pedagogical topics at the state and national levels. Her research involves the interaction between music analysis and performance and the applications of current technologies to music learning. Former faculty appointments include San Diego State University, Grossmont College and San Diego Mesa College. Dr. Zdechlik holds a D.M.A. in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma, where she was recently awarded the 2002 Dissertation Prize in Education, Fine Arts and the Professions for her dissertation, *Texture and Pedaling in Selected Nocturnes of Frederic Chopin*.

**George Litterst Group Teaching Presentation: *Putting it all Together: Using***

***Personal Computers in the 21st Century Piano Laboratory***

**Reporter: Lisa Zdechlik**

In this session, George Litterst presented some of the newer possibilities for using computers in the classroom, highlighting some of the instructional applications of the program, *Home Concert 2000*. Most music educators are familiar with traditional computer applications in the keyboard lab such as music theory, ear training, and composition programs, but not all have considered the Internet resources that are available once you introduce computers in the classroom. In this session, George introduced participants to some of the Internet resources available for instruction including online lessons, long distance instruction, research, grading, and feedback.

To demonstrate the potential of videoconferencing with students, George arranged a videoconference with Laura Beauchamp-Williamson (the absent co-developer of this conference) and her newborn baby girl, Rebecca. The windows program *Polycom* was used to access Laura and Rebecca in South Carolina. This gave us perspective into where the future is going with internet based instruction such as online lessons and videoconferencing. George made the interesting point that in teaching class piano, we have already begun to learn how to teach at a distance in that we are not at the “site” of every student. So if we think about projecting that distance a little farther and put that individual student in a window (the computer screen), long-distance piano instruction is not such a fanciful idea.

What does putting it all together in a 21st century piano laboratory look like? Put a computer and a digital keyboard together, add the program, *Home Concert 2000*, combine with a Standard MIDI file, mix in one student or more, and you have created a dynamic learning environment. *Home Concert 2000*, which George co-developed with Frank Weinstock, can be used for instruction in music fundamentals or to support and enhance keyboard performance within the class piano curriculum or the private lesson. *Home Concert 2000* will open any Standard MIDI file. Consider the resources at hand then from the thousands of Standard MIDI files accessible on the Internet to the Standard MIDI files available with most current piano methods.

When you open a file in *Home Concert 2000*, the program displays the separate tracks of the MIDI file on the computer screen. When you select a track, the program will transcribe it into an electronic picture of music notation, displaying the music on the computer screen. As you begin to play, each progressive measure is highlighted, indicating your place in the music. As you approach the bottom of a page, the program will turn the page, displaying the bottom of the current page and the top systems of the upcoming page.

What the program is fundamentally able to do is called “score following.” The score following task is able to figure out 1) location, 2) changes in tempo, and 3) changes in the dynamic level. George first demonstrated the ability of the program to follow the score 15 and track what the performer is doing in terms of tempo using the Duncombe piano composition, *Fanfare*, and a Standard MIDI file from Alfred Publishing Company. As he played, George deliberately altered the tempo in a number of places. The program, like a sensitive accompanist, responded to all his tempo changes, whether subtle or dramatic.

In working with *Home Concert 2000*, a student can access three different modes: *Learn*, *Jam*, and *Perform*. Each time you click on one of the modes, some of the choices are removed because they don’t apply to that mode. For instance, in the *Learn Mode*, the tempo is turned off so the software will not follow the performer’s tempo. The objective in the *Learn Mode* is to learn to play the correct notes in the correct time. So if you are not able to play the correct note at the correct time, the program will pause and wait for you to get it right. Or, if you make a mistake, the program will pause and expect you to correct the inaccuracy before allowing you to continue. In addition, when you pause, a red light flashes on an “on-screen keyboard,” assisting you by displaying the correct note.

George pointed out that concepts of musicality are magnified when using *Home Concert 2000* because the entire ensemble follows the performer’s musical expressions. For instance, when the performer changes dynamic levels, the entire ensemble will follow the performer’s dynamics, magnifying the changes. This mode then is particularly effective when helping the student decide on and refine his or her musical concepts of a piece.

In the *Jam Mode*, the performer can set the initial tempo, after which the program’s “job” is to strictly maintain this tempo and not respond to changes in the performer’s tempo. Hence, this mode can be used to develop an accurate, strict rhythmic sense. Another feature of the *Jam Mode* is that it allows you to place markers in the score. One such marker called “wait for soloist” enables you to create stopping places for the student. The “wait for soloist” marker might be used in the case of a student who was having trouble getting to a certain measure on time. For instance, if the student was experiencing difficulty getting to measure 10 on time, you could place a marker at this measure. Now, every time the program arrives at measure 10, it will stop. This pause allows the student to find her place, recompose herself, and then move on when she is ready. The point of this then is to gradually reduce the amount of pause-time until the student is able to eliminate the pause entirely and play through the problem.

In the *Perform Mode*, the program allows you complete freedom. It will follow both tempo and dynamics; you can even skip a measure and the program will follow you. The program also records behind your back without you even knowing it. A practice scenario in working with this mode is to challenge the student to maintain a steady tempo at 100%. After the student has played, ask him to use the program’s playback feature and evaluate his performance for a 100% steady tempo. When introducing the concept of rubato to a student, the *Perform Mode* is particularly effective because it will follow the student’s rhythmic nuances. George demonstrated this with Barbara Kreader’s composition, “Longing” from the Hal Leonard Student Library. MIDI files are authored with a steady tempo so George first demonstrated the file at this steady tempo. Then, he re-played “Longing” in *Perform Mode* using rubato, the accompaniment taking time where he took time. This was an amazing demonstration of the potential of *Home Concert 2000* to help students develop artistry and sensitivity in their performances.

Other features of *Home Concert 2000* include the ability to play one hand at a time in any of the modes, a looping function to repeat specified measures, and a piano roll that enables the learner to see a graphic notation of the score. In the remaining minutes, George fielded questions from participants; of course, the primary question was, “How much does this cost?” The price of an individual copy of *Home Concert 2000* is a surprisingly inexpensive $99.00; twelve copies sell for approximately $320.00. Check out the website www.timewarptech.com if you are interested in further details on *Home Concert 2000*.

In closing, George pointed out that once you attach a computer to a keyboard, it promotes a new level of interactivity. Once the learner has been introduced to the many possibilities of instruction with this technology, the teacher can step out of the way, allowing the learner to develop independence and critical thinking skills in his/her own performance and musical understanding.

**Lisa Zdechlik**, is Assistant Professor of Class Piano and Piano Pedagogy at the University of Arizona. An active performer, educator and clinician, she has presented workshops on pedagogical topics at the state and national levels. Her research involves the interaction between music analysis and performance and the applications of current technologies to music learning. Former faculty appointments include San Diego State University, Grossmont College and San Diego Mesa College. Dr. Zdechlik holds a D.M.A. in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma, where she was recently awarded the 2002 Dissertation Prize in Education, Fine Arts and the Professions for her dissertation, *Texture and Pedaling in Selected Nocturnes of Frederic Chopin*.

**Ann Milliman Gipson Group Teaching Presentation: *Facilitating Group Interaction Within the Piano Class***

**Reporter: Lisa Zdechlik**

Ann Milliman Gipson’s session, *Facilitating Group Interaction Within the Piano Class*, provided participants with an expert model of dynamic ways to facilitate group interaction within the group piano class. Ann led the participants through multiple activities to demonstrate ways to structure the learning environment in a keyboard laboratory to promote collaboration, independence, and confidence in playing.

Ann opened her session with a discussion of the benefits of group interaction including variety in the lesson, motivation, and musical independence. Ann prefers variety in student groupings (individuals, pairs, small groups, large groups) and in the musical activities presented within a lesson (sight reading, harmonization, improvisation, technique, repertoire, and ensembles). Another reason to facilitate group interaction is for purely motivational reasons - because not all students particularly care to be in piano, group activities are a great motivator, bringing humor and laughter into the learning process as well as creating energy in the room. Anxiety is often dispelled when students interact with each other. Group activities provide students with opportunities to relax so they aren’t as focused and intense, helping them to develop a more positive outlook in their progress. Group activities also promote musical independence, especially for secondary students who often depend on the teacher too much. Having to respond in a group and share in the learning process allows students to claim ownership for their own learning.

Ann set forth considerations to take into account when grouping students in the class piano environment. Personalities, musical and technical abilities, balancing group activities with individual work, and environmental issues all need to be carefully thought out. The teacher must be sensitive to personality conflicts and the ways students interact and communicate with each other. In grouping students with respect to musical and technical abilities, it is advantageous to experiment with different pairings. Pairing a quicker student with one who is having problems is helpful because it gives the quicker learner an opportunity to verbally communicate and teach, while giving the slower learner a different perspective on the learning at hand. The fourth consideration in planning for an effective group lesson is awareness of environmental factors, including the previous class students are coming from, the temperature of the room, and the weather.

Ann followed this discussion with a teaching demonstration using a chord progression to illustrate how one might structure a lesson plan to provide for group interaction in different combinations: the full group, small groups, partners, and individually. Structured to be covered during three consecutive class periods, the lesson plan incorporates a variety of musical activities (harmonization, sight-reading, technique, improvisation, analysis, and repertoire) to effectively reinforce both musical concepts and group interaction.

On the first day of the projected plan, Ann begins with an introduction of the chord progression using Roman numerals (I - V4/3 - V6/5 - I - vi - ii6 - V7 - I) and a partner activity. In the workshop session, she instructed us to work with our partners and convert the Roman numeral symbols to letter names in the key of A major. As we worked out the chord progression, Ann strolled around the classroom, helping with difficulties that were encountered but also subtly staying out of the way of the concentrated learning occurring between partners. Ann then brought the class back together to discuss and confirm answers.

The next activity involved the actual playing of the chords; our instructions were to play from chord to chord without looking at our hands. Here, Ann’s questioning of us was extremely effective, a reminder that students learn best when they are led to discover concepts, movements, etc. for themselves. Ann remarked, “think through how you are getting from chord to chord,” which focused our attention on our hand movements. She continued to focus our attention by questioning, “What are you using as pivot notes or pivot fingers?” Ann indicated that at this point in the lesson, she would pair students and ask them to discuss the most challenging chords in the progression, perhaps guiding their discussions with comments and questions such as, “a difficult change is the move from the A major to the F# minor chord. How would you get there?” When she asked us that question, one solution that the class offered was to simply pick up the hand and move it down; another solution was to use the bottom note as a pivot; and yet another solution was to use the thumb to move. Abundant discussion ensued as the hand-movement problem was solved in a number of ways. The collaborative problem solving and divergent questioning employed in this activity opened the door for many “right” answers, and served as a reminder that what works for one student may not work for another one. At this point, Ann explained that students would be given time to individually practice the progression, applying different rhythms, e.g., a half-note rhythm in quadruple, then triple meter.

On the second day of the lesson plan, Ann reviews the progression in triple meter as the class plays with headphones unplugged. Their next task is to learn to play the chord progression without looking at the hands. To help us understand this process, we were again assigned a partner; partner A was the designated “player,” while partner B’s task was to watch partner A’s eyes and count how many times partner A looked at the hands. Then, we switched roles. The outcome? The group’s eye-consciousness was raised to a higher level—if you have someone staring into your eyes, it makes you very aware of what you are doing with your own eyes.

Once the class was able to play the chord progression smoothly without looking down, Ann introduced an improvisation activity. Ann requested that one partner play the chord progression while the other experiment with the melody. To focus students’ listening on the interaction between the melodic improvisation and the harmonic progression, Ann suggested further discussion and exploration concerning what was happening in the improvisation: (1) If the chord progression gets to the end, but the melody doesn’t sound like it got to the end, ask what the melodic partner might do to adapt the melody and (2) listen to see if the melody tones fit the chord tones. In this way, students are both listening and evaluating the interaction between the improvised melody and the chord progression.

On the third day of the lesson plan, after students have had an opportunity to practice their improvisations, they share these creative adventures in small groups. Although Ann doesn’t necessarily advocate using peer grading, she suggested that students be given the opportunity to listen, play, and evaluate the improvisations of their fellow students. Hence, students learn to evaluate the group process from different perspectives, playing the role of listener-evaluator, improviser, or harmonic accompanist. At the end of this activity, a member from each group would be selected to play for the entire class. After the improvisation activity, the Beethoven *German Dance* was introduced.

Ann asked the group to compare Beethoven’s chord progression with the chord progression we had been practicing. Because of the way that Ann had intricately developed the learning in this lesson, students now possessed the musical understanding and skills to make this comparative analysis and to critically analyze the interaction between the melody and the harmony. This lesson was a dynamic example of spiral learning, each activity creating a more profound level of understanding so that when students are ready to play the Beethoven *German Dance*, they already have a built-in knowledge of the composition.

After critical discussion, an ensemble activity ensued with the class divided into trios (using headsets) to play three parts: (1) the right-hand part (the melody played as written), (2) the left-hand part, (played as written or as the chord progression), and (3) a counter melody (generated from the improvisation activity). Before we began to rehearse, Ann established groundwork for the evaluation of the group ensemble. She asked, “What does a conductor listen to when listening to his/her ensemble?” The group responded, (1) keeping everyone together, (2) balance, (3) orchestration options, and (4) in this case, a melody with an active rhythm; hence, for the person improvising the countermelody, the challenge is to find something that complements the given melody. As students rehearsed the ensemble, the laughter and all-embracing energy in the room was an indisputable indication of the value of group interaction and learning. From the teacher’s console, Ann listened to each group, gave feedback, and invited one group to share their ensemble with the whole group.

Ann summarized this session with the advantages of structuring learning in different combinations. In small groups, students can listen for corrects notes and rhythm and appropriate and steady tempo. As well, they can check for memory, hand position, and posture. In pairs, students can discuss fingering, compare chord choices in harmonization activities, and create accompaniment patterns. In large ensembles, students can work on developing continuity and steadiness. This session provided participants with a wealth of ideas and techniques to structure learning that promotes interaction within group piano courses. The musical activities and group techniques that Ann presented were engaging and creatively implemented, providing for collaborative learning, taking into account individual learning styles, and promoting independence in learning.

**Lisa Zdechlik**, is Assistant Professor of Class Piano and Piano Pedagogy at the University of Arizona. An active performer, educator and clinician, she has presented workshops on pedagogical topics at the state and national levels. Her research involves the interaction between music analysis and performance and the applications of current technologies to music learning. Former faculty appointments include San Diego State University, Grossmont College and San Diego Mesa College. Dr. Zdechlik holds a D.M.A. in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma, where she was recently awarded the 2002 Dissertation Prize in Education, Fine Arts and the Professions for her dissertation, *Texture and Pedaling in Selected Nocturnes of Frederic Chopin*.

**Martha Hilley Group Teaching Presentation: *Web-Based Instructional Support for Group Piano***

**Reporter: Lisa Zdechlik**

Martha Hilley is Professor of Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) and coauthor of *Piano for the Developing Musician* (PDM), now in its 5th Edition. She has created a groundbreaking website for the UT Austin group piano program that coordinates with the PDM text. In this session, Martha demonstrated the philosophies, techniques, and software underlying this innovative web-based instructional support, stressing that the techniques and ideas she was presenting could be used to create a website for any curriculum. She also suggested that pedagogy teachers incorporate this technology into their pedagogy courses because independent teachers of tomorrow need to know how to create a website for their studio as well as personalize tutorial help for their private students.

The principal software programs used in creating this website include *DreamWeaver*, *Flash*, *Shockwave*, *Peak*, *Director*, and *PowerPoint*. Martha gave a quick synopsis of the benefits and uses of each of these programs. *DreamWeaver*, web authoring software by *Macromedia*, was recommended because of its ease of use in creating a website. Icon driven, *DreamWeaver* displays a split screen that shows you what the icon does and displays HTML code at the same time. Hence, if something doesn’t work, HTML code allows you to see why it is not working. *Director* is multimedia authoring software by which you can create sophisticated animation, video, and audio clips. *Director* plays off of *Shockwave*, a format for animation programs that allows files created with *Director* to be compatible with the web. With *Peak*, produced by *Bias*, you can import sound files from a digital keyboard into a computer. If you have *Director*, *Peak* allows you to save a sound file as an mp3 file. Martha also highly recommended using *Finale* or *Sibelius*, music notation programs, so students can notate their compositions. The program, *Premiere*, enables one to capture video and import it into a website; however the problem with this program is that the files are so large, e.g., two minutes of a video file is approximately 519 megabytes. Figuring out how to compress this type of file and still maintain quality needs to be worked out. Martha stressed the need for all musicians to know how to use *PowerPoint*, acknowledging this software as one of the most powerful teaching tools available to the music profession. Martha believes so strongly in *PowerPoint* that in advance of the conference, she sent a step-by-step tutorial, “Microsoft *PowerPoint* As a Resource,” via email to all participants. This tutorial explained how to construct a studio page, develop a tutorial on the major pentascale, and import picture and sound files.

The PDM website is used to reinforce concepts that are already being taught in the group piano curriculum. Martha demonstrated some of the tutorials she has developed that focus on improvisation, sight-reading, harmonization, and keyboard theory. She began by showing the web pages that support the preliminary chapters of the text. The website is a dynamic tool for students at this stage in their learning because it reinforces concepts and skills that students are responsible for understanding in the preliminary chapters and it provides additional exercises and practice drills. “The horrific page of whole notes,” appropriately named by Martha’s students, is an example of a reading exercise from these preliminary pages. In this tutorial, the screen first displays three rows of whole notes. A visual “tutor” in the form of a red square moves across the screen from measure to measure, highlighting each note to be read. Moving across the screen ahead of time, the red square prompts the student’s eye and mind to move ahead to the next note. For students who have a tendency to get lost, the red square draws their eyes to each note and keeps them moving ahead, as well as training their eye-hand coordination. The program *Director* was used to create this shockwave movie.

**Improvisation**

In Chapter One of PDM, improvisation on the black keys is introduced with the intent to get students to respond to a given rhythm and play back an improvisation that imitates the rhythm. Sitting at their keyboard and computer, students see and hear the webpage. The webpage cues them to “Listen,” to the musical question of two measures. This is followed by the cue “Play,” which flashes on the screen to prompt students to answer with their improvisation. The tutorial was easy to follow and perfectly timed in audio and visual cues. For a student intimidated by improvisation, this activity presented a non-threatening way to develop improvisational skills.

**Sight-reading**

A problem familiar to all who teach group piano is that of never having enough sight-reading examples for students. Martha has solved this problem by compiling a sight-reading library of 3000 fourÐsix bar items for all four levels of group piano at UT Austin. The library includes original compositions written by Martha and her teaching assistants as well as several student compositions. Roland’s *Visual Music Tutor* is used to generate these examples because it allows one to play a piece on the digital keyboard, save it on disk as a Standard MIDI file, open it on a PC in *Visual Music Tutor* and in the end—it shows up as manuscript, ready to be added to the sight-reading library.

**Harmonization**

The harmonization tutorials help students see relationships between a given melody and its harmonic possibilities. For instance, when students begin harmonizing with the I, IV and V chords, the web page allows students to interact with the melody and determine the harmonic options for each melodic note. When you click on a measure of the melody, a caption pops up above a specific note that reads, “I could use a I chord because A is the fifth of the chord; I could use a iii chord because A is the third of the chord; or, I could a V chord because A is the root of the chord.” The point is to present to the student that s/he has options and that once the options are acknowledged, it is up to her/his ear and theory sense to decide which chord fits best. This tutorial also doubles as an ear-training exercise: when students click on “play,” they can listen to the melody and harmonization with a background accompaniment. Another click allows students to see the Roman numerals used in the harmonization.

**Keyboard Theory**

Martha illustrated a keyboard theory tutorial that addresses the use of the common tones in chord progressions, helping students to see and hear common tones between chords. In this tutorial, three options are given: (1) spell the chord, (2) see the common tones, or (3) play the progression. In the first case, a progression is shown on the screen (I IV ii V7 I) and students are asked to spell the chord in “sync” with a background rhythm. In the second case, students see the progression notated on the screen and are cued to “listen as the progression is played.” As the progression plays, a “circle”, marking the common tone between each chord, moves ahead prompting the student’s thinking to link chord tone to chord tone and see/hear the common tone between chords. Lastly, students are asked to play the progression.

**Use of *PowerPoint* in Individual Instruction**

Martha demonstrated how she uses *PowerPoint* in the individual studio lesson to provide personalized feedback throughout the week. Margaret Morris, a mythical high school student, is working on Gurlitt’s *Whirlwind*. After Margaret’s lesson, Martha sends a *PowerPoint* email intended to tap into Margaret’s thinking and practicing of *Whirlwind*. The email revolves around what happened in the previous lesson and then gives suggestions or questions for Margaret to think about or focus on in her practicing. The message to Margaret reads, “After you left yesterday Margaret, I was thinking about the problems you had with the rhythm on pp. 28–29 of your Lesson Book. Why don’t you get out your book and take a second look at this.” Martha also makes specific comments about what was good in the lesson and what needs to be worked on. Most impressive is that embedded in the *PowerPoint* email is a sound file of an ensemble part for Margaret to rehearse with in her practice sessions. The instructions from Martha read, “click on the next listening icon when you are ready to hear the ensemble part I have written for you.” Through this ingenious use of *PowerPoint*, Martha has built a library of tailor-made email messages that can be used with any student.

For those who are concerned that technology is going to destroy the human element and touch in learning, Martha’s presentation was a perfect example of the way that technology and human touch can be creatively merged to create a learning environment that powerfully addresses individual differences and needs. I have no doubt that all participants left this session inspired to return to their schools to launch web-based instructional support for their group piano curricula and individual lessons.

**Lisa Zdechlik**, is Assistant Professor of Class Piano and Piano Pedagogy at the University of Arizona. An active performer, educator and clinician, she has presented workshops on pedagogical topics at the state and national levels. Her research involves the interaction between music analysis and performance and the applications of current technologies to music learning. Former faculty appointments include San Diego State University, Grossmont College and San Diego Mesa College. Dr. Zdechlik holds a D.M.A. in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma, where she was recently awarded the 2002 Dissertation Prize in Education, Fine Arts and the Professions for her dissertation, *Texture and Pedaling in Selected Nocturnes of Frederic Chopin*.

**Connie Arrau Sturm Presentation: *Video Excerpts of American Group Piano***

***Pioneers***

**Reporter: Steve Betts**

*Video Excerpts of American Group Piano Pioneers*, presented by Connie Arrau Sturm, featured portions of videotaped lessons by five group piano teachers. The videotapes were made in the late 1980s as part of Sturm’s Ph.d. dissertation research.1 Her research involved surveying group piano teachers listed in the *CMS Directory of Music Faculties in Colleges and Universities* to determine those group piano teachers who were regarded as “exemplary.” The survey results indicated twelve teachers who received significantly more votes than others. Of these twelve, six agreed to participate in Sturm’s study: Guy Duckworth, Martha Hilley, James Lyke, Larry Rast, Joan Reist, and Marienne Uszler. Two others of the twelve, AnnaBelle Bognar and Frances Larimer, agreed to participate in Sturm’s pilot study. Through her analysis of the tapes Arrau was able to identify characteristic behaviors of these teachers. In her session Sturm used tapes of five of these teachers: Martha Hilley, Frances Larimer, James Lyke, Larry Rast, and Marienne Uszler.

The first video shown was of Frances Larimer, Professor Emeritus at Northwestern University, teaching a class of non-music majors. The concept taught involved the staff and intervals of seconds and thirds. Arrau used this segment to highlight one of the findings of her research - the teaching sequence of teacher direction, followed by student keyboard performance, followed by either more directions and performance or by a teacher question. The characteristic demonstrated by the exemplary teachers is that the sequence is fast paced and the directions are often short.

Larry Rast was the teacher shown in the second video. The students in this class at Northern Illinois University were learning major scales in tetrachord position. The students progressed around the circle of fifths, using the top tetrachord of the previous scale to become the bottom tetrachord of the next scale. The students discovered that the right hand fourth finger always played the new sharp. Arrau highlighted Rast’s use of “Discovery Learning” and stated that the students were more apt to remember the information due to the teaching strategy.

The third video was of Martha Hilley, Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Arrau stated her first reason for showing this tape involved students receiving different forms of information simultaneously and being asked to perform skills involving two of more simultaneous behaviors. In her research Arrau found that approximately one-third of lesson time involved activities of this nature.

The second reason Arrau mentioned for showing a tape of Hilley was the use of humor during the class.2 Comments such as “If you don’t shift both hands at the same time, you’ll end up holding hands with yourself,” or activities such as improvising a Country & Western song to demonstrate the I-vi-ii-V-I progression, added enjoyment to the class. Arrau did additional study of the videotapes to investigate the use of humor.

The longest excerpt showed Marienne Uszler, Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California teaching a class for whom it was only their second session. After showing the tape, Arrau asked for audience comments regarding the teaching. Responses included comments concerning Uszler’s enthusiasm, organization, use of student involvement, teaching the students to teach themselves, moving around the classroom, rapid pace, and holding students to high standards of musicianship.

The last tape showed a class taught by James Lyke at the University of Illinois. Of the five tapes, the physical setting of this class was unique, in that two acoustic pianos were used with the class gathered around them. The tape demonstrated one of Arrau’s findings - exemplary teachers praised student behavior more than twice as often as they criticized or corrected it. The class maintained a positive atmosphere while making constructive suggestions for each performance. Additionally, Lyke was able to maintain involvement by the whole class, even though not everyone was playing.

Other findings listed on a handout distributed at the session included:

* Over ninety per cent of teacher behavior was directed to the whole class.
* Over two-thirds of student performance was by the whole class.
* Use of headsets varied from none to over fifty per cent of class time.
* An average class generated over fifty questions and student responses.3

**References**

1. Connie Arrau, *Classroom Behavior of Exemplary Group Piano Teachers in American Colleges and Universities* (Ph.d. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1990).

2. Connie Arrau Sturm, “Use Humor in Music Teaching and Get the Last Laugh,” *American Music Teacher* 43 (October/November 1993): 12–15.

3. Connie Arrau Sturm, handout distributed at *Video Excerpts of American Group Piano Pioneers*, presented at the National Group Piano/Piano Pedagogy Forum, 03 August, 2002, Cincinnati, OH.

**Steve Betts** is Associate Professor of Music at Southern Nazarene University. His articles have appeared in *The Journal of Research in Music Education*, *The Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, *Keyboard Companion*, and *Keys*, and in 2001 he served as the Executive Director of the *National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy*. He is the lead author of the *Time to Begin Activities Book* and coauthor of the *Activities Books for Music Tree 1, 2A, and 2B*, all for *The Frances Clark Library for Piano Students*.

**Panel Discussion: *How Do You Teach Beginning Teachers to Teach Beginning Technique?***

**Reporter: Victoria Johnson**

**Panelists**: Jane Magrath, University of Oklahoma, Sam Holland, Southern Methodist University, Mary Craig Powell, Capital University

Jane Magrath, Sam Holland, and Mary Craig Powell are well known for their successful teaching of beginning technique. The following is a summary of the panel discussion in which they shared their strategies for developing this expertise in novice teachers.

**Jane Magrath** described the technical approach she teaches in pedagogy courses as eclectic, which allows it to be used with any beginning piano method. She groups technical work into four categories: warm-ups (examples are five-finger patterns for young students and double thirds exercises for advanced students); scales and arpeggios; miscellaneous exercises (such as octave studies, chord studies, and expansion/contraction exercises); and etudes. The majority of technical exercises are taught by rote, sometimes with the aid of a chart guideline. The goals of this technical work are dexterity, sound control, and development of the hand.

Magrath encourages pedagogy students to consider early level technical work as leading towards general pianism. To this end, the pedagogy class generates a list of the skills necessary for performing an advanced level piano piece. This list includes not only technical skills such as playing legato and staccato, executing octaves, and maneuvering leaps, but also musical demands such as inflection, voicing within the hand, and projection of character. Magrath believes that it is crucial that pedagogy students develop a step-by-step routine for teaching these skills to young pianists.

In the very first lessons with young beginners, Jane Magrath uses rote pieces such as “Billy Boy” (in *Finger Starters*) and “Engine, Engine Number Nine” (in *Music Pathways Solos A*) by Lynn Freeman Olson to promote freedom at the piano. Students play these pentatonic pieces with “hammer taps,” large forearm gestures with the third finger supported by the thumb. Once this movement is secure, students use smaller gestures called “wrist knocks” (also with a supported third finger) to play pieces including “Ebenezer Sneezer” (in Olson’s *Songs for Our Small World*).

Later in the first semester of piano study, Magrath introduces five-finger patterns using Olson’s “Just Like Me” (in *Songs for Our Small World*). The goals of this five-finger work are legato and an even touch. The piece is played hands separately then hands together, eventually in all major keys. The focus gradually shifts to phrasing, hand position, and endurance, and five-finger pattern variants are introduced. In assigning five-finger variants and other technical studies, Magrath encourages pedagogy students to ask the following questions: “What technical exercise should I give the student?” and “What should I ask him/her to do with what I’ve assigned?” Student teachers should have strong pedagogical reasons for assigning five-finger pattern variants and exercises, rather than assigning them merely for the variety’s sake. The early levels of Magrath’s *Technical Skills* series provide many five-finger pattern variants. Additionally, pedagogy students can create their own combinations.

Jane Magrath introduces hand-over-hand arpeggios fairly soon in a young student’s piano study, to promote coordination. She believes that they are motivational for the student, as they are physically fun to play and sound impressive. Chord progressions are also assigned rather early, blocked then broken. Students play these in many different keys, not just those found in the method book.

In closing, Magrath reiterated that she urges pedagogy students to ask themselves what their beginning students need to learn in order to eventually play the advanced repertoire, and then follow a step-by-step plan to move students towards that goal. This usually involves going beyond what is included in method books. Most importantly, when teaching beginning technique, Jane Magrath advises pedagogy students to “make it fun” and “make it sound good!”

In teaching beginning teachers to teach beginning technique, **Sam Holland** shares his wife’s household rule: “Nothing stays that isn’t known to be useful or believed to be beautiful.” He believes that inexperienced teachers often clutter piano lessons with items that are neither useful nor beautiful, particularly in the area of technique. They teach as if shopping at a flea market, choosing a little of this and a little of that, without a clear vision of the desired result.

Holland believes that it is especially challenging for advanced pianists to teach early level technique because they are so far removed from the beginning. They often have difficulty cutting through to the fundamentals of technique that are important at both the beginning and end of piano study. Breaking these elements down so that young students can experience repeated success is a further challenge.

Holland pointed out that inexperienced teachers are frequently unaware of the psychology of teaching technique and do not realize that beginning technique can be taught very effectively in a group setting. He shared a video clip of Ted Cooper (of the New School for Music Study) teaching a group of seven year olds in their second year of lessons. In this particular lesson, the children were learning to cross the second finger over the thumb. According to Holland, the video excerpt showed the following characteristics of successful teaching of beginning technique:

1. It preserves what is natural.

2. It begins with sound and proceeds to feeling.

3. It includes lots of modeling, imitation, and rehearsal.

4. It finds the magic in something ordinary.

Holland concluded by saying that teaching technique cannot be experienced in the abstract. Instead, pedagogy students learn to teach technique by observing the pedagogy teacher and other experienced teachers. Most importantly, they learn to teach technique by doing it themselves, in supervised teaching situations and on their own.

**Mary Craig Powell** is a well-known Suzuki specialist, but teaches pedagogy through a variety of approaches. In her segment of the panel discussion, Powell focused on the Suzuki method of teaching technique, which is used by many traditional teachers.

According to Suzuki, the beginning is the most important time in musical study. The four variations on “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” form the foundation of the Suzuki technical approach. The variations, all taught by rote, are played an average of three to six months by beginning students; the goals of this work are ear-training, technical development, and development of musicality. In her teacher training courses, Powell focuses on how to implement the Suzuki technical approach. She finds that although teachers know technique themselves, they need to learn how to communicate these ideas to the child. Therefore, she emphasizes a child-like approach to teaching technique, one that uses lots of imagery and creative ideas. She finds it important that teachers have several ways to reach the child, such as modeling, working on a closed keyboard cover, and having the child “take a ride on the teacher’s wrist.”

Powell addresses posture first, including bench height, foot support, distance from the keyboard, and sitting position. Next, hand position is discussed. Powell advises that the child should have a loose, natural hand that feels like a wet washrag or a stuffed animal; an arm resembling a straight road; and fingers that feel like rainbow arches or a bridge. The child first experiences these sensations away from the piano (on the closed keyboard cover, for example), since tension may creep in when the child approaches the piano.

Powell briefly described the technical focus of each of the four Twinkle variations. In Twinkle A, which begins with four sixteenth notes, students should move from the elbow; the speed with which this variation starts requires that students are loose and free. Twinkle B should be played with a wrist motion. For this variation, Powell uses the analogy of a “trampoline that gives a little and then springs back up.” Twinkle C is played closer to the keys, with a bit of wrist and forearm movement. Finger legato is the focus of Twinkle D, with the wrist used for arm weight.

Additional topics that Powell addresses in teacher training courses are tone production, potential technical problems and possible solutions, teaching tools, balance, dynamics, and shaping phrases. She stresses that technical work is a “preview of coming attractions.” In other words, concepts that will be found in the repertoire are covered much earlier in technique studies.

In summary, it is interesting to note that although the panel members come from different teaching systems and had not discussed their presentations before the conference, several common themes emerged. First of all, the advanced repertoire is used as a thoughtful guide to choosing what is taught as technique for beginners. Second, early technical work 29 begins with large gestures and progresses to smaller motions. Third, there is a focus on musical aspects of technique, such as tone production, phrasing, and balance. Finally, when teaching beginning teachers to teach beginning technique, all three panel members address not only *what* to teach, but *how* to teach it.

**Victoria Johnson** is Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Piano Pedagogy at Louisiana State University, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate piano pedagogy and supervises the group piano and piano preparatory programs. Dr. Johnson holds a Ph.D. in music education from the University of Oklahoma, an M.M. in performance from Bowling Green State University, and a B.A. in music and German from Luther College, with additional studies at the Westfalische Wilhelms-Universitat, Munster, Germany. She has written articles for Keyboard Companion and Alfred’s Piano Rendezvous and regularly gives presentations on repertoire by women composers, musician wellness, and teaching beginning piano students. Dr. Johnson previously served on the faculties of Luther College, Decorah, IA, and the Harper Music Academy and North Central College Piano Academy in suburban Chicago.

**Group Discussion: *Share Your Favorite Technology and Non-Technology Pedagogy Projects***

**Reporter: Erica Keithley**

At this summer’s GP3 Conference in Cincinnati, pedagogues were asked to share their favorite technology-focused and non-technology-focused projects in small group sessions. The following list describes the many projects suggested by instructors. The project topics cover a wide range and explore areas of intermediate and advanced repertoire, beginning methods, business and professional development, learning theories, teaching techniques, and observations.

**Non-Technology Pedagogy Projects**

**Repertoire**

Projects concerning standard teaching repertoire were very diverse and creative. Several favored projects required students to study and perform teaching pieces in mini-recitals:

* In-class recitals: Students learn and perform pieces from the teaching literature. They prepare a handout about the compositions that incorporates imagery.
* Design a theme recital: Students select a theme for a recital, such as music of spring, or pieces about animals, and choose repertoire to fit the theme. Music must be of appropriate specified levels. Students perform 10 of the selected pieces in an in-class recital.
* Record a CD of standard teaching repertoire: Students select two pieces from each level of Magrath’s *The Pianist’s Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Repertoire* and record them on a concert instrument in one session. Students also edit the CD and prepare liner notes.

Other repertoire projects focused on honing students’ skills in evaluating the level of difficulty of repertoire and identifying the teaching concerns associated with pieces. Understanding how to evaluate both the musical and technical difficulty of pieces and comparing pieces to determine which is most difficult were important skills that projects addressed. Also, developing the ability to finger passages, to apply information about performance practices, and to interpret an *urtext* score for an intermediate student were stressed.

* Leveling Repertoire: Students receive a packet of pieces which they must arrange in order according to level of difficulty from easiest to hardest. For help in leveling or to check answers students may refer to either *Intermediate Piano Repertoire* by Albergo and Alexander or *The Pianist’s Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Repertoire* by Magrath.
* Compose pieces at defined difficulty levels: Students write pedagogical piano pieces to match certain defined levels, such as those given in either of the books listed above.
* Edit intermediate repertoire: Students select a composer and choose several teaching pieces to include in their new edition. Students then locate an urtext version of the scores and edit the music, adding fingerings, expressive markings, ornament realizations and other explanations of performance practice. Students order the pieces in the edition according to level of difficulty.
* Analyze repertoire from various style periods: Students receive a packet of teaching repertoire and must identify the style of piece. They then list performance practice concerns that they would address in teaching the piece.

Duet and duo piano music was also an important area repertoire addressed in favorite projects. Several possible projects were mentioned, including 1) doing a survey of teaching literature; 2) listing strengths and weaknesses of duets; 3) researching historical duet/duo teams.

**Business and Professional Development**

Most projects concerning business in the piano pedagogy world focused on exploring the challenges of creating an independent piano studio. Three interesting and down-to-earth projects proposed emphasize preparing for interviews, learning to adjudicate, and learning to teach master classes. Finally, the last project in this category is perfect for the pedagogy student who hopes to become the next Lynn Freeman Olson!

* Design a private piano studio: Students make a budget and explore the financial aspects of setting up an independent studio. They learn how to deal with tax forms, zoning laws, and other legal regulations. They also formulate studio policy statements and design promotional materials for the studio.
* Prepare for a mock interview: Students are presented with information about how job searches are conducted, what sorts of questions are typically asked, how to deal with difficult or awkward questions, and how to best present oneself. After sufficient instruction and preparation, students are given a mock-interview by a panel of faculty and students.
* Learn to adjudicate: After discussing the elements upon which a performance judgement could be based and studying the adjudication forms used by various organizations, students are asked to design an adjudication form. They then sit on a mock adjudication panel, watch a video of several student performances, and adjudicate the performances.
* Masterclass teaching: The pedagogy instructor contacts local independent teachers and arranges for pre-college students to come to campus for a masterclass taught by graduate students. Graduate students are coached on teaching techniques appropriate to the masterclass format. Students video tape the masterclass teaching performance and give a written analysis of their teaching.
* You the composer: Investigate music publishing houses and compose an elementary piece to submit to a publisher.

**Methods**

A general survey of methods is at the heart of most beginning piano pedagogy courses, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. Students are expected to analyze reading and counting methods used, list strengths and weaknesses, evaluate supporting materials, and determine the overall value of each series. Other favorite projects that deal with methods included:

* Design a new method: Students make an outline of the first book of their own new method, including what concepts would be introduced, sequencing and pacing of concepts, activities, and music used.
* Classroom debate: Students discuss in class which method they believe to be best.
* Compose pieces to fit method books: After thoroughly studying a method, students compose their own pieces to fit that series. They should indicate at what point in the book their piece would be taught.

**Learning Theories**

Much has been written in the past 20 years in the areas of philosophy, psychology and sociology of music. Many piano pedagogues at the GP3 conference expressed an interest in helping their students put the theories into practice in their teaching. In fact, some teachers believe that pedagogy courses should begin with an exploration of learning theories. This will give the students a framework within which to evaluate all other topics covered, like method series, teaching techniques, etc.

* Exploration of Learning Theories: Students give brief in-class presentations on the work and writings of various thinkers in the areas of psychology, philosophy, and sociology of music. Authors presented could include Jerome Bruner, B. F. Skinner, Howard Gardner, Carl Rogers, David Kiersey, Keith Golay, Parker Palmer, Thomas Gordon, etc.
* Applying temperament theories to musical learning: Students explore the temperaments described in Kiersey’s *Please Understand Me* and look for ways to communicate musical solutions in ways appropriate to several different temperament types. The Kiersey sorter is available online at www.kiersey.com. Another valuable resource in applying learning theories to classroom situations is *Learning Patterns and Temperament Styles* by Keith Golay.
* Reflective Writing Projects: During the first week of class students write and essay on the topic, “Towards a Philosophy of Teaching,” and the following week they write on the topic “Towards a Career in Music.” For a final project at the end of the semester, students select one of the two topics to reconsider in light of their new knowledge and write an essay on the topic.

**Teaching Observations**

Like the survey of beginning piano methods, student observations are traditionally one of the most important aspects of pedagogy courses. Students are assigned to observe and analyze the teaching of master teachers. Teachers observed may be applied faculty, off-campus independent teachers, teachers in university outreach programs, or even non-piano music teachers. Observation assignments may be short-term projects in which student attend only one lesson with each teacher, or long-term projects in which students view many lessons of the same instructor. Several teachers suggested interesting variations to the standard teacher observations:

* Pre-observation interviews: Students interview teachers prior to observing them teach. They use a scripted handout that guides questions. The goal of the interview is to prepare the student have deeper insight while observing teaching.
* Video critiques: Students watch short video segments of intermediate and advanced students performing. They then give suggestions on what aspects of piano playing they as teacher would address with the students and what repertoire they would assign next.
* Interaction Analysis: Students view a videotape of a group piano lesson and analyze the teaching according to Flander’s types of activities.

**Teaching Techniques**

The vast number of teaching techniques employed by piano teachers boggles the mind, so a comprehensive list of projects that emphasize teaching technique is only an impossible dream. However, several excellent projects were proposed that focus student teachers’ attentions on how they teach:

* Case studies of piano students: Teachers present students with a brief description of an intermediate or advanced piano student, which includes lists of his current repertoire and his strengths and weaknesses. Student teachers then discuss what pieces they would assign next, how they would address technical and musical weaknesses, how long they expect it would take to fix the problems, and where they would expect to see improvement. Student teachers design a six-month curriculum for the piano student and present this in class.
* Teaching memorization: Students read chapters of Seymour Bernstein’s *With Your Own Two Hands* that deal with memorization and use his techniques to memorize a pieces. Students are then tested on the piece to determine how strong their memorization is.
* Making an abstract: Students design abstract reductions or maps of pieces to aid in the introduction or memorization of pieces. Rebecca Shockley’s book, *Musical Mapping* is a great reference for this project.
* Task analysis project: Students analyze a musical task to identify as many of the necessary steps or concepts needed to accomplish the task as they can. This helps student teachers recognize all of the steps that must go into teaching a skill and understand the best sequence for teaching those steps.
* Long-term lesson planning: Students plan out 10 weeks of a group piano class, including pacing of material, grading, examinations, etc. Students then compare plans and evaluate.

**Miscellaneous**

Piano pedagogues seem to feel the need to put their students on the hot seat, as can be seen in the next three projects!

* Impromptu explanations: The pedagogy instructor prepares a stack of index cards with one teaching topic labeled on each. Students randomly draw a card from the stack and must speak for two minutes on the topic given. The goal of the activity is to give students practice in thinking on their feet and responding verbally to questions about teaching.
* Piano Potluck: This activity is a variation of the above impromptu explanations. Students submit a list of musical and technical problems that teachers must address in lessons. Each problem is placed on an index card. Students then draw on card from the stack and do an impromptu teaching demonstration on how they would address the problem with a student.
* Impromptu teaching scenario: Students must invent ways to teach a group class of preschoolers in various ways: 1) without using any traditional music teaching tools; 2) using tools that support rhythm; 3) using recordings or children’s poetry.

Two other valuable projects that defy categorization are:

* Vocabulary for International Students: Students work on developing the vocabulary and mastering the grammatical constructs necessary to teach group or applied piano lessons.
* Reflective writing assignment: Students are assigned to write an essay about their own first two years of piano study. This makes them aware of how they were taught and draws attention to what they feel was most and least productive in their own childhood lessons. They can then choose whether to teach as they were taught or not.

**Technology Projects**

Technology has continues to change music education in profound and exciting ways. Comments made at the GP3 conference indicate that piano pedagogues feel a responsibility to provide their student teachers with the skills they will need to use technology productively in the classroom and private studio. However, it is not enough to know how to operate all of the latest programs and appliances; teachers must know how to use technology in a meaningful way. We should not use technology just to use it. We must ask ourselves: how will the technology support the pedagogy? Each of the following projects is designed to employ technology in the pursuit of pedagogical goals.

**Equipment Explorations**

Most conference attendees agreed that one of the most important skills students need is the ability to operate basic technology required for teaching both in an independent studio and in a college classroom. Many pedagogues structure the technology portions of their courses based on what each particular class seems to need to learn. Some students are already quite adept at dealing with technology and are familiar with many software programs; others need to learn basic skills. From operating overhead projectors to exploring the intricacies of web page development, pedagogy projects run the gamut!

* Functional technology: Pedagogy students learn to operate and exploit the features of an electronic keyboard lab in their teaching, including overhead projector, visualizer, teacher controller system, and MIDI sequencer.
* Disklavier: Students explore the various functions and capabilities of the Yamaha disklavier. Determining concrete teaching applications to exploit the instrument’s capabilities is emphasized.

**Sequencing projects**

Sequencing projects were among the most commonly mentioned technology projects. Many variations were suggested. Pedagogy student teachers use Performer or other sequencing programs to design sequences of standard teaching literature for use in private teaching or student practice. Ideas include sequencing right and left hand on different tracks so that students can play one hand while hearing the sequencer perform the other, creating practice loops in which one phrase or measure is repeated several times to aid in drilling sections, using notation functions to print out technical exercises, and creating new accompaniments for beginning level pieces. Other projects included sequencing hymn arrangements and accompaniments for standard teaching repertoire.

* Multi-voiced sequences Pedagogy students create a 32-measure sequence using eight tracks and percussion. Students learn how to edit and quantize their sequence. An in-class recital of sequences is the culmination of the project.
* Sequencing Projects for Group Piano Students: Fifth semester vocal majors in group piano class are required to sequence choral scores and accompaniments or four voice hymns. This is a valuable skill that students can use in their public school classrooms when they graduate.

**MIDI Accompaniments**

The vast and ever-growing body of MIDI accompaniments for methods, educational music, and group texts is an area in which teachers need expertise, a fact that is reflected in the application and evaluation projects below:

* Teaching with MIDI Accompaniments: At some institutions, student teachers are required to incorporate MIDI accompaniments into each lesson or class. They are coached on how to integrate MIDI accompaniments smoothly in the lesson, when to use them, and how to operate the equipment quickly.
* Analysis of MIDI accompaniments: Pedagogy students evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of select MIDI accompaniment disks. They are challenged to determine what makes a good accompaniment.

**Software**

Teachers have created several projects utilizing both music and non-music software programs.

* PowerPoint presentations: Pedagogy students receive a tutorial on PowerPoint and present a class project using slides.
* Notation Projects: Students use Finale or Sibelius to create scores for pieces that they compose.
* Database projects: Pedagogy students create a database listing titles, composers, publishers, and levels of difficulty of educational pieces. This project acquaints students with how to operate databases and produces a handy list of pieces that could be used in locating and selecting works for piano students.
* Music Theory and History software: Pedagogy students explore and evaluate various software programs that teach music theory and history. Some of the favorite theory and history programs were Alfred’s *Essentials of Music Theory, Music Ace*, *Music Kit, MIBAC Theory Lessons*, *Free Style*, and *Practicum musicum*.

**Business applications**

A home computer is indispensable for the independent piano teacher. Teachers can use spreadsheet programs to keep track of student billing, databases to keep student information records, and word processing programs to design recital programs. Projects that develop skills in using a home computer in an independent studio include:

* Website development: Pedagogy students develop websites for use to advertise an independent piano studio or to provide information for piano students.
* Design a studio newsletter: Pedagogy students use desktop publishing software to create a “back to school” studio newsletter to be sent to parents and students.

In small group sessions at the GP3 conference, pedagogy instructors gave several suggestions of how teachers can continue to learn about current technology. Teachers can invite a technology expert to give a guest lecture to the pedagogy class, attend MTNA technology symposium or other educational events, or enlist the aid of technology savvy students. In addition, several books were mentioned to aid in the development of technology projects. They included *Teaching Toward Tomorrow* by Sam Holland, *Teaching With Technology*, and the *MTNA Guide to Instructional Software*.

**Erica Keithley** is currently a candidate for the Ph. D. in Piano Pedagogy and Music Education degree at the University of Oklahoma. Ms. Keithley has served on the faculties of the University of Illinois and Georgia Southwestern State University, teaching applied piano, group piano, music theory, and aural skills. She has also taught children in a variety of settings, including serving as faculty for the Illinois Summer Youth Music Camps for the past six years and teaching the demonstration group piano class for beginners at the University of Oklahoma.

**Lynda Metelsky Presentation: *Perspectives on Pedagogy Teaching: Testing and Evaluating Pedagogy Students at the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto***

**Reporter: Thomas Swenson**

Lynda Metelsky presented an intriguing perspective on piano pedagogy training in Canada at the 2002 National Group Piano/Piano Pedagogy Forum. Although her informative lecture outlined both general and specific elements of the system, this article will attempt to provide a general outline of teacher training at the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Metelsky is the department head at The Glenn Gould Professional School of the Royal Conservatory of Music where she teaches piano and piano pedagogy, and also coordinates the teaching internship program. Additionally, she teaches piano at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, is a clinician for the Frederick Harris Music Company, and is a member of the College of Examiners for the Royal Conservatory of Music.

While many American piano instructors have used anthologies from the Royal Conservatory and the *Celebration Series* graded piano method, many of us are probably unaware of the unique examination system that underlies the regimented and rigorous system of our northern neighbors. Not only does the organization provide an examination system that will provide a constant level of evaluation throughout a student’s training as a future performer, it also provides a similar benchmark program to train and certify piano teachers, culminating with the Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Music designation.

There are mainly two types of pedagogy programs offered - one at a graduate level through the Glenn Gould Professional School (the only one of its kind in Canada) and through the conservatory’s community music school. It was the latter that Metelsky focused on.

An Associate Diploma (ARCT) with emphasis in Performance or Pedagogy is awarded to students passing a performance exam and its co-requisites, although students often pursue both diplomas. The ARCT not only requires a high-level of musicianship and artistry (demonstrated in the performance exam), but a thorough knowledge of music as an academic discipline: a written exams cover 4 areas - history, analysis, counterpoint and theory.

Metelsky stated that in order to begin the ARCT pedagogy diploma (commonly referred to as the “Teacher’s Diploma) students must have minimally passed the Grade Ten Performance Examination with “honors.” This performance requirement indicates that the student has already achieved many skills of a successful performer and possesses a relatively high level of knowledge concerning performance issues. Although the exams can be completed at age 18, many people wait until after an undergraduate or graduate degree.

The flexibility of the program, Lynda Meltelsky emphasized, certainly contributes to its success. Students can prepare for it at their own pace and in a variety of settings. They are allowed many choices throughout their preparation - and even in the actual examination - so that they can focus on their particular strengths or interests. With examination centers throughout the country, students usually prepare for the exams at home and take them at the nearest venue.

The performance requirements for the ARCT Performance Diploma include a concert etude (many by Chopin and Liszt), and one piece from each of five style periods. Representative literature from level ten includes Bach *Preludes and Fugues*, a complete Classical sonata, an advanced Romantic character piece, and a contemporary piece. The contemporary repertoire seeks to include very recent compositions by international composers, but with an emphasis on Canadian composers, thus encouraging the awareness of living composers. Although there is a separate list for those seeking just the teaching diploma, most students choose repertoire that is included in both the performance and teaching diplomas with the eventual goal of achieving both.

Regarding the theoretical component of the exam, Metelsky mentioned many concepts and ideas that are quite similar to the requirements of many American undergraduate music degrees. Knowledge of scales, harmony, counterpoint, and four-part writing are only some of the areas covered.

The music history component is divided into three subdivisions beginning with a broad overview and continuing with more in-depth studies of the styles of the 16th through 18th centuries, and 19th and 20th centuries. Both the theory and history components usually take about three years of preparation and are prepared for in conjunction with the piano exams (beginning between the Grade 6 and 9 exams).

The pedagogy component of the exams usually takes about one year of solid preparation. It is often prepared through private tutoring or small-group instruction. Although no specific texts are required in studying for the exam, a list of reading resources and practice exams are included in the published study guides. Teaching experience and observation are strongly encouraged along with reflective journals of those experiences. Metelsky showed some sample areas that are covered in the written exam: pedaling, teaching and learning styles, business aspects, etc.

I found that one of the more unique parts of the exam is the editing of a musical selection. Metelsky explained that this is done without the aid of an actual keyboard. The student must add whatever signs and symbols to the score they feel might contribute to a stronger musical presentation - dynamics, fingering, articulations, phrasing, etc. She revealed that this portion allows students to assimilate the knowledge they have acquired and use it in a creative and logical manner.

The oral portion of the exam is called the “Viva Voce.” Included in this portion are some listening tests, sight-reading, technical requirements, repertoire, and questions. These questions are often open-ended - allowing students to display prioritization skills, individuality, and creativity.

The student must be prepared to discuss current teaching methods, collections, and contemporary compositions. Lastly, the student prepares 27 junior and intermediate-level pieces from the syllabus. Although they may only play one piece from each category, they will be asked to discuss pedagogical aspects and supplemental materials they might use.

Preparation for the “Viva Voce” exam usually is done in an individual lesson situation, or possibly in small groups. With each student preparing so many pieces, it can be difficult to do in a larger teaching environment. Each student tends to pick different pieces, which requires individual attention in dealing with the artistic, theoretical, and pedagogical goals. As is common elsewhere, without assistance students often perform these intermediate pieces in a pedantic, non-expressive manner. Metelsky emphasized that the evaluators for this oral exam look at each student’s ability to communicate in age-appropriate language, their professionalism, enthusiasm, and musicianship. It is not expected that they will know the answers to each and every question but, rather, that they have begun to explore the various facets of piano teaching. The punctuality, attire, and organization of the student’s materials demonstrate this professionalism to a certain extent.

Most Canadian teachers were brought up in this system, which translates to a strong understanding of the philosophy. But to become an examiner requires more than just knowledge and understanding of the system. The examiners must apply, interview, attend a summertime training program, become an apprentice for at least two exam sessions with an experienced examiner, and go through a trial period before becoming a full-fledged examiner. This intense training - which helps to maintain a reliable standard between different examiners - is obviously part of what makes the system so strong. In addition, each examiner must attend at least one workshop presented by the College each year as “professional development.” The critique sheets, which are provided to each person taking an exam, are regularly reviewed by the chairperson of the College to insure the highest quality of comments and any necessary feedback to the examiner.

Not only does the ARCT diploma serve as certification for independent teaching in homes and community schools, but they are also sometimes used in lieu of an audition for further academic study. The diploma is often a requirement to be a member of local and regional music organizations. Although not a bona fide degree due to its limited scope, the ARCT diploma with emphasis in Pedagogy has contributed a great deal to the consistently fine training of pianists in Canada.

Metelsky briefly spoke about the Glenn Gould Professional School’s Master’s program in Pedagogy - which has similar requirements to many programs in this country. This school is housed in the same building as the Conservatory with many of the same faculty, but is able to award undergraduate and graduate degrees. It is built around a two-year curriculum that culminates in a recital, thesis, or lecture-recital. There are weekly master classes, observations, and student-teaching opportunities. Courses in library studies/research methods, theory, history, literature, pedagogy, and a couple of elective classes complete the coursework. The students usually teach only one student each year - a university secondary keyboard major - due to the way the university is structured. Although they would like to recruit more younger students from the community, the community music school associated with the university relies on these students to fill their own programs. Technology is the main area that Metelsky would like to see improved. Group piano lessons for pre-college students are a rarity in Canada. There is such a strong tradition of individualized lessons that it will probably be quite some time, if ever, before it gains popularity.

In conclusion, I offer several personal observations. Having been a piano student of a teacher that was very involved in the Minnesota Music Teachers Association, I grew up taking theory and performance tests nearly every year from sixth grade up through high school. Following my master’s degree, I taught at a large community music school and often referred to those practice exams, technical requirements, and repertoire selections to guide me in bringing up a new generation of musicians. Even today, teaching college students, I think my sequencing of skills is partly a result of having been cultivated in such a system. Certainly many other regions and states offer similar curriculums and guidelines. Many of our “current” teaching methods, strategies, and traditions are tested and retained in this global cyclic process. I mention the term “global” because for the past century students and teachers have traveled throughout the world sharing their gifts and insight. Understanding alternative methods for preserving the music we love and cherish challenges our philosophies and energizes our teaching. The Royal Conservatory of Music’s ARCT Teachers Diploma offers a unique perspective on a well-established curriculum. Most Canadian piano teachers are certified through the ARCT diplomas. The music-training program used throughout Canada offers not only a somewhat flexible curriculum for music students, but also is a model for training piano teachers.

**Thomas Swenson**, Instructor of Piano and Theory, is completing his Doctorate of Philosophy in Music Education with emphasis in Piano Pedagogy at The University of Oklahoma. He has also studied at Minnesota State University, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro . An active solo and collaborative performer, his main teachers have been Dr. John Salmon, Dr. Jane Magrath, Dr. Barbara Fast, and Mr. Howard Lubin. He has taught piano and music theory at UNCG, NC A&T State University, and The University of Oklahoma along with serving as assistant conductor of the Cincinnati Men’s Chorus, and director of music at several churches. In 1999, he performed at Texas Christian University as part of the Teachers Program of the Van Cliburn Institute. Many awards and scholarships have been bestowed on his piano students at the Music Academy of North Carolina, where he has served as recital coordinator, faculty representative to the board of directors, directed the outreach program, and led numerous master classes. While working on his coursework in Oklahoma, Mr. Swenson has been featured at the 2001 Symposium of World Music, the National MENC 2002 Convention (Nashville), and the Oklahoma Music Teacher’s Association State Convention. An article will be published January 2003 in The Piano Pedagogy Forum (a web-based periodical). A past Vice President of the Greensboro Music Teachers Association, he is currently a member of MTNA.

**Group Discussions: *How Do You Test and Evaluate the Work of Pedagogy Students in Courses and Internships at Your Institution?***

**Reporter: Christopher Hahn**

The question posed for the final afternoon of the conference involved the use of evaluation in pedagogy programs. One participant said, “the very challenging demands to work with different teachers and teaching types, and different student’s personalities and learning styles, makes having a standard procedure of evaluation almost impossible.” The process of testing and evaluating a student’s learning and development as a teacher can be a delicate topic that often is based on subjective standards or opinions rather than objective facts. In the discussion groups, various ideas were shared about ways to make the task of evaluation clearer for the teacher and the student. Also addressed were ways to deal with internships and the observation of student teachers.

The discussion groups addressed many areas, but the comments primarily focused in two categories: providing suggestions and feedback for student-teachers; and providing grade evaluations of both pedagogy courses and student-teaching.

**1) Suggestions and Feedback for Student-Teachers**

*Situations for Observation of Teaching*

The following represents a compilation of responses from the participants at the conference regarding teaching opportunities that are in place at their institutions.

**Internships** are being incorporated into pedagogy programs through community music schools, preparatory programs, and independent studios. It was mentioned that in some cases the pedagogy students are responsible for finding a supervising teacher. For experience in teaching the applied lesson, other colleges utilize secondary piano students. These internships give a much-needed teaching opportunity for pedagogy students, and can be individualized in many instances to fit the student-teacher’s needs. Most of the internships are included as a segment of pedagogy class. Susanna Garcia from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette suggested that internship opportunities could be made available in public school systems that are adopting group piano labs into their curriculum.

The primary difficulty with internships as indicated by most discussion groups is finding time to schedule lessons and to evaluate the student-teachers. Also troublesome is that some teachers do not like being observed while they teach which poses obvious impediments to a student-teacher who wants to learn by observation.

**Teaching Assistantships** are incorporated at many of the colleges represented at the conference. Regarding the evaluation of assistants, many schools indicated that they require new TA’s to arrive one week early for a 4-day intensive training workshop. In regard to assigning final grades for group piano situations, most institutions adopt a policy where the final will be graded by a team consisting of a faculty member and the TA responsible for the class, and any discussion regarding the final grade occurs at this time. In a smaller group piano situation, some schools use a team-teaching approach: the faculty member demonstrates for 2 weeks, then helps the TA for 2 weeks, then functions as an observer thereafter, with the TA doing the bulk of the teaching.

*Observation of Pedagogy Students by the Professor*

For this process, the two options most commonly discussed were live observation and the use of videotaping.

**Live observation** by the professor could include the following:

* a demonstration class taught by the student-teacher
* student-teacher private lessons every other week
* the pedagogy class watches the student lesson and make comments during class time

It is helpful to set up a 15-minute meeting immediately after the student-teaching to discuss the lesson. Some suggested having the student keep a journal to be handed in periodically or to email the professor to give feedback. At some institutions, both the professors and graduate students evaluate the undergraduates.

At Ohio University, Gail Berenson said that students were assigned a student at the lower she observed the lesson. From the same discussion group, Meg Gray noted that she teaches a 45-minute demonstration class each week, then observes each pedagogy student teach one student from the class every week. She is able to compare the lessons in class because the students all teach the same lesson plan each week.

**Videotaping** was a popular choice for observation among the groups, and some professors are able to get load credit for the time required for watching the tapes, depending on the number of students enrolled. In larger group piano situations:

* 2 videotapes are required from each TA per semester
* a written evaluation is provided to the TA by the professor
* one-to-one discussions with TA

Before submitting the tape to the professor, it is important that the students observe and critique the tape themselves and write a review of their teaching. Martha Hilley emphasized this by saying “although I give my comment sheet at the end of the class, I tell the students not to read my comments until they have watched their videos and made their own assessments.” In order for the student to benefit even more from videotaping, Hilley stated that “two video cameras are better than one - to tape not only the teacher, but the reactions from the students as well. The student-teacher needs to learn to read the body language of the class.”

Another approach to reviewing video tapes as suggested by Tim Shook from Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas is having the student-teacher critique the tape according to a personalized evaluation form which highlights the areas each student feels are important to cover in a lesson. At some institutions, internship students meet as a class and together they watch a tape each week and make comments in a friendly environment. The importance of peer review and evaluation should not be overlooked, but should not be implemented during the first semester, giving the students a chance to settle into their teaching style.

**2) Grade Evaluations**

Many participants agreed that there is great difficulty in assigning grades to a process that is inherently subjective. Each group indicated some level of dissatisfaction with assigning grades, and instead encourages and emphasizes discussion and feedback in the classroom.

The most common evaluation of pedagogy students as indicated in the discussion groups is based on class projects. In a performance situation such as group piano, more specific definitions are needed in grading, such as correct notes and rhythms equate to a “C” (meeting acceptable standards), whereas the inclusion of articulation and musical nuance is a “B” or an “A”. In each case, the ideal situation would focus away from the grade and more toward the goals of the class from both the teacher and student point of view. However, it is essential to a student’s progress that a grade be assessed and awarded, as this is the only measure of a student’s grasp of the material covered, and it is the only method for a teacher to ensure the assigned work is being done.

Marcia Bosits and Linda Christensen led a detailed and thorough discussion within their group, and summarized the evaluation of pedagogy as having two distinct points of view. The student-teacher feels if he/she puts forth a full effort, then he/she deserves an “A”. The supervisor, however, wants to honestly reflect each student-teacher’s current teaching skill and to develop strategies for improvement. This discussion group indicated in clear terms what they felt to be the best kind of evaluation, which includes motivating student-teachers to want to develop specific aspects of their teaching, and involves the pedagogy student and the teacher in pinpointing the areas for improvement.

*a) Grading Courses in Piano Pedagogy*

*Projects*

Some voiced the opinion that it is difficult to make changes to the standard class projects that are assigned to pedagogy students, or to leave some out at the inclusion of others. Popular assignments included writing reviews of teaching literature and method books. For such projects, Lori Rhoden emphasized that the key element in reviewing method books is to develop the students’ ability to recognize “what is being taught?” An extensive and broad range of projects from one group consisted of the following ideas:

* Studio brochure with policies
* File of method books
* Write a syllabus for a pedagogy class
* Write a “philosophy of education”
* Write an application for a mock-grant
* Graduate masterclass (adjudicating experience)
* Write an article for a keyboard magazine
* Prepare a pedagogy workshop
* Compile bibliographies of specified topics
* Use “Scribe” software to evaluate videotaped teaching
* Compositions for a pedagogy method
* Write literature reviews
* Compile videotape of their best teaching clips
* Analysis and/or study of intermediate repertoire
* Lecture-recital
* Business organization

*Testing in Pedagogy*

In the area of pedagogy, the creative mind should be fostered more than the art of recollection. In light of this, it would seem as though traditional testing does not have a place in a pedagogy course. As one participant remarked, “the pedagogy instructor teaches principles, not facts for regurgitation”.

Although the common feeling among the groups was that projects are more appropriate to effective learning, the overwhelming majority of participants said that tests are given at their institution as it reinforces learning. “Take home” exams administered for completion in the final weeks of class offer a chance for reflection on what the student has learned that semester, and how he or she can apply this to future teaching. A number of teachers at the conference give oral exams in place of a final to help develop the student’s ability to think on their feet. It could also be applied in a situation where the teacher becomes the student for the exam, requiring the student to be resourceful and creative in thinking up a solution to the problems encountered in the “lesson-exam”.

*Some Ideas for Testing*

Another group had some interesting ideas to share for assigning grades that would stress the importance of playing musically:

* Listening tests of teaching repertoire from anthology CD’s
* Playing tests for teaching repertoire (in class)
* Tests on teacher duets

It was pointed out that grading other faculty member’s student can be a tricky situation -if necessary, have those who are weak with advanced literature perform intermediate literature.

*b) Grading of Teaching*

In this aspect of evaluation, a variety of opinions circulated through the discussion groups. Bosits and Christensen, as representatives of the programs at Northwestern University and Wayne State University, clearly pointed out that “we recognize grade expectations are high, and we must explain our criteria in as much detail as possible.”

With the necessity of assigning a grade for each student, it should be determined what is most important for each student’s development. Should the focus be on the sequencing of the lesson, the organization of the lesson, or the overall content of the lesson? Perhaps a plan can be developed for him or her at the beginning of the semester. This will allow a clearer idea of what is expected of the student and how you will help them to achieve these goals. Ann Gipson says evaluating teaching improvement is difficult and suggests giving sequential steps to the student. This will provide a grade based on improvement within the standards and guidelines that you provide rather than subjective grading based on the student’s relation to other more or less experienced individuals in the class. Most groups felt that an A- was “a good grade”.

The teaching process is based on trial and error while engaged in the teaching situation, and how the student assimilates information and adjusts his or her approach. Because of this, it is important to note where a student comes from and where they end up after a given period of time - this is the only fair assessment of their learning. The teachers see discussion and feedback as the cornerstone to the learning of their students, and grading is seen as generally unimportant from the teacher’s standpoint with the exception of providing motivation. In the end, however, the teacher has a responsibility to give the student-teacher an indication of where they are in their field in relation to their colleagues and as such the grading element is considered important by participants of the conference.

**Criteria for Grading Students Teaching in Pedagogy Courses**

The group led by Michael Benson and Lori Rhoden submitted the following as a possible grading checklist:

* How is the student-teacher introducing a concept?
* Is the student-teacher diagnosing problems?
* Is the student-teacher finding the essence of problems?

The use of a checklist is highly recommended for grading as it will clearly show what is positive about the teaching and the issues that need to be addressed, as well as provide the student with the important criteria that is being graded.

Some questions to ponder based on comments from other discussion groups:

* Should feedback have a negative or positive slant to it?
* Is teacher modeling used in your current situation? If so, does it work? If not, could it be incorporated?
* Would a pass/fail approach be more useful in some situations?
* Is parental feedback considered important with internship and demo class teachers?

All conference attendees agreed on the importance of documenting grades, keeping clear grade books, reasons for assigning a poor grade if necessary, and keeping grades on file for up to two years.

**What the Pedagogy Students are Saying**

At the conference, many of the participants were graduate students and/or student-teachers. The design of the small-sized group discussion provided an important interaction between the teachers and the students. Not only were the teachers able to hear the concerns of other students, but it allowed the students to have a voice in shaping their future education.

As it pertained to the grading and evaluation of their courses, one student felt that the lack of specific tests was frustrating, and would like more feedback. However, teachers in the group responded with frustration at having so much important information to cover in only two semesters. They feel there is no time for tests and that group projects, presentations and observations are more effective. Another student expressed disappointment that their graduate teaching assistantship experience consisted of no feedback due to the fact that she had only been observed once.

The students at various programs around the country gave a brief sketch of their current pedagogy class situation and how they are graded:

* Class sizes are very small
* Not many grades are given
* Class discussions and participation is a large part of the grade
* Final exams are administered
* Observations and presentations are important

**Summary**

Most attendees could relate to the topic of grading in pedagogy classes and internships. In academia, grading is a necessity that is deemed important by students and administrators alike. Yet most professors and teachers, especially in a discipline as subjective as the arts, felt it represents an inappropriate measure of achievement. Professors and supervisors must be sensitive to all learning styles in the classroom and should grade students according to individual progress in their teaching. A more personalized approach can be helpful in planning what each semester’s goals will be based on the experience of each student-teacher.

**Christopher Hahn**, pursued his early training through the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Ontario and received the Associate Diploma in performance with first-class honors. Mr. Hahn has since furthered his study of performing and teaching in Canada, the United States and France. He has earned the Licentiate Diploma in performance from Trinity College of Music in London, England, and in 2000 he received the designation Fellow of Trinity College, the highest honor given by the College. In addition, he holds an Honors Bachelor of Music from Wilfrid Laurier University in performance and music education, and a Master of Music degree in performance from Michigan State University. Christopher has served as an adjudicator for MTNA, presented workshops at the OMTA state convention and at the Glenn Gould has been published in American Music Teacher. He has recently been invited to join the esteemed College of Examiners of the Royal Conservatory of Music. Mr. Hahn has taught for the Community Music School at Michigan State University, the Flint Institute of Music and at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Michigan. Currently, Mr. Hahn is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in performance and pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma where he serves as a graduate teaching assistant in applied and group piano. This past year he was appointed by the faculty as lecturer in undergraduate piano literature. He is also on the faculty at Oklahoma City University where he teaches group piano.

**Group Discussion: *Self-Selecting Small Group Discussions***

**Reporter: Karen Beres**

In this final forum for discussion at the 2002 conference, participants were encouraged to select a group in which to participate whose description most closely matched their own teaching assignments. Choices for group selection included:

• People who teach at undergraduate institutions whose loads are limited to the piano area.

• People who teach at undergraduate institutions whose loads include work in other areas (theory, aural skills, music appreciation/history, administration).

• People who supervise graduate students.

While topics of successes and concerns varied greatly amongst the groups, as one might expect from a population whose members teach in such varied job situations as those listed above, some common subjects were examined as well. A summation of each group’s minutes, taken from written and typed notes of group reporters, encapsulates some last thoughts shared by conference participants in these concluding discussion sessions.

**People Who Teach at Undergraduate Institutions Whose Loads Are Limited to the Piano Area**

*How Do You Fill Your Load?*

Load credit appeared as a topic of concern in all three of the discussion groups. Concerns voiced by this gathering included inconsistencies and lack of understanding from administration in addressing what duties constitute a full load, particularly in the area of classroom keyboard teaching. Ways of measuring a full-time group piano load varied greatly, ranging from 12-16 contact hours per week. One unique situation at TCU was mentioned in which class piano falls under the supervision of the preparatory division, and the appointment is not counted on the load credits of the teachers at all. However, instructors are paid a separate salary through the prep department for teaching class piano sections, and quite a few adjuncts work in a split capacity between the music school and the preparatory department.

*How Do You Use Performance Skills in Class Piano?*

A few younger professionals in the group expressed a need for understanding ways in which their performance background and knowledge could be applied to their group piano teaching. Responses from experienced teachers touched on the idea that the classroom is yet another “performance venue” in which a teacher who possesses a high level of performance skills can relate more successfully to students and in turn can be a more effective classroom teacher. Also, several group instructors spoke about maintaining performance schedules in addition to teaching a full course load.

*How Much is a Piano Student Expected to Practice?*

Instructors shared guidelines of recommended hours of practice time and phrases used to convey practice expectations in course syllabi. The most popular ranges of anticipated student practice time ran from 2 hours of outside student preparation for a 1 credit course, to 2 hours per day for music education majors and 4 hours a day for performance students. On class piano syllabi, expressions conveying the necessity of practice included “Thirty minutes of practice a day are expected and required in order to pass” and “Expect to spend a minimum of 30 minutes a day in keyboard practice.”

*How Are Secondary Piano Juries Conducted and Graded?*

Standards for juries differed quite a bit, from a requirement that students play a jury consisting of three pieces, one from memory, for a panel including two faculty members, to a school in which no jury is demanded of secondary students and grades come solely from the studio teacher. Consensus at a number of schools is that graded juries create a suggested grading range, in which the studio teacher may use his or her discretion to assign a semester grade no higher or lower than one letter grade away from the letter grade assessed by the jury.

**People Who Teach at Undergraduate Institutions Whose Loads Include Work In Other Areas (Theory, Aural Skills, Music Appreciation/History)**

*How Are Loads Filled and Load Credit Assigned?*

The balance of loads between studio teaching, classroom instruction, and accompanying assignments represented a main area of discussion for this group. One important issue addressed by the participants centered on what to do when piano studios must continue to accept new students after course teaching assignments have already been made and the professor’s schedule is full. Group members suggested dropping or transferring non-music major piano students and counting the extra hours of class teaching as overload. Strong support from the administration was identified as crucial in running a music department where many of the faculty loads are divided between several assignments.

*How Is Accompanying Handled as Part of Load Credit?*

Accompanying assignments at several institutions counted for 2 hours of credit for four hours of accompanying, and at another school, 1 hour of credit equaled three hours of playing. Other schools hired accompanists outside of load credit and paid additional salary for the supplementary duties. Accompanying was identified as one area in which consistency of load credit may need to be addressed, as the guidelines for load credit vary greatly.

*Do Faculty Teaching General Education Courses Enjoy Their Assignments, and Should All Faculty of a Small Department Do So?*

The majority of opinions offered in this discussion group supported the idea that all members of a small department should be assigned teaching duties outside of his or her main area of expertise. Experiences teaching outside of the major area were seen as positive, and faculty members in such departments expressed the feeling of being a member of a team and part of a liberal arts philosophy. Concluding remarks from the group recommended this type of position as one that is wonderful for young professionals learning how to teach. The diversity in teaching assignments makes life interesting, and participants felt involved in the pedagogy of teaching at all times.

**People Who Supervise Graduate Students**

*How Are New Teaching Assistants Trained?*

Concern for the training of inexperienced and experienced teaching assistants alike occupied the beginning minutes of this group’s conversation. Training requirements for incoming TAs included a one-semester, 2-hour course consisting of one hour per week with the supervising teacher and one hour observing a class piano instructor, and a university-wide “Graduate Applied Teaching” course at another school. A third school required all new TAs to take a 3-hour class with their supervisor, for which they had meetings every week. Other scenarios encompassed day-long orientation meetings, intensive training sessions during orientation week followed by periodic meetings with the supervising teacher, and observation assignments in the teaching area throughout the semester. While many new TAs are encouraged to take pedagogy courses, it is not a requirement at all schools, and it was noted that attempts to make it a requirement are sometimes met with resistance from applied faculty who view it as taking away from “precious practice time.”

*How Are TAs Evaluated?*

Most supervisors visit classes taught by TAs periodically. Studio piano TAs are less likely to be observed than those teaching group piano, and supervisors suggest sitting in on juries of secondary students in order to gain perspective on the ability of their TAs in teaching studio piano. Group piano observations were examined in greater depth, with various suggestions made on the topic of scheduled or drop-in observations. Possibilities for combining the two types of observation included:

* letting TAs know that supervising teachers may drop in at any time, and perhaps asking for a lesson plan when doing so
* requiring a certain number of teaching videotapes per semester, also involving self-evaluation
* saying that observations will take place during weeks 7-9, etc.
* schedule a personal observation and videotape at the same time (one former TA really appreciated this)

Acknowledgment of how frightening it is for TAs to be observed was made, and teachers noted that the situation can be very hard no matter how nice the supervisor may be to the TA during and after the observation experience.

*How Do You Handle Lesson Plans With Your TA?*

Some instructors give very detailed plans, especially at the beginning of the term, then give students increasingly greater freedom to develop his or her own style and approach to teaching further into the semester. Some former TAs remembered wishing for more guidance at the beginning of the term, but later found that they learned a lot by having decisions in planning and pacing left up to them.

**Summary**

Ideas for investigation that evolved from the three discussion groups highlighted the need to address disparities in load credit assignment for applied and classroom teachers and to design suggested guidelines for equipment necessary in keyboard programs, particularly in the area of group piano teaching. Future exploratory surveys addressing the existing disparities in load and equipment were proposed as possible activities for future conference meetings.

One conference participant shared her thoughts concerning the valuable ideas that she took with her from the 2001 GP3 Conference. Upon hearing the way that other schools were implementing improvements in the group piano and pedagogy areas and handling issues that also were occurring at her school, this professor took ideas from the conference back to her dean, saying, “This is what other schools are doing. We need to start making changes in order to keep our program at the forefront of the field.” Based on the data from the conference, changes were instituted at that school. Hopefully, forums such as this last self-selecting small group discussion hour provided the opportunity for similar exchanges of ideas among participating teachers. Through these times of group interaction and sharing of ideas at the 2002 GP3 Conference, the process of change will continue for the related fields of group piano and piano pedagogy.

**Karen Beres** is Coordinator of Group Piano at the North Carolina School of the Arts. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education (summa cum laude) from Lebanon Valley College (PA) and a Master of Music in Piano Performance from Bowling Green State University (OH). She is currently completing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance and Pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma under the direction of Dr. Jane Magrath and Dr. Edward Gates. While at OU, she served as Interim Coordinator of Group Piano and Undergraduate Piano Pedagogy during the 2000-2001 year and was awarded one of three campus-wide Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant awards. Ms. Beres has also served on the faculty of Bowling Green State University in the position of Coordinator of Group Piano. Active as a solo and collaborative artist, she has performed throughout the United States. In addition, she has spent five summers as a member of the Accompanying Staff of the Interlochen Arts Camp.