



Nuances

The Newsletter of MAME

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From the President's Desk

What a winter we're having here in Madison! I love how our members share ideas about teaching (and, increasingly, their studio's snow policies) when we get together at meetings. I came away from our February meeting feeling refreshed and energized, in spite of low attendance due to an ice storm the day before. That leads me to our official MAME inclement weather policy, voted in at our January board meeting: If the weather looks questionable at the time of any MAME event (meeting or otherwise), we will follow the Madison schools. If they are closed due to weather, then MAME will cancel or reschedule that event. If the event takes place on a weekend (recital or such), please check your email for updates.

At the February general meeting, we voted in favor of amending the MAME bylaws to read "In the event of the dissolution of this organization, any funds remaining in the treasury after the payment of any outstanding debts shall be contributed to Music Teachers National Association or another 501 (c)(3) music education organization."

We'll be starting our renewal process soon for the 2019-20 year. In fact you may receive a renewal notice directly from MTNA before the month is up. (It typically comes somewhere around spring break time.) When you renew, please be sure to include payment for MAME, your local association. That is the easiest way to ensure you can take advantage of all MAME has to offer for

you next year.

Read below on upcoming MAME events from our committee chairs. I look forward to seeing you soon!



[Denise Taylor](#)
MAME President

Performers Supporting Performers

PSP will present a recital on Sunday, March 3 at 3:30 pm at Oak Park Place on the east side ([718 Jupiter Drive, Madison 53718](#)). Please join us for a program which includes Chopin's *Berceuse*, movements from *Bach's G Minor English Suite*, Chopin's *Waltz in C# Minor*, Debussy's *Danseuses de Delphes*, Meredith Monk's *Window in 7's*, Bach's *Sinfonia No. 1*, Schumann's *Des Abends* and Haydn's *Sonata in Eb Major*. Performers include Shad Wenzlaff, Linda Johnson, David Barach, Cheri Lewis and Ruth Heinecke. We hope to see you there!.

[Ruth Heinecke](#)

Upcoming MAME Program

Date: Friday, March 8, 9:30-11:30 am

Venue: Christ Presbyterian Church ([944 E Gorham St, Madison, WI 53703](#))

Presenter: Martha Fischer, Professor of Piano and Collaborative Piano, UW Madison

Subject: What Pianists Can Learn From Singers (And Vice Versa!)

Description: Pianists and singers have much to learn from each other's unique perspectives. Breath, legato, language/articulation, phrasing, and dramatic expression are common concerns that will be explored and celebrated in this interactive session.

[David Barach](#)

Upcoming MAME Masterclass: Notice and call for participants

A piano masterclass, led by esteemed UW-Madison Jess Johnson, will take place on Saturday April 6 at 6:00 pm at Steinway Piano Gallery ([6629 Mineral Point Rd Madison WI 53705](#)).

Teachers who have advanced high school aged students with Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionist, and 20th Century repertoire at the ready or near-ready are welcome to submit performer names and ages, along with repertoire and contact information, for selection.

Please submit candidates to Jess Salek, MAME chair of masterclasses, at jbcspno@gmail.com. Performers will then be notified.

Thanks - and hope to see you all there!

[Jess Salek](#)

Masterclasses: What Are They Good For?

When I was a kid (and I know I'm dating myself) there was a Vietnam War protest song that went, "War. What is it good for? Absolutely nothing." Until recently, that's exactly how I felt about masterclasses. Now, before you cluck your tongue and talk about how bad a teacher I am, I can assure you that I have taken additional seminars, participated in on-line training, read piano instruction method books, etc., all in an effort to be the best teacher I can be.

But, as a teacher of elementary and middle school students, I never thought a masterclass was relevant or important to me. Masterclasses were only for the teachers who had advanced students. How wrong I was.

Recently one of my intermediate students “snuck over the line” and became an advanced student. It happened so gradually that I didn’t realize I was out of my depth until he chose a Class A solo/ensemble piece that stretched my limits. Now, what to do? If you haven’t reached out to a MAME peer for support in a situation like this, I encourage you to do it! Two very wonderful teachers helped my student and me, and it wasn’t at all intimidating. In fact, it was uplifting.

I attended two lessons with one of the other teachers who instructed my student. I realized right away that I was privileged to get a personal masterclass. I learned so much that I won’t be quick to turn up my nose at masterclasses again. Here’s what I discovered:

1. I was actually doing pretty much everything correctly! Comments that I made to my student (which he often ignored) were repeated as important by this other teacher! Areas that I thought needed work actually needed work! This personal masterclass reinforced me as a teacher. We, as piano teachers, often work in a void. When I was a grade school music teacher, I certainly shut the door to my classroom and taught alone, but I was never really alone. I had support from the other teachers in the building. This event taught me that I don’t have to teach in a void in my private piano studio. I have a network!
2. I learned body movement techniques that I didn’t know. Can’t reach that long chord – here’s how to do it. Having trouble with creating depth in the bass – use your shoulder, not just your wrist. Insights that I gained from my personal masterclass are now being used with all of my students and they enhance my own playing as well.
3. I like to teach using analogy or comparison. I learned new analogies and new ways to say the same old thing. I always think that the more ways you can explain something the more people will understand. I have enhanced my toolbox.
4. I forgot about color in music, but now I’ve been reminded. Yes, I know about making music more musical, but I teach students who struggle with the difference between a half note and a dotted half. Frankly, musical color is the last of my concerns. But it should be the first! Why make music if it isn’t musical? Listening to the lesson between my student and the other teacher made me pay attention to things that I’d been neglecting and all of my students have benefited.

So, now I am going to answer the question I posed in my title, but I'm going to change it a little bit. Masterclasses: WHO are they good for? Me. Hope to see you at one.

[Cynthia Stephan](#)

Spring Adult Music Social

The Spring Adult Music Social will be held on Sunday, April 7 at 2:00 pm. Please encourage all your adult students to participate in this opportunity. The event is fairly informal and will help pianists at all levels to become more comfortable sharing their music with others. Pieces can be memorized or played with music. Adult students who would first like to learn more about the social are also welcome to attend without playing that afternoon. Those attending are requested to bring a small plate of cookies or other food to share. Contact Cheri Lewis at (608) 222-5125 with any questions.

Cathy Crams (student of Ruth Heinecke) will be hosting the event at her home ([11674 Midtown Road, Verona 53593](#)).

[Cheri Lewis](#)

Exploring Music Resources: Improvisation in the Studio: Forrest Kinney's *Create First*

By Sarah Prescott

There is no greater gift that we can give to our piano students than the ability to improvise. Empowering students to fluently explore sound relationships to create their own music is enormously rewarding for both teacher and students. But many teachers hesitate to teach improvisation due to reluctance on the part of the student, or insecurity about their own improvisation skills. Seattle-based musician and composer Forrest Kinney has made it his mission to alleviate these worries with his remarkable resources for exploring improvisation in the piano studio.

Noting that improvisation is much less intimidating in a duet context, Kinney has developed what he calls the duet-to-solo approach, which he explains in his

two-book series, *Create First*. Both Book 1 and Book 2 have a duet version, which can be explored by teacher and student together in the studio, and a solo version for the student to use at home. When the teacher creates a sonically rich accompaniment, and gives the student some simple suggestions (included in *Create First*) for musical patterns that will sound good with that accompaniment, most students become willing to create and explore improvising. Then, once the student is comfortable, he or she can begin learning the solo version of the improvisation, which usually involves playing a simpler version of the teacher's duet part in the left hand, and improvising over it in the right hand.

In the duet books of *Create First*, the teacher is provided with evocative accompaniments in a variety of styles, drawing from blues, Latin, gospel, Alberti bass, and more. Students are given a scale to improvise in and suggestions about ways to combine notes in the scale. Part of what makes the improvisation ideas in these books so exciting is that they wake up students' ears by using a wide variety of scales and modes, drawn from both the western tradition and musical cultures around the world. In the first book alone, students can explore and improvise in major, minor, Dorian, Phrygian, Mixolydian, Lydian, the major and minor blues scales, the pentatonic and whole tone scales, an ancient Japanese scale, and the Arabian scale. Kinney is full of clever tricks for making different scales memorable for students; for example, he notes that the (Eb) blues scale can be created by playing on all the black keys plus A-natural. Equipped with this shortcut, even elementary students can begin to create improvisations in a blues style.

The feature of *Create First* that makes it so practical to implement in the studio is its use of another approach of Forrest Kinney's, known as the "Pattern Play" approach after his earlier improvisation books of the same name. Each improvisation-piece has a "pattern," or the basic vamping accompaniment and its corresponding student improvisation activity, as well as one or more "vacations," which are new, related improvisation ideas that provide a contrast to what came before. When teachers and students feel that they have exhausted the original pattern, they can "go on vacation" to keep their music fresh and exciting. Since this transition requires students and teachers to coordinate with each other, either through sound or through body language, this is a wonderful way to improve students' listening skills and ensemble awareness.

In my own studio, I have found that students are invariably excited when given

the opportunity to try the improvisations in *Create First*. They listen more, make more creative and musical decisions, and leave the lesson with a smile. I have also found that my own improvisation skill and confidence have greatly benefited from exposure to Forrest Kinney's inspiring musical creations. I hope you enjoy them as much as my students and I have!

Sarah Prescott is a master's student in Piano Performance and Pedagogy at the Mead-Witter School of Music. She studies with Jessica Johnson.

[Jess Johnson](#)

Madison Area Friends of Piano (MAFOP) 27th Annual Piano Playathon Update

The 27th Annual Piano Playathon was held on February 9 at Barnes & Noble West. An impressive 22 piano teachers brought their studios to this event to help support the most beneficial Music Therapy program at the American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH).

There is still time for your students to send in their pledge form and money if they haven't yet done so. All money should be sent to Connie Jones at 36 Arboredge Way Fitchburg, WI 53711. Those students who raised a minimum of \$125 will be entered into a drawing for a one night stay for a family of four at Great Wolf Lodge in Wisconsin Dells.

Awards will also be given to both the student who raises the highest donations and to the teacher whose studio has raised the highest donations.

Thank you for making a difference in the lives of many unfortunate young people at AFCH.

[Jeanne Felix, MAFOP Representative](#)

Board Meeting Minutes

Are you curious about what happens at our board and/or general meetings? Please click [here](#) and [here](#) to check out our most recent general meeting and

board meeting minutes.

[Ben Garber](#)



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Submissions:

Completed submissions of articles, events and other music-themed features are welcome. All submissions are due by the 21st of each month to be considered for publication.

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