



NEW ENGLAND

PIANO TEACHERS' Assoc., Inc.

February 10, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

I wish to thank our EDITIONS COMMITTEE – **Sandra Rosenblum**, Chair, **Elfrieda Hiebert**, **Miriam Gargarian**, **Debbie Beers**, and **Margaret Bachelder** – for the fine presentation on the piano music of Brahms in January. It is always wonderful to have our own members share their research, their talents, and their enthusiasm with us! If you were not present, I'm sure you will read **Allen Giles's** notes with interest. They will be available soon on the NEPTA website. Enclosed in the print version of this newsletter are Allen's notes from the October meeting on William Westney. Allen's notes from past meetings can be found on the website.

Alexander Korsantia is unable to be our speaker on Monday, Feb. 25 because he has been engaged to play with the Cincinnati Symphony on that weekend. Instead, **Jean Stackhouse**, whom many of you will remember as a member and past president of NEPTA, will present a program entitled "**Mindful Music Making.**" We welcome this opportunity to see Jean and hear about her new work, which includes recent studies on the brain and music. Jean's biography is at the end of this letter. Many thanks to **Shann Wood**, our Program Chair, who found our wonderful substitute program.

I am happy to announce that **Joan Collins** has graciously agreed to chair the MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPETITION. Joan is not a newcomer to this position, having chaired it for many years before. I would recommend that you download a new entry blank from our website – or be certain to change the information on the blank sent in October to return to Joan Collins at 19 Waverly St, Brookline 02445-6818.

The PROGRAM COMMITTEE is meeting on Monday, March 3, and would like to hear from you. If you know of interesting speakers or topics, please pass them on to **Shann Wood**, Chair, shannwood@comcast.net

The CELEBRITY SERIES will resume sending us notice of pianists performing in Boston and information about discount tickets as teachers.

A new recital hall at Rivers School, the A. RAMON RIVERA RECITAL HALL, has been opened and named in Angel's honor. **Angel Rivera** is a longtime member of NEPTA, and Director of the Rivers School. We congratulate him!

The Powers Music School in Belmont is scheduling the 45th **Mildred Freiberg** Piano Festival Saturday, March 29 and Sunday, March 30 with seven different recital times. There will be copies of the application blank at our next meeting, or you can call the school directly at (617) 484-4696.

Included in this newsletter is a two-page mid-year NEPTA Membership Update, submitted by **Michelle Kelley**. Please save these with your membership directory.

I look forward to seeing many of you on February 25.

Sincerely yours,

Joan Reddy, President

Biography for February 25 NEPTA Speaker Jean Stackhouse

(from the Berkshire Music School faculty directory)

Jean Stackhouse, PIANO PEDAGOGY, served for many years on the faculty of the New England Conservatory, where she directed the Piano Pedagogy Program, served as Director of Education, chair of the piano department and founder of the Piano Performance Seminars for their Preparatory School. She is a lecturer and clinician throughout the United States, where her workshop presentations have been featured at Curtis Institute, Eastman School of Music and University of Wisconsin. In the Spring of 2005, the New England Conservatory Preparatory School presented its first "Jean Stackhouse Excellence in Teaching Award" in her honor, the award to be given annually in perpetuity. On (Berkshire Music School) faculty since 2005.

Announcements

Tanya Shrago will present "An Evening Song" at 7 pm on Thursday, March 13. With Anton Belov, baritone, and Jill Deleault, soprano, at Manchester Community Music School, 2291 Elm Street, Manchester, NH. Works of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninoff, Rubenstein, Gershwin, Weill, and Bolcom.

Michelle Kelley will appear in the Second Tuesday Speaker of the Month at the Freeport Performing Arts Center, Freeport, Maine, on Tuesday, February 12, at 7 p.m. She will also perform on Saturday, March 15, at 2:30 p.m. at M. Steinert & Sons, Worcester, MA. She will then appear on March 28-29 at the University of Maine, Orono, Maine, giving a masterclass and recital. On April 6 at 2 p.m. at Indian Hill School of Music, Littleton, MA, she will collaborate with local artist Reese Inman with a concert and presentation on relationships between art and music. On the program are Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Hovhaness, and George Rochberg. All concerts are free and open to the public. Contact Michelle at conmoto@comcast.net for more information.

Nancy Oliva Awards

The following students were presented with Nancy Oliva Awards for their wonderful performances at the Intermediate I recitals on February 3:

Kimberly Huang (Helena Vesterman)
Felix Xu (Helena Vesterman)
Njeri Grevious (Margarita Gureyevich)
Brian Li (Nilly Shilo)

The Nancy Oliva Award was created to encourage students in private studios. Please take this into consideration when choosing your student to enter.

NEPTA meeting notes for Monday, October 22, 2007

SPEAKER: William Westney
TOPIC: "The Perfect Wrong Note"
NOTES BY: Allen Giles

Mr. Westney feels an "ongoing mission," a "great urgency" —his words—about our piano teaching field. He feels that we are primarily concerned about teaching students with goals of technical precision and good fingers and much less with "aliveness" in performance. Perfection is not a matter of playing every note accurately with technical precision. The real concern must be with communicating the vitality and energy of the music being played.

We talk about "practice makes perfect." What does that mean? Is the statement even helpful? Instead. "Practice makes **permanent**", a worrisome idea. Is it even really true? Or "perfect practice makes perfect," a terrifying idea. Our goal for our students must be vitality and aliveness in their performances. Aiming for perfection produces an impediment in this goal.

For example, small children in Dalcroze class alerted to the elephants about to appear in music being listened to. Their whole bodies are tuned to that moment, charged up with anticipation, listening for the change. Music for them is full of fun and excitement. Anything that doesn't generate this feeling of anticipation is suspect. This sense of anticipation is what we want to engender in our students in their playing.

The student who looks at the teacher for approval as he/she plays the last note of a piece is insecure. We've all heard the story that "I play the piece fine when I'm practicing at home all alone." Question: Is what you are doing really practicing or just amusing yourself at the piano? What is real practice?

The goal of practice is motor mastery of the task at hand. Analogy with the task of learning to ride a bike: "Don't worry about falling. Just go for it. If you fall, learn from the experience." If I fall it doesn't mean that I will always fall when I ride." Or another analogy: a child learning to sit up is involved in **ego-less** repetitive attempts of trying out new skills. Learning comes from this sort of experience. Accuracy is a destination, not a starting place. Practicing is an enjoyable learning experience in which you are not concerned about the outcome. Honest mistakes lead to learning. Don't feel guilty about mistakes. Pick yourself up and go at it again. With exuberance. The arm must learn the distances involved. How does it **feel** to play that passage? There is no fear involved in such learning. Stop at places where you play wrong notes. Learn how it feels to play it correctly. Involve yourself in a healthy dialogue with your body. Find a way to relinquish control of your body. Let your body figure out how to move. Give up control.

Note: In playing arpeggios, realize that the hands do not feel the same as you move from one octave to the next. The arms and the hands are at a different angle with the keyboard..

Suggestions for practice:

1. Ignore dynamic levels in early practice. Practice exuberantly at comfortable dynamic levels and tempi.
2. Focus on how it **feels** to meet each challenging problem.
3. Separate technical problems for isolated practice. Then practice the passages in the piece with freedom, concerning yourself with the shape of the piece.
4. Problems in performance are often found in easier passages.
5. During slow practice, try every few days faster to see if the motor skills are developing.
6. Analyze often, testing what you are doing.