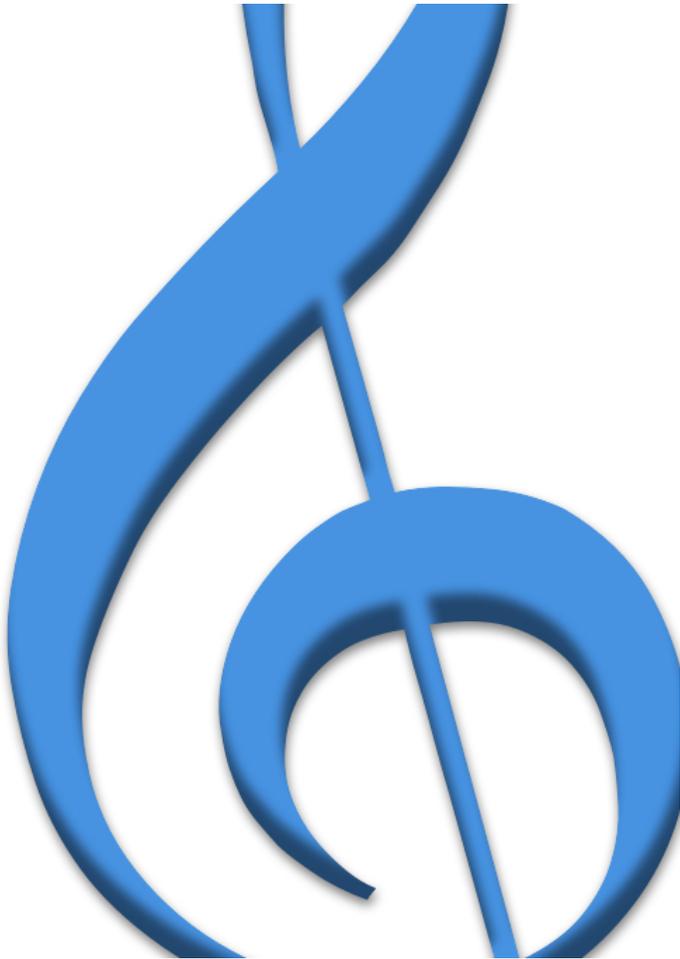


# CONNECT

**CAPMT**



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# CAPMT CONNECT

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# Message from the President

[Wendi Kirby](#), NCTM • [wkirby@gmail.com](mailto:wkirby@gmail.com)

CAPMT President



Welcome to *CAPMT Connect*! It is hard to believe that I am writing my last message as president of CAPMT. So much has transpired over these past two years that it is hard to express the magnitude of what we have all endured and continue to overcome as we navigate and pivot in this new normal. As vaccines are available and the world is beginning to open up, I sense a collective sense of hope for a return to face to face human interaction and what we might call normalcy. I know for myself, I absolutely cannot wait for in-person teaching and live music. CAPMT has shown great resilience and has continued to thrive through this pandemic thanks to our strong members, determined leadership, and the unparalleled power of music.

Our 2020 CAPMT Conference was a huge success. Albeit virtual, we had more attendees than any conference in our history. Our keynote presenters, Anderson & Roe inspired all of us with their palpable joy for the art of music and teaching. I will never forget my feelings of hope for the future of music as I listened to their conversation and performance at a time when our world was ever changed by the pandemic. Stephen Pierce and his incredible conference team provided a robust schedule of interesting and relevant topics. Our sessions were unique in that they were all held live (rather than the standard pre-recorded sessions of other organizations) which provided a greater level of connection and excitement to our virtual event. A heartfelt thank you to Stephen and the entire conference committee for such an engaging conference.

Our first annual Membership Engagement Week kicked off with a special interview with Michael Tilson Thomas. So many of you reached out to say that this event was exactly what was needed to inspire all of us to greater heights of teaching during such difficult times. It was also such an important reminder of the healing power of music. “MTT” was candid and heart-warming as he shared how his teachers inspired him to become the maestro he is today. Our membership chair, Grant Kondo continues to work diligently to engage our membership through opening all chapter events to the entire membership. COVID has taught us that technology allows us to

reach our entire membership through virtual events. Even as we return to in-person programming, it is my aspiration that we will form a hybrid plan of in-person and virtual attendance so that our entire state can continue to benefit from all of the wonderful opportunities that are being offered at a chapter level across the state.

CAPMT student events and competitions were all virtual and highly successful this year. Thank you to Julie Ann Ballard, Su-Shing Chiu, Mona DeCesare as well as all chapter chairs and teachers. California was well represented at MTNA national competitions and I am so thankful to all of you for your hard work and diligence.

As you know, my theme as president has been one of connection. I love social interaction so it has been a true challenge to serve in this position without being able to connect with you in person at meetings and conferences. That being said, I know that we are so fortunate to have the technology that has allowed us to stay connected virtually. I have experienced so much support throughout this time as your president. I am humbled by your nomination as the 2021 MTNA Foundation Fellow and extend so much gratitude for such an honor. The opportunity to serve with such an amazing board and fine leaders across the state has been an enormously memorable experience. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this incredible opportunity to serve you the past two years as CAPMT president.

With respect,

Wendi Kirby, NCTM

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# Editorial

[Dr. Stephen Pierce](#) • [pierces@usc.edu](mailto:pierces@usc.edu)

CAPMT Connect Editor



Dear fellow CAPMT members,

Spring has arrived and it feels as though we are finally turning a corner with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have not worked with any of my college or pre-college students in person since March last year, but I know things are starting to open up and that teachers are increasingly yet cautiously working with students in person. I am excited at the prospect of teaching in person again soon, while also determined to preserve certain newly implemented activities I have incorporated since we all moved online. These activities have led to successful learning outcomes in my students and I believe they will enhance my in-person instruction going forward. With this in mind, I reached out to three teachers who contributed to our summer issue of *Connect* last year and asked them to write about this idea. I wanted them to share specific activities they have utilized since teaching online that they will retain as we move back to in-person instruction. To learn more about their wonderful ideas, please read our Coda column.

We are also delighted to continue including our two new regular columns in this edition of *Connect*: one focused on musician wellness written by CAPMT wellness chair, Dr. Jackie Petitto as well as Gail Lew's column on new music publications. In her column, Jackie writes about the importance of self-care, especially at the present time, and provides some excellent advice and ideas. Gail highlights several marvelous new publications, including several recently composed works and collections, as well as two exciting new scholarly editions of teaching favorites by Mozart, and Beethoven. In the IMTF column, Heidi Saario shares terrific ideas and insights about how to build and foster community in the virtual music studio. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly reminded us all that human connection and our relationships with others are invaluable for our health and well-being.

In addition to our columns, we are thrilled to feature two enlightening articles in this issue. The first is by Andrew Boyle and he discusses how sometimes providing a broad range of experiences to students, while at other times having our students narrow their focus and achieve "ultra-learning" can both help them to achieve musical mastery, productive practice, and learning success. To this end, Andrew takes a closer look at two recent books namely, *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* by David Epstein, and Scott Young's *Ultralearning: Master Hard Skills, Outsmart the Competition, and Accelerate Your Career*. In a meticulously researched article, Dr. Eloise Kim provides seven guidelines for teaching piano successfully to students on the autism spectrum. In addition to her research, she draws upon her own and other teachers' experience working with these students. As such, this is an invaluable article and a must-read for all teachers who work with autistic students or who are keen to learn more about teaching these students.

I wish to thank each of our CAPMT members who contributed to this issue of *Connect*. I hope that you will enjoy reading this issue as much as I enjoyed putting it together. Happy reading and happy teaching!

– Editor

# Independent Music Teachers Forum (IMTF)

## Building Community in a Private Music Studio

Heidi Saario

Most music teachers around the world have been teaching online for more than a year. Many of us have felt isolated during the pandemic both in our personal and professional lives and we truly miss seeing our students in person. During this past year, I have often thought about how to build a better sense of community in our music studios. How might we feel better connected with our students when we cannot see each other in person? With this in mind, I decided to ask six wonderful CAPMT teachers to share their thoughts and ideas on how they have tried to build a better sense of community in their teaching studios before and during the pandemic. It was very uplifting to hear about their great ideas and to learn how teaching online has also inspired some new ways to connect. I hope this column will offer you some inspiration and useful suggestions on how to continue connecting with your students and their families. Thank you to Antonela Frashëri, Grant Kondo, Ginger Kroft, Natalia Pressman, Yvonne Reddy, and Noreen Wenjen for their input!

Below are the questions I asked each teacher followed by a summary of their responses. The teachers interviewed for this column teach students of all ages, from young children to senior citizens.

[What type of activities and events did you offer within your studio prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to foster a better sense of community?](#)

Within the studios of these teachers, a wide range of events that bring the students together are on offer. Different types of performance opportunities are available on a regular basis, such as recitals, group classes, workshops, and master classes. Sometimes the recitals have a special theme and students are given the opportunity to participate in choosing the theme. A potluck reception at the end of a recital offers students and their families an opportunity to connect in a relaxed environment. One teacher encourages students who are unable to attend a recital to record their performance that is then shared on a video loop during the reception. Everyone is pleased to see all of the students included in the recital even if some of the performances are pre-recorded. In addition to performance related events, teachers also organize social events such as movie nights, piano parties, field trips to concerts, and game days. Some of these studio teachers offer practice challenges for students to encourage each other to work harder towards their goals. Regular newsletters and posts on social media pages offer an opportunity to share information by highlighting upcoming and past events as well as recognizing any student achievements.

### How have you adopted your studio activities and events (if any) during the pandemic and online learning environment?

This group of teachers shared that almost no programs or events have been cut during the pandemic. The teachers have been able to continue live performances online. Some teachers have opted for live Zoom recitals and others have preferred pre-recorded performances put together into a recital movie that the students and their families watched together. Organizing an online recital offers an opportunity for a larger group of relatives and friends to attend, who would normally not be able to join due to distance. This new way of connecting has brought lots of joy to many grandparents, for example, who have been able to attend these online recitals from different cities, states, and even countries. During the online recitals, students have enjoyed connecting via chat and cheering each other's performances. Movie nights, game nights, and other fun social gatherings have continued to take place online. One teacher even managed to adapt a popular collaborative event, where students usually play and improvise together on three pianos in her studio, by compiling students' individual videos into a music collaboration with the entire studio!

### Have you added any new activities or events during the pandemic to build a better sense of community amongst your students?

While no programs were cut this year, many of these hardworking teachers have started offering new virtual activities to their students. These include a studio wide Halloween composition activity, online practice challenges with prizes, new group classes and workshops on various topics (music history, theory games, performance, composing), summer intensive groups, and even full online courses. The teachers have also taken the opportunity to offer master classes to their students taught by master teachers who live further away. When teaching a master class online, the location of the master teacher does not matter. In addition, one teacher has created mentor programs, where older students are paired up with either younger students or their own peers, to keep each other on track.

### Have you noticed any particular studio-wide activities that your students and families have responded to really positively (either prior to or after the pandemic)?

Many students have enjoyed the opportunity to make pre-recorded videos for performances in order to be able to showcase their best playing. Families have also enjoyed watching the recital movies. One teacher encouraged students to produce their own solo concert on Zoom for close friends and family. These students did all of the planning and production on their own, including selecting the repertoire, creating a program, inviting guests, and opening and closing the program. Many students have responded positively to a number of social events such as group composition activities, theme parties, and game days.

Do you have any plans for the future for how you might like to continue improving the connection between the students and families in your studio?

After getting used to online teaching, many teachers now consider this teaching modality will remain an on-going option in one way or another. One of the teachers is planning to offer hybrid lessons. The parents have really appreciated this option due to saving time on commuting during rush hour. Students moving out of the area have shown an interest in wanting to continue lessons online with their teachers after their move. Once we are able to get together in person again, duets and all collaborative music making will undoubtedly be a big hit! Several teachers are hoping to continue offering more opportunities for groups and incorporating a greater variety of social activities moving forward.

Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share about the importance of building community in a private music studio?

All of the teachers agreed that it is essential that we develop personal relationships with our students and their families. As such, each student and parent should be treated equally and with respect, while students need to feel they are a valued part of the studio, regardless of their skill level. These teachers encouraged us to all make the time to connect with each of our students while maintaining our professionalism. Especially during this pandemic, it is important that we check in with our students about how they are feeling and how things are going with school and other parts of their lives. Furthermore, the ability to build a community within a music studio can also be seen as a powerful marketing tool to attract new students. All of the teachers agreed on the importance of providing opportunities for students to share experiences and play together and that including other family members can be a great addition to the experience. Lastly, these teachers would encourage all types of engaging and fun group events that allow the teacher and the students to learn more about each other and feel better connected within the studio.



*[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.*

# Balancing Focus and Variety: Knowing when to Specialize and when to Broaden

Andrew Boyle

As music teachers, we strive to give our students the tools they need for lifelong involvement in music making. Two recent books focused on the topic of expertise provide important insights into promoting skill development. Scott Young's *Ultralearning: Master Hard Skills, Outsmart the Competition, and Accelerate Your Career*, is an encyclopedia of tactics that learners in all areas can use to acquire new skills more effectively.<sup>1</sup> Young discusses several basic principles which can accelerate learning and improve retention in any field of study. By contrast, David Epstein's *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World*, is a provocative critique of common assumptions held by many, including music teachers, about both practicing and the road to mastery.<sup>2</sup> Epstein challenges Malcolm Gladwell's famous assertion that the primary way to achieve expertise is through ten thousand hours of practice.<sup>3</sup> Epstein argues instead that individuals who are able to draw on a broad range of skills reach the highest levels of success. He suggests that in addition to careful practice, having broad experiences leads to true skill mastery, a thesis which corresponds with the lives of many great musicians. Ultimately, as teachers we should be aware of the need for focusing both broadly and in depth in our teaching. By examining the messages contained in both *Ultralearning* and *Range*, I hope to provide teachers with a set of tools they can implement to help their students learn even more effectively. I also hope to provide a more nuanced understanding of how expertise is acquired through both deliberate practice and the ability to incorporate knowledge from other areas of music as well as outside of music.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Young, *Ultralearning: Master Hard Skills, Outsmart the Competition, and Accelerate Your Career* (United States: Harper Business, 2019).

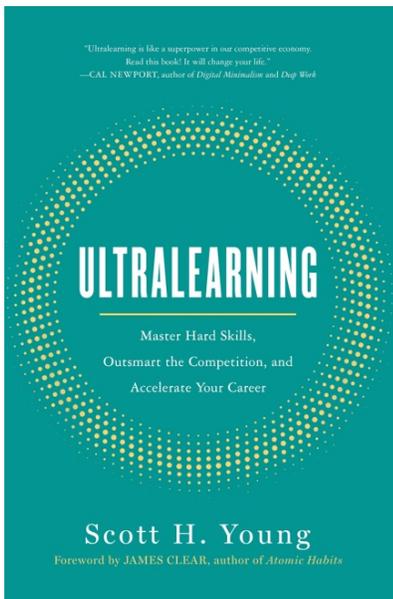
<sup>2</sup> David Epstein, *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2008), 35. It should be noted that Gladwell based his "10,000 hour rule" on research by K. Anders Ericsson (1947-2020) et al. Ericsson later challenged Gladwell's interpretation of his research on the "10,000 hour rule" and argued that it was actually the amount of time spent in *deliberate practice* that distinguished expert performers from non-experts. In *Outliers*, Gladwell emphasized the amount of time spent, while Ericsson emphasized the quality of the practice, distinguishing it from other activities or types of practice that do not necessarily improve performance. For the original definition of deliberate practice see:

K.A. Ericsson, R.T. Krampe, and C. Tesch-Römer, "The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance" *Psychology Review* 100, no. 3: 368.

For Ericsson's response to Gladwell see:

K.A. Ericsson, "Training history, deliberate practice and elite sports performance: an analysis in response to Tucker and Collins review—what makes champions?" *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 47: 533-535.



Scott Young, a Wall Street Journal best-selling author in his early thirties, specializes in writing about learning productivity and testing out his ideas using self-education projects. Curious about how much he could learn free of charge online, he challenged himself to pass every exam for a computer science degree on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) [OpenCourseWare](#) website in one year while blogging about it throughout the process.<sup>4</sup> He succeeded and his test results and completed projects for each course are available on his website.<sup>5</sup> Another year, he learned to speak conversationally in four foreign languages.<sup>6</sup> In *Ultralearning*, he distills some general themes he picked up along the way from experts in different fields who used specific strategies to rapidly attain high levels of competence in a given area. The three principles he discusses that are most relevant to music teaching and learning are Metalearning, Focus, and Retrieval.

In Metalearning, the student's learning improves dramatically through their observation of the strategies used by other successful learners.<sup>7</sup> In Young's interviews with expert scrabble players, memory athletes, and polyglots he found that a common ingredient to their success was that they took time to interview many other experts in their fields about their learning pathways and strategies. In this way, these experts discovered possible learning paths they could follow in their journey towards expertise from many other seasoned experts. Using this idea, students could spend time mapping out for themselves exactly how to learn something based on what experts in that area have previously done, rather than simply jumping into a new activity without a plan.

The second principle is Focus. Young observes that distractions frequently limit the amount of learning that occurs during a study session.<sup>8</sup> He explains that learners in any area can improve their ability to focus and therefore their learning if they implement specific strategies. Young says that the key to achieving improved focus is for learners to start very small, allow for no distractions, take breaks after clear stopping points, and set out with concrete objectives.<sup>9</sup> He also recommends that they work on achieving focus for small periods of time and then build up from there.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Young, *Ultralearning*, 2-5.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.scotthyoung.com/blog/myprojects/mit-challenge-2/>

<sup>6</sup> Young, *Ultralearning*, 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-77.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

The third learning principle is Retrieval. Studies have shown that testing improves memory retention in learners far more than simply reviewing material.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, this means that the attempt to recall something will strengthen learners' retention of it, even if they are unable to remember the item or concept correctly at first. While it may be frustrating to test a student's grasp of something before they feel completely ready, Young argues that the sense of difficulty can be a sign that longer term learning is taking place.<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, learners' memory will be strengthened when they attempt to retrieve information, even if they are not completely successful at first, provided they take the time to review the correct answer afterwards.

These three principles of Metalearning, Focus, and Retrieval are commonly found in the study habits of efficient learners across many fields.<sup>13</sup> Taken together, they can provide a helpful map for understanding how to practice effectively. The principle of Metalearning speaks to the notion that students can improve their learning process by identifying their goals and studying the learning pathways of other experts in that area in order to reach those goals.<sup>14</sup> Teachers can help students articulate their goals and develop clear plans to reach them. This can ultimately help develop autonomy in students because it gives them the opportunity to choose their objectives and draw their own map to reach those objectives. As such, students learn to understand their day-to-day practicing in the context of their broader goals.

Focus can also be developed through careful practice. Teachers can learn how their students practice by observing their students' practice habits and then discussing with them, the thought processes their students utilized. In addition, having students verbalize their thought process in advance of a given practice task in detail can help to build awareness in students. Student verbalization can also be done while they play, e.g. "I crescendo here, stay relaxed, fuller sound, not too fast." Since Focus is easiest to sustain in short bursts, it is best that students practice their ability to focus in several brief blocks of time. Each block should have a clear musical objective, a process, and a time limit. The goal is to stay on task for the allotted time without giving into distraction, and then to take a break. The amount of time can then gradually be increased.

Retrieval can be used to accelerate learning and reinforce memorization. For example, teachers can have students close their music book or score and ask their students to recall how many lines of music were printed on the page, thereby developing students' visual memory or recall of the printed page. Alternatively, students could be asked to sing back the beginning of the piece to test aural memory or recall of how the piece sounds. For more advanced students, teachers could ask about the form of the piece or about details that pertain to each section of

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<sup>11</sup> M. Carrier and H. Pashler, "The influence of retrieval on retention," *Memory & Cognition* 20: 642.

<sup>12</sup> Young, *Ultralearning*, 123.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-25.

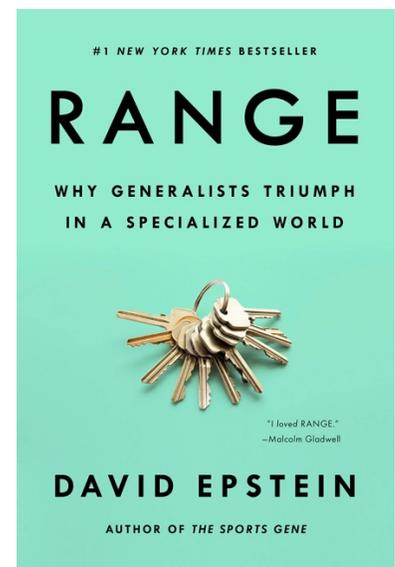
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

the piece, thereby helping to develop analytical memory or recall of theoretical concepts related to the form or structure of the piece.

In working on Retrieval with students it is crucial that teachers communicate clearly about why practicing this technique improves memory. Teachers should not presume that students will always have the right answer or the ability to complete the memory task perfectly: rather teachers are helping to strengthen students' memory through the process of Retrieval. As such, an initial incorrect answer can still lead to improved memorization, because the process of first trying to remember and then reviewing the correct answer after making a mistake or forgetting will help develop long term memory retention. To this end, Josef Hofmann (1876-1957) suggests that every musician begin the day by sight-reading a piece a few times and then finish the day by playing from memory as much of the same piece read earlier in the day as possible.<sup>15</sup> This exercise could unite all of the strategies mentioned above. Hofmann was not assuming that everyone would be able to remember a complete piece of music several hours after reading it at sight, but he did believe that trying to do so would develop the ability to memorize music more efficiently.

David Epstein's *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* provides insight into the importance of experiences in different fields for the development of mastery. Epstein set out to examine and explore the careers of great innovators whose lives do not fit with the common assumption that specialization alone is the key to achieving success as an expert. He posits, rather, that there are dangers associated with focusing too narrowly on a single skill. Epstein references studies that illustrate the risks associated with premature specialization, particularly in the area of athletics.<sup>16</sup> While conventional wisdom might suppose that year-long exclusive participation in a single sport is the likeliest path to a professional athletic career in said sport, there is a growing trend in sports science research that suggests that this is not the case.<sup>17</sup>

These studies indicate that children and amateur athletes who played only one sport year-round and who spent most of their sports time in structured, coach-led environments, were less likely to become professional athletes and more likely to become injured than individuals who played multiple sports growing up. In addition, studies show that current professional athletes are more



<sup>15</sup> Josef Hofmann, *Piano Playing with Piano Questions Answered* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1976), 23-24.

<sup>16</sup> A. Güllich, P. Kovar, S. Zart and A. Reimann, "Sport activities differentiating match-play improvement in elite youth footballers - a 2-year longitudinal study," *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 35, no. 3: 207-215.

<sup>17</sup> S.A. Kliethermes, K. Nagle, J. Côte, et al., "Impact of youth sports specialisation on career and task-specific athletic performance: a systematic review following the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM) Collaborative Research Network's 2019 Youth Early Sport Specialisation Summit," *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 54: 221-230.

likely to have tried many sports as children and played these various sports both formally and informally.<sup>18</sup> The results of these studies have led the National Basketball Association (NBA) to now recommend more diversified childhood sports experiences.<sup>19</sup>

Epstein also provides a historical example that illustrates the benefits of diverse childhood experiences within a specific area. Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) spent much of his career at the Ospedale della Pietà, a conservatory for female orphans in Venice.<sup>20</sup> The teaching at the conservatory was so excellent that after the music chronicler Charles Burney (1726-1814) heard the girls and returned to England, he made a proposal to found a national conservatory modeled after what he had witnessed in Venice.<sup>21</sup> In the Ospedale, the girls learned to sing and to play multiple instruments. Musicologist Jane Baldauf-Berdes noted that “from the *maestri d’istrumenti* they [the girls] learned to play all of the instruments owned by their *coro* [conservatory orchestra] and were given private lessons on at least two.”<sup>22</sup> As adults, the girls would frequently switch between several instruments in a single concert.<sup>23</sup> Vivaldi’s most famous student was Anna Maria della Pietà (1696-1782), who mastered the violin as well as “the viola d’amore, cello, mandolin, harpsichord, lute, and theorbo.”<sup>24</sup> Vivaldi dedicated nearly thirty concertos to her and she was considered by one observer as “the foremost violinist in Italy” of the time.<sup>25</sup>

Epstein’s thesis that an initial stage of broad experience with different instruments could enhance later performance on a single instrument provides nuance to contemporary understandings of expertise. Vivaldi’s concertos for unique instruments like bassoon, mandolin, and viola d’amore seems to reflect the wide variety of highly skilled instrumentalists available at the Ospedale. The fact that the girls changed instruments during performances and that Anna Maria della Pietà had learned seven of them suggests that the Ospedale’s broad multi-instrumental training actually helped the students reach high levels of mastery. Two more recent artists who similarly learned to play multiple instruments are pianist and conductor Mikhail Pletnev (b.1957), who as a child “learned to play several instruments,”<sup>26</sup> and cellist Pablo Casals

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>19</sup> J.P. DiFiori, et al., “The NBA and Youth Basketball: Recommendations for Promoting a Healthy and Positive Experience,” *Sports Medicine*, 48: 2053-2065.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Talbot, “Antonio Vivaldi,” *Oxford Music Online* (Accessed April 3, 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Jamie Croy Kassler, “Charles Burney’s “Sketch of a Plan for a Public Music-School,”” *The Musical Quarterly*, 58, No. 2: 227.

<sup>22</sup> Jane L. Baldauf-Berdes, *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations, 1525-1855* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 128.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Talbot, “Anna Maria,” *Oxford Music Online* (Accessed March 15, 2021).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> David Fanning, “Pletnev, Mikhail,” *Oxford Music Online* (accessed March 15, 2021).

(1876-1973), who first took piano, organ, and violin lessons, before discovering the cello at age eleven.<sup>27</sup>

This example from the Ospedale shows that breadth in music learning can actually lead to greater specialization later in a student's life. Although much of the research in Epstein's book is related to athletics, there are key similarities between music and sports which allow music teachers to draw valuable connections. For example, there is an understandable desire to give children a competitive edge by having them start playing a specific sport or musical instrument as young as possible, but there could be a danger that burnout will set in later in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood if they specialize in one activity too early.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, both music and sports are areas in which physical injury from overuse is a significant danger.<sup>29</sup> Since a greater variety of childhood sports activities has been shown to reduce the risk of injury in athletes, it is at least possible that the risk for music performance related injuries could be lessened through more diversified childhood musical experiences.<sup>30</sup>

Epstein also discusses individuals who change career paths or pursue multiple interests and who are able to bring their experiences from one area into another to improve their level of expertise. According to Epstein, Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) seriously pursued five other career paths before finally deciding to pursue art at the age of 27. These included working as an art salesman, seminary student, school teacher, bookseller, and traveling missionary.<sup>31</sup> Each of these experiences made a mark on Van Gogh's artistic development later in life. For example, Epstein points out that Van Gogh's time spent as a missionary shaped his conviction that it was morally imperative to communicate truth to ordinary individuals, and this belief would later be expanded to apply to his artistic creations.<sup>32</sup> His time spent as a bookseller gave him an opportunity to study Latin and Greek for hours on end, and he would use this aptitude for disciplined self-study when he began to study art.<sup>33</sup> As such, Van Gogh's unusual career path actually gave him unique advantages when he finally specialized exclusively in art later in life. Beyond Epstein's work, there are numerous cases of musicians whose pursuits outside of music have led to enhanced musical productivity and creative innovations. The career of pedagogue Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), the creator of eurhythmics, illustrates this principle. Eurhythmics helps students experience and understand musical rhythm and expression through

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Anderson, "Casals, Pablo," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed March 15, 2021).

<sup>28</sup> Ellen Winner, "Often, Child Prodigies Do Not Grow Into Adult Genius," *New York Times*, May 20, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/05/20/the-benefits-and-pressures-of-being-a-young-genius/often-child-prodigies-do-not-grow-into-adult-genius>.

<sup>29</sup> H. J. Fry, "Prevalence of overuse (injury) syndrome in Australian music schools," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 44: 35.

<sup>30</sup> C. A. Popkin, A.F. Bayomy, and C.S. Ahmad, "Early Sport Specialization," *Journal of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons*, 27: e995.

<sup>31</sup> Epstein, *Range*, 124.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

physical movement of the body.<sup>34</sup> Jaques-Dalcroze developed this practice while he was teaching solfège at the Conservatory in Geneva.<sup>35</sup> His adult career began when he moved to Paris in his twenties to study drama and music, only later deciding on music professionally. It was likely from his theater coach Denis Talbot (1824-1904) that he learned that physical gesture should connect with emotional meaning in acting.<sup>36</sup> Jaques-Dalcroze applied this idea to training musicians with great success. Eurhythmics is now considered an influence on the development of modern theater, and it seems that without his unique background in drama and music, Jaques-Dalcroze may perhaps not have been able to create this approach.<sup>37</sup>

Another teacher with a breadth of skills was Dorothy DeLay (1917-2002), whose celebrated violin students at Juilliard included Itzhak Perlman (b.1945) and Midori (b.1971), among many others. Numerous accounts of her teaching mention a vast knowledge of music combined with an astute understanding of human psychology.<sup>38</sup> While she began her college years majoring in music at Oberlin Conservatory, she transferred to Michigan State University to broaden her education, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, minoring in psychology.<sup>39</sup> It is also reported that she had memorized all of *Grey's Anatomy* and would regularly address technical problems from a physiological basis during a lesson.<sup>40</sup> DeLay's ability to draw on her general education outside of music arguably helped take her teaching from great to legendary.

A remarkable example of mastery in two very different fields is Josef Hofmann (1876-1957). He was considered to be among the greatest of living pianists by Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943), who dedicated his Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30 to Hofmann.<sup>41</sup> What many do not know is that Hofmann is credited with inventing one of the earliest designs for shock-absorbers used in automobiles, as well as having had many other patents to his name.<sup>42</sup> This interest in technology may have been sparked when he made the first recorded music on phonograph at the age of ten with Thomas Edison (1847-1931). Early letters between Edison and Hofmann reveal a keen interest on Hofmann's part in the mechanics of the phonograph, which Edison had given him

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<sup>34</sup> Lawrence W. Haward, "Jaques-Dalcroze, Emile", *Oxford Music Online* (Accessed April 3, 2021).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> James W. Lee, "Dalcroze by Any Other Name: Eurhythmics in Early Modern Theater and Dance" (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 2003), 97-98.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>38</sup> Barbara Lourie Sand, *Teaching Genius: Dorothy DeLay and the Making of a Musician*, (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000), 17.

<sup>39</sup> Barbara Jepson, "Classical Music; She Helps Fiddlers Help Themselves" *New York Times*, July 26, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/26/archives/classical-music-she-helps-fiddlers-help-themselves.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Helen Epstein, *Miss DeLay: Portrait of Beloved Violin Teacher Dorothy DeLay*, (Plunkett Lake Press: 2019), ebook.

<sup>41</sup> Gregor Benko, "Hofmann, Josef," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed March 15, 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Hofmann, Josef, 1920, Shock Absorber, U.S. Patent 1444248A, filed June 5, 1920, and issued February 6, 1923, <https://patents.google.com/patent/US1444248A/>.

as a gift.<sup>43</sup> Hofmann discussed his unique perspective on the relationship between mechanical inventions and piano playing. "I hold that an artist can become interested in mechanical things without detriment to his art — on the contrary, his art may benefit by it... A knowledge of mechanics is actually valuable to a pianist, as an assistance to him in execution— that is, it helps him in the physical side of expression, and in the solution of problems in teaching."<sup>44</sup> While Hofmann's abilities as both a pianist and inventor are unique, this quote reveals that Hofmann saw deep connections between these two areas and that his musicianship benefited from those connections.

The stories of the Ospedale della Pietà, Jaques-Dalcroze, DeLay, and Hofmann all suggest that broad experiences both within and outside of music can serve to elevate specialized skill as a performer or teacher. The Ospedale taught its students multiple instruments and allowed for diverse childhood musical exposure. Jaques-Dalcroze and DeLay had insights from fields outside of music that they brought directly into their music teaching. Hofmann had seemingly disparate interests in two areas which do not seem immediately related, however he was able to integrate insights from creating his inventions into his understanding of physical technique and music teaching. These examples highlight the way that breadth, either within or outside of the field of music study, can improve an individual's overall level of musical expertise in a specific area. Students may also have a special combination of talents both broadly within music or outside of it, and teachers should be careful not to discourage outside experiences that may potentially provide an important foundation for future development.

Beyond simply increasing our students' technical capacity, music teachers can turn to *Range* for inspiration in how to encourage their students to approach their practice with greater creativity. At the same time, teachers can and should utilize the principles found in *Ultralearning* to benefit their music students. Disciplined practice over a long period of time is essential to mastering a specific musical instrument, and teachers should supply their students with strategies that will help students improve as effectively as possible. Students can be inspired by their growth when they work to improve their Focus and experience fewer distractions. Using Retrieval can help students get the most out of their practice sessions by building long term retention. By taking ownership of their learning using Metalearning, students can learn to enjoy the process and hard work it takes to reach mastery.

So, how does a teacher know whether a student needs more breadth or depth? There is not a one-size-fits-all approach. However, there are general principles that can be applied within the music studio. If a student seems apathetic or unmotivated, it is possible that they feel constrained and have not experienced enough variety to know what interests them. They may

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<sup>43</sup> "Letter from Josef Casimir Hofmann to Thomas Alva Edison, March 10th, 1891," *Edison Papers Digital Edition*, <http://edison.rutgers.edu/digital/document/D9148AAH>.

<sup>44</sup> Jack O'Connell, "Magic Fingers Win Double Fame," *Popular Science* (May 1927), <https://books.google.com/books?id=micDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA2&dq=>.

need the opportunity to choose from a wider range of repertoire. Or maybe they need to try learning by ear instead of from sheet music, or vice versa etc. Alternatively, if a student is already motivated to practice their instrument, the teacher should challenge them to improve their practicing strategies in order to develop further skills or mastery. If a student has already honed their practice skills for several years, they may eventually experience a plateau in skill development where they feel they are no longer improving. Students may need to utilize a general learning strategy like Metalearning to discover new insights and inspiration by studying what other experts have done to continue to improve their performance. This could involve undertaking a new recording project, exploring a new genre of music like jazz, reading more literature, studying expert performers in another area, or even taking up a new skill like yoga or golf. In all of these situations, teachers should observe the student's skill level, motivation, and potential interests, and consider what is most likely to best enhance their student's music learning and performance.

*Ultralearning* provides key insights into effective practicing habits that when mastered, can develop musical expertise in students. *Range*, on the other hand, provides an important look at the benefits of learning a broad array of skills. As teachers, we should emphasize purposeful practice without sidelining the fact that experiences playing other instruments or even developing skills in other areas outside of music can help musical development. This is admittedly a balancing act, but in the long run I believe that our students can benefit greatly in their learning when they strive to combine breadth and depth.

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# Musicians' Wellness

## Self-Care for Music Teachers

Dr. Jacqueline Petitto

During these unprecedented times, how do we stay grounded, sane, motivated, optimistic, resourceful, adaptable, open-minded, and resilient? As music educators, we must take care of ourselves so that we can continue to serve our students and be available to support our families, friends, and colleagues. Since our current circumstances are not normal, we must recognize this fact and accept our new reality. For many of us in society, including our students, this is a period of loss. We have suffered much collective devastation over the past year. It is only natural and understandable to feel frustrated, concerned, overwhelmed, sad, angry, discouraged, hopeless, frightened, and anxious.

With all of this in mind, how do we move forward? It is my hope that you will find the following suggestions helpful:

### Connect

Humans are social creatures.<sup>1</sup> Try to remember to connect with supportive and positive people. Embrace technology and use telephone or video calls to develop relationships. Reach out to colleagues with whom you identify about specific issues in your field. Since we are all feeling more isolated than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, treat yourself and others with compassion, kindness, empathy, generosity, flexibility, and patience. Continue learning. It is OK to fail as failure can serve as a great teacher or lesson. With your students, aim to change the focus from failure to creating solutions and responding to their needs. Prioritize connection over content or the lesson plan. Do your best – your confidence can grow as you refrain from judging and criticizing yourself (try to challenge and silence your inner critic as needed).

### Breathe

We breathe around 22,000 times daily.<sup>2</sup> The breath controls the mind and the mind controls the body.<sup>3</sup> Conscious diaphragmatic breathing anchors us and positively impacts our health. Among its many benefits, the breath calms an agitated mind, overcomes stress, boosts physical energy and endurance, increases mental focus, and enhances artistic performance. To get started, find breathing, meditation or mindfulness apps that can help you learn various breathing exercises and techniques.

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Revised Edition, Edited by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 1252a1-3.

<sup>2</sup> "Breathing," *The Lung Association*, 12 October 2016, [www.lung.ca/lung-health/lung-info/breathing/](http://www.lung.ca/lung-health/lung-info/breathing/).

<sup>3</sup> Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar, *Light on Yoga: Yoga Dipika* (United Kingdom: Unwin Paperbacks, 1968).

## Move

Moving the body has many mental and physical benefits.<sup>4</sup> Physical activity releases endorphins which help you cope with pain and stress.<sup>5</sup> Listen to your body and notice what information it is providing. Meditating or exercising with a friend helps to keep each other accountable. Our bodies respond to a threat with fight, flight, or freeze. COVID-19 is perceived as a sociological threat. Consider trying one of the many free workouts available online these days.

## Disconnect from Media

Stay informed without overdoing it. Keep in mind that too much social media, television and/or video games may lead to feelings of isolation or depression.<sup>6</sup> Consider shutting off all media for a few hours every day to regroup and detoxify the mind.

## Personal and Professional Development

Try to find value, purpose and meaning for yourself. You may have more time now to spend on personal and professional growth. Work with non-profit organizations to assist those in need. Stay active to advance your career whether that means learning a new skill, writing, networking, practicing, performing, or more. Build other sources of income during COVID-19—for example, charge for online concerts by offering links for online payment, etc.

## Overall Health

The Ancient Romans believed that “a healthy body is a healthy mind.”<sup>7</sup> Health is the complete harmony of the body, mind, and spirit. Hydrate with water to increase energy, facilitate detoxification and carry nutrients to cells.<sup>8</sup> Restful sleep improves memory, strengthens immunity, and helps maintain focus and resilience.<sup>9</sup> Exercise reduces stress, improves sleep, controls weight, supports your mood, and prevents illness. Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet of whole foods and proteins that stabilize blood sugar and elevate energy, decrease intake of sugar and salt, and avoid trans-fat and processed foods. Stress management and mindfulness

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<sup>4</sup> Srin Pillay, “How Simply Moving Benefits Your Mental Health,” *Harvard Health Blog*, March 28, 2016, [www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-simply-moving-benefits-your-mental-health-201603289350](http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-simply-moving-benefits-your-mental-health-201603289350).

<sup>5</sup> Smitha Bhandari, “Exercise and Depression,” *WebMD*, February 18, 2020, <https://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/exercise-depression>.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Robinson and Melinda Smith, “Social Media and Mental Health,” *HelpGuide*, September 2020, <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and-mental-health.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> The Latin phrase “mens sana in corpore sano” from the *Satires* of Juvenal (ad c. 60–c. 130 AD) translates to “a rational mind in a healthy body.” See:

“mens sana in corpore sano,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, Second Edition. ed. Elizabeth Knowles, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com>.

<sup>8</sup> “The Nutrition Source – Water,” *Harvard School of Public Health*, accessed April 15, 2021 <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/water/>.

<sup>9</sup> “Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep,” *National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)*, accessed August 13, 2021, <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/patient-caregiver-education/understanding-sleep>.

are essential now more than ever. In my experience, a daily practice of breathwork, yoga, meditation, tai chi, and/or walking helps keep bad stress (i.e. isolation) at bay. Aim to engage in activities that provide joy, keep a gratitude journal, be positive, and stay present. Practice healthcare prevention and seek medical attention when or if needed. Remember that telemedicine is readily available and convenient.

### **Mental Wellness**

Many of us have felt fear, pain, uncertainty, and insecurity during COVID-19. Be aware that you are not alone. Music professionals are struggling with postponed and/or canceled gigs which may be grief-inducing. We also need to forgive ourselves as music teachers. Strive to dial back perfection in favor of student participation. Take time for reflection and reinforcement (which is hard to do when we are constantly watching the clock). At first, teaching online may have felt like going to war – now, aim to appreciate the little things.

One in five US adults experience mental illness each year and this number has only increased during this pandemic.<sup>10</sup> 73% of independent music makers suffer from mental illness symptoms including anxiety, depression, substance abuse, suicide, and more.<sup>11</sup> Teletherapy sessions are a safe option during the COVID-19 pandemic. Look for and join virtual support groups such as Music Minds Matter – a Facebook group for Denver music-scene members.

### **Increased Screen Time**

A healthy speaking voice involves deep breaths, a released jaw, facial vibrations, no throat tightness, speaking in your tessitura, warming up if speaking/singing for many hours in a row, staying hydrated, and maintaining a good posture. Voice preservation is critical to all of us as we spend more time in front of a screen these days.

For hearing preservation, we need to watch decibel exposure especially in practice/rehearsal, check earbud/headphone use, wear ear plugs for protection, and get an annual hearing test. Music-induced hearing disorders occur at an incidence rate of about 74%. Tinnitus (ringing in the ears) is very prevalent.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Anxiety and Depression Household Pulse Survey," *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, April 7, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> "73 percent of independent music makers suffer from symptoms of mental illness," *The 73 Percent Report*, Record Union, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.the73percent.com>.

<sup>12</sup> Schink, Kreutz, Busch, et al, "Incidence and relative risk of hearing disorders in professional musicians," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (2014) 71: 472-476, <https://oem.bmj.com/content/71/7/472>.  
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Related to screen time is time spent sitting at our computers and/or using our phones. Too much sitting can lead to many maladies.<sup>13</sup> Find an ergonomic posture for computer work: it can help to think long tummy, open chest, head on shoulders, and tuck your chin. Digital eyestrain is commonly caused by exposure to blue light, glare, and may result in decreased blinking.<sup>14</sup> Prevent neck and eye strain with improved monitor positioning: set-up a proper viewing angle and viewing distance, consider the pros and cons of a laptop versus desktop computer set-up, and try to separate your eyes from your hands if possible. Protect the ulnar (longest) nerve by not flexing elbows for too long since the ulnar nerve controls the majority of our hand muscles.<sup>15</sup> Your neck will thank you if you avoid head forward position when texting. Take micro-breaks (try the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes spent using a screen, look away at something that is 20 feet away from you for a total of 20 seconds)<sup>16</sup> and endeavor to incorporate micro-movements while sitting which include stretching, working the core and glutes, writing letters with your feet, and more.

All in all, remember that you and your students matter most. As such, we need to carefully consider their and our own mental and physical health and wellbeing.



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<sup>13</sup> James A. Levine, "Sick of sitting," *Diabetologia*, Vol. 58, no. 8 (2015), pp. 1751-1758, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00125-015-3624-6>.

<sup>14</sup> Amy L. Sheppard and James S. Wolffsohn, "Digital eye strain: prevalence, measurement and amelioration," *BMJ Open Ophthalmology Journal*, April 16, 2018, <https://bmjophth.bmj.com/content/3/1/e000146>.

<sup>15</sup> Shahab Shahid, "Ulnar Nerve," *Ken Hub*, March 18, 2021, <https://www.kenhub.com/en/library/anatomy/the-ulnar-nerve>.

<sup>16</sup> The 20-20-20 rule was developed by an optometrist and is recommended by workplace safety experts, the American Optometric Association, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology. See: <https://www.aoa.org/AOA/Images/Patients/Eye%20Conditions/20-20-20-rule.pdf>.

# 7 Guidelines for Teaching Students with Autism in a Private Piano Studio

Dr. Eloise Kim

Autism spectrum disorder, also known as ASD, is a neurological condition that starts in early childhood and lasts throughout an individual's life.<sup>1</sup> Signs of autism can be detected by observing what the child lacks in their behaviors and communication skills during their development when compared to typical young children.<sup>2</sup> Individuals with autism often show deficits in social communication, verbal language, and imaginative thought.<sup>3</sup>

Children on the autism spectrum may have repetitive or restricted interests and experience exaggerated sensory distractions.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons, children with autism might also prefer to keep themselves in their own comfort zones.<sup>5</sup> This impacts their everyday life activities, the ability to observe information, and social interaction with peers. Although they share some similarities, autism spectrum disorder is different from other disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).<sup>6</sup> As a piano teacher, I have found it very important to seek advice from a healthcare professional before assuming anything about a student's condition.

While children on the autism spectrum can exhibit symptoms that range from mild to intense, the undeniable reality is that the population of children with autism is increasing rapidly. Studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in 2004 that 1 in 166 children were diagnosed with ASD.<sup>7</sup> In 2020, approximately 1 in 54 children were identified with autism spectrum disorder.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?" *US Department of Health and Services*, March 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Signs and Symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder," *US Department of Health and Services*, August 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/signs.html>.

<sup>3</sup> National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, "Autism Spectrum Disorder: Communication Problems in Children," *US Department of Health and Services*, April 2020 <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/autism-spectrum-disorder-communication-problems-children>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ryan Hourigan and Amy Hourigan, "Teaching Music to Children with Autism: Understandings and Perspectives," *Music Educators Journals* 96, no. 1 (September 2009): 40-45.

<sup>6</sup> CHADD. "ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder," *Neon Web Studio*, 2021, Accessed March 10, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Data and Statistics on Autism Spectrum Disorder." *US Department of Health and Services*, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Much research exists on how music education taught in a classroom setting can positively benefit students on the autism spectrum.<sup>9</sup> Music enables children to develop their communication and social skills, which are attributes most lacking in an autistic child when compared to other children.<sup>10</sup> Upon learning about how life-changing music education in the classroom can be for autistic students, I was inspired to research how one could use successful classroom-teaching techniques in a private piano studio and apply them in my teaching.

I first want to note that teachers must realize that not every child with autism spectrum disorder will share the exact same behaviors and learning needs. In my experience and from the literature I have read, there is no single ‘method’ that works for everyone. However, as teachers we should endeavor to prepare ourselves by trying to create effective lesson plans for our students. Here are seven guidelines for preparing successful lesson plans for students with autism in a private piano studio based on the research I have conducted and from my own teaching experience.

### 1. Schedule a Pre-Lesson Chat

When teaching students with autism, I find it very helpful to schedule a pre-lesson chat with either the student’s parent and/or the student’s personal therapist. If this cannot be scheduled in-person, it can be done via phone call, video conferencing, or email before the first official meeting. This is especially important because most autistic students may not be able to express and describe their emotions verbally or communicate naturally in a conversational setting.<sup>11</sup> Chatting ahead of time with the child’s parent(s) and/or personal therapist can provide a major start to preparing a plan for the student. Three important questions to address during this conversation are:

Which level is the student on the autism spectrum?<sup>12</sup>

Does the student have any hypersensitive or hyposensitive sensory processing—if so, in what areas?

How are the student’s verbal communication and comprehension skills?

Getting to know as much as possible about the student through this conversation can help teachers better prepare for upcoming lessons. While the three questions above are critically important for teaching students with autism, the conversation can naturally proceed to include other details. These can encompass any particular fears that the teacher should know about, learning preferences, or musical interests of the student.

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<sup>9</sup> Alice Hammel and Ryan M. Hourigan, *Teaching Music to Students with Autism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, “Autism Spectrum Disorder: Communication Problems in Children,” *US Department of Health and Services*, April 2020, <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/autism-spectrum-disorder-communication-problems-children>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Lisa Jo Rudy, “Understanding the Three Levels of Autism,” *Very Well Health*, December 2020, <https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-are-the-three-levels-of-autism-260233>.

Children with autism have specific behavioral issues and learning needs, not all of which will be the same.<sup>13</sup> Learning about these issues and needs ahead of time is helpful, and aids in eliminating the potential scenario of the student experiencing a difficult or uncomfortable lesson from day one. Understanding the autistic student at a basic level will make lesson planning easier and help guide the teacher to be more sensitive to the student's behaviors in every lesson.

## 2. Prepare Your Piano Studio Environment

Providing a well-organized studio layout and environment can make a significant difference to the autistic student's learning in my experience. A child with autism will often possess exaggerated sensory processing, which manifests in either a hypersensitive or hyposensitive way.<sup>14</sup> Teachers should be ready to adjust accordingly to each student's needs and comfort level.

For example, an autistic student with visual and auditory hypersensitivity might see objects in a visually distorted way: bright lights may jump around, and their vision could be focused on details rather than the entirety of an object.<sup>15</sup> They might also hear noises others cannot hear, such as outdoor environment noises at an enhanced level.<sup>16</sup> In this case, teachers can adjust the environment of their studio with dim lighting and remove all objects that can become a potential distraction. All windows and doors should stay closed to avoid exterior noises. In extreme cases, some of these students with hypersensitive hearing may also need sound-blocking headphones.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, an autistic student may have hyposensitive senses.<sup>18</sup> These students with hyposensitive vision may have poor depth perception and objects might appear dark and unclear.<sup>19</sup> And because of their poor vision, they may accidentally bump into things without awareness. Teachers should arrange their studio to reduce the chances of bumping into sharp or hard surfaces, as students with hyposensitive senses tend to move excessively in order to

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<sup>13</sup> Temple Grandin, "Teaching Tips for Children and Adults with Autism," *Indiana Resource Center for Autism*, December 2002, <https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/articles/teaching-tips-for-children-and-adults-with-autism.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Olga Bogdashina, "Sensory Hyper- and Hyposensitivity Autism," *Integrated Treatment Services*, September 2014, <https://integratedtreatmentservices.co.uk/blog/sensory-hyper-hyposensitivity-autism>.

<sup>15</sup> The National Autistic Society, "Autism and Sensory Sensitivity," YouTube video uploaded by The National Autistic Society, April 9, 2014, <https://youtu.be/ycCN3qTYVyo>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Andrea Choi, Interview by Eloise Kim, January 29, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Autism Speaks, "Sensory Issues," *American Psychiatric Association*, 2013, <https://www.autismspeaks.org/sensory-issues>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

help stimulate their brain activity.<sup>20</sup> Using visual support aids or photocopying music with larger print can be helpful.<sup>21</sup>

It is also possible that the student may be hypersensitive in one sensory area while being hyposensitive in another.<sup>22</sup> Understanding these areas can help teachers better prepare the physical layout of their private piano studios. Preparing a well-designed environment accordingly to each student's needs have enormously helped me to teach more successful lessons for students on the autism spectrum.

### 3. Use Effective Communication Skills and Verbal Strategies

Effective communication is key when teaching a student with autism.<sup>23</sup> Most students with autism are not capable of decoding and navigating communication devices like a typical student might, and end up tuning people out when it all gets to be too much.<sup>24</sup> They may be unable to understand conventional communication skills or to absorb context in conversation.<sup>25</sup> In addition, metaphors or phrases that require extended imagination could become difficult to comprehend.<sup>26</sup> I have found it most effective for my students with autism to keep instructions concise, preferably three to five words, specific, and to the point.

There are many examples of how instructions can unintentionally become confusing. For instance, while giving fingering advice, if the teacher says, "You can use finger number 3 there too," the last word an autistic student would hear and might focus on is that "too," which could be misinterpreted as the number "2." A more successful instruction would be "On D, put finger number 3."<sup>27</sup> As is evident from this example, it is important for teachers to be very careful with the use of vocabulary and language when giving instructions.

Teaching rhythm provides another challenging verbal example. For students with autism, metric and durational counting can be highly confusing.<sup>28</sup> This is especially evident when a rhythm exercise immediately follows a fingering exercise, as students could get confused about the meaning of the numbers. Instead, teachers can use words or syllabic counting, to demonstrate rhythm and beat. For example, when clapping (or playing) two quarter notes followed by a half

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<sup>20</sup> Grandin, "Teaching Tips for Children and Adults with Autism."

<sup>21</sup> Autism Speaks, "Sensory Issues."

<sup>22</sup> Bogdashina, "Sensory Hyper- and Hyposensitivity Autism."

<sup>23</sup> Price, "Autism and Piano Study: A Basic Teaching Vocabulary," *The Piano Magazine*, April 2019, <https://www.claviercompanion.com/current-issue/autism-and-piano-study-a-basic-teaching-vocabulary>.

<sup>24</sup> Price, "All in a Day's Routine: Piano Teaching and Autism." *Clavier Companion*, July/ August (2010): 10–16.

<sup>25</sup> National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, "Autism Spectrum Disorder: Communication Problems in Children."

<sup>26</sup> Price, "Autism and Piano Study: A Basic Teaching Vocabulary."

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

note in a 4/4 meter: instead of counting “1, 1, 1-2” (durational or unit counting) or “1, 2, 3, 4,” (metric counting), teachers can substitute it with “Short, Short, Hold-it” (syllabic counting).<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. Always Have A Routine

Dr. Derek Polischuk, Professor of Piano and Director of Piano Pedagogy at Michigan State University, addresses the importance of “minimizing transitions and ensuring a predictable environment” for students with autism.<sup>30</sup> In his book, *Transformational Piano Teaching*, he adds that “[these measures] can help [autistic] students feel more comfortable while learning. It is important for teachers to realize that although individuals on the autism spectrum sometimes have difficulty determining another person’s emotions and desires, they are often very well aware of their own. So if unexpected events in the lesson routine occur, the feeling of anxiety and nervousness in an autistic child will be more amplified [than in a typical child].”<sup>31</sup>

During an interview with my colleague, Dr. Alexander Zhu who is on the piano faculty at the Pasadena Conservatory of Music, he emphasizes the importance of having a structure and routine: “For my autistic students, I find that regularity and clear routines help with lessons. For most of my [other] students, I usually change the lesson order/content quite regularly to keep them thinking on their feet, but for autistic students this can be a recipe for a very unproductive lesson. I usually find for the boys (3 out of my 4 cases) that making the lessons highly game-focused really helps. Even something as simple as assigning points to repetition practice can really keep them motivated.”<sup>32</sup>

Breaking away from the usual routine can cause extreme discomfort for students with autism, not only in piano lessons but in their daily life activities too.<sup>33</sup> Having a focused and set routine in their life is fundamental to the well-being of these students.<sup>34</sup> As such, it provides structure, order, and predictability.<sup>35</sup>

#### 5. Constantly Adjust to Different Students’ Learning Needs

It would make things easier if as teachers, we could be given a set lesson plan that worked successfully for every one of our students. The reality however, is that there is no single method that works for everyone. This challenges us to become better and more creative instructors.

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<sup>29</sup> Scott Price, “Tone is Everything,” *Frances Clark Center Pedagogy Forum*, April 2019, <https://www.claviercompanion.com/article-details/tone-is-everything>.

<sup>30</sup> Derek Kealii Polischuk, *Transformational Piano Teaching: Mentoring Students from All Walks of Life* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 66.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-68.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Zhu, Interview by Eloise Kim, March 17, 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Polischuk, *Transformational Piano Teaching*, 67.

<sup>34</sup> Zhu, Interview.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

Dr. Scott Price, Professor of Piano and Piano Pedagogy at the University of South Carolina, shares two essential points that instructors must realize when teaching students with special needs (including students with autism):

“The Teacher” is the special learner  
The “Special Learner” is the teacher<sup>36</sup>

Although a teacher’s job is to lead instruction in lessons, we must remember that our students are guiding the lessons too. Teachers should continuously observe their students in order to understand how each student best communicates and learns. This is particularly important when teaching piano students with autism. All students learn differently and thrive in their own special ways.

There is some debate about whether method books are appropriate for teaching students with autism.<sup>37</sup> Depending on the student and where they are on the spectrum, it is important to choose a method book that creates the least number of distractions possible.<sup>38</sup> Teachers can photocopy the music so that it prints out in black and white.<sup>39</sup> For certain method books such as Bastien, Faber, and Alfred where illustrations are included, teachers have found it helpful to cut out and remove the pictures, to reduce the distractions during the lesson.<sup>40</sup>

Quite a number of autistic students have proven to demonstrate exceptional and instantaneous pitch matching abilities.<sup>41</sup> Teachers can effectively exploit these skills when teaching popular piano music or familiar tunes by utilizing rote activities.<sup>42</sup> It has often been a very positive learning experience in my lessons to take advantage of my students’ outstanding auditory abilities and add improvisatory duets with them to enable their creativity to grow.

All students have their own unique learning styles. A student could prefer to learn through a visual, auditory, or hands-on approach.<sup>43</sup> Some students might even demonstrate a mix of all three learning style modalities while having a preference for one style over the others.<sup>44</sup> Once

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<sup>36</sup> Price, “Tone is Everything.”

<sup>37</sup> Price, “Repertoire Choices for Students with Autism,” *Alfred Music Blog*, 2018, [www.alfred.com/blog/repertoire-choices-students-autism/](http://www.alfred.com/blog/repertoire-choices-students-autism/).

<sup>38</sup> Choi, Interview.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Henny Kupferstein, “A Response To The Autism Matrix: Why Jill Escher's Autism Matrix is Pseudoscience,” *The Jewish Week*, 2017, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316605261\\_A\\_Response\\_To\\_The\\_Autism\\_Matrix\\_Why\\_Jill\\_Escher%27s\\_Autism\\_Matrix\\_is\\_Pseudoscience](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316605261_A_Response_To_The_Autism_Matrix_Why_Jill_Escher%27s_Autism_Matrix_is_Pseudoscience).

<sup>42</sup> Price, “All in a Day’s Routine: Piano Teaching and Autism.”

<sup>43</sup> Grandin, “Teaching Tips for Children and Adults with Autism.”

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

the instructor carefully determines the student's learning preferences, relying on that particular learning method(s) can greatly increase the likelihood that the student will learn successfully.<sup>45</sup>

## 6. What to Expect and How to Prepare for Both Ends of the Autism Spectrum

Depending where the student is on the autism spectrum, the student's behaviors and learning ability may be completely different.<sup>46</sup> In this section, I will address what to observe for the two opposite ends: high-functioning autism and low-functioning autism, and how to prepare for these disparate sets of students in private piano lessons.

The difference between high and low-functioning autism is shown through the student's behavior.<sup>47</sup> Individuals with high-functioning autism are usually able to handle basic life skills, such as eating and getting dressed. However, they may have some difficulties with social interaction and nonverbal communication.<sup>48</sup>

Piano students with high-functioning autism are often very fast at learning new material.<sup>49</sup> Teachers must be ready to challenge these students constantly, no matter the topic or subject.<sup>50</sup> During an interview with my colleague and experienced piano teacher Andrea Choi, co-founder of Radiant Music Studio, she shares: "High functioning autistic students are often straightforward learners and pick up materials very quickly. For this reason, they get bored easily. I find myself needing to challenge them consistently. For example, when I teach intervals, such as the distance of a third, I then challenge the student to find the distance of a tenth, then intervals at the higher octave, etc. Challenging students with high-functioning autism makes the lesson itself more intriguing for them."<sup>51</sup>

It is also often the case that high-functioning autistic students have specific interests:<sup>52</sup> for example, an obsession with a movie soundtrack. Teachers can then craft the lesson plan to complement the interest of the student such as using the student's favorite music (or similar styles), for repertoire, sight-reading examples, rhythm exercises, or ear training activities, etc.<sup>53</sup> Dr. Scott Price shares how some students with autism can have considerable emotional anxiety and will therefore desire frequent validation.<sup>54</sup> When teaching these students, it is important for the instructor to keep their voice very calm, while maintaining an open, smiling facial

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Katherine Hobbs, "Severe Low Functioning Autism: What Sets Them Apart," *Autism Parenting*, 2020, <https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/low-functioning-autism/>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Choi, Interview.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Polischuk, *Transformational Piano Teaching*, 66.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>54</sup> Price, "A Basic Teaching Vocabulary Inside the Lesson."

expression.<sup>55</sup> When these students get stuck on something, teachers can best help them by leading the student in a positive manner to elicit the correct answer.<sup>56</sup>

Low-functioning autistic students show symptoms that are on the intense end of the spectrum.<sup>57</sup> They are unable to perform basic life activities on their own, and often have very limited vocabulary, comprehension and/or listening abilities.<sup>58</sup> These autistic students may also have neurological motor challenges.<sup>59</sup> In such cases, they struggle to keep their arms, hands, and fingers steady or in the ideal hand position and posture for piano playing. Some may twitch involuntarily or have tension in their hands while playing.<sup>60</sup> Autistic students with these challenges can exhibit tension in their piano playing because they need to have that strong feeling of control in order to feel secure.<sup>61</sup>

In my first experience teaching a student with low-functioning autism, I discovered that this student was very sensitive to touch and sound. The student's body would often tense up, especially in the shoulders and in the physical playing. While piano lessons with typical students could involve a hands-on approach to fix certain postures, I was informed prior to the lesson by the parent that this student would feel very uncomfortable and fearful from experiencing even the slightest physical touch from another person. In this student's case, it was more successful to instruct with concise verbal directions in a soothing tone of voice. Dr. Price also suggests that teachers can fix posture by telling the student, "Relax your shoulders," while placing the hands about two inches away from the students' shoulders rather than physically pushing them down.<sup>62</sup>

## 7. Piano Instruction is Therapeutic for Students with ASD

As piano instructors, we must remember that music instruction for students on the autism spectrum can also serve as a therapeutic purpose for students' well-being.<sup>63</sup> A major deficit for students with autism is a lack of verbal communication and social interaction.<sup>64</sup> Music comprehension allows students to use both the analytical and creative parts of the brain, and stimulates cognitive functions related to speech and language skills.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Hobbs, "Severe Low Functioning Autism: What Sets Them Apart."

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Profectum, "Motor Development: How Autism Affects Motor Skills," *Profectum Foundation*, 2018, <https://profectum.org/motor-development-autism-affects-motor-skills/>.

<sup>60</sup> Kupferstein, "A Response To The Autism Matrix: Why Jill Escher's Autism Matrix is Pseudoscience."

<sup>61</sup> Choi, Interview.

<sup>62</sup> Price, "Tone is Everything."

<sup>63</sup> Hammel, and Hourigan, *Teaching Music to Students with Autism*.

<sup>64</sup> National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, "Autism Spectrum Disorder: Communication Problems in Children."

<sup>65</sup> Ashley Zlatopolsky, "How Music Is Being Used to Treat Autism," *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 1 Mar. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/music/2017/mar/01/autism-music-therapy-detroit](http://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/mar/01/autism-music-therapy-detroit).

Additionally, many children diagnosed with autism display an interest and response to music.<sup>66</sup> Learning a musical instrument can help an autistic child improve social skills, attention, behavior, and communication.<sup>67</sup> It has been one of the most meaningful experiences in my life to see how piano lessons have encouraged my students with autism to communicate their emotions through the music they play and listen to.

Edward Roth, Director and Professor of Music Therapy at Western Michigan University, conducted a research project in which children were put into a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scanner while improvising or listening to someone improvise music.<sup>68</sup> The MRI showed activity in the parts of these children's brains that were involved with communication.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, these children were able to communicate through making music.

Music involves engagement in physical activity, a mastery of fundamental motor skills, and courage to build creativity. Piano playing builds aural skills and helps brain energy to become active and challenged in a positive way.<sup>70</sup> When taught successfully, piano lessons can improve the physical and mental health of students.<sup>71</sup>

To conclude, I share a beautiful anecdote from Andrea Choi. Her student with low-functioning autism could not perform any basic life activities because of hypersensitivity issues. The student could not even touch one key of the piano for about a month of piano lessons due to the fear of sound and sensitivity to a new and unfamiliar physical touch. For about a month of lessons, Choi carefully showed the student videos of piano playing in a softer volume, and calmly assured the student that "this is not scary," while introducing sound with a few soft notes at a time at her own instrument, avoiding the lower register of the piano. After a month of patience and slower-paced lessons, this student overcame their fear. The student is now able to enjoy listening to music and play the piano. Furthermore, piano lessons have served to improve the general wellbeing in this student's life and the student's ability to adjust to basic daily activities.<sup>72</sup>

My hope is that the next time teachers have the opportunity to teach a student with autism, they will find the courage to do so while also having some knowledge and insight into how to

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<sup>66</sup> Anthony Tracia, "Teaching Piano to Students with Disabilities: A Collective Case Study," Master's Thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2016, [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1359&context=masters\\_theses\\_2](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1359&context=masters_theses_2).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Zlatopolsky, "How Music Is Being Used to Treat Autism."

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> TopMusic Co, "Tactics for Teaching Piano Students with ASD & ADHD," YouTube video uploaded by Tim Topham, June 20 2015, [https://youtu.be/ntJ1hn\\_wDdM](https://youtu.be/ntJ1hn_wDdM).

<sup>71</sup> Anthony Tracia, "Teaching Piano to Students with Disabilities: A Collective Case Study."

<sup>72</sup> Choi, Interview.

help these students achieve something seemingly impossible. Music instructors carry an important purpose in this world. Our teaching can truly change lives, especially for students with autism.

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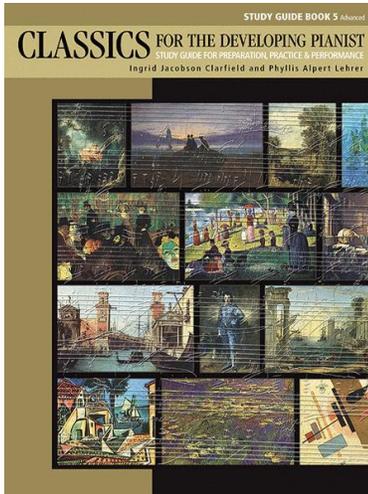


[Dr. Eloise Kim](#) received her BM from The Colburn School studying with Ory Shihor, an MM from the Manhattan School of Music working with André-Michel Schub, and DMA from the USC Thornton School of Music as a piano student of Daniel Pollack. At USC, Dr. Kim taught group and individual piano instruction as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and Studio TA, and served as Vice-President of the MTNA USC Collegiate Chapter. She has won top prizes in the Pinault, Lennox, Kingsville, and Jefferson international piano competitions, which have led to performances in numerous venues including Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall and the Wheeler Opera House in Aspen, CO. Dr. Kim has also been a featured soloist with the Vancouver, Columbia, Beaverton, and Jefferson symphony orchestras. An active chamber musician, she has performed with members of the Ebene Quartet, USC Thornton Edge Contemporary Ensemble, and LA Opera vocalists. She has also participated at the Lake George, Aspen, Orford, Banff, and Art of the Piano festivals. Dr. Kim currently teaches at the CAL School of Music and the Ory Shihor Institute. She is dedicated to bringing an inspiring experience to her students and nourishing their love for music.

# New Publication Recommendations

## Reflections and Impressions from The Classics and Beyond...

Gail Lew



CLASSICS FOR THE DEVELOPING PIANIST STUDY GUIDE BOOK 5  
Study Guide for Preparation, Practice & Performance  
Ingrid Clarfield and Phyllis Lehrer  
SheetMusicPlus, 2020

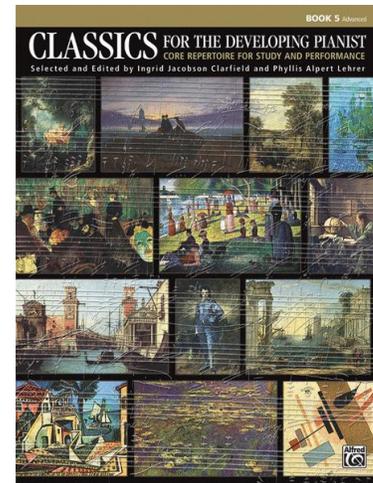
<https://www.sheetmusicplus.com>

72 pp., \$12.99

Advanced<sup>1</sup>

This publication provides a fabulous opportunity to bring pedagogical luminaries Ingrid Clarfield and Phyllis Lehrer right into our studios to provide

a masterclass. As a companion to the core repertoire book, *Classics for the Developing Pianist* Book 5, this new study guide provides exhaustive teaching tips that assist teachers as they guide their students in preparation for learning each masterpiece, practicing each composition in the collection, and finally, polishing each piece for performance. Selected from all style periods, the works included represent a cross section of the advanced pieces that our upper-level students often want to play and that can then become



part of their permanent repertoire. Included are compositions such as J. S. Bach's "Sinfonia" from *Partita No. 2 in C Minor*, BWV 826, Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in C Minor*, Op. 13, Brahms's *Intermezzo in A Major*, Op. 118, No. 2, Chopin's *Fantaisie Impromptu*, Op. 66, Schubert's *Impromptu in A flat Major*, Op. 142, No. 2, Bartók's *Sonatina*, Sz. 55, Debussy's "Clair de lune" from *Suite Bergamasque*, L. 75, and many more all-time student and teacher favorites.

As students begin their study of these perennial favorites, there are introductory sections worthy of exploration. These provide opportunities for enriching both the student and the teacher's knowledge and experience as they approach each composition. The sections included are namely: Background, Features, Preliminary Activities, General Practice Pointers, Creative Practice Techniques, and Finishing Touches.

Each piece is introduced with some Background Information. For example, in the background information about Brahms, the student will learn about the form of the composer's intermezzi,

<sup>1</sup> 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.

capriccios, and phantasien and how the *Intermezzo in A Major*, Op. 118, No. 2 is believed to be dedicated to Clara Schumann (1819-1896). A little-known fact about Debussy's prelude, *La fille aux cheveux de lin* is that it was inspired by a poem by the French Romantic poet, Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894). Students will also learn where to find a recording of Rachmaninoff performing his own *Prelude in C sharp Minor*, Op. 3, No. 2. The intriguing background facts provide added interest and relevant information about history and style.

The next section contains Features of the piece. This includes a discussion of form, motives, melodic lines, harmonies, textures, phrasing, and compositional devices utilized in the various pieces. It also provides an overall look into the stylistic and musical elements that will help the student in their interpretation and emotional projection of each piece. As such, the student is now ready for Preliminary Activities.

Preliminary Activities include pencil points or details in the music for students to mark with their pencils, and preparatory exercises that might help prepare them for any technical, rhythmic, and reading issues that may arise. For example, in the study of the Brahms *Intermezzo*, a suggested activity recommends practicing an F sharp minor scale polyrhythmically, with eighth notes in the right hand against eighth-note triplets in the left hand.

After completing the Preliminary Activities, the student is ready to work systematically through the General Practice Pointers. These might include blocking chords or dividing passages into small groups and playing these groups backwards and forwards, or adding one group together at a time in practice. Please see the example below from *Intermezzo in A Major*, Op. 118, No. 2 by Brahms mm. 5-8 and 13-16 (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1

**CREATIVE PRACTICE TECHNIQUES**  
Measures 5-8 and 13-16: **ADD-A-GROUP (AAG)**

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The section on Finishing Touches helps students add the final polish to each piece. At this stage, the student should be ready to perform the piece at the correct tempo. They should also be able to begin with an artistic opening gesture, project their melodic lines clearly, follow the suggested dynamics, voice and shape each line, convey the character and style of the piece, and bring the piece to a satisfying musical conclusion with an appropriate closing gesture.

All in all, this study guide provides a wealth of teaching and performance information and deserves to become a staple of every teacher's reference library. *Classics for the Developing Pianist* repertoire books 1-5 and *Study Guides* books 1-4 are all available on Alfred.com, Amazon, and Sheet Music Plus. The *Study Guide Book 5* is only available on Sheet Music Plus. All are highly recommended.

### BEETHOVEN BAGATELLE IN A MINOR WoO 59 "Für Elise"

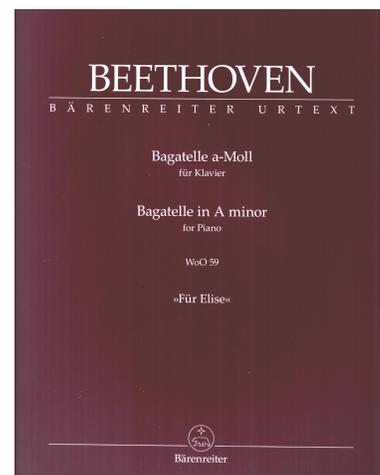
Urtext Edition, Edited by Mario Aschauer

Bärenreiter, 2021

[www.baerenreiter.com](http://www.baerenreiter.com)

10 pp., \$6.95

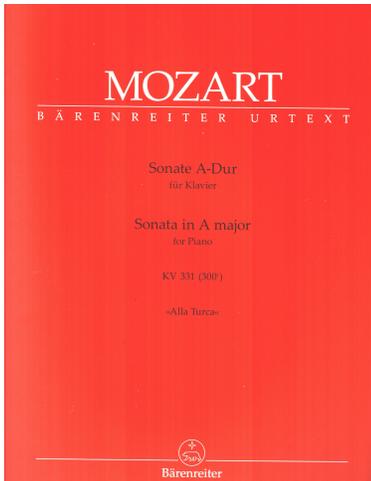
Level 6



Despite its extraordinary popularity, much of the history and background of Beethoven's *Bagatelle in A minor*, WoO 59, more commonly known as "Für Elise," remains a mystery. We neither know its original title nor the identity of Elise. Of particular interest in this edition, is that it includes a unique discussion about a layer of pencil revisions that are superimposed on the original draft in ink of the work. This scholarly edition also includes a copy of the first edition engraving, a draft of the first version of the piece (version 1), completion of the autograph draft for a second version (version 2), expert critical commentary, special comments, and a most enlightening preface.

The pencil revision of WoO 59 indicates three prominent differences. For example, in his revision for version 2, Beethoven indicated a shift in the left-hand accompaniment in the A section beginning with a sixteenth rest on count 1 thereby moving the entire accompaniment over to the right. He also introduced a redesign of the coda with a newly sketched ending that extends the piece by an extra three measures, and added some previously unused material from the original draft which included melodic variations in the A section and a four-measure transition into the key of F major at mm. 22-25.

The musicological research conducted in the preparation of this critical edition is impeccable. I have always believed that as teachers and performers, we should aspire to amassing the most authoritative editions of a work available as part of our permanent reference library. For this reason, I feel that this Bärenreiter edition of *Bagatelle in A Minor* is the definitive edition to be included in our own reference libraries.



MOZART SONATA IN A MAJOR KV 331  
Urtext Edition, Edited by Mario Aschauer  
Bärenreiter, 2021

[www.baerenreiter.com](http://www.baerenreiter.com)

42 pp., \$15.95

Advanced

A key element in our approach to our own continuing education is to build a significant reference library. In turn we can then recommend high-quality editions to our students. This new edition reflects the continuing research seen recently in editions by Henle, Wiener Urtext, and Bärenreiter of this Mozart sonata. In 2017, a previously unknown manuscript of this work emerged that has allowed musicologists to attempt a complete reconstruction of the autograph version. This newly engraved and carefully researched edition offers both the edition based on the first edition, as well as the reconstruction of the autograph from the fragments available. In this way, the musical texts of the autograph and the original are printed separately without merging the sources into a new text. The reconstruction of the "Alla Turca" autograph features a fold-out page that conveniently avoids page turns.

The insightful preface material, and several introductory chapters make this edition a valuable teaching and performing edition. For example, the notes on performance practice include a discussion of *clavier* instruments in use during the late eighteenth century in Vienna. There is also a chapter on pedaling, touch, and articulation in addition to a short chapter on embellishments. These chapters include musical examples and facsimiles. Overall, this landmark edition offers the first scholarly and critical performance edition with a reconstruction of the autograph transmission, two complete playable versions of the sonata, and invaluable critical commentary.

SHOWSTOPPERS BOOK 1

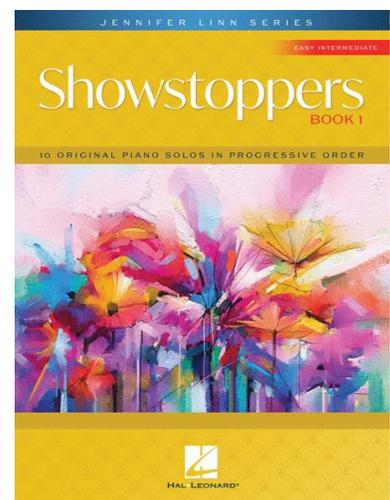
Jennifer Linn

Hal Leonard, 2021

<https://www.halleonard.com>

22 pp., \$8.99

Levels 1-3



From the expressive and ethereal *A Sprinkle of Rain* to the driving and energetic *Tiger Chase*, this collection contains an assortment of styles that will appeal to a wide variety of musical tastes. The pentatonic *Black Hole* requires the performer to depress the damper pedal for the entire piece thereby creating an

otherworldly feeling. *Falling Star* effectively uses descending two-note phrases, crescendi and diminuendi, and an easy-to-memorize left-hand pattern. The rocking motion in *Bluebird Lullaby* is perfectly captured in triple meter and the piece ends ever so softly, moving from *pp* to *ppp*. Bitonality is featured in the fast-moving *Supernova*, with D flat major used in the right hand and C major in the left hand.

Pieces in this collection are organized by level of difficulty and the first selection in the book is the slow and expressive *Rainbow Dreams*. This piece requires some movement around the keyboard yet the hands remain in five-finger patterns as melody lines are tossed from hand to hand. As such, this is more appropriate for a level one student. Thereafter, the pieces are composed for students at level two, moving to level three.

## PROGRESSIVE PIANO REPERTOIRE

Selected and Edited by Keith Snell

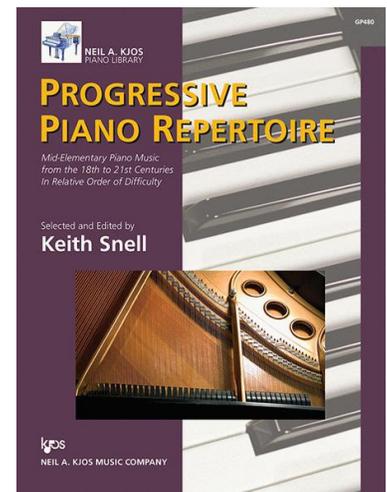
KJOS Music Company, 2020

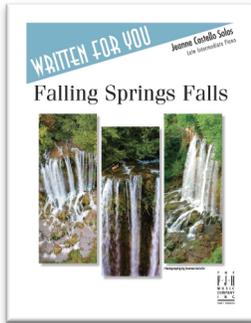
[www.kjos.com](http://www.kjos.com)

36 pp., \$7.95

Levels 1-2

There is a demand for original piano repertoire at early levels that effectively bridges the gap between method books and intermediate standard repertoire. *Progressive Piano Repertoire* fulfills this need. Snell has carefully selected excellent pedagogical works by composers such as Bartók, Gurlitt, Haydn, Rameau, Reinagle, Spindler, Türk, and others while including some well-crafted compositions by Diane Hidy, and himself. Snell's *Lights, Camera, Action!* with myriad major and minor triads moving effortlessly around the keyboard provides lots of excitement and dynamic variety. *Prelude and Gigue in G Major* is composed in the style students might find in a Bach Partita, yet accessible at level two. *Homage to Kabalevsky*, reminiscent of Kabalevsky's *Children's Pieces*, Op. 39, presents a fun romp in C major with two-note slurs in the left hand and rising and falling sixteenth note passages in the right hand. [Mashed Potato Clouds](#) by Hidy is an 'easy-but-sounds-hard' piece that will delight students. The well-planned phrasing, repeated rhythmic and melodic patterns, and consistent left-hand cross-overs to high C make this piece easy to memorize for recital performance. Keith Snell's collection makes an important contribution to early-level pedagogical literature.





FALLING SPRINGS FALLS  
 Jeanne Costello  
 FJH Music Company, 2020  
[www.fjhmusic.com](http://www.fjhmusic.com)  
 sheet music, \$3.50  
 Level 7

Falling Springs Falls is a spectacular waterfall in Virginia's Allegheny Highlands. Costello's programmatic solo, written in E major, creates a musical snapshot of this remarkable cascade using 6/8 meter to portray the energy of the rushing water. The composer depicts numerous smaller cascades in which the water splits into a hundred different directions, by moving up and down and back and forth across the keyboard, with left hand and right hand sometimes playing in contrary and sometimes in parallel motion, yet always moving energetically forward. Like the actual waterfall, Falling Springs Falls, this solo is breathtaking and bound to impress any audience.

SHADES OF WINTER  
 Mary Leaf  
 FJH Music Company, 2020  
[www.fjhmusic.com](http://www.fjhmusic.com)  
 sheet music, \$3.50  
 Level 3

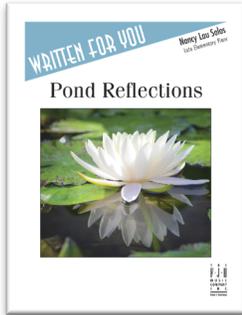


Written in ternary (ABA) form, this quiet vignette in E minor features repetitive patterns that rise and fall. These patterns offer opportunities for students to shape the right-hand melodic lines expressively. Subtle changes in the left-hand harmonies are created using ties held across the bar lines in tandem with slowly moving inner voices. Adding more pedal than is marked in the score creates an effective Impressionistic sound in this piece. Students will love the arpeggios with cross-hand playing in the B section and this wonderful hand choreography allows the early-intermediate student to emulate gestures used by advanced pianists.



OH, SO PRETTY!  
 Christopher Oill  
 FJH Music Company, 2020  
[www.fjhmusic.com](http://www.fjhmusic.com)  
 sheet music, \$3.95  
 Level 7

The gently flowing eighth-note passagework in this evocative late-intermediate solo opens in E flat major, segues to G flat major, then returns to E flat major. The elegant, lyrical melodic line is punctuated by octaves against a continuously moving eighth-note accompaniment pattern in the left hand. Several harmonic surprises contribute to the beauty of this creative, and captivating solo. Technical considerations include rolled chords, playing the melody in octaves, trills in double note thirds, achieving clear balance between melody and accompaniment, and executing simultaneous left- and right-hand eighth note passagework with precision. The harmonies in this piece are exquisite, memorable, and creative. As such, this solo will be an unforgettable highlight on any recital program.



## POND REFLECTIONS

Nancy Lau

FJH Music Company, 2020

[www.fjhmusic.com](http://www.fjhmusic.com)

sheet music, \$3.50

Level 2

This reflective solo utilizes harmonic and melodic second, third, fourth, and fifth intervals and remains technically accessible within the hand span of a fifth. With a tonal center of A, the gently flowing pond is written in the mode of A Phrygian until the final measure when the piece settles on an F. An effective performance will require a good hand shape, careful attention to pedal markings, and expressive use of dynamic shaping and contrasts. The extended pedaling marked across two measures at a time blends the harmonies and helps to create a sumptuous resonating palette of sound.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

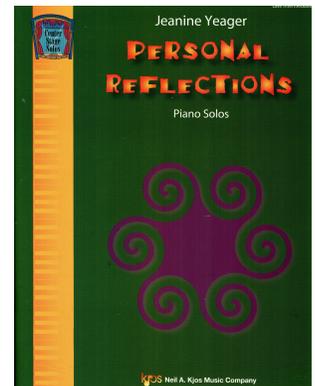
Jeanine Yeager

KJOS Music Company, 2021

[www.kjos.com](http://www.kjos.com)

32 pp., \$7.95

Levels 5-6



Performers and audiences will fall in love with the improvisational quality of Jeanine Yeager's compositions. *Personal Reflections* is a collection of intriguing, reflective, and introspective pieces and each selection presents students with an opportunity to offer their own interpretation and insert their personality into the music. Within the collection, Yeager uses a variety of major and minor keys, as well as modes. [Autumn Intermezzo](#) and *Romance* are filled with full and lush sounds. *Evening Reflections* consists completely of arpeggios and finishes with a crossed-hand gesture. *Missing You* requires careful balance between the hands as the melody switches to the left hand in the B section accompanied by sixteenth-note passagework in the right hand. A recording available [online](#) portrays the wistful nature of this piece. Gorgeous harmonies, broken-chord accompaniments, haunting melodies, exciting sixteenth-note passagework, and lots of pianistic flair make these compositions sound impressive and exciting to play. This is a welcome addition to the growing list of contemporary repertoire written by America's finest living composers.



*[Gail Lew](#) is an 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 her tenure as senior piano editor for Kjos Music, director of keyboard publications for Warner Bros. Music, editor of the California Music Teacher magazine, and contributing editor to 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 focusing on living composers.*

## Coda

### What aspects of virtual instruction will you retain in your teaching as we move back to in-person lessons?

Online teaching over the past year has shown me that my students have become more and more comfortable playing over video as well as recording videos of themselves performing. One of the creative projects I have had my students work on, is playing duets with themselves. Nowadays, many students are well versed in using technology, and syncing up different musical lines or parts is a fairly common practice in 2021. Recording one duet part as a guide track, and the other duet part as an added layer, has helped them gain a variety of skills including keeping the tempo and pulse stable, developing consistent and active listening, as well as achieving clear balance and voicing. This activity also helps to cultivate a stronger sense of flow in my young beginners' playing. Several of my students have recorded movements from duet collections including Ravel's Mother Goose Suite, and Brahms's Waltzes, Op. 39. While originally faced with limits when moving to



teaching online, I was able to quickly find and turn the challenges into advantages: for example, these duet recording projects were inspired by the online forum, and have become a fun, imaginative, and accessible assignment I will enjoy retaining with my students when we move back to in-person instruction.

*Canadian pianist [Barry Tan](#) is a doctoral student and Graduate Teaching Assistant at USC. He has been invited to participate as a Piano Fellow at the upcoming 2021 Tanglewood Music Festival, and currently serves as President of the MTNA USC Collegiate Chapter.*

One of the practices I started during the months I taught over Zoom was to keep a written log of all of my students' assignments. For my younger students especially, I felt it was important to write down their assignments for the following week in an assignment book, and scan and send these to their parents. The parents could either rewrite my notes into their child's booklet, or just cut and paste them. I kept my original assignment notes and, in a spiral notebook with all their names tabbed, pasted them onto their respective pages. I had my older students write their new assignments into their own booklet, and I wrote directly onto 'their' page in my notebook, adding comments for any specific skills, scales, difficulties, etc. on which we worked. Using this system made it easy to jump right into the new lesson each week.

All but three of my students have returned to in-person lessons this year, however I continue to maintain my notebook with a copy of my students' weekly assignments (plus any additional comments). Now, if a student accidentally leaves their assignment booklet at home, there is no

question about what they should have practiced, follow up questions, etc. Keeping detailed notes also gives me a great overview of how the student is progressing—and is something to point to and discuss with parents should they have specific questions.



*[Debbie Lagomarsino](#) is a seasoned music and education teacher with global experience. Known for her mastery of both playing and teaching the piano for over 35 years, she is actively sought after to direct musical productions for theatrical organizations and provide piano lessons to students of all ages. Her 35+ years of teaching experience is deeply rooted in transformational learning for disadvantaged children and those wanting to learn English. Highly collaborative and engaging, she strives to bring out the best in individuals and organizations. Debbie is CAPMT District 6 Director.*

The pandemic has put teachers into a difficult situation where adaptation has been necessary for survival. We are extremely fortunate that the technology that enables effective remote teaching is widely accessible and mostly intuitive to use. I am eager to see my students face-to-face again, but plan on retaining certain elements of remote teaching. This is because these elements offer benefits to students that would not be time or cost effective otherwise.

Since it requires little effort and preparation time to schedule short online checkups with students, these checkups can serve as an invaluable supplement to their regular weekly in-person lessons. A brief mid-week checkup affords teachers the opportunity to assess their students' progress and practice habits between lessons. It also keeps students feeling accountable for maintaining consistent practice habits throughout the week.

In addition, group lessons and studio classes can be more conveniently held online as geographical distance is rendered inconsequential while scheduling seems to be easier. Being able to see and interact with their peers more regularly benefits students, as experiencing each other play can be a source of inspiration, and reinforces the communicative aspects of music-making.



Now that my students and I are well-equipped for remote lessons, I look forward to supplementing their regular weekly lessons with these and other online activities.

*[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.*

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