



Nuances

The Newsletter of MAPTA

**Dec 2014 Vol 45 Issue 5
MAPTA Calendar of
Events**

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Calendar

January 25, 2015, 4 p.m.
Farley's House of Pianos

Ilya Yakushev plays Beethoven's
Pathetique Sonata, Prokofieff's
Sonata No.2, and Schumann's
Carnaval.

Ticket info at salonpianoseries.org.

Share The Music!

Do you know someone who could
benefit from joining MAPTA?
Send them this issue of Nuances by
clicking the link below.



Submissions

Complete submissions of articles,
events or other piano themed features
are welcome. All submissions are due
by the **21st of each month** to be
considered for publication.

President's Message

[June Zeeh](#)



Greetings!

The Fall Workshop in November with Gail Berenson proved to be an enjoyable and educational experience for those attending. Gail sends her thanks for the hospitality shown to her, and she was delighted with the participation of the teachers attending the workshop.

This holiday season offers many opportunities for our piano students to display their skills and to bring enjoyment to others. Retirement homes often welcome holiday music programs. We can also encourage our students to play at family gatherings during the holidays. The Young Artist Recital on December 7 is another opportunity to perform.

The next board meeting will be at Heid Music on Tuesday, January 20, 2015.

Our next general meeting will take place on February 10, 2015, at Christ Presbyterian Church, 944 E. Gorham Street. Tim Mueller will be speaking on "Mindfulness Practicing".

May your holidays be joyful and musical!

June Zeeh
MAPTA President



Member Directory Update

Linda Johnson

Nuances Editor:
Stacy Fehr Regehr
5013 Hammersley Road
Madison WI 53711
nuances@madisonpianoteachers.org

Please update your directories with Luanne Ritsema's new address:

Luanne Ritsema
139 Faircrest Ct.
Verona, WI 53593

Studio Exchange Teachers

Contact [Gloria Chuang](#), [Denise Taylor](#), or [Debbie Yee](#) if you are interested in being a part of the Studio Exchange Program.

New Advertising Rates

[Stacy Regehr](#)

This month, you will also receive a special issue of Nuances outlining the new advertising rates for the newsletter. The new rates were approved by the board this fall and are effective now. You can find this advertising page in each issue under "Quick Links" or click [here](#). Please email nuances@madisonpianoteachers.org with any questions.

Exploring Music Resources Christmas Carols

[Denise Taylor](#)



It's the most wonderful time of the year.....well, at least for those of you who love teaching Christmas music. Some students find Christmas carols one of the highlights of piano lessons, so this month's EMR submission is meant to help you wade through the many choices out there. It is not even close to a comprehensive list!! For that level of detail, I'd have to write a book.

When selecting Christmas music, I consider a few factors:

1. Will the student appreciate religious (usually called "traditional" by publishers) or secular (often called "popular" or "fun"). Think the difference of *Away in a Manger* vs. *Jingle Bells*. Some books will include a variety, but many of them favor one or the other.
2. Would the student or family like to sing along? Be sure there are lyrics printed right there in the score. Songbooks may even have an additional insert with lyrics.
3. How much practicing time does the student want to devote to Christmas music? How many carols does the student want to learn? When students want to play several carols, choose an easier book so he can learn several in a week. This can be helpful sight-reading practice, and they love doing it! When the music is harder, they may need the whole month of December to learn just one. In my experience, most of my students have preferred to get their repertoire challenges elsewhere and just have fun with Christmas music.

Over the years I have tried many different editions, and I have found a lot of appealing arrangements across the different publishers, many not even listed in this article. The best success for your student comes with matching her needs with the above concerns. Here are comments on a few, to help you get started.

Bastien Christmas Favorites

These are very standard, dependable versions that are graded depending on the student's level. Old-fashioned drawings, mostly black and white--it's quaint and retro! The primer is a single line for the student with teacher accompaniment; level 1 has very simple, manageable accompaniment, whereas level 2 has a slightly more complex LH accompaniment. By the time you get to level 4, the RH will sometimes have a 2-voice texture.



Bastien Piano Basics: Popular Christmas Songs

The artwork comes straight from the Bastien lesson books, very colorful pictures, from about 20 years ago. Levels 1-2 are very similar in technical demands, with level 1 more likely to stay in a single position and split the melody, while level 2 is more likely to have the melody in one hand. No teacher duet parts.

The Bastien arrangements can start with beginner students. Two Alfred sets below are more challenging and suited to more skilled students (with one exception detailed below). Helpfully these offer a grading according to the "UK Exam" system, which is probably ABRSM. *Celebration Perspectives*, *Snell Essential Repertoire*, and *Masterworks Classics* are also closely aligned with these numbers --- but I often go "down" a level so the student works through the carols quickly.

Famous & Fun Christmas, arranged by Carol Matz (Alfred)

This is a nice set, complements other *Famous & Fun* books (Rock, Classics, Pop, Duets). The series encompasses a range of abilities, from total beginner to repertoire level 4, with teacher accompaniments for books 1-3. A nice mix of traditional and popular carols, but I must say there are occasional misses in the arrangement where she chooses a strange chord tone in the bass in order to assist technical obstacles, or simplifies in less musically successful ways.

Book 1: for a complete beginner, with middle C position, with a keyboard "picture" to say where to put the fingers, and a teacher accompaniment. This is great for a real go-getter who wants to figure these out on her own!

Book 2: Hands will stay in one position throughout the carol

Book 3: for UK Grade 1

Book 4: for UK Grade 2 (claims "early intermediate" HA -- not by my definition -- talk about grade inflation)

Book 5: for UK Grades 3-4

Fun & Jolly Christmas Songs, arranged by Dan Coates (Alfred)

Let me start by saying I think Dan Coates is a really talented arranger. He gets the sound and character just right without sacrificing a manageable technique for the student. These are really excellent! The carols are almost exclusively popular songs without religious reference. Some oddball choices, like the tune from Polar Express (huh?). Book 1 begins at UK grades 1-2, so this would be too much challenge for new beginners.

Book 1: for UK Grades 1-2 (there are some teacher duet parts in here but they're hard to distinguish visually from the student part)

Book 2: for UK Grades 2-4

Book 3: for UK Grades 3-5



Teacher duet parts are wonderful - they help the carols sound rich and full, and we can reinforce steady pulse, nice tone, and dynamic range. It's great when a parent or older sibling can play the teacher part, but not every student is lucky to have another talented musician in the family. For a book with a much simpler second part, try *Christmas for Two*, arranged by Jerry Ray (Alfred) where one part is very simple and the second varies from about level 2-5. Another good one is *The*

Music Tree Christmas, written as duets for student and teacher, the teacher part a bit harder than the Jerry Ray book.

I have so far neglected the advancing students who want to play Christmas music. There are several Christmas books meant to be piano recital pieces, such as the **Magic of Christmas**, arr. Dennis Alexander, **Christmas Memories**, arr. Melody Bober, and the **Virtuosic Christmas Performer**, arr. Margaret Goldson. There are no lyrics here, and the technical demands are much closer to (approximately) level 5-7 repertoire. One final set of Christmas arrangements I'd like to mention are those by Philip Keveren. A very popular composer and arranger published by Hal Leonard, Keveren has Christmas books of varying styles - medleys, jazz ("Jingle Jazz" is great fun, there's also "Santa Swings"), pops, and even a Celtic Christmas for those who like a bit o' the Irish. These are fairly advanced in that the pieces tend to be long (8 pages isn't unusual) with multiple key changes. But if your student can get past that, the technical challenges at the piano are, I would say, easily manageable for any advanced player, probably about a level 7-8.

So, 'Tis the Season for All Your Faithful students to Come a'Caroling while they Deck the Halls, enjoy their Tannenbaum and Figgy Pudding. Everyone Have Yourselves a Merry Little Christmas!!



Feedback Corner:

What's your favorite Christmas edition? I'd like to know, please jot me an email!!

Ruth Heinecke told me she was so inspired by my 20th-century article that she's going to incorporate some into her lessons! I'd love to hear of anyone else's most successful 20th-century teaching pieces.

Piano Composition Festival

[Mike Weiser](#)

Please contact Mike Weiser (mikeweiser@me.com) if you have suggestions for judges and locations for the Piano Composition Festival in summer 2015.

MAFOP's Piano Playathon

[Lana Robotewskyj](#)

Mark your calendars now for the Piano Playathon: Saturday, February 7, 2015, at Barnes and Noble WEST. By now, you should have received your letters regarding the Playathon. To sign up, please

contact Connie Jones at tischy56@icloud.com or 442-8302. MAFOP is making a goal this year to raise over \$10,000 for the American Children's Hospital.

Not only does participation benefit the hospital, it's an investment in your business by providing exposure to you as an instructor and exposure to your studio. I always pick up a student or two after events like these. My kids get excited for the opportunity to show off their talents, and they invite friends and family to hear them. Someone always knows someone looking for piano instruction. Make that someone you, and get involved. It's a win-win-win for all parties involved. Most importantly, children staying at the hospital will receive your generous gift of time and energy spent, as toys and instruments for their usage while sojourning, involuntarily, at the hospital. Let's make this the biggest year yet in money raised, and of course, providing musical awareness to the public. Who doesn't love live piano music?? Let's excite the public with music as much as they are excited with sports. We can't let the art of piano fall to the wayside. Please consider--smiles and fun guaranteed!



MAFOP's Monster Concert

[Lana Robotewskyj](#)



What a great day of music making at Barnes and Noble! Monster Concert was a huge success. On behalf of MAFOP, thank you to all participating teachers and students for bringing music to shoppers, listeners, and avid book readers. The costumes were cute, fun, and when facial masks were removed, functional! Monster Concert is a great way to provide your studio another opportunity for performance. Whether the kids are



preparing Sonatinas for the festival, pieces for ABRSM, masterworks for the Honor's Recital, early starts to Federation, or working on just plain, fun, and scary music, there are many reasons to participate. I think the next best reason to consider if you haven't, is that it's great studio exposure. In the future, think of this not only as an investment in your students



and the benefits they receive from preparation and performance, but also as an investment in yourself and your business.

Parents love to have their kids play in public, and the public loves to hear the piano played, and well! This is free advertising for your business, as you may receive new clients as a result. My students tend to bring their friends, who often inquire about piano instruction, and I gain new business. Farley's House of Pianos is so very generous to bring in a beautiful piano to play. Patty and I couldn't resist--after students finished playing, Patty and I both played duets and solos as well.



well. Monster Concert was a great event. Thank you all, and if you haven't, please



please consider signing up your studio next year. It's a win, win, win for



everyone involved!!



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