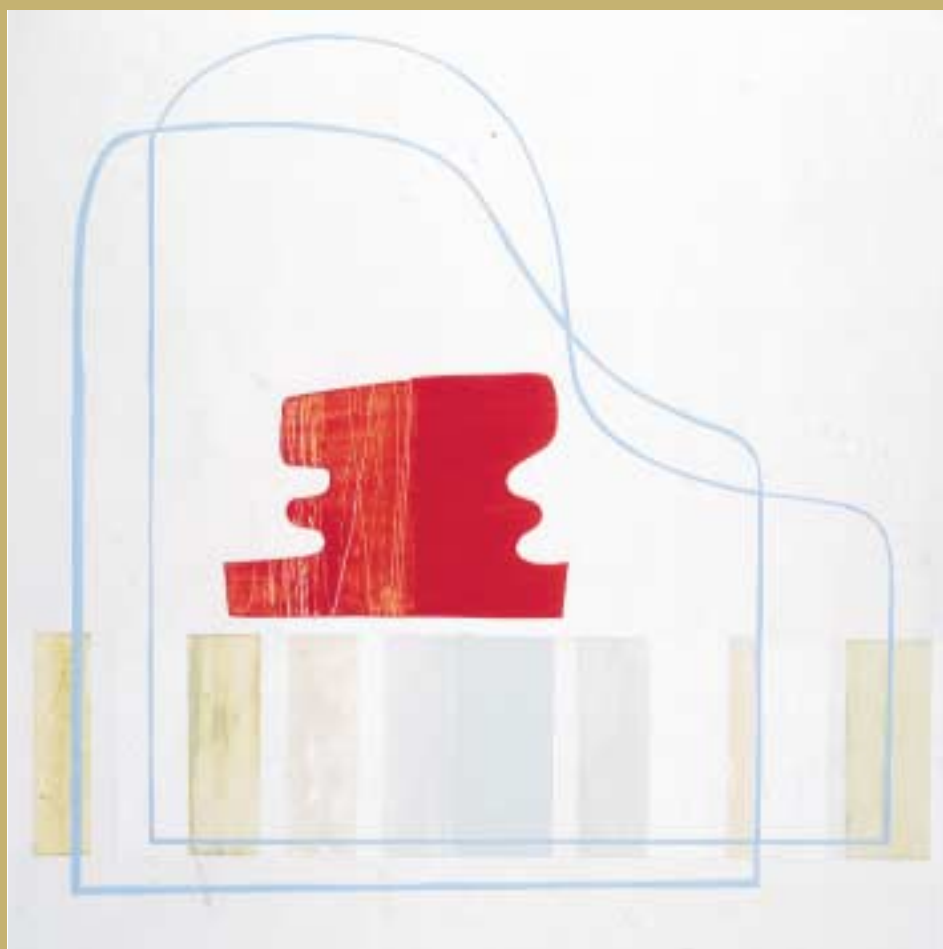


LIBRETTO



Music Medals

Examiner training

**New Piano Syllabus:
publications &
Grade 8 repertoire**

**Anthony Williams
on the technique of a
musical performance**

**Paul Harris
on staying connected**

Issue 2002:2



**ASSOCIATED BOARD
OF THE ROYAL SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**

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PUBLISHING**



Outlook

The Associated Board has strongly applauded the commitment given by the UK Government that over time every child should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. Work is now underway in earnest to give effect to this 'music entitlement'.

There are, however, many questions to be answered before the commitment can become a reality. Here are some: Who is entitled? Is it to be every child in primary education? What is the entitlement? Will it be for a certain period of instrumental tuition, free of charge, and will this provide a real opportunity for sustained learning? What genres of music are eligible? Who will teach? Will music services be able to cope with such a large influx of additional pupils? What quality assurance mechanisms will be put in place? How will sufficient instruments be made available? How will the teaching be organised and how will it relate to the National Curriculum? To what extent will tuition be carried out in schools within or outside normal school hours? How will it be funded?

Various music education groups are already well advanced in thinking around matters of this sort. For example, in this issue we report the outcomes of vital research by Keele University into the factors which make young people engage or disengage with music-making; and the Federation of Music Services is poised to publish detailed proposals for their instrumental curriculum, *A Common Approach*.

Similarly, the Associated Board has for the last three years been researching the assessment needs of young musicians who are being, and increasing numbers will be, taught in groups. On the facing page you will see an announcement of the resultant Music Medals exams, tailor-made for these students. As the Keele research concludes, it is of the utmost importance for young people to be provided with structured goals appropriate to their learning. We are confident that for children taught in groups Music Medals will do just that.

Richard Morris

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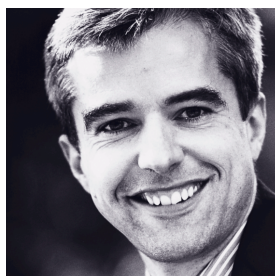
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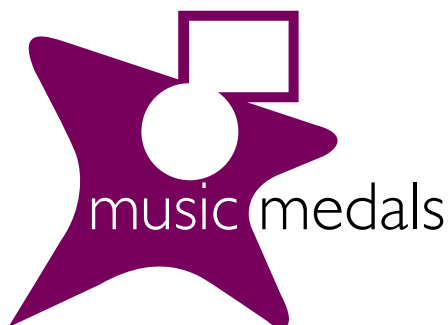
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Nigel Scaife, Syllabus Development Manager, introduces a major new syllabus being piloted in the UK from September.



Group teaching in the UK

Much has changed in the world of instrumental teaching and learning since the introduction of graded music exams in the late nineteenth century. One of the most significant changes in recent times has been the widespread adoption of group teaching, particularly within UK music services. While the move towards more group teaching may have been driven initially by financial imperatives as much as educational ones – more children needing to be taught by fewer teachers in less time – it has long been clear that learning an instrument in a group does have much to offer. For example, the motivation of children who enjoy making music with their friends and learning from each other, the early development of ensemble and associated listening skills, and the opportunities for creative work linked with classroom music activities. Clearly these have a place alongside the long-established and acknowledged benefits of one-to-one tuition.

Teachers of some instruments have had guru figures to show the way forward: Paul Rolland and Sheila Nelson spring to mind for the violinists, although of course there are many others. For those without such figures and with fewer resources to draw on, it has been harder to develop good practice, particularly as so many instrumental teachers have not experienced group teaching as students themselves.

In 1998 the Federation of Music Services and the National Association of Music Educators teamed up to produce a forward thinking 'framework for an instrumental/vocal curriculum', called *A Common Approach*, which supported an holistic approach to group teaching, learning and assessment. Their work is now being extended to include *Programmes of Study* that promise to be equally influential in this area.

Group teaching demands different activities and strategies from the one-to-one model, as well as different kinds of assessment. This is why the Associated Board is developing an alternative pathway to sit alongside graded exams, but reflecting the activities of the group lesson – Music Medals.

Breaking the mould

Music Medals are exciting new assessments for group-taught students at the earliest stages of learning, with two Medals before the Grade 1 level – Copper and Bronze – followed by Silver and Gold, before moving beyond Grade 3 to the highest Platinum level. Over the last three years we have been working with experienced group teachers, music educators and composers to develop this ground-breaking syllabus and create supporting materials of the highest quality that will complement existing resources.

We are piloting the syllabuses for flute, trumpet and violin from September 2002 with a view to publishing the complete syllabus and initial support materials in 2003 and launching the assessments themselves the following year.

Music Medals have been designed to fit with the broad range of teaching approaches found in group lessons. Whichever tutor books or methods a teacher uses, they will find that Music Medals work with them in helping their students to achieve their best results. Music Medals will be available for most instruments commonly taught in groups. The accompanying publications will initially cover the most popular of those instruments with others included through the use of repertoire from existing publications.

What does the assessment consist of?

There are three sections to the assessment, Ensemble, Solo and Musicianship. Although the assessments take place in a group context, performers are marked individually. So in the Ensemble section, the examiner will assess only the single examined part, ensuring that full attention is given to the individual candidate's contribution.

Each element of the Music Medals process is transparent, with clear assessment criteria given alongside a range of exemplar materials for teachers.

How will Music Medals be delivered?

In piloting the syllabus with music services, we are exploring different delivery options in order to provide the highest quality service, bearing in mind the resource and cost implications of different approaches. So, watch this space! Whichever way the assessment is delivered, the teacher can be present throughout and contribute to ensemble performances when appropriate, as well as accompany solo pieces if necessary.

Motivation and celebration

Music Medals will form the most carefully devised suite of assessments for group-taught students in the UK. They will be both clear and easy to use. We are bringing our commitment to educational excellence, high quality publications and attention to detail to this innovative project, which will be of significant value to music education nationally. Entering students for Music Medals will provide a great way to motivate them and to recognise and celebrate their achievements – continuing in the best tradition of the Associated Board.



Philip Munday provides another glimpse into the world of the Associated Board examiner, looking this time, with Clara Taylor, at training and moderating.

Are you examiner material?

We welcome applications from musicians who would like to join the panel of examiners. If you are based in the UK and would like to be considered as a potential member of this very special group of musicians, please request an application form from Philip Munday, Director of Examinations, at our Portland Place address.

Correction

The simplified rubric now in use for the Aural Tests at Grades 1 to 3 was unfortunately misquoted in the last edition of *Libretto*. It should have read:

You may find it helpful to know, when preparing your pupils for the Aural Tests at Grades 1 to 3, that when examiners announce the D Test elements they simply refer to 'smooth or detached notes' and 'loud and quiet playing' rather than to articulation, contrasted dynamics and gradation of tone.

In the last issue I wrote about the Associated Board's philosophy of generalist examining. The article provoked an unusually large postbag, with all but one letter expressing support for the principles which underlie our music exams. Here the focus shifts to the initial examiner training and to the monitoring which then follows, year in and year out. Clara Taylor, our Chief Examiner, leads the process:

'We provide rigorous training for potential examiners and once accepted on to the panel, they undergo regular moderations, seminars and marking exercises. Training takes place over two-and-a-half days at Portland Place, followed by four days 'on the road' with individual trainers. During the initial days trainees are introduced to the philosophy of examining, the importance of putting candidates at ease, the

assessment criteria and the administration of aural tests; they experience the procedures involved in every aspect of the exam. It can be a steep learning curve but gives a secure foundation on which to build future skills.

'Once out examining with individual trainers, the trainees observe and administer exams, the latter in increasing amounts as the days progress. There are then opportunities for review and discussion before the final day, when I am usually present to observe the trainee administering all the exams.

'Ongoing professional development is then crucial. There is no room for complacency and we strive to refine skills through seminars and regular visits by moderators. Moderation in the exam situation is vital and significantly contributes to the consistency of the panel.

New examiners are moderated within their first year of examining and established members of the team are usually visited every two years.

'The professional discipline and skill needed to make the exam a positive experience for all candidates must be in place for every member of the panel; the examining must always be fair and consistent regardless of circumstances. We receive very few letters expressing concern over results, but such concerns are always thoroughly investigated as part of our quality assurance procedures.'

Clara Taylor gives a clear picture of the importance we attach to the quality of the examining panel, and of some of the resources we bring to bear in maintaining it. This is further enhanced by a thorough statistical analysis of the results of every examiner at least three times a year. Summing up, Clara comments that 'these selection, training and moderation processes are central to maintaining our position as the examining board with the greatest world-wide reach and the strongest reputation for quality assurance.'



All about funding

David Hault, Principal of Leeds College of Music, shares his knowledge and experience of current funding issues.

Readers of *Libretto* will recall that Associated Board exams were recently accredited by the government's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), as part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This inclusion of Associated Board exams in the NQF is well known, but there seems to be less awareness of its implications for funding. In England this is the responsibility of the new Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There are similar arrangements through separate bodies in Wales and Northern Ireland, with different arrangements in Scotland. The LSC was established last year as the successor to the Further Education Funding Council and the Training and Enterprise Councils. It funds all education and training for young people aged 16 and over, and also for adults - everything except Higher

Education, which has its own funding councils. The LSC will fund any qualification listed under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, and now, thanks to QCA accreditation, Theory and Practical Grades 1 to 8 are included in the list as approved for funding.

So what's the snag? Well, predictably enough, there are strings attached. Firstly, the LSC only funds organisations: colleges, training providers, and - from this September - school sixth forms. It does not provide funds directly to teachers or students. So here at Leeds College of Music, and no doubt at other colleges too, we have been able to access the new funding quite easily. Secondly, the LSC does not fund exams for young people aged under 16 and finally, funding is not especially generous. It should cover the cost of teaching theory to small groups

but would not run to the additional expense of individual instrumental or vocal tuition. And there are restrictions on the charging of fees, so it would not normally be possible to make up the shortfall in LSC funding by charging a top-up fee to students.

If these drawbacks are not enough to cope with, there's one more: the bureaucracy. Anyone who gains LSC funding for graded exams can expect a small army of auditors, OfSTED inspectors, quality assessors and target setters to come knocking on the door asking to see your performance indicators. Still interested? Well, good luck - and don't say I didn't warn you!

Colleges wishing to know more about how to access LSC funding for graded music exams should make enquiries at their local LSC office, see www.lsc.gov.uk or telephone the LSC Helpline on 0870 900 6800.

Grade 8 piano preview

EXAMS



The new Piano and Bowed Strings Syllabus for 2003 and 2004 will be available from July. The syllabus features revised repertoire lists for piano, viola and double bass and as in previous years, we are providing a preview of the new Grade 8 piano list so that teachers and candidates have plenty of time to begin preparing the new pieces.

List A

- 1 **JS Bach** Partita no.2 in C minor, BWV 826: 4th and 5th movts, *Sarabande* and *Rondeaux* *
- 2 **Handel** Fugue no.1 in G minor, HWV 605 *
- 3 **Hindemith** Praeludium from *Ludus Tonalis* *
- 4 **JS Bach** Prelude and Fugue in G, BWV 884 *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Part 2* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
- 5 **Handel** Suite no.3 in D minor (1720 Collection), HWV 428: 1st and 2nd movts *Prelude* and (*Fuga*) *Allegro* *Handel 8 Great Suites, Book 1* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
- 6 **Scarlatti** Fugue (Sonata) in C minor Kp.58, L.158 *Scarlatti The 5 Fugues* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
- 7 **Scarlatti** Sonata in D minor, Kp.191, L.207 *The Scholar's Scarlatti, Vol.3* Novello/Music Sales
- 8 **Shostakovich** Prelude and Fugue in D: no.5 *24 Preludes and Fugues, Op.87, Vol.1* Boosey & Hawkes

List B

- 1 **Beethoven** Sonata in F minor, Op.2 no.1: 1st movt, *Allegro* *
- 2 **Haydn** Sonata in C minor, Hob.XVI/20: 1st movt, (*Allegro*) *Moderato* *
- 3 **Schubert** Sonata in A, Op.120, D.664: 1st movt, *Allegro moderato* *
- 4 **CPE Bach** Sonata in A \flat , Wq.49/2: 1st movt, *Un poco allegro* *CPE Bach Selected Keyboard Works Book 3, ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd*
- 5 **Beethoven** Sonata in G, Op.14 no.2: 1st movt, *Allegro* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
- 6 **Haydn** Sonata in E minor, Hob.XVI/34: 1st movt, *Presto* *Haydn Complete Piano Sonatas, Vol.3 Wiener Urtext -Universal/MDS*
- 7 **Mozart** Sonata in D, K.311: 1st movt, *Allegro con spirito* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
- 8 **Mozart** Sonata in B \flat , K.570: 1st movt, *Allegro* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd

List C

- 1 **L Berkeley** Prelude no.3 from *6 Preludes, Op.23* *
 - 2 **Blumenfeld** Berceuse, Op.23 no.3 *
 - 3 **Philip Cashian** Landscape *
 - 4 **Copland** Piano Blues no.3 from *4 Piano Blues* *
 - 5 **Iain Hamilton** Spring Fountain: no.7 from *A Book of Watercolours* *
 - 6 **Joaquín Turina** Sacro-Monte: no.5 from *Danzas Gitanas, Op.55* *
 - 7 **Brahms** Intermezzo in B \flat : no.4 from *8 Piano Pieces, Op.76* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
 - 8 **Chopin** Waltz in E minor, Op. posth *Chopin Waltzes, Henle – Schott/MDS*
 - 9 **Debussy** Prélude no.12 Book 1: Minstrels *Debussy Préludes, Book 1, UMP or Wiener Urtext – Universal/MDS*
 - 10 **Grieg** Sonata in E minor, Op.7: 2nd movt, *Andante molto* *Peters P-2278*
 - 11 **Janáček** In the Mist: no.1, *Andante* *Bärenreiter H607015*
 - 12 **Mendelssohn** Song without Words (Duetto), Op.38 no.6 *Mendelssohn Songs Without Words* ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
 - 13 **Poulenc** Novelette no.2 in B \flat minor *3 Novelettes, Chester/Music Sales*
 - 14 **Rachmaninov** Moment Musical in D \flat : no.5 from *6 Moments Musicaux, Op.16* *Anton Benjamin EE3170/Boosey & Hawkes*
 - 15 **Schoenberg** 6 Kleine Klavierstücke Op.19: nos.4, 5 and 6 *Schoenberg Selected Works for Piano Wiener Urtext – Universal/MDS*
 - 16 **Skryabin** Etude in C# minor, Op.2 no.1 *Skriabin Selected Works* *Alfred Publishing/Faber*
- * Published by ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd in *Selected Piano Examination Pieces 2003-2004, Grade 8*



Available in July:

- Piano & Bowed Strings Syllabus 2003 & 2004
- *Selected Piano Examination Pieces 2003-2004, Grades 1 to 8*
- *Teaching Notes on Piano Examination Pieces 2003-2004, Grades 1 to 7*

Effective teaching



Richard Crozier, Director of Professional Development and Course Director for the CT ABRSM course, on what it takes.

What is effective teaching? Indeed, who is an effective teacher? The glib answer is to point to someone who has many pupils, enters them regularly for exams and is rewarded with a significant number of Merits and Distinctions. But, of course, there is more to it. An effective teacher maximises the potential of each and every one of his or her pupils. It's about noting the difference between achievement and attainment. It may be a great achievement for one pupil to attain a Pass at Grade 3 but for the next pupil anything short of a Distinction would be disappointing. Through responding to the differing needs of every pupil the effective teacher ensures that each one achieves their true potential.

Effective teachers exhibit similar characteristics, even though they may go about their work quite differently. Effective teachers are pro-active rather than re-active and they plan what they are going to teach in each lesson. They use different teaching strategies to suit individual learners, becoming aware of a pupil's preferred learning style be it audio, visual or kinaesthetic and taking this into account during lesson preparation. Effective teachers motivate pupils

in a variety of ways using rewards, and sanctions if need be, to keep pupils going. They look for new ideas to incorporate into their lessons and are not afraid to experiment, discarding materials that don't work.

When teaching, it is easy to get stuck in a rut, to use the same pieces time after time, to follow the same pattern in each lesson. The effective teacher reflects on their work and is prepared to ask the hard question of themselves after each lesson: 'could I have done it better?' They engage in professional development to keep abreast of new thinking, both in music and in teaching and finally, effective teachers are interested in music and music-making!

So, are you an effective teacher? What steps can you take to make yourself more effective? Here are three simple ones. The first priority is to never stop learning. You might even consider enrolling on a course to learn something new in a completely different subject to music. For most people this is a real eye-opener, giving them the opportunity to watch another teacher at work. Secondly, learn and use some new repertoire because if it's fresh to you it will probably seem fresher to your pupils. Thirdly, focus on teaching music rather than all of its component parts.

If you would like some help with this, why not consider the Associated Board's CT ABRSM professional development course where you can do all of the above and share your experiences with other like-minded teachers – always a good way to make learning easier.

Travel Grant news

Cyprus

Examiner and CT ABRSM mentor, Peter Noke and CT ABRSM Course Leader, Anne Allcock were in Cyprus at the end of February to run two professional development courses. They were joined by Richard Crozier, Director of Professional Development and together worked with over 70 teachers on topics including motivation, improvisation, getting the best out of your pupils and preparing for exams.

The next Centenary Travel Grant event is planned for January 2003 when we are holding three courses for jazz teachers in Australia. Details will be announced in the next issue of *Libretto*.

CT ABRSM UK award ceremony

The award ceremony for successful students on the 2001–2002 course will be held at the Royal College of Music in London on 24 July. John Baker, Chair of the Associated Board's Governing Body will present the certificates.



CT ABRSM 2002-2003

Hong Kong

The 2002–2003 course begins in July at a new venue: the School of Professional and Continuing Education at the Hong Kong University. The Course Leader will again be Walter Blair.

Singapore

The 2002–2003 course has just begun at the National Institute of Education at Nanyang Technological University. This year's Course Leader is Bill Thomson with mentors, Akiko Iijima and Penny Stirling.

UK: new prospectus

Applications are now invited from teachers wishing to join the 2002–2003 Certificate of Teaching (CT ABRSM) course starting in October at venues around the UK.

For more information and a copy of the new prospectus contact:
 Suzanne Gray
 t 020 7467 8244
 e sgray@abrs.ac.uk

New piano exam music



Selected Piano Examination Pieces 2003–2004, Grades 1 to 8

In July this year we publish *Selected Piano Examination Pieces 2003–2004, Grades 1 to 8* – eight albums containing pieces selected from the new syllabus for piano, also available in July.

As usual, the new Piano Syllabus will contain 18 pieces to choose from in each of the first seven grades and 32 in Grade 8, providing a wide range of music from which teachers and pupils can create their own individual programmes. Each of the Grades 1 to 7 albums contains nine of the 18 pieces, three from each list. The Grade 8 volume offers 12 selected works, chosen to reflect the scope of the syllabus.



Teaching Notes on Piano Examination Pieces 2003–2004, Grades 1 to 7

Who better to offer advice on how to help students overcome technical insecurity and to suggest various angles of approach and methods of practice than the Associated Board's Chief Examiner, Clara Taylor, and highly experienced examiner, Anthony Williams? In *Teaching Notes* they discuss the characteristics of each piece on the syllabus and encourage a fresh and imaginative approach to playing. This essential teaching aid is written with personal understanding of the many challenges that teachers face.



Recordings of Piano Examination Pieces 2003–2004

This year we are producing our own recordings of the complete Piano Syllabus and have chosen a range of pianists to record the repertoire. We have carefully selected artists who have a special knowledge of particular repertoire.

Do remember that the performances on these CDs are not definitive and that finding your own interpretation of what is on the page will always produce the most convincing performance for the listener and examiner.

The pianists featured are Sophie Yates, Dennis Lee, Rolf Hind, Paul Lewis, Noriko Ogawa, Piers Lane and Mary Mei-Loc Wu. In these fine recordings they provide valuable insights into the way professional performers apply their personal interpretations to bring the music to life.



Competition winners

In the January 2002 competition we asked you what word is given to the study of music other than performance or composition. The answer is 'musicology'. We also asked what the letters URL stand for in the context of the internet and at which distance-learning university Trevor Herbert is Professor of Music. The answers are 'Uniform Resource Locator' and 'The Open University' respectively.

Congratulations to the five winners who each receive a copy of *Music in Words* signed by the author, Trevor Herbert.

- Mr Vincent Ng, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
- Mr Clive Aucott, Auckland, New Zealand
- Ms Jennifer McDonald, Madrid, Spain
- Miss Fiona Walker-Buckton, Lancashire, UK
- Mrs J Pistol, Surrey, UK

Competition

We are giving away one complete set of the three new *Performer's Guides* (see p8). Four runners-up will receive a copy of *A Performer's Guide to Music of the Romantic Period*. Just write the answers to these three questions on a postcard and send to:

ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd
 24 Portland Place
 London W1B 1LU
 United Kingdom

to arrive no later than
 Friday 5 July 2002.

- 1 Which contributor to *A Performer's Guide to Music of the Baroque Period* founded The Academy of Ancient Music, the internationally known period instrument orchestra?
- 2 Which 12-year old singer sang the part of Barbarina in the 1786 première of Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*?
- 3 Which famous composer of romantic piano music is seen playing the piano on the front cover of *A Performer's Guide to Music of the Romantic Period*?

Anthony Williams



Anthony Williams is Head of Keyboard and Assistant Director of Music at Radley College in Oxfordshire. He is also an experienced performer, Associated Board examiner and trainer, piano mentor on the CT ABRSM course and co-author of the Teaching Notes books which accompany the Piano Syllabus.

Something special happens when a pupil passes Grade 5; no more are they 'beginners', instead we become increasingly aware of their accomplishments as pianists and development as musicians. There is an excitement about the repertoire; pupils are able to attempt some of the greatest music in its original form, explore subtleties of interpretation and begin to communicate with a greater sense of involvement and technical freedom. Pupil and teacher may now have Grade 8 or beyond in sight and there is the anticipation of imaginative and accomplished performances along the way. Unfortunately, as so many of us have discovered, the reality is often different and the promised halcyon days ahead sometimes prove to be stormy and troubled.

The advent of a new and vibrant Piano Syllabus provides an opportunity to reappraise our approach to piano exams and how we address the technical demands of the higher-grade repertoire. However, rather than focusing on specific technical problems and their solutions, I would suggest that technical proficiency and accuracy should be secondary to two more important areas: choice of repertoire and the encouragement of a musical performance. With these as our first consideration and providing the context for our teaching, technical fluency and control will develop far more quickly and with greater subtlety.

Something special happens when a pupil passes Grade 5

Choice of repertoire

With the extended choice of repertoire and the wealth of interesting pieces now found in the Piano Syllabus, there is almost certainly something in each group for all but the most alternative of personalities. It really is possible to choose pieces that will suit a pupil's strengths. Sadly it is often the case that pupils learn pieces that they are not ready for, either in terms of understanding or control. They probably love the piece and work hard but despite this they do not do themselves justice. For instance: a pupil might have been given a jazz-inspired and rhythmically complex piece when their sense of rhythm may not be sufficiently developed or their hand size

too small; a Classical sonata movement might demand a clarity of articulation too challenging for a pupil although there may be other more appropriate pieces to choose; the angst-ridden chromaticism of a late Romantic piece may be well beyond the pupil's emotional experience. What lies behind such misguided choices? Often it is either 'pupil choice', the belief that if a pupil likes a piece they will work at it, or a situation where the teacher knows the piece well, likes it and feels comfortable teaching it. In this latter case the teacher's personal taste subconsciously limits the choices available to the pupil. Both approaches can be valid, but not always.

As far as pupil choice is concerned I would suggest that it makes sense to have the pupil's interest rather than likes at heart. Is the most immediately attractive piece the one that will live with a pupil for the rest of their life or enhance their musical development? Or might they grow to cherish a piece that might not have been their first choice if it is of musical worth and taught with imagination? Most importantly how much more will they grow to love a piece that lies well within their experience and technique? Don't deprive them of choice, rather guide them towards the best decision.

As teachers we need to be clear about the purpose of the exam. I am sure most of us would agree that it should be a signpost of a pupil's progress, not a stick to overcome some previously acknowledged weakness. With this in mind it is worth taking the time to go through the new syllabus and decide which piece would show off a pupil's best attributes whether technical or musical. The new *Teaching Notes* from ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd gives invaluable help here as do the numerous seminars organised by the Associated Board, European Piano Teachers Association and the Incorporated Society of Musicians. Most crucially a detailed exploration of the syllabus may extend your knowledge of the repertoire – selectors go to extraordinary lengths to find unusual yet stimulating repertoire. And don't neglect the pieces that are not inside the volumes of *Selected Piano Examination Pieces*. Here you will find some of the best pieces.

Now comes the interesting part. You know the right piece but realise you may have problems convincing your pupil to play it. A teacher must sometimes be a salesperson and don't assume

that because you are not fond of a piece your pupil won't love it, providing you present it to them in the right context. Make it your business to find out what is at the heart of the piece and, before even demonstrating, communicate this to the pupil by talking them through it and perhaps exploring different recorded interpretations. Sell it to them with a story here, a metaphor there, a description, colour, imagery or emotion. As a result, don't be surprised if you even persuade yourself how wonderful the piece is, adding a new piece to your teaching repertoire and encouraging your pupil to play the piece that is right for them!

Musical understanding and communication

Having chosen the right pieces for your pupil there are then the technical hurdles ahead, though the barriers will not be so high if you have capitalised upon a pupil's natural strengths. Note-learning at the Grade 6 to 8 level is often quite good. Candidates are usually able to play their pieces with a degree of fluency and can 'get through' – they have been rigorously put through their paces or perhaps frightened by the closeness of the exam. Often missing, however, is any evidence of the Grade 6 to 8 musician. Missing also can be the imaginative and communicative performance that will develop, inspire and encourage a technical fluency and ease – and yes, I have put this the right way around.

Many pupils (and some teachers) believe that an exam performance must be 100% accurate. This can destroy any love of the piece and any good you may have achieved when introducing the personality and character of the choice. Of course, we all strive for the 'perfect' performance – but to what end? And how much is our pupil's obsession with 'getting it right', at the expense of the musical performance, our fault? If notes and technique have been at the centre of every lesson then how is a pupil meant to flick a musical switch and 'just go in and enjoy it'? The problem is that they have often been conditioned for years to first and foremost listen and respond to mistakes, after all, isn't this is how teachers often react?

Here's a little experiment. Listen to a piece played by any of your pupils and make a note of the very first thing that you say or that comes into your mind. Was it the wonderful balance between the hands on the third beat? The subtle shading at the end of a phrase? The expressive nuance or placing of a note? Or was it the technical unevenness of a passage, the wrong note in bar 4 and the fact that the pupil hasn't learnt as much as you had asked for? Rarely, if ever, will a piece be played by a pupil without at least one moment of subtlety. It may have been accidental, and only one note, but did you as a teacher notice it? This is an important question because it is from such detail that musical performances are encouraged and inspired. It may well take several years for a pupil to reach Grade 6 and during that time there will have been a lot of conditioning by the teacher and

consolidation by the pupil, but of what? Technique may, understandably, play a big part in the equation, but what of the beautiful vocal sound, eloquence and natural *rubato* needed in the Mendelssohn *Duetto*? How much have you explored the rhythmic incisiveness, clarity and control that lie at the heart of the Turina *Danza Gitana*? And what about the subtle pedal changes that only sensitive listening can achieve in the Copland *Piano Blues*? These cannot be added on or taught at the last minute. The technical finesse needed to produce the right sound can only be developed over time. A phrase with no shape or a chord with no balance must be considered as 'wrong' as an A instead of a Bb, perhaps worse, and it can take as long to develop this kind of control as it does to learn the notes.

Use the new syllabus as a chance to break the mould

The development of a musical performance begins with the first note played, whether in a Grade 8 piece or 'middle C' during the first lesson. Musical instinct must be allowed to grow by nurturing the occasional glimpses of what is musically possible, and not allowing them to be overshadowed by an obsession with adjusting technique and textural detail. Praise your pupils for one small moment of magic, question them about how they produced a particular sound or shaped a phrase and then persuade them to explore the idea using it elsewhere in the piece.

But this is all very well, I hear you say, but they probably do not have the technique to produce the sound they are after and surely this must come first? I would argue that most pupils if enthused and motivated to produce a particular sound will find a way to produce it and, with the teacher's help, the easiest way – whether it is 'raindrops and thunder' at pre Grade 1 or a true *cantabile* later on. If piano lessons are more focused on sound, interpretation, imagination and communication then your pupils will hopefully be inspired to work towards the control they aspire to. Practice will become a pleasure, your technical advice will have a musical context and the motivation to succeed will be all the greater. Technique is not a science, it is as individual as – well the individual, and something to be refined and nurtured to achieve a musical end.

Use the new syllabus as a chance to break the mould. Experiment, choose the right repertoire for the right pupil and make the starting point the interpretation. With the character, sound-world and personality of the piece at the heart of every second of the lesson you may well be surprised at the technical polish and control that this inspires from your pupil. It will not be long before you find yourself listening not just to a Grade 8 pianist who can play the notes, but also a Grade 8 musician.

Staying connected – simultaneous learning for the advanced pupil

Paul Harris



Paul Harris is a teacher, composer, writer, clarinettist and examiner. The author of over 250 publications including The Music Teacher's Companion – from ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd – and the Improve Your Sight-reading! series (Faber Music) and many works ranging from short educational pieces to five concertos and a ballet.

I have received some very positive and encouraging feedback to my article, *Simultaneous learning – teaching pupils to think musically*, featured in *Libretto* 2001:3. This follow-up article applies the principles of simultaneous learning to more advanced teaching. The transition should be smooth and turbulence-free and if we have already begun to embrace a more holistic and imaginative approach to our teaching, it will be exciting and rewarding both for pupil and for teacher. But I am not re-inventing the wheel – the ideas, strategies and concepts are already very much the domain of many skilful, thoughtful and imaginative teachers. I am simply drawing these together in a more formalised manner and thus defining one approach to the teaching of our more advanced pupils.

New areas of learning enter the arena

I am sure we would all agree that the underlying direction of all good music teaching (from beginner onwards) is to broaden and deepen our pupil's musical thinking and to develop their ability and confidence to make their own informed choices. Simultaneous learning, from the very first lesson, will certainly begin to achieve these ends. Of fundamental importance is always to make connections – as professional musicians, we do so instinctively and intuitively. Some of our pupils do too – and it is these who we soon label as the high-fliers. For the rest, our teaching should continually demonstrate how all the various strands of music learning are linked. As pupils progress, new areas of learning enter the arena and others develop and begin to play a more central and demanding role. So, in addition to further developing aural, key-sense, scales, technique, theory, rhythm, sight-reading, (and all their various relations!) we might now begin to see the gradual emergence of practical analysis, stylistic conventions, historical context, harmony and the need to

develop a pupil's ability to mould their own interpretation. You might like to repeat the exercise suggested in my previous article. Make a list of all the elements of music teaching – now including all the 'new' areas (both those I have suggested and any others that may occur to you) – and make two or three connections between each of them. This is how the mind enjoys working. As you teach, you will continually see more and more vistas opening up and increasingly more imaginative routes down which to steer your pupils.

As our experience grows we soon begin to recognise, even among our very elementary pupils, those who will go on to take music seriously, passing through to the higher grades and perhaps on even further. Of course as teachers of integrity, we deliver the same quality of teaching to all our pupils, but human nature (together with a whole host of other reasons) will cause some pupils to shine – almost despite our efforts! These pupils will be more likely to go to concerts and actively listen to music. Also, as we begin to detect a real glimmer of enthusiasm, we should encourage them to build a collection of recordings of music they will eventually play.

Such 'broadening' activities will bring about many advantages: pupils will begin to develop their own internal perception of the sound-world and potential of their instrument or voice; they will know that Bach, Mozart, Beethoven or Shostakovich piece prior to learning it – perhaps even for a number of years. It will have become part of their experience. 'But they'll play it just like Murray Perahia' is a comment occasionally thrown back at me – my answer is simply, 'if only!' The sum total of their own musical experiences, the potential of their ear and technique, will of course produce a performance quite different from Perahia's; but what they would have learnt, by knowing his interpretation will be considerable.

Of course, we need to be able to learn music without any prior knowledge and we need to instil an approach that will ultimately generate successful study of unknown pieces. How might

this work? How might we set about teaching a new work to, say, a Grade 8 piano pupil?

Let us take, for example, the first movement of the Schubert Sonata in A minor (2001 & 2002, List B: 3) – bearing in mind that the approach would be identical for any work and for any instrument. In the formative years, I believe there are considerable advantages for pupils who listen to a work before they begin playing it. In many ways, learning a new piece of music is like learning a part in a play. It is always fascinating and illuminating to listen to a great actor talking about a big role. They will know that character virtually as well as they know themselves; they will be able to explain the whys and wherefores of the character's every thought and action. There is no doubt in my mind that getting to know music in this way will ultimately result in a much more personal and profound relationship with that piece – both during practice and performance. Great music deserves serious study – what actor would approach Hamlet or Lear in a cavalier fashion?

So, pupils should listen to the music and listen intelligently. They must begin to develop ideas about the piece. What does it mean emotionally? What does it mean to them? What is the music saying? They must use their discerning ear to understand exactly what is going on. This is making real connections with aural perception. Make connections also with practical analysis. Yes it is necessary to understand the overall structure of the movement but get pupils to listen to how melodic ideas unfold and develop, how rhythmic patterns inhabit different melodic guises and how Schubert develops both within varying textures and sonorities. What is the significance of similar phrases sometimes ascending, sometimes descending? Once your pupil has developed some understanding of the music, make time to discuss the style; make connections with the historical context too, and, as a result, they will begin to develop their own personal approach to the music. If your pupil knows the music in this way, if they can talk about the music, intelligently and enthusiastically, they are well on the way to a very good performance.

Then, identify the ingredients, just as we did with our simple pieces. Think about the technical, stylistic and musical ideas that add up to make the whole. These may lead into improvisations – to develop and overcome a technical problem perhaps, or to assimilate a point of style. Work out the various keys the music travels through and work at the scales and their related patterns in association with the music – not as unconnected, unmusical patterns given a few moments at the beginning or end of the lesson (or practice). Try to work out what it is that makes this music sound like Schubert and experiment with short Schubertian improvisations. This may involve making connections with harmony; it should certainly

involve listening to other works by the same composer – perhaps other sonata movements or some of his songs. Try playing scales in the style of Schubert!

A number of weeks may have passed by now and we still might not have begun to play the piece, as it were, from bar one. Our work so far has been directed towards building up a concept of the music; acquiring a deep knowledge of the movement and its meaning. We would have identified, and perhaps learnt and memorised, the technically demanding passages. We would have listened to and made connections with other works by Schubert in order to broaden our understanding. We would have spent some time talking about the music. Now we finally come to putting it all together and developing an interpretation. Again we must remember the underlying philosophy of simultaneous learning – we continually make connections with a wide range of musical and imaginative thinking, we keep our minds open and, as far as possible, we encourage our pupils to take ownership of their learning. Aural remains the central source of developing an interpretation. There is of course no definitively right or correct way to play this, or any other, piece. And it is never our job to tell our pupils how something might 'go'. We encourage pupils to use their ears to experiment and discover different solutions to each musical problem, and then through questions and discussion we ultimately lead them into making their final decision (with perhaps a little appropriate guidance from ourselves). But this decision may of course not be final – by virtue of working in this way we broaden the range of possibility, and in performance their musical imagination might take them to a completely new, but equally meaningful, negotiation of a particular musical corner.

Encourage pupils to take ownership of their learning

By teaching in this broader and more holistic manner we have taught our pupil not simply to play this Schubert sonata movement, but, much more importantly, how to approach music of this calibre and, in so doing, given them the necessary ability and confidence to learn other Schubert sonatas on their own.

As in using simultaneous learning with our younger and less advanced pupils, this approach may take a little more thought, more preparation, and more time, but the rewards are palpable. We are teaching our pupils to think musically and to think for themselves. We are not simply teaching them 'the instrument' or 'the piece'; we are teaching them to become artists and we are giving them the confidence to develop their own insights into great art.



Music exams keep children playing

A major new research project from the Department of Psychology at Keele University has confirmed the important motivational role that music exams can play. The Young People and Music Participation Project took place between 1998 and 2001 under the direction of the Unit for the Study of Musical Skill and Development, led by Dr Susan O'Neill. The project focused on the factors that might affect young people's decisions to 'engage or disengage with musical activities.'

Looking at the transition from primary to secondary school, the research highlighted how involvement in musical activity, including the playing of instruments, often declines over this period. However, certain factors were identified which appeared to protect children from giving up, one of these factors being music exams. The report states that:

'Children who have been involved in performance groups and have taken a music

examination are more likely to continue playing instruments after making the transition to secondary school. What appears to be important is not so much that children attain the highest levels on music exams, but rather that they gain a sense of having a structured goal to work towards that is viewed as a challenge or opportunity to improve their skills and not just as an opportunity to display their competence.'

The report also stressed the importance of: young people being involved in deciding what form their musical activity might take; starting to play from a young age and at least one year before moving to secondary school; playing in musical groups outside school hours; and positive parental support.



The full report is available on the Keele University website at www.keele.ac.uk/depts/ps/ESRC

New UK HLRs

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Cool Keys

The Associated Board is collaborating with the BBC, Yamaha, Jazz Services and the Arts Council to produce a new jazz resource for classroom teachers. The *Cool Keys* pack is built around the jazz and improvisation elements of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and features footage from a forthcoming BBC2 series on the history of jazz piano presented by Jools Holland.

Cool Keys is an ideal starting point for pupils coming to jazz for the first time. The pack, including a 60-minute video, a teacher's book and a CD, provides a range of jazz listening, background information, workshop ideas and classroom materials. To complement the *Cool Keys* pack, the Associated Board is running a series of workshops later in the year for classroom music teachers and Yamaha will be mounting a roadshow of school events featuring *Cool Keys* related keyboard music.

The BBC2 series, *Jools Holland's Piano*, is likely to go out in the autumn and the *Cool Keys* programme for schools, as found on the video, is broadcast on BBC2 on The Learning Zone on 18 May.

The *Cool Keys* pack will be available in the autumn, priced at £24.99 (inc VAT and p&p), from:

Cool Keys
PO Box 50
Wetherby
West Yorkshire LS23 7EZ

t 01937 840206

Please quote ISBN 1 86000 214 5



For information about the Associated Board *Cool Keys* workshops, contact the Marketing Department:

t 020 7467 8254
e marketing@abrsm.ac.uk



Christmas competition

Another chance for your pupils to enter our Christmas card competition! This year we are looking for a picture that illustrates 'Music around the world'. The winning picture will be used on the official Associated Board Christmas card and will be printed in a forthcoming issue of *Libretto* together with two runners-up.

The picture must be an original idea, in colour and no bigger than an A4 piece of paper (210mm x 297mm). The competition is open to children aged 15 years and under who are studying for Associated Board exams and the closing date for entries is 6 September 2002. Pictures should be sent together with a letter telling us the child's name, address and age, to:



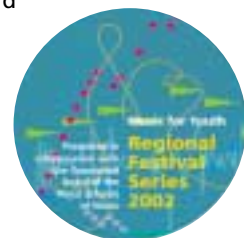
Christmas competition
Marketing Department
Associated Board of the
Royal Schools of Music
24 Portland Place
London W1B 1LU
United Kingdom

Unfortunately we cannot return pictures.

Magnificent Music for Youth



From February to April, around 40,000 young musicians took part in the 2002 Music for Youth Regional Festival Series. Choirs, orchestras, bands and musical groups of all kinds performed in over 50 events at venues around England. As in previous years, the Associated Board supported the Regional Festival Series as well as providing posters and stickers for participants and venues.



World travels

As part of the International Department's development work, Tim Arnold, Head of International Operations, is undertaking an extensive travel programme during 2002 visiting New Zealand, Australia, India, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Switzerland and Spain. Tim will be meeting teachers, candidates and Representatives as he delivers a series of workshops and seminars. These events will focus on graded exams, the Diploma Syllabus and professional development for teachers.

On his visits to India in April and to Spain in October, Tim will be accompanied by our Chief Executive, Richard Morris. In India they will be travelling to all our exam centres presenting seminars whilst the Spanish trip coincides with events celebrating 20 years of Associated Board exams in Spain.

Listen and learn

Teachers in Hong Kong have been tuning in to the radio to listen to the latest series of programmes on the Piano Syllabus. As in previous years, David and Shirley Gwilt, our Hong Kong Consultants, presented the programmes which focused on the alternative pieces in the Piano Syllabus. From May to July, last year's programmes are being repeated – dealing with pieces featured in the *Selected Piano Examination Pieces*. Also in May, David and Shirley Gwilt are running seminars on the Performing Diplomas, looking at repertoire choice, written submissions, programme notes and the *viva voce*. A similar seminar took place last year in Macau – a great success with around 150 teachers attending at the Macau Polytechnic Institute – and in September David and Shirley return to Macau, by request, to lead a seminar on the Grades 6 to 8 piano repertoire.

From South East Asia



Bill Thomson, our Regional Consultant, reports.

Planning for the next Professional Development Programme (PDP) is well under way with seminars taking place during August and September in seven cities: Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Kota Kinabalu, Miri, Kuching, Singapore and Jakarta.

The focus will be on the use of theory in practical teaching and working with improvisation. We are delighted to welcome Richard Ingham and Paul Harris as our presenters. Richard is Visiting Professor of Jazz at the University of St Andrews and Lecturer in Music at Leeds College of Music and has a wealth of knowledge and experience to share. Paul returns to South East Asia after his popular visit for PDP 2000 and will be highlighting a whole range of ways for teachers to put theory into practice at the higher grades. So, there will be much to stimulate and encourage; an opportunity to refresh the spirit and recharge batteries! If you are a teacher in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia or Brunei, look out for your PDP booking form with this issue of *Libretto*.

Earlier this year I visited Indonesia holding seminars for around 400 teachers in Medan, Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Surabaya on the subject of 'grammar in music'. For teachers at these seminars the August PDP will be a natural next step. Whilst in Yogyakarta I visited the Music High School, where 200 teenage children from across Indonesia study at the Western Music Department. It was a privilege for me to present the school with a donation of music and books from ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd and Oxford University Press. ABRSM (Publishing) Ltd regularly donate music to colleges and schools around the world where music may be scarce, difficult to source or beyond the finances of teachers and students. Last year over 50 boxes of music were sent to 38 institutions worldwide. The Music High School in Yogyakarta runs on a very modest budget and students come from families of limited means so this contribution will be much valued.

A first for China

Last year we held seminars in China for teachers, parents and students, presented by our consultants, David and Shirley Gwilt. These seminars paved the way for the first exams in Guangdong Province where our two examiners, John Reynolds and Edward Warren, visited Guangzhou, Zhaoqing, Zhongshan and Shenzhen. Candidates took exams in piano, violin and cello across all grades and some also took Theory of Music papers. All exams involved the use of interpreters working in Cantonese or Putonghua and the session was organised by our local Representative, Lin Pai Shi together with Shirley Gwilt. In April, David and Shirley presented further seminars in Guangzhou and examiners will be returning to Guangdong Province in August for the next exam session.

Indonesia jubilee

2002 marks 25 years of Associated Board exams in Indonesia. To celebrate this Silver Jubilee we are holding a Jubilee Concert in December to be attended by our Chief Executive, Richard Morris. The concert will take place on 1 December at the Aryaduta Hotel in Jakarta.

Malaysia entries

All entries for exams in Malaysia are now being processed locally rather than in London. This transfer of work means that we can offer an improved service to teachers and candidates with quicker entry procedures and more time available at our London office for the provision of additional teacher support.

NEWS

New international Representatives

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e tonybrag@hotmail.com

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USA: Hartsdale
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UK High Scorers' Concerts

11 May
Taunton

12 May
Doncaster

18 May
Sutton Coldfield

19 May
Stafford

12 June
Birmingham

12 June
Bangor

25 June
Northampton

22 September
Isle of Man



Your chance to share experiences and ideas with other readers.

In each issue our Chief Examiner, Clara Taylor, introduces a subject for discussion. We then publish your responses in the next issue. Your contribution may be edited for publication.

Write to Clara Taylor, marking your envelope Forum, or email chiefexaminer@abrsm.ac.uk

A unique bond

Getting the timing right for exams is a skill in itself! The unique bond between teacher and pupil is an invaluable aid in making decisions with and on behalf of the student. It provides a real insight into their strengths and weaknesses and the longer I have taught somebody, the easier I find it to help them make the right musical decisions.

However, there is always a chance of a last-minute crisis – family problems, a headache, an argument with a friend, a broken instrument or sheer panic on the day of an exam. We cannot prepare for this but it is possible to draw on the close relationship with the student to provide reassurance, to boost confidence or give a sense of perspective. Even in the event of a disappointing result it is possible, with carefully chosen words, to console and rekindle enthusiasm in a student who has grown to trust, respect and even like their teacher.

We can all get it wrong sometimes, but the bond I have with my students is one of my most valuable teaching aids as well as being one of the great rewards of the job.

*Alison Wilkins
Reading, UK*

Lessons in timing

Recently one of my students surprised me by announcing that she wanted to participate in the next exams. I was hesitant as this student is not very confident, is a perfectionist, works slowly and would need to work extra hard to prepare in time. However, she was enthusiastic and convinced that she could do it. My evaluation was that she might not be entirely successful but that her spirit would be dampened if I talked her out of it. After discussing the issues with the student and her parents, we mapped out a course that I felt would prepare her in time. She worked faithfully but the pressure affected her self-confidence. On the exam day we both felt hopeful but not confident. Imagine my horror when she emerged from the exam room in tears! Our initial conversation consisted of her sobs and claims that she had 'messed up'. Later, we carefully reviewed the exam and ascertained that there had only been a few minor mistakes but that her feeling of not having enough time to prepare had affected her confidence and her performance negatively.

When she received her marks – a respectable 125! - she felt much better but still said that if she had been less nervous she would have

done better. On a positive note, she now realises that she needs to feel very well prepared for an exam and needs to give herself enough time to reach that situation. We may have made the wrong decision on the timing of this exam but she learned something very valuable for the future. In fact, she recently played in a piano festival, using the same pieces (now very familiar and beloved) and was awarded a Gold Seal Certificate. Perfect timing!

*Judith Walter
New Jersey, USA*

Special Visits

I would like to add a note in support of the Associated Board's system of Special Visits which I have used extensively since it began.

The opportunity to arrange a suitable date away from the inevitable pressures of the end of the school term is of enormous benefit to candidate and teacher. Preparation can be paced with more certainty and the inevitable extra practising can be incorporated in the candidate's daily routine with greater ease. Add to this the advantage of a familiar piano and location and the benefits of the system seem unbeatable.

*Vivien Laird
Ely, UK*

Next topic: helping the slow starters



Clara Taylor

Very occasionally teachers may have to cope with a pupil who has no interest in playing, no aptitude, no intention of practising and just waits with barely concealed impatience for the end of the lesson. This situation is, fortunately, rare but I would have no hesitation in telling the parents that they are wasting their money and that lessons should cease immediately, to the relief of all concerned.

What about, however, those who are not blessed with a strong sense of rhythm or pitch, are poorly co-ordinated and slow to learn but enjoy the lessons, do the best they can at home and keep coming back for more? Although such pupils may stretch their teacher's patience to the limit, I believe that they are very worthwhile to teach. A genuine response to the music and progress, however slow, gives the teacher an opportunity to take things at the pupil's pace, relax the relentless series of goals that are the usual routine

and really foster a love of music on the pupil's own terms.

Frank discussion with the parents is essential as expectations need to be realistic. Exams may be on the agenda but it will take longer to reach each grade and a natural ceiling may occur around Grade 4 or 5. Never mind, the pupil will be playing enough to have the all-important first hand contact with music and all the benefits that brings. An exam result of 102 should be a genuine cause for celebration and congratulations. It may well be more of a triumph for the less gifted pupil than a mark of 132 for one who races easily through the grades. Incidentally, the current average mark for Grades 1 to 8 Practical is 117, a piece of information which may be useful to parents whose hopes for their offspring may be over-optimistic.

Do write to us with your experiences of this situation. Shared views and approaches to teaching are so valuable to us all.