

PIANO

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE STUDIO OF DR. JOVANNI-REY DE PEDRO at the
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UI Piano Students in Los Angeles

Last week I was excited to visit my home in Los Angeles to play in a series of fundraising recitals for three churches in and around Baldwin Park, CA where I grew up.

This was the first time I took four of my own piano students from the University of Idaho - **Wei "Max" He**, **Lynnsean Young**, **Morgan Kline**, and **Kristen Cox** - to perform solo and ensemble repertoire in my recital series. I wanted to give them an opportunity to experience concert life and performing on the go.

Getting to show them around my "stomping grounds" was definitely a bonus! This trip was also their first time performing for audiences of over 300 people each night!



We also visited my former high school, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, where I gave a masterclass and performed with my students. Although I have returned to LACHSA many times since graduating, it was a special experience to take my own students there and show them a taste of a place that feels like "home" to me.

When Beauty Isn't Enough

For a very long time, I've asked myself, "What am I listening for in a performance?" And if you're like me, here's the typical list: note accuracy, fluency, tone quality, touch, phrasing, dynamics, pedal, rhythm, interpretation, expression or feeling...kinda sounds like a checklist from an adjudication sheet! But is there something more?

About twenty years ago, when I was in high school, I was learning the last movement of Samuel Barber's piano sonata, and in it, I wrote down a quote that my teacher gave me in a lesson one day. "The greatest artistic performances are the ones that show the most possibilities." This quote, attributed to Leon Fleisher, has lived with me ever since, and has actually shaped the way I listen, perform, and teach.

In the spirit of exploring new possibilities, I decided to go with the title "When Beauty Isn't Enough" for this newsletter because I became frustrated with the word "beauty" or "beautiful" being thrown around all the time, as though beauty the only end game.

Over the next few months, my newsletters will explore a variety of musical possibilities beyond just beauty presented as thoughts.

THOUGHT #1 : The Piano Sings...and Speaks

The modern piano was a huge technological achievement in the early nineteenth century. The result of the structural improvements caused a longer decay of sound, which allowed more legato, and subsequently longer phrases. The prior keyboard instruments were speaking instruments - something our modern piano can *also* do extremely well!

Upcoming Events

October 14: Recital, Steinway Piano Gallery, Spokane WA.

October 18: Recital, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay WI.

October 20: Recital, Northern Kentucky University, Newport KY.

October 23: Recital, Malone University, Canton OH.

October 24: Recital, Butler University, Indianapolis IN.

October 27: Music Celebration, Bella Note Studio, Sandpoint ID.

November 9-12: Christopher Norton at UIdaho.

Looking ahead...

Nov.: "When Beauty Isn't Enough, Part 2: Creativity vs. Artistry" with a special "Meet the Studio" section!

Have an idea you want me to write about? Email me!

Trivia Winners!

Before being known as the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy, NCKP was known as the National Conference on Piano Pedagogy. Congratulations to Robyn Browning (Cairns, Australia), Carly McDonald (Adelaide, Australia), and Dr. Alejandro Cremaschi.

Your CDs are on the way!!!

I often explain to my students that the difference between the old pianos and the new is the difference between singing and speaking. Singing is vowel-oriented, and speaking is consonant-oriented. In the preface of his Inventions and Sinfonias in 1723, Bach wrote that he composed this set of pieces to help his students develop a *cantabile style in playing*. So he wants the melodic lines to sound as if the music has text. But not the long melismatic vowel-centered text of a high Romantic opera. Rather, the *cantabile* style he wants to achieve is one that is grounded in the articulation of spoken consonants.

This notion of the piano as both a singing *and* speaking instrument is really at its height in the interpretation of classical-era music. A fantastic resource if you'd like to read more on this would be Bart van Oort's book, *To Speak or to Sing: Mozart and Beethoven on the Fortepiano*.

THOUGHT #2: Orchestrate

A more complex form of teaching color is to imagine the piano is an entire orchestra, full of individual instruments, each with its own voice, timbre, and articulation. Thinking of piano in terms of instruments often helps us imitate the breathing and attack of a wind or string player.

For example, in a lesson I taught on the first movement of Mozart Sonata K. 332, I wanted a bright woodwind-like sound in measures 13-16 to contrast the very warm string section of the opening. I chose an oboe, because its attack is very articulate, and that contrasts and balances well with clarinets, which (unlike the oboe) have a "wah" sound rather than "ta." Thinking of the music like this helped my student keep the RH articulate, and the LH more legato, as well as let the music "breathe," creating a more stylistic performance.

MORE TO COME!

I hope these first two thoughts on "when beauty isn't enough" have piqued your interest, and in my next newsletter, I look forward to sharing more thoughts for going beyond beauty – the possibilities are endless!