

## TEACHING PIANO PEDAGOGY

# Kaffee Klatsch

BY MARIENNE USZLER

This is a “special” for all the pedagogy teachers among our newsletter readers. What we’re proposing here might fill a need—and trigger some reactions.

All of us like to “sound off” at times. Certain issues keep cropping up that beg for discussion, if not resolution. On certain days, the issues may seem thorny, on others merely puzzling. But we’d like to *talk* about them. And because a pedagogy teacher is most often the lone faculty member to whom these topics *are* issues, the issues themselves never get the attention they deserve. You can’t grab a latte and a faculty friend and ask, “What do you do when ...” or “How do you feel about ...”

Yes, pedagogy conferences and MTNA’s pedagogy Saturdays are talk-fest opportunities for those with common concerns, but such meetings are few and far between. You have to pack a bag and go someplace—not to mention paying for airline tickets and room and board. It would be nice if you could talk shop in those moments when you’d really like to “hang out.”

Well, you can. We’ve got a newsletter and a website. Let’s use them. Pour that latte and speak up.

We’ll put our cards on the table first, face up.

Teaching piano pedagogy has its own challenges. Some of these are general and global.

- ◆ Within a pedagogy curriculum, how do you prioritize all that needs to be taught within the number of allotted semesters, or within a single semester?
- ◆ How do you ensure that students have exposure to good teaching at several levels—from preschool to more advanced instruction?

Some challenges juxtapose the ideal and the practical.

- ◆ How do you guide students to an understanding of educational theories, yet see to it that they also emerge knowing how to teach specific pianistic skills?
- ◆ How can you balance musical and real-world topics to prepare students to run a financially successful and professional independent studio?

Some challenges may be local.

- ◆ How do you inspire piano majors whose focus is only on a performing career to take the study of pedagogy seriously?
- ◆ How do you develop and sustain piano pedagogy as an important and viable subject when the administration or the keyboard faculty feel otherwise?

Are there answers to these questions?

The big challenges and general questions can’t be addressed on a single page, or in a few hundred words. Answers and opinions must be set against a perspective, or stated in relation to fundamental principles. That requires time and space.

But specific issues can be met head on, and these are the types we hope to address in the newsletter and on the website. To do so, we’re inaugurating a page on which such questions can be posed and examined. The idea is to provide a forum where practical and theoretical matters can be looked at as honestly and thoroughly as possible. Different people may have different solutions, but an open discussion is a good way to examine a subject from several angles. From there, you can take what you feel makes sense to you.

There are many such issues, of course. While members of the Advisory Board will offer some opinions to get this forum going, we can’t know the exact challenges you face in your own classes and schools.

So ... here’s your chance. What’s on *your* mind? We’d like you to raise

the questions, and we’d also like you to offer some solutions.

Take another sip of latte.

Are there some hot-button topics you’d like to see addressed? Do any of these hit home?

There are all those methods ...

- ◆ Do you (should you) advocate a particular reading approach?
- ◆ Do you introduce students to a number of methods, or do you concentrate on just one?
- ◆ If you have students prepare reports on different methods, do you (and how do you) guide their examination of a method?
- ◆ Do students leave your class knowing you favor (a) certain method(s)?

And there’s all that repertoire ...

- ◆ Do you perform intermediate repertoire for your students?
- ◆ Do you require your students to perform intermediate repertoire?
- ◆ Do you encourage teaching 20th-century literature?
- ◆ What do you mean by 20th-century literature? (Yes, we know we’re in the 21st century now.)

Well, your latte may be getting cold, but we hope that your pedagogy engine is beginning to fire on all cylinders. Sit down at your computer and tell us what frustrates, puzzles, inspires, or challenges you.

Here’s where to find us with *our* cups of coffee. ☕

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 Log on to the Piano Club Discussion Forum  
 Click on “Teaching Piano Pedagogy”  
 Enjoy a virtual latte and chat with us