

From the Desk of Beatrice Ellis, President

After nearly 9 months of the Covid-19 pandemic I wish I were... a writer who could assemble eloquent and powerful words to reflect our current mental state with its mix of anxiety, fear, impatience, thankfulness and hope. I wish I were...a magician who could bring a smile to anyone willing to give in the wonder of a magic act. I wish I were... a healer who would know how to comfort the sick and the lonely.

In recognition of the unique position that we hold as music teachers during this crisis, I thought back to a poem-To Be of Use by Michigan poet Marge Piercy. I had chosen it to close the MMTA Online Fall Gathering as an illustration of the discipline we, members of the music world, try to exemplify. Today, these words resonate in me primarily as homage to our frontline essential workers. Since I did not ask permission to reproduce the full text, I am just quoting from the first two stanzas and invite you to look up the poem on the Internet:

*The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight....*

*I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,....
who do what has to be done, again and again...*

And with that, I am also reminded that, within our very own set of musical skills and humanity, each of us is potentially a communicator, a healer and a magician. Many parents are grateful for our guidance and for bringing wonderful music to their homes. Recently a parent of one of my students wrote: "Thanks for touching our lives so beautifully and letting that fragrance linger forever in our lives." I believe that the sentiment in this statement applies to all teachers in MMTA. When in doubt about the effectiveness of teaching online, or when we feel exhausted after hours spent in front of a screen, these words are comforting as they display the power of music education working both ways between a teacher and a student's family and these words of gratitude motivate us to move forward.

Continued on pg. 4



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All materials must be received by this date

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President's message, continued from pg. 1

Despite the frustrations of the online experience, many teachers have willed themselves to master new technologies and adapted their teaching in the course of just a few months to avoid a major disruption in their working schedule. Online recitals blossomed, helpful webinars multiplied, competitions were re-invented and most chapters kept conducting meetings and events online. "Zooming" has become a word and brought unforeseen possibilities. Registrations for the MMTA Online Fall Gathering exceeded expectations and the generosity of our members shone through. I would not have been able to create this event if other music organizations had not paved the way and given me the confidence to, at least, try my best. And speaking of people who "jump into work head first without dallying in the shallows," Yelena Wells, MMTA Webmaster, did not hesitate to jump with me!

It is my hope that the success of the Online Fall Gathering becomes a springboard for MMTA to produce online workshops and webinars that could benefit more members throughout the year. It should also encourage chapters to work together more and share resources not only to invite guest presenters but also to help plan state events such as SAT. Online meetings may also ease conversations about topics that we shy away from due to lack of information or discomfort, namely expanding our knowledge of composers and repertoire beyond western culture and reaching out to students from underserved communities.

While we are all wary of what the future may hold due to the pandemic, please take comfort that MMTA is in good financial health, that our membership base is strong and that MMTA will continue to support its members' professional development and wellness. I am learning a lot through phone conversations with board members and during my participation in chapter's board meetings. I am impressed and galvanized by everyone's dedication, stamina and desire to help MMTA to continue meeting the challenges of adapting to the current shifts of our practices. In that spirit, I am delighted to welcome Joy Morin as Education Chair, as well as Erin Thomas and Karen Betz-Griewahn who will lead respectively the String and Woodwind SAT.

I close this message in the way we have become accustomed in these past months: stay safe, stay healthy!

Béatrice Ellis

If you would be interested in taking a more active role in the organization, five positions are open:

MTNA Junior Coordinator – contact Laurie Marshall

MTNA Young Artist Competition – contact Laurie Marshall

SAT Voice Chair for details – contact Michelle Mitchum

MTNA Foundation Chair – contact Béatrice Ellis

Communication Coordinator (new position) – contact Yelena Wells

From the Vice-President:

I wanted to take a moment to say hello as the new Vice President of our exceptional organization. First and foremost, thank you for trusting me in this important role. I have big shoes to fill following Beatrice Ellis, and I am thankful for her help as I begin my tenure. I look forward to planning a few conferences that will be inspiring and educational, and hopefully in-person.

A few short words about myself: I am Professor of Piano and Director of Piano Pedagogy at the Michigan State University College of Music. I have been teaching at MSU since 2006. Previous to this, I completed my schooling at the University of Southern California. At MSU I am blessed to teach an extremely wide range of students, from very young students to DMA students in Piano Performance, to adult hobby students, to non-major group piano students, to students with Special Needs, in particular Autism Spectrum Disorders. And of course, I'm privileged to work with the next generation of piano teachers in courses in Piano Pedagogy. Recently, I published a book with Oxford University Press titled "Transformational Piano Teaching: Mentoring Students from All Walks of Life" that discusses the different developmental approaches for working with various kinds of piano students. This past year, I released a new CD of Latin American works for two pianos with my good friend Sarkis Baltaian. All in all, my professional life is very busy, but extremely satisfying. I owe much of this to mentors I've had over the years here in Michigan, and my connection to MMTA, CAMTA and MTNA. These organization have provided me with structure for my teaching, events for my students, and a network of world-class teachers to draw both inspiration and knowledge from. I'm forever grateful for this, and hope to give back how I can in this role.



To say that it has been a challenging year is a gross understatement. How fortunate, though, that we are able to impart beauty and goodness to our students in our teaching. May we continue to do that.

Derek Polischuk, MMTA Vice President

Online Visibility Webinar

Join our first 2021 MMTA Member Exclusive Webinar! Our webmaster Yelena Wells will share marketing tools to help increase your studio's visibility online. Are you taking advantage of Google My Business? Do you know how to schedule posts on Facebook? Learn about free resources to manage your advertising online and get found by prospective families. Join us on Friday, January 22 at 9:30-11:00am. Register at michiganmusicteachers.org/webinars.





SAT Update

As of the end of November, all the 2021 tests for Technique, Sight reading, Aural, and Theory have been written, proofed multiple times, and prepared for printing. I will be sending them to all the local chairs in early December for the final proofing before testing season begins.

The tests will look very similar to previous years' tests. So even though most chapters will be doing some form of virtual testing, we can all know what to expect. Each local chapter will decide exactly how they will administer the tests this year, but needs to follow the guidelines sent out earlier by Michelle Mitchum so that students across the state have as uniform an experience as possible.

We are looking forward to another great year of piano SAT testing in Michigan, it may look different this year, but I'm happy we can still offer this wonderful experience to our students!

Jacki VanderSlik
SAT Handbook & Testing Chair

Eastern District Semi-Finals Chair Needed

Our semifinals auditions will be online this year, over the weekend of April 16th-18th and I am in need of someone to take over the semifinals for the Eastern Division. The job description looks a little different this year; an outline of duties include:

- Online registration of students
- Communication with the judges (Judges have been obtained already)
- Assigning student numbers to coincide with student performance links, student adjudication sheets and student music (PDF) to be sent to the judge
- Ordering certificates and sending them out to each participant
- Follow up with SAT Auditions Chair for students who have been chosen as finalists

Please contact Michelle Mitchum if you are interested in this very vital position.

New SAT Chairs

Strings: Erin Butler-Thomas

Erin Butler-Thomas has been an active violinist in the Kalamazoo area since she was a child. She grew up studying with Renata Knific at WMU and then went on to study at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She has studied with David Updegraff, Kurt Sassmanshauss, and Dorothy DeLay. She has performed as a guest artist with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham-Bloomfield Orchestra, and the Rochester Symphony. She has given many concerts in both classical and Irish Fiddle genres throughout both the US and the World. She has performed in Italy, Ireland, England, Wales, Australia, Germany, Austria, and Japan.



Erin has competed nationally and internationally, coming in third place in the international IBLA competition. She was awarded the Wienawski award at the International IBLA Carnegie Hall competition and has soloed with numerous symphonies, including the Kalamazoo Symphony, Rochester Symphony, and Cleveland Orchestra. In addition to doing masterclasses and a PBS special with Mark O'Connor, She has performed with Natalie McMaster, Mark Wood, Gil Shaham, Hilary Hahn, Keith and Kristin Getty, Regin Guttessin, and many others. In addition to concerts, Erin has also had the privilege of being part of two movies – a short film titled 'The Acorn' and a feature-length film yet to be released– recording and being on screen for both.

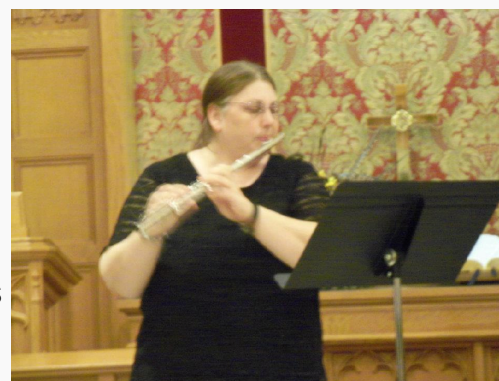
Since getting married and settling down she enjoys playing as a substitute member of the Southwest Michigan Symphony and the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, along with various small ensembles throughout the state. She established her teaching studio in 2010 and enjoys teaching students of all ages and abilities. While she predominantly uses the Suzuki method, she has several students who enjoy the Fiddle and show tunes as well. Erin has been an active member of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) for the past 3 years and has also been an active member of the Michigan Music Teachers Association (MMTA). She has assisted with the SAT string division in Michigan for the past 2 years and has had students place with high scores on the exams. Students from her studio have competed locally, nationally and internationally. A few students have had the experience and excitement of performing at Carnegie Hall and placing 2nd and 3rd in International Competitions.

From Erin: I grew up taking the SAT exams both in piano and violin. I studied the piano here in Kalamazoo with Susan Uchimura and violin with Renata Knific. I also participated in the Yamaha National String Competition and placed third nationally. By bringing awareness to fellow string teachers in the area, I hope to increase the string attendance with the SAT. The string students who have participated in it have really enjoyed the experience and the knowledge gained from it

and look forward to it every year. I have always had a love for learning and for teaching. Having helped with the SAT these past two years has taught me a lot. I enjoy preparing the exams and would look forward to help with software suggestions and exam prep from other teachers who have input. My students love playing games to improve their aural awareness as well as their theory skills. For my students that do not perform and compete regularly, this gives them an opportunity to practice, perform and accomplish a goal. They are always so excited afterwards and are already talking about the next year. While I grew up taking the exams, I am still very much new to creating and maneuvering the SAT exams and welcome any advice that can be given. I have enjoyed working with Wendy over the past two years and have learned a lot from her.

Woodwinds: Karen Betz-Griewahn

Karen Betz-Griewahn, is an active flutist, instructor, pianist, conductor and adjudicator in the West Michigan area. She is a founding member of and has performed with the West Michigan Flute Orchestra for 30 years and performs with the Great Lakes Chamber Flute Choir. She currently serves on WMFA board of directors as development director. Karen was the founding and past director of the West Michigan High School Flute Ensemble, and Past President of the West Michigan Flute Association. She has taught at Aquinas, Grand Rapids Community and Grand Rapids Baptist Colleges. Karen has two degrees in flute performance and has studied with Darlene Dugan, Mary Louise Poor, Judith Kempf and Chris Kantner. Karen grew up here in West Michigan and graduated from Forest Hills Central High School and then attended Grand Rapids Junior College, Grand Valley State University, and University of Michigan. She has played with the West Shore Symphony, Hope College Repertory Theater, Grand Rapids Civic Theater, Kent Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Grand Rapids Chamber Winds. She has been the winner of several concerto competitions, scholarships and awards. Karen has performed with the Westwinds Quintet, and she has a very active flute and piano studio, and is active as an accompanist in the area, as well as teaching flute and piano in her home studio for the past 40 years. Karen is an active clinician and adjudicator for the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association (MSBOA). She had served as woodwind teacher and band assistant at Byron Center Christian Middle School for grades 6-8 for many years. Karen plays piano for St. John's Lutheran church in Jenison and has served 4 Lutheran churches in the area as their music directors over the past 30 years. She is an active member of the National Flute Association (NFA), performing at NFA conventions in Columbus, Chicago, Nashville, Kansas City and Minneapolis and served as a newly published Music Judge NFA in 2000. Karen is also a member of Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) and Michigan Music Teachers Association (MMTA) serving as past state SAT





Woodwinds Coordinator. She is an active member of the Grand Rapids Piano Teachers' Forum, and the Grand Rapids Musician's League (GRML). Her students consistently earn high ratings in Solo and Ensemble Festivals, Student Achievement Testing, Federation Festivals in both flute and piano and her students have been winners of several honors, scholarships and achievement awards. Karen has been married to barber Elwyn Griewahn for 33 years and they have two daughters- Anna, sophomore at GVSU, majoring in opera; and Elena, who attends GRCC, studying organ performance. Karen loves to teach music to students of all ages and ability.

Karen writes...

My love of music and the passion that I have to teach music to all ages is my daily goal. I have been involved with SAT Testing for some years, and my own flute students love to participate in the day! My hope is that we can involve more woodwind students and their private teachers. Our woodwinds program is a very fine all around program, through solos, theory, listening, sightreading and technic. My students love the opportunity to perform their solos for other judges and love the inclusion of theory especially. I hope to show other woodwind teachers that we have a place in our fine organization to include their students, whether playing the flute, clarinet, oboe, saxophone or bassoon. I have found that the SAT woodwinds program is an all around program that helps prepare our woodwind students for further study in college too. I plan to make updates and revisions to most of the tests over the next few years, and would love the input of any of our Michigan woodwind teachers. An update had been made of the flute tests about 10 years ago, but time to update the other instruments tests too. I would love any help from you. Many programs at the schools are not happening right now during this COVID-19 outbreak, and private study and having a clear goal is so needed at the present time. SAT Woodwind testing is an excellent way for the students to stay involved, interested and motivated. Please contact me with any questions. Happy practicing!

MMTA Concerto Competition Update

The MMTA Concerto Competition will be virtual in 2021. It is always open to all instruments and voice. Please encourage your students to participate. In a slight chance that we may be able to compete in-person, the date is May 22, 2021. Registration deadline is April 10, 2021. For more updates, please check out the association website.

New Education Chair: Joy Morin

Joy Morin is a teacher, pianist, speaker, and writer of a blog at ColorInMyPiano.com. She teaches students of all ages at her independent piano studio near Ann Arbor, Michigan (after having relocated from Bowling Green, Ohio). A devoted teacher and lifelong learner, Joy is a frequent attendee of conferences and workshops to refine her craft. She has twice been the recipient of MTNA Teacher Enrichment Grants, enabling her to further pursue her interest in Edwin E. Gordon's work in Music Learning Theory (MLT) and complete certifications from the Gordon Institute for Music Learning in both Piano and Early Childhood Music.



Joy enjoys connecting with fellow piano teachers, through her blog and beyond. As an outgrowth of her blog, she offers an online course for piano teachers (see institute.joymorin.com) and an annual Piano Teacher Retreat at her home (see pianoteacherretreat.com). As an active member of MTNA, Joy serves in various capacities: most recently as Teacher Education Chair of MichiganMTA, VP for Affiliated Associations of OhioMTA, and Co-President of the Toledo Piano Teachers Association. Joy has given presentations at regional, state, and national events on the topics of piano method books, music learning theory, piano teaching literature, and studio business (see JoyMorin.com). Two of her articles were published in the *American Music Teacher* and *Clavier Companion* magazines.

A native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Joy completed graduate studies at Central Michigan University (Mount Pleasant, Michigan) where she received a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy, studying both subjects under Adrienne Wiley. Her Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance is from Hope College (Holland, Michigan), where she studied piano with Andrew Le and pedagogy with Adam Clark. Upon graduating summa cum laude from Hope, she received the MTNA StAR award and was granted membership into the Pi Kappa Lambda music honorary society and the Phi Beta Kappa honorary society. Joy also holds an Associate of Music degree in Piano Performance from Grand Rapids Community College (Grand Rapids, Michigan), where she studied with Mary Scanlan.

Find A Teacher Directory

We're excited to offer a public Find A Teacher directory on our website. Please submit your information on this form by December 31, 2020. Website will be updated the following week so that we have up-to-date searchable information over winter break. Submit your info: <https://michiganmusicteachers.org/directory>





2020 MTNA Michigan Composition & Performance Competitions

November 2020

RESULTS

Junior Division

Piano:

Winner, JP 2020-03 Aaron Wang	Teacher, Catherine Rollin
Alternate, JP 2020-11 Brian Zhang	Teacher, Christopher Harding
Honorable Mention, JP 2020-06 Alexandra Xu	Teacher, Mary Siciliano

String:

Winner, JS 2020-03 Bhargava Kulkarni, cello	Teacher, Amir Eldan
Alternate, JS 2020-02 Allan Choi, violin	Teacher, Mallory Tabb

Senior Division

Composition:

Winner, Jonah Cohen	Teacher, Mary Siciliano
*Jonah also went on to receive Honorable Mention in the East Central Division competition.	
Honorable Mention, Jackson Naglick	Teacher, Catherine Rollin
Honorable Mention, Atticus Rebmann	Teacher, Michael Coonrod

Piano:

Winner, SP 2020-26 Aleks Shameti	Teacher, Christopher Harding
Alternate, SP 2020-12 Richard Gao	Teacher, Michael Coonrod
Honorable Mention, SP 2020-23 Luis Villa	Teacher, Michael Coonrod
Honorable Mention, SP 2020-15 Khoa Ho	Teacher, Thomas Lymenstull
Honorable Mention, SP 2020-19 Annie Tang	Teacher, Faye Mao

String:

Winner, SS 2020-02 Ben Deighton, cello	Teacher, Amir Eldan
Alternate, SS 2020-07 Kaivalya Kulkarni, cello	Teacher, Amir Eldan
Honorable Mention, SS 2020-01 Eric Yun	Teacher, I-Fu Wang

Woodwind:

Winner, SW 2020-02 Zachary Costello, saxophone	Teacher, Joseph Lulloff
Alternate, SW 2020-01 Laura Ramsay, saxophone	Teacher, Timothy McAllister



Young Artist Division

Brass:

Winner, YAB 2020-01 Christopher Warren, Euphonium
Alternate, YAB 2020-02 Iyla Miller, Euphonium

Teacher, Kenneth Kroesche
Teacher, Kenneth Kroesche

Piano:

Winner, YAP 2020-05 Nhi Luong
Alternate, YAP 2020-03 Lyndon Ji
Honorable Mention, YAP 2020-06 Angie Zhang

Teacher, Christopher Harding
Teacher, Logan Skelton
Teacher, Logan Skelton

String:

Winner, YAS 2020-02 Danqi Zeng, Violin
Alternate, YAS 2020-03 Jackie Hager, cello

Teacher, Daniele Belen
Teacher, Amir Eldan

Woodwind:

Winner, YAW 2020-06 Valentin Kovalev, saxophone
Alternate, YAW 2020-09 Maria Torres Melgares, saxophone
Honorable Mention, YAW 2020-10 Alex Toth, saxophone
Honorable Mention, YAW 2020-11 Nathan Salazar, saxophone
Honorable Mention, YAW 2020-12 Lindsay Bos, clarinet

Teacher, Timothy McAllister
Teacher, Timothy McAllister
Teacher, John Nichol
Teacher, Joseph Lulloff
Teacher, Arthur Campbell

2020 MTNA Michigan Performance Competition Guest Judges:

Brass:

Young Artist - Thomas Evans

Piano:

Junior – Andrew Le, Nick Susi, Susan Yang Walvoord
Senior – Matthew Hagle, Adam Neiman, Susan Tang
Young Artist – Eunjin Lee, George Radosavljevic, Silvia Roederer

Strings:

Junior, Senior, and Young Artist – David Lister, Bruce Uchimura, Jenny Walvoord

Woodwind:

Junior, Senior, and Young Artist – Heidi Johanna Radtke, Henning Schroder, Kenneth Tsa

MTNA Michigan Composition and Performance Competition Team

Mary Ann Anschutz, Composition Coordinator Ruth Goveia, Young Artist Division Coordinator
LMM/ Jordon Young, Junior Division Coordinator Jordon Young, Technical Assistant
Karen Feilla, Senior Division Coordinator Laurie M. Marshall, Performance Competition Chair

Our Collaboration: Why Didn't We Do This Sooner?

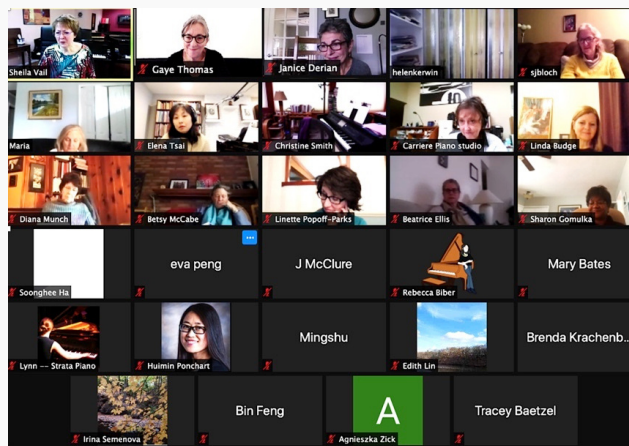
Ann Arbor Area Piano Teachers Guild and Livonia Area Piano Teachers Forum

Livonia Area Piano Teachers Forum (LAPTF) and Ann Arbor Area Piano Teachers Guild (AAAPTG) are two neighboring MMTA associations who recently took advantage of their geographical locations to come together and share responsibilities for hosting a series of special workshops. This first collaboration was intended to allow as many people in the area as possible to attend and learn more about evaluating/adjudicating the many piano performance events that take place in Michigan.

Adjudicating student performances, whether it is SAT, Federation, or various other competitions is an important skill and we took this opportunity to co-host a three-session series titled **The Art of Performance Evaluation**. Sheila Vail, the US National Coordinator of the RCM Certificate Program was asked to be the main presenter. In all three sessions our speaker was virtual. The first session was in the fall of 2019, hosted by Ann Arbor and held in Kerrytown Concert House. Livonia hosted the 2nd session at Evola Music in Canton, and the third session was delivered through Zoom for all of us in our own homes, due to Covid19. The response from both associations was overwhelming.

Those teachers that attended all three sessions will receive a certificate of participation, validating their time and energy and acknowledging their continuing education effort. Participation for each session required a small fee.

This collaboration provided us the value of sharing educational information with other teachers and networking and building relationships with people who are less than an hour away. In addition, sharing the cost of hosting excellent speakers is something that every association might readily appreciate.



We continue to collaborate. In the fall, LAPTF invited the Ann Arbor Area group to a Zoom meeting featuring speaker Carly Walton: **“Online/Remote Piano Teaching: Tools and Tips”**, and in January, AAAPTG will reciprocate with online teacher, Josh Wright, in a program titled: **“Live Q & A Session with Josh Wright: Josh Wright Piano TV: Your Guide to Mastery”**.

We are grateful for the new relationship. We now communicate regularly, as we navigate the virtual worlds of SAT 2021, online lessons, and the many areas of music education that we all value. The Ann Arbor Area and Livonia Area groups encourage other chapters to find ways to come together through collaboration by opening your doors and building bonds with other teachers of MMTA.

Janice Derian, LAPTF and Gaye Thomas, AAAPTG



Musical Musings

Q & A

By Louis Nagel

Julie and I have been busy during this difficult time. Julie, far more active than I, is maintaining her psychology practice working on line with patients. And she has presented lectures discussing three different topics: OPPRESSION IN MUSIC, the ME TOO movement, and STAGE FRIGHT to groups of teachers and analysts for nine (!) different venues. I have entered the early part of the twentieth century technologically by giving lessons on ZOOM. With the acquisition of a good microphone I feel can be somewhat effective and I would love to have more students, as I love teaching with the same ardor as I love playing. As for playing I was invited to do three programs at Kerrytown. I was asked to “Be Louie” (I cherish this compliment, really) and talk about the music or the career, or any relevant thoughts. I did NOT come up with the name LOUIE LESSONS, but that is the title, and the subject is three programs on the piano music of Mozart. For these three programs I have resurrected from way back in my repertoire the “Twinkle—“ variations, and learned the first of his eighteen complete sonatas, K. 279 in C Major, a work I ashamedly confess I had never even read before! And I have revisited some other works—the last program on December 3 will end with the magnificent Sonata K.310, in A Minor.

Part of these programs includes an invitation to listeners to phone in questions. So far I have received none, but I got to thinking about questions I have been often asked in my career as a pianist and lecturer. So I thought in today’s column I would pose a couple of them that I have frequently tried to answer. Before starting this Q and A session, I want to assure anyone who is thinking about a question but afraid to ask: there really is no such thing as a “silly” or “dumb” question. Consider a visit to a doctor who understands all about cholesterol: would you be afraid to ask “What do LDL and HDL mean”? I hope not. I imagine some people are quite curious about performers—after all, it is not everyone who walks out on a stage to present a musical composition.

Q. 1: Do you get nervous?

A: The simple answer is “yes” and anyone who tells you “no” is either insensitive or lying. There is a difference, however between the nerves of excitement and anticipation of doing something you love to do and have worked hard to do it, and the nerves of uncertainty—“why am I doing this?” This question is answered with eloquence, research and compassion far better by my wife in her book MANAGING STAGE FRIGHT than by me. She has studied the issue deeply. For me, I must accept the fact that as I age I do feel the need to prepare more intensely than I used to and have taken scores to the piano in recent years because I don’t trust the memory that rarely failed me in my younger days. I have as my models for this some very great pianists who began using scores, among them the aging Anton Rubinstein, the stroke patient Sviatislav Richter and the magnificent senior citizens Dame Myra Hess and Richard Goode. There is nothing artistic about pretending you can do what you always were able to do if you feel uncertain about it. I would much prefer the music



to speak to my audiences than my ego. And on the other side of the nervous question (I have never been asked this, but I volunteer it for what its worth) "do you still feel the exhilaration that comes after a good performance?" "Just like always" is my honest answer, and locally my reward to myself is a dinner across the street from Kerrytown at Zingerman's, There is nothing like a rewarding meal after an afternoon of fast playing.

Q. 2: How long do you practice?

A: This is not such an easy question to answer, because there is no time frame into which I put my practice needs. In learning, for example, this new (for me) Mozart Sonata K.279 I am working intensively. It is not that it is so hard, but rather it is unfamiliar. It is not the difficulty of K.310, (a bear of a piece) but I have often played the A Minor sonata, and while one never masters such a piece, I have developed a relationship with it. K.279 is the "new person in the neighborhood" and I am still listening and learning where my fingers need to go in those eternally sneaky Mozart scale/melody patterns. So while the A Minor is harder, I am spending far more time now on the earlier work. And in terms of how long? I set a goal for myself and don't stop until I feel I have either reached it or are close enough that I can stop for the day. Incidentally, when you are learning a piece, at the end of, let's say, two hours of practice, you can play that page or section or movement. Don't be surprised when you return to that music the next day it is still in shambles. It takes several times of coming back to in practice session before you can claim any sort of ownership! I suspect you all have discovered that and I am just here to verify that discovery.

Before leaving that question, I want to say something about the A Minor: Though I have often played it, I still discover new things in it. In the second movement, for example, I realized I was beginning the development section quite forte. Mozart, however, asks for "P". How about that?! I tried it. I guess the fellow knew what he was doing. But I, in the habit of producing a warm rich C major sound there, have to retrain myself to begin softly so I can achieve the buildup of drama and intensity that infuses the heart of the section. It is infinitely more beautiful when I try to honor the composer, whose instruction I had either ignored or misremembered. NEVER PRACTICE WITHOUT THE SCORE IN FRONT OF YOU!!!!!! I should know that—I have demanded that of hundreds of students over the years.

Q. 3: Why do some pieces have titles and others don't?

A: This was actually asked of me some time back (when we actually had live audiences) by a young student playing a Mendelssohn Song without Words. It was one of those wonderful/awful moments when the "expert" is absolutely stumped as to how to reply. I think it is a terrific question now, but I fumbled through an answer then. I suspect the young lady who asked that question was not particularly satisfied by my answer. However, in the case of the Mendelssohn, the titles are mostly publishers' add-ons after Mendelssohn's death, The composer himself titled the three Venetian Boat Songs, the Duet from Book 3 (one os his finest works I should add) the Volkslied from book 4, the Funeral March and Spring Song from Book 5 (did everyone from my generation have to learn the



Spring Song when we were kids having piano lessons? Do I DARE to include that in a Mendelssohn group today?) and the Spinning Song, from Book 6. Let me digress to share with you a favorite experience of mine. I had just played the Fourth Concerto of Camille St.Saens with an orchestra here in Michigan and it went well enough to be asked for an encore. I was not particularly planning on doing an encore, but the customer is always right, so to speak, and I played the Mendelssohn Spinning Song —same key and same kind of piano writing. It too went well, and I was pretty happy—the Spinning Song is one devil of a piece to feel good about. The next day I read a very complimentary review of my work and cited my “generosity” in playing an encore by Mendelssohn entitled “The Bee”. “What is that all about?” I asked and actually called the reviewer, out of curiosity. And to my utter amazement I learned and verified that in some English edition, that marvelous piano piece was given the title of “The Bee’s Wedding”! I hope the bee in question married his honey and lived happily ever after..... The nineteenth century delighted in titles. Schumann fancifully entitled most of his pieces. So did Liszt, Schubert gave character titles to his short pieces, as did Beethoven in his Bagatelles. Mendelssohn felt otherwise although he did call his short pieces Songs Without Words. Brahms avoided such an approach but one could easily call Opus 117/1 “Sleep Gently” or Opus 76/1 as “The Turbulent Ocean”. Closely related to the lied that flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these short character pieces invite the performers to associate their sounds with experience. And publishers felt they certainly were better for business. People were buying music to learn and play for their pleasure in the nineteenth century. And titles helped sales. What would you find more attractive were you an amateur pianist looking at some title pages by Mendelssohn: “Opus 19 Number 1 in E Major”, or “Sweet Remembrance”?

Beethoven did NOT call it MOONLIGHT SONATA. And Chopin would not have liked the nicknames given to his Preludes and Etudes, nor the so-called PRODIGY NOCTURNE (F Minor, Opus 55/1). But the nineteenth century loved the association of words with music and some of the writings from that period are pretty colorful. I often play Opus 27/2, and while mentioning the origins of the title, nevertheless tell the audience that I am about to perform The Moonlight Sonata. And I still have the same joy as always in hearing those familiar notes. Titles announce old musical friends.

Enough questions and answers for now. I am happy to entertain others should readers want to send in. Meantime, stay healthy, everyone, and enjoy the beginning of the holiday season SAFELY!

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