


The 1999 Music Class — Beauty, Greatness, fun and how music enriches our lives

CD's to play:

1. Jan De Ghatini - from Nonesuch CD, track #3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25
2. Emmy Lou Harris - Roses in the Snow - track #1, 2, 6, 9
3. Aretha Franklin - ATLANTIC RETROSPECTIVE
4. John McCormack - I hear you calling me - track #19 (EMI) and 17(ASV)
5. Tito Schipa - track 3, 10, 16 (compare with Gigli), 17, 18 from Nimbus CD
6. Drifters - Ruby Baby
7. Coasters - Riot in Cell Block #9, Smoky Joe's Cafe, Run Red Run
8. Falcons - Stop, Taste of Doo Wop vol #3
9. Moonglows - Secret Lover, Vol 2 of Doo Wop Anthology
10. Clovers - Nip Sip, Fool Fool Fool, Devil or Angel
11. Mattia Battistini - track #9, 17
12. Ali Akbar Khan - Alap 
13. Scriabin - Vers La Flamme/ Horowitz and Richter
14. Maria Callas - #1, 2, 9, 10, 11 CD Two track #8, 10*, 11,
15. Elizabeth Schwarzkopf - Festival De Strasbourg 1960 - track # 4*, 7, 8, 11, 12*, 13*, 14*, 15,
17, 18, 19. CD of Romantic Arias - track #2, 3, 4, 7, 8
16. Frank Sinatra - Only The Lonely - Spring Is Here
17. Bach - Cantata # 80 - Ein Feste Burg, Goldberg Variations, Art of the Fugue - from
Gould organ CD and last fugue played on piano, canons played by Antiqua Art Koln - disc 3
tracks 9, 13, 16, 23, 25, 29. Partita #1 - Rosalyn Tureck, Wachtet Auf - Wilhelm Kempff -
track 24
18. Beethoven's symphony #3 in Eb major, piano sonata #5 in c minor - 2nd movement,
string quartet in F major - 2nd movement, Les Adieux sonata - 3rd movement
19. Ellington - Perfume suite, Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue, Mood Indigo. Cotton
Tail, Congo Brava, Rockin' in Rhythm, Warm Valley, Dusk, Overture to a Jam Session,
Jeep's Blues, The Clothed Woman, Sophisticated Lady (from CBS Special Products + Ella
Sings Duke), Heaven, Passion Flower, Suite Thursday (3rd movement), Bula, Pyramid
(from Afro Bossa), The Beautiful Indians/Minnehaha from The Golden Duke, Blood
count from And His Mother Called Him Bill, from Anatomy of a Murder - Midnight
Indigo, Almost cried
20. Miles Davis/Gil Evans - Porgy and Bess - Bess You Is My Woman Now, Bess Oh
Where's My Bess, Prayer (For Doctor Jesus), There's A Boat For New York. Miles Ahead -
The Duke, Blues for Pablo, New Rhumba, I Don't Wanna Be Kissed
21. Rachmaninoff - Piano concerto # 2 - Byron Janis, Rachmaninoff - Phillips CD #2 - tracks
#13, 18, 20 (compare with Heifetz version), Cello sonata, 2nd movement - Rostropovich
and Horowitz, Vespers - track #1*, 6, 8*, 9, 10, 11*, 13, 14*, 15*
22. Plimley - Three Sighs To The Moon, An exhilaration Of Larks, Sensology
23. Chopin - nocturne in Eb - Friedman
24. Scriabin - Sonata #5 - Richter
25. Rimsky Korsakov - Scheherazade, cut #3
26. Rachmaninoff - Daisies - Jascha Heifetz
27. Stravinsky - Rite Of Spring
28. Strauss - Four Last Songs, cut #3, Schwarzkopf

29. Wagner - Siegfried's Idyll - Bruno Walter with Columbia Symphony
30. Liszt - Standchen, Valse - Caprice #6, Horowitz At Home
31. Schubert - Impromptu in Gb, Horowitz
32. Liszt - Consolation #3, Horowitz
33. Stockhausen - Capricorn and Leo
34. Debussy - Prelude to the afternoon of a faun, Etude played by Mitsuko Uchida - #6
35. James Brown - Cold Sweat - disc 2 of JB anthology, Give it up or turn it loose - disc 2
36. Palude - play track #2, 3, 1, 4, 7*, 8, 9*
37. John Williams - Spanish Guitar Favourites track #5, 12
38. Jussi Bjorling - track #3, 11, 13 (compare with Gigli), 15 (for beauty of voice carrying average melody), 18 (Nessun Dorma, compare with Giuseppe De Stefano's version)
39. Anne Sophie Von Otter - track #1, 3, 7 (for the soft ending), 8, 11, 13 (for tone painting melody), 23
40. Fritz Wunderlich - Die Schone Mullerin track #8, 9, 21 (Standchen)
41. Beniamino Gigli - track #1*, 2, 3, 6, 7 (compare with Schipa), 10 - after 1:15 (compare with Bjorling), 13
42. Cuban music anthology - I Am Time - Disc 1 - track # 2*, 3, 8* (for Mark)

Second class:

- Review the issues of : personalization, interpretation, sound/melody/rhythm/development of material etc
- Play *Art of the Fugue #9* by Gould, then by *Swingle Singers* . Talk about the personal bias factor of selections to be played and how it is mostly a good thing.
- Talk about the beauty of the voice as developed by bel canto. Play *Battistini* cut. Play McCormack's 2 versions of *I Hear You Calling Me* .
- Play Schipa from *Nimbus* CD. Compare to opera today....
- Play *Gigli cut #1* from EMI CD.

- Play Bjorling and then De Stefano's *Nessun Dorma* . Play Jan De Gaetani Schubert and Wolf CD - good for her soft tones and feeling
- Play 2 Callas #'s from EMI CD's #1 from cd 1 and #10 from cd 2
- Play song forms: Four last Songs - #3 from Schwarzkopf's version. Play from *Strasbourg CD* lieder recital.
- Fritz Wunderlich: natural expression
- Ann Sophie Von Otter
- Choral music: Rachmaninov vespers. Mention Berlioz's Requiem for drama
- Emmy Lou Harris tracks
- Coasters and Clovers tracks

IMPROVISING

Improvising is a game. Now one of the things that stops people from improvising is that they feel it's something that's beyond their means, because everyone wants to think about it as an intellectual process.

Either they say it comes from God or it's something that you should at least be able to think of.

Improvising is not so much an intellectual capacity, in terms of how it is materialized, but is more really a state of letting oneself be put into the space where improvisation can happen.

What we do have immediate control over is the following: we have a sense of being able to play in the higher and lower registers of the keyboard (we may be able to tell if we play C that G is right there, being able to hear ahead, but that will come with time).

What we do have control over is the rhythm. We may play different notes in that rhythm and we can play faster and slower.

When you're playing an improvisation, put the attention of your mind onto the actual sounds that you're making.

In general, for music, people do not listen as closely as they could to the actual sound of the notes that they play: in terms of overtones, we have the fundamental (the note that we identify as "that pitch"), but it does have a smaller wave of higher frequency and that determines very much the colour or the sound of each instrument that you're playing.

That's why when you play A on a clarinet, the same A will sound different on a piano: a different wave or overtone structure.

Listening is good, and improvisation is very good because you really want to hear what's happening.

You don't want to do too much thinking or worrying. You will use certain intellectual components, like areas of knowledge, so if you know a certain number of preliminary rules and you absorb them or internalize them, that's great, because always, without exception, the highest level of improvisation is done when the mind has nothing to do with it. And that's why when I'm really playing my best you can rest assured that the music has taken over. It's playing me. (It's wonderful...a fantastic experience.)

So, you want to be able to just trust yourself so that a feeling will come through.

Herr Plimley Speaks...

I'll start from a very simple viewpoint. (Here we go.)
We know that here are the keys and here are our hands and fingers, OK?

One very important thing in playing the piano is that you want to strive for a complete, full contact with your fingers into the keys at the keyboard.

Hands and arms have weight. If you relax, there's weight.
You want to go down to the bottom of each key.

Now think of the hand area as a kind of centre of gravity...or mission control.

We have weight. We have a centre of gravity.
And we think of the fingers as being five independent hammers...little hammers.

Usually our fingers want to go straight up and down as we play:
the hand parallel to the keys, the fingers naturally curved...they have a natural curvature.

When we play piano we want a combination of control over the musculature and relaxation as well.

Here's a good test: do the Monkey Shrug. (Stretching and cracking of shoulders, arms, hands and fingers to relax them)

The fingers should be quite relaxed. We have weight.
Now just transfer that weight from one finger to the next.

We don't do this when we play, but we could have a thing where the fingers are just like a pivot point. (If you see great Indian musicians play tavalas, they tune up, and I think there's a similar motion that could be transposed to the keyboard.)

You want every finger to be able to play with a kind of uniformity.
Then of course you can put in the accents.

We cross our fingers over our thumbs.
And that's all there is.

When you do your scales you want to think of a few things.
One is playing slowly and really evenly, like a heartbeat.

Always play your scales thinking of a particular rhythm.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 (emphasis)

There are all sorts of games that we can play, we can go high end of the keyboard, low end of the keyboard, middle...slow, fast...we can be more chromatic or we can concentrate more on the black notes or the white notes.

The nice thing to do is to let your intuition or spontaneity come to the foreground, without having to think, just let things be. It's like an ongoing series of gestures.

In every person alive there is a unique personality and we also have a unique sound. For those of us that do love music, you will play differently in some way than anyone else. So there are probably as many sounds or styles as there are stars in the universe. With that in mind, we probably won't run out of ideas for quite some time.

When we're playing music we are constantly being pushed towards the assumption and belief that there's really only one good way to make music, and that is basically what our listening experience tells us.

If we are glued to AM radio and I play a little improvisation using a particular kind of language, as charming as it may be in the Herr Wonderful Arthur Schlonger Entertainer tradition, you may say it's just so much hot poop. And we're in trouble: I happen to like it. I dig Fever and All Through The Night.

So that's how it works. Let yourself be naive enough to suppose that there's more than one good way to make music.

Don't let the mind judge good or bad. Let the improvisations just be. It's very much a Zen-like experience. We're after an experience. We're not after "good" or "bad" or a "judgement".

There are many ways to make good music. Have some fun improvising at the keyboard.

The beautiful thing about music is that it has the power to touch you and put you in a state where you are very sensitive to wonderful feelings about life, and those feelings ultimately move towards love and all, which is truly meaningful to human beings.

In a nutshell that's really it. I can't really think of anything more beautiful or anything that contains more love than that. I think that's what music is. Music can express so, so many of our inventory of experiences.

Exercises: ostenado (repeated figure) with left hand (C-G)
with melody in C Major scale (any white notes)

C-G left hand/shift down and back
keeping repeated figure with right hand

*Triads are not the only thing that sounds good.