MTNA e-journal
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MTNA

National Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Forum

Poster Sessions • Lightning Talks • Performances

From The Editorial Committee

GP3 2024

It's hard to believe we're already halfway through the semester; wasn't it just yesterday that we were gathered in Cincinnati for our biennial National Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Forum (GP3)? I, personally, am still mulling over the pedagogical techniques, resources and repertoire I gleaned from this year's Forum. While I may be deep in the "grind" at this point in the semester—I was just submitting midterm grades this morning!—the presentations from GP3 have a way of seeping into my teaching, shoring me up for the long school year ahead.

Dr. Sarah Rushing, NCTM

I'm especially excited to share this issue of the *MTNA e-Journal* with you. For those who were in attendance at GP3, you may find in revisiting these session reports that the content has been distilled, seeping into your day-to-day interactions with students. Others will enjoy reading about the latest research in our field, perhaps piquing your interest to attend in the future.

We have no shortage of incredible conferences in our field; as professional musicians and teachers, we take our continuing education seriously. I relish any opportunity to attend a conference, whether it's at the regional, state or national level. Still, there is something special about GP3. The relatively small scale (at least when compared to the behemoths that are the MTNA National Conference and TMTA State Conference!) lends itself to a more intimate atmosphere, facilitating deeper connections and networking opportunities. Most notably, the GP3 Steering Committee infallibly curates programs that address the most pressing topics in piano pedagogy head-on.

At this year's Forum, we learned about the continuously evolving role of artificial intelligence; presenter Le Binh Anh Nguyen gave a captivating demonstration of how we can use AI in our teaching and community engagement, providing fodder for techies and luddites alike. Chan Kiat Lim led a timely panel on "Cultivating a Global Perspective in Higher Education"; panelists Margarita Denenburg, Luis Sanchez and Siok Lian Tan offered their candid reflections on their time as international students, leading to a lively discussion about how we can best support international students in our own circles. Teaching Generations Z and Alpha was another common theme; sessions by Lynn Worcester Jones, Emily Barr and Melody Morrison highlighted the joys and challenges inherent in teaching a changing population. Yours truly was honored to present recent data on the higher education job market and graduation rates; my conversations with attendees left me with renewed energy to continue discussions about this urgent and multidimensional topic.

You'll read about these sessions and more in this issue of the *e-Journal*. Additionally, we highlight two recent doctoral documents. One abstract features the latest research on the composer, Max Reger. The second serves as a pedagogical reference for new professionals developing a piano literature curriculum. As a whole, this issue offers an immense wealth of knowledge. It is my sincere hope that you find the spark you need to revive your excitement for teaching as we head into the long winter ahead.

—Dr. Sarah Rushing, NCTM
West Texas A&M University

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Is Music a Universal Language?

Presented by Dr. Anthony Brandt

In this engaging session, Anthony Brandt showed presenters first-hand which elements of music may not be universal. He began from the perspective that music doesn't need to be translated, and he challenged the reality of that perspective from several angles. Brandt explained that while music is a "universal" feature in cultures (in that there has never been a society, that we know of, without music), this universality does not mean that the music itself doesn't necessitate translation. He then took us through the process of exploring whether humans have a universal preference for certain types of sound.

Referencing Isabelle Peretz's 2003 study, "Brain Specialization for Music: New Evidence for Congenital Amusia," Brandt first addressed the idea of two "anchorage" points for understanding music: organizing pitches into scales and ascribing regular beats. He explored how these two seemingly universal concepts vary widely between cultures, to the point of not even existing. Brandt had many short, recognizable musical examples throughout the presentation. When introducing the idea of scale organization, he first played "one of the most famous descending scales," from Tschaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, to demonstrate. Brandt then contrasted the clear Tschaikovsky scale against Mongolian throat singing, which lacks scalar organization. He continued to expand our global perspectives as we considered aboriginal didgeridoo music or the unique tuning of gamelan ensembles, both of which do not require the cognitive anchor of scale relationships. To drive home the point that pitch organization is not a universal priority, Brandt juxtaposed Kermit the Frog's popular singing against Siberian Khomus playing. Kermit the Frog sang melodies where only rhythmic and timbral elements are present.

Next, Brandt addressed how the "universal" anchorage point of ascribing regular beats appears throughout cultures. Through a variety of examples, he explored how a steady beat is not a requirement for musical communication. He challenged our own associations in the process: While we may instinctively believe that dance music or ensemble singing would always have a steady rhythm, he provided examples to the contrary that used long, sustained notes for a dance genre or featured individual ensemble members singing a folk tune at their own pace. Brandt did acknowledge the commonalities we can still find among cultures in these pitch and rhythm examples. For example, there is a tendency in humans to divide frequencies somehow, although even spatial metaphors for pitch vary widely: Where Western music uses high versus low imagery, there are other societies that use terminology such as young versus old, father and son or small versus large. In addition, Brandt pointed out that breaking the "rules" of having a steady rhythmic beat is especially common in Western art music: Most cultures use continuous sound to demarcate

a performance, but we are used to hearing music broken up by rests. Long silences while a performance is still taking place, such as fermatas, are a rarity in world music overall—yet they are something we may not often think of when asserting rhythmic importance.

After plenty of counterexamples to the so-called universal ideas of pitch and rhythm organization, Brandt explored what elements may remain that could be translated across cultures, disproving yet more biases we may have from Western music. A preference for consonance was once thought to exist, due to an experiment where babies were found to turn their heads and listen to consonant Mozart more than de-tuned Mozart. Brandt described the flaws in that conclusion, and he explained a contrary study demonstrating that babies would simply listen longer to whichever example was played first. Brandt then challenged the notion that an inherent emotion or function of music would be recognized between cultures: This idea was tested through polls on listeners' emotional responses to examples such as Chinese folk music and ragas. Participants had to choose whether they thought the music represented emotions such as misery, amazement or courage, and whether the function of the music was a war song, a love song, for healing, mourning, for soothing a baby or a work song. Not only was the audience divided between opposing answers, often the correct answers also conflicted with our cultural expectations: For example, many people would think that lullabies must be soft, soothing and probably sung by a female soloist. Instead, two contrasting examples turned out to both be lullabies, with one example being a loud and sustained duet. By participating in the polls, it was clear our emotional responses, even within the room, were not universal. As with the rhythmic concept addressing fermatas, Brandt also tied in Western music examples. Even Beethoven and Gluck excerpts caused divided emotional reactions. A Gluck aria was "misdiagnosed" by the audience compared to its original function, with most people labeling its minor key as sad or mourning, since major/minor distinctions now carry so much meaning. Brandt emphasized that even within Western art culture, emotional connotations have changed over time. Emotional responses are therefore enculturated and developed through exposure—universality cannot be assumed.

Despite the clear differences between musical cultures, Brandt wrapped up the session optimistically, by discussing what we can learn about humans outside of trying to prove a universal language. He touched on research from neuroscience, explaining that our brains can either process information from a bottom-up perspective, in which a stimulus causes a direct reaction in the brain, or a top-down perspective, in which we use background knowledge and experience to interpret a stimulus. Like a mixing board, our brains can adjust between these perspectives according to the situation. Brandt concluded that human brains are designed to develop slowly and adapt to our environments. The wide variety of musical functions is not a flaw but a testament to human creativity. Each of our brains creates a network according to the music to which we are exposed, and we should be considering how vast our limits are, rather than restricting studies to commonalities between cultures. He also pointed out, from a practical perspective, we can no longer expect the public will inherently understand the culturally specific music we play, although it will leave an impression on them. This highlights the importance of education and exposure. Brandt's presentation reinforced the role of music teachers in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of music in any culture.

Molly Sanford *holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati and Western Michigan University. She is currently the administrative manager and a faculty member at the New School for Music Study in Kingston, New Jersey.*

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Creativity Up Close

Presented by Dr. Anthony Brandt

"Creativity Up Close," presented by Anthony Brandt, explored the intricate workings of creativity, particularly through the lens of the arts. Brandt emphasized the importance of nurturing creativity in children, especially in educational settings where it is often overlooked. Understanding and explaining creativity do not diminish its magic but rather make it more accessible to everyone.

Internal Model of Reality

Each of us lives with our own internal model of reality. It is built on our experiences, and it is a part of our brain's attempt to make the world around us as easy to process as possible. It helps us navigate daily life. Every choice we make is reconciled against our internal model of reality. The model also becomes automated over time, making familiar tasks easier but also causing us to tune out the familiar. Brandt illustrated the brain's tendency to streamline processes through neuroimaging studies that showed decreased brain activity in response to repeated stimuli. For example, when a subject is shown the same image repeatedly, their brain's response diminishes significantly after multiple exposures, indicating the surprise element has been incorporated into their internal model.

Evolutionary Aspects of Creativity

The internal model of reality represents an evolutionary aspect that makes humans unique in their creative abilities. Human brains are significantly larger than those of other animals, leading to a trade-off where human babies are born "prematurely" compared to other species—i.e., human babies spend a significant amount of time out of the womb while not able to survive on their own. This extended developmental period allows for greater neural flexibility and adaptability. For instance, while a foal can walk within days of birth, human babies take about a year to achieve the same milestone. Additionally, humans are highly social beings, and our need for social connection drives our novelty-seeking behavior, which in turn fuels creativity. This social aspect is crucial as it fosters teamwork and collaboration, essential components of creative endeavors.

Mechanisms of Creativity

Creativity is described as a means to keep the world engaging and prevent our internal models from becoming too rigid. Brandt

introduced a model of creativity developed with neuroscientist David Eagleman that includes three basic cognitive mechanisms: bending, breaking and blending. These mechanisms are illustrated through various examples from art, technology and everyday objects.

- **Bending** involves making a copy of something and altering it. This can be seen in the numerous fonts available for the same letters or the different shapes and sizes of pasta. The speaker explains that bending is based on the principle of making a copy and altering it to create something new. Examples include the various designs of umbrellas, cell phones and dice.
- **Breaking** entails taking something apart and using some or all the pieces to create something new. Digital pixelation, which breaks a solid image into thousands of individual points, is a prime example. Other examples include creating skylights by breaking ceilings and developing time-release medication by breaking pills.
- **Blending** merges two or more sources to create something entirely new, such as a houseboat or a Swiss Army knife. Other examples include roof gardens and fusion cuisine.

Creativity in the Arts

The arts externalize features of human cognition and showcase the processes of bending, breaking and blending. Examples from visual arts, sculpture, architecture, film and music demonstrate how these mechanisms manifest in creative works. For instance, Francis Bacon's self-portraits exemplify bending, Julian Schnabel's plate paintings illustrate breaking and Frida Kahlo's *The Wounded Deer* is a blend of different elements. In sculpture, Olafur Eliasson's *Infinite Staircase* is an example of bending, while the artist duo Dan Havel and Dean Ruck's *Inversion* sculpture, created from broken boats, exemplifies breaking. Nick Cave's *Soundsuits*, which blend hundreds of objects into wearable sculptures, are a striking example of blending. In architecture, the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health by Frank Gehry demonstrates bending, while the renovation of an old brewery into artist lofts by breaking off the damaged facade is an example of breaking. The Maritime Headquarters in Belgium, which blends modern and historical elements, showcases blending. In film, techniques like jump cutting break the flow of time, creating new ways of shaping narrative. Brandt shared a scene from an early Spider-Man movie to illustrate how breaking time flow can enhance storytelling.

Case Studies and Examples

Several case studies and examples are provided to illustrate the principles of creativity. These include:

- **Lonni Sue Johnson**: A graphic artist who lost her long-term memory due to encephalitis but continued to create word puzzles, demonstrating the reliance on prior experiences for creativity. Her case shows how creativity can persist even when traditional memory functions are impaired. Johnson's story highlights the importance of the storehouse of experiences in the creative process.
- **Susie McKinnon**: A woman born without the ability to create biographical memories, highlighting the importance of memory in imagining possible futures. McKinnon's inability to envision future scenarios underscores the role of memory in creative thinking. Her case illustrates how our ability to imagine and create is deeply rooted in our memories.

- **Anthony Cicoria**: A retired orthopedic surgeon who developed a sudden desire to compose music after being struck by lightning, illustrating the mysterious nature of creative inspiration. His case is a fascinating example of how sudden changes in the brain can lead to unexpected creative outputs. Cicoria's story demonstrates that creativity can sometimes emerge from seemingly inexplicable events.

Brandt discussed the specifics of creativity in music, using Beethoven's Diabelli Variations as a prime example. Beethoven's variations are described as a key example of divergent thinking, where multiple solutions are generated for an open-ended problem. The speaker explains how Beethoven's approach to altering the harmonic progression of the theme in each variation showcases his creative genius. This method of constantly varying the progression results in a variation set much richer in variation than others of the period (and arguably after).

The Role of the Arts in Science

The importance of the arts can be seen in both scientific and cultural contexts. The arts not only provide a means of exploring and expressing creativity but also offer valuable insights into human cognition and the creative process. Creativity through the arts is a crucial element in protecting consciousness by keeping our internal models flexible and engaging. By constantly challenging and disrupting our internal models, the arts prevent our perceptions from becoming too rigid and help us remain open to new experiences and ideas.

Collaborative Projects and Neuroscientific Research

Brandt has experience with collaborative projects that combine artistic performance and scientific experiments. One such project involved a collaboration with Jose Luis Contreras-Vidal and his team of neural engineers at the University of Houston BRAIN Center. This project aimed to study changes in functional connectivity within the brains of musicians during live performances. The musicians wore portable EEG caps during rehearsals and performances, allowing the researchers to monitor brain activity in real-time. The EEG data was also used to create visual projections during the performance, illustrating the neural activity of the musicians. As the variations in the music became more abstract, the projections also became more abstract. The data collected provided insights into how different areas of the brain synchronize during musical performance, particularly during moments of coordination between the conductor and the pianist. This research highlights the potential of combining artistic and scientific approaches to gain a deeper understanding of the creative process.

Conclusion

The arts play a significant role in both scientific and cultural contexts. The arts serve as a platform for exploring and expressing creativity while also shedding light on human cognition and the intricacies of the creative process. Anthony Brandt ended the session with a call to recognize and support the vital role of the arts in fostering creativity and innovation.

Andy Villemez, *DMA, is an educator, author and composer based in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he serves as associate professor of piano and piano pedagogy at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.*

By Dr. Vanessa Cornett, NCTM

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Teaching From the Inside Out

Professional development opportunities can be wonderful because they provide us with new ideas, materials and methods to improve our teaching. At the same time, no matter how many external strategies we employ, the deepest wisdom often comes from within. When we pay attention to the nature of our remarkable inner lives—our values, triggers and tendencies—we can gain the insight to become more self-aware, mindful teachers. If we can learn to recognize and manage the stressors in our lives, we can be more present with our students. Mindfulness, the practice of paying attention, can help us nurture our own inner wisdom to speak and act with authenticity and integrity. The short mindfulness activities that follow can help teachers develop awareness and navigate the challenging emotions that can frustrate that authenticity.

Perhaps the most accessible way to become centered before a lesson, meeting or social event is to pause and enjoy a single, fully conscious breath cycle. A deep, mindful inhale and a slow, controlled exhale can be a powerful technique to draw our attention to the present moment. We can invite ourselves to experience the embodied moment that is *right now,* reflecting on the miracle that we exist in this time and space. We often take this miracle for granted when we are caught up in the endless cycle of "doing." It can sometimes help, when taking one conscious breath, to reflect that in the present moment, there is nowhere else we need to be.

We can sometimes use playful imagery to soften stressful situations. Imagine, for example, that you possess a small imaginary roller bag, the type that you might take on an airplane or check through to your destination. You might then recall something that has been bothering or distracting you. It could be anxiety about an upcoming event, regret or embarrassment over a recent argument or mistake, or any unwelcome mental burden. If you pretend that you can pull this unwanted thought or feeling outside of your body, you can place it inside your imaginary roller bag and zip it up. You then roll the bag out of sight, perhaps just around the corner. If that unwanted feeling pops back into your mind while you are engaging with someone else, remind yourself that you have stowed it in your roller bag, and you can pick it up later. In fact, we can always agree to think about something later.

Animals can teach us about living in the present moment. Take, for example, the humble goldfish. Although goldfish are likely to possess much longer memories than previously assumed, the common myth that a goldfish has a three- to 10-second memory span is still popular in our culture. Playing into this myth can be a fun way to navigate and set aside unwanted thoughts. You can entertain the idea that a goldfish must be the happiest animal on earth because it only has a 10-second memory. A goldfish can't hold a grudge or relive its mistakes. When you make a mistake, you can acknowledge it and let it go. If you were a goldfish, you wouldn't even remember it a few seconds later. When the occasion calls for it, why not pretend to be a goldfish?

Often our resistance to a particular situation is more uncomfortable than the situation itself. Days of dreading a performance or a job interview might feel far worse than the actual event. Radical acceptance can help us loosen our resistance to an unwanted situation. Some may question the wisdom or value of accepting that something unwanted or even terrible has happened. The truth is that, once we realize something has happened, all or

part of it is already in the past. If we have a memory slip or botch a page turn during a recital, that mistake immediately moves from the present to the past. Radical acceptance allows us to acknowledge the thoughts and events that are in the recent past before returning our full attention to the present moment. Accepting the reality of a situation helps us move forward with mindful awareness and deliberate intent.

The acronym **PEACE** can help us remember how to deal with a difficult or stressful situation. We can **P**ause, take a moment to **E**xhale slowly, **A**cknowledge what just happened (perhaps with radical acceptance), **C**hoose how to respond and then **E**ngage with the situation from a place of objective awareness. This slows down the process and can help replace a knee-jerk reaction with a thoughtful response. When an immediate response is required, this five-step process can unfold within the span of one or two deep breaths.

Another helpful acronym is **WAIT**. If someone is sharing a difficult situation with me and I notice the urge to chime in and share my own experience, I remind myself to WAIT first. I ask myself, **W**hose **A**genda **I**s **T**his? In other words, whose needs will be met by my disclosure? If my personal anecdote does not directly help anyone other than myself in that moment, it serves only my own agenda. With this awareness, I can instead remain a quiet and attentive listener. The truth is we listen differently when we are not mentally forming our response. In other situations, perhaps when I'm teaching a lesson, I can ask myself, **W**hy **A**m **I T**alking?

Those familiar with the 1994 movie *Forrest Gump* may find it possible to model the titular character's outlook at times. Forrest is a kindhearted and uncomplicated man who narrates his life story to various passersby while sitting on a park bench near a bus stop. He uses very simple and objective language to describe the events of his extraordinary life. At times, we too can recount even frustrating or unwanted situations to ourselves using plain and impartial language. We might even describe it in the third person, as if we were talking about someone else. The situation may then seem somewhat less significant or a solution may become clear. Because sometimes, when the situation calls for it, we can simply "Forrest Gump" it.

There is wisdom to be found in some characters in our popular culture. Yoda is a notable example. This small, light green fictional Jedi master from the *Star Wars* movie franchise occasionally offers Zen-like insight to those around him. Most famously, when Luke Skywalker says he will try to accomplish a specific challenge, Yoda responds, "No! Do. Or do not. There is no try." This philosophy is helpful because it places the emphasis on the task itself, not how we feel about it or how much effort we put into it. It is a more objective way of perceiving our necessary work. When faced with a looming or unwanted project, we can do the task or not do the task, but dreading or resenting it rarely helps. You might compare an undesirable task to an everyday task, such as brushing your teeth. You either brush your teeth or you don't brush your teeth, but you don't *try* to brush your teeth or angrily resent brushing your teeth. If I must spend my entire morning answering emails instead of practicing, I can do the work or not do the work, but I don't need to dread the work. Often it is easiest simply to do the work.

These and other mindfulness games or mini practices can help us to respond rather than react to challenging situations. They can help us expand the short space between stimulus and response, allowing us the opportunity to act thoughtfully. They can sometimes offer a broader or more neutral perspective of a problem. As a teacher, you will make countless choices and encounter many metaphorical paths throughout your lifetime. In the end, the path you choose doesn't matter as much as the fact that it was your intentional choice, the result of a conscious decision. When we direct our awareness with deliberate intent, we are true to ourselves and can in turn be true to our students and colleagues. That awareness, I believe, is what it means to teach from the inside out.

Vanessa Cornett, *NCTM, is professor of piano and piano pedagogy at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis-St. Paul. A certified meditation instructor, she is author of the book* The Mindful Musician: Mental Skills for Peak Performance.

Reported by Nuoya Zhang

PLENARY SESSION

Cultivating a Global Perspective in Higher Education

Presented by Dr. Margarita Denenburg; Dr. Luis Sanchez; Dr. Siok Lian Tan, NCTM; and Dr. Chan Kiat Lim, NCTM

The panel session "Cultivating a Global Perspective in Higher Education," presented at the National Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy (GP3) Forum 2024, brought together distinguished educators to explore the challenges and strategies of supporting international students in the U.S. education system. The session was moderated by Chan Kiat Lim, NCTM, with presentations from Margarita Denenburg, Luis Sanchez and Siok Lian Tan, NCTM. Once international students in the United States, all presenters now serve as university professors. They shared numerous cultural and professional challenges they encountered as international students and music professors, which current international students continue to face.

Supporting International Students: Experiences and Strategies

Luis Sanchez, professor of piano at Texas A&M University-Commerce and director of international engagement for the Frances Clark Center, highlighted the support he received from his piano professor and the International Student Office during his first arrival in the United States from Argentina. Margarita Denenburg, associate professor of practice in piano pedagogy at the University of Texas at Austin, discussed the language barriers she faced after she arrived from the Soviet Union. Siok Lian Tan, professor of piano and keyboard area coordinator at Miami University of Ohio, described her transition from a science student in Malaysia to pursuing music in the United States, aided by scholarships and opportunities at her college.

Guidance for Professors Assisting International Students

As more international students come to the United States to study music, professors must understand how to assist and support their students through the intricate application process. The panelists recommended the following routine for professors:

1. **Initial contact/trial lesson**: Determine the student's willingness to attend the school.
2. **Set up conferences**: Assess the student's English proficiency and emphasize the importance of meeting the requirements of language proficiency tests such as the TOEFL exam. Discuss conditional admissions that may require English courses.
3. **Contact the International Student Office**: Verify information with the International Student Office to avoid giving incorrect or uncertain advice.
4. **Maintain communication**: Check in regularly with prospective students through email, phone calls, online platforms, and the like.
5. **Dual applications**: Ensure students understand if there is a dual application process for university and music school admissions.

Application and F-1 Visa Process

International students should start preparing early to apply to U.S. schools because they have additional requirements as compared to domestic students. Applications generally include language proficiency tests (such as the TOEFL) and translated academic transcripts. After receiving acceptance offers, students must apply for their F-1 student visa, requiring documents such as the I-20 form and a financial support statement. The I-20 form certifies a student's acceptance and eligibility for an F-1 visa, detailing the program of study, financial support and duration of stay in the United States. The financial support statement ensures students have sufficient funds for their studies. Transferring an I-20 form involves moving a student's SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) record from one U.S. institution to another, maintaining their F-1 visa status during the transition. Additionally, international students must ensure they have a valid travel signature on their I-20 form before traveling internationally to ensure reentry into the U.S.

Work Authorization: CPT and OPT

International students with F-1 visas can work on campus for up to 20 hours per week during the academic term. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) allows F-1 students to gain practical experience related to their major through employment, internships or cooperative education programs. CPT must be directly related to the student's field of study and is generally available after completing one full academic year, with part-time CPT recommended over full-time. Optional Practical Training (OPT) provides F-1 students the opportunity to work in their field of study for up to 12 months, before or after completing their academic program. Students must apply for OPT through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) before starting work. Students must file taxes annually, even if they do not work, and both professors and students should always verify legal matters with the International Student Office.

Navigating Cultural Challenges and Stereotypes

The panelists discussed navigating cultural differences and overcoming stereotypes.

Denenburg highlighted the challenges posed by language barriers and the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural diversity, emphasizing treating each student as an individual rather than making assumptions based on nationality. Tan addressed common stereotypes, such as the misconception that all international students are wealthy or disengaged, and she stressed understanding different communication styles and creating opportunities for international students to engage with peers. Sanchez shared his experience of international students trading national repertoires and cultural gifts in his studio classes, fostering cultural exchange.

Classroom/Teaching Strategies

Promoting cultural exchange and maintaining professionalism were key themes. Tan emphasized the importance of understanding students' strengths and weaknesses, speaking slowly and clearly to help international students follow along. Denenburg advocated for recording lessons to allow students to review them later. Sanchez noted that students are usually more formal in lessons but become more comfortable and active in group activities, suggesting that teachers offer mentorship and opportunities for group interactions outside the office.

Preparing for the Job Market

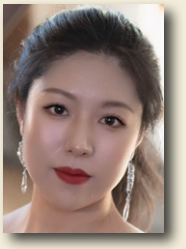
Preparing international students for the job market involves strategic planning. Sanchez advised starting preparations from the first year of a master's degree, considering legal status and enhancing resumes to stand out in a competitive market. Tan suggested exploring alternative job opportunities, such as community music schools and private studios, which may offer sponsorship.

This session on "Cultivating a Global Perspective in Higher Education" offered

"The future of higher education lies in our ability to connect across cultures…"

a profound exploration into the intricate world of international education. By weaving together personal narratives and professional insights, the panelists illuminated the path to a more inclusive and supportive academic environment. Their emphasis on continuous communication, cultural understanding and strategic preparation for the job market underscored the transformative power of a global perspective. As educators and institutions, embracing these strategies enriches international students' academic experience and fosters a vibrant, diverse community that thrives on mutual respect and shared learning. The future of higher education lies in our ability to connect across cultures, and this session serves as a beacon guiding us toward that horizon. ◂◂

Nuoya Zhang, *a Juilliard and Mannes graduate, is a doctoral candidate in piano performance at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, serving as a secondary piano assistant and studio teaching assistant. She specializes in Ultramodern and living female composers.*



PLENARY SESSION

Making Generative AI Your New Teaching Assistant

Presented by Dr. Le Binh Anh Nguyen

At the recent GP3 Forum, Le Binh Anh Nguyen, a secondary piano graduate assistant at the University of Cincinnati, delivered an engaging and insightful presentation titled "Making Generative AI Your New Teaching Assistant." This session offered attendees a deep dive into the transformative potential of generative AI tools within educational settings, focusing on their wide-ranging applications in creative projects, teaching aids and the area of research assistance.

Understanding AI and Machine Learning

Nguyen opened his presentation by providing the audience with a foundational overview of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML). While these terms and concepts have been established in the academic and technological fields for decades, they have recently surged into mainstream discourse, mainly due to the rapid rise of generative AI tools. These advanced systems, capable of creating new artistic content autonomously, represent a significant leap forward in technology and creativity. Nguyen illustrated the evolution of AI, tracing its development from the relatively simple algorithms that power recommendation engines on platforms like YouTube and TikTok to the sophisticated and complex capabilities of today's generative AI, which can generate original works of art, compose music and even write stories with remarkable ease and accuracy.

Evolution and Market Trends

Nguyen compared the current advancements in AI to the early days of the internet, particularly during the "dot-com" bubble of the early 2000s. He pointed out that the rapid investment and speculation surrounding AI technologies today are reminiscent of the technological booms of the past. For example, he cited Nvidia's dramatic stock surge as a contemporary indicator of the financial market's enthusiasm and confidence in AI's potential. However, Nguyen was careful to note that, despite these exciting developments, we are likely still in the nascent stages of AI's full potential—akin to how the revolutionary impact of the iPhone on internet access only came after the initial "dot-com" bubble had burst. One of the most significant highlights of his presentation was the announcement of OpenAI's latest model, GPT-4o, unveiled in May. This new model represents a groundbreaking leap forward in AI capabilities, introducing advanced communication features that allow it to interact with users through text and to see, speak and even sing. Nguyen suggested this model offers a tantalizing glimpse into the future of human-AI interaction, where AI assistants could become even more integrated into our daily lives, assisting with tasks in previously unimaginable ways.

Interactive Exploration of Generative AI Use Cases

Nguyen's presentation was not merely theoretical; it was practical. He showcased the potential of generative AI through three distinct and interactive use cases. Each use case was brought to life with demonstrations and hands-on activities, allowing attendees to experience the practical applications of these tools in real-world scenarios.

1. **Generative AI as a Creative Partner**

   The first use case explored the integration of generative AI into creative projects, particularly in the context of music education. Nguyen and his colleague Ashley-May Burkhardt have been organizing a workshop series about music and storytelling for children at hospitals, musical centers and elementary schools. Nguyen shared that he chose this topic because storytelling has always been a powerful teaching tool for introducing classical music to young children. This innovative approach, inspired by classic works like Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Disney's *Fantasia*, utilized generative AI to enhance and enrich the storytelling experience. During the workshop, Nguyen's assistant, Ashley-May, and a group of volunteers were tasked with listening to a piece of music and associating it with two animals. They then crafted a story based on these associations. Meanwhile, Nguyen focused on creating a video that incorporated the selected animals and the story they had developed, using a range of AI tools to enhance the visual and auditory experience:

   - **Artwork**: Midjourney, an AI tool known for consistently generating stylized artwork, was used to create images that aligned with the story's themes. Attendees were shown various examples, including multiple illustrations of a haunted house, all generated from the same prompt but with slight variations. This demonstrated the AI's ability to maintain consistency across different iterations while still allowing for creative diversity.
   - **Story**: ChatGPT, a well-known language model, was employed to generate a story tailored to specific musical scenes. Nguyen demonstrated how he could adjust the tone, style and length of the story to better align with the musical compositions, showing how AI can be a powerful tool in creating engaging and educational narratives.
   - **Video**: Canva, a user-friendly design tool, was utilized for video production. Nguyen pre-loaded the audio and framed images within the platform, making the process of video creation accessible even to those with limited technical skills. The result was a series of musical stories designed for parents, demonstrating how AI can streamline and simplify the creative process.
   - **Voiceover**: The session also featured AI-generated voiceovers created using ElevenLabs and Microsoft Clipchamp. These tools offer cost-effective options for producing high-quality instructional materials, further illustrating the versatility and accessibility of Generative AI in educational contexts.
   - **Music**: Although Nguyen did not focus extensively on generative AI tools for music composition during this session, he noted recent advancements in this area. These tools can now generate clear, natural-sounding music and rewrite familiar song lyrics. While this capability was not the workshop's primary focus, Nguyen suggested that such tools could be incredibly valuable in teaching different music styles, particularly when trying to avoid the legal complexities associated with copyrighted music.

2. **Generative AI in a Teacher's Toolbox**
   The second use case introduced how generative AI can be a powerful productivity enhancer for educators. Nguyen demonstrated a variety of tools specifically designed to streamline and simplify everyday teaching tasks, making them more efficient and less time-consuming:
   - **Piano Literature Quiz**: Nguyen showcased a customized ChatGPT model developed to create quizzes based on F.E. Kirby's *Music for Piano: A Short History*. This tool automatically generated multiple-choice questions with detailed explanations and references, including links to relevant YouTube videos for further exploration. This saves educators time and ensures that quizzes are comprehensive and aligned with the course material.
   - **Piano Piece Recommender**: Another practical application of ChatGPT was demonstrated through a prompt designed to recommend piano pieces based on Jane Magrath's *Piano Literature for Teaching and Performance: A Graded and Annotated Bibliography*. This tool assists both students and teachers in selecting appropriate pieces for various teaching scenarios and difficulty levels, tailoring recommendations to specific educational needs.

Nguyen also took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of safeguarding proprietary data when using these AI tools. He cautioned educators to be mindful of data privacy and to ensure that sensitive information is protected and not used to train AI models without consent.

3. **Generative AI as a Research Assistant**
   The final use case presented by Nguyen highlighted the increasingly vital role of Generative AI in academic research. Musicians, who often possess deep expertise in their art but may lack the technical skills required for study design and data analysis, can find invaluable assistance in generative AI. Nguyen shared his collaboration with Piano Marvel, where ChatGPT played a crucial role in analyzing sight-reading data. He used AI to assist with data cleaning, guide the initial analysis approach and work with Excel to perform various calculations by identifying and applying the appropriate formulas. This use case underscored the potential of AI to not only enhance the efficiency of research but also to open new avenues of inquiry by making complex analyses more accessible to those without a technical background.

Conclusion

Nguyen's presentation provided a comprehensive overview of the immense potential of generative AI in education. Through interactive demonstrations and hands-on activities, he successfully highlighted the practical applications of these tools in creative projects, teaching aids and research. Nguyen concluded by emphasizing the importance of prompt engineering—stressing the need to clearly define the AI's role and make specific, well-structured requests when utilizing these tools. The session was met with great enthusiasm from the audience, who were visibly impressed by the possibilities of AI. The positive feedback from attendees in the days following the conference further underscored the impact of Nguyen's insights and the excitement surrounding the future of generative AI in education.

Diana Chubak, *an accomplished Ukrainian pianist and educator, holds a DMA degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She's recognized for international performances, her album Neskoreni and her dedication to promoting Ukrainian composers through charity initiatives.*

By Dr. Lesley McAllister, NCTM

ROTATION SESSION

Active Learning in Pedagogy Coursework

Evidence, Benefits and Strategies

Large active learning classrooms (ALCs) are student-centered and technology-rich, allowing for peer interaction as students use their own devices to brainstorm, problem solve and develop ideas. It typically involves a roundtable classroom where students are arranged in pods in a circular pattern. The instructor is usually in the middle of the classroom, so instead of lecturing, instructors use "micro-lectures" interspersed between group activities. Each pod has an individual monitor, moveable tables, rolling chairs and large rolling whiteboards. A software app called Solstice allows students to use one mobile device at each table—either an iPad or laptop—to connect to the monitor, which can be projected to the monitors at other specific pods, or to all pods.

Overwhelming evidence of the benefits of active learning across disciplines in higher education has been well established. It has been shown to improve performance (Freeman et al. 2014, 8415) and close performance gaps, such as in populations of minority and first-generation students (Theobald et al. 2020, 6483). Student participation likewise increases critical-thinking skills (Tsui 2002, 740), a sense of belonging (Eddy and Hogan 2014, 66) and decreased anxiety about learning (Cooper et al. 2018, 18). Despite these documented benefits, some students may prefer a traditional classroom, with their self-reported perception of learning differing from their actual learning (Deslauriers et al. 2019, 19251). It is important to address this misconception early; instructors might share research on team-based learning (TBL) pedagogy, clarifying their intention to transform the classroom experience from *acquiring* knowledge to *applying* it through active engagement in course material.

In this session, the presenter shared information about her experience teaching an undergraduate pedagogy class in an active learning classroom. Most of the work done in class revolved around a "think-group-share" model of thinking individually about a problem to begin and then grouping up with

others to discuss ideas. Usually, the assignments were made ahead, so students do not depend on others for their ideas but gain a new perspective in groups. One assignment done in this way related to peer evaluations of teaching, where students were assigned to a partner whose teaching video they watched before class. During class, they paired up to discuss their observations of each other. In another teaching observation assignment, everyone watched a video of the same lesson of a faculty member and shared feedback with each other. Students also did some lesson planning together in class. Other sample in-class assignments included learning to use the library database by finding a list of full-text online and in-library resources on an assigned topic. Students also kept two weeks of a practice journal and shared their format with the group. Since intermediate literature was an important topic in the class, students often annotated scores in groups. As an example, students added articulation markings to a Baroque Urtext score and pedaling markings to unmarked Romantic scores, while also adding fingerings and practice strategies.

In an active learning classroom, teachers must plan to move more slowly through the course content, but they will cover the material more deeply, using class time to problem-solve and gain deeper understanding. It might be helpful to rotate groups after a period of time, such as every five weeks. Since students might prefer to take on a specific role, the instructor should assign roles, such as a transcriber, speaker and presentation creator, and then vary the roles throughout the semester. During group work, teachers should give a time limit and walk around the classroom while students work together to offer direction to discussions and get to know the classroom dynamics.

Lesley McAllister, *DMA, NCTM, is professor of piano pedagogy at Baylor University. She is the author of two books,* Yoga in the Music Studio *and* The Balanced Musician, *and two-time winner of the* AMT *Article of the Year award.*

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By Dr. Lynn Worcester Jones

ROTATION SESSION

Cultivating an Adaptable Mindset in Teaching Generation Z

In a rapidly evolving teaching landscape, understanding and adapting to Generation Z's distinct characteristics is crucial for effective teaching. During the 2024 Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Forum, the nuances of teaching this generation through the lens of artificial intelligence were explored.

Generational research suggests that labels, including Generation Z, can sometimes lead to oversimplifications and stereotypes. It is important to recognize students within this generational cohort are not a monolith. Individual differences remain significant, and generational boundaries are not universally agreed upon—including the cutoff dates for Generation Z. These factors make it essential for teachers to proceed with caution and avoid assumptions that are based on generational labels.

One of the key insights was how inference artificial intelligence in social media has changed the way Generation Z engages with learning. They have spent their formative years in a fragmented, largely virtual theater, and their interactions through social media involve a bi-directional relationship with algorithms that learn their preferences and tailor content accordingly. This constant feedback loop has influenced how they process information and, ultimately, how they learn. On one hand, the always-connected atmosphere of Generation Z can result in lower levels of engagement with traditional learning methods. And on the other hand, their comfort with the bi-directional relationship with the algorithm built into social media can be leveraged into enhanced learning. In meeting them where they are, we can adapt our teaching strategies to align with their personalized experiences from which they have grown accustomed.

A powerful practical approach is to incorporate frequent check-ins during lessons that mirror the feedback loops present in social media algorithms. Teachers should inquire every 60 seconds to ensure the content resonates with the student. Approaching lessons through personalized engagement mirrors the interactions Generation Z has grown accustomed to and helps maintain their interest, attention and involvement in their learning process in lessons.

While the rise of mental health issues in Generation Z is a concern, stated as a public health emergency by Jonathan Haidt in his 2023 book, The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness, educators can use the power of real-life, off-screen experiences to counterbalance the effects of excessive screen time. By creating a supportive, adaptable learning environment that engages students, we can cultivate resilience and emotional growth in students.

***Lynn Worcester Jones**, DMA, serves as associate professor of piano pedagogy and chair of the piano pedagogy and secondary piano department at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.*

By Dr. Emily Barr

ROTATION SESSION

Game-Based Learning:

Engaging Activities for Gen Z and Alpha Students in the Collegiate Group Piano Classroom

The 25-minute rotation session *Game-Based Learning: Engaging Activities for Gen Z and Alpha Students in the Collegiate Group Piano Classroom* offered examples of practical games that can be used to aid, enhance and reinforce learning in the collegiate group piano classroom. An emphasis on active learning was central to the session.

The highlighted activities and games were organized into four common group piano curricular concepts: sight reading, keyboard topography, technique and harmonization. Descriptions of each activity are provided.

Sight Reading

Choral Score "Flash" Reading helps develop vertical reading skills in this fast-paced, timed activity. Students receive five flash cards, each with a chord notated in open-score format. A timer is set for 30 seconds and students play each example, with the goal of completing the stack before the timer runs out.

Keyboard Topography

Keys in the Dark is a simple but effective way to help students develop a tactile sense at the keyboard. With eyes closed, students follow the teacher's prompts, such as, "Find two black keys. Which note is to the left?" (C). Or, "Find a group of three black keys. Touch the one in the middle. Now slide to the right. Which note are you on?" (A). It's effective as a two-minute warm-up at the beginning of class.

Major/Minor Triads Bingo helps students identify these triads at the keyboard. Each student has a bingo card with keyboard depictions of the 12 major and 12 minor triads, plus one free space. The teacher announces a triad (e.g., "F minor"). Students play the triad on their pianos and mark the corresponding triad on their cards. This process is repeated

until a student wins. Customized bingo cards are available at bingobaker.com.

Technique

Scales Relay Game is an effective activity to review scales before exams. Four students are on a team and each player performs a task, including arranging letter cards to spell the scale, placing number cards on top to show fingering, notating the scale on the staff and playing the scale. The fastest team wins.

Alberti Bass Calisthenics uses gross motor skills to internalize this pattern. Students place three foam dots on the floor to represent the tonic triad. Then, they step on the corresponding dots while singing, "bottom, top, middle, top…" The V6/5 chord can also be shown using the tonic chord dots as a reference. Students can sing a melody while moving to the Alberti bass pattern before they play it on the piano.

Harmonization

Figured Bass Name That Tune combines harmonization, aural skills and critical thinking. It is appropriate for functional keyboard skills classes. Each student is given a figured bass example, which notates only the bass line and figured bass below. Students realize examples individually and take turns playing for the class. Examples are played three times. The teacher can chant the rhythm of the melody to provide more context, and students use the harmonic progression, meter and rhythm of the melody to name that tune. ◂◂

"The highlighted activities and games were organized into four common group piano curricular concepts: sight reading, keyboard topography, technique and harmonization."

Emily Barr *serves as visiting assistant professor of piano at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Her work has been featured nationally by MTNA and the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy.*

By Dr. Hannah Roberts, NCTM

ROTATION SESSION

Group Piano as Community Outreach

In my rotation session "Group Piano as Community Outreach," I advocated for cross-cultural outreach through community group piano classes. My session described the program I developed at the University of Alabama (UA), discussing the outcomes of the program and the benefits it has offered for both the community and the university.

To begin, I asked attendees to imagine a typical day in a university piano lab; in the imagined scenario, however, instead of the keyboard stations being filled with the typical college class, the seats are filled with diverse members of the community. I proceeded to describe the cross-cultural makeup of the first community group class offered at the UA. The group class was integrated into the UA graduate piano pedagogy curriculum, and graduate students co-taught the class with me as part of their course assignments. The class had eight participants and met weekly in the UA piano lab. Hosting the class in the evenings prevented classroom schedule conflicts and allowed working adults and parents to participate. It ran for 12 weeks from January to April, following the university academic calendar. I led the first two classes with the graduate students observing. Next, I co-taught a class with each student-teacher; at the semester midpoint, I passed the teaching responsibilities fully to the student-teachers, who took turns leading the class on a weekly rotation schedule. Teachers were required to video record their teaching and submit self-reflections. Reflection prompts were adapted from Pamela Pike's book, *Dynamic Group-Piano Teaching: Transforming Group Theory into Teaching Practice,* which was one of the pedagogy class texts. The group class utilized video submissions and duet performances as motivational assignments at strategic points throughout the semester. After describing the operation of the class, I listed advantages to operating a community piano class using this framework:

- Minimal paperwork needed.
- Diverse ages represented in the class.
- Seamless integration into a piano pedagogy curriculum.
- No funding to support the class needed. (Students paid a $40 fee to participate, but this was solely to ensure student commitment.)

Finally, I outlined benefits this class afforded for her students, community and university at large:

- Group teaching expands students' versatility and vision for piano teaching.
- Community engagement is often a priority for higher education institutions, and classes like this support university initiatives.
- Community classes invite the public into the School of Music, thereby enlarging the potential audience for performances, serving as a recruitment tool, and engaging with potential arts supporters.

To conclude, I encouraged attendees to consider the model described as a framework that could be adapted to fit individuals' unique teaching environments and available resources. The session closed with a call to reach outside the walls of the teaching studio and seek ways to engage one's larger community.

Hannah Roberts, *NCTM, is assistant professor of piano at the University of Alabama, where she teaches applied piano and pedagogy. She holds a DMA in piano performance and pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma.*

By Dr. Curtis Pavey

ROTATION SESSION

Nurturing Novice Improvisers

Fostering Creativity in the Undergraduate Pedagogy Classroom and Applied Lessons

Despite the enthusiasm in the pedagogy field for improvisation and creative activities, many students enter collegiate programs with limited experience and skills in improvisation and composition. The National Association of Schools of Music's *Handbook* and *Advisory for Music Faculty and Administrators* (NASM 2024 and 2010) both describe the importance of composition and improvisation skills but leave exact details of implementation up to each institution. While there are numerous resources that provide ideas for how to approach beginning improvisation, few discuss the appropriate sequence for undergraduate students who enter their programs as performers at the advanced level and novices at improvisation. This presentation provided approaches that instructors can use in applied lessons and pedagogy courses to foster creative skills needed before and after graduation.

In applied lessons, students should develop creative abilities alongside study of repertoire, technique, sight reading and other functional skills. Improvisation requires students to make numerous musical decisions simultaneously and can be daunting to those who never received this instruction from the beginning of their studies. Many of these same undergraduate musicians enter college at or near the early-advanced level with gaps in stylistic understanding and technical ability. Instructors can use pedagogical pieces from the intermediate and late-intermediate levels to fill in these gaps, while also helping them explore creativity within a highly structured activity such as improvising a new accompanimental texture, recomposing the consequent phrase in a period structure or making small changes to the melodic line. As initial skills are developed, these same kinds of activities can be applied to the student's more challenging jury and recital repertoire, where these

"In a world of rapidly advancing artificial intelligence, improvisation and composition are imperative skills for collegiate students to master…"

improvisation activities can improve their memorization, understanding of the musical structure and self-expression (Hancock 2020). Students with more developed improvisation skills could be challenged to improvise new renditions of larger sections or even small forms, such as an improvised prelude.

In pedagogy programs, students often learn about the importance of creative activities in beginning and intermediate lessons, but without hands-on activities in class, students who were never exposed to improvisation may not know how to implement these activities with their own students. Before discussing the importance of creative activities, instructors can design activities for their students to gauge their previous experience and interest in improvisation. Activities that gamify improvisation such as "musical telephone" or picture-/video-based improvisation will show students how to make these activities engaging at their level, which can lead to a discussion of how these activities look at the beginning level and how to use improvisation for musical and technical development. As part of their classwork, instructors can assign an improvisation project in which students teach creative activities they have created to another member of the class.

In a world of rapidly advancing artificial intelligence, improvisation and composition are imperative skills for collegiate students to master, and using the strategies listed above in applied lessons and pedagogy courses can help novice improvisers develop the skills they need for their future careers. ◂◂

Curtis Pavey *is a pianist, harpsichordist and educator, and serves as assistant professor of piano pedagogy and performance at the University of Missouri and as manager of online publications at the Frances Clark Center.*

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By Dr. Melody Morrison, NCTM

ROTATION SESSION

TikTok and iPad Kids

How to Effectively Connect with Gen Z and Alpha Students

I began the session by sharing how piano education has evolved over the past decade, bringing us to the education of Generations Z and Alpha. These generations are characterized by their deep involvement with technology and unique post-COVID experiences. The presentation provided a brief overview of each generation, their strengths and weaknesses and strategies to work effectively with these groups.

Generation Z (1995–2009)

Born during the dot-com boom, Gen Z has unlimited access to media and is considered the first generation of digital natives. Gen Z is also diverse, open to new perspectives and ambitious. Post-COVID effects on Generation Z include apprehension toward new situations and people, a tendency to zone out, comfort with asynchronous learning, heightened resourcefulness and increased use of educational technology. The typical Gen Zer spends an average of 12 hours a day on screens.

Generation Alpha (2010–2024)

This generation is known as an "unintentional global experiment." Gen Alpha is immersed in smart devices and constant cognitive stimulation from birth. The world has yet to witness the full results of this upbringing. Gen Alpha enjoys highly personalized learning experiences and is the most diverse generation in history. Post-COVID effects for this group include delayed social skills and increased internet/tech addiction. Reports on Gen Alpha show they have spent more time on screens during formative years than any other generation.

Strengths of Gen Z and Alpha

- Digitally literate
- Curious
- Resourceful
- Globally minded

Challenges and Possible Solutions

Challenge	**Social Skills**
	▸▸ Struggle with socializing and group work
Solution	**Activities that develop collaboration**
	▸▸ Group classes, multi-piano ensembles, group projects, duets/trios/quartets, composition partner projects and mini research projects
Challenge	**Instant Gratification**
	▸▸ Preference for immediate results with minimal effort
Solution	**Create bite-sized challenges and use technology**
	▸▸ Smaller Milestones: Break large tasks into tangible, small goals for students ▸▸ AI and Digital Resources: Utilize AI tools like ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot and digital resources such as backing tracks and educational apps ▸▸ Visual Methods: Create visually appealing materials to track progress
Challenge	**Motor Skills**
	▸▸ Gen Alpha faces challenges with motor skills
Solution	**Integrate physical and tactile activities**
	▸▸ Fine Motor Skills: Use theory books, worksheets, coloring activities, composing by hand, Play-Doh, rhythm sticks, finger trampolines and hand dolphins ▸▸ Larger Motor Skills: Engage in activities like note buckets bean bag toss, floor staff and body movement rhythm activities
Challenge	**Authority**
	▸▸ Today's students challenge authority
Solution	**Remain conscious of possible authority issues**
	▸▸ Create a calm atmosphere, use extrinsic rewards, explain consequences and involve students in content decisions

Conclusion

Generations Z and Alpha are unique in their learning styles and social behaviors, influenced heavily by their digital environments and post-COVID experiences. Effective teaching strategies for these students involve leveraging technology, fostering social skills through collaborative activities and addressing their need for instant gratification and personalized learning. Understanding these generational characteristics can help educators tailor their approaches to better meet the needs of today's students. ◂◂

Melody Morrison, *NCTM, is an adjunct professor at the University of North Florida and Liberty University Online. She maintains a diverse in-person and virtual piano studio, teaching students from Oregon, Arizona and Florida.*

By Dr. Olivia I-Hsuan Tsai

LIGHTNING SESSION

The Art of Minute Practice

Short, Concentrated Piano Practice for Busy People

Minute practice is an alternative way of piano practice specifically for busy individuals who struggle to find time in their hectic schedules. With the average human attention span decreasing by almost 25% from 2000 to 2015 and humans now having shorter attention spans than goldfish, it is evident traditional long practice sessions may not be suitable for everyone. The core idea behind this approach is targeted, intentional practice. By laser-focusing one specific spot in a piece, individuals can achieve impactful results in a shorter amount of time. Just like how we train our muscles through focused workouts, we can train our fingers, hands and arms through deliberate and concentrated practice.

In contrast to the prevalent culture of multitasking, which involves switching between various tasks, similar to practicing different passages or technical elements in one setting, dedicated short, uninterrupted attention to a specific spot (one beat in a measure or a change of pattern in a passage), individuals can escape the strain of multitasking and create a space for focused, mindful engagement with the instrument.

Whether you are a busy professional, a student juggling multiple responsibilities or simply someone seeking an efficient way to improve your piano skills, minute practice offers an alternative approach. Embrace the power of intentional, concentrated practice and witness the remarkable progress you can achieve, one minute at a time.

Olivia I-Hsuan Tsai *is an associate professor at VanderCook College of Music, and the director of the Yang and Olivia Arts Foundation, promoting music of underrepresented composers with multicultural influences.*

By Dr. Michelle Sulaiman

LIGHTNING SESSION

ASD & ADHD

Overlapping Characteristics & Teaching Adaptations

In this 2024 MTNA GP3 Lightning Talk, I presented three overlapping characteristics between students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as well as applicable teaching adaptations for these students.

There are growing figures of students diagnosed with ADHD and ASD among the K–12 population. The CDC estimates almost 10% of students aged 3–17 are diagnosed with ADHD while 3% of K–12 students receive ASD-related services. The overlapping traits between the two disorders are important—around 30–50% of students with ASD also have ADHD.

My talk focused on three overlapping traits: sensory sensitivities, emotion dysregulation and poor executive functioning. I suggested that students with sensory sensitivities could benefit from physical studio or classroom modifications such as using soft or yellow lights, utilizing noise-reducing headphones, soundproofing studio space and removing scent sources. Students with emotion dysregulation, who often have difficulties managing their feelings and emotions, can benefit from a physical chart of emotions as well as a calming corner with sensory toys, e.g., fidget toys, kinetic sands and twisty hand puzzles. The last trait, poor executive functioning, describes students who struggle to manage impulses; have problems with starting, organizing, planning or completing tasks; and have trouble listening or paying attention. As executive functioning is a learned skill, teachers could aid students in developing these skills. Modeling how to practice at home during lessons or classes, breaking tasks step-by-step, using external motivations and taking short breaks are helpful tools for students with this trait.

Michelle Sulaiman *serves as an instructor of keyboard and music theory at the University of Oregon. Her current research interest includes AuDHD (ASD and ADHD) and late 19th-century Indies (present-day Indonesia).*

By Dr. Sonya Schumann, NCTM

LIGHTNING SESSION

Connecting Class Piano Coursework to Careers

Dr. Tina Chong and Dr. Sonya Schumann, NCTM, both faculty at San Diego State University, reported on their class piano curricular changes from the last two years, connecting curriculum to their students' futures and goals.

As collegiate class piano students matriculate from the basics at the keyboard to more intermediate skills and concepts, students may wonder about the importance of these skills in their day-to-day lives after graduation. How often has a student complained, "I'm never going to use _____" when speaking of assessments in keyboard skills expected at higher levels? Focusing on addressing the disconnect between the piano classroom and the diverse career paths students have chosen, the pair have created project-based assessments for the final two semesters of piano courses for music majors to:

1. Connect classroom activities and assessments to real-world scenarios and practices, not only in their students' future jobs, but also in the present moment.
2. Strengthen peer-to-peer collaborations, especially as students often stay within the region after graduation—group projects also serve to encourage community and network building beyond the classroom.
3. Encourage students to "be the expert" in their field using the piano as a tool, versus "being an expert at the piano." Learning to reduce serves students well in this respect, in sight-reading as much as part-reading.

In the first two semesters of group piano at SDSU, accompanying assessments and duets were essential to fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and mutually beneficial outcomes. In year two, they introduced a group project that connected their piano studies and their future goals, called "Piano with a Purpose," inspired by Christopher Fisher's book, Teaching Group Piano. Students were encouraged to create groups of up to four people, typically by major. In this project, students would contact a professional in their chosen

"Student reports show increased motivation to practice and use the piano as a tool in their own professions."

Tina Chong *is assistant professor and piano area coordinator at San Diego State University. A graduate of Indiana University and Oberlin Conservatory, Tina is a Yamaha artist and advocate of alternatively sized keyboards.*

Sonya Schumann, *NCTM, teaches at San Diego State University, where she also serves as coordinator of the piano academy of the community music school. She also leads the nonprofit AmateurPianists and is a founder of Keys to Inclusion.*

field to interview and ask 5–10 questions about their incorporation of the keyboard in that field. The student groups then presented the information gleaned from their interviews, as well as a small demonstration at the keyboard. Individually, each student would submit their personal takeaway from the assignment, giving them an opportunity to further connect. Each project went in its own direction, and students continually reported a deeper appreciation for even the most tedious of piano activities, such as scales and arpeggios.

Finally, giving students their own moment in the class to highlight their expertise while integrating career-centered piano goals drove home the importance of the keyboard. As the final assignment in the terminal level of class piano, students chose from five options for their capstone projects and performed for the class in a talent show-style final exam. Projects ranged from presenting children's songs from foreign countries to creating a piano accompaniment practice track for a jury performance to composing an original work for solo piano or even transcribing pop music to be played at the piano. Student reports show increased motivation to practice and use the piano as a tool in their own professions.

By Dr. Grace Ho

LIGHTNING SESSION

Empower, Not Cower

Developing Keyboard-Positive Curriculum

Many students experience dread and stress when taking piano proficiency courses. Not only is performance anxiety combined with test anxiety, but students get stressed about making mistakes on an instrument that is brand-new for them. They have to read in a new clef, they have to learn new technique and they have to coordinate playing with two hands at the same time; this is very daunting for a one- or two-credit class. Worst of all, students lose sight of the purpose of these classes, focusing only on passing exams, immediately forgetting what they learned.

This fear causes students to cower under the pressure, and many develop PTSD from keyboard skills classes. In this lightning talk, I discussed the steps I took to create a "keyboard-positive" curriculum for secondary piano students at the University of Oregon. Our school's administration tasked me with creating courses that would meet appropriate learning goals while relieving student stress. I based the curriculum on three guiding principles. The first principle is to adapt material to the student rather than making students adapt to the material. This is an idea from Universal Design Learning. For instance, assignments and evaluations are adapted to the student's ability, giving students multiple options for demonstrating their skills. The assessments play to the student's strengths by rewarding points rather than deducting points when evaluating their progress.

The second principle is to focus on functional skills. We have done this by individualizing requirements for different majors rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. For instance, we have voice and music education majors work on pentascales for vocal warm-ups, SATB choral score reading, vocal accompaniments and harmonization. In contrast, composers need to know scales and idioms of stylistic periods as well as mixed ensemble score reading. Assignments and evaluations simulate practical situations in which keyboard skills are used so students understand the relevance of the course content.

The final principle is making piano class fun! When asked how he was able to memorize so many trivia facts, *Jeopardy!* champion and host Ken Jennings said, "Somebody who thinks they have an unremarkable memory or a kid who can't learn their times tables, they still know every word of every song on their favorite album, and they know every player on the roster of their favorite team. The memory is working just fine when engaged." Students will engage more if they are having fun. Whenever possible, I have the class play "out loud" together with headphones off. They sight-read together. We do "reverse karaoke" for vocal accompaniments. We sing and harmonize with everyone using whatever accompaniment style they feel comfortable with. And we all laugh and have fun. Students feel safe to make mistakes and by the end of the course they feel empowered, excited and ready to use their skills.

Grace Ho *is a pianist, educator and arts administrator in Eugene, Oregon. She is on the faculty of the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance as instructor of secondary piano and piano pedagogy.*

Dr. Olivia Ellis, NCTM; and Dr. Ivan Hurd, NCTM

LIGHTNING SESSION

"It's Stuck in My Head!"

Five Ways to Build Musicianship Skills through Original Lyrics

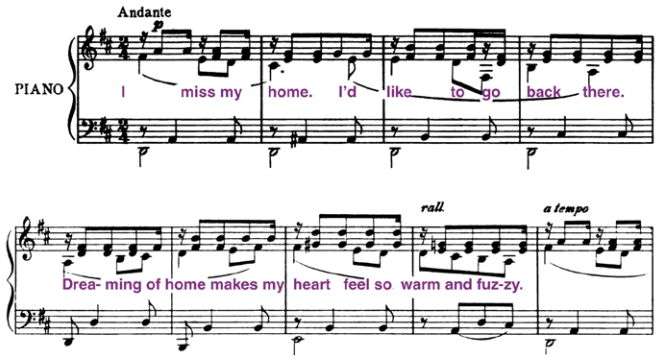
"Have you tried singing it?" Teachers often ask students this question in an effort to increase musicality. Yet many times, students respond to this question with a blank stare or look of reluctance, wondering, "Why would I sing my pieces if there are no lyrics?"

Lyrics are embedded into a vocalist's repertoire, but they can also be invaluable to pianists, even in the earliest stages of learning. When piano students invent catchy lyrics to accompany their pieces, they benefit in the following ways that were discussed during the session:

1. **Solidifying memory:**
   Adding lyrics to non-vocal music helps instrumental students commit the musical elements firmly to memory.
2. **Shaping phrases:**
   Singing is an easy method to understand phrasing, learn where to take time and breathe and determine the peak of a phrase. Setting lyrics to a piece makes this kind of discovery natural.
3. **Delineating texture:**
   Singing to lyrics can help voice the main melody, understand harmonic function by singing bass lines, or better hear interesting middle voices, depending on the texture.
4. **Playing varied articulations:**
   Singing lyrics of a certain character makes it easier to remember and apply many different articulations to an instrument.
5. **Performing with a unique interpretation:**
   The greatest songwriters use lyrics to tell stories and elicit a variety of emotions. Students' lyrics can achieve similar goals.

Throughout this session, we shared original lyrics to bring each point to life and invited the audience members to sing along. For example, to bring out the inner melody of Rebikov's *Song without Words,* we added these lyrics:

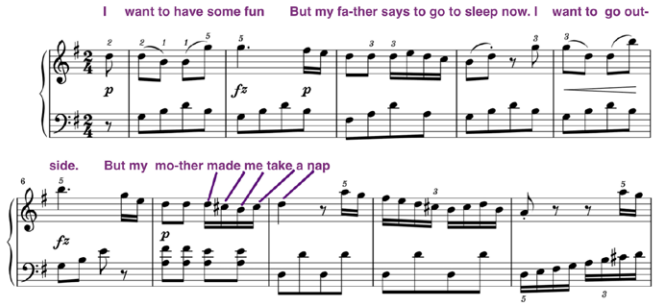
"I miss my home. I'd like to go back there.
Dreaming of home makes my heart feel so warm and fuzzy."



Example 1. Vladimir Rebikov: Song without Words

Singing lyrics to the opening of Clementi's Sonatina in G Major, Op. 36, No. 2 helps students exaggerate articulations in performance:

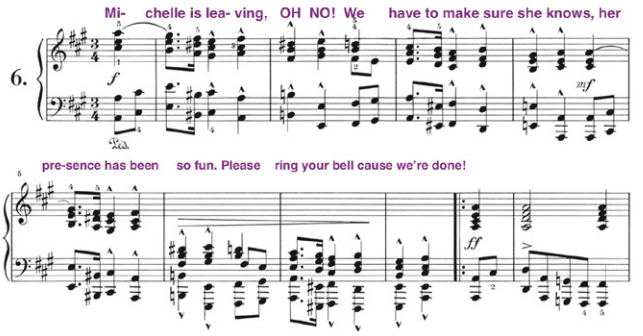
"I want to have some fun, but my father says to go to sleep now.
I want to go outside, but my mother made me take a nap."



Example 2. Muzio Clementi: Sonatina in G Major, Op. 36, No. 2, I. Allegretto

A group favorite was the final example set to R. Schumann's "Important Event" from Kinderszenen, Op. 15, which paid a tribute to retiring GP3 founder Michelle Conda:

"Michelle is leaving, OH NO! We have to make sure she knows,
Her presence has been so fun. Please ring your bell 'cause we're done!"



Example 3. Robert Schumann: Kinderszenen, Op. 15, No. 6 "Important Event"

The session ended with joy and laughter, solidifying that lyrics can make piano practice memorable and enjoyable!

Olivia Ellis, *NCTM, is associate professor of music and director of keyboard studies and chamber music at Messiah University. She holds a DMA degree from the University of Oklahoma and co-authors the blog creativepianoteacher.com.*

Ivan Hurd, *NCTM, is assistant professor of piano pedagogy at the University of Texas at San Antonio, where he teaches piano, pedagogy and class piano. He holds a DMA in piano performance and pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma.*

By Dr. Jessie Welsh, NCTM

LIGHTNING SESSION

A Lab of Wonders

Innovative Performance Assessments for the Group Piano Classroom

Students in the group piano classroom—especially those fulfilling a requirement for an undergraduate degree in music—frequently express that they view themselves as "non-pianists" and therefore show reluctance in developing skills at this unfamiliar and overwhelming instrument. While fundamentals like scales and chord progressions are necessary for these musicians, what would it look like if the group piano classroom focused on the application of these foundational skills? What if we, as pedagogues, challenged our students to demonstrate understanding and mastery of piano fundamentals through creative performances and innovative collaborations with peers? What if a dreaded degree requirement became a highlight of our students' academic careers and simultaneously prepared them for flexible, innovative careers as music educators, studio teachers, collaborators and performers?

This lightning talk addressed these questions and provided real-life examples from the collegiate group piano classroom. The purpose of this lightning talk was to encourage attendees to explore innovative assessments outside—or in addition to—the traditional group piano performance requirements. Three main tips were offered to group piano instructors looking to complement their curriculum and expand their coursework to include nontraditional and creative assessments:

1. Know your audience—Consider your student demographic: Will most of your students work as K–12 educators? Think about their future jobs and what skills are essential for their success in the classroom.
2. Balance fundamentals with interest—Reflect on how to accomplish the same goals and concepts with more variety. Do you students love pop music, or perhaps musical theatre? What repertoire or songs might they find compelling and motivating?
3. Keep play central—In *The Body Keeps the Score*, van der Kolk states, "When we play together, we feel physically attuned and experience a sense of connection and joy." The presenter described these as goals for her own classroom.

I shared examples of coursework and assessments at Western Kentucky University, including practice demonstration videos, "White House" arrangements of *Happy Birthday*, ensemble self-assessments, "studio class" days, transcription projects and playing by ear, collaborative performances from lead sheets, pop and holiday singalong recitals, and silent/short film recital projects.

I also shared how the silent/short film recital projects in the fourth semester of group piano at my university served as a culmination project for the group piano sequence. These multimedia performances of planned improvisations or written-out scores promote student autonomy and require musicians to demonstrate music theory knowledge, long-range planning skills, practice independence, sensitivity to characters/mood and overall artistry at the piano.

This lightning talk concluded with short video examples my group piano students performing two-handed accompaniments and silent film projects. The full clips of these videos, along with additional examples, were provided to attendees through a QR code, which is included below.

Jessie Welsh, *DMA, NCTM, is pedagogical assistant professor of piano at Western Kentucky University, where she coordinates the group piano sequence, teaches graduate and undergraduate piano pedagogy, teaches applied piano and directs the piano laboratory program.*

By Dr. Carla Salas-Ruiz

LIGHTNING SESSION

Sparking the Fire Within

Cultivating Motivation and Empowering Practice through Interest Development

In the presentation "Sparking the Fire Within: Cultivating Motivation and Empowering Practice through Interest Development," the goal was to inspire a new approach to understanding and fostering student motivation. The discussion focused on the complex nature of motivation, influenced by factors such as memory, attention, curiosity and interest. Interest plays a unique role in motivation by activating the brain's reward circuitry, improving attention, increasing efficiency and developing over time (Renninger and Hidi 2020, 11). The presentation highlighted the crucial role teachers play in nurturing and sustaining student interest.

The Four-Phase Model of Interest Development, introduced by Hidi and Renninger (2006), outlines how interest develops through four phases. The first two phases are situational, requiring external triggers for engagement, while the latter phases involve self-directed learning. The importance of teacher support was emphasized, as interest can become dormant or regress without it. The presentation proposed a shift in perspective: Rather than viewing a lack of motivation as a general issue, piano teachers could focus on understanding each student's specific phase of interest development. This approach allows for more personalized and effective strategies to inspire motivation to practice.

The Interest Development Scale (Boeder et al. 2020), validated for adolescent piano students in Salas-Ruiz (2023), was introduced as a tool for identifying a student's phase of interest development. The presenter described her dissertation study, which focused on adolescent music students in the situational phases and identified areas for improvement, including musical understanding, autonomy, competence, sense of belonging, performance confidence and self-regulation.

Practical strategies for enhancing interest development and motivation to practice were shared. To promote musical engagement, methods such as writing, painting or digital technologies and platforms were suggested to meet students in their comfort zones. Strategies for fostering autonomy, competence and a sense of belonging included utilizing duets, engaging parents, increasing cultural awareness and providing training to build cultural competence and address unconscious

bias. To address performance anxiety, suggestions included encouraging self-reflection, fostering camaraderie and educating on educational psychology principles. For developing self-regulation skills, emphasis was placed on modeling self-regulatory behaviors and attributing success to practice.

The presentation concluded with a call to action for educators: ignite the internal fire within students by cultivating their motivation and empowering their practice through a thoughtful approach to interest development.

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Carla Salas-Ruiz, *associate director and faculty at the New School for Music Study, holds a Ph.D. degree in music education focused on piano pedagogy. Her research includes motivation, interest development and healthy musicianship.*

By Dr. Brendan Jacklin

LIGHTNING SESSION

Staying Current

The Need for Updating the Psychology of Pedagogy

Many theories that form the foundation of modern pedagogy are beginning to show their age: *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (1917), Jean Piaget's *Theory of Cognitive Development* (1919), Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (1943) and Neil Fleming's *VARK* (1992). As our understanding continues to evolve, it is critical to reevaluate our reliance on these theories in light of new information. Throughout the last 15 years, social sciences have been grappling with two issues: The first is a replication crisis, where many theories and studies have been unable to be replicated by other scientists—one of the studies that precipitated the crisis showed a failure rate of up to 50%, meaning half of the experiments they tried to duplicate were unable to achieve the original results. This led scientists to explore what lay behind the replication crisis, finding poor methodology, drawing incorrect conclusions, small sample sizes, publication bias, cultural and gender biases, and even fraud. The second is WEIRDness. WEIRD—Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic—are biases inherent in many past experiments. Many studies were completed using the most readily available population scientists had access to: the college student. When combined with past racist and sexist policies, that meant white male college students. These biases mean that many past experiments may not be universally applicable to other cultures and are in fact dominated by WEIRD countries. These issues are what led a 2020 study to conclude "thus, what we know so far [about psychology] may represent the tip of the iceberg of a more fully fledged picture of the human psyche" (Muthukrishna 2020). Two examples of theories highlight these issues and how current research should shift our thinking. Piaget's *Theory of Cognitive Development's* sample was very small, consisting largely of his own children, and suffers from a strong cultural bias. A 2011 study notes "life pattern and cultural context have been found to play a significant role in cognitive development, however, Piaget ignored this particular area" (Franzoi 2011). Learning styles, such as *VARK* developed by Fleming, have been found to be unrepresentative of actual learning. Fleming himself said, "I sometimes believe that students and teachers invest more belief in VARK than it warrants. You can like something, but be good at it or not good at it…VARK tells you about how you like to communicate. It tells you nothing about the quality of that communication." Learning styles further ignore that different types of knowledge may require different modes of learning and that people "self-select" what fits their self-image. Some go further, concluding there is no evidence that learning styles exist. A 2008 study concluded "the contrast between the enormous popularity of the learning-styles approach within education and the lack of credible evidence for its utility is, in our opinion, striking and disturbing" (Pashler 2008).The knowledge of how we learn and perceive the world is continually evolving. The closer we can follow new developments, the better we will be able to help ourselves and our students.

View References

Brendan Jacklin *is assistant professor of piano at Fisk University. He is also a cofounder of A Seat at the Piano and serves as director of programming for the Nashville Chamber Music Society.*

By Dr. Chenbaixue Yang

LIGHTNING SESSION

Tobias Matthay

Three Touch Species

Tobias Matthay, British pianist, composer and educator, is known for his pioneering contributions to piano teaching. His methods, particularly emphasizing relaxation and natural hand movements, have greatly influenced modern piano pedagogy. The focus of this presentation was on Matthay's "Three Touch Species," an approach that highlights the importance of understanding the physiological aspects of piano touch.

Matthay's pedagogical approach emphasized scientific rigor in developing finger techniques, including improving fingers' strength, independence and agility, while promoting relaxation and proper body mechanics.

Matthay's discipline is thoroughly documented in his writings, such as *The Visible and Invisible in Piano Technique, Relaxation Studies* and *The Act of Touch*, in which he explored both the technical and interpretative aspects of playing. His focus on physiology and relaxation transformed the traditional understanding of piano touch, introducing the notion that proper technique is rooted in the natural mechanics of the body.

At the core of Matthay's theory is the concept of the "Three Touch Species," which analyzes three main components of piano touch: the exertion of the fingers, the exertion of the hand and the weight of the arm:

1. Finger Exertion: The force generated by the finger against the key is met by an equal upward force at the knuckle. The effectiveness of this exertion relies on a stable foundation to absorb the opposing force.
2. Hand Exertion: When pressing the knuckle, the recoil force travels to the wrist, connecting the arm and hand. Proper hand exertion requires managing this energy flow to avoid tension.
3. Arm Weight: By releasing tension in the shoulder and elbow, the natural weight of the arm is allowed to bear on the hand. For louder effects, slight downward movements of the arm can enhance the weight applied to the keys, but the body should remain passive.

These components work in various proportions to create different types of piano touch, depending on the musical context. Each type—whether finger, hand or arm dominant—produces a unique sound quality and must be applied thoughtfully. Effective playing relies on mastering the coordination of these touch species to align with musical expression.

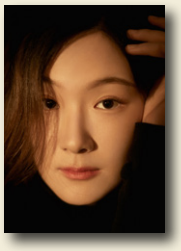
The "Three Touch Species" method encourages pianists to develop a heightened awareness of their physical mechanics. Pianists must recognize that the precise moment the hammer strikes the string is when their touch matters most, and all efforts should focus on making that moment expressive.

Matthay's emphasis on natural hand movements, relaxation and the technical foundations of piano touch remains invaluable for pianists striving for expressive, controlled playing. Matthay's legacy continues through his writings and the pianists who study his methods.

Reference

Matthay, Tobias. 1903. *The Act of Touch in All its Diversity: An Analysis and Synthesis of Pianoforte Tone-Production*. Longmans, Green and Co.

Chenbaixue Yang, *pianist, instructor and researcher, holds a DMA degree in piano performance pedagogy at Arizona State University. She is actively engaged in research related to piano pedagogy and Chinese contemporary piano repertoire.*



By Dr. Sarah Rushing, NCTM

LIGHTNING SESSION

Too Much of a Good Thing?

Oversaturation in the Job Market

This lightning talk discussed the saturation of the higher education job market by comparing data on DMA graduation rates with job postings. The presenter began by commenting on the importance of all jobs in our field, stating that while academic positions are highly sought after for their stability and other benefits, this should not diminish the crucial work of community music teachers, church musicians, freelance pianists and others working outside of academia. Though the higher education job market cannot support the increasing number of qualified candidates, communities throughout the country benefit from the high level of pianism produced by the 52 accredited DMA programs in piano performance. Thus, we have found ourselves with a "good" problem in need of forward-thinking solutions.

The data presented in the talk was drawn from the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) Project, produced by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). The presenter focused solely on the DMA in piano performance degree, averaging the last five available HEADS Project surveys (academic years beginning 2017–2021). To determine the number of job postings each year, the presenter used the online College Music Society's Music Vacancy List archives and the crowd-sourced Academic Jobs Wiki hosted online by Fandom, including only full-time positions in the U.S. that primarily sought a piano pedagogue. Positions that primarily sought collaborative pianists or positions that required specialized knowledge or skills beyond the standard DMA in piano performance curriculum were not included.

At the start of each academic year, there were, on average, 866 students enrolled in a DMA of piano performance degree program. An average of 161 DMA candidates graduated each academic year. Over the span of these five years, a total of 808 DMA degrees in piano performance were conferred. Contrastingly, the analysis of job postings revealed that approximately 36 academic jobs are listed each year, a quarter of which, on average, are tenure track. The presenter noted that most of these jobs are not won by new graduates; rather, they are filled by pianists with prior university teaching experience.

The brevity of this talk prevented in-depth discussion about solutions for this "good" problem, though the presenter did mention two basic suggestions:

1. Schools with DMA programs must have a conversation with applicants before accepting them into the degree program to determine their career goals, research areas and aptitude for the wide-ranging skill set required to be successful in our field in and out of academia.
2. Schools with DMA programs should consider changes in the standard curriculum that better prepare new graduates for entry-level collegiate teaching positions, including more intermediate pedagogy instruction and a heightened focus on sight-reading skills.

The presentation closed with a call to action: As professors and mentors, we have a duty to our students to be realistic and informed about their career options. If their goal is to teach in higher ed, we need to help them understand the likelihood of winning a collegiate teaching position in the years following their graduation. ◂◂

"As professors and mentors, we have a duty to our students to be realistic and informed about their career options."

Sarah Rushing, *NCTM, is assistant professor of piano at West Texas A&M University, where she teaches piano and piano pedagogy. She also co-directs the Grace Hamilton Piano Festival and co-coordinates the WT Music Academy.*

Archipelago Gem

An Exploration of Trisutji Kamal's *Sunda Seascapes*

By Dr. Meldy Tanako

Trisutji Kamal (1936–2021) incorporated the folklore and traditional charms of Indonesian music in her 48 solo piano works, establishing herself as the only woman among Indonesia's renowned contemporary composers. This poster introduces three works from her *Sunda Seascapes* collection: "Nuances of the Sunda Strait," "Mystery of Sanghyang Island" and "Song of the Sea."

Kamal began her musical education in Indonesia before continuing her studies in Europe, developing a compositional style that blends musical elements from her Javanese heritage with Arabic and Islamic traditions, and Western compositional techniques. Completed in 1990, *Sunda Seascapes* exemplifies this blend. The collection includes seven works graded at level 10+ according to the Magrath leveling system, reflecting its technical demands, including parallel chords, rapid sixteenth notes and frequent hand position shifts. Although *Sunda Seascapes* was once published by the Mitra Budaya Foundation, it is now out of print, with only three copies available in the United States through interlibrary loan.

The first piece, "Nuances of the Sunda Strait," features musical traits derived from Javanese gamelan music, prominently utilizing the pentatonic *Slendro* scale. Written in a five-part, through-composed form, this piece showcases the modified *Slendro* scale and incorporates gamelan compositional practices such as melodic transposition and doubling. "Mystery of Sanghyang Island" employs open sonorities and melodic elaboration principles derived from gamelan music's heterophonic texture. "Song of the Sea" explores Arabic traditions within a four-part through-composed structure, with each section marked by shifts in texture and tempo. The piece also uses the heptatonic *Pelog* scale, which can be reinterpreted as a modified double harmonic scale, effectively blending musical elements from both gamelan music and Arabic traditions.

Overall, Trisutji Kamal's *Sunda Seascapes* is a collection that seamlessly integrates Javanese, Western, Islamic and Arabic musical traditions, showcasing her versatility as a composer.

Meldy Tanako *earned a DMA in piano performance and pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma in August 2024. She has presented her research on the pedagogical works of Asian composers at regional and national conferences.*

ARCHIPELAGO GEM: AN EXPLORATION OF TRISUTJI KAMAL'S *SUNDA SEASCAPES*

Meldy Tanako, DMA
University of Oklahoma

PURPOSE

Trisutji Kamal, the sole female composer among Indonesia's renowned contemporary composers, incorporated Indonesian folklore and traditional elements into her 48 solo piano works. Despite her extensive body of work, Kamal's compositions have yet to gain recognition in major piano literature texts. This poster introduces three captivating pieces from her *Sunda Seascapes* collection: "Nuances of the Sunda Strait," "Mystery of Sanghyang Island" and "Song of the Sea."

TRISUTJI KAMAL

Kamal (1936–2021) was born into a Javanese aristocratic family in Jakarta and grew up in Binjai, North Sumatra. She studied piano and composition with Dutch concert pianist Laurine Rammert before furthering her musical studies at Amsterdam Conservatory, École Normale de Musique in Paris and Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome. Upon completing her studies in 1967, Kamal returned to Indonesia to pursue her composition and teaching career. Her compositions have been performed in major cities in Europe and all around Indonesia.

COMPOSITIONAL OUTPUT

- Composed for multiple instrumental and vocal mediums
  - *Lorojonggrang* (1956) - Indonesia's first opera
  - *Prayer for Redemption* - for orchestra
  - *Mount Agung* - ballet suite
  - One symphony
  - Two piano concerti - one of which is accompanied by gamelan bumbung (Balinese bamboo gamelan ensemble)
  - Dance and film music
- **Solo piano music dominated Kamal's solo instrumental output**
  - Wrote 48 solo piano works
  - Published collections:
  - *Sunda Seascapes* (1990) - 7 pieces
  - *Younger Years Selected Compositions* (2002) - 10 pieces
  - *Indonesian Folk Melodies* (2002) - 26 pieces

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

- Indonesian elements: Javanese gamelan concepts and practices, Indonesian folk-like melodies, quartal and quintal harmonies
- Islamic elements: Quran recitation rhythm *(tajwid)*, double harmonic scale
- Western elements: jazz harmonies, Western forms, Western diatonic harmonies, changing meter

SCORE INFO

Sunda Seascapes score is available through interlibrary loan from:

- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, TX
- Rice University, TX
- Cornell University Library, NY

ABOUT SUNDA SEASCAPES

- Dedicated to Kamal's husband, A. B. Kamal
- Completed in 1990 at Kamal's villa in Anyer, a small town in West Java, Indonesia
- Premiered in 1991
- 7 character pieces inspired by the beauty of nature

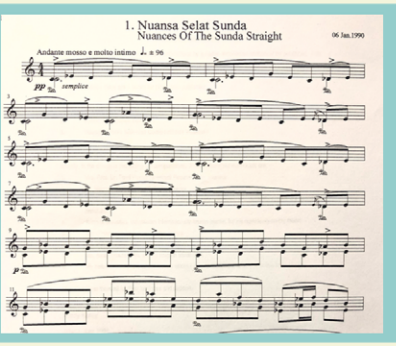
"Here I enjoyed, felt, and received the penetrating vibrations of another world. For hours I used to stare at the colors and atmosphere of the sea, from dawn till dusk, sometimes continued gazing at the skies during moonlit nights. I visited the mysterious Sanghyang Island, where the remnants of Japanese fortress can be found. The color of the skies, the quietness and beauty of the sunset at Anyer beach was like a natural painting that changes constantly every day and forever and ever. The nuance of the sea was of the gradation of blue, depending on the sunrays and the states of the weather." (Kamal, in an interview with Tamio, 2007)

- Style: Romantic, Impressionist, Minimalist
- Musical features: gamelan traditions and sonorities, double harmonic and pentatonic scales, *tajwid*
- Difficulty: Artist level (Level 10+ Magrath leveling system)

I. NUANCES OF THE SUNDA STRAIT

Gamelan traditions
- Melodic stacking and doubling in fourths and fifths (m. 9)
- Gong strikes (m. 22, left hand)
- Colotomic structure (between sections A and B)
- Musical climax at the end of a section (sections A and B)

Western element
- Planing (mm. 53 - 54)



Melodic motif:
- Modified gamelan slendro scale (C-Db/D-Eb-G-Ab)

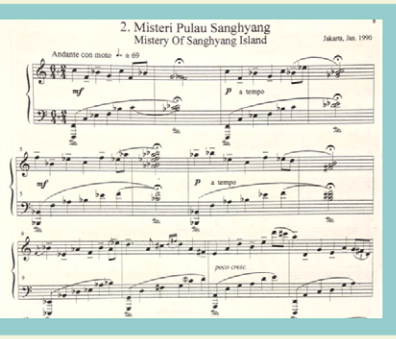
Three-part form
- A: mm. 1 - 37
- B: mm. 38 - 74
- C: mm. 75 - 144
- New sections marked by textural change

Pedagogical values
- Non-traditional scales
- Compound melody voicing
- Weak beat accents
- Polyrhythm

II. MYSTERY OF SANGHYANG ISLAND

Gamelan traditions
- Microtonal tuning (m. 2)
- Gamelan pentatonic slendro scale (mm. 1 - 8)
- Octave doubling (m. 20)
- Use of heterophonic texture principles as melodic elaboration technique (m. 21)
- Use of open-sounding quartal and quintal harmonies

Western elements
- Debussy-like three-voiced texture (m. 50)
- Planing (mm. 71 - 74)



Islamic element
- Double harmonic scale (m. 34)

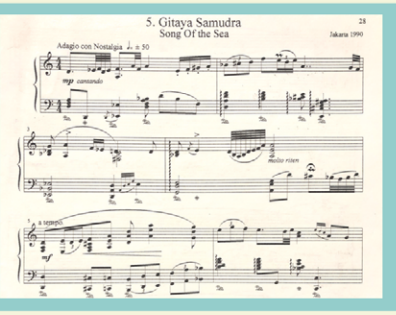
Five-part form
- Introduction: mm. 1 - 8
- A: mm. 9 - 29
- B: mm. 30 - 52
- C: mm. 58 - 75
- D: mm. 76 - 107

Pedagogical values
- Variety of articulations
- Rapid change in hand positions
- Smooth octave movement

V. SONG OF THE SEA

Gamelan traditions
- Improvisatory style
- Layered texture (m. 27)
- Gamelan heptatonic pelog scale (mm. 1 - 2)
- Melodic fillers (mm. 98 - 102)
- New section marked by tempo changes (mm. 57 and 61)

Western elements
- Jazz harmonies (m. 56)
- Glissandi (mm. 21 - 22)



Islamic element
- Double harmonic scale (mm. 1 - 2)

Four-part form
- Introduction: mm. 1 - 8
- A: mm. 13 - 56
- B: mm. 58 - 83
- C: mm. 88 - 107

Pedagogical values
- Exposure to non-traditional scales
- Changing meter
- Rhythmic diminution

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Scan the barcode for:

- Audio recordings of selected pieces from *Sunda Seascapes*, performed by Ananda Sukarlan, a renowned Indonesian composer-pianist
- Reference list
- Leveled list of Kamal's published piano works

CONTACT

- meldytanako@gmail.com

Boosting Students' Motivation through Contemporary Repertoire

By Dr. Le Binh Anh Nguyen and Dr. Molly Sanford

Popular contemporary repertoire can be motivating, exciting and pedagogically rich for use in group piano classes. Our poster demonstrates a variety of ways to integrate K-pop and film music for the classroom, from small references to multilevel exercises. Through both sheet music examples and audio backing tracks, we found that students were more motivated to practice and more engaged with group classmates when we utilized popular contemporary repertoire. We have addressed the practical challenges of how to incorporate popular music within a standard piano class so other educators may have a foundational framework for similar situations. Our examples were easily adaptable to different student levels and classes.

The "Navigating Copyrights" section offers guidance on legal considerations when incorporating popular music into educational settings, emphasizing the importance of using licensed materials and the potential flexibility offered by fair use in academic contexts. Meanwhile, the "Selecting the Right Repertoire" section highlights strategies for choosing music that resonates with students. By staying up to date with trends and incorporating pop culture references like K-pop or movie themes, teachers can create a more engaging and relatable learning experience, which can motivate students to practice more and tackle new challenges with enthusiasm. Our "Teaching Strategies" example functions for both aural skills and reading skills. When teaching sixteenth-note counting, we incorporated Example 4 by first clapping through together, then writing the counting for students on the whiteboard, then assigning the rhythm: telling students that whoever could clap it perfectly next time would get candy! (This was for college non-music-majors, and it was very popular.) "Crafting Arrangements" helps students approach more advanced repertoire. Example 6 was our solution to varying levels in a group class: the top two staves were created as options from the third, allowing the whole class to work towards the same goal with level-appropriate material.

Le Binh Anh Nguyen *is a secondary piano graduate assistant at the University of Cincinnati and an education/technology consultant for Piano Marvel. His research interests include music technology, generative AI, sight-reading, K-pop and Vietnamese music.*

Molly Sanford *holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati and Western Michigan University. She is currently the administrative manager and a faculty member at the New School for Music Study in Kingston, New Jersey.*

Boosting Students' Motivation through Contemporary Repertoire

by Molly Sanford and Le Binh Anh Nguyen

Introduction

Popular method books can sometimes seem outdated and uninspiring to students. To boost motivation and encourage students' personal interests, teachers can turn to contemporary repertoire, such as music from movies and the K-Pop genre. However, it can be difficult to know how to incorporate this pedagogically. This poster serves as a practical guide for teachers eager to integrate popular music into their lessons.

Navigating Copyrights

Options include using licensed arrangements from established publishers. For custom arrangements, use platforms like ArrangeMe or PianoMarvel. Be aware that copyright scope might not cover the right to create audio tracks. However, fair use in academic contexts can offer some flexibility for educational use.

Example 1. White-key triad exercise on Piano Marvel, accompanied by BTS's "Fake Love"

Selecting the Right Repertoire

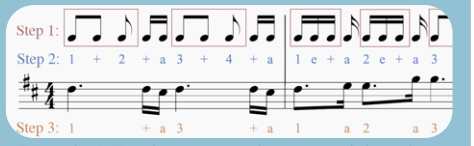
Stay current with trends by using platforms like TikTok and YouTube to understand what resonates with students. Incorporate pop culture references, especially for K-pop, to create an emotional connection with students. Encourage students to select pieces from popular movies, like "The Avengers," to increase their practice time and enthusiasm when learning new concepts, such as reading bass clef. Don't dismiss pieces students want to play simply because they seem difficult at first glance.

Example 2. Using K-Pop fan chant as as lyrics

Example 3. Incorporating movie pop culture references

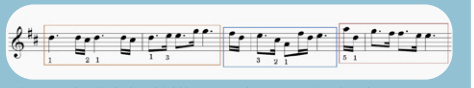
Teaching Strategies

- Introduce new rhythmic concepts through familiar material: take advantage of the sound-before-sight approach that popular music offers.
- Students can learn the mechanics behind a rhythm they already know as a theory exercise.



Example 4. Teaching sixteenth notes and dotted rhythms using John Williams' "Jurassic Park" theme

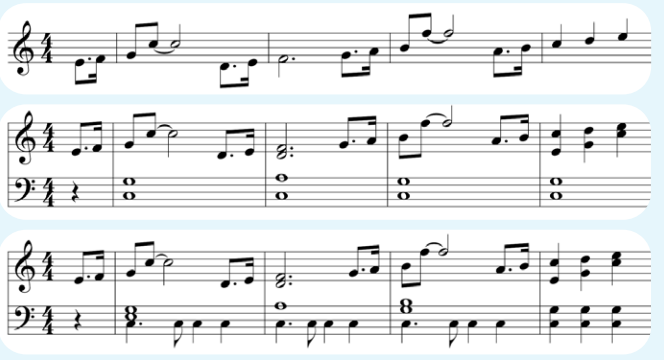
- When a student wants to play an advanced melody, demonstrate how pianists can create mental groups relating to 5-finger patterns or scales and chords.



Example 5. John Williams' "Jurassic Park" theme with melodic groups

With aural familiarity, students can face challenges above their typical reading level. Breaking down difficult music in this way gives them the tools to face similar challenges in the future.

Crafting Arrangements



Example 6. Three different levels of John Williams' "Raiders March"

- Even if you cannot teach a complete piece that a student wants to play, you can respond to their enthusiasm by exploring one line or one section.
- Students will feel accomplished, and at the same time, have an idea of where they could progress.
- If an existing arrangement is too difficult, show students how to eliminate octaves, reduce harmonies, or play only the top-note melody.

Impact

- Develops critical listening skills
- Encourages enthusiasm for practicing and performing
- Allows for student-led pedagogical discussions
- Students take an active role in learning process

China's Pioneering Composer

Ding Shande

By Dr. Mimi Zhang

Ding Shande (1911–1995) was a pioneering 20th-century Chinese composer. He played a pivotal role in the development and advancement of Chinese piano pedagogy, music education and piano performance. This poster provides an overview of Ding Shande's compositional output, available solo piano works, contributions to 20th-century Chinese music and a brief analysis of a selection of solo piano works: Spring Suite, Op. 1 (1945), Three Overtures, Op. 3 (1947–48) and *Eight Piano Pieces for Children,* Op. 28 (1987). The works selected range from the early-intermediate to late-intermediate level (Magrath 2021).

Mimi Zhang *is a pianist, pedagogue, collaborator and researcher based in St. Augustine, Florida. She is the director of the St. Augustine Piano Academy LLC.*

Ding Shande was born on November 12, 1911, in the city of Kunshan, located in the Jiangsu province, China. From age 6, Ding was inspired by the traditional Chinese festival music from his hometown. Developing a deep love for Chinese folk song and instruments, Ding taught himself to play the pipa, dizi, erhu, sanxian and other traditional Chinese instruments by 8. At 17 years old, Ding Shande enrolled in the Shanghai Conservatory, studying piano under Boris Zahkarov (1887–1943), pupil of Leopold Godowsky (1870–1938). In 1935, Ding performed a solo piano graduation recital, known as the first solo piano recital performed in China. Soon after graduation, Ding Shande was the first pianist to record Chinese solo piano music.

As a pedagogue, Ding Shande made history by composing the first Chinese elementary piano method, *First Lessons in Piano* (1st ed. 1941, 3rd ed. 1957). Throughout his teaching career, more than 105 of Ding Shande's students have won prizes at national and international competitions. As an academic, Ding Shande authored more than 100 academic articles, a composition treatise and translated three French theory textbooks into Chinese.

China's Pioneering Composer: Ding Shande 丁善德

Mimi Zhang, DMA
University of Oklahoma

Background

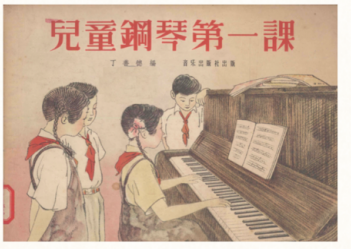
- 1911-1995
- Born in Kunshan, Jiangsu, China
- Pianist, composer, educator, theorist, activist
- Output: 16 piano works, 1 elementary piano method, 31 art songs, 5 symphonies, 4 instrumental ensembles, 1 choral work, 1 violin sonata, film music, 3 theoretical texts, and over 100 scholarly articles on music, piano performance, arts advocacy, theory, and music education.
- Attended Shanghai Conservatory of Music (1928-1935)
  - Mentors: Boris Zakharov, Wolfgang Fraenkel, Huang Zi, and Xiao You Mei
- Attended Paris Conservatoire (1947-1949)
  - Mentors: Nadia Boulanger, Tony Aubin, Noël Gallon, and Arthur Honegger

Solo piano output:

Early	Spring Suite Op. 1	(1945)
	Piano Sonata in E Major Op. 2	(1946)
	Three Overtures Op. 3	(1948)
	Variations on a Chinese Folk Song Op. 4	(1948)
Middle	Xinjiang Dance No. 1 Op. 6	(1950)
	Children's Suite "Happy Festival" Op. 9	(1953)
	Xinjiang Dance No. 2 Op. 11	(1955)
	Toccata "Good News" Op. 13	(1958)
Late	Eight Pieces for Children Op.28	(1987)
	Four Little Preludes and Fugues Op. 29	(1988)
	Sixteen Easy Studies for the Piano Op. 31	(1988)
	Sonatina for the Piano Op. 32	(1988)
	Rondo Op. 33	(1988)
	Six Preludes Op. 34	(1989)
	Scherzo Op. 35	(1989)
	Three Piano Pieces on Chinese Folk Song Op. 36	(1992)

Contributions

- First to perform a solo piano recital in China (1935)
- First to record solo Chinese piano music in China (1935)
- Composed the first Chinese elementary piano method (1st ed. 1941, 3rd ed. 1957)

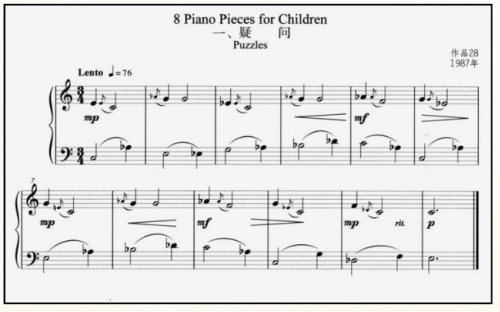


First Lessons in Piano (3rd ed. 1957)

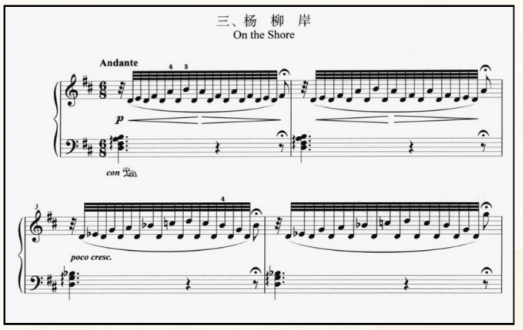
- Contains 71 exercises arranged by progressing difficulty

- First Chinese composer to write in traditional large forms including the multi-movement sonata, toccata, and theme and variations.
- Composed the first solo piano collection illustrating the lives of children: Children's Suite: *Happy Holidays, op. 9* (1953).
- Established one of the earliest music festivals in China, "Spring in Shanghai."
- Throughout his career, over 105 of Ding Shande's piano students won prizes in national and international competitions.
- Ding Shande mentored prominent pianists, composers and pedagogues, including Zhu Gong Yi, Zhou Huang Wen, and Zhou Wen Zhong.

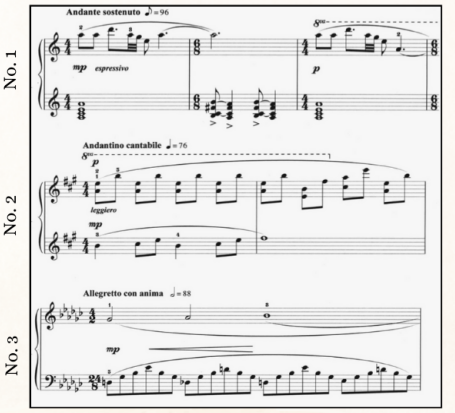
Selected Works



8 Piano Pieces for Children Op. 28 (1987) consists of a collection of 8 charming character pieces. Op. 28 offers colorful and expressive miniatures ranging from elementary to intermediate levels. Descriptive titles evoke the games played by children. "Puzzles," mimics the strategic scheming of two children focused in a game. "Puzzles" is leveled at a Magrath level 4, appropriate for an early intermediate pianist. Challenges include chromaticism and accidentals, shifting hand positions, sensitive phrasing, two-note slurs, and grace note emphasis.



Spring Suite Op. 1 (1945) was Ding Shande's first composition. The titles depict the imagery of spring: *I. Waiting for Sunrise, II. In the Boat, III. On the Shore, and IV. Breezing in the Morning.* This collection evokes the hopeful arrival of peace following the victory of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Pictured here is *III. On the Shore.* Technical challenges include contrapuntal hand independence, large arpeggiations, hand crossings, rapid rotation, and repeated notes. *III. On the Shore* is appropriate for a late intermediate pianist.



Three Overtures Op. 3 (1947-48) was composed while Ding Shande was attending the Paris Conservatory. This collection consists of three overtures, or sometimes referred to as preludes. The first overture/prelude presents a captivating melody from the Shanbei region, while the third overture showcases a melody drawn from the Chinese opera titled "The Jade Hairpin." Op. 3 is apprpriate for a late intermediate pianist. Technical challenges include metric changes, large arpeggiations, rapid passage work, and thick chord voicing .

Selected References:

Contact:
mimizhangpiano@gmail.com

From My Childhood to Yours

Piano Works by Korean Female Composers

By Dr. Ka-Young Lee, NCTM; and Dr. Sunjoo Lee

Lullabies and children's songs are inherited from our mothers and passed on to the next generation. They play vital roles in the emotional bonding between mother and child and in cultural development, shaping values and traditions from a young age. This poster introduces three Korean classical piano pieces by Korean women composers, Soonmee Kahang and Wonhee Shin, deeply inspired by beloved Korean lullabies and children's songs. These works were awarded through a composition contest by the Korean Composers Association (KOCOA) in 2015. They were recognized as inspirations from composers' childhoods and simultaneously as representations of Koreans' common sentiments.

The first two works are piano duets arranged by Soonmee Kahang. The original versions of Gwasuwon-gil (On the Orchard Road) and Sumgip Agie (A Baby in the Cottage House of the Island) feature affectionate lyrics and easy-to-sing-along melodies, making them so famous that they are often called national nursery rhymes in Korea. The last piece, Saeya Saeya (Bird, Bird, Blue Bird), is arranged as a piano solo by Wonhee Shin. The original Saeya Saeya is a folk song using only three tones, with lyrics containing metaphors of freedom, including a story about General Jeon Bong-jun (1855–1895), the leader of the Donghak Peasant Revolution in 1894. This song also served to appease the souls of General Jeon, his wives and the bereaved families of those who perished in the revolution.

The poster includes:

1. Brief bios of each composer who arranged these songs to piano music, 2
2. Translated lyrics of the original songs,
3. The background of compositions and
4. Musical examples of original songs and each piano work.

By showcasing the works of Korean female composers, this poster presentation contributes to not only enriching your piano repertoire but also promoting the diversity of musical heritage in the classical music community.

Ka-Young Lee, *NCTM, is originally from Seoul, Korea. Currently, she serves as an assistant professor at South Carolina State University. She holds a DMA in piano pedagogy from the University of South Carolina.*

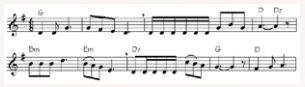
Sunjoo Lee *is a lecturer of piano at the University of Louisville. Her research interests include piano pedagogy, special education for neurodiverse students and an interdisciplinary approach to teaching music.*

From My Childhood to Yours: Piano Works by Korean Female Composers

Dr. Ka-Young Lee, South Carolina State University
Dr. Sunjoo Lee, University of Louisville

Gwasuwon-gil (On the Orchard Road) arr. by Soonmee Kahang

Original Song



Original Text Translated

On the orchard road outside the village,
acacia flowers are in full bloom.

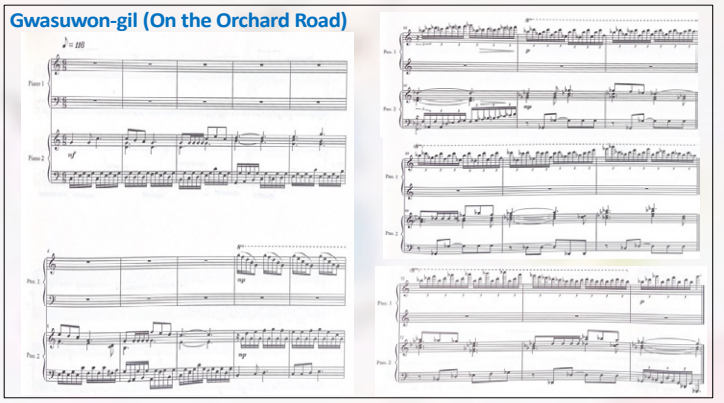
White flower leaves fly like snowflakes.

The fragrant flower smell rides in the wind.

The two of us are silent, looking at each other face to face.

Acacia flowers bloomed in white, the old orchard road.

Gwasuwon-gil (On the Orchard Road)



Composer's Bio

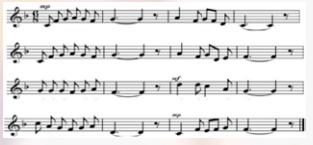
- Emeritus professor at Sungshin Woman's University, Seoul, Korea
- Awarded Grand Prize at the 35th Korea Composition Competition, 2017
- Michigan State University (Ph. D)
- Manhattan School of Music (MM)
- Works: 14 orchestral pieces, 5 pieces for Korean traditional instrumental orchestra, 20 chamber music, and more than 30 works for solo instrumental and vocal music.

About the work

- The first piece of Piano Duet for Four Hands, *Four Songs* (2013).
- The main melody is quoted from the Korean Children's song, Gwasuuwon-gil, composed in 1972.
- Free and easygoing style with some technical challenges of left-hand arpeggios and repetitive figures in triplets.
- Length: 3'36"
- Suggested level: Late Intermediate to Early Advanced.

Sumjip Agie (A Baby in the Cottage of the Island) arr. by Soonmee Kahang

Original Song

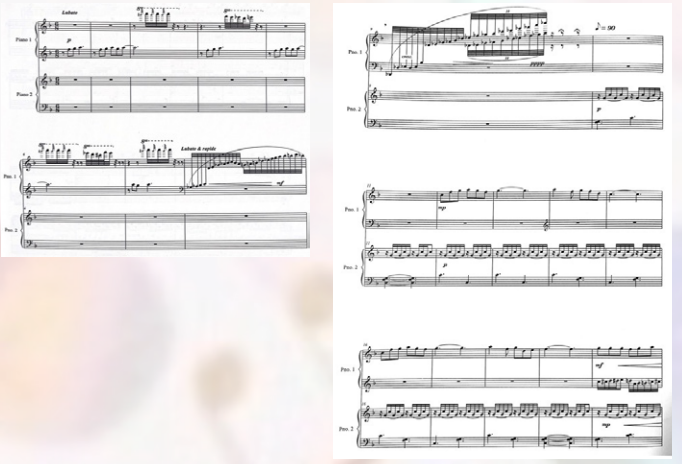


Original Text Translated

While the mother's out in the sea diving
for the oyster
The baby falls asleep in a cottage on an isle
With a lullaby sung by the sea
The baby puts her little head
on her own arm

While the baby fell in deep sleep
The gulls play a song that hurries the
mother home
The mom sets her half-full basket
on her head
The mom runs swiftly home
along the sandy beach

Sumjip Agie (A Cottage House in the Island)

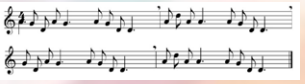


About the work

- The second piece of Piano Duet for Four Hands, *Four Songs* (2013).
- The main melody is quoted from the Korean Children's song, Sumjip Agie, composed in 1950, but the text was written in 1946.
- Direct description of the sound of seagulls and the gentle breeze of the sea.
- Length: 2'45"
- Suggested Level: Intermediate

Saeya Saeya (Bird, Bird, Bluebird) arr. by Won-Hee Shin, Folk Song

Original Song

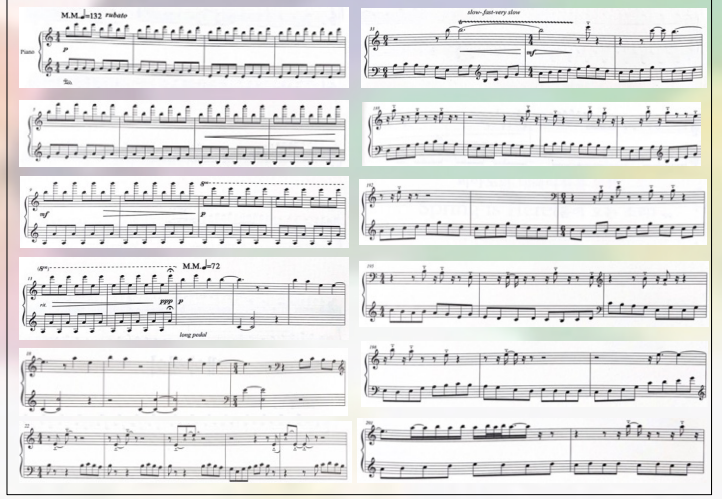


Original Text Translated

Bird, bird, bluebird.
Don't sit in the green bean field.
When the mung bean flowers fall
A tradesman of mung bean is crying and
leaving.

* The original text contains the following metaphors:
Bluebird- Japanese army
Mung bean field- peasant army
Mung bean flower-General Jeon
Tradesman of mung bean- Korean people

Saeya Saeya (Bird, Bird, Bluebird)



Composer's Bio

- Teaches several universities in Seoul, Korea
- University of Cincinnati (MM and Ph. D)
- Former Adjunct Professor at Northern Kentucky University
- Awarded several competitions in the U.S.
- Commissioned from Aspen Summer Music Festival, Music X Festival, and Hvar International Summer Music Festival

About the work

- A solo piano piece (2011).
- Originated from a Korean folk song about General Jeon Bong-jun (1855~1895), the leader of the Donghak Peasant Revolution in 1894.
- The original song was to honor General Jeon and the wives and bereaved families who were called to appease the souls of their dead husbands and family members.
- Prevalence of tremolo-like passages and long trills to depict birds' sounds.
- Length: 10' 19"
- Suggested Level: Advanced

A Quantitative Approach with Interdisciplinary Study of Psychology, Neurological and Piano Pedagogy

The Interdisciplinary Approach of Piano Teaching Strategies and Three-Dimensional Model

By Hanqiu Xu and Minzhou Sun

This interdisciplinary study crosses the fields of piano pedagogy and psychology, exploring the impact of music performance anxiety (MPA) on musicians. In previous research, most studies related to MPA have been conducted within the field of psychology, and researchers have primarily used the questionnaire survey method. Very few interdisciplinary studies have used interview methods to study MPA. Our study employed a semi-structured interview method.

Twelve musicians of different ages and professional musical backgrounds participated in the interview. We found that MPA affects musicians uniquely in different performance contexts; we studied how MPA differs before performances, during performances and after performances. We also discovered the association between educational circumstances, musical culture and MPA. Then we examined how personality traits and individuals' self-concepts are related to MPA. Next, we explored how the performance preparation process is associated with MPA. Finally, we found, from a physiological perspective, how anxiety impacts musicians' self-perception and performances.

In this poster, we focus on how musical talent culture influences music teachers' teaching attitudes and how it impacts music students' practice habits. In our social culture, how people perceive individuals' musical talent can be a factor related to MPA. We discuss how individuals with perfectionism and low self-esteem are more likely to have MPA, and we found MPA affects musicians in both positive and negative ways. In the interviews, most musicians only knew that anxiety could be positive or negative, yet most found it difficult to understand how these two states impact them clearly. We also discussed how the physiological process of anxiety impact musicians' self-perception and feeling before they have performances. In addition, we provided information on how music teachers can adjust teaching strategies based on these findings. This study applies to all musical pedagogy related to MPA.

Hanqiu Xu *received a master's degree from the Peabody Institute of Music and a bachelor's at Bowling Green State University. She is pursuing a DMA degree in piano performance and cognate piano pedagogy at Texas Christian University.*

Minzhou Sun *is a master practitioner in clinical counselling (MPCC) clinical counselor supervisor. She conducts individual, family, couples and group therapy and collaborates on various academic work with different institutions and individual professionals.*

Texas Christian University

A Quantitative Approach with Interdisciplinary Study of Psychology, Neurological and Piano Pedagogy: The Interdisciplinary Approach of Piano Teaching Strategies and Three-dimensional Model

Xu, H., & Sun, M.

Abstract

The research aims to explore musical talent and MPA in musicians to understand how these factors influence their learning and performance, enhance musicians' self-awareness, and integrate strategies to cope with the difficulties of these factors at every stage of musical learning. A semi-structured interview was used. Our study incorporates real-world piano teaching, clinical psychotherapy experience, and interview data to comprehensively explore the interplay between piano pedagogy, psychology, and neurology.

Introduction

Musical performance anxiety (MPA): MPA is characterized by excessive anxiety or impaired performance skills in public settings beyond one's musical abilities and preparation. It also represents significant occupational stress (Kenny, 2004), with 15%-83.6% of musicians being impacted by MPA. (Barros et al., 2022). Individuals who exhibit perfectionistic traits, low self-esteem, and negativity are more prone to experiencing MPA (Dobos et al., 2019).

Talent and Music Learning: Musical talent is reviewed as rare and innate, leading to an exclusive approach to teaching, while others believe oppositely. These differing views affect teaching methods and students' learning experiences (Angela & Fiona Patrick, 2015). High musical expertise requires deliberate practice (Lehmann & Ericsson, 2019). Oxford Academic and Harvard studies suggest that genetic predispositions and structured educational experiences shape musical capabilities.

Psychological Neurological and Piano Pedagogy Three Dimensional Model

Identifying the reasons for learning

Talent and music learning

Most participants agree that talent is important for music learning, yet it is not the core. Key factors for success in music learning include a passion for music, motivation to learn, long-term commitment, and a supportive teaching environment. Overreliance on talent can actually hinder success. Furthermore, when music teachers believe that only talented students can excel, they may exclude those deemed "untalented," compelling potentially capable students to endure unnecessary hardships to achieve success. Talent only influences learning plans and processes; it does not determine the outcome of music learning.

MPA related difficulties

Performance is integral to music learning, and musicians have varied definitions of it. Whether demonstrating practice in class or performing in a concert hall, any performance may induce anxiety. A successful performance does not mean the absence of MPA. All respondents indicated a lack of understanding of the physical and psychological aspects of anxiety and fear. They acknowledged that MPA has both positive and negative effects but are unclear how to distinguish them. **Overcoming MPA primarily involves two strategies: controlling or adjusting feelings of fear and anxiety after they arise and thorough preparation.**

Recognizing internal reasons

Personalities & self-concept

- **Perfectionism**
- **Low-esteem & Negative self-concepts**

Perfectionism is characterized by striving for flawlessness, setting excessively high standards, and being overly critical of oneself, often leading to stress and dissatisfaction (APA; Flett & Hewitt, 2014). Negative self-concept involves pervasive feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, leading to self-defeating thoughts and significant psychological issues like depression and anxiety (Sickert et al, 2022). Both traits positively relate to MPA among musicians (Flett & Hewitt, 2014; Kenny, 2011).

Understanding anxiety psychologically and neurologically

Anxiety: An emotion characterized by apprehension and physical tension, where an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune. The body often responds to the perceived threat with tense muscles, faster breathing, and a rapid heartbeat. Anxiety is future-oriented, long-lasting, and focused on a diffuse threat. **The physiological process of the fight-or-flight response:** When we encounter a threat, our senses detect danger signals, which are sent to the amygdala in the brain, triggering an emotional response.

CRF stimulates the pituitary gland to secrete adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH), prompting the adrenal glands to release adrenaline and noradrenaline. These hormones cause physiological changes preparing the body to respond to the threat. Once the threat is gone, the parasympathetic nervous system helps the body return to normal.

Positive & negative effects of MPA

- **Positive**: Excitement and anticipation before going on stage can enhance preparation.
- **Negative**: Musicians often worry and fear they won't perform well, a negative aspect of MPA that varies among individuals and can start as soon as they receive the performance task.

Musicians often face difficulty describing their performance anxiety, focusing more on specific worries than the feelings themselves, and they lack an understanding of the underlying physical and psychological processes. This gap in knowledge means they are affected by anxiety without fully comprehending it. Preparing for performances demands increased physical strength, focus, and energy, triggering a physiological fight-or-flight response, including increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, accelerated breathing, muscle tension, and raised blood sugar levels. These responses, while providing necessary energy, can be mistaken for negative anxiety or confusion about whether they are truly anxious or just excited.

Teaching strategy

Increase mental awareness in teaching

Teachers should prioritize effective communication with students beyond piano instruction. Meaningful dialogue allows teachers to understand students' personality traits and emotions. Recognizing how different personalities and emotional habits impact piano learning is vital for effective teaching. Teachers should actively address these factors to support students' or musicians' development. Also, teachers need to be aware of how each student's talent will affect the student's learning progress and make learning plans accordingly

Suggested Strategies to Alleviate MPA

1.Integrating the knowledge of physiological mechanisms of anxiety into piano lesson.

2.Encourage musicians to enhance their awareness of anxiety. Train them to distinguish if the sensation is a physiological response preparing them for performance or a negative, worry-driven reaction.

CONCLUSION

This model provides feasible methods for teachers to develop an in-depth understanding of musicians, promote teaching efficiency and increase musicians engagement. The model contains: (1) How talent and MPA may impact music learning (2) Recognizing internal reasons for the difficulties musicians may experience by understanding related psychological and neurological theories. (3) Introducing teaching strategies to help musicians to enhance their overall music learning and performance.

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Teacher Perceptions
of Beginner-Level Piano Technique and Injury Prevention

By Dr. Stephanie Archer, NCTM

Many studies have been conducted examining musicians' injuries and their prevention; however, most of this research focuses on the advanced pianist. Pedagogues and researchers agree that the early stages of piano study are crucial for developing proper habits regarding piano technique, and many believe poor piano technique can be a factor in playing-related injury. An examination of piano teachers' perceptions and practices regarding beginner-level technique and injury prevention is necessary to further investigate and understand the causes and solutions to this medical phenomenon.

The purpose of this study was to investigate current perspectives and perceptions of pre-college piano teachers regarding teaching technique to the beginner-level student and the relationship those perspectives have with injury prevention. Several factors were examined including the extent these teachers' strategies reflected existing research concerning injury prevention and technique. Influences, such as method books, were also assessed to attempt to determine the root source of pedagogical choices.

The researcher created a questionnaire that was distributed to pre-college piano teachers from across the United States. A total of 204 participants responded to the survey. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Results suggested that many teachers do believe the relationship between beginner-level technique instruction and injury prevention exists; however, the emphasis each participant places on certain techniques varies across demographic groups. When teachers were divided into groups according to their preferred method books, the order in which they introduced technical skills to students varied. The emphasis on various skills also differed when participants were organized into groups according to their personal experiences with playing-related musculoskeletal disorders. This study provides the basis for more research to be conducted on beginner-level piano technique to aid in the prevention of future injuries and to promote healthy and fulfilling piano playing.

Stephanie Archer, *NCTM, earned a PhD in Piano Pedagogy from Florida State University in 2023 and is currently an assistant professor of music at the University of Mobile. She is a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music.*

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF BEGINNER-LEVEL PIANO TECHNIQUE AND INJURY PREVENTION

Stephanie Archer, PhD, NCTM
University of Mobile

What are teacher perceptions and practices in relation to beginner-level technical study and injury prevention?

Piano teachers (N=204) from across the United States were surveyed regarding their perceptions on teaching beginner technique and injury prevention.

Teacher Experience with PRMDs and Technical Skills

	Yes		No	
Techincal Skills	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Posture/Tall Back	4.65	0.66	4.50	0.69
Bench Height/Forearms Level with the Keys	4.74	0.49	4.68	0.62
Secure Footing (on Stool or Floor)	4.38	0.85	4.38	0.85
Use of Arm Weight	4.41	0.92	4.45	0.81
Firm Fingertips and Knuckles	4.18	0.92	4.35	0.83
Loose, Flexible Wrist	4.49	0.92	4.65	0.61
Round Hand Shape/Supported Hand Bridge	4.47	0.86	4.62	0.67
Elbows Slightly in Front of Body	3.83	1.01	4.23	0.83

Philosophies of Teachers Concerning Injury Prevention

Themes	Σ	Example Quote
Physical Awareness	84	"I start looking for tension at the first lesson."
Teaching Strategies	31	"Always modeling and reinforcing good technique, encouraging a healthy practice routine, and not pushing [the] student to repertoire that is too difficult for them!"
General Positive Sentiments	29	"Teaching good technique is essential for injury prevention."
No Philosophy	12	"I don't know much about it."
External Influences	9	"Learning properly in a positive atmosphere of warmth, fun, [and] caring HELPS prevent injury"

Order of Techniques Compared by Preferred Method

	Alfred	Faber	Piano Safari
1	Posture	Posture	Posture
2	Round Hand Shape	Round Hand Shape	Arm Weight
3	Playing with Fingers 2, 3, 4	Firm Fingertips	Playing with Fingers 2, 3, 4
4	Firm Fingertips	Playing with Fingers 2, 3, 4	Firm Fingertips
5	Playing with Finger 1	Flexible Wrist	Flexible Wrist
6	Playing with Finger 5	Arm Weight	Round Hand Shape
7	Flexible Wrist	Playing with Finger 1	Portato Touch
8	Legato Touch	Playing with Finger 5	Playing with Finger 1
9	Arm Weight	Legato Touch	Playing with Finger 5
10	Wrist Rotation	Staccato Touch	Staccato Touch
11	Staccato Touch	Wrist Rotation	Wrist Rotation
12	Portato Touch	Portato Touch	Legato Touch

Contributors to Injury

- Posture of the Pianist
- Wrist Angles
- Unnecessary Tension
- Hand Placement
- Long Practice Sessions

To what degree do you believe technical training at the beginner level and injury prevention are related?

M = 4.27 *SD* = 0.92

Recommendations

- Intentional Technical Introduction
- The Parent as a Teaching Asset
- Focus on Habit Formation
- Continued Education of the Teacher

Top 10 Music Software Tools

for Group Piano Instruction

By Dr. Le Binh Anh Nguyen

The music learning landscape has undergone a significant transformation since the pandemic, witnessing an upsurge in the utilization of digital music libraries, piano learning apps and other music software. This paradigm shift has opened up a wide array of practical applications for group and private piano instruction. This poster presents a curated selection of the top 10 music software tools highly recommended for music teachers to explore and integrate into their teaching practices. The software tools encompass several key categories, including:

1. Digital music libraries (such as forScore, MuseScore and Newzik)
2. Piano learning software (such as eNovativePiano, Piano Marvel and Duolingo's music courses)
3. Chord recognition apps (such as Chord ai and Ultimate Guitar)
4. Backing-track apps (such as Genius Jamtracks and iReal Pro)
5. Scanner apps (such as Sheet Music Scanner and PlayScore 2)

When compiling this list, key considerations included ease of use, affordability and practicality. Please note the list and its prices are subject to revision as music technology continues to rapidly evolve. While many of these software tools can be used independently, combining multiple apps in a workflow can significantly enhance a project's production value while keeping costs low. For instance, when self-publishing a multimedia pop song curriculum, MuseScore offers crowdsourced resources for further customization, Chord ai assists in creating chord charts from YouTube music videos and Piano Marvel supports the self-upload of teaching materials.

Le Binh Anh Nguyen *is a secondary piano graduate assistant at the University of Cincinnati and an education/technology consultant for Piano Marvel. His research interests include music technology, generative AI, sight-reading, K-pop and Vietnamese music.*

Top 10 Music Software Tools

by Le Binh Anh Nguyen

Digital Music Library

1. forScore ($19.99)
- Robust annotation tools for easy score sharing.
- Supports layered annotations and built-in metronome

2. Musescore.com (FREE)
- Extensive sheet music library, including licensed and user arrangements.
- Interactive features like playback and transposition.
- Supports downloads in MusicXML, PDF, MIDI, audio, etc.

Honorable mention
- Newzik: cloud-based, exports PDF scores to MusicXML or MIDI.

Music Learning Software

3. eNovativePiano ($43 per 120-day semester)
- Comprehensive curriculum with multimedia resources.
- Customizable curriculum and homework. **(NEW!)**

4. Piano Marvel ($10.84/month billed annually)
- Extensive music library with textbooks from major publishers.
- Features real-time assessment, progress tracking, and practice tools like looping.
- Group Play feature for simultaneous group instruction. **(NEW!)**

5. Duolingo (FREE)
- Interactive lessons for basic notes and rhythmic notation.
- Effective notifications for reminding young students.

Honorable mention
- Note Rush: gamified, simple user interface, for young students.

Chord Recognition Apps

6. ChordAI (FREE)
- Real-time chord recognition from YouTube and audio inputs.
- Syncs chord charts with YouTube, allows tempo adjustment and advanced chord features.

Honorable mention
- Ultimate Guitar: User-generated and verified tabs.

Backing Track Apps

7. Genius Jamtracks (FREE)
- High-quality backing tracks, including advanced concepts like odd meters and complex harmony.
- Natural-sounding tracks with AI.

8. iReal Pro ($19.99)
- Wide range of musical styles.
- Easy chord editing, supports various file exports.

Music Scanner Apps

9. Sheet Music Scanner (FREE)
- Playback PDF scores or MIDI instruments, export as MIDI, MusicXML, audio files.

10. PlayScore 2 ($5.99/month)
- Scans complex music, supports various clefs, allows playback with MIDI instruments.

Honorable mention
- piano2notes: Transcribes audio to scores with moderate accuracy.

Unveiling Ortmann

A Guide to Kinesthetic Awareness through Physiology

By Dr. David Mach

Otto Ortmann sought to answer a crucial question through scientific research: What is the most effective way to play the piano? How can pianists access the full spectrum of tone colors available on the instrument? To address this, Ortmann synthesized information from the fields of physics, physiology and psychology. Despite encountering publication difficulties, Ortmann's work has become less accessible in recent years, disconnecting younger generations of pianists from this foundational research.

This poster aims to provide a guide to kinesthetic awareness by presenting Ortmann's analysis of tone color through his physiological and psychological research. In addition to a brief biography, the poster includes diagrams explaining how to produce and teach the six essential tone colors most commonly used by pianists at the Peabody Institute, where Ortmann conducted his research. These tone colors, as outlined in Ortmann's original text, include singing, crisp, bell-like, sparkling, velvety and dry.

Both teachers and students can benefit from a deeper understanding of how the body creates coordinated movement at the keyboard. Knowledge of the basic physical and psychological principles in Ortmann's work can inform keyboard technique, enabling teachers to explain technical concepts in multiple ways—not just as they were taught. This opens the door for students with diverse perspectives to develop their keyboard technique, allowing piano study to reach new audiences.

David Mach *resides in St. Augustine, Florida, where he serves as cofounder of the St. Augustine Piano Academy and music director at St. Anastasia Catholic Church, coordinating their concert series and other music programs.*

Unveiling Ortmann: A Guide to Kinesthetic Awareness through Physiology

David Mach, DMA Piano Performance & Pedagogy

Who is Otto Ortmann?

Otto Ortmann (1889-1979) was a music researcher, administrator, composer, educator, pianist. After graduating with a teacher's certificate and artist's diploma in composition from the Peabody Conservatory, Otto Ortmann served on the Peabody Faculty from 1919-1928.

Otto Ortmann founded the Peabody Conservatory Research Department in 1925 to conduct research on pianists of a wide variety of skill levels, including amateur and concert pianists.

He was promoted to the director of the Peabody Conservatory of Music in 1928 where he would stay until 1941 when he was asked to step down.

His output of books on keyboard technique constitute Ortmann's most important contribution to pianists.

Ortmann's method of recording movements of keys and fingers

Instrument for recording finger-contractions

Why does Otto Ortmann matter?

Otto Ortmann (1889-1979)

Peabody Conservatory in 1902

Ortmann pioneered data-based research on expert pianists and their technique. His research confirmed several widely held beliefs in piano pedagogy and settled many debates concerning keyboard technique. Even today, his research offers valuable knowledge for modern pianists which can beautifully supplement or clarify alternative technical approaches such as Taubmann or Alexander.

Ortmann's work aimed to demonstrate the need for pianists to learn the sciences, and incorporate principles of physics, physiology, and psychology into their teaching and playing.

The 3 Sciences that Inform Keyboard Technique

Physics

The Physical Basis of Piano Touch and Tone (1925)

In 1925, the year in which his laboratory was founded, he published *The Physical Basis of Touch and Tone*.

In this book, he, using principles of physics, addresses the basis of touch and tone. He claims that tone relies primarily on the speed of the key and how long the key is played (intensity and duration).

This study proved controversial at the time, offending those believed that "the soul of the piano transcends all investigation."

Physiology

The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique (1929)

In this book, widely considered his magnum opus, Ortmann expanded on *The Physical Basic of Touch and Tone* to include physiology. Ortmann did this by collaborating with professors from Johns Hopkins Hospital and University and taking extensive physiological coursework himself.

The research for the book included measuring and recording data from the performances of advanced pianists. Some of these measurements from Chapter 23, "Tone-Qualities" are included at the bottom right of this article.

Psychology

The Psychology of Tone (Unpublished)

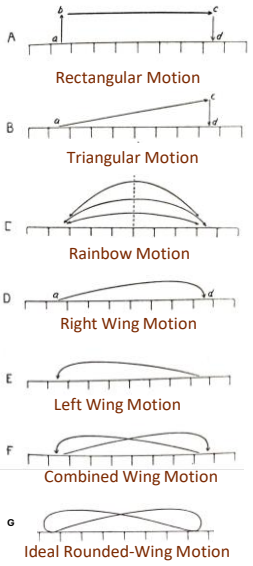
Ortmann himself planned on writing a third volume besides *The Physical Basis of Piano Touch and Tone* and *The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique* that focused purely on the psychological aspect of piano playing, a domain only briefly addressed in *Physiological Mechanics*).

He wrote an article called *The Psychology of Tone* in 1939, but he never completed the book that would flesh out these ideas more substantially.

Principles of Kinesthetic Awareness for Pianists

To understand how we create different tone-qualities, we must first understand that all natural and coordinated musculoskeletal movements are curved lines, or **curvilinear.** The explanations of the figures below constitute one potential exploration.

Almost every coordinated musculoskeletal movement requires a combination of different muscles, joints and bones. **Motions are rarely isolated.**



A. The rectangular motion from Figure A involves excessive wasted energy, featuring two full stops along the way.

B. The triangular motion simplifies the leap by moving directly over the new key. But this still requires one full direction change, creating two separate movements.

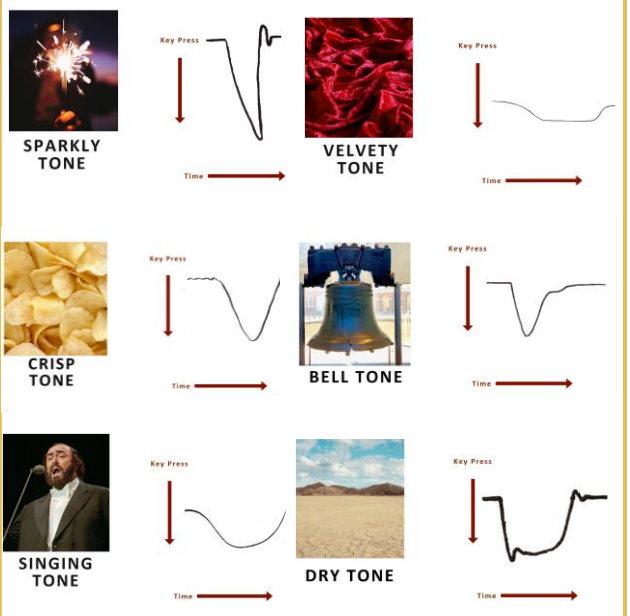
C. This can be fixed by adding a curved motion. Yet, the hand has moved much more *distance* than necessary.

D. / E. We can shrink the curve on the ascending side, raising only enough to get the desired volume from the key, thus creating a wing-shaped motion (see Figure D). The reverse motion can be inferred (see Figure E).

F. These two motions can be combined (see Figure F). Note that the 1st part of the motion must not be reversed in the 2nd part, forming 2 overlapping arcs. The only incoordination comes from keyboard stopping the hand. But Ortmann states: "No muscular coordination can entirely overcome this shock at the points of key-contact, without sacrificing tone-production."

G. Nonetheless, we can round off the edges of the movement slightly to create the Ideal Rounded-Wing Motion (see Figure G). When Ortmann recorded the lateral arm movements of advanced pianists at Peabody with the instruments he had created, he found this exact motion to be present.

6 Tone Qualities Commonly Discussed in Piano Lessons (Measured by Ortmann)



Conclusion:
Teachers and students can benefit from an understanding and awareness of how their bodies create coordinated movement at the piano. Knowledge of the basic physical and psychological principles found in Ortmann's work can guide keyboard technique, allowing teachers the ability to explain technical concepts in multiple ways, not just the ways in which they were taught. This opens the door for students with completely different understandings of the world to grow in their keyboard technique, allowing the study of the piano to reach new audiences.

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Paying Tribute and Looking Forward

Stylistic Influences and Innovations in Max Reger's *Sechs Intermezzi,* Opus 45

Dr. Bryan Chuan, NCTM
University of Colorado Boulder, 2022

Abstract

The compositional career of Max Reger (1873–1916) encompassed the deaths of the musical giants Brahms and Wagner and the emergence of modern musical styles in German music, such as the orchestral gigantism of Richard Strauss and the dodecaphonic procedures of the Second Viennese School. Keenly aware of his position in German music history, Reger sought to forge an identity as a progressive who furthered the musical developments of his predecessors while composing "absolute music" in the vein of Johannes Brahms, who was an early advocate of Reger's music. Reger composed prolifically in his short lifetime, publishing numerous symphonic, chamber and solo works while frequently unleashing obscenity-laden polemics against his critics and colleagues. Critics during and after Reger's lifetime have disparaged his large compositional output as a symptom of excess and poor taste, yet Arnold Schoenberg and Paul Hindemith cited Reger as a key influence on their musical innovations.

Reger published nearly 400 piano works in his short lifetime, but almost all these works are outside the standard repertory. Like Brahms, the majority of Reger's piano works are sets of short, abstract pieces in ABA form, such as his *Sechs Intermezzi*, Opus 45, published in 1900. Between 1898 and 1901, Reger composed prolifically, even by his standards, as he recovered from illness in his hometown of Weiden. These works mainly revisit earlier genres from German musical history, notably the still-widely performed Opus 52 chorale fantasias for organ, which expand the Protestant liturgical tradition to enormous proportions. Little research has been done about how the numerous solo piano works from these years revisit and expand on the genre of *Klavierstücke*. This paper examines how the *Sechs Intermezzi* incorporates stylistic elements of the piano works of the Johannes Brahms and Franz Liszt, while experimenting with innovations in harmonic language, counterpoint, sound spectrum and form. By following in the pianistic tradition of Brahms and Liszt while forging a progressive musical style, Reger balances between paying tribute and looking forward in the *Sechs Intermezzi*.

Full Dissertation: https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/graduate_thesis_or_dissertations/ng451j847

Bryan Chuan, *NCTM, is lecturer of piano at the University of Nevada, Reno, and received his doctorate of musical arts degree in piano performance from the University of Colorado Boulder.*

CURRENT RESEARCH

Teaching College Piano Literature Courses

Toward a New Approach

Dr. Jackie Yong
Florida State University, 2024

Abstract

Piano literature (or keyboard repertory studies) is commonly included in piano performance and some piano pedagogy degrees in the United States. This single or sequential course is required by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) at both undergraduate and graduate levels. While most universities include such courses in their degree requirements, it might be argued that not all instructors are well-equipped to teach piano literature courses. An oft-cited maxim in higher education is that "faculty teach the way they were taught" because they usually receive little formal training in teaching before entering the classroom. There are almost no pedagogical resources or materials that directly address issues regarding teaching piano literature courses to prepare young piano faculty and facilitate their teaching of such courses. While the fields of piano pedagogy, music theory, music history and musicology have many up-to-date resources available for reference, there is minimal scholarly discussion of teaching piano literature courses in educational journals or at conferences. This treatise aims to serve as a reference for both young and experienced college professors to think about how piano literature classes for 21st-century pianists can and should be taught. It compiles the wisdom and experience of established textbook authors and course instructors at prominent music institutions in the United States. Using a qualitative inquiry approach, this document will examine essential and neglected topics surrounding teaching a piano literature course. Discussions include teaching methodologies and strategies for Generation Z and Generation Alpha in the artificial intelligence world, selecting course materials that include overlooked composers without compromising canonic composers, and navigating the practicality of assignments in a piano literature course. This investigation seeks to initiate discussion on these important topics and contribute to the pedagogy of piano literature in higher education.

Full Dissertation: https://repository.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:927799

Jackie Yong *holds a DM degree in piano performance from Florida State University. He currently serves as the assistant professor of piano and keyboard division coordinator at Palm Beach Atlantic University.*

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