**Proceedings from the**

**2010 National Group Piano/**

**Piano Pedagogy Forum**

Reprinted from *Piano Pedagogy Forum*, [The Frances Clark Center](http://www.keyboardpedagogy.org)

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***Developing an Outreach Curriculum***

**Reporter: Cully Bell**

Derek Kealii Polischuk, Assistant Professor of Piano and Director of Piano Pedagogy at Michigan State University, presented a session involving the outreach curriculum at the Michigan State University College of Music, in which piano pedagogy students travel to urban Detroit to give piano instruction to students. Polischuk began by pointing out the current economic circumstances faced by Detroit. According to Polischuk, one in three residents in Detroit live below the poverty level, primarily due to the loss of manufacturing jobs. On the other hand, some suburbs in Detroit are quite wealthy. Though the economy is suffering, Polischuk noted that music lessons should not be limited to those who can afford them.

Polischuk mentioned that public schools in Detroit are often considered to be failing. He then discussed The Cornerstone School, a private school in urban Detroit. With a 95% on-time high school graduation rate, this school has an 11-month school year. Emphasizing parental involvement and individualized learning, this school achieves significant success. Particularly notable is the vibrant music program available at Cornerstone, which includes group piano classes. Using electronic keyboards, 42 students in grades 6 through 8 are taught in five different classes. These piano courses are highly popular with the students.

After providing background information regarding The Cornerstone School, Polischuk discussed the partnership between this school and the Michigan State University College of Music. Once a semester, the piano pedagogy students at MSU travel to Cornerstone in order to give master-classes for the students in these piano classes. In return, the Cornerstone students get the opportunity to visit MSU for various musical events, where they are also given the opportunity to play on Steinway D pianos. Polischuk showed several video clips, available on YouTube, of MSU students giving master-classes to these students.

Highly beneficial to the MSU pedagogy students, this program provides an opportunity to develop skill sets that are not readily available in a pedagogy classroom setting by giving the students the opportunity to give master-classes, as well as by providing teaching opportunities across a wide range of social and economic demographics. As noted by Polischuk, piano pedagogy students, and musicians in general, tend to live “insulated” lives. This program enables them to branch out into the community and see the larger role that music education plays in the betterment of society.

Polischuk went on to discuss the various expenses of this program. Transportation and meal expenses are underwritten by a local family foundation. Overall, he noted that this program is not very expensive. Many partnerships make this program possible, including the MSU College of Music Outreach and Engagement, the Cornerstone School itself, as well as donors such as Family Foundations, Cornerstone School Partners, and the MSU Alumni Club Grant.

Polischuk noted the various positive outcomes of this partnership. The Cornerstone students, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, benefit from the opportunity to receive high-level music instruction. In turn, the Michigan State University students benefit from gaining teaching and master-classing experience, and receive inspiration and fulfillment from this program. The School of Music at MSU also benefits, in that these visits are also useful for recruiting purposes. In summary, this partnership program benefits both the pedagogy students at MSU, as well as the piano students at Cornerstone, and Polischuk encouraged other educators to incorporate similar programs into their pedagogy curriculums.

**Cully Bell** is the Coordinator of Piano Pedagogy and Class Piano at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He previously taught group and applied piano at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where he was also on the faculty of the Preparatory Department. He is completing his DMA at UCC-CM, where he studied piano with Elizabeth Pridonoff and pedagogy with Michelle Conda, to whom he was assistant. In addition to teaching and performing activities, he is the Artistic Director for the *Challenging Performances* concert series in Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Breakout Session: *High School Group Piano Instructor***

**Reporter: Nicole Young-Biggs**

In a breakout session, Pam Kalmbach shared her contributions in building a curriculum for group piano courses at Westwood High School in Round Rock, Texas. She teaches about 200 students on a weekly basis in a classroom equipped with approximately 20 pianos. The curriculum is centered on building essential piano performance skills supported by general musicianship activities such as ear training, music theory, ensemble playing, and composition.

The curriculum is organized into five levels, with level one consisting of beginners with no piano experience. Alfred’s Basic *All-in-One Course* is used as a textbook for level one, with other selected supplementary instruction books for the other levels depending on the collective skill set of the class. A typical class consists of individual warm-ups with cadences and scales followed by ear-training exercises. Rhythmic activities are emphasized through the use of exercises away from the keyboard that make use of drums and rhythm sticks. Additional classroom activities include students working together in performance ensembles and sight-reading. Classes are 90-minutes in length, 45 of which are allotted to individual practice time.

Student projects include composer-based PowerPoint presentations and ensemble performance projects, as well as composition projects involving modes, theme and variations, and holiday arrangements. Forty percent of the final grade is drawn from class performance projects. Music technology is an essential element of the classes. Kalmbach uses a variety of computer programs such as *Finale*, *Auralia*, *Musition* and *Audacity*.

Kalmbach graciously shared the curriculum for the high school group piano classes in her breakout session. She affirmed the importance of drawing from individual learning styles, trying “new” instructional approaches, and aiming for appealing student-centered class activities in the group piano setting. Her situation at Westwood High School illustrates the potential for group piano instruction in the high school setting. For those brave piano instructors with an open mind and entrepreneurial spirit, the American high school could be the next new frontier for teaching piano in the group setting, and become a viable option for music courses at the secondary level of public education in the United States.

**Nicole Young-Biggs**, NCTM, made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2006 and has since performed in China, Italy, England, and the United States. Recent awards include winner of the Oklahoma Israel Exchange Young Artist Competition and the Yamaha In-Residence Fellowship. Her solo recording, *Lyricality*, is available on iTunes and amazon.com. She has performance degrees from the University of North Texas and the Cleveland Institute of Music and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Oklahoma. She teaches applied piano, group piano, piano pedagogy, and coordinates the group piano program at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

***Educational Research Instruction in the Graduate Pedagogy Curriculum: Providing***

***New Tools to Future Researchers and College Faculty***

**Reporter: Mason Conklin**

Dr. Alejandro Cremaschi of the University of Colorado identified what he considers a troubling gap in the curricula for graduate piano pedagogy programs, namely, instruction in research in music education. Cremaschi believes that since the academic discipline of piano pedagogy has matured from its nascence in the early 80’s, it is important that programs produce not just excellent teachers, but excellent researchers in music education as well. However, in a survey of twelve DMA programs in piano pedagogy, only three included introduction to research in music education as part of the curricula.

Co-presenter Emily Book McGree, a DMA student at the University of Colorado, observed that, as teachers, we often rely on informal sources of knowledge to guide our instructional endeavors. Such informal sources of knowledge include relying on intuition, self-examination and reflection on techniques that worked for us, reading articles, talking with colleagues, and modeling the instruction we received from our teachers. However, this source of information can be somewhat unreliable. McGree contrasted these informal and occasionally unreliable sources of knowledge with the kind of knowledge that is gained in academic research. She defined research as, “the search for reliable knowledge using systematic investigation.” Research can be used to confirm intuition, or to shed new light on a problem.

**Research Methodologies**

Cremaschi and McGree briefly outlined five methodologies well suited for piano pedagogy research and provided real-world examples to help illustrate the methodologies.

1. **Survey/Descriptive studies.** Survey studies use statistical sampling to provide an accurate description of prevailing conditions. For example, a researcher might survey a number of parents over a wide geographical area to ascertain attitudes and goals for piano lessons for their children. Teachers could use this information to better address the wants and needs of parents.

2. **Correlational studies.** In correlational studies, researchers try to find relationships between two different concepts through statistical methods. For example, a researcher might try to determine the relationship of household income to the number of years a child continues piano lessons.

3. **Experimental, Quasi-experimental studies.** In experimental studies, two similar groups of individuals are measured on a certain outcome. One group receives a treatment, and the other group does not. For example, a researcher might compare academic achievement of low-income students with half of those students receiving piano lessons. Such research could be used for seeking grant funding for special outreach programs.

4. **Case and Phenomenological studies.** Case studies and phenomenological studies use qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis rather than statistical methods. The researcher does not propose a hypothesis for testing, but rather uses observation through field-notes and interviews to discover frequently occurring themes that address areas of interest. For example, a researcher might want to discover how non-English speaking students interact with other students and with music in the classroom.

5. **Ethnographic studies.** With ethnographic research, the researcher collects a variety of qualitative data including observation, interviews, and artifacts to provide a clear picture of the inner-workings of a specific social phenomenon. For example, a researcher might want to examine three successful music schools that cater to different student populations to discover elements that could be incorporated in a similar setting.

**Current Curriculum**

Cremaschi believes that graduate students in pedagogy should be able to understand research reports, evaluate and criticize research, and apply research findings in relevant ways. In addition, DMA students should be able to contribute to the body of research in a meaningful way. Such contributions would enrich the field and NASM clearly requires it. The NASM guidelines for DMA pedagogy programs read, “preparation of music teachers and researchers who conduct inquiries and develop methodologies and repertories for music study. Programs normally include comparative methodologies, research in music and music education, performance, and educational evaluation.”

However, in a comparison of the types of studies that appear in the *Journal of Research in Music Education* (JRME) and the types of studies from recent DMA dissertations, DMA dissertations may not be making the kinds of contributions required by the field. Pamela Klueck (2009) compared a content analysis of DMA dissertations from 1983–2008 to Cornelia Yarbrough’s (2002) content analysis of the JRME. While the JRME articles featured a preponderance of studies that were descriptive or experimental in nature, very few of the DMA dissertations examined fell in that category. Instead, most DMA dissertations were either historical or fell into the Yarbrough classification as “other.” Cremaschi observed that this discrepancy might be a result of a gap in the curriculum that does not address research in music education.

**Solutions**

One way to solve this problem would be to add research courses to the curriculum. Cremaschi recognized that this solution could be problematic given the administrative difficulties of changing an already extensive curriculum. He offered an alternative solution that injects elements of research education into the core pedagogy coursework. Methods discussed for doing this included giving additional reading assignments in music research, dissecting and discussing research articles in class, assigning literature reviews on specific topics, creating literature review posters for inclusion in conference poster sessions, and offering instruction in qualitative observation techniques for self-evaluation assignments. Cremaschi noted he is careful to tie readings in research to pedagogical concepts being discussed in his pedagogy course work.

**McGree’s Research Experience**

McGree had a strong desire to produce meaningful research in music education for her DMA dissertation, but found that the structure of her degree made doing so difficult. She audited two courses in research in music education, courses not required by her degree plan but necessary for understanding the process and methodology of research. She felt fortunate to have an understanding committee that patiently helped her through the process.

McGree believes that, although very arduous, her experience with research has made her a better teacher, and that all DMA students need to be familiar with the processes and methodologies of academic research. Currently, she is responsible for coordinating a large keyboard studio associated with the Parlando School for the Arts in Boulder, Colorado. In addition to her administrative duties, she regularly provides professional development for the faculty by presenting overviews of recent research in music education. The teachers under her supervision report that the research McGree shares has helped them better address the needs of their students and made them better teachers.

**Works Cited:**

Klueck, Pamela. (2009). *Trends in Piano Pedagogy: A Content Analysis of Piano Pedagogy Dissertations (1983–2008).* Poster presentation at the National Conference in Keyboard Pedagogy.

Yarbrough, Cornelia. (2002). The first 50 years of the *Journal of Research in Music Education: A content analysis. Journal of Research in Music Education,* (50)4, 276–279.

Additional resources, including the slides from the PowerPoint and examples of pedagogical research using the methodologies enumerated above may be found online at www.alejandrocremaschi.com/edresearch.htm.

**Mason Conklin** is currently on faculty at Iowa State University, where he teaches Class Piano, Applied Piano and Piano Pedagogy. Mr. Conklin holds a B.M. and M.M. in piano performance from Baylor University, where he studied with artist-in-residence Krassimira Jordan. He is a candidate for a Ph.D. in Music Education with an emphasis in Piano Pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma, where he studied piano pedagogy with Dr. Jane Magrath and Dr. Barbara Fast. His dissertation research investigates the phenomenology of musical performance anxiety as it occurs in digitally recorded performances distributed via the Internet. As a guest clinician, Mr. Conklin has presented to local, state and national audiences on musical performance anxiety and digital audio recording. He is in frequent demand as an adjudicator in the state, and is a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music through MTNA.

**Panel Presentation: *The View: Innovative Formats Within Group Piano Teaching***

**Reporter: India D’Avignon**

This panel presented a glimpse into four very different group piano teaching situations: the Yamaha Music Education System, group piano for non-music majors in the small college, group piano adult hobby classes, and high school group piano instruction. Each speaker had ten minutes for their presentation and then moved to breakout sessions where they talked more in depth. Questions were held for the breakout sessions.

**Mike Morrell—Yamaha Music Education System (YMES)**

Mike Morrell is the manager of the Yamaha Music Education System at Yamaha Corporation of America. Yamaha was founded in Japan in 1954. Their teaching method was initially an experiment that has now blossomed into an enrollment of over 500,000 students internationally. It boasts fifty locations in the United States and over seven million graduates overall.

Morrell cited three areas that drive the method forward: concerts (communication), curriculum (evolution), and examination (reflection). He also discussed YMES courses available in the United States, and elaborated on four principles that underlie the core of the method: timely education, group lessons, comprehensive scope, and use of the keyboard.

1. **Timely Education** To “speak music” is a process of language acquisition. The development of musical ability evolves in accord with the natural development of the human being. The approach matches the stage of development and considers aural ability, muscle development and coordination, imagination, intellect, and will. For ages 3–5 the focus is on aural ability (keyboard solfege), imitation (call and response) and age appropriate images and subjects. For ages 6–8 the focus is on cultivating independence, the ability to play the keyboard, and further development of comprehensive skills. And from elementary age into adolescence the focus is on the integration of skills, promoting the individual, performance, improvisation, and composition.

2. **Group Lessons** Group lessons foster a social and cultural context. They also create lateral relationships, and motivate due to shared experience. A sense of rhythm and ensemble are also formed.

3. **Comprehensive Scope** Individual elements are conveyed holistically. Elements are integrated as musical sensibility fluency in the language of music: Pitch Training = Vocabulary Harmony = Grammar and Syntax Keyboard Performance = Speech Improvisation = Form, Balance, Cohesive thought Composition = Individual Style, Aesthetics

4. **Use of the Keyboard as a Tool** Students sing what they have heard and play as they have sung, using solfege. The keyboard becomes the student’s voice.

**Michael Benson—Group Piano for Non-Music Majors in the Small College**

Dr. Benson is on the faculty at Ohio State University in Lima. He uses the Piano for Pleasure text by Martha Hilley. Blackboard is used for additional assignments and blogging. He discussed several considerations concerning group piano instruction for non-music majors.

* Involving students in self-evaluation while implementing performance checklist blogs: students are asked specific questions pertaining to music reading/keyboard performance and blog their answers. Proper sentence structure is expected.
* Introducing music composition: students blog about the challenges of writing and performing their compositions.
* Initiating a small piano ensemble course within the curriculum: students blog about how they learn their part and are asked to discuss their videotaped ensemble performance and reflect on whether or not they enjoyed the experience.

**Martha Hilley—Adult Hobbyists**

Professor Hilley gave an unscripted talk. She was raised in a family that loved music; her grandmother could play a song after hearing just a few notes. When you walked in the door at grandma’s for Christmas, you got two lists - one was your chore list and the other was where you were going to sleep. You also had to bring your instrument with you. From this she saw the absolute joy that music could bring to people who are not “talented”. Her mother was a piano teacher for years and years and would tell her students, “Honey, if you don’t practice, I’m going to tell your mother that you’re talented.” Hilley finds that there is a great deal of nurturing that goes into teaching piano. The education of the adult hobby student needs to be very much student-centered. It is not the instructor’s agenda that is important but the student’s. Listen to what they want out of the experience because they have chosen this path. In 1974, a New Jersey grant provided funding for the state to pay to bring senior citizens from a senior center to her studio. The state paid for the materials and pianos; Prof. Hilley volunteered her teaching time. She used the old Wurlitzer system and loved the entire experience. Herb was 89 and Maude was a young 81; they met in her piano class and got married.

Hilley started teaching at the University of Texas when it had a weak continuing education program. She rejuvenated this program in part by creating a “So You Want to Play the Piano” poster. They came in droves. The second level was called “But Your Mother Let You Quit”. Those people had just enough piano experience to be dangerous. The third level was called, “Now That you’re a Virtuoso”. They had potlucks; the students didn’t have to play well, but if they wanted to eat, they had to play something. There is a tremendous amount of support among hobby students - they really love it.

**Pam Kalmbach—High School Group Piano**

Westwood High School became the Fine Arts Academy for the Round Rock district in 2001. Ms. Kalmbach was at that time the associate choir director and was given the task of developing innovative courses that were not offered in other high schools. She asked herself the question: what were classes that would benefit students and that would help them in their future music al pursuits. Two classes were developed, each of which combine traditional teaching methods (scales, technique, theory books, literature) with group activities (duets, ensembles, students helping each other, etc.) and technology based learning and projects. The district supported this endeavor with a piano lab of twenty-two full-sized keyboards (all with weighted keys) and thirty-two laptop computers. Capital Music came to download all the software on each computer, which they can now do through the server.

The Piano 1 class has 30 students per class. Students are given assignments from instruction books plus other music. Concepts are taught to the entire class each week and music is assigned and “checked off” for assessment. As always, some students are naturally more adept and ready to progress at a faster pace, so by the end of the first semester there may be three separate assignments each week. For the last six weeks of the year, Kalmbach prints out a list of required music in the instruction book and they “check off” what they have accomplished, having worked at their own pace. She continues to hear them individually each week. Many students start in Piano 1 and continue on for four years. Some students take the piano class for practice time while others take it for festivals and competitions.

The Piano 2 class has 27 students per class. Every student is at a different skill level that can range anywhere from one year of experience in the Piano 1 class up to 10 years of private instruction. Kalmbach is not able to hear even student individually in this class on a weekly basis. Nevertheless, the class offers opportunities beyond what a traditional private studio may, including the use of computer software for theory (Musition), ear-training (Auralia), and composition/notation projects (Finale/Allegro).

This will be the fourth year for Kalmbach to teach five of the seven piano classes plus one music theory class. The associate choir director teaches the other piano classes. This past spring, 218 students requested piano classes and this was the first time some students were closed out of the class. This fall there will be three Piano 1 classes, two Piano 2 classes, and one each of a Piano 3 and Piano 4/5 class. Because of larger class sizes, students now record scales using Audacity and save these to their school folder. They turn in their theory books twice every six-week grading period. This means more grading time spent outside of class but allows Kalmbach more time to hear individual students play their assigned literature. As well, the more advanced students help the younger ones. Ensemble music works well with this set-up since there is always a harder part and an easier part.

**India D’Avignon** teaches theory, musicianship, and class piano at the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. She previously served as Department Chair of the Piano and Organ Department at The Conservatory of Music at Capital University where she also taught piano, harpsichord and accompanying. Research topics have included the music of Lili Boulanger, Maria Theresia Paradis, and Benjamin Franklin and the glass armonica. D’Avignon currently serves as the California State Chair for the MTNA Competitions and is on the Board of Directors of the San Luis Obispo Symphony.

**Panel Presentation: *Piano Pedagogy in Three “Smaller” Schools***

**Reporter: Michael Dean**

There is great diversity in how small colleges and universities overcome the difficulties of providing quality pedagogical studies within their curriculum. In this session, Karen Schlabaugh, Paula Thomas-Lee, and Karen Thickstun presented the innovative solutions and continuing challenges faced by the programs at Bethel College, Reinhardt University, and Butler University.

**Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas**

Dr. Karen Schlabaugh, Professor of Music and Bethel’s Music Department Chair since 1998, introduced Bethel as an academically excellent, four-year undergraduate liberal arts college affiliated with the Mennonite Church. Bethel ranks first in the state of Kansas in the percentage of bachelor degree students continuing to graduate school and completing doctoral degrees, with 1 out of every 17 graduates achieving a Ph.D. The college is noted for its excellent choirs, choral society and an equally strong instrumental area, with nearly thirty percent of the campus community involved in various aspects of the music program. Summer music and theater camps serve as important recruiting tools. However, as with many other institutions nationwide, Bethel has recently struggled with declining enrollment despite its academic and musical successes. Although the keyboard area occasionally utilizes adjunct instructors, Schlabaugh is the sole professor in the piano department.

In the early 1980s, Bethel joined with two nearby colleges in providing one piano pedagogy course each in a rotating sequence. This allowed for increased class sizes while reducing the teaching load required of each institution. The classes met once per week in the evening, and focused on the techniques for teaching music fundamentals and beginning students, intermediate level students, and advancing students. Schlabaugh noted that many community members enrolled in these classes, joined MTNA, and remain active teachers in the region. Students with strong piano backgrounds but with other majors also took these courses. The combination of the three colleges’ resources produced a successful teacher-training sequence, which resulted in the founding and expansion of a preparatory academy staffed by many graduates of the program.

When one of the cooperating schools ceased participation in the sequence, the remaining two colleges successfully managed its continuation. Although enrollment numbers within the program decreased, community interest in the courses remained high. In an effort to manage teaching load implications with the reduced enrollment, the contributing schools postponed the sequence by one year, resuming it with only two courses. The institution partnering with Bethel recently restructured its pedagogy offerings, dissolving their longtime collaboration. Bethel College is now faced with the challenge of making its pedagogy program viable in both numbers and strength.

**Reinhardt University, Waleska, Georgia**

Dr. Paula Thomas-Lee, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Graduate Studies at Reinhardt University, noted the School of Music’s substantial growth over the last ten years. The school, located an hour north of Atlanta, once offered only a two-year associates degree to less than twenty music majors. Now it boasts more than one hundred music majors in bachelors and masters programs. The university opened a new music building in 2005, became a Kawai EPIC School in 2007, and recently added a Master of Music in Piano Pedagogy to its offerings. The piano area anticipated fourteen piano majors for the fall 2010 semester. Thomas-Lee credited these developments to the significant efforts and support of the school’s current Dean. She also mentioned the commitment of both full-time and adjunct faculty to their students and the university, and to their involvement in the community at large.

Reinhardt’s piano faculty includes three full time professors and one adjunct instructor, who in addition to their university duties support the activities of the local MTNA chapter. The healthy relationship between faculty and community piano teachers fosters positive experiences for pedagogy students by providing observation and internship opportunities, as well as promoting quality teaching by all. A strength of the school’s bachelor’s degree in piano performance is the four semester piano pedagogy sequence, which in the first year focuses on teaching preschool age students through beginning adults, while concentrating on group teaching, observation, and teaching labs in the second year.

Thomas-Lee cited facilities and resources as major limitations to the program. Currently there are only two practice rooms for the fourteen piano majors, requiring them to use the choral and band rooms as well as faculty studios for practicing. Building a current library of scores and method books is a continuing challenge in the face of budget shortfalls. The university and its various programs utilize every free marketing possibility, including Facebook and Twitter, and continue to seek additional recruiting methods. Insufficient class sizes often force students to find independent study options or take courses out of sequence.

**Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana**

Karen Thickstun, Director of the Butler Community Arts School and Coordinator of Piano Pedagogy at Butler University, described the institution’s dedication to academic excellence and “the Butler way.” As part of a liberal arts education, each student takes one course involving active engagement with the Indianapolis community and attends at least eight cultural events in the form of artistic performances, seminars and public lectures. The university welcomed its largest freshman class in 2010, due largely to the recent performance of its basketball team.

There are approximately 200 undergraduate and 40 graduate students in the School of Music, with arts administration and recording studies the fastest growing degree programs. The number of piano majors has declined over the last five years, to the recent level of only four piano performance majors and two piano pedagogy majors. Four new master’s students entered the pedagogy program in the fall of 2010 as a result of recently reinstated graduate assistantships. The pedagogy program, created by Steve Roberson, boasts four primary classes. The first focuses on teaching methods, business practices, and entrepreneurship. The second concentrates on teaching and maintaining healthy, injury free technique. The third and fourth courses in the sequence cover style and performance practice and psychological and cognitive learning theories. Students other than piano majors often elect to enroll in pedagogy classes.

Many of the college students become teachers for the Community Arts School following their experience in the pedagogy sequence. The school, established in 2002, serves a wide segment of the community and provides arts education to many who otherwise could not afford it. Butler University students teach private lessons, *Music for Little Mozarts* classes, and assist with camps. A new MTNA collegiate chapter encourages students to remain active in the community school and in music education opportunities in the region. Thickstun cited under-funding in technology, inadequate building facilities, and continued attention to the growth of graduate studies as the primary issues facing the Butler piano program.

In a brief question-and-answer session following these presentations, Schlabaugh, Thomas-Lee and Thickstun reiterated the importance of administrative support in developing and maintaining viable pedagogy programs. Thomas-Lee reaffirmed her praise of the Dean at Reinhardt University, who serves as a cheerleader for the School of Music. All of the presenters stressed the need for flexibility and creativity in dealing with the ongoing challenges confronting smaller schools and those larger schools facing declining enrollment. Creating education courses relevant to students of multiple majors might solve the problem of small pedagogy class sizes, for example. Instruction in the organization of private lesson content and structure or in the business elements of teaching are two examples of classes applicable across music disciplines. With many pedagogy programs nationwide struggling to maintain effective programming, it is important that music educators continue to share informational resources and creative solutions with each other.

**Michael Dean** is Assistant Professor of Music and Coordinator of Keyboard Studies at Oklahoma Baptist University. He also serves as East District Co-President of the Oklahoma Music Teachers Association. Dr. Dean maintains an active schedule as a workshop clinician, adjudicator, solo performer, collaborative artist, and faculty at summer music camps throughout the United States and Canada, and is a member of the Manno/Dean Piano Duo.

**Breakout Session: *Group Piano Adult Hobby Classes***

**Reporter: Kimberly Dreisbach**

In this session Martha Hilley shared her experiences with Recreational Music Making (RMM) through adult hobby group piano classes held at the University of Texas at Austin. Topics included: initiating the project, classroom activities she finds successful in RMM situations, advice when approaching common difficulties associated with RMM, anecdotes from class participants providing insight from the students’ perspectives, and resources for further reading.

The program referenced in this session developed through the University of Texas at Austin as a way to provide a laboratory setting for student teachers enrolled in a Group Piano Pedagogy course. To garner participants, Hilley sent a campus-wide email to University employees offering the class for no charge to interested participants who had no prior piano experience and could obtain permission from their supervisors to attend class during regular business hours. Even as someone who knew the potential of Recreational Music Making, Hilley was astounded to receive over 780 responses almost immediately! While RMM efforts are often geared toward participants who are pursuing additional leisure activities due to retirement, Hilley pointed out the enormous interest this project showed from young professionals. These classes were in 10-week sessions meeting once a week for 90 minutes and were conducted based on the assumption that students were not practicing piano outside the class meeting time.

When planning activities for hobby groups, Hilley emphasized the importance of focusing on rhythm throughout the beginning classes. Even when engaging in exercises that included finger numbers, dexterity, and reading, the instructors were also watching to see that students were both aware of and able to keep a steady pulse. Hilley also encouraged attendees to “send yourself home with students” through audio files of guided practice sessions that had an intentionally calm and casual tone. Both teachers and students found these recordings to be immensely helpful and popular in retaining material from week to week.

When setting goals for adult hobby students, Hilley emphasized the importance of being sensitive to the students’ needs and a willingness to adjust the curriculum. If students can be led to set goals that they are likely to surpass, this can be an effective way of maintaining students’ initial enthusiasm and preventing discouragement. When setting repertoire goals, Hilley suggested the use of lead sheets where they could sing and play chords and emphasized that literature choices must be student-driven.

Comments shared from class participants can be considered representative of many RMM students. They often wished instructors spoke slower and moved slower through class exercises. When they had questions or difficulty with material they were reluctant to raise their hands, ask questions, and otherwise indicate they were having trouble. Many of the participants gave notes of personal encouragement and gratitude to the student teachers.

Hilley emphasized that in addition to *Piano for Pleasure* there are many resources for teachers interested in hobby group piano classes and Recreational Music Making. She suggested beginning with *Teaching Piano in Groups* by Christopher Fischer; *The Recreational Music Making Handbook: A Teacher’s Guide* by Brenda Dillon and Brian Chung; and Deborah Perez’s website www.everylifeneedsmusic.com.

**Kimberly Dreisbach** teaches group piano and piano pedagogy at Bowling Green State University. Previously, she taught at Oklahoma City University, the University of Oklahoma, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Langston University, and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. She has also served as both church pianist and director of the Fine Arts Academy of First Baptist Church, Norman. A frequent adjudicator and clinician, she has presented at state and national MTNA and CMS conferences. Current research interests include the study of pedagogical four-hand piano duet literature and the development of a website: findpianoworks.com.

***Beethoven Learned What?!? Discovering Lost Traditions as One Looks to a Career in Music Education***

**Reporter: Carol Gingerich**

Richard Holbrook presented a provocative session that explored the idea that if we were to investigate how composers of the past, such as Beethoven and Bach, taught and created music, we might discover more effective tools for reaching a larger musical audience today. Holbrook is on the staff of the International Institute for Young Musicians and the Novus Via Music Group. He also maintains a pre-college teaching studio and is researching modern music education for his D.M.A. at the University of Colorado. Holbrook’s past musical experiences have provided him with a broad musical perspective. He has worked with pop musicians in a Los Angeles recording studio. As part of his work with the International Institute for Young Musicians he has seen hundreds of students from all across the country, and through his involvement with the Novus Via Music Group he has spoken with numerous teachers about their teaching methods.

Holbrook began by contrasting the world of 1825 with that of the present. Composers from the earlier period, such as Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Schubert and Schumann, are still widely represented on modern concert programs. He described these musicians as having contributed to or built upon traditions of formal and compositional complexity, and as having advanced what we might call “intellectual” or “classical” music. He contrasted this with composers from today such as Adams, Bolcom, Corigliano, Crumb, Glass, Part, Reich and Tan Dunm, all of whose compositions are much less frequently performed. Holbrook offered several perspectives on why this may be so:

1. Today, with nearly six times as many people in the world and scores of music colleges, shouldn’t new music be more abundant and accepted?

2. Pop music pleases millions. But a lot of pop musicians aren’t university educated and the music tends to be simple. Are people today just not as smart as they were 200 years ago?

3. Were the great composers of the past inspired geniuses or did they know some secret?

4. Is it possible that our modern system of music education is flawed?

Holbrook chose the last item as his thesis and suggested we need to stop blaming the general public for “not getting it” and perhaps take a look at ourselves as musicians and teachers. He then referred to several sources and ideas to improve the situation.

He began with the work of Thomas Frey, a futurist employed by many large corporations such as ATT and IBM, whose work can be viewed on YouTube. Frey quotes Max Planck who is reported to have said “When you change the way you look at things, the thing you look at changes.” Frey felt that systems can prevent greatness and gave the example of the old Roman numeral system, which actually prevented the Romans from doing more advanced math than the earlier Greeks.

Holbrook contrasted the modern day and “golden age” of music education systems. The modern day system focuses heavily on performance of pre-existing repertoire and artistic interpretation. In it, compositional (conceptual) understanding of most musical experiences is optional, and functional harmony acts as the primary tool for conceptual understanding. He defined the “golden age” as referring to the era from Bach to the early 20th century, after which we see a decline in the number of great prolific intellectual composers. During the “golden age” musicians were multi-faceted and functioned as composer, teacher and performer. At this time, compositional (conceptual) understanding of all musical experiences was commonplace, and counterpoint and figured bass were primary tools for conceptual understanding. Next Holbrook played a game with us in which he first showed sets of numbers that he asked us to memorize. The sets were difficult to memorize, except for one in which the numbers increased by 5 (5, 10, 15, 20, etc). He then asked us to transfer this conceptual idea to fill in the blanks in other sets including more advanced ones such as the Fibonacci series, which were also based upon conceptual understanding. He concluded that conceptual understanding allows for efficient learning and creation of new data, and that with the exception of aleatoric music, all music can be understood conceptually. He then provided examples of how a conceptual understanding of the elements of music can allow for more efficient learning as well as the creation of new music. The elements he mentioned are listed below:

**Meter, Beat and Rhythm** Individual sounds in time don’t mean anything until our brains group them into recognizable patterns. The heartbeat is recognized the world over. Our brains automatically conceptually understand meter and beat in part because of the Law of Proximity defined in Gestalt psychology.

**Pitch, Intervals and Scales** The most common pitches and scales are based upon the mathematical relationships and the hierarchy of the octave and fifth of the Pythagorean Scale, and as found in nature. Studies at Harvard University, the University of Windsor and the University of Toronto have shown that infants prefer these pitch relationships before cultural influence can play a role in their preference of music. We are hard-wired to prefer the Pythagorean pitch hierarchy. The more popular Beethoven symphony melodies overlay a framework of important pitches in Pythagorean hierarchy, as do the most loved classical popular pieces. Holbrook then asked if it is possible that more recent academic trends in music composition toward free tonality or atonality could be the reason why contemporary intellectual music struggles?

**Melody, Motive and Permutation** The idea of motive is very important to music and helps to unify countless compositions. A conceptual understanding of permutations can help immensely when studying or creating a piece of music.

**Form and Structure** The concept of form is quite easy even for non-musicians to understand. Most people are aware of the verse-chorus form in pop music.

**Counterpoint** This is the layering of melodies and our natural instrument, the voice, is melodic. Composers can mix and match harmonic intervals to manipulate emotion.

**Harmony** Holbrook defined a chord as the conceptual tool we use to identify common note groups resulting from counterpoint and mentioned that chords, depending on their intervallic content, have a wide variety of emotional implications. He then suggested that the more effective system for a conceptual understanding of harmony is not the traditional functional harmony approach, but rather a contrapuntal analysis such as that found in CPE Bach’s *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Holbrook pointed out that Haydn, Beethoven and Czerny all used this and that Mozart thought highly of CPE Bach. In fact, most of the great composers wrote using counterpoint, not functional harmony.

Holbrook continued with a defense of pop music. He believes art is a reflection of the world around us and that pop music reflects our world. Pop music is simple in its use of form and permutation, and innovative in its use of rhythm, timbre and texture. Advanced permutation and form complexities require education. So if classical music’s form and permutations were studied and utilized by pop musicians we would have a new type of serious music. He reminded us that the pop musician Quincy Jones studied with Nadia Boulanger and went on to produce the best-selling album of all time. Holbrook then asked, if most pop music does not carry the torch for intellectual music, what would? He mentioned that serious music students rarely ask to compose because they are often daunted by the “genius” of great composers. This is due in part to the strong detail-oriented focus on performance and interpretation championed by their teachers.

Holbrook’s session ended with an analysis of our existing music education system and with suggestions for improvement. He contended that college students spend too much time learning by rote, and that the tools for conceptual understanding have not kept pace with the high level of performance. In some sense our college students are like trained circus monkeys. These habits are not easily broken. He suggested that CPE Bach’s Essay is not a book about composition, but rather a book for performers that focuses on the importance of composition. He reminded us that if Bach, Schumann and Brahms had been only performers, we wouldn’t know them today. He mentioned that performance should be only one aspect of a musician’s existence and that composition, critical thought and teaching should also be part of it.

Holbrook recommended that we teach conceptual understanding and composition to all students and use a contrapuntal and figured bass approach as the foundation for musical understanding, rather than functional harmony. He asked us to encourage all students to be great by not focusing exclusively on performance and thereby inadvertently implying that the great compositional traditions of the past are beyond our students. He asked us to do it for the greater good and reminded us that it’s not that smart people make music, but rather that music makes people smart. In relation to the declining number of students taking music lessons, he inquired how many people would play soccer if they were told to just kick the ball around, but they were not taught to understand the rules of the game. He suggested that the great composers were not simply geniuses, but that they were educated and worked hard, and he admonished us to not just relive history but to go make it.

A copy of the PowerPoint may be downloaded at www.holbrookpiano.com.

**Carol Gingerich** is Associate Professor of Piano at the University of West Georgia where she teaches applied piano, pedagogy, keyboard literature, collaborative piano and class piano. Her performance and research interests include French Piano Style, Beethoven’s Sonata op 81a, Pedagogical Applications of YouTube, and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. She has given recitals, teacher workshops and presentations on these topics for conferences in Europe and the US, and as a guest artist at universities. She holds a doctoral degree from Columbia University, Teachers College.

***Can a ‘Phases of Learning’ Inspired Organizational Practice Approach Facilitate***

***Flow and/or Better Learning in Group Piano Students?***

**Reporter: Susan C. Ha**

Thomas J. Parente is an associate professor of piano at Westminster Choir College of Rider University, where he teaches and coordinates secondary piano. He is the author of *How to Teach Group Piano Successfully through Flow*. His presentation provided an overview of a study done on beginning class piano students using an organizational practice plan at Westminster Choir College for effective music learning. The practice plan was inspired from Skills Acquisitions Researchers Fitts and Posner’s “Phases of Learning,” which describes the three stages that one goes through when learning a new skill.

College class piano students sometimes develop a negative attitude towards playing the piano. Their practice could easily be enjoyable and effective, however, if they followed a learning model that would help them to enter the “flow state”. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defined this state in 1991 as “a total involvement that people feel when they are engaged in an activity in which they feel both highly challenged and highly competent.”

Parente’s approach to “Phases of Learning” is based on dividing repertoire into segments of increasing levels of difficulty and achieving a high level of proficiency on each segment before moving on to the next. His observations suggest that the learning process accelerates when students are in the flow state, and their intrinsic motivation and satisfaction increase. Characteristics observed by Parente of pianists playing in this flow state include the following:

* Engagement in a challenging activity that requires skill
* Setting of clear goals
* Ownership of a sense of control
* Diminishing self-consciousness, resulting in one’s perception of time being altered
* Merging of action and awareness

Students are not always capable of setting clear practice goals and do not know how to properly sequence practice sessions. They generally attempt to accomplish far more than what they are capable of doing at their skill level. This leads to feelings of anxiety and frustration. Often, students continuously make the same mistakes in the early stages of practice: this seldom allows them to progress to the flow state.

The three stages of “Phases of Learning” by skill acquisition researchers Fitts and Posner have consistently been acknowledged and referenced by professionals since they were introduced in 1967. The first stage is the cognitive stage. The individual thinks about what skills need to be mastered. In learning piano, the greatest amount of internal dialogue takes place as the pianist experiments on finding the best musical gesture for a given task. Poor rhythmical flow and coordination are often found in this stage.

The greatest amount of practice time is spent in stage two, the associative stage. Work in smaller units from the first stage is processed into a larger piece through repetition. The student makes fewer errors and attains the basic movement of the work. A sense of control and proper tempo are attained and the student starts to involve less mental resources in decoding the score.

The last of the three learning stages is the autonomous stage. Music is ready to be played with ever-increasing tempo, efficiency, accuracy, and expressivity. Cognitive mediation has become automatic, hence it is transformed into efficient movements - music begins to flow. The output of the performance is very consistent from one to another.

The Phases of Learning paradigm has been modified to fit the research that Parente conducted in class piano. Students were observed in order to view their ability to reach the flow state during their practice sessions. The study, conducted in the summer of 2010, involved assigning two pieces to nine incoming freshmen in the group piano setting. The pieces to be learned were Beethoven’s *German Dance in A* and a piece of the participant’s choice. The *German Dance* had been divided into segments of increasing levels of difficulty. Students were expected to structure their work by practicing from the simplest to most difficult segments in the order provided by Parente. At the end of the research, the faculty members of Westminster Choir College evaluated the students’ progress.

Students were also evaluated via:

* Student self-ratings made on a Skills/Challenge Phase of Learning Reporting Form
* In-class observations of students made by Parente
* Student reports on their experience during home practice sessions
* Student comments during the final interviews at the conclusion of the research

Results for two of the nine participants were discussed in detail. These students were more advanced than the others.

**Participant #1:**

* Barbara, 18 years old
* Skill level: had relatively advanced piano skills compared to the other participants, had extensive performing experience in choirs in high school, and had taken AP Music Theory classes
* Description: dressed casually but neatly, somewhat quiet but interacted well with fellow students and faculty, and worked very hard
* Progress on required piece, Beethoven *German Dance*
  + For the first three class periods, she did not adhere to the POL principle of attaining the autonomous stage before moving onto the next segment
  + Although she never reached the autonomous stage, she was far into the associative stage during the time. Barbara generally stopped before the passages became automatic
  + She did not learn the segments in the provided order
  + Although she did not achieve autonomous stage with each segment to the next, she achieved the flow state, and she was quite successful in learning to play *The German Dance*
  + Her practice log indicated that she made an improvement in each practice session, and that she was having an “awesome” experience 25.
* Progress on student-chosen piece, Mozart *Minuet*
  + She easily segmented the piece in a manner that was logical and well suited to her skill level
  + Despite a lack of coaching, she was more aware of how the POL model worked and was more consistent at following the POL paradigm with this piece
  + Barbara had learned to critically evaluate and self-direct her practice. She reported she did not get to the autonomous stage in her last practice session, so she decided to review the passage a few extra times in the next session
  + Barbara generally worked to the autonomous stage
  + The Flow state had been achieved with the piece as well. She mentioned that she
  + was “very excited to finish the piece”

The organizational plan that guided her practicing seems to have aided both enjoyment of the learning process and the end result.

**Participant #2:**

* Sally, 17 years old
* Skill level: had sung in choirs, took AP Music Theory, studied voice privately, had toured Germany for singing with American Music Abroad, was deeply involved with the high school theater, and had little experience in the piano
* Description: was attractive, quiet, intelligent, hard-working, and interacted well with peers
* Progress on required piece, Beethoven *German Dance*
  + Sally did a wonderful job adhering to the POL principle of reaching the autonomous stage in each segment before moving on to the next
  + Although she did not always follow the suggested order, she sequenced the segments in such a way that she could play passages at the end of practice instead of working on various passages from different sections There were only a few segments that did not reach the autonomous stage
  + She experienced the flow state
* Progress in the student-chosen piece, Clarke *King William’s March*
  + The piece was too easy for her skill level, she decided to switch to Burgmuller’s *Le Courant Limpide*
* Progress in Burgmuller *Le Courant Limpide*
  + As with the *German Dance*, Sally was consistent at following the POL paradigm with this piece
  + Excellent practice decisions were made - she looked for recurring patterns and technique. Sally then organized her practice sessions accordingly
  + Sally reached the autonomous stage and the flow state. She indicated, “It was really fun. I didn’t know how much I would enjoy it because I never really practiced the piano in the past...When I came, I had fun and the time went by so quickly because I wasn’t even like thinking about what I was doing. I was just playing and having fun.”

Parente concluded that the Phases of Learning model worked well as an organizational tool for every student at all levels. Students were relieved from the anxiety created by the perception that they were about to work on the entire piece at once. Pleasure was derived from the process, which was shown to accelerate the learning. Parente often stressed to his group piano students, “For successful learning to take place, it would be essential that they enjoy what they were doing and that they should continually strive to make it so.”

**Susan C. Ha** is a DMA student in Piano with cognate areas in Piano Pedagogy and Theory at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She has been studying piano with Awadagin Pratt and pedagogy with Michelle Conda since she began her MM at UC. Other major teachers include Eric Ruple, Gabriel Dobner (Collaborative Piano), and Hae Won Moon. Susan received her BM in Piano Performance from James Madison University. Currently, Ms. Ha holds a graduate assistantship in Secondary Piano and Piano Pedagogy at UC where she teaches group piano classes and private lessons. She also instructs adult group piano classes through UC’s *Communiversity* Program and is on the piano faculty of the Cincinnati Music Academy.

***Technology in the Group Piano Lab and Beyond***

**Reporter: Jyoti Hench**

In this presentation Dr. Mario Ajero described how he uses computer-based technology to enhance the educational experience of his group piano students at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. He listed three important technological building blocks in his group piano classroom: (1) a notebook computer, (2) an overhead projector that can display anything from the computer, and (3) software. Specifically, Ajero discussed the use of slideshow presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple Keynote.

**Why Use Slideshow Software?** Ajero stated that there are three primary benefits to using slideshow presentation software in group piano classes. First, the software helps teachers save time and deliver information efficiently. Second, it allows teachers to address the “push notification mindset” of today’s students, who expect to be reminded when important events and deadlines are approaching. Third, slideshow presentation software helps teachers develop organized lesson plans that are fun to create, as well as tangible and visual for students.

**What Can Slideshow Software Do?** Ajero uses a slideshow presentation for each class period. Each presentation essentially serves as a student version of his lesson plan for the day. Ajero acknowledges that it does take a “considerable” amount of time to create these slideshows. However, he considers this time a worthwhile investment, not only because the slideshows benefit his current students, but also because he is able to use the slideshows again for future classes.

Ajero begins each class period with a “For Today” slide that is displayed as students enter the classroom. The slide contains a few short, clear points—each in a different color—that inform students of what they should begin working on. This way, students can start working on headset right away, before class begins.

Slides can also serve to introduce and review material in class. Ajero obtained permission from Alfred Publishing to scan every page of *Alfred’s Group Piano for Adults* and embeds excerpts from the text as needed into his daily slideshow presentations. He does this by opening the scanned textbook page in a PDF-reading software program (such as Apple Preview), and copying and pasting an excerpt from the page into his slideshow presentation.

By using text boxes, teachers can type helpful information onto slides. Ajero uses color and animation to make this information more visually appealing. For example, he uses different font colors to illustrate finger groupings in scales. He also uses animation features (called “builds” in Apple Keynote) to add excitement to sight-reading analysis. For example, for a sight-reading piece in E minor, Ajero showed teachers how to make the symbol “Em” roll onto the slide in a ball of fire. Whenever a “build” appears on a slide, Ajero prompts students to write the corresponding information in their own books with a pencil.

Ajero ends each class period with a “For Next Time” slide that informs students of what they should work on for the next class. In case students miss this information, or do not write it down, Ajero also makes it available on the class webpage through the university’s course management system, Blackboard.

**Social Networking** In addition to using the class webpage through Blackboard, Ajero uses Facebook to deliver content to—and receive content from—his group piano students. He created a Facebook group for his classes, adjusting privacy settings so that content is closed to everyone except his students. Using Facebook is a supplemental, non-required option for Ajero’s students.

Sharing videos is perhaps the most practical use of Facebook for Ajero and his group piano students. Ajero posts instructional videos to Facebook for his students. For example, he shared a “video lesson” that he created for students to watch over spring break. Ajero’s videos show him talking and playing, and also include visual aids—such as the piano keyboard and musical staff—through Classroom Maestro software. To make these videos, Ajero uses six components: (1) an external FireWire camera, (2) a Yamaha Disklavier piano, (3) a MacBook computer, (4) Classroom Maestro software, (5) ScreenFlow or Camtasia software to capture Classroom Maestro animations onto video, and (6) IMovie software to do simple editing. Ajero, along with Dr. Stella Sick of Hamline University, will give a presentation at the 2011 MTNA National Conference that will demonstrate, in greater detail, how to make these types of multimedia instructional videos.

Ajero also receives videos from students via Facebook. Students have the option of performing quiz material on videos that they record—usually with their cell phone cameras—and post to Facebook. Ajero never leaves grades on Facebook; instead, he refers students to the class Blackboard page to view their grades and comments.

**Conclusion** Ajero showed teachers how to create slideshow presentations for daily use in group piano classes, as well as how to use social networking websites such as Facebook to deliver information to—and receive information from—students. Although incorporating these applications takes extra time from teachers, the benefits that students receive from this type of instruction make this time worthwhile. In addition, this time can be considered an investment for future classes. Finally, computer-based technology allows teachers to communicate through media with which today’s students are familiar and comfortable.

**Online Resources**

Classroom Maestro Software

ScreenFlow Software

**Jyoti Hench** is a doctoral candidate in Piano Performance and Pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma. She has taught pre-college piano students in her own independent studio, as well as in children’s programs at California State University, Sacramento, and the University of Oklahoma. She has also taught collegiate group and applied piano as a graduate teaching assistant. Jyoti holds degrees from the University of California at Santa Cruz and California State University, Sacramento.

***All in the Spirit of Friendly Competition: Using Contests to Motivate the Collegiate Class Piano Student***

**Reporter: Alexis Ignatiou**

In-class contests have been known to promote interest in the subject matter and make the learning experience more enjoyable. With a little encouragement, class piano students are willing to step out of their comfort zone and become active participants. Dr. Terry Lynn Hudson, Assistant Professor of Piano at Baylor University, uses a variety of in-class contests to encourage collaboration and prepare her students for an upcoming exam. Even though there aren’t any tangible awards for winning teams, students celebrate their “victories” by knowing that they have absorbed the test material and will do well on the upcoming exam. Isn’t that a great reward?

While some in-class contests involve playing the keyboard, games like *Running Charades* don’t include performance. In this case, the class is divided into teams; the objective is for each team to be the first to answer a series of questions. Following a correct answer, the next question is given and the game progresses. Sample questions include the following:

1. Which major and minor scales are fingered exactly like C Major?
2. Which arpeggio did we nickname “the claw,” and what does this mean in terms of fingering?
3. Which minor arpeggios are fingered 5 4 2 1 in the left hand?

In the case of *Split-Class Contest*, teams are formed and judged on their combined performances. This is a quick activity that can be incorporated spontaneously and it works well for any skill area. The group huddle version of this contest includes a brief team discussion before presenting a skill at the keyboard.

In *Sudden Death*, the strongest individual participants are recognized. However, there is more than one version to the game. The “Survivor” version measures the ability to successfully complete a piece or exercise. The “Around-the-room” version reinforces first-time accuracy in technical patterns.

*Scaleathon* is another activity that incorporates fun with learning. The game is designed to make technical practice more interesting. It is especially valuable for review work, as other students can “play” along silently, while students perform individually. The performers contribute to a team score and the activity concludes with the “Final Jeopardy” round.

Even though Dr. Hudson’s presentation focused on class contests that require minimal or no physical activity, she did stress the importance of being aware of our surroundings in a classroom setting. She encouraged instructors to consider space restrictions and classroom safety before undertaking any physical activities; the modern piano lab often contains wiring, power strips, headphones, and other contraptions that can obstruct and endanger students. Safety first!

This report quotes directly at times from Dr. Hudson’s handout *All in the Spirit of Friendly Competition: Using Contests to Motivate the Collegiate Class Piano Student*.

**Alexis Ignatiou** is completing the DMA in Piano Performance at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music where he studies with Elizabeth Pridonoff and is also pursuing a minor in Arts Administration and Piano Pedagogy. He currently serves as President of the Graduate Student Governance Association at the University of Cincinnati. Ignatiou also served as President of the Graduate Student Association at CCM and from 2007-2010 held the teaching assistantship in secondary piano, working with Michelle Conda. He earned the MM at UNCG working with Paul Stewart and John Salmon. Ignatiou is the recipient of a 2004 MTNA StAR Award. In 2004–2007, he and his wife Connie (CCM-DMA Oboe Performance) worked in the Republic of Cyprus teaching music at the collegiate level and together organized a series of educational concerts with the support of the Ministry of Education.

***It’s True! Your Pedagogy Students Can Easily Graduate As MTNA Certified Teachers!***

**Reporter: Kari Johnson**

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if all piano pedagogy students were not only registered as MTNA members, but were also seeking MTNA certification as part of their degree? By incorporating certification into the pedagogy program, students will not only have additional help with their studies, but will also graduate holding degrees and national certification. In this fast paced and well-organized presentation, Dr. Rebecca Grooms Johnson explained how the new MTNA certification process easily coincides with an undergraduate piano pedagogy curriculum. The new certification process, which began on January 1st, 2010, is directed towards teaching ability and easily dovetails with a piano pedagogy curriculum. It also gets rid of the “red tape” of the previous process.

The goal of MTNA certification is to recognize and certify competent teaching. Unlike the previous certification process, the new system is streamlined and easy to understand. The Teacher Profile Process requires two steps. Step 1 is to complete and submit the application, which can be found at www.mtnacertification.org. Step 2 is to complete the five Teacher Profile Projects.

Before beginning the five Teacher Profile Projects, all applicants should read the instrument-appropriate Teacher Profile Workbook. This text contains detailed instructions about each of the required five self-study projects. Another required text is “Piano Teacher Profile Projects: What will the evaluators be looking for?” This text includes suggestions for the completion of each project.

The five projects for certification are:

1. Write your Teaching Philosophy The Piano Teacher Profile Projects workbook states that the teaching philosophy is a “written narrative” that “defines **how** you teach, **why** you teach, **what** you teach, and **who** you teach and impacts every determination you make in your professional life.” This document should be no more than 600 words.
2. Analyze four teaching pieces Each applicant will be given four pieces to analyze. The analysis is done in essay format, and must touch on topics found in the Piano Teacher Profile Projects Workbook. Applicants will discuss each piece’s significance in regards to music history, theory, and technical development.
3. Present your teaching Applicants will record a series of lessons to show how they introduce, develop, and polish a work with a student. Lessons should include clear instructions for student practice, supplemental theory or technique materials, and student incorporation of appropriate stylistic interpretation. A written self-evaluation is also required. This series of lessons should be submitted in DVD format.
4. Share information about your teaching environment All applicants must write a short (300 word) statement about their teaching environment. Pictures and other 125 documentation should be included to prove that each applicant creates a positive, clean, organized learning environment for their students.
5. Discuss your business ethics and studio policies Each applicant will be given three scenarios and must discuss how they would deal with a problem with a student, colleague, and parent. Applicants are encouraged to consult the MTNA code of ethics. Applicants must also provide a hypothetical business plan to demonstrate their understanding of basic economical principles of running a private music studio.

All materials must be sent in hard copy to the appropriate address. All applicants have one year to complete the process. The five projects can be completed ahead of time, making it ideal for students. In addition, when students graduate, they must become active MTNA members in order to maintain their certification, which is good for the organization as a whole.

At the end of the presentation, several audience members had questions. The questions and answers are listed below:

**How does certification work for College faculty members?** College faculty used to have to submit their transcripts. Now, all full and part time college faculty simply need to submit the appropriate form with their supervisor’s signature. Transcripts and letters of recommendation are no longer needed.

**Is there a special certification process for DMA holders who are NOT on a faculty?** No; DMA and PhD holders who are not on a college or university faculty must complete the normal application process to obtain certification.

**When should students apply?** When they’re done with their pedagogy sequence. Teachers can advise their pedagogy students on each of the five projects except for the analysis and the ethics scenarios. Since the material can be completed in advance, it is easy to include these activities in an undergraduate pedagogy curriculum.

**Can students who are CMTNA members apply for certification?** Yes, but they must become active members in order to maintain certification.

**Who are the evaluators?** Evaluators are divisional commissioners who are not from the applicant’s division. Two evaluators are assigned to each application. In the case of a tie, Rebecca Grooms Johnson will be the tiebreaker.

**How are evaluators trained?** Evaluators receive written information. A committee also meets and watches sample videos to maintain evaluation standards across the board.

**What feedback will be given?** Rejected applicants will be given notes on what was missing from their application and what they need to do to improve. No feedback will be given to passing applicants.

**What if you are unable to complete the process within one calendar year?** You must request an extension in writing to receive an automatic second year.

**What is the fee structure?** The fees are listed on the application as $200 for MTNA members and $350 for non-members for the first area of certification. Each additional area is $150 for members and $275 for non-members. Some states will reimburse full or partial fees to students who become certified, but students need to be active at graduation.

**Does the new process effect state level certification?** No; state certification is up to each state.

When does certification expire? Renewal must begin on July 1st of each year. Completion of the process in October or after includes the next year. Reminder emails are sent at the end of each cycle. This is a change from the previous 5-year renewal; with one year it is easier to keep track of the teaching points. Now, you need only accumulate 3 points per year.

MTNA is excited and proud of the new streamlined certification process, and will measure its success by the number of new applicants, the number of renewals, and how the whole process works. More information can be found at www.mtnacertification.org.

**Kari Johnson** teaches applied piano as an adjunct faculty member at Avila University in Kansas City. She is currently completing her DMA in Piano Performance at the University of Missouri Kansas City where she serves as a GTA in group piano, applied piano, and chamber coaching. She holds degrees from the University of Central Missouri, Bowling Green State University, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

***Transitioning From Student To Teacher In The Master-Apprentice Model Of Piano Pedagogy: Challenges, Solutions, Reflections And Suggestions For The Future***

**Reporter: Erika Kinser**

Melissa Slawsky’s session focused on the transition that occurs when adjusting from student to teacher upon graduation from college and the effectiveness of the master-apprentice model as a means of learning to teach. The report included suggestions for overcoming the hurdles during the transition time, which, in turn, furthers the field of piano pedagogy. Her information was based upon twenty-two questions that she asked during interviews conducted with eight piano teachers.

The problems identified were three-fold: 1) to discover the challenges faced during the transition from student to teacher; 2) to identify solutions and resources in overcoming these challenges; and 3) to share experiences that prepared the student for the challenges of the transition. The interviewed teachers were also asked what challenges they currently face, as well as curricula suggestions to enhance the future of piano pedagogy.

**The Results**

Early in the transition time from being a student to a teacher, the teachers discovered several challenges. Perhaps, the most crucial one in particular was an under-developed teaching style. Most felt it was necessary and natural to emulate their previous applied teachers. However, the interviewees all made specific comments on how much they desired this imitation. Some copied their teachers “very much so.” Others tried to be the opposite of their master teacher, while others only followed the positive aspects of their former teachers. Other challenges included choosing curricula, dealing with disciplinary issues, enforcing studio polices, a lack of support, and acquiring new students. These teachers found solutions through various means, such as gaining experience through trial and error, reading articles, treatises, and books, having discussion forums with peers and mentors, joining professional organizations, and improving general communication skills within their studio.

After this initial transition time, the teachers were asked to comment on their current challenges. These also varied, and included competing with other extra-curricular activities, transitioning students from method books to intermediate literature, managing lesson time, and helping students develop their own performance style. Also discussed was the notion of the parents’ and students’ lack of value placed upon piano study as a serious endeavor. The challenges of teaching new populations of students arose, such as the pre-school student, a special needs student, or an adult hobbyist student. Current economic situations were seen as a challenge for some teachers as well.

The solutions to these challenges included the use of online music resources, fake books, and new forms of advertising. One solution that remained constant from the previous section was the discussion group with colleagues and mentors. Also, by this point in their careers, the teachers had learned how to tailor their curricula to the individual needs of the student, which was seen by them as a solution to some of the previous challenges faced.

**The Relevancy of the Piano Pedagogy Coursework to Professional Careers**

The eight respondents were asked to comment on effective and ineffective contents of piano pedagogy coursework completed in their college educations. The respondents concluded that writing teaching philosophies, surveying method books, developing studio policies, observing experienced teachers, and partaking in a discussion group with experienced teachers and peers were all helpful components of their piano pedagogy experiences in school. Additionally, the respondents cited the development of lists of literature and curricula for individual and group teaching settings and the logistics of establishing a studio as beneficial aspects of their piano pedagogy coursework.

The areas in which the respondents felt they were ill equipped as a result of their piano pedagogy coursework were intermediate and advanced repertoire, special populations of students, and non-traditional notation-based playing methods (such as improvisation, lead sheets, harmonization, and playing by ear). Lastly, the interviewed teachers felt poorly equipped to manage the business aspects of their studios, ranging from taxes and insurance to record keeping and new forms of advertising. The area of their piano pedagogy coursework that teachers felt was most ineffective was inauthentic teaching experiences and scenarios.

**The Future, as it relates to Piano Pedagogy**

The eight interviewees were asked in hindsight what topics they would have liked to have received guidance in during their piano pedagogy coursework. The topics included hands-on teaching experience (not discussion only), filing taxes, record-keeping (including software for assisting in this area), advertising and marketing, improvisation, playing by ear, basic child development, learning styles, and new approaches to teaching technique. In addition to these topics, the teachers desired training in specific techniques for teaching students with special needs or new populations of students. Also desired was observation time of established professional teachers.

In retrospect, the teachers who were interviewed had varying opinions as to the relevancy of their coursework in college as it related to their professional careers. What is curious to note, though, is that “those who had a smoother transition into the teaching role taught throughout their time in higher education and did not rely solely on the curriculum to prepare them for teaching” (Slawsky). Lastly, the interviewed teachers recommended that studies in piano pedagogy be required of all performance majors. Also, they suggested that improvisation, business skills, and technology be a part of all piano pedagogy curricula.

Melissa Slawsky’s interviews are going to be expanded into a large-scale study that will result in her doctoral dissertation at the University of South Florida. As a result of her PhD in Music Education and the extensive research skills that she has acquired through her studies, she also has plans in the future to establish a Piano Pedagogy Research Association (PPRA) that will assist piano pedagogues in surveys, statistics, and research.

**Erika Kinser** is a doctoral student in the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She currently studies with Dr. Robert Weirich and teaches both group piano and applied piano to Conservatory music majors of all levels.

***Creative Sight Reading***

**Reporter: Jun Matsuo**

Cole Burger, Instructor of Music at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, presented a session that offered creative ideas for drilling sight-reading in group piano classes. He strives to present sight-reading activities to his classes in different ways in order to keep them from becoming monotonous. His suggestions for new and creative ways to sight-read were presented in two categories: preparatory steps and performance steps. Throughout the presentation, the importance of rhythm and continuity was emphasized.

**The Preparatory Steps**

1. *What do you see?* With a musical example projected on the screen, the first of three preparation activities was presented: show the example for a brief moment and then hide it from the students and ask them, “What did you see?” Burger expressed the importance of knowing what to look for as well as audiating what has been seen. In earlier stages, students usually begin with basic information such as clefs, time signature, and key signature. It is crucial to encourage students to see larger concepts such as chord shapes, broken chords, texture, etc. so that students are preparing to play the music the moment they begin looking at it.
2. *Focus on rhythm*. Students will only get to play the examples once when they are sight-reading. Including an opportunity for them to practice the rhythm is thus important. Burger suggested that students be prompted to read melodic/harmonic intervals in time without stopping. To foster this, Burger suggested making the sound “eh” in place of intervals that students encounter and don’t recognize. Substituting a syllable for an unfamiliar interval encourages students to eliminate the undesired action (stumbling, stopping, or going back to the beginning) that does not help when they attempt to sight-read a piece.
3. *Tap your head and rub your stomach*. Since piano is a two-handed instrument, sight-reading with both hands is expected even though many group piano students tend to start by playing one hand at a time. Burger explored how to practice coordination skills before playing two-handed examples. Having students speak one part while they tap the other part may be a helpful activity before they actually play both parts at the piano. This will encourage students to engage in reading and executing both parts even though they are not yet playing both parts at the same time. He emphasized that this should also be done in rhythm, placing a sound like “eh” in places where the student can’t figure out what they are reading so that the concept of keeping time is reinforced.

**The Performance Steps**

1. *Preview for counting*. Counting while playing is important and he emphasized that selective counting is better than no counting. Burger encourages students to look for places in the example where they will need to focus on the counting such as rests, longer notes, and especially dotted notes.
2. *Focus on the left hand*. Harmony is most often present in the left hand. Burger suggests that students “smush” the right hand part if they encounter measures in which it is difficult to maintain continuity.
3. Look at the music. Burger recommends covering up students’ hands so that they keep their eyes on the music and away from their hands. He also suggests possibly taking the music away, which may seems opposite to what you want them to do but this may get their attention back to the music they are attempting to play.

In conclusion, Burger expressed how the importance of competent sight-reading skills, which was explained as “can you play what sounds like what is on the page,” is essential to schoolteachers who have little time to practice with their busy schedules. The surface learning that is highlighted in sight-reading activities may help students perform better. Reinforcement of the importance of not stopping when you make a mistake may also transfer into their solo performances, which could help strengthen their performance ability. He also pointed out the importance of integrating other musical concepts/knowledge into sight-reading activities. For example, theoretical concepts can be reviewed or composer background information can be provided. A brief casual discussion between the presenter and attendees followed that focused on counting and rhythm. Martha Hilley commented on the importance of encouraging students to count with the inflection with which they would perform the music.

**Jun Matsuo** is Assistant Professor of Music at Coker College where she teaches piano and music theory. She is versatile as both a solo and collaborative performer, appearing as guest artist up and down the east coast. Over the last few years, her performance and teaching activities have expanded internationally to include Japan, Malaysia, and France. She is presently on the board of directors for the South Carolina Music Teachers Association and is also active as an adjudicator in the southeast region. Dr. Matsuo earned her DMA in Piano Pedagogy from the University of South Carolina, and prior degrees from Binghamton University and the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

***Improvising Is For Everyone***

**Reporter: Hannah Mayo**

Jazz educator Bradley Sowash presented effective ways of helping students attempt improvisation at the piano. After a quick philosophical discussion about the imbalances of traditional piano teaching (too much eye, not enough ear), he explained the importance of improvising in student’s lives. Whether it be playing lead sheet praise music at church, vamping at a school musical, or just forgetting notes of that Bach minuet and needing to “kill time until remembering a cadence” all musicians are called upon to improvise at some point.

Sowash recalled a story about Louis Armstrong that helped connect the dots for all the classically trained audience members. Someone once asked Louis Armstrong what his recipe for music was. He responded, “First, I plays the melody, then I routines the melody (enhance or embellish the melody).” Although Armstrong didn’t say it, he always came back to the melody. Sowash helped bridge the gap from reading music to improvising by describing a possible teacher-student interaction. First, take a Haydn tune (for example) and tell your students to play the tune. Next, tell them “All those notes worked fine for Haydn so they will work fine for you.” Then have the students mix up the notes to create a new tune. Sowash continually accompanies on a jimbay drum to keep an interesting beat for the student, but also so he “wouldn’t get bored.”

Sowash called an audience volunteer up to the piano and went through the improvising process with his new “student.” He wrote out a progression consisting only of primary chords (I, IV, and V) in the key of C Major. He had the volunteer play the C major scale and primary chords until she was comfortable with the key. He then had her play the C major scale (in eighth notes) over the progression he wrote out for her. Then he told her to do the same thing, only this time randomly changing the direction of the scale (only steps, no skips). He later directed her to add longer tones. He avoids saying “quarter note” or “half note” because they tend to eliminate syncopations. Finally, he directed her to add occasional leaps to her melody. Then she had officially improvised a new tune. Sowash ended the discussion with a few secrets to help traditional piano teachers and their students improvise more.

1. Do not correct a student’s ending note if it doesn’t match the chord: eventually they will figure it out. When they do, offer them this advice: “Always remember that if you don’t like a note you ended on, a better one is only one step away.”
2. It matters a little what note you start on, a lot what note you end on, and what you play in between doesn’t matter much at all.
3. Classical players like clear directions. By using the process described to the volunteer, even classical players can improvise.

Although Sowash was unable to give his entire presentation due to time restraints, his detailed handout offered a valuable step-by-step guide on playing by ear. The first step is to choose a song and work out the basic tune. Teachers should stick to songs with mostly primary chords (i.e. folk, Christmas, and pop songs). Working out the tune in the key of C comes next. The student should play the scale a few times to get the sound in their ear, then find tonic. After locating tonic, the student should find the starting note (it might not be on C). The student should “hunt and peck” the melody and memorize it. After figuring out the melody, the chords should be added. Melody implies harmony so the students should use notes that come on strong beats to make educated assumptions about what chord fits. If the melody has a note on a strong beat that is in more than one chord (i.e. F is in the F and G7 chord), test which one is better. Then the student is ready to put the melody and the chords together. Once the basic melody and harmony are figured out, the student should add style. The teacher can accompany using a common left-hand pattern while the student continues playing blocked chords. Beginning students combine a left-hand pattern appropriate to their level with a right-hand melody. Intermediate students can add stylistic embellishment to the melody. Advancing students can include harmony in the right hand alongside the melody. Harmony notes should always be below the melody. Sowash compiled a variety of left-hand patterns including Rock, Latin, Swing, Boogie, Reggae, Fifties, and Lyrical Styles.

For more information visit www.bradelysowash.com.

**Hannah E. Mayo** holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in Piano Pedagogy and recently received a Master of Music Degree in Piano Performance from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette where she was awarded the Phi Beta Kappa Masters Award. As a graduate assistant, she taught applied piano, class piano, and music theory. Currently, she teaches group piano classes at UL Lafayette, private/group piano lessons at the Acadiana School of the Arts, REACH (an after school child development program), and in her own private studio.

***Project-Based Instruction in the University Group Piano Program for Music Majors***

**Reporter: Emily Book McGree**

Dr. Christopher Fisher, Coordinator of Group Piano Studies at Ohio University, offered a multitude of possible projects to benefit music majors in group piano sequences. Fisher provided examples of both individual and group projects. Most students at Ohio University take three years of group piano courses. Fisher stated that within the 3rd year, classes are almost exclusively project based, with two projects every quarter, one individual and one group. In addition, students also participate in mid-term and final exams each quarter. Students are evaluated and given grades on each project from the viewpoint of a potential future employer. They are required to video record and include each project in their professional portfolio.

**Sample Individual Projects:**

1. *Choral Rehearsal Project*: Students select a middle/high school level choral score that they will hopefully use in the future. They must prepare each part and be able to play all combinations while running a 15-minute sample choral rehearsal. Students must also present an overview of the composition, be knowledgeable of the composer, and keep the choir engaged with questions.
2. *Art Song Accompaniment Project*: Students must prepare the accompaniment to an art song in various tempi, as well as play and sing the melody line. They are responsible for preparing a performance with a singer, providing knowledge of the work and composer, and discussing pedagogical techniques for teaching and rehearsing the song.
3. *Composition Project*: Students must compose a 24-measure piece, provide a computer-generated score on Finale or Sibelius and perform their composition for the class. Fisher also proposes variations: 1) Compose and perform piano accompaniments for beginning band/vocal methods, 2) Compose and perform piano duets or ensembles, 3) Compose/improvise and perform a score to accompany a children’s book.
4. *Popular Music Transcription Project*: Students select a pop song from a CD, determine the chord progression, notate the melody and accompaniment, sing and perform a similar version, and transpose to a closely related key. For extra credit, students may also record each part on sequencing software, adding additional instruments.
5. *Styles Improvisation/Compositional Project*: This project is for 2nd year students. They must select a melody and compose variations in at least four different styles. Students submit a computer-generated score and perform their improvisation/composition for the class.

**Sample Group Projects:**

1. *Piano and my Profession*: This project is for all 1st year students and requires them to research and demonstrate ways the piano is used in each profession. Each group interviews a professional in their area, presents their findings to the class, and submits a written essay to the instructor identifying specific goals and strategies necessary to use to realize the goals.
2. *Styles Improvisation Investigation*: The instructor offers a presentation on different styles of piano playing (i.e. jazz, rock, blues, etc.) and students form groups with class members interested in the same genre. Each group must research their choice, create an ensemble improvisation, and teach classmates about the style.
3. *Annotated Choral Warm-Up Compendium/Demonstration*: This project is for Choral Music Education majors. Each student in the group must compose four original choral warm-ups, give a class presentation explaining the objective, and play the warm-ups in ascending chromatic order while directing the class from the keyboard. Students must compose a creative accompaniment and provide a computer-notated copy to be compiled with all the warm-ups from the class.
4. *Ensemble Accompanying*: This project is for Music Therapy majors. Students must collaborate on an ensemble composition that includes at least four instruments with a piano accompaniment. Instrument parts should be easily playable for clients and may be rhythm cells or ostinato patterns on rhythm instruments. Students present a class demonstration with students rotating on the piano part and a computer-generated score.

In conclusion, Fisher mentioned all of the above projects are included in his recently published text, *Teaching Piano in Groups*. He also commented on various trends he has noticed in his classes that participate in these group projects, including a greater ownership from students, a higher level of preparation for class, and an increase in commitment to the subject matter. More information, including sample projects and study guides, can be found on Fisher’s companion website to the text: teachingpianoingroups.

**Emily Book McGree** is currently a doctoral candidate at The University of Colorado at Boulder. A native of Delaware, Ohio, Emily received a Bachelor’s degree in Piano Performance from Ohio Wesleyan University and a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from Louisiana State University. She served as graduate assistant at both LSU and CU and is currently the director of piano studies at the Parlando School for the Arts. Emily has also presented research at state and national conferences of the Music Teachers Association.

**Breakout Session: *Group Piano For Non-Music Majors In The Small College***

**Reporter: Miroslava Panayotova**

The morning session of group piano day was a panel presentation entitled *The View: Innovative Formats Within Group Piano Teaching*. Four teachers in different group piano venues introduced their programs and shared their experiences and expertise. This was followed in the afternoon with breakout sessions in which each of the panelists presented more in-depth discussions of their particular teaching venue. Introduced were the Yamaha Music Education System for children, group piano in a public high school setting, college classes for non-music majors, and hobby classes for adult beginners. This report highlights the afternoon breakout session presented by Dr. Michael Benson. His presentation focused on *Group Piano For Non-Music Majors In The Small College Environment*.

Dr. Michael Benson, NCTM, is on the music faculty at The Ohio State University in Lima where he teaches piano, group piano and serves as the music director for the University Chorus and the Chamber Singers ensembles. Three group piano classes are offered for non-music majors during the autumn, winter, and spring quarters (ten weeks each). These include Music 101.01 (two sections offered in autumn and one section in winter), Music 102.01 (one section offered in winter and one in spring), and Music 208.01 (one section offered in spring).

Music 101.01 is designed to introduce and develop basic music reading and performance skills at the piano. The required textbook is *Piano for Pleasure*, written by Martha Hilley and Lynn Freeman Olson. Music 102.01 is a continuation for students who have successfully completed Music 101. Music 208.01, *Small Ensemble Course*, is designed for students who have completed Music 101 and Music 102. This class focuses on the development of ensemble playing and was added to the curriculum at the request of students who wanted to continue their piano lessons on campus. Students work on duets from *Piano for Pleasure*, learn teacher accompaniments of their Music 101 repertoire pieces, and explore supplemental duet repertoire.

In his presentation, Benson shared teaching strategies and assessment techniques that he uses in his non-music major group piano classroom. The main topics he discussed included:

* 1. Involving students in self-evaluation while implementing a performance checklist and blogging
  2. Introducing music composition
  3. Initiating a small piano ensemble course within the curriculum

Involving students in self-evaluation is an instrumental component of Dr. Benson’s curriculum. His techniques include videotaping of students’ own performances, asking students to write descriptions of their personal experiences with the videotaping, and requiring their self-assessment of the performances through checklists and blogging.

Representative examples of each of these techniques are discussed below.

**I. Student Self-Evaluation through “Carmen.” 1**

A. Incorporating Videotaped Self-Evaluation Checklist

During the first weeks of the term, beginning non-music major students videotape their performances and complete a self-evaluation checklist of ten behaviors in regard to proper sitting position and posture. (See Example 1)

Example 1: Checklist—Proper Physical Adjustment to the Piano/Keyboard (Video Self-

Assessment)

YES\_\_NO\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Proper sitting position on bench (front half of bench, closest to piano)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Knees below front edge of keyboard

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Bottom of feet on floor

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Elbows at key level (adjust bench up or down)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Hands in lap (starting position)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_6. Fluid motion in arm and wrist (during performance)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_7. Finger leads to the keyboard before each note (during performance)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_8. Curved fingers that support weight of arm (during performance)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_9. Wrist leads away from keyboard after each note (during performance)

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_10. Hands in lap (ending position)

GRADE: \* Each “Yes” answer is worth 10 points. So, multiply the number of correct

behaviors times 10 to find out your grade. For example, if you had 9 “Yes” answers you

would multiply 9x10=90 and your grade would be an A-.

B. Blogging to Assist Student Learning and Discussion

Blogs function as a personal written expression of each student’s understanding and self-assessment of in-class activities and out-of-class practice techniques. Students use the blogs as open forums for discussing both their videotaped performances and their self-assessment checklists. Blogging is essential in addressing and clarifying concepts studied in class, practice techniques, fingering, sight-reading, and repertoire performances, among others. An example of the implementation of blogging was presented from the assignments of Music 102.01. Dr. Benson requires responses to the questions for the final grade. He will intervene to include an encouraging comment—“I liked your description,” or if a student described a concept incorrectly. The following are three example questions and students’ responses to the questions posed:

**Blog question: What is the most challenging issue you face when sight-reading a piece for the first time?**

That’s simple. The rhythms. I can normally get the notes no problem. Just trying to figure out the rhythms throws everything else off. (J.B.)

I just have to read ahead when sight-reading before I can play. Bass clef takes me a wee bit longer, but I’m handling it. I also feel like I change the tempo while playing and thus, mess up the rhythm. (C. D.)

**Blog question: Do you read or see the piano fingering provided in the score when you first sight-read a piece? Do you ever change the fingering? Why?**

I try to figure out what scale the piece is in and go from there. The only time I move my position is if the piece requires my hand to move, or if my hand just decides it doesn’t want to listen to what I am telling it and moves on its’ own, which happens a lot. (A. E.)

**Blog question: How would you describe the technique we used to learn “One-Four-Seven” on page 194? Did it work for you? Why?**

I really enjoyed the rote part of learning to play because I like to be able to have confidence of knowing I can play it and then looking at the written version to put it together. This is the same method I use when I write a composition. I play something, then write it down and put the two together. (B.S.)

I liked learning “1-4-7” by rote as it was easier for me to play and get the hang of, and it was easier for me to do a composition on also. The piece really worked for me and it is actually one of my favorite pieces. (T. T.)

**II. Introducing Music composition within the Group Piano Classroom**

Benson introduces music composition during the first class meeting. Taking advantage of the fact that *Piano for Pleasure* brings in tapping of finger numbers as a pre-staff reading approach, he asks students to create finger-number compositions (right- and left-hand) and tap them, starting with a single finger number composition. The activities that follow include incorporation of quarter- and half-note rhythms, succeeded by the addition of note names within the C Major five-finger pattern. The creative process of the composition contributes to a simultaneous assimilation of rhythm and technique during the first class.

After students have performed a collection of repertoire pieces in class, Benson asks them to compose their own piece. The only limitation is to incorporate musical elements similar to those introduced with the piece in the textbook. The students enjoy sight-reading and performing each other’s compositions. Blog questions address challenges faced by the students during the composition process. In the course of the presentation, Benson highlighted compositions fashioned after various pieces from the textbook *Piano For Pleasure*: “Dreamer,” “Happy Feet,” “Change of Pace,” and “D Minor Coolness.”

**III. Initiating a Small Piano Ensemble Course within the Curriculum**

Dr. Benson played a videotaped ensemble performance of “The Little Chapel” during the presentation. He explained that after video-recordings are uploaded to “Carmen,” students answer questions on challenges they discovered during the learning process, how they incorporated practice techniques, and their experiences in working as a team to assemble the different parts together.

**Blog question: Would you choose to learn and perform other duets or ensemble pieces? Why?**

I would do other ensembles in the future if I had the chance. Playing with someone else brings a whole new dynamic to playing because you have to play more confidently and you have to know how or what the other person is going to play. (D. S.)

In the age of university online courses, course management systems like Blackboard, and communication tools such as Skype, Benson’s presentation inspires a quest for using cyberspace as a group piano teaching medium to an even greater extent. His presentation provided a glance into his innovative and successful application of technology in the non-music major group piano classroom.

**Notes**

1. “Carmen” is a computer-based learning management system. Its name is a reference to The Ohio State University’s alma mater, “Carmen Ohio.” The system offers an integrated set of online course tools for instructors and students to collaborate and share course materials, including discussion boards and audio and video clip integration.

**Miroslava Panayotova** is Visiting Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of South Florida where she teaches studio piano, piano pedagogy and class piano, coaches chamber music, and continues her long-lasting association with choral ensembles as an accompanist. She has made numerous appearances as recitalist and concerto soloist in the United States, Canada, Bulgaria, Russia, Slovakia, Romania, and Mexico. Panayotova has appeared at many music festivals including the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival in Vermont, XXI Festival Dr. Alfonso Ortiz Tirado 2005 in Mexico, and the Orford Festival in Canada. Her numerous awards include the first prize at the Green Valley Piano Competition in 2007, the Silver Medal at the Svetoslav Obretenov National Piano Competition in Bulgaria, and a semifinalist at the 2002 Missouri Southern International Piano Competition. As a winner of the 2006-2007 President’s Concerto Competition, Panayotova appeared with The Arizona Symphony Orchestra. Panayotova holds performance degrees from the State Academy of Music in Sofia, Bulgaria where she studied with Daniela Andonova, and an M.M. Degree from the University as South Florida where she studied with Svetozar Ivanov. Presently, she is a DMA candidate at the University of Arizona, where she studies with Tannis Gibson.

**Breakout Session: *Yamaha Music Education System***

**Reporter: Miroslava Panayotova**

The morning session of group piano day was a panel presentation entitled *The View: Innovative Formats Within Group Piano Teaching*. Four teachers in different group piano venues introduced their programs and shared their experiences and expertise. This was followed in the afternoon with breakout sessions in which each of the panelists presented more in-depth discussions of their particular teaching venue. Introduced were the Yamaha Music Education System (YMES) for children, group piano in a public high school setting, college classes for non-music majors, and hobby classes for adult beginners. This report highlights the afternoon breakout session presented by Kathy Anzis, director of teacher training for the Music Education Division of Yamaha Corporation of America. She discussed the process for becoming a certified Yamaha teacher and the different courses that comprise YMES.

**Teacher Certification Process**

A teacher candidate must demonstrate skills in performance, theory, harmonization, improvisation, sight-singing and sight-playing. Upon passing the entrance examination, the candidates attend *Certification Seminar A*. After the completion of Seminar A, teachers are certified to teach beginning levels (Junior Music Course and Young Musician Course). The teachers submit DVDs with videotaped teaching sessions of these levels. Approximately twelve certified teachers are involved in the evaluations of the video recordings. A year after completing *Certification Seminar A*, the candidates attend *Certification Seminar B*. Again, they submit additional DVDs for evaluation. Yamaha Corporation continues to update the training of its teachers through seminars and workshops.

Teacher Candidate Exam Certification Seminar A Begin Teaching (Junior Music Course, Young Musician Course) Teaching Evaluations Certification Seminar B Teaching Evaluations

**YMES Courses**

The Yamaha Music Education System offers unique music courses that are tailored to the age, ability, and development of the students. Music Wonderland, Yamaha’s nine-month program, is designed for three-year-old children. The Junior Music Course (JMC) is the “cornerstone” of the Yamaha Music Education System. This is a two-year curriculum, designed for four- and five-year-old beginners. After a student has completed the Junior Music Course, an audition is administered to assess the musical achievement and to determine the student’s placement in one of the following programs: Junior Extension Course (JXC) or Junior Special Advanced Course (JSAC). Both courses are designed for six- and seven-year-old children. Most of the JMC graduates continue their studies in the two-year program of the Junior Extension Course after a successful audition. After students complete this course, they may enroll in the Junior Advanced Course (JAC), a two-year program for eight- and nine-year olds. JMC graduates who demonstrate advanced capabilities continue their music study in the four-year accelerated curriculum of the Junior Special Advanced Course. A different program, the Young Musician Course (YMC) is an entry-level course for six- to eight-year-old beginners and offers three years of study.

**Features of the Junior Music Course**

Two-year course (four semesters)

* Offers group lessons for four- and five-year-old children
* Parent participation is required
* Extensive work on the development of general musicianship
* Serves as a foundation of the Yamaha curriculum

During the first semester of the Junior Music Course, students are exposed to a variety of activities including: singing solfege, playing the keyboard, singing songs with words, rhythm exercises, and introduction to music rudiments and music appreciation topics. One of the unique features of the Yamaha method is its outstanding ear-training. This is possible because solfege is the core of the method. The use of “Fixed-Do” solfege (without altered syllables) enables students to internalize the pitches and to learn their pieces by singing. During the first semester the students experience singing in the keys of C Major, G Major and F Major. The teacher sings melodic patterns, which the students imitate. Anzis played a video showing a class in which the students were learning the song *Happy Elephan*t (based on an alternation between “Do” and “Re”). The teacher sang with the children and created gestures, images and movements that stimulated the students’ attention.

Music appreciation segments focus on the character, form, and orchestration of studied compositions. CD and DVD recordings accompany each of the method books. The CD recording includes orchestral arrangements of the pieces studied and serves to accompany students while they play their repertoire at home. The DVD recordings incorporate fun animations created specifically for the pieces. Anzis demonstrated a video accompanying the *Ballet of the Chickens in Their Shells* from Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*. She pointed out that the students do not watch the DVDs in class; they are intended for home practice.

During the second semester of the Junior Music Course, students work on singing the solfege of their keyboard pieces. A video recording of a JMC class at the playing stage was shown. The students focused on the expression and the accompanying gestures for the contrasting phrases in the piece (march-like detached first phrase and smoothly connected cantilena second phrase). Students sang the piece and played with the parents who attended the course. Through singing solfege, students develop a strong sense of pitch training, singing by ear, rhythm, harmony, form, phrase structure, key, articulation, dynamics, and mood. In the Yamaha method, “keyboard solfege” is the main process, which connects the ear and the keyboard. It refers to the established internal association between sound, keyboard topography, gestures used while playing, and the physical motion that would be required to create the specific articulation and dynamics, in order to match the manner of the singing.

The Advanced courses (JAC and JSAC), which consist of group and private lessons, continue with the solfege training, keyboard harmony in more complex keys, and chord progressions played by ear. In addition, the teachers emphasize correct hand position and technique. Introduction of black keys into the pieces follows the principle “Listen - Sing - Play - Read.”

Students from Yamaha Music Education System schools throughout the world perform their compositions at the Junior Original Concert (JOC). Since 1972, over 28 countries have hosted this prominent event. Ensemble is another important element of the Yamaha curriculum. Its ultimate celebration is the Yamaha National Summer Music Camp, which educates students and teachers from across America’s YMES network. A brief glance into the world of the Yamaha ensembles demonstrated that their members do not use headphones—the pieces are taught to them as a group.

Various teaching materials of YMES were presented and exhibited during the presentation. These materials form an extensive collection of student textbooks, workbooks, CDs and DVDs, which are integral to the program and of the highest quality. They are colorful, engaging, and attractive for “kids of all ages.” Only teachers certified by Yamaha may receive these materials. Through the unique Yamaha Music Education System, students acquire fundamental skills, develop their musical sensitivity and creativity, and fulfill the desire to express themselves through music.

**Miroslava Panayotova** is Visiting Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of South Florida where she teaches studio piano, piano pedagogy and class piano, coaches chamber music, and continues her long-lasting association with choral ensembles as an accompanist. She has made numerous appearances as recitalist and concerto soloist in the United States, Canada, Bulgaria, Russia, Slovakia, Romania, and Mexico. Panayotova has appeared at many music festivals including the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival in Vermont, XXI Festival Dr. Alfonso Ortiz Tirado 2005 in Mexico, and the Orford Festival in Canada. Her numerous awards include the first prize at the Green Valley Piano Competition in 2007, the Silver Medal at the Svetoslav Obretenov National Piano Competition in Bulgaria, and a semifinalist at the 2002 Missouri Southern International Piano Competition. As a winner of the 2006-2007 President’s Concerto Competition, Panayotova appeared with The Arizona Symphony Orchestra. Panayotova holds performance degrees from the State Academy of Music in Sofia, Bulgaria where she studied with Daniela Andonova, and an M.M. Degree from the University as South Florida where she studied with Svetozar Ivanov. Presently, she is a DMA candidate at the University of Arizona, where she studies with Tannis Gibson.

**Discussion Groups**

**Reporter: Thomas Swenson**

Attendees divided into ten groups to discuss three topics. The first topic, assignments that never fail, has become a traditional discourse of this conference. The second topic explored the unique environments of teaching piano pedagogy at smaller schools. The third topic questioned what we, as piano pedagogy instructors, are doing in response to a number of challenges in academia. These three areas inspired passionate and open discussions, revealing environments that, despite the challenges, invite us to deepen our commitment to the field of piano pedagogy. This report is based on the compilation of discussion leader notes submitted from each group.

**I. Pedagogy Assignments that Never Fail**

One of the highlights of the GP3 conferences is the opportunity to share assignments, old and new, which are meaningful and successfully motivate our piano pedagogy students. The thrust of these discussions was on repertoire, business and marketing aspects, and creative projects. In addition, real teaching experience within the degree program was discussed.

The repertoire available for teaching is vast and ever changing. Choosing the right piece at the right time can make the difference between a student being successful or feeling under- or overwhelmed. The following assignments allowed students to thoughtfully become acquainted with the teaching repertoire:

* Provide the students with a number of pieces, as many as 20, and ask them to level the pieces, from easiest to most difficult. In addition, some instructors asked for performance goals for each piece or some type of rationalization for the ordering of the pieces.
* Have piano pedagogy students prepare a number of pieces for a professional-level recording. In so doing, the students thoroughly understand the technical, stylistic, and artistic subtleties of the repertoire.
* Provide an intermediate to early-advanced level piece to the students. The students’ assignment is to identify pieces that would precede (prepare for) the given piece.
* The instructor invents a fictional piano student (age, level, gender, interests, strengths, weaknesses, etc.). The piano pedagogy students seek to find a “diet” of repertoire for the fictional student.
* Playing through ensemble repertoire allowed pedagogy students to experience the joy of chamber playing and identify challenges and teaching strategies.
* Also related to repertoire was an assignment that required students to edit a score. The instructor would find an unedited piece and have students provide articulations, dynamics, and fingering. In doing so, the students synthesized concepts from their previous training.

The business of professional music teaching requires skills, knowledge, and an entrepreneurial mindset that can be advanced in piano pedagogy courses. Assignments designed to propel the student for business acumen included:

* Creating a mission statement or a teaching philosophy to guide them in creating an independent studio or a community music school.
* Creating “real” items such as a statement of policies, business cards, websites, an advertising plan, an annual budget, newsletters, a teaching schedule, and/or an interior design (which included computer workstations, listening area, restrooms, etc.).
* Writing a grant proposal requesting funds to open an independent music studio.
* Creating a resume to be used in applying to teach at a community music school.
* Participating in mock interviews for a teaching position.
* Determining the repertoire, filling out all registration forms, etc. for a fictional student who will be participating in a local or state competition.
* Requiring students to become actively involved in local, state, and national associations/conferences.

Teaching is at the core of piano pedagogy. Providing students with a number of opportunities to hone their skills and prepare for future teaching is crucial. Observation, assisting, and mock teaching were most commonly mentioned. Technology was used extensively in providing observational experiences for students to grow in their skills. Participants mentioned how easily it is to access web-based videos of student performances. These served well for pedagogy students to practice adjudicating and also provided a stimulus for discussions on what and how they might work with the student they observed. Assisting in group lessons or providing tutorial assistance allowed piano pedagogy students to interact with students directly. Many instructors noted that mock lessons between piano pedagogy students were not very successful, since these students could not adequately role-play fictional piano students.

Hosting a master class, for the students of local piano teachers, seemed to be another wonderful route for piano pedagogy students to interact with less-experienced pianists. The students who performed gained insight, and the piano pedagogy students acquired meaningful experiences in teaching and presenting. A tangential benefit was that the piano pedagogy program garnered attention from the local music community.

Several groups discussed when to allow pedagogy students to actually teach. While most students begin teaching in the second or third semesters after their first pedagogy course, a couple of instructors wanted their students to teach very quickly: right from the start or after only four weeks of classes. They defended this in noting that college students (and adults in general) are accustomed to educational environments that require them to use new knowledge immediately - not just store up knowledge for a nebulous future occasion. The piano pedagogy students might teach other college students, tutor students in class piano who required extra assistance, or teach local high school students. In the latter case, a local booster club provided financial assistance so the pedagogy students would receive some remuneration for their teaching. Most pedagogy students who participated in actual teaching were required to keep a journal for future reference.

Successful assignments/projects in piano pedagogy courses that had a large creativity component required students to reflect seriously upon objectives and diverse pathways to understanding. Some of the assignments mentioned included:

1. Composing teaching pieces (presumably pieces with a certain amount of repetition),
2. Composing accompaniments for given pieces (for the teacher to perform, and/or a MIDI-type accompaniment),
3. Creating either an outline of, or an actual, method book
4. Inventing games to reinforce music concepts.

A number of other excellent assignments were discussed that bear inclusion:

* To facilitate clarity of directions one instructor had her students write out directions to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
* While journals were mentioned earlier in this report, other student-created resources were also brought up by a number of pedagogy instructors such as charts and comparison tables.
* Reflective assignments, such as writing an essay on their favorite teachers, encouraged students to become more thoughtful about the teacher they hope to become.
* Personality tests, such as the Myers-Briggs Personality Types, were both enlightening and enjoyable for students.
* One interesting assignment involved behavioral modification. Pedagogy students began by identifying a way to improve their own practicing. They then attempted to teach that skill to others.

The present economic situation was clearly on the minds of many participants in these discussions as many instructors included assignments that required their students to articulate clearly the value of piano lessons. Whether the assignment was to record a 5–7 minute podcast or record a live speech, many participants affirmed the value of these activities.

**II. The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching in Smaller Schools**

A second topic of discussion revolved around piano pedagogy courses and programs at smaller schools. After identifying some of the advantages and disadvantages, many groups discussed the importance of recruitment and retention.

Teachers at smaller schools felt they had a greater degree of flexibility in tailoring courses to meet individual student desires. They felt their relationships with the students were closer than at larger schools. As such, they could advise students more thoughtfully. In smaller schools, some instructors liked the fact that they get to wear a variety of “hats,” sharing administrative responsibilities and teaching an array of courses. Teachers at smaller schools enjoyed collaborating with the music theory teachers and felt this contributed to a strong curriculum.

Challenges in teaching in a smaller school were few, but very important. Personality conflicts that arise between faculty members can intensify and disrupt growth and retention. Classes with low enrollments at smaller schools can be quite anxiety-producing. Many instructors mentioned teaching courses as Independent Studies, which had negative consequences on their teaching loads or salaries. Low enrollments have even dictated that class piano sections be combined, including both music and non-music majors. Lastly, it was felt that smaller schools tend to be slow in obtaining and repairing technological items.

Recruitment and retention of students were discussed in all ten of the groups. Piano pedagogy courses/programs, along with entire music programs, seem to be under great scrutiny by administrators. Ideas, useful to all programs seeking to build enrollments and receive greater support from the administration, were shared. The following actions, related to recruitment and retention, were stated:

* Bringing important pedagogues to campus brings exposure of the school and program to the local music community.
* Hosting MTNA events at the school attracts both pre-college and college-level instructors. In addition, sponsor organizations, whom often attend many peripheral events, attend these conferences and bring unique ideas and perspectives.
* Concerts and recitals demonstrate a commitment to growth and artistry.
* Being actively involved in state music teachers associations allow college faculty to network with other teachers.
* Presenting at various conferences demonstrates a commitment to research and innovation.
* Collaborating with non-music faculty on projects encourages innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to learning and teaching.
* Performing at events where the college president is present allows the administration to experience the power of music.
* Adjusting performances to meet the needs of the administration demonstrates that we can be flexible.
* Targeted marketing allows each dollar spent to be used most efficiently.
* Working closely with the admissions staff allows them to be more equipped to talk with potential students.

**III. How Has Your School Regressed and What Are You Doing About It?**

The final topic of inquiry asked participants to reflect upon how their schools may have regressed and how, as class piano and piano pedagogy instructors, they have dealt with these changes. Clearly, the present economy has had a significant impact on colleges and universities. Programs and instructors are seeking creative solutions to deal with these challenges. These “regressions” included:

1. Fewer scholarships are available to attract the best students
2. Incoming students seem less prepared for serious music study than previous generations
3. A reduction of fulltime music faculty (adjunct faculty are usually not active in recruiting events)
4. The need to justify courses with small enrollments
5. Merging multiple levels of class piano into a single class
6. Allowing over-enrollments in piano classes since attrition is common
7. A decrease in funding to purchase or maintain instruments
8. A manipulation of course credit hours in ways that require additional contact hours with less compensation (sometimes referred to as “hidden” credits)
9. A push to “economize” our teaching through distance or online learning components.

Creative responses or solutions to these burgeoning challenges were offered. While the recruitment ideas were included in the previous section, additional actions included:

* Teaching “pair lessons” (which some have found to be extremely successful)
* Peer-tutoring
* Incorporating technology and online resources (especially regarding keyboard classes)
* Looking to other models, such as language courses, which require students to spend 1–2 hours each week practicing in a supervised lab
* Demonstrating the success of the curricular sequence by making “before” and “after” videos of students
* Collecting data from former students about how they use their acquired piano skills as professionals
* Offering online and distance-learning courses when appropriate
* Offering “certificate” programs, which can build enrollment in smaller classes and meet the professional needs/desires of non-degree-seeking adults.

One participant enthusiastically shared how their program has grown in these turbulent times. Their music department decided to “corner the market” on technology. In so doing they were able to acquire a number of grants, advance the curriculum, and serve the needs of the students. While there was certainly a learning curve for the faculty, this instructor seemed to believe their efforts were celebratory.

Another participant thoughtfully reflected on the growing number of graduate degrees in Piano Pedagogy. They questioned whether we are doing a disservice to the field in accepting so many graduate students in piano pedagogy, knowing there are limited careers in academia.

As always, these small group discussions were a highlight of the GP3 conference. Participants networked in very productive ways and brainstormed the future of our field.

**Dr. Thomas Swenson**, Assistant Professor of Music and Director of the Salem College Community Music School, is regarded highly for his work in piano pedagogy, group piano, applied piano lessons, music theory, music technology, and composition. In addition to his work at Salem College, he has taught at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and is a regular piano instructor at the University of North Carolina Greensboro Summer Music Camp program. He received Piano Performance degrees from Minnesota State University (BM) and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (MM). His Ph.D. in Piano Pedagogy/Music Education is from the University of Oklahoma. His dissertation, focusing on specific traits of adult piano students, has contributed important information to this area of piano pedagogy. Additional areas of interest include the art of practicing, teaching composition, successful partner lessons, and keyboard ensemble literature. He has presented nationally at the Music Teachers National Association, Music Educators National Conference, and the World Music Symposium in addition to many state and local conferences and workshops. Dr. Swenson now is serving a second term as a Vice-President for the North Carolina Music Teachers Association.