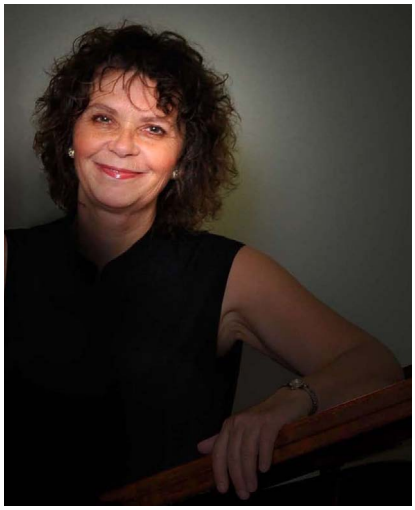
Oregon Musician

Sharing ideas about music and the teaching of music

Motivation!

The Editor's Comments



About the Editor

Diane Baxter, pianist, educator and consultant, is the new editor of *Oregon Musician*. She is currently Professor of Music at Western Oregon University where she has received the *Faculty Honors Award for Outstanding Creativity* and the *Pastega Award for Excellence in Teaching*. Diane teaches studio piano and courses in Ethnomusicology, Performance Anxiety, and Research Methods. Off campus Diane consults and performs far and wide, often giving workshops on doing our best under pressure. "The Science of Artistry: The Fourth String" was published in *Clavier Companion* in Nov/Dec 2013. She lives, writes, plays and thinks in Brownsville, Oregon.

Hello dear readers,

The topic for this edition of *The Oregon Musician* is "Motivation." Motivation is the "something" that makes "everything" happen. We can find "motivational speakers" for everything under the sun. A quick Google search revealed "The World's Most Popular Motivational Speakers, 2017." The fifty top speakers in the world "are often powerful and their talks impactful, regardless of whether they are attempting to challenge, transform or convince the audience. These talks are intended to fire the audience up and get them to take action." The list includes names one might expect, like Tony Robbins, Les Brown, and Suze Orman (if you've ever watched OPB during their fundraising drives, you know Suze Orman). It also includes people like Naomi Judd, Deepak Chopra, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Eckhart Tolle. The range is diverse and fascinating. And so it is with music, musicians, and motivation.

I posed the topic music and motivation to the contributing authors for this edition. Reading through their articles will give you a good indication of the vast ways in which music itself, people in music, experience in music, and transformative power in music affect us all. Jill Timmons states that "an ongoing encounter with beauty is the motivation, the sustaining element that binds artists to the profession . . . Beauty transcends, inspires, informs, and engages us at a profound level. One could say it contains the eternal . . . beauty is what we serve, it gives us everyday a chance to experience something greater than ourselves." Rachelle McCabe has written an eloquent tribute in memoriam to a legendary teacher, Joan Baines Gathercoal. Rachelle writes that "developing a student's motivation to learn is one of our essential jobs as teachers." Joan Gathercoal's life of teaching demonstrated that "at the core of

her teaching were clear methods, a rock-solid philosophy, and successful strategies for motivating students to practice and share music."

Daniel Immel offers practical solutions for Practicing in the Age of Distraction. He writes of the technological age and the dizzying whirl of distractions that come with it. The conflict of wanting instantaneous responses for everything is at direct odds with survival on the concert stage. Dan writes "On the concert stage and in the practice room, survival is dependent on thorough preparation free from distraction, no matter its addictive allure."

The essay from Dr. Paulnack is one that he wrote for the parents of the incoming freshman class at Boston Conservatory in 2003. It remains one of the most powerful pieces on music's role in our world that I've ever read. He has graciously agreed to have it included in this edition.

Finally, Susan Kline reminds us that one must "choose a field of endeavor which you really adore. Don't let yourself stay trapped by getting stuck in something which isn't working for you . . ." She gives us more detailed and excellent information on the inner workings of the piano and its action. What would we ever do as pianists without the Susans of our world?

I think music provides a greater umbrella than all the motivational speakers in the world, truth be told! A good deal of music uses no speech, no implied meaning, and yet its power is phenomenal, mystical, if you will. Lewis Thomas tells us in *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony:* "If you are looking about for really profound mysteries, essential aspects of our existence for which neither the sciences nor the humanities can provide any sort of explanation, I suggest starting with music. The professional musicologists, tremendous scholars all, for whom I have the greatest respect, haven't the ghost of an idea about what music is, or why we make it and cannot be human without it, or even—and this is the telling point—how the human mind makes music on its own, before it is written down and played. The biologists are no help here, not the psychologists, nor the physicists, nor the philosophers, wherever they are these days. Nobody can explain it. It is a mystery, and thank goodness for that. The Brandenburgs and the late quartets are not there to give us assurances that we have arrived; they carry the news that there are deep centers in our minds that we know nothing about except that they are there."

Enjoy these voices among us. As always, I welcome your comments and your insights, and I look forward to hearing from you.

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The Oregon Musician

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Music and Inspiration

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An Ongoing Encounter with Beauty

by Dr. Jill Timmons, NCTM

About the Author

Jill Timmons performs internationally as a solo and ensemble artist and has recorded on the Laurel, Centaur, and Capstone labels. With some thirty years in higher education, she continues to prepare pianists for competitive auditions and successful performances. Her best-selling career guidebook, *The Musician's Journey: Crafting Your Career Vision and Plan*, is published by Oxford University Press. Timmons is the artist/teacher affiliate with Classic Pianos at their flagship Portland store and in their satellite locations in Seattle, Denver, Cleveland, Anchorage, Las Vegas, and Albuquerque.

Music study and a place in the profession usually require a singular sustained commitment and years of study, often beginning in early childhood. Time is filled with countless hours in solitude. Fluency and mastery are gained only through regular and extensive practice over many years. Superb instruction, fine instruments (at considerable cost), supportive families, schools and communities, are all necessary for the flowering of artistry. Those of us in the profession know this all too well.

So in this age of instant gratification, quick results, media and information overload, not to mention distraction, how and why are musicians drawn to an artistic path and how do they sustain their passion and commitment, sometimes over decades? It's definitely not mainstream culture, although ironically music is more readily available than ever before (Pandora, Spotify, etc).

An ongoing encounter with beauty is the motivation, the sustaining element that binds artists to the profession. At the risk of getting lost in the "weeds," defining beauty is essential. It evokes deep emotions, and all kinds of emotions. It is congruent, that is it makes sense. It contains invention, structure, and a kind of cohesion. It is honest. And although we can be surprised by beauty's dazzling and novel qualities, we often discover an element of inevitability. There is that response, "Of course, how perfect."

In music, beauty comes out of a deep well of creativity from both the composer and the performer. Beauty transcends, inspires, informs, and engages

us at a profound level. One could say it contains the eternal. It can hold in its wake the numinous. It charges up our intuitive skills, requiring a whole brain approach to artistry. How else can we face the demands of a composer like Mozart?

British writer/philosopher Roger Scruton articulates a well-defined description of what beauty can offer. "Beauty can be consoling, disturbing, scared, profane; it can be exhilarating, appealing, inspiring, chilling. It can affect us in an unlimited variety of ways. Yet it is never viewed with indifference: beauty demands to be noticed; it speaks to us directly like the voice of an intimate friend. If there are people who are indifferent to beauty, then it is surely because they do not perceive it."

Consequently, as music educators, we are charged with educating our students about the sublime, bringing to their musical studies an encounter with beauty so that they *do* perceive it. As performers we strive, through our temporal art form, to offer an encounter with beauty—something beyond the everyday and an experience that lifts, inspires, informs, edifies our daily life. Through discovering beauty, we are required to stretch, to open our hearts and minds to something beyond our purview, our quotidian routines.

In an ever increasingly institutionalized culture we can lose our way in the distraction of winners and losers, success and failure, gain and loss. But music does not care about that. There is only beauty and only the development of resonance with this awareness. Doing it faster, with more, creating volume as opposed to quality, squeezes out any opportunity to invite beauty into our lives. There is no room in the world of artistry for this narrow and parsimonious view of creativity. The muse will simply never visit this realm.

Throughout my own journey as a musician, I have faced the issue of sustainability many times. There have been losses, disappointments, obstacles, distractions, all-consuming life events, and even doubt. But every roadblock, every challenge has brought me back to beauty. It is what has sustained me, fulfilled me, and inspired me. It is the *raison d'être* of all that I do for myself and for others in our industry. We are so very lucky in our profession. We have the opportunity to encounter beauty every day.

My article in this issue is brief. May it serve as a reminder for something we already know: that beauty is what we serve, that it gives us everyday a chance to experience something greater than ourselves. I will leave you with a thought that speaks so clearly to our quest for beauty. "We live only to discover beauty. All else is a form of waiting." Kahlil Gibran.

Profound Teaching and Motivation: Lessons for All from Our Dear Joan Gathercoal

by Rachelle McCabe

About Rachelle

Rachelle McCabe, concert pianist and professor of music at Oregon State University, enjoys an international career as artist-teacher and is well known to audiences throughout the Pacific Northwest where she appears frequently as a solo recitalist, concerto soloist, duo pianist, and highly respected chamber musician. Rachelle McCabe has performed throughout the United States, and in Canada, Southeast Asia, France, and England. She has been heard on NPR's *Performance Today*, the CBC, and PBS television. She is Director of Piano Studies at Oregon State University, Artistic Director of Corvallis-OSU Piano International and its prestigious Steinway Piano Series, and Executive Director of an intensive summer program for chamber music studies, the OSU Chamber Music Workshop.

On October 14, 2017, in Corvallis, more than three hundred people gathered to celebrate the life of one of OMTA's most beloved teachers, Joan Baines Gathercoal. My heart full, I played Ravel and Rachmaninoff at the piano, Joan's indelible spirit channeling the music. In the back of my mind, her gentle voice reminded me that it's a wonderful thing to be able to share music. Indeed, the idea that we share music, not merely "perform" it, was central in Joan's teaching. Joan embodied this positive message of sharing; an exceedingly kind and nurturing person, Joan's positive effect on all those who crossed her path seemed almost magical. And sometimes her teaching seemed magical too, but really, there was no mystery about it. At the core of her teaching were clear methods, a rock-solid philosophy, and successful strategies for motivating students to practice and share music.

During my early years of teaching at Oregon State University, Joan and her twin sister, Jean, encouraged and supported me like two fairy godmothers. I visited them often. The Gathercoal home was irresistible, an enchanted gingerbread house that

transformed from season to season with intricate old-world decorations and, of course, the twins' legendary cookies which they served up in style at their frequent "Share Day" programs for students and families. The welcoming atmosphere was so appealing as to be motivational in itself. Day by day, the Jean-Joan Piano Studio was a bustling hub of activity and learning. After Jean passed away in 1994, Joan seemed to double down with purpose and commitment, as though carrying on for both of them. Her approach to teaching is perhaps best described in her husband Forrest "Spike" Gathercoal's book, *The Judicious Music Teacher*, which was inspired by Jean and Joan's professional methods and dedication.

Just as Jean and Joan had a secret recipe for their magical shortbread cookies, the twins had a "recipe" of sorts for their motivational teaching. They used effective strategies to develop intrinsic motivation and the love of learning. In *The Judicious Music Teacher*, we are introduced to the learning theory behind Jean and Joan's methods and beliefs. Simply put, students develop intrinsic motivation if they are taught with a set of loosely defined guiding principles: mutual respect, encouragement, freedom, honesty, tolerance, responsibility, and equality. In a collaborative relationship of sharing, these principles are reciprocal and mutually beneficial for teacher and student. When a teacher and student work positively together, as opposed to the teacher acting as the only authority, core qualities such as integrity, confidence, trust, and conscientiousness start to take root and grow. The student's learning process, then, becomes based on her growing sense of responsibility, not on extrinsic values such as a desire for reward or praise. The teacher shares authority and empowers the student with the understanding, the skills, and the authority to make his own decisions and take ownership of his progress.

Developing a student's motivation to learn is one of our essential jobs as teachers. In *The Judicious Music Teacher*, Forrest Gathercoal explains, "a student's motivation is the result of two main forces: first, the student's expectation of reaching his or her goal and second, the value of that goal to him or her . . . motivation is tied to meaningfulness." Forrest goes on to apply this theory to a student's motivation to sit down at the piano and practice. Two questions must be answered by the student: 'If I practice, will I play well?' and 'If I play well, will that be valuable to me?' In Forrest's explanation, "If students believe the answer to either one of these questions is 'no,' there will be little or no motivation to practice. On the other hand, if students believe they have the ability to play well (they have high expectation of playing well) and if playing well is important to them (they see high value in playing well), then their motivation to practice will be strong. The intrinsic strategy to motivating students to practice is to help them believe that practicing leads to success in music and that musical ability is of value to them."

Carrying out this theory of intrinsic motivation in our teaching may not come naturally at first. I know this first-hand, through my first attempt to pass my love of music on to my own children. My son had a disastrous start with music lessons, (a disaster I blame entirely on myself). When Alexander turned four years old, I decided it was time

for him to learn the cello. My husband and friends had cautioned me about getting too involved, recommending I stand back and let his teacher do her job. Ignoring all warnings, I launched into my son's musical development with all my heart, taking charge of every practice session. I provided constant "constructive criticism," expressing my praise or disapproval at every moment—I knew best, I thought, and I had a comment for everything. This might have been a positive process if I had employed some of Joan's teaching methods.

But I didn't. My worst flaw was my tendency to transfer onto my young son the same level of expectation I had for the high achieving teenagers in my private piano studio. And so, in this climate of constant judgment and parental authority, my future Yo-Yo Ma started to shut down. I should have seen the writing on the wall when one night the whole family ended up in tears in a power struggle over *Twinkle Variations*. But did I lighten up? No. I dug in and our practicing became even more serious and intense. At last, during one of these joyless sessions, Alexander had finally had enough. Always an independent thinker, he got up from his stool and threw his little cello all the way across the room, breaking it in two. That was the end of that.

The cello tossing incident finally did the trick; I came to realize that teaching my own child would not be feasible. We gave the idea of music lessons a break for a year or so. Then I turned to Joan and asked her to work some magic. As a beginning piano student of Joan, Alexander's motivation changed before my eyes. I observed the theory of intrinsic motivation playing out in reality. Joan's approach, in contrast to the one I had adopted with Alexander, was entirely based on the sharing of responsibilities and mutual expectations between teacher and student.

During his first lessons, I sat outside the teaching studio in a cozy chair by the Gathercoal fireside. I could still hear enough of what was going on inside to know that Joan was establishing a collaborative relationship built on mutual respect and shared responsibility. Alexander was experiencing how it felt to be respected and valued as an equal partner. Soon he trusted Joan implicitly—he knew there would never be stress or power struggle in that room. He was not being judged. Joan always made time for conversation in the lessons. In her organized loose-leaf notebook of teaching materials (she provided one for every student), she inserted each week's new assignment and the goals they had discussed together in the lesson. Wondrously, one day at home Alexander talked to me about "his goals" in piano. He looked forward to the lessons, enjoyed practicing (usually), and had his favorite pieces (twenty years later, *Broken Record Boogie* still rings in my ears). Soon our daughter Elizabeth began lessons with Joan and, fortunately for Elizabeth, she was the recipient of Joan's motivational teaching from the beginning.

As an experienced teacher myself, with success especially with advanced students, I have found particular inspiration in Joan's approach to speaking with students—her

encouraging and effective word choice. Joan avoided simple judgment statements like "That was really good." Repeating such unspecific praise statements too often emphasizes a mindset for praise rather than for critical thinking. We want our students to reflect on our feedback. Instead of "that was really good," Joan would offer a focused observation: "You played with joy and power!" Browsing through Elizabeth's purple lesson notebook, I find reinforcing feedback like "You made the music come alive with all the dynamics!" and "You played with beautiful wrists!" In correcting mistakes in lessons, Joan would avoid simply saying "You aren't playing what's in the music here." Instead, she might ask "Does that sound right to you here?" or "What do you think if we tried it this way?" Joan always asked lots of questions to encourage a healthy collaboration like "How do you think we might make the sound sparkle here?" She was a master at phrasing questions that invited students to listen and think for themselves. Learning from Joan was a process of discovery.

Joan was my friend, mentor, and inspiration. She was a teacher not only for young piano learners, but for us all, and she didn't only spark motivation in her students—she spread it to everyone around her. I recall myself pondering Joan's effect on my own motivation to share music one afternoon many years ago, as I watched my daughter play a duet at one of Joan's studio recitals, which she called "Family Share Days." With her emphasis on "sharing" rather than performing music, Share Days were the outcome and joyous celebration of mutually shared responsibilities and goals between many, many students and their loving teacher.

Thinking back to that Share Day, and the many more hours I spent beside Joan witnessing her teach my children, seeking her wise advice on one or another musical, professional, or parenting challenge and, most recently, sharing music with her memory in my heart at her celebration of life, I finally understand that Joan was my teacher, too. She taught me, as a teacher, parent, and ever-learning pianist, how to share my love of music, both with myself and with the world. Isn't that the point, after all? Joan's profound goodness, her generous spirit, and her outstanding teaching methods can guide us all. Thank you, Joan.

The Digital Virus: Practicing in the Age of Distraction

by Daniel Immel

About Daniel

Daniel Immel, pianist, is currently Associate Professor of Music at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches teaches applied and class piano, as well courses in Music Appreciation and Film Music. He is a frequent lecturer for the "Know Your Symphony" Reading Symphony Lecture Series, and advocates for the performance practice of rarely-performed piano literature. He lives in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania and is wholeheartedly devoted to gym workouts, recreational sports, new tattoo designs, and his beloved Shih-tzu Samson.

As winter approaches, we are reminded of its cruel beauty; a season of pristine landscapes offset by early darkness, numbing cold, and the dreaded flu virus that announces its holiday presence. Medicine has proven to us in truth that viruses are immune to prescription assaults, as the germ invasion eludes even our best attempts to conquer it, and only "time" the proven cure. In the 21st century, the technological age has advanced beyond our capable imaginations, and with it, its accompanying complexity to render us hopelessly distracted. As pedagogues and pianists ourselves, we rely on years of tactical experience to solve our own digital illnesses, when the fingers lead us astray in the practice room or on the stage. However, are we facing a contagion that may be impervious to even the most insightful pedagogical medicine? Practicing in the "Age of Distraction" is proving to be a formidable virus in the digital world.

In 2017 approaching '18, our students today find themselves inundated with access to innumerable informational portals, from iPhones and iPads to iPods and iMacs. Ironically, the concept of "I" has all but vanished in a world of virtual reality and culture voyeurism. The newest generation of Millenials may also be deemed the "drive-thru" generation:

a generation which feeds on instantaneous responses to texts, chats and snaps, all of which have become arguably a newfound oxygen for survival. However, on the concert stage and in the practice room, survival is dependent on thorough preparation free from distraction, no matter its addictive allure. In facing this emergent pedagogical crisis, there are several tips to keep in mind in order to keep the virtual world from further infecting the digital roads we travel as pianists.

Phones Off . . . Period.

The acceptance of living in the age of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and other informational portals is inevitable; its ability to disrupt practice time is a participatory choice. We all have become impossibly "busy" with our lives, and our routines are hardly an exception. For many of us, time is a precious but elusive commodity in our chaotic culture. Yet, the *art* of practicing is just that-a painstaking journey that requires archery-like precision, and not one based on centrifugal motion. Years of performing, individual study and teaching for many of us have seduced us into taking for granted the digital intricacies and complexities that both the fingers and hands must execute, oftentimes with complicated choreography and/or impossible rates of speed to accompany them. Ringtones, alerts and notifications may be emotionally gratifying, but their metronomic presence ultimately deters from the rhythmic focus needed to cultivate excellence in a practice session.

Practice Makes PERMANENT, Not PERFECT.

One of my favorite quotes is from legendary Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi, who penned "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence." In a world of competitions, juries, auditions and recitals, the concept of perfection is the seemingly-inevitable rudder that propels the ship of artistic achievement and recognition ever-forward. Piano pedagogy, however advanced and blessed by the thousands of artists and icons to advance its purpose, is still faced with a cruel dichotomy in the 21st-century: the idea of training pianists to be "perfect," versus training them to be "artists," with the central understanding that the human flaw of imperfection is seated at the heart of our existence. Competition in our society has never been more keen, but its reputation in the music world as being pathologically-viral only increases with each passing calendar year. If ever there was a time to be exceptionally diligent to cultivating excellence in the performance-practice petri dish . . . that time is now.

The concept of *permanence* is also contextually misleading; its definition implies familiar and welcomed assurance; an old friend that provides shelter in moments of performance insecurity. Additionally, practice and its survival revolves around one fundamental concept: repetition. When I hear the statement "I'm going to practice" from my students, I encourage them to change their declamation to "I'm going to study." How many of us as

performers (and have watched our students suffer the same fate on occasion) have been unravelled in performance due to a passage or section of a piece not being *thoroughly* learned? Mindless repetition is a dangerous, and often deadly, endgame. I remind my students that our fingers have no allegiance to us whatsoever; they only obey the brain and what it instructs and guides them to accomplish. If the infection of distraction is allowed to enter the equation, no matter its source of origin, the virus permeates our fingers and hands, and we become prisoners to tactile memory.

I oftentimes use an analogical example with my students and ask them, "You have a brand-new Porsche. Your 9-year-old has informed you that he/she is taking it for a spin . . . would you let them?" After their incredulity has passed, they err on the side of rational logic and say "Absolutely not, they don't know how to drive!" As pianists, it is fundamentally critical to remember that we are always in control, and turning the keys of the car (the brain) over to inattentive children (the fingers) may result in tragic accidents down the proverbial musical road.

Theme and Variations: A Prescription for Time

As musicians, the conceptual theme of time is a continual presence in our metrical and musical lives. On stage, in the "practice" room, in rehearsal—it's crucial that it is well-spent. In general, the majority of students are overly-concerned (or proud of themselves) for how *much* time they spend in advancing their musical abilities and respective musical educations. An eternal battle is waged between quantity vs. quality. In amassing a certain number of hours and/or minutes, they have accomplished a benchmark goal, without realizing that four quarters of concentrated and focused study may be more valuable than one hundred pennies of forced and absentminded repetitive practice. In essence, this quantitative obsession supersedes the qualitative journey which yields the more reliable results when performances are given.

In discussion of the element of quality, there are a number of habits we may cultivate to ensure immunity from the virus of mindless repetition. Initially, when studying a new piece, it is advantageous to practice the most difficult parts of the piece first rather than the more "fun" or "favorite" sections of the music. Oftentimes, I have found that students are comparatively far more prepared on their preferred sections, rather than the ones that need the most examination and attention. It's the equivalent of the Facebook and Instagram "like": a psychological and self-induced "pat-on-the-back" from the brain's emotional pleasure center, which further blurs the line between *automation* and *involvement* when examining their preparation for lessons and subsequent performances.

Perhaps even more potentially-volatile in the repetition arena is the frequency factor. Repertoire may be practiced, studied and performed repetitively for weeks, or even months. The danger of studying one piece, or an entire program for an extended period

of time, lies in the encroachment of inevitable boredom. This mutation of the virus to inhabit the fingers is difficult to eradicate; we as humans prefer the attractiveness of novelty to our anachronous possessions.

In order to keep our digital mobile devices up to date, it's necessary to download useful new "apps" in order to prevent a system crash. The idea of *slow* practice is hardly exciting or even contagious among millennials. Students should be encouraged to practice difficult passages in different rhythms at various metronomic tempi. Moreover, students may experiment with the idea of practicing problematic spots in different articulations (staccato, legato, portato, etc . . .) than what's written.

A favorite teaching tool of mine is to have the student "shadow" the passage; in other words, execute the right hand as written, but only play the left hand on top of the keys without actual digital depression of the key, and then alternate hands. This proves difficult for the student, because the hands are accustomed to the "buddy" system to pull each other through the passage, rather than facing the independence truth serum that shadowing not only administers, but reveals.

As musicians, we find reliable hospitality in security, and often depend on it in performance situations. The frightening dilemma in the twenty-first century is that certain super-bugs are elusive to the last defenses of modern medicine. In the pianistic world, vaccinations are a formidable defense against the digital viruses of various distractions. Ultimately, the hands are tied together in marriage, in sickness and in health. Depending on the prescribed medicinal vows, we control the fate of how they both shall live.

2003 Address to the Parents of the Freshman Class

by Karl Paulnack

Committed to a diverse, comprehensive practice of collaborative musicianship as an artist/teacher for more than two decades, Karl Paulnack is currently Dean of the School of Music at Ithaca College. He served as Director of the Boston Conservatory's Music Division from 2002-2013. He also serves as music director and conductor of the Contemporary Opera Lab of Winnipeg, and is a faculty member of the Vancouver International Song Institute. Previously, he co-chaired the highly acclaimed accompanying and coaching department of the University of Minnesota, and served on the faculties of the Tanglewood Music Center, University of Southern California, Roundtop Festival, and Music Academy of the West. Dr. Paulnack began his academic career as faculty member at Ithaca from 1986 to 1997, where he developed the school's collaborative piano curriculum.

As an advocate for music and the arts, Dr. Paulnack is increasingly in demand as a keynote speaker and lecturer. His thoughts on music have been translated into six languages and appeared on well over 100,000 websites, in print publications such as the Christian Science Monitor, and in the program books of dozens of symphony orchestras and concert series around the world. Last spring, Linda Ronstadt read from his writings during her official testimony to the United States Congress on behalf of funding for the arts.

Dr. Paulnack holds a B.M. in piano performance from the Eastman School of Music, and the M.M. and D.M.A. degrees from the University of Southern California, where his teachers included Gwendolyn Koldofsky and Brooks Smith. He is also a graduate of the Boston University Institute for Non-Profit Management and Leadership. He is a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, which honored him in 2011 with the Signature Sinfonian award and National Honorary membership.

2003 Address to the Parents of the Freshman Class

The speech that follows was given as a welcome to the parents of new freshmen at the Boston Conservatory on August 28, 2003.

One of my parents' deepest fears, I suspect, is that society would not properly value me as a musician, that I wouldn't be appreciated. I had very good grades in high school, I was good in science and math, and they imagined that as a doctor or a research chemist or an engineer, I might be more appreciated than I would be as a musician. I still remember my mother's remark when I announced my decision to apply to music school—she said, "you're wasting your SAT scores!" On some level, I think, my parents were not sure themselves what the value of music was, what its purpose was. And they loved music: they listened to classical music all the time. They just weren't really clear about its function. So let me talk about that a little bit, because we live in a society that puts music in the "arts and entertainment" section of the newspaper, and serious music, the kind your kids are about to engage in, has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with entertainment, in fact it's the opposite of entertainment. Let me talk a little bit about music, and how it works.

One of the first cultures to articulate how music really works were the ancient Greeks. And this is going to fascinate you: the Greeks said that music and astronomy were two sides of the same coin. Astronomy was seen as the study of relationships between observable, permanent, external objects, and music was seen as the study of relationships between invisible, internal, hidden objects. Music has a way of finding the big, invisible moving pieces inside our hearts and souls and helping us figure out the position of things inside us. Let me give you some examples of how this works.

One of the most profound musical compositions of all time is the *Quartet for the End of Time* written by French composer Olivier Messiaen in 1940. Messiaen was 31 years old when France entered the war against Nazi Germany. He was captured by the Germans in June of 1940 and imprisoned in a prisoner-of-war camp.

He was fortunate to find a sympathetic prison guard who gave him paper and a place to compose, and fortunate to have musician colleagues in the camp, a cellist, a violinist, and a clarinetist. Messiaen wrote his quartet with these specific players in mind. It was performed in January 1941 for four thousand prisoners and guards in the prison camp. Today it is one of the most famous masterworks in the repertoire.

Given what we have since learned about life in the Nazi camps, why would anyone in his right mind waste time and energy writing or playing music? There was barely enough energy on a good day to find food and water, to avoid a beating, to stay warm, to escape torture—why would anyone bother with music? And yet—even from the concentration camps, we have poetry, we have music, we have visual art; it wasn't just this one fanatic Messiaen; many, many people created art. Why? Well, in a place where people are only focused on survival, on the bare necessities, the obvious conclusion is that art must be, somehow, essential for life. The camps were without money, without hope, without com-

2003 Address to the Parents of the Freshman Class

merce, without recreation, without basic respect, but they were not without art. Art is part of survival; art is part of the human spirit, an unquenchable expression of who we are. Art is one of the ways in which we say, "I am alive, and my life has meaning."

In September of 2001 I was a resident of Manhattan. On the morning of September 12, 2001 I reached a new understanding of my art and its relationship to the world. I sat down at the piano that morning at 10 AM to practice as was my daily routine; I did it by force of habit, without thinking about it. I lifted the cover on the keyboard, and opened my music, and put my hands on the keys and took my hands off the keys. And I sat there and thought, does this even matter? Isn't this completely irrelevant? Playing the piano right now, given what happened in this city yesterday, seems silly, absurd, irreverent, pointless. Why am I here? What place has a musician in this moment in time? Who needs a piano player right now? I was completely lost.

And then I, along with the rest of New York, went through the journey of getting through that week. I did not play the piano that day, and in fact I contemplated briefly whether I would ever want to play the piano again. And then I observed how we got through the day.

At least in my neighborhood, we didn't shoot hoops or play Scrabble. We didn't play cards to pass the time, we didn't watch TV, we didn't shop, we most certainly did not go to the mall. The first organized activity that I saw in New York, on the very evening of September 11th, was singing. People sang. People sang around fire houses, people sang "We Shall Overcome." Lots of people sang America the Beautiful. The first organized public event that I remember was the Brahms Requiem, later that week, at Lincoln Center, with the New York Philharmonic. The first organized public expression of grief, our first communal response to that historic event, was a concert. That was the beginning of a sense that life might go on. The US Military secured the airspace, but recovery was led by the arts, and by music in particular, that very night.

From these two experiences, I have come to understand that music is not part of "arts and entertainment" as the newspaper section would have us believe. It's not a luxury, a lavish thing that we fund from leftovers of our budgets, not a plaything or an amusement or a pass time. Music is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can't with our minds.

Some of you may know Samuel Barber's heart wrenchingly beautiful piece Adagio for Strings. If you don't know it by that name, then some of you may know it as the background music which accompanied the Oliver Stone movie Platoon, a film about the Vietnam War. If you know that piece of music either way, you know it has the ability to crack your heart open like a walnut; it can make you cry over sadness you didn't know you had. Music can slip beneath our conscious reality to get at what's really going on inside us the way a good therapist does.

2003 Address to the Parents of the Freshman Class

Very few of you have ever been to a wedding where there was absolutely no music. There might have been only a little music, there might have been some really bad music, but with few exceptions there is some music. And something very predictable happens at weddings—people get all pent up with all kinds of emotions, and then there's some musical moment where the action of the wedding stops and someone sings or plays the flute or something. And even if the music is lame, even if the quality isn't good, predictably 30 or 40 percent of the people who are going to cry at a wedding cry a couple of moments after the music starts. Why? The Greeks. Music allows us to move around those big invisible pieces of ourselves and rearrange our insides so that we can express what we feel even when we can't talk about it. Can you imagine watching Indiana Jones or Superman or Star Wars with the dialogue but no music? What is it about the music swelling up at just the right moment in ET so that all the softies in the audience start crying at exactly the same moment? I guarantee you if you showed the movie with the music stripped out, it wouldn't happen that way. The Greeks. Music is the understanding of the relationship between invisible internal objects.

I'll give you one more example, the story of the most important concert of my life. I must tell you I have played a little less than a thousand concerts in my life so far. I have played in places that I thought were important. I like playing in Carnegie Hall; I enjoyed playing in Paris; it made me very happy to please the critics in St. Petersburg. I have played for people I thought were important; music critics of major newspapers, foreign heads of state. The most important concert of my entire life took place in a nursing home in a small Midwestern town a few years ago.

I was playing with a very dear friend of mine who is a violinist. We began, as we often do, with Aaron Copland's Sonata, which was written during World War II and dedicated to a young friend of Copland's, a young pilot who was shot down during the war. Now we often talk to our audiences about the pieces we are going to play rather than providing them with written program notes. But in this case, because we began the concert with this piece, we decided to talk about the piece later in the program and to just come out and play the music without explanation.

Midway through the piece, an elderly man seated in a wheelchair near the front of the concert hall began to weep. This man, whom I later met, was clearly a soldier—even in his 70's, it was clear from his buzz-cut hair, square jaw and general demeanor that he had spent a good deal of his life in the military. I thought it a little bit odd that someone would be moved to tears by that particular movement of that particular piece, but it wasn't the first time I've heard crying in a concert and we went on with the concert and finished the piece.

When we came out to play the next piece on the program, we decided to talk about both the first and second pieces, and we described the circumstances in which the Copland was written and mentioned its dedication to a downed pilot. The man in the front of

the audience became so disturbed that he had to leave the auditorium. I honestly figured that we would not see him again, but he did come backstage afterwards, tears and all, to explain himself.

What he told us was this:

> "During World War II, I was a pilot, and I was in an aerial combat situation where one of my team's planes was hit. I watched my friend bail out, and watched his parachute open, but the Japanese planes which had engaged us returned and machine gunned across the parachute cords so as to separate the parachute from the pilot, and I watched my friend drop away into the ocean, realizing that he was lost. I have not thought about this for many years, but during that first piece of music you played, this memory returned to me so vividly that it was as though I was reliving it. I didn't understand why this was happening, why now, but then when you came out to explain that this piece of music was written to commemorate a lost pilot, it was a little more than I could handle. How does the music do that? How did it find those feelings and those memories in me?"

Remember the Greeks: music is the study of invisible relationships between internal objects. The concert in the nursing home was the most important work I have ever done. For me to play for this old soldier and help him connect, somehow, with Aaron Copland, and to connect their memories of their lost friends, to help him remember and mourn his friend, this is my work. This is why music matters.

What follows is part of the talk I will give to this year's freshman class when I welcome them a few days from now. The responsibility I will charge your sons and daughters with is this:

> "If we were a medical school, and you were here as a med student practicing appendectomies, you'd take your work very seriously because you would imagine that some night at two AM someone is going to waltz into your emergency room and you're going to have to save their life. Well, my friends, someday at 8 PM someone is going to walk into your concert hall and bring you a mind that is confused, a heart that is overwhelmed, a soul that is weary. Whether they go out whole again will depend partly on how well you do your craft."

You're not here to become an entertainer, and you don't have to sell yourself. The truth is you don't have anything to sell; being a musician isn't about dispensing a product, like selling used cars. I'm not an entertainer; I'm a lot closer to a paramedic,

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a firefighter, a rescue worker. You're here to become a sort of therapist for the human soul, a spiritual version of a chiropractor, physical therapist, someone who works with our insides to see if they get things to line up, to see if we can come into harmony with ourselves and be healthy and happy and well.

Frankly, ladies and gentlemen, I expect you not only to master music; I expect you to save the planet. If there is a future wave of wellness on this planet, of harmony, of peace, of an end to war, of mutual understanding, of equality, of fairness, I don't expect it will come from a government, a military force or a corporation. I no longer even expect it to come from the religions of the world, which together seem to have brought us as much war as they have peace. If there is a future of peace for humankind, if there is to be an understanding of how these invisible, internal things should fit together, I expect it will come from the artists, because that's what we do. As in the concentration camp and the evening of 9/11, the artists are the ones who might be able to help us with our internal, invisible lives."

First, Motivation and Music
Then Piano Anatomy 101

The Action Cavity and the Damper Action

by Susan Kline, Registered Piano Technician

About the Author

Susan Kline, a piano technician living near Corvallis, studied at Oberlin and at UT/Austin. She has a Masters degree in applied cello. She played in the Hamilton Philharmonic (Ontario), then did two sabbatical replacement jobs on the Canadian prairies. In 1978, she attended George Brown College's Piano Technology course in Toronto. After 12 years of sweaty piano work in Stockton, California, she happily moved to Philomath, Oregon. She tunes for most concerts and festivals in the area. She has written a series of articles for *Piano Technicians Journal.*

How to motivate oneself?
How to motivate one's students?

Probably candor is in order here—how else could I say anything worth reading? Never mind the embarrassment; one survives it.

See the short bio—I started my musical life as a cellist. The question of practicing was a sore point between me and my up-tight mother. My natural curiosity and enjoyment of accomplishment tended to be swamped by some really well-developed passive-aggression. My sense of guilt about not practicing enough was quite striking, but my work habits—well, actually, they were a lot better than I thought at the time. Away at college, I worked better, of course. I never self-identified as diligent, even if I often acted that way. I ended up playing very well.

Ego in teens and early twenties is a great motivator, but it moved me in the wrong direction, toward a solo career to which I was physically and temperamentally unsuited. Failure to self-identify as diligent and having poor physical energy under stress are not compatible with enjoying performing in public, even if I managed to soldier on adequately. Having unresolved psychological issues about practicing (now sorted out) was a severe problem when teaching children. Even if I knew just how to explain things, it didn't matter, since I couldn't get them motivated to practice enough, let alone to practice

well. I refused to bully them. Watching some good teachers and seeing how their students could still be individuals while practicing steadily without disliking it made me realize that I should step aside.

Photo 1: Susan Kline, 1970s, young, slender, attempting the impossible

Fast forward about seven years. I needed steady work! Even if I had found a steady orchestra job or a university job which wasn't just filling in as a sabbatical replacement, they would not have been a good fit for me. At my wits' end, I found the piano tuning course, had one sleepless night, and never looked back. My self-identification was instantly and effortlessly transformed. Suddenly, working my head off seemed completely natural. If asked, I would have said that I took up piano work because I needed a dependable income, which doesn't sound all that idealistic. In point of fact, the instrument is fascinating, good piano work is needed by a lot of very nice people, and I soaked it up like I was born to it. In piano work, there is always more to explore and more ways to do things better. The concert tunings here are far enough apart that I don't burn out, but I get to tune for truly world class pianists. I get to be as meticulous as I possibly can be, and I get thanked.

Rule one for motivation in music: Choose a field of endeavor which you really adore. Don't let yourself stay trapped by getting stuck in something which isn't working for you—we only live once. In retrospect, a B.Mus. and M.Mus. in cello performance are pretty useless degrees. If you play well enough, you don't need them, and if you don't play well enough, it doesn't help to have them. However, they were an excellent preparation for becoming a piano technician.

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Back to the Grand Piano

We're moving on to a part of the piano seldom seen by pianists—the action cavity. When the action and keys are slid out (without breaking off hammers) and are carefully moved elsewhere, the place they have vacated is called the action cavity. The floor of it is called the keybed (because the key frame rests on it.) On the right side, as you may remember from our exploration of how to get pencils out of pianos, is the return spring for the shift (left) pedal.

Photo 2: Return Spring, Dag, and Keybed Glide Insert

Always an exception: there are just a few grand pianos where the return spring is on the left and the keys shift to the left instead of the right when the soft pedal is pressed.

On the left side (except for the left-spring oddballs) is a slender block with cushioning action cloth on the side of it. This determines the rest position for the action once the return spring has—returned it. It has a shallow bevel at the front which helps locate the action as it is being slid back in.

Photo 3: Rest Block

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On the keybed toward the back are several little blocks called dags. You can see one in the first photo. They hold the back side of the action down. On some fancy European brands they have a screw which can be turned in and out, which sets how far back the action will go, but mainly they just hold the back rail of the keyframe down. Graphite keeps the action from squeaking as the shift pedal slides it left and right past the dags.

Another good place for graphite is the round hardwood inserts in the keybed where the glides—glide. You can see one in the first photo.

If anyone has very, very good long-term memory you may recall the glides on the bottom of the balance rail of the keyframe? They can set the height of the action, and they affect how deep the keys will dip. And some notes can click if the glides are not all set up to contact the keybed in just the same way. Well, the glides are very slippery and smooth on the bottom dome-shaped side, but they can still make a noise during the soft pedal shift. Therefore the hardwood inserts (end grain, very dense and smooth) can have a little bit of graphite put on the area where the glides contact. One can easily see where that is. I rub a 6B very soft pencil on them. This place is intended to receive only dry lubricant, never anything greasy, which can get gummy and slow down the return of the action after the soft pedal is released. If the action is sluggish returning from the shift position, (or worse, if it actually gets stuck), one pulls out the action, thoroughly cleans the keybed removing any inappropriate lubrication, dusts it with talcum powder, and then one marks the contact points for the glides with the 6B pencil.

Now, exactly how does that soft pedal manage to move the action and keys to the side? Well, there's a hole through the keybed, and the end of the shift lever sticks through it.

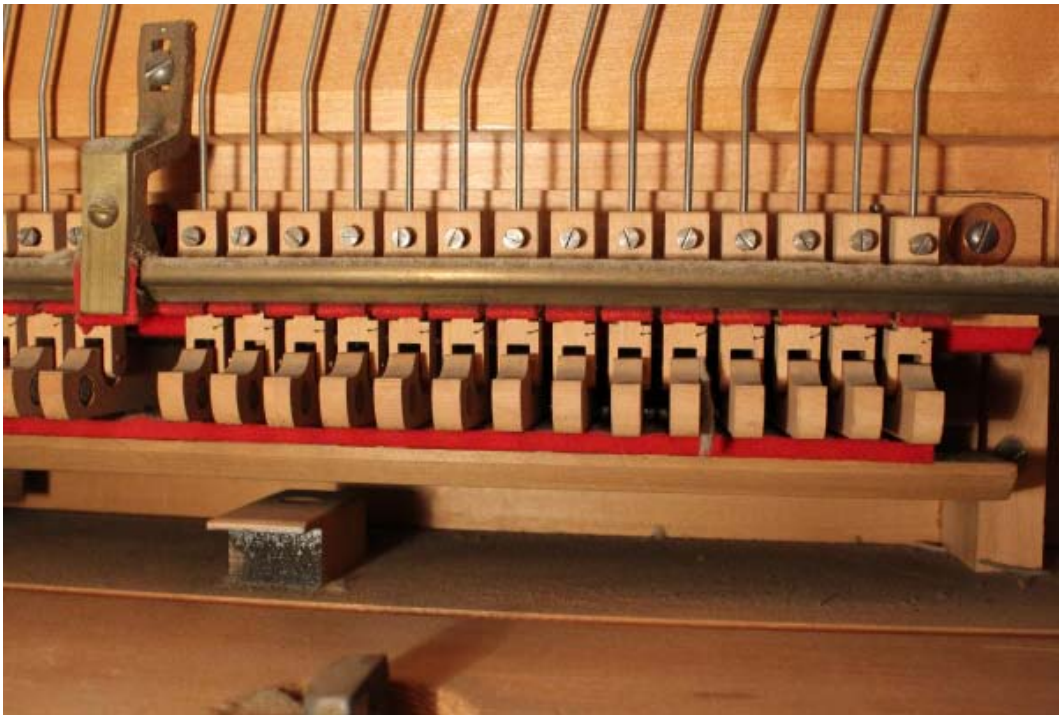

Photo 4: Top End of Shift Lever, Right Damper Tray Support Block, and Damper Up Stop Rail

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This end of the (cast iron) shift lever gets wedged sideways by the soft pedal, and it pushes on part of the action frame just behind the balance rail, which moves the whole thing sideways. The motion is exactly sideways because the keyblocks have brass inserts which go over the guide pins on the ends of the front rail. Possibly you remember the keyblocks and their brass inserts? It's another great place to make the soft pedal noisy, because the contact is metal on metal. Very thick greasy lubricant is used there.

Photo 5: Steinway Keyblocks Showing Brass Inserts

You possibly also remember that there are fairly shallow holes in the keybed and short dowels coming from the bottom of the keyblocks which make sure they are correctly located.

What limits the distance that the action shifts when you use the soft pedal? The amount of shift distance allowed is determined by what one might call a stop screw, either on the right side of the action cavity or on the left side of the right keyblock. Turning the screw in or out changes the distance the action is able to go before it is stopped by pressing against the screw head.

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Photo 6: Baldwin Right Keyblock with a Screw to Adjust the Shift Distance

Notice how much of what we're talking about deals with the location of the action. Locating a piano action and keys and dampers and keyblocks and all the rest of it is done in the factory, and it is called forefinishing. Forefinishing is one place where Steinways (and some other traditionally built pianos) and Asian pianos differ the most. Steinways are individuals mostly because each rim is a little bit different, and placing the action and keys and key blocks and fallboard and the back action is done individually, to get everything to work. It's a real art, doing this acceptably, let alone well. Asians (especially the Japanese) are very fond of planning everything ahead of time and making all the parts and geometry totally identical. If you are putting the action and keys back into a Japanese grand piano, and you just push them in as far as they will go, they will generally end up where they should be. The Steinway action has to be located by the keyblocks, as I described in the last article, instead of just being pushed in as far as it will go. In return for this fuss (and the cost of setting up the slightly different pianos one by one in the factory) one gets instruments which are individuals, each with a different feeling and flavor and tone.

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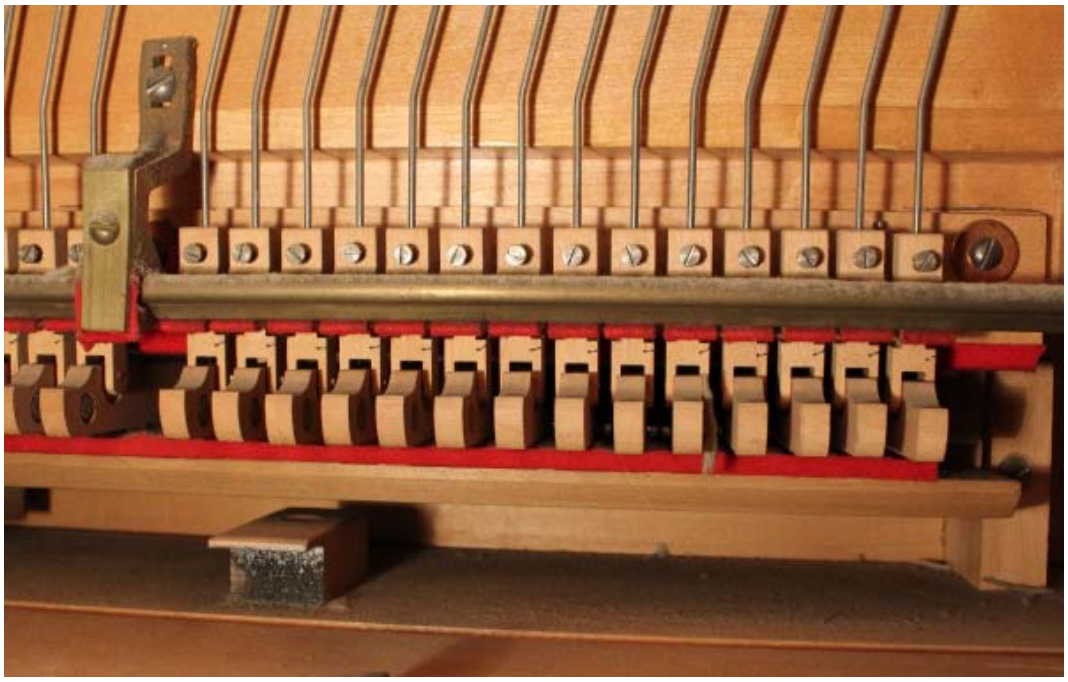

Looking at Photo 4 Again . . .

At the back of the action cavity is the damper assembly, sometimes called the back action. If you like geometry and did well at it in school, you'll love the back action and damper regulation! When I talked about the soundboard and the strings and bridges and all that, we dealt with the dampers and the different kinds of damper felt for trichords, bichords, and singles (monochords.) Well, now we're going underneath to see the rest of the dampers instead of just the heads.

In photo 4, notice the damper tray, which lifts all the dampers together when the right pedal is used. Behind the damper wires, you can see a long rail with thick red felt on the bottom side. It's the one held on by the big screw and washer to the right. There's a slot behind the washer so that its height can be adjusted. You can see its red felt to the right of the dampers. This is called the damper up-stop rail. It is set so that when someone is playing and pedaling very hard, the dampers don't fly up too far. If a piano is played hard most of the time, the damper up-stop rail can get pushed upwards. Action parts can even clang against the sostenuto rail (more later about the sostenuto.) The best fix for this is to install a block of scrap hammer felt above the right pedal trapwork, so that the full force of the pedal can't push the dampers too far up. Tuners sometimes call this kind of problem "Gospel Damage."

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Photo 7: Back Action—Pitman, Damper Guide Rail, Bottom of Pinblock, Treble Dampers on Strings, and the Sostenuto Rail Just Above the Red Tabs. See the Offset Bends in the Damper Wires.

Now notice the black piece of wood coming through the keybed, which pushes up the tray. It is not usual to have this attached to the tray with a hinge pin, like it is in this 1934 Baldwin. It is usually a round dowel of wood or sometimes brass, and it is called the pitman. In many pianos, especially Steinways, the top end rests in a little depression in the bottom of the damper tray. Sometimes it has a short pin which goes into a hole in the bottom of the damper tray. The bottom end, out of sight, either rests in a small depression on top of the trapwork lever, or there's a little hole in the top of the right pedal trapwork for its pin. We'll explore the external pedal system in a later article.

Emergency Intervention After A Grand Piano Has Been Moved

So, you push down on the right pedal. The trap lever and the pitman go up. This raises the damper tray, and therefore all the damper parts which rest on it, and then the dampers are lifted from all the strings at once. You take your foot off the pedal, and gravity and various springs return the dampers to the strings. Well, this is what should happen, and most of the time it is what does happen. However, if the piano has been moved, which means it has been put on its side and sometimes has been subjected to some jolting in the truck, the pitman can sometimes end up diagonal instead of vertical. The top end

has come out of its little depression, and it jams the damper tray so all the dampers are always off the strings. If the piano has been moved right before a concert, this constitutes an emergency.

Hopefully, I or one of my colleagues will be on hand, only sometimes we're not. No guarantees, but this is a problem which a determined and well-informed pianist may be able to fix.

1. Get down on the floor, between the right leg and the pedal lyre so you have access to the trapwork above the right pedal.

2. Look with a flashlight, and slide your hand along the top of the trapwork lever, to find the dowel sticking up through the keybed (the pitman.) There's often a coil spring or leaf spring too, but it's usually a couple of inches away from the pitman.

3. If the pitman seems to be at a diagonal angle, take hold of it, and grope around by feel to see if you can get the top of it (out of sight) into the hole in the bottom of the damper tray. (It sometimes is greasy or has graphite on it—your hand may get dirty.)

You'll know if you get it right. You'll feel the pitman going into the hole, there will be a little whump noise, the pitman will now be vertical, and the sympathetic vibration from the undamped strings will quiet down. And you will definitely be the hero of the day. (This is weird, but I have encountered it twice: if the pitman has a coil spring AROUND IT, and the damper pedal feels way too easy to push down, the movers have screwed up. You need a piano technician to take the spring off the pitman, put the pitman back where it belongs, and the coil spring back where it belongs, too.)

One small factoid: the area behind the action to the right of the damper tray is prime real estate for a mouse nest.

Now, let's consider why you never want to risk bending the damper wires.

Looking at photo 7 (and photo 4, and photo 9), note the small side-to-side offset bent into the damper wires. This is because the spacing of the dampers is not the same as the spacing of the keys. Damper wire adjustment is an exercise in three dimensions. The damper head (the part you can see when you play your piano) has to be lined up with the strings. It has to be the right distance from the hole in the guide rail, so it's centered over the strings. It must come off the strings exactly straight, instead of wanting to twist. It has to be square to the strings, so the front or back does not contact the strings first. When it rises, it has to go up exactly vertically, instead of at an angle. If the side bends aren't exactly right, with both the right and left bends exactly the same, inserting the wire into its flange will make the whole wire slant, so it will bind in the guide rail when the damper rises. The dampers all have to rise off the strings at exactly the same time, none early, none late.

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There's an old Steinway joke: the factory has the grand damper department on the first floor so that when the workers get so frustrated they jump out the window they won't get hurt. (I have no idea whether the Steinway damper department is on the first floor . . .)

Part Names

The lowest action part, with the lead weight in it, is called the underlever. In photo 4, just to the left of the break, you can see the lead weight. The underlever is attached to the damper rail by the under lever flange (to the rear, out of sight). The lead weights can sometimes get loose and then you can hear a click, which is difficult to locate but easy to fix. Some pianos also have leaf springs pushing down on the tops of some of the underlevers (usually for the bass note dampers.) While it is fairly difficult to remove an underlever, it is harder yet to get out the older ones which were glued to the damper rail instead of having flange screws. However, they can usually be popped loose without damage, and then glued back in once repaired.

The short vertical part with the damper wire going into it is called a top flange. A screw goes through a threaded brass insert to secure the damper wire. Too loose and the damper sometimes won't lift; too tight and the damper head twists and has to be straightened, or worse, a dent is made in the wire making removal difficult, or the threads can even be ruined. Halfway up the top flange is the sostenuto tab, the part caught by the middle pedal's sostenuto rail. Older tabs were rigid but most now open so they can be pushed downward by the sostenuto rail as the damper rises. These new style tabs have little springs to return them to the closed position when the sostenuto rail is out of the way.

Exploring Various Sostenuto Pedal Mysteries

Most new pianos now come with the middle pedal properly regulated, but I've found many sostenuto pedals mis-adjusted and therefore not working. A surprising number of pianists don't know how to use the middle pedal. There are a few grands without a true sostenuto pedal. The usual alternative is a bass sustaining pedal, which works like the right pedal but only affects the bass section. Anyway, I apologize to the many piano teachers who know all about the sostenuto pedal, because I'm going to explain how it is used.

What I usually hear is, "The middle pedal isn't working. I push it down and nothing happens." Well, it's not supposed to do anything unless some keys are being held down. It catches and holds up whichever dampers are already raised, and it leaves the rest alone.

To evaluate the middle pedal, see if it passes the following tests:

1. Press down the middle pedal when no dampers are up. Nothing should happen, and especially there should be no jamming and it should not raise any dampers.

2. Hold down the right pedal and press the middle pedal, then, holding down the middle pedal, release the right pedal. All the dampers should be held up.

When you release the middle pedal, they should all go back down in a kind of staggered manner which I've heard described as being like rainfall. One doesn't want them to go back down as a single whomp noise, but luckily they usually don't. One little quirk: sometimes the right pedal doesn't raise all of the dampers quite far enough for every one to be caught, yet when the notes not caught are played by the keys, the sostenuto pedal can hold them up. This counts as a properly working middle pedal, since when playing music you'll use the pedal to hold up the dampers of the notes you are playing with the keys.

3. Play a chord, and while holding the keys down, press down the middle pedal, then let go of the keys. The dampers for the chord should be caught and held off the strings. When using the middle pedal while playing music, you time the middle pedal for after you play the notes you want it to hold, and before you let go of them.

Then, the critical last rule, and in some ways the most important is:

4. Press down the middle pedal, and, holding it down, play every note HARD. Be sure that none of the dampers are caught.

The sostenuto rail is round in cross section, but it has a pointed ridge, slightly curved upward, sticking out. At rest this ridge angles downwards at about 45 degrees. It is in front of the damper tabs and it doesn't touch them. So, what happens is that the sostenuto rail rotates when the middle pedal is pushed. Ideally, it barely clears the damper tabs for the notes not being played (going over them), but ends up underneath the ones which have been raised. When the key is released the damper tries to go back down, but the ridge of the rail is in the way of the tab, and that holds it up so the note keeps sounding without your having to keep the key pressed down. This leaves you free to do all sorts of fancy playing while the chord or single note is still held, but none of your filigree blurs like it would if you used the right pedal, except notes which have sympathetic vibration with the chord or note you are holding. (Well, nothing in life is perfect . . .)

Once the middle pedal is holding some dampers up, when you play any other notes, the dampers rise, but the front part of the tabs press against the bottom of the sostenuto rail's ridge, slide open, and therefore aren't jammed and aren't caught. IF the tabs and the rail are the right places!

Many things can go wrong. If the damper wires have a little bend front to back, some of the tabs may be too far forward (so they jam against the rail when the pedal is pressed down, despite the dampers not being lifted.) Or some are too far back, so that the rail can't catch them. The rail itself may be too far forward, too far back, too low, or too high. It may be a combination of these, and different in different registers. The pedal itself can have the

usual noises. It can lift too far or not far enough. The rail itself is held on by metal brackets, with cloth or teflon bushings to keep them quiet. If one or more of these bushings are missing, a quite incredible jangling racket can result, which cannot be found without removing the action and knowing what to look for.

Otherwise fairly adequate piano technicians can be poor or even clueless about sostenuto pedal adjustments, just because there is so little call for them.

Some sostenuto pedals are easier to adjust than others. New York Steinway (and ONLY New York Steinway) still attaches the sostenuto rail to the action stack itself.

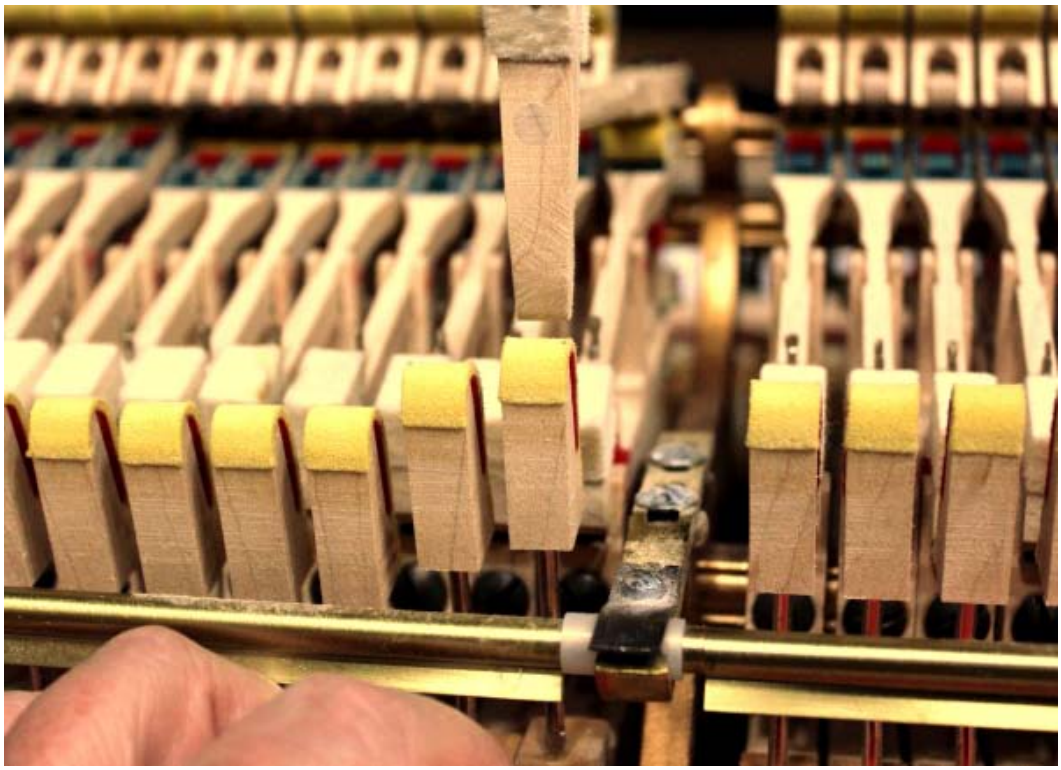


Photo 8: Steinway Sostenuto Rail, Mounted on the Action Stack

Therefore, any adjustments have to the done with the rail and action out of the piano, then tested in the piano, then adjusted, then tested, etc. There is a jig to help determine how high the sostenuto rail ought to be, by putting it on the keybed in front of the damper tabs themselves and setting the height. It's also possible, though difficult, to remove a couple of dampers and look down with the action inside the piano to see how far from the tabs the sostenuto rail is.

Since I've explained how to remove and replace a Steinway action, there is one warning I should share: the Steinway middle pedal works by having a dowel, like the pitman, going through the keybed. It pushes up a part called the monkey, which is mounted on the

action and which rotates the sostenuto rail. Well, this dowel is intended to sit at rest with the top exactly flush with the keybed. If you manage to press down the middle pedal while the action is out, the dowel will end up protruding about 1/3 of an inch, and the action will jam against it when you put it back in. It can be pressed back down easily enough, but only if you are aware of the possibility that it may need to be.

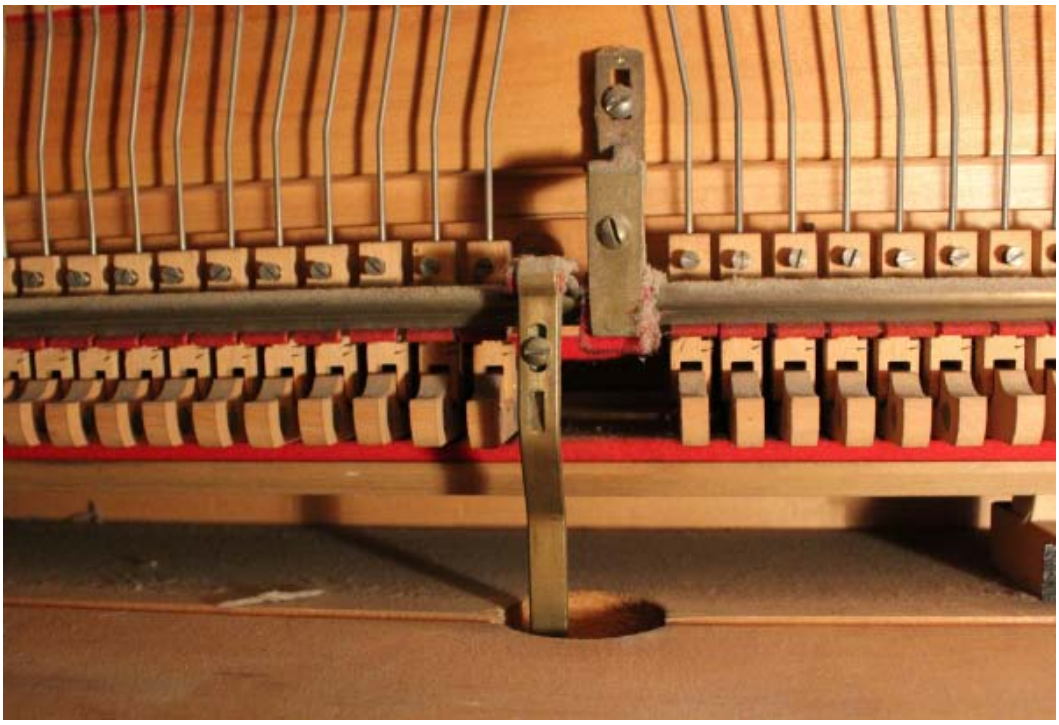
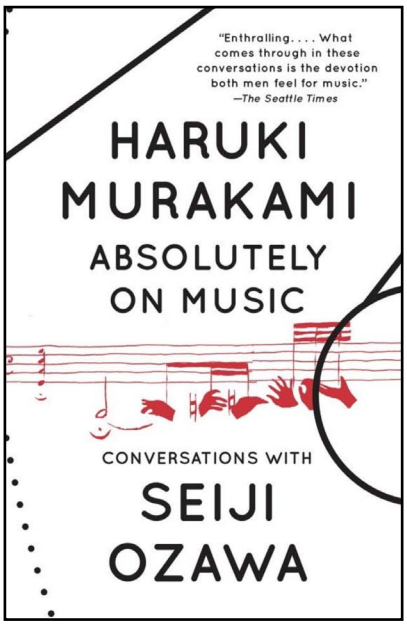


Photo 9: Non-Steinway Style Sostenuto Rail

Other brands are far easier. They mount the sostenuto rail to the belly, as seen in photo 9. So one can push the middle and right pedals, see how the rail clears or doesn't, and adjust the rail, the pedal lift, and the tabs as needed, all without the action being in the way.

And I hope this hasn't been total overkill in describing what's lurking in there. Next time we can explore the pedal lyre and the trapwork above it, as seen from underneath the piano.

Baxter's Bookshelf



Haruki Murakami's book, *Absolutely on Music: Conversations with Seiji Ozawa,* is a gentle, appealing book that makes you feel as though you were present during the conversations. The narrator and Mr. Ozawa discuss a vast array of topics from highly detailed and nuanced specific performances to memories and reflections. The nature of artistic interpretation and the deep ways in which it can vary run through the series of discussions.

The Poet Speaks

by Donna Henderson

Donna's poem humorously highlights that the motivation must come from within!

Do you brush after every meal?

Do you floss at least once a day? Do you recycle all bottles, cans, aluminum foil, paper, magazines, plastic jugs (do you remove the tops?) asceptic containers? Do you flatten your cardboard? Do you take old paint, fluorescent bulbs, garden chemicals, batteries (do you use only rechargeables?) to a Hazmat Disposal Site? Do you remember to stand up straight? Do you tithe ten percent of your income to feed the poor? Do you meditate an hour a day, even better two? Do you do weight-bearing exercise? Do you eat at least three servings a week of oily fish? Do you avoid overfished species? Do you test your smoke alarm batteries on a regular basis? Have you replaced all incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents? Do you use an interdental brush also? Do you contact your elected officials on important bills? Do you keep the fridge set no higher than 40, the freezer at zero or below? Do you screen your mutual funds for social responsibility? Do you examine your breasts every 30 days? Have you completed an Advance Directive? Does someone know where it is? Do you replace your spices every 6 months or so? Do you turn off the water heater when you leave for more than 2 days? Do you wash your hands for at least 15 seconds after using the toilet? Do you rotate your tires every 1500 miles? Do you walk at a brisk pace for 30 minutes each day? Do you avoid polycarbonate, polystyrene and PVC containers for use with food? Do you keep the heat in the house no higher than 68 degrees? Do you use your own bags? Do you apply sunscreen of at least SPF15 before exposure, even on hazy days? Do you deadhead your annuals? Do you drink at least eight glasses of water a day? Do you keep the feeders filled? Do you send birthday cards to your siblings, grandchildren, children, nieces, nephews, inlaws and closest friends? Do you send the kids checks with their birthday cards? Do you stretch after every run? Do you crosscut shred all mail? Do you mulch? And prune? Do you keep the canned goods stored in a cool and dry location? Do you use a low-flow showerhead? Do you check the labels for transfats, sugars, BGH, gluten and GMOs? Do you replace the potting soil of your houseplants each spring? Do you pre-pay your taxes on a quarterly basis? Do you keep the spaces between the planks clear of leaves and debris? Do you air and dryclean your woolens to keep them free of moths? Do you discard all expired prescriptions? Do you wrap rosebushes in burlap before a freeze? Do you save receipts? Do you use rubber gloves? Do you contribute the annual maximum to your IRA? Do you take calcium, magnesium and a multivitamin supplement? Do you sterilize the sponges? Do you always use the fan? Have you updated your will? Do you turn off the lights when you leave the room? Do you store oil and tea away from light and strong odors? Do you keep the garden tools clean and free of rust? Do you read all the instructions before use or assembly? Do you wait for sales? Did you read it through thoroughly before signing it? Do you limit your intake of wine to a single 5-oz glass a day? Do you do the back exercises prescribed for you each morning and evening? *Think of how little time it takes out of your day, and how important it is to do.*