

CONNECT

CAPMT



JOURNAL



CAPMT CONNECT

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Message from the President

[Wendi Kirby](#), NCTM • wkirbya@gmail.com

CAPMT President



Dear CAPMT Members,

Welcome to *CAPMT Connect*. I hope that you are doing well and your families are keeping healthy and safe.

We are so excited to present our upcoming conference on October 9 and 10, 2020. Your conference committee, led by our VP of Conferences, Stephen Pierce has been working hard to provide a robust and engaging two days of online learning, connection, and professional development. We are so thrilled to have piano duo, Anderson & Roe as our keynote speakers and trust you will find all of the sessions interesting and informative. Thank you to Stephen, Sun-A Park, Michael Krikorian, Lina Lee, Mona DeCesare and Noreen Wenjen for being an incredible conference team.

This past year has been one of many adjustments for the world. In an effort to connect with you, I (and a team of CAPMT board members) met with your local chapter presidents for discussions and support. Our VP of Membership, Grant Kondo developed a membership survey which was followed up with a round table discussion via Zoom. The nominating committee has been hard at work on the upcoming ballot to give long time board members relief by recruiting new leadership to take us forward. Thank you to every board member, chair, and District Director who has given us their precious time and energy for so many years! Every effort has been made to provide support and connection with our members. We hope that you feel our support through this fine organization we call CAPMT.

Finally, as a huge outreach to all of you, Michael Tilson Thomas will provide an interview and Q&A session for us on September 25 at 11:00 AM as part of a new event: Member Engagement Week. Kudos to Grant Kondo who thought of this idea and has worked with MTT's agent to make it a reality. We hope you will join us for this exciting event. It will be held on BigMarker and a Constant Contact with the link has been sent to every member of CAPMT. Thank you to Noreen Wenjen and Mona DeCesare for providing huge technology support this year as everything is online.

I know I already shared my favorite mantra of the year (from my friend, Leila Viss): "Take Courage." We are not through this challenging time (yet) but I feel that when we do get to the other side, we will come through with a completely different appreciation for the little things in life...in person events like coffee with a friend, a music lesson, a live concert, a conference, a trip to the grocery store...simple things will take our breath away. Ah, gratitude.

Take courage. Please know I am sending each and every member my support and hopes for health and safety (and a little sanity!).

With respect,

Wendi Kirby, NCTM

Editorial

Dr. Stephen Pierce • pierces@usc.edu

CAPMT Connect Editor



Dear fellow CAPMT members,

As we continue to encounter ever-increasing challenges in our world, I remain grateful for the ability to teach and connect online. I am also immensely grateful for my CAPMT colleagues. Thank you firstly to our *CAPMT Connect* editorial committee members, Mitzi, India, Luba, Sonya, and Alison for all that you do to help me with this journal. I would also like to thank our journal contributors for your service to the profession and commitment to excellence. Lastly, to my fellow conference planning committee members, Wendi, Noreen, Mona, Lina, Sun-A, and Michael, my sincerest thanks for all working so hard to help me with this year's event! As CAPMT VP of conferences, I am excited to invite you, our CAPMT members to attend our upcoming online state conference next month.

One of the things I value most about our state conference, is the opportunity to interact with my colleagues from all across our enormous state. With this in mind, the planning committee felt it was vital for our

members to have a virtual event that allowed everyone to keep safe, but also connect and commune together in real time online. The result is this year's event on the platform BigMarker, "CAPMT Connects Online 2020." We are hoping that while we are physically distanced, we can socially engage together in this online format. For this reason, we have even included an informal happy hour or two.

For this year's virtual event we have also tried to include sessions specifically related to online teaching and performing in the time of COVID-19. To this end, we are excited to welcome acclaimed piano duo, Anderson & Roe who will tackle "Collaboration and Connection During a Pandemic" in their keynote address. Neal Paton from Yamaha will present a session dedicated to enhancing the audio experience in online lessons, while CAPMT members Ginger Kroft, Dr. Jeeyoon Kim, and Dr. Andrea Gareffa will each present a session focused on elements of either online teaching or performing. In addition, Dr. Janet Lopinski from the Royal Conservatory of Music will join me for a session dedicated to online RCM examinations, while a second RCM session will explore their new online teacher portal and digital resources. It is our hope that teachers and students alike will benefit from these presentations.

Musician's health and wellness will also be the subject of two conference sessions this year. Pianist, Dr. Jacqueline Petitto,

CAPMT's wellness chair, and flutist and Body Mapping Educator, Ruth Kasckow will each offer presentations focused on wellness. In addition, teachers can enjoy sessions by pianist and composer, Amy Stephens, NCTM and pianist and educator, Dr. Landon Baumgard from Faber Piano Adventures respectively. Members of our state board will also provide informational sessions focused on CAPMT membership, and our various student programs.

We are also delighted to showcase a variety of online performances this year. This includes the World Premiere of "AURA" by 2020 CAPMT Commissioned Composer, Roman Baranskiy. Attendees can also look forward to hearing Julie Poklewski and mezzo-soprano Solmaaz Adeli, YPLN members, and state competition winners in performance.

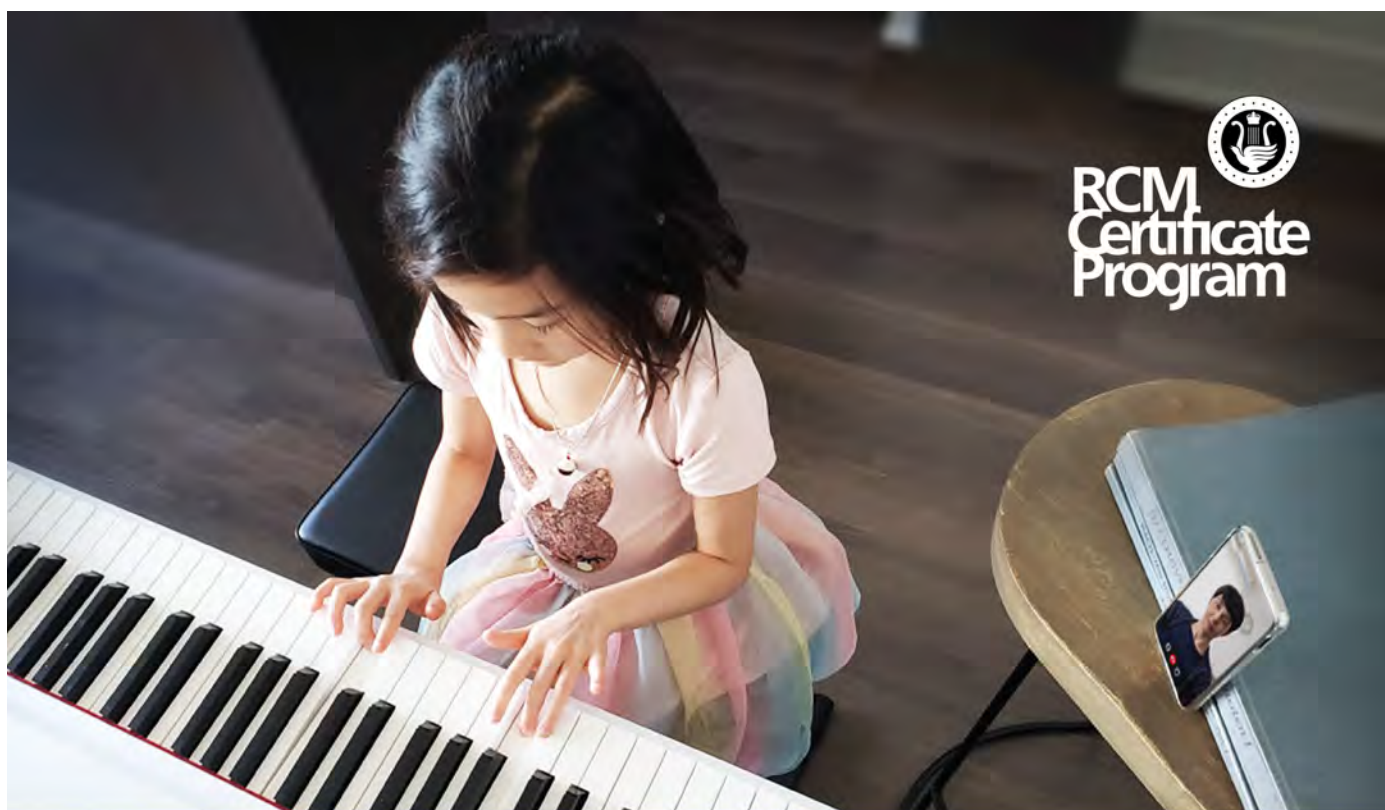
The conference will also feature a unique masterclass focused on improvisation by Dennis Thurmond. This event is the first in a new series to be included at each state conference, honoring the legacy and work of the late James Ramos (1973–2016) who was dedicated to the inclusion of creative activities in music instruction. We also hope that you will join us as we honor our state award winners, including Dr. Charles Asche, our 2020 CAPMT Lifetime Achievement

Award recipient. All in all, we are looking forward to two exciting days filled with learning, discovery, celebration, and connection.

In this issue of *Connect*, we are pleased to include two new regular columns: one devoted to musician wellness, written by our wellness chair, Jackie Petitto as well as a column focused on new music publications, penned by Gail Lew. We are also featuring several items highlighting CAPMT's special relationship with the Royal Conservatory of Music. This includes an inspiring interview I was fortunate to conduct with RCM President and CEO, Dr. Peter Simon, as well as a feature on our RCM Participating Schools in California. Also included are an illuminating article on Debussy by Dr. Sabrina Xiao He, and a timely article on time management in the music studio by Conlan Miller. Heidi Saario offers valuable insights into how to market a music studio in her IMTF column, while several teachers share their favorite aspects of teaching online in our coda column.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of our journal and look forward to seeing you at our state conference, if not before. Until then, please keep safe and healthy, and happy reading!

— Editor



Earn your RCM Levels Online from Home with Remote Exams

The RCM is one of the largest and most respected music education institutions in the world, offering standardized curriculum and assessment through its certificate program.

What you can expect from RCM Remote Exams:

- Equivalent assessment calibre to an in-person exam
- Ease of scheduling, register as soon as you feel your student is ready
- The comfort of your own home and familiarity of your own instrument
- Simple set up, all you need is a smartphone, tablet, or computer with internet access

Visit RCMusic.ca/RemoteExams to see how you can keep achieving from home.

"It was more comfortable at my own piano and in the comfort of my own home. It was something I'd never done before, and was a great experience." - Olivia, Level 2 Piano

An Interview with the Royal Conservatory's Dr. Peter Simon

Stephen Pierce



Shortly after arriving in the United States in 2004 to begin my graduate studies, I learned of the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM), based in Toronto, Canada. Since that time, I have admired the RCM for their commitment to the arts and arts education, and for the many resources they offer to music students and teachers. I have used their repertoire books with my private students and in my university courses for many years, and enjoy having my students participate in the RCM Certificate Program examinations. In January, I even started working part-time for the RCM! As the world moved online this summer and students' performance opportunities evaporated, I was grateful to the RCM for moving their practical exams online rather than eliminating exams. With all of this in mind, I asked Dr. Peter Simon, Director and CEO of the RCM for almost three decades, if I could interview him for CAPMT Connect. He kindly obliged and below are his fascinating and engaging responses to my questions about the online exams and much more.

Stephen Pierce (SP): Hello Peter, thank you for this opportunity to interview you. You have served as President and CEO of the Royal Conservatory of Music since 1991. Firstly, how would you describe the role of the Royal Conservatory in society as it relates to the arts in general, and music education more specifically?

Peter Simon (PS): The work of The RCM is based on two foundational beliefs: that music has a unique power to connect people at the deepest and most profound level and is therefore of vital importance in creating and building a cohesive society and culture and; that the study of music is the most powerful means through which young people can develop their full potential.

I believe that the study of music awakens and stimulates the three greatest attributes of humankind – emotion, curiosity, and imagination all the while opening the door to a sublime realm of beauty and a higher purpose for humanity. The study of music is also a proven path for young people to attain higher levels of cognitive development, creativity, and ultimately academic achievement.

While the RCM functions like other Conservatories in the training of future performing artists and educators, it is also a world leader in the development of structured systems and programs for the study of music. We have a very broad range of programs which are meant to support teachers and students. We also initiate projects in public schools in which students are struggling and not meeting expected standards. In such schools we implement an arts based approach to learning which leverages the enthusiasm of students for arts activities and connect this to the learning of the core curriculum.

Given my view that ultimately it is culture that truly determines the success and greatness of a nation, the work of the RCM in connecting millions of people in the shared experience of musical expression has shaped individual lives and culture.

SP: What is the educational value and benefit of a structured music assessment program such as the RCM Certificate Program?

PS: Structure is an important component of any educational process. There is a logical progression in development which builds upon a foundation. Our Certificate Program has been structured to provide a step by step developmental path in learning to make music. For parents the knowledge that there are benchmarks of achievement each year and also availability of an external evaluation, is important. For students, goals are necessary and our structure provides those points of arrival.

SP: Due to the current pandemic, the RCM offered online exams for the first time in their 134 year history. Personally, I was immensely grateful for these as they offered my own pre-college

students an opportunity to perform, and a goal to work towards. My students all thoroughly enjoyed playing their online exams from the comfort of their own living rooms and pianos. I have also heard from others that these have been incredibly successful and popular with teachers, students, and parents. Have you received similar feedback?

PS: Thank you and I am very glad that your students enjoyed the experience. We have monitored the satisfaction rate quite closely because after all this was initially a response to the limitations arising from COVID and an attempt by us to help students complete their year, to give them motivation at a difficult time and importantly to encourage students to continue their lessons. Over 80 percent of participants have indicated that they enjoyed the remote examination and would like to take another one. There remained a group who were uncomfortable but still thought it worked well in the end. The last ten percent accepted the necessity of a digital exam but still preferred the in-person experience. We did have glitches on occasion due to technology and some overloading of our scheduling system and will fix these as we move ahead. But overall, remote exams exceeded our expectations.

SP: Will you continue to offer online exams when we return to a more normal way of life?

PS: Yes we will. There are many students and teachers who live in remote areas and would need to travel great distances for an in-person exam. Online exams alleviate that issue. Also, there are students who really prefer to play in their home at a general time of their choosing, as this reduces their stress level. Of course, for parents there is the convenience issue and no need to find that elusive parking space.

SP: In your time as President and CEO of the RCM, you have launched so many initiatives and achieved a great deal. What are some of your proudest accomplishments?

PS: I believe that in our field one has to strive for the highest possible standard of excellence in all activities. This ranges from the quality of our curriculum, our teacher training and support networks, our professional training, our early childhood education programs, our performing arts series, and of course our facilities and concert halls. When I hear the students of our Taylor Academy or Glenn Gould School perform in Koerner Hall [a world-class recital hall located at the Royal Conservatory building in Toronto] it is hard not to feel proud. The students are extraordinary and show what can be achieved by young people when there is support but also high expectation. Koerner Hall is simply an amazing place in which one can hear music with an acoustic that is among the best in the world. Our building is an inspiration to enter and houses a community of likeminded people.

SP: One of the most exciting areas of development at the RCM are all of the superb digital learning offerings. What do all of these offer to music students and teachers?

PS: Digital learning has emerged through the crisis as a reality. However, I think that one has to achieve a careful balance that incorporates the many benefits of digital learning with the human exchange and contact that one cannot replace. Our goal was to make it easy for students to work on things such as ear training, theory, and music history throughout the week online and thus accelerate their learning process. For teachers, we have developed a range of helpful programs so that the collective experience and insights of thousands of educators could be shared and educational leaders could provide their own special ideas.

SP: You have also recently launched an exciting new Teacher Portal. What all is available and how can teachers take advantage of these offerings?

PS: We have launched a new version of our Teacher Portal recently. We offered free access so that teachers could benefit from the extensive content but also provide us with their views for improvement. The goal of the Portal is to provide a support structure for teachers that can encompass every aspect of their teaching lives. This means of course including hundreds of videos of outstanding teachers working through repertoire that students learn, access to recordings and performance videos, webinars on a range of topics such as financial management of studios and technology etc. It is meant to be a one stop resource center where teachers can find solutions to problems but also be inspired by the work of others and engage in continuous learning.

SP: Some of our readers might not know that you are a highly accomplished pianist and that you attended some of the most distinguished music schools, and studied with some highly illustrious teachers. What can you share about your earliest piano instruction with Boris Berlin?

PS: Mr. Berlin was very much of the Russian school with an emphasis on a singing line and the building of a solid technical foundation through which one could produce a full tone and never one that was hard or forced. He was a wonderful man and very kind to me but concurrently he had no reservations about raising his voice. I recall several instances when he told me that “this is the worst playing I have ever heard” and “what are you thinking playing like this.” I would wait until he had exhausted himself in this semi mock rage and understood the intent to motivate. In our third year together he said it was time for me to go to Juilliard and experience other points of view. His support for me never wavered and we remained friends until he passed away at the age of 97 – still sharp as ever.

SP: You also studied with Louis Kentner in London – a formidable Hungarian born British pianist. What did you learn most from him?

PS: At that point I had dropped out of Juilliard and was not attending school. I was living in London, practicing a lot and hearing concerts almost every night including Mr. Kentner at Albert Hall playing the Tchaikovsky B flat Concerto. Mr. Kentner had the most expansive repertoire of any pianist I have ever met and total recall of anything he had played. I once played the Fourth Scriabin Sonata for him thinking I had found something he could not just sit down and play immediately because he had never recorded Scriabin. As ever he sat down at the second piano and said as he usually did “dear boy – I think you are working far too hard at playing this” and then played the entire piece. He said the same of the Liszt B minor Sonata and asked why I just didn’t relax and just play. His point was that I had been driving so hard to attain technical command that I did not actually notice that I could actually play these works fairly well. It was exactly the message I needed at that point. He too was wonderfully supportive and helpful.

SP: I am so sorry about the passing of your former teacher, the legendary Leon Fleisher. What a huge loss for the music world! What do you think made him such an inspiring and influential teacher and performer?

PS: Leon’s great intellect was coupled with eloquence and a richness of language through which he could paint pictures that would inspire and elevate you. He was insistent on verbalizing and speaking about the fundamental character of a piece and what it was exactly that you were trying to convey. He made the point that without this absolute clarity of idea, intention, and goal there was little point in practicing because what exactly were you then practicing? Of course, his insights into music were a revelation and with every piece I played I felt that I had crossed a threshold of understanding. He also did not back away from the aspects that related to the execution of the ideas. He was uncompromising in accepting any deviations from the chosen path and was quick to point out how we undermined our own vision through a series of subtle compromises. There were core themes in his teaching – clarity of intention – being aware of compromises – precise execution of the idea – that hold true in all of life’s endeavors. The overarching theme however was humanism. Leon was a kind and generous man who helped people.

SP: You have met so many famous persons, from distinguished musicians and other celebrated performing artists, to important dignitaries such as the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau and the Queen! Do you ever get star struck? Are there any famous persons that stand out amongst all of those you have met?

PS: I remember vividly what an extraordinary smile the Queen had – wonderfully bright and open – a sincere, genuine smile and that made you feel that she was actually pleased to be in your company. Meryl Streep is another person who is without any guile, very intelligent, open and friendly and of course loves music. The most surprising interactions

were with Keith Richards and Ron Wood of the Rolling Stones. Keith was very well versed in classical music and loved music from the Baroque and Classical eras. We had gotten on to the odd topic of which music we would like at our funerals and Ron Wood said the second movement of the A major piano concerto K488 by Mozart. I have to admit my jaw dropped a few inches when he said that. KD Lang is a wonderful person and amazingly musical. She sang Halleluiah by Leonard Cohen in Koerner Hall with a simple piano accompaniment and it was one of the greatest performances I have heard. Lastly, I cherish the fact that I met and had some time with Oscar Peterson. He was thoughtful, dignified and an artist with incredibly high standards. I miss him a great deal.

SP: What advice would you give to music teachers and students during this challenging time of online teaching and learning?

PS: I would hope that all teachers understand just how important their work really is. Throughout North America we have seen a precipitous decline in music and arts programs for young people. This means that independent teachers and schools must provide a counterbalance to these highly corrosive developments. We all understand how difficult it is to be a teacher but also how inspiring it can be. I would make the case that music lessons for many young people are the most important developmental aspect of their lives. The neuroscience research is clear about the benefits of formal music study. Ultimately, young people across North America need a spiritual and ennobling dimension to their lives that fosters a greater connection to humanity.

For more information about the Royal Conservatory of Music, visit their website [here](#).



South African pianist, Dr. Stephen Pierce enjoys a multi-faceted career as a teacher, presenter, performer, clinician, and scholar. He teaches at the University of Southern California and privately in Pasadena. He is currently California's Vice-President for Conferences, Collegiate Chapter State Chair, and Editor of CAPMT Connect. He is also a Regional Representative for the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) and a member of the RCM College of Examiners. He has presented at national conferences and published articles for the RCM, and in CAPMT Connect, Clavier Companion, Music Research Forum, Piano Pedagogy Forum, The California Music Teacher, and The South African Music Teacher.

Spotlight on RCM Participating Schools in California



The [Community School of Music and Arts at Finn Center \(CSMA\)](#) is Northern California's largest nonprofit provider of arts education programs, serving more than 28,000 people each year. We are proud that each and every one of our programs are designed to provide the opportunity for meaningful engagement in the arts to those who would otherwise have no access.



The RCM Certificate Program aligns perfectly with CSMA's philosophy of a complete music education. CSMA teachers and students have participated in RCM exams since 2008 and our music theory program uses the RCM curriculum as we have found it to be the most comprehensive available.

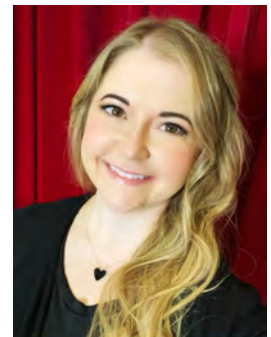
Carrie Campbell, Director of Finn Center Programs

[Little School of Music](#) is based in Santa Clarita and has been a Founding School and Assessment



Center for the Royal Conservatory of Music since 2011. Students of all ages and disciplines from Little School of Music have achieved their musical goals and shown personal growth by participating in the well-rounded RCM Certificate Program. Disciplines include: piano, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, guitar, percussion, voice, violin, viola, cello, and music theory. Our students have performed at the Festival of Excellence Honors Recital at the USC Thornton School of Music each year, and we have had numerous National Gold Medal winners over the past 10 years. We are grateful to be part of such an inspiring musical community and look forward to expanding the program for years to come! Little School of Music is fully Accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Center for the Royal Conservatory of Music since 2011. Students of all ages and disciplines from Little School of Music have achieved their musical goals and shown personal growth by participating in the well-rounded RCM Certificate Program. Disciplines include: piano, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, guitar, percussion, voice, violin, viola, cello,



Mindy Cabral, Owner of Little School of Music



Established in 1984, the [Pasadena Conservatory of Music \(PCM\)](#) is an independent, nonprofit, nationally-accredited community school whose mission is to educate, advocate, inspire, and share through music study and performance. The Conservatory offers a comprehensive curriculum that encompasses traditional and contemporary music for children and adults. More than 1,200 students attend the school annually and over 3,000 students in schools throughout



the Pasadena community benefit from its extensive outreach programs. PCM is honored to serve as an evaluation site for Royal Conservatory of Music Certificate Program examinations. The RCM provides high-quality evaluations that are internationally recognized. We are committed to promoting these exams in our music school as well as making them available to the wider community.

Stephen McCurry, Executive Director of PCM

The **San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM)** is a global destination for musical excellence,



earning a reputation for producing musicians of the highest caliber. SFCM's faculty includes nearly 30 members of the San Francisco Symphony and SF Ballet Orchestra as well as Grammy Award-winning artists in orchestral, chamber, composition, choral, jazz, music engineering, and classical guitar. [SFCM's Pre-College](#) is an immersive program that instills the value of music in young children and teens, providing an artistic framework and tailored instruction for the next generation of musicians. Our curriculum integrates private lessons with musicianship courses, small and large ensemble experiences, master classes, jury

assessments, and performance opportunities, making music a core part of their lives. The Pre-College is a Royal Conservatory Participating School, utilizing RCM's Celebrate Theory series in a rigorous musicianship training sequence and providing students with access to on-site RCM certification.



Michael Roest, Associate Dean and Executive Director of Pre-College and Continuing Education

Established in 2017 by Desislava Grueva, Irvine-based [WePlay Music](#) has quickly become a leading music school through its balanced curriculum of excitement and learning, highly qualified and caring teachers, exceptional administrative staff and customer service, and focus on providing a positive and supportive environment for lessons. WePlay Music also prides itself on being active in its local community through its participation and



support of schools and city fairs, as well as its complimentary workshops available to the public. WePlay Music will continue to enhance its curriculum to best instruct and provide the highest quality music education for students, giving them the tools to succeed in their RCM examinations and also enjoy their musical journey.

Desislava Grueva, Director of WePlay Music

The [Westside Music Conservatory](#) is proud to be an RCM Center for both performance and theory examinations. We have RCM National Gold Medal students, present our students in



world-class advanced academy master classes, and offer high-level theory instruction (private, semi-private, group) in all RCM academic subjects. The Westside Music Conservatory is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in music education. We strive to build self-confidence, inspire creative curiosity, and foster risk-taking. We develop well-rounded musicians by supplementing performance studies with sight reading, ear training, solfege, theory, harmony and counterpoint, and the study of world music and

cultures. We advocate the importance of the performing arts through strong appreciation, understanding, skill, and proficiency in music; and we provide music educational and performance opportunities in an inclusive setting for all learners of all ages. We encourage students to give back to the community through service and outreach programs in music and the performing arts. Our goal is to instill a life-long love of music!



Dr. Deborah H. How, Executive Director and Owner of Westside Music Conservatory

Selected RCM Participating Schools in California

4S Ranch School of Music – Lazzari Studio

16055 Winecreek Road
San Diego, CA 92127
858-231-3907
www.flutediva.com

Adventures in 88 Keys

12064 Meriden Lane
San Diego, CA 92138
858-883-1103
www.adventuresin88keys.com

Center for Community Arts

(formerly Civic Arts Education of
City of Walnut Creek)
111 N Wiget Lane
Walnut Creek, CA 94598
925-943-5846
www.communityarts.org

Galina's Music Studio

1756 First Street
Livermore CA 94550
925-960-1194
www.GalinasMusicStudio.com

Huntington Beach Music Art School

8111 Westminster Boulevard
Westminster, CA, 92683
714-767-8682
www.phamtantrieu.com

Hyperium Conservatory

655 Deep Valley Drive, Suite 120
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274
310-378-1078
www.HYPERIUMconservatory.com

Inspire Academy of Music and Arts

2340 Santa Rita Road, Suite 7
Pleasanton, CA 94566
925-461-3266
www.inspiremusicacademy.com

La Jolla Conservatory of Music

3511 Caminito El Rincon #279
San Diego CA, 92130
858-232-1490
www.LJCM.org

Music N Beyond

4560 Dublin Boulevard
Dublin, CA 94568
925-833-8100
www.musicnbeyond.com

MUSYCA

10110 Melinda Way #5
Northridge, CA 91325
818-554-9937
www.musyca.org

New Mozart School of Music

2100 El Camino Real Suite C
Palo Alto, CA 94306
650-324-2373
www.newmozartschool.com

OC Cambridge Music School

53 Robinson Drive
Irvine, CA 92602
657-232-1003
949-316-7046
714-417-1944
www.occambridgemusic.com

One Voice Institute of Music and Art

(OVIMA, formerly CLAV)
648 North Mayfair Avenue
Daly City, CA, 94015
415-846-2955 (USA)
+91 98192 81000 (INDIA)-IST
www.ovimaglobal.com

Palos Verdes Strings

PO Box 924
Hermosa Beach, CA, 90254
310-245-7575
www.palosverdesstrings.com

Pasadena Conservatory of Music

100 North Hill Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91106
626-683-3355
www.pasadenaconservatory.org

San Francisco Conservatory of Music

50 Oak Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-503-6283
www.sfcm.edu/pre-college

San Jose Academy of Music 3695

Rose Terrasse Circle San José, CA
95148
408-806-9050
www.sanjoseacademyofmusic.com

Santa Monica Academy of Music

2414 Wilshire Boulevard
Santa Monica, CA, 90403
310-828-8025
www.smamusic.com

Sound Roads Music

3017 Pico Boulevard
Santa Monica, CA, 90405
310-310-8048
www.SoundRoadsMusic.com

Southwest Conservatory

18430 Brookhurst Street #101
Fountain Valley, CA 92708
714-964-3410
www.southwestconservatory.net

Torrance Arts Academy

2941 Rolling Hills Road
Torrance, CA 90505
310-784-0100
www.torranceartsacademy.com

Villa Musica

10373 Roselle Street
San Diego, CA 92121
858-550-8100
www.villamusica.org

Wendi Kirby Music Studio

PO Box 2373
Carmel, CA 93921
209-663-7163
www.wkmusicstudio.com

Westside Music Conservatory

2515 Wilshire Boulevard
Santa Monica, CA 90403
424-581-6400
www.WestsideMusicConservatory.com



The Ultimate Teaching Resource.

We created the RCM Teacher Portal to help busy music teachers like you make the most of your time online. The RCM Teacher Portal our very best teaching content, premium streaming services, and masterclasses all in one convenient place.

Access is **FREE** until October 31, 2020, so sign up today for:

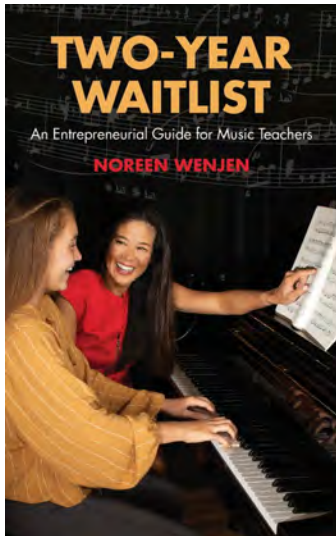
- Access to the Naxos libraries, Medici.tv, and Berliner Philharmoniker Digital Concert Hall
- Masterclasses featuring celebrated artists, including Sir András Schiff and many more
- Articles on studio and business development
- Repertoire guides and printable worksheets
- Curated webinars and teaching tips for professional development
- And more!

Visit rcmusic.ca/teacherportal to start exploring.

Independent Music Teachers Forum (IMTF)

Marketing Tips for Building a Private Music Studio

Heidi Saario



In this IMTF column, I will share some tips on how to market a new or existing music studio. My family recently relocated to a new city about an hour away. As a result, I needed to rebuild my private studio. Within six months of starting my search for students, I filled my schedule with 22 new students and have a growing waitlist. In this column, I will share my experience and some tips on what worked well during this process. I also recently read our fellow CAPMT member and Immediate Past-President Noreen Wenjen's new book [*Two-Year Waitlist – An Entrepreneurial Guide for Music Teachers*](#)¹ (see left). In this book, Noreen offers lots of great information and I will share some of her thoughts here as well.

Three Months Leading up to Moving Day: Updating my Studio Website

During the time leading up to moving day, I started planning for my new studio. The first task was to update my website so that I would be ready to start advertising and meeting new students as soon as possible after the move. My goal was to approach the messaging from two different perspectives. First, I wanted to present my studio with a clear mission statement. Second, I wanted to create an honest and genuine connection with potential customers who would visit my website for the first time by answering any questions they might have when looking for a piano teacher for themselves or their child.

We all have a unique story to tell about how we ended up becoming music educators. Maybe you have a background in teaching in a classroom setting, or being a music director in a church, or composing or arranging music. We cannot all be everything to everyone and that is why it is so important to convey a clear image of the important aspects of your studio online. In this way, you can connect with the right type of customer for your studio. Noreen Wenjen also points out that as music teachers, we all have unique and valuable skills to share. There are only a few other professionals who have been training daily since early childhood to hone their skills. She recommends adding value to a music studio by offering specialized classes, performance opportunities, and student participation in competitions, for example.

¹ Noreen Wenjen, *Two-Year Waitlist – An Entrepreneurial Guide for Music Teachers* (Maryville TN: Audrey Press, 2019).

Below are some questions to ask yourself when describing the experience students receive in your private studio:

- How would you describe the lesson experience in your studio?
- What unique lesson formats or events are available? (e.g. group classes, buddy or partner lessons, skype lessons, a music lab, performance classes etc.)
- On which specific age groups or levels is your teaching focused?
- How do you motivate your students to reach their goals? (e.g. incentive programs, regular performance opportunities, competitions, examinations)
- What results have your students achieved? (consider adding some student performance videos)
- What does the curriculum offered in your studio include?
- What do you love most about teaching?

I wanted to make sure that I answered all of these questions in a clear and concise fashion on my website. It is a good idea to keep the answer paragraphs short and leave enough white space on each page so that the verbiage is not overwhelming to read. Bullet points are a great and concise way to list and organize different kinds of activities included in lessons. Photographs are always a powerful marketing tool. A parent who sees pictures of students in action can easily relate to the learning experience in your studio. In addition it is highly recommended that you include a “Call to Action” button on your website so that potential clients can easily click to contact you for more information.

When rebuilding a studio in a new location, you unfortunately cannot rely on referrals at the beginning. It is therefore extremely helpful to include student testimonials on your website. I had never previously asked my students or parents to write testimonials and thought this would be the perfect time to do so. I added their testimonials to my website and made sure to mention the age of the student in each case. In this way I was able to highlight my experience, teaching a wide range of students of different ages and levels.

Prior to the move, I also started to learn more about my new community and the other music teachers in the area. I did a Google search for piano lessons and looked at other piano teachers’ and music schools’ websites to get a sense of what my competition might be. Not only did I want to find out how much other local teachers were charging for lessons, I also wanted to find colleagues I could connect with in my new hometown. According to Noreen Wenjen, teachers should charge what the market will bear. She adds that it is a good idea to try and distinguish yourself by offering a specialized studio or teaching style so that you are not competing based on lesson fees or amounts alone.

After the Move: Marketing and Interviews

After updating my website, I made sure that I added the name of my new city in the site description of my website. This ensured that my studio would start showing up higher in the Google search results for piano lessons in the area. I also set up both Google and Yelp Business Pages which are completely free. Doing this made a big difference to the online search results since any business that has a Google Business Page is listed at the top of the Google search results page with the business location shown on the map. I also made sure to showcase a few attractive photos of my studio on both business pages. In addition, I asked my former students to post a copy of their testimonials as reviews on both my Google and Yelp Business pages. These helped to improve my ratings. Furthermore, my Facebook Business Page, Instagram account, and Nextdoor Business Page helped raise awareness of my studio through social media.

Once my family and I had settled into our new house and I was ready to start meeting with potential new students, I set up a Google Ads (advertisement) campaign. These advertisements allowed my studio to show up at the very top of the Google search results page. To try this out, I would recommend starting with a low monthly budget at first to see how well it works for you. It is important to know that once you reach your budgeted total amount, the advertisements will stop showing up online.

In addition, I posted free advertisements in some local Facebook groups. I thought about setting up a Facebook Ad campaign, however, the Google Ads seemed to do the work for me and were quite easy to set up. I also ran an advertising campaign through Yelp over the few days leading up to the start of the school year. This all helped to bring more traffic to my website and Yelp Business Page.

Since implementing these strategies, I have discovered that most people use the contact form on my website to get in touch with me for more information. I have found it beneficial to keep an excel file with records of every person who contacts me. I record the date of contact, the name of the person, how they contacted me, who the lessons are for, contact details such as phone number, and email, as well as their status i.e. what are the next steps. I regularly review the list to see if I need to follow up with anyone. This way of tracking really helps me to stay organized and I make sure to get back to everyone as soon as possible.

As a rule, I would recommend scheduling a time to meet with any potential student that shows interest in your studio. After initial contact via email or phone, I share my studio policy before meeting with them in person. In addition to finding out if we are a good fit, this free consultation allows me to share my teaching philosophy in more detail and explain the curriculum and activities that I use in my studio. During the meeting, I speak about my studio policy in detail so that the new families are clear about all of my expectations. In addition, I often engage the potential student in a couple of musical activities to assess their ability and to give them an idea

of my teaching. During the time of COVID-19, instead of holding in-person meetings, I now arrange consultations via a Zoom video call. I make it a habit to ask new clients how they found out about me so that I can keep track of the different advertising methods and their respective effectiveness. I should note here that the majority of my current students found me using a Google search. This is why having a good website and online presence is so important.

Full Studio with a Waitlist

After six months, I am delighted to have recruited 22 students and reached my studio's capacity. I continue to update my social media pages with pictures from students' lessons and other events but I am not currently running any advertising campaigns. That said, I keep receiving inquiries about lessons. I continue to record each inquiry and offer to add potential new students to my waitlist. As a result, my waitlist has started to grow. According to Noreen Wenjen, having a music studio waitlist changes people's mindset from trying to get the "best bang for their buck" to choosing the most qualified music teacher for themselves or their child. I love all of my new piano families and feel that I have found students who are a great fit for my music studio. They were all on board when we suddenly had to switch to an online format overnight this spring, so I continue to teach them in weekly remote lessons.

In short, I hope that this column has offered you some new insights and ideas about how to market your private music studio and successfully recruit new students.



[Heidi Saario](#) maintains a private studio in Alameda, California and is the CAPMT State Chair of the Independent Music Teacher's Forum (IMTF). In addition to teaching, she remains active as a performer. In recent years her solo and collaborative performances have taken her to many cities across Canada and the United States. As a native of Finland, she enjoys programming and promoting Scandinavian composers. Her debut CD, "Jean Sibelius - Compositions for Piano" was released in 2008. Her collaboration with soprano Cindy Koistinen as Duo Freya produced another recording, "Diamonds of the North – Songs from Scandinavia" in 2010. Heidi is a Senior Examiner within the College of Examiners for the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) and holds a Master of Music degree in piano performance and pedagogy from the RCM.

Time Management in the Music Studio

Conlan Miller

Introduction

As music teachers, we live hectic lives. So do our students. Society is ever-changing and growing increasingly complex. Today, it seems teachers are required to do and be more than ever before, and to reinvent ourselves almost daily. Modern advances in task-management and planning technologies can alleviate some of the stress caused by these extensive workloads. However, keeping up with these advances can ironically create additional stress due to the sheer number of tools from which to choose, and their associated learning curves.

Like many music teachers, I consistently focus my efforts and attention toward improving my teaching skills and helping each of my students achieve their potential. Considering these obligations, responsibilities, and professional goals, as well as family relationships and the minutiae of everyday life always looming, how are we to achieve focus and feel present in our teaching? How are we to be effective ambassadors for the arts? How are we to have the “mental space”¹ in which to appreciate, explore, and understand the music we teach, let alone communicate this understanding effectively to our students? How can we inspire great learning in our studios unless we manage to tame the internal noise of everyday mental clutter?

David Allen, a leading expert in time management, and author of *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, suggests that people need “mental space” to facilitate creative thinking. In order to maintain this mental space in our professional endeavors, we must keep our minds free of disruptive clutter. If our attention is pulled in several directions simultaneously, we will have little attention to give to those tasks which require focused engagement. Whether teaching a student, planning a studio recital, writing a syllabus, or comparing score editions, music teachers must be mentally present to complete these tasks successfully.

In search of more mental space, music teachers can develop and master a skillset of helpful time-management principles. This article will share some of the research showing the positive influence of effective time-management behaviors on productivity, mental health, and wellness. It will also include valuable productivity principles and practices from leading authors on the subject, as well as suggestions for implementing these principles in the music studio.

Why is it important to be good managers of time?

Research has shown that time-management training can help people accomplish important tasks more efficiently. For example, one study found that working women from dual-earner

¹ David Allen. *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. New York: Penguin, 2004, chap. 1, Kindle.

families who had received time-management training were able to spend more of their time relaxing than those who did not receive this training. These women also perceived having more control over their time after the training than they had before the training.² This is consistent with other studies³ which suggest that effective time-management training can result in better time-management behaviors, greater perceived control of time, and a subsequent increase in free time. Use of effective time-management behaviors has also been shown to reduce perceived stress⁴ and improve performance in the workplace.⁵ Other studies have shown that the use of time-management behaviors such as goal-setting, prioritization, list-making, scheduling, and organization⁶ may help to avoid work-family conflicts,⁷ as well as reduce job dissatisfaction and some somatic health complaints.⁸ These findings effectively show the positive impacts of appropriate time-management on personal wellbeing and professional pursuits.

These past several months, most communities, businesses, families, and individuals have felt the impact of a global pandemic, and a large number of professionals have shifted to remote work from home. While many music teachers have previously worked from home, having our spouses, partners, and/or children home with us most of the time presents new challenges. When these challenges are compounded by the common technological frustrations of remote online teaching, the life of the average music teacher is now very different from any other time in history. To navigate these and other difficult circumstances, as music teachers, we can better organize and manage our lives by decluttering our minds and achieving a state of deep work.

Decluttering the Mind

David Allen's book and productivity method, *Getting Things Done*, includes several suggestions for helping us find more "mental space." One of the most useful principles is that of "capturing."⁹ Allen compares the mental cache of temporary information in the human brain to a computer's RAM (random-access memory). While performing a task, the brain keeps certain

² A. C. King, R. A. Winett, and S. B. Lovett. "Enhancing Coping Behaviors in At-Risk Populations: The Effects of Time-Management Instructions and Social Support in Women from Dual-Earner Families." *Behavior Therapy* 17: 57-66.

³ B. J. C. Claessens, W. Van Eerde, C. G. Rutte, and R. A. Roe. "Planning Behavior and Perceived Control of Time at Work." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 25: 937-950.

⁴ A. Häfner, A. Stock, L. Pinneker, & S. Ströhle. "Stress Prevention Through a Time Management Training Intervention: An Experimental Study." *Educational Psychology* 34: 403-416.

⁵ T. H. Macan. "Time-Management Training: Effects on Time Behaviours, Attitudes, and Job Performance." *Journal of Psychology* 130: 229-236.

⁶ T. H. Macan, C. Shahani, R. L. Dipboye, and A. P. Phillips. "College Students' Time Management: Correlations with Academic Performance and Stress." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 82: 760-768.

⁷ G. A. Adams, and S. M. Jex. "Relationships Between Time Management, Control, Work-Family Conflict and Strain." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 4: 72-77.

⁸ T. H. Macan. "Time Management: Test of a Process Model." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 79: 381-391.

⁹ David Allen. *Getting Things Done*, chap. 5, Kindle.

helpful information handy for quick access as needed. This cache of information is most helpful when working on a single task or project at a time. However, it can become cluttered by irrelevant thoughts if not managed carefully. We can develop the habit of clearing our mental RAM of any incoming thoughts or ideas which are not immediately useful to the work in which we are engaged, and store them for use at a better time. To do this, we can “capture” those ideas, tasks, and projects in an “external system,” like a notebook, or planner. This action effectively offloads these thoughts from the mental RAM, and allows RAM to be reallocated toward more relevant thoughts.¹⁰ In Allen’s words, “[The] mind is for *having* ideas, not for *holding* them.”¹¹ The most important thing about capturing is to know that an idea is safely stored, organized, and prioritized in a way that can be easily recalled when the time is right to do something about it. Trusting the system is key. This gives the brain permission to temporarily let go of those thoughts, and be fully present for the task at hand.

A reliable and straightforward way to capture incoming thoughts during a music lesson is to jot them down on a notepad the moment they come to mind. This frees the mind to return to full engagement with teaching. Using a notepad and pen tends to minimize disruption and maintain a level of professionalism versus pulling out a phone or other device to record these thoughts. We should always be sure to follow up on these written thoughts at a later time to avoid losing trust in the system. Following up might mean adding an event to the calendar, moving an idea to a project journal, adding a task to a to-do list, or discarding the thought altogether if there is no more interest in pursuing it.

The longer one is bogged down by mental clutter, the more challenging it becomes to complete even simple tasks. This lack of efficiency often creates an even deeper backlog of mental clutter which can distract, overwhelm, and exhaust the mind, leading to increased stress, procrastination, and possible burnout. However, this downward spiral can be overcome through careful preparation and a significant time investment toward the development or improvement of a time-management system. This system must be reliable and include a dumping site for every thought, idea, task, or project that may come into the mind. It must also have some degree of organization for easy retrieval. With this in mind, using a digital task-management tool can prove beneficial. Most mobile devices come with a basic task manager with built-in notifications and reminders. The return on this investment comes in the form of improved focus, notable reduction in stress, and a way to systematically handle and organize every incoming thought that may otherwise tax the mental RAM.

Deep Work

Cal Newport, associate professor of computer science at Georgetown University, suggests some additional principles for time management and increasing productivity. Part of his method

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ David Allen. *Getting Things Done*, chap. 14, Kindle.

includes scheduling blocks of time dedicated to what he calls “deep work.”¹² Deep work is entirely focused and distraction-free. It involves some planning and setup, but can ultimately save time and help to get more done. According to Newport’s method, a block of time can only be considered “deep work” if one never deviates from the task at hand to do things that are not specifically pertinent to that task. For example, we should not check our smartphones or social media pages while filing taxes. All web browsers, applications, or devices that are not needed to perform our work should be closed, silenced, or removed from the workspace while we are engaged in “deep work.” It can be very helpful to use the “Do Not Disturb” feature standard on most smartphones and computers. Consider taking brief breaks as needed, perhaps every 30-60 minutes. These breaks can provide an opportunity to return calls or other missed communications, or to simply rest the mind from active engagement in work.

Switching between multiple tasks is much less effective than focusing on one task at a time. The latest research on this subject suggests that multitasking is not truly possible in the way we might think. Rather than accomplishing two goals simultaneously, the brain is more accurately “task-switching,” or quickly shifting focus between tasks. Every time the brain does this, it requires a moment to recalibrate and switch modes which impacts its overall productivity. Constant shifting leaves the mind in a state of “attention fragmentation.”¹³

The term “knowledge work,” first coined by Peter Drucker,¹⁴ refers to work that primarily involves thinking, and includes the work of programmers, scientists, academics, etc. This definition would accurately describe the work that music teaching encompasses. Teachers must unavoidably do several things at once: listen to their student, determine what the student needs, decide how best to convey a particular concept, and frequently determine the student’s understanding. Additionally, it is important to consider that playing a musical instrument necessitates using, manipulating, or thinking about many things concurrently. This might include the right hand, left hand, one or more pedals, dynamics, balance, shaping, articulation, rhythm, rubato, as well as any unspoken interpretational choices at any given time.

Gloria Mark is a professor of informatics at the University of California, Irvine, and an expert on the science of attention fragmentation. She observed knowledge workers in their offices and found that even short interruptions significantly delayed the total time required to complete tasks. She further discovered that this type of fragmentation tended to produce a “cognitive burden,” increase stress, hinder deep thought, and inhibit innovation.¹⁵

¹² Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016, chap. 7, Kindle.

¹³ Cal Newport, *Deep Work*, chap. 2, Kindle.

¹⁴ Peter Ferdinand Drucker. *Landmarks of Tomorrow* (New York: Harper, 1959), 122.

¹⁵ Gloria Mark. *Multitasking in the Digital Age* (San Rafael, California: Morgan & Claypool, 2015), 80.

With this in mind, as music teachers, we already push our brains beyond the ideal limit every day. The moment our phone rings, every one of the mental processes in our RAM must be put on hold until we react to the phone call, and decide what to do about it. To avoid these interruptions, we may consider silencing all unnecessary notifications, removing possible distractions, even hanging a “Do Not Disturb” sign outside the music studio to achieve a deeper level of focus for teaching, learning, and discovery.

Time Saving Studio Tips

Once we understand the underlying principles of decluttering the mind and deep work, we can find ways to implement these principles in our studios and create a more productive teaching environment for both teacher and student. The following are some additional time-saving ideas:

- Create a syllabus or timeline for each student at the beginning of every semester. Outline semester goals for each student, then break down these goals into a few weekly objectives to represent the contents of each lesson. This syllabus can help you quickly shift to the appropriate mindset for each student before jumping into each lesson, and can be updated as necessary. Consider creating a syllabus template to save time each semester.
- Create a detailed studio policy and teaching philosophy that are easy for parents to review, perhaps located on a studio website or webpage. Consider including a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on your website to help avoid answering dozens of similar emails from parents about policies and studio procedures.
- Set expectations from the very beginning. Hold a “New Student Orientation” meeting at the beginning of each year to explain all studio policies, expectations, and yearly events (studio recitals, competitions, festivals, evaluations, holiday breaks, etc.). This will help avoid the need to explain similar information several times to individual students and their parents. An alternative option might be an online meeting or group email thread for discussing these matters.
- Create templates, supplements, and charts for the studio. Visual aids and progress charts (e.g. technique charts) can help avoid writing the same fingering and requirements for every student. Using email templates is an easy way to save time on repetitive tasks (sending out reminders, reports to parents, information about payments, etc.). Organize these studio templates in a folder for quick access. Keep these up to date to save time and reduce stress later.
- Choose simple planning tools. If choosing digital tools, such as online calendars or task-management applications, be careful not to fall into the trap of trying to use all of the latest productivity apps that exist. These apps often come with a steep learning curve, and can actually complicate life, requiring a change of habit. Since it can also be time-consuming to move data across multiple planning systems, consider what will work best,

and keep to one or two trusted tools. Paper planners can offer greater simplicity, however it can be difficult to add new items on the fly unless the planner is always nearby. Consider all available options and choose the system that best matches your lifestyle.

- Plan and prioritize tasks. Not all tasks are equally important. Learn to organize by priority to ensure that the most important things are completed first. Tasks can also be categorized by their type, urgency, location, etc. Aim to group similar tasks for more efficiency. For example, consider responding to emails just once or twice per day.
- Consider scheduling “office hours” as any professor or other teacher might do. It is best to express a desire to minimize unnecessary communications outside of these designated hours. This should be clearly stated in the studio policy. Also consider asking parents not to contact you over the weekends so that you can take a break from work to enjoy family or social time.
- Schedule an “administration hour” once per week for taking care of essential non-teaching tasks related to the studio such as booking piano technicians, sending out studio emails and reminders, or registering students for festivals or competitions. Doing so will free the mind of these day-to-day tasks that can be distracting during a lesson. Throughout the week, keep a list of these sorts of tasks that can be tackled during the administration hour so that time can be used most productively when it arrives.
- Schedule a weekly planning session to review all upcoming events, deadlines, or other scheduled items. Approach the planning from multiple levels: one week out, one month out, the entire semester, year, etc. Keep these items in mind when planning tasks for the upcoming week. Families usually have very complex and busy schedules to juggle, so be sure to send reminders to parents with plenty of notice.
- Rather than booking students back-to-back, consider scheduling short breaks between lessons. Allow a moment to catch up on important missed calls, briefly review lesson plans for the next student, or otherwise recover a bit of energy before entering another focused period of teaching in the studio.
- Consider using the “Pomodoro Technique.” This is a very popular time-management technique which involves rotating regular blocks of uninterrupted work (usually 25 minutes) with short breaks of about five minutes, and occasional longer breaks of 15 to 30 minutes. This can be an effective, measurable way to create periods of “deep work” throughout the day.
- Last but not least, schedule self-care time. As teachers we should give our bodies and minds the same respect we give to our students. This is important to help avoid burnout and better balance our personal and professional lives. Mindfulness exercises, meditation, journaling, walking, or reading can all help ease stress and ground our mental state. We should strive to factor in our personal needs when planning our weekly schedule.

Conclusion

Good time management and an organized mental workspace are essentials for any professional. Now that most work is happening in the home, the ability to separate professional and family life has never been more critical or more difficult. While there may be a lack of spatial dividers between professional and family life, by decluttering the mind and achieving a state of deep work, music teachers can create mental and temporal dividers. The level of focus required to teach music with appropriate energy and consistency while managing dozens of tasks for dozens of students calls for a trusted time-management system. As teachers, our lives will never be easy, but we can learn to manage our studios with less stress, greater control of our time, and an elevated sense of fulfillment in our craft.

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[Conlan Miller](#) is an award-winning pianist who has performed in venues across the United States, Mexico, and the Netherlands. He is a DMA candidate in piano performance at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music where he studies with Dr. Stewart Gordon. His doctoral studies have included related fields in piano pedagogy, theory and analysis, and music technology. He also holds master and bachelor degrees in piano performance from Yale and Brigham Young University respectively. He maintains an active schedule as a performer, teacher, and collaborator.

Musicians' Wellness

My Path to Wellness

Dr. Jacqueline Petitto

There is no better time than now to focus on our health and wellbeing. COVID-19 is a reminder to us all that our health is everything. Without good health, far less is possible. In fact, our ability to make music is highly dependent on being in good physical health. Therefore, it is imperative now more than ever, that we make wellness a priority for all musicians.

It is my honor and pleasure to serve as your new CAPMT Wellness Chair. I really appreciate this opportunity to reflect on my relationship with musician wellness! My own journey dealing with injury and seeking a healthy playing technique at the piano has been difficult at times. However, I strongly believe that my experiences have made me a better performer and teacher. As such, I hope that by sharing my experiences, I am able to help educate and inform other teachers and their students.

My life as a graduate piano student at the University of Southern California (USC) would forever change in the fall of 1997. I knew something was very wrong when I started to experience tingling and numbness in my left hand. This was serious and I needed to do something before it became pain. To continue practicing and wish it would go away on its own was not a solution. Naturally, I was concerned that my symptoms would become permanent, debilitate me for life, and end my career as a musician. It was bewildering not to know what to do next, who to confide in, or how to recover. To my surprise, I was not alone. After reading the limited literature available at the time and consulting with healthcare experts, I realized that performing arts medicine, as opposed to sports medicine, was in its infancy. It would be an arduous task to learn more and improve my symptoms, yet I was determined to do so.

How did I get to this point? In 1996, I had moved my upright piano to my rental apartment so that I could practice at home as well as use the practice rooms on campus. Unbeknownst to me when I moved in, was that the neighbor right below me was a night-time nurse who slept during the day. When I played, she would tap her broom on her ceiling until I stopped. She complained to the building manager that I was not a very good pianist since all I did was repeat the same music or passage over and over. Obviously, neither my neighbor nor the manager knew much about how musicians practice. As a result, I tried using the practice pedal on my piano which activates a piece of felt between the strings and hammers thereby decreasing the volume of the piano considerably. However, this did little to solve the issue as the sound still bled through to the apartment below. Barely able to hear myself, I played with excessive force. It was practicing in this way that most likely caused damage to my body and invited an injury.

There were many questions and opportunities for growth at this time... Firstly, how could I have avoided hurting myself at the piano? And what if all music students were taught how to play in a healthy manner? I had always had tension and tightness in my upper back area, but at this time knots were visible through my shirt. While my posture at the piano looked fine to the naked eye, I was actually overarching my lower back without realizing it, causing upper back issues. Years and years of incorrect misuse of the body (especially at the piano) had created layers and layers of physical, and emotional challenges.

At that time, it was frustrating to deal with medical professionals who knew very little about what musicians do. For instance, my hand doctor prescribed rest which meant no piano playing for six months (which was extremely devastating and depressing as you can imagine). She also put both hands in splints (to support the wrist and limit movement) which had metal rods to keep the wrists from bending, especially while sleeping. She even threatened to put both hands in casts if I did not stop playing! Additionally, she placed me in a neck brace, the kind you wear after you have been in a car accident. That thing was so uncomfortable! Not only did it not help me with my physical issues, it hurt and overstretched my neck. My doctor kept asking me what worked during our appointments. As such, I was educating her as to how to treat my condition. The whole situation was disheartening and seemed ridiculous.

As a result, I sought treatment through physical therapy. My posture issues were addressed through postural re-education and core strengthening. By tucking my tailbone in while sitting, this seemed to free up the limbs nicely. Rehabilitation and strengthening programs included stretches and conditioning exercises using weights and machines at the gym. In addition, I taught myself to sleep on my back which is the healthiest position for the spine. I felt like a “mummy” at first with both arms to the sides, but eventually got used to sleeping in this way. Sleeping on my stomach had caused a lot of neck strain because of having to face either side. It is important to note that incorrect rest positions usually have negative effects on the body, in particular the neck and back.

During this period, there were many valuable lessons learned, and positive outcomes. These included:

- learning to listen to my body and caring for it properly
- understanding the importance of movement coordination at my instrument
- deciding that nobody should face an injury alone without adequate access to information
- believing injury awareness and advocacy are necessary for destigmatizing and preventing musician injuries
- longing for expert support and resources specifically designed for musicians (i.e. clarity is needed about what treatment options are beneficial for musicians)
- desiring a more open conversation about musician’s health and wellbeing
- creating a piano wellness course that I dreamed of teaching in the near future

During all of this time, I also tried new ideas and remained hopeful about recovery. Movement training such as Yoga and the Alexander Technique would become essential parts of my daily life. In Yoga classes, participants work on flexibility, stretching, breathing techniques and using body weight to build muscle and strength. Alexander Technique lessons focus on the efficient use of the self, following specific directions and guidance from an Alexander instructor. While these activities were beneficial, they did not cure my issues. However, they did help manage my symptoms.

All in all, the most significant realization surrounding my injury was that my struggles could help other musicians prevent injuries in themselves and their students. Dealing with my injury taught me a lot about myself. This includes learning to understand my body, the power of determination and resilience, my passion for music, how to live a healthy lifestyle (including playing and teaching piano in a healthy way), as well as the benefits of self-care (including reflexology, and massage) and other therapies (such as hand therapy, chiropractic care, and fitness).

With this in mind, I am thrilled to serve as your CAPMT Wellness Chair. I am keen to find out from you, our CAPMT membership, which topics and aspects of musician wellness you are most interested in exploring together. To this end, I will be sending out a survey to solicit your suggestions and feedback. Please make your voice heard. I look forward to reading your responses and hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration!



*Pianist **Jacqueline Petitto** is an active soloist and chamber musician who has performed domestically and abroad. She has taught at the University of Southern California, University of La Verne, Pasadena City College, Los Angeles City College, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Colburn Conservatory of Music (where she created a Musician Wellness course), and was Assistant Professor and Director of Keyboard Studies at Long Beach City College. Dr. Petitto's strong commitment to wellness resulted in her recent appointment as CAPMT Wellness Chair. She has presented at universities, conferences, and for music teacher organizations, and translated a musician wellness book from Spanish into English.*

Claude Debussy: Impressionist or Symbolist?

Sabrina Xiao He

Scholars have questioned the relationship between the music of Claude Debussy (1862–1918), and the art of Impressionist painters, and the verse of Symbolist poets. Although the influence of Impressionism and Symbolism in Debussy's music is debated, these two movements have much in common, and Debussy's music reveals evidence of both influences. In this article, I will consider the extent to which Debussy is more of an Impressionist or Symbolist composer and analyze music examples in order to evaluate these influences.

In 1980, Ronald Byrnside addressed the issue of Impressionism, in *Musical Impressionism: The Early History of the Term*. According to Byrnside, "Debussy is the most typical of the musical impressionist of the day"¹ and "Debussy is the first composer, whose name is associated with the term "Musical Impressionism."² At the World Exhibition in 1889, Debussy first heard the sound of a Javanese gamelan orchestra and was attracted to the beauty of Southeast Asian music and art.³ According to Stewart Gordon, Debussy's "impression concepts" are reflected in the titles that he used to describe subjects (be they a person, item, or scenery) of his music compositions. Furthermore, Debussy's musical style is associated with "harmonic and structural ambiguity," "colorful sonority," and "inner sensitivity."⁴ Compositional techniques include "mixed modes and scales, including whole tone scales, pentatonic scales, major scales with raised fourth or lowered seventh. He also favored dominant ninth and thirteenth sonorities, as well as parallel fourths and fifths."⁵ Thus, Debussy erodes traditional harmonic practice to create a musical impression in his music. As such, it could be argued that all of Debussy's music is Impressionistic.

However, some scholars have reasoned that Debussy is more of a Symbolist than an Impressionist because Debussy himself refused to be recognized as an Impressionist until later in his life. In a letter written in 1908 from Debussy to his publisher, Jacques Durand (1865–1928), Debussy complained that "imbeciles call (my music) 'Impressionism,' a term employed

¹ Ronald L. Byrnside, "Musical Impressionism: The Early History of the Term," in *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 522-537.

² Ibid.

³ Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and Its Forerunners* (New York: Schirmer, 1996), 361.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 359.

with the utmost inaccuracy.”⁶ Similarly, in John Shepherd’s review of two important books on Debussy, namely: Stefan Jarocinski’s, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism* and Arthur Wenk’s *Claude Debussy and the Poets*, Shepherd argues that because of the heavy influence of the Symbolist movement in French literature, the evidence of the texts that appear in Debussy’s music, Impressionism is an imprecise label for Debussy’s music.⁷

To understand the differences between Impressionism and Symbolism, a comparison of their definitions and artistic intents is necessary. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, Impressionism involves “conveying the moods and emotions aroused by the subject rather than a detailed tone-picture.”⁸ Oscar Thompson believes that Impressionistic works are “emotional reactions to the objects,”⁹ rather than “mirroring the objects.”¹⁰ Symbolism is defined by Paul Roberts as “concerned with what lay behind external appearances, with [the] intangible and ‘inexpressible.’”¹¹ Although Symbolism originates from literature, and Impressionism focuses on paintings, the goals of these two concepts as reflected in Debussy’s music are similar, in that both aim at blurring reality.

One of Debussy’s earliest works based on Symbolist poetry is *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* (1894) for orchestra. This piece was inspired by the poem, *L’après-midi d’un faune* (The Afternoon of a Faun), written in 1865, and published in 1876 by Symbolist poet, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898). The poem is regarded as the most beautiful and admired Symbolist poem in French literary history according to Paul Valéry (1871–1945), another Symbolist poet.¹² In the poem, a metaphor is used to describe a faun’s sensual experience as he interacts with several nymphs in his dream.¹³ In his musical setting, Debussy seems to deliberately portray various elements of the original poem. For example, the intentional pauses used by Mallarmé are depicted as silences by Debussy. In addition, Debussy’s opening flute solo suggests the pan pipes of the faun in the poem. Interestingly, when Debussy first asked for Mallarmé’s permission to set music to his poem, Mallarmé famously responded: “but I thought I had

⁶ Brian Hart, “The Symphony in Debussy’s World: A Context for His Views on the Genre and Early Interpretations of *La Mer*” in *Debussy and His World*, ed. Jane Fulcher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 150.

⁷ John Shepherd, “Review of *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism* by Stefan Jarocinski, trans. Rollo Myers and *Claude Debussy and the Poets* by Arthur B. Wenk,” in *Contact: A Journal for Contemporary Music* 17 (1977): 31–32.

⁸ Michael Kennedy and Joyce Kennedy, “Impressionism” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 415.

⁹ Oscar Thompson, *Debussy: Man and Artist* (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1940), 21.

¹⁰ Ibid.

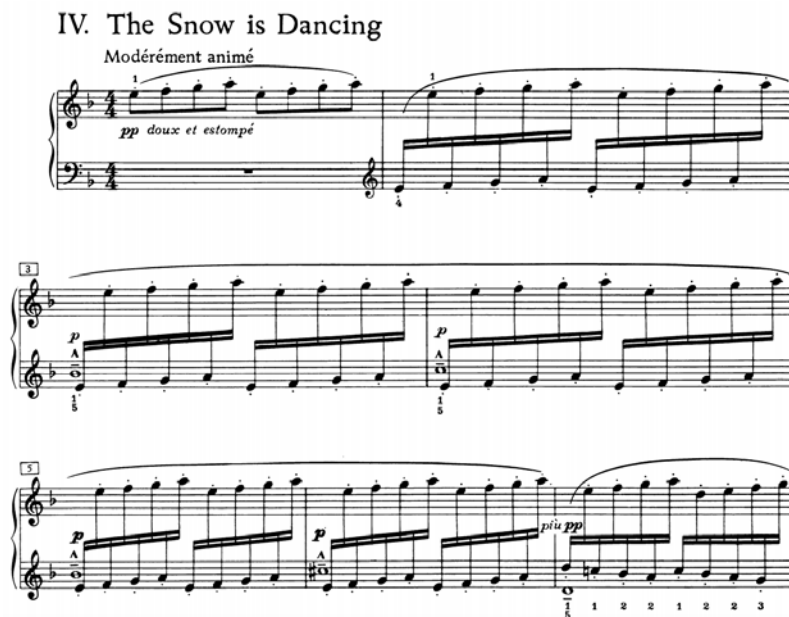
¹¹ Paul Roberts, *Imagine, the Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), 18.

¹² Paul Valéry, *Collected Works of Paul Valéry, Volume 11: Occasions*, trans. Roger Shattuck and Frederick Brown (Cambridge: Princeton University Press, 1970), 225.

¹³ Henry Weinfield, *Stéphane Mallarmé, Collected Poems, Translated with Commentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 38.

already done that!"¹⁴ In 1912, Vaslav Nijinsky (1889–1950) created a ballet, *Afternoon of a Faun*, based on Debussy's composition.¹⁵

In Symbolist poetry, nature plays a significant role. Similarly in Debussy's music, water, leaves, snow, rain, and landscapes often appear in his compositional titles and allusions. Debussy described his reaction to nature as follows, "Irresistibly bewitched by the magic of the ancient forests I had stayed late one autumn day in the country. From the fall of the golden leaves that invest the splendid obsequies of the trees, from the clear angelus that calls the fields to rest, rose a gentle and alluring voice counselling oblivion."¹⁶ Typically, Debussy first provided a musical description of nature in his music, and then increased the emotional intensity to involve the listener. An example of this is evident in the beginning of "The Snow is Dancing" from *Children's Corner* (1906–1908). The sixteenth notes in the first 13 measures are marked *pianissimo* and *portato*, and together with the small harmonic changes, Debussy suggests the texture of snow (Example 1).



Example 1: Claude Debussy, "The Snow is Dancing," from *Children's Corner*, mm. 1-7¹⁷

Another piano piece probably inspired by Symbolist poetry, is "Clair de lune." This is the third movement from Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque* (1905) and the likely inspiration for this piece is the poem *Clair de lune* written in 1869 by Symbolist, Paul Verlaine (1896–1944).¹⁸ Not only do

¹⁴ Richard Sieburth, "1885, February: The Music of the Future," in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 795.

¹⁵ Peter Ostwald, *Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap into Madness* (New York: Carol Publishing, 1991), 53.

¹⁶ Claude Debussy, "Monsieur Croche the Dilettante Hater" in *Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music* (New York: Dover, 1962), 8-9.

¹⁷ Claude Debussy, *Klavierwerke Band I*, ed. Eberhardt Klemm (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1970), 45.

¹⁸ Arthur B. Wenk, *Claude Debussy and the Poets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 24.

the two share the same name, the title of the complete four movement suite, *Suite Bergamasque*, appears to have come from a phrase within the first stanza of this poem, “Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques.”¹⁹

In “Clair de lune,” Verlaine wrote “The calm, pale moonlight, whose sad beauty, beaming, Sets the birds softly dreaming in the trees.”²⁰ These words are expressed imaginatively in the music by Debussy. The overall slow tempo and quiet dynamics of the piece create the mood of a peaceful night. The extended phrases with occasional *tempo rubato* set forth timelessness, while the sixteenth notes appearing in the middle section along with *un poco mosso* might suggest the fluency and fluidity of a water “fountain,” which is mentioned in the last sentence of the poem: “And makes the marbled fountains, gushing, streaming – Slender jet-fountains – sob their ecstasies.”²¹

Another work with a credible connection to Symbolism is “Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir.” This is the fourth piece from Debussy’s first book of *Préludes* (1909–1910) for solo piano. The title likely came from the first stanza of a poem by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), *Harmonie du soir* (Evening Harmony) written in 1909.²² The melody in this piece is announced by a three-note motive of E-A-B flat, which is then repeated with a short extension added. This motive does not appear again until it is developed in the middle section of the piece. The music throughout features fantasy and a gentle sensuousness, while the poem gives personifications to the “light,” “flower” and “songs.” Below is the first stanza of the poem with its translation, containing the title of this piece.

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir;
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!²³

Now for the hour when swaying on its stem
Every flower swings a censer to the Night.
While songs and scents condense the dying light;
The Melancholy waltz begins again.²⁴

¹⁹ Paul Verlaine, *One Hundred and One Poems by Paul Verlaine: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 28-29.

²⁰ Ibid., 29.

²¹ Ibid.

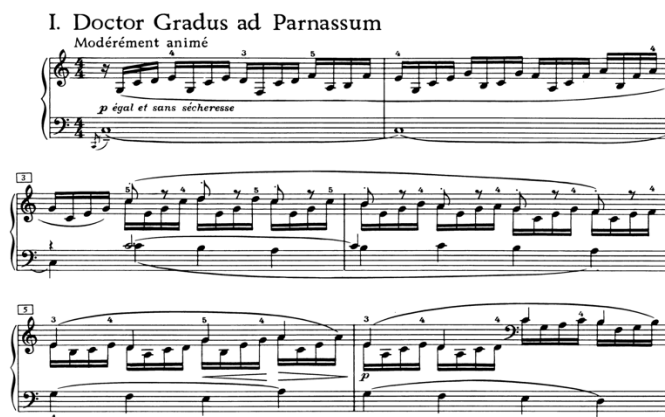
²² Siglind Bruhn, *Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music: The Extra-Musical Subtext in Piano Works by Ravel, Debussy, and Messiaen* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997), 159.

²³ Charles Baudelaire, *Complete Poems*, trans. Walter Martin (New York: Routledge, 2002), 124.

²⁴ Ibid., 125.

Debussy also explored more sophisticated ways of expressing Symbolist associations in his music. An example is the piano suite, *Children's Corner* (1908), which was dedicated to his daughter, Chou Chou,²⁵ and the fourth piece from this work, "The Snow is Dancing" was referenced briefly above. Chou Chou was three years old when Debussy wrote this suite. He put himself into Chou Chou's fantasy-land of toys, isolated from reality. The titles of the pieces are in English, because of Chou Chou's English governess.²⁶ *Children's Corner* consists of six pieces, each with a subtitle featuring a character or a subject.²⁷ Symbolist influence may well have resulted in Debussy's attitude towards several pieces in the suite. Since Symbolist poets are interested in the meaning behind external appearances, Debussy offers clues as to his personal attitude toward these subjects, but also from a child's point of view with a sense of humor. Some people claim that *Children's Corner* is merely teaching repertoire,²⁸ but the complexity of the texture, the demanding articulation and the sophisticated use of pedal combine to make it more challenging than it first appears.

In the first piece (Example 2), "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum," Debussy ridicules the études of Clementi. He uses the word "doctor" to make fun of all purely technical didactic music, while portraying children's dislike toward tedious technical exercises in a humorous way.²⁹ The piece is in C Major and mostly consists of fast sixteenth notes similar in style to some of Czerny's études from *The School of Velocity*, Op. 299.



Example 2: Claude Debussy, "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum," from *Children's Corner*, mm. 1-5³⁰

In the transitional passage (Example 3), the pace is gradually slowed down, while the music modulates to the keys of E flat Major and D flat Major. The short excursions to other keys and return to the home key could be considered as a musical depiction of a child getting lost and

²⁵ Paul Roberts, *Imagine, the Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 202.

²⁶ Christopher Harding, "About Children's Corner" in *Debussy – Children's Corner* (New York: Schirmer, 2009), 4.

²⁷ E. Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 118-119.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Paul Roberts, *Imagine, the Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 208.

³⁰ Claude Debussy, *Klavierwerke Band I*, ed. Eberhardt Klemm, 33.

then slowly finding their way home to the tonic key of C Major. This might be a subtle use of Symbolism.



Example 3: Claude Debussy, "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum," from *Children's Corner*, mm. 33-44³¹

"Feux d'artifice" (1912–1913) is the last piece in the second book of Debussy's 24 *Préludes*. It is technically demanding yet pianistic, and contains techniques such as glissandi, parallel chords, and passage work divided between the hands. In measures 80-83 (Example 4), the thirty-second notes suggest visual images of a fireworks display, and the *subito piano* and rests that follow possibly convey the spectators' awestruck reaction to this display. In the coda, Debussy quotes the French National Anthem (Example 5), thus suggesting France's celebration of Bastille Day symbolically.



Example 4: Claude Debussy, "Feux d'artifice," from *Préludes*, mm. 80-83³²

³¹ Ibid., 35.

³² Claude Debussy, *Préludes pour Piano, Livre 2* (Paris, Durand: 1913), 78.



Example 5: Claude Debussy, "Feux d'artifice," from *Préludes*, mm. 90-98³³

In addition to *Children's Corner* and the advanced piano works discussed above, there are numerous works within Debussy's piano oeuvre that are related to Symbolist poetry and suitable for late-intermediate and early-advanced students. This includes several works within the *Préludes*. For example, "Girl with the Flaxen Hair" (1909–1910), is in fact a quote of a poem with the same title by the Symbolist, Leconte de Lisle (1818–1894).³⁴ Other pieces of moderate technical demands include "Dances of Delphi" and "Footsteps in the Snow" from the first book³⁵ and "Bruyères" and "Canope" from the second book of *Préludes*.³⁶ While these pieces are technically more accessible for less advanced students, they are still sophisticated in terms of their emotional depth and interpretative demands.

While Debussy's connection to Symbolism is clear, it is also feasible to consider Debussy an Impressionist. A case in point is "Reflets dans l'eau" (Reflections on the Water), yet another work by Debussy depicting nature. This piece is the first movement from the first book of *Images*, and was published in 1905.³⁷ Debussy used compositional techniques such as parallelism, pentatonic and whole-tone scales, thereby eroding tonality and traditional functional harmony. These compositional techniques became trademarks and recognized elements of Impressionism.³⁸

In the opening of the piece (Example 6), it is not difficult to associate the three elements of the musical texture with different layers of a watery landscape in a painting: the first is the reality above the water; the second is the reflection under the water; and the third is the colorful water.

³³ Ibid., 79.

³⁴ Siglind Bruhn, *Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music*, 166.

³⁵ Claude Debussy, *Préludes pour Piano, Livre 1* (Paris, Durand: 1910).

³⁶ Claude Debussy, *Préludes pour Piano, Livre 2* (Paris, Durand: 1913).

³⁷ Paul Roberts, *Imagine, the Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, xviii.

³⁸ John Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 142.



Example 6: Claude Debussy, "Reflets dans l'eau," from *Images*, mm. 1-7³⁹

The composer utilizes whole-tone scales in measures 43-47 (Example 7). Here, the left hand plays a whole-tone melody in octaves combined with broken B flat Minor and augmented chords in the right hand. The right hand's broken augmented triads generate true whole tone sonority with a long and intense crescendo, arguably creating emotional anxiety.



Example 7: Claude Debussy, "Reflets dans l'eau," from *Images*, mm. 43-47⁴⁰

Debussy often uses traditional formal structures as a point of departure in his works, but blurs the block or sectional structures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This piece could be considered to be in a modified ABABA form, built on two motivic fragments.⁴¹ Both motives appear in the left hand: the first, a three-note motive (A flat-F-E flat) in the beginning, and the second (D-E-A flat-G flat-E-D) first appearing in measure 25. The addition of cadenza-like passages within the structure renders the traditional block or sectional form more sophisticated. This arguably enhances the music's serenity and freedom. Towards the end of the piece, Debussy slows the three-note motive creating a "fade away ending."⁴² This device in which there is a slowing down in the tempo along with a *diminuendo* is often encountered in the composer's music.

In addition to the use of Impressionistic compositional techniques, there is little doubt that "Reflets dans l'eau" was inspired by the works of Impressionist painter, Claude Monet (1840–

³⁹ Claude Debussy, *Images, 1ere Série* (Paris: Durand, 1905), 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴¹ Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 23.

⁴² Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature*, 360.

1926). Monet began to create the series of *Water Lily Ponds* at his house in Giverny in the late 1890s.⁴³ The painting shown below, “The Clouds” is from 1903 (Example 8). Monet’s paintings are frequently associated with Debussy’s compositions because of the similar titles and artistic intentions of the two. Monet said, “for me, the subject is of secondary importance: I want to convey what is alive between me and the subject.”⁴⁴ As such, “Reflets dans l’eau” serves as an excellent example of Debussy as an Impressionist composer.



Example 8: Claude Monet, “The Clouds” from *Water Lilies*, 1903. Oil on Canvas, 74 x 106.5 cm⁴⁵

Impressionism and Symbolism originate from different creative art forms. Whether using compositional techniques inspired by the blurred forms of the Impressionist painters, or the suggestive texts of the Symbolist poets, Debussy was undoubtedly both a Symbolist and an Impressionist. Even so, while Debussy is widely regarded as an Impressionist composer, his strong ties to Symbolism are often downplayed or ignored altogether by some scholars. However, Symbolist poetry fundamentally influenced Debussy’s compositions throughout his life and there is probably no composer more closely aligned with poetic Symbolism than Debussy. Since the composer seemed to favor recognizing the influence of Symbolism over that of Impressionism, the answer to the perennial question of whether Debussy is more of a Symbolist or Impressionist composer should probably come down on the side of Symbolism. With this in mind, teachers should encourage their students to read any poetry that is connected to a composition while learning or listening to the related pieces. This will help students understand the poetic style of Symbolism and this literary movement in general. English translations of these texts are often easily attainable. For example, Verlaine’s poetry is included in a bilingual edition, translated by Norman Shapiro.⁴⁶

⁴³ Christoph Heinrich, *Monet* (Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 2019), 94.

⁴⁴ Christoph Heinrich, *Monet*, front cover.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁶ Paul Verlaine, *One Hundred and One Poems by Paul Verlaine: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

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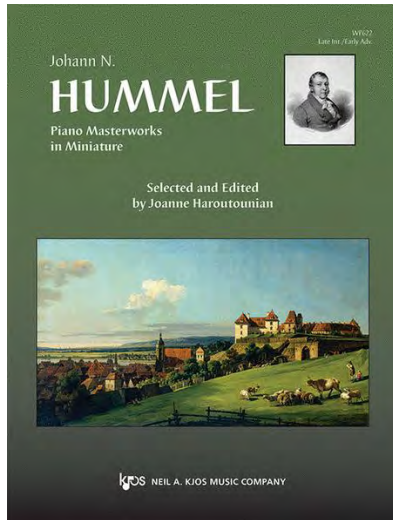


Dr. Sabrina Xiao He is a Waring Artist, Guangzhou Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra Principal Pianist, and US-Chinese Cultural Ambassador. She has given over 300 concerts in North America, Europe, and China, including her Carnegie Hall debut in 2019, and performed Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto no. 2 with the Thousand Oaks Philharmonic in 2010. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in piano performance from the USC Thornton School of Music where she studied with Dr. Stewart Gordon, and has won prizes at the Steinway Academy Piano Competition (2019), Waring International Piano Competition (2017), International Music Competition in Paris, Grand Prize Virtuoso (2015), and MTAC Piano Concerto Competition (2010). In 2020, Ivory Classics released her album, "Debussy and Chinese Music."

New Publications Recommendations

From Hummel to the Stars

Gail Lew



JOHANN N. HUMMEL PIANO MASTERWORKS IN MINIATURE

Selected and Edited by Joanne Haroutounian

KJOS Music Company 2019

www.kjos.com

48 pp., \$8.95

The music of Hummel (1778–1837) reflects the transition from Classical to Romantic style and deserves to be better known. This collection serves as the first American publication of a selection of Hummel's intermediate-level piano pieces. Haroutounian includes pieces from Hummel's *Pianoforte School* (1827) as well as the 6 *Pièces très faciles*, op. 52. She has retained Hummel's

original fingering and dynamic markings and included some of her own markings to better provide students and teachers with stylistic considerations. She also provides programmatic titles which serve to foster interpretive artistry. Many of these gems are similar in style to pieces by Schumann. These include *End of Summer* with its a lyrical melodic line and voicing "a la Schumann," *Sailing* which rolls along in 6/8, and *Heroic March* with its expansive rolled chords spanning an octave in both hands. The *Romance* in A flat Major, sounds similar to a Schubert impromptu. As such, it is a serene character piece with a middle section comprised of sixteenth note arpeggiations. There are also pieces that bear a likeness to Mozart, Hummel's teacher. These include *Ecosaise* in C Major, *Allegro* in C Major, *Menuet*, and *Rondo* in C Major from the *Pièces très faciles*. This is a fine collection of Hummel's didactic pieces which has been thoroughly researched, impeccably edited, and thoughtfully selected by Joanne Haroutounian.

NEW ETUDES BOOK 4

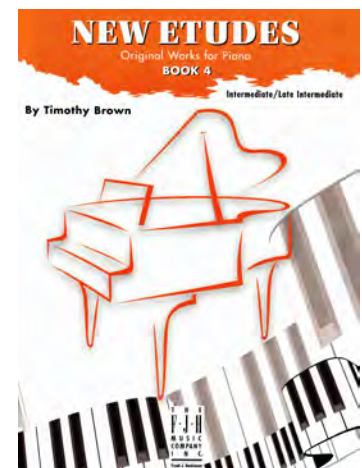
Timothy Brown

FJH Music Company, 2019

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32 pp., \$6.50

This mid-intermediate collection serves as an ideal sequel to Burgmüller's 25 *Progressive Studies*, Op. 100. In each of these imaginative and creative études, the spotlight is on a different musical technique: *staccato* versus *legato* between the hands in *Anticipation* and left-hand legato phrasing in the *Ballade*, for example. If a student



enjoyed playing Burgmüller's *Ballade*, they may delight in Timothy Brown's inventive twist on this perennial favorite. The *Pendulum* swings back and forth using extended broken chords in both hands, while left-hand broken-chord extensions are featured in the attractive E minor *Fantasie*. A *Burleske*, utilizing staccato harmonic seconds in both hands is a lively capriccio. The brisk *Winter Wind*, focused on cultivating clear balance between the hands, also helps to develop the fast fingers needed for more challenging études to come in the future. The Schumanesque *Melodie*, with doubling of melodic lines in both hands, and *Novelette*, with contrasting motion between the hands, aim to develop increased dynamic awareness and voicing possibilities. Written at a level commensurate with Kabalevsky's *Children's Pieces*, Op. 27, *Children's Game* and *The Porcelain Doll* utilize whole-tone patterns. *New Etudes Books 1-4* reinforces important technical aspects of performance including essential pianistic movements, gestures, and touches.



MUSEUM MASTERPIECES

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28 pp., \$8.99

Catherine Rollin effectively brings art and music together in this collection of piano solos inspired by great works of art. Photographs of the ten evocative paintings which inspired the pieces are displayed in full color at the center of each book. Historical notes and information about the artists accompany the pictures. In this way, students may be inspired by the images and information included.

Museum Masterpieces Book A (Levels 1-2¹) provides a sensory experience and introduction to imagery rarely found at the early level of piano study. In addition, all of these elementary solo pieces include a teacher accompaniment. *The Swing* (Pierre-Auguste Renoir) travels back and forth in triple meter; *Tiger in a Tropical Storm* (Henri Rousseau) prowls using rising and falling *crescendi* and *diminuendi*; *The Oregon Trail* (Albert Bierstadt) ambles along in a long-short rhythm; *Butterflies* (Odilon Redon) flit lightly from octave to octave while the student holds the damper pedal down for the entire piece.

"In my role as a teacher, I am always using imagery from art to try to inspire a student, in terms of their playing. If I want someone to use their arms in a way that is flowing, I might show them

¹ Level guidelines are based on Jane Magrath's literature leveling in *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1995). See page xi.

a painting by Monet and how the brushstrokes flow for the water. As a person who loves art, I thought it would be really wonderful to have the artworks inspire me to write music."²

The brilliant vignettes included in *Museum Masterpieces Book B* (Levels 2-3) fulfill Rollin's vision of melding art and music. Paintings like *The Cellist* (Amedeo Modigliani) and *A Prairie Picnic Disturbed by a Rushing Herd of Buffalo* (George Catlin) come to life through the pieces provided. *Rush Hour, New York* (Max Weber) is complete with honking horns and *Little Blue Horse* (Franz Marc) trots along in two-note phrases. The crashing of waves against a small boat depicted in *Fishermen at Sea* (Joseph Mallord William Turner) is created musically by rising arpeggios, culminating in an accented crash. For *Wheatfield with Crows* (Vincent van Gogh) Rollin uses dissonant minor second grace notes to portray the improvised, loud, raspy caw of crows. Both collections are worthy of exploration and contain solo recital pieces for late-elementary to early-intermediate level students.

MODERN PIANO STUDIES

Jakub Metelka

Bärenreiter, 2019

www.baerenreiter.com

28 pp., \$19.99



This collection of clever late-intermediate (Levels 5-6) contemporary gems by Czech composer and pianist Jakub Metelka contains études in all major and minor keys. Each miniature explores an individual technical challenge, is given an appealing title, and illustrated with amusing artwork. The harmonic language is unpredictable and novel.

A few of the technical considerations include staccato touch in one hand against *legato* in the other hand (*Petite Danseuse* and *Blind Mouse Dance*), glissandi (*Leaky Gutter*), rapid sixteenth note triplet passagework (*Grasshopper Race*), eighth note triplets (*Flea in the Fur*), polyrhythms (two against three in *Sweet Tooth Squirrel*), crossed hands (*For Denisa and Ludvik*), trills and appoggiaturas (*March of the Ant Soldiers*), chromatic double note thirds (*Tipsy Wasps*), and *legato* double note sixths (*Home Sweet Home*). The pieces are sophisticated and ingenious. Audio samples are available [here](#).

² Kevin Elliott, "Catherine Rollin," *Downtown Newsmagazine*, October 23, 2018, <https://www.downtownpublications.com/single-post/2018/10/23/Catherine-Rollin>



ONE OF A KIND SOLOS BOOK 5

Wynn-Anne Rossi

Alfred Music, 2019

www.alfred.com

24 pp., \$7.99

Wynn-Anne Rossi presents unique and creative late-intermediate to early-advanced compositions in her One of a Kind series of five books. With a metronome marking of 152 and using mixed meters, *Urban Toccata* makes for a wild ride. This piece also includes tone clusters, open fifths, and rapid eighth-note passages. *Sundog* is an atmospheric piece. In it, the dynamic excitement builds from *piano* to *forte*, creating a hazy rainbow effect. *Blue Scherzo* is filled with triplets and interval stretches of a seventh. The lyricism and appealing improvisational quality in this piece are reminiscent of Gershwin. *Fractal Images* is minimalist with its ongoing repetitive loops that call Philip Glass to mind. *Interstellar Mood* is an eerie mood piece written in mixed meters. The dramatic writing in *Epic Victory* makes this a showstopper. The pieces in Book 5 of this series are highly imaginative and offer fun and exciting performance repertoire for the late-intermediate level student.

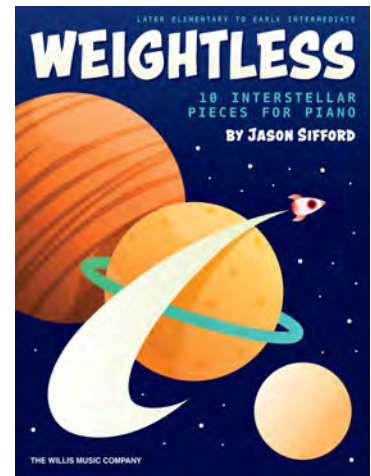
WEIGHTLESS

Jason Sifford

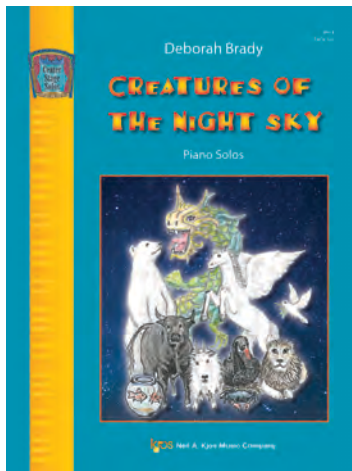
Hal Leonard, 2020

www.halleonard.com

32 pp., \$8.99



The universe and outer space hold an innate fascination for students of all ages. In *Weightless*, Jason Sifford aims to capture this curiosity by depicting the cosmos musically using unusual harmonies, textures, meters, rhythms, and extended sections of acoustic pedaling. The collection includes several two-page late-elementary preludes and four longer early-intermediate contest or recital solos. Highlights include *Shining Sol* with its crossed hand playing, long pedal markings, shifting harmonies, and changing tempi. Students can imagine their arms floating in zero gravity in *Weightless* which includes descending scale passages to be played with the damper pedal held down. *Toccata-Rocket* is a fast and furious perpetual motion into outer space, opening with a powerful, syncopated theme utilizing *forte* open fifths in the left hand. A contrasting middle section allows students to explore the quietness of the solar system. *Jupiter's Eye* portrays a giant storm on Jupiter with its swirling winds depicted by swift running eighth notes and broken C Minor chord patterns. A video of the composer performing this piece can be found online using the following [link](#). Other appealing pieces in this outstanding collection of interstellar piano solos include *The Sea of Tranquility*, *Dodging Asteroids*, *Spacetime*, and *Lost in the Oort Cloud*.



CREATURES OF THE NIGHT SKY

Deborah Brady

KJOS Music Company, 2019

www.kjos.com

24 pp., \$6.95

Another collection of piano solos focused on the universe is Deborah Brady's *Creatures of the Night Sky*. In this collection of ten pieces, the composer mixes well-known constellations with her own interpretation of the creatures found in the night sky. The effect of her musical imagery is unique and may appeal to intermediate (Levels 5-6) students. The starry menagerie depicted includes *Pegasus* (The Winged Horse) with open fifths used in combination with staccato and pedaled passages, *Pisces* (The Fish), swimming along in a dreamy, expressive 6/8 meter, *Draco* (The Dragon) portrayed in medieval grandeur using modal writing and extensive brass-like fourths and fifths, *Cygnus* (The Swan) floating along in a graceful 3/4, *Leo* (The Lion) announcing himself with a royal fanfare filled with trumpet calls in a dotted note rhythm, the flamboyant *Taurus* (The Bull), graceful *Columba* (The Dove), and ever playful *Capricorn* (The Goat). Brady's collection is filled with delightful ideas for a star-studded recital.



[Gail Lewy](#) is a pianist, editor, arranger, piano teacher, clinician, and nationally-respected leader in the field of piano pedagogy. She is an independent studio teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area, a member of CAPMT District 2, and a judge for state, national, and international piano events. Gail holds degrees and credentials in piano performance, music history, and music education. Highlights of her 30-year career in music include tenure as senior piano editor for Kjos Music, director of keyboard publications for Warner Bros. Music, editor for the *California Music Teacher* magazine, and contributing editor for the *American Music Teacher* magazine. Gail maintains close ties with major publishing companies in the United States, Canada, and Europe and presents workshops nationwide on contemporary music focused on living composers.

Coda

What do you enjoy most about teaching music online?

As a music educator, I look forward to the time when we can safely resume teaching students face-to-face. While remote lessons are not a perfect replacement for in-person lessons, I feel grateful that we have the technological means to adapt our teaching to protect ourselves and our students in the midst of a pandemic. Instead of brooding over the shortcomings of online lessons, we must endeavor to look at the bright side and focus instead on the positive aspects and unique advantages of this teaching format. These include:

1. **More active participation from students in the learning process.** In online lessons, students are required to listen and watch more intently. They are also responsible for keeping notes for themselves and marking their own scores. This gives them more agency in their learning. As a result, they are more likely to remember and commit to practicing things that they write down themselves.
2. **Greater flexibility in scheduling.** We no longer need to work around commute times to schedule lessons, and it is also possible to arrange quick five-minute checkups during the week to track students' progress. Students feel more accountable for their practice when they know they will have a mid-week checkup. This also prevents them from procrastinating until the day before their lesson.
3. **Geographical distance is no longer a barrier.** We are able to teach students from anywhere in the world provided they have access to an instrument and the means to connect online.
4. **Opportunities to check on students' practice space and set up.** For those who teach at a school or in their own home, online lessons provide an opportunity to check on a student's regular practice environment and suggest changes for better playing conditions and increased productivity, if needed.
5. **No more driving for those who normally commute!** As someone who teaches in-home lessons in a crowded metropolitan area, I have saved a significant amount of time, money, and stress by not having to sit in traffic for two hours every day. It is also better for the environment.
6. **Building a strong sense of community.** Navigating the challenges of online teaching and learning together with our students encourages a sense of shared responsibility in adapting to the situation. Unstable internet connections and other technological glitches can be frustrating, but through it all there is a mutual understanding that we are in this together and doing our best to keep moving forward through these challenging times.



Dr. [Michael Krikorian](#) is a Los Angeles based pianist, composer, and music educator. He received a Doctor of Musical Arts in piano performance from the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, where he studied with Antoinette Perry. He currently serves as CAPMT Regional South Concerto Competition Chair and CAPMT Young Professional Leadership Network (YPLN) Chair.

As someone who teaches jazz piano and improvisation, I am used to playing bassline accompaniments for my students, counting in the appropriate tempo, and giving students improvisation prompts in real time. Over Zoom, all of this is basically impossible. Although I initially mourned the loss of the ability to help my students through their jazz tunes in real time, I have noticed that many students have become more independent and confident without my accompaniment and oversight. Students are now finding correct tempi on their own, learning to use play-along accompaniments, successfully orienting themselves with their metronomes on beats two and four, and self-correcting basic problems with chord voicings and time feel. In other words, without the ability to lean on me, students have learned to stand on their own two feet. It is a great lesson for me as a teacher that sometimes a more hands-off approach can encourage a student to take ownership of their own music learning.

I am also grateful that Zoom has made it easy for students around the world to connect with an appropriate teacher, regardless of location. This summer, I have been teaching students in Italy, Cyprus, Nebraska, Kansas, Michigan, New York, and North Carolina, in addition to my students in Southern California. It is a beautiful thing that technology allows us to connect with students around the country and across the globe.

[Jeremy Siskind](#) is a pianist and professor of piano at Fullerton College. He is also the author of 13 Hal Leonard publications and a Yamaha artist. His new concert work is called "[Perpetual Motion Etudes for Solo Piano](#)."



The virtual studio has many challenges, but I have found some wonderful rewards these last months. Students have blossomed in their own spaces, as adults remember and cherish the joys of self-investment. Young students have also taken ownership and are finding their unique voices. Perhaps my favorite aspect of teaching virtually is the reimagining of community. Many of our piano students struggle with the loneliness of our instrument, but it need not be so — even now! I have enjoyed meeting many favorite stuffed animals, watched pets zoom-bomb, and talked with Gagas and Abuelas from multiple states. Typically, students share a tiny corner of their week's schedule with me, and I share my office. Now, we share our families, our living rooms, our favorite plants and toys, and more. Recently, I have begun offering my young students a monthly studio class on Zoom, and they have loved it! It has been incredibly rewarding to see how we can be a light to each other in the darkest of times.

Dr. [Sonya Schumann](#) is an engaging and imaginative performer and pedagogue. Active in the artistic community, she has toured through the US, Canada, Europe, and Australia. In addition to performing, she volunteers for several non-profit arts initiatives, spanning both coasts of North America. Her publications as an editor, compiler, and producer can be found under Hal Leonard, Schirmer, and Schott Music. Dr. Schumann currently serves as a lecturer at San Diego State University and is a member of the CAPMT Connect Editorial Committee.



Like many music teachers, I have felt frustrated at times due to the technical challenges of using Zoom and other video calling options for online lessons. However, I have also enjoyed the advantages and reach of Zoom's technology. In teaching beginners, the variety of screen sharing options available have made it easier to sustain students' attention. This includes access and sharing of videos in real time (YouTube, Medici), document sharing (comments and markings on scores), as well as screen sharing Sibelius notation software.



It is challenging for many young beginners to keep their focus on one thing during a lesson. I find that listening to and notating simple melodies together, has been a successful way to spark beginning students' musical creativity. Using Zoom's screen sharing option together with Sibelius, my students and I have been given an opportunity to exchange notation ideas, look at each other's examples, and follow what the other person is transcribing in real time. [Sibelius-First](#) is a free software, and I highly recommend giving it a try!

Canadian pianist [Barry Tan](#) is a doctoral student and Graduate Teaching Assistant at USC where he studies with Dr. Stewart Gordon. He was recently invited to participate as a 2020 Piano Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Festival and currently serves as President of the MTNA USC Collegiate Chapter.

CAPMT Connect Editorial Committee

Editor

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pierces@usc.edu

Editorial Committee

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