



NEW ENGLAND

PIANO TEACHERS' Assoc., Inc.

March 2009

Dear Colleagues,

It was indeed a pleasure to welcome **Ann Sears** this month, who shared her many delightful ways of approaching our teaching with fresh eyes, deep knowledge and great humor. **Jean Alderman's** notes on her lecture are included with this mailing.

On Monday, March 23, we will be visited by **Michael Lewin**, a member of the Boston Conservatory Faculty, who brings a rich background from his international concert career and recording to his teaching. He has chosen to speak on **Charles Griffes** and **Franz Josef Haydn**. Please read his fuller biography on page 14 of your program booklet.

The Student Recitals will conclude on Sunday, March 22 with the Ensemble and Adult Recitals at Steinert's in Natick. These recitals are an extremely important part of our overall program each year. We are very grateful to the Chairs and Committees who do this valuable work for us. Please read through the list of their names on page 5 in our booklet, and think about how you can get involved to help next year.

On Monday, April 6, we will have a Teachers' Exchange at the Wellesley Free Library with a double program. **Tanya Shrago** and her duet partner from Longy School will present a program of piano duets by the Russian composer, **Valery Gavrilin**. An open discussion about Motivating Teens will follow. Please bring your ideas to share.

Repertoire for the Student Master Class on Monday, April 27 will be included in the April Newsletter. **Ya-Fei Chuang**, faculty member at the Boston Conservatory, will conduct the class. Her information is on page 15 of your booklet.

The following students were awarded the **Nancy Oliva** Awards for their wonderful performances at the Intermediate I recitals on January 25.

Ellen Liu (Lina Yen)
Kevin Ren (Houry Schmeizl)
Oliver Xie (Wei Le)
Tong Xu (Mila Filatova)

These non-competitive awards are given annually to four seventh graders who study in an independent studio in recognition of their musical efforts and to encourage a continuation of their studies. Congratulations to these students and their teachers.

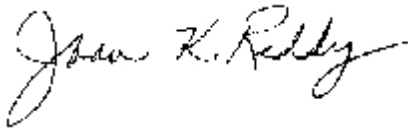
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Included with this Newsletter is the **Dues Notice** for next year. For those who receive the Newsletter electronically, the 2009-2010 form will be available at www.nepta.info/download/dues-scholarship.pdf as a downloadable and printable pdf file. Please note that the form also includes a line for your donation to the Scholarship Fund. Please respect deadlines and respond promptly, so that our materials can be collected well in advance of the printing of our next Program Booklet and Directory.

I look forward to seeing you at the events ahead. Please wear your nametags and continue to introduce yourself to new faces at our gatherings. Because our schedule is so full, we need to make a special effort to get to know one another better.

Sincerely yours,



Joan K. Reddy
President

March NEPTA Announcements

Shaylor Lindsay will give a Faculty Artist recital at the Longy School in Cambridge at 3pm on Sunday, March 22. The program is as follows:

“Faschingsschwank aus Wien,” Schumann

“On the Beautiful Blue Danube,” J. Strauss - piano 4-hands, w/**Thomas Stumpf**

“La Valse,” Ravel, 2 pianos, w/**Thomas Stumpf**

“L’Histoire du Soldat” – piano trio with **Chester Brezniak**, clarinet and **Sargis Karapetyan**, violin

The **Sounds of Stow Winter Concert**, Sunday, March 22 at 3pm will commemorate the 200th anniversary of Mendelssohn’s birth, with choral and orchestral music, including the violin concerto, and conclude with Beethoven’s Choral Fantasy. Hale Middle School, Hartley Road, Stow Center. \$20/\$15 Seniors and students. **Barbara Jones** is the Artistic Director.

The **Arlington Piano Festival** will be held on Sunday, April 5 at 2pm at the Park Avenue Congregational Church, 50 Paul Revere Road, Arlington. Open to students of all ages and levels in Arlington and the surrounding communities. For an application, go to AngelaGazzaPianoStudio.com or call 781-646-7768.

Inga Magid announces the Keys for Kids Piano Evaluation, to take place on Saturday and Sunday, April 11 and 12, and Saturday and Sunday, April 18 and 19 in Lexington. Please contact her at inga@keys-for-kids.com for the pdf file that gives specific information on content and grade levels. She may also be reached at 781-274-9727. The website is www.keys-for-kids.com.

Dr. Ann Sears

“Finding New Ways to Teach Old Music”

NEPTA meeting February 23, 2009

Notes submitted by Jean Alderman

Dr. Ann Sears is from Wheaton College, where she teaches piano and courses in American music. She addressed her subject, "Finding New Ways to Teach Old Music," from several different angles.

REJUVENATING OURSELVES. Do we teach as we were taught, or have we evolved? From this perspective, Professor Sears recounted stories about several of her own teachers, their manner, their strengths and weaknesses, and how she responded. By explaining her own influences candidly and with good humor, we were led to do the same, to think deliberately about what we take from our own pasts, what we change or discard, and what we add.

She pointed out that it's a **DIFFERENT WORLD**, that students have changed: They are more distracted, more tired, and they live in a global, eclectic culture. Completely at home with technology, they can teach us a lot, and they enjoy the role reversal. Professor Sears even goes so far in coping with this new breed as to have ginger ale and chocolate for one particularly tense student. It settles him down, gives him time to talk a bit about his life...and helps prepare him to focus on the lesson. In stark contrast, her first teacher kept a small baton at hand with which to rap her knuckles if she made a mistake. "Students learn best when they are enjoying themselves." Piaget

Another perspective was emphasis on **NOT JUST CLASSICAL** - on the fact that all kinds of music have quality, e.g., a good rag is good music. Professor Sears' father was a bluegrass banjo player who encouraged his daughter to try everything. She studied violin and guitar as well as piano. Her rhythm at the piano is something else, and one could guess that her early exposure to different musics is responsible for her teaching American music (see bio in NEPTA booklet). She suggests using a Fake Book, having students pick out tunes they sing and just generally being open-minded and inclusive.

The aspect of **ORNAMENTATION** was explored: are all ornaments expressive? Surely they are in Bach and Beethoven, whereas in Chopin and Liszt they tend to be more decorative. Using a CD, Professor Sears compared the great folk singer Odetta's ornamentation (sliding in under the pitch, then rising to pitch) to classical expressive ornaments. She might ask a student, "Can you devise a different ornament? a better one?"

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, playing with others, especially strings and voice, brings in another side of music which should be cultivated early on. It teaches the vital basis of all music, rhythm, along with flexibility, acute listening, sight-reading and being able to count.

Next came **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**, an example of which was her own first exposure to the Erard piano, with its light action, bright silvery sound and clear bass. She had been practicing "Poissons d'Or" on her piano with little success, but found it easy to get that wonderful, fast background sound on Erard. Playing on that piano taught her how to do it -- let the key push up your finger. As another example, she played an old recording of Debussy (1862 - 1918) doing "La Soiree dans Grenade."

It was very free -- not exact rhythmically at all -- another broadening experience.

Professor Sears acknowledged how difficult it is to strike a balance between helping one's students be disciplined and at the same time encouraging freedom and curiosity.

From **HOWARD GARDNER** we learn about the different kinds of intelligences:

1. linguistic
2. mathematical
3. musical
4. bodily/kinesthetic
5. spatial
6. interpersonal
7. intra-personal
8. existential/spiritual
9. global

Everyone has some combination of these; no one has them all. Understanding that each student is a unique blend of intelligences frees both teacher and student from being judgmental about their own limitations, and allows uniqueness to be nurtured. "Assume they can do it and together try to find a way to use the gifts they have. Remember to tell them what they do well." (paraphrase) cf. Gardner's books: **FRAMES OF MIND, INTELLIGENCE REFRAMED** and **TO OPEN MINDS**, in which he contrasts the virtues and problems of Chinese and American early education styles.