



March 2014

S C O R E



From The President
Patti Misita

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I hope everyone is enjoying this burst of winter weather! Aside from the schedule disruptions it has been a nice change of pace! This issue of the score features inspirational articles from committee chairs Pamela Pike (Composition) Brandon Bascom (Community Outreach) and Eleanor Elkins (Wellness). Hopefully they will give us food for thought as we move ahead into Spring.

I do hope to see many of you at the MTNA Conference, March 22 - 26 in Chicago. If you will be attending the Gala please join us at our state table. We honor Marjorie Stricklin as our Louisiana Foundation Fellow for 2014. Please let me know in advance if you will attend.

Louisiana was well represented at the South Central Division Competitions. Once again we have two winners. Congratulations to Marika Buchholz, Senior Woodwinds winner, student of Malena McLaren and Young Artist Piano winner, Scott Cohen, student of Faina Lushtak. Alternates were: Venkatesh Sivaraman, Senior Piano, student of Emily Hirsch; Benita Dzhurkova, Senior Strings; student of James Alexander. Honorable mention goes to Matthew Aubert, student of Sue-Steck Turner for Elementary Composition. All of our Louisiana MTA winners can be found on our LMTA website by clicking on the mask.



The Torgrimson Swanzy Competition will be held June 7, 2014 at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches. Thanks to Francis Yang and CENLA for hosting this event.

The LMTA Summer Board Meeting will be held at The Wesley Center on Saturday, August 23, 2014. If you serve on the Board please mark your calendar for a day of sharing ideas for the future of LMTA.

Our 2014 LMTA Convention will be held in Ruston on the Campus of Louisiana Tech, October 9-10. President-elect LaWanda Blakeney has a sneak preview of all the wonderful things we will have to offer in this issue. Mark your calendars to join us!

Patti Misita





Composition

Pamela Pike
Composition Chair

Yes, You Can Teach Elementary Composition:
Tips for including creative activities into
weekly lessons...even if you don't have
time or experience!



In the spirit of full disclosure, I feel that I need to preface this article with the following statements: I am not a composer, nor do I have any desire to compose during my free time. While some of my

best improvisations have occurred in recital (after a memory failure, of course), I have tried to avoid the improvisational experience for most of my professional life. While I wrote chorales and exercises in counterpoint as a high school student and university music major, I didn't directly transfer those skills to my own solo playing (at the time). So, it would be fair for you to ask why I would write an article about incorporating composition into the weekly lesson. The reason is simple.

I believe that creative activities should be part of every student's lesson from the very first meeting. I believe that true musical synthesis and deeper understanding (of theory, harmony, technique and musicianship skills) can be achieved through compositional activities. The argument that many of us make is that we do not have enough expertise in the compositional arena to teach composition. We do, however, have music degrees and a deep understanding of theoretical knowledge. Indeed, not all of us play Beethoven like Alfred Brendel... but that does not stop us from teaching Beethoven to our students and from continuing to refine our own performance skills! Let's explore what we do know about composition

Masterworks to Inspire Composition

Piano teachers have access to one of the largest repertoires of elementary and intermediate teaching literature. Exposure to many different works, styles, and composers has provided us with a rich knowledge base. If we explore a popular level 1 piece, such as Köhler's "Melodic Tune, Op. 218, No. 20," we find a 16-measure composition in the key of G Major. (This piece is contained in numerous anthologies including Masterwork Classes 1-2; see excerpt below.) There are four phrases built around a G Major five-finger pattern. The "question" phrases, in this case phrases 1 and 3, are identical. As expected, these phrases are "answered" differently in phrases 2 and 4. Throughout, the left hand accompaniment consists of tonic, subdominant, and dominant broken chords. A closer look the melody (in the first phrase, for example) shows that Köhler has used only notes of the tonic triad, simply rearranging the notes and using a simple rhythmic pattern for the first 4 measures.





Melodic Tune Op. 218, No. 20 (Excerpt)

Louis Kohler



Using this masterpiece of teaching as a model for creating our own teaching compositions, we might have students experiment with improvising different answer phrases to this piece. Or, we could have students create their own “melodic tunes” in various pentascale positions. Personally, I find it helpful to provide my students with a starting and an ending note for each phrase, when they embark on this exercise. However, I do not wait until a student is advanced enough to play a level 1 piece to begin composition in the lesson.

Reinforce New Concepts Through Composition

In my studio students create weekly “composer pieces” following the very first lesson. I give them guidelines or parameters, based on what the main concepts of the lesson were. I find that starting the compositional process early permits students to exercise some creativity while exploring musical sounds at the keyboard. At first, I do not ask them to notate what they have written, though some of my students find creative pictograms to express their musical composition. As they learn about major and minor pentascales, primary triads, and other theoretical concepts we begin to refine their compositional skills. I have also used the act of notating our composer pieces, to be very helpful for students who struggle with reading since we are, in fact, “reading in reverse” – notating the notes that we see and hear on the piano!

A Helpful Teacher’s Guide

Fortunately, for those of us who do not have time to create compositional exercises for our students there are several resources on the market that can be very helpful. The Piano Teacher’s Guide to Creative Composition (Hal Leonard) by the late Carol Klose is an 80-page guide for teachers who wish to learn more about the compositional process, in general. The book contains five parts that cover the broad topics of: laying the groundwork for creative composition; student’s library of compositional tools; mapping a composition; lesson plans; and, refining a composition.

Continued on page 4

There is also an appendix containing 6 pages of useful resources. This book is a concise, but comprehensive resource for teachers and contains numerous intermediate to advanced examples of compositional styles and activities. While there are some elementary activities, the book is aimed at broadly exploring important topics at various levels, rather than covering specific topics in depth. There is a five-page “composer’s toolbox” that covers basic topics such as form, rhythm and meter, pitch, melody, harmony and expanded elements including character, transitional techniques and special effects. While this book might work for some more advanced students, I would suggest that the resources covered in this book are more useful for the teacher who teaches composition as part the music curriculum. Also, this book would be an excellent resource for teachers wishing to explore ways to add compositional activities to the weekly lesson.

Work Books for Student Composers

If you are looking for good resources that your piano students can use, Wynn-Anne Rossi (who presented sessions on teaching composition at our LMTA State Convention in 2013) has a set of six books entitled *The Creative Composition Toolbox: A Step-By-Step Guide for Learning to Compose* (Alfred). The books range in difficulty from “early elementary” (beginning with creative off-staff piano notation) through “late intermediate” (where students begin to compose using secondary dominants, modulation, lead sheets and even in canon!) The books are sequential, building gradually on concepts that have been explored previously. Activities are simple and straight-forward enough to take up minimal lesson time. Each compositional activity is preceded by a “model” composition written by Ms. Rossi so that the student can explore the concepts within the context of an elementary work. Then, through a series of succinct directions, students create their own piece. Manuscript and measures are provided, along with helpful parameters (for example starting pitches or motives). Each piece contains a “toolbox tip” and a “composer connection,” where a few sentences describe important composers in history.

These books are designed to be integrated into any well-sequenced piano curriculum and concepts used in each composition reinforce concepts that are likely being explored during the regular lesson. During our 2013 LMTA Convention, Rossi noted that she assigns the composition pages for homework, so this process does not take too much time during the lesson as the student is doing most of the work at home. I would suggest that the activities are so well-designed and thought-out that students should achieve enjoyable results, and thus be motivated to complete the activities and explore composition at home.

Ideas from our MTNA Colleagues

These are just a few tangible ideas and resources for incorporating compositional activities into the musical experience for your students. Several teachers in our state find that working on compositions during the summer months provides time to explore composition in depth. Our colleagues have done this either in private lessons or through group composition camps or classes. I find that when my students hear compositions written by their peers, they gather new ideas and are inspired to be even more creative themselves. Another MTNA colleague (who teaches in a state just north of us) hosts special composition recitals each spring and occasionally she brings in an educational composer, such as Dennis Alexander, to work with her composition students for a day. Such compositional workshops usually conclude with a student recital of works by the guest composer and the “resident composers!”

In Louisiana, remember that we have venues for young composers to receive feedback for their compositions, either in the LMTA Elementary Composition Competition (school grades 3-6) or in the Louisiana State MTNA Composition Competition (ages 5-26). First-place winners perform their work at the LMTA State Convention. All entrants receive specific feedback, which teachers have found to be very helpful during the past couple of years. But, we could create more informal opportunities for learning too. For example, teachers within local associations could sponsor informal student-composer recitals or create venues for young composers to receive feedback from a composer in the region. These are just a few ideas for us to consider as we continue our own musical learning. It might be liberating and enlightening for us to flex some new (or atrophied) musical muscles by helping our students to explore compositional activities during the lesson.

Resources

Klose, Carol. (2011). *Piano Teacher's Guide to Creative Composition*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation. (\$9.99)

Rossi, Wynn-Anne. (2012). *Creative Composition Toolbox: A Step-by-Step Guide for Learning to Compose* (books 1-6). Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music Publishing Co., Inc. (\$6.99 each)

Information on LMTA Elementary Composition Competition: <http://www.lmta.org/state.asp?page=elementaryrules>

Information about MTNA Louisiana State Composition Competition: <http://www.mtna.org/programs/competitions/composition-guidelines/>

Inspiring and Motivating Others Through the Value of the Arts

Brandon Bascom Community Outreach & Education



I am happy to serve as the Community Outreach and Education chair for LMTA. Accepting this position caused me to research community outreach and education on the MTNA website. I am confident this information will be valuable to you; and have provided a link for you. Click on the mask and you will be brought to the MTNA website. 

This page gives guidelines for state and local associations in their Community Outreach and Education on behalf of music and arts education. While lobbying and advocacy is allowed, there are limits to how much so the associations do not lose their tax-exempt status with the IRS.

"The advocacy page also says, "The maintenance of school music programs and the continuance of arts activities in our communities are vital to the education of America's children and the future of our culture and can be profoundly influenced by the proactive involvement of each MTNA member. Music Teachers National Association is committed to ensuring access to viable music programs for the benefit of all." In my short time here in Louisiana, I know that there are several teachers that are involved in programs such as MusicLink, as well as others.

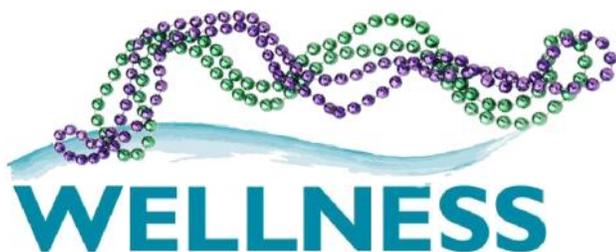
From the web page, I understand the role of Community Outreach and Education Chair "for the most part relies upon inspiring and motivating music teachers, parents, students and other friends and professional colleagues through informational and educational efforts concerning the value of the arts." I asked myself what were some of the most inspirational talks I have heard on music and the value of the arts? I came up with three keynote speeches from various venues. I was fortunate to hear two of them live and I wanted to share them with you.

The MTNA National conference in New York 2012 featured Keynote speaker, Benjamin Zander who gave an address titled, "The Art of Possibility." Click on the mask to see a shortened version. 🦋 His remarks are powerful. He discusses how classical music is for everyone. He speaks to the ability of awakening possibility in others. He says you know you are awakening possibility if the eyes of those you are around shine. If they are not shining, we need to ask ourselves what are we doing that our students' eyes are not shining?

The National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy in July 2009 featured Keynote speaker, Brian Chung, Senior Vice President of Kawai. He spoke on the role of the teacher in his remarks titled, "Life Shaper or Artist maker." I found a recording of the same talk given at MTAC. Click on the mask. 🦋 He asks, "What lenses do you use in this professions?" He also discusses different ways of defining success.

The last clip someone shared with me via social media. It is Dr. Jack Stamp who is the Chairperson of the Music Department and Director of Band Studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He was speaking to a group of parents during an honors band performance at the Pennsylvania Region 5 Band. His remarks are titled, "Why Music Matters." Click on the mask 🦋 He addresses that music is the one thing in our students' lives that demands perfection. We don't always get there; seldom do we get there. He also pleads with parents, "You can't let someone who doesn't know about music take music out of our schools." He also advocates that music develops the right side of the brain that develops the heart, and triggers emotions.

I hope you will take the time to enjoy these addresses, and that you find them inspiring. Also if you are involved in a project that has to do with Community Outreach or Education, feel free to share it with me. bbascom@dillard.edu



Eleanor Elkins
Wellness Chair

Google "piano injury prevention" and you get 172,000 hits – medical research, summer workshops, DVD demos, teachers who specialize in healthy technique, etc. etc. The sheer amount of information is both exhilarating and daunting. Where to begin?



Scrolling down the endless entries, I recalled my own experience as an injured pianist and wondered how different it would have been if Google had existed then. Way back when, I over-practiced myself into acute bilateral tendonitis and a companion case of utter black depression. My life as a graduate performance major was at a complete standstill.

Eventually I climbed far enough out of the Pit of Despair to go to the music library (yes, children, with a card catalog and book stacks) and read everything I could find on piano technique. After all, what else did I have to do?

Most of it was unscientific in the extreme except for one volume, Otto Ortmann's 1929 *The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique*. His photographic experiments clearly demonstrated that efficient movement at the keyboard was primarily curvilinear. Yet Czerny had recommended practicing with a coin on the back of the hand for maximum stability! Could he be – gasp – wrong?? My world turned upside down.

The long journey to wellness that followed was fraught with trial and error, a fortuitous encounter with the discipline of yoga, and eventually serious hands-on work with an expert teacher. Looking back, I realize how blessed we are to live in this information age. Google could have pointed me in the right direction quickly, with one important caveat: that I be able to get to the help I needed. Ideally, I could have found someone reasonably local (as opposed to a long flight away) to talk with, get ideas from, even visit in person.

As it turns out, we are now living in the ideal world. MTNA has mandated the establishment of Wellness Chairs for each state association and I am delighted to assume this responsibility. Healthy technique is relevant to every level of piano playing. To a youngster, the jumps in the Bach Minuet in D are as titanic as any Liszt octaves and Clementi passagework as formidable as a Chopin etude. The sheer complexity of our repertoire can literally tie us in knots.

My hope is to serve as a resource by phone {(337)477-0759 or (325)450-8931} e-mail {eejames99@hotmail.com} or skype {eleanor.elkins.1@skype.com}; to present sessions at convention, and most especially to travel to local groups for mini-clinics and sessions. Please let me know what would be most helpful to you, and thank you for this opportunity!



SAVE THE DATE

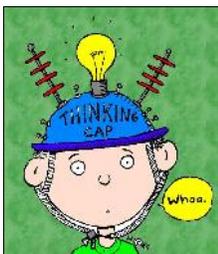


LaWanda Blakeney
LMTA President-Elect

No, I'm not a young blushing bride (been there, done that), but I do want you to SAVE THE DATE . . . for our 2014 state convention. It will take place on October 9-10 on the campus of Louisiana Tech University in Ruston. Our host is Dr. Steele Moegle, and she and her colleagues have already begun preparations toward making this convention



the best ever. It's my distinct pleasure to formally announce that our featured speaker is Dr. Jane Magrath, who is internationally renowned for her enormous contributions in piano pedagogy. She has a very busy schedule, and we are, indeed, fortunate that we were able to secure her for our convention. We aimed for the top person in this field, and in my opinion, we got her! So please . . . come on up to north Louisiana and join us!



Thinking about something you would like to share? Go to page 7 to find out more information!

CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS

We are now accepting proposals for sessions from members who wish to present at the 2014 LMTA Convention, October 9-10 at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston. Session length is 50 minutes. Collegiate members should include the name and contact information for their faculty advisor. Please submit the following no later than April 1:

PRESENTATION TOPIC

Brief (50-word maximum) description of session

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR ALL PRESENTERS

(e-mail, phone and mailing address)

BIOGRAPHY OF ALL PRESENTERS

(50-word maximum)

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Send all information to La Wanda Blakeney, LMTA President-elect
lawanda.blakeney@lsus.edu



Comments, and or suggestions for THE SCORE, LMTA's newsletter, can be emailed to David Easley, LMTA Vice President for Publicity at achordabove@etigers.net

