

## NEPTA TEACHERS' EXCHANGE

April 7, 2014

Wellesley Free Library, Massachusetts

Submitted by Linda G. Vieira

### **TEACHING ADULTS: PEDAGOGY AND OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND THE STUDIO**

**Presenters: Lisa Caliri, Nancy Morgan and Robert Finley**

**LISA CALIRI** talked about the theories of Tobias Matthay (1858 – 1945) who is considered to be one of the great pedagogues. He was born in London and taught piano at the Royal Academy of Music for over 50 years. In 1905, he opened the Tobias Matthay Piano School and established the American Matthay Association in 1925. *Members of the AMA were chosen by Matthay during his lifetime. His work is celebrated at the Annual Matthay Piano Festival.*

Matthay wrote numerous pedagogical books addressing technique and musicality. Some of ideas include:

- teacher and student should study the music silently
- a teacher can express ideas on mood and rhythm, then remember the student must “play the piece as his/her own fancy prompts”
- good teaching makes students think, not just imitate the musical interpretation of their teacher
- give ways to improve rather than calling attention to a student’s faults

His concepts on displacement of tension and attention to natural musical laws were revolutionary at the time. His core concept was to achieve technical solutions through musical understanding. He solved musical and technical problems in a lesson and encouraged thoughtful practice. Practicing is trying to find out everything about a passage, musically and technically: the how of the music, every note of it for the sake of the whole. The “how” musically and technically: where does the beauty and emotion lie, what are the techniques to express that? He taught how each note fits vertically, horizontally, melodically and physically. The sole purpose of technique is to express music. He never taught technique apart from music.

Matthay believed the piano evolved tremendously but playing with ease and achieving a beautiful tone with wide musical expression are the elements that are most important. He supported using “elbow elastic” for all singing and big tones. He taught arm weight to achieve a singing tone: sitting reasonably far away from the piano, elbow level with the keys and avoid pressing your knuckles.

He taught “arm off” in between the abounding of all notes and during all light, running passages. He did not favor wild movements: the listener should focus on the music, using his/her ears and not the eyes in a performance.

He taught relaxation instead of fixation (immobile, stable or resisting all actions in playing). Beethoven and Chopin suggested movements to be used to play passages in their compositions that described rotation, but Matthay invented it formally. He taught his students that rotation was moving away from the last finger used.

The duration of each note is as important as the tone. Without rhythm, there is emptiness. The great charm of a Chopin passage is that your fingers can inflect tone and duration with every note. Other concepts include: feeling the growth of each phrase to its climax and never to the end of the phrase and realizing the growth of a movement, a group of notes into a whole. Matthay spent his life eliminating difficulties so that musical development was not delayed by the wrong kind of mechanical practice.

Stephen Siek recently published a new book on Matthay, England’s Piano Sage. For more information about Matthay and a list of his educational works, go to **matthay.org**.

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**NANCY MORGAN** discussed teaching materials, resources, performance and socializing opportunities, different types of adult students and the unique situations adults bring to piano lessons.

Ms. Morgan stated she wants her adult students to play well to the best of their abilities: everything correct and not watered down. Some adults do stop lessons after a few months when they realize how hard learning to play is; others continue for a long time e.g. 20 years.

Ms. Morgan discussed briefly how she would start with a complete beginner. She would find out what they wanted to learn and adjust her approach accordingly. She begins with having the student develop a feel for the keyboard while learning the white keys in relationship to the black keys (2 blacks – C) with eyes open and closed followed by improvisation on the black keys with the pedal, often suggesting the student find a motif and develop a sequence on that motif. NEPTA members were invited to visit her website or to contact her with questions [www.MorganPianoSchool.com](http://www.MorganPianoSchool.com)  
[Nancy.Morgan@alum.wellesley.edu](mailto:Nancy.Morgan@alum.wellesley.edu)

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## **TEACHING MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

BEGINNER METHOD BOOKS: (Ms. Morgan likes the landmark approach)  
Keyboard Musician for the Adult Beginner Frances Clark, Summy-Birchard  
The Music Tree Frances Clark  
Adult Piano Adventures All-In-One Lesson Book with CD Faber & Faber  
Hal Leonard Student Piano Library Adult Piano Method with CD  
The Classical Piano Method Heumann, Schott

## **SIGHT READING** (cover hands with towel for beginners)

Music Pathways Piano Discoverie, Olson, Bianchi and Blickenstaff, Carl Fischer  
Speed-Reading at the Keyboard Shanapy, Isacoff and Jordan, Ekay Music.

## **THEORY**

Theory and Musicianship Edith McIntosh Carl Fischer  
Fundamentals of Music Theory, Snell and Ashleigh, Kjos  
Contemporary Music Theory Mark Harrison, Hal Leonard.  
Musictheory.net

## **SCALES, ARPEGGIOS, CADENCES....**

Daily Warm-ups, Set 1, 2, 3 Kowalchyk and Lancaster, Alfred  
The Complete Book of Scales, Chords, Arpeggios and Cadences Palmer, Manus, Lethco, Alfred.

## **TEACHING BOOKS FROM THE MAJOR STYLISTIC PERIODS**

Keys To Stylistic Mastery Clarfield and Alexander, Alfred  
Mystery To Mastery Book 1 and 2, (unfortunately out of print) Clarfield and Guy  
Keys To Artistic Performance Clarfield and Alexander, Alfred.

## **OTHER MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

The Guide to Effective Practicing, Nancy O'Neill Breth, Hal Leonard  
Wright-Way Note Finder  
Linked In  
[Groups.google.com/a/columbusstate.edu/group/Pno-ped-l/topics](https://groups.google.com/a/columbusstate.edu/group/Pno-ped-l/topics);  
Join piano teacher organizations  
Clavier Companion Magazine  
You Tube and other great websites  
Flashcards, Music Apps and computer programs.

**TYPES OF ADULT STUDENTS** (What motivates each student to practice?) Best to be flexible with repertoire and schedule. They may be sophisticated listeners but not critical listeners. They are surprised how difficult it is to performance and are easily upset if they lose the repertoire they had learned. Here are samples of adult students:

- Older beginner, retired, took lessons as a child, may be a baby boomer who wants to stay active
- Parents who study because their children are taking lessons
- Old beginner or those who fail to learn or learn very slowly
- College student, other music teachers or serious students
- Busy adult or someone who wants to learn something specific: hymns, lead sheets, Christmas songs

### **PERFORMANCE AND SOCIALIZING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Make a recording
- Play at nursing home facility or religious institution
- Potluck supper recital (Ms. Morgan hosts these twice a year)
- Home party recital (guests must listen attentively when student is performing)
- Performance lesson: student invites guests to perform for during his/her lesson
- Play for an evaluation with another teacher
- Partner or group lesson: Ms. Morgan has 3 group lessons per year on topics suggested by adult students such as theory, stylistic periods, ear training
- Music Seminars
- Ensemble Playing

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**ROBERT FINLEY** spoke about opportunities for adults beyond the studio: festivals, competitions and community services. His presentation included slides that are summarized below.

**COMPETITIONS** Robert provided us with an extensive list (dates are when the competition began)

Paris Competition: (1989) started by economist & amateur pianist Gerard Bekerman

Fort Worth USA began in 1999: joint venture by Van Cliburn and Paris competition has been highly successful

- Boston Competition (2001) held every 2 years at Longy School of Music

- Competitions in Washington DC, Fort Worth TX, Colorado Springs, Chicago, Warsaw Poland (Chopin Society), St. Petersburg Russia (Piano Bridges), Moscow Russia (Claviarium), United Kingdom (Open Piano Competition)

Most competitions are held every 2-4 years, except Paris and Washington DC which is every year. Amateur competitions are far less rigorous than professional competitions and are more relaxed e.g. no chamber music rounds, shorter recital rounds, less stringent rules and regulations. They are arranged for “fun” rather than selecting a pianist for a major international career

Adult amateur pianists are defined as those who play for love rather than for a living.

- They do not obtain primary source of income from playing the piano though contestants may have a few piano students as long as it is not their primary income
- Minimum age usually 30 (Boston is 35, VCF is 31, WIPAC is 18)
- Competitions have 2-3 rounds before a jury and audience
- Each round usually 12-15 minutes (prelims), 15-20 minutes (semis), 20-30 minutes finals. Far less rigorous than professional competition
- Some allow repetition of repertoire in subsequent rounds, some do not
- Most allow performance from memory or from music
- Usually open choice of repertoire, usually about one hour’s worth of music
- Contestants selected by resume, audition CD/DVD/Youtube video
- Size of competition between 30-90 competitors depending on competition
- Usually 12-14 semifinalists, 5-6 finalists.
- Prizes usually \$1000-\$2000 plus other cash prizes, special prizes, winner’s recital, concerto with orchestra opportunities (Paris, Boston, Colorado Springs)
- Most amateur competitions are solo recital events
- Some have concerto with orchestra final (defunct Berlin Competition)
- Some have two “streams”, “gold” and “silver” (Chicago) with easier repertoire and only two rounds in silver. Gold stream is 3 rounds.
- Concerto competitions in addition to solo competition (Chicago)
- Choice of 3 or 4 concertos or movement of concerto, 20 minutes max
- Rehearse with accompanist, play before a jury, 5-6 selected to play with symphony orchestra
- Chicago competition in May has choice of Beethoven 4<sup>th</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> mov., Chopin 2<sup>nd</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> mov., Rachmaninoff 3<sup>rd</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> mov.

- Piano Texas festival also has concerto competition with similar arrangements.
- Competition jury gives feedback and advice to competitors, which is very important.
- Good social events, masterclasses, chamber music.
- Van Cliburn Foundation has Youtube amateur pianist video contest
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## **FESTIVALS**

- Festivals are non-competitive events, more relaxed, growing in popularity
- Consist of several days of recitals, masterclasses, private lessons, social events
- Famous pianists and teachers give recitals, masterclasses, lectures
- Some festivals feature concerto competitions and chamber music
- Major festivals include PianoTexas, Chetham's, Piano Summer School, Les Amateurs Festival. All are excellent programs
- PianoTexas takes place in June at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth
- Three concurrent sessions for young artists, amateurs and teachers
- Usually two sessions lasting about 10 days each
- Many opportunities to perform, have private lessons, attend recitals, playing in masterclasses, chance to perform concerto with FWSO
- Chetham's piano summer school takes place in August at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester UK.
- For young artists, amateurs and teachers
- Two sessions each lasting a week
- Includes private lessons, recitals, masterclasses, workshops, social events
- Les Amateurs Festival based in Paris France.
- Two festivals per year, one in Paris and the other in another country (Shanghai China, St. Petersburg Russia, Budapest Hungary, Buenos Aires Argentina, Rio de Janeiro Brazil)
- Les Amateurs is for finalists and winners of amateur competitions
- Features recitals, masterclasses and social events. Paris venue is the Theatre du Chatelet.
- Other festivals for amateurs in Verbier Switzerland, Perugia Italy (Musicfest Perugia), Mozarteum Summer Academy in Salzburg
- London Masterclasses: Will accept amateurs but only of very high standard. This is mainly for young professionals.
- Boston Symphony is considering a festival for amateurs during Tanglewood

## **PIANO CAMPS**

- Rami Barniv's Rhapsody Piano Camp in Utica NY.
- residential course for beginners to advanced level pianists
- Two sessions in June and October
- Includes lessons, recitals, masterclasses, social events

## **PIANO SOCIETIES**

- Provide informal recital opportunities in halls and private residences
- All over the country and around the world
- Pianists of all levels play. Usually intermediate, advanced and professional
- Groups in the USA include Boston, New York, Chicago, San Diego.
- Boston Piano Amateurs Association has "soirees" every month in different member's homes.
- Informal concert before audience. Up to 12 people play for 10 minutes each followed by refreshments.
- Also have masterclasses by professional pianist, workshops and "peer review" sessions (people play to each other, discuss, make improvements)
- Very popular events and well attended.
- Good opportunity for someone preparing for recital or competition.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

- Opportunities for amateur pianists to play in nursing homes.
- Most nursing homes are only too glad to have piano recitals for their residents.

## **VIDEOS OF FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS**

- Les Amateurs festival: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-tAMI-Y3k4>
- Paris Competition: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_lbHd8Ohmc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_lbHd8Ohmc)
- Chopin Competition: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-AgQ0iE6w4>
- PianoTexas: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0rcVK5gSp0>

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

- Boston International Piano Competition: [www.bostonpianoamateurs.org](http://www.bostonpianoamateurs.org)
- Paris competition: [www.pianoamateurs.com](http://www.pianoamateurs.com)
- WIPAC Competition: [www.wipac.org](http://www.wipac.org)
- Colorado Springs Competition: [www.apiano.org](http://www.apiano.org)

- Van Cliburn Amateur Competition: [www.cliburn.org](http://www.cliburn.org)
- Piano Bridges Competition: [www.pianobridges.com](http://www.pianobridges.com)
- PianoTexas Festival: [www.pianotexas.org](http://www.pianotexas.org)
- Chethams Summer School: [www.pianosummerschool.com](http://www.pianosummerschool.com)
- Perugia Music Festival: [www.musicfestperugia.net](http://www.musicfestperugia.net)
- London Masterclasses: [www.londonmasterclasses.com](http://www.londonmasterclasses.com)
- Les Amateurs Festival: [www.pianestival.org](http://www.pianestival.org)
- Rami Bar-Niv's Piano Camp: <http://ramisrhapsody.tripod.com/>