

Thank you, George Bailey

by Nathene Arthur

Happy New Year everyone! As I have been given the auspicious task of writing the Editorial for our last issue of Calgary Impromptu, I think of many things.

Originally, I had written a little poem. It was terrible. This is a solid “Take Two” on that attempt.

Having served as Secretary and Archivist, among other roles with Calgary ARMTA, I was able to look through many years of Impromptu editions. You will see some of its history covered in this edition. But the most special thing about Impromptu: It. Was. Ours. Yes, we will still receive the CFMTA Canadian Music Teacher Magazine, and the Provincial ARMTA newsletter Tempo. We can still read professional development articles, and some larger scale advertisements and notices. All our Calgary news and events can reach you all via email. Our Calgary teachers can submit articles to Tempo. All is well.

However, looking over the articles, story sharing, events we attended together, and programs we ran, I do grieve for the history of what our local Calgary area ARMTA teachers shared in this little newsletter. Times change, I get it. The editions will all remain sitting there, in the Archives, silent, but immortalized. Our “history”. I am proud of it. In the future, no one

will read over our emails. Years from now, someone may read Impromptu!

In the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, which is a Christmas classic, we see good old George Bailey. Not a big somebody, certainly not “rich” in the bank account kind of way, and just contributing day by day to make the world a better place. We then see his moment of crisis, he gets to see what the world would be like, had he never existed.

It was not good, at all! I think Calgary ARMTA is richer because of Impromptu. It is a part of us. And there were many of our members who in the past sacrificed time, worked with other members, and got the editions out. On behalf of ARMTA Calgary, we thank you. You are our George Baileys. We would not be the same without you.

This final edition will include a history of Impromptu, a few articles, professional development, the ever important upcoming “Calendar of Events”, colourful advertisements from our local music stores and conservatories who sponsor us, and who we encourage our membership to support. Thank you everyone for making this last edition so special. And to all our membership: enjoy!

Calgary ARMTA Continuing Education Scholarship

DEADLINE EXTENDED TO JUNE 1st

Our Calgary Executives have decided to extend the deadline for our Calgary ARMTA Continuing Education Scholarship to June 1st, 2021. This \$500 professional development grant is for a current Calgary ARMTA member who is studying towards an additional diploma, taking lessons with a master teacher in their instrument, or to cover upcoming conference fees, workshops, online summer training or professional development fees, etc. The winning applicant will be required to submit a report of their learning experience for publication in Impromptu and/or present live at one of our future Calgary ARMTA meetings. This Scholarship was advertised in the February 2020 Impromptu, and most recently by email in April 2020. For more details please contact: LaDona Ahenda: ladona.ahenda@gmail.com



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Dr. Peter Simon
President, The Royal Conservatory



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IMPROMPTU

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Advertising and Submission Deadlines:

FALL ISSUE:

Deadline*: September 12

Publication: October 15

WINTER ISSUE:

Deadline*: January 20

Publication: February 15

**Deadlines will only be in effect in the event that there is another edition of Impromptu.*

Impromptu is the newsletter of ARMTA Calgary branch with the purpose of informing members of events of interest, providing summaries of Calgary meetings, and encouraging and supporting professional development through member-written articles.

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Message from the Board Chair

I am so grateful to live in this age of electronic communication. It has enabled so many to keep studying, playing and teaching music, to become inventive in how to accomplish learning and teaching music. Many can continue to work, to visit with family and friends near and far, to shop, and so much more, without coming in physical contact with others and thereby reduce the opportunity for virus to spread.

I wonder what we will continue to use or how this experience will inform how we work and play in the future.

Certainly electronic communication has changed how we seek and deliver information. In 1995, when I joined ARMTA and Calgary Branch, we relied on receiving Impromptu, our branch newsletter, four times a year because it contained the application forms for recitals, announcements about meetings and special guests, workshops and special events. In 1995, there was a network of people (including me) who helped with all member phone outs. The internet has made it possible to have this information available constantly on our website, and to almost instantly send an announcement to every member by email. Professional development articles and advice are available from many online sources.

Impromptu itself is available online, both current and

past issues, and very few members receive a printed copy by mail.

It seems that the time has come to put Impromptu to rest. We will continue to re-invent how we communicate with our members, and how we use new methods to help each other and our students blossom as teachers and learners.

Josee Robitaille and Carol S. Moore devised a means to continue holding regular student recitals online. It is our hope that our new online mini-recitals are useful to your students. Thank you Josee and Carol. We have held several workshops and discussion forums online and hope you have found them helpful and easy to attend. Thank you Looi, Francis, Nathene and everyone who has suggested topics or convened an event. Once in-person events resume, the board will want to know which online opportunities you wish to retain. The variety of online experiences and options is a blessing and a curse. The blessing I appreciate is not having to cancel lessons for mild illness, snowstorms. Another great thing is attendance at ARMTA meetings and no travel time! Which online blessings will you want to keep in your repertoire of tools?

Wishing you and your students good health and good music,

Beth Olver, ARMTA Calgary Branch Chair

Pedagogy Group Volunteers Wanted

The Pedagogy Group (PPG) is searching for a mentor or advisor. They are newer teachers and meet once a month on a Sunday evening to support each other as they continue their own studies and teach their own students. Currently, the majority of the group consists of piano teachers but they want to include other disciplines. Learn more at

<https://calgarypianopedagogygroup.ca/>. Contact Beth Olver at soundsofmusic@shaw.ca.

UPCOMING BRANCHING OUT EVENTS

by Frances Ewington

2020 is behind us and, after our long winter's nap, it's time to start the year off right. Get inspired with these free Zoom talks hosted by ARMTA. Members, students, AND non-members alike are ALL invited to attend. Spread the word!

These events will be recorded and posted on our website in the member's only area at <https://armta.ca/calgarybranch/>.

January 31 (Sunday) 1pm – 2pm

Social Media's Role in the Music Industry with Kien To

Kien is an independent artist based out of Calgary. He builds his music around the social issues of Asian representation in mainstream media. Rap, R&B, song writing, and music production are some of his expertise.

February 25 (Thursday) 10am - 11am

Learning Through the Arts with Dale Erickson

Dale is Superintendent at Calgary Arts Academy. CAA, the only school of its kind in North America, is an innovative public charter school that engages children through Arts Immersion – teaching the Alberta curriculum through the immersion of the five fine arts: music, visual art, dance, drama and literary art.

March 10 (Wednesday) 10am - 11am

Multi-Cultural Music with Subash Giri

Subash is the Principal instructor of the Indian Music Ensemble (IME) at the Department of Music, University of Alberta. His main areas of research are applied ethnomusicology, traditional music of South Asia, music and diaspora, music sustainability and cultural continuity, music and community well-being, music and gender, music and identity, the music industry and copyright.



Calendar of Events

DATE	EVENT & PLACE	CONTACT
January 10	Outstanding Student Recital (OSR) video, applications due January 10, video release date TBD	Ron Proctor
January 30	ARMTA Calgary Recital and Awards (ACRA), watch for a YouTube link.	Tanya Foster
January 30	Outstanding Student Recital (OSR) video submission deadline	Ron Proctor
January 31	Branching Out Kien To: Social Media's Role in the Music Industry 1PM via ZOOM, available until February 28th at www.ARMATA-Calgary.com * for ARMTA members, students, and interested public	Looi Tan
January 31	Rotary C3 (Calgary Concerto Competition) Deadline for entries	Calgary Civic Symphony website Barb Robertson
February 14	Pedagogy Group 4 PM	presidentppg@calgarypianopedagogygroup.ca
February 20	Outstanding Student Recital (OSR) video potential release date	Ron Proctor
February 22	ARMTA Calgary Branch Board Meeting, ZOOM 9:30 a.m.	Beth Olver
February 25	Branching Out Dale Erikson: Learning Through the Arts 10 AM via ZOOM *for ARMTA members, students, and interested public	Looi Tan
February 27	Virtual Student Recital, online 2:00 – 4:00 PM	Carol Moore Josee Robitaille www.ARMATA-Calgary.com
March 5-7	Rotary C3 (Calgary Concerto Competition) at Michael Lipnicki Fine Pianos	Calgary Civic Symphony website Barb Robertson
March 10	Branching Out Subash Giri: Multi-cultural Music 10 AM via ZOOM *for ARMTA members, students, and interested public	Looi Tan
March 14	Pedagogy Group 4 PM	presidentppg@calgarypianopedagogygroup.ca
March 15	ARMTA Calgary Branch Board Meeting, ZOOM 9:30 AM	Beth Olver
April 11	Pedagogy Group 4 PM	presidentppg@calgarypianopedagogygroup.ca
April 19	ARMTA Calgary Branch Board Meeting, ZOOM 9:30 AM	Beth Olver
May 2	Pedagogy Group 4 PM	presidentppg@calgarypianopedagogygroup.ca

May 8	Virtual Student Recital, online 10:00 AM– 12:00 PM	Carol Moore Josee Robitaille www.ARMATA-Calgary.com
May 10	ARMATA Calgary Branch AGM, ZOOM, 9:30 AM	Beth Olver
Late May or June TBD	Possible Music Marathon	Laura Whitehead
June 13	Pedagogy Group 4 PM	presidentppg@ calgarypianopedagogygroup.ca

Members' contact information is available in the "members only" area at www.armta-calgary.com
 Questions? Please contact the administrator Maryellen Pankratz at armtaofficers@gmail.com



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ACRA Winners

ARMTA Calgary Recital and Awards, (ACRA), formerly Honours Recital

Congratulations to the following students for their hard work and success on 2020 exams. Due to COVID restrictions, students have submitted videos for a virtual recital. Medals and scholarships will be forwarded to the teachers. Teachers will be able to distribute these to students.

PIANO -

Piano Junior I

Bohan Feng- Bronze
Tristyn Anderson- Silver
Camellia Wang- Gold

Piano Junior II – Bronze

Alethea Leung- Bronze
Asher Li- Bronze
Ethan Lin- Bronze
Arnaaz Sandhu- Bronze
Jackson Xu- Silver
Billy Chi Tseuk- Tang- Silver
Savannah Niu- Gold
Joel Cook- Gold

Piano Intermediate

Kendra Chu- Bronze
Samantha Lan- Silver
Alexa Manzano- Gold

Piano Advanced

Julian Tan- Bronze
Chanan Ngo- Silver
Aaron Wang- Gold

VOICE -

Voice Junior I

Claire McCluskey- Bronze
Milla Singh- Silver
Sophie Jirov- Silver
Kamea Lafontaine- Gold

Voice Junior II

Claire McCluskey- Bronze
Aidan Pfeifer- Silver
Hannah Klassen- Gold

Voice Intermediate

Robert McDonald- Silver
Jeanette van Nieuwstadt- Silver
Nora-Jane Bonner- Gold

STRINGS -

Strings Junior I

Hana Loewen- Silver
Arwen Au- Yeung- Gold

Strings Advanced

Ashley Tsai- Gold

WOODWINDS –

Woodwinds Junior I

Brianna Hollingsworth- Silver
Ava Goertz- Gold

Advanced Theory Scholarships

Level 9 Harmony

Cindy Ma

Level 9 History

Lisa Cao
Haofei Guo

Level 10 Harmony

Haofei Guo

Level 10 History

Ashley Tsai

Level ARCT Analysis

Erich Herchen

Level ARCT History

Janice Leung

Named Scholarships

Peter Turner Memorial

Aaron Wang

Piano Diploma Association Scholarship

Julian Tan

Harold Saklofske Scholarships

Alexa Manzano

Ashley Tsai

Morning Musicale Scholarship

Colette Hennebury

Teachers of ACRA Winners

Colleen Athparia

Paul Bagley

Esther Bing

Natalie Brodsky

Elaine Case

Gloria Chu

Kathryn Corvino

Tanya Foster

Rachel Hop

Denise Jamieson

Linda Kundert

Rosalyn Martin

Linh Nguyen

Allen Reiser

Barb Robertson

Josée Robitaille

Peter Rudzik

Rose Schmaltz

Jacqueline Serpas

20 years of Impromptu

by Alicia Romero

Before emails, websites, and social media, ARMTA Calgary stayed in touch with you, our Calgary branch members, through mail-outs and the publication of the Impromptu Newsletter. In this article I would like to offer a retrospective of the Impromptu Newsletter from 2000 to 2020.

Content

Through Impromptu you learned about grants, bursaries, competitions, conferences, board meetings, events around the city, workshops, music stores, articles of interest, the branch's board work and members, and news from the provincial board and the federation.

Over the years the content of Impromptu changed in response to your interests and needs, as well as the branch's initiatives:

It served as a platform for our membership to share their knowledge and success stories.

It was a forum to pay tribute to our members' outstanding careers.

It kept you up to date about the branch board's day-to-day operations and advocacy work on your behalf.

It was a vehicle for consultation, and a source for historians and the community in general to know who we are, our vision, mission, and values as registered music teachers.

Issue after issue, year after year, Impromptu editors gathered, organized, edited, and presented all the information you read. Under their leadership Impromptu underwent a transformation in its look and feel and medium of delivery over the years. Here are some interesting numbers and facts.

2000-2012, 2019 (Interim)

Editor and advertising coordinator: Alicia Romero

Number of issues published: 4 per year, 2 issues in 2019

Regular Sections: Paradigm Shift, Executive Meetings Summary, Announcements, Directory, events calendar, articles of interest and interviews.

Seasonal sections: Honours Recital Application, C3 Competition, Contemporary Showcase, CFMTA Conference, CASSA.

Highlights: two look and feel changes, three production changes: photocopying, printing, email, and website download.

2012-2014

Editor: Margaret Brentnall

Advertising coordinator: Amy Skinner

Number of issues published: 4 per year

Regular Sections: Announcements, Directory, Events Calendar, articles of interest and interviews.

Seasonal sections: Honours Recital Application, C3 Competition, Contemporary Showcase, CFMTA Conference, *Impromptu* - February 2021



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CASSA.

Highlights: use of icons and color throughout the publication.

2014-2018

Editor: Lisa Ng

Sponsorship: Jackie Law

Number of issues published: 4 first year, 2 per year afterwards

Regular Sections: Announcements, directory, events calendar, articles of interest and interviews.

Seasonal sections: Honours Recital Application, CFMTA Conference, CASSA, Music Marathon.

Highlights: Interest articles spread over several issues, one look and feel change, extensive use of color/images.

2020

Editor: Denisha Teichroeb

Sponsorship: Jackie Law

Number of issues published: 2 per year

Regular Sections: Announcements, directory, events calendar, articles of interest and interviews.

Seasonal sections: Honours Recital Application, CFMTA Conference, CASSA, Music Marathon.

The Team Behind Impromptu and New roles

For 20 years, Impromptu reached your mailbox, and later on your inbox without fail thanks to many helping hands. From stuffing envelopes to uploading the issue on the website, many hours went into producing and delivering Impromptu. Also, the roles of this mighty team evolved, and new ones were created over the years. Advertising coordinator evolved into Sponsorship program, and the Virtual Assistant role emerged in the last few years as a response to the ever-changing technology. During the past 20 years, members of this small but mighty team included Carol Moore, Barb Testzlaf, Miriam Johnston, Lindsay Inkster, Amy Essenburg, Josee Robitaille, Tanya Foster, and Leila Mackenzie.

Keeping Up with the Spirit of the Times

The content of Impromptu wasn't the only thing that changed over time. Impromptu's look, production, and medium also changed. At first, each issue was put together using Microsoft Word. Each page of the newsletter was printed, and ads were printed separately as well - "cutting and gluing" followed. Finally, this "hand-made" original was taken to the print shop to be photocopied and stapled. The first significant change in the production of Impromptu happened when professional graphic design software and digital printing became mainstream. In the fall of 2000, Impromptu was put together using Adobe Illustrator and Acrobat, and it was digitally printed from a USB memory stick at the print shop. Thanks to these technological

advances, Impromptu had a significant change in its look. New technologies also gave the opportunity for the editor to experiment and try different ways to make Impromptu available. Initial attempts to send Impromptu via email were not successful due to long loading times and large file sizes. As we look back, there is no doubt we were going in the right direction but "flying when everyone was still crawling." About nine years had to pass for Impromptu to be available through the association's website. Colour started to be part of the digital publication and by 2014, color was used extensively throughout the newsletter and hard copies were also in color. With this, Impromptu again got a new look.

A Liaison with the Music Industry

One way for the music industry to connect with you was by advertising in Impromptu. Music stores would let you know of their new products and promotions. RCM let you know about workshop dates and new programs. And performance and music education societies like CASSA Musical Arts let you know about bursaries, camp dates, and workshops. Impromptu also raised funds for the branch's programs through its loyal advertisers. Their commitment is worthy of acknowledgement and appreciation. This aspect evolved into the Sponsorship program.

Final Thoughts

As one of the editors of Impromptu, I hope that over years the articles you read were inspiring and thought provoking, that you found useful information, and that Impromptu served you as one way to stay in touch with the community.

A Message from the Editors

Thanks to Alicia Romero for her exhaustive review of the last 20 years of Impromptu. We are looking for an ARMTA member who would like to write a history of Impromptu prior to 2000 so that we can share this with our members. Impromptu existed well before 2000 and we would like to acknowledge the significance of its predecessors, as well as the procedures in place prior to our current technology. Please contact a current board member or email the [administrator at armtaofficers@gmail.com](mailto:administrator@armtaofficers@gmail.com) if this appeals to you.

The job description for Newsletter Editor can be found on our website at <http://armta-calgary.com/opportunities/>. If you are reading this issue in the future and it sparks an interest, contact a current board member or email the administrator at armtaofficers@gmail.com for details.

The editors, past and present would like to acknowledge our virtual assistant, Miriam Johnston for her extensive contributions to Impromptu. Turning our myriad files of rough text into a flowing work of art is a task that requires great patience and countless edits. Thank you, Miriam for your hard work and comprehensive skills.

2020 Workshops

Covid-19 Guidelines for Back to School Zoom Workshop, August 18, 2020

Rachel Goldenberg presented a wealth of information and facilitated the discussion for 29 participants. She had prepared a wonderful slide show of guidelines about the reopening of private studios. She presented graphs, information from studies and rules from the government. As well, various websites and resources were shared. There were useful suggestions for strategies with ideas for good, better, and best practices to use in our studios.

The video recording of this workshop was posted on provincial's website in the member's only area at <https://armta.ca/webinars/>.

Thank you to Rachel Goldenberg for hosting this informative workshop.

How to Deal with Difficult Parents Zoom Workshop, September 24, 2020

Ivea Mark led the discussion for 28 participants and many experienced teachers offered valuable suggestions and examples.

Topics included:

- Setting realistic goals
- Students' goals vs parents' goals
- Setting studios policies
- What are some ways you successfully convince parents to trust your teaching
- Age appropriate level and ability
- Understanding RCM syllabus and progress
- Winning at competitions / Prep for competition
- How to leave a studio/ Closure with student.

The video recording of this workshop was posted on our website in the member's only area at <https://armta.ca/calgarybranch/>.

Thank you to Looi Tan for her organization of these enlightening workshops.

CASSA Pedagogy 2020

by Madeline Neufeld

Dr. Christopher Hahn was the perfect choice of clinician for Cassa's first ever virtual pedagogy classes in July 2020. His enthusiasm and passion for teaching was obvious and came across very well using the Zoom technology.

In the first session on articulation, Dr. Hahn had many suggestions on how to interpret what composers want with the various symbols and terms. He said it's all about how you play the note and the variety of wrist movements is what gives us the sound we desire. Listening is of paramount importance in conveying the musicality of a particular articulation. He reminded us that "the physical movement matches the musical, and the musical matches the physical."

"Rests are much more dynamically important than previously thought. For example, in sonatinas think of playing the note and attacking the rest. The attack is in the release, and the release is in the attack. Each always leads to the next part, either to notes or rests."

In the next session, Building a Better Bass and Laying a Secure Left Hand Foundation, Dr. Hahn recommended using two methods: the Schmitt Preparatory Op.16, and Boris Berlin Practical Hanon. These methods will strengthen the LH with drills such as the 'mirror system' of having the LH play the same note pattern as the RH in contrary motion. Another idea was to cross hands in scale work or when playing repertoire.

In Keeping the Beat, Dr. Hahn used the analogy that the foundation of your musical house is built on rhythm. He listed some of the aspects of rhythm, including meter, pulse, tempo, sound, movement, syncopation, style, rubato, phrasing, dance, and accent. Students need to translate the time signature into the pulse of the music, considering "moments in line, not moments in time." To describe rubato, he used the words gravity, hang time, rollercoaster and slingshots then gave us musical examples of each.

"Rhythm is one of the most overlooked aspects of

music," according to Dr. Hahn and his handout on sight reading described the steps needed to deliver results. It starts with big beat tapping, contour tapping, and finger tapping on the fallboard, always counting out loud and feeling the main beats. After several months, it's time to open the keyboard and begin playing LH and tapping RH, then vice versa, then playing both hands while still counting out loud, and then playing HT without counting out loud.

I'm always impressed with how examiners are able to write an evaluation of pieces in such a short time. In the last session, RCM Examination Tips and Written Critique, Dr. Hahn told us the three rules of a good critique. These are: be precise, be courteous, be fair. Avoid saying 'good', 'great' and 'nice', although these are excellent reminders for everyday teaching! He also mentioned some of the areas examiners need to consider when listening to a performance, namely notes, rhythm, tempo, technical security, attention to musical details, fingering, pedaling, balance, melodic line, rubato, character, dynamics, and articulation. He said they avoid negative comments such as 'poor fingering' by saying, "the scale passages will benefit from increased concentration on fingering, but nevertheless this was an energetic performance."

Dr. Hahn referred to numerous books throughout his lectures, including *The Whole Musician* by Susan Bruckner, *The Inner Game of Tennis* by Timothy Gallwey, *The Savvy Musician* by David Cutler, *A Piano Teacher's Legacy* by Richard Cronister, *Pianist's Guide to Teaching Student Concertos* by Dr. Christopher Hahn, and *Stolen Time* by Richard Hudson, which is all about rubato.

Dr. Hahn's classes were definitely inspiring. As teachers, I think we're always interested in learning new concepts or finding another way of helping our students reach their potential. I would definitely like to hear him speak again!

CASSA Programs 2021

2021 Cassa Musical Arts Dates (IN-PERSON)

Cassa Kids: July 12 – 16 (Ages 4 to 12): **1:00 – 4:00pm**

Cassa Playwriting: July 12 – 16 (Ages 7 to 12) : **9:00am – 12:00pm**

Cassa Jazz: July 12 – 16 (Ages 12 to adult) : **9:00am – 3:30pm**

Cassa Composers: July 12 – 16 (Ages 12 to adult): **9:00am – 3:30pm**

Cassa Piano: July 19 – 23 (Ages 9 to 19) : **9:00am – 5:00pm**

Cassa Pedagogy: July 19 (Professional piano study): **9:00am – 4:00pm**

Cassa Adult Piano: July 20 – 22 : **9:00am-5:00pm**

Cassa Recital: July 18: **7:00 pm**

Cassa Musical: August 3,4,5, 10,11 & 12 (Ages 9 to 21): **9:00am – 3:00pm**

2021 Cassa Musical Arts (ONLINE)

Cassa Songwriting: July 26 – 29 (Ages 12 to adult) : **10:00 – 11:30am**

Cassa Pedagogy: July 26 & 27 (Professional piano study): **9:00am – noon**

Cassa Piano: July 26 – 29 (Ages 9 to 19) : **9:00am – 4:00pm**

Cassa Jazz: July 26 – 29 (Ages 12 to adult): **10:00 – 11:30am**

Cassa Staging: July 26 – 29 (Ages 9 to 21) : **10:00 – 11:30am**

Cassa Playwriting: July 26 – 29 (Ages 7 to 14) : **10:00 – 11:30am** and (Ages 15 to adult) : **1:00 – 2:30pm**

Cassa Artful Business: July 26 – 29 (Ages 15 to adult) : **10:00 – 11:30am**

Cassa Musical: August 16 – 20: **10:00 – 11:30am** with (Breakout classes) : **12:30 – 2:00pm**

CASSA Songwriting

by Tim Janz

July 27 to July 30, 2020 marked the first online Cassa Songwriting Workshop, attended by five participants via Zoom. We explored on the first day, the idea of what a song is, as well as looking at how song lyrics are a special type of poetry. Not all poems make great songs, and there are a number of great songs that, without the music, do not succeed as top rate poetry. We talked about the song writing process, and different song ideas—the light bulbs that get things going.

The second day, we started with sharing some song ideas that the participants had created the day before and then focused on melody. Through analysis of three songs of top Canadian singer/songwriters (Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen) we saw how melody can provide many different ways of supporting the lyrics and adding to their richness.

The third day, again we began with sharing the melodies that the participants had chosen for the lyrics they created earlier, and then we looked at the different ways songs could be supported with different accompaniments. With a quick look at diatonic

harmony and the structural bones of the primary chords, we also delved a bit into modal harmony with the Lightfoot example.

The final day we discussed song structure, and production, as well as different ways of sharing recorded and written music. While the workshop was intended to explore the song writing process, rather than producing a finished product, by the final day, each participant had a strong example of their own songwriting voice. A fun song about pet frogs, a road song about the thrill of traveling, a character song about a ghost named ‘Guilt’, a jazz inspired song about clouds, and a very personal song about the many life choices that lie ahead and how to face them without fear.

I was very impressed by the originality and the diversity of each participant’s personal style. I wish them all the best in their continued songwriting creativity, and hope that they will continue to explore their new song ideas, sharing their thoughts and feelings very personally through music.

Student Recitals

by Carol S. Moore

On November 7, 2020 the Calgary Branch of ARMTA planned and orchestrated their first virtual recital. Between 10 am and 12 noon four short (ten minute) recitals took place. Sixteen students participated, including five violinists. The recital proceeded very efficiently. After I had organized the names of participants and completed the program, Josee Robitaille sent out the web links to join individual recitals and managed each one, very successfully.

Our next recitals will be February 27 and May 8, 2021.

2021 Cassa Online Masterclass/Workshop Series

As an introduction to our programs, and to give you some exciting opportunities as we move through mid-winter and into the spring, we have decided to present a virtual masterclass and workshop series!

You will have opportunity to work with world renowned teachers in the comfort of your own home. And, if you want to watch our experts at work, rather than perform, you can register as an audience member for the masterclasses here.

First up is the amazing virtuoso artist-teacher, and perennial Cassa fan favourite, Joseph Fridman. Mr. Fridman will be hosting masterclasses on Sunday, January 17 between 12 and 4 pm.

Register now, either as a participant or as an audience member!

<https://www.cassamusicalarts.com/register>

Keep an eye out for registrations (coming soon!) for the following programs:

Cassa Piano

Work with our world-renowned 2021 piano clinician Dr. Corey Hamm on February 21, 9:30am-12:30pm.

Cassa Songwriting

Learn how to experiment and create your own music with Cassa Songwriting. Join us and explore on March 27, 9:30am-12:30pm with composer Tim Janz.

Cassa Musical

You will get a chance to perform alongside mentors Darren Dyck and Jane Dennison and feel comfortable in your own skin. Get pumped for March 28, 12:30-4:30pm.

Cassa Playwriting

Create and perform a mini-play with our writing expert, Simon Rose on April 24th, 9:30am-12:30pm.

Cassa Preps for RCM exams

Taking a practical piano exam? Join us the morning of May 15 for some tips on final exam preparation from RCM Teacher of Distinction, Senior Examiner, and Cassa Artistic Director Linda Kundert.

Cassa Staging

Looking to join theatre/television? See if staging is the right place for you on April 25, 12:30-4:30pm with Leia Guo and Michelle Delisle.

Cassa Jazz

Want to branch out beyond classical music? Why not try jazz? With this introduction to jazz workshop you can see if jazz and improvisation is up your alley on June 19th, 9:30am-12:30pm with Derek Stoll.

Praises for the CFMTA 2020 Canada Music Week e-Festival

by Frances Ewington

CFMTA started the e-Festival a few years ago, and it was never meant as a replacement for traditional festivals, but with COVID-19 restrictions being what they are in Alberta, my students needed something to work towards this Fall and the Canadian Music Week e-Festival fit the bill!

I happily chose Canadian Authored material, and prepared my Speech Arts and Drama students for their e-Festival debut. I recorded each participant in my living room, while I was safely masked and distanced behind the camera.

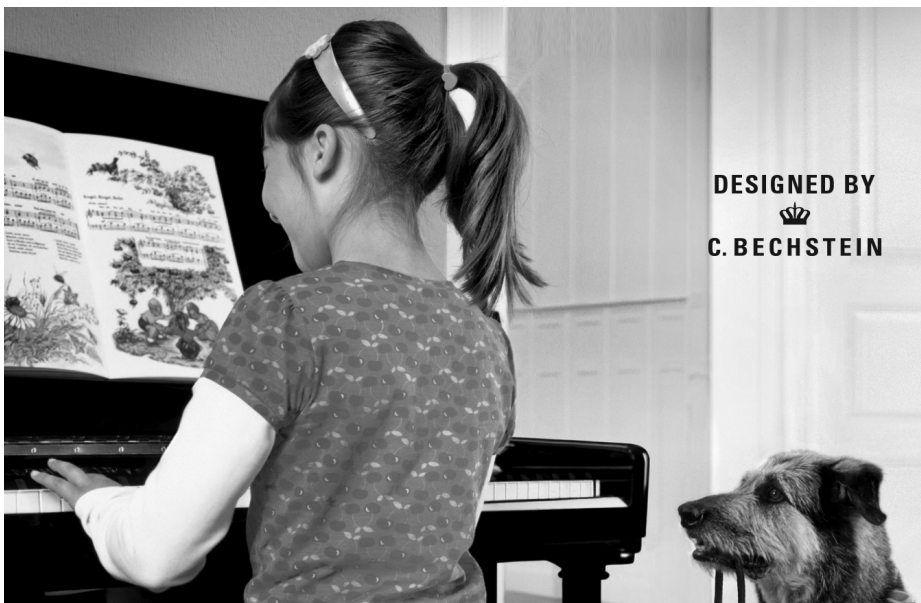
My students learned so much! I have training and experience in television and film, and it was great to pass along that knowledge. Camera skills are much needed these days in our new virtual world. Once my students' performances were "in the can", I uploaded them to my YouTube account and sent them off to the festival. By the end of the month, everyone got their e-Adjudications. Thank you so much to RCM examiner, Michael Faulkner, whose adjudications were

both kind and constructive.

Lastly, I would like to mention what happened after the e-Festival was over: my students' recordings were still posted (privately) on my YouTube account, and excited parents passed on the link to Aunts, Uncles, Grandparents, and family friends. Relatives near and far downloaded and enjoyed their dear ones' performance. I also showed students their own performance and we were able to closely go over their strengths and weaknesses. At most recitals or festivals, students are so worried about their own performance that they forget to critically listen to the other participants. With the videos at my fingertips, we also constructively evaluated other speech students' performances. You can learn so much by watching others. Now THAT is something worthwhile!

The next CFMTA e-Festival is Spring 2021. So, don't be shy, try it out - I think you'll be glad you did!

November's e-Festival highlights can be seen here <https://www.cfmta.org/en/e-festival/>



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Focal Points: Six Ways to Capture the Focus of Young Students

by Bronwyn Schuman

Calgarian pianist Bronwyn Schuman is a recent graduate of The Juilliard School, where she completed her Master of Music in Collaborative Piano. She is an active performer, with recent performance highlights including performances in Alice Tully Hall, in Lincoln Center, and on WQXR's live broadcast in The Greene Space. She has enjoyed teaching music for over a decade to individual students and groups, and her current studio features learners aged 4—74!



Excitement, distraction, boredom, and working through scattered thoughts—these experiences are not specific to children. These are human experiences! But, for young children, these feelings can often overwhelm their ability to focus. Without a doubt, we all have students who struggle to focus, both inside and outside of their music lessons. Over the years, I have explored six techniques that help harness the focus of young students (aged around 4–7-years-old). I hope you can find some of these ideas and activities useful!

1) Point with Your Eyes: Teaching Eye Movement

A few years ago, I started to notice that my students struggled to move their eyes along the page. In my non-expert, non-scientific opinion, eye focus seems to be difficult for my young beginner students, and I think that this may be potentially due to increased screen time for children. As mammals, human beings' eyes are caught by movement. With screens, our eyes don't have to move themselves—our eyes are moved, effectively, by the pictures on the screen. When watching a screen, our eyes follow movement, they don't initiate movement. For this reason, I think that children often struggle to initiate the movement of their own eyes, especially when a still, black and white piece of paper is placed in front of them at the piano! I often find myself pointing along with all of my young students, actively telling them, “Now look at this

note... Now look at your hand – Now look back up to the... next note! Now where is that? Now look here,” and so on. I have become an “Eye Guide.” I attempt as early as possible to shift the “Eye Guide” role to them. I tell them that I am no longer going to point, but they are going to “point with their eyes.” Strangely, it works! And many students, I have noticed, will sometimes begin to physically point with their other hand (if it's free), which is a huge success for little ones, who are now using their own finger as a guide for their eyes.

2) Interactive Brightening: Work with Colour

Children's eyes (and adults'!) are drawn to bright colours. In many ways, colour is a sign of life and excitement, and it can even suggest movement. Whether or not the method books that I use feature colour on their pages, I incorporate colour into my lessons as much as possible. I often encourage students to engage with their lesson books by having them put colour on them, actively brightening the pages. In my teaching supplies, I always keep coloured pens and crayons, and I regularly ask students to choose one or two colours per lesson. With the chosen colours, they will circle specific notes or markings on the page, or they may try to draw symbols. My students look forward to the moment when they get to choose the weekly colours, and these activities draw my students' eyes directly to the page; in a sense, my students “zoom in” on the page. Furthermore, there are effective

colouring music resources, such as Color By Note books by Sharon Kaplan, as well as different online resources (listed at the end of the article), some of which could be printed in black and white to allow the student to colour the illustrations in themselves. Lastly, I keep a stack of basic colouring sheets on musical topics, for those moments when I need a five-minute focusing activity for young children. A note: I don't see the use of colouring sheets as neglecting my responsibility as a teacher. I specifically remember certain colouring sheets which I completed as a child, and I enjoyed making them come to life with colour. Creating a lasting imprint of a symbol or instrument is a great thing, and colouring can help a child to calm down and to narrow his or her focus in the lesson.

3) Shifting Gears: Step Away from the Instrument

Given the room, stepping away from the instrument is not always ideal. Some studios don't have desks, and some teachers go into students' homes where a piano might be jammed into a tight-fitting space. However, one amazing thing about children is that they often don't see "space" the way adults do. Would you believe that I was home schooled all my life until high school, and, by choice, the place that I did most of my work was on the floor? An open space on the floor, a step, or a staircase are work spaces for children. In lessons, make sure to take time to leave the piano bench, to step away from the chair, or to put the instrument down. Sit on the floor, sit at a desk; find multiple locations, if possible. Leaving the instrument can help shift children's focus onto different activities, such as flashcards with note naming, colouring activities (as mentioned above), practicing rhythms with egg shakers, or merely marching to a beat. Changing location and body position can help children shift their focus, and it keeps lessons from becoming mundane and predictable.

4) To Shift, or Not to Shift: Wear a Watch

I always wear a watch in lessons, even if there is a clock already in the room. The short distance from the wrist to the eye is a huge benefit, especially when teaching young ones whom you may struggle to look away from! When a student is starting to lose focus, I always check my watch. How long have we been doing this one activity? Is it time to get up and move? Is it time to shift gears? In essence, this question is one of my own expectations with this student. Have I set up

too high of an expectation for their focus? For anyone's focus? Keeping an eye on my watch, sometimes I will allow my students to remain in their lack of focus for one full minute. As teachers, we should not always distract our students from boredom or lack of focus. Boredom is a huge underlying force in creative people. Lack of focus is often just a struggle within oneself to navigate boredom towards a creative solution. When I wear a watch, I can give students a minute here and there to try to focus themselves, and I can also adjust my expectations for lengths of activities or playing time.

5) Click Refresh: Attention Timeline

Children (and adults!) often focus incredibly well right when they approach a new activity; i.e., when the activity feels "fresh." For this reason, I will sometimes enter lessons with a specific timeline in mind, for example five minutes per activity. Occasionally, I will use a kitchen timer in the lesson to make my students aware of the timeline, or the "refresh circuit." Setting a timer helps keep us honest, and it helps my students start to be able to feel the passing of time (a key component of focus). In this case, as an example, we start with five minutes at the piano, reviewing last week's assignment; we leave for five minutes to work on rhythms; we return to the piano for an improv game and to try a new song; we leave the piano again to learn a new symbol and to practice drawing it; we sing a song at the piano; and for the last five minutes, we put on a performance for our puppets, including piano, singing, and bowing before and after! The lesson is fast-paced, active, vibrant, and engaging, and I am often surprised at how much information my students will take in due to "refreshing" their focus every few minutes with a new activity.

6) Focus Finders: Capture Attention with Physical Objects

I consider a "focus finder" to be a small, colorful, physical object, that can be held and used by the student during activity transitions. These "focus finders" are useful tools when shifting gears. The main tools that I use are finger puppets, or small stuffed animals. Packages of finger puppets and other focus finders can be found either through online shopping with Amazon, eBay, etc., or through teaching resource centers, such as KidSource Inc. (see the list of resources at the end of this article). For my teaching,

each finger puppet has a role and a name. For example, I have Freddie, the Finger Number Frog; Rachel, the Rhythm Rabbit; Percy, the Piano Panda; and Paige, the Pointing Pig, to name a few. These puppets add a small focal point, with colour and a friendly face, to musical concepts and activities. When it's time to shift gears, to, say, work on rhythm, Rachel the Rabbit comes out of the puppet bag. Students already know where the lesson is going, and they get excited about the new activity. Furthermore, when a student's focus is drifting, a finger puppet will often catch their eye, bringing them back to the material. Other focus finders could include the crayons and coloured pens that I mentioned earlier; maracas or egg shakers for rhythm activities; game pieces; or other types of characters (little toys or erasers). Every month or so, I will introduce a new puppet or a new "focus finder" from a reserve, to change things up. To many of my students, these puppets are each a "real" being; they are their music friends. Even to me, the puppets are becoming real beings, with personalities and with their own stories! Or, maybe I just have been inside too

long...!

List of resources:

Worksheets, Coloring Pages, Board Games:

Color By Note, book series, by Sharon Kaplan

Susan Paradis: <https://susanparadis.com/>

My Fun Piano Studio: <https://www.myfunpianostudio.com/>

(worksheets under "Teacher's Playground")

Making Music Fun: <https://makingmusicfun.net/>

Music Colouring Pages: <http://www.getcoloringpages.com/music-coloring-pages>

<https://coloringhome.com/music-coloring-pages-free-printable>

<https://www.pianostars.com/> (based in St. Albert)

Piano Stars: <https://www.pianostars.com/> (based in St. Albert)

Focus Finders:

Piano Stars: <https://www.pianostars.com/> (based in St. Albert)

KidSource Inc.: <https://kidsource.ca/>

For finger puppets, www.amazon.ca has a good selection, as well as www.ebay.ca.

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Teaching Principles in Piano Tone Production – Tobias Matthay

By Gloria Chu

Gloria Chu is a dedicated pedagogue, RCM examiner, festival adjudicator, composer and performer. She holds a Master of Arts in Piano Pedagogy and mentors students in piano, violin and voice. Gloria is passionate for music education and has explored learning with the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Shenandoah University, the Juilliard School, and the University of Ottawa in vocal, string and piano pedagogy. She is excited about her upcoming adventures in the UK at the University of Chichester in String Pedagogy.



One of the greatest challenges of teaching piano students is to develop the potential for creative enjoyment while equipping students with skills for expression. In my exploration for teaching strategies of good tone, I was particularly attracted to the detail methods of Tobias Matthay. Matthay's publications are arguably the turning point of piano pedagogy, analyzing the muscular aspects, key actions and positioning of the various body parts to produce tone. In his book *The Act of Touch in All Its Diversity*, Matthay's intense dedication to discovering the fundamentals of piano playing is revealed in each of the four sections. Arm weight was no doubt a heavily emphasized factor in producing piano tone. In addition, Matthay is seen to be pivotal in his contributions and influence in England in the first part of the 20th century and continues to make its mark through the work of The American Matthay Association. The encyclopedic *The Act of Touch in all its Diversity* (1903) was promoted as being about natural music laws. With a strong emphasis on relaxation, his publications are filled with specific details which are at times redundant and inventive in terminology. He refers to "species of touch" and denotes an exploration of key speed manipulation. Weight is a concept heavily explored, inviting students

to explore the amount needed to depress each key. Matthay believes awareness of key resistance is essential in manipulation of intensity. Students are encouraged to determine how much muscular force will be required for each note. Resistance is defined as "it feels more difficult" to move quickly. Hence the teaching strategy is to coach students to know how much the key will resist before it gives way and while it is moving down under the finger. Matthay outlines a basic triad to be played as an exercise for students to experiment varying the speed in which they depress the keys to discover "how much each key resists being moved" so the student can play "what each key wants" (Matthay 1912, p.4).

Duration is defined as the control of energy to the end of the tone. Matthay suggests that duration is a second concept to be taught once intensity is managed appropriately by the student. In extension of skills learned in discovering intensity of tone, once awareness of the weight is taught, students are to extend this awareness to individual fingers beginning with the thumb and pinky. In an open fifth hand position, the thumb and pinky are to be played through rotary motion of the forearm. Extension of this technique is described by Matthay in various duration of notes. Students have understood the

only way to make tone is by moving the key, the next challenge in duration is guiding and aiming the energy, or force and weight, to finish the moment tone begins (for staccato) and longer for sustained durations.

In teaching strategies for good tone, Matthey focuses on “control intensity,” which means understanding how much weight to use and the roles of the finger, hand and arm. This results in what Matthey calls the “three species of touch.” Only once intensity is mastered are students advised to explore duration. Awareness to individual fingers then becomes the emphasis, calling upon its control to manipulate extra weight and force to release the keys in commanding tonal duration.

Weight-touch exercise

The writer then describes the value of arm weight in piano tone production. This includes clenching the hand lightly into a fist, allowing the fist to fall gently on two black keys with thumb facing upwards. Students are cautioned not to force the arm to go down, instead, the arm should go down naturally using their weight from the shoulder. The exercise should begin as quietly as possible, slowly increasing to a forte tone. This way, students will learn about added weight and its contribution to depressing the key (weight-touch exercise).

After this motion is conducted, students are invited to be aware of forearm rotation to turn the thumb facing up to touch the surface of the keys. This twisting motion is only for the forearm and not the elbow. Once the steps are mastered, students are to repeat the weight-touch exercise with the thumb on the side. The weight-touch exercise is then to be repeated with all fingers wrapping the thumb. This motion is then continued with a triad, being aware of the weight-touch required. The goal is to bring awareness that all fingers playing the triad are to do the same amount of work, and adjustments to rotary motion are required for even tone. The exercise is to be repeated at various dynamic intensity levels for students to learn the desired weight required for different intensities. These steps are correlated in his pedagogy literature of *The Child's First Steps in Pianoforte Playing* (1912) for exercises in developing tone production in an elementary piano student.

According to Matthey there are three important touch tones a student is to learn in production of tone (Matthey, 1939)

1. Finger touch
2. Hand touch
3. Arm touch

All touches are to incorporate elements of finger, hand and arm. The main distinguishing factor is timing and energy in favor of one of the elements over the other. The type of touch used depends on the speed and intensity required for passages.

Arm Touch

The arm touch technique is suggested to be the first touch to explore with students because it is the simplest. The whole arm is to lapse onto the keys with the fingers and hand to follow. Timing of the weight is to be attended to reflecting understanding of each key's resistance. This approach is recommended for cantabile single tones and chord passages. Speed across the keyboard is slower than other motions as the entire arm is commanded to release after each motion. The addition of the upper arm results in a louder intensity. For lighter chords, only the forearm weight is to be used. The arm is to feel as though it is unsupported to allow the weight to engage the hand and fingers.

Hand Touch

This approach is suitable for moderately paced passages. Tone with the hand is to more muscular since less weight is applied. The arm is to be carried loosely while the hand and fingers execute the muscular activity of depressing the keys.

Finger Touch

Without doubt, the hand and arm are to be engaged along with the finger. However, in this approach the finger provides the movement which generates the tone. For quiet intensity and fast passages, the hand and arm are to be passively hanging. In this motion, fingers will be seen to be slightly raised ready to strike the keys. Unlike the percussive tone definition of Ortmann, Matthey cautions for no percussion against the key's surface. Percussion is not required since students are to know ahead of time how much resistance is required for the key. No visible hand motion is required in this touch.

Matthey cautions students “... it is useless to squeeze the key upon the pad you can do nothing to alter the sound once the key is down, since the hammer flies back as soon as you reach the sound in key-

descent” (Matthay, 1912, p.2). Thus the sound will stop because the damper falls upon the strings; this will happen when a student releases the key. It is emphasized that the student makes the sound at the beginning when the key is depressed. Matthay reminds us that the sole means to produce a sound is to make the key move. In comment to intensity for beginners, “the quicker you make the key move the louder the sound” (Matthay, 1912, p.2).

In summary, Matthay invites teachers to coach students in understanding intensity, how much weight to use and the roles of the finger, hand and arm through the three species of touch. Upon discovering the approaches to intensity, students can develop an imaginative color of expression.

Farewell to Impromptu

Impromptu has been around for as long as I can remember, even when I was President of the Calgary Branch - so long ago that I can't remember the year. I always looked forward to receiving Impromptu in the mail and would read it from cover to cover. This magazine was a great communicator to our teachers when we were running the 2005 CFMTA “Peak Performance” Conference in Calgary. We had a huge team of volunteers who organized the many facets of this outstanding event over a span of 7 years, and Impromptu kept us connected. In addition, Impromptu and the members of ARMTA have supported the Calgary Arts Summer School Association, now operating as Cassa Musical Arts, since its inception in 1993. Thank you to all of the volunteers who created Impromptu, and kept it going.

Linda Kundert,
President and Artistic Director
Cassa Musical Arts

Impromptu has provided me with information about ARMTA Calgary activities, has had professional development articles, given me a chance to get to know members, and has been a connection for the approximately 200 ARMTA Calgary teachers. I learned early on that if it went in the “to read when I had time pile”, I missed deadlines, activities, meetings, etc. Now I read it as soon as it comes. Whether it is read online or in print, I believe it is a connection that we need to maintain.

Barbara Robertson,
Email convener

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Because the position of Newsletter Editor is now empty, this final issue of Impromptu was put together by volunteers from the Board. Barb Robertson, Nathene Arthur, Beth Olver and myself were heavily involved in gleaning this final issue for you, our Calgary branch members, as well as for the benefit of our esteemed sponsors. It was a pleasure to read and organize the content and our wish is that you will find enjoyment and value in these pages. With any luck, perhaps some kind soul will restart Impromptu again one day.

Maryellen Pankratz
Administrator

The Last “Note”

by Barbara Robertson

Thank-you to officers of the ARMTA Calgary board who stepped up to publish this edition of Impromptu. I know we all have our own jobs, but your participation is greatly appreciated.



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Thank-you also to members who offered to provide professional development articles. We appreciate that you took the time to share your wisdom. It was great for me to connect, (virtually) with you as we discussed topics, etc. Although we work with students, private music teaching can be an isolating life. We have few opportunities to connect with colleagues, especially during the COVID pandemic.

Impromptu has been an important connection for us for many years, either in print, or online. It connects us, it teaches us, and it informs us of ARMTA activities.

As a result of receiving no applications for the position of Newsletter Editor, the board has decided that this will be the last issue of Impromptu. This is truly unfortunate as it is one of the ARMTA projects that is always listed as valuable to our members.

How do you feel about this? I am hoping that this will not be the end of Impromptu, that someone will bring it back to life and it will sing again.

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