

## **The Professional Piano Teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

### **How Can I Really Keep Up?**

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*In today's session, we want to consider things that have been said in this conference, plan and organize for the future and philosophize on the teaching profession as we move forward in this century. Let's stop for a minute and reflect upon our lives as piano teachers, the lives of our students and the role of music in today's world. Here is a hypothetical job description for an independent music teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We invite you to think about anything that we may have left out of this description.*

#### **Job Description for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Piano Teacher**

Long-term position open for someone looking for challenging permanent work in a changing world. Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours including afternoons, evenings and some weekends.

#### Responsibilities

Must be able to work with a variety of ages and levels and assume responsibility for the final end product. Must schedule all lesson times, reschedule lesson times, and once again reschedule for clients who are continually adding other activities to their schedules. Candidates for this position must have their own studio space, piano, music library and other needed supplies. Aside from scheduled lesson times, candidates should devote part of each week to lesson preparation and practicing the piano.

#### Wages and Compensation

Candidate will set his or her own wages, but must also bill for them and collect payment. Must be prepared to handle clients who pay late and clients who ask for family discounts. All continuing education is paid for by the client and will include out-of-town travel. During this time wages will be lost unless other arrangements have been made.

#### Knowledge of Technology

Candidates must have access to a computer, the Internet and a teenager who can show them how to use these things.

#### Possibility for Advancement and Promotion

None. The job remains the same for years, but candidates must consistently retrain and update their skills so that their clients no longer need them.

#### Benefits

While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered (unless you create your own), this job supplies limitless opportunities for

changing lives one at a time, instilling the love of music in the hearts of many and in general, making the world a better place to live.

## **Time Management**

Obviously, with such a job description, balance is necessary in one's life to juggle our personal and professional responsibilities while avoiding stress. Such balance is equivalent to setting priorities and managing time effectively. So that one can have more personal time, the following list of practical things can be done to make teaching and work more efficient.

1. Keep a master list of things that need to be done in the next year. Revise it on a monthly basis to reflect current goals.
2. From this master list, develop a weekly activity list of things to do that week.
3. Handle mail and papers only once tossing out what is not needed and responding immediately to things that need a short answer.
4. Establish a procrastination file of things that you are unsure about. Review it periodically, but most likely you will never deal with the things in this file.
5. Let the voice mail answer calls during lessons and when you are working on things that require concentration.
6. Organize computer files in a logical manner and clean them out regularly.
7. Review E-mail each day and answer important messages immediately.
8. At the end of the day, clean up voice mail and E-mail messages so that the morning hours the next day can be used for projects that require concentration.
9. Scan professional magazines and mark articles that you want to read later. Take them with me on trips for airplane and hotel reading.
10. Use the summer for long-range planning for students, exploring new teaching materials and equipment and catching up on reading.

In general, handle things that are urgent and important immediately and plan for things that are important and not urgent. Avoid dealing with issues that are unimportant and urgent as they are usually caused by others and are sometimes beyond your control. Eliminate things that are unimportant and urgent. By following this philosophy, you will be able to establish a better balance between your personal and professional lives.

## **Professional Activities**

Since you are attending this convention, all of you are obviously active in professional associations and attend conventions. We find that colleagues at such conventions really provide a support network and the programs are a wonderful source of continuing education. We typically attend three to four conventions a year in the United States – Music Teachers National Association, Music Teachers Association of California, National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy and World Piano Pedagogy Conference.

Websites open up a whole new world to us professionally. Using search engines, you and your students can find information on almost any subject. Several websites are totally devoted to music subjects including the Australian website, [www.practicespot.com](http://www.practicespot.com), which is very popular in the United States.

Magazines are another source of professional information for the teacher. We subscribe to several types of magazines – some that focus on teaching, some that focus on performance, journals of professional associations and others that are designed for the amateur musician. Currently we subscribe to the following magazines:

American Music Teacher (Music Teachers National Association)  
The California Music Teacher (Music Teachers Association of California)  
Clavier  
International Piano  
Keyboard Companion  
Making Music  
Pianist  
Piano Guild Notes (National Guild of Piano Teachers)  
Piano Journal (European Piano Teachers Association)  
Piano Today

### **Recent Books of Interest**

Even with all the emphasis today on technology, it is still wonderful to have a library of books relating to the profession and to be able to hold a book and read it. We are guilty of buying almost every book that we see and would like to share some of our most recent purchases that you may find interesting.

Appleby, David P. *Heitor Villa-Lobos, A Life (1887-1959)*. Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Darling Edward. *Selected Writings by Richard Chronister – A Piano Teacher's Legacy*. The Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy, Inc., 2005.

Faricy, Katherine. *Artistic Pedal Technique*. The Frederick Harris Music, Co., Limited, 2004.

Froehlich, Mary Ann. *101 Ideas for Piano Group Class*: Summy-Birchard, 2004 (distributed by Alfred Publishing).

Hinson, Maurice. *The Pianist's Dictionary*. Indiana University Press, 2004.

Johnson, Philip. *The Practice Revolution – Getting Great Results from the Six Days Between Music Lessons*. PracticeSpot Press, 2002.

Lehmann, Stephen and Marion Faber. *Rudolf Serkin – A Life*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Parini, Jay. *The Art of Teaching*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Schnebly-Black, Julia and Stephen F. Moore. *Rhythm: One on One*. Alfred Publishing Co., 2004.

Taub Robert. *Playing the Beethoven Piano Sonatas*. Amadeus Press, 2002.

Westney, William. *The Perfect Wrong Note – Learning to Trust Your Musical Self*. Amadeus Press, 2003.

### **New Music and Materials**

New music is what keeps our teaching interesting. We often say that new music is written for teachers and not students. Everything is new to the student. Teachers need new things to keep the teaching alive and vital. We have chosen four titles to share with you today from Alfred Publishing Company. We think that they are unique and will provide variety in your teaching.

*Contest Winners, Books 1-3* including music by several composers

*A Night at the Opera* by Bernadine Johnson and Carol Matz

*Miniature French Suite in F Major* by George Peter Tingley

*Celebrated Piano Duets, Books 1-3* by Robert Vandall

At the beginning of today's session, we read a job description for a piano teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We all obviously have accepted that job. We wish you the best as you continue your work in this job pursuing limitless opportunities for changing lives one at a time, instilling the love of music in the hearts of many and, in general making the world a better place to live.