

MUSIC MATTERS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR MUSIC TEACHERS

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2010



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The Professional Independent Music Teaching Studio

By Sheila Vail, Managing Director of the Indian Springs Academy of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio

Here we are in the middle of another year. It's the perfect time to start planning for the *next* academic year, to consider new options or to make exciting changes that our clients can look forward to. Each year can bring the ever-present freshness of a new beginning for our clients (parents), our students, and for ourselves.

Our chosen profession, as an Independent Music Teacher (IMT), is a wonderful one! Unlike most careers, at any given point in time, we have the ability to improve and recreate our work environment, format, and product—even our professional image.

As IMT's, we are all fellow faculty members in the virtual "College of Independent Music Teachers." We are each a mutual universe of knowledge, ideas, and inspiration. We can provide each other with professional support and advice.

As professional business owners we are all engaged in the operation of our studio. We plan repertoire, events, performances, set goals for our students, and prepare to work

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You Asked

When is Convocation this year?

Convocation will be held on
Sunday, February 13th, 2011.

See page seven for more
information.

through the many challenges we all face as music educators. Because we are independent, we are also free to create our businesses in the manner that best suits us and our clients. But to be truly successful we should be mindful of the accepted standards and practices common to all successful business owners. As professionals, we have elevated responsibilities: to our clients, our students, our local community, the teaching community, and to ourselves. Raising our own standards and practices is a gift to our community, our studios, and our own lives.

Professional Responsibilities

As an IMT, our objective is to establish and maintain our studios and to provide quality music instruction for our students. But we provide much more than lessons. We are each a spotlight that focuses attention to the fine arts within our local community. We serve our clients by providing a local center where they can bring their children for their musical education. We work to meet their needs, to the extent that we are willing and able as we guide and develop the musical talents of their children.

We serve our students by providing a rich and varied program of information, performance opportunities, guidance, and instruction in becoming good musicians. Because we interact with our students on a one-to-one basis, we also have the opportunity to influence our students in many positive and personal ways. We are an adult influence (other than a parent) that can help establish perspectives and personal skills that help shape the fundamental fabric of their lives. We enrich their lives with wonderful gifts and glowing memories that can be rekindled many times with great fondness.

We serve ourselves and our profession by engaging in a rewarding career with wonderful professional relationships, financial stability that supports us, and the great reward of creating the world's future musicians. In our profession we are free to set our own calendar, fee schedules, location, and retirement date. What wonderful professional opportunities we have. Best of all, we can continually recreate them at any point in time. We are free to "interpret"!

Professional Objectives

All successful businesses provide a consistent high quality product and/or service under the guidance of professionally-respected leadership. Apply positive, creative and innovative thinking to your business.



*As professionals,
we have elevated
responsibilities: to our
clients, our students,
our local community,
and to ourselves.*

Let's take a closer look at our chosen profession. In addition to teaching lessons, we spend much time and effort creating a world of musical experiences for our students. We also handle the accounting, advertising, purchasing, scheduling, and the office work required to sustain the services we provide. Are our clients and students aware of the many things that we do to enrich their musical education? Do they think of us as business owners and career professionals?

As IMT's how are we perceived in our community? Are we individuals who "give lessons" or are we professional IMT's that offer a high level of service, supported by defined ethical standards of professional conduct and practice? We must establish and maintain respect from our clients to ensure their continued presence in our studio.

Value of Professional Presence

Improving our own image reflects well on the profession as a whole. We each have a responsibility to employ appropriate conduct and practice to better our own lives, our relationships with our clients and students, the existing teaching community, and the future teaching community.

Volunteer to run an event, perform in a local concert, serve as an officer in your local MTA, and start attending local meetings more often. Remember, these are our "faculty meetings." Your clients and students want to know what you are doing to enhance your continued education and professional life. Publish your activities and accomplishments and include your performances, conferences attended, and local association activities. Take time to write articles about what you know and file them away for future use—your thoughts and experiences are valuable. Publish a newsletter or a blog on your own website. Everyone wants to be part of the winning team and they will be willing to accept higher fees for the privilege.



A computer can be a great timesaver and create terrific efficiency

There is a popular economic term known as “intangible wealth” which refers to the development of an abundance of the immaterial, unseen valuable qualities of ourselves, our work, and our community. How consistent is our service? How pleased is our clientele? Do they have complete confidence in us and in our judgments? Is our reputation of ethical conduct well established and continually maintained? The sum of all these factors determines our intangible wealth—and that is a valuable commodity as people consider who influences their children.

Products and Services

Our trust in a business is built through clear presentation, consistency in practice, and confidence created by performance reliability. We may also be inspired by the character of a business owner who has earned our respect through the thoughtful attention given to their clients. Certainly a pleasant place to conduct business is always appreciated: seasonal changes and appropriate décor add energy and a fresh appearance.

Now think of a school. Do they offer only the minimum required classes to keep their license? Or do they offer a constructed program that enhances the overall educational experience in order to provide their students with goals, incentives, and rich experiences to keep them engaged in their course of development? In our industry, besides teaching

lessons, we also provide programs that include activities within a defined calendar that create a path of achievement.

Intangible wealth, in the context of our business, includes the continued support and training of the faculty, specialized course offerings, equipment used, facility upkeep, and the continued good reputation of the institution.

Recreating Your Program:

Lessons vs. Programs—Thinking Long Term

Many of our clients appreciate making payments in dollar amounts that remain consistent. Using a flat-rate fee payment schedule is greatly appreciated. Program fees are easy to comprehend and even simpler to attend to. A program fee simply states all activities included in the program, states the fee for the program that includes all the costs, and lists the payment options.

Establishing program fees will give your clients a complete understanding of all that is being provided for their children, including tuition fees, entrance fees for music festivals, exam fees, music and materials, recital fees, and will provide you with a predictable and stable income. If you have students that don't want to participate in activities, then consider coaching and consulting rates available on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Here are some suggestions for designing your own Program Fee Schedules:

- a) Create a name for your program to separate it from coaching or consultations.
- b) State the starting and ending date of the term of study.
- c) List all activities included in the fee.
- d) State the full amount due for the year.
- e) State the accepted payment options and due dates (monthly, quarterly, annually).

Consider invoicing an annual Program Fee with clearly published payment schedules. For example:

FEE PAYMENT OPTIONS

Monthly: Twelve equal payments due the 10th of each month

Quarterly: Four equal payments due September 10th, January 10th, April 10th, and July 10th

Annually: One payment for the academic year due September 10th

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Cash or check

PayPal (Allowing your clients to pay you online is very popular these days.)

Again, this is a common billing format that people are comfortable with. Late fees are also standard. You might also consider small pre-payment discounts and referral discounts if you are trying to grow your studio enrollment.

Never be afraid to raise your fees. Periodic raises are natural and expected. This is understood by our clients. Any concerns about small, routine fee increases would likely be outweighed by their confidence in you and your work.

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Organize to Energize

For our clients, *consistency* creates *certainty*, which creates *confidence*.

One key component to success is clear organization. It creates a clear path forward for all of us.

Plan next year's activities and repertoire now to allow ample time for your students to prepare. Prepare entry forms and order forms, buy your inventory, secure your recital facilities, and pre-write your annual announcements such as recital posters, etc. Have everything you need at your fingertips.

Do you use a computer in your studio? It can be a great timesaver and create terrific efficiency for teachers, students and parents. You can use a simple spreadsheet to keep track of attendance, books, order lists, contacts, festival records, and enrollment data. If you use an accounting program such as QuickBooks and Quicken, you have immediate access to all of your studio invoicing and purchasing.

But there is much more you can do with a studio computer, Internet access, and an inexpensive printer. You can email quick notes home to parents as needed or send assignment sheets, invoices or reminders to your students. Having all your active forms right on your desktop enables you to print what you need when you need it: calendars, forms, even event applications.

A computer can also be used as a teaching assistant. Your students can watch or listen to recordings and access reference or archival materials. You can access websites that provide games and instruction for use within the lesson to reinforce and enhance your teaching. Music LAB programs are becoming a common inclusion in the private teaching studio. An older computer can be put to good use as a "Music Lab" to drill all kinds of skills and enhance the study of theory and music history.



We have the unique opportunity to inspire everyone around us in ways we are likely to never be fully aware of.

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Typical Music LAB Fees range between \$100 and \$250 annually.

Experience the Joy

Walt Disney believed that if you are in the business of creating happiness, you will be eternally successful. In a profession that is fundamentally ours to create, we have choices and flexibility that few others enjoy. We have much to be grateful for in our professional lives and thousands of colleagues in our "virtual college" to enjoy it with. We have the unique opportunity to inspire everyone around us in ways we are likely to never be fully aware of. So smile—your fellow faculty members salute you!



Sheila Vail

Mrs. Vail earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, Maryland where she studied with Lilian Freundlich and Leon Fleisher. Active in the Ohio Music Teachers Association, Mrs. Vail currently serves on the OTMA Executive Board as the State Student Certificate Program Chair for the National Music Certificate Program (NMCP). In addition to this, she is a clinician for Frederick Harris Music, a member of the Royal College of Examiners (RCM), and serves on the steering committee for the NMCP. Mrs. Vail resides in Cincinnati where she is the owner and managing director of the Indian Springs Academy of Music in West Chester, Ohio, and maintains her private studio of 25 students.

Discipline Updates: The Marks Are In!

Summer Session 2010 Average Practical Marks*

LEVEL	Cello	Clarinet	Flute	Guitar	Piano	Saxophone	Violin	Voice
Preparatory A	-	-	-	-	87	-	-	-
Preparatory B	-	-	-	-	85	-	-	-
Grade 1	-	-	-	81	83	-	81	81
Grade 2	-	-	82	80	82	-	79	79
Grade 3	-	-	-	77	79	-	79	81
Grade 4	-	79	78	77	78	-	80	80
Grade 5	-	-	-	76	76	-	76	75
Grade 6	-	73	76	77	76	71	77	78
Grade 7	75	-	-	-	76	-	74	77
Grade 8	79	73	77	71	73	72	73	76
Grade 9	-	-	78	-	76	-	74	76
Grade 10	72	-	79	-	74	-	73	76
ARCT Performer's	-	-	-	-	74	-	80	-
ARCT Teacher's	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elementary Piano Pedagogy <i>Viva Voce</i>	-	-	-	-	79	-	-	-
Intermediate Piano Pedagogy <i>Viva Voce</i>	-	-	-	-	78	-	-	-
Advanced Piano Pedagogy <i>Viva Voce</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*To respect confidentiality and statistical significance, results are not reported if there were fewer than ten examinations.

April Session 2011

The Royal Conservatory is happy to announce that applications for April Session 2011 are now being accepted.

You can register via paper now by visiting rcmexaminations.org and downloading the application form.

DATES

Registration Deadline January 17, 2011
 Practical Examinations April 14–16, 2011

LOCATIONS

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burnaby
 Richmond
 Vancouver

ONTARIO

Hamilton
 London
 Markham
 Mississauga
 Ottawa
 Toronto

ALBERTA

Calgary
 Edmonton

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatoon

QUEBEC

Montreal

MANITOBA

Winnipeg

NOVA SCOTIA

Halifax

Summer Session 2010 Average Theory Marks*

RUDIMENTS

Preparatory 94
 Basic 89
 Intermediate 85
 Advanced 85

HARMONY

Introductory 84
 Basic 72
 Intermediate 66
 Advanced 69

History 1 81
 History 2 79
 History 3 81

Analysis 76
 Counterpoint 72

KEYBOARD HARMONY

Basic 72
 Intermediate 66
 Advanced 69

SPEECH ARTS AND DRAMA

TECHNICAL THEORY

Level 1 90
 Level 2 91
 Level 3 72
 Level 4 71

HISTORY AND LITERATURE

Level 1 77
 Level 2 82
 Level 3 75
 Level 4 74

*To respect confidentiality and statistical significance, results are not reported if there were fewer than ten examinations.

Mentor Memories invites leading arts professionals to share memorable moments of inspiration and motivation. This fifth installment is an interview with Ms. Alexina Louie, critically acclaimed and highly decorated Canadian composer.

Mentor Memories with Alexina Louie

Alexina Louie

Alexina Louie has created memorable compositions in many musical genres for some of Canada's most highly regarded soloists, chamber ensembles, and new music ensembles. She has written major works for concert halls, theatre (including opera and ballet), film, and television, which have been performed by international conductors such as Sir Andrew Davis, Charles Dutoit, Pinchas Zukerman, and Kent Nagano. During Ms. Louie's highly celebrated career, she has received multiple Juno awards, three SOCAN Jan V. Matejak Concert Music Awards, the Léger Prize (for *Nightfall*), and the Chalmers National Music Award (for *Obsessions*). Ms. Louie is a recipient of the Order of Ontario and a Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal. In 2005 she was invested as an Officer of the Order of Canada and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Ms. Louie's current major project is a full-length filmed comic opera based on the life and career of Canada's 18th Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney. Set to premiere in Spring 2011, it is the first event outside of the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts to be part of Cineplex Theatre's prestigious *Live at the Met* national airings.

MM: Why did you choose to pursue music as a career?

AL: I don't think I chose it, but rather it chose me. I began piano lessons in Vancouver at the age of seven. At age twelve Jean Lyons became my teacher. She taught me how to shape a phrase of music, to lead a line, and how to "sing" at the keyboard. It was during the next several years that I gradually learned how to express myself through the music of great composers. It was the feeling of elation I felt through self-expression and the creation of beauty that made me desire to learn more. I found music-making to be deeply moving and satisfying.

MM: What is it like to hear another performer play one of your compositions?

AL: It is an exhilarating experience. Until the moment of performance, the piece only exists in my imagination. Mind you, at this point in my career I know what I have written on the page. However, it is the sound of the music, which has been brought to life by a performer who has lived with the piece that is thrilling.

I write everything at the piano, but I use the piano as a tool, not as a performance instrument. For me, hearing an orchestral work performed is the difference between seeing a painting in a black and white photo and seeing it live, in color. As for my operas, the voice is sublime. It is quite impossible for me to sound anything like the divine singers who perform my operas and concert works.

MM: What aspect of your piano performance studies led you to pursue composition?

AL: Again I go back to the fulfillment of the desire for self-expression. I developed carpal tunnel syndrome when I was in graduate school and I could no longer play the piano. The need to "sing" was still there so I turned all my creative attention now to my composition studies. However, there is a big difference between composing and

playing. The creation of something out of nothing is very different from creating something beautiful and expressive out of something that already has its life.

MM: Where do you find inspiration?

AL: First I have to find inspiration from inside myself. I have to discover the "in" to the piece, or the work will not ring true. I need to express the emotions that I truly feel. I realize that this statement is amorphous, and this part of the mystery of my creative spirit is very difficult to express and difficult to comprehend, however this is the guiding principle of my creative life be it in a pedagogical piano piece, a work commissioned by The Toronto Symphony, or an opera.

There are so many sources of inspiration for me: nature, the night sky, poetry, my Chinese heritage, the performer who commissions the work, the eternal nature of creation, etc.

MM: Many teachers teach both theory and practical lessons. Do you have any tips on how to engage students with theory?

AL: First of all you have to make it meaningful. For instance, the concept of constructing chords only on paper is much less meaningful than having the student construct the same chords, as well, at a piano.

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Memories—cont'd from p. 6

If the student looks at that chord in a passage of music, plays it, and is guided in listening to its harmonic function in a passage, and performs it with that knowledge, then the study of the theory is connected to a meaningful outcome. You play a passage differently if you understand the push and pull away from, and toward the resolution of harmony.

This also happens with the essential and unessential notes in a melody. I learned this from a half year of study (analysis) of Bach chorales at University of British Columbia. At the time I had little idea of why we were spending so much time on the analysis of four-part harmony. Partway through the course the light went on for me.

MM: Distant Memories (Grade 9 Piano) and I Leap Through the Sky with Stars (ARCT – Piano Performance) are heard frequently in examinations and clearly resonate with candidates. Do you have any insight for students currently learning these pieces?

AL: It goes without saying that the technical challenges should be dealt with early on in the learning process. As with any of my music, I want the performer to play musically, not mechanically. Often performers mistakenly connect contemporary music realization with very correct, very precise playing that is mechanical: precision is desirable, mechanical playing (for me), is not. The phrases should be thoughtfully shaped as in any composition from the standard repertoire. The voices and lines need to be balanced. The piece needs to breathe.

Distant Memories has a lovely lilt to it, and is really quite tender and yearning. That tenderness needs to come through in the performance. This little piano piece still moves me after all these years.

I Leap Through the Sky With Stars begins with a crystalline volley of notes that create a shimmering mood for the piece. It eventually moves to an extremely dramatic low *pesante* (*brutale*) note that holds through as sonorous and colorful chords move inexorably upward to the highest register of the piano. The top notes of the right hand should be a bit louder or deeper than the other notes of the chords as the feel of the hammered low note resonates through to a spiritual resolution in the upper reaches of the piano.

MM: You have received many awards and honors, including being named an Officer of the Order of Canada. Is there a single point in your career of which you proudest?

AL: That event was a highlight. When the citation was read I was so taken by emotion and recalled the many hours spent at the piano: hours of sweat and hours of elation. The act of composing is solitary and often you think that no one is paying attention. The fact that I was recognized with one of the highest civilian awards that Canada offers was absolutely thrilling.

Celebrating 125 Years of Excellence

The Royal Conservatory's year-long 125th anniversary celebration begins in January 2011! During this year, starting with the Winter 2011 Session, practical candidates will receive a participation certificate and special 125th-anniversary commemorative medal at the examination center. Look for additional celebration details in the January-February issue of *Music Matters*.

2010 Silver Medal Ceremonies

The Royal Conservatory has begun holding the 2010 Silver Medal Ceremonies in six locations across Canada:

Vancouver, BC	Saturday, November 13, 2010
Edmonton, AB	Sunday, November 14, 2010
Halifax, NS	Saturday, November 27, 2010
Winnipeg, MB	Sunday, November 28, 2010
Regina, SK	Saturday, December 4, 2010
Toronto, ON	Saturday, January 8, 2011



Results and eligibility are reviewed automatically at the end of each academic year. Formal invitations are sent in October to the winning students and their teachers. **For more information about Silver Medals, visit: rcmusic.ca/silvermedals.**

Convocation 2010

On Sunday, February 13, 2011, The Royal Conservatory will honor the graduating class of 2010 at the annual convocation ceremony to be held in Koerner Hall, Toronto, Ontario. Graduates from across Canada and the United States will attend with their families and friends, joined by staff and faculty of The Royal Conservatory.

All candidates eligible to graduate receive a formal invitation to the ceremony in late November. The ceremony celebrates graduates who have achieved their Licentiate in Piano Performance, Diplomas for the Associate of The Royal Conservatory of Music (ARCT), Glenn Gould School Artist Diploma Program, Glenn Gould School Performance Diploma Program, Learning Through the Arts Artist Mentors, and Early Childhood Music Education. Graduates unable to attend the ceremony will receive their Diplomas in the mail by the end of March 2011.

Online registration for Convocation and further information can be found at rcmusic.ca/Convocation.



Important Dates 2010–2011

		CANADA	USA
Winter Session 2011	Theory Examinations	Dec. 10 & 11, 2010	Dec. 10 & 11, 2010
	Practical Examinations	Jan. 17–29, 2011	Nov. 29–Dec. 4, 2010
April Session 2011	Registration Deadline	January 17, 2011	
	Practical Examinations	April 14–16, 2011	
Spring Session 2011	Registration Deadline	March 1, 2011	February 22, 2011
	Theory Examinations	May 13 & 14, 2011	May 13 & 14, 2011
	Practical Examinations	June 6–25, 2011	May 9–June 5, 2011
Summer Session 2011	Registration Deadline	June 1, 2011	
	Theory Examinations	August 5 & 6, 2011	
	Practical Examinations	August 8–20, 2011	

You asked

As a new teacher, can I register for a Teacher Pedagogy Seminar?

Absolutely! The Teacher Pedagogy Seminars are for teachers of all experience levels. Visit rcmusic.ca/tpd to learn more.

Teacher Professional Development Seminars

Full-day Seminars. 30 Locations. North America's Top Pedagogues.

Join teachers from your community for an intensive one-day professional development seminar focused on the essential issues facing both established and emerging keyboard teachers.

Engage with master teachers and leading pedagogues in master classes, teaching demonstrations, interactive sessions, and round table discussions covering a range of specific pedagogical and professional topics. These accredited events are designed to benefit teachers at all career levels, including students and recent graduates.

Register today! rcmusic.ca/tpd

Music Matters:

The Official Newsletter of RCM Examinations and the National Music Certificate Program.

Chief Examiners:

Jennifer Snow, Chief Academic Officer
Thomas Green, Practical Subjects
Maria Case, Theoretical Subjects

Music Matters aims to provide pedagogical support and up-to-date information on The Royal Conservatory, RCM Examinations, and the National Music Certificate Program. Senior members of the teaching community offer new perspectives and useful suggestions for managing a successful teaching studio and using the RCM curriculum. Current and back issues of *Music Matters* may be downloaded free of charge from the RCM Examinations and National Music Certificate Program websites.

Contact us:

Article requests or questions about this publication? Email us at musicmatters@rcmusic.ca.

RCM Examinations and the National Music Certificate Program are divisions of The Royal Conservatory.

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