Build your own website!
Patti Misita, IMTF Chair

Have you ever considered setting up a website for your studio? I contemplated this for several years. Each time I looked into it, I was either put off by the cost, or just didn't know where to begin. This year, BRMTA established a site for our local organization. It is up and running at www.brmta.org. Currently members, events, and yearbook information are included on the website. It is possible to set up member log-in features that will allow us to manage events through the internet in the future.

Inspired by our local organization and by a few members who went before me, I decided to go ahead and set up my own site. There are several options available that are either free or inexpensive, and are easy to use. Marietta Lanoux has a simple webpage that gives information about her background and program (http://www.pianoandchambermusic.net:80/). Katherine Tobey maintains a site through Cox Cable at no cost. Your local internet provider may also offer free pages with your service. Patricia Dolan (www.PatriciaDolanPiano.com) taught herself to use Macromedia and Fireworks to create her own site. Former LMTA member Molly Weise Lohman found a company called Practice Spot which offers a wonderful website hosting service designed specifically for music teachers. I decided to use this service because it was so simple and offered many attractive features for my students. If you are interested there is a 30 day trial period available. Molly, Donna Toney, and I have all set up sites through Practice Spot. The process was simple and it is very affordable.

As independent teachers we are responsible for all aspects of our business, and at least in my case, the non-teaching tasks can sometimes be overwhelming. Paperwork and communication with parents and students are important parts of what we do. The website helps me get information to students and parents much more quickly and easily. I have received nothing but positive feedback from parents and students on the new website. It offers them easy access to all information regarding the studio.

Reasons for building a website:

∗ Parents have instant access to information, anytime, anywhere. How often do you get calls from parents regarding information already sent home in a newsletter or on an assignment sheet? Information can be posted to your site regarding all events, group lessons, deadlines, etc. This is a much more efficient way to communicate with parents. For extra emphasis, send emails referring them to your website.

* A website says that you are a professional who is willing to embrace new technology and move with the times. If you want to be treated as a professional you must act like one. Most businesses have some sort of website giving basic information about what services they offer, location, etc. How many times do you use the internet when looking for information? Parents use phone books and newspapers less than they use the internet these days. Students receive

instructions and assignments from their teachers via the internet. They prefer text-messaging to phone use. Google has become the ultimate source of information of our time. Why not promote yourself in a way that speaks to parents and students of this generation.

* Students love having their accomplishments recognized.   Posting pictures of events, recitals, etc, can be a wonderful way to recognize and motivate. New students can see what types of events and awards are available to them as they progress.

* It is a wonderful and efficient way to introduce prospective students to your program. When you get a call from a parent about lessons, you can direct them to your website for instant access to your studio policy, schedule and other pertinent information. They can also see what your studio has to offer first hand. Include a mission statement, a description of your program and photos of your studio. This says a lot more about you than anything you can say on the phone.

* It is a learning resource. Our students live on the internet. They do homework, keep up with friends and get information. Provide links to music sites that offer games, resources and other information for music students.
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What resources are available for setting up a site?

MTNA: Association in a Box (AIB) is free to all state and local associations. Check out www.mtna.org for more information. This is a new service from MTNA.

BRMTA site: Baton Rouge hired a professional company to build our site. They have worked with several other MTA's and the cost was reasonable. Contact heidi@handmadedesigns.com for more information.

Practice Spot: Practice Spot offers webvertisement pages. This is a pre-designed site that you customize with your own personal information. You select a template and then enter information about your qualifications, background, facilities and what your studio offers. You can attach your policy, give directions and include links to other sites. The fee is reasonable and the site is easy to use. Go to www.musicteaching.info to learn more. Visit these sites to see what other members have done.
     www.misitapiano.musicteaching.info
     www.toneypiano.musicteaching.info
     www.mollylohman.musicteaching.info

Cox Communications: Cox cable offers free web pages to customers.
Visit Katherine Tobey's website at http://members.cox.net/tobeykath/ for an example of this option. Check with your cable provider to see if they offer similar services.

If you would like to submit a question for a future score, or if you would like more information regarding websites, please contact me feel free to contact me at psmisita@cox.net. (*Spring 2007*)