

# Oregon Musician

Sharing ideas about music and the teaching of music

## Integrity and the Musical Life

A Note from the Editor



### About the Editor

Rhonda Ringer, NCTM has crafted a career as a pianist, a writer and an instructor. She has released four CDs, is an active solo and collaborative performer of both classical and jazz, and her articles have appeared in *American Music Teacher*, *Piano & Keyboard*, *Flute Talk*, *Clavier*, and *Keyboard Companion*. She received her MM from Boston University.

For the past few months I have been substitute teaching an advanced student while his teacher is recovering from a serious injury. The guidelines of the situation were clear between the other teacher and me, and both of us presented them to the student's parent. Just last week, however, the parent tried to play the other teacher and me against each other and were it not for our long-standing friendship and the strength of both of our commitment to professional integrity, the incident would have escalated into hurt feelings, a breakdown in a friendship, and ultimately an unpleasant situation for the student. My colleague and I discussed the problem, presented a united front to the parent, and that parent finally relented. Because of our determination to communicate with each other, this student benefits not only from two musical perspectives but from the example of comradeship and professional courtesy we showed him, his father, and each other.

This story could have come from any teacher's studio. Teachers are pulled one way and another by parents' demands, students' conflicting leisure activities, and the tight economy. We are increasingly marginalized in a world that focuses on "winning" and "success" and "making lots of money." And as independent teachers, we frequently feel we are fighting this battle alone.

In this issue, *Oregon Musician* examines the challenging topic of Integrity and the Musical Life. Whether it is musical integrity, professional integrity, or personal integrity, we all face these challenges and we all know the temptation to give in and not hold firm to what we know to be truth. Sometimes the challenge is made more daunting by the unprofessional and (at times) unethical behavior of a few in our profession. But it is up to us to choose to create a positive and professional organization. We just have to choose to live by our code of ethics and be generous and supportive of each other in this difficult task of "birthing" creative, honorable, and trained musicians in a world that frequently deems us irrelevant.

Each author represented in this issue has courageously tackled some aspect of integrity in our profession. But this is the beginning, not the end, of this important discussion. If we want music to change the world, we must first change ourselves—one decision, one courtesy, one act of generosity at a time.

—Rhonda Ringer, NCTM

# Music Teaching in the 21st Century

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# Integrity is Like Good Weather

by Dr. Jeannine Jordan



## About the Author

Jeannine Jordan is a champion of the organ and its music. She has traveled throughout the world promoting and sharing organ music through her concerts, workshops and teaching. She is known for her innovative organ and media concerts, *Bach and Sons* and *From Sea to Shining Sea*, which integrate performance with live camera projection.

Please visit:

[www.promotionmusic.org](http://www.promotionmusic.org)

for more information.

"Integrity is like the weather: everybody talks about it but nobody knows what to do about it. Integrity is that stuff we always say we want more of . . . We want it in our schools and our houses of worship . . . So perhaps we should say that integrity is like *good* weather, because everybody is in favor of it." (Carter, p.6.)

As musicians we have been given great gifts that through work and perseverance we share with the world in a multitude of ways from teaching to performing to composing to writing. But without integrity or wholeness of character, our musical gifts will become unusable or at least less fruitful. So what is integrity?

The dictionary definition of *integrity* uses three words: wholeness, unity, and honesty. "When talking about integrity, we are talking about being a whole person, an integrated person, with all our different parts working well and delivering the functions that they were designed to deliver." (Cloud, p. 31)

In their book *The Integrity Advantage*, Adrian Gostick and Dana Telford identify ten "integrity characteristics." Let's examine how these "integrity characteristics" can be integrated into the life of the whole musician—the musician with all the different parts working well and delivering the functions that they were designed to deliver to students, colleagues, and audiences.

### **1. You know that little things count. If you don't lie or cheat on the small things, you are not corrupted by larger temptations.**

The popular expression "Don't sweat the small stuff" is poor advice for the musician of integrity. As teachers, performers, and church musicians our lives can become singular as we hone our craft alone in a practice room. Yet as practicing musicians we constantly are called to interact with the public. Each of our "small" actions is open for scrutiny. Have you ever been tempted to make a "quick copy" of a piece of music for a student or choir member knowing that you lack copyright permission to make that copy?

# Integrity is Like Good Weather

## **2. You find the white (when others see gray). You don't make difficult decisions alone. You receive counsel and take the long-term view.**

Several years ago the church where I was teaching initiated a room use fee. This fee was going to greatly increase the expense to my organ studio. Instead of merely announcing to my students that a room rental fee would be added to the following semester's lesson fees, I asked for counsel from my students and sought other alternatives. We took the long-term view by carefully weighing the convenience of the present teaching space, the type of organ, and the ability to reserve the space not only for lessons but student concerts as well. In the end, through the counsel of my students, I made the decision to remain at the same church and add a room use fee to the lesson amount. The students, because of their buy-in, understand the addition of the fee and are satisfied with the studio location.

## **3. You mess up, you 'fess up. You disclose both good news and bad. You acknowledge mistakes, apologize and make amends.**

I recently had the humbling experience of having to reschedule an entire week of lessons. I "messed up" and scheduled lessons for a week I would be out of town. I had to "fess up" and disclose the news that no matter how carefully I had planned the summer lesson schedule, it just wasn't going to work. I apologized and asked to reschedule the week's lessons. Thankfully, most of my wonderful students changed their schedules to accommodate mine.

## **4. You create a culture of trust. You develop a work environment that will not test the personal integrity of your students or your colleagues.**

I am privileged to have a studio of nearly twenty adult organ students with whom I share a culture of trust. Some of my students have played for churches for years and are studying to enhance their service playing skills while others are pursuing playing the organ as a new avocation. Together we have created a wonderfully trusting and supportive community where ideas and performances are shared freely and easily.

## **5. You keep your word. You act with integrity to gain trust.**

If I tell my students we are going to have an opportunity to play the outstanding pipe organs at Mt. Angel Abbey, it is not a whimsical idea. I know once such an opportunity is presented to my students, I will have to follow through. By working through the myriad of details necessary to make that performance and learning opportunity a reality, I continue to build trust with my enthusiastic group of students.

"In the end trust is about the heart, and someone making an investment in you from his or her heart. If you gain people's trust, their heart, then you also have their desire and passion. Good teachers capture the other people's will, their true desire, through connecting with them first." (Cloud, p.53)

# Integrity is Like Good Weather

## **6. You care about the greater good. You make decisions that will benefit the entire organization.**

Caring about the greater good means providing community building opportunities such as *Play-Ins*, recitals, and music-sharing days for my students; working to choose, prepare, and share music that will enhance worship for my church's congregation; presenting concerts that will advance the value of music making in society; and supporting the professionalism of my musical colleagues.

## **7. You're honest but modest. You let your actions speak louder than words.**

I frequently talk about and write about the two "P" words—*Practice and Performance*. However, it is important that I do more than talk and write about this subject; I also practice, create and perform new programs hoping that my example will encourage my students to work toward their practice and performance goals.

## **8. You act like you're being watched. You make sure your integrity is passed along to future generations through your example.**

As musicians we are always being watched or listened to in one way or another. Barbara Killinger in her book, *Integrity*, presents advice for musicians quoting a song by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine from their insightful musical, *Into the Woods*:

Careful of the things you say,  
Children (students, congregations, audiences, colleagues) will listen.  
Careful of the things you do,  
Children (students, congregations, audiences, colleagues) will see  
And learn.

Children (students, congregations, choirs, audiences, colleagues) will look to you  
For which way to turn,  
To learn what to be.

Careful before you say,  
'Listen to me.'  
Children (students, congregations, audiences, colleagues) will listen."

## **9. You hire integrity and you promote those who show an ability to be trusted.**

Fill your musical lives with those colleagues and students who have integrity. Share ideas with them, learn from them, listen to them, interact with them, and encourage them to grow in their professional competencies.

# Integrity is Like Good Weather

## 10. You keep on keeping on. You have ethical consistency and predictability.

The anecdote, “The Gifted Musician” from Hidalgo’s writing, encourages us to consistently and predictably practice not only our instrument but also integrity in our musical life:

“Most people only enjoy listening to music, but some people also enjoy creating music. Some musicians are good, some are better and then there are those who are exceptionally good—considered to have the “gift” of music. But even they have to practice.

I attended a concert recently where a fan of the featured musician walked up to his favorite performer and said: “You’re an outstanding musician!”

The artist replied saying: “Thank you, I appreciate you saying so. I practice everyday.”

Just as we as musicians must practice every day to maintain a high level of artistic talent, so too must we practice implementing integrity in our every day musical lives.

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Music Teachers National Association. *Code of Ethics*.  
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# Why I Teach: Maintaining Integrity in the 21st Century

by Barbara M. Gustafson, NCTM



## About the Author

Pianist Barbara M. Gustafson, NCTM; MUP in piano performance/Willamette University '79; choral teaching certificate/University of Oregon '81; MMUE/Lewis and Clark College '87. She has maintained a large classical piano studio in Portland for 28 years. Barbara serves as an OMTA Syllabus adjudicator, a clinician and a performer. The proud mother of three grown children she lives in Happy Valley with partner John Chapman.

The teaching of classical piano in the 21st century is not for sissies, not for the faint-hearted, and certainly not the weak-willed. Upholding artistic standards in a society of instant gratification, high technology and floods of interference is a constant challenge.

Our students are pulled in ten different directions with school, sports, extra curricular activities, social media, and a never ending list of options and distractions. Prevailing attitudes often support music as merely one more pursuit to be listed on a resume, studied to promote brain development, encourage discipline, win a competition, or gain a scholarship. However, classical piano study is far richer, its value far greater.

As piano teachers we are not only responsible for instilling in our students the importance of technique, musicianship and style, we are also charged with the important responsibility of continuing an ARTISTIC legacy. Pianism is a craft, lovingly and tenaciously passed on to each new generation. Long before the cell phone and the iPod, the Walkman, the transistor radio, even before the first phonograph was introduced in 1877, the piano has been a signature representation of quality musical expression. This legacy merits, in fact desperately requires, vigilant continuation and protection. However, our methods are seemingly incompatible with society's priorities and patience. Yet as tempted as we may be to water down curriculum, teach to the competition, or lessen our musical demands, maintaining our integrity is crucial to classical music's survival.

Integrity in teaching is being consistent in our actions and always upholding musical values and pianistic standards. As sentinels, we protect our art's WHOLENESS. Every detail, be it articulation, phrasing, rhythm or style, requires the highest level of patience and attention. Classical music has traditionally been passed on by careful masters, pedagogues who emulated tenaciousness and utmost integrity.



## Why I Teach: Maintaining Integrity in the 21st Century

Realizing a Beethoven Sonata or Schumann character piece demands honesty and the utmost adherence to the score. The tools required to accurately and convincingly interpret a masterwork requires deep musical understanding and technical mastery. Passing on this ability is a slow, methodical process that requires dedication and discipline. Acquiring these skills is a lifelong pursuit.

The fundamentals of note reading, rhythm, fingering and hand position, followed by the more advanced concepts of pedaling, articulation, or phrasing, must be firmly in place for higher musical levels to be achieved. Technical development, through slow, careful practice is also crucial to advanced pianism. Pianistic artistry includes detailed, stylistic elements and performance practices indigenous to a variety of historical eras.

Advanced pianism also demands technical mastery and control coupled with a vast color pallet. Although very few students will ever reach the highest playing level, teachers must maintain equal standards for students of all abilities. In the very least, we are developing an acute appreciation for classical music; at the most we are developing a great pianist. We owe our vigilance to this worthy cause.

Exhibiting integrity in teaching means we must be role models to our students, as well as their parents, through continuing our own education and honing our pianistic skills. Practicing what we preach enables us to demonstrate to our students the necessary artistic ingredients. As classical pianism comprises a myriad of elements, we simply cannot choose which to teach and which to omit. To ensure the WHOLE all ingredients are needed. We as teachers are guardians of the WHOLE: musically, technically, stylistically and interpretively. Upholding this tradition is our responsibility. We can't afford to be less tenacious.

Supporting community arts programs also helps to encourage concert attendance among our students. In addition to hearing live classical performances, our students should also be prompted to share their music with others. Stressing the importance of classical music in our society hinges on our commitment as educators. Teachers must maintain the energy to teach with intention and vigor and should offer students a wide variety of study and performance experiences.

Our craft demands the belief that classical music is a great art form worthy of serious study and preservation. Our curriculum needs to remain rigorous and not watered down to broaden its immediate appeal. We as piano instructors should be honored to be among those who have the noble, yet challenging task, of passing on the art of pianism. The wealth of magnificent piano literature deserves a future. This is why I teach.





# Integrity, Professionalism and Ethics in Music Teaching

by Geneva Wright, NCTM



## About the Author

Geneva Russell Wright, NCTM, Hillsboro, graduated from Willamette University summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance.

From 1990 until 1999 she studied piano performance and composition with Dr. Walter B. Saul III at Warner Pacific College, Portland. A pianist, composer, and watercolorist, Geneva maintains an active private studio in Orenco Station Hillsboro. She is past president of Oregon Music Teachers Association and travels throughout Oregon as an adjudicator and presenter of workshops.

The MTNA Code of Ethics, which is reprinted in this publication, provides succinct, specific, and unequivocal statements regarding our conduct as music professionals. This should be the end of subject . . . or is it? If rules-to-live-by were as succinct, specific, available, and agreed upon, advice columnists might have to look for another line of work.

Of course Dear Abby never lacked for interesting situations. And dilemmas remain, in life and in musicians' careers as well. At times new teachers, and even experienced ones, have questions that make us wish for a musical "Dear Abby" to give advice on professional dilemmas. And in the spirit of musical comradeship, "Dear Allegretto" offers the questions and solutions to problems many of us face each day in our profession.

## Dear Allegretto,

**My Level 2 student's mother insists on choosing Level 4 repertoire for me to assign.**

*Signed, Frustrated*

Dear Frustrated,

Have a private meeting with the student's mother. Share the third sentence of Code of Ethics Commitment to Students and explain that you are bound by the Code to "Encourage, guide and develop" your students' repertoire as you best understand the levels.

## Dear Allegretto,

**My student of the past three years has yet to be able to sight read, but if I spend most of her lesson time on sight-reading, she will fall behind in performance goals.**

*Signed, Conflicted*

## Integrity, Professionalism and Ethics in Music Teaching

Dear Conflicted,

Read again the second sentence of *Commitment to Students* in the Code of Ethics. Then discuss with your student that reading is not an option in piano study, it is a requirement. Just as students in elementary school are required to learn to read words, any musician in your studio is required to learn to read notes, therefore you and she will take as much time as is necessary for success.

**Dear Allegretto,**

**I've been asked to join a monthly repertoire group for piano teachers. But I am so busy teaching and caring for my family that I never have time to practice.**

Signed, *Super-busy*

Dear Super,

Please refer to the second sentence in the Code of Ethics, *Commitment to Society*. An ethical member of MTNA agrees to "continued growth in professional competencies." It is practical to think of yourself as equally important as the students you teach. Of course you schedule time for each student. Give yourself a time slot, non-negotiable, for professional growth . . . practicing, or reading, or a lesson with another musician.

**Dear Allegretto,**

**Some of my students and their parents feel competitive with each other, pushing their children to play harder repertoire and participate in higher level evaluations than the ones I feel appropriate.**

Signed, *Pressured*

Dear Pressured,

All of the first three sentences of the Code of Ethics, *Commitment to Students* can give guidance to this problem. First of all, we can refrain from using competitions as a tactic to achieve practice goals. Secondly, as the owner of your studio, you can "*clearly communicate the expectations*" of your plans to each set of parents. Thirdly, refer to the goal that you alone are in charge of "*developing the musical potential of each student*." It is not only your right, but your ethical responsibility to choose the repertoire and evaluation levels for each individual.

## Integrity, Professionalism and Ethics in Music Teaching

Dear Allegretto,

**I agreed to teach a transfer student who played well at the interview, only to discover that the former teacher had taught very little theory. How can we catch up without negatively commenting on the former teacher?**

Signed, *Puzzled*

Dear Puzzled,

First, kudos for being sensitive to the reputation of a fellow teacher. (See: Code of Ethics, *Commitment to Colleagues*) Secondly, this situation requires creative assignments on several fronts. Analyzing easy music, composing, and mentoring lower level students' theory lessons are a few ideas for incorporating theory concepts into every aspect of the lessons. Gradually the student's lack of specific instruction can be overcome.

The "Dear Allegretto" examples are random instances of applying the Code of Ethics to our teaching career. Each of us can benefit from seeking practical applications of the principles and guidelines. Certain phrases can inspire each of us to improve our professional lives.

We members of OMTA/MTNA teach music theory as well as musical performance. We feel an obligation to present theory concepts as intrinsic building blocks of compositions and improvisation. (For instance, "Scales are the basic material of the pieces we play," and not "You must learn scales in order to pass syllabus!") Then should we not adopt the values and precepts of the Code of Ethics for the same reason? These values are more than beautiful, abstract words on a page. They are the building blocks intrinsic to our chosen profession, building blocks of our choice to live as musicians and teachers. Long live the Code of Ethics!



## Generosity and the Art of Making Music: An Interview with Linda Barker

by Rhonda Ringering, NCTM



Linda Barker

“Competitiveness undermines the meaning of music,” esteemed pianist, instructor, and adjudicator Linda Barker claims. “We should be making music because it’s intrinsically valuable, not to bring ourselves fame and money.”

We are seated in Barker’s stunning garden on one of the first dry days of June.

Well known for her concerto appearances with the Oregon Symphony, her passionate and encouraging adjudication, and fifteen years of teaching at the University of Portland, Barker has enjoyed a reputation as a fine pianist since her debut at age sixteen when she played the Schumann Piano Concerto with

the Portland Youth Philharmonic. She received her Bachelor’s degree from Oberlin and her Master’s from Indiana University. She is a master clinician and has appeared across the country in chamber and solo recitals. Despite, or maybe because of her accomplishments, she approaches music, teaching, and life with humility and love.

“Recognize what it is that you love about music,” she states. “Most people respond to music emotionally and everybody loves it. I believe classical music is so powerful and I want my students to understand what it is that connects them to the music. In turn, during a performance, they should focus on clearly communicating what it is they love about the music. That’s more important than being ‘correct.’ It can be correct, but if we don’t feel it, it doesn’t touch us.”

In the rarified world of classical piano, stressing love and passion rather than clinical precision seems to be counter-cultural. Barker has seen her share of students, parents and other teachers who have reduced music to a gymnastics competition and it disturbs her deeply. In her teaching she stresses meaning, asking her students to focus on how expressively they played rather than how many wrong notes or memory slips they may have had. She teaches students that there is never just one right way to play something and asks them, instead, if the phrase or piece made sense to them.

## Generosity and the Art of Making Music: An Interview with Linda Barker

"I'll say, that phrase didn't make sense, the way you played it," Barker says.

"And then I'll say, let's play it this way or that way." She stops and smiles. "They always know what sounds right. I ask them, do you want to listen to perfection or do you want to listen to inspiration?"

Operating from the position that any great artist is open to new ideas, Barker strives to open her mind and her heart to what the music offers. There is always room for change and reinterpretation, and she is bold in her assessment of narrow mindedness and academic interpretations of music.

"I feel that people who believe in a 'right' and a 'wrong' interpretation of a piece are a bit short-sighted. No matter what interpretation you find to be historically correct, music still needs to come from the performer's heart."

Her attitude toward her concert career reflects her dedication to the power of music to transcend stiff and "correct" playing in favor of accessing the full range of emotions the music has to offer and then sharing this with the audience. When asked about her most meaningful performance experience, she cites not the many premiers and concerto appearances she has played, but rather one performed in a local retirement community. Barker and a violinist were hired to play a concert by one of the residents who had closely followed the violinist's career. Unfortunately, halfway through the concert, the woman collapsed from a heart attack, and despite Barker's best efforts to resuscitate her, she passed away at the hospital. Her son, knowing how much this concert meant to his mother, asked Barker to play for her memorial service.

"I put together the Mendelssohn Trio, and at the service I found out what an amazing person she was," Barker says. "Everyone said she loved music and that she died a happy death because there was no more perfect way to go than to be listening to the music she loved. In a small way I think I made a difference in her life. Concertos are exciting, but reaching people is more meaningful."

Teaching meaning and communication in music is becoming more and more difficult in the face of extreme competitiveness in both parents and other teachers. The profession has always had a few teachers who "poach" others' students with no regard to professionalism, ethics, or courtesy, but Barker echoes the feelings of many when she claims things have gotten worse in the last decade. And while much of the problem seems to come from competitive parents, Barker claims teachers must take responsibility for how they respond to pressure from parents.

"Parents are often very influential and perhaps encourage competitiveness among teachers. When parents make unreasonable demands regarding their child's musical development, we have to be willing to have a backbone and stand up to them.

We must be unwilling to compromise our principles."

Dealing with a lack of generosity and courtesy among teachers is even more difficult than working with parents. For example, Barker mentions the teacher's group she

## Generosity and the Art of Making Music: An Interview with Linda Barker

has been part of for years. Made up of a small group of OMTA teachers, they meet once a month for discussion and brainstorming. Teachers bring their questions and they share ideas on how to solve them. This has been a really positive experience for everyone involved and Barker hopes that more teachers can benefit from this type of collaboration, as it not only helps those involved become better teachers, but also reduces competition amongst teachers.

Most teachers, Barker included, have experienced the pain of seeing a favorite student move to another's studio and Barker acknowledges that students do have the right to pick who they want to study with. But she also feels we owe it to each other to be courteous about the change. Common courtesy and MTNA guidelines (see Coda section of this issue) give teachers ideas on how to best handle this difficult problem, but true professional generosity must come from within.

"Most teachers are willing to share ideas," she states. "There's enough room in the world for lots of people to excel, and in the same things. There's always someone better and always someone worse. We can be generous with each other."

When asked why Barker thinks some teachers behave competitively toward each other, she cites the very real fear that they will lose their top students.

"In the end, the teacher a student chooses is out of your control," she says. "What's really important is giving your students a strong sense of your musical values and supporting them through their own musical development."

As Barker looks forward to what she hopes her students take away from their time with her, she is clear that she hopes all the lessons they learn from her will carry into other aspects of their lives--generosity, for instance.

"Give more of yourself than you feel you should. Believe anybody is capable of doing more than they think they can do."

Words to teach—and live—by.



# New Voices

by Joseph Hoffmann



## About the Author

Joseph Hoffman, MM, is the founder and director of Hoffman Academy of Music where he teaches piano and trains teachers. Joseph is a regular presenter at OMTA focus group meetings, and he is also active as an adjudicator of local piano festivals and events. Joseph holds a Master of Music degree from Brigham Young University, and enjoys life in Portland with his wife and two boys, ages 3 and 5.

## Law of the Harvest

I find it helpful to remember the Law of the Harvest in my teaching and in my life. The Law of the Harvest states that whatever I sow is what I am eventually going to reap. Plant a carrot seed, and I get a carrot. Plant a corn kernel, take care of it with water and sunshine, and, with patience, I'll enjoy sweet, fresh corn. Plant nothing, and I harvest nothing. It's all up to me.

In my teaching, this means that I have to plan carefully in advance what results I want to "harvest" from my students. If I want to enjoy a good harvest, I have to plant the right seeds months ahead of time. If I want a student to play with excellent technique, I have to train correct habits from the very beginning, starting at the first lesson. Failing to teach and expect the correct technique from the beginning, rather simply *hoping* that eventually they'll "catch on", is kind of like planting an apple seed and watching it grow, all the while *hoping* that you just might someday get a plum. All the wishing in the world cannot make it happen.

If I want my students to actually love music and music making, I have to plant these seeds early on, too. I must regularly share my own love and passion for music and playing piano, and teach with a compassionate, caring touch. This way my harvest can include students who want to make music for a lifetime, not just until the practice timer goes off. If I want my high school students to have a good ear, I should start having them dictate little melodies early on, while they are still in elementary school. I even like to teach the Law of the Harvest to my students, so they can



understand that *how* they learn and practice a piece from the very first week will effect in a large way how they perform it months later. If they plant the seeds of sloppy fingerings and inattention to detail early on, they will harvest a sloppy performance. On the other hand, if they plant the seeds of careful learning with full attention to detail, they will harvest a polished and confident performance they can be truly proud of.

The Law of the Harvest applies equally well to our relationships with others. If I want to enjoy the respect of others, I need to plant the seeds of always acting with integrity and treating others with respect. If I want others to speak well of me, I must speak well of others. If I want friendship, I need to be a friend. In my own little family of 4, I have found that the single best way to feel more loved is to start giving more love away. It always comes back to me, without fail. That's the Law of the Harvest.



# Ask Artsmentor

by Dr. Jill Timmons



## About the Author

Jill Timmons, artist-in-residence at Linfield College, is known to international audiences and educators as a leading consultant in arts management through her consulting firm, Artsmentor LLC. Timmons has performed throughout the US, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Spain and Chile. Dedicated to American composers, her discography includes recordings on the Centaur, Capstone and Laurel labels. In 2012, Oxford University Press will publish her book on music entrepreneurship: *The Musician's Journey—Crafting Your Career Vision and Plan*.

## Professional Integrity: Creating an Enlightened Collective

Dear Artsmentor,

Recently, I have had a very disappointing situation emerge in my studio and would like some advice about professional ethics in our organization. I am a member of OMTA and value the community of colleagues and friends in this organization.

Some months ago one of my most gifted students performed in a district wide recital. She played beautifully and caught the attention of many in the audience. One teacher in particular made a point of connecting with her personally, lauding her talent to her parents, and offering professional advice as to her next step in developing her skills. I found myself uncomfortable with the situation but decided to drop it in favor of more positive endeavors with my student. The next week I received a call from this teacher, informing me that my student was planning on moving to her studio. The teacher made some word of apology but said that it was simply part of the business. The parents left a potted plant on my doorstep and a note of thanks.

I am at a loss as to what to say to either the teacher or my former student's parents. Is there governance in the MTNA organization that can provide sanctions against this sort of unprofessional treatment? I am ready to take action!

*Perplexed* in Portland

Dear *Perplexed*:

While students are always free to move from teacher to teacher, there are, on the other hand, a number of proto-

cols that ethical teachers follow. Indeed, in the Coda section of this journal you will find a listing of the Code of Ethics.

Sometimes as teachers we encounter parents or prospective students who are ignorant of the professional ethics in our industry. For example, most teachers approach all inquiries for instruction by first asking if there is a teacher already in place. Most of us *require* all prospective students to notify their current instructor of their plans to transfer—before they enter our studios! Once this is done, I recommend following up with a personal phone call to that teacher to confirm the transfer and discuss the transition for student, verifying that things are open and transparent about the transfer from one teacher to another.

In your story what is unfortunate is that the teacher appears to have courted your student and to have secured the transfer without directing the family (and student) to have closure with you as they made the change. Yes, it is possible to file a report concerning an ethics violation but unless it falls under the rubric of tort law, most of us are probably going to simply move on.

There are other choices we can make, however. We can join together as colleagues to model and encourage ethical behavior. My guess is that those teachers who resort to sketchy recruiting practices do so out of fear that there are not enough students to go around and that perhaps their own studios are struggling. We can also continue to bring forth in our professional organizations a review of what constitutes those ethical guidelines. Those who choose not to follow this path may very well be left on the sidelines. With the advent of Facebook and Twitter, we can be fairly certain that those unethical behaviors will not remain hidden.

My recommendation to you is to look to your OMTA chapter for those teachers who are thriving, exhibit the highest ethical standards, are collaborative, and are interested in training students for both the profession and for life-long learning. Find ways to collaborate with them, consider joining the OMTA governing board, create playing groups and teacher exchanges, invite guest artists to coach your students, and offer your talents and resources to other like-minded professionals.

When we join together in promoting respect for one another and educate our clients as to our high standards of ethical behavior, we are all greater for it. Through an enlightened collective, we will find that there is little room for negative behavior. It's difficult to resist the power of the positive!



# Music Teacher's National Association

## Code of Ethics



COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS—The teacher shall conduct the relationship with students and families in a professional manner.

- The teacher shall respect the personal integrity and privacy of students unless the law requires disclosure.
- The teacher shall clearly communicate the expectations of the studio.
- The teacher shall encourage, guide and develop the musical potential of each student.
- The teacher shall treat each student with dignity and respect, without discrimination of any kind.
- The teacher shall respect the student's right to obtain instruction from the teacher of his/her choice.

COMMITMENT TO COLLEAGUES—The teacher shall maintain a professional attitude and shall act with integrity in regard to colleagues in the profession.

- The teacher shall respect the reputation of colleagues and shall refrain from making false or malicious statements about colleagues.
- The teacher shall refrain from disclosing sensitive information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.
- The teacher shall respect the integrity of other teachers' studios and shall not actively recruit students from another studio.
- The teacher shall participate in the student's change of teachers with as much communication as possible between parties, while being sensitive to the privacy rights of the student and families.

COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY—The teacher shall maintain the highest standard of professional conduct and personal integrity.

- The teacher shall accurately represent his/her professional qualifications.
- The teacher shall strive for continued growth in professional competencies.
- The teacher is encouraged to be a resource in the community.

Direct communication is essential in resolving ethical concerns. Members are strongly encouraged to work out ethical problems themselves. If issues cannot be resolved by the involved parties, MTNA has a specific process for dealing with concerns.

Available at: <http://www.mtna.org/AboutMTNA/CodeofEthics/tabid/468/Default.aspx>