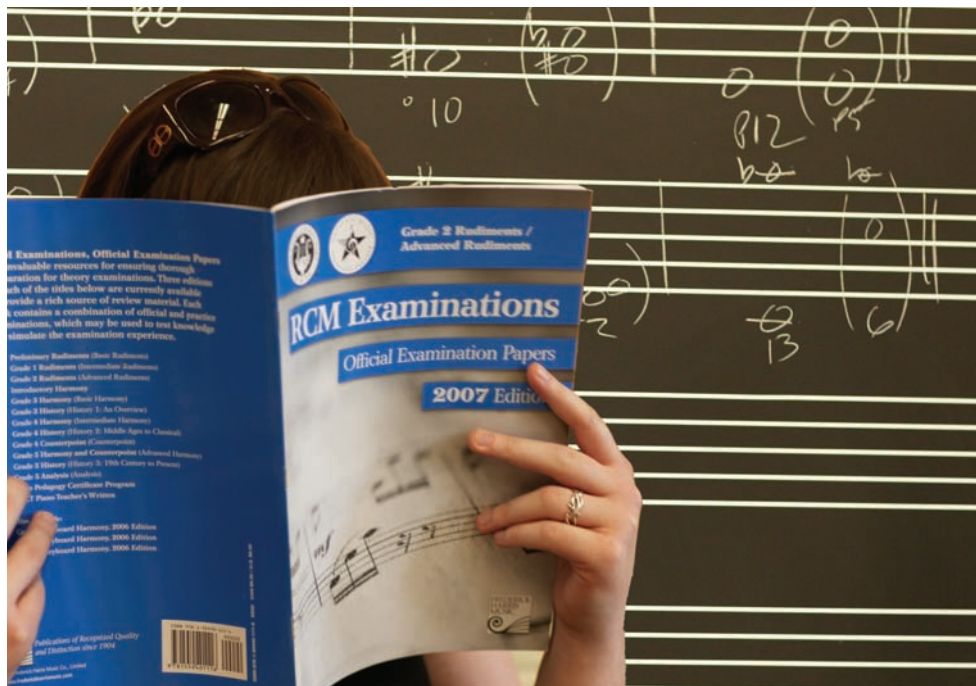


MUSIC MATTERS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR MUSIC TEACHERS

MARCH-APRIL 2010



Not Just in Theory: Making the Most of the Practical Lesson

By Dr. Janet Lopinski, Chief Examiner Emeritus, Faculty Member of The Royal Conservatory

In order to become effective and inspiring teachers who make a real difference in the lives of our students, we must constantly search for new ways to nurture their artistic development, while at the same time ensuring that they are developing the skills necessary to play their chosen instrument. While there are many diverse approaches, successful music teachers generally exhibit certain common traits: they are dedicated and committed to their work as pedagogues, knowledgeable and well-informed on the subject they are teaching, and excited and passionate about sharing their experience. They are also patient and genuinely interested in the students they are teaching, and have developed creative strategies to communicate with them effectively.

One of the greatest challenges that must be faced by even the most inspired teachers is the very real problem of time management. How can we possibly cover all the bases in a thirty-minute lesson? We need to work on the physical aspects of playing the instrument, on developing

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You Asked

My student mailed in their exam registration form. What happens next?

Candidates submitting their registrations by mail or fax will receive an email within two weeks confirming registration. An examination schedule, with the exact date and time, will be mailed to these candidates three to four weeks prior to the start of the examination session.

The Royal Conservatory
The finest instrument is the mind.



musical literacy, on building musicianship skills, and on bringing out the creativity and artistry that lies within each of our students. It requires super-human organizational skills to fit in a technical workout and fundamental musicianship skills including aural development and sight reading along with a review of repertoire and studies, and still have time to touch on music theory before the next student arrives at the door!

It is not surprising that experienced teachers often develop a phenomenal approach to multi-tasking and somehow manage to weave these strands together, even within the tight time-line of a thirty-minute lesson. This can sometimes happen spontaneously, when in the course of introducing a new piece we review an old scale, or while working on memorization we incorporate some analysis of chord structure or cadence points and thereby “hit two birds with one stone.” But an even better strategy is to consciously and creatively incorporate the study of theory, harmony, and history into the practical lesson on a regular basis.

Opportunities at the elementary level

It is certainly possible to apply this approach with pupils at virtually any level. In the case of elementary students, every lesson will most likely include the introduction of some new concepts. This can be done by experiencing a new idea first through games, drills, or creative activities, then pointing it out as it appears in a piece and only later attaching a label.

For example, while working on *Chimes* by Paul Sheftel, the concept of octave leaps in the left hand could be introduced through a preparatory exercise. This could be presented by rote several weeks before the notated piece is introduced.

A teacher who multi-tasks might work on the choreography of moving from one octave to the next, while at the same time, pointing out the interval of a perfect octave as the bottom and top note of the scale. The perfect octave could also be reinforced through a written exercise such as drawing the four Gs on the grand staff, thus preparing for the concept of octave transposition. This facilitates the learning process while at the same time introducing an important theoretical concept.

Opportunities at the intermediate level

Teaching intermediate-level repertoire offers many opportunities to introduce elements of theory as part of the process of learning repertoire. J.S. Bach's *Little Prelude in C Major* is an ideal candidate for a multi-tasking approach. Even when reading the opening phrase, the structure of the dominant seventh chord—as outlined in the right-hand part—can be introduced and related to the improvisatory nature



... consciously and creatively incorporate the study of theory, harmony, and history into the practical lesson on a regular basis.

of this work. Hearing the effect of the minor seventh stacked on top of a triad in a musical context is more meaningful for a student than learning about it sitting at a desk away from the keyboard.

When writing rudiments examinations, students are asked to apply their theoretical knowledge in an analysis question, generally the last question on the examination. This is arguably the most important skill that they acquire as theory students; the ability to identify concepts studied in a theory book within the repertoire they study and perform. We can and should draw these types of connections on a regular basis with our students at all levels. One way to do this might be to ask the student to design an analysis exercise, modeled after the exam question, for each piece being studied. Indeed, this is an instance where figuring out what questions should be asked about a piece might be more important than actually answering them!

Another engaging possibility is a “scavenger hunt” activity, where students are sent home with a list of theory concepts to locate and identify in their music. This might include a series of melodic or harmonic intervals, major and minor triads in specific inversions, perfect and imperfect cadences, and various Italian terms.

Opportunities at the advanced level

With students playing advanced repertoire, the possibilities for drawing connections and even introducing new concepts within the practical lesson are enormous. Of particular value is the opportunity to illustrate concepts within the repertoire that are required for history exams. A quick glance into the history section of the *Theory Syllabus* will reveal that the terms listed for History 1, 2, and 3 could easily be cross-referenced by a piano, violin, or voice teacher interested in multi-tasking. This might include some of the following activities:

Not Just in Theory—cont'd from page 2

- Apply the terms presented in the unit on J.S. Bach and the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (subject, answer, countersubject, stretto) by analyzing the fugue as it is studied.
- Encourage students who are learning a Mozart sonata to listen to a string quartet and opera aria by the same composer, then discuss how these styles influence each other.
- Look for influences of “bel canto” style in the nocturnes of Chopin and play a recording of a Bellini aria to demonstrate the connection.
- Search for whole-tone scales and pentatonic melodies in works by 20th-century composers.

The possibilities are endless!

At the Advanced level, it is also useful to relate concepts discovered in the study of harmony to repertoire study. Imagine how much more expressively a student who is aware of the *appoggiaturas* will play a Mozart sonata, or how he or she will interpret a Chopin nocturne once in touch with the concept of harmonic tension and resolution?

It is easy to see that with just a little thought and planning we can all make the most of our lesson time and as a result encourage our students to think broadly and to develop into complete musicians.



Dr. Janet Lopinski

A faculty member of The Royal Conservatory (Conservatory School and Glenn Gould School), Dr. Lopinski teaches piano, piano pedagogy, music history, and theory. She is a senior member of the College of Examiners, served as Chief Examiner, Theoretical Subjects, from 1996 to 2002 and is co-author of *Explorations*, a three-volume set of history workbooks published by The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited.

Preparatory A and B: What do you think?

Now that it has been over a year since we introduced the Preparatory A and B examinations, we would like to know what you think of them. Are your students engaged in the material? What do parents have to say about their children's progress? Have Preparatory A and B helped you maintain your students' interest in music?

What some people have already told us:

“I think the sooner they start, the better. If you start them younger, in a ‘smaller’ exam, then they know they can do this!”

~ Marie-Christine, Parent

“One of the best things about the preparatory examinations is that they allow new students to get that feeling of achievement.”

~ Lisa, Teacher

“It gets them using penta-scales and learning keyboard geography. These are things that will foster a well-rounded musician – and right from the onset, not [in] Grade 1, after two years of lessons. I think that's very important.”

~ Jennifer, ARCT, B.Mus.

Do you agree or disagree? Do you have a different perspective on the matter or an experience you want to share? Please write and tell us your Preparatory A and B stories: musicmatters@rcmexaminations.org





Musical Skills: Hear, See, Do — By Elaine Lau

What are musical skills? It is possible to define musical skill as the ability to play an instrument but this is hardly scratching the surface of what is truly required to make music. In pedagogy, we need to look at the components and concepts that enable well-rounded musicianship for any instrument. For practical purposes of discussion, this usually divides into two major but integrated areas: sight reading / playing /singing and ear training / aural skills.

As teachers, why should we ensure that our lessons include consistent attention to the development of what can seem like dry and tedious areas? After all, students often mainly want to play repertoire and gain greater physical or technical facility at the instrument.

The benefits of good sight-reading skills go beyond obtaining a perfect score on an exam. A student who reads well will learn pieces faster, while honing this skill improves multitasking and processing of rhythm and pitch, thereby achieving immediate physical response (eye-hand coordination) from page to sound. A student who possesses good reading skills will be more able to pursue ensemble playing. For students who eventually want to pursue music as a profession, acquiring a solid foundation in this area prepares them for studio or orchestra work, being on-call as a substitute, and for pianists, collaborative opportunities. Most of all, the ability to sight play or sight sing well is crucial to effective music-making.

The active development of sight reading can be used simultaneously in teaching to strengthen pulse, rhythmicity, and tactile facility. Short sight-clapping patterns can serve as an excellent way to build security in such challenging concepts as *hemiola*, polyrhythms, and dotted rhythms.

Developing good ear-training skills enables greater audiation. To hear what is seen on the page without playing, or to be able to hear without reference to the physical act of playing (internal hearing) is an indispensable skill. With relevance to practicality and enjoyment for the student, the possession of a good ear aids in such skills as intonation, improvisation, memorization, and ensemble playing, not to mention the lifting of favorite songs from the pop charts or movie soundtracks.

In order for students to acquire these abilities steadily, we need to include musicianship skills as part of the lesson in addition to core technique and repertoire.

Have students sing: intervals, playbacks, even rhythms. Singing internalizes concepts.

It can actually be incorporated into the earlier part of the practice routine and addressed at the beginning of the lesson. This will serve as a reminder that a warm-up routine is not just about scales and dexterity; a musical warm-up should also include tuning into sound production, listening, and focus. Making pop quizzes to keep the student motivated and to give structure to his or her practice routine can strongly reinforce musical skills.

Have students sing: intervals, playbacks, even rhythms. Singing internalizes concepts. Ear training CDs such as *Comprehensive Ear Training* can be put on MP3 players for complete portability in the 21st century. Similarly, the listening exercises in *Sound Advice: Theory and Ear Training*, which are available online, can be copied onto a disk or loaded onto MP3 players. I find this works well with the teenagers especially.

For the technologically minded student, the latest answer to *Simon* (the colorful 1980s aural memory game with green, yellow, blue and red buttons) is *PianoGame**, a smart-phone application that challenges the player to play back anywhere from one note to a whole sequence of pitches.

Sight passages that contain difficult patterns, rhythms, keys, and textures can be turned into quick studies: turn something that was initially unsuccessful or very challenging into an accomplishment. For example, in piano sight reading, the first attempt at sight playing chorale texture is generally at the late-intermediate level. If vertical processing is very new to the student, learning how to play it properly afterward integrates theory, hearing and seeing vertical writing that influences the success rate of the next attempt of passages with a similar texture. In this way, the required processes are built and then reinforced.

With a bit of guidance, one can encourage the student to develop their own sequence of concepts such as the direction of notes, intervallic distances, rhythmic patterns, articulation, etc. Have your student come up with a checklist as an assignment and follow up with it during the next week's lesson; then

* Recommendations by the author are not necessarily those of The Royal Conservatory.

Musical Skills—cont'd from page 4

have the student put that checklist into a sensible order. There are many resources online and in print for sight reading material. Books such as the *Four Star Sight Reading and Ear Tests* series can help to structure the development of sight reading at the piano, while any repertoire three grades below the current study grade could serve equally well. Quiz beginners on landmark notes, including those with ledger lines, to avoid narrow comfort zones. To develop faster visual processing, I personally use note-mazes/labyrinths in tandem with a metronome: these test agility in direction and switching of clef signs, while allowing the student to aim for a better relationship to tempo. Sight reading or sight playing, like most other skills, is a cumulative skill: the more your students do it, the better they become at it.

Perhaps it is easy to see that for the student who plans a career in performance, musical skills are a necessity. However, we need to also remember that for the student who is not planning to pursue music professionally or for the amateur who just wants to be able to play for enjoyment, a solid foundation in musical skills will provide what he/she needs most to play popular sheet music and music for special occasions, parties, and holidays. The immediacy of these skills can serve as much practical purpose as perfecting complex classical art music repertoire.



Elaine Lau

*Ms. Elaine Lau holds graduate degrees in piano performance and pedagogy from the Glenn Gould School and the University of Cincinnati. Ms. Lau is on the faculty at Wilfred Laurier University and previously served in residence as a coach and collaborative pianist at the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts. In addition to performances as a recital soloist and collaborative artist, Ms. Lau is a founding member of the contemporary keyboard collective, **unctQin**.*

Policy reminder:

Applying for an ARCT examination?

Remember that in order to be granted an examination, the candidate must have successfully completed all prerequisites. For example, an ARCT in Piano Performance candidate will have successfully completed the Grade 10 Certificate in full. Be sure to consult your *Syllabus* before you apply.

Attention, teachers!

Two new Syllabi are coming in 2010.

Speech Arts and Drama Syllabus, 2010 Edition, and *Organ Syllabus, 2010 Edition* will be free downloads on our website later this year.

Did you know we have seven publications available for free downloading? Visit our website, click **Academic Information**, then click **Syllabi** to see what is available.

MTNA 2010 Conference a success!

Special thanks to MTNA

The Royal Conservatory, through the National Music Certificate Program and The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, took part in the Music Teachers National Association Conference that was held March 20th-24th in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

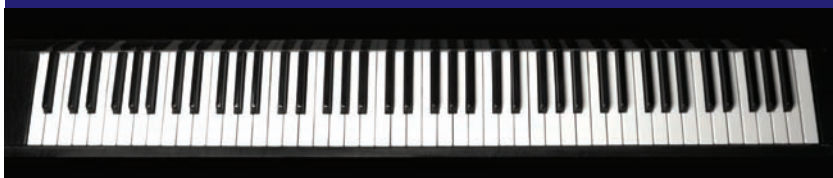
Watch for a special "highlights" article by Dr. Thomas Green in a future issue of **Music Matters**. Thank you to everyone who visited our booth or attended our special sessions. We enjoyed meeting and talking with so many of you.

Are you moving?

How to notify us

The best way to make sure you continue to receive timely updates from The Royal Conservatory and never miss an issue of **Music Matters** is to keep your contact information up to date. There are three ways to update your information:

1. Log in to **Teacher Services** and click **Change Your Profile**.
2. Phone **Candidate Services**.
3. Visit the **Contact Us** page on our website.





Why Register Online?

Online exam registration offers teachers several benefits. You can:

1. Register your students through your Teacher Services account
2. Receive RCME / Candidate ID Numbers immediately
3. Confirm registration immediately
4. Select available dates and times for your piano students
5. Make scheduling requests for your non-piano students
6. Instantly update your contact information

Important Dates 2010

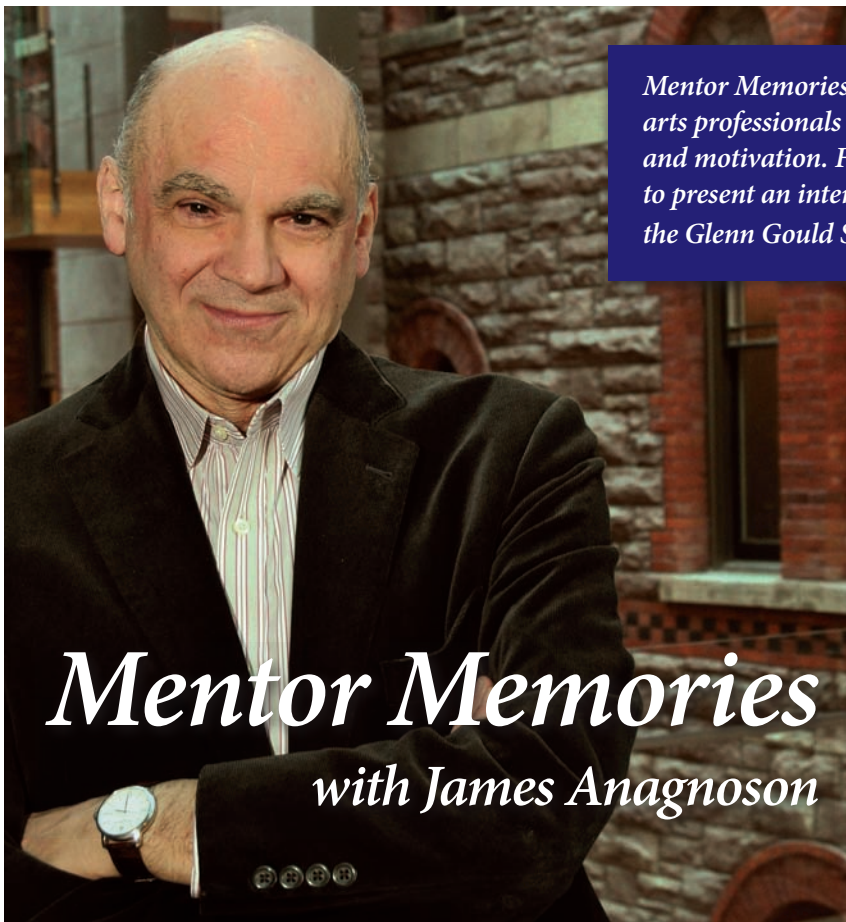
		CANADA	USA
Spring Session 2010	Theory Examinations	May 14 & 15, 2010	May 14 & 15, 2010
	Practical Examinations	June 7–26, 2010	May 10–June 6, 2010
Summer Session 2010	Registration Deadline	June 1, 2010	
	Theory Examinations	August 6 & 7, 2010	
	Practical Examinations	August 9–21, 2010	

Discipline Updates: The marks are in!

Winter Session 2010 Average Practical Marks*

	CELLO	CLARINET	FLUTE	GUITAR	PIANO	SAXOPHONE	VIOLIN	VOICE
Preparatory A					87			
Preparatory B					86			
Grade 1	88	-	83	82	83	-	84	83
Grade 2	-	74	83	81	81	-	81	81
Grade 3	82	-	-	79	78	-	80	79
Grade 4	-	77	80	74	78	79	78	79
Grade 5	77	-	-	78	77	-	76	81
Grade 6	81	77	78	80	76	78	77	77
Grade 7	82	-	-	70	76	-	75	77
Grade 8	80	78	77	78	73	-	74	78
Grade 9	-	-	79	-	75	-	78	78
Grade 10	-	-	78	-	74	-	78	80
ARCT Performance					75		79	
Elementary Piano Pedagogy Viva Voce					78			
Intermediate Piano Pedagogy Viva Voce					78			
Advanced Piano Pedagogy Viva Voce					-			

* To respect confidentiality and statistical significance, results are not reported if there were fewer than 10 examinations. Please consult the January/February 2010 edition for Winter Session 2010 Average Theory Marks.



Mentor Memories is a special new feature that invites leading arts professionals to share memorable moments of inspiration and motivation. For this inaugural installment, we are delighted to present an interview with renowned performer and Dean of the Glenn Gould School, Mr. James Anagnoson.

Mentor Memories with James Anagnoson

James Anagnoson

Dean of The Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School (GGS) since August 2007, he is one of Canada's best-known pedagogues and one half of the piano duo Anagnoson and Kinton. The *New York Times* described the playing of A & K as "outstanding... with formidable precision and panache." They have performed over a thousand concerts around the world and their numerous recordings are broadcast extensively across Canada, the United States, and Europe. Mr. Anagnoson received his Master's Degree from The Juilliard School, and a Bachelor's Degree from the Eastman School of Music. A longtime faculty member of GGS, he has also taught at the University of Toronto, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the University of Western Ontario.

MM: What inspired you to pursue a career in the performing arts?

JA: What inspired me then is what inspires me now, my passion for music. I always remember my first-year roommate at Eastman playing Chopin's *Ballade in G Minor*. I would go into his practice room every day and make him play it for me—it was just so beautiful that I needed to hear it every day. I could barely contain myself as I sat and listened to him play it. It was then that I realized that music was something I couldn't live without.

MM: As a distinguished concert artist, you must have many fond memories of performing. Do you have a favorite performance?

JA: That's a tough one, but I'd say that even after thirty-three years there are two performances with Leslie Kinton that stand out in my mind. The first is our Wigmore Hall debut in London. I had never experienced such a beautiful acoustic in that size of recital hall and I can still remember the incredible sound of two pianos resonating around that hall as we played, continually inspiring me to try to make the most beautiful music I had ever imagined! I realized that evening that a great hall can give voice to musical subtlety and influence interpretation in the same way a great instrument can—a lesson I've never forgotten. The other outstanding performance memory is of a small concert we played on a channel island in British Columbia. We were playing Rachmaninoff's *Suite No. 2 for Two Pianos*. As we started the beautiful third movement (Romance) I looked up and saw the sun setting behind a mountain range, with the fading light shimmering on the water of Vancouver Sound. When I heard that otherworldly music in that breath-taking setting I was so moved I almost stopped playing!

MM: Looking back, how did your teacher(s) motivate you as you prepared for a performance?

JA: I was fortunate to have had many teachers motivate me in many different ways, but as a student, for all of my passion for music and desire to play well, I just didn't realize the level of commitment needed to play at a professional

level. The turning point came when my teacher at Juilliard made me memorize the left hand alone of my entire Master's Degree recital program—three months before the recital! I begrudgingly did it, then studied and polished the program for the next three months. The night of my recital, I remember being very nervous backstage. But then I walked on stage, started to play the Bach Toccata I'd learned, and immediately relaxed, because as soon as I started to play I realized that I knew this program upside down and backwards. Even today I remember that performance and as it turns out I got the highest grade I had ever received on a jury or recital. When I received the grade I realized that this achievement wasn't because I had suddenly become more talented—it was because I had finally learned how much disciplined, detailed work it takes to play at the level I was aspiring to.

MM: If you could give one point of advice to beginner music students, what would it be?

JA: This one is simple: Don't ever forget to have fun. I know it can be difficult, and I know progress takes time and requires a lot of patience—really, more patience than most kids have. But music is an amazing thing in life and being able to play music on an instrument is a gift, one you will value for the course of your life. I had fun playing when I was in Grade 4, and even though I've practiced many hours since then (not all of which were fun!), I still have fun playing the piano, whether at home or in a concert.

Music Matters News

Ignore the *fermata!*

Holding your suggestions? Email us now to give us your feedback.

Digital Music Matters

Rest assured, the *Music Matters* team is working diligently to produce a digital version of the publication. While it is not quite ready, we expect to offer this new distribution option very soon. Stay tuned for more information.

Sign up now by emailing musicmatters@rcmexaminations.org

KEYBOARD PEDAGOGY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2010

July 24 & 25

The Royal Conservatory, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

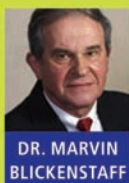
Join teachers from across North America for this intensive two-day professional development summit focused on the essential issues facing both established and emerging keyboard teachers. This innovative event, hosted by The Royal Conservatory, will focus on the integral and creative aspects of teaching in the 21st century.

Highlights include master classes, teaching demonstrations, interactive seminars, discovery learning activities, and a range of specific pedagogical and professional topics.

Renew, Refresh, and Inspire

- Join top pedagogues from across North America as they lead practical, interactive, and insightful sessions
- Engage in interactive seminars and discovery learning activities that inspire discussion and creative experience
- Explore resources, curriculum, career development, and a range of teaching and professional strategies
- Connect and network with colleagues from across the continent

Presenters



DR. MARVIN
BLICKENSTAFF



DR. ANDREW
HISEY



DR. JANET
LOPINSKI



DR. KENT
MCWILLIAMS



DR. JENNIFER
SNOW

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You asked

Where can I find Syllabi information?

For information on all our Syllabi, including free downloadable editions, updates and errata lists, click on **Academic Information**, and then click **Syllabi**.

Music Matters:

The Official Newsletter of RCM Examinations and the National Music Certificate Program.

Chief Examiners:

Peteris Zarins, Training and Development
Thomas Green, Practical Subjects
Maria Case, Theoretical Subjects

Music Matters aims to provide pedagogical support and up-to-date information on The Royal Conservatory, RCM Examinations and the National Music Certificate Program. Senior members of the teaching community offer new perspectives and useful suggestions for managing a successful teaching studio and using the RCM curriculum. Current and back issues of *Music Matters* may be downloaded free of charge from the RCM Examinations and National Music Certificate Program websites.

Contact us:

Article requests or questions about this publication? Change of address? Email us at musicmatters@rcmexaminations.org.

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