# Keys to the Future

## A Study of Undergraduate Piano Education

by

Rosabel Choi

A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved April 2013 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Kwang-Wu Kim, Chair
Andrew Campbell
Robert Hamilton
Benjamin Levy
Caio Pagano

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2013

ABSTRACT

Classical pianists have struggled to reconcile personal artistic growth with the economic and cultural realities of a career as a musician. This paper explores the existing structure of North American undergraduate piano education and its development alongside sociological and cultural changes in the twentieth century. Through document study and interviews, I look at three different models of undergraduate piano curricula. Chapters One and Two explore the issues and history surrounding the traditional piano curriculum. Chapters Three and Four draw on interviews to study two different North American undergraduate curricula: a piano curriculum within a liberal arts environment of an American Conservatory-College, and a piano curriculum within a Canadian University Faculty of Music. Chapter Five concludes with a summary of these findings and potential recommendations for implementation.

In this study, I suggest that changes to piano curricula were made because of a differing approach, one in which music is seen as an entrepreneurial vocation. These changes point to a discrepancy between what is being provided in the curriculum, and the actual skills that are needed in order to thrive in today's economy. Awareness of the constant flux of the current professional climate is necessary in order for pianists to channel their skills into the world. I theorize that changes in curricula were made in order to provide a better bridge for students to meet realistic demands in their career and increase their ability to impact the community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Kwang-Wu Kim for his inspiration, tireless energy, and guidance. He agreed to take me on as his only student during his busy role as the Dean and Director of the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University, and for that I will always be grateful. I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Benjamin Levy, who provided valuable input and worked closely with me on the design of the study. Thank you to Prof. Robert Hamilton, Dr. Andrew Campbell, and Prof. Caio Pagano for serving on my committee and for their helpful advice along the way.

Many thanks to Dr. Heather Landes, who helped with the framework for this study and provided sound advice and information. I would also like to thank the faculty, students, and administrators of the institutions for their input during the interviews. Their insightful thoughts were a source of inspiration. The Canada Council for the Arts provided much support, and I was thankful to be able to work on preliminary steps at the Banff Centre, creating and discussing many of the issues with music residents and faculty.

The musical accomplishments of my brothers Edward and Arnold, and sister Estelle, continue to motivate me daily. I am forever grateful to my parents, Jemma and Jinsoo, who provided moral support and love. Thank you to my colleague Jessica Yam. Our frequent sessions to study and complete work bolstered my spirits. Jenny Waleczek, Sarah Jo Zaharako, and Kelsang Kunshe provided valuable support in friendship and editing. Thank you to Linus, Drew, Terri, Doug and Naoko for cheering me on and giving me perspective.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER Page

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

**Background of Study.** The socioeconomic structures that support piano performance are always changing, making it necessary to create a curriculum that is also evolving. Otherwise, a gap can develop, making it harder for students to transition to the professional world. I experienced this gap, embarking on tours, recordings and other professional projects while attending school. Many of the skills needed for these career-related activities were acquired through hands-on experience. While developing these projects, often the skills that I needed were not easily attainable through my degree requirements. I speculated that this was because of the changing patterns in culture and society, and was curious to find out if there was a way to integrate some aspects of these skills into the current curriculum. This investigation led me to explore the development of the traditional piano performance conservatory model, and a study of two different extensions of this model: an American Conservatory within a liberal arts setting, and a program within a Canadian University. In response, I conclude with a sample experimental program of study, inspired by the concepts introduced by each model.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, post-secondary university or conservatory piano curricula have included performance training in the classical tradition, aural skills, theory, and a survey-style overview of classical music history (Parakilas et al., 1999; Weber et al., 2013). The music that is studied is generally European music from 1600-1950. Much of the theory and aural skills training are centered on music from that period as well. I began this study under the assumption that piano performance

degrees had varied quite a bit over the years. It was surprising to discover that a very similar curriculum still exists, or has existed up until quite recently, in many North American schools. Yet almost every other aspect of music making in society has changed, including the piano's relevance and reach into the contemporary world.

In the traditional conservatory model, the piano curriculum consists of the usual components of theory, history, ensemble, solo instruction, and non-music courses. The emphasis is to train pianists to perform music written by other people at the highest level possible. This prepares pianists for an idealized world of solo and possible chamber ensemble recitals in concert halls. Although there are valuable aspects to this outlook, this model has very little focus on the logistics of how to create that career, and how to approach the current music industry. A professional pianist working in North America is often required to be familiar with a wide variety of styles – not only within classical music, but also in jazz, contemporary and cross-cultural styles. In my own experience, having some versatility in improvisation, even in a limited capacity, led to more performing opportunities and access to different kinds of audiences and income streams.

Pianists also need to orient themselves to a quickly changing range of technologies for the creation, notation, recording, manipulation and dissemination of music. According to a survey of 82 American Schools of Music, only one-fourth of the piano performance programs required a keyboard skills course. An improvisation or jazz skills requirement was present in only 5% of the schools (Walker, 2008, pp. 21-22). This shows the extent of specialization within an already specialized path of study. Considering that many job opportunities for young pianists require these skills, these oversights need to be addressed.

An educational program should take into account the shifting nature of the music business, a field that requires an individual to juggle the role of performer, educator, entrepreneur, and producer. Then, students could have an easier time transitioning to music-making opportunities far beyond the concert hall: schools, community groups, studios, art galleries, hospitals, and online applications. Involving young musicians in the communities can help enliven audience members, allowing them to engage with the arts as participants and not just as passive consumers. I often discovered that my professional roles extended to facilitating the music-making of others, above and beyond my abilities as a pianist.

In 2011, Angela Myles Beeching's research in entrepreneurship and career services showed that music schools deal with many different pressures: record-high tuition costs, an increased need for scholarship funds, fierce competition among graduates for jobs, and a climate of concern about the future audiences for classical music. There are many more candidates than there are ready-made opportunities for 'traditional' employment, which is only a small corner of the job market. The music related industries sector in 2008 employed approximately 300,000 people working in "core" industries such as performance, publishing, recording studios, record companies, distribution, radio stations and networks, and music instrument manufacturing and retail. In addition, there are almost triple the number of people working in the 'peripheral' industries: music educators, agents, managers, promoters, performance venues, and reproduction companies. The annual revenues from the peripheral industries were $20 billion higher than the annual core industry revenues. These numbers support Beeching's

ideas that if musicians can adapt their professional skills broadly, they will have many more opportunities in the future (Beeching, 2011, p. 140-148).

Musicians are often creative and multi-talented, and many create their own opportunities. Pianists are creating alternative career paths such as writing and playing new and traditional music, organizing their own tours and performing in alternative spaces. Claire Chase, co-founder of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), recounted her days starting ICE in 2001 with no business experience or money. Seven years later, ICE had given over 250 concerts, world premieres of over 400 new works, with three solvent companies in Chicago, New York and California. As she stated on the website Polyphonic.org,

> Our generation of musicians, despite the economic challenges we face…are in the midst of an unprecedented freedom….We can produce our own concerts, release our own albums, create our own communities and own movements, and we don't need a lot of money to do this. We just need great ideas, we need a spirit of adventure, and we need each other….It is my hope that this spirit of entrepreneurship in the arts will be one of the defining characteristics and contributions of my generation. (2008, para. 6)

One of the unusual aspects of a music performance major compared to other majors in general is that it usually requires a certain level of specialization, developed over a period of years prior to enrollment. In a sense, piano education already begins in a specialized area, and then the student progresses throughout the four years of growth to even more specialization. For most students, career goals become more specific as they move through their degree, leading to individually appropriate goals. As the current curriculum has undergone very little change over the past century, this puts students skill-set in a very narrow box. Piano educators should design a curriculum that enables their

students to thrive in their professional journey by observing changes in the profession, allowing for flexibility in their requirements, and encouraging an approach that is vital and active in the community.

**Purpose of study**. The purpose of this study is to describe and compare the undergraduate curricula represented at two collegiate institutions with the general North American curriculum — an American Conservatory curriculum that develops adaptability within a liberal arts environment, and a Canadian University Faculty of Music curriculum that approaches adaptability from within their piano performance requirements. Specifically, I observe similarities and differences found in these models, what the curricula consists of, and the reasons for curricular modifications or stasis. In Chapter Five, I discuss the way programs could become more flexible with the development of various practical musical skill areas, which in turn could increase diversity in a students' professional development.

**Research Questions**. I interviewed various faculty and students in undergraduate curricula, and visited two campuses. I have chosen to keep the two institutions anonymous so that participants would feel comfortable sharing their opinions and observations about their program. For privacy purposes, pseudonyms have been designed to replace the names of institutions, people and places. As I guaranteed confidentiality, I chose to label subjects as simply as possible. In my interviews, I based my study on several questions:

1. What is the current state of undergraduate piano education? What are students learning and what are instructors teaching?

2. How has the undergraduate piano curriculum evolved over the past 10 years? What was the cause of changes being made or not made?

3. How can undergraduate piano education be improved so that pianists can more easily meet the demands in the working world?

**Definition of terms**. *Conservatory of Music* – a private, independent accredited institution of higher education offering intensive, professional study primarily in the area of classical music performance (Gandre, 2001). In the keynote address to the College Music Society Summit on Music Entrepreneurship Education, Douglas Dempster (2011) described the Conservatory as a training institution that prepares new talent for the culture and marketplace, and in the best of worlds holds significance in society.

> Yet they [conservatories] are also major employers of practicing musicians, composers, and music technicians. These institutions are also major patrons and presenters of touring, freelance artists and commissioners of new work. We are incubators of new and experimental art that wouldn't be supported elsewhere. For many of our communities, large and small, we serve as cultural anchors of the enrichment of citizens. (Dempster, 2011, pp. 12-13)

*Bachelor of Music degree (BM degree)*—a professional undergraduate degree in music. In Canada and the United States, about 25-35% of the coursework for the degree is taken outside of the discipline of music. According to the National Association for Schools of Music (NASM), "Students enrolled in professional undergraduate degrees in music are expected to develop the knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the professional life of the musician. To fulfill various professional responsibilities, the musician must exhibit not only technical competence, but also broad knowledge of music and music literature, the ability to integrate musical knowledge and skills, sensitivity to musical styles, and an insight into the role of music in intellectual and cultural life" (NASM Handbook, 2012, p. 98).

*Faculty of Music or School of Music*—a program dedicated to the intensive study of music within the college or university setting. In Canada, a Faculty of Music is comparable to a School of Music. It is a unit that administers its own degree (for example, a Faculty or School of Music administers the degree Bachelor of Music). In Canada, a department of music within a Faculty of Arts or of Fine Arts will usually only offer a music program leading to the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. The term 'School of Music' typically applies to a music division found in a large state university in the United States; it has been adopted by a few Canadian institutions, but within Canada it usually characterizes a diversified music division, whether offering a degree in music or not ("University Music Programs," 2012, para. 4).

*National Association for Schools of Music (NASM*)—Founded in 1924, it is the accrediting body for music of higher education in the USA. It consists of 589 institutional member schools, colleges, conservatories, and universities that offer music studies. The purpose of NASM is to secure a better understanding among music in universities, establish a more uniform method of granting credit, and develop and maintain basic threshold standards for the granting of degrees and other credentials. NASM annually assembles the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) statistics that include compiled enrollment, faculty, salary and ethnicity statistics based on a survey of degree-granting music units. In 2011-2012, there were 365 NASM accredited institutions offering Bachelor of Music piano and harpsichord degrees. The previous year, 499 pianists graduated with Bachelor of Music degrees, a small percentage of them being harpsichordists (NASM, 2012, Chart 1-2).

*The Canadian University Music Society (CUMS*)—formerly known as the Canadian Association of University Schools of Music (CAUSM), CUMS was founded in 1964 for the purpose of establishing a general philosophy of undergraduate and graduate musical education in Canada, and to enable Canadian university teachers of music to discuss common problems and to exchange scholarly ideas relating to all facets of music. Formerly, the CUMS had the authority to enforce guidelines, but now function as a society organization. The Society aims to establish a community of individuals who meet as university musicians—not separately as musicologists, composers, theorists, music educators or performers. CUMS also facilitates of the exchange of views among administrators and teachers, the recommendation of minimum standards for music degree programs, and the encouragement and assistance of the professional development of both institutional and individual members of the society.

*Associate of the Royal Conservatory (ARCT*)—the culminating diploma of the Royal Conservatory Examinations Certificate Program, a curriculum that spans eleven grades, with examinations conducted four times a year across Canada.

Programs in institutions acceptable for full institutional membership in the CUMS will generally conform to the CUMS guidelines. Associate institutional membership is available to other institutions that offer courses in music that meet the standards of courses applicable to a music degree. The guidelines are not to be interpreted as strict standards, and the CUMS is not an accrediting agency.

**Significance of Study.** Although NASM and other accreditation programs standardize the basic requirements for undergraduate music degrees, this standardization is not intended to prevent individual schools from adopting new ideas and approaches for

the education of their students. The research done on how curricular design can rise above an accredited template is relatively new. As well, entrepreneurship education has become a growing interest in the arts, addressing the need for different approaches towards a pianist's learning. There is constant dialogue among many classical musicians about creating sustainable change in careers in which musicians can make a living.

In Tammie Walker's recent study, *The Status of the BM Piano Performance Degree* (2008), she surveyed 82 NASM accredited piano performance degree requirements, and discovered that diversity in the piano curricula was lacking in many areas. Attention to these areas would enhance the marketability of these students upon their graduation.

> A pianist's post-college life is richly diverse and multi faceted—it is my opinion that a pianist's undergraduate training should prepare students for this reality. As a disclaimer: I am not, in any way, recommending that the study of solo piano literature be discouraged or in any way slighted...doing so, in fact, would negate my 11 years of college study, which includes B.M., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees all in piano performance. The thorough study of solo piano literature creates a refined pianist and forms one's technique and comprehension of style, articulation and pedaling. I am strictly recommending that in addition to this wonderfully rich and rewarding literature, we strive to diversify our curricula to help ensure our students' success upon graduation (Walker, 2008, p. 20).

This document uses the quantitative data that Walker's survey provides, and focuses on the qualitative information gathered from two different variations of the BM degree. I explore how these programs approach the questions of whether piano curricula should develop a set of skills that can be applied to diverse situations, or if they should be a place for pianists to train for careers. The two programs move in slightly different directions, and I will compare these differences.

Heather Landes (2008) explains that qualitative research is widely accepted, although music school studies have not used this method very often. Using qualitative research helps to identity complex relationships among institutional features, student cultures, student behaviors, and in uncovering some complexities of meaning found in these relationships (Landes, 2008, p. 68). Before presenting these qualitative findings, the development and subsequent layout of piano education in the conservatory and university setting will be addressed. The history of the piano in the conservatory concludes with the general components of the present-day piano curriculum.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE TRADITIONAL MODEL IN NORTH AMERICA

**Historical Development from Europe.** In E. Douglas Bomberger's discussion of the conservatory, he states that the modern conservatory developed in the mid-nineteenth century, growing alongside the public's growing obsession with virtuoso pianists and the increasing availability of pianos and piano music (Parakilas et al., 2001, p. 124). There were earlier models of the conservatory occurring in Venice and Naples in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, created out of orphanages and infirmaries, but they were meant for the maintenance of children, where orphaned children were 'conserved,' reflecting the early sense of the Italian word *conservatorio (*Weber et al., 2013*)*.

It was not until 1795 with the establishment of the *Conservatoire National de Musique* in France that the piano was to develop a major presence throughout the next century. Piano instruction moved to the center of the conservatory curriculum during the second half of the 19th century. The solo recital as a new type of concert, most commonly for piano, created a fertile setting for the growth of conservatories and renowned teachers such as Anton Rubinstein in St Petersburg, Franz Liszt in Geneva and Weimar and Clara Schumann in Frankfurt.

By the end of the nineteenth century, many middle-class homes had a piano, which led some conservatories to focus mainly on training piano teachers and amateurs. British conservatories placed particular emphasis on the testing and licensing of teachers; in Germany and France the development of uniform methods of pedagogy was a major concern (Weber et al., 2013).

The establishment of the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843 led to conservatories springing up all over Europe, particularly in the German-speaking countries. Felix Mendelssohn, the first director of the conservatory, established a three-year curriculum that focused on theoretical and practical skills. All students developed knowledge of music history and theory as well basic keyboard and singing skills. Mendelssohn also created a group lesson system in which three to six students of comparable skill took lessons together. This allowed students to learn from their colleagues, and allowed instructors to earn a higher hourly fee while still keeping tuition costs low. This system of teaching piano and other instruments lasted until around the beginning of the twentieth century, when American schools began to favor private lessons (Parakilas, 2001, p. 125).

Although the goal Mendelssohn had when creating the Conservatory curriculum was to instill a well-rounded education for students, conservatories came under criticism in the late nineteenth century for being known as virtuoso factories, and for being rigid and overly conservative (Fay, 1965, p. 264-266). Anecdotes of Franz Liszt's classes in Weimar show that he was a strong opponent of the piano teaching in conservatories, and he often used the word 'conservatory' as synonymous with anything he considered unimaginative (Jerger, ed., 1996, p.22).

**Movement to North America**. The Leipzig model was incredibly successful, attracting many musicians from abroad. Their Conservatory records show that there were 1644 students from the United States and Canada between 1848 and 1918. By 1915, music as an academic discipline was widely accepted by colleges and universities across America, including state universities (Morrison, 1973, p. 25).

Musical life in North America, in particular the United States, evolved from methods taught at the Leipzig Conservatory and other German schools. For instance, graduates of the Leipzig Conservatory directed the Oberlin Conservatory, founded in 1867. The Leipzig Conservatory was also used as a model for the early days of Oberlin's administrative structure, basic curriculum, piano methods and music theory textbooks (Phillips, 1979, p. 214-239).

Another lineage of piano education came from Russia, through the St. Petersburg Conservatory, founded in 1862 by Anton Rubenstein (1829-1894) and Theodor Leschetizky (1830-1915). By 1867, ongoing political tensions led to dissent within the Conservatory's faculty, and both Rubenstein and Leschetizky left the Conservatory, eventually moving on to teach some of the leading American pedagogues. Leschetizky taught in Austria, and in 1872, Rubenstein was one of the first esteemed Russian pianists to perform in the United States (Isacoff, 2011, p. 243). Rubenstein later settled in Dresden and taught his only private piano student—Joseph Hofmann, who would become one of the most celebrated pianists of the era. Hofmann eventually settled in the United States, and in 1924 he became the first head of the piano department at the launch of Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music.

**Development of Canadian university piano programs**. The history of formally constituted Canadian music teaching in departments dates back only to 1918 when the University of Toronto created its Faculty of Music. Up until 1940-1950, the programs offered in English-speaking universities were modeled after the Conservatory programs in England. These programs were intended primarily for composers, and the possibility of earning an undergraduate degree in performance, history or musicology was virtually

non-existent. After 1940, the tendency in English Canada was to model university music programs on those in the United States, distinguishable from their British counterparts by compulsory attendance and a wider selection of fields of concentration. The first Canadian degree program to follow the American model was created at the University of Toronto in 1946 and led to a Bachelor of Music degree in the School Music. In 1949, there were 19 graduates from this program. The first Master of Music degree to be awarded in Canada was in music composition, from the University of Toronto in 1956. By 1990, 28 Canadian universities were offering music programs leading to baccalaureate degrees: Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Music Education, and Bachelor of Musical Arts (BMA). Requirements for these degrees have varied, but in general they require 3 to 5 years of residence; approximately two-thirds of the coursework is in music (including performance), and concentrations are available in performance, theory, composition, and musicology. In some cases, no concentration is specified, and the degree is awarded with 'General Mention' (Ellard & Kallmann, 2012).

The increasing globalization of musical life since 1945 has affected conservatories, performance styles, teaching staff, and the student body. In the postwar period, study overseas became more common, particularly at the postgraduate level. This exposed musicians to different national styles of performance and composition. The international musical community continues to reflect the impact of changing social patterns (Weber et al., 2013).

**Piano programs today: Conservatories and beyond**. Although Christoph Richter described "The Age of Conservatories" as a period that ended in the early twentieth century, there are still a handful of prominent leading conservatories in North America (Parakilas et al., 2001, pp.132-133). In fact, there are nine independent conservatories in the United States, and approximately seven conservatory training programs. Overall, there has been a growing trend toward more integrated musical education. Some conservatories have become affiliated with colleges and universities. College-Conservatories such as Ithaca, Oberlin, and Cincinnati aspire to maintain a connection to the traditional past while adding the distinction of a college education. In Germany, private conservatories have been replaced by a system of state-financed *Musikhochschulen* with more government control and uniformity of programs, as in France. Music departments in North American colleges and universities have become increasingly prominent, aided by governing bodies such as NASM. Some conservatories in Europe have also strengthened their links with other university-level institutions in order to offer students wider educational opportunities. While these developments have brought benefits, there can also be dangers: there is need for the conservatory to guard against loss of distinctiveness, and to retain its ability to admit those for whom the conservatory provides the most appropriate environment. The traditional staffing pattern of the conservatory, with its close ties to the music profession, is a particular strength (Weber et al., 2013).

Despite its shortcomings, the conservatory has been inextricably linked to the piano over the years. Conservatories created basic belief systems in piano that continue to inform the present. These schools encouraged virtuosity and enforced a rigorous,

systematic approach to learning the instrument, which has continued to be the ideal for many teachers. This approach also inspired analytical thinking about technique and pedagogy. As an institution, the conservatory contributed to the growth of sales in pianos and piano music, and encouraged the importance of a large body of music known as the 'standard repertoire' — in essence the traditional canon. Most importantly, one of the benefits of this model has been the one-on-one mentorship of private instruction and increasingly, is one of the few places in life when one can be a full-time practicing musician.

**Canadian format**. The Canadian music programs vary more in that they are not accredited in the same manner as in the United States. Education is a provincial rather than a federal jurisdiction in Canada; therefore most universities are supported and controlled by their respective provincial government. This explains in part the curricular differences across Canada within the similarly labeled university programs (University Music Programs, 2013).

In general, the piano program entrance levels correspond to the ARCT diploma or its equivalent. This is one of the culminating examinations taken through the Royal Conservatory Examinations Certificate Program. However, receiving this diploma is not a guarantee of acceptance. One university program gives a sample repertoire list as a flexible guide to the levels of technical and musical achievement expected (see Table 1). This guide is for prospective students as an outline for the level of competence expected, and do not indicate specific repertoire requirements.

Table 1

*Sample of repertoire level and requirements for Canadian University*

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 1 | Virtuoso études (e.g., Chopin: Op. 10, No. 5); Bach: French Suite No. 3; Beethoven: Sonata Op. 7; Schumann: Papillons; Bartok: Bagatelles; Concertos (e.g., Mozart: K. 453) |
| Year 2 | Virtuoso études (e.g., Chopin: Op. 25, No. 3); Bach: English Suite No. 4; Beethoven: Sonata, Op. 28; Schubert: Sonata, Op. 122; Ravel: Sonatina; Concertos (e.g., Liszt: No. 1). |
| Year 3 | Virtuoso études (e.g., Liszt: Paganini Études); Bach: Toccata in C minor; Beethoven: Sonata, Op. 57; Brahms: Scherzo, Op. 4; Stravinsky: Sonata; Concertos (e.g., Rachmaninoff: No. 2); vocal and instrumental accompaniments; piano chamber works. Third-year recital. |
| Year 4 | Virtuoso études (e.g., Chopin: Op. 10, No. 2); Bach: Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue; Beethoven: Sonata, Op. 110; Schumann: Kreisleriana; Stockhausen: Klavierstücke; Concertos (e.g., Brahms: Nos. 1 and 2); vocal and instrumental accompaniments; piano chamber works. Fourth-year recital. |

Most Canadian undergraduates complete 120-130 credit hours. The credits are made up of approximately of 25 to 27% music history and theory electives, 4 to 8 semesters of chamber music/collaborative work, 20 to 25% non-music electives, and varying levels of musicianship electives and concert attendance.

**American format.** Obtaining accreditation through NASM requires institutions to adhere to specific structural guidelines. Focusing on piano performance degrees, curriculum is required in the following: 25 to 35% of study in the major area of performance, including ensemble participation, pedagogy courses, independent study, and recitals; 25 to 35% of supportive courses in music, and 25 to 35% general studies (NASM Handbook, 2012). Studies in the major area and supportive courses in music should total at least 65% of the curriculum.

NASM recommends that undergraduate degree students in music should have opportunities to "gain a basic understanding of the nature of professional work in their major field. Examples are: organizational structures and working patterns; artistic, intellectual, economic, technological, and political contexts; and development potential" (NASM Handbook, 2012, p. 101). Furthermore, the NASM also acknowledges that students must acquire the skills necessary to assist in the development and advancement of their careers. "Professional undergraduate and graduate programs in music are shaped by the realities and expectations in the field to seek the development of competencies at the highest possible levels." (NASM Handbook, 2012, p. 78). This would indicate that piano programs should require the program curricula to develop according to the realities of the professional world.

In the 'Flexibility and Innovation' section of the NASM Handbook, it states that innovative and carefully planned experimentation is encouraged, and that experimentation might lead to programs outside those defined in the handbook. These guidelines allow for space to think about piano education and create more innovative structures of learning.

> Failure to follow the specific approaches indicated or implied by a standard will not necessarily preclude accreditation; however, if deviations exist, the institution must provide an acceptable rationale documenting how functions required by the standard are being fulfilled, or how required competencies are being developed (NASM Handbook, 2012, p. 85).

To a certain extent, a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance must contain traditional elements. The more alternative and exploratory the program gets, the more it moves toward a Bachelor of Arts degree, which is more interdisciplinary in nature and focuses more on coursework. The standard model for piano teaching consists

of most of the threshold credit requirements for NASM accreditation: piano study, with electives in history, theory, ensemble and non-music credits. However, Walker (2008) notes that many of the NASM public institutions are missing important components of a performance education. Of the 82 institutions that were surveyed, only 5% required jazz or improvisation skills training. Only 24% required a functional keyboard skills class, and 60% required chamber music. Only 77% required accompanying or collaborative training (Walker, 2008, p. 20-22). Students enrolled in these basic programs may experience challenges when entering the workforce after graduating. Pianists must have versatile abilities in this fluctuating society, as the majority of performance opportunities are in collaboration with other musicians. These missing elements create imbalances in a pianist's training, making it difficult for a student to transition into music employment or possibly even a graduate music degree.

Over the next two chapters, I look at two undergraduate piano programs from different institutions, using aliases for names and places. One has followed a fairly traditional path within a broad, progressive setting. The other program in some ways is its reverse—a more dynamic curriculum within a traditional environment. I begin with the piano curriculum at Middleton Conservatory College and how it trains undergraduate pianists. The Middleton piano program takes place alongside a small liberal arts college. I conducted confidential interviews with several piano faculty and students at Middleton, asking questions about the current state of their curriculum.

## CHAPTER THREE

## LIBERAL ARTS SETTING: MIDDLETON CONSERVATORY COLLEGE

**Conservatory-College Setting**. Set in the midst of an American college town, Middleton is a conservatory in which students and faculty work closely together, emphasizing a well-rounded education. Located outside a major metropolitan area, the conservatory's residential campus setting is bustling throughout the school year. Students make up over 30% of the town's population. In 2013, I conducted phone interviews with the piano faculty and students to find out more about their program.

Middleton operates on a high academic level, and it requires significant intellectual ability on the part of its students. Most Middleton students tend to do well on their ACT and SAT tests, and in their recruiting literature it is recommended that a strong performance in high school in a full range of challenging courses will help prepare students for the academic demands. Beyond grades and scores, Middleton aims to recruit students who want to engage with complicated issues and who are interested in service to their local community or their school environment. Students at Middleton could be described as smart, idealistic, and progressive. They live in an environment that is relatively insulated, in town that is essentially engulfed by Middleton. The distance from the city creates a further buffer from the rest of the world.

Performances are a major part of the Middleton Conservatory experience. Along with hundreds of concerts a year, both the College and Conservatory also produce events that are led by students, such as informal musicals, dance shows, arts events, and recital series. The many Conservatory recitals are graduation requirements for junior and senior performance majors, but departments also bring in guest artists for concerts and master

classes. In addition to departmental, honors, ensemble, junior and senior recitals, students can also organize their own self-designed recitals. Performance spaces at Middleton come in all shapes and sizes, from big concert hall auditoriums to small dance clubs and chapels. Traditional Conservatory venues are also used for student performance art, and the larger general freshman classes. Scattered throughout the campus are various chapels that make beautiful spaces for recitals and operas.

There are about 3000 students enrolled, with approximately 600 students enrolled in the conservatory. Students may also enroll in courses and degrees from the College. The Conservatory focuses on undergraduate education, with students from all over North America and over 20 different countries. Within the Conservatory, there are various departments, including the piano area.

**Organizational Structure**. Middleton offers different types of undergraduate programs, and of these, the Bachelor of Music program focuses largely on private lessons. Within the Conservatory, there are about 90 faculty members, with a student-faculty ratio of 8:1, which allows students to receive a great deal of individual attention. Although there are other non-performance or academic degrees within the Conservatory, such as the music history and theory majors, performance studies at Middleton generally emphasize private instruction.

The Conservatory electives function to teach students the skills to function as well-informed musicians. History, theory, and ensemble participation are requirements for each major, and there are also optional courses that focus on areas such as physical wellness and professional development. Middleton offers and option of a pre-professional training courses for students to take as course electives. The professional development

classes were described as a type of presentation class in which students work on career skills such as how to write a grant, speaking before a recital and how to deal with music critics.

A Bachelor of Music degree may be designed to concentrate in a single area or among two or more Conservatory departments. The college courses and facilities are sometimes an important part of a student's major. As an example, a student could design a unique interdisciplinary major focusing in violin, art, and education. Other areas of specialty could include African American music, liturgical music, Suzuki violin pedagogy, fortepiano, and arts management. Students can perform and record in numerous concert halls, and there are over 200 Steinway pianos in the performance spaces, classrooms, teaching studios, and practice rooms.

**Piano Curriculum at Middleton Conservatory.** The main difference between the Middleton piano curriculum and a more traditional model is that about 25% of the coursework is sourced from a reputable liberal arts college. As one Conservatory faculty member said, access to the College permeates the attitude and culture of the student body, and that "just being around here changes people's minds more than if you were in an isolated music school somewhere" (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

Theory, aural skills, music history and piano lessons are taken concurrently for four semesters, and students have a jury at the end of each year, as well as a junior and senior recital to complete (see Table 2). Piano performance majors also take a semester of Piano Literature. Many who would like to teach during their studies take a Piano Pedagogy course, as it is prerequisite for teaching beginning and intermediate students

on-campus. In addition, a keyboard skills course is required, in which students learn how to read orchestral scores and figured bass realizations.

Table 2

*Piano program basic juried components, Middleton Conservatory, years one to four*

| | |
|---|---|
| Year one | -First jury: 8 minutes of memorized solo music, not graded with comments |
| Year two | -Second jury: 25 minutes of memorized solo music, must include at least 2 contrasting styles and one work written before 1900, graded pass/fail with comments |
| Year three | -Third jury: Out of three selections, student will choose one piece to memorize and perform. The piece must be self-prepared without the help of faculty, graded with comments<br>-Recital: (prerequisite: 2 public performances) 25-35 minutes of memorized solo works |
| Year four | -Recital: 50 minutes of memorized solo works. Chamber music and concerti may be included (in addition to the 50 minutes). Unusual programs must be submitted to the piano faculty for approval. |

There are seven piano faculty members, two of which are part-time. The faculty members each have 9 to 14 students, and there are approximately 85 to 90 piano students enrolled in the Conservatory. All faculty are nationally known performers, ensemble players, guest teachers, and lecturers. Their interests include early keyboard instruments, vocal and instrumental accompanying, and avant-garde techniques. The school aims to have a diverse piano faculty, representing a variety of pedagogic approaches. As a result, the faculty have differing points of view of what the students at Middleton should aim to accomplish. One faculty member stated:

> As far as what we try to do…I wouldn't presume to say what [another colleague] thinks we do, you know, because whatever it is I think it's different from what I think we do. I think we try to get them to play as well as we can within the setting

> we have, which includes a more academic curriculum than most conservatories have…So I think that what makes this program distinctive, is having the college and taking part in the college. But there's nothing special about our curriculum (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

As many of the piano students represent an international background, there is an adjustment period necessary for those used to a different culture of education. One student in his senior year could speak of the benefit he felt he had going to Middleton, despite the fact that it was not his first choice for his undergraduate studies.

> I ended up going here because I got a better scholarship and living costs are lower than my first choice school…Honestly, I don't think it is an advantage to be here if you want to do something like win lots of piano competitions. Because for that mentality, it's probably better to be around lots of competitive people. But I think in the end it's better here because I have to work on my English and academics and be more well-rounded. Also, the people here are more interesting (Conservatory piano student, 2013).

**Middleton Conservatory: Issues with Curricular Change**. The last change to the piano program was about twenty years ago – the requirement of four semesters of accompanying/collaboration, in addition to the chamber music electives. One of the reasons that there has been no change since then, a faculty member speculated, is because changing the curriculum is not often a priority within the administration, especially since their present formula is working for the most part.

> I think first of all, it would be great if [Middleton] would *have* a discussion about what being educated in music means, because we never have. We have this idea that there are x number of credit hours and there are certain basics you have to pass. Beyond that, it's kind of a free-for-all, a smorgasbord. And, it's not a bad system, but we've never actually talked about what we want our students to be able to do (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

Resources are always an issue for Middleton Conservatory. Faculty and administration spend a considerable amount of energy defending their scholarship money allocated to the Conservatory students. Although the College and Conservatory are separate, there is often dialogue and discussion about combining the two, turning the conservatory into a department of music within Middleton College. For this reason, administrators and piano faculty try to keep their scholarship resources from being reallocated to College or non-music students. This struggle to keep the status quo, challenging in itself, makes it more difficult to add new dimensions to their program. The uniqueness of being able to participate in the College while also being a separate Conservatory creates a healthy tension, as long as the Conservatory is able to hold its own ground. Within the College, there are opponents and advocates for the Conservatory to remain a separate entity. The main battleground is in regards to scholarship money for students. In response to this issue, a member of the piano faculty pointed out that "…at the same time, we are what keeps the college going, because 6 out of 10 people come to the college because of the conservatory…without that, we'd be just another not-very-distinguished, small college out of nowhere" (2013).

> I really do think that this is the best place for undergraduate classical music education. I mean, look what you get for your money. You get this incredible scene and all this attention. Everybody can find something wrong with the school they went to, and we're not perfect, but I still think we're a better choice than any place else for a young person. Unless you're Lang Lang. And then you should be in a big city somewhere hanging out with other Lang Langs. But for everybody else, I think [Middleton] is a really special, unique place (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

Middleton is currently working on developing a more practical approach to the theory curriculum. They are hoping to put more emphasis on listening and applying listening skills to various tasks, rather than just on formal analysis. According to some students, it is this rigorous training in theory and history that helps them with musicianship confidence.

> You know, I don't struggle with theory as much as some of my string friends. I think being a piano major gives you some advantages in theory, I think. The main thing I notice is that so far, all the theory teachers I've had so far really love teaching, so that makes me work hard at it. I think that will help me a lot if I end up teaching someday – remembering how much these guys love to share their ideas (Conservatory piano student, 2013).

When asked what developments should be made in the current model, there were a wide variety of responses focusing on practical skills in dictation and aural skills, as a general training for musical preparation. There were many different opinions on what individuals felt the Middleton piano curriculum was lacking. One piano faculty member encapsulated all of their remarks in the following way:

> I think students ought to be able to have fantastic ears, take any kind of dictation. I think they should be able to arrange anything for their instrument. Any other kind of music they can take it to their instrument and write out some kind of arrangement or other. I think they ought to be able to, no matter how terrible their voices are, they ought to be able to sing parts in close harmony. They should have an incredible breadth of knowledge about music that isn't for their instrument. I think pianists should know operas and symphonies and things, enough so that they can play them on the piano. They should all know how to write, they should be able to speak at least one foreign language. I think they should all be able to play popular music. In the sense that, I think popular music is easy, so I think they ought to be the master of at least a few popular music styles so they could go get a job in cocktail lounge, or they could go be back-up in a rock band. Because it shouldn't be that hard, you know, to do that. If you have intelligent musical skills, you ought to be able to do it. I think you ought to be able to play the organ. Or at least teach yourself to play the organ…I don't think anybody who's not fluent in adapting themselves should graduate. If you can play two Etudes really good and

> one Beethoven sonata, I don't think you should graduate. I think you should be able to prove that you can adapt somehow, you know (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

The association of the liberal arts environment is one of the strengths of the education at Middleton. Developing critical thinking within a broader education is an advantage for students becoming fluent in adapting themselves to circumstances. In addition, the semester system includes a short period of time in which all students can complete a self-directed project, to be approved and assisted by a Conservatory or College faculty member. This project can be in any topic, as long as the student has faculty approval. One piano faculty member suggested that these innovations in the wider curriculum could be further embedded at the relatively traditional piano department level. For instance, a suggestion was made to put more emphasis on contemporary music, as it presently has an undefined presence within the piano program. One faculty member advocates for not only new 'art' music, but anything from post-modern to popular and folk music.

> I do think that there should be a bigger emphasis on some kind of contemporary performance. Not necessarily the thorniest, most modernist contemporary, but *anything*. If you can play progressive jazz, fine, that counts. Or if you could be back-up to a country music band, that counts - you know, that's contemporary music. Just so you could do something that relates to people (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

The topic of popular music is one that points to the difference in present cultural values. In one discussion, a faculty member spoke of the dangers of developing the "academic fallacy known as the 'I think, therefore I have acted' mentality"(2013). This ivory tower outlook, or not looking to adapt to cultural shifts, is one of the factors that could be slowing the growth of their piano department, according to the professor. He

described the memory of attending a summit, when an outdoor hiphop performance made him notice the young people dancing like "fish in the water…those are the people we want, and we're just leaving them behind," he said.

> It's a question of culture. I think your high-strung, Byronic Liszt performance is totally alien to these people. Because they don't think and live like that anymore, you know. People don't think the same way about nature and God and love and sex, and you name it, you know, you feel really different about it. Or fate – you have this idea of the hero acting in history, that's all gone because of experience we've had and scientific discoveries—so how are you supposed to know about being Schumann and desperately being in love with somebody you can't have, far away, when these days you can have anybody if you buy them dinner? It's a totally different world. So I think that's a problem. And it's probably inevitable, you know. The further away you get from something, the more alien it is (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

This comment points to the idea that the massive social forces at play are on-going, no matter how the wider public relates to piano music. The faculty member stressed the importance of relating to people and not losing touch with society while studying relatively esoteric works from the traditional canon.

The piano students at Middleton are thinking about their futures for the most part in terms of whether they want to continue on to graduate degrees or not. Many are exploring topics of interest, and do not have a clear picture of what the future will look like for their careers. They are comforted by the fact that they will most likely be well qualified for graduate degrees in reputable colleges or universities in North America. In regards to life beyond schooling, one student enrolled in a double-degree program spoke of the issues of the music industry. The student was made more aware of the music industry when working as a volunteer at a recording studio.

> The music industry right now is totally in upheaval. There doesn't seem to be a point in going to a music industry class, because what kind of business model is

> there to study when people are reluctant to pay for content and have stopped buying albums for the most part? It's a weird time in the industry but there's also an environment that's eager for change and for whatever is next. Hopefully we'll all be able to adapt to whatever's coming. In the meantime, though, I think [Middleton's] trained me to have a pretty good product to present to the world, and that's really the most I can hope for (Conservatory piano student).

Another student expressed a wish to look to the example set by the alumni and guest artists who are active in the professional world, including professors. He spoke about the limited amount of time in the private lessons and studio classes to be able to discuss future goals beyond just the goals of the semester or degree.

> This school is a mix of lots of forward and backward thinking. There's some teachers who only want their students to play stuff by dead white Europeans. Then there's other teachers who encourage a lot of improv and new music. Add to that the teachers in the College who are always pushing us to think outside the box…But this school has a lot of alums who have done really well, being successful at all kinds of things. I think it would be great if we could spend more time with them on a mentorship basis. There are some classes and workshops, but it'd be nice to understand more of the process of that (Conservatory piano student, 2013).

The entrepreneurial element in the Middleton Conservatory is not yet well-integrated into the piano curriculum. It is a program that is a separate entity within the Conservatory, and students have a choice of whether or not to participate in it. Middleton is an established structure made up of many moving parts. Perhaps because of this, it may take some time before this is integrated in other ways, rather than being considered just as a place where résumés and grant proposals are made. To sum up some of the concerns for the future of the graduates of the program, one faculty member used the analogy of classical literature in theater.

> You will always have Shakespearean actors. Shakespeare will always be important. But how many Shakespearean actors do you really need? Or put it

> another way: how many actors can make a living only from Shakespeare? Not that many. Everybody should know something about Shakespeare, but you're going to make your living doing commercials, and doing musicals, and whatever you can do as an actor. You live from day to day, doing whatever you can do. I think musician's lives are going to get a lot more like that. The idea that there's an inevitable career path – you go to school, you either win a competition, you play concerts, you get a college job – I think all that is going to be much harder to do as time goes on. People are going to have to have mainly local reputations where they are and create their own community of participants to keep something going (Conservatory piano faculty, 2013).

In speaking to the piano students and faculty of this Conservatory, the overall opinion is that the school provides a broad-based education that aims to have students interested in a wide variety of topics. Students live, eat and study together in relatively close proximity, and therefore have an opportunity to be exposed to different musical and aesthetic ideals. Although Middleton students have a typical piano curriculum, the intersection of a thorough liberal arts education exposes pianists to a wider view of the world. Like many college students, they are sheltered from the often complicated and uncertain professional world of music. For this reason, the piano department could incorporate changes by making faculty decisions on what they want their students to be able to do when they leave Middleton, rather than being primarily requirement-focused. As students usually look to their studio teachers for guidance, having some unified outcome goals would help clarify their time during their studies. This will not be an easy task for Middleton piano faculty, as it is clear that they have many disagreements.

The next chapter examines an undergraduate piano program in a university setting that has certain progressive leanings in their approach to curriculum. Like Middleton, this university also has a strong liberal arts emphasis. Unlike Middleton, this university is located in Canada, and has a smaller music program within a larger university.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## MEYER UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF MUSIC

**University setting.** In the middle of a snowstorm, I arrived at the Meyer University music building one winter morning in 2013. This medium-sized institution, located an hour and a half drive from a major Canadian city, sits within a regional municipality of around 500,000, consisting of several cities and townships. Spread across several campuses, Meyer University has an enrollment of about 17,000 students. The campus in which the Faculty of Music is located is in the smallest of the cities with a population of about 100,000. An unusual aspect of the campus location is that it neighbors a larger separate university known for their strong programs in science and technology. This neighboring university is almost double in size, comprised of over 35,000 students. For this reason, every fall semester the city becomes inundated with students from age 17 to 22, creating a vibrant, youthful atmosphere. I went for a 3-day visit to the campus, where I met with the piano faculty and students. My goal was to see how the program functioned in real-time, as well as observe nuances with the people and their interactions within the program.

The Faculty of Music produces many of the mainstream elements of an undergraduate performance school; there is a symphony, opera, string quartet program, a large concert hall, and a variety of concert series. A day in the life of a student typically consists of the classes one would expect at a music school, such as courses in music history, theory, as well as chamber music and liberal arts electives. Meyer has positioned itself as a program that offers a strong core curriculum in its Bachelor of Music degree as well as the flexibility to experiment when necessary.

**Organizational structure**. All of the music activities take place in a multi-level building that is clean and modern. The main level of the Faculty of Music building is a nondescript thoroughfare for most of the Meyer students commuting to class, who either drive under or walk through the corridor. This generic entryway gives way to the inviting upper levels of the building. Student culture has been taken into consideration in the design of each floor, in that there are many places where students and faculty can perch or engage in conversation. There is a music technology room, a historical keyboard instruments room, and a designated student lounge. My first impression of Meyer was that the school seemed to be comfortable within their structures, reflected in both the design of the building and the curriculum.

The music program at Meyer University has about 350 full-time students, and is one of the university's smallest areas, containing less than 5% of the school's full-time students studying music. There are about 25 full-time faculty members, 30-40 part-time faculty, and 8-10 staff members. The Faculty of Music is a non-departmental faculty; there are no heads or directors of departments, so there is no competition for resources on the departmental level. This may contribute to the interdisciplinary environment among the faculty and teaching staff, as all of the professors have opportunities to interact with each other at the faculty meetings.

In addition to the reputation of the high academic standard at Meyer, students are attracted to the Faculty of Music because it is a school that has developed a reputation for producing strong performers who move on to a wide variety of careers. When asked why he chose this particular program, a student said that the "educational program is also incredibly inspiring...it's very open, multi-faceted, and answers to basically any interest I

can come up with....I find it all inspiring because it works to show how broad the music industry is and provides you with skills that are applicable in a large range of areas post-graduation" (University piano student, 2013). An example of this is the course "Music in its Context," a required first-year course that replaced the standard "History of Western Music" course. "Music in its Context" applies a more global perspective to music history, and is taken for two terms. Here the students look at music in the context of the wider world, such as in entertainment, theatre, and advertising.

The students and faculty describe Meyer University as a small yet diverse and friendly place. The small size makes it easier for students to get to know one another, and diverse interests of the student body create an atmosphere of curiosity. A piano student who also majors in composition, commented that "you have people here who are going into pop music or classical performance or music therapy or new music, comp-improv. I think it's incredible, the amount of variation that we have here...and yet everyone gets along so well despite their different interests" (University piano student, 2013). Occasionally, the piano faculty will accept students with an unconventional 'spark' when they audition or recruit. These students often become interesting to work with, although they may be weak in some areas. One student is gaining an impressive profile in the new music community of a big city, even though his conventional piano skills are lacking, and "he can't sight-read his way out of a paper bag" (University piano faculty, 2013).

The Bachelor of Music degree at Meyer contains many of the core components that are present in many of the NASM accredited schools. In discussing accreditation, a Meyer University administrator said, "NASM is a double-edged sword, for sure. It guarantees a certain quality, and the consistency makes for easy transferability between

institutions. There are lots of good things about it. On the other hand, I think the Canadian system, or Canadian non-system, allows for a lot of latitude in our thinking, and by extension in our curriculum and programs" (2013). Students are also given a chance to give feedback on curriculum. If a student feels that there should be something different in their program than what is currently offered, adjustments in requirements can be made.

> We have what we call a Petitions Committee — all of the Faculties here do – whereby a student can petition or make a case for an exception to whatever policy or procedure we may have in place. We look at it pretty carefully; we look at it pretty seriously. So there's always been the possibility to deviate from the curriculum when it seemed appropriate. What it is that we're doing now is to develop a curriculum that has those differences in a sense built into it, so a student doesn't have to petition to do something different, so that flexibility is afforded to the student by the policies, procedures, and curriculum that we have in place (University music administrator, 2013).

**Piano Curriculum at Meyer University**. Meyer's piano program is directed by three full-time faculty, and three to four part-time faculty, depending on the number of enrolled students. Both the full-time and part-time piano faculty at Meyer were traditionally trained and come from well-established performing careers. Like the Middleton Conservatory, the Meyer piano faculty members are diverse, and are known nationally as performers, ensemble players, guest teachers, lecturers and adjudicators.

On the whole, the expectations for the piano students at Meyer University are comparable to most other universities. However, the students are given explicit information as to the function and purpose of the requirements. All piano students complete four semesters of theory, history, aural and sight-reading skills, and ensemble participation. There are about 80 undergraduate piano students enrolled in two terms a

year, spanning 24 weeks. Not all of these students are in the performance area, but all piano students from all areas have the same curriculum for the first two years. In the studio class I visited, for example, almost everyone had chosen a slightly different specialization: piano-jazz, composition-conducting, music education-theory, performance-improvisation-composition, performance-music criticism, and piano-music therapy.

Meyer's current approach to the piano curriculum began almost two decades ago, when the entire full-time piano faculty was retiring due to an early-retirement incentive program. After restructuring, the three new full-time faculty members were given a blank slate to design a curriculum. This was a major shift in the history of the keyboard area, and the faculty began creating a program that would reflect a more collegial atmosphere than what they were accustomed to in the past.

"The very first thing that we all agreed on right away is that we didn't want to be competitive in the studios," said one faculty member (2013). After mutually agreeing to start as a cooperative program, students were dispersed equally into each studio. Once a month, a common masterclass was scheduled for all of the piano students, taught by faculty on a rotating basis. The non-departmental structure of the weekly faculty meetings meant that the faculty could have more interaction with the other disciplines, such as music therapy, composition, theory, and history. This has continued to be a factor in Meyer's interdisciplinary approach to music.

The piano faculty emphasizes a collaborative atmosphere that was established 18 years ago when they re-established the piano program. Without this respectful environment, they feel that very little can be done in terms of motivating change. As one

faculty member noted, "One of the reasons I think that we work well together is because we're all very different, and our areas in which our strengths are, are very different. This is not something that pulls us apart, but it enables us—at the audition time—to say, 'That student's interested in this. We should earmark that person for so-and-so's studio'"(2013). Another factor is that change is best implemented when it is done by a few long-term faculty who are willing to move the curriculum forward year by year, stressing the idea that change cannot be imposed. As one piano faculty member stated:

> I think, from ground zero, all three of us were like, 'We have to start this as a cooperative program. We have to start it as a collaborative program. We're going to have—for instance, we are not going to have a competition for who goes into what studio. We're going to have policies that we spread the students around equally between the studios. Each studio is going be a diverse mix.' That there will be an equal number of performance majors in all the studios. Once a month, we would have common master classes where all the three master classes would come together…it turned out to be perfect. We never, ever had an argument. It was this fantastic setting (University piano faculty, 2013).

As the university expanded, this system has been harder to coordinate. The common masterclasses are not a regular occurrence, although there is still a weekly masterclass within each studio. Due to growth in the music programs, faculty-wide meetings now occur monthly rather than weekly, but the history of interaction has made it easier to maintain a collegial culture.

As time went on, piano enrollment has more than doubled in size. It became necessary to hire contract academic staff in order to accommodate the growth of the program, and to cover teaching when faculty members went on sabbatical. These new hires began as part-time instructors, and eventually took on more students and responsibilities.

> What I find is that the part-time instructors became more busy and the rules changed so that they would take more students. Then they became unionized, and they gained seniority, and so on—so they became like our colleagues. They began to function as our colleagues, so now there's a larger group of piano colleagues in a way that there wasn't before (University piano faculty, 2013).

The unionization of the part-time faculty allowed them to legally accept more students, extending their teaching up to 18 hours a week. As a result, many part-time faculty have made Meyer University a significant part of their career. Although they do not participate in faculty-wide meetings, they develop curriculum informally within the piano program. The full-time piano faculty members are careful to maintain the good faith of their part-time instructors, and often function as a liaison between senior administration and the part-time instructors. One piano professor mentioned that whenever possible they try to distribute prospective performance majors among the part-time faculty as well, so that they are able to develop their own studios.

> This becomes an additional task for the full-time faculty: retention of the CAS (Contract Academic Staff). In many places, even in other parts of our music faculty, retention of CAS is an issue. A high CAS turnover causes all sorts of problems with recruitment and training new staff, continuity with the students in a studio and so on. So this CAS retention is in our interest but is very delicate to handle in this kind of two-tier system we have now (University piano faculty, 2013).

One instructor noted that faculty meetings are difficult places to institute change. This is because of time constraints—people are often fatigued as meetings are often squeezed in between long hours. This can make it impossible to communicate between differing mindsets. Making changes to the official course catalog can be challenging and tedious, as the entire music faculty and University senate must approve of each change. Because of this unwieldy process, the faculty aim to keep the course catalog as simple

and as diplomatic as possible, while being much more detailed in the course outline. It is at the course outline level that the program institutes change. This allows them to be more nimble in their decisions, so they can develop projects and incorporate ideas from the part-time faculty.

The faculty must respond to the pressure from administration to increase enrollment numbers and hire fewer full-time instructors, which has led to the hiring of more part-time instructors. Although they have fewer benefits and less job stability than the tenured professors, part-time faculty members have more freedom to pursue activities outside of their duties at Meyer. Some of these activities are necessary in order to supplement income, but there is also more time to pursue goals in their professional or personal lives if they wish. Meyer stresses the importance of looking to the part-time faculty as a resource for improvement.

> Part-time instructors have to be treated with the utmost respect, because they're the ones fresh out of school, with energy and innovative ideas. They're out there performing a lot, are younger and may or may not be struggling with families yet. We have a retreat once a year, ask them for ideas, and make sure that we are regarding each other as equals. The long-term professors should not be the higher-ups so much as the people with continuity (University piano faculty, 2013).

***Course outline for Meyer University undergraduate piano***. The course outline is used as a foundation for the whole piano faculty, and consists of weekly studio lessons, daily practice sessions, weekly studio class student performances, concert attendance, an annual sight-reading exam and a creative project. During the course of the study, students must keep an updated repertoire list, and bring properly-bound scores to lessons. In addition to the creative project they all study a minimum of three advanced solo works from memory, as well as two shorter solo works (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Piano program basic components, Meyer University, years one to four*

| **Weekly Studio Lesson** | **Practice** | **Weekly masterclass** | **Student Performances** | **Concert Attendance** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Length<br>1st and 2nd year:<br>60 minutes<br>3rd and 4th year:<br>90 minutes<br><br>Punctuality and legible scores are mandatory<br><br>All performing commitments outside of program must be consulted | Daily minimum for performance majors: 3 hours<br><br>No more than 6 hours daily<br><br>Part-time work can be for no more than 10 hours a week | Attendance required for all majors<br><br>Visits to other masterclasses are allowed<br><br>Guest classes given by visiting instructors attendance is strongly recommended | Masterclasses – at least twice a semester<br>Concerto Competitions<br>Recital Hall & Joint Recitals<br>Weekly Noon Recitals<br>Community Performances | Must attend a minimum of six concerts given by professional musicians each semester, including off-campus keyboard events, bringing programs to studio instructor for analysis and discussion<br><br>One written critical review of one of the concerts |

**Table 4**

*Overview of concepts covered in undergraduate piano program, Meyer University*

| **FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS**<br>Year one and two | **EXPLORATION**<br>Year three | **SYNTHESIS**<br>Year four |
|---|---|---|
| **Annual sight-reading test**<br>-tested at the end of fall term, must be repeated until passed<br><br>**Repertoire**<br>-Representative works of keyboard repertoire are surveyed, 6 different works studied each year<br>-Minimum: 3 advanced solo works (memorized), 2 "quick studies" of short solo works, and 1 DIY repertoire project<br>-DIY project: 1 independently learned piece, with 7 different deadlines for reflective work (journals, recordings, etc.)<br><br>**Technique**<br>-list of technical work assigned by instructor tested at year-end juries<br>-may vary from including scales, chords, arpeggios and octaves, extended harmony, modes, early keyboard instrument techniques, figured bass, jazz charts, and electronic media<br><br>**Creative project**<br>-choose between a structured improvisation, one's own or another student's composition, piece written within the past 5 years, song cover, multi-media or interdisciplinary project, performance art, original concerto cadenza, or figured bass realization | Students are approved for one of two streams: Classical Music or New Music. Studio or masterclass instructor may be reassigned by Keyboard Coordinator<br><br>Proposal developed for graduation project, based on areas of student's creative interest<br><br>**Jury**<br><br>-Must include written proposal for graduation project<br><br>-Classical Music Stream: one Bach Prelude and Fugue, one complete sonata or concerto, one contrasting composition and one concert etude, memorized<br><br>-New Music Stream: three solo compositions, one of which may be student's own composition, and one of which must have been written within the past five years. Must include a contrapuntal work, a work of at least 15 min in length, and a virtuosic etude. A structured improvisation must be included. Memorization is encouraged. | Work goes towards the presentation at year's end of a pre-approved graduation project<br><br>Must include but is not limited to, a 50 minute graduation recital which meets the criteria of the Faculty committee |

During my visit I watched a piano studio class, led by a faculty member. The first person that played was preparing a lecture recital, and practiced speaking to the audience and performing Beethoven's Op. 126 Bagatelles. The next student announced with flair that since he had just become a new uncle, he had been thinking about lullabies. He played the famous lullaby by Brahms, introduced and improvised a jazz rendition of it, and then performed George Gershwin's Blue Lullaby. This was followed by a lively discussion about whether or not performers could stray from a notated jazz score. The next student played his own composition that he was going to perform that night at a new concert series founded by a fellow Meyer piano student. After this, he played a piece by a different student composer, after which they discussed aspects of working with a composer and new score. The class ended with two more performances of improvisations. One improviser used extended techniques inside the piano, and another played a short, contrapuntal form.

Faculty members, including the part-time faculty, are able to initiate change in the curriculum. For instance, one development made by a part-time faculty member is the do-it-yourself (DIY) project for pianists. It is similar to the Middleton self-directed project in that the students shape it. Unlike Middleton, it applies only to the piano students as a repertoire project, and it extends for a longer period of time, over 3 to 4 months during the school year. This assignment is part of the private piano studies for each individual student. After some experimentation, it was implemented in 2012 with successful results.

***DIY Project***. The DIY Piano Repertoire Project is an example of a pilot project that the piano faculty decided to develop and incorporate into the student requirements. In this project, students learn a piece of repertoire independently, ideally stretched over a period of time. Examples include repertoire from the standard literature, or compositions written by the student or fellow colleagues. One student wrote an original tango composition for piano and ensemble, with the finished product resulting in a collaborative video performance. Developed by one of the part-time faculty members, this is now incorporated into the piano course requirements. Designing this project was part of a larger effort to address the need for students to gain more independence with their interpretation.

> I decided to try that assignment on this performance major at the time, wanting to see how she could grow with that experience, instead of always being told what to do interpretatively at a lesson, or waiting for suggestions to evolve. Then she had to play it in studio class....I guess for us going through the system, as undergrads, we both discovered, even though we came from totally different schools, that we approached preparing for lessons in a certain way. Then we came here and now it's a different generation. The students have evolved differently, so we felt that students weren't necessarily thinking in the same way we did with lesson preparation, particularly with gaining enough background information regarding style, research and listening to professional recordings. So by the time I started to experiment with this, I was making comparisons between the students I had in 2003 and the students that I was having in 2010 (University piano part-time faculty, 2013).

After attending a conference in which a 'Do-it-Yourself' project was presented as an idea to use as a teaching tool, the faculty member tested it within the studio, and introduced it in the annual jury through the student's performance. The other instructors decided that they would also like to try it, so they initiated several trial runs within each studio, without grading the students. After some discussion at the faculty retreat and consultation with students, it was added to the course outline. This project is an example

of the gradual and democratic process followed by the keyboard faculty. It also illustrates the flexibility of the course outline, so that individual teachers who may or may not be comfortable with experimentation can still be happy with the results. Students may choose a short work, and they follow seven different deadlines to submit journals, reflective summaries, and recordings. The students requested these deadlines during the pilot period, as they felt the structure would motivate them to stay on track. Excited about venturing into an independent project, students still wanted to be guided through the structure of the assignment.

***Creative Project***. For this project, students submit a wide range of projects for the assignment in the second term, and are ideally working on it throughout the year. Examples include a structured improvisation, a performance of a student or colleague's composition, a performance of a composition written within the past five years, a song cover, a multi-media project, performance art, interdisciplinary project, an original concerto cadenza, or a figured bass realization. Students submit the projects by emailing a SoundCloud, Vimeo, or YouTube link to the jury. The jury grades all projects, and they then choose a selection of the projects to be performed in a showcase concert.

**Meyer University: Issues with Curricular Change.** Even without accreditation, classical music education has become very standardized, and schools often do not stray very far from those standards. Change can also pigeonhole programs into being labeled as 'experimental,' which can potentially drive away the handful of elite musicians that certain teachers are trying to recruit. There is also an issue of some students who may come into a program with different ideas of what they hope to accomplish. Often a freshman entering into a program may think initially that their goal is to have a solo

career, playing major concerti with all the significant orchestras in the world. The struggle for one's identity, and the subsequent move toward practical skills are usually developed throughout the undergraduate years. In addition, today's economy is such that degree programs are being pressured to increase their enrollment numbers, and there is fierce competition for top-quality students. Therefore, unless the curriculum is 'all things to all people,' it can be difficult to recruit students. Meyer's approach appears to be one that recognizes tradition, with certain faculty pushing progressive ideas forward.

> We have actually generally a conservative faculty, you know…and I kind of like that, because at least we know what we are, you know, and people like [progressive faculty] are trying to pull things into a certain direction. We're not trying to change everyone into ourselves, because we need a core of some kind.... When you start thinking about where your comfortable place is, each person is a little bit more unique these days. 150 years ago, it wouldn't have been the case because we wouldn't have had so many different kinds of music in our head that would've come our way. So I think what [progressive faculty] are trying to do is address that. We have students, they have all this music in their heads, and it's so much more than what we're teaching them here. So I'm curious about it, and I want to address it (University composition faculty, 2013).

It is also important to note that piano instructors at post-secondary institutions are usually required to have reputations as performers, and many have already established their skills in this standardized model of piano performance. These instructors, as well as those who are mid-career, may not have had the kind of training or interest that would qualify them to teach in an experimental genre, especially in areas such as improvisation or composition.

Young musicians who are drawn to an exclusively solo or classical career prefer traditional music training models. For these musicians, a conservatory model is an ideal environment for them. In my interviews at Meyer, there was a student who had hoped for

a more traditional Conservatory setting for his degree work. On the other hand, the student had transferred degrees from a broader field, and had chosen Meyer's program only because of the convenient location, not because of the piano program. A broad education had already been in place for this student, leading to a preference for a more traditional, specialized education in piano. One of the faculty members was also more comfortable in this specialization, and wished for an artist diploma program that would allow for intensive piano study.

> This would be geared completely—complete piano immersion, because, normally, in an undergrad, they have to deal with so much academic work, which is great, because it's very rigorous here, so it prepares them well for any grad school that they may go to or any teaching—anything, really. More so than in some other universities, I believe. But because they have to deal with all that, it would be nice for them to spend a year or two—I don't know what would work best—but spend some time just immersing completely in conservatory type—just stream of performance only—or mostly—which is their major (University piano faculty, 2013).

Curriculum change is often a complicated and subtle issue. It is often not a priority as the instructors are busy with other duties and responsibilities in their job. Another issue is the length of the Canadian semesters, which are generally shorter than the American system. Several faculty mentioned that this made it more difficult to accomplish tasks.

> One ideal change to Canadian universities that would have a really positive impact on applied studies would be to extend the school year from the usual 24 weeks of class to something more like 30 weeks. It is very difficult to facilitate the development of instrumental skills in a short time. We are working with the development of physical skills and listening skills that cannot be crammed (University piano part-time faculty, 2013).

As well, physical wellness for musicians is an area that is starting to raise serious attention in university music education. One part-time faculty member specializes in the

Alexander technique, having studied, written, and applied it to her teachings over the years, including the pedagogy course required by performance majors at Meyer. On the first day of pedagogy class she asked, "'does anyone experience or have they experienced any kind of chronic pain, not just a little bit of soreness here or there?' And every hand goes up....What is it about our traditional training that brings us to a level where you can't play without injury? That's really sad to me that every hand goes up. That they've had, in some cases debilitating but in other cases more a chronic something that's bothering them" (University part-time faculty, 2013). The physical issues are discussed in pedagogy class, and students sometimes have a consultation through an exchange lesson. Often in classical music culture, chronic pain doesn't get addressed until it has become reactive rather than proactive. "Sometimes, it doesn't get discussed…It's almost like there's a taboo, and you don't want to appear weak, so that's a big issue" (University piano part-time faculty, 2013).

Students brought up the wish to have fewer requirements in the third and fourth year of studies, so that they could concentrate more on their focus of study. Others wished for a more process-based approach. "Since watching the process or witnessing it and applying yourself to trying it is one of the most important parts.…I think it would just be so nice to be able to see the professionals more at work and not in their state of prime..." (University piano student, 2013). This example was given in the context of the piano composition and improvisation lessons he was working on. He suggested a masterclass with composers bringing in unfinished scores or a hands-on discussion on how to orchestrate. This was also brought up in the previous chapter, in regard to a student wanting a more process-based mentorship with alumni or visiting musicians.

There has been much dialogue about the future of specialized music studies, bringing up the larger issues of cultural and technological change. In his discussion about music entrepreneurship, James Ian Nie (2011) notes that concerts and gigs are harder to come by, and orchestras are in trouble. Everybody knows that measures must be taken to change, but there is a lot of effort expended just to defend the foundations of what is already in place, and so it is difficult to find resources to change the status quo. "The trend is clear: the music industries are in transition due—in part—to uncertain economic climates, changing arts consumption patterns, and an audience that experiences increasing demands on its time" (Nie, 2011, p. 132).

The need to adapt to the changing world is addressed by emphasizing the ability to react to change. A music administrator at Meyer spoke of developing this kind of versatility, rather than teaching new technological methods.

> Well, certainly the days of anticipating, institutionally, the skills that a student will need in a very practical sense to be successful, I think are gone. We don't know what the world is going to look like, even ten-fifteen years from now. I think in prior times we could actually write down a set of skills—'Here are a list of things students need to be able to do'—and they were often not very interesting. I mean, they were fairly pragmatic things—a student will need to play at a high level, they'll need to be able to audition successfully, they'll need to have some understanding of theory and history to support their performing skills. But it's much more complicated now. We know how important entrepreneurial skills are, how important critical thinking is, how important flexibility and adaptability are in our students lives, because they don't know what the world's going to look like either. I mean, for us to pretend that we are able to see what the world's going to look like, I think is unfair to the students. And so, one of the tendencies is to develop in our students is the ability to respond to change quickly and in meaningful ways (University music administrator, 2013).

Similarly, a piano faculty member also spoke of the need to explore different solutions to the professional and technological areas of piano training. Professional elements are often imposed onto a student's already busy schedule.

> The music business is a moving target, so you can't expect that you can give a student a skill and it will be a relevant skill. This is—I think—the mistake that many professional development programs make. They say, "Okay, we're going to put in a computer bank, and we're going teach the software." By the time you've bought that stuff—forget it. They've moved on to some—it's about something else, and it's about mobile phones now. It just keeps moving, so—What do you offer at the undergraduate level? I think the key that you have to offer is their sense of confidence in their own identity. That's the key. That's the abstract science of it. If you don't have that fundamental in place, you can just forget all the other skills, because they won't feel empowered to use them. They have to feel empowered. I think because we're so specialized, we unintentionally give the message of unworthiness to our students. We do this unintentionally. We want the best for them, so we hold them to high standards, and it ends up being that—it backfires on us—a little bit (University piano faculty, 2013).

The changes in curriculum in the Meyer piano program are seemingly small but have far-reaching effects. The DIY and Creative projects enable students to learn to trust their instincts and develop confidence in their abilities as a pianist. They are able to direct their own learning, try something out, and potentially fail. It is in their mistakes that they learn, and they can document this in their journal entries and reflective summaries. In the end, this is what they will need to do when they graduate and perform. Another aspect to their training is the easy access to study different kinds of improvisation. A faculty member encourages students to study improvisation as a tool to uncover one's identity. Students from other studios who are interested in learning about it can take exchange lessons on improvisation.

One challenging topic that has caused some discomfort is whether or not a performance program can go online. So far the general discussion has been that it would not work for performance, and that in the future the piano program would occur on the physical campus in a small way, as a type of 'showplace program.' The question is

whether or not the piano performance program should develop the techniques that would plug into an online franchise concept, which might involve some online instruction. Although there may be some components that could be taught online, the community is not ready to contemplate this yet. As one piano faculty member put it, "but it could be that some of what could be taught online could free us up to do some very interesting things. That's a question for the future, not for the present. For the present, things are functioning, and we don't want to fix what's not broken" (2013). This is an area that will require more contemplation as online education becomes more prevalent in the future.

The multicultural aspect of Canadian life may lead to a shift towards 'ecomusicology' and a more sensitive approach to environment sustainability. This topic is beyond the scope of this investigation, however it is something that acknowledges the larger issues of sustainability, and "how we musicians relate to our place on the land and in relation to the indigenous cultures of the lands we are living in and moving through….This is a different topic from multiculturalism. It is more closely aligned with environmental sustainability, with ecomusicology, with funding, and with touring practices" (University piano faculty, 2013). This may in turn lead to a change in audition practices.

> We need to think about the kind of person who wants to enroll in a classical music degree program, but struggles and may not pass the audition. Setting aside the yardsticks of talent and skill - and I don't mean that we should, this is a thought experiment - what other qualities do we know about this person? We know that a) they have a fierce passion for music b) they are risk takers willing to be vulnerable c) they are mostly young people, d) they have a dream, e) they have come forward and approached us for something they think they need, and f) despite all of the above, they may not be able to function as professional musicians themselves. Now I ask you, are these not the very people who the classical sector as a whole is seeking? And they are turning up at our gates voluntarily, and we are turning them away? This is a massive blind spot on our

> part. We need to reassign value to these people in our hearts and minds and offer them suitable opportunities to participate in our sector. I don't mean necessarily to enroll them as music majors. No matter where they live, they could stay a part of social media groups and so on (University piano faculty, 2013).

There are traditional elements within the Meyer piano curriculum. What is innovative about this program is that the traditional schools of thought can exist alongside newer streams of innovation. While one faculty member described another colleague's technique as seemingly outlandish, it was also recognized as something that could be useful to a certain type of student. Allowing students to make a request to change curriculum, the easy access to study improvisation and harpsichord (and other early keyboard instruments), and the Creative and DIY projects add up to a larger culture of understanding and curiosity. Overall, the piano program stresses both composition and improvisation in the coursework, performance requirements, and even in the audition process. They emphasize creativity by encouraging students to pursue their own identity through special projects.

The faculty members are eager to help students prepare for a wide variety of careers. Some of these alumni include: a new music pianist who has started many programs around town, a winner of piano competitions who also won a songwriting contest, a pop singer pianist who is also an ambassador for French in Ontario schools, a keyboard player for famous bands, and founders and leaders of many successful concert series ranging from underground pop to folk to new music. The current culture of the piano students at Meyer University continues to integrate itself within different disciplines at the university, as well as in the local and national professional world.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSIONS

**Summary.** Both Middleton and Meyer University piano programs of study expand upon the conservatory model in different ways. Middleton extends the traditional curriculum through the quality of their college course offerings, encouraging a broad education that would not be accessible in a normal conservatory. Students gain adaptability through the breadth of a liberal arts education, which in turn can empower them to seek out necessary professional skills on their own. The Meyer University piano program has more experimentation embedded in their piano curriculum, within a more traditional framework.

Classical piano music and the institutions that support it are usually very committed to maintaining traditional standards. One of the most valuable aspects of the conservatory model —and a hallmark of a piano performance degree— is the private studio instruction. Like an apprenticeship, it is the way a lineage of knowledge gets passed on, keeping pianists connected to the past. Beyond this, gaining a diverse experience in professional and practical skills depends on many complex factors. Both Middleton and Meyer aim to challenge pianists to take ownership of their futures. At the same time, both schools are concerned with how they can uphold a standard of tradition while also adapting to help students with changing professional needs.

Although undergraduate pianists take non-music electives to gain a broader perspective, the liberal arts context at Middleton Conservatory-College extends this further, developing a wider experience through a more academically challenging environment. Students in a liberal arts model such as Middleton are encouraged to gain

an interest in a variety of topics through participating in the College. It is a system that aims to produce students who are educated broadly. However, the piano department itself follows a traditional course of study. The course outline has not changed, partly because they rely on the fact that students can develop breadth, critical thinking skills and adaptability through their non-music elective courses. Despite this, students who are immersed in the conservative culture of piano study can find it hard to integrate any progressive aspects of the college training. These two cultures could align themselves more closely, even in small ways. Based on the feedback from the faculty and students, I believe that the program could benefit from a reassessment on how they could make adjustments to their curricula. All of the Middleton piano faculty are extremely accomplished and skilled at individual instruction and mentorship; however, as a department they are often in a supervisory role of fulfilling accreditation or university rules. A piano department such as Middleton could change the angle of their discussions by deciding what they want their students to learn. This shift in perspective would help to start a conversation about possible adjustments in their curriculum. Although all professors will have different viewpoints and may disagree on this matter, they could find common ground by identifying several key areas that they feel could benefit students. Many pianists and schools are concerned about losing their core training, in which case, a small testing period for a pilot project could help gauge whether or not these things would be possible.

In contrast, the Meyer Faculty of Music tries to keep the course catalog as simple as possible, while keeping the course outline dynamic. This is done by testing out ideas in pilot projects, and being willing to adjust the project design if it doesn't work for the rest

of the faculty. The effectiveness of the Meyer program is partly circumstantial, aided by the hire of new faculty all at the same time, and the ability to build a program from the beginning. It also has to do in part with Meyer's small number of faculty, the part-time faculty being allowed to influence curricula, and the respectful environment that they cultivate. For this model to continue to work, there must be a sense of willingness from the faculty to revisit their course outline so that certain projects keep adjusting to the ever-fluctuating professional world. The DIY or Creative project may need to look completely different in ten years, depending on how technology has advanced. For larger institutions, this kind of maintenance may be more difficult to instigate, due to many factors such as lack of consensus. In this case, it may still be possible to alter the design or create an in-studio project, much like the way in which the DIY project began. Allowing part-time faculty to influence curricula is a unique advantage to Meyer University, as it can bring in a fresh prospective. Like other industries, if there has been no innovation, different people are brought in to provide fresh perspective. Piano faculty can consider this option, if programs are in need of a boost of new ideas. If part-time faculty or staff had more incentives such as the ability to influence curricula, this could positively affect the retention of staff, and help to cultivate a culture of change.

Small changes at the course outline level can result in big results in the development of students. While the program at Meyer does not necessarily cater to an elite performer, it is still able to target the demographic of musicians who may not become full-time classical concert artists. The student body is eclectic and talented, and some of the students are already making their marks in the local and national music scene. Many have pursued unusual but savvy careers that add a twist to traditional paths. For instance,

graduates have been creators of concerts series in genres such as folk, new music, and improvisation. One graduate created a house concert series that grew until it has recently become a full series franchised to different venues across the coast. Another student has a high-profile career performing a show that combines his humor, piano playing, and songwriting. Others have moved into technology and music, continuing their work as university instructors.

It was useful to discover that the vast uniformity of piano programs across North America has largely to do with the fact that the course catalogs must be fairly broad and generic, in order to accommodate different tastes and priorities. As a result, however, many piano programs fall into the habit of relying on the catalog as a default, rather than a starting point to make their own changes at the course outline level. The design of the course outline must also be flexible enough to adjust to the diverse strengths of a piano faculty. For Meyer University, "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" is a phrase that the instructors and administration are well aware of in their discussions about innovation, and they are constantly being reminded to keep what is good intact. One of the most important points brought up is the necessity to instill confidence in a student's abilities. The confidence to develop one's own identity is a starting point for success in this field, yet often programs or faculty can inadvertently send a wrong message to students. They can develop a sense of unworthiness because of the high standards maintained in classical music. This message can hinder students from trying to take risks with their professional skills. From a place of confidence, students can then move more securely to explore areas in practical and professional skills. Based on my observations,

the following components would also have a significant impact in a student's ability to adjust to the many areas of professional work.

**Practical Skills**. ***Improvisation and composition***. Improvisation and composition have generally been separate from the piano performance curriculum, resulting in pianists experienced in re-creating, rather than creating. Improvisation is also a traditional concept, as the great composers of the past were accomplished improvisers as well. The Meyer piano program has a much stronger improvisation and composition presence compared to other models. In the audition for the program, prospective students may also include a performance of their own composition or improvisation. I observed that this improvisation element made students much more confident and spontaneous in their performances. For those that were in a performance stream and not as comfortable with improvising or composing, the awareness of their colleagues thriving in this area encouraged exploration into different areas of skills. A Meyer University faculty pianist who integrates improvisation in teaching explained some of the benefits:

> With the improvisation and with their own creative project, you take off that overlay of, "I have to do what the composers say." When you take that off and see the student just as they are, without that interface of the composer, it's an amazing moment. It's just remarkable. You suddenly hear their voice undiluted, and they hear their voice undiluted (University piano faculty, 2013).

Different types of new music could be incorporated into this area, such as improvisatory new music, jazz, or popular music. As discussed in Chapter 3, some professors may feel unqualified to teach in an experimental area. In this case, providing students with an option to explore this in an independent and guided project, or a required semester of improvisation with different faculty would allow a small window into a new area of exploration.

***Independent and creative projects***. Both Meyer and Middleton programs have these elements through self-directed projects, with advisors supervising the design process and deadlines. Middleton's self-directed project is applied throughout the College and Conservatory, and can be used to study a wide variety of projects. Meyer's DIY project is centered on the independent learning of piano repertoire for the first and second year piano students. This can also take the form of a general creative project, developed with their piano instructors. It can allow students to hone skills in newer areas such as popular music, multi-media, cadenza-writing, or figured bass realizations. Again, this may extend beyond the time and comfort of some faculty, but these projects can be scaled down and tailored to each studio's focus, such as focusing on the process of cadenza-writing or a figured-bass realization, or even writing a composition in the style of a particular composer.

***Community***. Community engagement is often a buzzword that has little meaning to students overburdened with many requirements. However, engagement with the community has many benefits, and for some pianists it can be a transformative performance highlight, boosting self-identity. It allows students to experience the current climate of music in society, helping them to identify their own role within it. Students can bring their musical talents to disparate audiences, and take advantage of opportunities that can arise from engaging in the arts as active participants. The communal aspect of music-making may also open the door to potential facilitators of community music, exposing new areas of interest.

In Michael Mauskapf's (2011) research on the challenges facing American symphonies, he outlines the way professional arts organizations are shifting to focus on

the community. Rather than marketing to passive consumers, organizations are changing focus by embracing audiences as active participants in the process. Strong boundaries from the wider community are breaking down in organizations, loosening to a model that is more "porous to the community, that blurs distinctions between organizations and emphasizes commonalities" (Mauskapf, 2011, p. 268). As symphony audiences are a part of the pianist's audience demographic, I believe that these trends will affect the structures that surround piano-playing as well. Pianists engaging actively with the community will also become more adept at integrating themselves into performing arts organizations.

**Professional skills**. Performers will have to make their way in a predominantly commercial world, where much of the music industry is in disarray because of the explosion of the Internet and changing consumer patterns. Performers must learn to understand how to use these patterns to actively find their audience. This is an audience that shares music and material online, and can now watch a world-renown performer online as well as an unknown person playing something casually in their home. Both might be of equal interest to this audience. These skills could be introduced in a professional skills workshop. Some schools have opened centers for entrepreneurial learning or career services on-campus, but many undergraduate piano programs may not have these resources readily available. Piano programs could support these tools by integrating career awareness into student learning. Cross-curricular strategies can help to align career development with the culture of music programs. One of Beeching's (2011) suggestions is a portfolio requirement. In it she suggests students can start their portfolio when they begin their program, complete with essays on their goals and career aspirations. They can collect work samples for each semester, document their work, and include

information such as course papers, recordings, programs of their performances, repertoire list, resume, website, and other documents (Beeching, 2011, p. 147). This portfolio could be reviewed annually. When discussing the question of how students can be better prepared for the professional world, a piano faculty member from Meyer University remarked that students are generally self-motivated when given the creative space to develop.

> My finding is that a person who is accepted into a good music undergraduate program is an exceptional person in society as a whole. These are salt of the earth people who are very self-motivated and smart and driven. I find that if you are a good gardener by giving them space to grow, let them expand, and most of all identify and mirror to them their unique qualities, then they will find the unique tools they need for their own professional development in society. Such tools aren't rocket science – often they can be obtained quite easily with a short seminar or online workshop – but they are very diverse. I don't think undergrad curricula and budgets have room to provide all the specific professional development tools needed. I think we have to train students how to go out and find their own (University piano faculty, 2013).

**Sample Curriculum**. Influenced by both the Middleton and Meyer models, a sample course of study is outlined below (see Table 5). Using 120 credit hours as a gauge for the workload, this course of study aims to complement traditional aspects while also incorporating some of the areas listed above.

Table 5

*Sample curriculum for B.M. piano performance degree*

| Year 1 | Credit Hours |
|---|---|
| • Studio instruction | 8 |
| • Theory I, II | 6 |
| • Aural Skills I, II | 2 |
| • Entrepreneurship in the Arts | 2 |
| • Music History I | 3 |
| • English | 3 |
| • Community Engagement | 3 |
| • Social/Behavioral Science | 3 |
| Year 2 | |
| • Studio instruction | 8 |
| • Theory III, IV | 6 |
| • Aural Skills III, IV | 2 |
| • Music History II | 3 |
| • Ensemble | 2 |
| • Cultural literacy | 3 |
| • Sciences/Math | 3 |
| • Improvisation | 3 |
| Year 3 | |
| • Studio instruction | 8 |
| • Music History (upper level) | 3 |
| • Music Theory (upper level) | 3 |
| • Keyboard Skills I and II | 2 |
| • Chamber music | 2 |
| • Ensemble | 1 |
| • Improvisation/Composition | 3 |
| • Community arts/arts management seminar | 3 |
| • Portfolio project seminar | 1 |
| • Collaborative Piano | 1 |
| • Quantitative reasoning | 3 |
| Year 4 | |
| • Studio instruction<br>-Final recital | 8 |
| • Music History (upper level) | 3 |
| • Music Theory (upper level) | 3 |
| • Collaborative Piano | 1 |
| • Literacy and Critical Inquiry | 3 |
| • Pedagogy and Outreach | 3 |
| • Copyrights and Contracts | 3 |
| • Piano Literature | 3 |
| • Accounting or Business elective | 3 |

While experimenting with the curriculum, it became clear that certain core elements are necessary in order to ensure good musicianship. However, by making certain shifts, more young students would have a chance to be creative. As many requirements are already needed, a project-based learning approach could be implemented (see Table 6). This approach cannot be overly fixed; the nature of the projects will differ depending on the student and what they feel is challenging. To expand awareness, students could be asked to learn how to present a business plan or create a concert series in a related genre of music. They could be asked to react to current local, national or international issues in ways that relate to their art. Any opportunity for students to spearhead their own projects would be empowering and provide an abundance of practical skills through self-initiative.

Table 6

*Sample projects for B.M. piano performance students*

| | |
|---|---|
| Year 1 | -Begin portfolio (Beeching, 2011, p. 147)<br>-Piano salon evening: presentation in area of interest (could include miniature lecture or lecture recital, a composition, original prose or poetry reading, etc.) |
| Year 2 | -Community performances (audio or video uploaded online, with letter of agreement from organization)<br>-Improvisation/composition concert (different genres encouraged) at local café |
| Year 3 | -Independent repertoire project (5-10 minute piece)<br>-Community outreach at local schools |
| Year 4 | -Business/grant proposal for local concert series or touring project, including budget<br>-Community project focusing on area of interest |

**Further study**. As this study was limited to two schools, I believe that there could be further research done to observe growing trends in piano curricula. This could include comparing the North American undergraduate models to programs in different countries. As globalization increases, institutions may look toward curricula that have little to no emphasis on traditional models. Concerning pianists and entrepreneurship, Jonathan Kuuskoski stated that "Like any young professional, pianists must create a unique, marketable and diverse set of skills flexible enough to face globalized hypercompetition" (Kuuskoski, 2011, p. 96). A similar topic could include how the international standard arisen from globalization has affected the different national styles in piano performances. Other areas of study could cover a study of alumni career paths, a larger cross-section of piano institutions studied at the course outline level, and entrepreneurship for pianists.

**Reflections**. At the beginning of this study, I theorized that changes in piano curricula such as Meyer were made because of an approach towards music as an entrepreneurial vocation, but this was only a small part of the picture. Change was also driven by the point of view of fostering a student's identity and independence. From there, an interdisciplinary environment and gradual curricular changes helped students develop confidence in their abilities to seek out professional skills.

After completing my own undergraduate and graduate degrees in piano performance, I have always had a deep appreciation for the traditional training I received, both in schools of music and conservatories. The strong core training that I received enhanced discipline, analytical skills, and my passion for the arts. There is a kind of largeness and grace to the world of piano. Many pianists live to walk towards the languid expanse of a concert grand piano under the spotlights in a darkened concert hall. In a

world that doesn't often sit still, performances are a chance to be enraptured or even enraged by live sound, and to hopefully be transformed by it. The pianist Artur Schnabel once remarked that the "social function of music is only an application or effect of music, it has nothing to do with the music as such. For society consumes all kinds of music. You can never come to any valuation of music if you come with statistics proving how music is sold or circulated. That deals with the utilization of music, not with the music itself" (Schnabel, 1970, p. 174). Schnabel brings up the point that the way in which music functions in the world has nothing to do with the intrinsic universal value of music. His words bring to mind the differences between music for oneself, rather than music for society. It is true that the study of music is valuable whether or not it is a viable career. However, this view in society can easily shift into music as an undervalued hobby rather than music as a practical way to make a living. Musicians have a role in society, and I believe that educators can find new relevance so that it is possible for students to develop skills to meet the present market. The beauty and the intrinsic value of music should still be able to exist alongside the way society looks at and consumes music.

> For every trained artist who cannot afford their child's day care, we are not exposed to their unique view of the world. For every violinist, violist, and cellist who cannot make a car payment and is forced to seek employment outside music, we cannot experience the transcendence of Beethoven's last string quartets. For every playwright who cannot find an affordable venue to premiere his or her latest work, a reflection of our humanity is lost among the piles of private art. As enlightened educators, we have the responsibility, in my opinion, to find new relevance in our students' talent and exuberance about their role in society (Beckman et al., 2011, p.30).

Mendelssohn's vision for developing well-rounded musicians continues to live on, informing the piano programs in post-secondary education. Many artists have embraced

innovation in piano across all genres, combining aspects of their training to bring forth their own ideas. Others have gone on to create their own venues and audiences. The piano has embodied a powerful voice throughout the ages. Despite the burden of association from past eras, the piano continues to invoke fascination through new mediums of communication. University piano studies will continue to evolve over the years, informed by the many changes in the music industry. Students will want to tailor their education to their own real or perceived needs, depending on how closely they have aligned their goals to reality. Teachers will also inhabit a musical space that they are comfortable exploring, and for some that will include more breadth or depth than others. A balance between mastery, exploration, and professional training may never be achieved because of the many unruly factors that undergraduate music education is facing today. However, the tension between these forces is part of what creates a compelling dialogue for change. The more dynamic the approach, the more opportunities pianists will have to be a significant force in culture and society.

REFERENCES


Becker, H.S. (1982). *Art worlds*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Beckmann, G.D. et al (2011). *Disciplining the arts: Teaching entrepreneurship in context.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Beeching, A.M. (2011). Entrepreneurship and Career Services in Context: Issues, Challenges, and Strategies (pp. 139-150). In G.D. Beckmann (Ed.), *Disciplining the arts: Teaching entrepreneurship in context.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Chase, C. (2008, March 24). Entrepreneurs in music—and don't forget about Mozart! [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.polyphonic.org/discussion_panel/entrepreneurs-in-music-and-dont-forget-about-mozart-4/

Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture: Twentieth century ethnography, literature and art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Couch, S.R. (1973). *Aspiring performers and aspiring teachers: Some aspects of the socialization of music students*. (Unpublished masters thesis). Retrieved from http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd/view.cgi?acc_num=obgrad1334949505

Denzin, N.K. (1970). *The research act in sociology: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods.* London: Butterworths.

Ellard, B., & Kallmann, H. (2012). Music Degrees. *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. Retrieved from http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com

Fay, A. (1880, reprint 1965). *Music—Study in Germany*. New York, NY: Dover Publications.

Fiske, H. (1976). The Role of Research in Music Education. *Canadian Music Educator, 17*. 27-30.

Gandre, J. (2001). *And then there were seven: An historical case study of the seven independent American conservatories of music that survived the twentieth century*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Gessele, C. M. (1992). The Conservatoire de Musique, and national music education in France, 1795-1801. In M. Boyd (Ed.), *Music and the French Revolution*, (pp. 191-210). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Green, P. (1979). Doctoral programs in music: reform or rhetoric. *Canadian Music Educator, 20/2.* 34-39.

HEADS. (2012). *Music data summaries*. Higher education arts data services. Reston, VA: National Association of Schools of Music.

Ingle, G. L. (2005). Keyboard pedagogy and the future. *The American Music Teacher, 2.* 4-9.

Jerger, W. (Ed.), (1996). *The piano masterclasses of Franz Liszt, 1884-1886: Diary notes of August Göllerich*. R. L. Aimdars, Trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kallmann H., & Beckwith J. (2012). Professional education. *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. Retrieved from http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com

Kingsbury, H. (1988). *Music, talent, and performance: A conservatory cultural system.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Kuuskoski, J. (2011). The Compleat Pianist: Leveraging Entrepreneurial Mentorship to Foster a Renewed Vision of Piano Pedagogy (pp. 95-116). In G.D. Beckmann (Ed.), *Disciplining the arts: Teaching entrepreneurship in context.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Landes, H. A. (2008). *On being a music major: A comparative study of student culture in a Conservatory and a University school of music.* (Doctoral dissertation). Loyola University, Chicago. Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3313151)

Mathews, W.S.B. (1895). Private Teacher vs. Conservatory: A Pedagogical Polemic. *Music, 8/5*. 487-497.

Mauskapf, M. (2011). *Enduring crisis, ensuring survival: Artistry, economics, and the American symphony orchestra.* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. (UMI No. 3519659)

Milliman, A. L. (1992). *A survey of graduate piano pedagogy core course offerings.* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Oklahoma, Norman.

Mongrédien, J. (1996). *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism: 1789-1830.* S. Frémaux, Trans. Portland: Oregon.

Morrison, J. (1973). *The rise of the arts on the American campus.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

National Association of Schools of Music (2012). *Handbook 2012-2013*. Retrieved from http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/

Nettl, B. (1995). *Heartland Excursion: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music.* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Nie, J.I. (2011). Music and Entrepreneurship in the Liberal Arts: A Model for an Interdisciplinary Minor to Augment Current Music Curricula (pp. 131-138). In G.D. Beckmann (Ed.), *Disciplining the arts: Teaching entrepreneurship in context.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Parakilas, J. (1999). *Piano roles: three hundred years of life with the piano*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Patterson, L.W.A. (1972). *Undergraduate programs for music teacher preparation in Canadian Colleges and Universities*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Philip, R. (2004). *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Phillips, L. M. (1979). *The Leipzig Conservatory: 1843-1881* (Doctoral dissertation). Indiana University. (UMI No. 7916957)

Sandow, G. (2013, March 6). What's wrong with music schools today [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2013/03/whats-wrong-with-music-schools-1.html

Schnabel, A. (1970). *My Life and Music*. Buckinghamshire, England: Colin Smythe.

University Music Programs. (2013). *Canadian Encyclopedia of Music*. Retrieved from http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/university-music-programs

Walker, T. (2008). The Status of the BM Piano Performance Degree. *American Music Teacher, 57/5*. 20-22.

Weber, W., et al. (2013). Conservatories. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41225.

# APPENDIX A

## LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

**LETTER OF CONSENT**

Dear _____,

My name is Rosabel Choi and I am a doctoral student working under the supervision of Dr. Benjamin Levy at the ASU Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts School of Music. I am conducting a study about post-secondary piano education, and am looking to compare perspectives between university training and requirements in the professional world. I am contacting professional pianists and educators from both conservatory and university backgrounds, and I hope that you will be interested in participating in this capacity. Your input will help provide information about the current trends of piano education in today's post-secondary settings.

Your participation will include an interview of up to 60 minutes. The conversation will be audio recorded in order to transcribe the groups' remarks verbatim. I plan to provide you with a copy of your individual comments so that you may correct, clarify, or add to your comments made during the session. I will give you at least two weeks to review the transcript, and if I have not heard from you by the deadline, I will assume you agree with the transcription as written. I may need to contact you for clarification or in order to ask you a question that arises from other interviews, but your total time involved in this study should be less than 90 minutes.

You must be 18 or older to participate in the study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty, and there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in your participation. There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study, but by participating you will help contribute to a better understanding of the current state of post-secondary piano education. I would like to use the results of this study, including your responses, in my dissertation, and in presentations related to my dissertation.

Your responses will be confidential, unless you indicate below with your signature that you approve of your identity being associated with the study results.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact either me Rosabel.Choi@asu.edu or Professor Levy Ben.Levy@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. If you are able to participate but cannot attend the interview in person, please respond to this email and I can send you list of questions that can be answered in written form.

Sincerely,
Rosabel Choi

**By signing below I give consent to have my name used in this study.**

_____

***Signature***

# APPENDIX B

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

I will ask the following questions to each of the student, faculty, and administrator interviews at the two different institutions. Questions will be tailored depending on the respective roles of each person as a student, faculty, or administrator.

1. Describe the kind of university education/degrees you have received (undergraduate, graduate, doctorate) and the years you received them.

2. How many students do you teach?

3. Are you active professionally outside of the university?

4. What have some of your graduates gone on to do professionally?

5. What kinds of musical organizations have you been affiliated with?

6. Based on your needs as a pianist/educator, what kinds of skills/courses did you take that were most useful to your career now?

7. What type of course or training do you wish you could've taken that was not offered at your school?

8. Do you have any ideas of how post-secondary education could be improved so that pianists could more easily meet the demands in the working world?

9. Name a musical organization(s) that you find inspirational, and why. It can be an institute, a performing group, or an educational program.

10. Do you notice any trends in educational approaches in higher education for pianists?

11. How has the curriculum evolved over the past five to ten years?

12. Have there been any changes in the undergraduate piano curricula? If so, why? If not, why?

13. Why were changes to the curricula made, what did they hoped to accomplish when making these changes?

14. How does it compare to other music programs?

15. What are some traditional elements that have been included in the undergraduate degrees? Do they have to follow guidelines stipulated by NASM?

16. Are schools thinking about this, and if so how? What is your idea of a traditional keyboard curriculum and why did they change?

17. If a high school student was interested in attending this program and wanted to know more about the institution, how would you describe your institution and student life?

18. What draws students to this school?

19. What type of student would this school want to draw?

20. What is really important to students at this program?

21. How do the school's values and goals affect decisions on curricula change?

22. Do you feel that the curriculum is in line with the school's values and goals?

23. How prepared are the students when they arrive? How well do you feel this program is preparing students for a life as a professional musician? Does the program stress this, and how?

24. Is there anything that this curriculum needs to improve upon?

25. Would you be available to be contacted for further remarks or clarification of any of the questions above?

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pianist Rosabel Choi's exploration of music has moved towards gathering the elements of her music training to create an identity that reflects the many cultural streams that resonate deeply within. During studies in Oberlin and Calgary, she received numerous awards, including the Oberlin Dean's Talent Award, Oberlin Piano Competition, Rudolph Serkin Award, Austrian-Canadian Mozart Competition, Kiwanis Rose Bowl, and the Roslyn McCowan Award. Performing extensively as a soloist and chamber musician, she recently toured the Toronto, Montreal, Baltimore and San Francisco areas. She is an active performer as the pianist in the Mash Potangos, a tango-inspired ensemble that formed at the Banff Centre and have since given acclaimed performances in concert halls, traditional tango balls, jazz clubs, loft spaces, bars and cafes across Canada and the US. Rosabel received her doctoral degree at Arizona State University, studying with Dr. Kwang-Wu Kim. She has been guest faculty at Arizona State University, Augustana College at University of Alberta, and the Peabody Institute of John Hopkins. Rosabel's recent teaching highlight was leading a tango workshop for OrchKids, an El Sistema-inspired program for local Baltimore youth. Many foundations and artist organizations have awarded Rosabel scholarships, including the Banff Centre, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Anne Burrows Music Foundation, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the Canada Council for the Arts.