



## Piano Teacher Talk – your quick update on what’s going on in EPTA

### Key dates to note:

#### **ABRSM-EPTA**

#### **Teacher development**

#### **days:**

31 March, 2 June, 30

June, 21 July at

Chetham’s School of  
Music in Manchester.

EPTA is delighted to  
highlight these brand  
new development days  
supported by **ABRSM**

**£100 for each day, £80  
for members of EPTA UK  
and £50 for students.**

Contact [admin@epta-uk.org](mailto:admin@epta-uk.org)  
for further  
information and for  
securing your place on  
this course.

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EPTA Piano Teachers  
Summer School,  
Chichester  
11 – 16 August 2019

Dear Piano Teachers

Welcome to our sixth online newsletter!

Thank you for reading the latest EPTA Newsletter. As we mentioned in the last newsletter, this month we are featuring our new initiative EPTA Education. We are particularly excited about EPTA’s very first summer school which will be taking place in Chichester from August 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> for just £595 full board for EPTA members. You can find out everything on EPTA Education are offering here <https://epta-uk.org/content/epta-education>

**March 31<sup>st</sup>** – ‘The clear sighted teacher’ - The ABRSM/EPTA development day at Chetham’s School of Music. This will include being able to observe a master class with Helen Krizos with students of all ages and stages, a guest speaker from ABRSM and sessions with Mark Tanner and Rowan Cozens. Click here to book: <https://epta-uk.org/catalog/event-booking>

**Other course dates include:** June 2<sup>nd</sup>, June 30<sup>th</sup> and July 21<sup>st</sup>.

The very first EPTA summer school will run alongside the hugely successful ESTA summer school at University of Chichester. In addition to a full programme of illuminating and in depth sessions delivered by Rowan Cozens and Anthony Williams the course will offer yoga, evening recitals and other events with ESTA members.

This fabulous summer school is a one-stop-shop for revitalising, refreshing and reenergising your teaching, whether you are new to the profession or an experienced teacher looking for inspiring CPD. It is perfect for those aspiring to teach the piano in the near future, those preparing for a diploma from ABRSM or EPTA or for those who simply wish to share and explore new ideas amidst the friendship and camaraderie of fellow musicians and teachers.

Book early to avoid disappointment <https://epta-uk.org/catalog/event-booking>

We will be letting you know about more events in the next newsletter, but in the meantime, do check out our EPTA education videos on You Tube here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uiDzB2eX44>

Just before signing off, new EPTA membership begins again on April 1<sup>st</sup>. We have improved our membership package with a special 20% off all sheet music (free postage over £15) provided by Ackerman Music, a digital resource pack for teachers, along with the usual Piano Professional and Journal Magazines, Public Liability insurance, discounted training opportunities and much more.

Thank you for all for your ongoing interest and support for EPTA UK

Very best wishes to all  
Murray McLachlan on behalf of EPTA Management Committee

*Please send us feedback, news and ideas for teaching and piano playing on our EPTA Facebook and Twitter pages or on the Pianodao site. We are very grateful to Andrew Eales for featuring the newsletter on Pianodao.*

### **Thoughts on musical festivals by Kathryn Page**

As a child from the age of 7 I took part in many local music festivals around Buckinghamshire and London. I still vividly remember the adjudicators and many classes I performed in. There were always lots of other pianists I knew, either students of my own teacher, from my school or from other festivals. The opportunities to perform in a friendly and familiar setting was always enjoyable and I eagerly looked forward to the chance to play solo piano, duet, viola and singing - the friendly cow song especially!

As a mother I have enjoyed watching my children play in festivals - if sometimes being rather nervous myself! Having the chance to go along to a festival for a day and play in many different classes, listen to other musicians and receive friendly encouraging feedback has been invaluable in their musical development.

Now I also have the privilege to be an adjudicator myself - a role which I absolutely love. As I listen to performers both young and not so young I appreciate the amount of dedication and hard work from both student and teacher. Being able to offer a positive and happy atmosphere is so important to all the performers and I value being able to help towards this experience. Festivals provide a supportive platform for all musicians - both experienced and novice. The range of classes available are extensive and offer something for everyone. The festival format allows adjudicators to be creative in their support of each performer. At a recent festival one child was unable to end their performance due to a sudden attack of nerves. At the end of the class when summing up we were able to play the piece together as a duet from beginning to end to which they received a huge round of applause from the audience. The chance to engage with everyone in the room during a class, to enjoy mass participation in the form of conducting, singing and dancing all help to make the festival experience a very happy and positive one.

**Do check out music festivals in your area**, you can find out about many here: The British and International Federation of Festivals has events listed on their website. <http://www.federationoffestivals.org.uk/>

### **How to motivate the demotivated student - by Amy Wakefield**

Lack of motivation in our students is a problem that all teachers of piano can expect to encounter at some point in their practice, so it seems important to develop strategies for tackling it. First of all I think it is important to consider - what is the root of the problem? Why does this pupil appear to lack motivation? Of course, there can be many factors in a pupil's life that can affect their performance for example when a pupil doesn't seem to be applying themselves with enthusiasm in the lesson, one should always consider 'what could have happened in this individual's day?' I personally have experienced a number of situations where pupils have been bullied at school or are suffering from difficult circumstances at home or even (I find this only too regularly!) feeling pressured and 'over worked' by statutory examinations or demanding extra-curricular activities. In tandem with this, it is worth reflecting on whether they decided to learn the piano themselves or alternatively did so under duress, perhaps as a consequence of parental whim or ambition. Being a piano teacher requires a great deal of understanding and above all I always make it very clear to the pupil that their decision to study the instrument should be exactly that – their own.

*Mutatis mutandis*, I find that if all is well with the pupil's lifestyle and general motivation, then this will also be reflected in their playing. If that is not happening, I have to ask myself- what could I be doing differently?

- **Clear long term and short term goals** and at the very least a conversation with pupils (if appropriate, parents too) should occur regularly to find out what is that they want to achieve on the piano, enabling teacher and student to formulate short and realistic targets.
- I also feel that it isn't enough to simply ask them what kind of music they wish to play. **Rather, one should also seek to educate pupils about different musical styles.** Sometimes it can be highly effective to say 'how

about we play one piece of music which I choose and one that you choose'; this means that pupils feel they are learning something that they have themselves selected and are thereby in charge of their learning, while at the same time we as professionals can guide them by choosing pieces which we know will develop them as a musician. Sometimes, maybe in the case of a transfer pupil, the student's prior knowledge is not thorough enough; it may well be that they have not completed enough music theory along the way or they are not connecting their sight-reading skills with the performative aspect of the learning process and this can mean that mastering their pieces takes a long time!

It is up to us to diagnose these problems and find a way to help pupils make links between the different components of learning so that they can progress at a pleasing rate. Of course this may take time, patience and lots of encouragement. Luckily, in my experience these are qualities most piano teachers have in great abundance!

**Fellowship feature - Nadia and Sue are the two fellowship members of EPTA UK. With over a 100 years teaching experience between them, they share their wealth of experience to EPTA members through the fellowship feature appearing in various issues of the newsletter throughout the year.**

**EPTA Fellowship feature:** *This article has been written by one of just two EPTA fellowship holders, Nadia Lasserson. With Over 40 years supporting the charity, many decades piano teaching and daughter of the founder Carola Grindea, Nadia shares her experiences of the value of ensemble playing to motivate students. Nadia currently teaches piano at the Junior departments of the Royal College, Trinity as well as at James Allens Girls' School (JAGS) and privately.*

### **Piano needn't be lonely by Nadia Lasserson**

#### **The value of tradition .....**

Last night I took all my students to perform in piano ensembles at Steinway's showroom in central London. This all began in 1990 when my school pupils had to play on one piano and one electric keyboard so the annual trip gave them a taste of real pianos with beautiful tones. My school now has a brand new Music School with two grand pianos in the Concert Hall and I suggested that there was no longer a need to trek to town but the senior girls begged me not to stop the Steinway experience.

Last night certainly proved all the hard work to be of great value to each pupil. They all loved the occasion and gave of their best leaving with big smiles on their faces after being allowed to play on all the pianos in the showroom.

#### **The value of ensembles .....**

The great advantage of performing in ensembles is that each pupil has to listen very carefully in order to blend and balance with their partners. They learn the art of accompanying sensitively in allowing the player with the main melody to be in the fore, they learn how to play out if the music requires, they develop their rhythmic awareness by always listening and having to quickly adapt if a player has jumped ahead, in order to keep the ensemble together. They learn the art of starting together and one person giving the lead, they also need to practise finishing together. They develop precision of touch and finger control to enable work on tonal qualities.

It is always a good idea to provide repertoire that is of an easier level than their present standard of playing in order to enable them to concentrate on all of the above and to play with musical sensitivity without having to struggle with technical demands beyond their current capabilities. In a strange way, playing and practising ensembles together improves sight-reading as the students begin to follow the other parts of the score while playing and also become more familiar with different rhythmic patterns which can then be applied in sight-reading examination tests. After all, sight-reading is only stored memory. The main advantage of playing in groups is that no one person can ever stop to repeat a wrong note and is always forced to keep going, regardless of what has passed.

#### **The value of being together .....**

Playing together in ensembles is always so much more fun than performing alone and far less frightening. Students are so happy together in a group and they practise their own parts most conscientiously for fear of letting down their partners and friends. As all teachers know, practice leads to more motivation and that leads to more practice

and becomes a win/win situation which cannot fail to build confidence in performance and also, in other life skills. One or two of my adolescent pupils only practised annually for the multiple piano concert which was so important to them that they did not abandon lessons altogether and eventually regained enthusiasm, leaving school at a far higher level than at their start.

At the start of rehearsals, the music does not fully permeate but it is so rewarding to hear the gradual progress building up to the final performance where all antennae are on full alert to bring out the very best in all the performers, giving them full enjoyment and musical satisfaction.

### **Pedalling in Classical Music by Margaret Murray McLeod**

There is still some controversy over how much the modern pianist should use the sustaining pedal in the music of Haydn and Mozart. Some teachers advocate using no pedal at all, but we know from his letters home that Mozart waxed lyrical over the “pedal” (knee lever) found on the Stein fortepianos. ***“The device, too, which you work with your knee is better on this than on other instruments. I have only to touch it and it works; and when you shift your knee the slightest bit, you do not hear the least reverberation.”***

From this comment we can tell that Stein’s fortepianos were not the only ones that had this facility, although some were still operated with hand stops. It is also illuminating to read CPE Bach’s comment\* ***‘the undamped register of the pianoforte is the most pleasing and, once the performer learns to observe the necessary precautions in the face of its reverberations, the most delightful for improvisation’***. And this written in his invaluable volume of **1763**, thus predating all of Mozart’s piano sonatas.

However, the modern piano is much larger and has considerably more resonance, so we must be very careful not to overdo the amount of pedal we use in the Classical repertoire. Clarity of melodic lines and harmony are essential, so there is little call for pedalling in quick movements. Added resonance to chords, especially at cadences can be useful, but rests should never be covered in this period. One of the most useful skills to develop is the so-called “finger-pedalling” especially when playing alberti bass figures. Here the first (bass) note of each group is held under the other notes of the chord. Other broken chord and arpeggio figures can also benefit from touches of pedal. In the next article I will discuss pedalling in specific pieces by Haydn & Mozart.

*\*Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen (The True Art of Keyboard Playing)*

