

# Oregon Musician

Sharing ideas about music and the teaching of music

## Music Teaching in the 21st Century

A Note from the Editor



### About the Editor

Rhonda Ringering, NCTM has crafted a career as a pianist, a writer and an instructor. She has released four CDs, is an active solo and collaborative performer of both classical and jazz, and her articles have appeared in *American Music Teacher*, *Piano & Keyboard*, *Flute Talk*, *Clavier*, and *Keyboard Companion*. She received her MM from Boston University.

When I started teaching piano lessons in the late 1980s, I rented studio space from Cascade Piano, taught the classics I knew and loved, and ran my business with little more than business cards and a telephone. Today I still teach the classics, but have acquired training to teaching jazz and pop. My computer, Web site, e-mail, social network sites, and YouTube have become important parts of my business and teaching. The world has changed, young students have changed, and I have been forced to change with it.

This issue of *Oregon Musician* reflects society's changes. In addition to its newly revamped appearance as an e-journal, this first issue of 2011 asks just what it means to teach music in the 21st Century. Dr. Matt Cooper challenges us to expand our musical palate—for ourselves and for our students. Dr. Claire Wachter shows how to integrate tradition and technology through the use of YouTube, digital keyboards, computer labs and even Skype. Peter Brownlee draws from his extensive years as a harpsichord and piano performer to show us fresh ways to interpret the music of J.S. Bach. This issue's New Voices writer Robyn Pfeifer reminds us we cannot teach today's students the same way we were taught to play. And Dr. Jill Timmons challenges each of us to ask ourselves and our students the deep questions—who we are and why we go to our instruments each day and make music.

No venture such as this happens without the expertise of many people. I want to thank our writers for volunteering their time and their wisdom, and I want to thank Dr. Bonnie Esbensen and designer Julie Weiss for the layout and design of this newly reborn *OM*. This year you will receive two issues of *Oregon Musician*—this issue, and one which will be released in August. As we enter a new era of *OM*, I encourage you to contact me with your thoughts and suggestions. I may be reached the old-fashioned way (503-992-2192), via e-mail (rhondaringering at hotmail.com) or through FaceBook.

May 2011 bring you joy, prosperity,  
and many hours of musical beauty.

—Rhonda Ringering, NCTM

# Music Teaching in the 21st Century

## Table of Contents

The 21st Century Piano Teacher by Dr. Claire Wachter	page 3
Bach, Authenticity, and Reality by Peter Brownlee	page 8
Creating a Puzzle Around You: 21st Century Globalization and the Musical Career by Dr. Matt Cooper, NCTM	page 13
Dream Big and Be Realistic: An Interview with Dr. Jill Timmons by Rhonda Ringering, NCTM	page 17
<i>New Voices</i> Teaching Private Music Lessons in the 21st Century by Robyn Pfeifer, NCTM	page 20
<i>Ask Artsmentor</i> Creating Student Performance Opportunities in a Small Town by Dr. Jill Timmons	page 22
<i>Coda</i> Why We Play	page 24

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# The 21st Century Piano Teacher

by Dr. Claire Wachter



## About the Author

Claire Wachter chairs the piano department at the University of Oregon. She has performed throughout the United States and in Austria, Italy, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Canada. Claire has been a presenter at MTNA National Conferences in Dallas (1997), Kansas City (2004), and Toronto (2007). In 2005 Claire received the "Working Partnership Award" from the International Institute for Young Musicians.

Consider the great piano teachers of the 19th and 20th centuries—Clara Schumann, Franz Liszt, Theodore Leschetizky, and Artur Schnabel. They all taught students on acoustic pianos. If these great teachers were alive today, how would they use 21st century technology in their teaching? In this article I will discuss four of the most important uses of technology and their influence on modern day piano teaching: YouTube, computer programs, digital pianos and long-distance technology such as Skype.

## YouTube

The use of YouTube for studying performance and interpretation has become an important activity for both teachers and students. With a quick Internet search it is easy to find a YouTube performance of many pieces in the standard repertoire, sometimes with video and sometimes with still images accompanying the recorded performance. This is the first time in our evolution as pianists and teachers that, without leaving our teaching studio, our students can access the greatest performances and interpretations of the masterworks for piano and in many cases can watch the pianist perform.

However, many teachers are aware of the negative side of using YouTube: the students are not discriminating about the performances they hear because they have not been trained as the previous generation was trained. One of the new functions of the teacher in this area of technology is to show the students what makes one performance great and another performance not so great. The teacher now becomes an artistic guide who helps the student to sort through the enormous amount of information that comes to us from the new technological medium.

For my own students I recommend specific YouTube performances for their study and inspiration. One of my students was playing the Liszt transcription of Schumann's "Widmung" (Dedication). I asked her to watch Van Cliburn's live performance of this work on YouTube. When my student

## The 21st Century Piano Teacher

performed this piece on her commencement recital, I was pleased to hear that she had absorbed some of the greatness and the majesty of Van Cliburn's playing that charmed his audience so long ago.

Another powerful use of YouTube is the opportunity to watch great teachers and pianists teaching in master classes. I was enormously impressed by Lang Lang's excellent instruction of young prodigies. Through his imagery and conducting, Lang Lang treated these young students as potential artists and spoke to them without condescension or talking down to them. Interestingly, we can view Lang Lang as a student in Daniel Barenboim's master classes on YouTube. In these master classes Lang Lang receives coaching from Barenboim on Beethoven Sonata Op. 57. These YouTube master classes are fascinating and worthwhile viewing for all teachers.

We can use video technology to make our own "YouTubes." I ask my students to create videos of their teaching. Some of them use a laptop computer to create high quality video and audio recordings. These videos are e-mailed to me for critique and review. The technology enables me to make efficient use of my time to follow their teaching progress.

### Computer Lab

Independent teachers can now create in their home studios a "computer lab" where the use of powerful programs can help their students study music history, theory, ear training, and even freeze-frame a performance for study and analysis.

NCTM Sandy Hull asks her students to do theory drills on the computer which she says improves their rhythm reading musicianship skills and sight-reading. She says that computer-assisted instruction helps her students to do well on OMTA Syllabus exams. Sandy recommends the Educator Versions of programs such as Music Ace Maestro (Harmonic Vision) or Essentials of Music Theory (Alfred), but suggests that the teacher consider the age group and level of the students who will use them. With the more expensive Educator Version, teachers will be able to use the program with many students and will also be able to monitor the progress of their students.

Other programs that Sandy has found helpful in her computer lab include "Home Concert Extreme," the CD-ROM "Interactive Classics," and "Band in a Box." One of Sandy's favorites is the "Amazing Slow Downer Program." This is a playback program that can change the tempo of music without affecting a change in the pitch. A student can play along at a slow tempo with a CD of music that he or she is studying. Sandy says that this practice technique helps her students develop patience with slow practicing. In my opinion this program is a technological miracle. It is the first time we have been able to access music in any medium and study it in slow motion without changing the pitch. No previous generation has ever had the ability to do this.

### Digital Pianos

One of the most powerful aspects of new technology is the ability of the digital keyboards

## The 21st Century Piano Teacher

to create the sounds of other instruments. We can stimulate the imagination of our students by asking them to play their Bach Inventions using the harpsichord or organ sound on the digital keyboard. It is interesting to note that Franz Liszt, always on the cutting edge, had a “piano-organ” built for his use—basically an early synthesizer—that enabled him to hear the sounds of his orchestral compositions at the keyboard. This one-of-a-kind instrument was built by Alexandre and Erard in Paris, and was used by Liszt from 1853 in Altenburg. It is now housed at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

In a 2004 article in *Clavier* magazine former University of Kansas Piano Pedagogy Professor Dr. Chris Hepp has this to say about the use of digital keyboards:

“The sounds that are a natural part of the musical landscape of every child no longer come from the acoustic piano. They come from digitally produced sound, which is now deemed natural ... Like it or not, the music that children hear today cannot be played on an acoustic piano with satisfaction; the music of today has to be reproduced on digital instruments ... The musical sounds of today are the sounds of science fiction and Star Trek, of animations and special effects. Thirty years ago these sounds could be created only sound engineer-composers like Robert Moog and Wendy Carlos using a bank of synthesizers, a host of electronic connections, cables and rheostats. Today these sounds are available on the digital piano, and it takes simply the press of a button and a key. The stock-in-trade metaphor of piano teachers to ‘imitate the orchestra’ is no longer a metaphor at all; it is a reality. The range of available timbres is almost limitless, and I have seen the musical curiosity of many young children expand accordingly.”

I observed one of the most interesting and advanced uses of technology when I saw the Roland Keyboard Lab at the University of Texas at El Paso. Dr. Oscar Macchioni, who designed this \$250,000 lab, controls all the equipment with a touch-screen panel. He can demonstrate on his own keyboard and his class can watch his hands or his pedaling on their own individual monitors at each student keyboard. In other systems students cannot see the teacher’s hands for demonstration and they cannot monitor their own hand position other than from their own perspective.

Dr. Macchioni also connected his piano lab to the Internet.

“The other day we were looking at whole-tone scales, so of course I show them Impressionistic paintings, and I have them watch a pianist playing Debussy preludes. All of this can be accessed within seconds. At the same time we were playing whole-tone scales and trying to understand the aesthetics of the whole-tone scale in music, and relating it to art.”

# The 21st Century Piano Teacher

Most importantly, Dr. Macchioni has a practical perspective on the use of technology in teaching: "I'm not teaching anything new. I'm teaching in a different way, but the basics of music are all the same. All this technology is great to have, and these students are born into this type of technology, but it's just a tool, and it needs to be taken as a tool—to improve, to teach, or improve the teaching—but not as the only way to do it." For college teachers who wish to create a state-of-the-art piano lab, Dr. Macchioni's system would be an excellent model.

In my own teaching I have used the Yamaha Disklavier. It was a very useful teaching tool, especially for students who are visual learners. The Disklavier allowed them to study their key strokes (playing all the keys at the same time for a chord, for example), or observe their pedal changes (to see that the dampers may not have touched the strings to clear the sound). The playback feature was ideal for studying tone quality and melodic voicing. Dr. Scott McBride Smith, Professor of Piano Pedagogy at the University of Kansas, considers the Yamaha Disklavier as "one of the greatest teaching tools ever invented," says that the Disklavier's ability to playback slowly is its most important feature.

"In my view, the main reason that students don't fix problems is that they don't really hear their playing the way it actually sounds—more like hearing what they think they want to play. Or they aren't trying that hard to hear it because they erroneously think their way is the best way! The slow playback (on the Disklavier) really helps this problem."

## Skype

Long-distance or virtual piano teaching using Skype enables the users to send and receive visual and audio information almost instantaneously. Using Skype, a professor at The Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, Maryland, coached a chamber ensemble that was physically located in Singapore at Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. Although this is not the same as the teacher coaching the students in person it's much less expensive than buying plane tickets for everyone!

## Conclusion

There are those who might choose to ignore the learning and teaching possibilities created by new technology and continue teaching every day as the piano teachers from the 19th and 20th centuries taught. However, if we ignore the teaching potential of new technology we might be missing the opportunity to expand the range of our musical experience and truly bring piano teaching into the 21st century.



# The 21st Century Piano Teacher

## Sources

Burger, Ernst. Franz Liszt: *A Chronicle of his Life in Pictures and Documents*, translated by Stewart Spencer (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989)

Hepp, Christopher, "The Electronic Studio" *Clavier* 43 (October 2004): 6

Cadman, Shane. Roland's The Educator educational e-newsletter. "Imagine the Ideal Piano Lab," <http://www.rolandmusiced.com/spotlight/article.php?ArticleId=1045>

## Selected YouTubes

Van Cliburn:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh2\\_8zFoOXM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh2_8zFoOXM)

Lang Lang master class teaching Derek Wang:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_T45CKRStsU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_T45CKRStsU)

Lang Lang master class teaching Anna Larsen:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9cYcMD3J0M&feature=related>

Daniel Barenboim master class coaching Lang Lang:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49KBYCja2tM&feature=related>

## Selected Web sites

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

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

*The author wishes to thank Dr. Scott McBride Smith and NCTM Sandra Hull for their contributions to this article.*

# Bach, Authenticity, and Reality

by Peter Brownlee



## About the Author

Peter Brownlee made his debut as a pianist at age 12 with the Marin Youth Symphony and as a harpsichordist at his high school senior recital playing Bach's "Goldberg Variations". He studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Hunter College in NY. Mr. Brownlee has appeared at King's Chapel in Boston, Barge Music in NY, the Huntington Library in Los Angeles, and the de Young Museum in San Francisco. He has studied piano with Istvan Nadas, Marilyn Thompson and harpsichord with Laurette Goldberg, Albert Fuller and Piet Kees.

*Most pianists and piano teachers struggle with the challenge of playing Bach on the modern piano. From Baroque festivals to recitals to individual studios, questions abound, particularly regarding the use of the damper pedal. This article gleans from a lifetime of experience as both a noted harpsichordist and pianist, with many of the questions reflecting queries received from students and colleagues alike.* —Editor.

**Question:** The early music revival has created a new breed of musician who specializes in performing the music of Bach, his contemporaries, and predecessors on period instruments. What does this movement offer musicians who perform on modern instruments?

The Early Music Revival of the early 20th century benefited all musicians in many respects. As important as the reintroduction of previously used instruments was, equally important it put to rest the misguided 19th century notion that music is a progressive art which was continuing to "evolve." Perspective is gradual, however, especially in the wake of perceived 19th century excesses in the music of earlier epochs written for instruments which few people understood until recent decades. The reaction to these excesses is understandable but often reactionary and problematic. A pronounced desire in the 1930s and later to return to the composer's "original intentions" and "authentic performance" (quite romantic notions!) introduced Urtext, or "original" editions intended to reflect precisely what the composer intended, no more and no less. However, these do not always provide us with the composer's final word on a given composition; Bach's definitive edition of the "Goldberg Variations," for instance, was published under his direct supervision, yet his personal published copy has significant changes in his own hand made long after publication. Beethoven kept changing his metronome settings. 18th



## Bach, Authenticity, and Reality

century writers often disagree on the symbolism of say, E Major. Clearly, “authenticity” and “original intentions” are often elusive.

**Question:** Do modern *Urtext* editions tell the performer everything he needs to know to perform a piece?

Yes, if the edition is accurate and the performer understands the performance conventions of the time. Guenter Henle’s *Urtext* editions are indispensable. Also indispensable is familiarity with instruments similar to those used by a given composer. Consider Beethoven’s pianos. Five are preserved and in playing condition and several of these have been recorded. Reproduction of these instruments have become quite commonplace in the last 30 years, and although some pianists dislike the sound of early pianos, they nonetheless tell us much about the sonorities available to the composer. Stripping the score of subjective markings enables the pianist to arrive at his own interpretive conclusions with greater conviction. It is also important that the interpreter understand the social and political environment in which the composer lived.

**Question:** Is harpsichord music a transcription?

The pianist is faced with more serious decision-making when it comes to literature not written for the piano, particularly that of Bach. Anton Rubinstein went so far as to say that harpsichord music not be played on the piano, stating that Bach’s instruments “...had tone-coloring and effects that we cannot reproduce on the Pianoforte of today” (Anton Rubinstein, *A Conversation in Music*, trans. Mrs. John Morgan, New York, 1892). In 1934, Ralph Kirkpatrick wrote, “...Bach, with however much approval he might have regarded the modern piano, would have composed for it altogether differently” (“Goldberg” Variations, Schirmer, 1934).

But it is patently absurd not to play harpsichord literature on the piano, particularly that of Bach as his works form the genesis of modern pianism. It is extremely difficult to believe that Beethoven’s late sonatas, Chopin’s preludes and countless works by other great pianist/composers of the first half of the 19th century would have incarnated as they did had it not been for a profound and intimate knowledge of Bach’s works. After all, Beethoven played the entire WTC book I by age 11.

Nonetheless, Kirkpatrick reminds us that “By this time it should be universally recognized that the keyboard music of Bach is not piano music, and that on the piano it must (*italics mine*) be regarded as transcription.” This realization can be liberating if the pianist understands his instrument and utilizes its natural resources to communicate the structure followed by his interpretive insights. It is instant death to a composition when one attempts to make the piano sound other than how it is intended to sound. That is, like a

## Bach, Authenticity, and Reality

harpsichord. The imperative is to understand and convey the musical structure will always override the medium; interpretation then follows quite naturally whether one is playing the piece on the piano, harpsichord or steel drums.

The means of accomplishing this conveyance is necessarily different on different mediums and therein lies the challenge. A favorite teacher of my youth was fond of saying, “the black things are the notes; the white stuff is the music.” On this point, the *Urtext* fails to tell us as much as we’d like, and personal responsibility becomes all important. Decisions concerning interpretation must be made using a reliable edition, the composer’s tonal references, and knowledge of form and performance practice of a given era. Beyond a well-informed reading of a given composition, interpretation will remain a personal and perhaps even subjective comment. Obviously, not everyone will share the same interpretive insights because aesthetics cannot be dictated, but performers must be able to explain how they arrive at the conclusions they draw. As performers and teachers, we encourage our students to do likewise. To merely say, ‘That’s the way Glenn Gould plays it’ is a complete abdication of personal responsibility which robs both player and audience of a worthwhile musical experience.

**Question:** Some pianists think it incorrect to use the damper pedal. What is your opinion concerning its use?

An egregious practice which continues to persist in some quarters is the proscription of the damper pedal in the works of Bach because this device was unknown on his instrument. This irony will not be lost on anyone who joins this dot to the next one! The pedal belongs in the list of essentials as its use is unavoidable.

Let’s acknowledge the myth that the modern piano represents the evolution of the harpsichord into an instrument which poor old Papa Bach and his colleagues longed to have. But realistically, the piano as we now know it came about early in the second half of the 19th century and is an instrument never imagined by Bach, Mozart or even Beethoven—it is intended for a radically different repertoire.

The most obvious difference between these instruments is a wide dynamic range verses a limited one. Everyone knows that strong and weak beats are realized on accent-less keyboard (that is, the organ and harpsichord) by means of agogics and articulation. Registration is the companion of these and its use is dependent upon the texture and character of the piece. These considerations must be borne in mind when playing Baroque literature on the piano.

One approach used by some pianists when playing this literature is to be confined by the perceived dynamic limitations of the harpsichord and perform without dynamic inflection except where an obvious directive to do otherwise is indicated, as in some works by Bach and other composers of the period.

## Bach, Authenticity, and Reality

Another, more flexible approach is simply to exploit the natural resources of the piano which will provide more options which one could argue would make musical sense and therefore be sensible to the composer himself. For instance, metric articulations may be substituted with subtle dynamic contrast between strong and weak beats and also strong and weak measures. This approach is entirely consistent with the clavichord, and the piano has infinitely more in common with that instrument than it has with the harpsichord. The *silence d'articulation* has a tendency to sound threadbare on the piano. For this reason it is more advantageous to the pianist if he explores what the clavichord can do as it will provide him with greater insights. (Claudio Arrau, Paul Jacobs, Roselyn Tureck, Istvan Nadas, John Browning, and other pianists owned clavichords.) It's interesting to note that more people played the clavichord in Bach's day than the harpsichord, probably owing to its smaller size and affordability. The clavichord was approximately the 17th and 18th century equivalent to our upright piano and these instruments share a genealogy.

Pianists ought to rely on *both* of these approaches as neither by itself is sufficient. Again, the judicious use of the damper pedal ought to be encouraged despite occasional cries of "anathema!" by the unenlightened. It is worth discussing why its use in Baroque literature is appropriate, although I acknowledge the tendency to overuse it in piano literature of all periods. A proper harpsichord has an extremely live acoustic which amplifies a complex series of partials that continue to ring after the player's fingers have parted company with the keys. The piano's acoustic is rather less active once the keys are released. Examples of effective and desirable use of the damper pedal can be found in the *Italian Concerto*, *Chromatic Fantasy*, the *Sarabande* from the *French Suite* in b minor and many other works of Bach and his contemporaries.

**Question:** What about the preludes and fugues?

Use it, but sparingly. As soon as the player limits himself by insisting that "I can't use the pedal because Frescobaldi didn't have one on his harpsichord," he puts himself in a psychological straight-jacket and will never play convincingly or with authority, and certainly not as a fully developed pianist.

**Question:** Which books ought to be in the pianist's library?

It's essential to read Bach's students' books, including CPE Bach and Kirnberger. Quantz and Leopold Mozart are also indispensable, though Quantz's table of fastest running note groups and their corresponding table of tempos must be considered with caution. Kirnberger is obsessed with his master's keyboard works and uses many his works as examples. Considering

his words is almost like having a lesson with Bach, himself. In our own time, Richard Taruskin's "Music and Text" is a must read for anyone who plays 18th and 19th century music. It will put the myth of "authenticity" and the "composer's original intentions" into clear perspective.

### **In Conclusion**

Playing Bach on the modern piano provides a joyful exploration of some of the finest music written for the keyboard. If the pianist has a thorough grasp of musical structure, the performance practice of a given era, (and a sufficient knowledge of the composer's instruments, their sonorities and basic techniques), his modern instrument will serve him unfailingly in presenting a great work which will not only be meaningful to his audience but recognizable to the composer. This is "authenticity" in its fullest meaning.



# Creating a Puzzle Around You: 21st Century Globalization and the Musical Career

by Dr. Matt Cooper, NCTM



## About the Author

Matt Cooper earned the MM and DMA in Piano Performance, with a cognate area in Jazz Studies, at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and the B.Mus at the University of Oregon. He performs frequently as both a classical and jazz musician, and has taught at Eastern Oregon University since 1991.

We OMTA teachers are increasingly falling out of touch with the real world of 21st century music, and are becoming increasingly irrelevant to our students and to the public. Why is this so? Because we are still rooted in vanishing 19th century traditions, in which virtuoso performers traveled the globe. Our world has changed and bears little resemblance to the world of the 19th or early 20th centuries, or even to the conservatories where many of us were educated. If we are to remain relevant to today's students, we must help them prepare for the multi-faceted and vital musical world they will inhabit, rather than clinging exclusively to the hopes of an elite few who dream of a classical concert career.

Realistically, we must confront and acknowledge trends such as the aging of the audiences for classical music concerts, and an overall decline in attendance; a keenly competitive economic environment, which makes a performing career (in the 19th century sense of the word) increasingly unattainable but for a very few; an increasingly multi-ethnic population; and new means of music distribution, which lead to widespread access, rapid dissemination, and the blending of many styles.

Author Bonita Kolb documents the aging of the classical music audience and its effect on attendance at traditional concerts. Her data demonstrates not only that the average age of classical music attendees is increasing, but also that young people are not automatically gravitating toward attending classical music concerts as they age. Furthermore, non-white ethnic groups are not gravitating to classical music even as their income and educational levels rise. And non-white ethnic groups are no longer "minorities" in many parts of the US; as she points out, the population of New York City was 91 percent white in 1950, and 35 percent today. Kolb speculates that classical music suffers from a variety of disadvantages, including a long-held association with

## Creating a Puzzle Around You: 21st Century Globalization and the Musical Career

“conservatism and established order;” an almost exclusively European cultural emphasis, and an isolation from other world cultures; and a performance tradition which emphasizes “reverence of individual genius, perfection of technique, and the importance of emotional control” rather than the participatory, communally-based ethos inherent in music of the African diaspora (such as jazz, blues, and rock). Kolb suggests that the formal style in which concerts are presented often alienate younger audiences; indeed, even at the Eastman School of Music, the stereotype of “the musician dressed in formal black who enters the stage, gives a quick bow to the audience, and sits down to play is on its way out.”

But changing demographics are not the only evidence for the decline of the 19th century, performance-based career model. Several authors cite globalization as an influence on an increasingly diverse musical marketplace, where consumers are hungry for a multitude of musical styles. Whatever the causes, the need for musicians to develop “portfolio” careers with multiple skills—and to emphasize being musicians over merely being performers—is borne out by several prominent studies which have tracked college music students and alumni both in the US and abroad.

Author Dawn Bennett’s article details the results of a 2009 study of 239 musicians and dancers. The results of her study “strongly suggest that much existing training does not adequately prepare artists for sustainable careers.” She describes arts careers as necessarily “Protean,” meaning that artists must continually “change forms at will” (like the Greek god Proteus) in order to stay employable. Although artists’ performance skills are central to their practice, very few of them base their careers primarily on performance. Participants in the study mentioned the need for “maintaining ‘knowledge and awareness of current trends’ . . . and the need to be versatile ‘in a range of styles and of working’” as well as “skills in a variety of genres and environments . . . ‘up-skilling in different techniques . . . to be more diverse.’” A third of the artists mentioned the need for additional training in technology in order to remain employable. For musicians, this meant such skills as “music recording and editing, composition, photography and film, video, sound and installation work, archival work, and complex coding.” Both musicians and dancers added that performing in multiple genres, such as contemporary or original music, increased their satisfaction as performers.

In another article, Bennett reports on a longitudinal study of full and part-time musicians between 2002 and 2005. She concurs with other writers’ assessment of the contemporary musician as less of a “performer” than “someone who practises within the profession of music in one or more specialist fields.” Bennett and other authors refer to this type of musician as a “composite” or “portfolio” musician. According to data gathered by the College Music Society and the National Association of Schools of Music in 2000–2001, just over half of music performance graduates were “gainfully employed” in music making. Bennett concludes that 48 percent of music performance graduates were not employed

## Creating a Puzzle Around You: 21st Century Globalization and the Musical Career

in the performance field. Musicians held an average of over two music industry roles, and over a third held roles outside the music profession. Performance was only a secondary role for over half of the UK respondents; a similar Danish study only found only 6 percent of music graduates working solely on performance. "Of the 40.1 percent of musicians who were paid for all of their work, 41.9 percent cited performance as their primary role." Thus, less than 17 percent of the respondents were making a living primarily as performers.

Furthermore, Bennett says, few of the respondents were engaged primarily with classical music; rather, due to globalization, "musicians tended to be musically multi-lingual" and "need to be conversant in a variety of cultures and genres." She goes as far as to say: "Performance-based education and training in classical music does not provide graduates with the requisite skills to achieve a sustainable career."

The situation is no different at even the most prestigious conservatories. In a 2004 New York Times article, Daniel Wakin tracked 44 Juilliard graduates ten years after graduation. Out of these, eight could not be found, suggesting that they did not have active musical careers. Of the remaining 36 graduates, 61 percent of these reported that they were still primarily performing, and 28 percent had left the music profession entirely. According to Wakin, the results "suggest how hard it can be to live as a classical musician in a society that seems increasingly to be pushing classical music to the margins, even as Juilliard and scores of other music schools pour out batches of performers year after year." The respondents "sometimes wondered what point there was in playing the same war horses over and over, to what seemed to be inexorably aging audiences."

Of those few who have been successful (only three out of 44 orchestral musicians in this study described themselves as "primarily soloists"), most would fit the mold of the "portfolio" or "Protean" musician. One successful violinist works as a fill-in concertmaster, commissions pieces, directs a music festival, and performs with dancers. Another premiered a piece by Shulamit Ran, issued a dozen CD's, produced concerts, toured with the jazz pianist Dick Hyman, and started a foundation which supports young Israeli violinists. In addition to his instrumental training, he also credits his variety and versatility: "Rather than be the missing part of a puzzle, you can create a puzzle around you."

Some music schools and conservatories are already responding to these changes in the music world. As early as the 1990s, the Eastman School of Music began revamping their curriculum; the new curriculum even includes rock, folk, and contemporary religious music. Eastman theory chair Elizabeth Marvin West said that in addition to being familiar with popular music, students should develop improvisational skills: "We want to make a more versatile musician. . . 'We want them to develop ear skills.'" As part of their juries, all string students are now required to play "at least one piece written in the past 40 years. 'We haven't specified that it be a pop piece, but it should be by any composer who is alive,'

## Creating a Puzzle Around You: 21st Century Globalization and the Musical Career

says John Graham, chairman of the string department. Students might even play a piece that they have commissioned from a classmate at Eastman who is studying composition.”

Bennett traces the efforts of conservatories to revise their curriculum since the 1960s, when classical music performance degrees were broadening to include composition, pedagogy, musicology, jazz, contemporary and world music. The seven British conservatories have undertaken a range of reforms, most prominently the Royal College of Music, Royal Northern College of Music, and the Guildhall School. Guildhall has attempted to re-define its role in the community by a program to work with the youth in the poor suburbs of East London. The Royal Northern Conservatory of Music’s School of Wind and Percussion has added supporting areas such as pedagogy and jazz performance to its traditional Western music performance curriculum. This program includes “group teaching, coaching ensembles, notation-free performance and work with jazz structures.”

We OMTA teachers should heed the evidence that our students will be “composite” musicians, not “concert artists.” We should *not* abandon the rich European concert tradition most of us were raised with, but we must be aware of the wide variety of other styles and practices that our students will enjoy and utilize. In addition to traditional performance venues, our students are likely to be involved in rock groups; praise bands or other music for worship; and music for film, video, or computer games. Their music is more likely to be distributed via the Internet, or other technologies that haven’t been invented yet, rather than heard in the concert hall. Many of our students will want to improvise and read chord symbols as well as read staff notation; to create original music, and to record and distribute it using various technologies; and to collaborate with others in performing, recording and songwriting. Today’s musician must assume an ever-shifting variety of roles, including teacher, marketer, computer technician, manager, producer, recording artist—as well as performer. They will live in a world far more eclectic than we ever imagined. We teachers need to help prepare them for this world.





## Dream Big and Be Realistic: An Interview with Dr. Jill Timmons

by Rhonda Ringering, NCTM



Jill Timmons and students

"There is a big gap in teaching," Jill Timmons states. "We are not looking at what we are doing and why. We live in a paradox: teaching still requires attention to rigor, but we must also prepare our students for a changing marketplace."

We are seated in Timmons' sunny Lake Oswego dining room, the remains of lunch cleared away, and freshly-brewed coffee fueling our conversation. The music teaching profession has changed dramatically in the eighteen years I have known her, and Timmons'

words reflect that change. The enthusiasm remains, but it is tempered by the depth and insight of her decades of working as Artsmentor to so many professionals locally and across the country.

"How many music students are actually planning to pursue a music career?" She asks. "Most teachers have very few students who will choose this path. We must have the courage to ask our students the big questions: why are you studying? Why are you here? The student's life plan flowers from here." She pauses a moment. "This plan must come from the student, not the teacher. And we must lay the seeds for entrepreneurship."

Timmons' own performing, writing, and teaching career is a study in high art, individually crafted dreams, and hands-on hard work. International concert performances, award-garnering recordings, the Two-Piano Institute in France, Artist-in-Residence at Linfield College, a burgeoning writing career, her Artsmentor business, and even an appearance on the soundtrack to a Ken Burns documentary several years ago—it is a dizzying list of accomplishments. I once referred to Timmons as the Oprah of classical piano; the description still seems to fit.

"You can make a living in music," Timmons continues, "but you can't put the artist's soul on the chopping block of capitalism. You must separate income from art because you can't be an artist without a full commitment. We need to ask our students, 'what is your perfect life in ten years?' and then we need to let them know that making a living and being an artist

## Dream Big and Be Realistic: An Interview with Dr. Jill Timmons

are two separate things. Think of Charles Ives: do we think of him as not serious because he didn't make his living in music? Sometimes being an artist and making a living do intersect. But not always. How we make a living does not necessarily define who we are as artists."

She recounts a story from one of Gyorgy Sebok's workshops she hosted at Linfield years ago. A student in his mid-thirties played a Brahms sonata and gave a stunning, deeply satisfying performance of the piece. During a break, this student spoke with Sebok and complained about not being able to get concerts and how difficult it was to have a career in music. Sebok let him run it all out and then when he came to the end, said, "Yes, but you got to play the Brahms sonata. How long did that take?"

"Few people get the ecstasy of playing this work so well," Timmons comments. "It is a connection with beauty and with the numinous. Sebok wasn't seduced into talking about managing the young man's career. He wanted to know who the young man was and why he does what he does. He also wanted to remind this young pianist that he had already achieved something extraordinary—he could play Brahms with real command and artistry!"

Timmons' work through Artsmentor begins with this sort of question: Who are you? What is really in your heart and whose dream is it—yours or someone else's? She asks the penetrating question, if you didn't have to make a living, what would you do? Then the process of opening up and discovering begins. It takes time to clarify a vision and to see what it looks like, feels like, and tastes like but once it is clear, implementing becomes dynamic and practical.

"We must dream and be realistic," she claims. "And this training isn't anywhere in our education. But it is our job to ask these questions of ourselves and of our students."

One of Timmons' former students came to her as an engineer who was working on her doctorate in engineering but had always dreamed of becoming a pianist. With just this dream, a late start in lessons, and a couple of years of piano training, this student followed her passion and worked arduously to achieve it. She was recently accepted as a piano major in a liberal arts music department in the Midwest. Other success stories include a Midwest early instrument musician who has toured for years on grants obtained from the National Endowment for the Humanities. A more humble example includes her life changing question—"why can't you do both?"—when in my early twenties I struggled to choose between my passion for music and my love of writing.

"Once you commit to your own vision, other's opinions no longer matter," Timmons says. "Once you open yourself up to the possibilities of your own dreams, then you have to do it. And what is success? It may be mastering a piece of music or making a recording, or a recital, or collaborating with a certain player. We are successful because we got to do this thing."

Making the dream tangible takes much more work than simply day dreaming about it. Once clarified, Timmons guides her clients to put the goal on a realistic timeline that starts with a one year goal. It is concrete and is broken down into manageable weekly tasks. The next goal is a five year plan that encompasses a broader vision. Timmons

## Dream Big and Be Realistic: An Interview with Dr. Jill Timmons

believes this sort of dream discovery and implementation must become part of every teacher's job.

"We all have cells in instruction," she states. "We teach theory, technique, performance practice, and we must also have a cell for self-actualization. We must leave room in our lessons for this kind of conversation. And there is no room for making music by force. We need to ask our students, what's your vision? Who's your hero? What kind of pieces do you like? And we need to begin this conversation early, while they are still young."

In Timmons' philosophy, good teaching always requires us to ask very spiritual questions. The questions of why a student is drawn to the piano and what sort of dreams the student harbors must be a process of discovery, not of force. What is success? Winning a competition? Having a lot of money? Timmons believes that if success is placing first in a competition or a bank account or a job, we are focused on the wrong goals as artists. It doesn't mean that life as a musician necessarily has to be one of scarce means. In fact one is more likely to thrive as an artist both creatively and financially if one is inner directed. What matters is uncovering the soul's desires and finding meaning and grounding here, not in the outside stuff.

In response to hearing of students being forced to study music, she says, "let them go! Talk to the parents about what is good teaching. Please don't traumatize students about winning! What are they winning? How will it get the student something? The success and value of teaching and performance cannot be found in winning."

Mid-afternoon sunlight streams through the dining room window. Timmons—a winner in so many professional arenas—smiles and states,

"Life is not about winning or losing. Can we win love? Can winning a piano contest provide us with a thriving career? If we lose in competition is there no career path available? How do we win happiness? These are all questions that help to sculpt our teaching in the 21st century. Our best model for teaching is to guide our students in becoming inner directed and entrepreneurial in spirit. Whether they choose a professional career in music or not, this type of training will help to prepare them for a richly textured and abundant life."



# New Voices

## Teaching Private Music Lessons in the 21st Century

by Robyn Pfeifer, NCTM



### About the Author

Robyn Pfeifer, NCTM has been teaching piano for 15 years and is the owner and director of MusicWerks Studio in Portland and the blog [www.MusicTeachingSuccess.com](http://www.MusicTeachingSuccess.com). She is an educator, clinician, and author. Robyn teaches all ages and levels of students. Her Web site Music Teaching Success is designed to help teachers succeed in business.

Teaching the modern student how we were taught as children is no longer effective. The student of the 21st century requires a complete musical education that considers the individual, communicates with parents, and uses modern technology in addition to teaching students how to play the instrument.

Incorporating these three points into your teaching ideals will keep students long term so you can have the opportunity to actually teach and raise a competent musician.

### Tailor Lessons to the Individual Student

Understanding that each student comes with their own individual needs to be met as part of teaching is imperative for modern teachers. Consider the personality, learning style, and interests of each student. Ask if a student has learning disabilities or other issues that may affect private music study. What are their personal and musical interests that you could use to motivate students in lessons? Although learning classical repertoire is extremely important, tossing in a little Harry Potter, Star Wars, or other favorite music can act as a real motivator for students to practice all of their music for lessons.

### Parent Communication and Education

Many of today's parents want their children to take private music lessons, because they never did. Parents often do not understand the dedication, time, and commitment required for lessons. Some parents expect children to practice by themselves without being nagged or reminded. As teachers we know that most students are not capable of regular practice without being guided and constantly reminded by

both parents and the teacher. It is up to us to properly educate the parent so they may understand how to get their child to practice and continue lessons.

In addition to basic communication like assignment notebooks, add more modern techniques to increase parent education and awareness such as a series of parent education e-mails on the importance of practice, routine, and dedication to lessons. Have a new parent orientation meeting where parents can be educated on how to keep students studying music long term.

Student progress reports also aid teacher/parent communication. This is a wonderful tool to educate both parents and students on the child's progress in lessons throughout the year.

### **Use Technology**

It's easy for today's teacher to use technology to increase student learning. Many lesson methods come with accompaniment CD's for students to use and develop duet and ensemble skills.

Recording a student's performance motivates and inspires. A digital keyboard and the program Garage Band on Macintosh is an easy way to record students. Teachers can use the built in microphone on the Mac for recording an acoustic piano if they don't have a keyboard. Portable stereo recording devices are also very affordable for a quality recording.

Having students bring their iPods' for sharing their musical favorites with the teacher can be a wonderful way to get to know students better. Teachers can also use Garage Band to record a student's lesson and then put it on CD or their iPod for home study during the week.

Incorporating these three aspects as part of modern teaching is important to long term student retention and success.



# Ask Artsmentor

by Dr. Jill Timmons



## About the Author

Jill Timmons, writer, career consultant, and concert/recording artist, has melded a professional career to include performance on three continents, award-winning publications, and educational/consulting opportunities for music professionals. Recipient of the Wilk Literary Prize (USC), she has written for *American Music Teacher*, *Clavier Magazine*, the *College Music Society*, *Carpe Diem Books*, the *Jewish Review* and works as an career consultant for Artsmentor as well as O'Malley International Associates. She is professor of music and artist-in-residence at Linfield College in Oregon.

**QUESTION:** I am a small town private piano teacher. Our MTNA chapter has only ten members and we are some three hours from the nearest metropolitan area. I believe my students need more regular performance experience but I am limited in what I can offer through my studio. Any suggestions?

**ANSWER:** I am a firm believer in the notion of creating consortia in the arts. When we join together with others, we are greater than the sum of the parts. Here are some suggestions, although once you get started with your colleagues, I am sure you will develop many more creative ideas. Create a performance consortium within your local MTNA chapter in which all the students in your chapter have more diverse and abundant performance opportunities. By going out into your community, you will discover the need for live music and by working together with your MTNA colleagues, you will find that the process is easier with a shared project. What about going to local retirement centers, nursing homes, hospitals, places where people may be confined? Music is a welcome addition to the lives of these people. Your students will have a warm and appreciative audience. If you need a piano delivered to one of the venues, consider a partnership with your local piano dealer. You may have access to a piano if you offer free advertising and the occasional "sales pitch." Consider a fundraiser for one of your civic charities. Have your local students do an all-day Mozart marathon to raise money for the local blood bank or food pantry. These experiences benefit students by putting them in contact with their local communities. Through the process of enriching the lives of others, our students

gain valuable performance experience and discover the power of music. This consortium will also create partnerships with your colleagues in the local MTNA chapter. Supporting one another's students is the best way to build a strong MTNA chapter. Who knows, the teachers may want to occasionally join the students in performance outreach!



## Why We Play

*If we were a medical school, and you were here as a med student practicing appendectomies, you'd take your work very seriously because you would imagine that some night at two AM someone is going to waltz into your emergency room and you're going to have to save their life. Well, my friends, someday at 8 PM someone is going to walk into your concert hall and bring you a mind that is confused, a heart that is overwhelmed, a soul that is weary. Whether they go out whole again will depend partly on how well you do your craft.*

— Karl Paulnack, Boston Conservatory —

