

Impromptu

Piano and Yoga...An Unlikely Combination? Maybe not!

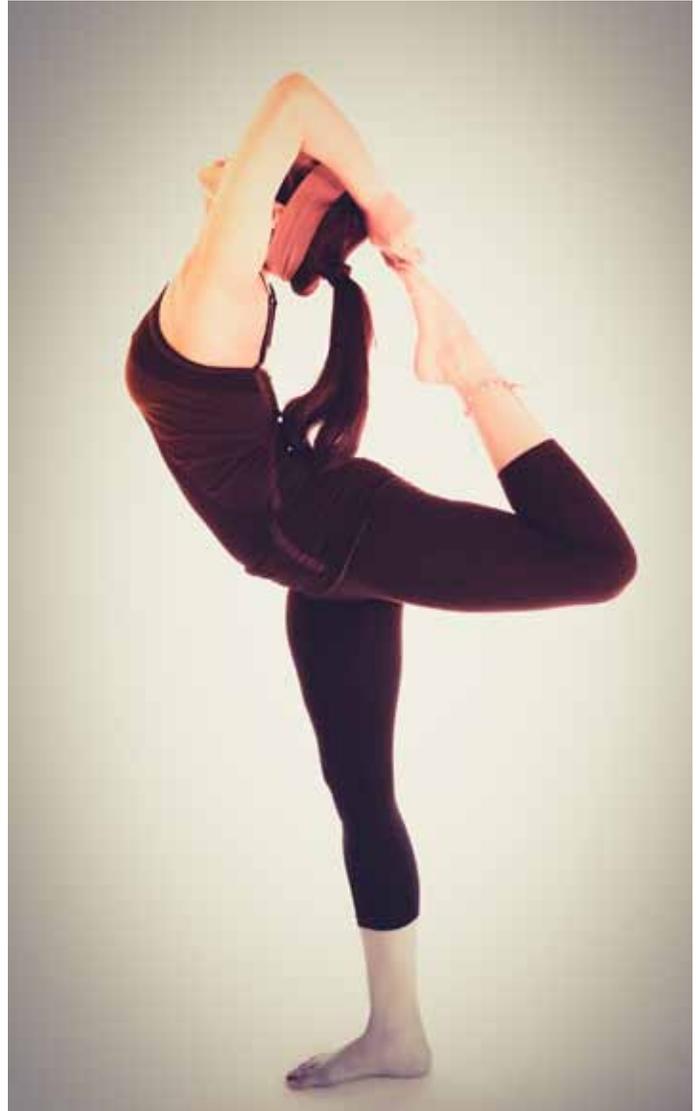
By Jennifer Latta

We've all been there. We smile as our student plays a beautiful melody with that gentle Alberti Bass. Then here comes the trill and...ouch! Tense, loud, no note clarity. We've all been there. Lesson after lesson, month after month we explain, demonstrate, draw analogies, beg, plead (OK, you get the point) and *still* the crescendo gets missed, the staccato gets held. The student does not notice the page right in front of their face. What does it take to guide a student to grow musically. Sometimes you have to come at it from a new angle. Or in this case, a new posture!

I have run my in-home/mobile piano teaching studio for over fourteen years now and I needed a change. Still teaching, of course, but maybe it was time to teach something new. So I enrolled in yoga college with hopes to touch lives in a new way through teaching yoga. Little did I know my training would make a difference right now in the piano studio.

One of the key things we learn in yoga college is Pranayama. Or, in plain English, prana=breath, yama=control. Breath control. If we deepen our inhalations and prolong our exhalations, we soothe our nervous system. Aha! Just what my too-tense-Terry needs when he knows that trill is coming up. His shoulders hunch, his wrists lock, he holds his breath and...the trill...gets stuck. But wait! I had just learned about the sympathetic (fight or flight) versus the parasympathetic (rest and digest) nervous systems. If I could get Terry out of the sympathetic response and into the parasympathetic response, he would relax enough to do that trill.

I taught him to put his hands on the sides of his ribcage (like hands on hips but higher up) and feel how his



ribcage expanded when he breathed deeply and slowly. I had my student count to four on each inhale and six on each exhale. Prolonged exhalations soothe the nerves and calm the brain. Back at the piano I cued Terry, "Inhale slowly," a good four counts before the trill. "Exhale into it," I said as he executed the trill. I also taught my student to "sigh" into the trill. Physically sigh on an exhale. Did it work? You bet it did. Not only did too-tense-Terry physically relax shoulders, wrists and fingers and was able to form the relaxed hand position to perform a trill, but

Continued on P. 11

Read also "Talent and the Iceberg Illusion" by Sharon Omura on P. 12



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Inside

- 4** President's Message
- 5** ARMTA Calgary Chamber Music Program
- 6** Calendar of Events
- 7** Barb Robertson Honoured at the Annual General Meeting
- 8** Beth Olver's 20 years of Service Recognized at the General Meeting
- 9** New Member Profile
- 10** Music Marathon a Huge Success
- 11** Piano and Yoga...An Unlikely Combination? Maybe Not!
- 12** Talent and the Iceberg Illusion
- 15** Honours Recital Information
- 20** A Creative Workshop by Leila Viss
- 21** Conferences
- 22** Student Recitals
- 23** Calgary Branch Executive Directory

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Steinway Piano Gallery	P. 2
St. John's Music	P. 7
Music for Young Children	P. 9
V. A. Hill Fine Strings Ltd.	P. 9
Bearspaw School of Music & Art	P. 10
Music Makers	P. 19
Sak's Music	P. 22
Long & McQuade	P. 22
Yamaha	P. 24

Special thanks to Jennifer Latta and Sharon Omura, authors of the two feature articles in this issue. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experience, and for spending your precious time writing the articles!

ARMTA IMPROMPTU

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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Publication: February 15

Impromptu is the newsletter of ARMTA Calgary branch with the purpose of informing members of events of interest, providing summaries of Calgary meetings, and encouraging and supporting professional development through member-written articles.

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If you have a story to tell or ideas to share, please contact the editor.

President's Message

Yet another severe thunderstorm warning has been issued for Calgary as I am writing. I hope that despite the wet weather this summer, you have all been able to take some time to relax and rejuvenate. Every summer I make a point of taking some time to reflect on the past teaching year and to evaluate what I could improve upon next year. This year I have decided to focus more on sight-reading and composition skills with my students. I also hope to include a little more technology into my lesson plans. Off-the-bench activities will also continue to be an important aspect of lessons in my studio. ARMTA Calgary's recent Leila Viss workshop challenged me to rejuvenate some of my off-the-bench activities. Maybe with some luck, I will also fit in some more time for practising, myself!

Taking over the presidency of ARMTA Calgary this past March has been an exciting and rewarding experience. The learning curve has been steep but thanks to Barbara Robertson's patience and guidance, I feel like I'm getting up to speed quickly! It is a privilege to lead such an important organization in the lives of Calgary music teachers. When I first started teaching almost 30 years ago, I always looked forward to becoming a member of ARMTA. As a new teacher, the organization represented a level of professionalism to which I didn't yet feel worthy of belonging. Over time I gained confidence, experience and education, and decided to take a leap of faith and apply to become a member. It was an ARMTA pamphlet in the old Rideau Music store that caught my attention one day. I filled out the application form attached to the pamphlet and sent in the required documentation. It was an exciting day when I received my ARMTA certificate of membership in the mail. I felt like my chosen career path was validated!

It's important that ARMTA reaches out to beginning teachers and makes a space for them in our professional community. There is a place for all qualified music teachers in our community. I believe that the benefits of belonging to ARMTA are critical to the development of teachers at all stages of their careers. In the current difficult economy, musical entrepreneurship can be a viable career choice, especially within a supportive professional environment.

We all know the significant role we play in the lives of our students. Often, there is a public perception that music teachers are "hobbyists". Many times in my career I've had to educate the public regarding my career choice. There seems to be a prevailing assumption among some

people that teaching music is something that we all do to make a "little fun money". Professional organizations such as ARMTA provide career music teachers with a public face. Most other "serious" professions have similar organizations. Being perceived as professionals allows us to charge more realistic fees for our services and affords us benefits and opportunities as a group, which we would otherwise as individuals, not be able to access. I am committed to continuing to strengthen our professional image in Calgary. In addition, I will make it a priority to continue to encourage the offering of enriching and relevant events for new and seasoned teachers. I encourage all of you to think about what you value most about our organization and what your vision is for the future of ARMTA Calgary. Please feel free to send me your ideas and suggestions. Thank you again for the opportunity to serve as ARMTA Calgary president! I wish you all the best with the start to fall lessons, and hope to meet you at one of our exciting upcoming events! Our Workshop and Events Coordinator, Sandra Joy Friesen, has a fantastic lineup for the coming year. Stay tuned for more details!

I leave you with a quote which reminds me every day of the importance of being a music teacher and the importance of music in our lives. May you all continue to hold the enjoyment of music first and foremost in your hearts and continue to share this enthusiasm with your students this year.

"I think I should have no other mortal wants, if I could always have plenty of music. It seems to infuse strength into my limbs and ideas into my brain. Life seems to go on without effort, when I am filled with music."

-George Eliot, English novelist (1819–1880)

Michelle Everett Faunt

Exciting New ARMTA Calgary Chamber Music Program Call For Young Musicians

The newly established ARMTA Calgary Chamber Music Program (ACCMP) is continuing to accept applications for **violin, viola, cello and piano players ages 9 through 18!**

The ACCMP is a pilot project aiming to provide young instrumentalists and aspiring musicians with an opportunity to experience the art of performing together in a small group setting. The program will offer 10 advanced students, ages 9 to 18, excellent opportunities to study and perform with established chamber music professionals .

The ACCMP will specialize in repertoire for piano, strings and voice with an emphasis on piano trios and string quartets. It is open to **all** students of ARMTA Calgary teachers who have **no** previous experience in chamber music. Students of ARMTA teachers from southern Alberta are also welcome to apply. It is hoped that this exciting new program will be instrumental in the recruitment and promotion of young talent. Please encourage your late intermediate and advanced students to apply and take advantage of this fantastic opportunity!

Faculty: *Kathleen van Mourik*

Visiting Faculty: *Marc Destrube & TBA*

Location and time:

The program runs Saturdays 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. at the Steinway Piano Gallery, 76 Heritage Gate SE, Calgary AB

Dates: September 10, 17, 24
October 1, 15, 22, 29
November 5, 12, 19 26
December 3, 10

Recital: December 11, 2016

Tuition and Expenses

Tuition for the fall semester (September through December) is \$350, which includes coaching and lectures on chamber music.

Music books will be 25% off of the regular price for participating students.

There will be FREE access to The Mountain View Connection concert series 2016/17 for participating students.

Please contact Chrysanthema Pashunkova for more information about the program: violino@shaw.ca

Calendar of Events (September 2016–February 2017)

Date	Event & Place	Contact
Sept. 10-Dec. 11, 2016	Saturday ACCMP Classes: Steinway Gallery, 76 Heritage Gate, SE Calgary 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Chrysanthema Pashunkova: violino@shaw.ca
Sept. 19, 2016	ARMTA Executive Meeting: Location TBA 9:30 a.m.	Michelle Everett Faunt: fauntpianostudio@gmail.com
Sept. 30, 2016	NATS Chats: Extreme Bean 9:30 a.m.	Rachel Goldenberg: soprano@gmail.com
Oct. 14, 2016	Honours Recital/OSR Application Deadline	Michelle Everett Faunt: fauntpianostudio@gmail.com
Oct. 14, 2016	Calgary Contemporary Showcase Deadline	Katrina Thompson: kthompson11@hotmail.com
Oct. 17, 2016	ARMTA GM: First Church of the Nazarene, 65 Richard Way, SW 9:30 a.m.	Michelle Everett Faunt: fauntpianostudio@gmail.com
Oct. 20-23, 2016	Music Conference Alberta, ARMTA Provincial AGM: The Banff Centre 105 Tunnel Mountain Drive Banff, AB	Beth Olver: soundsofmusic@shaw.ca
Oct. 28, 2016	NATS Chats: Location TBA 9:30 a.m.	Rachel Goldenberg: soprano@gmail.com
Nov. 4, 2016	Honours Recital/OSR Acceptance Notification	
Nov. 12, 2016	South Student Recital: Steinway Gallery, 76 Heritage Gate, SE Calgary	Carol S. Moore: rhythmreader@shaw.ca
Nov. 13, 2016	ARMTA Calgary Canada Music Week Event: Location and Time TBA	Sandra Joy Friesen: sandrajoyfriesen@gmail.com
Nov. 17-19, 2016	Calgary Contemporary Showcase: St. Peters Anglican Church	Katrina Thompson: kthompson11@hotmail.com
Nov. 20-26, 2016	Canada Music Week	
Nov. 21, 2016	ARMTA Executive Meeting: Location TBA 9:30 a.m.	Michelle Everett Faunt: fauntpianostudio@gmail.com
Nov. 25, 2016	NATS Chats: Location TBA 9:30 a.m.	Rachel Goldenberg: soprano@gmail.com
Nov. 25, 2016	Calgary Contemporary Showcase Gala: St. Peters Anglican Church 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.	Katrina Thompson: kthompson11@hotmail.com
Dec. 2, 2016	Honours Recital Performance Confirmation Deadline	Michelle Everett Faunt: fauntpianostudio@gmail.com
Dec. 9, 2016	OSR Performance Confirmation Deadline	Ron Proctor: ronaldproctor@shaw.ca
Jan. 14, 2017	South Student Recital: Steinway Gallery, 76 Heritage Gate, SE Calgary	Carol S. Moore: rhythmreader@shaw.ca
Jan. 16, 2017	ARMTA Executive Meeting: Location TBA 9:30 a.m.	Michelle Everett Faunt: fauntpianostudio@gmail.com
Jan. 28, 2017	ARMTA Honours Recital: Hope Lutheran Church, 3527 Boulton Road, NW Calgary 2:30 p.m.	Rita Thurn: rita_thurn@telus.net
Feb. 4, 2017	Presentation—Dr. Jacques Després-French Style/Influences: Location and Time TBA	Sandra Joy Friesen: sandrajoyfriesen@gmail.com
Feb. 5, 2017	Outstanding Student Recital (OSR): St. David's United Church, 3303 Capitol Hill Crescent NW, Calgary 4:00 p.m.	Ron Proctor: ronaldproctor@shaw.ca
Feb. 6, 2017	ARMTA Calgary Budget Meeting: Location TBA 9:30 a.m.	Sharon Carne: scarne@telus.net

Barbara Robertson Honoured at the Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on March 14, 2016 at the First Church of the Nazarene. Outgoing president, Barbara Robertson, was thanked for her hard work as interim president over the past year. Her enthusiasm, resourcefulness and commitment to ARMTA Calgary was highlighted. Barbara was presented with a silver necklace and an inspirational plaque by incoming president Michelle Everett Faunt.



Michelle Everett-Faunt (left) presenting Barbara Robertson with her president's gift.

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Beth Olver's 20 Years of Service Recognized at the General Meeting

The General Meeting and luncheon was held on May 16, 2016 at the First Church of the Nazarene. At the luncheon, Beth Olver was honoured for her involvement with ARMTA. Barbara Robertson gave a wonderful tribute to Beth's work over the years and presented Beth with a card and gift from our branch. A donation was made in Beth's name to the ARMTA Provincial Recognition Fund.



Michelle Faunt presenting Beth Olver (left) with flowers and a donation to the ARMTA Recognition Fund in Olver's name.

I am very honoured to be recognized by my colleagues for 20 years of service to ARMTA (still counting!). This was on the occasion of the end of my second term as branch past president. Volunteering in ARMTA has been huge in developing my self-confidence, and has taken me places, allowing me to take on roles I would never have thought possible. I encourage everyone to take that risk and discover what can be learned through active participation in our organization.

---Beth Olver

In Memory

Janice Evelyn Pearl McCUBBIN of Calgary passed away peacefully on Monday, February 22, 2016, at the Agape Hospice with her family by her side. Janice was raised in Lethbridge by a loving family. From an early age she was drawn to music. Playing piano and teaching music was to become a lifelong passion for Janice. She moved to Calgary in 1958 to raise her family and continue her career in music. She earned degrees in music from the University of Western Ontario, and the University of Calgary. In 1996 she married Alec McCubbin, and moved to Whiterock, BC, where she enjoyed the happiest time of her life. She is already greatly missed by those who knew and loved her. Janice's obituary can be found at: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/calgaryherald/obituary.aspx?pid=177844665#sthash.SeGXqTNg.dpuf>

New Member Profile



Lucie Alaimo is a freelance performer, instructor, researcher and administrator. She received her Bachelor of Music from Wilfrid Laurier University and her Master in Music and Culture-Musicology from Carleton University.

While obtaining her Master's

degree, she was a guest lecturer at Harvard and McGill Universities amongst others, and has published an article with *Resonare*, an online music journal. She was also an intern at CBC Radio Canada where she created playlists, wrote script and developed creative programming initiatives for the radio programs, *Tempo* and *Bandwidth*. She is currently a guest lecturer with the Mount Royal Conservatory and a director for the Land's End Chamber Music Society, Calgary.

Lucie has numerous performing experiences in solo and chamber and contemporary music ensembles. She currently plays with the Calgary Wind Symphony, the Parthenia Flute Choir, and Pronto Flutes. While she loves playing music of all genres, her current interests are contemporary flute literature and jazz flute.

In addition to her performing experience, Lucie has been teaching music in a variety of settings over the past decade. Her experience includes private instruction, university teaching assistant, early childhood music group classes, and instruction and conducting at select summer music camps.

Lucie also maintains a musical career with the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve. Since 2007, she has served as a musician with the Navy, performing in a variety of exciting venues coast to coast for audiences ranging from twenty to thousands including young children and royalty alike.

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MUSIC MARATHON 2016 A Huge Success

By Michelle Everett Faunt

The Music Marathon held on May 28, 2016 was a resounding success! Luckily, the wet spring weather didn't put a damper on the fun. The event was moved inside the Core Shopping Centre, thanks to pre-arrangement with the Downtown Association. We are very appreciative of their flexibility and their support of the Music Marathon!

Steinway Piano Gallery provided ARMTA Calgary with a stunning nine-foot grand piano that resonated beautifully in the open air of the Core Mall. RPM Piano Movers ensured that the piano was safely transported between Steinway and the mall. Thank you very much to Steinway Piano Gallery and RPM Piano Movers for their generous support of this event!

The students had a fantastic time rotating through their performances to create a day full of non-stop music and speech selections. Many shoppers stopped to check out the excitement, with some passersby donating spare change. Students worked hard to collect donations for their playing before the event took place. In fact, the Music Marathon raised approximately \$3400.00. This is roughly equivalent to last year's tally. The Music Marathon has quickly become one of ARMTA Calgary's most important fundraisers of the year. Some of the money from last year's marathon was used to provide small scholarships at the Outstanding Student Recital in February and to facilitate a successful masterclass with Heather Blakely. In addition, two scholarships were offered this year with Music Marathon funds: a Teacher Continuing Education Scholarship and a Student Financial Need Bursary. It is hoped that we can continue to fund innovative programs and events through the Music Marathon proceeds in the future.

Thank you very much to Karen King for her vision, resourcefulness and energy in initiating the Music Marathon last year and with her planning of the event this year! Karen is now stepping aside in her role as Music Marathon Convener (and as Vice President) in order to focus on her doctoral studies in the fall. We wish you the best with your future endeavours, Karen. You will be missed!

Thank you to Chrysanthema Pashunkova for offering to become convener for the upcoming year's marathon. Thank you to the volunteers that helped out on the day of the marathon: Karen King, Sharon Carne, Lindsay Inkster (and her husband!), Michelle Everett Faunt, Josee Robitaille, and to all of the parents that brought their children to the event. Thank you so much to all of the teachers who submitted and prepared students for the event. Your hard work was critical to making this day a success!



Piano and Yoga...an Unlikely Combination? Maybe not!

(Continued from P. 1)

he mentally relaxed into the trill. He experienced it not as a fearful intricacy, but as an enjoyable sound. Success! Soon every student in my studio spent a minute of deep breathing in their lessons before trills and light, clear ornaments ensued.

Now that my students were all happily trilling away, it was time to conquer my next challenge: fidgety-foot-Francine. You know, the student who thinks she can concentrate better if her feet are dancing and her bottom is sliding side to side and sometimes off the bench. Fidgety-foot-Francine was taught Pranayama breathing. It helped. But not enough. She needed more. Yoga college training to the rescue! This time in the form of forward bends.

Forward bends are used to end a yoga class because they soothe the adrenal glands, return blood pressure to normal and prepare the body for final relaxation. Forward bends are most calming when the forehead is resting on a support. I closed the piano lid and had Francine round her spine and come down into an easy forward bend with her forehead resting on her fists, one stacked on top of the other. In this pose she breathed slow inhalations and long exhalations. In a forward bend position, the pressure on the forehead signals the body to rest and relax. After 30 seconds Francine played calmly and smoothly. She read the notes on the page more accurately and played with a steady beat. And her feet and body stayed still! I kid you not. I repeated this exercise and variations of this exercise each piano lesson. Francine became a changed piano student; one with mental focus and physical calmness.

Asanas are the physical postures of yoga. Asanas train our bodies to hold our joints in alignment with ease to attain perfect posture. Chest opening Asanas expand our lung capacity, enabling us to breathe fully, and shoulder opening exercises allow us to have full mobility of our shoulder joints. Any Asanas that involve movement of the spine energize the body as well. Hmm, a few good tools here I think I could use.

My next piano-yoga challenge—slumped-shoulder-Sara who played locked in middle C position. With Sara, I started having her sit tall “as if I pulled up a string from the top of her head”. Next, I had Sara do shoulder rolls moving into larger arm circles until she was ready to sit up tall with her hands clasped behind her back. In this position a student gently straightens the elbows while squeezing the shoulder blades together and working the hands away from their back. This is a wonderful shoulder opener. A gentle backbend was easily done at the piano bench by having Sara sit tall with hands pressing into her lower back, chest lifted up and head gently looking

at the ceiling. A shoulder opener and a gentle backbend (emphasis on the word “gentle”). Sitting on the bench with her hands pressed to thighs, I also had Sara round her spine then curve her spine like a curious cat. A few repeats of this and Sara played with full arm movement. If you want your students to use the full piano they need to learn to move! And the bonus? Fuller crescendos! Energetic staccatos! Bring movement and energy into the body and you will bring movement and energy into the performance. It’s a beautiful thing.

In summary, I am no yoga expert. I simply used a few tips and tricks I learned in yoga college to help my students. If breathing exercises calmed me, why not them? If breath control increased my mental focus, it would work for them, too. If resting my forehead changed my mood, I could teach a student that as well; and if shoulder opening gave me more movement, they could also experience the same. So I guess you could say I became a yoga teacher not in the yoga studio, but in the piano studio. How about that?

***For further reading on yoga, I suggest: *Yoga the Path to Holistic Health and Light on Pranayama* both by B.K.S. Iyengar. Also consult www.yogajournal.com. Piano and yoga classes are offered through various sources. Google piano yoga.**



Jennifer Latta opened her in-home piano studio, Music4Life, in January, 2002. She graduated with her Piano Teacher’s ARCT in 2008 and became a mobile piano teacher in 2011. She specializes in beginner and

intermediate students, theory and teacher training. She is currently enrolled in the Yoga Studio College of Canada and on track to graduate with her 200-hour Certified Yoga Instructor certificate in April 2017. If you ask her, she would say she absolutely loves teaching. She chooses teaching jobs where she can impact lives in a positive way to help people live to their fullest potential. She considers herself very fortunate to be able to have the most fun and fulfilling career. You can contact her at music4lifecalgary@yahoo.ca.



Talent and the Iceberg Illusion

By Sharon Omura

Picture a few young people standing on a tennis court. They lob a few tennis balls around in a pick up game on a lazy summer day. Next, picture a few young people practising on a tennis court, hitting all of the 550 balls contained in a shopping cart. After they are finished, they pick them all up and start over again.

The first picture was a friend and I when we were teenagers, and that was the highlight of our tennis careers. The next picture was of Venus and Serena Williams at the ages of four and three. That was just the beginning of their phenomenal training and subsequent trajectory to international fame.

We know that growing a world-class performer isn't as simple as my rudimentary illustration above, but just how much of an effect does *volume* of practice have to do with excellence? Is it critical or does talent and outstanding

performance have more to do with natural ability?

Practice Quantity

In his book *Bounce: Mozart, Federer, Picasso, Beckham, and the Science of Success*, Matthew Syed, a former Olympian, examines talent and outstanding performance. Through case studies and scientific research, he dispels the talent myth that ascribes outstanding performance to natural inborn abilities. Talent is more complex and about far greater extraordinary effort and practice than I had formerly understood.

For example, Mozart racked up 3,500 hours of practice before his sixth birthday, and from the age of three, he had received musical instruction under the intensive and driven guidance of his father Leopold, a leading pedagogue of the day.

Tiger Woods watched from his high chair as his father hit the balls into a net; he received his first golf club for Christmas just before he turned one. When he was 18 months, he had his first golf outing and had a preshot routine by his third birthday. He entered his first tournament when he was two. At four, he was working with a pro, and at 13 he won his first national tournament.

The Williams sisters practised at four and three with 550 tennis balls but their training intensified. They used baseball bats to shoot at traffic cones until their arms ached. On school holidays they practised relentlessly. Serena entered her first competition at age four and a half. Their father constantly invented innovative ways for his daughters to practise for improvement. When the girls were 12 and 11, the family moved away from California so they could train with a pro at an academy in Florida.

Have you ever labelled someone as musically talented and believed that the person was blessed with a truly natural ability? Well, I admit I had, but Syed challenged my assumptions. He describes a study conducted by psychologist Anders Ericsson where he examined the causes of outstanding performance amongst a group of violinists.

Violinists at the Music Academy of West Berlin in Germany were divided into three groups: the super talented potential soloist players, the good players destined for excellent orchestral positions, and the players expected to become music teachers. Biographical histories of the three groups were very similar in terms of the age at starting lessons, the number of teachers studied with, and the number of other instruments studied.

The most significant difference was in the number of extra hours the best violinists had practised by the age of 20 versus the others. They had practised an average of 10,000 hours, which was 2000 more than the good violinists and 6000 more than the violinists who expected to become music teachers. Ericsson and his colleagues concluded that it was persistent and deliberate efforts to improve performance that made the difference in performance, not innate talent.

Anders Ericsson says when we see an extraordinary feat, we are subject to what he calls the “iceberg illusion” where we see only the end product of a process that has taken years. Syed states that we don’t see the hidden years of practice, drills on technique and form, concentration, and transformation of the body and brain behind the incredible performance we admire. He describes several instances where individuals have achieved outstanding performance including Gretzky, Kasparov, Beckham and Picasso, and shows how they and others only achieved greatness after many hours and years of hidden practice. Syed contends that it takes 10 years or 10,000 hours of practice

to become outstanding, whether it is athletic, mental or creative feat.

Practice Quality

So if I practise 10,000 hours, does it mean that I’ll become outstanding at whatever I set out to do? No, it is not just quantity, but quality of practice that makes one great.

If you only go through the motions and focus on what you can already do easily, you’re not likely to become outstanding. Practice must be what Syed calls “purposeful” where you work at what you can’t do with the never-changing goal of progress to extend and change your abilities. The outstanding violinists mentioned in the previous study didn’t just do more practice but succeeded by doing more purposeful practice.

Syed explains how purposeful practice involves necessary failure. He describes a high performer as one who regardless of possible failure, is always striving for a target slightly out of reach with a vivid awareness of how the gap might be breached.

One example he uses is Brazilian soccer players. They develop extraordinary soccer skills by growing up playing futsal that uses a smaller, heavier ball with a smaller playing area than soccer. Compared to soccer, this game demands more precise handling of the ball, more ball contact, and working more quickly to create angles and space. Soccer consequently becomes easier.

Referring to his own training in table tennis with Chen Xinhua, his Chinese coach, Syed explains how instead of playing against him with a single ball, his coach took a bucket of a hundred balls and fired them at him from different angles, at different speeds and spins, then kept upping the challenge. Finally his coach widened the table by half a width, so his foot work and movements were pushed to the extreme limit. Syed’s skill and world ranking consequently soared. After

this experience, Syed concludes that smarter and more purposeful training was the key to China’s success at table tennis.

Feedback

Rather than innate talent, Syed finds that expertise results from continuously guided, analytical and purposeful feedback.

He attributes his own enormous improvements in table tennis skills to the work he did to create a perfect feedback environment. His coach, Chen Xinhua, made him practise for months to perfect a consistent forehand slice. Once perfected, this base-line stroke enabled him and his coach to analyze variable by variable what went wrong when he missed, and to add variations of speed and spin in a logical way. In a few months he was astounded to find he increased the strokes he could hit in a row from 15 to more than 200.

Apparently, Jack Nicklaus also used a feedback loop. For every shot, he mentally shot with a “colour movie” of his intention. Even in practice, before he hit the ball he would visualize the path of the ball first to envision where it would land.

With accurate feedback, practice can be perfectly reproducible in performance. This is why top coaches matter according to Syed since they embed feedback in the practice drills, so continuous re-adjustments can be made to create constant improvements.

Attitudes

Attitudes about failure and belief in the talent myth destroy motivation. But why would you try to improve or attempt something new if you wouldn’t believe that you possess a natural “talent” for it and would likely fail?

The extent to which these attitudes damage both motivation and excellence was shown in a study led by Carol Dweck where the “growth mindset” and the “fixed mindset” that make a

tremendous difference in improving performance were examined. The attitude to become better through practice is called the “growth mindset”, whereas the “fixed mindset” is the attitude that one is born with an ability.

Dweck selected two groups of elementary students with equal intelligence, but one group had a “fixed mindset” about intelligence and believed it was unchangeable while the other had a “growth mindset” and believed that intelligence can be changed with effort.

When given a set of puzzles, both groups did the easy puzzles equally well, but when faced with difficult puzzles, the “fixed mindset” group quickly became discouraged. They criticized and blamed their lack of ability and intelligence for not being able to do the difficult puzzles. They berated themselves for not being smart or not being good at puzzles.

The “growth mindset” group on the other hand kept trying and didn’t blame anything including themselves for failures. In fact, failure wasn’t part of their vocabulary. This “growth mindset” group maintained effort, kept improving their strategies and kept learning, and some even solved the problems. The “fixed mindset” group on the other hand deteriorated in their strategies and became less effective.

Dweck concluded the experiment showing that everyone can change and grow through experience and application. The “growth mindset” group embraced failure and thereby improved their performance.

Praise

Have you tried to encourage someone by saying that he/she is talented? Has someone complimented you that you are talented? Does praise about talent in fact encourage excellence?

To answer, Syed points to another Dweck study where students were given simple puzzles. After they

completed the puzzles, they were each given his or her score and were told either “You must be smart at this!” or “You must have worked really hard!” When offered a subsequent test and a choice of whether to take an easy or a hard test, only two-third of the group praised for intelligence chose the hard test versus an astonishing 90% of the group praised for effort.

On the next test where it was so difficult that no one succeeded, the intelligence-praised group concluded that their failure was because they were no good at puzzles, whereas the praised-for-effort group tried longer, enjoyed the process more and didn’t lose confidence. Finally on the last experiment, the students were given a chance to do a test of equal difficulty to the first test. The surprising result was that the praised-for-intelligence group performed more poorly than on the initial test, whereas the praised-for-effort group increased their scores. The findings showed that contrary to what we may believe, praise for talent and innate ability instead of praise for effort discourages improvement and excellence.

Syed quotes from Dweck’s book, *Mindset*, giving examples of talent-oriented praise:

“You learned that so quickly! You’re so smart!”

“Look at that drawing, Martha, is he the next Picasso or what?”

“You’re so brilliant, you got an A without even studying!”

Although the above comments sound supportive, they can give the following negative messages:

“If I don’t learn something quickly, I’m not smart.”

“I shouldn’t try drawing anything hard or they’ll see I’m no Picasso.”

“I’d better quit studying or they won’t think I’m brilliant.”

Conclusion

In summary, outstanding performance is about many thousands of hours of purposeful practice. It is about seeking feedback and opportunities to stretch oneself, to purposely leave the comfort zones and to embrace failure. It is also about possessing a growth mindset, believing that effort and practice will lead to change and excellence. Praise for talent discourages effort, whereas praise for effort encourages growth and high performance.

Matthew Syed’s study of talent myth and its many facets is much more detailed and nuanced than I have room to properly describe in this article. His book *Bounce* is tremendously important, particularly for anyone interested in talent development. This summer, when I watch the brilliant speed, co-ordination and strength of Olympic athletes in Rio, I will remember the “iceberg illusion”. Whether it’s athletic, intellectual, creative, artistic or musical feats, no achievement is the sole result of talent.

For Olympic athletes, there has been far more purposeful practice, belief in one’s abilities to learn and embrace failure than most of us have realized or could have imagined. When I watch a race where hundredths of seconds make the difference between winning gold and not placing, I will remember that I have seen only the tip of the iceberg, not the submerged massive chunk of practice, motivation, coaching and change. A lesson for all of us when we want to learn something new, master anything or encourage “talent” in our students.

Sharon Omura, BEd (Music), LLB, ARCT, is a Calgary piano teacher. She is always on the look out for new ideas and new ways of seeing the world. That’s why she loves good conversation, teaching, music, art, travelling, books, and hiking new trails.

HONOURS RECITAL

Saturday, January 28, 2017, 2:30 p.m.

Hope Lutheran Church

3527 Boulton Road NW, Calgary, AB

The Calgary Branch of the Alberta Registered Music Teachers' Association sponsors the HONOURS RECITAL and the OUTSTANDING STUDENT RECITAL (OSR) in order to recognize students who have achieved excellence (minimum of 85%) on their current practical examinations. Students will first be considered for the Honours Recital. Those students not selected to play in the Honours Recital will automatically be selected to play at the Outstanding Student Recital in February, 2017 (date, location, time TBA). ****Please note that students MUST apply for the Honours Recital in order to be considered to play at the Outstanding Student Recital.****

Scholarship donors will be acknowledged on the Honours Recital program, and advertising opportunities are available in the program for donations of \$300 and higher.

In an effort to streamline and simplify the Honours Recital, there are some changes being implemented this year. **Please carefully note the following changes:**

The Honours Recital **will NOT** be recorded and broadcast by Shaw TV this year. Feedback from last year indicated that although we greatly appreciated SHAW TV's volunteer involvement with the Honours Recital, there was an undue amount of behind-the-scene work to ensure that we could legally record and broadcast the recital. This may be reconsidered in future years.

Documentation of theory corequisites **will NOT** be required for Levels/Grades 1-9. Practical marks will be the only consideration for selection in the Honours Recital/OSR. Grade 10 and Diploma Level applicants **will continue** to have to submit documentation of theory corequisites that have been completed within 2 years of taking the practical exam.

The Honours Recital will be held on a **Saturday** this year.

HONOURS RECITAL/OSR APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Midnight, Friday, October 14, 2016

HOW TO APPLY

Please carefully read the Rules and Regulations on the following page for detailed information

on dates, application process, supporting documentation and guidelines.

STEP ONE—ONLINE APPLICATION FORM (one application for both recitals)—ALL LEVELS/GRADES

Click on the link below to access the application form or copy/paste the link into your web browser. The application form is best accessed on a desk top computer or tablet. Please complete and submit the form online.

PLEASE DO NOT PRINT.

<https://goo.gl/forms/2l9ppaNb7cpEPplh2>

Please contact Michelle Everett Faunt (403-615-7553 or honoursrecital@gmail.com) with any questions regarding the application.

STEP TWO—PRACTICAL MARK DOCUMENTATION—ALL LEVELS/GRADES

Hard copies or electronic files of **student practical marks** must be provided in conjunction with the online application by the application deadline: **midnight, Friday, October 14, 2016.**

Documentation can be submitted using one of the following methods:

a.) Email attachment (scanned image, photo or PDF of the official exam results) sent to honoursrecital@gmail.com

**Please put the student’s name followed by the word “Documentation” in the subject line.

OR

b.) Send via Canada Post (must be received on or before **midnight, Friday, October 14, 2016**) to

Michelle Everett Faunt, 131 Tuscany Meadows Heath N.W. Calgary, AB T3L 2T9

STEP THREE—THEORY COREQUISITE DOCUMENTATION—**LEVEL/GRADE 10 AND DIPLOMA LEVEL ONLY

Hard copies or electronic files of **LEVEL/GRADE 10 AND DIPLOMA LEVEL corequisite theory marks**, completed within 2 years of the practical exam, must be provided, in addition to the online application and documentation of the practical mark. Please submit this documentation by the application deadline: **midnight, Friday, October 14, 2016.**

Documentation can be submitted using one of the following methods:

a.) **Email attachment** (scanned image, photo or PDF of the official exam results) sent to honoursrecital@gmail.com

**Please put the student’s name followed by the word “Documentation” in the subject line.

OR

b.) **Send via Canada Post** (must be received on or before **midnight, Friday, October 14, 2016**) to

Michelle Everett Faunt, 131 Tuscany Meadows Heath N.W. Calgary, AB T3L 2T9

Scholarships & medals are awarded to students who achieve the top three practical examination marks (minimum of 85%) in each category listed below. **Level/Grades 10 and Diploma in each discipline will also need to show documentation of completed theory corequisites within 2 years of completing the practical exam.

PIANO	
JUNIOR I	Level/Grades 1–3
JUNIOR II	Level/Grades 4–6
INTERMEDIATE	Level/Grades 7–9
SENIOR	Level/Grades 10 and Diploma**

STRINGS	
JUNIOR	Level/Grades 1–6
INTERMEDIATE	Level/Grades 7–9
SENIOR	Level/Grades 10 and Diploma**

VOICE	
JUNIOR I	Level/Grades 1–3
JUNIOR II	Level/Grades 4–6
INTERMEDIATE	Level/Grades 7–9
SENIOR	Level/Grades 10 and Diploma**

SPEECH ARTS/OTHER INSTRUMENTS	
JUNIOR	Level/Grades 1–6
INTERMEDIATE	Level/Grades 7–9
SENIOR	Level/Grades 10 and Diploma**

HONOURS RECITAL & OUTSTANDING STUDENTS' RECITAL

RULES & REGULATIONS 2016/2017

*Please read the rules carefully. **On the online application form, please agree when prompted, that you will abide by these rules and the decisions of the committee responsible for the organization of the recitals.*

1. Teachers may submit applications for students who earned a minimum of 85% on practical examinations from January 1, 2016 to August 31, 2016. (**Exception:** Level/Grade 10 AND Diploma students may apply the following calendar year to accommodate completion of theory corequisites.)
2. The application deadline for both recitals is **midnight on Friday, October 14, 2016. All applications and supporting documents must be received by this date. **Late, incomplete, or illegible applications will not be accepted.**
3. Supporting documentation for practical examination marks must be submitted for all grades. In addition, documentation for theoretical corequisite examination marks is required for Level/Grade 10 and Diploma Level based on the syllabus of the applicable examining board (i.e. Royal Conservatory, Conservatory Canada, or other recognized Examining Boards).
4. All teachers who submit students must be current ARMTA Calgary members.
5. Only students of members in good standing of ARMTA (Calgary Branch) at the time of the examination are eligible.
*Program credit will be given to the teacher at the time of the examination.
6. Teachers will be notified by email on or before **Friday, November 4, 2016** regarding the placement of their student(s) in either the Honours Recital or the Outstanding Student Recital.
7. Students who are chosen to perform in the **Honours Recital** will be sent a **Performance Confirmation Form** via email. This form must be completed by **midnight, Friday, December 2, 2016.**
8. Students who are chosen to perform in the **Outstanding Student Recital** will be sent a **Performance Confirmation Form** via email. This form must be completed by **midnight, Friday, December 9, 2016.**
9. All successful applicants for the **Honours Recital** will be required to attend the recital to accept their scholarships & medals unless prior arrangements have been made with **Rita Thurn, Honours Recital Committee Chair.**

Contact: (403) 202-0429 rita_thurn@telus.net

10. All successful applicants for the **Outstanding Student Recital** will be required to attend the recital to accept their certificates unless prior arrangements have been made with Ron Proctor, Outstanding Student Recital Coordinator.

Contact: (403) 922-9917 or ronaldproctor@shaw.ca

11. It is the teacher's responsibility to communicate information about the recitals to their students.
12. The decisions of the Honours Recital Committee and the Outstanding Student Recital Coordinator are final.
13. Any complaints must be made in writing and addressed to the President of the Calgary Branch of ARMTA.
14. The Calgary ARMTA Code of Ethics applies to all aspects of the Honours Recital and Outstanding Student Recital and its organization.

HONOURS RECITAL SCHOLARSHIPS

ARMTA CALGARY BRANCH SCHOLARSHIPS

The Calgary Branch of the Alberta Registered Music Teachers' Association sponsors the **Honours Recital Scholarships** for students who have earned the top three practical examination marks in each category during the past year. These ARMTA awards are funded by donations. Donation cheques (made out to ARMTA Calgary Branch) may be sent to:

Jackie Law, 91 Edenvold Cres. NW, Calgary AB T3A 3T6. Please direct questions regarding donations to **Jackie Law** at jcklaw518@gmail.com.

In 1987, when Robert Hooper was president of Calgary Registered Music Teachers, the Endowment fund was created to provide scholarships. Alberta Registered Music Teachers Association (ARMTA) Calgary Branch continues to maintain investments through the Endowment fund for the purpose of funding scholarships. Each fall, donations are sought from businesses and individuals and received into the Endowment fund.

EILEEN AND ELGAR HIGGIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The **Eileen and Elgar Higgin Memorial Scholarship** is awarded to a Senior Voice student.

Eileen and Elgar were giants in the musical life of Calgary, and their legacy lives on in the teaching and performing careers of their daughters, Elaine Case and Jennifer Higgin. Starting in the 1930s as soloists at Knox United Church, Eileen and Elgar were often heard in recitals throughout the city. In the late 1950s, Eileen formed the Calgary Theatre Singers in order to give up and coming singers opportunities to perform in operas and musicals, produced to a very high artistic standard. She also was instrumental in the start of the Singing and Opera Division of the Banff School of Fine Arts, where she taught every summer for several years. In 1969, in the last year of his life, Elgar Higgin taught Singing for that program. Eileen and Elgar donated trophies and scholarships to the Calgary Kiwanis Festival and were active with the Calgary Musicians' Union, the Alberta Registered Music Teachers Association, and National Association of Singing. Their students have been heard at the Saddlers' Wells Opera, Dusseldorf Opera, San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera Company and Metropolitan Opera. A life-size portrait of Elgar Higgin, painted by noted artist H.G. Glyde, hangs in the National Music Centre. Each year the Banff Centre awards a scholarship in honour of Eileen Higgin. Elaine Case has donated the Eileen and Elgar Higgin Memorial Scholarship to ARMTA to honour her parents' devotion to the development of young musical talent.

PETER TURNER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The **Peter Turner Memorial Scholarship** is awarded to the student who earned the highest mark in the Performers' ARCT examination during the past year.

Peter Turner was a highly regarded teacher of piano for many years in Calgary. His students played at the highest level and were consistently successful not only in local but also national competitions. Peter Turner set a high standard for both his students and for other teachers. He was also a senior examiner for the Royal Conservatory of Music. He died in 2008.

PIANO DIPLOMA ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP FOR SENIOR PIANO

The **Piano Diploma Association Scholarship for Senior Piano** is awarded to the Senior Piano Student in Grade 10 OR Diploma Level who has earned the highest mark based on both the practical and theory examination marks.

Criteria for the **Piano Diploma Association Scholarship for Senior Piano**:

1. Only those students who have achieved their Diplomas as PERFORMERS will be considered.
2. Grade 10 and Diploma level students who have been submitted for scholarship and medal consideration to the ARMTA Honours Recital will be eligible for this scholarship.
3. These students can be studying in either the Royal Conservatory curriculum or in the Conservatory Canada curriculum.
4. Tabulation of marks. The recipient of the scholarship will have the highest aggregate score using the following criteria:
 - a. For an RCM Grade Ten candidate - the Gr. 10 practical exam mark, Level II History and Level II Harmony
 - b. For an RCM ARCT candidate - the ARCT practical exam mark, plus the TWO HIGHEST marks from the three ARCT theory corequisites submitted by that candidate
 - c. For a Conservatory Canada Grade 10 candidate—the Grade 10 practical exam mark, Theory 6 and History 6
 - d. For a Conservatory Canada ACCM candidate—the ACCM practical exam mark, plus the TWO HIGHEST marks from the four ACCM theory corequisites submitted by that candidate

The Piano Diploma Association, formed in 1958, is a group of piano enthusiasts who meet monthly to perform or discuss major classical piano works in an atmosphere of friendly criticism and encouragement. They endeavour, wherever possible, to contribute to the musical life of the community.

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Thank You ARMTA Members for your support

A Creative Workshop by Leila Viss

By Sandra Joy Friesen (sandrajoyfriesen@gmail.com)

Leila Viss is a well-known pedagogue in the United States, based in Colorado. She's known for her creative approaches to teaching music and when she gave her workshop on May 31 in Calgary, it was clear to see why she attracts students to her studio as well as teachers to her workshops. Her workshops are interactive and fully engaging, and her time spent with the members of APTA and ARMTA that morning did not disappoint.

She started it off with a humorous clip from a Will Smith movie to illustrate that, as teachers of music, we would do best to avoid the critical and strict line of saying that things should be “exactly this or exactly that” in the processes of feeling, hearing, understanding and communicating the creative art of music. Rather, we can achieve really great results by embracing the fun and interactive human aspects of music and bringing these into sound pedagogical training practices of rhythm, technique, sight-reading and aural skill. As you read on, please note that all her material and much, much more is available on her website www.leilaviss.com. The PDF she supplied is also available there complete with all the online links, but I can also send it to anyone who requests it.

The interactive focus of the workshop was “**Improvisation—On and Off the Bench**”. She acknowledged the *why* of improvisation with a generous list of truths such as “**spontaneity** is the spice of life and requires release from the printed page; **satisfaction** comes from the natural desire to feed imaginations; **skills** blossom with dynamic, large motor activities first, followed by a transfer to small muscle motor motions”. Then she introduced simple yet meaningful ways to bring students together for the purpose of learning how to improvise. Members of the audience were the “students” in this activity. Throughout her presentation, she referred to useful technological aids that, for improvisation, provide rhythmic accompaniments as well as colourful visuals that present a unique source of imaginative inspiration. As her bio notes, she is tech-savvy and the majority of the exercises and activities of her presentation involved how to use many different apps for teaching rhythm, aural and reading skills as well as understanding the basic theoretical concepts of melody, harmony, form and style.

Her level of creativity toward all aspects of a music studio were abundantly clear. She shared numerous videos and photos of the activities she develops and arranges for her students, such as theme-based learning, that are appropriate inspirations for all of us. “**Borrow from the Baroque**” was one example, in which the students learned about Baroque repertoire through the year (also with the help of a variety of tech-aids) and this culminated in a fun social recital, complete with Baroque wigs made out of toilet paper rolls. Her ideas for group classes also fully engage creativity and learning together in constructive ways. Again, she had members of the audience participate in her “**Bucket Drumming**” demonstration, using all manner of percussive materials such as: the buckets (from any hardware store), jars filled with pasta for a shaker sound, chopsticks for tapping rhythm...you get the picture. The best part of it all was that the drumming exercises were created from a well-thought out process for learning basic note values and fundamental rhythmic patterns. Be warned though, prepare for loud volume in this group activity!

Leila was able to pack an enormous amount of good quality teaching ideas and activities into the three-hour morning session. Members had questions at the end of it all, and she was generous with her time afterward, continuing to offer more information and advice on using technology in teaching. I think many of us hope that we will be able to host Leila again! I would like to sincerely thank the members of APTA and ARMTA who helped make this workshop such a success, and also to mention how enjoyable it was to be bring our organizations together for professional development.

Short biography: Leila Viss holds a church organist/pianist position, blogs at 88pianokeys.me, writes for [Clavier Companion](#) and authored [The iPad Piano Studio: Keys to Unlocking the Power of Apps](#). She is drawn to discovering innovative teaching tools and successful practice strategies to encourage the average player to stick to the bench for a lifetime. Customizing lessons to suit each student is a priority, and therefore, she offers blended, tech-savvy instruction in classical, jazz, pop improvisation and composition. Every student not only has a private lesson but “Off-Bench Time” as well which features assignments and activities using the latest iPad apps, a Clavinova and more.



October 20–23, 2016
Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity
Register at www.musicconferenceab.ca

This is ARMTA’s annual professional development opportunity for all members with string, voice, and piano sessions and masterclasses. ARMTA is pleased to present Gregory Chase on understanding boys, and Honens Prize Laureate Luca Buratto. Details at www.armta.ca under “events” tab.



CFMTA MTNA joint conference March 18–22, 2017
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www.youtube.com/user/igudesmanandjoo

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Make plans early to get best prices on flights and hotel (share with friends)
<http://www.mtna.org/programs/conferences/>
Details at www.armta.ca under “events” tab

STUDENT RECITALS

BOOST YOUR STUDENTS' SELF-CONFIDENCE!

Student recitals provide an excellent opportunity for students to perform and **enhance** their **self-confidence, pride, and joy of performing**. Recitals can simply be a means for them to **gain experience**, to **help prepare for an exam** or other special events. The opportunity to perform in front of an audience **gives your students the perspective needed to understand the necessity of practice, study, and commitment**.

There are opportunities for this invaluable learning tool:

North

TBA—For dates and location, please contact Han Ding: hding-89@hotmail

South

1. **Saturday, November 12, 2016, 2:00 p.m.** Steinway Piano Gallery, 76 Heritage Gate, SE

2. **Saturday, January 14, 2017, 2:00 p.m.** Steinway Piano Gallery, 76 Heritage Gate, SE

For information, please contact Carol Moore: rhythmreader@shaw.ca



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