# Submitting a Strong Proposal to an EPTA International Conference

From a good idea to a clear, persuasive abstract

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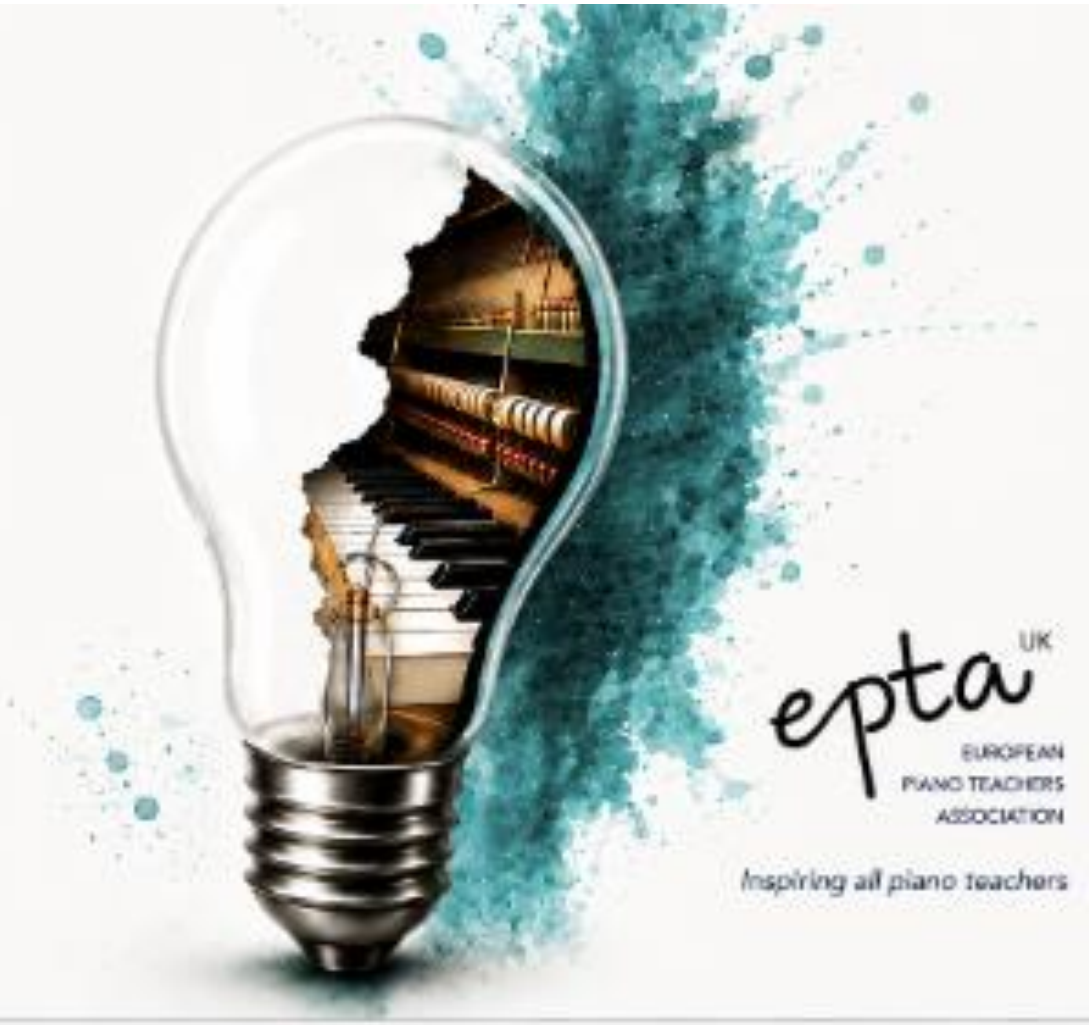
# 49th International EPTA Conference

***Innovation** and **New Insights***

26 – 29
August 2027

Birmingham
Conservatoire
200 Jennens Road
Birmingham
B4 7XR, England

epta-uk.org



epta UK
EUROPEAN
PIANO TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION

*Inspiring all piano teachers*

# What we will cover

- Understanding the conference and its audience
- Choosing a focused, relevant topic
- Selecting the right presentation format
- Turning an idea into a strong title and abstract
- Writing for blind peer assessment
- Avoiding promotional proposals
- A practical submission checklist

# Imposter syndrome!

Your experience as a teacher/pianist/researcher is valuable.

EPTA teachers want to learn from your knowledge and experience.

EPTA UK looks forward to receiving your proposal.

# What kind of conference is it?

## EPTA International Conference

- Piano teachers teaching students at all levels from many different countries
- Performers, researchers and students
- Piano teachers value inspiration, exchange of ideas and practical advice that they can put into practice in their teaching.

## Academic conference

- Often organised around a research field or scholarly theme
- Research question, method and contribution may be central
- Specialist terminology may be more familiar
- Evidence and originality are strongly foregrounded

# Who is the audience for EPTA 2027?

New and experienced teachers, students and performers.

Musicians balancing a portfolio career

Professionals working in the music industry

Musicians from many different countries

Teachers working in private studios, independent and state schools, specialistic music schools, universities and conservatoires

# Innovation and New Insights



# What topics are we looking for?

## Theme 1: The Future of Music and Piano Teaching

- Positive uses of AI and digital resources
- The changing needs and expectations of piano students
- The future of piano music publishing
- New insights into performance practice

## Theme 2: Innovation in piano teaching and research

- New approaches to learning and teaching in a changing world
- Emerging pedagogical research
- Creative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment
- New business models for the teaching studio

## Theme 3: Equality, diversity and access in piano education

- Broadening access to piano education
- Breaking down barriers and engaging with local communities
- Creating new performance and participation opportunities
- Innovative programming and new repertoire
- Supporting diverse learners and inclusive teaching practices

# Choosing a topic

Check out the conference guidelines and assessment criteria – what are the organisers looking for?

Ask yourself:

- ‘What problems do piano teachers and students currently face?
- What valuable experience do I have to share?
- What inspires me most?
- Do I have an innovative approach to some aspect of my teaching or performance practice?
- What new insights do I have into teaching methods or repertoire?

# Focusing the topic

- Begin with an issue, question, challenge or opportunity—not simply a broad subject.
- Narrow the scope enough to do it justice within the allocated time.
- For research proposals, make the research question and significance visible.
- Think like both a presenter and the assessment reviewer.

NB Your final presentation must match your abstract. Consider preparing the whole presentation, with timing, before writing the abstract?

# EPTA Conference 2027 formats

**Spoken Paper:** 20-25 minutes
**Lecture-Recital:** 20–25 minutes
**Workshop-Demonstration:** 30-35 minutes
**Symposium (3-6 participants):** 30-35 minutes
**Lightning Talk:** 5 minutes
**Poster Session:** details to follow

# Choosing the right presentation format

- Lecture-recital — aim for a 50-50 balance between pedagogical insights with musical examples.

- Interactive workshop — participants learn through doing

- What is a keynote? - an invited presentation by an established professional offering expertise on a specific topic.

# Choosing the right presentation format for you

- Lightning talk — particularly suitable for Students and Young Professionals.  One focused idea communicated with clarity and economy
- Poster — concise visual communication with the opportunities to explain the key points
- Joint proposal/symposium — several presenters speaking on the same topic from a different perspective. Make each contributor's role and the coherence of the collaboration explicit
- Spoken paper — primarily a talk-based presentation based on experience or on research, with a clear focus on key ideas, findings and implications for practice. No live musical demonstration is required, but some musical examples are appreciated.
- Academic conference research paper — question, method, findings and implications

# TITLE: Write a title that is specific

## Too broad / vague

- Technology in Piano Teaching
- Thoughts on Performance
- Inclusive Piano Education

## More focused

- Using Gen AI to Support Independent Piano Practice
- From Sound to Symbol: Does this approach work for everyone?
- Who Gets to Improvise? Creating More Inclusive Approaches to Piano Improvisation

# ABSTRACT: a typical academic abstract structure

1. **Context:** What issue or gap are you addressing?
2. **Purpose:** What will this presentation examine, demonstrate or argue?
3. **Approach / Methodology:** Research, repertoire, workshop activity, case study?
4. **Contribution:** What is distinctive or useful about it?
5. **Take-away:** What will participants leave knowing, questioning or able to do?

# A possible abstract structure for an EPTA conference

- Are there currently problems or gaps within piano teaching in general? Has piano teaching changed in recent years? Do we need to explore a new approach?
- What experience do you have to offer teachers through this presentation?
- What will the session address?
- What will be the format and style of presentation?
- A summary of the content – eg specific activities or musical examples
- Why does this matter to EPTA's international community?
- Take-aways – how will attendees benefit from this presentation?

# Writing an Effective EPTA Abstract

*Clear purpose • practical relevance • accessible communication*

## Aim to

- Use clear, precise language
- Show relevance to piano teaching and learning
- Have a clear purpose or argument
- Make specific, evidence-based claims
- Explain specialist concepts accessibly
- Show what teachers can take into practice
- Use AI responsibly and verify claims

## Avoid

- Unexplained jargon
- Long literature reviews
- Unsupported claims such as “revolutionary”
- Trying to cover too much
- A biography disguised as an abstract
- Describing an interest without a clear contribution

Useful active verbs: examines • explores • analyses • demonstrates

# 9. Experience-based and research-based proposals

- Both can be valuable—but be clear about what kind of knowledge you are offering.
- Practice-based: Very appropriate for a pedagogical conference, such as EPTA. Explain the context, what you tried, what you learned, and why it is can be relevant or thought-provoking for other teachers.
- Teaching experience-based: aim to place your own experiences within a wider pedagogical or professional question.
- Research-based: Particularly suitable for an academic conference. Identify the question, approach/data where relevant, findings or emerging insights, and implications.
- Do not present anecdote as general evidence.

# Consider your style of presentation

- Be yourself!
- Will you use slides? Will you be demonstrating examples at the piano? Or a combination of both?
- Is the presentation interactive?
- Is your natural presentation style informative, inspirational? How comfortable do you feel with adding humour?
- Are you confident in presenting in English? If not, what additional preparation will you need?

# Blind / Peer-review assessment: what does this mean?

The benefit: Reviewers can assess each proposal fairly without being influenced by the identity or reputation of the presenter.

- Follow the submission instructions exactly: presenter details belong only in the designated biography/CV fields.

- Remove names, institutions and identifying references from the blind abstract where required.

# Blind assessment: some examples

| Instead of… | Try… |
| --- | --- |
| **“Claire Schumann teaches at Halifax Music Centre.”** | **Practice** — “In her work at a specialist music centre, the presenter has explored…” |
| **“John Thompson is the author of the John Thompson piano method.”** | **Resource** — “The presenter will demonstrate this concept using examples from his award-winning piano method.” |
| **“Einstein Smith is a doctoral student at Manchester University.”** | **Research** — “The presenter will share findings from his doctoral research into…” |

# Be inclusive and internationally relevant

Consider whose repertoire, traditions, learners and teaching contexts are represented.

- Avoid presenting one pedagogical tradition as the universal norm.
- Offer as wide a range of repertoire as possible
- Explain culturally or institutionally specific terminology.
- Use respectful, inclusive language and consider accessibility in both proposal and presentation design.
- For international audiences, emphasize ideas that can travel across contexts while acknowledging important differences.

# A non-promotional proposal

- An EPTA conference presentation should contribute knowledge, practical advice or points for discussion—it should not function as an advertisement.
- Avoid sales language, repeated branding, pricing information or calls to purchase.
- Any sales activity should be restricted to the booths in the exhibition hall.
- You may demonstrate a resource when it is necessary to clarify a pedagogical point.
- Where permitted, one final slide can direct interested attendees to the resource, contact details or further information.

# Before you press Submit

- Have I followed the conference guidelines and word limit exactly?
- Is the topic appropriate for EPTA and an international audience?
- Can a reviewer identify the purpose within the first few sentences?
- Have I explained what will happen in the session—not just the topic?
- Is the contribution or take-away explicit?
- Does the format match the content?
- Have I removed identifying information from the blind abstract?
- Is the proposal educational/scholarly rather than promotional?
- Has someone outside my immediate area read it for clarity?

# What if I am unsuccessful?

We are looking for a balanced programme and have limited spaces.

Other people may have submitted a similar topic.

If we cannot accept your proposal, you may be invited to take part in a symposium, or to present a lightning talk or poster presentation.

But do come to the conference to learn more!

And continue to develop your experience and proposal and resubmit next year.

# EPTA International Conference 2027

## We want to hear your ideas!

Submit a proposal that is clear, relevant, inclusive and generous to its audience.

The follow-up webinar on June 13th 2027 will focus on how to deliver an engaging presentation.

# Questions & discussion