

The Piano School of NYC, Inc Newsletter

December 2003

Volume 1, Issue 1

A Year of Growth and Learning

A School Without Walls.

“Where is the Piano School located?” is a question we often hear. The answers inevitably vary to suit the students needs, often followed by “what a wonderful service you provide.” You see, as many of you may already know, the Piano School of NYC provides at home service as well as group lessons where we provide the piano. Yes, this year we began to provide pianos to schools that wanted group classes, but lacked an instrument. The results thus far have been very successful, as most budgets for schools have severely limited funds available for the arts and in many cases even more so with the *do more with less* mandates they receive. This past year 6 pianos were provided for schools around the city, and it is our hope to continue to offer this service to throughout next semester too!



Mrs. Snow Wilson teaching at the Children's Learning Center

Where we stand.

We have been very successful at instructing children of all ages who want to learn piano, and this year we have expanded our programs by establishing classes in various schools, kindergartens, and nursery schools all over our city. Currently over 200 students receive quality piano instruction in classrooms located over a broad geographic location.

We are proud to have associations with the following institutions: the Restoration Plaza/Youth Arts Academy in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn; The George Jackson Academy in Manhattan's Lower East Side; In Morningside Heights we can be found at the Children's Learning Center as well as the Weekday School at the Riverside Church; in Harlem at the First Grace Baptist Church and the United Church of Deliverance; and also on the Upper West Side at De La Salle Academy, the River School, Mott Hall II, & P.S. 165; and at the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Midtown.

We look forward to continue offering high quality music education to everyone, and encourage anyone with suggestions of furthering our goals to kindly contact us. What a wonderful and fulfilling 3rd year it has turned out to be!

P.O.N.Y. NEWS!

We are pleased to inform everyone of our recent goal to form a non-for-profit organization, which we call the Piano Outreach of New York, Inc., or PONY for short. PONY contributors will find their donations are tax deductible, as we have just received the final 501(c)(3) approval from the Internal Revenue Service.

Our main intention is to provide exposure to and availability of piano instruction to those who would not afford the opportunity otherwise. In keeping with this mission, we plan to provide piano instruction and mentoring to children and individuals from low-income underprivileged communities, focusing on self-esteem building and empowerment. Via fun, uplifting, and educational piano lessons, including instruction in music theory and music history, we can make a positive impact on peoples lives and broaden their perspectives in their own environments.

Please feel free to contact us should you wish to enhance and foster appreciation for the arts by contributing in any way you can. We are currently seeking grants, sponsors, and donations to help get this project off the ground and up and running! I look forward to reporting our progress.

Andrew Anselmo

Find out more by visiting us at
www.pianoschoolofnyc.com

The following article, *Music Makes You Smarter*, written in 1997 by Frances H. Rauscher of the Department of Psychology in the University of Wisconsin, clearly demonstrates the *importance of music education*.

Music plays a role in the development of children from the strains of the first lullaby. It enters a child's life from experiences in the family, from the media, as part of religious worship, in the school curriculum, and in play. In addition to its enormous social value, recent research suggests that music also is important for intellectual development: Exposure to music from an early age appears to affect the organization of the central nervous system, making it a precious tool for early childhood educators.

Learning Starts Early—Even Before Birth

Studies from around the world show that early stimulation is important to brain development. An enriched environment can boost the number of neural connections that children form. Even animal studies have shown a significant relationship. For example, William Greenough of the University of Illinois exposed one group of rats to a stimulating environment. A second group was housed in standard drab cages. The animals housed in the enriched environments had 25% more connections among their brain cells.

The bottom line is that the brain is very pliable from the beginning of its development. This presents us with immense opportunities and weighty responsibilities, but timing is crucial. When there is a disruption of the normal development, neural connections are not made properly. In fact, a growing body of evidence confirms that brain development and learning are affected by experience, even before birth. Ultrasound recordings show that the neurons that develop in the womb begin driving an infant's limbs as early as the seventh week of pregnancy. It appears that experience can act on the brain's development from the very beginning. Experimental data confirm that learning can take place in utero. Studies have shown, for example, that newborns will show a preference for sounds that mimic the mother's voice as it was heard in the womb.

This evidence—and a great deal more that is beyond the scope of this brochure—leads to a single conclusion: how children develop and learn depends on both nature and nurture. It may be that nature sets the upper limits of development, but nurture determines whether an individual will reach this limit.

The Role of Music in Brain Development

What parent or teacher would choose to deny a child an experience that has been shown to help brain development? A new body of research suggests that music training at an early age can develop the neural connections that are necessary for understanding complex mathematical and scientific concepts. This research shows an important link between musical training and other cognitive abilities, particularly spatial abilities—the abstract reasoning that is used for understanding relationships between objects such as, for example, when calculating a proportion or playing chess.

Three-year-old children were given music instruction on the piano keyboard. Their spatial abilities were tested before they started lessons (pre-testing) and again six months later (post-testing). Their scores were compared to children who received lessons in the computer, children who participated in casual group singing sessions but who did not receive formal music instruction, and children who received no special training. Although the four groups of children's pre-test scores did not differ, the post-testing revealed that the children who had received the keyboard instruction scored significantly higher than the other children on a select, but very practical, domain of abstract intelligence—spatial-temporal reasoning.



Angela Jia Kim teaching at The River School

Supporting these data, Martin Gardiner and his colleagues have demonstrated that early training in music and the arts can influence kindergartner's test scores in reading and math. Other researchers have found similar effects. In fact, data demonstrating greater flexibility in mathematics and language skills for children enrolled in Hungarian music grade schools have been reported for decades.

What this means is that early music training may influence brain development, much in the same way that reading to a young child does. Specifically, it seems that music encourages the formation of neural connections essential for scientific endeavors. Many parents and educators have held this view for years, but it is only within the last decade or so that the scientific research in this area has come into its own. In fact, a recent study demonstrates the influence of music on cognitive development of animals. Rats who received extensive (12 hours a day for a period of months) exposure to complex music performed better in a spatial maze than rats exposed to repetitive music, white noise or silence. The researchers proposed

that the area of the brain responsible for spatial learning was developmentally affected by the music exposure. Just imagine what kind of impact music training can have on our own children!

Music as an Educational Experience

Although research has shown that even listening to music affects human intelligence, the strongest effects of music are to be found from active participation in music making. Children who receive music training are likely to reap benefits far beyond those which can be found from passive listening. It is clear that cognitive stimulation reaches a high level during music training. Music training can hardly be called "dry and boring." It's fun, but is always a challenge to a student's cognitive abilities. After all, a child working on a mathematical problem can sit back and ponder it for as long as necessary before committing pencil to paper. The same child, playing with a band, must keep up with the group and at the same time think ahead to prepare for what is coming. In no other subject is a child called upon to make four or five decisions per second and to act on them continuously for long stretches of time.

During musical performance, children must constantly turn their thoughts into action. Thought structures continually have to be updated and adjusted. This combination of constant vigilance and forethought coupled with ever-changing physical responses is an educational experience of unique value. One can easily see why children with music training are able to deal more easily with material which cannot immediately be assimilated. In turn, these children may be able to learn more easily and store information better than children who are not given the opportunity to participate in music making.

In addition to these benefits, the social climate of music instruction is marked by cooperation, whereas in most other subjects cooperation is either totally lacking or replaced by a climate of competition. Only by working together can students play a musical performance. They learn that cooperation is a means to an end which can be applied to other goals. Music is not a solution to all the problems of education. The human brain is enormously complex, and our knowledge of how music affects us is far from complete. Nevertheless, music is a powerful instrument of education which should be used.

We must however be careful not to downplay the importance of music for the beauty and value it brings into the lives of our children. We should not engage our children in musical activities solely because they encourage brain development.



Slavina Zhelezova with Youth Arts Academy Stu-

districts, have had to cut back spending on arts classes as their tax bases have shrunk, and as spending on areas like computers and special education have taken up larger parts of their budgets. Music was the most commonly offered arts class: 81 percent of schools say it is taught at least once a week. Just 9 percent of schools offered no music courses at all. Visual arts were taught at least once a week at 77 percent of schools, and 17 percent offered no such classes. Weekly theater arts classes were offered at 17 percent of schools, with that subject unavailable at 74 percent of schools. And dance was offered at least once a week at 7 percent of schools, while it was unavailable at 80 percent. Even at schools where the courses are offered, not everyone takes part. For example, only one in four eighth graders reported being asked to sing or play a music instrument at least once a week according to results of the first National Assessment of

Educational Progress in the arts. The NAEP study, often called the nation's report card, was done in 1997 on a repre-

US Schools Fail To Offer Music, Art

Nearly one American school in five fails to offer music or art classes - even once a week - according to an Education Department study. "In this age of information and when our economy is increasingly built on generating ideas, it is a serious mistake to shortchange our children's instruction in the arts," Education Secretary Richard W. Riley said in a statement. A 1997 study of eighth graders found that "most American children are infrequently or never given serious instruction or performance opportunities in music, the arts or theater - that's wrong," Riley said. "Arts education can be a creative way of connecting young people into education. The arts help them learn to solve problems, think creatively and develop mental discipline," Riley said.

Many schools, especially those in cash-strapped big-city dis-



The Year In Pictures

Clockwise from upper left:

Bow Dien "Snow" Wilson at Children's Learning Center (CLC);

Valerie Sciarra at CLC;

Slavina Zhelezova at Youth Arts Academy in Brooklyn;

Slavina Zhelezova at Mott Hall II;

Vera Anselmo at United Church of Deliverance in Harlem;

Manuel Koch at Mott Hall II;

Daniel Kelly at Montessori School in Brooklyn;

Magdalena Baczewska at De La Salle Academy;

Vera Anselmo at First Grace Baptist Church;

Assen Doykin at George Jackson Academy;

Valerie Sciarra at Weekday School .



Center picture: Smiling students at Youth Arts Academy





The Year In Pictures



These are the National Parenting Publication Awards for 2003.

These great sources of music are broken up into 3 categories; music for infants and toddlers, music for ages 4 and up, and music for ages 9 and up. To quote the NAPPA website, "We're delighted to be able to present winners that represent such a wide range of influences and styles - and thrilled that children everywhere can benefit from the diversity and excellence of performers who have their interests at heart!"

Music for Infants and Toddlers:

Hunk-Ta-Bunk-Ta FUNsies, by Katherine Dines, Hunk-Ta-Bunk-Ta Music, 2003; \$15.99; www.hunktabunkta.com, 303-298-7122.

This album of creative, practical and fun songs and activities for parents and children comes from a consummate and seasoned performer. Dines offers 15 compelling tunes designed to aid in the development of early motor skills and language.

Look At My Belly, by Brady Rymer, Bumblin' Bee Records, 2003; \$15; www.rymersongs.com, 631-765-1629. A day in the life of a new dad and his son translates into 13 original and creative tunes by singer-songwriter Brady Rymer.

Under a Shady Tree, by Laurie Berkner, Two Tomatoes Records, 2002; \$14.95; www.laurieberkner.com, 800-361-8153. Sincerely silly, smartly observed and performed with energy and an understanding of her audience, Laurie Berkner's songs speak to the child in us all. Experience counts.

Music for ages 4 and up:

Not Naptime, by Justin Roberts, Hear Diagonally Records, 2003; \$15.98; www.heardiagonally.com, 773-325-9259. While Roberts' voice and styling have been compared to James Taylor's, he has his own definitive voice that speaks to children. The 12 original songs on this new recording are clear and bright and directly hit the ups and downs of growing up.

Indian Elephant Tea, by Skip Ewing, Rounder Records, 2003; \$14.98; www.rounder.com, 800-ROUNDER. One of Nashville's finest singer-songwriters turns his hand to some classic children's fare. This album has it all: inspired performances and juicy arrangements. You've just got to hear the "Itsy Bitsy Spider Took the 'A' Train." We think Duke Ellington would approve.

Uh-Oh!, by Peter Alsop, Moose School Music, 2002; \$15; www.peteralsop.com, 310-455-2318. Respected songwriter, performer and educator Peter Alsop asks a peculiar question: What would happen if you could be magically transported back to preschool? Along with pals Bill Harley and Mar Harman, Alsop's hilarious 22-song collection boldly reverts to the world of diapers and innocence at breakneck speed with plenty of jokes for adults.

Music for Ages 9 and Up

It's a Puzzle, by Trout Fishing in America, Trout Records, 2003; \$14.98; www.troutmusic.com, 888-439-8342. The latest outing of two talented chaps, this recording ties bluegrass and rockabilly musical roots to sharp witty lyrics. The musicianship is top-notch, the singing is great, the arrangements rock and the recording - clichés aside - is truly for the whole family.

African Playground, by various artists, Putumayo World Music, 2003; \$15.98; www.putumayokids.com. Another comprehensive cultural experience from the Putumayo brain trust, this CD highlights the music of Africa with traditional, upbeat instrumentation - a transporting experience. The liner notes are highly informative for older children and parents.

This Land Is Your Land - Songs of Unity, by various artists, Music for Little People, 2002; \$15.98 CD, \$9.98 cassette; www.mflp.com, 707-923-3991. This ambitious and rewarding tribute to America features stories, songs and poetry that depict the nation's social struggles and triumphs and espouse liberty and justice for all. A hidden pleasure is Brian Johnson of AC/DC singing "If I Had a Hammer."

We would like to extend a Special Thank You to all the following people from whom we have received invaluable help in supporting and furthering our efforts.

THANKS TO YOU!

Laura Watts-Patrick at **Children's Learning Center**;
Deborah Flynn, Linda Herman, Elyse Everett at **The Weekday School**;
Jeanne Bunn at **De La Salle Academy**;
James Turner at **George Jackson Academy**;
Jane Kresch at **River School**;
Jory Plevel at **Mott Hall II**,
Jane Lewis at **Crossroads**;
Bertilia Diaz Perez at **PS 165**;
Penelope Pi-Sunyer at **Montessori School in Brooklyn**;
Peggy Alston at **Youth Arts Academy in Brooklyn**,
Mr. & Mrs. Rev. Vincent Miller at **First Grace Baptist Church in Harlem**;
Pastor McEacheren at **United Church of Deliverance in Harlem**;
Tess Alviar, Sonia Cruz at **Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School**;
Karina Strobl at **Patrons Program, Archdiocese of New York**;
Rania Tsoukalas at **ING Direct Cafe**;
Peter Renee, **Columbia University, Alfred Lerner Hall**;
Ben Model, **Piano Tuning & Repair**;
Simeon Iliev, **Quantum Solutions Group**;
Andrew Anselmo, **Photographer; Editor; Administrator**;
Kathryn Nieves, **Administrative help**.



Key News

From Our Faculty

- 1. Magdalena Baczewska** won the Dorothy McKenzie Award at the International Keyboard Institute and Festival in New York City this past July. In October Magdalena played a recital and conducted a Master Class at the Montclair State University in New Jersey. On November 2nd she performed a recital at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. This concert marked her third appearance on the Carnegie Hall stage. She was also one of the guest artists in concerts at the Merkin Hall, the Polish and Hungarian Consulate. Magdalena is also active as a music critic. Her writings have been published in the New York Concert Review.
- 2. Julia Dusman** formed a new chamber music group called *IMAJ* this past August. It is a trio of an unusual combination of instruments: violin, piano and French horn. The trio made its debut on September 4 at the Winchester Gardens concert hall in NJ. *IMAJ*'s plans for this winter include concerts organized by *Artists Representation International*, chamber music competitions, and making a recording. The group's members include Funda Cizmecioglu-violin, Amber Chisholm-Lane-French horn, and Julia Dusman-piano. In November *IMAJ*'s members were among the first staff of the newly opened music department at the *NEST* school in the lower east side.
In November Ms. Dusman gave a solo recital at *The Fountains at Logan Square East* in Philadelphia and, in collaboration with the *Metropolitan Opera* singers, the concert at the *John Jay College* in NYC.
- 3. Daniel Kelly** has just returned from a six week tour to Southeast Asia as a member of the Latin jazz group, *Jazzissimo*. The tour was part of the Jazz Ambassadors program sponsored by the US State Department and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. The group performed concerts and master classes in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, India and Bangladesh.
- 4. Valerie Sciarra** is currently working as a Musical Director for the New York premier of the opera *Urban Stampede* by Frank Reed with music by Andrew Gant. It is a modern retelling of the Greek myth of Orpheus, set in the 50's. Verse Theater of Manhattan will be presenting this production as a concert version at the Makor Theater on Sundays, Jan 25, Feb 1, and Feb 8.
- 5. Angela Robinson** will direct the Senior Choir of the First Presbyterian Church of Newtown in their annual Christmas Eve performance this December 24th, where she is organist as well. In February 2004, Angela will be performing in a violin/piano duo recital at the New York Academy of Art and Design. In March 2004, Angela will be giving a series of eight lectures for the Program for Cultural Enrichment at Queens College. She will be discussing the piano music of Alexander Scriabin, with special emphasis on his piano sonatas.
- 6. Katie Down** produced *Galumphing 2*, two evenings of music and spoken word improvisation and new collaborations this past November. The festival took place at TIXE, A Chashama arts space at 113 W 42nd, and was the second installment of the first festival which was presented in mid September. The two-day event brought together performing artists who had never before collaborated together. Each evening featured trios and quartets of some of New York's top musicians and spoken word artists. Video archives are available of both performances via www.chashama.org/113/galumphing
- 7. Angela Jia Kim** (www.angelajiakim.com) has spent the fall semester performing throughout North America in NY, NJ, OH, WA, and in Canada to rave reviews. Upcoming performances include solo recitals and master classes at Purdue University and Western Washington University. Performances in the 2004-05 season include a 20 city tour in the United States. Angela has also developed a creative program for young children for the Piano School of NYC that incorporates movement and imaginative exercises to make music fun to learn! Each exercise has been carefully researched and brings the child closer to the goal of feeling the rhythm internally and expressing emotion through sound.
- 8. Assen Doykin** plays every Friday from 7.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. at Romano Italian restaurant with jazz singer Ann-Mary Kay. The restaurant is located on the corner of 35th street and Broadway. In November the Assen Doykin Trio (Mike Blanco on bass, and Bill Cambel on drums) performed in concert at The Boerum Hill Arts Center located at 492-94 Pacific Street (at Third Avenue) in Brooklyn. Many originals as well as some jazz standards were played. Assen recently finished recording and co-producing an audio track for the multimedia company Fluxure Advance Motion Media. The track can be heard on the web at www.fluxure.com. Also in the works is a debut CD with my jazz trio for the CTA recording label: www.ctarecords.com. The CD should be released in spring of 2004.
- 9. Manuel Koch** has been performing with a Brazilian quartet at Dos Caminos on Sunday afternoons and will continue to do so for the rest of the year. He also appeared at the Blue Note Jazz Club with the group of sax player Sam Kininger the weekend of the 7th and 8th of November. Additional performances during this semester included jazz trios and quartets at Jules in the East Village, Mezzo Mezzo in Astoria, Queens and at the Orbit in Harlem.
- 10. Nathan Brandwein** was recently named the Kansas State Winner of the Music Teachers National Association competition and will be traveling to Boulder in January for the Divisional Competition. I will be performing the Beethoven *Ghost* Trio in Weill Recital Hall on December 10 as part of the gala concert in this year's Mannes festival, entitled *The Birth of Romanticism: From Haydn to Schubert*.
- 11. Julian Lawrence Gargiulo:** After three sold-out performances in Italy this summer, the last of which took place in the Verona Philharmonic Hall, during a season also featuring conductors, Zubin Mehta and Kurt Masur and pianists, Murray Perahia and Arcady Volodos, Julian Lawrence Gargiulo recently played in the St. Martin in the Fields Concert Series in London. Upcoming performances include the US Virgin Islands and California. The release of his new CD *Preludes - Live from Italy* is scheduled for late December. For more information, visit www.juliangargiulo.com

STUDY HABBITS OR T.I.P.S. (To Influence Playing Soundly)

To The Students:

1. Divide your homework assignments into a few days of practicing. This will help you to develop a habit of practicing on regular basis,-the opposite of cramming all your homework a night before.
2. Start by playing the pieces you already know and play well,-it will warm-up your fingers, and will set a good mood for challenges you are to overcome.
3. Repetition is the key to your confidence! "Drilling" those difficult measures 5-10 times on regular basis will make a HUGE difference in your playing.
4. Goal setting: Home Recitals are a great way to get excited about your practicing,-that's right,-it can be very exciting when you are working toward a goal. Set a date on your calendar, and invite your friends for your "Solo Recital,"- I assure you will be thrilled when your pieces are sounding better and better with each day.
5. You get a "Hi five" for reading these helpful tips:-)

Vera Barskaya-Anselmo, *Founder & Artistic Director*



The Piano School of NYC
461 Central Park West
#3A



Our Community: Your Home

The following links provide information on how parents and children can together "warm the heart strings" with some interesting musical outings in NYC. Many events are free or suggested donation; others are in the \$5-\$10 range. We hope you use and enjoy the information, and please let us know what to add for our next newsletter!

www.parenthood.com, www.familydisco.com, www.newyorkfamily.com,
www.gocitykids.com, www.jewishmuseum.org, www.cmom.org,
www.ywcanyc.org, www.ymcanyc.org, www.symphonyspace.org,
www.stjohndivine.org, www.southstseaport.org, www.nypl.org,
www.nappa.parenthood.com