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**The intermediate piano student:  
an investigation of the impact of learning  
material on motivation**

Thesis submitted by

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in December 2010

for the degree of Master of Music

in the School of Creative Arts

James Cook University

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## **Abstract**

The intermediate piano student is difficult to define, as the term ‘intermediate’ is ambiguous, meaning that the student is neither beginner nor advanced. The literature provides minimal guidance in terms of how to define an intermediate student, however the general consensus is that the student is defined by his or her skill set and the repertoire being played. At the beginning level, there are many texts, methods and articles that assist both the teacher and the student in learning; however, there is less support in terms of pedagogical guides and resources for the intermediate student and significantly, minimal research on how these influence motivation.

In order to better define the intermediate piano student and what motivates the student, a mixed-methods study was conducted with key stakeholders. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with intermediate piano teachers and students, authors of method books, heads of external examination bodies, contemporary composers and authors of literature guides. In order to examine the issues further, quantitative data was collected through an internet survey which was completed by over 500 teachers from a range of countries. Each stakeholder who participated in the study was asked to define a beginner, intermediate and advanced student and what factors they thought motivated intermediate students. Issues of learning programs were also covered with the teachers and students.

The interviews and survey confirm that there is a significant relationship between learning programs and motivation. The students indicated that they practise more when they enjoy the repertoire, and the teachers and external stakeholders agree that motivation is essential for lifelong learning. A significant finding is that while students would most likely choose to learn popular music, teachers identified that they mostly use classical music as stock learning material. This research provides insights and suggestions for those involved in the intermediate learning process, as well as opportunities for further research and the development of a learning program for the intermediate piano student.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1 Learning a musical instrument**

Music forms an integral part of everyday life. We are surrounded by it, immersed in it. It is part of every culture, every race, every religion. It helps us to relax, concentrate and celebrate. Whether it's the radio in the car, the music at a shopping centre, or a band in a club, and whether we're entirely conscious of it, music is, in some way, part of our everyday lives. For some people however, a conscious effort is made to be involved in music; a decision is made to learn a musical instrument.

When it comes to learning a musical instrument, there are many choices and decisions to be made, including:

- What instrument;
- What style of music (classical, pop, film, cultural);
- Whether to have a teacher or be self-taught; and
- Whether to learn privately or in a group.

There are also many reasons why people want to learn an instrument, and many reasons why they choose particular instruments and styles of music. For example, some are inspired by a particular concert they have seen or an artist they have heard, some are encouraged to play by their parents and some learn because of their peers. Whatever the reason, the motivation for starting to learn an instrument is important because it can

influence the rate of progress, and in times of doubt or frustration, it can influence a student's decision to continue learning (Hallam 1998).

Many people within Western culture attempt to learn an instrument either through school, with a private teacher or informally, for example in a band. The concepts of formal and informal learning are often used to distinguish between the teacher-taught learners and self-taught learners (Green 2001). Formal learning is usually associated with a teacher or instructor, either in a private lesson, group lesson, orchestra or other form of ensemble. Informal learning is self-taught, for example, listening to music and attempting to transcribe it, or through playing in a garage band formed by a group of students. Walker (2009, n.p.) suggests that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, “children are ‘educating’ themselves through their iPod, internet, and mobile phones.” Both concepts of formal and informal learning are effective and have unique benefits.

### **1.1.1 The benefits of learning music**

The benefits of learning music and indeed learning an instrument have been well documented and recognised (e.g. Davidson 2008, Davies-Splitter 2008, Geoghegan and McCaffrey 2004, Guldberg-Hoegh 2008, Hallam 1998, Music Council of Australia 2008, StGeorge 2006). The process of learning an instrument can have many positive outcomes for children that can benefit other activities such as school and home life. Learning an instrument can develop and improve concentration, creativity, communication, reasoning capacity and problem solving skills, maths and language performance, memory, social

and team skills, reading and verbal skills, and punctuality (Davidson 2008, Grandin, Peterson and Shaw 1998, Hallam 1998, StGeorge 2004).

In the United Kingdom, the government believes so strongly in the benefits of music for children that they have launched a program to make every primary school a musical school (Guldberg-Hoegh, 2008). They have found that students who sing and learn music from an early age develop better social skills, confidence, memory, and the ability to listen critically.

In the Australian school scene, the importance of music education has long been realised. “School programs that incorporate the arts (music, dance, drama, visual arts) have proven to be educational, developmentally rich, and a cost-effective way to prepare students for a fulfilling and effective life” (StGeorge 2004, p. 316). The Department of Education, Science and Training (2005) in their national review of school music education also found that music had a positive effect on student’s learning. Participating in music can provide many positive emotional and psychological benefits. It can reduce stress and mentally rejuvenate. Physically, it gives a ‘high’ (Davidson, 2008). In general, there is much evidence and research that leads us to believe that music and instrumental learning can provide personal growth and satisfaction.

### **1.1.2 Learning the piano**

Piano teaching has been a part of society for centuries. The great composers of past centuries such as Bach, Mozart and Beethoven taught to establish their reputation,

supplement their performing and composing income, and because they were often required to by their patrons. Throughout time, the fundamentals of these reasons have essentially remained the same. “It’s a safe bet that teaching others how to play pianos and keyboards will nicely hold its own in the century just begun” (Uszler, Gordon and Smith 2000, p. xiv).

However, the piano lesson has progressed significantly from its early days and practices (Uszler *et al* 2000). The styles and methods of teaching have changed as research has highlighted the benefits or problems associated with certain practices. The instrument itself has also changed and therefore the performer has had to adapt. Influential composers such as Beethoven and Liszt stretched the limits of the piano and its repertoire, enabling concert pianists of the nineteenth century to expand on their showmanship and technical skills. The changes in the instrument also produced an influx in piano repertoire being written, both for the professional and the amateur (Jones 2003).

For many years, the one-on-one lesson was considered the most effective way to teach, although there was no evidence to support this (Daniel 2005). Now, the concept of a lesson has expanded to include partner lessons, group lessons and class piano. The term ‘piano’ has come to mean acoustic piano, in contrast with the digital piano or keyboard. The profession of piano teaching is considered a serious job, and with that comes the responsibility of marketing, insurance, tax returns and professional development. Methods of teaching and lesson content are also serious topics of conversation amongst music teachers (Uszler *et al* 2000). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the profession appears to be

changing and evolving in terms of lesson formats, learning and teaching methods, and recognition of the need to further enhance practice.

## **1.2 The intermediate stage**

Music students are often divided into three broad categories; beginner, intermediate and advanced. To divide all piano students into just three categories can often not be specific enough, so each of the three broad categories can be further divided into early, middle and late (Bastien 1995). These categories can be helpful for the teacher when assigning repertoire, setting expectations and preparing students for competitions or auditions. The beginner student is quite simple to define as he or she is just starting to learn. The advanced student is also quite simple to define as he or she is learning the standard repertoire of the great composers and performing at a high level (Uszler *et al* 2000). However, attempting to define or characterise the intermediate student can be challenging due to a number of factors that raise various questions:

- The intermediate student lies somewhere between the beginner and advanced student with the boundaries very difficult to determine: when does a student leave the beginner stage and enter the intermediate stage? Similarly, when does a student move from the intermediate stage to the advanced stage?
- People are motivated to take up the learning of an instrument at different ages, e.g. four, forty or eighty-four: are different definitions therefore needed to accommodate these different ages and motivations?

- Some students may progress from the beginner stage to the intermediate stage much more quickly than others due to age, maturity and motivation: is it therefore appropriate to create a definition for the intermediate piano student around the length of time spent learning?
- Not only is it difficult to determine when the intermediate stage commences, some authors (e.g. Albergo and Alexander 2000, Bastien 1995) suggest that there are stages within this stage (early, intermediate and advanced): hence does this help or complicate the process?
- While a student may technically be commencing intermediate repertoire, is he or she necessarily beyond the beginner stage in all areas relevant to learning the piano? For example, could a student have a solid technique suitable for intermediate repertoire but be less developed in terms of analytical or musical skills?
- Is the intermediate student considered 'intermediate' because of the repertoire being studied, level of skills, or other factors?
- Who determines when the student reaches this stage; the teacher, student, parents, audience, external exam body or the wider music sector?

This research will attempt to better define the intermediate student and the intermediate stage of learning, both through the help of the literature and further studies. Through a review of the literature, it is anticipated that a definition and guidelines of how to define the intermediate student will be suggested, and that through further research, the definition and guidelines will be validated.



### **1.3 Repertoire and motivation**

Piano lessons typically revolve around students learning musical notes on a page. These notes are the foundation of the vast amount of repertoire that teachers and students focus on. Repertoire is required for exams, concerts and for personal growth and enjoyment. Given repertoire plays such an important part in the lesson environment, what impact does it have on motivation? Perhaps it is not the repertoire itself that motivates students, but the way it is presented and taught that matters. If repertoire is influential, is it possible to determine specific periods, genres, composers or even pieces that positively or negatively affect motivation? Teachers often agonise over selecting music for their students, deciding what will best suit their skill level, interest and the intended purpose of the piece. If repertoire is truly influential in motivating a student, then selecting music is one of the most difficult things teachers have to do. Luckily for teachers, the piano has one of the largest selections of music of all instruments, so it is achievable to find music that each student will enjoy (Bachus, Vail and Lancaster 2009).

There are potentially many factors that affect a student's motivation during learning; repertoire, family, peers, extra-curricula activities, school and hormones. Is it possible to expect that a student's motivation levels will remain constant throughout learning or is it more realistic to expect certain periods of highs and lows? Parents and teachers undoubtedly play a large part in the learning process, so are there ways for them to encourage student motivation? This research is related specifically to the intermediate piano student, and will therefore focus on what factors specifically affect motivation in the intermediate piano student.

## **1.4 Aims**

The purpose of this study is to address a range of questions in regard to the intermediate piano student. Firstly, to what extent is there a relationship between the learning material available to the intermediate piano student and their motivation for piano studies? Secondly, who determines what learning material is provided to the intermediate piano student? Thirdly, who should be responsible for determining what learning material is provided? Finally, what are the factors that influence motivation in an intermediate piano student? More specifically, the three aims of the study are to:

1. Explore the perceptions of the key internal stakeholders, that is, the teachers and students engaged directly in the intermediate piano learning process;
2. Explore the perceptions of a range of external stakeholders; method book authors, literature guide authors, external examination boards and contemporary composers of literature for the intermediate piano student; and
3. To attempt to draw any conclusions from the data gathered above in aims one and two about the impact of learning material on motivation.

## **1.5 Limitations of the study**

As stated in Section 1.2, there are various complex factors relevant to any definition of the intermediate piano student (age, work ethic, motivation). What this study therefore seeks to do is explore the broad issues of motivation and repertoire as they apply to the intermediate piano student.

Further, the study is not an exploration of personal motivational factors which influence an intermediate student who might be a child, adolescent or adult. The study will focus on the views of any intermediate piano student and their views on repertoire and learning programs. The study is limited by these issues, and what can be realistically investigated in the timeframe given.

## **1.6 Organisation**

Chapter Two profiles the intermediate piano student and the other participants involved in the learning process. It also explores the learning programs available to intermediate piano students and authors' views on each of these options. Chapter Three details the methods undertaken in sourcing current information regarding the impact of repertoire on motivation in the intermediate piano student. The results of the data gathered are presented in Chapters Four (teachers) and Five (students and external stakeholders), with further directions and implications of the study highlighted in Chapter Six.

## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The intermediate piano student is often neglected in terms of systematic research inquiry, despite the fact that the intermediate level is a pivotal stage in instrumental learning (Hallam 1998). There are many texts and articles written about the piano student, the teacher and the process of learning, however the majority refer to either the beginner or advanced student (e.g. Jacobson 2006), or to the generic attributes required for teaching piano (Baker-Jordan 2003). In terms of the intermediate piano student, there are only two texts that focus specifically on this stage of learning: *Intermediate piano repertoire* (Albergo and Alexander 2000) and *The pianist's guide to standard teaching and performance literature* (Magrath 1995). There are other texts that don't focus specifically on the intermediate piano student, however they do feature a substantial amount of helpful information on this level of learning; these include *How to teach piano successfully* (Bastien 1995), *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* (Hinson 2000) and *The well-tempered keyboard teacher* (Uszler et al 2000). While there are only a few texts that feature the intermediate piano student, it is possible to draw some insights into the area by considering those texts that also refer to piano teaching in general (e.g. Baker-Jordan 2003, Creech and Hallam 2002, Green 2001, Jacobson 2006, Macmillan 2004, StGeorge 2002, Thompson 2002).

## 2.2 Profiling the intermediate piano student

As discussed in the previous chapter (Section 1.1.3), determining when a student reaches the intermediate level is complex and difficult, perhaps primarily because the word *intermediate* is ambiguous, implying that the student is neither beginner nor advanced. The literature offers some guidance, however there are few authors that provide definitions that describe in detail the intermediate piano student, the process of learning at this stage, or ideal programs of study to follow. Uszler *et al* (2000) present the problem well in describing the intermediate student as often

between the ages of ten and fourteen, an adolescent or preadolescent. Yet many older students and adults happily study at this level for many years ... a better definition of the intermediate student quantifies skills, not age or length of study (Uszler *et al* 2000, p. 81).

Albergo and Alexander (2000) agree with this view, stating that the intermediate stage varies for each student depending on their age and ability. For their purposes, they define the intermediate level “as music study following the completion of an elementary [beginner] method or the mastery of the concepts needed to perform elementary level repertoire” (Albergo and Alexander 2000, p. 6).

By the intermediate stage, the fundamentals are arguably learnt and the student should be continuing to develop a higher-level skill set. It is potentially this skill set that determines when a student has reached the intermediate stage, with Uszler *et al* (2000) suggesting four skills that intermediate piano students should possess and be able to achieve:

1. Read music notation, readily locate pitches at the keyboard, and perform short pieces with reasonable note accuracy;
2. Identify lengths of notes and rests, recognise rhythmic patterns, and understand basic meter;

3. Learn a piece efficiently, and be able to solve technical problems appropriate to the level; and
4. Perform a piece successfully with correct fingering, articulation, dynamics, and marks of expression, with energy, concentration, and attention to mood (Uszler *et al* 2000, p. 81-82).

Bastien (1995) offers a less specific definition in referring to the intermediate student as one who “will be playing music that requires an adequate technical approach to perform convincingly” (p. 181). In his view, he also proposes that an intermediate piano student will typically study the following new technical exercises:

1. Scales;
2. Arpeggios;
3. Chords;
4. Parallel note passages;
5. Trills; and
6. Technique studies.

Bastien (1995) does however add a further complication in terms of defining the intermediate student as best placed in three categories; early intermediate (for students in their fourth year of learning), intermediate (for students in their late fourth or early fifth year of learning) and advanced intermediate (for students in their fifth or sixth year of learning). Albergo and Alexander (2000) use the same three categories when discussing intermediate repertoire (without defining length of learning):

- Early intermediate is “a composer’s easiest writing; material appropriate for introducing the classics;”
- Intermediate is “moderately difficult pieces; possible introductory pieces to the composer’s style;” and
- Advanced intermediate to advanced is “difficult pieces that are possible for skilled, motivated high school students; a composer’s more advanced compositions” (Albergo and Alexander 2000, p. 7).

Uszler *et al* (2000) suggest that the intermediate student be defined not only by their skills, but also the level of repertoire studied. While this can be problematic in determining how competently a student should be able to complete each of the ‘intermediate’ skills, it is still arguably more accurate than defining the intermediate piano student by age or length of study. The skills that the student should have mastered during their beginner years and by the time they reach the intermediate stage will arguably allow them to progress through intermediate repertoire successfully.

It is therefore apparent that while there is some guidance for the researcher and teacher in relation to the profile of the intermediate piano student, (e.g. skill set, ability to handle a certain level of repertoire), there are a number of variables that in reality will mean a great diversity between students (e.g. age, length of learning, motivation and work ethic). Further, it is very difficult to attempt to categorise the point in the learning process at which a student has reached the intermediate stage. Albergo and Alexander (2000) and Bastien (1995) further complicate the situation by suggesting three different levels or stages within this level (early, intermediate, advanced). The term “intermediate” should be indicative of a particular student profile, rather than categorical or overly prescriptive. Therefore, based on the literature, the intermediate piano student is most appropriately defined by skill set and the repertoire being studied.

### **2.3 Participants in the learning process**

Learning a musical instrument requires an enormous amount of time, energy and commitment from all participants: the teacher, student and parents (Uszler *et al* 2000). Each participant arguably has a significant role that contributes to the success of the learning environment. Baker-Jordan (2003) sums up the impact that each party has on the learning process, stating that:

The teacher's responsibility is to teach the student not only how to play the piano but how to practice. The student's responsibility is to practice properly and learn to play the piano. The parent's responsibility is to support the student and see to it that he practices (Baker-Jordan 2003, p. 2).

Macmillan (2004) supports this principle and claims that learning an instrument should be a group effort, where all participants are required to work together and support each other.

#### **2.3.1 The intermediate piano teacher**

While each participant has a role, it is reality that much attention is directed to the role of the teacher, a point made by Uszler *et al* (2000), who state that “much depends on the teacher” (p. 83). Varro (in Agay 2004) discusses the importance of the teacher in sharing the joy of music with their students.

Music is here so that people may enjoy it. Performers and teachers are called upon to transmit this joy. The pedagogue who forgets this aim, or – worse – lets his student forget it, has failed in the proper exercise of his calling (Varro 1929 in Agay 2004, p. 5).

Coats (2006) and Gaunt (2007) also believe that the goals of a teacher should be to motivate their students and prepare them for lifelong enjoyment of music. Often, a



teacher's primary role is to guide the student in the development of musical skills and attributes, however they may also be called upon to assume different roles. Uszler *et al* (2000) suggest that "many adults have a memory of a teacher who had a profound influence on them, as a mentor, role model, and facilitator of personal growth" (p. 84). Uszler *et al* (2000) elaborate by explaining the way in which teachers can support their students through broader educational and life development:

Caring and being willing to become involved in a healthy way in students' lives are measures of all good teaching. What you teach and model for your students about such life skills as problem solving, goal setting, time management, dealing with authority figures, and being a caring, involved human being may be the most important memory they retain from piano lessons (Uszler *et al* 2000, p. 84).

In order to provide 'good teaching' for students - regardless of the level - there are certain qualities that Jacobson (2006) believes a piano teacher should possess. These are empathy, concern, passion, knowledge, dedication, honesty, patience, respect, enthusiasm, humour, adaptability, spontaneity and professionalism. Harris and Crozier (2000) add that the piano teacher should have a musical imagination, sensitivity, encouragement and humility. Agay (2004) believes that the requirements of a piano teacher should include knowledge of musical facts, judgement and taste in choosing repertoire and a warm and inspiring personality.

Harris and Crozier (2000) conducted research with adults regarding the most and least appealing characteristics of teachers when they were learning as adolescents (the participants did not specify what level they had attained at the time of adolescence). The characteristics most appealing included:

- Giving pupils a sense of purpose;
- Helping them to realize their ideals;
- Stimulating pupils' ambition;
- Inspiring self-confidence;
- Taking an interest and showing kindness; and
- Possessing integrity, independence and energy (Harris and Crozier 2000, p. 13).

The characteristics least appealing included:

- Sarcasm;
- Severity;
- Absence of laughter and smiling; and
- Indifference (Harris and Crozier 2000, p. 14).

According to the above, it can be seen that the characteristics deemed most appealing to these students were of a positive nature. Teachers who displayed negative characteristics were seen as less appealing. Further to this, Uszler *et al* (2000) suggest that a teacher of intermediate piano students should have composure, tenacity and a good sense of humour. They also believe that a teacher will have a “love of music, love of students, and a sincere desire to lay a musical foundation that will enable students to use and enjoy music for the rest of their lives, whatever their level of pianistic expertise” (Uszler *et al* 2000, p. 87). Clearly, it is important for teachers to provide good teaching in all aspects of learning and to help foster a lifelong love of music.

### **2.3.2. Parents of the intermediate piano student**

“Parents hold a critical position in the pyramid of success, which involves three parties: the student, the teacher, and the parents” (Fisher 2010, p. 181). The role of the parent of an intermediate student is difficult to define as there are many roles they might assume; some may be involved in the lesson and practice time, some may feel they don’t know enough to be involved, and others may not be interested in being involved. Fisher (2010) believes that parents need to be aware of their responsibility and accept this as an essential part in the learning process; it is a parent’s duty to supervise and encourage practice and to encourage learning. Creech and Hallam (2002) suggest that there are various factors that play a part in or influence parental involvement, such as: (a) the musical background of parents, (b) music interaction at home, (c) practice supervision, (d) lesson attendance, (e) parental value of music, and (f) parental aspiration for learning.

Many other authors (e.g. Agay 2004, Green 2001, Macmillan 2004, Thompson 2002) stress the importance of parental involvement in a child’s learning. “Once children start learning an instrument, parental involvement is critical as to whether the child persists or gives up” (Macmillan 2004, p. 296). Green (2001) believes that “parental encouragement of various kinds is one of the most crucial factors in the formation of classical musicians” (p. 24). According to Agay (2004), “the ideal parents, from the teacher’s point of view, are those who display a constructive interest in the child’s study and progress without being overzealous or meddlesome about it” (p. 487).

The active involvement of teachers and parents in a child's learning can be helpful in motivating the student and can encourage the student to continue to learn at any level; beginner, intermediate and advanced. StGeorge (2004) states that:

Parental, peer and teacher support profoundly influence young people's music education, and it is evident from the abundant qualitative research in the social psychology of music domain that missing out on such support and resources from family and teacher may lead to discontinuation (StGeorge 2004, p. 316).

The literature indicates that efficient and successful learning requires each of the participants in the learning process (teachers, parents, students) to contribute in a positive and proactive manner.

## **2.4 Lesson formats**

There are many different lesson formats for teachers and students to follow, including: private (one student), semiprivate (two students), group (three-ten students) and class (ten-thirty students or more) (Agay 2004).

The one-on-one lesson has long been the preferred method of teaching in most studios, however there is little evidence to support that this is the best method of teaching (Daniel 2005). There is "no statistical evidence available showing the advantages of one system of teaching [private versus group] over the other" (Bastien 1995, p. 16). Harris and Crozier (2000) observe that "much of our teaching today is modelled on ideas developed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century" (p. 79) though they agree that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teachers and researchers are realising the benefits of group teaching as well. Agay (2004) suggests that "any method, private or group, may be used exclusively or in combination. In recent

years the idea of overlapping the private lesson with the semiprivate (paired) lesson has been gaining popularity” (p. 266).

There are advantages and disadvantages in all methods of teaching, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to decide how they can best deliver lessons to their students.

Jacobson (2006) argues that the advantages of the private lesson include:

- Increased attention from the teacher and a closer relationship with the student;
- Improved technical and musical development with detail;
- Allowing students to progress at their own rate; and
- The teacher can devote all their attention to one student.

Private teaching (one-to-one) arguably presents a greater opportunity for the development of a relationship between teacher and student, as well as a “focus on the development of refined instrumental skill” (Gaunt 2007, p. 217). Gaunt (2007) however, also found that in the private lesson, teachers tended to be less prepared and therefore the lesson lacked direction and gave little encouragement for self learning and self responsibility.

Several authors (Coats 2006, Enoch 1974, Fisher 2010) suggest that the advantages of the group lesson include:

- Increased performance opportunities;
- Improved critical listening, rhythm, musical understanding and communication;
- Inspiration and motivation; and
- Social playing.

Learning piano through private instruction is contrary to other activities that the intermediate student participates in (Jacobson 2006). Agay (2004) believes that the advantage of group study is that learning is fun. Activities such as sport, dance or band are all group activities allowing for social interaction. When students learn together, “they enjoy playing for an audience of peers, they look forward to the learning games, they make new friends, and they learn from each other” (Agay 2004, p. 267).

While Coats (2006) argues that “teaching in groups has become commonplace today” (p. 133), Agay (2004) believes that the group lesson format is still not the preferred method of teaching. Despite this, Agay (2004) states that the group lesson has a long history dating back to the 1800’s. There is evidence of class piano in Dublin in 1815, group piano in the United States of America in 1887 and class piano incorporated into public schools in the United States of America in 1913 (Agay 2004).

Bastien (1995) suggests some questions that a teacher should consider when deciding whether to teach privately or in a group format:

1. How much teaching space do you have?
2. What training have you had (private or group)?
3. Do you like working with individual children or groups of children?
4. Are you confident that you can organise interesting group activities?
5. What method of teaching do you believe will produce the best results?

As discussed previously in Section 2.3.1, there are certain characteristics and skills that piano teachers should possess, however there are also certain skills specifically required for group piano teaching. Coats (2006) believes that the group piano teacher needs to be a leader in order to increase musical and performance development, participation and group morale. She also suggests that the group piano teacher should be a competent musician, have knowledge of the subject matter, be observant, prepared, flexible, imaginative, motivational, personable, and have good time management. Bastien (1995) argues that it is the teacher, not the lesson format that will essentially make the difference in piano teaching. Indeed, if you look back at the history of piano teaching and learning, both methods (private and group) have been successful. The teacher must be confident with whatever format they have chosen and be enthusiastic towards delivering lessons.

## **2.5 Motivation levels and the intermediate piano student**

There are many reasons why students want to learn an instrument, and many reasons why they choose particular instruments. Some are inspired by a particular concert they have seen or an artist they have heard, some are encouraged to play by their parents, and some are inspired from seeing their peers learning an instrument. Whatever the reason, the motivation for starting to learn an instrument is important because it can influence the rate of progress, and in times of doubt or frustration, it can influence a student's decision to continue learning (Hallam 1998). Barry (2007) discusses this further by stating that:

While musicians acknowledge that motivation is a key element for musical success, most teachers struggle with the question of how to motivate the reluctant learner. Indeed, working with an 'unmotivated' student can be one of the greatest frustrations that teachers face (Barry 2007, p. 1).

Students need to progress as quickly as they can to feel a sense of achievement (Thompson 2002). Satisfaction and achievement act as positive reinforcement and can provide motivation for children when learning a musical instrument (Rife, Shnek, Lauby and Lapidus, 2001). “Why do some children seek the challenges of learning and persisting in the face of difficulty, while others, with seemingly equal ability and potential, avoid challenges and withdraw when faced with obstacles or difficulties?” asks Barry (2007, p. 1). It is reasonable to assume that students will have varying levels of motivation during their learning. Indeed, it is important to remember that even the most motivated and dedicated students have lapses in enjoyment and interest in learning (StGeorge 2004). Coats (2006) reminds the teacher that every student is unique and will therefore handle a challenging situation differently.

There are many possible reasons as to why student motivation and enjoyment levels drop during periods of learning piano. One reason could be due to the loneliness and isolation of this type of activity. Thompson (2002) believes that “children enjoy peer group activities therefore time spent practising is often resented” (p. 38). The piano student undertakes practice alone and there are not as many opportunities for group performances and social interaction as with the learning of other instruments, such as the violin, with which students typically perform in chamber groups or orchestras. Enoch (1974) advocates that the “group-lesson combats this loneliness, and to a certain extent compensates the pianist for the lack of communal music-making so much enjoyed by those who play orchestral instruments” (p. 1). As mentioned previously in Section 2.4



however, the private lesson remains the dominant method of teaching; hence this may affect motivation.

Macmillan (2004) believes that motivation and enjoyment are affected by many factors, including repertoire, parents, the teacher, and the student's belief in his or her own ability. Mak, Kors and Renshaw (2007) claim that "motivation often drops if students don't see the connection between what has to be learned and the personal or professional benefit of that learning" (p. 12). Coats (2006) believes that interest and enjoyment of repertoire is what motivates the student to play:

Nurturing the excitement and satisfaction of playing music is a teacher's ultimate goal. The choice of repertoire should appeal to the student and teacher. The musical concepts to be taught will be similar no matter what music is taught (Coats 2006, p. 8).

Several authors (Harris 2003, Rife *et al* 2001, St George 2006) claim that students become bored when they don't understand how to practise effectively and consequently do not progress well. StGeorge (2006) believes that it is necessary for the teacher to explain proper practice procedures to the student so that he or she doesn't feel frustrated and defeated by their attempts. Harris (2003) also stresses that teachers spend the majority of the lesson telling students *what* to practise, not *how*. Students need to be motivated to practise, and they need to realise that practice is an essential part of their progress. Coats (2006) believes that

A major priority in piano teaching is to motivate the student to practice effectively. How can we teach in a way that will enable the student to go to the practice room and know what to do? Getting the students to think critically about their playing in the lesson will help them apply similar thinking to their practice (Coats 2006, p. 24).

Helping students to understand and implement proper practice techniques enables them to progress at a faster rate (Coats 2006).

The intermediate level is considered as a difficult time as often the initial excitement of learning has worn off (Ruismäki and Tereska 2008). Uszler *et al* (2000) state that the intermediate student often has many other family and extra-curricula activities that can lead to a lack of time, energy and motivation towards the piano. On the other hand, they also believe that learning the piano can have its advantages for the intermediate student. “The teenager may regard playing a keyboard as a social asset” so that they can play popular chart hits, or old favourites for their friends and family (Uszler 2000, p. 56). Bachus *et al* (2009) give some ‘hints’ for the teacher to maintain motivation in the intermediate student:

- Reduce the workload;
- Find pieces that incorporate specific technical elements to eliminate the need for a study and a piece;
- Set smaller pieces to create a sense of satisfaction;
- Set goals – recitals, exams, school performances etc;
- Make sure the student knows what they have to practise and how; and
- Create a practice plan so they know what to do each day of the week.

While there are many factors that can influence an intermediate piano student’s motivation, it is important to find reasons to stay excited and motivated so that the student can progress to higher levels of playing. Bastien (1995) argues that this “is a

crucial point in the student's development" (p. 170). Ruismäki and Tereska (2008) suggest that once the student has reached the advanced level, there is often a renewed excitement and motivation with the repertoire, performance and study opportunities available.

### **2.5.1 Learning and motivation for teachers**

This research discusses the issues of intermediate student learning and motivation, but is it possible for a student to be motivated about their learning if their teacher has lost motivation? As teachers, "we should endeavour to maintain our enthusiasm for teaching in order to stimulate and enthuse our students to make learning an enjoyable experience for both our students and ourselves" (Thompson 2002, p. 42). According to Fisher (2010), learning and motivation for teachers should occur through professional development.

Can experienced teachers who have been working in the field for many years still benefit from professional development? Is there anything new to learn? Coats (2006) believes that "experienced teachers realise that improvement of teaching effectiveness is an ongoing process" (p. 2), and Lancaster (2007) agrees that teaching for years without continuing to learn and change is disregarding musical evolution.

There's a constant evolution happening outside the studio: in repertoire, examination expectations, student needs, social tastes, technological developments, and potential pathways students might choose to follow. Daunting as it might seem, private music teachers need to keep up with these changes (Lancaster 2007, p. 62).

Professional development for private music teachers is certainly not a new concept. In fact, music teacher associations (MTAs) have been in existence in some states in Australia since 1911. “The MTAs are made up of dedicated volunteer studio teachers who provide an important role in improving the quality and status of the profession” (Guldborg-Hoegh 2008, n.p.). Since the formation of the first MTAs, it has become more accepted and encouraged for teachers to network with each other and to discuss the problems and successes of teaching. This is evident through the professional development opportunities that the MTA’s organise such as conferences and workshops (Rostvall and West 2003).

For a school music teacher, a structured four-year or equivalent degree program is required. For the private music teacher however, there are no set guidelines, qualifications nor any accreditation process. The Music Teacher’s Association of Queensland (MTAQ) states that to be a professional member, applicants must have: a degree in music from a recognised university and have studied pedagogy subjects, have a teaching diploma, or have been teaching for five years and have student examination results to verify this (Music Teacher’s Association of Queensland 2009). Smith (2002) argues that even though associations have been set up all over the world to try and standardise the level and quality of teaching, generally these do not extend past State organisations and are therefore not effective. Thomson (1990) further states that “despite strong and continuing efforts by music teacher organizations in most states during the past sixty years, music teachers are not required to register in Australia” (p. 16). Harris and Crozier (2000) suggest that:

Monitoring your work is an important issue for all teachers, and particularly for the instrumental teacher, who may work in isolation both from other teachers and from other aspects of the pupil's learning processes. Such isolation necessitates a rigorous approach to self evaluation (Harris and Crozier 2000, p. 33).

In Bastien's text (1995), he interviews several famous piano teachers regarding teaching styles and methods. Two of the interviewees, Nelita True and Adele Marcus, give suggestions for ways that teachers can self evaluate. True (in Bastien 1995) recommends that teachers return to the piano and become students again. They should also attend master classes and workshops, read books on piano teaching and attend or listen to recordings of great performances. She argues that this would keep teachers "aware of the standards to which we must aspire" (True in Bastien 1995, p. 322). Marcus (in Bastien 1995) supports these suggestions and further advises that teachers should learn about all types of music, even the ones that aren't of particular interest to the teacher. The intermediate piano student of today will no doubt have many different musical tastes to students of a decade ago, and possibly different tastes to the teacher. "We must all be conversant with what is going on in the world around us, and we all need to broaden our horizons" (Marcus in Bastien 1995, p. 332).

Fisher (2010) agrees with True and Marcus and suggests various ways for teachers to evaluate and improve their craft. They can join a music teacher's organisation, attend master classes and workshops, read journals, magazines, books, theses, maintain their own practice and lessons, as well as perform. He also believes that it is important for teachers to seek out new methods, materials and repertoire. Klingenstein (2009) agrees

that teachers need to remain updated about new books and repertoire, as this is essential for maintaining high standards. Coats (2006) further suggests that teachers should attend conferences where they can learn and share pedagogical details with other colleagues.

The private music teaching profession gives little or no scope for promotion and extra financial rewards or bonuses. There is however, the need for professional development as it gives the teacher a greater chance of both keeping their current students and attracting new students (Drummond 2001). In fact Lancaster (2007) argues that every teacher, no matter how great or experienced they are, can benefit from professional development to increase their skills and renew their motivation.

## **2.6 Programs of study for the intermediate piano student**

Programs of study for the intermediate piano student are as diverse and varied as the students themselves, as are the approaches taken by teachers. In the last twenty years or so, there has been an “explosion of published materials available for intermediate students” that assists teachers in the design and implementation of intermediate programs (Uszler *et al* 2000, p. 95). Indeed there is a vast array of piano repertoire available at the intermediate level for students and teachers to incorporate into a program of study. There is repertoire from different time periods, in different styles, and available in a range of texts to help guide the teacher (and student). Essentially, the repertoire falls within the following broad areas:

- The repertoire itself e.g. a published edition of Bach's *Two-part Inventions* (J. Albert and Son 1976);
- Collections of work by the one composer e.g. *The Great Piano Works of Ludwig van Beethoven* (Alfred Publishing 1997);
- Collections of works from the one period e.g. *Romantic Masters* (Alfred Publishing 1996);
- Collections of works in the one genre e.g. *The Joy of Sonatinas* (e.g. Yorktown Music Press 1972);
- Guides to piano repertoire with indications as to level e.g. *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* (Hinson 2000);
- Intermediate method books e.g. Bastien's *Intermediate Piano Course* (Kjos Publishing 1981); and
- External exam syllabi at intermediate graded levels e.g. Trinity Guildhall Examinations, Grades 4 and 5 (Trinity College London 2008).

The increased availability of material at the intermediate level can cause challenges for the teacher, as there are differing views regarding the impact of this wealth of material on learning. Baker-Jordan (2003) claims that often a large selection of materials makes it more difficult for teachers to design a program of learning for any piano student.

The world of piano teaching materials has never been as rich as it currently is. The proliferation of good pedagogical materials with the inclusion of learning theories, full color graphics, artwork, and technology comprise the abundant and fertile field of materials from which teachers can choose. Since the teacher has so many choices, it may become even more difficult to choose the most appropriate and compatible way to teach each student (Baker-Jordan 2003, p. 202).

Roennfeldt (2003) disagrees with Baker-Jordan, arguing that the increased availability of materials is a positive change for the teaching profession. “One of the main advantages of working today is that information and resources are more abundant than ever before, particularly with the advent of the internet, but also with the availability of much valuable research and reference material” (Roennfeldt 2003, p. 132). Teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are now able to browse online for many of their teaching requirements, often giving them greater ability to search for items that are perhaps out of print, used, or yet to be released to the stores. An increase in published resources as well as an increase of access via the internet provide teachers with greater options for individualising each student’s program.

In terms of the actual content of student lessons, regardless of level, many authors (e.g. Agay 2004, Bastien 1995, Goddard 2002, Hall 2004, Thompson 2002) believe that different musical styles and periods should be covered, and particularly those that appeal to the student’s individual tastes. “The repertory of piano study should present the widest possible musical spectrum, incorporating not only the literature of piano, past and present, but also well chosen samplers of other appealing, lighter musical idioms the student is exposed to in everyday life” (Agay 2004, p. 432). Goddard (2002) however, suggests that it is often the case that music is chosen from the “culture and style most familiar to the teacher” (p. 251). This results in the majority of repertoire being chosen from the body of Western classical music from 1680-1900, somewhat negating the validity of jazz, popular and contemporary classical music from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Goddard 2002).



Hall (2004) and Thompson (2002) agree with Agay (2004) that students should be exposed to a variety of repertoire in different styles, allowing them to explore the full range of written music and create new experiences and interests. True, in interview with Bastien (1995), believes that students should be assigned repertoire from all periods as “one style of music enhances the understanding of another” (True in Bastien 1995, p. 320). Goddard (2002) suggests that teachers should be willing to learn the styles that interest their students and not be afraid to learn with the student. Agay (2004) agrees, stating that “piano study should not alienate and abruptly tear the young student away from everyday musical experiences and diversions” (p. 432).

Each individual student will have their own interests and dislikes, and each student will typically have their own unique program of learning designed by the teacher. Despite each student’s individuality, there are general goals of learning that each intermediate piano student might realistically share. Uszler *et al* (2000) presents a guide that offers advice for the general content areas and/or attributes that should be covered for intermediate piano students:

- Love of music as a form of human expression
- Traditional piano-playing skills
- Ability to play pieces that students, teachers and families love
- Quick and accurate learning techniques that lead to accurate and creative performances
- Knowledge of style periods, performance practice and representative pieces
- Development of reliable and pain-free technique
- Inclusion of a variety of functional skills, as dictated by the needs of each student: sight reading, harmonization and transposition, accompanying skills, musicianship (including theory, ear training listening, and memorization skills)
- Exposure to a variety of materials and styles, such as serious, jazz and New Age

- Appreciation for different genres and modes of artistic expression, especially concerning music as it relates to other arts
- Enjoyment of the act of music making in many contexts: solo, ensemble, accompanying (Uszler *et al* 2000, pp. 84-85).

Uszler *et al* (2000) however, don't suggest a program of learning that would incorporate each of these elements, nor do they outline how these elements would be taught or integrated. Pingel (2003) stresses that all musical aspects of a learning program should be taught simultaneously (holistically), to encourage the forming of a well-rounded musician. While Pingel (2003) doesn't specify which age or level her comments are targeted at, she does make the point that holistic learning is beneficial for all students.

Chappell (1999) also supports holistic learning in claiming that designing a program with a focus on one aspect of learning can cause many problems. She evidences this through a study of the importance of a whole-brain approach to piano teaching. A focus on technique can cause unnecessary physical tension as well as a weakness in the right hemisphere of the brain due to the lack of creative work. The left hemisphere of the brain is used for technical skills and note-reading, while the right hemisphere is used for improvisation, memorisation and internalisation. The brain structure and development in children requires they be provided with stimulation and activities to exercise both hemispheres of the brain, otherwise, the 'unused' connections become weak (Chappell 1999).

Zhukov (2008) claims that the development of the right and left hemispheres of the brain function is different for primary school-age boys and girls. As the males mature, the two

hemispheres function independently, allowing for more factual, rational thinking. For females, there is a strong link between the two hemispheres, allowing for greater sensitivity. “These differences suggest that teachers might need different approaches when explaining the same topics to male and female students” (Zhukov 2008, p. 165). Could it also be necessary for teachers to consider different learning programs for male and female students?

### **2.6.1 Resources or guides for the intermediate piano student and teacher**

In terms of published guides for the teacher and/or student, there are a number of texts that synthesise and analyse piano repertoire, providing directions and/or indications as to possible programs of learning. Table 2.1 below summarises each of these texts, in terms of author, year of publication, title, focus of text, method of determining grade or level of the repertoire, and in the final rows, an analysis of the relevance to the intermediate piano student. Two of the texts *Intermediate piano repertoire* by Albergo and Alexander (2000) and *The pianist’s guide to standard performance and teaching literature* by Magrath (1995), are specifically written for the intermediate student and teacher, however the other texts included cover a much larger and broader range of repertoire and learning levels.

Table 2.1 Overview of guides to piano literature

<b>Author(s)</b>	Albergo and Alexander	Hinson	Magrath
<b>Year</b>	2000	2000	1995
<b>Title</b>	Intermediate piano repertoire: a guide for teaching (4 <sup>th</sup> edn)	Guide to the pianist's repertoire (3 <sup>rd</sup> edn)	The pianist's guide to standard teaching and performance literature
<b>Focus</b>	Summarises the repertoire written for the intermediate piano student organised by historical period (baroque, classical, romantic, contemporary) and then alphabetically	Summarises the repertoire written for solo piano organised alphabetically	Summarises the repertoire written for the intermediate piano student (solo piano) organised by historical period (baroque, classical, romantic, 20 <sup>th</sup> century) and then alphabetically
<b>Level</b>	E (Early Intermediate), I (Intermediate) A (Advanced Intermediate to Advanced)	Easy, Int (Intermediate), M-D (Moderately Difficult), D (Difficult)	Levels 1-10 (Beginning to Early-Advanced Levels)
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses solely on the intermediate piano student</li> <li>• Layout is clear and easy to follow</li> <li>• Good stylistic range and quantity of examples</li> <li>• Grading of material is easy to follow</li> <li>• Contains some biographical/historical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Layout is clear and easy to follow</li> <li>• Good stylistic range and quantity of examples</li> <li>• Grading of material is easy to follow</li> <li>• Contains some biographical/historical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses solely on the intermediate piano student</li> <li>• Layout is clear and easy to follow</li> <li>• Good stylistic range and quantity of examples</li> <li>• Grading of material is easy to follow</li> <li>• Contains some biographical/historical information</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of the featured editions contain the same pieces</li> <li>• Often unclear whether composer or editor has compiled the edition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't focus solely on intermediate piano student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initially unclear whether guide was intended solely for the intermediate student</li> </ul>

Table 2.1 Overview of guides to piano literature (continued)

Author(s)	Friskin and Freundlich	Hutcheson and Ganz	Kirby	Kern and Titus
Year	1973	1969	1966	1954
Title	Music for the piano: a handbook of concert and teaching material from 1580 to 1952 (2 <sup>nd</sup> edn)	The literature of the piano: a guide for amateur and student (3 <sup>rd</sup> edn)	A short history of keyboard music	The teacher's guidebook to piano literature: a recommended listing of graded repertoire for elementary, intermediate and lower advanced students
Focus	Summarises the repertoire written for solo piano organised historically (early keyboard music, Haydn-early 20 <sup>th</sup> century, 20 <sup>th</sup> century) and then geographically	Discusses the repertoire written for solo piano organised by composer name or a geographic location	Discusses the repertoire written for solo piano organised historically	Summarises the repertoire written for solo piano organised by level and then alphabetically
Level	Terms applied include "Easy", "Not Easy", "Difficult", "Not difficult"	No levels indicated.	No levels indicated.	Lower Elementary (Grades I and II), Upper Elementary (Grades III and IV), Intermediate (Grades V and VI), Lower Advanced (Grades VII and VIII)
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good stylistic range and quantity of examples</li> <li>• Contains some biographical/historical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contains extensive biographical/historical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contains extensive biographical/historical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Layout is clear and easy to follow</li> <li>• Good stylistic range and quantity of examples</li> <li>• Grading of material is easy to follow</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't focus solely on the intermediate piano student</li> <li>• Only some works are graded in terms of level/difficulty</li> <li>• Method of grading is vague and hard to follow</li> <li>• Currency of publication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't focus solely on the intermediate piano student</li> <li>• No grading of material</li> <li>• More of a historical text than a guide</li> <li>• Currency of publication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't focus solely on the intermediate piano student</li> <li>• No grading of material</li> <li>• More of a historical text than a guide</li> <li>• Currency of publication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't focus solely on the intermediate piano student</li> <li>• Currency of publication</li> </ul>

Table 2.1 reveals that some of the texts (Albergo and Alexander 2000, Hinson 2000, Kern and Titus 1954, Magrath 1995) certainly provide the teacher and student with a guide in terms of choosing repertoire and/or designing a learning program. While the Kern and Titus (1954) text is interesting and useful, it is now outdated and has been replaced by new texts featuring more of the 20<sup>th</sup> century repertoire. The three current texts (Albergo and Alexander 2000, Hinson 2000 and Magrath 1995) are all excellent guides with many positive aspects. Hinson (2000) presents a guide to the full suite of piano repertoire levels, however Albergo and Alexander (2000) and Magrath (1995) both focus solely on the intermediate level. The Magrath (2000) guide is a more comprehensive and easy-to-follow guide than that of Albergo and Alexander (2000). Magrath (2000) uses ten grades/levels of repertoire that give teachers and students further guidance throughout the entire intermediate learning process – from the early intermediate to the advanced intermediate levels.

### **2.6.2 Intermediate method books**

The variety and number of beginner method books for teachers, parents and students to choose from is considerable. In fact, some companies publish numerous different series (e.g. Alfred publishes *Basic Piano Course* and *Premier Piano*) and most have several supporting and supplementary materials that are coordinated to the core method book. At the intermediate level however, there are not as many method books available that focus on this specific level. Some authors in fact argue that method books should not be used for the intermediate student, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why there are not as many published. For example, Chappell (1999) believes that at the intermediate level,

method books don't encourage students to look for horizontal lines and phrases in the music, and instead to listen and play 'note at a time.' Rostvall and West (2003) suggest that problems occur when teachers use the method books as their only source of repertoire and information, leaving little room for variance or imagination. Despite this, there is a selection of method books available at the intermediate level although little guidance on what programs teachers should follow.

Baker-Jordan (2003), along with Bastien (1995) and Uszler *et al* (2000) evaluate a selection of method books. In all three texts however, the intermediate student is not discussed in detail, for example, in Baker-Jordan's text (2003), only methods for the first two years of the beginner stage are reviewed. She gives a rationale for neglecting to detail the needs of the intermediate student, and indeed even the late beginner student by arguing that after the first two years the student or teacher may need a change of pace of materials, that they may like to branch out and use standard teaching materials. She doesn't however, give any information or support regarding what method or program of learning to use and therefore no recommendations are made for the intermediate teacher or student.

Bastien (1995) has a chapter dedicated to programs of study for the intermediate piano student, however he focuses heavily on collections of repertoire (anthologies), rather than method books *per se*. Bastien (1995) does however recommend his own method book series, claiming, "for teachers who would like to use an intermediate method, the *Intermediate Piano Course* by James and Jane Smisor Bastien is a well written series" (p.

170). He makes no mention of other methods suitable for the intermediate student and instead refers the reader to a previous chapter on beginning methods, stating that the teacher should assign the next level up. It is interesting that, having commented on a number of method books at the beginner level, Bastien (1995) does not include any method books (other than his own) in his chapter on programs of study for the intermediate student. Hence, he promotes his own method but then refers primarily to repertoire collections. It is difficult to resolve this conflict other than to assume he is supportive of his own text as well as repertoire collections. At the same time, he implies that method texts at the intermediate level are in fact relevant to the contemporary teacher.

Of the three texts, Uszler *et al* (2000) provide the most detail of intermediate method books, although they stress that their list is “selective rather than inclusive and intended to indicate just a few possible choices for study in a method at the intermediate level” (p. 95). The content of some methods are listed in detail, while others are simply mentioned and the reader is referred to a previous chapter on beginning methods for further specifics of the method. Overall, the Uszler *et al* (2000) text provides the most helpful guide for teachers seeking intermediate method books, with a range of methods listed as well as an “array of supporting materials, coordinated to the basic text” (p. 95). There is however, no critical review of each method.

Below, Table 2.2 profiles the method books intended for the intermediate student as featured in the Baker-Jordan (2003), Bastien (1995) and Uszler *et al* (2000) texts. The



table includes the skills content of each method as well as comments and reviews from the Uszler *et al* (2000) text: *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher*. This text provided the most comprehensive list and summary of methods intended for the intermediate student than any other texts, hence its sole inclusion in the table as the point of critical analysis.

Table 2.2 Intermediate method books

Year of release	Method Name	Authors	Publishing Company	Content	IPS Levels and year published (where relevant)	Critical reviews from <i>The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher</i> by Uszler, Gordon and Smith (2000)
1936	John Thompson's Modern Course for the Piano	John Thompson	Willis Music Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modern Course Book</li> </ul>	Levels 3 and 4	Not reviewed.
1981	Alfred's Basic Piano Library	Willard A. Palmer, Morton Manus, Amanda Vick Lethco	Alfred Publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson</li> <li>Recital</li> <li>Theory</li> <li>Ear Training</li> </ul>	Levels 3, 4 (1982), 5 (1984) and 6 (1986)	"The technical and musical difficulties of the repertoire are well sequenced...at higher levels the music in the lesson books becomes more predictable (in its phrase shapes, textures, ranges, and so on), especially after the introduction of triads" (p. 33).
1982/3	Intermediate Piano Course	James and Jane Bastien	Kjos Publishing Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repertoire</li> <li>Technic</li> <li>Theory</li> <li>Multi-key solos</li> </ul>	Levels 1, 2 and 3	"This is a useful collection, offering a good variety, but not a large number, of pieces in limited keys, and in a multitude of stylistic types...selections from the standard teaching repertoire are just that: well known, and easily available elsewhere" (p. 96).
1991	The Well Prepared Pianist, Volume 2	Jane N. Tan	The Willis Music Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Well Prepared Pianist</li> </ul>	Volume 2: A Guidebook for Teachers of Elementary Student	"Although described as being geared for elementary students, these books cover music that in other methods might be called late elementary or early intermediate. The Well Prepared Pianist has a unique organization, with a dual purpose: to build a complete repertoire of the gestures of established piano technique and to facilitate the aural and mental transfer of music from the printed page to the physical patterns of the keyboard" (p. 101).
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solo Repertoire and Reading Preliminaries</li> </ul>	Level II-A, Volumes 1-2; Level II-B, Volumes 1-2	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recital Etudes and Fingers Plus</li> </ul>	Levels II-A and II-B	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scales, Chords and Cadences</li> </ul>	Levels II-A and II-B	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scales for Advancing Pianists</li> </ul>		
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-a-day Miniatures</li> </ul>	Levels II-A and II-B	

Table 2.2 Intermediate method books (continued)

Year of release	Method Name	Authors	Publishing Company	Content	IPS Levels and year published (where relevant)	Critical reviews from <i>The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher</i> by Uszler, Gordon and Smith (2000)
1993	Piano Adventures	Nancy and Randall Faber	FJH Music Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Theory</li> <li>Performance</li> <li>Technique and Artistry</li> <li>Popular Repertoire</li> </ul>	Levels 4 (1995) and 5 (1997)	“There is a wide variety of style and texture in every book, even at the outset, because of the numerous suggestions to extend or vary what is on the page, or by use of creative introductions and endings” (p. 25).
1994	Celebration Series		Frederick Harris Music Company	• Piano Repertoire Albums	Introductory Level, Levels 1-10	“It presents an unusually comprehensive intermediate method for serious-minded teachers and students. For students with ample practice time and an interest in traditional piano study, these books will be an outstanding choice” (p. 97).
				• Piano Studies Albums	Levels 1-10	
				• Student Guides	Levels 1-8	
				• Recordings	Introductory Level, Levels 1-10	
1996	First Impressions – An Intermediate Piano Method	M’Lou Dietzer	Alfred Publishing	• Theory Book with Music/Study Guide Insert	Volume A	“The method makes a thorough presentation of the elements of music theory related to intermediate repertoire...this series will be a good option for teachers with a strong interest in music theory and analytical understanding as the driving force in piano study” (p. 98).
				• Music Book with Study Guide Insert	Volumes B, C	
				• Music Book with Study Guide Insert	Volumes 1-6	
				• Theory Books	Volumes A-C Volumes 1-6	
				• Recordings	Volumes A-C Volumes 1-6	

Table 2.2 Intermediate method books (continued)

Year of release	Method Name	Authors	Publishing Company	Content	IPS Levels and year published (where relevant)	Critical reviews from <i>The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher</i> by Uszler, Gordon and Smith (2000)
1996	Hal Leonard Student Piano Library	Barbara Kreader, Fred Kern, Phillip Keveren	Hal Leonard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson</li> <li>• Practice Games</li> <li>• Technique</li> <li>• Solos</li> <li>• Theory Workbook</li> </ul>	Levels 4 (1997) and 5 (1998)	“The Piano Practice Games are the most inventive of the books. They coordinate theory, technique, and creative activities that are purposeful and imaginative. The trump card of this method, however, is in the way it uses technology (via CDs and MIDI accompaniments) to stimulate and support discovery learning as well as more prosaic drill” (p. 28).
1997	Comprehensive Piano Library	Walter and Carol Noona	Heritage Music Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piano Lessons</li> <li>• Playing with Sound</li> <li>• The Complete Performer</li> <li>• General Midi Discs and CDs</li> <li>• Comprehensive Keyboard Skills</li> </ul>	Levels 3 and 4	“All five intermediate books at each level of this method present standard material with some unusual touches. There is an emphasis on musical understanding and basic performing analysis throughout. Although the selection of works by composers of the past is conservative, this collection contains an appealing selection of international folk songs in charming traditional arrangements” (p. 99).
2005	Premier Piano Course	Dennis Alexander, Gayle Kowalchyk, E.L. Lancaster, Victoria McArthur, Martha Mier	Alfred Publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson</li> <li>• Theory</li> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• At-home</li> </ul>	Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 (not all levels yet available)	Not reviewed given published later.

Table 2.2 lists ten method books that are intended for use by the intermediate piano student and teacher. Of these, seven are extensions of beginner methods, while three of the methods are new series, written specifically for the intermediate student. There is a range of method books available for use at the intermediate level, however there is very little information to help guide the teacher, student and parent in the choice of selecting one of these methods. While there are many texts that review method books for beginner students, there is only one that does so in relation to the intermediate level method books: *The well-tempered keyboard teacher*, Uszler *et al* (2000). There is also a lack of consensus as to whether method books should be used at this level, which may create difficulty for some teachers who prefer guidance in designing learning programs, or alternatively, opportunity for those who prefer an idiosyncratic approach to program design.

### **2.6.3 External examinations and the intermediate piano student**

Internationally, there are many different organisations that specialise in examining a range of musical instruments, styles and levels. Practical music examinations have been in existence for over a century in Australia, and today, in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, “six organisations or boards provide full courses of graded music examinations” (Guldborg-Hoegh 2008, n.p.). These are:

- Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB);
- Australian and New Zealand Cultural Arts (ANZCA);

- Trinity Guildhall Examinations (TGE)<sup>1</sup>;
- Australian Guild of Music and Speech (AGMS);
- St Cecilia's School of Music (SCSM); and
- Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM).

Each examining board offers practical exams for the early stages of learning right through to exams for accomplished performers. In terms of the intermediate student, the majority of the examining bodies have syllabi that specify which grades are appropriate, however other syllabi are somewhat vague, with or little no guidance regarding beginner, intermediate or advanced levels.

Trinity Guildhall Examinations (Trinity College London) was the first organisation to examine in Australia with examiners being sent out from England on long voyages dating back to the 1880s. The Australian Music Examination Board however, was the first examining body established in Australia (1887) and is still the most widely used Australian examining system (Guldborg-Hoegh 2008). In terms of the international context, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music claims that it is “the most popular instrumental examination graded system used in the U.K. and other regions worldwide” (Davidson and Scutt 1999, p. 81). Most of these organisations originally began by only examining classical music, however due to the changes in cultural patterns and the impact of popular music styles, the majority now examine contemporary music as well. In fact, the Australian and New Zealand Cultural Arts was established in 1983 “in

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<sup>1</sup> TGE is part of a larger structure; Trinity College London is the overall examining body for music, speech and drama and dance.

response to a growing need amongst private music teachers for an examination system catering for a greater diversity of musical styles” (Guldborg-Hoegh 2008).

The music examination system is a strong one. Harris and Crozier (2000) argue that in today’s society, there is pressure and importance placed on examinations. Pingel (2003) agrees, stating “every year, millions of candidates across the globe sit for examinations with one or more of the recognised examining bodies” (p. 117). Murray (2010) however, writes “seven out of every eight children who sit The Royal Schools of Music Grade One piano exam give up before they reach Grade Seven” (p. 57). This is not necessarily a reflection on the examination process or a particular examining body, but on the nature of learning itself. Authors argue both advantages and disadvantages of enrolling students in external examinations. Goddard (2002) believes that often students are pressured to sit examinations as “success is usually judged by the number of examination certificates amassed” (p. 243). Davidson and Scutt (1999) agree that there is often pressure on students to perform well because of both the student and teacher’s reputation. They believe that “the examination should be undertaken for the learner’s personal benefit,” not for the benefit of the teacher or the parents (p. 80).

Coats (2006), Davidson and Scutt (1999) and Pingel (2003) broadly agree that the advantages of external exams are:

- Motivation;
- Development of a range of musical skills;
- Sense of achievement;

- Resources for lessons;
- Feedback from an examiner; and
- A level of playing.

It is interesting to note that the authors above have listed motivation as an advantage of examinations. In terms of the intermediate student, do we know what impact exams have on their motivation? Do they keep a student engaged in learning? What evidence is there regarding this area? Or, are teachers and parents assuming that examinations are motivating for students, and therefore encouraging the student to undertake an exam?

The disadvantages, as broadly agreed by Davidson and Scutt (1999), Pingel (2003) and Roennfeldt (2003) are:

- Stress;
- Anxiety; and
- Musical malnutrition.

Harris and Crozier (2000) agree with these concerns and suggest that one of the most common problems “occurs when pupils are fed a diet of exam material to the exclusion of anything else” (p. 111). Despite arguing that external examinations can cause “musical malnutrition” in students, Pingel (2003) also argues that exam syllabi are not designed to teach all aspects of music that should be taught to the student; she claims that is the role of the teacher. Coats (2006) further states that exam programs “can serve as models for



developing one's own curriculum, or they may provide a plan of study that would satisfy a teacher's needs for her students" (pp. 64-65).

Each of the examining bodies tests a variety of skills and areas during the practical test, including scales and technical work, repertoire, aural skills and sight reading. Table 2.3 presents a comparison of each of the six major examining bodies used within Australia, their examination styles and musical areas covered, as well as their grades or levels that are appropriate for the intermediate student.

Table 2.3 External examination bodies used within Australia

<b>Exam Board</b>	<b>Year introduced in Australia</b>	<b>Geographical areas covered</b>	<b>Examination styles currently offered</b>	<b>Grades</b>	<b>Musical areas covered (practical examinations)</b>	<b>Intermediate stage</b>
TGE	1880's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia and Oceania</li> <li>• Asia</li> <li>• Europe</li> <li>• Middle East</li> <li>• Africa</li> <li>• North/Central/South America</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piano</li> <li>• Keyboard</li> <li>• Rockschoool – Popular Piano</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial-Grade 3</li> <li>• Grades 4-8</li> <li>• Diplomas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Work</li> <li>• Repertoire</li> <li>• Sight Reading</li> <li>• Aural Tests</li> <li>• Musical Knowledge</li> <li>• Improvisation</li> </ul>	Grades 4 and 5
ABRSM	1895	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australasia</li> <li>• South/Pacific Asia</li> <li>• Europe</li> <li>• Middle East</li> <li>• Africa</li> <li>• North America</li> <li>• The Americas: Continental/Islands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piano</li> <li>• Jazz Piano</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prep Test</li> <li>• Grades 1-8</li> <li>• Diplomas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Work</li> <li>• Repertoire</li> <li>• Aural Tests</li> <li>• Sight Reading</li> </ul>	Grades 4 and 5
AMEB	1918	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piano</li> <li>• Piano for Leisure</li> <li>• Contemporary Popular Music (Keyboard)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level 1 (Preliminary-Grade 4)</li> <li>• Level 2 (Grade 5-8)</li> <li>• Level 3 (Diplomas)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Work</li> <li>• Repertoire</li> <li>• Aural Tests</li> <li>• General Knowledge</li> <li>• Sight Reading</li> </ul>	Grades 5-8 (Level 2)

Table 2.3 External examination bodies used within Australia (continued)

<b>Exam Board</b>	<b>Year introduced in Australia</b>	<b>Geographical areas covered</b>	<b>Examination Styles</b>	<b>Grades</b>	<b>Musical areas covered (practical examinations)</b>	<b>Intermediate stage</b>
AGMS	1969	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia</li> <li>• New Zealand</li> <li>• Malaysia</li> <li>• Singapore</li> <li>• Brunei</li> <li>• Indonesia</li> <li>• China</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional Classical Piano</li> <li>• Light Classical Piano</li> <li>• Contemporary Piano</li> <li>• Piano and Keyboard Contemporary</li> <li>• Jazz and Blues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steps 1-3</li> <li>• Grades 1-8</li> <li>• Diplomas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Work</li> <li>• Repertoire</li> <li>• Sight Reading</li> <li>• Ear Tests</li> <li>• General Knowledge</li> </ul>	Not specified
St. Cecilia	1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia</li> <li>• New Zealand</li> <li>• Hong Kong</li> <li>• Malaysia</li> <li>• Indonesia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classical Piano</li> <li>• Modern Piano/Jazz</li> <li>• Electronic Keyboard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginner, Junior, Preliminary</li> <li>• Grades 1-8</li> <li>• Diplomas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scales</li> <li>• Exercises or Musicianship</li> <li>• General Knowledge</li> <li>• Ear Tests</li> <li>• Repertoire</li> </ul>	Grades 3, 4 and 5
ANZCA	1983	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia</li> <li>• New Zealand</li> <li>• Indonesia</li> <li>• Thailand</li> <li>• Malaysia</li> <li>• Hong Kong</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classical Pianoforte</li> <li>• Modern Pianoforte</li> <li>• Piano for all occasions</li> <li>• Pianoforte/Keyboard</li> <li>• Digital Keyboard – Piano</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory, Preparatory, Preliminary</li> <li>• Grades 1-8</li> <li>• Diplomas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Work</li> <li>• Repertoire</li> <li>• Aural Tests</li> <li>• General Knowledge</li> <li>• Sight Reading</li> </ul>	Grades 4 and 5

As is indicated above in Table 2.3, five out of the six examining bodies are specific as to which levels correspond to the intermediate level of learning. Three of the examining bodies (TGE, ABRSM and ANZCA) agree that grades four and five are appropriate for the intermediate student, and St Cecilia also include grade three for the intermediate student. AMEB however suggest grades five to eight and AGMS don't specify any grades at all. From this, it can be assumed that grades four and five are appropriate for the intermediate student, although some examining bodies choose to include higher or lower grades in this level.

## **2.7 Extant research studies: the influence of learning material on motivation**

There are currently no published studies that focus on repertoire and motivation at the intermediate stage of learning as applied to the piano student. There are however some extant studies that focus on the impact of repertoire on motivation at other piano learning levels or with other instruments (e.g. Renwick and McPherson 2002, Roennfeldt 2003). There are also a number of studies that focus on motivating the student in both piano and other instruments (Barry 2007, Park 2006, StGeorge 2004, Thompson 2002) as well as studies that focus on the intermediate student, but as applied to other instruments (e.g. Berry 2004).

Roennfeldt (2003) conducted a study on factors that influence tertiary piano students' repertoire choices. He found that 90% of students interviewed found the influence of their teacher to be important. "Today's students are predominantly influenced by external factors (teacher, examinations, peer group, public performances etc) rather than their own preferences when choosing repertoire" (Roennfeldt 2003, p. 126). While Roennfeldt's (2003) study shows that

external factors have influenced the selection of repertoire for tertiary students, his results don't reveal whether the student motivation levels were affected by repertoire choices.

Renwick and McPherson's (2002) case study of a young clarinettist found that she practised self-selected repertoire as opposed to teacher-assigned repertoire for longer amounts of time and engaged in "strategies that are typical at more advanced stages of development" (p. 173). Renwick and McPherson's (2002) case study, while small, demonstrates that repertoire has an effect on motivation and therefore an effect on practice and learning.

StGeorge (2004) and Thompson (2002) both discuss the different factors that can influence motivation during learning including repertoire, practice, and external factors such as school, family and peers. While both of these authors offer some guidance to help teachers motivate their students, Barry (2007) also gives survey and study results to back up her suggestions. While her research isn't directed at a particular level of learning, she believes that "motivation theory is relevant to all age levels" (Barry 2007, p. 3). Of the students that lost motivation and interest, and discontinued their music lessons, Barry (2007) also found a prevalence of students aged between eleven and twelve. Barry (2007) found that enjoyment was a key factor in motivation. Student's responded well to choice (however limited) as well as "diverse musical experiences" (Barry 2007, p. 7).

Park (2006) conducted research with 180 Korean instrumental students (piano, strings, winds, percussion) between the ages of ten and thirteen and found that "success and failure in instrumental learning are related to motivation, quantity of practice, quality of practice,

enjoyment and social environments” (p. 85). Her findings demonstrated that the longer students had been learning and the higher their level, the more important motivation was. Additionally, if the students were intending to be professional musicians, motivation was the most important factor for them. These studies demonstrate the complexity of learning, with many factors affecting motivation.

Berry (2004) conducted a study of intermediate cello repertoire, with a focus on Australian repertoire. Her study investigated “intrinsic motivation by questioning students and their teachers about which aspects of music repertoire are most likely to inspire students to practise more and strive for excellence” (Berry 2003, p. 25). She found that there were four aspects of music that intermediate students found most motivating; pieces which have a folk feel e.g. Irish or Celtic, pieces they’ve heard other students play, pieces written for cello and piano, and music which is fast and lively. The students also indicated that the top motivators for increasing their practice time were having a public performance or exam imminent and studying music that the students like.

## **2.8 Summary**

As the current chapter has shown, the intermediate stage is critical in the development of instrumental learning. There are several participants involved in the learning process; including student, teacher and parent, each of great importance. Within the learning process, there are many decisions to be made in regards to lesson formats (private lesson, group lesson, a combination etc) and programs of learning (method books, external examination syllabi, literature guides).

While the extant research studies are helpful for background research and methodology, they are not specific to the issues of motivation and repertoire as pertaining to the intermediate piano student. It is therefore important to conduct further research, focusing on the intermediate piano student and the effect of repertoire on motivation.

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction and directions from the literature**

Following a review of the literature, it is evident that the intermediate stage of learning piano is considered important, if not critical, for motivating and encouraging students to advance to higher levels of playing (e.g. Hallam 1998). Intermediate piano students are often faced with many new challenges, both musically and personally during this stage, so there is a need for research and support directed towards teachers and students. While there is some research in relation to the intermediate student (e.g. Berry 2004), and some in relation to repertoire and motivation (e.g. Roennfeldt 2003, Renwick and McPherson 2002), there are no studies focused on the intermediate piano student and the influence of learning material on motivation; therefore resulting in a gap in the literature and evidencing the need for this research to be conducted.

### **3.2 Sampling perceptions**

In order to respond to the research aims, which require exploring the perceptions of key internal (aim one) and external (aim two) stakeholders relevant to the intermediate piano student lesson, a sampling strategy needs to be developed. The relevant stakeholders therefore need to be determined. The participants either directly or indirectly involved in the intermediate piano student learning process include 1) the lesson participants (i.e. students, teachers and parents), 2) method book authors, 3) external exam bodies, 4) composers of contemporary literature for the piano, and 5) authors of piano literature guides. Each of these participants plays a particular and important role in the intermediate student's learning, and will impact differently on the student's experience during this stage of learning. The lesson participants (students, teachers and parents)



are directly involved in the learning process while the method book authors, external exam bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors are indirectly involved. With the exception of contemporary composers, Chapter Two introduced each of the external stakeholders by reviewing their learning programs and strategies of learning.

Further, the relevant stakeholders can be expanded, given that the ‘lesson participants’ group can be split into further sub-categories, adding to the list of possible participants. For example, in addition to current lesson participants there are also those students (and teachers/parents) that have either moved through this stage to more advanced levels or they may have ceased learning. This group would also potentially offer insights into the process of learning and how learning material impacts on motivation.

Each of these groups is relevant in relation to the intermediate piano student learning process, but is it viable, or even necessary to gather information and opinions from each of the stakeholder groups? Punch (2009) states it is not possible to “study everyone everywhere doing everything. Sampling decisions are required not only about which people to interview or which events to observe, but also about settings and processes” (p. 162). Research begins with an idea which is then developed into a question or series of questions to identify and condense the research. A methodology is then established that will best answer the research question/s (Sapsford, 1999). It is important however to keep in mind the scope of the project, the timeframe, costs and logistics. Therefore, decisions need to be made about who is to be sought for feedback, why they are required and how they should be accessed.

As a starting point, it was necessary to make final decisions about who and why. The advantages and disadvantages of gathering data from each of the potential groups briefly discussed above, are outlined below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Potential groups to sample perceptions regarding learning material as an influence on motivation

<b>Group</b>		<b>Potential Advantages</b>	<b>Potential Disadvantages</b>
Students	Current Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly engaged in learning procedures</li> <li>• Currency of views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not articulate their thoughts well</li> <li>• Parents may not consent to participation</li> <li>• Access relies on support of the teacher</li> <li>• Limited time to reflect on learning given it is current</li> </ul>
	Current but at advanced stage (moved through intermediate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a reflective perspective on what was taught in lessons</li> <li>• Benefit of hindsight</li> <li>• Able to compare stages of learning given now in more advanced level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have forgotten details</li> <li>• Parents may not consent to participation</li> <li>• Difficulty of identifying these students and access</li> </ul>
	Past (ceased practice as a musician)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a reflective perspective on what was taught in lessons</li> <li>• Benefit of hindsight</li> <li>• May be able to compare stages of learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have forgotten details</li> <li>• May be judgemental of teachers personality rather than their teaching style</li> <li>• Difficult to locate</li> </ul>
	Past (continued practice as a musician)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a reflective perspective on what was taught in lessons</li> <li>• Benefit of hindsight</li> <li>• May be able to compare stages of learning</li> <li>• Benefit of industry knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have forgotten details</li> <li>• Difficulty to locate</li> <li>• May have had a different learning experience due to current 'professional' status</li> </ul>
Teachers	Currently teaching at Intermediate level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs or administers the learning programs</li> <li>• Generally understand the capabilities and limitations of students</li> <li>• Currently engaged with the repertoire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential subjectivity of response</li> <li>• Possible inexperience</li> </ul>
Teachers	Past (no longer teaching)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed learning programs</li> <li>• Have a reflective perspective on what was taught in lesson</li> <li>• Benefit of hindsight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information may be outdated</li> <li>• May have forgotten details</li> <li>• Difficult to locate</li> </ul>

Table 3.1 Potential groups to sample perceptions regarding learning material as an influence on motivation (continued)

Group		Potential Advantages	Potential Disadvantages
Parents	Current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May actively view what their child learns each week</li> <li>• May be aware of child's enthusiasm for learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not attend lessons to know what the teacher has taught</li> <li>• May not be aware of child's enthusiasm or otherwise for learning</li> <li>• May not feel they have the musical knowledge or vocabulary to comment</li> </ul>
	Past (child continued learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit of hindsight</li> <li>• May have been aware of their child's learning</li> <li>• Have seen progress through different learning stages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not have been aware of their child's learning</li> <li>• May not feel they have the musical knowledge or vocabulary to comment</li> <li>• Difficult to locate</li> </ul>
	Past (child stopped learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit of hindsight</li> <li>• May have been aware of their child's learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not have been aware of their child's learning</li> <li>• May not feel they have the musical knowledge or vocabulary to comment</li> <li>• Difficult to locate</li> </ul>
Authors of Method Books		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design learning material used for lessons</li> <li>• May have research and data relevant to an intermediate student</li> <li>• May have feedback on successful learning material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers and students may not use method books in their lessons</li> <li>• Quantity of methods</li> <li>• May be difficult to contact</li> <li>• Potential bias towards own method</li> </ul>
External Exam Bodies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design learning programs used for lessons</li> <li>• View a large number of intermediate students through examination</li> <li>• May have research that defines an intermediate student</li> <li>• May have feedback from teachers at events on successful learning material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers and students may not use exam syllabi as guides</li> <li>• Quantity of examining bodies</li> <li>• May be difficult to contact</li> <li>• May be biased towards own syllabi</li> </ul>
Composers of Contemporary Literature		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design learning material used for lessons</li> <li>• May have research relevant to an intermediate student</li> <li>• May have feedback on successful learning strategies of their repertoire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty in determining how many composers write for this level</li> <li>• May be difficult to contact</li> <li>• May be biased towards own repertoire</li> </ul>
Authors of Piano Literature Guides		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design repertoire program used for lessons</li> <li>• May have research relevant to an intermediate student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be difficult to contact</li> <li>• May be biased towards own publication</li> </ul>

As is revealed above in Table 3.1, there is a range of potential groups relevant to the study. In considering the various groups for sampling perceptions, a decision was made to focus on current students and teachers. They are both directly involved in the learning process and could provide up-to-date information on motivation and learning material. It was decided not to include parents as many are not involved in their child's lessons or they may not have the musical background to give details of the repertoire studied. In addition, method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors were also included as they design and provide learning material for the intermediate student. The addition of these four stakeholders will also broaden the perspective of the results.

### **3.3 Data gathering methods**

There were many different methods for gathering data from the chosen samples that could be utilised; these included the live interview, phone interview, posted questionnaire, internet survey etc. As stated by Yin (2009), each method has “peculiar advantages and disadvantages” (p. 2). Live interviews potentially have more options of types of questions and length of interview. Telephone interviews have the advantage of speed of information, whereas posted questionnaires give the respondent time to give “thoughtful answers, to look up records, or to consult with others” (Fowler 2002, p. 73). Table 3.2 highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods.

Table 3.2 Analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of potential data gathering methods from  
key stakeholders

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Email Questionnaire (Word Document)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed of access</li> <li>• Allows participant to complete survey in own time</li> <li>• Allows participant to think about questions or find further information if required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May skip questions</li> <li>• May misunderstand questions</li> <li>• It is difficult to request added detail for unclear answers</li> <li>• Technical problems</li> </ul>
Internet Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed of access</li> <li>• Allows participant to complete survey in own time</li> <li>• Allows participant to think about questions or find further information if required</li> <li>• Professional appearance</li> <li>• Convenience of data analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May skip questions</li> <li>• May misunderstand questions</li> <li>• It is impossible to request added detail for unclear answers (due to anonymity)</li> <li>• Technical problems</li> <li>• Set-up costs/time</li> </ul>
Live Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal – builds rapport with the participant</li> <li>• Information is obtained immediately</li> <li>• Further questions can be asked if participants answers are not sufficient</li> <li>• Interviewer can see how the participant is reacting to each question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewee may be nervous</li> <li>• Logistics involved</li> <li>• May be hard to access</li> <li>• Transcribing time</li> </ul>
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively personal – builds rapport with the participants</li> <li>• Information is obtained immediately</li> <li>• Further questions can be asked if participants answers are not sufficient</li> <li>• Interview can see how the participant is reacting to each question</li> <li>• Participants may be reminded or prompted for answers from the other participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewee may be nervous</li> <li>• Logistics involved</li> <li>• May be hard to access</li> <li>• Transcribing time</li> <li>• Confidentiality can't be assured</li> <li>• Participants may be embarrassed/self-conscious of answering in front of other participants</li> </ul>
Posted Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows participant to complete survey in own time</li> <li>• Allows participant to think about questions or find further information if required</li> <li>• Allows participant to know the context of each question by viewing the entire questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May skip questions</li> <li>• May misunderstand questions</li> <li>• It is difficult to request added detail for unclear answers</li> <li>• Mail can be slow/misplaced/lost</li> <li>• Costs</li> </ul>
Telephone Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-personal – rapport can be built with participant</li> <li>• Information is obtained immediately</li> <li>• Further questions can be asked if participants answers are not sufficient</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs</li> <li>• Risks in recording information</li> <li>• Transcribing time</li> </ul>

While each method of data gathering considered above in Table 3.2 has its advantages and disadvantages, it was decided that an interview would be the best initial method for gathering data from the chosen sample groups. The interview can take many different forms: individual face-to-face, group face-to-face or telephone interviews (Punch, 2009). For this research it was decided to conduct live interviews individually face-to-face due to the personal rapport that could be built with the participant, the immediacy of information and the ability to ask further questions. In fact, “it is regarded by researchers as one of the best ways to obtain detailed data” (Frey and Oishi 1995, p. 4). Punch (2009) agrees, by stating “the interview is the most prominent data collection tool in qualitative research. It is a very good way of accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is also one of the most powerful ways of understanding others” (p. 144).

While the live interview was chosen as the preferred method of exploring perceptions, previous research (Bowden 2008) did indicate that gaining access to private music teachers for live interviews could prove difficult. Therefore, given the intention of this study was to explore a much larger sample group, it was also decided to develop an online internet survey in order to access teachers from other English speaking countries, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. According to Schonlau, Fricker and Elliott (2002), an internet survey should be considered when the sample size is large and there are a large amount of questions involved, particularly those that require a sentence or paragraph type answer. The live interviews would however provide a base line set of data to inform the development of the online survey.

A decision was made not to use an online survey for the intermediate students, despite this group being a potentially large sample. It was a possibility that each teacher who participated in the internet survey could be asked to give contact details of their own students. However, this would either jeopardise the anonymity of the teacher, or make it very difficult to identify where the students were located. The response rate would be potentially low from this group, and the written responses themselves would be too short and perhaps not useful. It would also be difficult to ensure that each student had parental/guardian permission to participate.

Further, surveys of examining bodies, method book authors, contemporary composers and literature guide authors were not pursued because of the relatively small sample in comparison to teachers. For example, there are only six examination boards and four literature guide authors (three books – one guide has two authors). Within the examining bodies for example, there are potentially hundreds of piano examiners that could be administered an internet survey. Many of the examiners however, are also well-known teachers and would therefore be covered in the teacher internet survey.

For the other four groups (method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors), a live interview may not be possible due to the researcher's location in a regional part of Australia. For these groups, a telephone survey would be the next best option as it still allows for rapport to be built with the participant, the information is obtained immediately and further questions can be asked.

### **3.4 Mixed-methods design – a visual model**

At this point, it was necessary to finalise the theoretical framework for the methodology and to define the methodological approach. The theoretical framework, also known as the paradigm, “sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research” (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006, p. 2). In order to do this, the decisions made in relation to the sample and methods of contacting each sample were revisited and reflected on. The live interviews would provide qualitative data in the form of written transcripts, which is ideal for a small sample study. The internet survey however, would provide basic quantitative data via multiple-choice or yes/no questions, which is more suited to a large sample study. Basic quantitative data would therefore emerge in the form of descriptive statistics, such as the percentage of teachers using a particular method book for example.

“The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is now increasingly common, and is known as mixed methods research” (Punch 2009, p. 4). Traditionally, in this particular area of research focus, qualitative methods have been used to gather data, however recently the use of quantitative methods has become more acceptable. Biemer and Lyberg (2003) agree in stating “in the past ten years, mixed-mode survey designs have gone from being a novelty to a necessity for many survey situations” (Biemer and Lyberg 2003 in Dillman, Smyth and Christian 2009, p. 300). As explained earlier in Section 3.3, a large and varied sample across the English speaking world was desired, which essentially required an internet survey be undertaken.

There are many different mixed methods designs, for example triangulation, embedded, explanatory and exploratory (Punch 2009). The designs describe either a one-phase



(triangulation, explanatory) or two-phase study (embedded, exploratory), and one set of data may be more important than the other (embedded, explanatory) or they might both be of equal importance (triangulation, exploratory). To identify which of the designs best suited this research, a visual model was developed following ten principles proposed by Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006). The ten principles for drawing visual models for mixed-methods designs are:

1. Give a title to the visual model;
2. Choose either horizontal or vertical layout for the model;
3. Draw boxes for quantitative and qualitative stages of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the study results;
4. Use capitalized or lower case letters to designate priority of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis;
5. Use single-headed arrows to show the flow of procedures in the design;
6. Specify procedures for each quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis stage;
7. Specify expected products or outcomes of each quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedure;
8. Use concise language for describing procedures and products;
9. Make your model simple; and
10. Size your model to a one-page limit (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick 2006, p. 15).

Figure 3.1 shows the visual model developed for this study. The development of the visual model took several drafts to establish the most clear and concise way to display the methodology.

Figure 3.1 Visual model for mixed-methods design

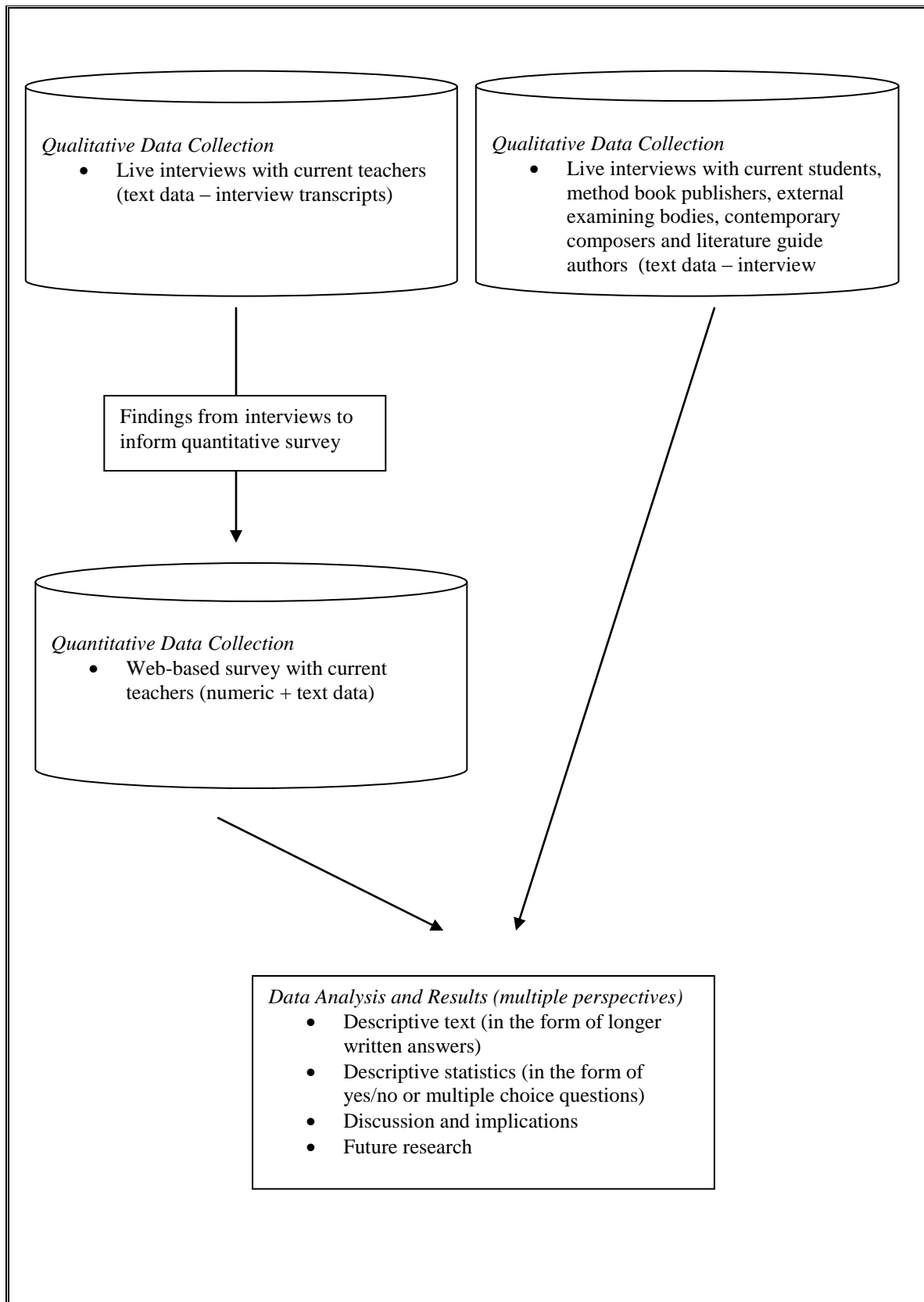


Figure 3.1 above displays a hybrid of two different approaches – the right side is a purely qualitative study, whereas the left side is a mixed-methods design; the qualitative data is collected first, then the quantitative. According to Punch (2009), the left hand side of the visual model represents an exploratory method. Both sets of data (qualitative and quantitative) are equally important and analysed simultaneously.

### **3.5 Designing interview questions**

At the onset of this study, research questions were developed to give the study scope and direction. Questions were then asked about what data would be required to answer the research questions. To answer the research questions, it is now necessary to “design research to collect and analyse those data” (Punch 2009, p. 10). For this research, it was decided to initially interview the teachers individually face-to-face, and then create an internet survey using the responses gained from the live interviews. Individual face-to-face interviews would also be conducted with the students. Given previous research (Bowden 2008) indicated that some teachers preferred to receive the questions initially and respond in writing, the researcher would also be prepared to email or post the questions if this was the only option for the participant. This would be taken into consideration when designing the questions for the interviews.

There are several different ways of designing the questions to be used for interviews. The researcher could develop a few broad questions and then initiate an open conversation with the participant, or develop a specific list of questions to ask the participant. For this research, it was important to ask each participant the same questions so that the data is

comparable. Fowler (2002) argues that “one step toward ensuring consistent measurement is that each respondent in a sample is asked the same set of questions” (p. 78). It will also make data analysis easier for the researcher. Open or closed questions can be used in the interviews and survey, both having their advantages and disadvantages. “The strength of the open-ended question format is that it allows respondents to freely answer the question as they want without limiting their response” (Dillman *et al* 2009, p. 72). However, participants are more likely to skip these questions in a self-administered environment. The other alternative is to use closed questions. “Closed-ended question formats should be used when surveyors want respondents to provide an answer after considering or evaluating a set of answer choices” (Dillman *et al* 2009, p. 72).

In mixed-mode studies, the same question may be asked in two different modes, for example, in this study in a live interview and in an online survey. This determines how much each question can be changed and altered between modes. When interviewing the teachers and students, it was decided that a set list of questions would be the best option. This will allow the researcher to obtain the same information from each participant, and given a large sample of teachers is anticipated in the internet survey, this will prove beneficial. A set list of questions will also be developed for the other participating groups. As the interviews and survey require human participation, ethics approval was applied for and granted before undertaking any interviews.

### **3.5.1 Teachers**

There are very few restrictions regarding the teacher interviews. While adults can concentrate and focus for a large amount of time, Axinn and Pearce (2006) remind researchers that long interviews fatigue the participant. They define 'long' as over an hour. As well as fatigue, it is important to remember that teachers are often extremely busy, and will therefore be more likely to participate in an interview that is brief and concise. Also, if the questions are difficult or cover sensitive issues, this drastically reduces the length of the interview. This research however, does not cover any sensitive issues and it is anticipated that all questions will be straightforward and simple to answer.

One of the best ways to develop a set of questions is to first identify the broad topics and then design specific questions (Mangione 1995). With this in mind, it was decided that the interview would be divided into two broad sections:

- Profiling the teachers; and
- Profiling the intermediate piano student.

It was then decided to break up the second section of the interview into a further five sub-sections:

- Defining the intermediate piano student;
- Teaching the intermediate piano student;
- Being an intermediate piano student;
- Programs of learning/repertoire; and
- Issues of motivation.

The sub-sections helped to clearly define each section of the interview and give both the interviewer and participant some landmarks. The creation of sub-sections would also prove helpful when designing the internet survey.

Profiling the teachers is the first section of the interview. It is designed to be a short introduction to the interview, to relax the participant and also to obtain background information on each teacher. These questions ask the teacher of their inspiration to start teaching and continue teaching, as well as how long they've been teaching and plan to continue teaching.

The second section of the interview relates to the intermediate piano student. Defining the intermediate piano student asks the specific question of "how would you define an intermediate student." The participants will also be asked to define the beginner and advanced student to gain an all-round perspective of the three levels of learning. The teachers will also be asked of their teaching styles for each of these levels. The researcher felt it important to include all three levels of learning for this question to see if the teaching style differed for the intermediate student. Teaching the intermediate student is another short section, simply designed to see what teachers enjoy and what they find challenging about teaching the intermediate student. The following section is possibly the most challenging for some teachers. It will require them to remember and recall their own intermediate experiences. They will be asked of their programs of learning, what repertoire they studied and what they enjoyed/disliked about being an intermediate student. Each teacher will then be asked to describe the programs of learning they use for their intermediate students as well as their students' reactions to new repertoire and

different styles of music. The final section of the interview covers motivation and continuation in learning. Teachers will be asked their opinion of what they believe motivates students, what causes them to lose motivation and possible solutions to the drop-out rate of students.

After several drafts, the interview questions were pre-tested with two colleagues and friends who were music teachers. The researcher felt it important to test the interview on current intermediate piano teachers so that the results would be comparable to those of the other participants. Both participants felt that the questions flowed smoothly, made sense and that the interview didn't take too long, therefore no changes were made to this set of questions. A copy of the questions can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3.5.2 Students**

The question design and interview structure for students has several limitations upon it. For example, in general, the intermediate students interviewed will be teenagers, therefore the interview length must be kept to a minimum and the questions must be brief and simple. Alreck and Settle (2004) agree, stating that for any age participant, "effective survey questions have three important attributes: focus, brevity and clarity" (Alreck and Settle 2004, p. 89). Therefore the questions will be designed as either one-word answers, or short sentences answers. Of course, if students want to elaborate on their responses, they will be given the opportunity.

The student interview questions were divided into three broad sections:

- Profiling the student;
- Piano and extra-curricula activities; and
- Repertoire.

The number of questions and the interview length is much shorter than the teacher interviews; therefore there are fewer broad sections. Profiling the students is a short introductory section designed to relax the student and get some background information on each student, similar to the ‘profiling the teachers’ section. There are four questions that ask how old the students were when they started learning piano, how old they are now, how many piano teachers they’ve had and why they started learning. The second section asks each student what it is they enjoy about learning the piano and what they find frustrating, how often they practise and what extra-curricula activities they enjoy participating in. The final section of the interview asks students about their favourite pieces and composers, and who chooses their pieces.

Several of the questions have been designed to correlate with the teacher responses, although they are asked in slightly different ways due to the potential age of each group. For example, the students are asked of their favourite pieces that they are currently playing, or have previously played, and the teachers are asked to describe how they think intermediate students react to Baroque, Classical, Romantic and 20<sup>th</sup> century music. If the student responds positively to a Bach Two-Part Invention they are currently learning, and the teachers claim that intermediate piano students dislike Baroque music, this will show a difference in opinions.



The student interview questions were drafted several times and then trialled on one of the researcher's own piano students (with parent permission). The student was fourteen years old and studying repertoire from the Grade 5 AMEB syllabus. They answered with mostly yes/no responses, but were able to give further information when prompted. The student felt comfortable with the interview, understood what was required from each question and didn't tire or lose concentration with the length of time. Again, no changes were deemed necessary. The interview questions for students can be found in Appendix 2.

### **3.5.3 Other stakeholders**

There are another four stakeholder groups involved in the research: method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors. At this stage, it was uncertain whether these interviews would be conducted via telephone or perhaps through email. The telephone interview was the preferred option, but if the participant requested the questions be sent so they could fill them out in their own time, it was deemed more beneficial to do this than not have them participate. The questions therefore had to be straightforward and simple to understand without requiring further explanation.

The design of the interview questions for each of the four stakeholders is outlined in Table 3.3. The table shows the broad sections of the interview, further detail of each section and the Appendix number of the full interview questions. Only testing of the composers interview questions occurred, as the researcher was not able to locate a

relevant or appropriate person for the other three stakeholder groups. However, given all previously designed interview questions had been tested, the researcher was confident that these would be suitable for the purposes of the study. Only one question was altered in the composers interview questions, which asked the participant of their compositional style.

While the external stakeholders differ significantly from the internal stakeholders in that they are not directly involved in the lessons and learning process, many of them have previously taught or currently teach piano students outside of their authoring/examining jobs. It was therefore decided to add a small ‘intermediate student’ section at the end of each interview, asking the external stakeholders to define the intermediate student and suggest possible reasons as to why students may gain and lose motivation in their learning. This last section of the interview correlates with the same questions that the teachers were asked during their interviews.

Table 3.3 Other stakeholders interview question design

Stakeholder and Appendix number	Broad sections	Further detail
Method book authors Appendix 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting in the music publishing field</li> <li>Specific company working for</li> <li>Duties in current role</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The method book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important skills and elements</li> <li>Publication process</li> <li>Further changes and editions</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intermediate piano students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a beginner, intermediate and advanced student</li> <li>Motivation</li> <li>Drop-out levels</li> </ul>
External examination bodies Appendix 4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting in the music examination field</li> <li>Duties in current role</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The syllabus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structure and layout</li> <li>Updating procedures</li> <li>Benefits of external exams</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intermediate piano students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a beginner, intermediate and advanced student</li> <li>Motivation</li> <li>Drop-out levels</li> </ul>
Contemporary composers Appendix 5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspiration for composing</li> <li>Publisher/freelance</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intermediate piano students and composition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a beginner, intermediate and advanced student</li> <li>Composition for intermediate students</li> <li>Motivation</li> <li>Drop-out levels</li> </ul>
Literature guide authors Appendix 6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting in the music publishing field</li> <li>Current publishing projects</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature guide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publication process</li> <li>Updates and feedback</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intermediate piano students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a beginner, intermediate and advanced student</li> <li>Motivation</li> <li>Drop-out levels</li> </ul>

### 3.6 Interview participants

As indicated in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, it was decided to conduct live interviews with current intermediate teachers and students, and phone interviews with method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors. It was also decided to design an internet survey for the intermediate teachers

which will be discussed in Section 3.7. The next step involved identifying and requesting participation from the various groups or stakeholders. The following sections outline the methods involved in finding relevant participants.

### **3.6.1 Teachers**

Given the travel costs and logistical planning involved with live interviews, it would normally not be viable to conduct interviews anywhere other than the researcher's home town. However, the researcher had previously planned a holiday to North America to visit friends who live in Greensboro, North Carolina. The researcher had studied at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro in 2007 and therefore an opportunity arose to interview teachers in Greensboro as well as in the researcher's hometown of Townsville, Queensland, Australia. For each town, a list of teachers was sourced through the respective 'Music Teacher Association' websites. In Australia, each state has its own associations with many branches. The teachers to be interviewed in Townsville were sourced through the Music Teachers Association of Queensland website ([www.mtaq.org.au](http://www.mtaq.org.au)). In America, there is an overall association, the Music Teachers National Association, with state branches. The teachers to be interviewed in Greensboro were sourced through the MTNA website ([www.mtna.org](http://www.mtna.org)).

As of November 2008, the MTNA website listed seven piano teachers in the Greensboro area and as of February 2009, the MTAQ website listed twenty-two piano teachers in the Townsville area. The researcher also knew of five piano teachers in Greensboro, not on the MTNA list, that were invited to participate. There were no restrictions on how many

teachers were appropriate for the study, although it was a criterion that they currently teach intermediate piano students. Each teacher on the lists was contacted via phone or email (depending on what information was available) and asked whether they currently taught intermediate piano students, and of their interest to participate in the study.

A list of twelve piano teachers (six female and six male) in Greensboro was developed, which included seven teachers from the MTNA website and five teachers that the researcher knew personally. Each participant on the list was contacted, however only those that the researcher knew responded positively. Interviews with two of the teachers were set up, while the other three teachers asked to be sent the questions to fill out in their own time.

From Townsville, a list of 21 piano teachers (twenty female and one male) was developed. Again, each participant was contacted either through email or telephone. There was great interest in the topic and in the interviews. All of the teachers commented on what an interesting and much-needed topic of research it was. Three interviews were set up immediately. In the coming months, another two live interviews occurred as well as two emailed questionnaires.

Participant names, their geographic location, the method of data gathering, and the date of the interview/questionnaire return are outlined in Table 3.4 below. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

Table 3.4 Sampling intermediate piano teachers perceptions

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Date</b>
Jacob Smith	Greensboro, NC	Live	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2008
Joshua Grant	Greensboro, NC	Live	5 <sup>th</sup> December 2008
Emma Mark	Greensboro, NC	Email	9 <sup>th</sup> January 2009
Michael Cook	Greensboro, NC	Email	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2009
Isabella James	Townsville, QLD	Live	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2009
Emily Fisher	Townsville, QLD	Live	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2009
Ethan Douglas	Greensboro, NC	Email	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2009
Madison Frank	Townsville, QLD	Live	18 <sup>th</sup> February 2009
Ava McDonald	Townsville, QLD	Email	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2009
Olivia Starr	Townsville, QLD	Live	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2009
Sophia Presley	Townsville, QLD	Live	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2009
Abigail George	Townsville, QLD	Email	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2009
Elizabeth Jones	Townsville, QLD	Live	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2009

The live interviews were taped using a voice recorder. This allowed the participant to speak freely without having to worry about speaking slowly enough to allow the researcher to notate. All interviews went smoothly, as all the questions were understood easily and the participants were happy to answer all questions, as well as provide further detail or clarification if required. After the interviews, the researcher transcribed the recording, eliminating any stuttering or nonsense syllables such as ‘um’ or ‘ah’. Also, if a participant didn’t finish a sentence, this was not included, unless significant information was to be lost. All interviews were transcribed in good faith and as accurately as possible. The researcher offered to send the written transcripts to each of the participants for proofing; no one accepted the offer, as they were satisfied to trust the researcher. The transcriptions of each interview, including the five emailed interview questions are included in Appendix 7.

### **3.6.2 Students**

Each teacher that was interviewed was asked whether they would be willing for their students to participate in interviews as well. All of the teachers agreed to ask the students' parent's permission before revealing their contact information. Only eight of the thirteen teachers provided the researcher with these contact details. Seven students were interviewed in Greensboro (from four teachers) and ten in Townsville (from four teachers). Many of the interviews were conducted over the phone as both the students and parents felt it would be quicker and more convenient. The researcher agreed, as the initial live interviews conducted showed that the students did not provide very long or overly complex answers. The questions had been designed for mostly one-word answers, so therefore notating during the phone interview was possible. In total, eight interviews were conducted live while the other nine were conducted via telephone. The following table (Table 3.5) outlines the seventeen students interviewed, including the interview method and the date of interview. As with the teachers, each student has been given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

Table 3.5 Student data gathering details

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chloe Jackson	Greensboro, NC	Live	20 <sup>th</sup> November 2008
Samantha Daniel	Greensboro, NC	Live	21 <sup>st</sup> November 2008
Natalie Alexander	Greensboro, NC	Live	21 <sup>st</sup> November 2008
Mia Adams	Greensboro, NC	Phone	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2008
Alexis Williams	Greensboro, NC	Live	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2008
Anthony Micarelli	Greensboro, NC	Live	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2008
Christopher Edwards	Greensboro, NC	Live	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2008
Alyssa Ryan	Townsville, QLD	Live	21 <sup>st</sup> February 2009
Hannah Johns	Townsville, QLD	Live	21 <sup>st</sup> February 2009
Ashley Woodgate	Townsville, QLD	Phone	19 <sup>th</sup> April 2009
Ella Christian	Townsville, QLD	Phone	2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2009
Sarah Jenkins	Townsville, QLD	Phone	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
Andrew Taylor	Townsville, QLD	Phone	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2009
Grace Kings	Townsville, QLD	Phone	30 <sup>th</sup> August 2009
Noah Johnson	Townsville, QLD	Phone	30 <sup>th</sup> August 2009
Aiden Wood	Townsville, QLD	Phone	11 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
Taylor Michaels	Townsville, QLD	Phone	11 <sup>th</sup> October 2009

Each of the live interviews was taped using a voice recorder, and the telephone interviews were transcribed simultaneously with the interview. As each of these interviewees had parental/guardian permission and the nature of the responses was simple and unobtrusive, it wasn't deemed necessary to send the transcript to the students for approval. The transcriptions of each of the student interviews (live and phone) can be found in Appendix 8.

### 3.6.3 Other stakeholders

It was established early in the methodology that conducting live interviews with the method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors would most likely not be possible due to location and distance. Phone interviews were the next best option, followed by emailing the questions to the participant and allowing them to answer the questions in their own time.



The table below (Table 3.6) outlines the list of people or companies contacted for each of the four stakeholder groups, those that initially responded and the method and date of the data gathering for those that agreed to interviews.

Table 3.6 External stakeholders data gathering

Stakeholder	Contact	Product/Company	Location	Responded	Method	Date
Method Book Authors	Willis Music Company (Online form)	John Thompson's Modern Course for the Piano	USA	N		
	Morty Manus ( <a href="mailto:keyboard@alfred.com">keyboard@alfred.com</a> )	Alfred's Basic Piano Library	USA	Y	Phone	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
	Jane Bastien ( <a href="mailto:lbastien@aol.com">lbastien@aol.com</a> )	Intermediate Piano Course	USA	N		
	Jane N Tan (The WPPI, 1809 East Rawhide Street, Gilbert AZ 85296, USA)	The Well Prepared Pianist	USA	Y		
	Nancy and Randall Faber ( <a href="mailto:faber@pianoteaching.com">faber@pianoteaching.com</a> )	Piano Adventures	USA	Y		
	Frederick Harris Music Company ( <a href="mailto:ddunn@frederickharrismusic.com">ddunn@frederickharrismusic.com</a> )	Celebration Series		N		
	M'Lou Dietzer ( <a href="mailto:intermediatepiano@cox.net">intermediatepiano@cox.net</a> )	First Impressions	USA	Y	Email	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
	Phillip Keveren ( <a href="mailto:phillipkeveren@comcast.net">phillipkeveren@comcast.net</a> )	Hal Leonard Student Piano Library	USA	Y	Phone	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
	Lorenz Corporation ( <a href="mailto:info@lorenz.com">info@lorenz.com</a> )	Comprehensive Piano Library	USA	N		
	Dennis Alexander ( <a href="mailto:DennisLAlexander@aol.com">DennisLAlexander@aol.com</a> )	Premier Piano Course	USA	N		

Table 3.6 External stakeholders data gathering (continued)

Stakeholder	Contact	Product/Company	Location	Responded	Method	Date
External examination bodies	Bernard Depasquale (Lvl 5, 175 Flinders Lane Melbourne Vic 3000)	AMEB	AUS	Y	Email	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
	<a href="mailto:admin@anzca.com">admin@anzca.com</a>	ANZCA	AUS	N		
	<a href="mailto:info@trinitycollege.co.uk">info@trinitycollege.co.uk</a>	Trinity	UK	Y	Email	26 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
	<a href="mailto:info@st-cecilia.com.au">info@st-cecilia.com.au</a>	St. Cecilia	AUS	Y	Email	8 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
	<a href="mailto:knoop@guildmusic.edu.au">knoop@guildmusic.edu.au</a>	AGMS	AUS			
	(Online form)	ABRSM	UK	Y	Email	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
Contemporary composers	Carol Matz		USA	Y	Email	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
	Elissa Milne		AUS	Y	Phone	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
	Kerin Bailey		AUS	Y	Phone	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
	Sonny Chua		AUS	Y	Email	27 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
Literature guide authors	Reid Alexander	Intermediate piano repertoire: a guide for teaching (4 <sup>th</sup> edn)	USA	Y	Phone	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
	Cathy Albergo		USA	N		
	Jane Magrath	The pianist's guide to standard teaching and performance literature	USA	Y	Phone	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
	Maurice Hinson	Guide to the pianist's repertoire (3 <sup>rd</sup> edn)	USA	N		

Interviews that were conducted via phone were done so using a speaker-phone and a voice recorder so that the answers could be recorded and transcribed afterwards. No problems were encountered during this process and each of the interview participants were asked if they would like the transcript to be sent to them for approval first; the majority accepted this offer, and changes were made to two of the transcripts in providing more clear, concise answers. The transcriptions of the phone interviews and written answers from the emails can be found in Appendixes 9-12; Appendix 9 – method book authors, Appendix 10 – external examination bodies, Appendix 11 – contemporary composers, Appendix 12 – literature guide authors. Some of the information about the ABRSM was gathered from their website, due to time restrictions of the representative.

### **3.7 Internet survey**

The intention of designing and conducting an internet survey was to reach as many intermediate piano teachers in the English speaking world as possible. An estimated, hopeful number of participants was 500. Many of the questions that were featured in the live interviews were open-ended, asking teachers to describe learning levels or their teaching styles for example. Therefore, an internet survey is considered appropriate, if not essential for collecting this amount and type of data.

#### **3.7.1 Survey sample**

A database was developed for the internet survey sample that included nearly 3000 names and email addresses. These contact details were collected from websites such as

universities, branches of music teacher associations and community piano groups. The intention was to target piano teachers in Australia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The table below outlines the websites viewed for each of these regions:

Table 3.7 Websites from Australia, US and UK

Country	Website Address	Website Description
Australia	<a href="http://www.australian-universities.com">www.australian-universities.com</a>	Alphabetical list of Australian universities
	<a href="http://www.mtaq.org.au">www.mtaq.org.au</a>	Music teacher associations from each state
	<a href="http://www.musicnsw.com.au">www.musicnsw.com.au</a>	
	<a href="http://www.vmta.org.au">www.vmta.org.au</a>	
	<a href="http://www.mtasa.com.au">www.mtasa.com.au</a>	
United States of America/Canada	<a href="http://www.music.org/cgi-bin/showpage.pl?tmpl=/infoserv/facdir/facdirhome&amp;h=63">http://www.music.org/cgi-bin/showpage.pl?tmpl=/infoserv/facdir/facdirhome&amp;h=63</a>	Alphabetical list of music universities in the US and Canada
United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/AboutUs/WhoWeAre/Pages/Members.aspx">http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/AboutUs/WhoWeAre/Pages/Members.aspx</a>	Alphabetical list of UK universities
	<a href="http://www.ukpianos.co.uk/piano-teachers.html">http://www.ukpianos.co.uk/piano-teachers.html</a>	Music teachers/schools directory
	<a href="http://www.besbrodepianos.co.uk/pianoteachers.htm">http://www.besbrodepianos.co.uk/pianoteachers.htm</a>	Piano teachers directory
All	<a href="http://www.richardormesher.com/sites-iptg/">http://www.richardormesher.com/sites-iptg/</a>	International Piano Teachers Group

Many of the websites listed above were in fact databases for a host of other websites. The Australian Universities site ([www.australian-universities.com](http://www.australian-universities.com)) listed every university in Australia, regardless of their faculties, departments and programs. This was therefore a lengthy process to visit each university website to see if they had a music department and

faculty. In total however, there were only 42 teachers identified from each of the individual university sites.

The music teacher association websites from each Australian state were very helpful, however the Western Australian and Tasmanian websites did not list email addresses. The researcher contacted the associations requesting email addresses for members or that the invitation to participate be passed on to members, but did not hear back. There is no association in the Northern Territory, hence its exclusion from the table. There were 850 teachers added to the database from the MTA websites.

The list of American and Canadian universities found at ([www.music.org](http://www.music.org)) was considerable and took many days to work through. Approximately 1800 teachers were sourced through the American and Canadian university websites. The Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) in America also didn't list members' email addresses online. The researcher emailed the CEO of the company, asking if she could have access to the addresses or if they would be willing to pass the survey invitation and link to their members. The MTNA was very helpful and supportive of the research and agreed to pass the survey link on to its members, inviting and encouraging them to participate.

The Universities of UK website ([www.universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)) was similar to the Australian one in that it contained a comprehensive list of the universities in the UK. While there were many 'music' universities, many of them focused on popular music, with no piano faculty, or did not list the email addresses of the piano faculty. From the Universities of

UK, 70 piano teachers were added to the database. The UK pianos site ([www.ukpianos.co.uk](http://www.ukpianos.co.uk)) and besbrode pianos site ([www.besbrodepianos.co.uk](http://www.besbrodepianos.co.uk)) are community directories where piano teachers can advertise their studios. Approximately 120 teachers were sourced from these two websites.

The final website used was the International Piano Teachers Group ([www.richardormesher.com](http://www.richardormesher.com)) which is a worldwide community organisation for piano teachers. A newsletter is sent to its members each week, and the invitation to participate in the internet survey was posted in the newsletter. It is not known exactly how many members are in the IPTG and in how many countries they live, however the location of some teachers may become evident in the survey results if they participate. In total, the database contained 2961 names, email addresses, the location of the teacher, and the website the names were sourced from.

### **3.7.2 Survey design**

As stated previously, the live interviews conducted with teachers would provide the baseline data for the construction of the internet survey. The live interviews were briefly analysed to establish the most popular answers to each question; these then formed the multiple-choice responses for some questions. For example, the first question in the live interviews was “What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?” From looking through the transcriptions of the live interviews, the four most common answers were: a previous teacher, flexibility of the profession, extra income and ‘I was asked to teach’. These four responses then became the four multiple-choice responses for the internet

survey. For each multiple-choice question however, there was the opportunity to answer ‘other’. For questions that required a numerical answer, multiple-choice responses were also given. For example, “How many years have you been teaching” had six options; less than a year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years and 21 or more years. Most of the internet survey questions were exactly the same as the corresponding live interview questions and the majority of them also had multiple-choice responses. The internet survey was developed to extend the data gathered through the interviews as well as validate and verify the data across several countries. The internet survey tool used was Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)).

Several authors (Alreck and Settle 2004, Dillman *et al* 2009, Schonlau *et al* 2002) suggest a number of key points to remember when designing an internet survey:

- Divide the survey into different sections/pages, so that not too many questions are seen at once;
- Use colour to enhance stimulation with participants;
- Limit scales to four or five categories;
- Align items logically and clearly;
- Have a progress bar to let the participant know how much they have completed;
- Don’t or rarely force answers to questions; and
- Always test the survey on friends/colleagues first.



Taking this into consideration, the survey was divided into seven different sections:

- Getting to know you;
- The intermediate piano student;
- Teaching the intermediate piano student;
- When you were an intermediate piano student;
- Programs of learning for the intermediate piano student;
- Motivation and learning; and
- Demographic information.

The survey had a blue and yellow colour theme and contained a combination of multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions and rating/scale questions. The questions with rating or scale responses were limited to a maximum of five points, there was a progress bar at the top of the survey and no questions that ‘forced’ an answer. A copy of the saved survey (from [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) can be found in Appendix 13.

After the survey design was complete, it was trialled on two friends and colleagues of the researcher. One of the colleagues was Australian, had been teaching on and off for many years, however only ever taught a limited number of students. The other colleague was American, had been teaching for only a few years but had a large and varied cohort of students. The trial was done to ensure the survey flowed well, made sense, didn’t take too long and there were no technical errors.

### 3.7.3 Survey implementation

What is the best way to administer and implement an internet survey? There have been numerous articles and texts (De Baux 2004, Dillman *et al* 2009, Frey and Oishi 1995) written on different ways to improve responses to internet surveys. De Baux (2004) suggests that “the way a survey is administered has a major impact on response rates” (p. 6). He gives five key steps to follow that can help improve response rates, although reminds the researcher that there is no one method of achieving high response rates. The five key steps involve:

1. Day 1 - Pre-Approach Letter
2. Day 4 - Questionnaire and Cover Letter
3. Day 11 - Thank you/First reminder letter
4. Day 25 - Second Reminder
5. According to Deadline - Third Reminder (De Baux 2004, p. 9).

Frey and Oishi (1995) agree that sending a pre-approach letter and giving notice of a survey eliminates or lowers the surprise, and it gives the participant time to think about whether they want to participate. Based on De Baux’s (2004) document on ‘improving responses’, a pre-approach letter was sent to the almost 3000 names on the database. The response from this initial email was very good. Many people wrote to say they appreciated the notice and looked forward to receiving the survey. Others wrote to say they thought the research was highly valid and would be interested in participating. There were also several people who asked to be taken off the list, apologising that they were too busy. There were also several that asked to be taken off the database, upset they had been

contacted, despite the fact their contact details are on a public university or association website. This demonstrated the necessity of the pre-survey notification as it gave people time to decline the offer to participate and ask to be taken off the database.

The texts that focus on internet surveys (e.g. Dillman *et al* 2009, Nesbary 2000, Schonlau *et al* 2002), all address the issue of ‘error’. They discuss the errors that can occur in these types of web-based surveys as well as ways to reduce the percentage of error. Within this survey, there was a certain percentage of error that could have been avoided, and a certain percentage that was uncontrollable. The error came in the form of email addresses. After sending out the initial pre-approach letters, the researcher’s inbox was inundated with ‘failed delivery’ or ‘returned’ email. The researcher then did a double check of all the failed email addresses and found that some had been copied incorrectly into the database and others were obviously either incorrect on the website or no longer active. The email addresses that were fixed were re-sent the pre-approach letter.

Three days later, the questionnaire and cover letter was sent (except to those participants who asked to be removed from the database). The researcher was overwhelmed by the number of responses, particularly from the number of people who emailed to say thank you for allowing them to participate in the survey. The researcher responded to these emails immediately, and one week later sent out a thank you/reminder email to the remaining names on the database. Two weeks later, the second reminder was sent. The researcher was extremely happy with the response rate so far, so decided not to send the final and third reminder as it seemed unnecessary and annoying for the participants.

The survey was available online for a total of four months. This was because each time the account was checked another few people had completed the survey so it was decided to leave it up to gain as many perspectives as possible. In total, there were 583 responses. A copy of the survey results can be found in Appendix 14.

### **3.8 Presentation of the data**

The results of this research will be presented in a variety of forms. There are two results chapters; the first presents the teacher data from both the interviews and the survey, and the second presents the information from the students and external stakeholders interviews (method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors). The two sets of teacher data will then be collated and analysed together. As much as possible, data will be presented in tables, graphs or charts in order to enable the reader to view the information easily. There will also be written discussions to compare the results and highlight individual responses.

## **Chapter 4 – Teacher Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the qualitative data gathered from the teacher interviews and the quantitative data from the internet survey. As discussed in the visual model in Section 3.4, each set of data (qualitative and quantitative) was collected separately but will be analysed simultaneously as in the exploratory method (Punch 2009). The data below is divided into the broad sections of the interview and survey questions:

- Profiling the teachers;
- Defining the intermediate piano student;
- Teaching the intermediate piano student;
- Being an intermediate piano student;
- Programs of learning;
- Issues of motivation; and
- Demographic information.

The data is not presented in the exact order of the interview and survey questions. For example, it was felt that ‘profiling the teachers,’ ‘being an intermediate piano student’ and ‘demographic information’ all related to the profile of the teacher, hence these are presented together.

Tables are used frequently in order to summarise and present the questions and responses from the participants, with the data from the interviews and survey presented side by side for ease of viewing the analysis. In the case where a question was asked during

interviews but not in the survey, this information is analysed separately. Also, if follow-up questions were developed from the interview transcripts and asked in the survey, these are also analysed separately.

#### **4.1.1 The interview data**

The teachers' responses to the interview questions have been summarised using a process of investigating each individual teacher's response and determining the broad issue of relevance. For example, the first question of the interviews asked each teacher "What first inspired you to teach?" From the responses, four main ideas emerged inductively: the teacher's were inspired by one of their own teachers, they liked the flexibility of the profession, the extra income it provided, or they were asked to teach by a friend or perhaps their own teacher. These responses then formed the multiple-choice responses in the survey. On occasion, some teachers referred to more than one issue e.g. in the first question ("what first inspired you to teach"), "it was a good way to make some extra cash during studies, plus it helped me to come up with solutions for various problems related to piano playing" was interpreted as relating to 'flexibility and income' and 'personal factors.' The responses are listed in highest to lowest order of occurrence.

#### **4.1.2 The survey data**

The survey sample's responses contained both multiple-choice and short written answers. The answer options that were available to choose on Survey Monkey are highlighted in yellow; these rows will most often have greater numbers than the other choices. The non-

highlighted rows are the written answers from when a participant checked ‘other’ and specified their answer in the space provided. Often, the survey’s categories contain more detail than the interviews, as the larger number of respondents allowed for further division of the answers. In the tables below, the ‘other’ row refers to responses that were not clear enough to be placed within one of the above categories. For example, in the first question which asked what the teacher’s inspiration to teach was, one participant said “Mother” however it was not possible to determine whether this meant that the mother was a teacher hence inspiration, the mother suggested that the respondent become a teacher, or the mother gave the respondent a love of music which eventually led to the decision to become a teacher. Off-task or incoherent responses were removed.

## 4.2 Demographic information

The final question of the survey asked teachers to provide some basic demographic information; of the 583 surveys returned, 333 completed this question. The details are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Demographic information of the interviews and survey

Question	Interview			Survey		
Demographic Information	Australia	7	58.3%	United States of America	204	61.3%
	United States of America	5	41.7%	Australia	103	31.0%
				United Kingdom	17	5.1%
				Canada	6	1.8%
				New Zealand	2	0.6%
				India	1	0.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>	

As can be seen, the majority of participants were from the United States of America. A third of the participants were from Australia, and there was also a small percentage from the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and one participant from India.

### 4.3 Profiling the teachers

Table 4.2 below introduces the teachers in terms of their inspiration to commence and continue teaching, how long they have been in the profession and for how long they intend continuing to teach.

Table 4.2 Profiling the teachers

Question	Interview			Survey		
What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?	A previous teacher	5	41.7%	A previous teacher	218	37.4%
	I was asked to teach	3	25.0%	I was asked to teach	191	32.8%
	Extra income	2	16.7%	Flexibility of the profession	143	24.5%
	Love of music	2	16.7%	Extra income	112	19.2%
	Enhance diagnostic skills	1	8.3%	Love of music	64	11.0%
	Exam requirement	1	8.3%	Love of teaching	62	10.6%
	Passing on knowledge/experiences	1	8.3%	Passing on knowledge/experiences	21	3.6%
				A gift or calling for teaching	11	1.9%
				Forced to change professions	11	1.9%
				Seemed like a natural progression	8	1.4%
				It was a suggested profession	5	0.9%
				Wanting to be a better teacher than their own	4	0.7%
				Other	8	1.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>583</b>	



Table 4.2 Profiling the teachers (continued)

Question	Interview			Survey		
What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?	To help students develop as musicians	8	66.7%	Love of teaching	464	79.6%
	Personal factors (enjoyment, challenge, satisfaction)	6	50.0%	The students	362	62.1%
	Flexibility and income	2	16.7%	Flexibility of the profession	226	38.8%
	To help students develop as individuals	2	16.7%	Extra income	170	29.2%
				Sharing/passing down knowledge	16	2.7%
				Love of music	14	2.4%
				Requirement of the job	7	1.2%
				Primary income	5	0.9%
				To learn	4	0.7%
				Other	6	1.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>583</b>	
How many years have you been teaching?	11-20	4	33.3%	21 or more years	357	61.7%
	Less than 5 years	2	16.7%	11-20 years	133	23.0%
	6-10	2	16.7%	6-10 years	55	9.5%
	21-25	2	16.7%	3-5 years	24	4.1%
	More than 26 years	2	16.7%	1-2 years	5	0.9%
				Less than a year	5	0.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>579</b>	
How long do you see yourself teaching piano?	Throughout their life	10	83.3%	My whole life	189	33.2%
	Don't know	1	8.3%	As long as I am able	129	22.7%
	Next 10 years	1	8.3%	Until I retire	47	8.3%
				10-19 years	44	7.7%
				20-29 years	43	7.6%
				30 or more years	30	5.3%
				5-9 years	24	4.2%
				Don't know	16	2.8%
				2-4 years	6	1.1%
				1 more year	5	0.9%
				Other	6	1.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	

As can be seen in Table 4.2, the large sample of surveyed teachers' responses reflects those identified within the interviews. The analysis of the data presents the following general principles about the profile of the piano teacher:

- Piano teaching is a tradition and a practice that is often passed on from teacher to student, the latter of whom are inspired to take up the craft from their teachers;

- The majority of piano teachers appear extremely committed to the role, with many passionate about a long career as a piano teacher; and
- Piano teaching is popular due to the flexibility of the profession and the income it generates.

#### 4.4 Being an intermediate piano student

In this section, the teachers were required to ‘take a walk down memory lane’ and recall their own learning experiences at the intermediate level. Several of the teachers found it difficult to remember, however most were able to give a detailed account of the teaching styles and repertoire they encountered.

Table 4.3 Recollections of being an intermediate piano student

Question		Interview		Survey			
Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...							
Can you remember your teacher or teachers? Describe their styles.	Encouraging	3	25.0%	Structured	82	24.4%	
	Strict	3	25.0%	Focus on repertoire	77	22.9%	
	Boring	2	16.7%	Positive/encouraging	77	11.9%	
	Laid back	2	16.7%	Strict	52	15.5%	
	Positive	2	16.7%	Taught to love music/have fun	44	13.1%	
				Boring	22	6.5%	
				Student was mostly self taught	21	6.3%	
				Traditional	12	3.6%	
				Unconfident in own abilities	12	3.6%	
				Can't remember	11	3.3%	
				Awful/abusive etc	9	2.7%	
				Student-centred	9	2.7%	
				Unfocused	8	2.4%	
Other				8	2.4%		
Total		12		Total		336	
What types of repertoire do you recall working on?	Exam syllabi	6	50.0%	General repertoire	278	75.7%	
	Competition/festival repertoire	3	25.0%	Method books	153	41.7%	
	Existing repertoire	3	25.0%	External exam syllabi	133	36.2%	
	Method books	1	8.3%	Competition/festival/eisteddfod repertoire	128	34.9%	
				Other	9	2.5%	
	Total		12		Total		367

Table 4.3 Recollections of being an intermediate piano student (continued)

Question	Interview			Survey		
Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...						
What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?	The repertoire	7	58.3%	The repertoire	242	66.1%
	Playing for family/friends	3	25.0%	Playing for friends	68	18.6%
	Playing/love of piano	2	16.7%	Can't remember	47	12.8%
	Can't remember	1	8.3%	Playing/love of piano	31	8.5%
	None	1	8.3%	Getting better/satisfaction	27	7.4%
	The challenge	1	8.3%	Performing	16	4.4%
				Being an independent learner	9	2.5%
				The challenge	8	2.2%
				Using skills for accompanying/shows etc	8	2.2%
				Playing with friends (duets etc)	7	1.9%
				Using it as an 'escape'	5	1.4%
				Relationship with teacher	3	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>		
What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?	Requirements for exams	4	33.3%	Technical difficulties	115	31.9%
	Technical aspects	4	33.3%	Practising	107	29.6%
	Teacher	3	25.0%	Can't remember	71	19.7%
	Bach	2	16.7%	Teacher	17	4.7%
	Practising	2	16.7%	Competing demands	15	4.2%
	Competing demands	1	8.3%	Not progressing as quickly	15	4.2%
				Performing	14	3.9%
				Repertoire	8	2.2%
				Theoretical aspects	7	1.9%
				Everything – wanted to quit	2	0.6%
				Other	5	1.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>	

There were many different 'teaching styles' encountered during each participant's intermediate years varying from fun, positive and encouraging, to boring and strict. It would be interesting to note whether the respondents made a conscious effort to not teach like their 'boring' or 'strict' teachers or whether this was simply a personality trait rather than a teaching style. It certainly does demonstrate however, that piano teachers are varied and because there are no guidelines or accreditation processes required, teachers

are able to form their own style: good, bad, or indifferent. Several of the teachers in the survey responded that they experienced an awful or abusive teacher while they were an intermediate student. While it is a small percentage in comparison to the other teaching styles that were experienced, it is hoped that this teaching style and method has not carried into the present day.

It is positive that the participants chose repertoire as one of the most enjoyable aspects of being an intermediate piano student. This could therefore suggest that the respondents were happy with the selection of repertoire available in the syllabus lists and offered to them by their teacher. Repertoire, in its various forms, tends to dominate the piano lesson; it is therefore possible to assume that repertoire would have to figure highly in terms of motivation. It is interesting that only a small number of the respondents felt that they had too many competing demands as an intermediate student; arguably a different percentage to today's students. During previous interviews (Bowden 2008), piano teachers commented on the number of extra-curricula activities students participate in: dance, sport, other instruments, etc. As stated in Section 2.5, the extra-curricula activities students participate in may affect the time, energy and motivation they have for their piano studies (Uszler *et al* 2000).

The teachers in the internet survey were asked what composers or works they specifically remember as an intermediate student and why they remember them. These questions developed as a follow-up from the interviews to extract further information and detail on the topic. The teachers' answers were categorised into five broad periods of music:

Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20<sup>th</sup> century and Popular/Jazz. The teachers' responses were varied for this question; some teachers recalled specific works, such as Clementi's Sonatina Op. 36, No. 1, while other teachers simply recalled a composer. The responses are summarised in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Survey responses to recollections of repertoire

Question	Survey		
Which specific composers or works do you remember?	Classical	235	70.1%
	Romantic	211	63.0%
	Baroque	158	47.2%
	20 <sup>th</sup> century	100	29.9%
	Popular/Jazz	15	4.5%
	Don't remember	9	2.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>	
Why?	Enjoyed it	116	50.2%
	Musical elements (melody, speed etc)	84	36.4%
	Seemed difficult	48	20.8%
	Played at recitals/competitions	30	13.0%
	Bad experience (didn't like it/didn't play it well)	17	7.4%
	Satisfaction of finishing the piece	16	6.9%
	Other	5	2.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	

Certainly the older periods of classical music were more commonly learnt, as music from the 20<sup>th</sup> century was comparatively lower in number. Bach's *Two-Part Inventions* are commonly considered intermediate repertoire, and twenty-eight teachers recalled learning these particular works. Another one hundred participants recalled learning Bach; the Preludes and Fugues, Minuets, etc. *Fur Elise* by Beethoven, another common 'intermediate' piece of repertoire was only mentioned ten times, however Beethoven was mentioned another one hundred times either with his Sonatinas, Sonatas or other small pieces.

The most common response for remembering specific works or composers is that the teachers simply enjoyed learning the piece. As enjoyment links to motivation, it could be suggested that these teachers were motivated to continue piano because of their enjoyment of the repertoire, amongst other factors. There were only nine teachers who could not remember the repertoire they played at the intermediate level, arguably proving that repertoire is memorable for the majority of people. It is therefore important that students are given repertoire they enjoy, as these memories are likely to stay with them for a lifetime. As many teachers recall learning works from some of the older periods (Baroque, Classical etc), it's possible that they are simply using this same repertoire with their own students rather than what most interests each individual student.

#### **4.5 Defining the beginner, intermediate and advanced piano student**

The literature established that defining the intermediate piano student is problematic and indeed teaching intermediate students can also be challenging at times (see Section 2.2). Each of the teachers was asked for their opinions, descriptions and definitions of a beginner, intermediate and advanced student. Table 4.5 below summarises the teachers' responses of their definitions.

Table 4.5 Defining the beginner, intermediate and advanced student

Question	Interview			Survey		
How would you define or describe a:						
Beginner student?	Defined by skills	7	58.3%	No prior experience	211	55.1%
	Defined in examination levels	3	25.0%	Defined by skills	96	25.1%
	No prior experience	3	25.0%	Defined by length of learning	40	10.4%
	Defined by length of learning	2	16.7%	Defined in examination levels	32	8.4%
	Defined by method book levels	1	8.3%	Excited/eager	26	6.8%
	They rely on the teacher	1	8.3%	Defined by method book levels	22	5.7%
				Defined by repertoire	8	2.1%
				Defined by age	7	1.8%
				Parents want them to learn	5	1.3%
				Other	10	2.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>	
Intermediate student?	Defined in examination levels	5	41.7%	Defined by skills	182	48.7%
	Defined by skills	5	41.7%	Defined by repertoire	117	31.3%
	Defined by repertoire	3	25.0%	Defined by length of learning	80	21.4%
	Musicality is introduced	2	16.7%	Defined by examination levels	77	20.6%
	Not sure	1	8.3%	Defined by method book levels	24	6.4%
				Independent learner	15	4.0%
				Becoming serious about practice/future	11	2.9%
				Losing interest	5	1.3%
				Defined by Jane Magrath levels	5	1.3%
				Defined by age	3	0.8%
				Other	6	1.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>	
	Advanced student?	Defined in examination levels	6	50.0%	Defined by repertoire	159
Defined by repertoire		5	41.7%	Defined by skills	148	40.4%
Independent learner		4	33.3%	Defined by examination levels	80	21.9%
Certain level of knowledge		1	8.3%	Defined by length of learning	35	9.6%
			Independent learner	34	9.3%	
			Serious about study	30	8.2%	
			Defined by Jane Magrath levels	5	1.4%	
			Defined by age	3	0.8%	
			Other	6	1.6%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	

The data from the internet survey reveals nearly identical results to those of the interview transcripts. The teachers tend to use technical skills, examination levels and repertoire as the three main ways to define a beginner, intermediate and advanced student. Interestingly enough, the internet survey showed that many teachers also used length of learning as a key definer, however, the view presented by Uszler *et al* (2000) suggests that this is problematic or challenging due to people commencing their learning at various ages and stages throughout their life.

The number of teachers defining students by repertoire and examination levels increased dramatically from the beginner to intermediate levels, and there was another slight increase in the advanced level. As this seems to be an important part of the three definitions, we can assume that repertoire and examination material would be a key factor in a student's motivation levels.

#### **4.5.1 Teaching styles for different levels of students**

After establishing the factors that define a beginner, intermediate and advanced student, the teachers were then asked to describe their teaching styles for each of these levels. Table 4.6 shows a summary of the teachers' responses to their teaching style/s.



Table 4.6 Teaching style for a beginner, intermediate and advanced student

Question	Interview			Survey		
How would you describe your teaching style for a:						
Beginner student?	Enthusiastic	6	50.0%	Teaching basic technique/practice skills	154	43.8%
	Encouraging	5	41.7%	Fun/love of music	97	27.6%
	Repetition	4	33.3%	Encouraging	63	17.9%
	Traditional	4	33.3%	Patient	44	12.5%
				Individual	40	11.4%
				Method books	39	11.1%
				Structured	35	9.9%
				Repetition	26	7.4%
				Discovery-based	18	5.1%
				Enthusiastic	11	3.1%
				Involvement of parents	8	2.3%
				Rewards (stickers etc)	8	2.3%
				Other	8	2.3%
Total	12		Total	352		
Intermediate student?	Collaborative between teacher & student	4	33.3%	Technical/practice skills	130	37.2%
	Allow some independence	3	25.0%	Variety of repertoire	106	30.4%
	Enthusiastic	3	25.0%	Musicality	86	24.6%
	Focus on how to practise	3	25.0%	Flexible/individualised	51	14.6%
	Encourage performances (goals)	2	16.7%	Encouraging	39	11.2%
	More repertoire choices	2	16.7%	Challenge the student	38	10.9%
	Encourage listening	1	8.3%	Encourage performing	24	6.9%
				Independent learning	24	6.9%
				Motivating/inspirational	22	6.3%
				Fun/love of music	18	5.2%
				Patient	16	4.6%
				Other	10	2.9%
	Total	12		Total	349	
Advanced student?	Assist in interpretation	5	41.7%	Assist in interpretation	92	26.4%
	Offer technical suggestions	3	25.0%	Variety of repertoire	88	25.2%
	Student-centred	3	25.0%	Offer technical suggestions	78	22.3%
	Challenge the student	1	8.3%	Independent learner	58	16.6%
	Combination of difficult and manageable repertoire	1	8.3%	High expectations	45	12.0%
				Student-centred	43	12.3%
				Encourage performing	35	10.0%
				Enthusiastic/encouraging	25	7.2%
				Encourage practice/give practice advice	20	5.7%
				Fun/love of music	19	5.4%
				Listening to recordings/performances	19	5.4%
				Attention to detail	18	5.2%
				Inspirational/motivational	7	2.0%
				Other	10	2.9%
	Total	12		Total	349	

The teaching style for beginner students matches the defining characteristics of a beginner student given by teachers in the interviews and internet survey; learning basic skills and technique. The teachers also mentioned the importance of fostering a love of music as well as being encouraging and patient with the beginner students. The teachers did not mention any involvement of parents to help maintain the enthusiasm and love for music encouraged in the lessons. A beginner student generally sees the teacher for thirty minutes a week; a short time compared with the hours spent alone practising. Is the student expected to maintain his or her own motivation at this level? Or perhaps parents should be required to supervise and encourage practice.

For the intermediate student, repertoire and musicality became more of a focus as it is assumed that the student has a grasp on the basic technical skills to allow them further musicality in their playing. The idea of encouraging students to be independent learners was also mentioned for the intermediate teaching style. The teachers felt it important to begin encouraging independence so that, at the advanced level, there can be a greater sense of collaboration between the teacher and student.

#### **4.6 Teaching the intermediate piano student**

Table 4.7 below summarises various issues relevant to the specifics of teaching the intermediate piano student.

Table 4.7 Teaching the intermediate piano student

Question	Interview			Survey		
Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?	20-25 students	5	41.7%	51 or more students	191	49.4%
	Less than 10 students	4	33.3%	21-50 students	104	26.9%
	10-19 students	1	8.3%	11-20 students	49	12.7%
	More than 25 students	1	8.3%	1-10 students	43	11.1%
	Not sure	1	8.3%			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	
What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?	Correcting mistakes/bad habits	5	41.7%	Keeping piano and practice a priority in their lives	287	74.0%
	Keeping piano and practice a priority in their lives	5	41.7%	Keeping up their enthusiasm	162	41.8%
	Keeping up their enthusiasm	5	41.7%	Finding appropriate repertoire	101	26.0%
	Finding appropriate repertoire	3	25.0%	Age (adolescents)	12	3.1%
	Patience	1	8.3%	Correcting mistakes/bad habits	7	1.8%
				Other	6	1.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	
What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?	Watching them develop	7	58.3%	Watching the student become an independent learner	302	78.2%
	The repertoire	5	41.7%	Watching the student mature as a person	198	51.3%
	Communication	4	33.3%	The repertoire	133	34.5%
	Seeing the student enjoy music	4	33.3%	Watching them develop musically	39	10.1%
				Watching their excitement/enjoyment of learning	16	4.1%
				Other	4	1.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>386</b>	

As presented in Table 4.7, the data reflects the age and experience of a large number of teachers who participated in the research. The interview and survey data match for what teachers consider the most enjoyable and the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate student. The teachers indicated that keeping piano and practice a priority in the student's life, as well as maintaining enthusiasm was difficult. Who should take responsibility for maintaining the student's enthusiasm: teachers, students, parents, or a

combination of all three? Is it the repertoire that the student is given that provides motivation, or perhaps the enthusiasm from the teacher, or support from parents?

#### 4.7 Programs of learning for the intermediate piano student

The literature revealed that there are various different programs of learning available to teachers for their intermediate students. Each of the teachers in the interviews and survey were asked how they design a program of learning for the intermediate student; what factors they consider, what repertoire they use, and who chooses the repertoire. These responses have been summarised in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8 Programs of learning for the intermediate piano student

Question	Interview			Survey		
How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?	Advancing skills	7	58.3%	Variety of music	140	48.6%
	Combination of challenging and manageable repertoire	6	50.0%	Technical aspects (scales, sight-reading etc)	110	38.2%
	Technical aspects (scales, sight-reading etc)	6	50.0%	Personality/interests	82	28.5%
	Variety of music	6	50.0%	Ability	70	24.3%
	Motivating/interesting repertoire	4	33.3%	Time for practising etc	47	16.3%
	Contrapuntal repertoire	1	8.3%	Goals	40	13.9%
				Requirements for exams/competitions	24	8.3%
				Age	17	5.9%
				Parental support	7	2.4%
				Other	7	2.4%
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	
When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:	Existing repertoire	12	100.0%	General repertoire	277	83.7%
	Exam syllabi	8	66.7%	External examination syllabi	223	67.4%
	Competitions/festival	2	16.7%	Method books	212	64.0%
	Method books	1	8.3%	Competitions/festivals/eisteddfods	199	60.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>331</b>	
How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?	Teacher & Student	11	91.7%	Sometimes	230	66.5%
	Teacher	1	8.3%	Student chooses from selection	52	15.0%
				Always	29	8.4%
				Choose together	17	4.9%
				Never	16	4.6%
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>344</b>	

Table 4.8 Programs of learning for the intermediate piano student (continued)

Question	Interview			Survey		
If you left an intermediate student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?	Popular/Jazz music	7	58.3%	Popular music	156	47.9%
	Things they like	3	25.0%	Depends on the student	61	18.7%
	All one style	1	8.3%	Classical music	59	18.1%
	Pieces that look easy/short	1	8.3%	Things they like/are familiar with	51	15.6%
	They would be stuck	1	8.3%	Pieces below or above their abilities	49	15.0%
				Jazz music	37	11.3%
				Well known classics	19	5.8%
				What their friends are playing	14	4.3%
				They wouldn't know	11	3.4%
				Not sure	9	2.8%
				Sacred music	7	2.1%
				A variety of repertoire	6	1.8%
				Same as the teacher chooses	6	1.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>326</b>	
In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?	Exposure to a variety of repertoire	6	50.0%	Variety of repertoire	95	35.2%
	Holistic approach	6	50.0%	Flexible/individual approach	45	16.7%
	More practice	6	50.0%	Enjoyment/love of music	30	11.1%
	Listen to repertoire	3	25.0%	Practice routine	29	10.7%
	More frequent lessons	3	25.0%	Good teaching	28	10.4%
	Challenge the student	2	16.7%	Have students choose some pieces	24	8.9%
	Things the student likes	2	16.7%	Opportunities for group lessons/ensembles etc	24	8.9%
	Communication between teacher, student and parent	1	8.3%	Technical skills	23	8.5%
	Exams (goals)	1	8.3%	Knowledge in history/theory etc	19	7.0%
				Parental/family support	18	6.7%
				Goals	14	5.2%
				Performance opportunities	14	5.2%
				Not sure	13	5.0%
				Going to concerts/listening to CD's	11	4.1%
				Less extra-curricula activities	10	4.0%
				Less pressure on exams	7	2.6%
				Consistent lessons/more frequent lessons	4	1.5%
				Other	10	4.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	

When structuring a learning program for the intermediate piano student, teachers aim to incorporate a variety of repertoire as well as various technical exercises. However, they don't mention any creative elements such as improvisation or allowing students to compose their own pieces. Both the interviewed and surveyed teachers most commonly use general repertoire in their programs of learning, although the survey revealed that all

four options given were quite popular. This suggests that lessons are being driven by existing repertoire only, as opposed to using a combination of repertoire and creative elements.

The teachers obviously feel it is important for their intermediate students to choose some of their own repertoire, as 66.5% of teachers selected 'sometimes' while 15% indicated that the student chooses from a selection of pieces that the teacher presents to them. It is possible that the teachers who selected 'sometimes' were also referring to this, however it was not specified in the survey data. Should intermediate students be allowed to choose their own pieces? Or is that why it is important to have an experienced and knowledgeable teacher who is able to select repertoire at the appropriate level for the student? Allowing a student to select their own repertoire could affect their motivation towards practice and learning.

Interestingly, the most common style of music that teachers give to their students is classical and the least common styles were jazz and popular. As this reflects what the teachers experienced when they were learning, is this merely a copying of their own learning? Perhaps they are teaching the way that they were taught rather than in the best interest of today's students. In their ideal world, the teachers would like their students to be exposed to a variety of repertoire; it is unclear whether the teachers want more variety within the classical repertoire, or whether they want a variety through a combination of classical and popular/jazz repertoire. If it is the latter, then perhaps teachers need to find the variety of repertoire that suits the needs of the student, as well as their personal

interest. As stated by Bachus *et al* (2009) in Section 1.3, the piano has one of the largest selections of repertoire, therefore a teacher can surely find a piece to interest each student. If it is however, the former, then the teachers need to re-evaluate the programs they are currently setting for their students. Is the lesson restricted by examination or competition material? Or perhaps the selection of repertoire is narrow because of the teacher's own knowledge and awareness of what's available. Repertoire is a controllable factor; it is possible to find suitable and motivating repertoire for each student.

#### **4.7.1 Specific programs of learning**

In the survey, the teachers were asked to give specific examples of the types of repertoire, exam syllabi, method books and competition repertoire that they use. This was again designed as a follow-up to the interviews to obtain greater detail of the programs of learning used for the intermediate piano student. The responses to 'repertoire' are divided into the periods/styles of Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Popular/Jazz. A row has also been included for compilation books, as many of the teachers indicated that they use these, although many did not specify what composers or periods were included in the compilations. Not all teachers gave further detail on the programs of learning they use. For those that did, the detail is summarised in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Specific examples of learning programs

Repertoire	Classical	164	77.0%
	Baroque	145	68.1%
	Romantic	117	54.9%
	20 <sup>th</sup> Century	108	50.7%
	Compilation books	69	32.4%
	Popular/Jazz	58	27.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	
External examination syllabi	Australian Music Examination Board	80	46.5%
	Music Teachers National Association	41	23.8%
	Trinity Guildhall Examinations	24	14.0%
	Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music	22	12.8%
	Australia and New Zealand Cultural Arts	10	5.8%
	National Certificate of Music Program	8	4.7%
	Royal Conservatory of Music	4	2.3%
	St Cecilia	4	2.3%
	Royal College of Music	3	1.7%
	Other syllabi	3	1.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	
Method books	Faber & Faber	39	36.8%
	Alfred's	37	34.9%
	Bastien	31	29.2%
	Hal Leonard	12	11.3%
	Celebration Series	8	7.5%
	Keith Snell	7	6.6%
	Frances Clark	5	4.7%
	Schaum	4	3.8%
	Thompson	4	3.8%
	Other methods	6	5.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	
Competitions/festivals/eisteddfods	Music Teachers National Association	53	46.5%
	Local festivals	27	23.7%
	Eisteddfods	25	21.9%
	National Guild of Piano Teachers	12	10.5%
	National Federation of Music Clubs	10	8.8%
	Other competitions etc	5	4.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	

While only a small percentage of teachers indicated that they give their students popular and jazz music, an overwhelming majority indicated in Table 4.8 that if their students were to pick their own music, it would be popular music. These results are rather alarming; many of the teachers are aware that their intermediate piano students would choose to learn popular or jazz music, but are instead providing them with music from the



classical periods. Are we truly catering for each individual student if we acknowledge their interest in a certain period but don't provide music to fuel their excitement? It seems that this is an example of participants being influenced by their own teachers and simply adopting their teacher's style, rather than developing their own to suit each student.

#### **4.7.2 Perceived reactions to repertoire**

One of the questions asked during both the interviews and survey asked teachers what they felt a typical intermediate student's reaction would be to Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20<sup>th</sup> century and Popular/Jazz music. The interviewed teachers' responses will be presented in text as it was felt that the information would be better uncovered in this format, rather than in tabular form. The initial idea that emerges from the interview data is that many teachers are unsure about how their students will respond and react to different musical periods and styles. Many teachers responded that "much depends on the student" as well as the individual composer, and the piece itself. The following points relate to the interview transcripts and each of the twelve teacher's perceived reactions of an intermediate piano student to the periods of music identified above.

- In terms of Baroque repertoire, nine teachers refer to the challenge of making it appealing to students, with one even commenting they have a "hard time selling it."
- The Classical repertoire seems to be more favourable than the Baroque repertoire with ten teachers agreeing that "more pieces in this repertoire are liked."

- The Romantic period is seen as “the most accessible genre of classical music” by seven teachers. Three teachers also found a difference in male and female responses to this genre.
- The contemporary period presented some uncertainty amongst teachers; six teachers believe that it is a popular genre, while four specified that their students generally do not like atonal music.
- The popular/jazz style of music received the best reaction from teachers with eleven teachers commenting that it is popular, and four of these stating that the students love it, or it is their favourite style.

There are several interesting factors that emerge from this data: the importance of teacher enthusiasm, the support of parents, and familiarity and exposure to style. One teacher, in referring to music from the Classical period, responded that all her students tend to enjoy the classical repertoire, perhaps because she loves it. She suggested that it is “easy to convey your love of something to someone else and they sort of catch that.” In regards to music from the Contemporary period, one teacher mentioned that while the student was excited about the piece, the parents didn’t like it, which made it difficult for the student to practise and remain enthusiastic. The Popular and Jazz styles of music were unanimously the student’s favourite styles, as suggested by the teachers. The teachers believe that students will typically choose the style of music they are most familiar with and are exposed to most. It was also suggested that often this style of music is more difficult than the student had anticipated, but their enthusiasm for learning it carries them through.

The table below represents the surveyed teachers perceived reactions of a typical intermediate student to various periods and styles of music. The internet survey provided five different boxes; ranging from ‘disdain’ (1) to ‘ambivalence’ (3) to ‘excitement’ (5). The teachers were to select one box for each style/period of music. The average for each style/period (out of five) was calculated by Survey Monkey.

Table 4.10 Perceived reactions to repertoire

Question	Response	Rating Average (out of 5)
What do you believe is a typical intermediate student’s reaction to:	Popular/Jazz music	4.53
	Romantic music	4.06
	Classical music	3.87
	20 <sup>th</sup> century music	3.22
	Baroque music	3.14

The teachers indicated that the Popular/Jazz music is the most favoured. Similar to the interviews, the surveyed teachers did suggest that perhaps the students are not exposed to classical music outside of the lesson and therefore not familiar with the style. Perhaps it is merely a matter of the students wanting to play what is familiar to them. Is it not then important that we encourage the student’s love of learning, regardless of style? This is not to say that the classical repertoire is not important or highly regarded, but perhaps needs to be introduced and appreciated rather than forced upon the student.

#### 4.8 Issues of motivation

The aims of this research were to investigate programs of learning for the intermediate piano student and aspects of motivation and learning. The following table (Table 4.11) examines the teachers’ responses regarding motivation.

Table 4.11 Motivation and learning

Question	Interview			Survey		
In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level?	Some	9	75.0%	To a moderate extent	252	76.6%
	All	2	16.7%	To a significant extent	43	13.1%
	Not sure	1	8.3%	Not at all	30	9.1%
				Other	4	1.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>329</b>	
To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?	Too many problems	7		To a moderate extent	165	49.4%
	Not enough practice	4		To a significant extent	113	33.8%
	Competing demands	3		Not at all	50	15.0%
	Frustrating	3		Other	6	1.8%
	Stops being fun	3				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>334</b>	
What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?	Repertoire	7		Satisfaction of learning a piece	233	65.4%
			58.3%			
	Mastering pieces	4	33.3%	The repertoire	179	52.5%
	Appealing to individuality	3	25.0%	Playing for friends & family	124	36.4%
	Duets	2	16.7%	Success	48	14.1%
	Inspiration	2	16.7%	Parents/family support	22	6.5%
	Playing for family/friends	2	16.7%	Love of music	21	6.2%
	Positive reinforcement	1	8.3%	Performing	17	5.0%
				Teaching	14	4.1%
				Having talents recognised	11	3.2%
				Social interaction (group lessons, duets etc)	8	2.3%
				Using skills (accompanying etc)	6	1.8%
				Other	8	2.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	

Table 4.11 Motivation and learning (continued)

Question	Interview			Survey		
What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?	Competing demands	9	75.0%	Outside factors (school, family, extra-curricula activities)	341	99.5%
	Poor repertoire choice	4	33.3%	Technical difficulties	100	29.2%
	Too hard	4	33.3%	Lack of discipline/lack of practice	20	5.8%
	Peer pressure	3	25.0%	Lack of ability	10	3.0%
	Poor family support	3	25.0%	Poor teaching	10	3.0%
	Poor teaching	2	16.7%	Repertoire	8	2.3%
				Isolation of practice/the instrument	5	1.5%
				Stress of performance/exams	5	1.5%
				Not keeping lessons enjoyable	4	1.2%
				Age	2	0.6%
				Other	6	1.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>343</b>	
In your experience, is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels?	Yes	8	66.7%	Yes	201	62.2%
	Don't know	3	25.0%	No	122	37.8%
	No	1	8.3%			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>	
Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?	Encouraging parents	3	25.0%	Inspire the student with suitable repertoire	152	67.0%
	Good work ethic	3	25.0%	Better communication between teacher, student and parents	128	56.4%
	Inspire student	3	25.0%	Not too many extra-curricula activities	24	10.6%
	Communication between teacher, student and parent	2	16.7%	Creating goals	18	8.0%
	Appealing to individuality	1	8.3%	Opportunities for collaboration	16	7.0%
	Piano at home	1	8.3%	Encouragement/inspiration	14	6.2%
	Recognition of benefits of music	1	8.3%	Flexible teaching	10	4.4%
	Suitable repertoire	1	8.3%	Incorporating other music subjects	7	3.0%
				Better preparation in the beginner level	5	2.2%
				Practice support/advice	5	2.2%
				Other	5	2.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	

The teachers indicated in both the interviews and survey that 90% of their students struggle to some extent with repertoire at the intermediate level and that this can greatly affect their decisions to continue learning. In the survey, the teachers have indicated that the satisfaction of learning a piece of music is highly motivating to an intermediate student, however they rated this quite poorly when recalling their own learning experiences as seen in Table 4.3.

The results often indicate the need for ‘individualised’ programs for each student, as many of the key motivators can also be a reason for students to lose motivation. Repertoire is considered one of the most important factors that influence motivation, however if this is chosen poorly and is of little or no interest to the student or is beyond their abilities, they will lose motivation. As identified by the teachers, the repertoire that they believe the intermediate student is most interested in learning is popular or jazz music. The biggest reason for students to lose motivation was due to the outside factors of school and extra-curricula activities. Many teachers mentioned that their students were involved in sport, dance, school orchestra, as well as having a part time job, and therefore had very little time to practise.

The teachers indicated that they felt there was a higher drop-out rate of students at the intermediate level and this was again mainly due to extra-curricula activities. They offer several solutions which simultaneously involve all three participants in the learning process: student, teacher and parent. They suggest that the teacher needs to inspire the student, the student needs a good work ethic, and the parents need to encourage and

support their child. It's interesting that they mention the need for the teacher to inspire the student; is this through repertoire? If the students were given pieces they loved, they would probably be inspired to practise more, regardless of their extra-curricula activities. There is also the factor that many of the students' extra-curricula activities are team sports or socially oriented in some way. If the students were given duets to play with their peers, or perhaps group lessons, this could also improve the drop-out rates. Further, how important is the involvement of parents? The teachers suggest that parents need to encourage and support their child, is this through attending lessons, practice, or something else? If a student has motivating repertoire, they would probably require less encouragement to practise and learn from their parents.

#### **4.9 Summary**

The data obtained from both the interviews and the survey confirm that the intermediate piano student teaching environment is complex and challenging, yet rewarding. The teachers believe that the competing demands on students of today have increased from when many of the teachers were learning and the styles of music and the mediums for listening to it have changed dramatically.

The teachers aim to provide programs of learning that are both interesting and beneficial to the student, however are perhaps overlooking one key area. If the intermediate student is motivated by repertoire and teachers are aware that they prefer the popular and jazz styles of music, why are they mostly being given classical music? Are the teachers simply teaching as they were taught? Every teacher will start out with what they know,

but as stated in Section 2.5.1, teachers need to stay motivated and updated about teaching through professional development. This way they will remain up to date with the latest publications, trends in music selections, and teaching methods. Teachers also need to be aware of the isolation factor associated with learning the piano; lessons are typically private, and practice is undertaken alone. Teachers should suggest group lessons, duets, concerts, or any other form of social interaction for learning. The bottom line is: if students enjoy learning, they will want to continue. If they are motivated to learn, either through repertoire, the lesson format or some other factor, then their chances of achieving lifelong musical learning are greatly increased.



## **Chapter 5 – Students and Key Stakeholders Data Analysis**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter Four revealed that teachers believe repertoire to be a key motivator for the intermediate piano student. The teachers identified popular and jazz music as the student's favourite repertoire, however the majority of music given to the students is from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods. This chapter will detail the analysis of the data from interviews with other key stakeholders; the students, method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors.

### **5.2 Students**

There were seventeen students interviewed – seven in Greensboro, North Carolina and ten in Townsville, Queensland. Sixteen of the students were adolescents between the ages of eleven and seventeen and one was an adult student. The students' names (pseudonyms) are detailed in Chapter 3, Table 3.5. The students were asked about their reasons for starting piano, why they currently enjoy it, and what their favourite repertoire is. The responses to the twenty-one questions are summarised in the four tables below. The tables follow the structure of the interview: profiling the student, piano and extra-curricula activities, and repertoire. The questions presented in the tables are exactly the same as the interview questions presented to the students, however some are summarised differently in the table for ease of viewing. Any of the questions that have been summarised differently are shown in italics in the tables.

### 5.2.1 Profiling the students

In Table 5.1 below, a profile of the students is presented, in terms of their age, how many piano teachers they've had, and why they started learning piano. An extra row was added to show how long each student had been learning, as this could not be identified from the starting age and current age of the student as shown in the table; this is because the table shows an average of the starting and current ages of the students, rather than individual responses.

Table 5.1 Profiling the student

Question	Responses (summarised)		
How old were you when you started learning the piano?	6-7 years	6	35.3%
	8-9 years	5	29.4%
	10+ years	4	23.5%
	Under 6	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
How old are you now?	14-15 years	10	58.8%
	16-17 years	4	23.5%
	11-13 years	2	11.8%
	Adult student	1	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
<i>Length of learning</i>	6-7 years	6	35.3%
	8-9 years	5	29.4%
	Less than 6 years	4	23.5%
	10+ years	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
How many piano teachers have you had so far?	1 teacher	5	29.4%
	2 teachers	5	29.4%
	4 teachers	4	23.5%
	3 teachers	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
Why did you start learning the piano?	Family member learnt	8	47.1%
	Parent direction	8	47.1%
	Showed interest in learning	5	29.4%
	Wasn't allowed to learn chosen instrument	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	

As can be seen from the above table, the intermediate student varies in terms of age and length of learning although most tend to be in the mid-teens age area. Uszler *et al* (2000)

suggested that the length of time a student has been learning could be used to define their level, however there are factors that would create variation: the student's maturity or work ethic. In this research, the number of years that each student has been learning varies from four to ten years. The number of teachers that each student has had in their time of learning varies between one and four teachers. One student indicated that they changed teacher because they moved, while two other students indicated that they changed teacher because the teacher didn't 'suit'. The remaining students didn't indicate why they had more than one piano teacher.

### 5.2.2 Piano and extra-curricula activities

The students were asked how often they practise (how many days/week) and how long they practise each time. In Table 5.2, the two questions have been combined to show how long each student practised per week, otherwise it would be difficult to gain a sense of how much time each student spent practising.

Table 5.2 Piano and extra-curricula activities

Question	Responses (summarised)		
What do you like most about learning the piano?	Fun to play	12	70.6%
	Challenge	4	23.5%
	Express emotions	2	11.8%
	Sound of the instrument	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?	Practising	9	52.9%
	Making mistakes	5	29.4%
	Technical aspects (rhythm, theory, sight-reading etc)	4	23.5%
	Being restricted with exams	1	5.9%
	Getting back into it after a number of years off	1	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	

Table 5.2 Piano and extra-curricula activities (continued)

Question	Responses (summarised)		
What do you think a piano teacher's job is?	Help students learn (notes, scales etc)	16	94.1%
	Help with style of music	5	29.4%
	Inspire student	5	29.4%
	Fix mistakes	3	17.6%
	Choose music	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano?	Maybe	6	35.3%
	Yes	6	35.3%
	No	5	29.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
<i>Practice time per week</i>	1 hour	5	29.4%
	2 hours	2	11.8%
	4 hours	2	11.8%
	5 hours	2	11.8%
	6 hours	2	11.8%
	7-14 hours	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
What motivates you to practise?	To learn the piece	7	41.2%
	To get better	6	35.3%
	Lesson each week	3	17.6%
	Love music	2	11.8%
	Mother says to	2	11.8%
	Nothing else to do	1	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
What do you think about when you practise?	Notes	11	64.7%
	Styles	7	41.2%
	Emotions	4	23.5%
	Fingering	3	17.6%
	The end result	3	17.6%
	Things that happened during the day	3	17.6%
	Dynamics	1	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in?	Sports	9	52.9%
	Other instruments	5	29.4%
	Church	3	17.6%
	Art classes	2	11.8%
	Dance	2	11.8%
	Part-time job	2	11.8%
	Languages	1	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
What do you like to do in your free time?	Computer	6	35.3%
	Play piano	4	23.5%
	Read	4	23.5%
	Watch TV	3	17.6%
	Arts (draw etc)	2	11.8%
	Hang out with friends	2	11.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	

The students each had their own reasons for why they like learning piano and what they find frustrating about learning. The students confirmed what the sample of teachers believed, that adolescents of today are extremely busy with school, sport, dance, part-time jobs and social activities. Each student listed two or three activities that they participate in after school, and two students, Sarah Jenkins and Ella Christian, mentioned the lack of time for practice. Ella Christian said that one of the frustrating things about learning piano is “having to make time to practise because with the busy life with school and work it’s hard to find time to practise.” Aside from the lack of time, the students also mentioned that they are often unmotivated to practise, or frustrated from making mistakes. As mentioned in the previous chapter in Section 4.5.1, students spend on average half an hour to an hour with their teacher each week; the rest of the time is spent practising alone. It therefore becomes important not only to inspire the student during the lesson, but to also motivate them to practise effectively and efficiently during the week.

When the students were asked what they thought a piano teacher’s job was, most of them simply answered, “to teach.” They then elaborated to explain that they were mostly referring to the teaching of notes, but also styles and inspiring the student. The students were then asked if they would one day like to teach piano, and the majority were either unsure or said no. Of the six students who answered “yes,” four believe it would be fun, while three students want to pass on their knowledge and love of piano.

From the teacher interviews and survey, it became clear that at the intermediate level, teachers were trying to encourage a sense of independence in the students. It seems

however, that these students are relying on the teacher for their learning. The teachers mentioned that they often get their intermediate students to start learning a piece on their own, however it seems that the students are not confident enough, or just don't want to do the basics on their own. There were five students who responded that they showed an interest in learning piano or were inspired to learn, however these were not the same five students that believed one of the teacher's jobs was to inspire the student. Perhaps some students have an innate interest in learning and don't need further inspiration from the teacher, whereas others require the teacher to provide inspiration.

Although Table 5.2 shows how much practice the students did on average each week, it wasn't possible to show the break-up of each of those amounts in the table. Each student varied in how they broke up their practice for the week; some practised for one hour, twice a week, while others practised for 20 minutes, seven days a week. The students were asked what motivates them to practise and it was interesting to see that only two students responded that a love of piano or music was what motivated them. For the majority of the students they simply wanted to learn the piece or get better, although it is unknown whether this is because they love the piece or love playing. There were also several students who mentioned that they were motivated to practise more when they liked the pieces they were working on. While they're practising, many of the students mentioned thinking about the notes; getting the notes right, fixing the fingering etc. There were very few students who mentioned listening for dynamics or getting the style right. This connects with the argument Rostvall and West (2003) make in Section 2.6.2, that

teachers rarely encourage students to listen for phrases, but rather read the music ‘note at a time.’

### 5.2.3 Repertoire

The questions regarding repertoire have been divided into two tables. The first table (Table 5.3) discusses the choice of repertoire; who chooses the pieces, who the student would prefer to choose repertoire and how the student would find their own repertoire if they had to.

Table 5.3 Repertoire choices

Question	Responses (summarised)		
Who chooses your pieces?	Teacher & student	15	88.2%
	Student	2	11.8%
	Mother	1	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?	Teacher & student	14	82.4%
	Student	3	17.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?	Look through sheet music at home	6	35.3%
	Listen to CD's	5	29.4%
	Local sheet music shop	4	23.5%
	Talk to other pianists	4	23.5%
	Youtube	3	17.6%
	Look at online sheet music sites	1	5.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	

When choosing repertoire, the majority of students indicated that the teacher would show a selection of pieces they might like and they would choose from this. Sarah Jenkins indicated that she prefers it this way. “I think it’s best that way because I would pick really easy pieces and I probably wouldn’t learn. I think it’s also good because she values

what I think.” Only one participant wasn’t happy with this method of selecting repertoire and would prefer to select their own, however this was because she felt the teacher was restricted by choosing pieces for exams and the local juvenile eisteddfod. This is however less about the method the teacher uses and more about the ‘restrictions’ of set repertoire for examinations. If repertoire is important for motivating students and students indicate that they practise more when they have pieces that they like, are they not speaking up when asked their opinion on the repertoire? Ella Christian believes that it’s a teacher’s job “to get music you like but you have to make them aware of what you like and want to learn.” Even so, perhaps it is not reasonable to expect a young teenager to ‘challenge’ their teacher.

The table below (Table 5.4) shows each student’s responses towards repertoire in terms of the period (B=Baroque, C=Classical, R=Romantic, 20=20<sup>th</sup> Century, P/J=Popular/Jazz). The questions summarised include the student’s favourite composer/s since they started learning, the pieces they are currently learning, their favourite and least favourite of those pieces, their favourite and least favourite pieces since they have been learning and any pieces that they would like to still learn. If the student didn’t have a favourite composer/favourite piece, this is indicated by N/I (not indicated). If the student couldn’t remember the name or composer of a piece or if they were not able to give enough information so that the period could be identified, this has been indicated with a dash (-). If the student didn’t have one favourite piece because they liked them all, this is indicated by ‘All’. The total number of times each period was mentioned per question is displayed at the bottom of the table.



Table 5.4 Student's responses towards repertoire

Student	Question						
	Do you have any favourite composers?	What pieces are you learning at the moment?	What is your favourite piece today?	What is your least favourite piece today?	What pieces have you played that you really liked?	What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with?	Are there any pieces that you really want to learn?
Mia Adams	N/I	C, R	R	C	R	R	N/I
Natalie Alexander	N/I	20	N/I	N/I	C/R	C/R	P/J
Ella Christian	20, P/J	C, 20, P/J	C	N/I	P/J	R	N/I
Samantha Daniel	N/I	B, R, 20	B	N/I	B	C/R	N/I
Chloe Jackson	C, R	C, R, 20	20	R	C	C	P/J
Sarah Jenkins	C, 20, P/J	B, C, 20	C	-	P/J -	20	R, 20
Hannah Johns	C, P/J	B, C, P/J	P/J	N/I	-	P/J	P/J
Noah Johnson	B, 20	R, 20	20	N/I	B	C/R	R
Grace Kings	B, C, R	B, C	C	B	B	N/I	R
Anthony Micarelli	C	P/J	P/J	N/I	All	B	P/J
Taylor Michaels	N/I	B, C, R, 20	R	N/I	P/J	P/J	N/I
Alyssa Ryan	P/J	20, P/J	20	N/I	20	N/I	N/I
Christopher Smith	R, P/J	R, P/J	P/J	N/I	R, P/J	R	R
Andrew Taylor	C, R, 20	C, R, P/J	P/J	P/J	C, P/J	P/J	C, 20

Table 5.4 Student's responses towards repertoire (continued)

Student	Question																				
	Do you have any favourite composers?			What pieces are you learning at the moment?			What is your favourite piece today?			What is your least favourite piece today?			What pieces have you played that you really liked?			What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with?			Are there any pieces that you really want to learn?		
Alexis Williams	20			C, R, 20			R			N/I			C			N/I			R		
Aiden Wood	N/I			20, P/J			20			N/I			20			-			P/J		
Ashley Woodgate	N/I			B, P/J			B			N/I			C			-			R, P/J		
Totals	C	6	35.3%	20	10	58.8%	P/J	4	23.5%	N/I	12	70.6%	P/J	6	35.3%	N/I	3	17.6%	P/J	6	35.3%
	N/I	6	35.3%	C	9	52.9%	20	4	23.5%	B	1	5.9%	C	5	29.4%	P/J	3	17.6%	R	6	35.3%
	20	6	35.3%	P/J	8	47.1%	C	3	17.6%	C	1	5.9%	B	3	17.6%	R	2	11.8%	N/I	5	29.4%
	P/J	5	29.4%	R	8	47.1%	R	3	17.6%	P/J	1	5.9%	R	2	11.8%	20	2	11.8%	20	2	11.8%
	R	3	17.6%	B	6	35.3%	B	2	11.8%	R	1	5.9%	20	2	11.8%	-	2	11.8%	C	1	5.9%
	B	2	11.8%	-	0	0%	N/I	1	5.9%	-	1	5.9%	-	2	11.8%	B	1	5.9%	B	0	0%
	All	0	0%	All	0	0%	All	0	0%	All	0	0%	All	1	5.9%	C	1	5.9%	All	0	0%
	-	0	0%	N/I	0	0%	-	0	0%	20	0	0%	N/I	0	0%	All	0	0%	-	0	0%
	Total	17		Total	17		Total	17		Total	17		Total	17		Total	17		Total	17	

The teachers indicated that often their current intermediate students don't enjoy classical music as much as they do popular or jazz styles. However, as can be seen from the table above, for the majority of students there is no pattern or trend in the styles of their repertoire choices. The totals at the bottom of the table indicate that pieces within each of the periods are similarly liked and disliked at times, therefore unfortunately offering no insight into the preferred styles and periods of music of an intermediate piano student.

It is possible that many students at an intermediate level may not realise which time period or style their pieces are in. As outlined in the six examination syllabi most commonly used in Australia, the majority of examining bodies don't ask questions relating to style and history until at least Grade 5. Even at this level, it is quite a basic understanding of their own three or four pieces rather than a comprehensive knowledge of various composers and periods: "background of the composers and of the works performed. Period from which the music derives" (AGME 2009). Several of the students that were interviewed struggled to name the composer of their piece, let alone the period in which it was written. If a student is unaware of the time period their piece was written in, can they have a bias towards certain pieces? It surely isn't possible for them to be biased towards certain periods.

Hannah Johns responded, "I really like Mozart stuff but we studied a lot of that at school, so it's probably just because I know more about him so I like it more." The teachers in the interviews and surveys suggested that perhaps intermediate students are not as interested in classical music because they are not as exposed to it as they are to popular

and jazz music. Hannah Johns has not only indicated that she likes Mozart's music, but also that she has been exposed to it "a lot" at school and therefore has confidence with it.

#### **5.2.4 Students' views summarised**

From the interview data, it can be seen that the intermediate piano student:

1. Varies in age;
2. Often has many competing demands with their time;
3. Doesn't seem to favour one period of music over another, but did indicate that they practise more when they like what they're playing; and
4. Prefers their teacher to select their music, but likes to have their opinion valued.

There were several interesting points raised through the interview transcripts that we as teachers could consider for motivating our students. Several students indicated that they practise more when they like their pieces. As teachers, this means we need to get it right with the repertoire. How do we get it right? There are many factors to consider when choosing repertoire for a student. These may involve requirements from school, examinations or concerts, or they might involve the student's taste and interest in certain forms of music. Hannah Johns indicated that she liked the music of Mozart because she had studied it previously at school. Therefore, perhaps familiarity equals confidence that in turn motivates the student. Sarah Jenkins mentioned that she liked it when her teacher valued her opinions. Maybe the notion of feeling valued has an effect on an intermediate student's motivation levels.

### **5.3 Method book authors**

Three representatives from different method books were interviewed: Morty Manus (Alfred's Basic Piano Library), Phillip Keveren (Hal Leonard Student Piano Library) and M'Lou Dietzer (First Impressions). Each author's profile will initially be presented in Table 5.5 below; their start in the publishing business, the inspiration and creation of the method book and the relation of the method book to the intermediate piano student will be discussed. At the end of this chapter, Section 5.7 will highlight all of the external stakeholders' views on the intermediate piano student and motivation towards learning.

Table 5.5 Profiling the method book authors

Question	Response		
	Morty Manus	Phillip Keveren	M'Lou Dietzer
How did you come to be working in the music publishing field?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Father bought Alfred's music publishing in 1928</li> <li>• Morty began working for Alfred's in 1952. Took over the company when his father was no longer able to keep running it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained first experience writing pedagogical pieces through a job in the music department at Yamaha</li> <li>• Has now been writing for Hal Leonard "in one degree or another" for almost 20 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was inspired to write a piano method through the teaching of her own students – led her to believe "there was a need for this kind of book"</li> </ul>
What is the history of the piano method?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The series was designed to be "cheerful, witty and humorous." The pieces were meant to be fun, so that the students would want to learn and want to practise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barbara Kreader approached Hal Leonard with an idea of a piano method she wanted to accomplish – they accepted. She then asked Phillip Keveren and Fred Kern to be a part of the team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Published Volumes 1-4 of <i>First Impressions</i> herself. Then began working together with Alfred's publishing in 1996 after they approached her to publish the methods</li> </ul>
When the series was first released, what was unique about it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The book used the 'position' approach and it used lyrics in most of the songs to emphasise a particular aspect of learning (e.g. singing 'my fifth' as the student plays an interval of a fifth)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The book contained recorded accompaniments on CD and midi, and the integration of improvisational activities;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The book "dealt exclusively with observing the musical patterns." She felt students needed to be able to analyse music and understand structure</li> </ul>
What skills/values is the method designed to teach the intermediate student?	<p><i>As Morty was an editor rather than a writer, he didn't feel he could comment on this question.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books four and five of the Hal Leonard series are suitable for this level. The student is required to play scales, syncopated rhythms, bigger chords and new time signatures. "To some degree, you're just now able to play music that was originally written for the piano and in the repertoire"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The series teaches students the skill of "looking at and learning to recognize musical patterns instead of just the dots on the page"</li> </ul>

Table 5.5 Profiling the method book authors (continued)

Question	Response		
	Morty Manus	Phillip Keveren	M'Lou Dietzer
Were there any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in the method?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each of the authors observed the development of several piano methods before the Alfred's series, and felt there wasn't a need to conduct any research before releasing the method book</li> <li>The only major change to the books was the use of colour. They were initially produced in black and white, but Morty soon learnt the importance of appeal and enhancement through colour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A test market was set up for the first three Hal Leonard piano books – 1000 students were taught using the books for 12-18months. "We made a lot of revisions after that test market" including simplifying the learning process as well as providing clearer instructions for the improvisation components</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some preliminary research was conducted with the methods at a University piano pedagogy class. The first guides were too detailed, so these were simplified and refined</li> <li>Volumes 5 and 6 have since been added, as well as three earlier volumes called A, B and C</li> </ul>

Each of these three authors have different backgrounds and reasons as to how they became involved in the music publishing field, but each of them has now been involved in the business for many years. The three method books were pre-tested differently before publication; Alfred's didn't do any research/interviews with their method book, M'Lou Dietzer did some research with her own piano pedagogy class and Hal Leonard did a large scale test market with 1000 students. While it seems that the 'testing' process for each method is sporadic or in one case non-existent, Phillip mentioned that he and the other authors had to negotiate to be allowed to do the research. Often "a publisher just wants to get things out" and is either not interested in performing preliminary research or trusts the authors and the product. In the case of Hal Leonard however, the test market was extremely important as the teachers and students were able to give suggestions for improvements. While there are no 'instruction manuals' for teachers to follow with each method, it seems that the authors are willing and eager to listen to criticism from the teachers and students, and to make improvements.

While each of the methods have appropriate levels that cater for the intermediate student, Morty was not able to specify which skills were required of the student as his role in the process was as an editor and publisher, rather than a writer. Despite not being technically on board with the writing of the method, Morty was certainly insistent that the method was fun and accessible to children.



#### **5.4 External examining bodies**

Four representatives from different examining bodies were interviewed in the course of this research: John Weretka (Australian Music Examination Board), Mark Stringer (Trinity College London), Matthews Tyson (St. Cecilia) and Nigel Scaife (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music). Their personal history is outlined in the table below (Table 5.6) and their comments and views on the intermediate piano student and motivation towards learning is presented in Section 5.7.

Table 5.6 Profiling representatives from the examination boards

Question	Response			
	John Weretka (AMEB)	Mark Stringer (TCL)	Matthews Tyson (St Cecilia)	Nigel Scaife (ABRSM)
How did you come to be working in the music examination field?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed an undergraduate degree in Musicology with a focus on editing music</li> <li>Has been working for AMEB for approximately 15 years – originally starting as a proof reader and now is in charge of “developing all of the board’s publications”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed an honours degree in Music at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester</li> <li>Worked in several different jobs before being appointed as an examiner by Trinity College London in 1992</li> <li>He is currently the Executive Director and Head of Academic Governance for Performing and Creative Arts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed examinations up to the diploma levels of various examining bodies</li> <li>Became representative for Trinity College London and remained in that position for 30 years</li> <li>Has been working at St Cecilia for forty years and is currently the Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spent many years as a teacher, performer and writer</li> <li>In 1999, he applied for the position of Syllabus Development Manager at ABRSM and has been working there since</li> <li>Currently responsible for the “musical and educational aspects of ABRSM’s examination service”</li> </ul>
To what extent has the layout of the syllabus and the structure of the examinations changed over the years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since the AMEB’s inception, the structure of the examinations has essentially remained the same. “The stability of the system is one of the guarantees of the standards we uphold”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The structure of the syllabus and examinations has changed very little since its inception, however “the repertoire has changed tremendously to reflect the wealth of music composed over this time span and incorporating jazz and more contemporary styles.” The marking schemes have also changed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A committee of teachers created the original layout of the syllabus and examinations and this structure has essentially remained the same throughout the last 35 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The original layout of the syllabus aimed at a standard “so high that the certificate granted may be regarded as a distinction worthy of attainment.” ABRSM believe that this has remained true to this day</li> <li>The ‘levels’ or ‘grades’ structure has changed over the years; there is now the eight graded tiers as well as the diplomas</li> </ul>

Table 5.6 Profiling representatives from the examination boards (continued)

Question	Response			
	John Weretka (AMEB)	Mark Stringer (TCL)	Matthews Tyson (St Cecilia)	Nigel Scaife (ABRSM)
What procedures are used when updating the syllabus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A panel of experts from private studios, and the tertiary and secondary education system are appointed. "These committees always have national representation and many of the most significant educators in the country of the particular instrument sit on the committee." There are also "syllabus consultants" who provide ideas and content for both the publications and syllabus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabuses are updated on a 3-4 year basis. These updates involve the Syllabus Manager, the Head of Publications as well as consultants who propose new repertoire for the publications and syllabus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When updating the syllabus, teachers are consulted to offer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The syllabuses are reviewed every two to three years. A panel of experts, including examiners and senior staff at the associated board, is set up to review "literally piles of music" to select the most appropriate pieces</li> </ul>
What feedback procedures do you apply when reviewing the syllabus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking members of the public to share their views on the current syllabus and allowing the public to see and comment on draft copies of the new syllabus. "Public feedback is taken very seriously by the Board and its committees."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from teachers and representatives, feedback from examiners after examination and at conferences, as well as monitoring repertoire choices made by students. "We do this by examiners sending in the appointment slips on the back of which candidates write down their chosen pieces for the examination"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers are given the opportunity to contribute to the syllabus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep track of forums on their websites, gather feedback at seminars and conferences as well as through the European Piano Teachers Association. During the last review, they also conducted surveys in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia with teachers</li> </ul>

Table 5.6 Profiling representatives from the examination boards (continued)

Question	Response			
	John Weretka (AMEB)	Mark Stringer (TCL)	Matthews Tyson (St Cecilia)	Nigel Scaife (ABRSM)
What skills/values is the syllabus designed to teach the intermediate student?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grades five and six are suitable for the intermediate level. “In general, these grades will be respectful of the developing technical skill base of the student, and will seek to develop this with sensitivity.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grades 4, 5 and 6 are suitable for the intermediate level. Trinity stresses that “the syllabus is not a curriculum; it’s a framework for assessment.” The teacher should ensure the student is learning a variety of repertoire that covers the technical and musical aspects of that level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grades 3, 4 and 5 are suitable for the intermediate level. “The technical work is cumulative and covers principal keys used extensively at these levels”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Qualifications Framework suggests grade 4 and 5 as suitable for the intermediate student</li> </ul>
What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for teacher and students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The student is the recipient of the combined wisdom of a nation’s piano teachers.” Teachers are also able to use AMEB as a networking tool to discuss pedagogical ideas and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals, an “impartial assessment” and an international benchmark for the student. For the teacher, “a graded set of repertoire which can form part of a curriculum.” It can also help give the teacher a goal and give them feedback on their teaching through their students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus, goals, structure of curriculum, recognition for school certificates, training for assessment/auditions, exposure to a range of repertoire, and sophistication in music lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouragement of diverse approaches to teaching of music, enjoyment and achievement, motivation, a “benchmark that enables teachers and pupils to monitor progress” and certification</li> </ul>
Where is the syllabus going in the near future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The next great hurdle are the problems posed by the ‘technological revolution’ – how to use the means of technology to engage students and teachers.” AMEB have recently released online written examinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trinity hopes to give “more freedom to the teacher and the candidate,” a wider variety of repertoire, tests and resources as well as support for professional development for teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St. Cecilia will make more use of online and computer-based programmes in examining, develop syllabuses for more instruments, develop more performance-based assessment and provide diplomas/other qualifications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ABRSM will be releasing new “support resources for the Aural Tests.”</li> </ul>

Each of the representatives has been in their position for many years – clearly believing in the examination system, and with a wealth of knowledge of examinations. Each of the examining bodies caters for the intermediate student as well as keeping up to date with reviews and feedback. Their review and feedback procedures however are mostly limited to examiners, teachers and other ‘experts’ in the field. Given that the student interviews conducted for this research indicated that often the student and teacher differ in their opinions of what is motivating or what particular repertoire or programs of learning are ideal, it would be reasonable to assume that the examining bodies would consult students. Mark Stringer at Trinity College London mentioned that they often monitor students’ repertoire choices for examinations. While this is helpful, it could be the case that the teacher has chosen the repertoire hence the student has not deemed it popular or indeed motivating. Trinity, by stressing that the syllabus is not a curriculum, reminds the teacher that much is required of them to provide holistic learning programs for their students.

It is also interesting to consider whether the ‘fun’ or ‘motivational’ aspects of learning should come from the examination syllabi, the teacher, or both. ABRSM are the only syllabus to indicate that the syllabus should provide some motivation for learning. However, as mentioned in the methodology, this interview transcript also contains data gathered from the ABRSM website in the form of text and podcasts, therefore it is not specifically Nigel Scaife (ABRSM representative) who has mentioned the importance of motivation. Should the examining bodies be considering what aspects of repertoire and learning will motivate students? This again brings back the point of asking students directly, gathering feedback from them regarding motivation and learning rather than the

teachers who can only assume. It is positive to note however that each of the examining bodies gives students and teachers options of musical styles with different syllabi to follow. Each of these syllabi were outlined in Chapter 2, but were not mentioned in the interviews by any of the stakeholders.

### **5.5 Contemporary composers**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen many new composers and repertoire for young students emerge (Uszler *et al*, 2000). For this research, four composers were interviewed: Elissa Milne, Kerin Bailey, Carol Matz and Sonny Chua. Each of their personal histories and composition backgrounds will be outlined below in Table 5.7, and their views and opinions on the intermediate piano student and student motivation towards learning is discussed in Section 5.7.

Table 5.7 Profiling contemporary composers

Question	Response			
	Elissa Milne	Kerin Bailey	Carol Matz	Sonny Chua
What inspired you to become a composer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced composition at a young age (5-6) and “always planned to be a composer”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Began composing in his late 20’s for his own piano students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has always been fascinated with the “behind the scenes - of how things work”. This, combined with her love of music inspired her to start composing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Composing seemed like a natural extension of listening to “so much great music”. He wanted to do things his way;</li> </ul>
How did you learn to compose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learnt composition skills initially by doing or “by making it up” but then completed formal undergraduate training in order to refine what she believes she “already knew how to do”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hasn’t had any formal composition training – he had previously written songs so “it wasn’t much of a step to going up and writing piano arrangements”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When she was a young student, her piano teacher encouraged her to improvise and compose. She didn’t go on to complete any formal composition training, but describes the process as “organic”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learnt to compose through trial and error; “by listening, watching and experimenting”</li> </ul>
Do you currently have a publisher you work with or do you freelance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently works with three different publishers; Faber Music (London), Hal Leonard (Australia) and AMEB;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publishes his books himself – “I do the publishing, the typing, the typesetting, even a lot of the printing”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the moment, she works exclusively with Alfred’s Music Publishing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently works with AMPD publishing as well as producing some of his own works</li> </ul>
What made you aim most of your compositions at the beginner or intermediate student?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made a “deliberate decision” to write educational music because she felt there was not a lot of material for younger students that was “contemporary and accessible.” It would also provide a niche and living for her</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noticed a drop-out area at the intermediate level so decided to compose some pieces for the students to “have a bit of fun” with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>She feels there is “a need for pieces at these levels” and she enjoys writing pieces for her own students to play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspired to write for the beginner and intermediate level through his own students. He wanted to “have fun with piano technique and musical styles”</li> </ul>

Table 5.7 Profiling contemporary composers (continued)

Question	Response			
	Elissa Milne	Kerin Bailey	Carol Matz	Sonny Chua
How would you describe your compositional style?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jazz-influenced. She uses “a lot of unusual devices in the kids music like 7 time and 5 time and unusual tonalities”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Jazzy.” He uses the word to describe the jazz feeling and encouragement to improvise with given chords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aims for her pieces to be easily learned; “this includes writing with patterns and concentrating on things that fall nicely under the hands”. Also takes into consideration what the student might consider fun, and what they might like to play in a recital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eclectic; “light classical, modern, fusion, traditional”</li> </ul>
What specific skills or attributes do you aim to develop in the intermediate student?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tries to “cover most of the ways of playing the piano that you would need to be a competent accompanist in a contemporary world”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aims to give the students “a bit of fun” while learning to play rhythm, read music and acquire skills in a different style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aims to develop balance between the hands, rhythmic accuracy and a full range of dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tries to develop technique and various musical styles</li> </ul>
Do you test your compositions before you publish them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compositions are tested on both her students and her mother who is also a piano teacher. “Nothing is allowed to be published that is not going to be useful”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compositions are tested on his students so that he knows they “work”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assigns her compositions to her students to test before they are published, however always feels she is aware of what will and won’t work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Compositions are tested for a period of 6-12 months with students and teachers before being published</li> </ul>



Each of the composers has had a very different background and have had different ‘beginnings’ in the composing industry. They all have one thing in common however: they see a need for fun and interesting works for young students. It is unclear whether they feel that historical repertoire is no longer current in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or whether it’s simply that a living composer is more accessible in terms of workshops, concerts and even having a face or personality to relate to.

Each of the composers ‘trials’ their compositions before they are published. They all trial the compositions on students, three mentioning that they test them on their own students; Sonny didn’t mention whether he tests his compositions on his own students or other students. When the composers are trialling their work, are they looking for reactions from the students, their ease at which they learn the pieces or perhaps their excitement to practise them? Would the students speak up if they didn’t like the piece or thought it was boring? Each composer has his or her own style of writing, but all of the styles aim to engage the student and encourage them to practise, have fun, and love music.

## **5.6 Literature guide authors**

Two authors of literature or repertoire guides were interviewed for this research: Reid Alexander (co-author of *Intermediate Piano Repertoire: a guide for teaching*, 2000) and Jane Magrath (*The pianist’s guide to standard teaching and performance literature*, 1995). Their personal histories as well as the inspiration for and creation of each of their literature guides is outlined below in Table 5.8. Their views on the intermediate piano student and motivation towards learning will be discussed in the following Section, 5.7.

Table 5.8 Profiling the literature guide authors

Question	Response	
	Reid Alexander	Jane Magrath
How long have you been working in the music publishing field?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 25 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 25 years</li> </ul>
Are you currently involved in a writing or publishing project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently working on the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the <i>Intermediate Repertoire Guide</i> and has recently finished <i>Keyboard Musicianship Volume 2</i>, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently working on a series called <i>Audition Repertoire for the Advancing Pianist</i> and will soon update the <i>Pianist's Guide to Teaching Literature</i></li> </ul>
Can you tell me about the history of the guide?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>Intermediate Piano Repertoire</i> guide is co-authored with Cathy Albergo – the first two editions were self published, however the third and fourth editions are published by the Frederick Harris music company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Pianist's Guide to Teaching Literature</i> was conceived through her “strong interest in the classical music teaching area”. She approached Alfred’s and they agreed to publish it</li> </ul>
What do you believe was unique about this particular literature guide?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is focused on the intermediate student, the 20<sup>th</sup> century section of the guide is divided into pedagogy composers and mainstream 20<sup>th</sup> century, half of the guide contains solo music and the other half ensemble music, and the rating system is different from other guides on the market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“It deals with intermediate teaching repertoire”, it includes commentary on many pieces, and the grading system is “rather unique”</li> </ul>
Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in the guide?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were no preliminary interviews or research conducted with the repertoire guide. The first two guides were self-published, so with the third edition they felt the guide had “enough momentum” and at the time it was published, there was a need in the market for it. The sales certainly affirmed this, with over 9000 copies being sold in the first few months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were no preliminary interviews or research conducted with the literature guide as she felt she “knew that area pretty well” through workshops she had conducted throughout the United States and from talking to teachers</li> </ul>

Both of the literature guides expose teachers to a wealth of repertoire by various composers and from various periods and styles. Uszler *et al* (2000) suggested that one of the most important jobs for teachers is choosing repertoire, so these guides can be an invaluable help. Both of the guides were developed through a ‘need’ in the market for such a resource and both have proven popular, which is evident through the further editions. Unlike the method books that seem to have many books that are required for learning, or at least holistic learning, these guides seem to have developed out of a genuine desire to help teachers and educate them about repertoire rather than being about sales and marketing ploys. Having said that however, very few teachers surveyed mentioned using the guides to assist in choosing repertoire.

### **5.7 Key stakeholders and the intermediate piano student**

During the interviews with the stakeholders profiled above (method book authors, external examination bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors), each participant was asked several questions regarding the intermediate piano student and levels of motivation. The responses are summarised in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9 Key stakeholder views of the intermediate piano student

Area of inquiry	Responses (summarised)		
How would you define or describe a beginner student?	No prior experience	7	77.7%
	Limited technical skills	5	55.5%
	Defined in examination levels	2	22.2%
	Sliding scale (early beginner, late beginner etc)	2	22.2%
	Defined by length of learning (at least 3 years)	1	11.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	
How would you define or describe an intermediate student?	Defined in examination levels	3	33.3%
	Sliding scale (early intermediate, late intermediate etc)	3	33.3%
	Becoming musical/pianistic	2	22.2%
	Defined by repertoire	2	22.2%
	Extended technical skills	2	22.2%
	Defined by length of learning (6 years)	1	11.1%
	Serious about a future	1	11.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	
How would you define or describe an advanced student?	Technical and musical playing	5	55.5%
	Defined in examination levels	3	33.3%
	Defined by repertoire	2	22.2%
	Sliding scale (early advanced, late advanced etc)	2	22.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	
Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?	Beginner	4	44.4%
	Intermediate	3	33.3%
	Late beginner/early intermediate	2	22.2%
	None	2	22.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	
What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?	Interesting repertoire	6	66.6%
	Regular practice	4	44.4%
	Performances/Competitions	3	33.3%
	Suitable teacher	3	33.3%
	Supportive family	3	33.3%
	Qualifications	1	11.1%
	Student teaching (income)	1	11.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	
What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?	Competing demands - (school, sport, opposite sex etc)	5	55.5%
	Uninteresting/difficult repertoire	4	44.4%
	Unsuitable teacher/poor teaching	4	44.4%
	Lack of family support	3	33.3%
	Peer pressure	3	33.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	

As discussed in Sections 1.1.3, 2.2 and 4.5, authors and teachers struggle to give clear definitions of the intermediate piano student that match across the board. It would therefore be difficult to expect that four different industries could agree on the divisions of the three levels. The majority of external stakeholders seem to agree that the beginner student has no prior experience and limited technical skills, however defining the intermediate and advanced student becomes more difficult. For each of the three levels, responses varied from length of learning, examination levels and repertoire played; the teachers agreed with repertoire as a defining factor, however, also believed skills were important.

Each of the stakeholders answered the question regarding the most common level at which students to drop out. Their answers were based on either their personal experience as a teacher or from their experience of talking to other teachers through their profession (publishing, composing etc). The numbers were fairly even for beginner, late beginner/early intermediate and intermediate students. The results from the previous chapter reveal that the teachers also agree that students are most likely to drop out in the intermediate or earlier phases of learning. In the literature review, Ruismaki and Tereska (2008) stressed the importance of students progressing to the advanced levels where there is often renewed excitement about the repertoire.

The key stakeholders suggested that interesting repertoire, regular practice, a suitable teacher and family support were important motivating factors for intermediate students. They also believe that a lack of these factors can cause students to become disinterested

in learning. M’Lou Dietzer (1996) believes that a “positive, encouraging attitude on the part of the teacher is vital”. The interviewed and surveyed teachers had a slightly different opinion on the motivating factors of learning, however repertoire was certainly high on their list of factors that motivate the intermediate student.

## **5.8 Summary**

Many of the external stakeholders believe that fun and motivating repertoire is important for intermediate piano students. One of the method book authors, Phillip Keveren (*Hal Leonard Student Piano Library*), believes that there are “certain songs that catch their [the students’] attention and I think it’s really important to try and find that style of music that captures their imagination”. Morty Manus also commented that he wanted the pieces in the Alfred’s method to be fun. Each of the composers made comments pertaining to fun, motivation, enjoyment and interest. Carol Matz responded that it’s “tempting for them [the students] to have fun on the computer and with video games, so it’s important to make sure students are also having fun in their piano studies.” During the student interviews, several of these four composers’ names, or titles of their compositions were mentioned; the students’ enjoy their works and styles. The compositions are new and current, they’re fun, and they’re not written by some ‘dead guy’ that the students cannot relate to.

As discussed in the literature review, the teacher and student have many resources available to them to assist in designing a learning program, including method books, external examination syllabi, literature guides as well as works from contemporary

composers. All four of the contemporary composers, as well as two of the method book authors stress the importance of having fun repertoire to help motivate the intermediate student. Many of the creators and authors of these resources remind teachers that it's not just about the repertoire; the encouragement and inspiration given by the teacher is also important.

## **Chapter 6 – Summary**

### **6.1 Overview**

The three aims specific to this study were to:

1. Explore perceptions of key internal stakeholders (teachers and students);
2. Explore perceptions of key external stakeholders (method book authors, external examining bodies, contemporary composers and literature guide authors); and
3. Attempt to draw any conclusions from the data gathered about the impact of learning programs on motivation.

The first two aims have been achieved through interviews with each of the stakeholders as well as a further internet survey with teachers. The conclusions from the data gathered will be summarised below.

Throughout the internet survey, the need to treat each student as an individual and to cater for them accordingly was consistently mentioned. It has been identified in both the literature and the data gathered, that there are many factors that influence a teacher's decision when designing a program of learning for the intermediate piano student, including the age of the student, the length of time they have been learning, their maturity, level of skills as well as their commitment to practice and their goals for learning. One of the most important factors of learning however, is motivation. Without motivation the student will lose interest in practising, coming to lessons and learning. Motivation is what drives us to achieve bigger and better things. How can a piano student reach greater heights when there is no inspiration or motivation to get there?



Through the teacher interviews and internet survey, the data showed that a love of music was considered more important at the beginner level than it was at the intermediate or advanced levels. As teachers, do we expect that an intermediate student has an internal desire to learn music and no longer requires our encouragement and enthusiasm for music? Or is this a reason that students drop out? Perhaps we need to place a higher priority on instilling a love of music and encouraging lifelong learning rather than simply teaching technique and repertoire.

This research aimed to find the connection between learning programs and motivation in the intermediate piano student. The internal and external stakeholders agreed that repertoire is important, can affect motivation in the intermediate piano student's learning, and that finding the right piece for a student is essential to their learning and motivation. The teachers seem to determine the programs of learning for their students, and the students seem to prefer this, stating that they wouldn't know what to choose or what is appropriate for their level. Students indicated however, that they like to have the final say in choosing their repertoire, and that they practise more when they like their pieces (therefore suggesting that they care and it affects them). So are we, as teachers, doing enough? Are our learning programs sufficient the way they currently stand? Is there enough focus on the student?

## **6.2 Challenges and limitations of the study**

There were various aspects of the research that were limiting. These included:

- Limitations of the scope of a Masters thesis and workload requirement;
- Student sample represented those in the Townsville and Greensboro regions, rather than a wide selection of locations;
- The definition of an intermediate piano student included all ages, maturity levels, etc;
- The factors that affect motivation in the intermediate piano student were limited to repertoire; and
- The research did not involve an in-depth discussion of the psychology related to motivation.

It is hoped that this thesis will be useful for other researchers, and also for piano teachers, students and parents, all involved in the intermediate learning process.

Almost all of the participants who were approached accepted the request for an interview and the internet survey delivered greater results than originally expected. There were however, challenges involved with accessing teachers and students for interviews; in particular live interviews proved difficult. While it was acknowledged in the methodology that access to teachers and their students could prove difficult, a larger sample size had been anticipated.

### **6.3 Directions**

There seems to be a wealth of material available for teachers and students to use in their lessons. There are method books, external examination syllabi, literature guides and the general repertoire from previous centuries through to the present day. Is all of this learning material fun and motivating? Is all of it current and interesting for an intermediate student of 2010? And perhaps most importantly, who, or what, is available to help the teachers with their decisions?

Not every piece of music will appeal to every intermediate student, but it is the responsibility of both the teacher and student to choose appropriate and appealing repertoire so that the student can potentially maintain a greater level of motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Regardless of how much effort and thought teachers and external stakeholders put into their programs and publications, it is the student who ultimately does the learning. While the student may not have the ideas and concepts to assist in motivation, they do know what excites them and what they find dull or boring. The findings suggest that further research be conducted with students for their opinions and thoughts on motivation and the specific effect of repertoire on motivation.

Further research could include substantial interviews with students from various cities, states and even countries. It could also investigate the intermediate student in different settings: the private lesson, partner lesson, and group lesson, in the private piano teacher's studio and in conservatoria. A possible study could be a longitudinal case study of several piano students of an early intermediate level, regarding their programs of

learning and feeling towards their repertoire. Their motivational levels could be assessed and analysed over several years of learning. Ideally a program would then be developed that could become a guide for teachers to use with the intermediate piano student. This program would be motivating and fun for students, would be holistic in its content and would be flexible enough in its structure to allow for the individuality of each student.

Further research could also examine other factors pertaining to motivation such as extra-curricula activities or the role of the students' families and peers. The research could also compare students learning in formal and informal learning environments as well as students choosing to study jazz or popular keyboard.

#### **6.4 Implications**

The literature has established that the intermediate piano student is under-researched, despite this stage being a critical stage of learning. The stakeholders have revealed that there is some uncertainty regarding a definition or description of the intermediate piano student and the programs of learning that are best suited to this level. The two common themes that emerged from the data analysis were that repertoire is a key motivator for the intermediate piano student, and that often there is a discrepancy between what repertoire is given to the student, and what the teachers and students believe they would like to learn. This suggests that teachers should be asking more questions of their students regarding repertoire and their interests and tastes, allowing free speech in lessons and letting students challenge the teacher in the repertoire choices. Finally, what percentage

of a student's repertoire should be their choice and what percentage should be the teacher's choice?

While there is still much research to be conducted on the intermediate piano student, this study has provided a foundation for both the current researcher and others to build upon. The research reveals that the existing literature on the intermediate piano student is often vague or small in its nature. There are studies related to motivation or repertoire and a small amount regarding the intermediate piano student, but none that investigate all three and how they relate to each other.

Teachers are in general striving to create productive lessons for their students, but many have missed the mark on motivation and lifelong learning. The contemporary composers are providing fun and interesting new repertoire that is still technically based and with pedagogical intent. The external examining bodies provide different syllabi for different interests of students, e.g., Piano for Leisure (AMEB) and Rock School (Trinity College London). The literature guide authors are attempting to keep teachers up to date with the new works being released as well as expanding their knowledge of older composers, pieces and publications available. The method book authors are providing quite structured programs for teachers to follow with repertoire and instructions to follow on each page. But how many of them really have the student in mind? Are they attempting to create fun and motivational programs for the teacher and student to follow? The composers certainly all acknowledged that they saw a 'need' for repertoire at this level that was fun and stimulating for students. Are the other stakeholders marketing their

products towards teachers rather than students? Is it therefore the teachers' responsibility to use their own teaching style and personality to make the repertoire interesting and motivating?

Research on the topic, *the intermediate piano student: an investigation of the impact of learning material on motivation* has attempted to better define the intermediate piano student and explore the effect that repertoire has on student motivation. The literature suggests defining the intermediate piano student by their skill level and repertoire, and while the stakeholders agree with this, they also suggest examination levels and length of learning as a defining feature. The intermediate piano student has been summarised as generally having many competing demands on their time, and despite widespread belief, having a broad interest in musical styles. The research has conclusively established that repertoire plays an important part in motivating the intermediate piano student.

The intermediate stage of learning remains a critical point in a student's development. With technology evolving faster than anyone can imagine, the adolescent student is being bombarded with instant entertainment in the form of TV, computer games, and the Xbox. Learning a musical instrument takes time and patience. Therefore as teachers we need to remain patient and inspiring for our students so that they can realise how rewarding the music world is. Motivating students is the key: find what inspires them, lights their fire and sends them rushing home to perfect that piece and learn more. In the end, isn't it all about motivating students towards a life long journey with music?

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## Appendix 1 - Teacher Interview Questions

1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?
2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?
3. How many years have you been teaching?
4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?
5. How would you define or describe a:
  - a) Beginner student?
  - b) Intermediate student?
  - c) Advanced student?
6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:
  - a) Beginner student?
  - b) Intermediate student?
  - c) Advanced student?
7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?
8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?
9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?
10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...
  - a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?
  - b) Describe their styles.
  - c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?
  - d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?
  - e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?
11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?  
What factors do you consider?
  - a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?
  - b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?
12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:
  - a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?
  - b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?
  - c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?
  - d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?
  - e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?
13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?
  - a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?
14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:
  - a) Baroque music
  - b) Classical music
  - c) Romantic music
  - d) Contemporary music
  - e) Jazz/Modern music
15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?

16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?
17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?
18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?
19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?
20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?
21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?

## **Appendix 2 - Student Interview Questions**

1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?
2. How old are you now?
3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?
4. Why did you start learning the piano?
5. What do you like most about learning the piano?
6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?
7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?
8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?
9. How often do you practice?
  - a) How long do you practice each time?
  - b) What motivates you to practice?
  - c) What do you think about when you practice?
10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.
11. What do you like to do in your free time?
12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?
13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?
14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?
15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?
16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?
17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?
18. Who chooses your pieces?
19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?
20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?
21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?



### **Appendix 3 – Method Book Authors Interview Questions**

1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music publishing field?
2. How long have you been working for this current company? Have you had the same position for that time?
3. What are your main duties in your current role?
4. Can you tell me about the history of the method book series?
5. When the series was first released, what do you believe was unique about it? Do you still believe it to be unique for this reason?
6. Did you and the other authors all work together or did you each have certain sections or elements to work on?
7. What skills/values is the method designed to teach the intermediate student?
8. Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in the method? If yes, what did you do? Did the results affect the final product?
9. Has the method been updated or reviewed since its original design?
10. Where is the method book going in the near future?

#### **Intermediate piano students**

11. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?
12. How would you define or describe a:
  - a) Beginner student?
  - b) Intermediate student?
  - a) Advanced student?
13. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?
14. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?
15. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?
16. What challenges do you think are relevant to teaching an intermediate student?

## **Appendix 4 – External Examination Bodies Interview Questions**

1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music examination field?
2. How long have you been working for this current examination board?
3. What are your main duties in your current role?
4. What first inspired the creation of the examination syllabus?
5. To what extent has the layout of the syllabus and the structure of the examinations changed over the years?
6. What procedures are used when updating the syllabus?
7. What feedback procedures do you apply when reviewing the syllabus?
8. What grades within the examination syllabus do you believe are appropriate for the intermediate student?
9. Within these grades, what skills/values is the syllabus designed to teach the intermediate student?
10. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for students?
11. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for teachers?
12. Where is the music examination syllabus going in the near future?
13. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano? Please describe:
14. How would you define or describe a:
  - a) Beginner student?
  - b) Intermediate student?
  - a) Advanced student?
15. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?
16. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?
17. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?

## **Appendix 5 – Contemporary Composers Interview Questions**

1. What inspired you to become a composer?
2. How did you learn to compose?
3. How long have you been composing?
4. Do you currently have a publisher you work with or do you freelance?
5. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?
6. How would you define or describe a:
  - a. Beginner piano student?
  - b. Intermediate piano student?
  - c. Advanced piano student?
7. Most of your composition appears to be aimed at students in the beginner or intermediate phase; what made you choose this route?
8. How would you describe your compositional style?
9. Do you consciously incorporate your own compositional style into your works for piano students? If so, how?
10. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you aim to develop in terms of your compositions?
11. Do you test your compositions for piano students with either teachers or students before you publish them? Please describe the process you follow.
12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?
13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?
14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?

## **Appendix 6 – Literature Guide Authors Interview Questions**

1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music publishing field?
2. How long have you been working in this area?
3. Are you currently involved in a writing or publishing project?
4. How did the literature guide come about?
5. What do you believe was unique about this particular literature guide?
6. Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in your literature guide? If yes, what did you do? Did the results affect the final product?
7. Will the guide be updated in the future?
8. What has been the most interesting feedback about the guide that you have received over the years?
9. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?
10. How would you define or describe a:
  - a. Beginner piano student?
  - b. Intermediate piano student?
  - c. Advanced piano student?
11. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you believe they should develop through repertoire?
12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?
13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?
14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?

## **Appendix 7 – Teacher Interview Transcripts**

### **Jacob Smith**

#### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

Wow. Well, a better question would be what inspired me to be a pianist, because I think everybody starts out wanting to be a pianist and then they end up teaching. This is kind of a tough question. Inspired me. In one way, a livelihood. It was a great source of inspiration. I needed to make a living. I did a little bit of teaching in high school, nothing significant but then I had a great assistantship in college and I enjoyed it and I think I was effective and that of course encouraged me to want to do it more. After that, I knew to teach in a university, I knew I had to go all the way with the degrees and do my doctorate.

#### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

The students. Oh yeah. Every year a new crop of students, new challenges, new personalities. You have to make it fresh every year. And you know, it's not always an ideal hook up between student and teacher. There are those lessons that are more challenging. You have to be more creative. If you feel you are being ineffective, you have to jump around, stand on your head, whatever it takes to be effective. But what inspires me to want to teach every day is the interaction with students and the light bulb going off in the students head when something clicks.

#### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

34 years.

#### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

Certainly through retirement age, whatever that is these days. Even when I retire, which I assume will be some time between 65 and 70, because there's no mandatory retirement age in this state. But even then, I'll probably have some private students, do some private things, maybe even go to another college or another university. But I think there'll be a time when I say "that's enough now" and hang it up.

#### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

##### **a) Beginner student?**

Well obviously beginner has no background in piano. It can be no background in anything to do with music, no theory, can't read a note. So obviously that would be a beginner. That's something I have no experience in. I've never taught a beginner from scratch.

##### **b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate is someone who can handle a certain body of repertoire that includes the sonatinas of Clementi or Kuhlau, some of the easier Bach preludes. Notice I didn't say Inventions, because the Inventions are tough. And a lot of teachers think that when their students become intermediate that they're ready for the Inventions, sometimes they're not. There's a couple that are more accessible, but I think the Inventions are more models for compositions students than they are for pianists. So intermediate, yeah, some of the minuets of Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart. I don't think the intermediate student is ready for the Beethoven or the Mozart sonatas, maybe the C major, the K545, the easy one. But all the other ones are a little tricky, and musically they're not up to it. And then there's all the other little character pieces out there. There's a wonderful body of

literature written by contemporary composers. My colleague George Kiorpes writes a lot, did you know that? He's got a lot published. He understands the literature, he understands the development of pianists and he writes for it.

**c) Advanced student?**

Advanced...the Beethoven sonatas. To play Beethoven sonatas I think you have to be an advanced student. To play even the Debussy preludes, Chopin preludes you need a certain development of pianism because they both require not just technique, but...there's two things. Technique is one thing, but facility is another. You know, mechanics. Mechanics of playing, of course you need mechanics in order to play fast arpeggios or scales. But technique is everything, how you use your technique, how you use your mechanics sorry. Technique is being able to control your fingers, how to balance a chord, how to make different sound qualities and tones. And the pieces that I mentioned, the Beethoven, Debussy, Chopin, you need to be advanced to be able to do those works justice otherwise they fall flat.

**6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

Haven't taught beginners.

**b) Intermediate student?**

As for intermediates, it is easier for me to say the things that my style is not (what terrible grammar, but you get my drift): my style is not intimidating, somber, serious to the point of dry and boring. I try to lighten up, and negate the notion that classical music is straight-laced and stoic. Inspiring the student is the most important ingredient. I try to do this through demonstration and recordings.

**c) Advanced student?**

My style with advanced students deals with giving the students a broad conceptual idea about a composer's output and then letting them make choices. I never want to tell a student you must play something a certain way. I try to instill a feeling of responsibility in their interpretations through educated criteria.

I do not teach with threats and rampages! They have to have the desire to delve into the music in order to achieve conviction in their interpretations.

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

In the college setting, because I have had to teach secondaries, I don't always teach majors, so I would say probably about 100.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Patience. You have to be very patient, because it takes them longer to...one, just learn the notes. It's a real challenge for them, unless you give them something very easy but I always try and challenge them. They don't have...the technique is not as developed, the reading skills are not as developed. They're still in the process, they're like a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader, they can read pretty good but they're not an 8th grader, but still pretty good. But when I say patience, I mean, having dealt most of my life with advanced pianists, this is when you have to switch gears with an intermediate student. Wait, this student can not to all of this, you think "why didn't you come back with some notes of these first two pages learnt", but it's difficult.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Teaching them how to become more comfortable at the keyboard, to negotiate at the keyboard which is technique you know. Making them realise piano playing is not just hands curved, it's also hands flat or this (does many different hand actions)... And when you, again, help them facilitate a passage and they say "oh that feels so much better", that's very rewarding.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

Yes.

**b) Describe their styles.**

I only had one when I was intermediate, from beginning to intermediate because then I quit. I had her for six or seven years. Very laid back, wrote in a notebook do this, do that, practice this, memorise this for next week. Things like that, very organised I guess you'd say. Looking back I just thought it was very pedantic. Very little demonstrating, although she could play. We had these monthly get togethers where she would actually sit down and play. But it wasn't terribly inspiring, she wasn't terribly inspiring. I got more inspiration from listening to recordings or going to hear concert pianists at downtown Chicago; Van Cliburn, Rubinstein.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

A lot of Macdowell, Edward Macdowell. Who was, even though he was German trained, he was considered an American composer because he was born in America, he's somewhere in Connecticut, I don't know. And the reason I played a lot of Macdowell because I was a member of the organization National Federation of Music Club, NFMC, and their festival or contest (where you play for a judge and get comments and a rating of superior, excellent,) every year they required two pieces. One, a piece of your choice and the other a piece by an American composer. And at that point when you're young, intermediate, there's not a lot of American composers that you can play. Copland didn't leave us a lot, Barber didn't leave us a lot, you go down the list. And a lot of what they did leave you can't handle at the intermediate, the Barber sonatas, stuff like that. But Macdowell is someone who sounds much more difficult than it is, and I remember specific works, the Macdowell Polonaise, Macdowell Concert Etude, Praeludium, Modern Suite Op. 10, and they were fun to play and good for technique. And when I say intermediate...the first was (goes to piano and plays some of Macdowell). It was an etude, but it sounds very impressive. The things you learn when you're young, stay with you forever.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

The thing I liked the most, you realise all of a sudden, you've graduated from (goes to piano and plays simple C major piece), you can make really big sounds. You were able to make these fantastic sonorities that only a pianist can do. You don't have to be advanced to be able to make some really wonderful sonorities on the piano. And I think that was really exciting. I mean, I could sit down and play a Bach fugue, but that didn't excite me, although it's important. But your question was what excites me the most, just to be able to sit down and make all these wonderful sounds.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

What did I like the least? At that time, it was probably practicing my Bach. Now I love Bach, I think he's such a genius, such a beautiful, romantic composer. But I didn't like Bach, really awful.

## **11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

### **What factors do you consider?**

For their development, the structure that I try to do is give them some contrapuntal pieces...very important in the development of not only the mind to be able to follow certain voices but also the technique to be able to, you know independence of the hands and then within one hand independence of fingers doing two voices within one hand, takes tremendous independence. Someone asked (a performer) about what he thinks about when he plays Bach, he said absolutely nothing, otherwise I'll get confused. He says after I learn it, I have to, if I'm playing a four voice fugue, I only have one brain. Something has to be put automatic. If I had four brains, I could assign a brain to each voice. So anyway, the importance of developing structure for intermediate is to definitely expose them to contrapuntal pieces. I wish I had been given more scales. I did etudes, but I think there's nothing like ripping off scales, up and down the keyboard and then beyond the scales, thirds, sixths. Then also, give them something that's...again structuring it...something baroque, technique, something above them and something below them. Below them so they don't get so frustrated that they can't learn it, and something above them so it's a challenge. They're not quite ready for it, but let's see what happens.

### **a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

Well, sometimes I don't, I can read their face but when I assign them a piece and they don't know the piece and I sit down and play it. I can read their body language and tell if they really like and tell if they don't. And if they don't like it, I'll give them another option because I don't want them learning something they don't like. I mean, we have to do that at times, but obviously if you have a choice, there's another piece that satisfies the same thing.

### **b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

Definitely...definitely, yeah. Sometimes they'll say, "well I'm not crazy about this, but I'll try." And then they end up being crazy about it! It's an interesting phenomenon.

## **12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

Personally I just know the repertoire and I think I know what the student might like. I would say the majority though of teachers, I was piano chair of the NCMTA and as the piano chair one of the duties was to make up the contest list. Teachers had to choose from the contest list, and there were 3 sections. There was baroque, classical and romantic/20<sup>th</sup> century. And we used to make up the lists, and even though I said I chose for my students, you know, my intermediate students, I'd just choose things that I know. But most of the students, they didn't know. You just draw from your teaching experience, the longer you teacher, you know what piece might work for a particular problem or for a particular student.

## **13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**



Very seldom, because they don't know. Rarely.

- a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

Movie music!

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

- a) Baroque music**

Not very exciting. They don't get very excited about that.

- b) Classical music**

Not quite the case, but maybe 20% of the literature that you give to them is classical.

- c) Romantic music**

Most of it they enjoy.

- d) Contemporary music**

A lot more than you think they enjoy. They like the rhythmic aspect of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, just the unusualness of it.

- e) Jazz/Modern music**

True jazz, most kids don't even understand true jazz. They love the modern pop, movie music though!

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

Roughly half.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

Probably substantially, you know, it's frustrating. I mean, the gifted ones continue, those who have the love for it who aren't gifted, well they have determination but all the rest "who needs this!"

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Ok, that's a great question. Great question. Repertoire, what they're studying, does it excite them? Does it challenge them? And then, some sort of role model...I want to play like that. All these guys who went to Julliard, all these piano geeks, they were inspiring one another, feeding off one another. If one came out of a practice room and someone was still practicing, they'd go back in. It was incredibly competitive. They were all feeding off each other, and that's not a bad thing. I had a piano group in college, we all stuck together. We weren't competing, but we were camaraderie, supporting each other. "That sounds great, can't wait to hear it next week."

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Poor teaching or poor choice of repertoire. And then of course probably, you know, music, piano lessons is just one slice of the pie. Now we're competing with the internet, and computers! Plus, if you're just a good old boy like I was, you wanted to play baseball, and then girls came along!

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

I think that's the most, the intermediate is the most dangerous, the highest dropout percentage is in the intermediate. Beginners don't know yet, they have no say. Then they get to intermediate and they get stuck. Making the jump from a Mozart minuet or Haydn whatever to Beethoven sonata...it's a big step.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

Yeah, I think there's certain do's and don'ts. You've got to inspire them, you've got to light a fire in them. Some it's competitions, some they hate competitions. Competitions are for horses! But you know, if the love of music is there, the attraction is there and you can give them something that they can relate to and enjoy, therefore get something out of it in return for the amount of work they've invested, I think that's the key.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

Literally a learning program is pedagogy, teaching. What is your way of teaching someone piano? The structure. But again, it's...make it fun. Music is here for entertainment. It's an art form. It's a wonderful, beautiful thing in the world. There's all this hatred, war, terrorism in the world. Music is one of the good guys and it's here to enjoy. It's not here to be punished with, "practice your Bach". But like anything, to get good at something, I always make the analogy with sports. You've gotta train. You've gotta run laps around the track. With baseball, hours and hours of batting practice, hours and hours of throwing. But when you step up to the plate, you think "wow I'm glad I did it."

## **Joshua Grant**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

It was because I had overcome a lot of difficulties myself by being misled through a lot of books and experimenting myself and I thought I could help younger students avoid the same pitfalls and be super efficient!

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

The progress of the students, it is very rewarding.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

Five years.

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

I will continue to as long as I can because it is rewarding.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

I think that you can define those based on the literature they are using. For example, beginning students, the literature is primarily used to teaching musical concepts such as pedagogy books and other very easy compositions where the student can learn those simply by being aware of what's on the page. There's not a lot of technical difficulty and they don't need to go through real piano practice. It's more learning the concepts to get them to play it. I think that is beginner.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate happens whenever you take these concepts and encounter pieces where you first actually have to do real pianistic practice to overcome certain challenges, but usually there's just a few.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

Advanced applies to students whose pieces you have to do a lot of pianistic practice, a lot of techniques to learn these compositions. And of course that level continues for the rest of their lives to whatever they want to be. I think you can divide it up that way.

### **6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

For all three, I would still use the same concept of learning a technical work, one piece I choose and something they want to work on. With all three levels I'm a perfectionist. I try not to let them sacrifice anything for notes, rhythm (even pulse) and even marking on the page. It's just that with the beginner, with every new piece there's more importance on reviewing the fundamental items and vocabulary, like the 'one' chord, or a forte sign. With the beginner I'm more congratulatory with every little accomplishment, with legato, the notes. I'm still a perfectionist though.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

I place more focus on getting control of the music and learning how to learn and practice the music. With intermediate my styles varies based on their goals. If I know they don't want to do music as a career I just push them; to the highest level I can and I'm very encouraging and understanding. Those who say they want to do college auditions, I'm very strict about making sure that they meet exact goals for every lesson. For example I might say these three scales need to be played at this metronome marking with no missed notes, or you need to have a piece memorised up to this point.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

Same idea with advanced. If there's a goal that I know about that takes time, I'm more strict. If not, I just lead them the best I can and try to be honest about the amount of practice and work that it takes to meet those goals, but I'm very understanding about other commitments and things. I do believe in a continuous review process, where at any given time they're always reviewing one piece or one technical exercise or study that they've done before, so that everything is pretty close under their fingers.

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

Let's say about six different intermediate students I have worked with.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

It's getting them to believe how to practice most efficiently because at the intermediate level they begin to run into some challenges that actually take some very planned methodical work, unlike where at the beginner level where you try to reinforce the concepts. And although you might know some very efficient practice techniques sometimes the students apply them and sometimes they don't.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

In a way, paradoxically, it's the same as the most challenging thing where you now have to teach them how to practice and I think that is what can define a successful teacher. I think the answer to the question "what is the most enjoyable thing" is how to teach these student to overcome of the obstacles that come with the intermediate literature, how to practice, how to become a pianist I think you have a successful teacher. But if one of the least enjoyable things is I hate teaching them how to practice, I think that is where the pitfalls come in. For me, I enjoy teaching them these methods for two reasons. Firstly I enjoy when they realise when certain methods are effective, but secondly it helps me to organise my practice and my own pianistic development even at the advanced level because I remind myself of some of the basic practice concepts.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

Yes.

**b) Describe their styles.**

Well, my first intermediate teacher had an undergraduate degree in piano from a smaller university but was not really a developed, advanced pianist and she primarily taught beginners. It's just that my father who was my previous teacher, he really didn't have knowledge of the piano repertory. So her style I guess, and what I remembered most about her, is that she had to now introduce me to real piano literature. And we really burnt through some things, Debussy Arabesques, Bach Two-Part Inventions and some easier movements of Beethoven sonatas. What I really took from her was the excitement and love of these different styles of music. I even remember about the Bach two-part inventions she was very passionate about "listen to that melody, and see how it echoes here", so although she didn't help me technically very much, I think her style and what she embodied was simply introduction to the piano rep and excitement for it.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

The Bach Two-Part Inventions, Debussy Arabesques and Rachmaninoff Prelude C# minor Op. 2 No. 1. When I mentioned wanting to learn a different Rachmaninoff piece, that's when she suggested I get a different teacher. The next piece I worked on with my

new teacher was a Chopin Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2 in E flat. He also gave me few more Debussy pieces.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

I liked being able to finally learn music that was enjoyable for two reasons. First because of the additional technical challenges for myself. I did enjoy trying to figure those out, although I will admit it was frustrating when I would come across something I didn't know how to tackle and I would tell myself "this is too hard for me right now", so that's how I eased myself out of it. But I enjoyed it for the technical challenges that I did figure out. That was exciting. I also enjoyed it because now I could tell people I know pieces by real composers. Instead of saying I know Bastien, and some pop arrangements. I could say I know Debussy, Chopin...so that's the two reasons I enjoyed it. One more thing I liked about that level, was because I was learning real pieces I would go and try and find recordings, and I would listen to the other pieces on the recordings and it exposed me to real advanced piano playing and it was very exciting. For example, when I listen to Ashkenazy play the Rachmaninoff preludes, I could not comprehend how a single person could play every single one of those preludes and not miss a single note.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

Well I did mention whenever I came across something that I couldn't do. I mean, I really just didn't have the methods to overcome it.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

**What factors do you consider?**

Well, I feel my goal as teacher for any of the intermediate students is to give them a knowledge of the history, of the repertory, and make sure they are advancing technically and finally make sure they know *how* to practice. Because that's what was frustrating to me, and what caused me to be more excited about piano once I finally knew how to practice. So those three things apply across the board for me. And then how I structure it specifically, is I as a teacher make sure they are assigned a technical exercise and a composition I think that they should be doing. The exercises are usually scales, unless their fingers are really being crazy, and then I'll assign them a Hanon exercise to make sure the fingers are close to the keys and they're being efficient and comfortable. But then I always allow my students, intermediate and beginner, to select one thing they want. It doesn't have to be classical. Some choose pop things, but some do choose classical. And that's how their lesson is structured. Technical exercises, something I want them to learn and something they want to learn.

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

It always depends on the rep. And it's interesting to see the reactions. For example, an anthology a lot of the students are using of mine, *The First Joy of Classics*, it's because their previous teacher had made them all purchase this book and it has a few different eras and styles of music in it. And I have one girl, whenever I play for her a classical piece of music from the classical era, she always likes them. And she gets happy, and she says "that reminds of a frog jumping" or "that reminds of this". Then I have another boy, who when I play those he has a look on his face like "you can't be serious, this is boring". But yet whenever I play for him some of the learning compositions by the Russians, like Kabalevsky, anything that is kind of dark or heavy or modern, he says

“that’s cool, I wanna play that one!” So it varies by the rep and the student, but you can definitely assess their reactions.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

I think almost without exception, they always seem to enjoy a piece more after it has been learned. And if they don’t enjoy a piece from the beginning, odds are they may not learn it to completion. So if you get to a stage where they have learned the piece, they almost always have a sense of accomplishment and enjoy the piece more after studying.

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

It’s a combination of existing rep and anthologies. In my opinion, the intermediate level happens after you are removed from pedagogical books. The technical challenges of pedagogical books, yes at the advanced levels can constitute intermediate rep, but I feel that they are a crutch to the teacher. I feel after the first few levels of beginning books, you can jump into the intermediate rep. And at that point, I do not like to assess the students development on examination syllabi or what’s been done at competitions and things like that. I like to base it off my knowledge of what the student wants to do, and if that is done correctly, what you stumble on in your selection of rep, should and probably will correspond to meet the requirements of the competition rep and examination syllabi used in Canada and England and what not.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

They always are choosing that one selection they would like to do. The only detail to expand on is that with that one selection they don’t have to finish it to completion for me. If at any time, they say you know “I want to go and try this”. We can always put that to the side and do something else.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

Very few would choose Classical, although some would. I have one young girl who just really respects her Grandfathers opinion and she would run right to him and he would tell her to learn some standard intermediate lit. But the most would go solely by their interests. They would go choose some pop songs they knew from the radio or something that corresponds to their interest. For example, I have one student who loves science fiction and fantasy and if there’s a picture of a character from Lord of the Rings, he would go buy that anthology and learn everything in there. So yeah, they would rely on outside interests and only few of them would be able to find Classical literature and it would just be the standards.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student’s reactions to:**

**a) Baroque music**

Baroque, they do tend to find boring. And I think it’s because they’re only beginning to develop their musical knowledge and have a hard time finding excitement in the structure itself and in the composition.

**b) Classical music**

Classical it depends on the personality type. Some find those boring too and uninteresting. Others find them kind of happy, cartoonish even. Some mention they hear it in the cartoons.

**c) Romantic music**

I find the best reactions to the romantic literature. Usually because pieces of their level, that are kind of shorter, they try to briefly capture an emotion and if it just so happens that that emotion corresponds to something that the student can relate to, they enjoy those pieces.

**d) Contemporary music**

I have had a lot of positive reactions to smaller contemporary pieces at the intermediate level just because you're using pitch structures and arrangements that really haven't been encountered before and the students find it really interesting to see these new patterns.

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

You get a very good reaction initially, but when the students realise the amount of work it takes to truly play the pop and jazz stuff that they hear on the radio, often they shy away from it then.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

I would say about half of the ones that I've had at the intermediate level struggled and usually it's because that critical moment of learning how to practice to overcome the challenges. If they were instructed at all in practice techniques during their beginning levels this usually doesn't frustrate them. They simply extend those techniques and apply to intermediate. But if you do have a student who was allowed to let slide in the beginning levels, does not have a fundamental musical knowledge and does not have a clue how to overcome the obstacles they can get disheartened very quickly.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

It affects it a lot, because a lot of times it can become personal if they don't have the knowledge of how to overcome the obstacles, they can feel like this is something they can't accomplish, like they're not good enough. Even though you can do everything you want to encourage them, you know, saying "you can do this, you just have to learn a few new techniques, just try!" A lot of times if it hits them when they can't invest the extra time because of extra curricula activities they may feel this is something they can't do and just don't want that extra burden.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

The excitement towards the rep and the accomplishment whenever they do overcome the obstacles that make intermediate lit, intermediate. And a lot of that I feel depends on the teacher's reaction to their accomplishments. If they do overcome a more difficult technical challenge by letting them know, "oh look, you couldn't do this at all two weeks ago, now it's nothing for you." By giving them that sense of accomplishment and by being excited about their literature, they want to keep on it.

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Probably what I had mentioned a couple of questions earlier. Not having the time, and just not clicking with how to overcome the challenges of the intermediate literature. It then can sometimes make the student feel inferior. And what I said about the positive reactions of the teacher. If at that level you still treat it like "good job, let's move on to the next piece", that isn't the kind of reaction they need.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

Definitely. First of all, at that age the number of extra curricula activities really increases and students find other interests and they can't invest the time in piano. Also if you have some later beginners, and they hit the intermediate level towards when they start to enter high school, that is where they start to think of college careers, and what they want to do, and if they start thinking of things that take a lot of time, both them and their parents might decide "well we don't need to continue piano studies" even though it might have these benefits.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

I think a partial solution can be found by stressing the importance of musical study for all of its benefits, instead of focusing on "well you're not going to do this in college or for a career, so let's focus on other things". Recognition of events like the Van Cliburn amateur piano competition where we have amateur pianists playing just as well as some professionals. Recognition of the role of music in the lives of all kinds of doctors, lawyers and what not who still take piano lessons and still enjoy playing. Recognition that this will improve mental ability in any career of all ages and that can encourage students to go through the intermediate and advanced levels.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

It would reflect the three items that I mentioned before where I select a piece, a technical exercise and allow them to choose something. But in an ideal world, I think I would really structure those three items by keeping on paper, even on an online website almost, what the student has accomplished, and display it as an accomplishment not just in a learning process but as a an accomplishment of itself, you know "you learned this piece, wow". You can even keep track of their technical exercises like that.



## **Emma Mark**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

I always loved playing the piano, and I always loved my piano teachers. It was just a natural choice for me.

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

I'm interested in working with the music itself, and with watching students become more musically mature. I also just really enjoy getting to know my students and helping them to learn to really enjoy listening and playing music.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

Wow. Almost ten years. I had no idea it was that long...

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

Forever.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

A student in the first few years of study – someone whose main challenges include reading and basic coordination of playing the piano.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

A student who has been studying for several years, and who is fairly independent in approaching reading and physical/technical challenges in playing - - an intermediate student may have more freedom to explore expression and musicality, or at least with more depth than a beginner.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

An advanced student is one who is can approach the reading, technical, and expressive aspects of a piece on their own.

### **6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

I'm very conscious of having generally following a routine in lessons and an organized approach to learning pieces, so that they can mimic that approach when they practice at home. I also try to follow a routine so that students know what to expect and can be comfortable during their lessons. We spend time with specific topics of technique, reading, expression, etc.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

I try to be a little more free-form and very, very student-specific with intermediate students. It seems like this is the level where students either get frustrated or bored and quit, or keep going. I'm still conscious of showing (rather than just telling) them methods to practice, but I try to pay very close attention to what motivates them and what they are interested in outside of piano lessons. (I guess this is true for all levels, but it seems particularly important here.)

#### **c) Advanced student?**

I think my approach at the advanced level entirely depends on the student and their needs. Since all of my students are at the precollege level, I try to challenge them as much as possible and prepare them for any future festivals/auditions, etc., while giving them some "lighter" pieces so they don't get bogged down. They'll have plenty of time to stress out of piano when/if they pursue it in college.

### **7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

Maybe 10 or 15?

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Keeping them interested, challenged, but not overwhelmed.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

I love watching them becoming independent and getting excited about the music.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

Absolutely

**b) Describe their styles.**

I had two – the first was very laid-back. I always had lots of fun in my lessons, but I'm sure I was not challenged very much. When I told her that I was interested in pursuing piano in college she sent me to another "more serious" studio. My next teacher sort of jump-started me into "real" music. Suddenly I had technique, theory, and challenging music that I never knew existed before. She was much more intense and didn't let me get away with sloppy playing, but was always very encouraging. I was always very inspired and motivated to practice after my lessons.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

With the first teacher – movie music, popular songs, and sheet music by people like Catherine Rollin, Dennis Alexander, Lynn Freeman Olson, etc.

With the second – Chopin nocturnes, Bach inventions, duets and piano quartet music

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

I just really loved playing and listening to the music as I played. I was always in love with every piece I practiced. (...and I never practiced the pieces I didn't love...)

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

I think I got a little bored with my first teacher – I didn't need to practice much, but I just did for fun. With the second teacher I was much more overwhelmed and started to become more insecure about my playing.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

All my intermediate students do scales, cadences, and arpeggios. I try to give them a variety of musical styles from the canon, as well as duets or one "fun" piece to practice. I try to keep them motivated as much as possible. I pay attention to the pieces they enjoy, or styles that come more easily to them. We spend more time on that literature, but I also try to expose them to music they might otherwise ignore or not understand right away.

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

I think most of my students are excited about new music. I *love* picking out new music, so maybe they are just humoring me, but I usually read through parts of a few pieces and let them choose their favorite.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

Do you mean their reactions as they learn a single piece? It seems like students usually start out excited, then maybe get overwhelmed or a little frustrated in the early practice stages, and then get excited again when they get past the initial challenges. If you mean over a longer period of time as they build up their repertoire, I think my students get more excited about a wider variety of pieces as they mature.

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

**a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

For intermediate students I usually use graded anthologies, like *Keys to Stylistic Mastery* or *Encore! Or Essential Keyboard Repertoire*

**b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

I'm not sure what you mean. But I think probably not since I don't know.

**c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**

Yes, for the first time this year.

**d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**

I think that would be the anthologies I mentioned above. For intermediate students I also often use separate sheet music of pieces by composers like Catherine Rollin, Robert Vandall, Martha Mier, etc. for "fun" pieces.

**e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

If a student brings in music they want to play, or ask about a certain piece, I do my best to either help them work on that piece, or find another piece with similar characteristics that might be still appealing but more technically appropriate for their level.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

I think lots of them would gravitate more towards popular music or movie music. I think one of my biggest responsibilities is to expose them to music that they don't already hear in popular media today.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

**a) Baroque music**

I think most don't like it, at least at first. (boring!) But I've had a few students who just can't get enough Bach.

**b) Classical music**

The fast, glittery stuff is more popular than slow classical.

**c) Romantic music**

The more gut-wrenching the better, especially for the teenagers. I think this is the most popular with my students.

**d) Contemporary music**

I think sometimes this is the hardest "sell" for students. I spend more time helping them to figure out why composers wrote what they did in these pieces, and I think sometimes that helps.

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

For some students this is the best and what they relate best to

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

I think that it's easy to try to push intermediate students too hard and challenge them too much. There's such a steep learning curve for most beginners, and the intermediate level suddenly plateaus, or at least it often seems to level off. I think it can be hard for teachers and students to realize that they are still making progress even if it's not as obvious as in the early years of study.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

I think this is the major factor in students' decisions to continue. Even if they have to quit lessons because of school or other extra-curricular activities, if a student still enjoys the music then I don't think they'll ever totally stop playing or at least listening.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

A sense of accomplishment in the tough (or tough-sounding!) pieces, and a sense that they can express themselves through music – I think expression might be the most important for lots of students, whether they realize it or not

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Frustration or boredom

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

I think more students drop out in the transition from beginner to intermediate, because there is less immediate gratification in learning pieces quickly.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

I think teachers must be vigilant about finding music that motivates their students to play. I would prefer an intermediate student to love playing pieces that might be a little easy, rather than slave away at harder pieces that they don't enjoy.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

I think I would have more frequent lessons with the student so that they have less time to get frustrated or overwhelmed with any piece or technical problem. Also there would be less of a burden on them to learn to practice efficiently on their own. With more frequent lessons we could also spend more time just listening to the music we play, and possibly listening to other students as they learn their pieces.

## **Michael Cook**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

It was a good way to make some extra cash during studies, plus it helped me to come up with solutions for various problems related to piano playing.

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

It provides a more steady source of income next to concerts and master classes. I would always teach though, I learn a lot about problem solutions also for my own playing, and I do have several students that really can be quite successful.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

About 10

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

Always, but if circumstances allow, I would keep only the ones that work hard and have a chance to become professional.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

I do not expect any skills at the beginning, and within the repertoire they will not be playing the easiest pieces of the main composers yet.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Various skills like harmony, analysis, to help them learn more complicated scores like easier Beethoven Sonatas, and the easier pieces of the main composers.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

Significant knowledge of harmony, analysis, also general theory and some history. At this level a student should be able to take performance exams at University level, playing the more advanced works of the main composers.

### **6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Ideally this students starts playing popular pieces with the correct practice attitude. Learning a systematic approach to practice. Learn intervals, some harmony, some eartraining.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Students play the easier pieces of the main composers, I try to make sure they practice correctly, and are able to use their harmony, analysis and other skills to comprehend scores and memorize them, more eartraining.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

At this level the student needs to be prepared to be ready for exams at a University level, so there is significant technical training. I help the student find his/her tastes and develop them. They need to play some pieces in all the main styles, but also specialize in their favorite style.

### **7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

About 25.

### **8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Keeping them interested, and focused. At this level many dropout because they have build up incorrect practice ways, with which they cannot get away with anymore at this level where pieces become too long and complex.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**  
Great repertoire.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

Sort of, but I skipped through the intermediate level pretty much and went to advanced repertoire, and they (unfortunately) let me.

**b) Describe their styles.**

They were not very good, so they let me do pretty much whatever I wanted and did not guide me to correct practice and understanding of scores.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

Do not recall really.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

N/A

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

N/A

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

Entirely based on the individual student. Usually I need to fix a lot of problems at this level. For students that were with me long, it involves learning different scores, do technical exercises, theory, harmony, eartraining. Again it is based on the students needs/weaknesses, but also on his/her strength, meaning that we develop that part more (be it great harmony skills, or very good ears)What factors do you consider? See above

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

They are usually happy with it, I always let them choose between several pieces.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

If the student has proper basic skills, they will not have problems. Most of the time bad habits start to become a problem at this level, and the student will be having a hard time fixing problems when a pieces is 'sort of' learned.

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

**a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

No. At this level your method should fit the individual student's needs, meaning that the teacher has to devise their programs according to the student's needs. A teacher that cannot do that is not fit to teach students at this level.

**b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

Sometimes, especially when they need to audition for competitions or programs.

**c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**

Yes, but just because many of them do.

**d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**

Yes, I have written pieces for students in the past, but that is too time consuming.

**e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

Yes, because at this level students generally do take part in programs outside the lesson studio.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

Sometimes, more often I let them choose between pieces.

- a) **If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

The repertoire within their favorite style.

- 14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

- a) **Baroque music**

Mostly unfavorable

- b) **Classical music**

More pieces in this repertoire are liked

- c) **Romantic music**

The most popular era.

- d) **Contemporary music**

Impressionism, late romantic, folk inspired (Stravinsky, Bartok, Ginastera) works are popular. In the later part of this era it depends entirely on the individual composer, as there is not a 'set' style.

- e) **Jazz/Modern music**

Generally liked, some students I do allow to play solely within this repertoire, if they want to specialize.

- 15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

Most of them, again because of improper practice habits that start becoming a real problem at this level.

- 16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

This is the main reason!

- 17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Exciting repertoire. If a student has good practice habits and general skills, advancing through this repertoire is not a big issue, and therefore they will not suddenly lose motivation.

- 18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Them having difficulty tackling the scores and comprehending them.

- 19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

The highest drop out rate happens here, because of all the before mentioned...

- 20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

No, the main issue is wrong practice habits. These wrong habits are often caused by teachers that do not know how to work themselves. But even with students that work with teachers that know practice habits generally go wrong. This is the result of the current environment (especially in the States), where most students start music 'for fun', meaning it is not taken seriously, and too much pressure (meaning that they have to do exactly as told by the teacher) is felt by them and the parents as 'not fun'. The attitude is that when the kid gets to a more advanced level, they will start being more serious.

Problem is that at that level it is important that they worked correctly from the beginning.

---This is not really a bad thing though, there are too many wannabe real musicians, and it is ok that the ones that do the correct work from the beginning, and the ones that want it enough to fix their bad habits later on are the students that do advance to the higher levels of playing.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

This would be a program where they would have more than one lesson a week. I would teach them how to divide the score and to learn mistake free motorical practice. Next to that all skills needed to be equally developed. Meaning all practical theory, and technique. The student in this world would come to the lessons prepared and have done at least worked on the thing that I gave them to work on.



## **Isabella James**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

Ok, do you know Joan Rawlins at all? Well, Joan taught me from when I was doing Grade 8 piano onwards and it was really her, just watching her teach and her encouragement that made me think it was something I want to do. Before that, I'd really only thought of piano as a leisure activity rather than as a career. Cause I was actually working as a psychologist when I started learning from her, and then after a while, actually I was doing administration, and yeah, she was just so inspirational. That's what inspired me to do teaching.

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

I just find it such a joy to...it sounds very basic, but to pass on an appreciation of music. You know, to introduce people to things that they've never heard or thought they couldn't play.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

23.

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

Until either I recognise myself or someone tells me I'm not doing a good job.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Beginners I usually class from commencing lessons until they get to about third grade.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate is grade three until early grade five and even into grade six.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

And then advanced after that. So a bit blurry around the edges and I think a lot of American books are very big on classing people into those categories. I mean, AMEB has different categories.

### **6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

I think there are a lot of factors that come into it, especially what age kids start piano. But in the usual scheme of things...beginner students I tend to teach very much in a formal kind of teaching way because I think it's very, very important that they care about time, rhythm, notes, all those kinds of things.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

By the time they get into grade two, grade three, they're starting to get into the intermediate. I think it's more of a personal role model relationship where demonstrating the pieces, and them having quite a bit of choice in what they play and what kind of activities they do.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

And then advanced, I feel...I haven't had a lot of advanced students, but I feel the role I prefer is more a facilitator. You know, sort of allowing them to find their own repertoire to a certain extent, I mean, always pointing them in the right direction but making them feel they can talk about any aspect of it. And always working side by side, rather than as teacher and student. I think with the intermediate students, particularly, hopefully you've had them since they were beginners, so you've had them four, five, six years, so they're

becoming almost family. So you know them really well, so for me, that really strict teacher role starts to slide.

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

It took me a while to figure this one out, but I reckon overall about 20. We've moved several times, so every time you move, you start back with a whole new lot of beginners, and maybe only one or two in that category. So yeah, probably only about 20.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

The thing I've found mainly, is that it all gets a bit hard. They can't rely anymore on not doing anything from lesson to the next, and so, lack of practice really shows. And everything seems to get busy at that stage with school, all the other activities, often their social life is blossoming by that stage and so yeah, unless they're really dedicated, it's hard to make progress. So that can get frustrating.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

I think the fact that they start to become friends, rather than just students. And I think they express themselves more freely, they're real people in your life.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

Yeah, I can remember my teachers. I only had one teacher from the start until about grade seven, so I guess that covers the intermediate years.

**b) Describe their styles.**

It was an extremely formal, authoritative style. We had theory lessons with six people around a big table, and a blackboard and she had a little stick that she'd wave around more than anything else. But yes, very strict.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

I would say it was 90% exam repertoire. There really wasn't much of anything else at all.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

Duets and trios. She did have a good collection of trios, three people on one piano. We used to all think it was hilarious because you'd be all crossing over one another. And she used to encourage us to go to each others places to practice, so it brought a whole other side, it brought a social side into it as well.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

I probably didn't like how long it took to learn things. That transition from when you're a beginner and can learn a new piece, or three or four pieces every lesson, to getting to the stage where, with her particular style of teaching where you basically just had three or four exam pieces, although I suppose by the time you get one or two extras, but that's all you had for the year. So it was such a long, hard journey with no end in sight! It took me a long while to appreciate things, like rests are important. I don't think she ever really explained it from a musical point of view. It was more just a rule that you followed, and didn't explain why it was musically important. So that was frustrating, although I probably didn't practice well at that stage either.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students? What factors do you consider?**

Well, I actually do still base it around the exam syllabus. I set up the scales to be done, and then we spend more time choosing different pieces and then in a lot of cases, if the

scales match the pieces, we sort of work on the scales as we work on the pieces. Depends a lot too on the students strengths and weaknesses, if they're particularly poor at aural or technique or whatever, then I'll put more emphasis on that and structure a program in that area. Then, if I'm sort of happy with that area, then it doesn't need to have the same sort of formality. I also have a good look at the kinds of music that they enjoy, that they have a natural flair for and try to include at least, a fair bit of that, so at least there's something encouraging going on. And I try also not to fall into the traps that I didn't like when I was intermediate. I still make them do rests, but I do try and sprinkle more duets things throughout the year and more music that they might sort of come up with that they'd like to learn and we pop it in somewhere or find an easy version or whatever. So, there's no one size fits all basically.

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

If they've chosen it themselves, they're usually pretty excited and very keen to get into it. If it's something we've just come to because there wasn't any others or because it's set in some way, they're sort of more resigned to it I suppose. But it doesn't come up that often, that they're not happy. It would only really be if there was an aspect of technique that I feel they haven't come to terms with and we've sort of run out of ideas with pieces that they really like that covers it. And even then, I'd say only learn a page of it or a section just to get hold of this particular thing.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

With quite a few students, they do get a sense of satisfaction from getting through it and achieving it. I have had students who have later said they're glad they did it, which is enough to keep me going with that aspect of it. But then there is a number who get upset about it and it's always hard, always boring and they just do end up giving up. And I think a lot of it has to do with choice. They haven't had a say, so they don't want to go on. Lucky there's not many like that, but there are certainly some.

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

I don't use a lot of method books at that stage. I feel like they've done that through the beginning stages, and usually after we've gone through four Hal Leonard's or whatever particularly one we've chosen, I feel like that's enough of method books and I'd much rather use a variety of material. Basically because I think it adds more interest, but also getting used to the different appearance of things. Every book looks different, looks different on the page, all those sorts of things. I have used the Elissa Milne *Getting to...* books, so I suppose they're a kind of method book, includes graded material which is not exam material. But as I said before, mostly I base it around the examination syllabus. Occasionally I'll look through other syllabi from other exam bodies, like ANZCA or CPM or Trinity just to see if there's anything else that looks interesting.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

They always get some choice. Usually I'll try and come up with maybe seven or eight pieces for each list and they can have a listen and they get to rate them; one to ten for each piece. If there's any really clear-cut winners, it's really easy. I don't do it for extras, we normally just pick up one or two from the rated list. If they're all sort of around six or seven, I think that's not great, so I sort of talk to them about what they're really looking for because it's a pretty big selection. Is this some kind of music they were hoping would be there? And sometimes they'll give me a few other ideas to try. Sometimes you just have to pick one and deal with it. You can't go on forever, I don't like to waste more than a couple of lessons choosing pieces, otherwise it just goes on forever. I play the pieces up to a certain standard, probably up to grade five, grade six level. I do have the recordings, so if I'm not feeling like I'm going to be doing a good job for some reason, I'll use them. But they're often a little bit...they don't really warm things quickly when they hear them on the recordings. And whether it just seems like another world because it's a recording. You know, it's top speed or whatever. It probably seems like something they couldn't do. But they just seem to be a little more familiar when I play too.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

I think they would just about always pick movie style pieces and jazz pieces or something they've heard their friends play.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

**a) Baroque music**

Don't like it! It sucks!

**b) Classical music**

Probably ok, but a bit boring. A lot of it is too long.

**c) Romantic music**

Sometimes they really enjoy the melodies and things like that or find it exciting.

**d) Contemporary music**

This has really a variety I think. Quite a lot of the contemporary music in the exam syllabus, I'm surprised the kids will actually think it's too weird. You know, things with odd time signatures all the way through. Sometimes I present it in a way that they actually go away quite excited about it, but their parents haven't liked it, which has been really difficult. I've had parents come and say can you choose some nice pieces this time, even though the kids have had some fun, you know Bartok or something.

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

They do usually enjoy this, not that they always do a better job at it. But they're quite enthusiastic.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

I feel actually the struggle's mine, not theirs. I suppose I know it's a difficult time and I really do want them to have pieces they're excited by and so I'll spend a lot of time trying to find particular pieces. I mean, I have had a few that did have difficulty with repertoire and we couldn't find more than one or two pieces they liked at that level and so they decided not to keep going. They said they loved their music but it's harder than they're used to. And struggle, I guess technical too.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

Repertoire has probably been a big part of it, but probably the time thing has been even bigger! And the coolness factor, especially with the boys. That's why I think if you can give them mostly modern, jazz, Star Wars, but as a teacher, I don't feel right in only giving them that material.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

I think they like to be able to play for their friends. A lot seem to be very impressed by their friends playing for them, so I feel they must like playing for them if they have something interesting. I think a lot of them like to be able to show off a bit, so they like something they can do for memory and is a bit flashy. It intrigues me because the thing I hated most at that stage in my life was playing for anybody. I just really disliked playing for other people!

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

I think it mainly is just having too much on their plates and not having the space for practice or even getting to lessons. And I think their life is so full of wanting relationships with other people and that's why piano, being a solitary instrument, becomes less interesting than band or orchestra or those types of things. Takes a lot of discipline. I don't think kids are as keen to be disciplined now as they once were generations ago, perhaps because there is more choice.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

I think it's the big drop-out area. I think beginners are often incredibly excited about it all, you know, want to finish book one, book two, etc. And I think once you get through the intermediate stage, the music is so nice and so exciting, you get to the stage where you'd be mad to give it up! So I think grade four-five is where kids drop out.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

That's an interesting one! Ban TV and Facebook and Xbox! I have kids who say I didn't have time to practice this week and I'll say did you have time to watch TV? And they'll say yes. Did you have time to play the computer? Yes. Then you have time to practice! But it's really hard to rate it up there as a really interesting activity. I think some of these syllabuses, like CPM, I actually looked into it and it has an awful lot of Christopher Norton, Kerin Bailey, all those sorts of music, it focuses really heavily on that. You've got to use backings and set it up yourself, a very modern approach. The keyboard approach is very big on having people teach that. It introduces improvisation quite early. So I generally learn it to get ideas pieces, because sometimes the kids enjoy playing with backing. Although the problem I find is that they don't tend to listen to themselves, they just play loud and bang. So I think that's probably helping a little bit in reducing drop-out rates. The other thing I think that helps reduce the drop out rate, is if your studio can become a nice place to be. You know, particularly if there's a few students that are the same level or same age and they can do things together and...like we do concerts twice a year here, and they become more and more...well it started off because I was trying to figure out who goes first because nobody wants to go first. So I started doing random things like picking a name out of a hat or choosing a theme and this piece would have to go first and you're the one playing it. And they've now really snowballed and ended up becoming big concerts with kids working together and big themes and things. And it started the students talking to each other and the parents getting to know each other and I

think if your studio can become that sort of place where people enjoy being a part of it, I think that's another thing that helps them overcome things. And I've got a couple of students who really shouldn't be keeping on learning. They really don't do anything, they're not achieving and their parents know that. But they just want to keep coming! But I think that's a big part of it, because it's such an isolating thing sometimes.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

I had to think a little bit about this. I think you've got to cover all the technical, rhythmical aspects that come up within that period of time and I would like to see some sort of approach where there were listings of pieces to cover certain aspects. So you go and say ok I want to cover trills or octave work and you had ten pieces on tap that were excellent for doing that. I mean, I'm doing it in my own way, but it would be excellent if it was already set up like that. I think systems where everything is prescribed bogs you down too much. I mean, I've tried teaching the music craft which is suppose to take 15 minutes of your lesson time, which is fine except that's your average student who doesn't have any hiccups, has done all their homework, that sort of thing. But most of the time you're only giving 30 minute lessons, so that's half your lessons. So I guess the joy of having a private studio is you can do something different with each individual student. Go with the type of person they are, their particular style, that sort of thing. And so the program is going to be something different I come up with for each different student.

## **Emily Fisher**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

Well, I'm not too sure about this one. When I was 19, the teacher I had at the time suggested I take a couple of pupils and I did and I hated that. They were beginners, and uninspiring beginners. Then I didn't teach again until I had my second child, so 93, 94. I got a couple of pupils and it kind of grew from there.

*So what made you get back into it after your second child? Extra income?*

Probably. I think somebody asked me if I'd take on a couple of boys that were in my area, and I thought oh yeah, I'll do that. And I went to uni and did a Bachelor of Music so I was sort of immersed then!

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

Sometimes I wonder about that! When I'm feeling uninspired, I suppose it's my students that can re-inspire me. When I'm not teaching I think why do I do this? And yet, having taught a lesson, I can come out feeling re-energised. So it's the kids I suppose, the enjoyment of their personalities. And talking to other teachers too.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

Off and on...I couldn't be sure, probably 16, 17.

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

I don't know, not until I'm old and gray I don't think. I know it would be hard to stop, I mean, when I think about it now I...well I did stop. I stopped for a couple of months a couple of years ago when I was having family trouble and I sort of missed it. And I know now if I wasn't teaching, I'd miss the kids and the teaching.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Beginner is one who is obviously just starting, learning the basics, notation and posture, hand position and stuff like that.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

I'm not sure when they become intermediate. I have a boy doing grade two this year and the jump from grade one to grade two is huge. And I think he's probably getting toward intermediate, he's doing a sonatine movement which is a big jump from grade one, you know one page type of stuff. But I don't know, grade two seems a little young for intermediate I suppose. But the piece he's doing...yeah, I suppose the pieces. I mean, some grade two's could still be on really basic note stuff or kids that have been learning that long. It depends on the kid, some kids seem to be learning notation for five years before they do anything else. Whereas other kids seem to progress really quickly.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

I think probably from grade 7 on, I'd class as advanced.

### **6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Beginner I suppose I talk a lot more. I get to the end and I think I've talked all lesson. More games, more sort of fun with the beginners because generally they're younger so to try and keep their interest and attention.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

I mean, the style changes for intermediate because the pieces are more meaty. I enjoy, I mean if I had a choice of who I was going to teach I'd choose an intermediate over a

beginner any day because I enjoy the meatier pieces where you can actually shape pieces and start talking about phrases and shaping phrases, rather than just reading notes and getting to the end of the little piece. I think making them listen more too. At the start, it's just about getting through the piece with their hands held, and if you can read the notes that's really good. But once you get past that, you want them to be able to listen and play music rather than just notes.

**c) Advanced student?**

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

I wouldn't have a clue! Generally, because I used to teach at Annandale Christian School and Ryan, although Ryan was mainly beginners, but I had a lot of pupils in those years. Generally kids will stay to intermediate and then drop out then if they're going to. At least 20+.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Well they're getting older generally, so finding time to practice. When they're younger and they've just begun, they have their practice time. Whereas when they get older into high school, practice just goes out the window because they're in so many other things, school work always comes first. So for them, finding a regular practice time that suits is hard. I suppose keeping them interested, especially boys, I find as they get older, I think you just have to go with what they want to do. Any general direction! If you find a piece that inspires them, they're more likely to go on.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

The age, I think. I used to be a school teacher and I enjoyed the upper primary level much more than Grade one! I like kids you can actually talk to and have fun with and you can actually have a joke with and they understand. I think the enjoyable thing is seeing the kids every week and seeing them mature and change over the years.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

I do, sort of. It was just one teacher for intermediate.

**b) Describe their styles.**

Not at all that extraordinary! She'd just sit there and have me play a whole piece through once, and not comment on individual parts. It's a wonder I kept going.

*Was she quite strict?*

Not really, but my mother was so I had to practice everyday! There was no option not to practice, so the teacher really got the cream of it. I'd go twice a week to my lesson ten past seven in the morning. I don't know how my mother managed that! I mean, I'm not awake at that time. Well I'm awake, but I'm not alive! I suppose because I'd practiced she could see the progress, but it was pretty uninspiring. It's just like playing a piece but not shaping it.

*How did you go about practicing then? How did you know what to practice?*

Well, back in those days I'd do two lots of exams, I'd do Trinity and AMEB each year so I had a lot to practice. So I'd just go through what I had to practice, maybe once, maybe twice and then I'd play what I wanted to play. Mum always bought a lot of music, fun stuff.

*Was she a music teacher?*



No, she had been a singer earlier in her life, but she didn't mind buying music that we wanted to play. But yeah, I did my normal practice, she didn't care what I practiced really as long as I sat there for the hour and played.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

At the time, I didn't even know what it was. But now when I'm teaching a Sonatina, I think oh yeah, I played that. I don't think that I touched Bach until I went to another teacher at Grade 7 (level 7), so basically I just worked on the Grade books. So I'd have my Trinity book and my AMEB book and eisteddfod back then was even set pieces so no matter what level you were at you had to play this piece. So it's a bit tough for students who have just begun. But I didn't have a lot of freedom in what I was playing so I think that's why when I teach now, I don't use grade books. I don't use AMEB or ANZCA, I just choose things out of the list. I have something against books...just working through them!

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

That you could play for people and give them enjoyment. My grandparents would come and say play something for me. So once you're at that stage, the pieces are actually enjoyable to listen to. It's so far ago that I can't remember!

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

I didn't really like practicing. I remember having many arguments with my mother and she'd say I'm going to ring up and tell her you're not learning anymore and I'd say no, no, don't ring! I can't remember what I didn't like other than that.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

**What factors do you consider?**

Well it depends on the student, I mean the main thing is you have to be flexible with every student. Some students, all they live for is exams and eisteddfods and they want to do everything they can, but other students just want to learn so they can sing along and play themselves. So if they're going to do an exam, you have to make sure technically they're fine with their scales and pieces, give them a range of repertoire. Whereas other students just want to do contemporary. I think if I try and push towards classical it'll turn them off. Well, sometimes I give a range of things. It depends on the kids totally. I don't think there's any one formula!

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

Generally...I always pick stuff with the student in mind and I try to give them a choice of two things, so then they've always chosen. It's not like I've just said play this, or this. Even with exam pieces, I'll give them a choice from the different lists, just so their heart's in it a little bit. They've got to have some excitement in learning it. There are times when I've said this is what you're doing and we've struggled through for weeks and I can see they're not enjoying it or it's not going to work. So I say look, do you really want to do this? And we'll change it. I don't think they're concrete, if they don't like it. What was the question again? I had one girl last week, she was supposed to be doing grade four last year, but didn't make the grade so I said she couldn't do the exam. I think it was a bit above her. But she just hadn't practiced all year, we achieved nothing all year. So I gave her a couple of new pieces last week and she was so excited about, especially one of them, it was just a chordy jazzy thing. And she actually came to her lesson this week and had practiced. Her mother was so amused that she'd actually

practiced. So it's always exciting when they're excited about something you hand to them. She was like oh wow! So we spent most of the year last year getting ready for this crazy grade 4 exam, that I knew she wasn't capable of, but we just hoped she'd pull her socks up, but a week before the exam, I said you can't do it. So we just sort of fluffed around for the rest of the year and I think if the pieces are set at the kids level, something they are capable of, something they enjoy, it's obviously the trick.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

I mean no one likes learning new pieces, especially the ones they have to put a lot of time into. But once they do learn them, they love it. And it'll be their favourite piece from then, but then getting them to learn a new piece again, is a real struggle. I find that once they get longer in length, it's harder to get them to keep persevering to get to that fully polished stage. Nobody likes learning new pieces!

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

I generally don't use method books, but I have done. Sometimes I use Bastien, I change all over the place, I don't like getting bored. Forget the kids, it's all about me!

Sometimes I've gone up to Bastien, the yellow book, and I'd say that's intermediate, that's about as far as I've gone with that. Alfred, probably up to the blue level.

Generally I use other stuff.

A combination, I hate it when kids only do exam stuff, like when they get to eisteddfod and all they've got to play is exam stuff. I like them to have fresh stuff for the eisteddfod. And as well I like them to have the fun stuff. They can do the jazzy stuff! But yeah, I like them to do other things.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

I find they don't totally like to choose all their own. Sometimes they'll come with a folder full of stuff they've got from the internet, and they're all songs. And they'll play around, but give them a choice, after they've fluffed around for a bit, they'll want to do something different. I find a lot of them want to do classical, like Mozart, or a Sonatina or something. That seems to be the favourite period or style that they enjoy.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

Probably things from the internet, because that's all that's available to them. It's only when I go through all my stuff and say do you like this, or how about this. Because they don't really have the knowledge to choose things, they need guidance.

*So would it be movie themes or Coldplay?*

Yeah, stuff they get off the internet is contemporary or popular stuff.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

**a) Baroque music**

I have a hard time selling baroque, I think it's because of my own personal bias. But I always try and do some, I think they should have some knowledge of Bach and baroque,

but you have a hard time selling it. So generally we'll do it, but it's not really their favourite. And I'm sure we ever get to the really polished stage before we give up on it either.

**b) Classical music**

Classical I find they all really enjoy, I don't know why, maybe because I love it. I think it's easy to convey your love of something to someone else and they sort of catch that. That's probably why I ended up enjoying music so much because the teacher I had when I was advanced, her enthusiasm and love, I think you catch on to that.

**c) Romantic music**

They love that, the modern type romantic is always great for intermediate. As they get more advanced, they enjoy other romantic stuff. Yeah, I think just the harmonies.

**d) Contemporary music**

It depends on the music. I don't know, I've never found anyone who really loves doing atonal type stuff probably because I don't as well. Something with melody or something to follow is more...well it's probably why classical is just so much more enjoyable because it's almost mathematical.

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

They like this, even if they're not up to being able to play how it is. I like teaching a lot of chords as well, so if they just play the right hand and learn chords that go along with it. I mean, I think they'll learn to play a lot more than if they're just reading the music.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

A lot. Because of the big jump and change from beginner music and repertoire to intermediate. The little boy I've got who's doing grade two and I've given him a sonatina or something like that, but compared to his grade one it's two pages of sonatina. I just chopped it and only gave him half of it, it sounded kind of finished. He thought that was a lot. It was funny the other day because he was saying he's nearly finished it and I said well I didn't want to tell you at first. And he wasn't totally shell-shocked, but had I given him the two pages to start off with he would have had a heart-attack.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

Depends on the child. Some kids obviously enjoy a challenge more than others. Some kids have parents who push more than others. Depends what their goals are, if all they can see is doing exams and having to do those pieces, then they may give up. I've had kids that get out of the exam phase and so we just do popular or modern type stuff and maybe when they mature, we'll change again. If it is just a struggle week after week, I'd give up. Especially boys I think, I always find if you're just trying to give them exam repertoire, very structured, romantic type stuff...maybe I've just had the wrong kind of boys! So they seem to get bored and can't see the point in it.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Playing stuff they enjoy, getting enjoyment from it. Giving enjoyment to others when they play, parents definitely. When their friends learn as well, it's a bit of a competitive thing. When they get older and are doing music at school, they have to do performances at school so they keep learning through grade 11 and 12 just because their performances will be better.

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Probably just the time factor, just a change in interests really. I'm not sure about that. I mean, yeah, if you give them pieces they don't enjoy at that age, then definitely yeah.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

I think if they're going to drop out, it will be then generally. I suppose a lot do drop out at the late intermediate, intermediate stage.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

Generally, not every kid wants to go to diploma stage in piano. And I think a lot of parents have the idea that if the kid can play and read music, then that's more than what they could do and it's probably good enough for parents. To think that every child is going to start at beginner and go all the way through is unrealistic. It's not what they all want. It's not what their goals. I hate it when kids drop out and they never play again and all they can play is what's written on music. That's why I like to teach chords, because if they can sit and read chords, buy a sheet of pop music, play the right hand and do some chords, it give them the freedom to do it. Or to just use their chords to hear something and play it. I don't want them to be totally dependent on the notes on a page.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

Well in an ideal world, you'd have to see them for more than half an hour a week. Probably come in for a couple of 45 minute sessions a week, and then you'd have time for theory. I always run out of chord stuff and improvisation which I'd like to do, but we always get hung up doing pieces we have to do. So more time to do other things other than compulsory pieces. Ideally, they'd have an extra half an hour a day that they could fit into their practice week.

**Ethan Douglas**

**1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

My piano teachers had such a positive effect on me both as a pianist and a young person in general that I wanted to become a teacher to be a positive influence on other students.

**2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

I enjoy motivating students and watching them grow as pianists week after week.

**3. How many years have you been teaching?**

I have been teaching for two years.

**4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

I hope to teach throughout my life.

**5. How would you define or describe a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

Beginner student – the student must learn the rudimentary skills necessary to play the piano. These include correct posture, hand position, touch, dynamics, articulation, and reading and rhythm skills.

**b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate student – the student has grasped the rudimentary skills of piano, and a great deal of information regarding musicality can be introduced. Students learn to voice, phrase, and interpret composers' indications.

**c) Advanced student?**

Advanced student – the student is capable of learning and performing a wide range of repertoire, mostly independent from the instructor.

**6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

Beginner student – the instructor must foster the development of good musical habits through quizzing and repetition.

**b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate student – the instructor begins to allow the student some independence in terms of practice habits, etc., but continues to verify that no bad musical habits occur. Limited choices are given to the student, i.e., three pieces are presented to the student, and the student picks one to learn.

**c) Advanced student?**

Advanced student - The instructor's primary role is to offer suggestions for resolving technical issues and to aid the student in interpreting the piece.

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

I have taught approximately five intermediate students.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Finding repertoire that is challenging but not too difficult and at the same time interesting to the student is probably the most difficult aspect of teaching an intermediate student.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

The most enjoyable aspect of teaching intermediate students is when they begin to interpret and enjoy music without my coaching.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

- b) Describe their styles.
- c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?
- d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?
- e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?

I had one teacher during my intermediate years. She taught directly from method books, so we worked on a wide range of repertoire as well as many transcriptions. I enjoyed the difficulty of the repertoire because it sounded interesting when played, but I disliked some of the technical difficulties that accompanied them.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students? What factors do you consider?**

I keep two things in mind when teaching my intermediate students: (1) I try to expose them to a wide range of composers and styles and (2) I try to strike a balance between advancing their skills and not discouraging them with overly difficult or boring pieces.

- a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?

Generally, I give the student a choice among several different pieces, and they pick the most personally appealing piece.

- b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?

This usually ensures that the response to the piece is positive.

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?

I generally do not use method books, because there is a wealth of Urtext intermediate repertoire to choose from (Tchaikovsky, Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, etc). I also don't use external syllabi and I have not had enough intermediate students to enter any into competitions.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

- b) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?

I allow my students limited choices. For example, I may present several Beethoven Bagatelles and then allow them to choose the one that is most appealing to them. I also allow them to bring music to the lesson that they are particularly interested in, and, if it is suitable, I incorporate it into the lesson. If I let them choose all of their repertoire, I would probably be teaching a lot of popular and video game music!

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

- a) Baroque music

Baroque – Some students love baroque music, others tend to detest it. I never know what a student's reaction will be beforehand.

- b) Classical music

Classical – probably the least popular style, at least initially.

- c) Romantic music

Romantic – probably the most accessible genre of “classical” music.

**d) Contemporary music**

Contemporary – usually popular, unless it is post or atonal.

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

Jazz/Modern – fairly popular.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

All students struggle at some point. Problems occur when students encounter a new technical problem. Problems are also common when a student has had bad instruction from another teacher at the beginning level.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

Piano stops being fun and the student loses interest if the problems are too widespread.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Mastering new pieces, and the positive reinforcement that comes from playing for others, is what I believe keeps students motivated to learn.

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Many intermediate students are young teenagers. Outside pressure from school, peers, and family can cause students to focus their attention elsewhere.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

The age of the student, as well as the increasing amount of independence that the student has over their learning experience, makes the intermediate level the point at which students will either choose to continue to play or stop taking lessons.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

Drop-out rates can be lowered somewhat if the instructor communicates effectively with the parents and the student. If the instructor is unaware of the student's needs then everyone will suffer.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

I would design a program that would balance the need to challenge the student and expose him or her to a wide range of styles with the student's musical interests and personal goals. Not everyone is going to become a concert pianist, and this must be taken into account when planning a student's lessons. I would be in constant contact with the student's parents in order to facilitate good musical habits throughout the week.

## **Madison Frank**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

I don't know. I think because I was doing an exam that required me to do something, like some teaching, it must have been a Trinity College one, like the teaching one. So I just started with three or four and it just grew from there.

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

That's a tricky one. I've actually given away teaching at home and I teach only at the school now. But I'd have to say that first introductory lesson where you see the kids go "oh there's a pattern". I just go "yep, this is going to be so good." I just want young people to find music and be introduced to music, it's very motivating.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

Well I was 20, we're talking probably 20 years now, well coming up to about 20 years.

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

Probably not forever, I don't think. Yeah, I'll probably give it away in the next 10 years. I think maybe you can get too old for it, and the students are so young and that gap might not be good. But then again, I see Daphne Turnbull, she's a singing teacher, she teaches my son. And I think she's so good with them, she keeps up with them, she keeps them interested. She just has a good rapport with young kids. My son is 13 and he loves going! She's good at it, but I worry that I won't keep up with it.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Well obviously a beginner doesn't know very much about musical notation, and all the rules, that go along with...I mean they could be incredibly musical but they don't know the formal structure of the music.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate should have all that. They will have the notation and everything under their belt. I shouldn't be saying "how do we learn the notes, what are our tricks for learning letter names". They should be passed that at an intermediate stage.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

At an advanced stage, they're telling me what they want to learn, where they want to go with it. They should be mature, and comfortable with themselves.

### **6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Really different. For a beginner, very traditional and I'm the instructor. They're there to learn.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate is a bit more collaborative generally because that's what you need to be. And I find that's the most difficult one.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

When they get to the advanced stage it's fine, they're in charge of their own destiny really. And it's much more exciting because the repertoire is great. I mean I only have one advanced student at the moment and you do have to say "yes you can do this, it might look hard."

### **7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**



Heaps, well heaps for me because I only have a small studio, but I've taught everybody through their teenage years. I've seen everyone through to year 12, which is tough you know, to have them at that stage. It's a really difficult time, especially boys. I've had a lot of boys through that time. So I don't know, I can't put a number on it. Maybe 20.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

So many distractions for them at this time because they're reaching a very exciting time of their life. They're becoming more social, schooling is becoming demanding, so it's a challenge to keep piano as one of their priorities and I don't know that I've ever done it very much. But yeah, it's just making sure they give their attention to piano as much as they give it to all the other competing things in their lives. And the social factor is probably the biggest. Tricky.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Probably because the repertoire gets a bit more interesting. And this is the time when they start saying do you know Alanis Morissette? Or do you know 'something' and then I can say well have you heard... I might introduce somebody to them or even just give them the Beatles or something from Elton John or Billy Joel and say hey, have you heard this? And this is when they're mature enough to want to expand their musical knowledge so I like that. I like it when they say I heard this really good song and you say I know which one you're talking about and you sit down and play it and they think that's fantastic and you've got them back again.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

Yes.

**b) Describe their styles.**

Old, and she's still with us, she's 95. She was very much, because I did the AMEB, so the repertoire was from there except maybe at the end of the year where we were given something that was meant to be fun to learn. Usually it was some hideous Irish waltz or something. So that was probably not my biggest motivating factor. My mum was a piano teacher, so there was a lot of music at home, so I would just go through and think oh this looks good, hey mum what's this? And she'd say oh they're the Chopin waltzes or something so that was motivating for me. And also, when I was at high school, I could play anything I heard off the radio, so that made me very popular... well popular for a nerdy kid! But you know, if I could sit down and play The Eagles on the piano it was like oh wow!

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

It was the AMEB syllabus.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

Probably playing for my friends because once you get to that stage you have the ability to sit down and say look what I can play. I mean, I've got this one student now who plays Missy Higgins, she has the collection, and she plays that and think she's great! And her friends probably think she's great too. I think that's something very rewarding.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

That one I can't answer because I never felt like I was ever at any particular stage because I enjoyed it all the time, no matter what I was doing.

## **11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

### **What factors do you consider?**

That's a tricky one. You have to give them something they like, you need to challenge them always with their technique, always some version of scales (usually related to what they're learning so it makes sense to them), and then you've got to say hey listen to this, and you play something that you know is a popular classical thing and they say oh yeah, I wouldn't mind trying that and so you just work on that bit by bit. And when it gets hard for them, because it will, because if they're doing say an easy pop piece as their choice, it'll be easy the whole way through. But if they're doing something say from the classical repertoire, it will start off easy and become challenging halfway through. So it's always that hump halfway through the piece and you think how am I going to get them through that? That's the hardest thing I think. So there will be that long term goal of learning a hard piece, short term of learning something that they enjoy, technique all the way through. That's usually the way I work it. And of course you have to change that if they want to be a performer, or if they want to do the AMEB exams. But I won't push the exams. I've had a few say yes, yes, yes, and then a few weeks before the exam I've had to pull them out. So I've learnt not to push it, if they're not the really highly motivated ones.

### **a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

If I choose it for them I have to make sure I play it for them in a very exciting way. But by then, you should know your students. So I had this one student who loved pieces in minor keys so she won't even consider it if it doesn't sound sad and mournful. So you choose pieces that you think they will like. And it's hard work, going through all the pieces thinking oh yes, Sarah will like this. And then you play them for them and they say NO! Oh, back to square one! I think I'm too accommodating in that way, in that I always let them choose from some that I've already pre-selected.

### **b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

Yeah, when things get a big bogged down, they can say I don't want to finish this. So you have to gauge it then, do I think it will be worth it to push through to the end or should we abandon this and try something else. And you have to try and make sure that they feel like they're progressing. I have one student who finds it very demoralising if it's not progressing. So I have to make sure we can get past the hump. Sometimes I start in the middle of the piece if I think it's going to be a problem and I say we might start learning this hard bit first and then the rest will come easily. It doesn't always work, but it's not a bad idea!

## **12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

I use exam syllabi and existing repertoire, but I don't use the method books past the late beginner, I throw them out after that! So sometimes I use albums, anthologies that sort of thing. Like a Sonatinas album.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

They always choose one.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

It would be all of the same thing that they prefer, whether it be pop stuff or studies, but it would be all of the same thing. Not very extensive at all.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

**a) Baroque music**

For boys, sometimes, it depends for boys, sometimes they really like baroque music. I've often had intermediate boys like Bach, because they just like that clear sound or structure, I don't know. I don't know what appeals to them.

**b) Classical music**

If I had an intermediate student, I would try and choose pieces that were more typically popular, even though they are classical, you know the popular classics. So I would try and choose something that I think because they sound good, over the years everyone's said yeah, that's a nice piece, typically an intermediate student would like it.

**c) Romantic music**

You might get some romantic stuff that the girls think sounds pretty.

**d) Contemporary music**

But sometimes trying to make them learn Debussy and more obscure stuff, they might go ew! But then I've given them Debussy and they love it! I don't know, I think it's more you cater to what you think they are receptive to and it could be anything. I mean, if I gave them a simple Bach but it sounded nice, they'd be fine. If I gave them one that was incredibly complex, a different story.

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

This would probably be their favourite.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

They all do, except the really, really good ones. The average one will always hit a hump in a piece. Some pieces they will get through but there will be other pieces that they'll hit a hump.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

It's tricky because if you gave them that all the time they'd never feel like they were accomplishing anything so you give them easier stuff. I think if you were always hitting them with hard stuff they would get discouraged.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Appealing to their individuality. That's what the intermediate stage is all about; me, me, me! It's all about what do they like! So appealing to their individual sense of music.

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

If it's too hard they will lose motivation because why would they practice then. So you have to be careful then, you have to not give them stuff that's too hard at first. It's a gradual thing. If they say oh gee, that wasn't too bad, you say try this one.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

I've never had much of a drop out rate, sometimes I wish they would! I've not had a lot of drop out rates other than there's just so much other stuff going on in their lives that it

just seems impossible, so that was the only one that kind of dropped. So because it's at that time of their life, sometimes family life is just all too hard.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

N/A

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

It would be nice to have a studio where they could listen to anything. You know, have a listen to all of these and tick off the ones that you like. But I have a very student-centred approach, so I want them to learn the piece because I guess from experience, it's too hard to get them to learn something that you want them to learn. So you have to be very careful and make them believe they're choosing. So it would have to be a mix of something that they like, something that will challenge their technique and I always want them to do something practical, even if it's something they're just plodding along with. Ideally I would like to have time for aural work, technical work, theory work, everything like that every lesson, but it's really hard. Theory work, unless they're doing exams, there's no way I'd get an intermediate student to do any theory, extra to what they're doing in class.

**Ava McDonald**

**1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

I was talked into teaching our back-neighbours two girls. I had just returned from Teachers Training College in Brisbane and was teaching Primary School in Cairns, at Balaclava S.S. I was really more interested in singing, having been an external student at The Brisbane Conservatorium of Music under the tutorship of Mr James Christensen. I had stopped formal piano lessons after completing Yr 5 A.M.E.B. Practical and Yr 3 Theory so as to concentrate on my Form 5 and 6 school studies. (Now called Yr 11 and 12). I probably would have shown little interest in continuing playing the piano at the time as I had had a most, uninspiring teacher, who used the cane when her temper got the better of her, (I went home with bleeding fingers one day) and who used to enjoy a quiet little drink in the next room and call out what I was to play next. My repertoire consisted of exam pieces and old sheet music left over from her defunct family music shop. Sounds bizarre now doesn't it? She was considered one of the best teachers in the district. But, my Dad was a singer of some renown, and, he insisted that I learn to accompany him. So I continued to practice.

Next, I married. At the time married teachers had to resign. Only women who were widows, or, single female teachers were employed by the Queensland Department of Education. Of course, we were very poor. What better way to earn a little money than to teach piano and theory at home? Even when the babies came they would sit on my knee and I would continue to teach.

**2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

I love teaching, anything. School work, sewing, cooking, music. I love students and showing them that, with dedication and effort, they can make their life most interesting. For about eighteen months during the 1970's I did not have students. During this period, through necessity, I returned to full time School Teaching, so the availability of music teaching time was very limited. For eighteen months I did very little music teaching, except for Choir work at School. But, on attending a seminar held by the Queensland Music Teachers Assn, in Townsville, (Mundingburra S.S.), I was horrified to learn that I had forgotten those little methods teachers devise to teach certain concepts. So I started taking a few students again to keep and develop those skills.

**3. How many years have you been teaching?**

50 years

**4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

Until my health impedes my ability to communicate.

**5. How would you define or describe a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

A beginning student is one who relies on a teacher to teach them a new piece more difficult than they have ever tackled before. This can be a few years, or it can happen very quickly. Young children tend to take a few years, but, intelligent, dedicated adults move very quickly. Intelligence and dedication are the key.

**b) Intermediate student?**

Students studying from A.M.E.B. Yr 4 to Yr 6.

**c) Advanced student?**

Yr 6 A.M.E.B. on.

**6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

Lots of positive feedback. I teach two-hand playing from the very beginning. I have devised various exercises of my own that introduce tonic triads and their inversions, and teach these from the beginning. I encourage students to recognise them in their music. Theory is consistently taught at the piano from the music they are playing regardless of the "Year Level" of A.M.E.B. Note recognition is demanded early. All white note scales are taught early, but, one octave, separate hands only. Contrary Motion is introduced early in all scales, one octave only. I lend music as I use a variety of books, sometimes only using a few pieces from each book. Only when I know a student is going to get his/her money's worth, do I ask them to purchase the book. Students are encouraged to turn the page and try to teach themselves new pieces. Stickers, with comments, are recorded for exceptional achievement or effort.

**b) Intermediate student?**

Depends on the student. I encourage all students to sit for theory exams, but, I don't insist on all students sitting for practical exams. Some students are just not "exam material." It is too much of a drama. End of term concerts are a way of showing me who would be capable of achieving well. I believe that, as Music study is an "extra" interest, it is important to guarantee a successful outcome in any "external examination". Perhaps this is a result of my own experience. I could sing for anyone at any time, but, to play the piano was a trauma, (vomiting and diarrhoea) one that took me many years to overcome. I use a variety of material. Usually, I play several different pieces from different composers, classical, modern, jazz, and allow the student to choose. Those interested in exams are directed into the more "classical" studies of the well known composers. Scales and exercises of Hanon, Czerny and Burgmuller are a regular choice. Martha Mier is a popular choice of my students together with Kieren Bailey. And, of course, old exam books.

**c) Advanced student?**

I have had very little experience with advanced students. Usually by the time they reach this stage, they have started Uni, and are not dedicated enough to continue. I feel this is one area I need to study, having had very little experience myself. By the end of the 1960's, many of my students could play as well as I could, so I started studying again, but, my repertoire consists of exam pieces, and a few of the popular classics. I do learn all pieces I expect my students to play.

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

Once again, very few. This is a Defence and Uni city. Many of my students are in town for a couple of years. I have had students whose parents are teachers and/or doctors from overseas, five in the past six years, whom I would call, intermediate students, but, every one of them has left the city on transfer or left Australia. Over the past ten years, I reduced my studio, as family commitments, my school teaching career and declining health had to be considered. Now that I am "retired" I have started building up my School again. At present, I have four intermediate students. Many years ago, (twenty) I have several Theory students who were studying for their letters.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Getting them to understand that technique needs to be practised separately from their pieces. A student should approach a new piece with the technique required already mastered. Developing enthusiasm for the Yr 2 and Yr 3 Theory examinations.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Most of them are very interested in improving, the relationship moves to a new level, and the music is beautiful.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

My very first teacher (I studied with her for 2 years) was kind, but, looking back I would say she had no formal teacher training. All the same she was very thorough, and with her I sat for Grade 1 practical and Grade 1 and 2 Theory. I had two half hour lessons a week, but, stayed longer to practice theory questions alone. She married and moved away, much to my sorrow.

My second teacher was obviously teaching music because she needed the money.

Talented students had no trouble with her, but, she was definitely the wrong teacher for me. I had to work to have any success.

My third teacher specialized in piano accordion. With her I studied Grade Seven Practical A.M.E.B. and Grade 4 Theory. I had to find someone else as she informed me she could take me no further.

My fourth teacher was friend, confidant, and teacher. With her I studied for A.T.C.L. Teaching Diploma.

**b) Describe their styles.**

Teacher 1: All pieces, no matter how long had to be learned separate hands. Scales for the grade were learned by watching her. Theory rules were written into a theory manuscript and I had to learn them off by heart.

Teacher 2: had a most unusual method of teaching theory. My mother had to purchase Elsie Robson's "Harmony, Melodic Invention etc". I was handed the book and told to go home and learn the first 40 rules. So inspiring! I still have the book if you'd like to peruse it.

All pieces, no matter how long had to be learned separate hands. Hanon and Czerny were used continually.

Teacher 3: As I was an adult student and interested in doing exams, she acted as an advisor, more than a teacher.

Teacher 4: Introduced me to much repertoire through records. A most inspiring teacher.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

Exam pieces, Hanon, Czerny, scales and pieces of unknown authors left from her family "shop" that would be falling to pieces by the time you learnt them.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

I hated it. I even started skipping lessons. I did enjoy being able to play Hanon and Czerny very fast.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

The lack of encouragement, the disinterest of the teacher and her bullying tactics. I hated practising scales.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students? What factors do you consider?**

\*Firstly, I take into consideration just where they want to go with their music. Are they learning for their own enjoyment, as a hobby? Or are they planning to continue their studies and become a performer, or, a teacher?

\* All students learn scales and exercises.

\*Adult students usually want to play just for their own pleasure so I don't insist on them sitting for theory exams, but, leave it to own choice.

\*Students who are undecided, I take a middle road, choosing pieces I know they will enjoy, not necessarily as difficult as they are capable of playing, but which they can learn quickly and really enjoy playing, developing a large repertoire. Scales and exercises are still a part of their program, so that, should they become serious, technique and knowledge have still been developed. Theory exams still are a very important part of their program. I teach the "Shefte" method of chords, so that "popular music" can be sight-read easily.

\*Dedicated students are encouraged to sit for exams, but, I still include easier pieces so they can learn these quickly, even sight-read them. Earlier in my music teaching career, I puzzled why my beginning students were so good at sight reading, but, my intermediate students suddenly seemed to lose their skill. I realized that a diet of difficult pieces that took several weeks to master was the cause. My beginners ( up to Gr 1) were learning several pieces a week. I then realised the value of easier music. Sight reading exercises were boring, but books with very easy pieces in them changed their attitude. Students have to learn two pieces each week on their own.

\*Another point I practised was to always be studying pieces harder than the examination pieces. In other words, sit for an exam that was a year behind what you were capable of playing. Confidence and self-esteem benefitted greatly.

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

Most can't get home fast enough to learn to play it, because they have chosen it. Exam pieces aren't received with the same enthusiasm.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

Haven't noticed much change. Most take pride in being able to play them.

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

**a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

I do not use method books for intermediate students. They do not cater for individuality.

**b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

A.M.E.B., because I am familiar with the system, having studied it myself. I have used another system in the past, but can't remember its exact name. Australian Music Academy I think.

**c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**

No. Often my students are not capable of playing the pieces set for the age group. I will teach them if the parent is insistent on the child participating in the competition.

**d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**

Not sure just what you want here. I use anything I can find that interests the student.

Keiren Harvey, Debussy, Schumann, Mozart, Martha Mier, David Carr Clover, Lindley Evans, Burgmuller, Czerny, Beethoven,

**e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**



**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

As often as possible from a selection of pieces I play for them. Advice and encouragement are given about choice when a particular skill must be learned.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

Many would be stuck. They do not hear much piano music, so don't know what is available. I have been horrified to learn that, except for the school music teacher and me, students have never seen or heard a professional play the piano.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

- a) Baroque music**
- b) Classical music**
- c) Romantic music**
- d) Contemporary music**
- e) Jazz/Modern music**

If the music has melodic appeal, any of the above would be enjoyed. I have had students struggle with difficult technique, but determined to learn the piece because they love the music.

I have had students struggle with Baroque music, but determined to learn it, because they admire the skill required to compose such a piece.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

With all the demands made on students' time, many don't have the time to devote to practice. Pushy parents don't seem to understand the amount of time it takes to develop sound technique. Students need to learn that choices have to be made. They cannot participate in all the opportunities that are available to them and be a master at an instrument.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

I feel it has a profound effect. Practice time can be a lonely time, and with so many alternatives on offer, it is easy to take the less difficult path.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

To all of the above:-

1. Teacher needs to be personally interested in the student.
2. No one program suits all students; flexibility is the key.
3. Programs have to be devised to suit the situation. e.g. Maybe the student has to plateau for a while. School studies must take priority at various times of the year. Music lessons do not have to follow the school term.
4. Duets, even if only with the teacher, add fun to the mix. With friends with other instruments even better.
5. Repertoire that suits the taste of the student must be found.

6. If theory is taught when it occurs during the practical lesson, it makes learning the piece easier, and, takes away the “dry”, “boring” aspect that theory lessons from a text book can have.

7. The cost of printed music has to be considered. Music can be lent, if the piece is only being learned to practice a technique.

Students need to have a wide variety of pieces they can play, not necessarily containing difficult technique, but, that are musically satisfying.

I encourage students to have a repertoire of, at least, six pieces that they can play at any one time, and to have a “concert” at the end of their practice, so that they finish on a high.

8. Learning a musical instrument, is a long, expensive process. If the teacher’s only income is from teaching, it can be very difficult to be flexible with lessons.

e.g. I have a Uni student, who rings me when she needs a lesson. This is occurring less and less frequently as she become more self-efficient. Lessons are now about two months apart. Cost is also a factor here.

**Olivia Starr**

**1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

Probably just the fact that I enjoyed playing myself, that's probably the biggest thing. I had a couple of good teachers. I just thought it was something I could do quite easily and I just enjoyed doing it myself.

**2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

Having wonderful students. I've built up...a few years ago I only had four or so students, not a very big number, and that's grown over the last few years. And I've got a lot of really good students. A couple are there because their parents want them to be, but a couple who, the majority who really want to be there and you have fun and it's rewarding. You ask them to do something and they come back the next week and they've done it and you think "this is great."

**3. How many years have you been teaching?**

Altogether about 20, which is a bit scary. I guess we've been up here about 5 or 6 years, and I had a break when I had the children, but about 20 all up.

**4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

Probably a fair while. I'm happy to keep going into the indefinite future.

**5. How would you define or describe a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

Beginner from their first lesson up until about grade 1 or 2 possibly...AMEB.

**b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate starting from grade 2 or 3 up until about grade 5.

**c) Advanced student?**

And advanced from grade 5 onwards.

**6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

I don't have any advanced students at the moment. My highest is working towards grade 5 and the other is entered for grade 5 at the end of the year.

**a) Beginner student?**

I try to be really enthusiastic with all my kids and I try to make it a really positive experience. And my biggest thing is, if they can have fun, they're more likely to want to do it, and then they'll practice, they'll keep learning, you know all that stuff. So that would be the same for both (beginner and intermediate). I'm a big writer, like with all my students I make sure I write everything out, everything I expect them to do. And I guess that would be less for the intermediate student, to a degree. Beginner very much step by step, although it depends very much on the individual kid or student I guess. I find some of them need things repeated and explained three different ways. Others will just go with it.

**b) Intermediate student?**

Again, I've only got these two students at the moment that are intermediate, and with them I write much less. It's much smaller. I tell them what to do, you know give them some instructions. And then they take it away. One of the two is a fantastic student, he goes away every week and does exactly what I've asked. So I say great Tom, now let's fix the articulation here or fix this line which is a bit slow and then he goes away and he comes back and he's done it. So now let's fix this...so it's a little less step by step, more advice.

**c) Advanced student?**

N/A

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

8-10...not a huge amount, but it has been quite a few years.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Challenging. For most of them, keeping them enthusiastic. Most of the kids, and I'm showing you here that I teach mostly kids, I do have one adult. But most of them are very enthusiastic when they start and keep going with their own enthusiasm, but that sort of wears off for them after a little while. And I think...this is another question later on I think, as they get older, they get busier with sport and school and with other extra curricula, so that's a challenge, to keep them interested and keep them practicing! And it gets harder...I'm noticing it with my daughters who are in this category too, like the songs are harder. They can't just learn them in a week or two weeks, they have to really practice and so I think that's a challenge to understand what practice means. Practice doesn't mean just play it through once or even play it through twice. It's actually getting into the nitty gritty and working out these four bars that are a bit of a dog to play. So for some of them, that's a bit of a challenge too.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Seeing their skill level improve so that they can actually manage harder pieces, the more interesting pieces. That's exciting. I've got this one boy who I'll talk about, he's my model student, he comes to a lesson and says "I'd love to learn the Moonlight Sonata" so his mum goes and buys him it and even though it's quite a hard song he'll have a go. He says "I'd really like to learn Clair de Lune" so his mum goes and buys him the music and he has a go. All this challenging stuff, but he has a go. And he's inspired by it and excited by it and the fact that he can even make an attempt is exciting and I think that's what's keeping him going. Bit of a carrot dangling...there's all this great stuff out there. Also seeing them achieve things and make progress and feel proud of themselves.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

I think it was pretty much just one teacher...I sort of changed teachers around the intermediate level. I changed from a mother down the road to a Russian pianist at the conservatory.

**b) Describe their styles.**

She was very passionate. It was always positive, she wasn't very strict. I mean she was very good. She was a concert pianist, a performing concert pianist herself. It was all a bit chaotic for me. I mean, I'd just grown up in a normal, Australian household and gone down the road for my piano lesson, so it was an eye-opener. It was great. She exposed me to a great range of stuff that I wouldn't have known if I'd kept going down the road.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

Pretty much classical. Like I went through the AMEB exam system so it was pretty much classical. I entered the eisteddfod, so it was pretty much classical.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

I don't really remember to be honest. One thing I do remember about going through the process of learning is when exams were approaching I wanted to quit. I don't know, obviously it was quite a bit more effort on my part. I don't know if that was to do with

my teachers style or my lack of practice. But I always got through the exam and then thought this is alright! I don't mind playing the piano now. That's one thing I do remember.

*Do you remember a change of repertoire?*

Not really.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

**What factors do you consider?**

I've got two at the moment. I try and find songs that they like. Both of them are boys, funnily enough. So I'm thinking if I can get something that excites them and interests them, then that'll keep them going. So I try and choose songs with them that I think they will enjoy. So that's songs I guess. At the moment with these two boys, they're both in the AMEB system so there's other stuff that goes along with that, scales and theory and all the other bits and pieces. I'm pretty leaning towards get them to pick. Like I'll have a think and have a few things in mind, but I'll play them and say do you like this? Yeah, that's really cool, I want to learn that one! I don't know if this is the point to mention it, but with both these boys I use the AMEB Piano for Leisure. Grade 5, Series 1 is great. There's Axel F, Fur Elise, Pink Panther...it is great! My 'non model-student' just loves Axel F. He wants to play by ear, he doesn't like to read music, but that one he just loves it. He was on the point of quitting, but his parents wanted him to keep going so I sort of thought, this is it. So we had a go and he kept going because of that. I don't know how long he'll keep going for, but I love that book. I think it's terrific!

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

Well they sort of help pick the songs, I find that really important. If I give a kid a song and they come back a few weeks later and they really don't like it, then I'll pretty much go with that. And I've seen my son when he was very much younger and he decided he didn't like a piece, and he'd stop. There were a couple of instances where he was encouraged to keep going and I can see the value in that to a degree but when it gets to a point where it's obviously going to cause problems I'll just choose something else.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

I haven't had that. Generally if they like a song and start learning it, no matter how hard it sort of becomes, they tend to keep on going. Especially if they know the end result will be good!

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

**a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

**b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**

**c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**

**d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**

**e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

Well as I said before, I use the AMEB Piano for Leisure syllabus as well as just existing repertoire, so probably b and d. I mean, I've got one of my boys, the model boy, I've got him onto Hanon now. So he's driving his family mad now! But that's not really a method book is it? So not method books at this stage now, not at the intermediate stage really. I really just pull things from anywhere, supplementary things.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

I choose a few pieces, let them hear it and see what they like. I want the student to always have a say and to like the song.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

Something they like! Tom, he likes a lot of stuff. I think he's a bit unusual actually. I mean, your stereotypical teenage boy I would sort of think just head towards the popular, jazzy, contemporary sort of stuff, but he really likes Beethoven. He likes Beethoven. I bring my big book of sonatas and he gets so excited. I think he's a bit unusual like that. But, stuff he likes.

*And his Mum buys him a lot of things, doesn't she?*

Yes, exactly. So she'd just be able to buy him whatever he wanted to learn. His poor mother, spending all this money on sheet music, but she's happy to do it!

*With student b, where do you think he would go to find something?*

Stuff he likes, so stuff he's heard. Axel F is one of the songs he's doing and he's obviously heard that. So he goes on youtube to listen to that and his family is musical, like his grandpa plays Memory, so he thinks he'd love to play that. So stuff that he's heard.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

- a) Baroque music**
- b) Classical music**
- c) Romantic music**
- d) Contemporary music**
- e) Jazz/Modern music**

I don't know how I'm going to answer that, because I only have the two right now and I really can't remember. I think contemporary, not in terms of 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the popular/jazzy sort of stuff, that's probably something they'd go to first or react more positively to. I don't know. My daughters are doing 4<sup>th</sup> grade exam, they're doing a bit of 5<sup>th</sup> grade stuff already, one of them is doing Bach No. 1 Prelude and she always says "this is so boring mum." And I thought I loved it when I was playing it! I think it depends on the song. They don't immediately love all the baroque and classical. Romantic, I don't know if they've done much of that. But probably just go more towards the jazz/modern, what they've heard.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

I think many do. And I think the reason is because it's a step up. As the songs get a little bit harder, it requires more effort. So where they've been able to learn a song in a week or two, they've got to nut it out for a good bit longer. So if they haven't got that patience or a good practice routine or habits, they can't achieve as quickly. So sometimes that puts them off.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

Probably fairly highly. And that comes back to all the sport and other commitments. This student b that I've got, I think he's on the verge of quitting. He hasn't got the time, or doesn't want to make the time to practice and so he can't...it's all too hard.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

The satisfaction in achieving. Tom feels so proud of himself, putting in the work and seeing results. I mean Tom, he works jolly hard, he goes away and drives his family insane with all his practice. But it pays off. And of course, hello, of course it does. But he sees that it's worth it and he's getting somewhere and all this effort is putting in, he thinks "yeah, I can do this." He wants to do 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and he's talked his family into buying him a grand piano when he passes 6<sup>th</sup> grade. He's the sort of kid who's always looking ahead. So seeing himself make those achievements. But it's sort of the songs...picking the songs that he likes and then seeing himself learn them and be able to do them. He thinks he can keep doing this.

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

The time factor is a big one. Like student b has an exceptional ear for music, he can just hear it and he can play it. Like if he's playing, I'll hum or sing along and if he plays a wrong note, he says sing that again! He'll find the note, he won't read the music though. So I mean, you can't learn classical or romantic literature like that, you have to read it. So I think that's been his problem. He won't put in the effort. So he's chosen songs, like Pink Panther that you can learn in a couple of weeks. There's a pattern.

Probably the same sort of stuff. Not being able to do it as quickly, getting busy with other stuff like school, life. I mean I haven't come across the whole boyfriend/girlfriend thing, but I'm sure that'll be an issue soon. It's where their heart is though. If their heart is in it and they want to be there, if you can keep that going, that's what your whole thing's about isn't it? Your whole study. Helping them want to be there.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

Possibly, I really am not sure how to answer that. My previous intermediate students didn't drop out, they kept on going but I left. But they had a really highly motivated mother, so I think that was part of the reason. It helps! I think probably though, because once you've got over that hurdle and you can do all the stuff and you know you've got to put in the work but you know it'll be worth it, so I think yeah probably. The beginner level, like up to grade 1 or 2, that's still fairly achievable fairly easily if they put in a bit of work. So I don't think there's a high drop out rate there, I certainly haven't had it. So probably, that's the area they're going to drop out.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

If they have a good work ethic, if they've come to the point of realising that if they practice, they'll be able to learn, then I think that...I mean, how do you achieve that? You can't practice for them! But I think that's a bit factor. If they know how to practice and are committed to practicing, then some of the problems we've talked about won't occur.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

I mean again, it depends on the student. But more of the stuff that they like doing and obviously they'd be putting in the work so they'd be able to achieve whatever they wanted. I think that's what I'd try and do. Get them songs that they liked so they had the greatest chance of continuing. Sometimes that's not enough though.

## **Sophia Presley**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

It happened by accident really. When my children were small and I was at home, I decided to go back to piano studies myself. And then one or two of my children's friends parents found out and asked if I could teach piano. And I said no, I don't know how to teach. I was learning from a lady in Ingham, very old school. She corrected my technique brilliantly, was very strict, and taught my two children. So I said well if you're willing to take the risk, I haven't taught before. So it started with just one or two, then three or four. One of the early ones was Kathryn Jones actually. All the time I was thinking "I'm not doing this properly." Which is why I like them to do exams actually, so I can check if I'm on track. So I suppose it was something I could combine with family, up to a point. I was having lessons, my children were having lessons, it sort of went on from there. And I got quite good results from exams, so thought I must be doing something right.

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

Well I'm in the lovely position where I've had about 4 students for 11 years. And they've been absolutely fabulous, because they started off, and they work really well together as well. And I've had some new ones coming through that are quite interested. The home studio is a lot more rewarding than the school situation where I think there's a lot more things going on. Probably because I enjoy the interaction with the students and the challenge of finding out what will make them practice! And you think there must be a key! Finding the right repertoire or the right approach or something that will inspire them to like music more.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

I reckon it must about 22-23 years. But I started off with just one afternoon a week and then bit by bit went up!

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

I'm teaching in schools and I'm teaching at home. Probably the school, another two or three years, cause I do enjoy it overall but the home studio is much easier and there's more interaction with the families too. And you can cut down on what you do at home, so you can do just say two afternoons a week if you want to. So I don't see an end in sight for that. Except you can't do your two year trip around the world can you?! So probably four or five more years how we are, then cutting down I think.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Beginner students come in with no knowledge of anything very much. Some of them enjoy singing, in which case you've got a head start. And I've had beginner students who are adults, and they will say they've always wanted to learn and they don't know a thing about music either. So I suppose coming in, you've got a clean slate really. They don't know the names of the notes, they do understand rhythm, probably from singing and school. So beginners are starting from scratch really.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate student I would probably say around grade 3, grade 4 AMEB. They've got over the hurdles, if you can get them through the first two years, I always say the first two years are the worst anyway. That's like learning to read and write. So many give up at



the end of 12 months and they've got no enjoyment from whatsoever. So I'd say around about grade 3, grade 4-ish, up to about grade 6 I think would be the crunch.

**c) Advanced student?**

Grade 6 upwards. Hopefully they've got good sight and reading skills, starting to be able to teach themselves the basics of the piece already and they've had exposure to more styles of music and can be more involved in choosing their own music too. But they've got good technical skills behind them. Some of them are good sight readers and some of them are still not! But it's probably at the stage where they're enjoying the more complicated music and are interested in putting more work in, because they actually enjoy what they're playing.

**6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

Well the little ones you've got to make as fun as possible. You have clapping the rhythms, well I still spend a lot of time on clapping and understanding the rhythm before they start playing, even with the higher levels. Teaching style...fairly gentle. I try and go with the language that they're used to, and they're all different. You can't say this is how you do it, because it depends on the student. All students are different. Teaching style...encouraging. Trying to build very much on the positives first. In fact, if they do one little thing right you pick that up first, and then you say "but I'm not too happy with this." So it has to be cheerful and encouraging and you desperately try and find some positives. And give stickers! Advanced students are the same! I had someone doing grade 6 the other day who said, we haven't had a sticker in ages.

**b) Intermediate student?**

I encourage those who want to, to get involved with performances; eisteddfods, concerts, to give them goals. And I have a concert every year where everybody has to play something.

**c) Advanced student?**

**7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

I can't really give a number, I'd have to go back through my records.

**8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

I think the most challenging thing is trying to keep them interested, because most of the time they're roughly getting towards sort of early teens, and there's lots of other things that are important as well. Or they're in sport, or in tae kwon do, or they go rowing five days a week or they do ballet. Dancing's a killer in terms of time. And as you go up in piano, you need to do more and more practice each day, and they actually have less and less time. And the school work is also increasing as well. So the problem is for them, fitting everything in. And I think for the beginner students, parents are keeping them far busier than they used to, say 10 years ago. It's actually getting much more difficult to give piano lessons because it needs time to become enjoyable. And it just ends up being a hard slog because they're trying to slot everything in. So I think the challenge is their time management, and also choosing suitable repertoire. Sometimes they bring music in that they've heard on the internet or played by a movie star or pop star, and they want to play it on the piano. But they haven't actually got the skills to play it, because it's actually quite complicated. So it's finding the right repertoire and getting them to put the work in so they can enjoy it.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

One of the enjoyable things is that when students get older the communication is better, generally. And if they do find something they like, they really get stuck in. It's also the repertoire getting more interesting...to listen to, and there's more choice. And they've got the basic skills in their fingers and they can start doing more complicated music which is more pleasing.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

I had one lovely teacher who understood that I was busy with my farm, I had my own horse. And she used to give a report card every term, and it always had comments like "doing quite well considering how little practice she does." But she put me in eisteddfods, most of her students had to sing and I had a singing duet partner, which was good. But she just exposed me to lots and lots of different music, some of which I'm still using. I have a lot of her music, because there was no copying in those days, and it's really good music.

**b) Describe their styles.**

Her style of music was encouraging. Love of music, encouraging me to go to concerts. We often used to have concerts put on by the new graduates from the Royal College in London and they'd go on tour doing concerts in different centres. My parents encouraged me to go, Mum played piano and I played church in piano every Sunday which meant I had to sight-read. So she was very much encouraging, just for the love of music not for exams. But I had to do exams and eisteddfods, it gave you goals and focus.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

I did Grieg's Butterfly, my favourite piece. Nocturno by Grieg, I've loved Grieg's music ever since. Bach I didn't like because I didn't practice enough. Bach you have to get right! She gave me some modern dance styles, Latin-American dance styles, which were different. And she also gave us some more modern repertoire that I can't remember. At the start I didn't like it, but I grew to like it so I learnt it whereas other things once you learnt it you didn't like it as much.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

I think it was just the exposure to different composers and styles.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

I just didn't have the time, so I didn't put much practice in.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

**What factors do you consider?**

I suppose I generally work through exam type repertoire and I'm thanking AMEB for Piano for Leisure because there's some fabulous music in there. So the program probably is, they have to do some technical work whether they like it or not. If they're sort of grade 5, 6, I'll get them to do some Hanon exercises as well. I leave it up to them to pick them. But I do think they need to know their keys, their arpeggios because music is really just scales and arpeggios and chords. I've got a couple that aren't doing much but they're the sort of ones who end up spending a term learning a piece.

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

It's hard to say. I like to get them fairly involved in the choice by that stage, so they've generally listened to it either on CD or I demonstrate it and they choose what they want

to play, up to a point. I mean, the exams are a bit rigid, it's a shame they have to do exams in some ways but at least there's a variety of styles and lots of music. So if you combine it, like if they're doing exams they do a Baroque, classical, romantic, modern, jazz, they get exposure to a lot. With the leisure books, they only do three pieces. But I'm not very rigid on that because sometimes you just want to keep them playing. If you come down too heavy they just leave, which some teachers think they should leave anyway.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

Sometimes they'll say it's too hard and sometimes they don't like it to start with, but again, I'll generally give them a choice, which you could argue. But as a teacher, the choice is within certain parameters. And sometimes they get into it and say this is nice!

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

External examination and existing repertoire. I don't use method books, although I have some adults starting with the Accelerated Adventures in Music by Faber and Faber which I haven't used before. But I think by that stage, I don't think you need it. I think you branch out into other things.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

I sort of select a few pieces and say what do you like out of this.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

It depends on the student. I've got some who download music off the internet, I presume legally. But it depends on the student. Sometimes it's the pop or movie things, Coldplay, Pirates of the Caribbean, Delta Goodrem. And I've got a lass that's been downloading lots of things that's too hard for her. But she wants to play it, and she is, so her sight-reading is improving. She's not very accurate though!

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reactions to:**

**a) Baroque music**

Some baroque, some of the easier Bach preludes the students pick out. That surprises me.

**b) Classical music**

They seem to like the sonatinas.

**c) Romantic music**

Depends on the student. Some of the girls like the romantic music, boys not so much.

**d) Contemporary music**

The atonal music doesn't go down well at all, with any of the students. Some of the early Bartok is nice. There's some Shostakovich that's really delightful. The pieces that have no tonal centre, I hope it's not my influence because I don't understand it, but they don't either.

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

Some love jazz. I have some students who love the traditional jazz in the leisure books, others it does nothing for them. Some of the Kerin Bailey music goes down nicely. It all depends on what they listen to. I have another student who loves Sonny Chua.

**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

A lot of them because they're not practicing the technical work and they're not practicing enough in general. So they struggle. It's that time of their life when everything gets too crowded.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

Oh yes, absolutely. I said to them, if you don't put some work in, it's really boring. If you don't practice, we'll do the same thing every week. And that comes back to their motivation to practice.

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Well those that I have go through, duets are a blessing. If you have two students at the same level, with back to back lessons. The four I've had go right through to Grade 8, I've been able to pair them all up. And it's kept their interest up because they're playing with somebody else, because the piano is a solitary instrument. But it's hard to find time for duets. For my Christmas concert, I try to get as many as I can to play duets or trios. It's also about choosing the right music too, which I spend hours agonising over!

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

The time factor, and the fact that they want to have a social life.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

It's a busy time in their life, they've got lots of things coming up. A lot of it comes back to the family situation too. If the family encourages them and makes time, it will help them keep going. I think there probably is a big drop out around Grade 4. They go quite well into Grade 1 and 2. You do get a drop-out rate in the first year or so too, especially if they come from a split family where Dad doesn't have a piano and there's other siblings. Family involvement is crucial. That's one of the biggest factors. Parents have to sit with them and help. If the parents value it and have a good relationship with their children, that will help.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

Ideally, you'd have a place to live that has a piano. Have the parents encourage them although at that stage they have to decide themselves if it's important enough to them. They have to make decisions really. When you're 13 or 14, parents can't force you to do something. You have to get them to enjoy it enough before then, to keep going.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

Ideally, I would like them to understand why they need the technical work. I'd like them to understand why sight reading is important, because I say again and again if you can sight read well, you can learn pieces quicker. And I've got some who don't understand that. They're appalling sight readers. That's one of the big factors. If you can get good sight reading skills, you can learn pieces faster and have them sounding like what they're supposed to faster. Ideally, I'd have them learning all their scales and keys up to four sharps and flats, technical work and to practice every day. Learn a variety of pieces too.

So learning program...probably give them exams since they're schooling is exam oriented anyway. It gives them goals too, lets them achieve something. And a good hours practice every day on a piano!

## **Elizabeth Jones**

### **1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?**

Probably the teacher I had when I was in Townsville, when I was at uni. I actually did a Computing and Maths degree and just took piano while I was studying. I did Grade 1-7 on the Tablelands, with a smattering of different teachers, whoever blew into town. And then Grade 8 with Shirley Smith and then she said “you may as well do your teaching degree after this” and I thought oh well. From there I started teaching piano, during my Honours year (Honours in maths).

### **2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?**

I enjoy working with kids. I’ve always liked teaching. At the moment it suits my lifestyle, with my own children, I can work around that. But when they grow up, I wouldn’t go back to work, I’d stay doing this. And I’ve got a collection of kids that other teachers would probably throw out, and I think it’s good that these kids get this training.

### **3. How many years have you been teaching?**

Since 1989, so 20 years.

### **4. How long do you see yourself teaching piano?**

A fair while. I enjoy this. I don’t ever see myself going back to full-time work, part-time is much better.

### **5. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Up to and including grade 2.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

Grade 3-6. Maybe even grade 4.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

Grade 7 and up.

### **6. How would you describe your teaching style for a:**

It’s really the same actually.

#### **a) Beginner student?**

Obviously you need a lot of time note-reading.

#### **b) Intermediate student?**

If they’ve come as a transfer student, that changes things too. If they’ve come as a transfer student and they can’t read music, you’re sort of going back to doing all that, and sight-reading and getting their reading skills up.

#### **c) Advanced student?**

I don’t take on advanced students. I’ll sort of grow my own, like if they go to grade 7 I’ll certainly take them. I’ve done a couple of grade 8, but I don’t really take advanced. But I’m also finding that there’s not that many advanced students at the moment. It’s not that they give up, it’s just that they move. You get these good students that you think “they’ll be a good one” and then next year, they move. You don’t sort of have the students for 10 years.

### **7. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught?**

I might have two or three a year. I suppose though, the turnovers probably about 3 years. So maybe 20 all up?

### **8. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

When they're not perfecting things to how they'd expect by that level.

**9. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?**

Well it's nice when they can nearly take the music home and nearly teach it to themselves.

**10. Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...**

**a) Can you remember your teacher or teachers?**

I had about 6, depending on who was around up at the Tablelands. Probably early high school, Mum found someone living up in Malanda, so that's when I was intermediate. I did Grade 6 in Grade 9 at school. I can't even remember who put me through Grade 4.

**b) Describe their styles.**

The first one I didn't see very often, even before exams, so she wasn't very memorable. The one in Malanda, she was taught by the nuns. She was old school and really very boring. So she probably didn't get us engaged at the time.

**c) What types of repertoire do you recall working on?**

It was actually disappointing with repertoire because there was another girl my level learning at the same time. And she'd have the AMEB books and give one piece to me, and one piece to her. She'd never give us the same, so you'd never end up with the best of the books or what suited you. You just got what she gave you. So the repertoire was really boring and it was series 8 or 9 that AMEB was up to. Very strict classical. She didn't like any of the jazz or modern ones. If there were any on the syllabus, we certainly didn't learn them.

**d) What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?**

I don't know. It wasn't really an optional extra. Mum said we were learning the piano, so that was it. We learnt the piano. There were no other instruments at school at that stage. But I enjoyed it, I liked playing it. But it would have been nice to have more exposure to other styles.

**e) What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?**

The repertoire! I only did the exam pieces and when you finished the exam and walked in the next week, you had exam pieces. We just went with exam pieces.

**11. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students?**

**What factors do you consider?**

It depends on the student. If they're doing exams, I don't ever get any of them just to do their exam pieces. They always have some sort of easy ones that they can finish off in a couple of weeks. At the moment, all of my intermediates are doing exams, but I have had some in other years that don't do exams. I often have teenage girls that are too busy with school work, so they learn just for fun. And we do random things. I guess you get to the point where you've worked through the lesson books and get your skills up, and then you just do random things. Sometimes I might work through one of those "Getting to" books, or they like all those Alfred ones, *Just for you*, all those sort of dreamy ones. So probably for a couple of years, we just move around in different books that they like. And once they probably get to about Grade 6 which I guess is almost getting past intermediate, I'd probably get them to do exam repertoire just to make sure they're improving. I'd select pieces from that so you know they're a definite standard.

**a) In general, how would you describe an intermediate student's reaction to new repertoire when they receive it?**

With the boys and the classical ones, you just say “look, we’ve got to pick a list B and here are your choices.” Some of them will like a Clementi or a Kuhlau but some of them don’t like any of those. But you have to pick one for the exam. The kids normally find something that interests them in the List A. But you sort of know the students, so you can sort of confidently pick a program they’ll like, but I usually get input from them. But they are usually happy with my suggestions.

**b) To what extent do you feel these reactions change over time as students learn repertoire?**

They do change sometimes. One of my students just hated a Clementi sonatina. I don’t know what it was about that piece. But now he’s doing quite a similar piece and he loves it. So maybe it’s the age? But he changed his attitude.

**12. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:**

- a) Method books? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- b) External examination syllabi? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?**
- c) Competitions or festivals where repertoire is prescribed?**
- d) Existing repertoire? If yes, which repertoire? If no, why not?**
- e) A combination of any of the above? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?**

Intermediate students I’m pretty much finished with books. I use the examination syllabus, but I don’t normally use the series books because I think the examiners probably hear those so much. So I go to the extra lists. So I use a combination of the exam repertoire as well as existing repertoire.

**13. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose his or her repertoire?**

It depends on the student and the situation. Say if they’ve got a Burgmuller book from last year, we’ll try and pick something from that for this year, unless they absolutely hate it. Sometimes I just say, here, I think you’ll like this one. But if they said they didn’t like it, I’d change it. So they do get a bit of an input.

**a) If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what sort of repertoire do you think they would select?**

In the ‘Getting to’ books, I often let them with those, just choose their own. But see what they do is they look at it and see if it looks hard, and then they see how many pages are in it, so when they’re choosing it themselves, that’s what they consider. Sometimes I just give them the book and the CD and let them choose out their own.

**14. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student’s reactions to:**

**a) Baroque music**

Some like it, some don’t. At least with the exam, if they don’t like the Baroque, they can choose a study.

**b) Classical music**

It’s really just a matter of what they like. You can usually find some pieces on the lists that will suit them.

**c) Romantic music**

It’s really just a matter of what they like. You can usually find some pieces on the lists that will suit them. Even for the boys, you can normally find one that’s a little bit faster and not so dreamy with rubato.

**d) Contemporary music**

**e) Jazz/Modern music**

Most of them love this. I’ve only really come across a couple that don’t like it.



**15. In your experience, how many students have struggled with repertoire at the intermediate level? Why?**

The transfer ones that can't read, struggle. My own ones are sort of ready for it. And if they can't read, you just don't give them hard material. So if it's my own students, I just have to take longer to do the next grade if they're struggling. At the moment, most of mine are doing Classical whereas three or four years ago, they were all sort of doing Leisure. That's the thing, if they struggle they'll give up. So you don't want that. So sometimes you just have to say that they won't be doing any more exams. If you just sort of tailor everything, hopefully they won't pull out.

**16. To what extent do you feel this affects their decision(s) to go on?**

**17. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Certainly giving them pieces that they like. With my students, all of their exam pieces they do half jazz and half classical. You've just got to keep them motivated with different repertoire, because they get sick of having the same pieces. And it also means, when you're turning pieces over, you can't expect them to be perfect. You have to relax your standards for those pieces or they'll get bored.

**18. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Probably more external factors on their practice time. They're not practicing, then they can't really get to enjoy the pieces because they struggle. So I think that would be the biggest thing. The other thing too, if they keep coming along with the same piece and it's not going very well, they mightn't like it. And they're just too scared to say it. If they hate a piece and they're forced to do it, they'll lost motivation.

**19. To what extent is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels? Why?**

I don't know. A lot of teachers say around the Grade 2 is when they get a lot of drop-outs. But I think if you tailor the pieces, you don't get a lot of drop-outs. I think you just have to change tact sometimes to suit them. I think the intermediates are over a lot of the hurdles anyway, they can read etc.

**20. Do you believe there is a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?**

Just tailor the program to the student and not forcing them to do exams etc.

**21. In an ideal world, how would you design a learning program for the intermediate piano student?**

You're tied a little bit with the cost of books. I can't send the parents a bill for \$150 worth of music for the exam. So I have to restrict the music to a couple of books. So that would be one thing, being able to pick pieces from a large source.

## **Appendix 8 – Student Interview Transcripts**

**Chloe Jackson**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

About nine.

**2. How old are you now?**

Sixteen.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Four.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

It was a joint decision between me and my parents and my sisters had both played and I thought it would be interesting to kind of continue on the tradition I guess.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

That's a difficult question! It's a challenge. I like the fact that I can actually play things that are hard to play.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

That I can't count in my head!

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To help the student learn.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

It's a possibility. I don't know, I think it's mostly because I would want to share something that I can do with other people and make it so that other people can play as well.

**9. How often do you practice?**

Not as much as I should! Probably five days a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

An hour.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

The fact that I actually want to learn what I play.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

Mostly the notes and random stuff that's happened throughout the day.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

Spanish club.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

You'll laugh at me if I tell you. I talk on the phone a lot, that, and computers.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Actually, I have three. I like Mussorgsky and Beethoven and Chopin.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Pictures at an Exhibition, Cat and Mouse and the third movement of the Pathetique sonata by Beethoven.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Cat and Mouse.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

The ones that get really repetitive. The ones that I've practiced a lot, so probably the Mussorgsky at the moment.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

The moonlight sonata.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

The first movement of the pathetique, the rhythm was hard.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

Usually I do.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

Well I have a pretty limited idea of what is good to play, so I suppose it would be better if the teacher chooses. Generally they choose it and I say if I like it or not.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Actually it's one off a movie, have you seen Twilight yet? Edward's Lullaby to Bella, it's really nice. Pretty simple, but I just think it would be pretty.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I'd probably go on Youtube, just look up my favourite composers and see what there is.

**Samantha Daniel (not recorded – interviewer took notes)**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

Seven or eight.

**2. How old are you now?**

Fourteen.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Two.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

I liked it. My cousin learnt and I thought it was cool. Then a family friend who has been learning for ages asked if my sister and I wanted to learn and suggested a teacher.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I like learning songs that are hard.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

When your fingers don't go where you want them to, and then I get tense.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To teach. Like they pick the music, give you instructions, then you go practice and then when you come back they tell you your mistakes.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Yes. Just because I've been doing it a long time and I'm used to it.

**9. How often do you practice?**

Three-four days a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

15 minutes.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

I just practice when I have nothing else to do.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I just focus on the notes and the fingerings.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I do tae kwon do.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Play piano.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

No.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Theme and Variations by Dennis Alexander, Summer Song by Baker-Grondahl, We Three Kings, and Fantasia in D Minor by CPE Bach.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Actually, I'm learning a piece that my teacher doesn't know about. It's Invention in A minor BWV 784 by J.S. Bach. I heard my cousin playing it and I thought it sounded cool!

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

None.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I really liked playing Pachelbel's Canon because my hands were just going everywhere. I really liked the feel of that, as well as the sound of the piece. It's really pretty.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

One or two years ago I had a piece but I don't remember what it was called, but it just sounded ugly.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

The teacher chooses some and then I pick from that.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I would like the teacher to choose, I don't care if it sounds ugly!

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

I wanted to learn the Invention, but I'm already learning that now.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I'd just look through my books and see what's interesting and what I haven't done. Then I'd try and play through them to see if I liked it.

Natalie Alexander (S=student, M=Mum, I=Interviewer)

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

Six.

**2. How old are you now?**

Eleven.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Three.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

Because my Mum saw me playing songs on our piano, just banging on it and I really wanted to learn it so she signed me up for lessons with this woman across the block.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

Playing songs that I know. I get a new book and I see Fur Elise and I learn it and then I can play it.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

When I can't get something and I have to practice over and over and over again.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

I think they have to teach the basic notes and scales first and then move onto the songs and stuff.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Yeah, because I like working with my little cousins and I like piano.

**9. How often do you practice?**

Maybe one, I don't know. It depends. Two maybe.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

S: 5-15 minutes.

M: She probably practices more than that. It always seems like she's practicing all the time.

I: Really? How many days a week would you say she practices?

M: Well, the past week she hasn't practiced too much, but usually she'd practice four.

I: And fifteen minutes at a time?

M: At least, yeah. I'm so surprised she underestimated.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

So I can get better, so I can go past it and nobody really plays piano at my house and I just like sitting there and the teachers playing it and I can listen to all the songs and choose and it's fun.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

The music, sort of. And when I really know a song I can just not think about the notes anymore and just really do it. So I think about the song and the notes.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I am starting basketball and softball and I skate. I have roller-blades.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

I like to go on the computer or play legos or something.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

No.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

S: Up a tree and I just finished a piece and that's all I'm really learning at the moment.

I: Is Up a tree in a book you have?

S: Yeah, it's in a big book, like an anthology, I think it's called The Joy of First Classics. I think his name is Stephen Chatman.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

N/A

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

N/A

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I can't remember the names of the pieces. But my favourite pieces were duets, like sometimes Italian duets. My first teacher had this HUGE stack of duets and sometimes we'd look through them and get a piece and start playing it. I really like duets.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

There was this one that was a Christmas song and I just didn't really like it a lot. It was hard and it was dull for a Christmas song.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

Usually I do and when it's the teacher's song (we have a student song and a teacher song), I can have some input, like "no I hate that song" and so he'll just look for other stuff.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I like to have some input. I don't want him to have all control over my song. Like I want him to pick the right level for me cause I don't know that but I like to have some input, like "I hate that" or "That's too hard".

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

I want to learn Glamorous by Fergie. My Mum plays it a lot in the car.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I would just go over there (in the shop) and go in the section where they have like all the real songs and just look through them until I found the right one. And then I'd get someone to play through it for me.

**Mia Adams**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

Four.

**2. How old are you now?**

Fourteen.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Four.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

My Mum's a piano teacher so she started teaching me. Also, my siblings all learnt piano.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I think it's really useful, you can sing while you play. It's just fun to be able to play pieces.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

All the sharps, remembering the black keys and all the key signatures.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To teach and inspire the students to keep on going.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Yes! It'd be fun!

**9. How often do you practice?**

Five or six days a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

An hour.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

I practice more when I like the pieces.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I think about the notes and getting them right.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I play the harp and sing in a choir.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

I like to draw and play volleyball in a Christian league.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

No.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Divertimento by Haydn, Rondo by Ginastera and Spanish Dance by Mussorgsky.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Rondo – it's fast and challenging, but rewarding.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

Divertimento – it's really repetitive.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

Hungarian Dance by Macdowell – it was so fast and powerful and it was really challenging.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**



In the beginning, I thought Hungarian Dance and Rondo were too hard.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

My teacher or Mum.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I would prefer someone else to choose because I don't know much, but I always have the final say and don't have to learn something I don't want to. It's like they choose a piece or some pieces and then they ask me if I like them or which ones I want to learn.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

No.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

Talk to people who learn piano, listen to recordings (either on Youtube or CD's).

**Alexis Williams**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

I was in first grade, so I guess I was about six years old.

**2. How old are you now?**

15.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Two I guess, I mean my Dad taught me for a while, just the basics and then I quit for a year, but two after that.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

Well I guess mostly because my Dad plays piano, so I thought it was cool.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I don't know, I think it's just it's really fun to just play. Not necessarily learning a piece, but once you know it.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

I guess I really need to improve on my reading so it's kind of frustrating. And also if I learn it the wrong way it takes so long to fix it up.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

I think a piano teachers job is to guide the student in learning the pieces, helping fix parts and then the student learns it and works on it and then during lessons the teacher fixes it up.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

No I don't think so, I don't really know why.

**9. How often do you practice?**

I practice every day for like a half hour. I practice before school, because I have time then.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

I guess knowing that I have a lesson at the end of the week.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

When I practice? I guess it's getting everything right and then going back and fixing certain spots.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

Yeah, I dance. I do ballet, pointe, tap and jazz.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Well I dance and watch TV.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

I really like Debussy, I think his repertoire is really...non conventional.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Jimbo's Lullaby and the Etude by Liszt and I'm also working on a Beethoven Sonata.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Probably the Liszt, it's really fun.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

I don't have one.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I played most of the first movement of the Pathétique sonata by Beethoven. I never finished it but I really liked it.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

Hard yes, but not really, I normally end up liking the pieces that I play.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

My teacher does usually. Sometimes he has a few pieces and then I choose one.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I like having my teacher choose them.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

I really like the Rachmaninoff prelude in C# minor.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

Well, my Dad has a lot of music.

**Anthony Micarelli**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

I was in fourth grade, so ten.

**2. How old are you now?**

17.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Four, three of which was because I moved. Yeah, I've moved three times, and then once was because I didn't really suit the teacher.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

I don't know. I think I just sat down and my Mum said she'd get me lessons.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

The songs that you can play...just let everything out.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

When I make wrong notes!

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To help you understand what you're playing, the in depth emotions of playing.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

I'd like to. I'd like to pass on what I already know.

**9. How often do you practice?**

7 days a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

45 minutes a day.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

My Mum not screaming at me.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

What I'm playing and the emotions that go into it.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

Couple of clubs, but that's about it.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Watch TV, video games, go on the computer.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Classical would be Beethoven, other than that I don't really have any.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

The Miami 2017 and Maple Leaf Rag.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Probably the Miami.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

I don't have one.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

No, I liked them all!

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

When I was learning the Bach Inventions, that was challenging!

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

Bit of both of us. I mean, he suggests it, but if I don't like it, it's ok.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

No, I like him choosing.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

I always wanted to play Imagine, so I got the music and now I play it.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

Piano books I already have.

## **Christopher Smith**

### **1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

I was 11 years old.

### **2. How old are you now?**

15...almost 16.

### **3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Four.

### **4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

My mum used to play piano and she played around the house and I was drawn to it and she taught me how to play.

### **5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

Just that you can play music yourself, play all your favourite tunes and learn things and just, you know, just play music in general.

### **6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

Practicing. Learning things from the beginning.

### **7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To explain anything that the student doesn't understand, musically, theory, that sort of thing.

### **8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Maybe to my own children, but not as a job. I'd see myself as more performing.

### **9. How often do you practice?**

My practice isn't really orthodox practice. I just kinda rehearse my songs, and then on the side I practice some scales, some Hanon.

#### **a) How long do you practice each time?**

Maybe an hour or two a day.

#### **b) What motivates you to practice?**

Just so I can move on ahead and get better and better.

#### **c) What do you think about when you practice?**

The after effect of this, how it's all going to pay off.

### **10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

Yeah, I do run track after school.

### **11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Well, I also play guitar and when I'm not playing piano I play guitar a lot. Rock guitar mainly.

### **12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Classical would probably be Chopin, and modern would probably be John Lennon.

### **13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Rachmaninoff Prelude in C# minor, Waltz by Chopin in C# minor and Maple Leaf Rag by Joplin.

### **14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Probably the Maple Leaf Rag, it's just a lot of fun.

### **15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

I don't have one, I wouldn't learn it if I didn't like it.

### **16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

Yeah, like the Joplin pieces; Maple Leaf Rag and the Entertainer. Anything Chopin!

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

The Rachmaninoff at first because it had a lot of big chords and a lot of complicated stuff, but my teacher pushed me through it and I got through it.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

It's kind of a mutual agreement between my teacher and myself.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

He knows what students should play, nothing too complicated or too weak, so yeah I'd prefer that he chooses.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

There are a lot of pieces I want to learn, a lot of Chopin pieces. But I've got to practice a lot to get there.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

Just using my own private knowledge of music I've heard.

**Alyssa Ryan**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

I would have been about five or six, I started around the same time my sister did.

**2. How old are you now?**

15.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

2.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

I can't remember! I think Mum just wanted us to learn an instrument, so we did!

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

You don't have to tune it, that's good! And you can't get out of tune. And I like the sound of the piano.

*So do you learn another instrument as well?*

I play cello.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

N/A

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

I suppose they can help you get the feel of the music. Sometimes you don't know the style it's supposed to be in and stuff.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Maybe. I was thinking about doing music after I leave school, so maybe for that, maybe for fun.

**9. How often do you practice?**

A few times a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

I don't know. I usually go through all my stuff, so that'd take 15 mins, 20 mins.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

Mum tells me!

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I think styles is a big one, like I don't know, classical style, I mean I don't have very many styles at the moment, but styles is a big one. And if fingering that she's put in doesn't work, I'll try and fix that up as well.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I do a lot of cello. I do orchestra, and I have symphony, and I've got my outside lesson and ensemble, and then I also do choir and art classes.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Reading is good.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Not really, I just like modern stuff, like jazz stuff. I mean, not like minimalist or serial stuff.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

I'm doing a Hungarian piece, I don't know who it's by, and I'm doing Grasshopper's Wedding, I don't know who that's by either.



*I think that's by Bartok.*

Yeah, that sounds familiar. And I'm doing a jazz arrangement of Yesterday, the Beatles song so that's fun.

*Is that from one of the AMEB syllabi?*

Yes.

*So do you prefer that kind of music?*

Well, I was going to do my exam and it was easy!

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

I like the Grasshopper one because it's the only one I really know right now.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

I don't really have one.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

Mum: You really liked playing that jazz one in grade two.

Oh yeah, I don't know what it's called and then my sister learn it last year for her exam. I really liked that one though. (Called Scoobie doo-wup by Kerin Bailey)

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

Not really. There's nothing that I don't like because my teacher gives us a choice of them and so we choose out of them, instead of saying ok, you've got this piece and this piece.

**So you always like it before you start learning it?**

Yeah, I know what it sounds like and stuff. I suppose it's all hard when you start, but you get used to it.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

I basically choose my pieces for what I'm doing for the exam, so she'll go through the exam ones and pick out some good ones and then she'll play them and I'll pick which ones I like.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

It's easier when she chooses them, she knows!

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Not really.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I'd probably go to Artie's and look at sheet music.

*What sections would you look at?*

I'd probably go for the jazz section, not classical, because that's boring. Yeah I'd go to the jazz and look at stuff and try and work out what's my level, see if it's possible to play it.

**Hannah Johns**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

Grade two, so about 7.

**2. How old are you now?**

17.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

2.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

I can't remember! I think Mum just wanted us to learn an instrument, so we did!

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I like how it's really easy to get songs that you know, that people know and it sounds good, instead of just having the melody line. You have a song contained in itself.

*So do you learn another instrument as well?*

I play flute.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

The fingering, when you have to do octaves and then have to jump around. That's frustrating.

*Just trying to practice it and get it right?*

Yeah. I'm playing Pachelbel's Canon, it's Grade 6 AMEB level and you need 3 hands to play it! It's just got so many parts. But it sounds really cool.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

Guide the students musically, and proper technique and stuff.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

I don't think so. I'm looking at doing medicine and I'm pretty busy as is, so I just don't think I'd have the time.

**9. How often do you practice?**

A couple of times a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

About half an hour or so, if I do it in the afternoon. If I do it in the morning, it's only about 10 minutes.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

If there's a piece that I like I'll practice it so I can get it to sound good. I just like it when pieces work, you know, when you hit that point where it clicks and then it's all downhill from there. But just getting to that place.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I count a lot in my head when I practice. Recently when I've been practicing I've been thinking I don't want to do this, I just want to go back to bed.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I'm in concert band at school but that's before school, I have a part time job, I go to youth groups Friday night, I used to get flute lessons, but then I just didn't have time.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

I really like reading.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

I really like Mozart stuff but we studied a lot of that at school, so it's probably just because I know more about him so I like it more. Andrew Lloyd-Webber is good, I just like musicals.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Pachelbel's Canon, a duet with Mrs. Knibb, Memory from Cats, and Fantasia by Mozart.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

I like Memory because I've got a really cool part, like I play the secondo part and it sounds really cool.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

Well I'm finding Pachelbel's Canon the hardest. I'm having to really, really work on it. But I don't have a 'not favourite' one.

*You're not doing an exam are you?*

Mum: So you can basically choose whichever pieces you want to play. You don't have to play any that you don't want to.

*Do you sometimes start a piece and then say I really don't like this anymore?*

Yeah.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I played the Chabrelesque, I think it was Grade 4 AMEB. That was fun, I liked that one.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

I'm not really good at jazz, I think I've given up on a couple of jazz pieces. My sister and I are kind of opposites.

*What about with Canon? You were saying that you really like it, but it's really hard and you need someone else to help you play it almost! Has there been anything else like that, that is kind of frustrating?*

The Fantasia when I first started playing it was kind of like that, but like you said before, it kind of clicks and now it's ok.

Mum: One of the ones you did for your exam last year you found very frustrating, the very fast one. I don't know what they're called, but your fingers kept tripping up!

*So is there a general thing that you find hard? Like you said you find jazz hard, do you find fast stuff hard or just that one particular piece?*

I think it depends what sort of fast it is. If it's just a couple of bars of fast, but if it's fast the whole song it's hard because I can't keep going, my brain overloads! But if it's just a few bars of fast, like tika-tikas and then goes back to ti-tis it's cool.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

She'll (the teacher) go through her music, she's got like 5 billion scores, and she'll pick them out at the level I'm at and then she'll play them and I'll say ok this term I want to play that one, and that one and then I might do those ones later on.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I don't know if I'd know where to look and what book.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Well I've kind of had this thing, last year for our concert I learned a bunch of introductions of pop songs, like just the themes from the start. I like learning little

snippets, like popular music. I did from Mama Mia, Love Song and the start of Bohemian Rhapsody, so that was fun.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I might listen to a few CD's and if I can't find something I've got a friend who's doing AMus piano so I might ask her what's good.

**Ashley Woodgate**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

Grade 4 – 9 years old

**2. How old are you now?**

Turning 15

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

1

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

Mum and dad both played it. So I played a little bit before, dad taught me some stuff when I was really little. He didn't teach me as such, like it wasn't a lesson, he just showed me some stuff.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I just like playing it in general, playing for myself.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

When you go over the same thing over and over and you still can't get it.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To help you understand the actual instrument and how it works and to teach you how to read music.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Maybe...but I'm not sure about it. I don't have a clue what I want to do, so I don't know. I think it would be fun though, just teach other people what you love.

**9. How often do you practice?**

Lots. I usually practice every day.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

Half an hour a day.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

Because I know how the songs are supposed to sound, and I know if I practice them I'll get them that way.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I think about how I can figure out how to make it easier, and just concentrate on getting the notes fingering right.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I do dance.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Go on the computer or watch TV.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Not really, just if I listen to anything and I think it's pretty, I'll try and play it.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Pachelbel's Canon and Take Five.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Canon, because it's pretty.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

None.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

Fur Elise, I learnt the main bit but then I did a different exam instead, so I didn't finish it. I like pretty pieces!

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

When I was younger I did, but I can't remember what the piece was. I didn't practice very much at all when I was little when I was learning that piece.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

She [my teacher] picks out a selection that she thinks I'll like and then I rate them and the top 3 that I choose, I play.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I prefer it that way because she knows what I'm good at and what I've had trouble with and what sorts of styles that I like.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Romeo and Juliet – Dad plays it by ear and I've been trying to get him to teach me that. I'm also kind of learning Hallelujah.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I think I'd probably just take the books, just look through the books that she has, probably the next grade because they have a CD and just play through and pick the ones that I like.

## **Ella Christian**

### **1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

8

### **2. How old are you now?**

15

### **3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

I've had 3. The first one I had for 2 and a half years, had been learning for 2 years and hadn't been taught chords and mum and dad thought it was a waste of money, so the next one was giving boring songs and didn't seem to really care, so I swapped again.

### **4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

My parents thought it was good idea to learn an instrument. I wanted to learn violin, but someone said I should start with piano because it's universal and then go to another instrument, but I liked piano so much that I never learnt another instrument.

### **5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I like it when I'm able to find a piece of music on the internet or off a movie and I'm able to play it. It makes me happy, I can de-stress from studying or something

### **6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

Having to make time to practice because with the busy life with school and work it's hard to find time to practice.

### **7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

I think it's their job to help you learn at your own pace but make sure you still enjoy what you're doing. Be supportive, and help you stay interested and keep learning. It's their job to get music you like but you have to make them aware of what you like and want to learn.

### **8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

I said once that when I get older, maybe when I retire, I'd like to teach.

### **9. How often do you practice?**

I'd like to practice more than I can, but lately I've only been practicing a couple of days a week.

#### **a) How long do you practice each time?**

Half an hour

#### **b) What motivates you to practice?**

When I have my lesson I always try and get some practice in, but when I sit down and practice it's because I want to.

#### **c) What do you think about when you practice?**

When I finally get a song right and I have the notes down pat, I like to put expression into it.

### **10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I have a job, do water-polo and do productions.

### **11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Draw, scrapbooking...if I have spare time I will sit down and play piano though.

### **12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Not any main things, I like to play different things. I'm not so much into the classical composers, just the modern day things you can get off the internet, movie songs. I've played a lot of Sonny Chua pieces in the past.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

For fun I'm learning Edward McCain's 'I'll be' piece, it's a song off Cinderella Story. And for my grade exams I'm learning Sonatina in C major, some piece without a name on the top, Cool Bananas, and The Last Voyage by Sonny Chua. They're all Grade 4 ANZCA pieces.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Sonatina in C major by Clementi. I'm good at playing it, and it's fun to play it. It's upbeat.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

Well I was learning Study in A flat and I really didn't like that, but we changed it. It sounded nice, but I just didn't like the rhythm of it. I could play it, just not very well. It's more of a softer piece, a slower, nicer one...I just didn't like it.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I loved 1000 Miles by Vanessa Carlton and the Reason by Hoobierstank, as well as a grade piece called Fire Dance.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

Not so far...the Study in A flat was the only I really didn't like.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

My teacher, she usually gives me a choice because for the grade pieces she says you can play this, this, or this. I get to choose which one I like better, and then it's up to me. With 1000 miles, she had it loose in another book so I took it home and learnt it. I choose some popular stuff...

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I would prefer to choose all my own pieces, because she has to go by what pieces we have to play for the exam. We focus on the exam and eisteddfod, so I'd prefer to choose my own pieces.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Not really, I don't think so.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

If I had to choose, I probably wouldn't go for the classical exam pieces, I probably wouldn't ever sit for an exam. I'd probably just go to music stores or look on the internet. A few of my friends play piano and I'd go to them and see what they've got as well.



**Sarah Jenkins**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

7

**2. How old are you now?**

Turning 16

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Just one, just my current teacher, although I play duets with another teacher sometimes as well.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

Because I wasn't allowed to learn violin, so my mum let me play piano.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I like experimenting with stuff, like learning new things. I really like the modern stuff, especially improvising. I think that's probably because I'm just getting a bit tired of classical piano at the moment.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

Finding time to practice is always hard. I suppose most frustrating is when I've got a new piece and I haven't heard it before, because I need to hear something before I can learn it or play it.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

I think a piano teacher not only has to teach but nurture a student. I was really glad that I got my current teacher cause she's really lovely. I think a music teacher shouldn't just focus on piano, they should do theory stuff with the students, keep that a regular thing. I've got a theory exam next Wednesday, but they ask questions about other instruments as well, so I think exposing the student to a variety of music is important.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Maybe tutor piano...not teach. With beginners, it would be more tutoring. Maybe just starting kids off on piano.

**9. How often do you practice?**

6 days a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

An hour.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

Mum doesn't get on my case, she just tells me what I play wrong, so it's not her. I'm motivated because there's a challenge there. If it's a piece I don't like I just want to get it done and get it over with. I learn it so I don't have to play it again.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

When I play, I kind of go for the feel of it. I play the notes, but I like to put my own twist on it, so sometimes there's a bit of rubato here or there. So I like to play it how it's written, but then I like to go back and play the section again and see if I can play it better, more like myself.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I play water-polo and netball and I have guides and we have church commitments (I play music in church as well and music at school too).

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

I usually read actually. But when I do assignments for school, if I'm getting annoyed at it or frustrated, I'll take a break and play piano. Just scales, that calms me down.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

I like Sonny Chua, I think his music is really different. I also like...I played a piece...Haydn, I'm learning a concerto at the moment. I really like Missy Higgins and The Fray.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

I'm learning a concerto by Haydn, concerto in C. I'm learning...I've got a Sonny Chua one, I can't remember the name. Malaguena, it's a Spanish piece. Allegro Burlesco by Kuhlau. Sonatina in D Major by Czerny (?), and an exercise by Bertini.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Probably the Exercise, because it's shorter than all the other pieces. It also uses octaves in the RH, and that's what I'm used to in church. I really like it.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

Malaguena, because it changes time signatures throughout and it's really annoying.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I really like the Colours of the Wind by Diane Coats, it was a bit long but I liked it. I played Grenada last year (duet) and that was a Spanish piece and I really liked it. I really prefer duets to solo pieces.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

There was this one by Kerin Bailey, Shining Jade. I cried after I played it. It had really weird chords and I couldn't get them.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

Both of us really. She picks a selection and says "pick the one you like and the one you want to play". I think she thinks that if she picks one and I don't like it, I won't work on it.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I think it's best that way because I would pick really easy pieces and I probably wouldn't learn. I think it's also good because she values what I think.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Someday I'd like to learn the Nutcracker Dance, I think it's really cute. And I'd also like to learn The Rustle of Spring. I'd also like to learn a piece called the Nuns prayer, it's like this really, really nice piece.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I would probably go see another teacher and see what she reckons. Because I know I probably wouldn't be able to pick one that's hard enough for me just because I'd be too lazy. So she would pick some at the level I should be playing at.

## **Andrew Taylor**

### **1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

I was in grade 2, so I was 7.

### **2. How old are you now?**

12.

### **3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

I have had 4.

### **4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

Well, my mum and dad wanted me to. And my dad played when he was a kid as well. He didn't teach me, but just showed me some things. They just wanted me to learn it because mum likes it!

### **5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

Well I like playing cool songs. It's cool when you can get a famous sort of song and get it sounding good.

### **6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

Well it sometimes...like when I was doing my first exam, my teacher at the time she was only 17 and she was practicing for her FMus, and I think when I had her I did my preliminary exam songs for about a year and just did those 3 songs for a whole year. I found that pretty annoying, so it's always nice to be able to play one easy extra piece. At the moment I'm doing my grade five exam, but I'm also learning an extra piece that I don't need for the exam.

### **7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To encourage the player and make them feel they are doing well. To pretty much teach them.

### **8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Yeah I think it'd be pretty fun.

### **9. How often do you practice?**

#### **a) How long do you practice each time?**

I practice maybe 10-20 mins each day. Depends how I feel. If I have just had a lesson and there's a cool bit in a song I might do 30-40 mins.

#### **b) What motivates you to practice?**

It all depends on the pieces.

#### **c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I think about what the end result will be if I ever get a bit bored with it. It's always good to hear them through so you know what it sounds like at the end so you always try and make it fit what you hear.

### **10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

I do junior and senior band for my school and I also do junior and senior percussion ensembles at school and I also do basketball.

### **11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

I like to read, like to go on the computer a bit, possibly ride my skateboard down the park.

### **12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

I love Beethoven and all the classical composers like Chopin and Debussy.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

I'm learning the Pink Panther theme, Fur Elise, Axel F and Prelude by Chopin. They're all from the Piano for Leisure Grade 5. I'm also learning Moonlight Sonata, just for fun.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

I like all of them, but I think my favourite is the Pink Panther. I sort of like the jazzy stuff and playing the sorts of things that get stuck in your head. I played it on band camp and everyone liked it.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

If I had a least favourite, I'd probably have to say Axel F because it is sooo fast and it's going to take ages to play it hands together.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I'm playing Fur Elise because of my grade 5 exam, but I started the first bit a couple of years ago. I finished it last year, but I have to learn it again because I haven't practiced it for ages. Also Money, Money, Money and the Inspector Gadget theme.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

Sometimes I come across pieces that have really difficult chords constantly. I was trying a song called Bella's Lullaby from Twilight. I tried it and the left hand has lots of chords and it's really difficult and I haven't tried to continue to get it finished.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

I have a contribution in some of the songs. My teacher always suggests a few songs and sees if I like them and if I like them I'll learn them. Sometimes if I just suggest a piece, I can learn that too.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I like it when she chooses a few of my pieces otherwise I'd have about 50 million pieces to learn at one time.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Sonata Pathetique and be able to finish Clair de Lune.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I'd just think about any sort of music that's gotten stuck in my head and see if it has a piano part. Or have a look through different music books and see if there's anything that looks nice or look at [www.sheetmusicplus.com](http://www.sheetmusicplus.com)

## **Grace Kings**

### **1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

9, maybe 10.

### **2. How old are you now?**

37. I've had about a 20 year gap in there though!

### **3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Michelle's the 2<sup>nd</sup> teacher I've had.

### **4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

Well I was very musical, I didn't ask for it but my parents just arranged for piano lessons because they thought I should be exposed to it. I was very lucky.

### **5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I just love music. It keeps the brain going and takes you away from your worries.

### **6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

When I first started getting back into it, but the more you do it, and put your head down, you can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

### **7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

To instruct, and to try and nurture that particular child's talent according to what they can do and what they want to do and give them an enjoyment of music and enable them to reach further than what they might want to reach. Improve their culture of music, expose them to new ideas and new experiences of learning.

### **8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Yes. Eventually. I've had a couple of beginners asking, but I don't think I'm ready just yet. I'd like to be able to take on students like myself who have sort of come back. There's no one in Charters Towers that currently does that.

### **9. How often do you practice?**

I try for every day.

#### **a) How long do you practice each time?**

Usually an hour and a half a day, sometimes two. I'd like to be able to bump that up to 3 hours though.

#### **b) What motivates you to practice?**

I just love music. I also want to learn the guitar, but I really love the piano.

#### **c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I try to think about the music, sometimes it's hard though. I think about what assignment my son has to do, or errands I have to do, but I try to concentrate and be in the moment. I try to have tunnel vision.

### **10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

N/A

### **11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

N/A

### **12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

I love Mozart, Chopin and all of those, and a lot of the modern, popular music. I'm still discovering classical music. I like Handel...I really like baroque...Bach and Handel.

### **13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

I'm in the middle of a Clementi and trying to finish a Mozart. There's a couple of Heller I'm working on, and I'm lined up to do some Bach.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Mozart

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

I don't really have one...probably one of the Heller's I find a bit boring. One of them is just a study and it's a little bit flat.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

When I was a kid I learnt Bach toccata in D minor and it was a lot of fun. I used to really enjoy thumping away at it. I used to love playing that. I like jazz a lot, so I'm also getting into that and boogie woogie.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

I haven't really had any to be honest, probably made good choices and had teachers make good choices for me.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

A combination – as I sort of move up into the higher grades I can pick some of my own. She chooses a lot of stuff, but she doesn't say you must do this. She asks if I like it, she doesn't try and make me do it.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I like that. An adult to adult situation with a lot of choice.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Chopin Fantasia, that's the one thing I've heard recently.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

Probably if I was lucky enough to have a CD, I'd have a listen and whatever grabs me to listen to I'd play. Luckily most of the texts come with a CD and you can listen to it and put a tick or cross on it.

**Noah Johnson**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

10 years old...maybe 9.

**2. How old are you now?**

14.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

1.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

My parents made me.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I just like music.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

Doing the music theory.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

Teach the student to play the piano.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

No.

**9. How often do you practice?**

4 times a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

25-30 minutes

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

I need to get my pieces done for the exam.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

Dynamics.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

Violin, indoor soccer and chess.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Internet, social network.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Kabalevsky and Bach.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Schumann (Erinnerung Op. 68b, No. 28), Kabavlevsky (Variations on a Ukrainian Folksong), Edward McDougall (To a Wild Rose), Myers & Williams (Cavatina)

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Cavatina. It's fast...

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

N/A

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

Bach preludes.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

Can't remember.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

I choose them.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I like to choose them.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**  
Hungarian Dance No. 5 – Brahms.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

Listen to CD's or look through books at Artie's, like the AMEB Piano for Leisure books.



## **Aiden Wood**

**1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

I would've been about grade 3 – so 8 years old.

**2. How old are you now?**

16 years old.

**3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Just the one.

**4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

My older sister was playing and I thought it was a cool instrument so I thought I'd give it a go.

**5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I guess it's just when I recognise songs I can play and then I can play for people.

**6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

Just when I can't figure out how to play something.

**7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

Well obviously teach the piano - teach you what you should be learning, but also keep you up to date with how hard you should be working at it.

**8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Perhaps not.

**9. How often do you practice?**

I'd say most days a week.

**a) How long do you practice each time?**

20-30 minutes.

**b) What motivates you to practice?**

It's just sort of therapeutic to play the piano.

**c) What do you think about when you practice?**

Not a lot – just how good it should sound. Mostly the feel of it, not so much notes.

**10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

Just like going to the gym to keep fit and going for walks up castle hill.

**11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

I guess hang out with some mates, maybe get school work done.

**12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Probably not.

**13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

Just recently I've been given Clocks by Coldplay. I'm going over You Dirty Rat by Sonny Chua. There's a bunch of songs that are in Jazz, Rags and Blues by Martha Mier.

**14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

I'd say probably the Sonny Chua piece.

**15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

Not really. I only really play the ones I like.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I'd say I really do like the Martha Mier pieces that I started lately. They're sort of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade - the more recent pieces.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

Number 12 – I'm not sure who it's by. I sort of gave up half way through.

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

My teacher and I...she might have recommended pieces and she shows me and then I choose.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I prefer it that way.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

How to save a life by The Fray. I started teaching myself that.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

I find I like blues pieces and I find they're easier to learn, so I'd start looking at them. And I'd probably look at 4<sup>th</sup> grade pieces or 5<sup>th</sup> grade pieces.

## **Taylor Michaels**

### **1. How old were you when you started learning the piano?**

I think I was 6.

### **2. How old are you now?**

I'm 14.

### **3. How many piano teachers have you had so far?**

Just one.

### **4. Why did you start learning the piano?**

My brother and sister were doing it as well because they're older than me. So mum sent me as well. I mean, I wanted to learn...it was kind of a combination.

### **5. What do you like most about learning the piano?**

I guess when you're finished with a song, the fact that you've gotten up to that stage, the satisfaction.

### **6. What do you find most frustrating about learning the piano?**

Probably the learning part and that it takes a year to do everything.

### **7. What do you think a piano teachers job is?**

Kind of just teach the student how to read music properly, to fix up all the errors they've made.

### **8. Do you think one day you would like to teach the piano? Why?**

Maybe.

### **9. How often do you practice?**

Maybe about 3-4 days a week.

#### **a) How long do you practice each time?**

Around an hour.

#### **b) What motivates you to practice?**

Getting the piece done.

#### **c) What do you think about when you practice?**

I just try to get most of the things right, otherwise if I play it wrong I'll probably always get it wrong.

### **10. What after-school activities other than piano do you participate in? Sport, dance etc.**

None.

### **11. What do you like to do in your free time?**

Just go out I guess – with friends.

### **12. Do you have any favourite composers? Who are they?**

Not really – not particularly.

### **13. What pieces are you learning at the moment?**

I'm just starting grade 6 now so I'm at the beginning stage sort of. I'm doing Bach and I'm trying to find a Liszt one. I've also got a Haydn and another one by Ravel. For grade 5, I did a Beethoven and a Bach and a Liszt.

### **14. What is your favourite piece today? Why?**

Probably the Liszt (Consolation No. 1) from grade 5.

### **15. What is your least favourite piece today? Why?**

I like basically most of them – if I'm not particularly fond of it I end up liking it after playing it for a while.

**16. What pieces have you played that you really liked? Why?**

I played a while ago, The Wind beneath my wings by Henley – it was a grade 3 piece.

**17. What pieces have you played that were frustrating or hard to continue with? Why?**

Yes I think I did. I tried to play Jessica's Theme, but it was only for an extra piece so I just chose an easier one (from grade 4).

**18. Who chooses your pieces?**

Well I mainly choose them all, but if I have too many of the one style she'll (my teacher) get me to choose something else.

**19. Would you prefer to choose your pieces or have your teacher choose them for you?**

I prefer choosing my own pieces.

**20. Are there any pieces that you really want to learn? Which one/s and why?**

Not really actually, I don't think so.

**21. If you were asked to select a new piece today, how would you go about choosing one?**

Usually I just get the exam book and then I just choose one out of them. I listen to the recording and choose from there.

## Appendix 9 – Method Book Authors Interview Transcripts

### Morty Manus - Alfred's Basic Piano Library

- 1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music publishing field? *Did you get into the music publishing business because of your Dad? Is that right?***

Yes, that's correct. My father was a music publisher. He in fact, was a musician, a violinist. He was born in Russia and was an only child. He travelled with an opera company and when he came to the United States, he liked it and left the opera company and made his living here as violinist and as a society orchestra leader. He later on provided music for the silent movies. This is what you'd call mood music; if there was a gallop or a love song, depending on what was showing in the movie on the screen. There was no set music that was played, you just looked at the screen and figured out what it was; if it was a chase scene, you had fast music going on. So when the talkies came along, that put him out of business. So he looked around for something to do and the Alfred company was up for sale and so he bought it. And that's how he got into the business. And of course when I was old enough, that's how I got into the business.

- 2. How long have you been working for Alfred's? Have you had the same position for that time? *You got into the business in 1952?***

I got into the business in 1952 (or it could be 1950). I was also an only child. I played the piano for nine-ten years and I also played the clarinet in a high school band and kind of fooled around with the guitar on my own. So I had a great piano background and I went to The City College of New York. It's a free college for people who live in NYC and you have to qualify to get in and I got in. Later on, I switched to a business course in my third year. So I had a business background as well as a music background. What was helpful in the business course, was not that it was very profound, but I learned that other people did not know more than I did, and that gave me a great deal of confidence. I thought there was a whole mystery about business, but it turned out that what I thought was what they were teaching so in fact that gave me support when I would have to make a decision that it wasn't contrary to widespread opinion about how to proceed. So that's how I got started. When I graduated, I went directly in the office and my father was there with three other people and I was the fifth person to work at Alfred. I think one of the things that is significant is that one of the people, the book-keeper turned out to have a daughter whom I later married. And that would be Iris. That's how I met her, though it took a while before we got together. So that's how it became.

#### ***What was your role back then?***

I was the lowest of the five. I would just do grunt work you might call it, which means I carried things from one place to the other. I would pack packages, I would take orders, nothing of consequence and actually nothing to do with music. It was a very small company. Alfred had something like \$17,000 in sales a year, so if you divide that by 12 months, there really wasn't an awful lot to do during the day. And whatever there was, I did it. And others did it too, I wasn't the only one, but there wasn't a lot of work to do. My father stayed on a couple of years, but then he had a

stroke and he didn't come in anymore. Being an only child, I was supporting my mother and father. Really, there wasn't much money, money was always a problem. I think I started off making \$20 a week which is \$1000 a year. My father made \$4000 a year. So money was a problem. And we didn't have much sales, much publications. So there I was with an invalid father and I was the sole support of the family. It didn't take me long to figure out we didn't have enough publications and no good writer was going to write for us. I was the youngest publisher and we were the smallest publishing company. So I realised that for me to be successful, I had to get writers who were ordinary and make the books good. I had to fix them up, I had to make suggestions to them, I had to re-write. I would work on the covers, the title, everything and then try to sell it after it came in from the printers. So it's a long process in developing one book at a time, but with each book I learnt more and more about how to do it and how to do it better. So I had real hands on experience of being an editor and developing a relationship with the composer and finding someone who I thought had promise but not the polished skills of writing and helping them along so that when the books came out, whatever it said on the cover is what you accomplished when you went through it.

One of my first books, I saw a book lying on my fathers desk and it was an accordion book. It looked good, it looked neat, it looked well written. The only problem was I knew nothing about the accordion. So I picked up the book and I put on an accordion and I could imagine it was heavy and then I put my hand on the keyboard and my left hand through the strap, opened and closed it, and I got the feeling in my head, even though I'd never had an accordion on me that I understood the instrument and I knew what it was like to play. So when I finished the book, I wrote a critique of it and it was about 4 or 5 typed pages and I packed it up and I got afraid to mail it. After all, I thought, I didn't really know anything about the accordion and here I am writing to someone who wrote an accordion book. I thought gee, this is a lot of nerve to do such a thing. What if I'm completely wrong. And I hesitated for a while. But finally I dropped it off in the post office box, and for a moment I wanted to reach in and grab it back out, but it was too late. Two weeks later I got back a response, thanking me for what I had done and I was very pleased at that. Now that writer was Willard Palmer. He became one of my earliest writers who stayed for a length of time with Alfred. So I got to know him. He lived in Texas, I lived in New York. We arranged to meet and we began a close collaboration in writing accordion books, until such time I told Willard that I didn't think the accordion had a very big future. We had done pretty well. We were still a small company. I didn't want to publish accordion music anymore, but if he wanted to write for the piano, I would be very happy to continue working with him. He said he knew the piano literature very well, he played piano and the harpsichord. Willard was an amazing musician, skilled in almost all areas, as an arranger, as a composer, as a teacher. He's a wonderful story-teller. He was endlessly fascinating. And so began a close collaboration with piano. The first books we put out were Masterwork Compositions – Bach Two-Part Inventions. It had light and dark print in it, differentiating what the composer wrote and what Willard wrote as an editor. It was very successful. That was the first of those books, now we have hundreds. And so one thing led to another and I came to Willard and

said, I'd like to have you write a piano course. He said he'd like to do it, but he'd like to do it with a woman who was a very fine teacher in Houston, Texas where he lived, and that was Amanda Vick Lethco. He wanted to write with her. So we made a contractual arrangement for him to write it with her. And I think we're now somewhere around 1977, 1978.

**3. What are your main duties in your current role with Alfred's?**

**4. Can you tell me about the history of the ABPL series?**

Willard began writing and they would send me what they had done, and I would give my comments back. I decided that I wasn't sure I liked what they were doing, so I flew to Houston and I met with Amanda Vick and Willard. We were somewhere up to a fifth, using a fifth in the first book. So he presented it to me and I didn't like it. And I told him I didn't like it. He said what's not to like? It's very good. I said it may be good, but it's really not interesting, the book is not fun. Anybody could write this book. He said I think you're wrong, it's a very good book. But I didn't like it. And we had an argument about it. They said I think it's good, we should use it. I said I don't think it's good, we're not going to use it. It was intelligent conversation! It ended with him saying that's it, I'm leaving. I said, Willard I want you to know, this is Saturday afternoon, I'm flying home tomorrow. I have a 12 o'clock plane and I'm not coming back. This is it. If we're not going to be able to work together, then this is where it ends. I said, do you understand that? He said, I understand that, but I think you're wrong, I think you're making a terrible mistake. So I said, look at it like this. It's my money and your time at stake here. We both have an investment in this. And we've got to be 100% together and if we're not, we're going to fall apart. So he left. I went to Iris and I said, let's pack up because we're leaving tomorrow morning. Well the next morning, the phone rang at 9 o'clock. It was Willard, he was downstairs. He said, Morty, I have something I want you to hear. And it was this song, *My Fifth*. So what was unique about it, was it used the words of a fifth as the student was playing the interval of a fifth, and used the word 'third' when the student was playing a third. It may have been used before, but I had just never seen it done before. And it was a cute lyric, it was fun. I said, Willard, this is it. This is the style that I like and that I think will be successful. I think what we should do next is go back to the beginning and re-write all the music. I have no problems with the way you introduce the fundamentals, but I have problems with the songs. They're not fun, they're like exercises. I want it to be cheerful, and witty and humorous, where the student wants to play and is getting some pleasure out of it. And so he did. By the time I was getting ready to leave, he sat down with me and said Mort, you really do so much more than a publisher. You're really engaged in this book and Amanda Vick and I talked it over and we'd like you to be a co-author with us. I said are you serious? He said, yes, I am. That means I'll be an equal partner, I'll get royalties? He said yes. I said that was more than I deserved, I'll take less, but I'll be very happy to be a part of this group. So that's how it began.

**5. When the ABPL series was first released, what do you believe was unique about it? 28 years on, do you still believe it to be unique for this reason?**

There's three ways I think you can learn to begin piano. One is you begin with Middle C, thumbs of both hands play there. Another way is you just draw a single line which is the first line of the staff and you develop notes going up to the next

space, and then you add another line until you get the five lines of the staff. And that's another way of teaching it. Some people feel you can actually learn to read better by doing it that way, because the lines don't represent a specific note. It could be any note in a line or space. Frances Clark is someone who developed this concept and was very successful with it. I'm not exactly sure that you learn to read better. It depends on what kind of student you are. And then the third way, is the position approach and that's the approach we used in Alfred's Basic. It began using five fingers in a basic C position. So after you've played in that for a while, we keep adding new rhythms, new notes, that is quarter note, half note, whole note, and then we add dynamics to it. So after the student has learned to play moderately well in the C position, we move to the G position. Now you know a lot of notes in the treble clef, and a lot of notes in the bass clef. So we only stayed within the five fingers. And after the G position we went into the D position, also five fingers, but this time the third finger played on an F#. We felt this was easier than going to the F position, where the 4<sup>th</sup> finger played a B flat in the right hand, which we thought was harder than the third finger to play a black key. After that (after getting to the F position), we abandon positions altogether and the students begin to play a wider range of notes with each finger. So positions were the pillar by which we developed the course. It's really very easy to begin to play. You almost can guess at the notes, and I think you learn quicker on it and it's just a fun way to begin. It's easier to present to a student than adding notes haphazardly with no complete organised discipline the student can understand. Yes, they're learning how to read but it's a lot harder and the music they're playing is a lot duller. So the position approach is what we used and that was very important for the success of the course.

6. **Did you, Willard Palmer and Amanda Vick Lethco all work together or did you each have certain sections or elements to work on?**
7. **Within books three-six, what skills/values is the method designed to teach the intermediate student? (Would you agree that these books are appropriate for the intermediate student?)**

It could very well be, I can't really say. See, I'm not really a teacher, I'm more of an editor, a creator, a writer. I can arrange, but that's not my strength. My strength is knowing how to develop a book so that it has commercial appeal.

The books sort of just developed in a way, so if 3-6 is for intermediate, then so be it. But it wasn't planned that way, it just happened that way.

8. **Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in the Alfred method? If yes, what did you do? Did the results affect the final product?**

You could trace the success of piano methods in the United States back to the 1930's, and that's when John Thompson developed his piano course. I believe he used a Middle C approach. In the 40's, the John Schaum Piano method became very popular. In the 50's and 60's, there was Francis Clark and David Carr Glover who had successful piano methods. In the 70's, Jane and Jim Bastien, husband wife, developed a very successful piano method. And then we came along in the 80's. So any piano teacher in the 70's knew of what preceded it. We didn't really have to do research because we grew up with some of these books. I learnt from a book written by John Williams that was around the same time as John Thompson. So we had John



Williams, John Thompson and then John Schaum. So just as a joke, I as saying, I'd have to find an author whose first name is John.

So we were well aware of what was available and we chose the position approach. We didn't have an outline to begin with. I kept asking Willard for it, but we just spontaneously moved ahead, page by page. We got up to page 62 or 63 in the first book and we knew it was going to end at page 64. It just seemed to end at a good spot and then we knew that the second book that was Lesson 1B, it would be 48 pages in the upright. And it just evolved. We went page by page. I kept saying Willard, we really need an outline. How do you know we're going to end up in the right spot? And he said I just know we're going to end up right. This is the way the course is going to be written rather than having a preset way of beginning and ending the book. Let me just develop it and I'll keep in mind when we get close to the end that it's going to end up at a certain page. And the next book will begin. So that was the way it happened. It was clearly delineated at the beginning. We just moved steadily ahead.

#### **9. Has the method been updated or reviewed since its original design?**

There were modest, very modest changes. They were so slight, I probably shouldn't even bring it up. The only thing that changed dramatically is that the books came out in black and white, no colour. And for quite a few years, it remained that way. The book incidentally was very successful immediately. The first book came out, it just erupted in fast sales. We were then under pressure to come out with the second book, and then the third book. We just raced through it. Some years later, I was visiting a music dealer in Alaska, I was in the store and I said I don't see any of our Christmas books in your racks. I see Bastien, but I don't see Alfred. And they said that Bastien's arrangements are better than Alfred's. And I said that I wasn't really aware of that. She said yes. I said, I don't believe it. She told me that it was true. I said, ok, I'm up here, I'm a long way from home. You have a teacher teaching right now. Let's get that teacher over and have a blind test. I'll pull out a song that is in our Christmas carol book and a song that's in the Bastien Christmas carol book and you won't know and everybody else won't know which is which. And let's see which arrangement you like better. So that's what we did. She came out of the lesson and I said I need 15 minutes of your time. We got a small group together to sit so they couldn't actually see the music that was being played. I played two versions and it was almost unanimous that our version was the more likeable one. So then I turned to her, and I said well, what do you think? She said I don't know what to say. Everybody tells me the arrangements are good. I said there is one big difference between the two. She said what's that? I said one book is in colour, and one book isn't. I learnt a big lesson there. I said ok, I'm going back home and I'm going to put all our books into colour. And that was the only thing that really changed. And I think the cover changed somewhere along the line as well. When we put the new colouring inside the book, we changed the cover as well. That's all really. We didn't really make fundamental changes in the music.

An interesting thing was that we developed the early Alfred's Basic Piano Library Lesson Books, some teachers told us the course moves too quickly. We then decided

to modify the course and slow it up. We thought that we could take Lesson Book 1A, divide it in half, add some new material and stretch the course out with more reinforcement, more songs, and end up with a new course that develops more slowly. That is how the Prep Course got started and instead of numbering the levels 1A, 1B, 2, 3, etc., we called the levels, A, B, C, etc. After a student would complete the Level B book of the Prep Course, they could go into either the Basic Course Level 1B or remain in the Prep Course and go into Level C. So if the student moves along more quickly, you can move them up to a faster course. And vice versa. Sometimes a student is struggling in the lesson book, so the teacher can keep them in the Prep Books. And that became a very successful idea. And from there, some teachers complained you've got too many books. You've got a theory book, a recital book, a sight-reading book, note spellers, just so many. I can't handle all these books, I want just one book. So then what we did was take the lesson book, theory book and recital book and combined them, taking out pages from the theory and recital and coming up with the All-in-one course. There are 5 books in that course. And just by extension we said now we need an Adult Course. So we began analysing how an adult is different from a young student. The obvious answer is that an adult understands concepts very easily, but can't always do what the music says it should do because the fingers are not as flexible. But the adult student understands, but has difficulty performing. Whereas the young student has no trouble or little trouble when they're young, but the concepts are hard for them. It was actually the reverse. We could move along faster in the adult course conceptually, but slower with the music portion. And you know the Adult Course became extremely successful. It's the number one course in this country and I think Australia as well. And it's related to Alfred's Basic, but it's different.

#### **10. Where is the method book going in the near future?**

Well we now have many other piano courses, most recently the Premier Piano Course. It's completely different to the Basic Piano Library, but as I said before, Amanda Vick and Willard are no longer with us, and so the Premier Piano Course has different authors, although I'm the editor of the book. And having authors that are alive and can go out and promote their book is necessary I think. For certain teachers, they need a writer of a method, it may be important to them, kind of like a celebrity, and they can always tell the student, I spoke to so and so and they said to do this. I just felt there was a new group of teachers coming along, new technology. So we developed it as a separate course. It's similar, but a different approach.

#### **11. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

When I say I wasn't a teacher, I should have said that I did take on beginning students for a while to learn what you go through as a teacher. But that's not my fundamental skill and it's more for me, a question of logic. And I guess maybe from being a kid myself, just thinking and watching what passes for popularity with books, not just music books, but books, what's popular in movies, what's popular on TV. I wanted to get away from a stodgy looking book. I wanted it to look more like a children's book that they would read, that would have design and pictures in it. So it wasn't so much coming out of my experience as a teacher, although as I said, I did do a certain amount of teaching.

## **Phillip Keveren - Hal Leonard Piano Library**

### **1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music publishing field?**

#### **How did you come to be working for Hal Leonard?**

My first job outside of college was at Yamaha. I worked in their music department during school and during that time I had my first exposure to writing pedagogical pieces. And Barbara Kreader who had taken a position at Hal Leonard, with the task of writing a piano method eventually sort of followed my writing and eventually asked me to become part of that team. So that's how that developed.

### **2. How long have you been working for Hal Leonard? Have you had the same position for that time?**

I'm not an employee, I'm a freelance person. I've been writing for them in one degree or another for nearly 20 years now.

### **3. What are your main duties in your current role with Hal Leonard?**

I still work with Hal Leonard. I do about 8-10 arrangements that are in a series. They're not part of a method, but sort of a satellite. So I write some every month.

### **4. Can you tell me about the history of the Hal Leonard series?**

Barbara Kreader was the team leader I guess you would say. She went to work at Hal Leonard with an idea of what she wanted to accomplish with the piano method and she went to them and they were interested in allowing her to pursue that. So she began to assemble a team of people that were like-minded and seemed to weave together well in what we wanted to see in a piano method and she brought Fred Kern on. They had worked together many years ago and had similar philosophies. I was really brought in more from the angle of a composer rather than a pedagogue and I guess I feel like my training in pedagogy comes with writing a piano method with Barbara and Fred. I've always taught all these years, but that's never been my primary focus. But that's kind of what you need with a method team, guys working in different areas. And it was just really a wonderful situation we developed there. We really enjoyed one another personally and you need that to write together for 20 years and we just enjoyed each others company and our talents come together really well.

### **5. When the Hal Leonard series was first released, what do you believe was unique about it? 13 years on, do you still believe it to be unique for this reason?**

You know we pretty much worked together, but as we worked, it became clear the things that people did especially well. We would always work, and still do, work on the whole picture together and work it out and then take assignments independently. But we all edited each others work. Every body sort of has a hand in all areas, but maybe I take responsibility for the actual content of the music and find people to write music when we don't want to write everything. Barbara is one of those people you go to about teaching. She knows, because she's always had 40 or 50 students a year, so she's the one who's always looking at things very, very carefully for reality. And Fred is a college professor, so he's more the intellect of the group I guess you'd say. And Mona, her specialty really has always been with younger students. But, she also really blossoms as a writer and an arranger as we went through this. She's contributed a lot to the subject.

*So was she one of the authors? I don't recall hearing her name before.*

Yeah, Mona is not on all of the books. I can't remember which ones she's on, and which ones she's not. She's on book 1, 2 and 3 and then she wasn't on 4 and 5. So she was sort of brought in for the lower levels. But in recent years, she's really been involved in everything. She became an important part in the process really.

**6. Did you, Barbara Kreader and Fred Kern all work together or did you each have certain sections or elements to work on?**

I think at the time, the marketing people would have said the fact that we had recorded accompaniments and were using technology more in-depth than had been used at that time. But at this point, everybody has really gone that route with CD's and Midi accompaniment. But I think really integrating improvisational activities was somewhat unique about that point. I think in terms of philosophy, I don't think there's anything that's really new. It's a blending of a lot of things. But I think everything is approached from understanding the whole and then going to the part. You know, if we had to have a very broad philosophical point. And that's how we're using improvisation, as a way to introduce hand positions and colours and then moving.

**7. Within books four and five, what skills/values is the method designed to teach the intermediate student?**

- Agreed that books four and five are for the intermediate student.

In our book four, that's when they're first stretching out into full scales. Book three they're still in five finger positions really. And book four, they're crossing over and under, extending into scales. Definitely widening their span about the keyboard. I think that's when they first get into 6/8 and slightly more syncopated rhythms. More sophistication in that way. I would say bigger and fuller chords. And then in book five, they see their first sixteenth note in book five. Book five is when you cross that line and you move into easy level classics and you prepare to play Kabalevsky. To some degree, you're just now able to play music that was originally written for the piano and in the repertoire. And it's for that reason, we originally intended to have a book six, but the truth is we found that most people by the time they got to book five were moving into repertoire.

**8. Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in the Hal Leonard method? If yes, what did you do? Did the results affect the final product?**

The first three books were in a test market with about 1000 students for about a year and a half or two years. We started working on it in about 1992 and then it went into test teaching. We had quite a batch of teachers that were part of a teacher test market group, that taught students and then answered questionnaires. It was pretty important actually. We made a lot of revisions after that test market.

*Did Hal Leonard set the test market up? How did that come about?*

That's funny. A publisher just wants to get things out. I mean, they were supportive once we were insistent upon that, but I think they'd have just been happy if we'd just

finished it and published it. But Barbara was very firm about a test market so after that they came on board with the concept.

*What sort of changes were made, if you don't mind me asking?*

I would say that from my perspective, and my memories would be more in tune with the music itself because that was my responsibility. I can't remember, but I'm sure there were details, pedagogical content as well. But we learned a lot about how pieces work, which ones work and which ones didn't. Pieces we thought might have demonstrated a certain point, and maybe they didn't have the same impact for the student. So we learned a lot about that. We also, as I recall, a lot of going back and simplifying a lot. It was a learning process in terms of cleaning up, editing, getting things really tight. I know that no matter how hard you try, there's going to be a measure or two that is a stumbling block in some way. And you try and get those as soon as possible. The idea of improvisation was quite new and we had a lot of people that were calling and saying "well what am I supposed to do with this", so we had to clean up a lot of the instructions, the actual instructions in the book to clarify that. It's funny to look at it now. It looks pretty clear, it's just a couple of sentences. But I think at the time, it had too much text and people were getting confused.

**9. Has the method been updated or reviewed since its original design?**

Well, we revised level 3. We did a new edition of that. And we have just now released an all-in-one version of book 1. I don't know if that's in Australia yet. But it's basically just taking the technique, solo, everything and putting it into one tighter, actually it's two books. So there's a book 1A and 1B with all the elements in that. In the process of doing that, we did make editions to that and we've continued to add satellite books over all that time.

**10. Where is the method book going in the near future?**

So we're coming up on 14 years next year. I don't imagine we'll go much further than a couple more years before it'll be time for a more major overhaul. If for no other reason than our work and patience is a limited thing too.

**11. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

Yes.

**12. How would you define or describe a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

It's kind of a sliding scale to me. Because you have early beginner, late beginner, early intermediate, late intermediate, early advanced...I don't always think necessarily in levels.

**b) Intermediate student?**

But when you're getting into what might be called intermediate. I think in general if the student is getting comfortable with moving about the keyboard and is becoming pianistic but I'm always trying at that intermediate level to get as much sound with as little pyrotechnics if that makes any sense. At a more advanced level and from an arranging stand point, you would have more trills and things. I'm always trying to be careful that looking at the page, for an intermediate student, it looks very friendly. And an intermediate student I

guess at least in our books, the number of keys you are making use of is smaller.

**c) Advanced student?**

Sometimes to me, an advanced arrangement in reality, isn't that much harder. It just looks harder because of the extra stuff that gets added. It's sort of a funny thing. Some of these things are case by case and you just sort of, after writing enough arrangements and getting enough feedback, you just sort of have a sense about what they'll be able to do and not be able to do. And of course it's not always that cut and dry but I always feel, and I don't mean to demean the student or simplify things, but I always feel that simpler is better. I'd rather have quality, clean writing that can be played technically with not too much fault so they can really focus on musicianship.

**13. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

Well I think there is definitely a wall that occurs (if you're talking in Hal Leonard levels) between level three and four. Just coming out of that early, late elementary going into intermediate. It seems to be the area that's the trickiest. And I'm not sure if that's because of the age of the kids when they get there. Certainly it is a time when the study is abandoning the safety of the five-finger position and there's some of that. But I have to think it's just an age, and how long they've been playing at that point. Are they really going to get serious about this? Or is it just a passing fancy? But I think just coming out of late elementary going into intermediate typically seems to be a drop-out point.

**14. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

**What do you feel causes them to lose motivation?**

Well it's so true that there are certain pieces, certain styles that students latch on to. Certain songs that catch their attention and I think it's really important to try and find that style of music that captures their imagination. I think especially with younger intermediate students, they're certainly influenced by character pieces that paint certain pictures. I'm always really aware that the title and the whole image that a piece paints is really important. Because sometimes the imagery is really important. I always think of my daughter. In one of the books there's a piece called *A Whispered Promise* and I had written that piece and I had just called it *Etude in D*. And my daughter heard me playing it and she came by, and said what's that called? And I said *Etude in D*. And she came by two hours later and she said "I think that's called *A whispered promise*." And she would have only been about 10 years old. And it really impressed me how important the title was, what that music said to her.

## **M'Lou Dietzer - First Impressions: An Intermediate Piano Method)**

### **1. In a previous email, you mentioned that your university students inspired the *First Impressions* books. Is this how you came to work in the music publishing field?**

Yes; actually, all my levels of teaching (including “pre-college” students) led me to believe there was a need for this kind of book.

### **2. How long have you worked with Alfred's as a publisher of your method book?**

I believe it was in 1996 when I became associated with Alfred. I had first published my own books, Volumes 1-4, and I presented them in a lecture session at the MTVA convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The teachers were very excited about my books and they went from my lecture into the exhibit room and told several publishers they should publish my books so they would be readily available for them to buy and use. Three publishers approached me about this but I had already hoped to get Alfred interested in them and they were the ones I chose.

### **3. Can you briefly describe your current working relationship with Alfred's?**

It is a very friendly relationship even though my books are not as widely used as we had hoped. I recently asked them to reprint volume 3 of the Theory Book because it was no longer available and they are doing just that.

### **4. When the *First Impressions* series was first released, what do you believe was unique about it? 13 years on, do you still believe it to be unique for this reason?**

It was unique because even though there were a few other books available with similar “study guides”, mine was the only one that dealt exclusively with observing the musical patterns. Other books seemed to be trying to teach the piece musically—character, dynamics, style, etc. I felt strongly that students need to have musical analysis ability in order to learn the music; after that, the teacher can mould and shape their musicality.

### **5. What skills/values is the method designed to teach the intermediate student?**

The skill of looking at and learning to recognize musical patterns instead of just the “dots on the page”. I’ve used this concept as the basis for workshops and articles.

### **6. Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in the *First Impressions* method? If yes, what did you do? Did the results affect the final product?**

Yes, I was fortunate to be teaching at California State University at Fullerton and I tested my study guide format in the piano pedagogy class. My first guides were too detailed (I am very detailed in my teaching) and this was not going to work. I continued refining the concept of the study guides and kept testing them so I believe they now fill a need and are usable for students, especially self-taught and adult students.

### **7. Has the method been updated or reviewed since its original design?**

### **8. Where is the method book going in the near future?**

I’ll combine #7 & 8:

No, *First Impressions* has not been updated or reviewed since it’s original design but as you know, I did add volumes 5 and 6 to the existing 1-4 volumes. Early on, teachers said “we need much easier material than your volume 1”. Since the volumes 1-6 were already in print, I wrote the 3 earlier volumes and called them A, B, C, which I felt was quite apt since they served as an introduction to Volumes 1-6. Teachers also told me they needed more repertoire so I put together the three “Discovering Piano Literature” books, each of

which relate to Volumes A-B, C-1, and 2-3. I also have a book, published by Alfred, "Piano Etudes" which are late intermediate/early advanced level as I felt there was a need and teachers would not have to continue teaching Chopin Etudes which, in my view, are, for the most part too difficult for most students (except, of course, for the highly motivated and gifted ones).

**9. How would you define or describe a:**

**a) Beginner student?**

Beginners are (obviously) those students with no prior piano experience and also those who had some earlier training but still have no skills to speak of either because of poor teaching and/or a time lapse.

**b) Intermediate student?**

Intermediate can be thought of as early, middle and late intermediate level. You could equate Early Intermediate with my Books A & B, C, Middle with !, 2, 3, and Late 4, 5, 6.

**c) Advanced student?**

**10. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

I personally think the greatest dropout is in the intermediate levels, primarily early and middle, because the student's age becomes a factor. If a student began study at early age of 5-6-7, he/she arrives at roughly middle intermediate level in the early teen years when a great percent of music students want to drop lessons. (Incidentally, I have, in the past, done research on this phenomenon and found a lot of research on it. It seems that many of those students who dropped at those earlier years and are now about 15-16, want to return to lessons! Of course, they've lost ground and it difficult in most cases for them to regain that lost time. I think a student's greatest growth is right at the early levels and can be in their early teens which makes it doubly sad that some of them drop out just then.)

**11. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

First, family structure is a big factor; obviously, a positive, encouraging attitude on the part of the teacher is vital! Those parents who have guided their children to practice regularly in the early years have a better chance of preventing them of quitting lessons but is no guarantee. Second, early teens like to compete and can sometimes remain in lessons with the right balance of competitions, festivals, recitals, etc. so it behoves the teacher to begin preparing students to play in recitals, etc. at an early age. Especially in today's educational structure, competition has almost become a bad word as students are becoming more and more pushed to strive for higher grade point averages, etc. I personally this is a big mistake as students now have learned to "learn for the test" instead of really understanding the material.

**12. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Sometimes it is peer pressure that, sadly, can work in both directions. If other school friends are studying music, that's o.k. but if the music student is alone in this activity, he/she can feel "different" or a "nerd", certainly to be avoided at all costs! Peer pressure is probably stronger than parental pressure at this age as this is an extremely sensitive age where "fitting in" is so important. Nowadays, high schoolers are thinking of things to put on their college resume application and this will motivate them to continue. But



sometimes, they realize this too late and have quit lessons and cannot make up for lost time. Therefore, it is important for the music teacher to try everything to keep the student in lessons—lessening the amount of assignment, allowing student to play “popular” music, etc.

**13. What challenges do you think are relevant to teaching an intermediate student?**

The most challenging thing for a teacher to do is not assume that since the student is not a teenager, he/she is ready to launch into Beethoven Sonatas and Chopin Etudes. I’ve taught a lot of pedagogy for established piano teachers and find that the teachers almost always, have pushed the student too hard too soon. Many piano students simply do not have the ability to reach beyond the late intermediate level. I think that is another reason I felt so strongly that my books would be a good source for many piano teachers.

## **Appendix 10 – External Examination Boards Interview Transcripts**

### **Nigel Scaife - Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music**

**1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music examination field?**

Having spent many years in music and music education - as a teacher, performer and writer – I successfully applied for the position of ‘Syllabus Development Manager’ at ABRSM in 1999.

**2. How long have you been working for the ABRSM?**

See above

**3. What are your main duties in your current role with the ABRSM?**

As Syllabus Director I lead the Syllabus department, which is responsible for the musical and educational aspects of ABRSM’s examination service. My main duties are to maintain the Board’s syllabuses for all Music Medals, practical and written graded music and diploma examinations; to develop new syllabus-related products and services; and to pursue matters of accreditation and validation.

**4. What specific factors first inspired the creation of the ABRSM syllabus?**

The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music was founded in 1889 as the outcome of a proposition by Sir Alexander MacKenzie, principal of the Royal Academy of Music, to Sir George Grove, director of the Royal College of Music, that their two pre-eminent musical training institutions unite to create an examining body ‘inspired by disinterested motives for the benefit of musical education... which would genuinely provide a stimulus and an objective for a high standard of achievement’.

The new body was designed to provide an impartial and authoritative alternative to privately owned examining institutions that were widely perceived to be motivated more powerfully by mercenary concerns than by ABRSM’s desire to promote high standards of musical education and assessment (<http://www.abrsm.org/?page=about/beginning.html> accessed 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009).

**5. How was the original layout of the ABRSM syllabus and the structure of the examinations decided?**

An ambitious first syllabus for the inaugural exams of 1890 aimed at ‘a standard so high that the certificate granted may be regarded as a distinction worthy of attainment’, a founding premise that has been retained through all subsequent modifications of the assessment schemes.

The opening local centre examinations took place at forty-six centres in the United Kingdom and the two grades (named simply ‘Junior’ and ‘Senior’) were completed by no less than 1,141 candidates.

After the opening group of examinations demands were made for a syllabus which supported the needs of pupils younger than those capable of attempting the ‘Junior’ and ‘Senior’ grades after concerns were raised that bad habits formed at an early age could be impossible to eradicate by the time a pupil was able to undertake formal assessment. Two school divisions were immediately introduced (‘Lower’ and ‘Higher’) which were

intended to precede the local centre split into 'Intermediate' and 'Advanced' (<http://www.abrsm.org/?page=about/syllabus.html> accessed 10th November 2009).

**6. To what extent has the layout of the syllabus and the structure of the examinations changed in the last 120 years?**

The school divisions were later extended downwards to incorporate 'Elementary' and 'Primary' and the category 'Final' was introduced as a new local centre division to precede the L.R.A.M, A.R.C.M. and L.R.S.M. professional diplomas (which were subsequently replaced or subsumed by the professional Diploma, Licentiate and Fellowship qualifications).

The aural scheme was introduced into local practical examinations in 1920 and the modern system of eight graded tiers was implemented in 1933. It was at this point that 'The Associated Board' became 'The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music' (<http://www.abrsm.org/?page=about/syllabus.html> accessed 10 November 2009).

**7. What/if any changes have been made to the curriculum itself?**

Please note that a syllabus is not a curriculum! A syllabus is a set of activities created for the purposes of assessment – whereas a curriculum is a much broader set of activities created for the purposes of teaching and learning.

**8. What procedures are used when updating the syllabus?**

Well, a syllabus starts off its life with a group of experts sitting together considering what happened in the past. Now with a piano syllabus, because it's reviewed every two years, this work is ongoing all the time with the board; the process of selection and moderation and so on is normally a two year process. But this particular piano syllabus, because it's had such a major review took quite a bit longer and started back in 2004 where we set up a bit of a small group of examiners and sort of experts, some senior folk of the associated board to review what had been happening with the existing syllabus which I think by that stage had been in existence for about 10 years or so it was time to get in and have a good look at it and seeing what we could improve. We also wanted to involve as many teachers in that process as possible. We wanted a really wide scale consultation to really check out our audience if you like, to see what they made of it and whether we could really meet their needs and the needs of their pupils more effectively. What were the things we could do even better? So, the working party that we set up met a few times and we commissioned some new sight reading, that the working party had a good look at, and we talked about the different parameters and so on, came up with some new proposals, including some new scale requirements as well that we wanted to trial out (<http://www.abrsm.org/resources/associatedboardpiano.mp3> accessed 10 November 2009).

*This is a fuller answer:*

**How does ABRSM select the pieces that appear on its piano syllabus?**

A new syllabus takes, on average, two to three years to compile. First of all comes the appointment of a team of usually two selectors (sometimes three) to work their way through literally piles of music – not only all the new music issued since the last syllabus but a review of the standard repertoire as well. Selectors are highly experienced

musicians as well as specialists in the chosen subject, and they generally tend to be Associated Board examiners, since familiarity with the Board's syllabuses and procedures, as well as its constituency of candidates and teachers, is a major asset. Detailed guidelines are provided to help the selectors pinpoint the most appropriate pieces.

Balance is one of the key elements we ask our selectors to achieve – in each list, we aim to produce a harmonious blend of styles and moods (as well as technical elements such as key and time signatures), so that the lists are broad and varied enough to suit all tastes while setting the appropriate demands at each successive grade. Tracking down the most suitable editions to recommend in the syllabus booklet is also one of the selectors' tasks.

With instruments such as piano and violin, where the repertoire is vast and much new music appears between syllabuses, the general rule is to refresh the lists completely with each new syllabus (repeating pieces only after a number of years has elapsed). This is not always possible with the other instruments, and a certain proportion of useful and well-loved pieces tend to be retained from past syllabuses. Where albums contain a substantial amount of popular and suitable pieces, we always try to make best possible use of them – both within the lists of a single grade, and across several grades, if appropriate – as this is appreciated by candidates and teachers. This is one of the reasons why the Board's own albums – for example the extensive *Time Pieces* series – appear quite widely in the lists.

After a number of months the selectors deliver their lists, and the next stage of the process is to invite a moderator (again, usually an experienced Board examiner) to Portland Place for two to three days to inspect all the music, grade by grade. This is a bird's-eye opportunity to lay out all the publications on our broad 'moderation table' and to make a careful check that every piece has been positioned in the appropriate list and grade, and that each list contains an appealing and attractive balance of well-contrasted pieces.

Once moderation has taken place, each piece is checked with the relevant publisher or distributor, to ensure that all the albums and pieces remain available for the new syllabus's duration – a lengthy task, but satisfying once the new lists have been confirmed. In the case of the piano and violin syllabuses, the finalized lists are then sent to ABRSM Publishing, who decide which pieces to include in their popular albums of *Selected Exam Pieces*. Work now also begins on the CD recordings that we issue of some of our syllabuses.

The last job in the cycle is to incorporate the new syllabuses into their relevant syllabus booklet – another lengthy process involving several rounds of proof checking. Our graded syllabus booklets are generally reprinted every two years; as well as introducing any new syllabuses, this two-year system allows us to make any small updates to the existing syllabuses, such as providing new details for a publisher or distributor if they have changed. With the exception of piano, all our syllabuses have a lifespan longer than two years and thus appear in more than one reprint of a syllabus booklet. It is always

worth checking the Special Notices at the front of each syllabus (and also the Regulations) to see what new and forthcoming syllabuses there are.

Q. So, how many people are actually involved in this whole creation of a syllabus process?

A. Well it could be actually thousands, because we like to pile it so widely and try things out with teachers. When it's a question of refreshing a syllabus repertoire list say for example, it's probably, if it's a standard instrument, a handful of people. But if we're looking at a more root and branch revision, and we're looking at new scales and sight-reading, what the requirements might be, and how we might order the list, that's a much wider process.

Q. So tell me what would happen at the very first meeting? Who would be there and what sort of things would you talk about?

A. Well the very first meeting is often one of the most interesting meetings, because what we try and do is to get the broader spectrum of opinion, if you like, so we will certainly involve the main teacher organisations for that instrument...so we try and get the broader spectrum of viewpoints when it comes to teaching and learning around the table. And we always involve our examiners because that's important, because they're the people at the chalk face and are very highly experienced musicians in their own right (<http://www.abrsm.org/resources/Syllabus.mp3> accessed 10 November 2009).

#### **9. What feedback procedures do you apply when reviewing the syllabus?**

Q. ABRSM exams are conducted all over the world, so were you consulting teachers from far and wide?

A. Absolutely. In the first instance, we went to our major markets in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia because teachers were selected because of their experience over the last few years and the number of candidates that they entered, as well as the fact that they had to have an email address because it was all done electronically. So if you were one of those teachers that helped in the consultation process, thank you very much indeed.

Q. Did you find that the teachers had very strong opinions on what could be changed, what should be changed?

A. We were surprised really. I mean, we were very pleased that by and large teachers gave us a very big thumbs up for the proposal. But piano teachers are very vocal about expressing their opinions on these issues, and we were very pleased to hear them. Because it does mean, having gone through this process, that we can pretty sure we've got this right.

Q. And what about feedback? Do you encourage any feedback on the new syllabus from teachers and candidates once the syllabus is out?

A. There are different ways in which we gather the feedback. One of the ways is that teachers talk to each other on the forums and we have a look at the forums, and they're very popular these days. So we generally get to hear what people think about us and what we offer. We get a lot of feedback from seminars, and just being out and about talking to teachers, at conferences and this sort of thing. And we also get feedback from organisations such as EPTA (the European Piano Teachers Association), so it comes from a multitude of sources really

(<http://www.abrsm.org/resources/associatedboardpiano.mp3> accessed 10 November 2009).

**10. The National Qualifications Framework suggests ABRSM grades 4 and 5 as intermediate. Within these grades, what skills/values is the syllabus designed to teach the intermediate student?**

**11. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for students?**

**12. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for teachers?**

*Here is some text from a submission we made to QCAin 2000 – you will find that some of this is relevant to the questions you pose – although its not formatted to specifically answer your questions directly.*

The Board's Prep Test and Practical graded examinations support a framework for life-long learning in music, without restrictions on age, length of study, or requirement that candidates are taught in schools, colleges or other specified centres. They encourage diverse approaches to the teaching of music and stimulate enjoyment and achievement through the progressive acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. That they offer a powerful source of motivation, setting up strong incentive for musicians to continue their studies, is perhaps the single most significant and distinctive contribution they make to music education. They form a point of consolidation and focus for a pupil's work and present both the opportunity and necessity to bring pieces and the supplementary studies to as high a standard as possible. Candidates may be entered at any grade that is deemed appropriate for their abilities. Progression is at the student's own pace, through a series of carefully graded steps, each of which successively poses increasing demands in technical accomplishment and musical understanding.

They measure performance of music against established benchmarks, enabling teachers and pupils to monitor progress, and provide certification in more than 30 different instruments and voices. They use assessment methods which are proven over time to be objective, reliable, consistent and appropriate. They also test other skills such as aural and (at the higher grades) theoretical musical knowledge in order to encourage all-round musicianship and to ensure that these general musical aspects are not neglected, but develop alongside the playing of pieces.

They are *music* examinations and not *instrumental* examinations, assessing the 'what' of the music being made, not the 'how' or 'why', and therefore steering clear of potential encroachment on the teacher's remit. They are examined by highly-trained examiners who become specialists in the field of music examining, whatever their instrumental specialism. They thus present an opportunity to perform in front of an independent and unbiased professional musician whose sole concern is to apply objectively the Board's published criteria in an holistic way, without recourse to subdivision or fragmentation of the musical experience. The use of these 'generalist' examiners also contributes to consistency across the instrumental disciplines.

The sheer size of the candidature produces a system in which each individual examiner typically examines well over 500 candidates a year in the UK. The experience gained through such large examiner allocations helps considerably to maintain reliability. This point may not seem relevant to discussion of the Board's distinctive contribution until it is considered that GCSE and A level music examiners would rarely examine more than 50 candidates per year, and those would normally be in just one intensive session. Where performances are teacher-assessed (as is increasingly common) each teacher-examiner may well experience only a tiny handful of candidates per year.

Feedback is given to every entrant in practical subjects through individual written comments by the examiner on the candidate's performance in each section of the examination (unlike in the GCSE sector where the candidate merely gets a grade unless a substantial additional fee is paid). The Board provides additional incentives to students in the form of scholarships, local prizes for achievement and concerts organised through a network of local representatives.

The examinations can be taken in over 300 public centres in the UK and (under certain conditions) at the premises of individual teachers. Their availability is not dictated by requirements of the academic year. The fact that they are not limited to one examining session per year, but can be sat in any of the three academic terms – and indeed on any date of the teacher's choosing outside the specified sessions, is distinctive. They are also not subject to any limit on the number of re-sits that a candidate may wish to take.

The very large candidature also enables the Board to offer a wide range of support facilities, including many exam-specific publications (including *These Music Exams*), seminars, workshops, information feedback (in the form of *Libretto* and the Annual Review), on-line examination entry, an appeals service, professional telephone support for enquiries, and a network of honorary representatives to provide local support and guidance.

### **13. Where is the ABRSM music syllabus going in the near future?**

The piano syllabus repertoire lists are refreshed every two years, but over and above that we are always working to improve our offer. For example, we will be issuing new support resources for the Aural Tests in July this year.

*Here is some draft text for a Libretto article to be published in May that might be of interest:*

#### **Exam support**

While listening skills play a role throughout the exam, the aural tests section is the focal point when it comes to assessing the candidate's 'musical ear'. As an exam approaches, you will naturally wish to prepare your students for the specific activities that will be included in the exam. To do that successfully you will need plenty of support material, particularly specimen tests.

We have been aware for some time that there is a need for a new set of aural training materials. The *Aural Training in Practice* volumes are now rather dated in their presentation and use of language, and teachers would be better supported with an entirely new and refreshed edition. Originally this publication was supplemented by the old format of ‘cassette tape’ (technology that now seems ancient!) and when these were reissued on CD the navigation between book and recording was rather compromised.

The *Specimen Aural Tests* and the confidential tests that examiners use in the exams have also been in print for some time, and again we wanted to improve them. For instance, we were keen to provide more examples of the D tests, which are very time-consuming for teachers to devise themselves. In fact, there has been a growing need for more material at every grade to allow teachers to prepare their students fully, and we also wished to create more opportunities for candidates to practise the tests outside of their lessons. Consequently, it was time to undertake a complete revision of the entire package.

### **Modifications to the tests**

At the same time, we were keen to take the opportunity that a comprehensive revision offered to review the presentation and content of the tests. Our review concluded that the range of activities and their progression were educationally sound and worked well in practice. However, there were a few corners of the syllabus where a slightly different approach would allow the tests to run more smoothly, to become more approachable for the candidate, and make the assessment more consistent and precise.

As a part of the review, we went through the test descriptions and the examiner rubrics (the form of words used in the exam) with a fine toothcomb, making sure that everything was clear and unambiguous. Particular attention was given to making the rubrics as clear as possible to candidates for whom English is not their first language.

There are a few minor modifications that will have relatively little or no noticeable impact on candidates, as they simply streamline the requirements. These are all detailed below. Some reflect the way in which working practice in the delivery of the aural tests has evolved since their introduction in 1994. However, in the case of Test 1C, we felt that a slightly different test would provide a better starting point and more even progression to Grades 2 and 3.

### **14. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano? Please describe:**

Yes, I began teaching the piano when I was a student at the Royal College of Music in the mid-1980s and continued to teach for many years. My position as Syllabus Director at ABRSM now takes up all my time, so I’m not teaching at the moment.



## **John Weretka - Australian Music Examination Board**

### **1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music examination field?**

I completed undergraduate study in musicology specialising in the editing of music and was originally appointed to the AMEB as a proof reader and later as the person in charge of developing all of the Board's publications. My focus has actually been much more on publishing than on the examination of music as such.

### **2. How long have you been working for AMEB?**

About 15 years all up, but for 10 of them as a permanent employee.

### **3. What are your main duties in your current role with AMEB?**

I have two main areas of concern, the supervision of the Board's annual cycle of publications (content, supervision of the production of proofs, cover designs, commissioning, editing, etc) and the supervision of the syllabus review plan (chairing committee meetings, writing briefing papers, designing public outreach plans, writing the syllabus document itself, etc).

### **4. The AMEB was the first Australian examining body, wasn't it? Is that what first inspired the creation of the AMEB syllabus?**

AMEB was the first Australian examining body in music, but it wasn't the first examining body in music in Australia – this honour belongs to the Associated Boards of the Royal Schools of Music, based in London. The spirit of the AMEB in a historical sense relies on the example provided by the ABRSM.

### **5. To what extent has the layout of the syllabus and the structure of the examinations changed in the last 91 years?**

In essence, the basic structure has changed very little. The stability of the system is one of the guarantees of the standards we uphold. The basic ideas of examining instrumental musicianship within the framework of a 'public' examination of technical and interpretative skills evidenced through a programme of discrete technical work and repertoire has been with AMEB since the start.

### **6. What procedures are used when updating the syllabus?**

When deciding to review a syllabus the Board appoints a panel of experts from the studio, tertiary and secondary education systems to advise it on the structure of the new syllabus. These committees always have national representation and many of the most significant educators in the country of the particular instrument sit on the committee. The Board also appoints a number of 'Syllabus Consultants' whose job it is to provide content for the syllabus and publications. These Consultants work in tandem with the Committee to propose the new syllabus for national adoption to the Federal Board.

### **7. What feedback procedures do you apply when reviewing the syllabus?**

The public is very heavily involved in the generation of a new syllabus. Members of the public are asked to contribute their views of the 'old' syllabus and may view copies of draft copies (up to two versions) of the syllabus, contributing their views through the process. Public feedback is taken very seriously by the Board and its committees. We also liaise with teacher and instrument advocacy societies wherever possible.

### **8. What grades within the AMEB syllabus do you believe are appropriate for the intermediate student?**

Fifth Grade and Sixth Grade, the first two grades of Level 2, are the grades most suitable for the intermediate student. Candidates who progress to Seventh Grade generally go on

to the Diploma examinations accordingly take their musical studies seriously enough to become quite competent players. The Diploma examinations features works one would expect to see on first year or second year examination programmes.

**9. Within these grades, what skills/values is the syllabus designed to teach the intermediate student?**

In general, these grades will be respectful of the developing technical skill base of the student, and will seek to develop this with sensitivity. This type of student is also starting to encounter works for the instrument written by canonical composers and repertoire choices will ensure that the most stimulating, technically accessible works by these composers are available for study. These are grades of technical consolidation and provide opportunities for developing the musicianship and musicianly maturity necessary for exploring the central works of the canon.

**10. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for students?**

One of the chief benefits of our system is a nationally debated curriculum of study for students in which repertoire and technique have been carefully synthesised and mediated through a process of national discussion – the student is the recipient of the combined wisdom of a nation's piano teachers.

**11. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for teachers?**

The idea of nationally mediated programmes of study mentioned above is also a key benefit for teachers. Teachers also get to use AMEB as a 'meeting place' for the discussion of their ideas about pedagogy and musician development.

**12. Where is the AMEB music syllabus going in the near future?**

The next great hurdle are the problems posed by the 'technological revolution' – how to use the means of technology to engage students and teachers and get important information to them. On a more general cultural level, we also need to continue to make the message of classical music relevant to our society, an increasingly difficult job in the welter of 'cultural noise' we experience today.

**13. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano? Please describe:**

**14. How would you define or describe a:**

- a) Beginner student?
- b) Intermediate student?
- a) Advanced student?

**15. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

**16. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

**17. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

**18. How would you describe the general standard of piano teaching in the country?**

I haven't answered these questions because I have no experience of being an instrumental music teacher.

## **Matthews Tyson - St. Cecilia School of Music**

### **1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music examination field?**

A very long story. I personally completed all examinations up to and including diploma levels. As a teacher I believe in the system. I became Representative for Trinity College, London and remained in that position for 30 years.

### **2. How long have you been working for St. Cecilia?**

Nearly 40 years.

### **3. What are your main duties in your current role with St. Cecilia?**

Director. Policy planning and direction. Syllabus construction. Exam planning. Coordinating examiners, promotion and administration.

### **4. What specific factors first inspired the creation of the St Cecilia syllabus?**

To fill a need for beginner level students to experience the concept of being assessed.

### **5. How was the original layout of the St. Cecilia syllabus and the structure of the examinations decided?**

A committee of teachers

### **6. To what extent has the layout of the syllabus and the structure of the examinations changed in the last 35 years?**

Not many changes because the original concept is still valid.

### **7. What procedures are used when updating the syllabus?**

Consultation with teachers principally.

### **8. What feedback procedures do you apply when reviewing the syllabus?**

Offer teachers the opportunity of contributing to the new syllabus

### **9. In a previous email, you suggested that grades 3, 4 and 5 would be appropriate for the intermediate student. Within these grades, what skills/values is the syllabus designed to teach the intermediate student?**

The pieces contain techniques expected of students at these levels. The technical work is cumulative and covers principal keys used extensively at these levels.

### **10. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for students?**

A huge question! In a nutshell (a) provides focus (2) a goal (3) structure for teachers (4) recognition for school certificates (5) good training for student for possible auditions and other exams (6) introduces opportunities to explore repertoire (7) brings a certain sophistication to music lessons

### **11. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for teachers?**

Answers above are relevant. Mainly allows for structure in development, a progressive approach, good measuring stick for parents, back up material available to aid teachers

### **12. Where is the St Cecilia music syllabus going in the near future?**

More use of on-line and computer-based programmes in examining. Development of syllabuses for more instruments. Developing more performance-based assessments. Providing more relevant diploma and other qualifications.

### **13. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano? Please describe:**

I am a string teacher.

### **14. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **c) Beginner student?**

A student at any age starting from scratch. Little or no musical skills or knowledge.

#### **d) Intermediate student?**

A student who has developed the principal skills to allow for performances of music at a level acceptable for public performance

**e) Advanced student?**

A student who is serious about developing performance skills and potentially may progress to a tertiary institution in order to obtain qualifications to allow for a professional teaching or performing career.

**15. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

My experience is that most students continue but those who have less ability usually drop out prior to the intermediate stages.

**16. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

The opportunity to obtain qualifications for school certificates. The enjoyment of performance. The possibility of teaching and earning an income.

**17. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Possible poor teaching; peer pressure; too many other commitments; boredom; social/home/school problems.

**18. How would you describe the general standard of piano teaching in the country?**

Generally good with pockets of excellence. The emphasis in Australia is more on sport so music suffers. There is a generally higher standard in New Zealand.

## **Mark Stringer - Trinity College London**

### **1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music examination field?**

Good question! It's not one of those job areas you think of when your primary school teacher asks you what you want to be/do, is it?

I started to learn the piano when I was six and by 14 had begun teaching privately. I started organ lessons at that age too and immediately took my first job as a church organist. When I was 16, I had organ lessons with the organist at Chester Cathedral and at 19 went on to do a four-year Honours degree at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester. Throughout my time there I continued teaching privately, played in a rock band and worked as a pianist in a posh restaurant to earn money as my father had refused to support my musical studies.

When I graduated from the RNCM in 1985, I moved to London where I was appointed Assistant Organist at the Royal Parish Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square and I did a Postgraduate Certificate in Education at the Institute of Education University of London. Continuing at St. Martin's, I took a full-time teaching job at London's largest secondary, co-educational comprehensive school where I taught for five years. I gave up teaching when I was promoted at St. Martin's in 1991 to be Organist and Master of the Choristers. There were regular TV and Radio broadcasts, high-profile royal services and many showbiz memorial services etc. as well as the regular Sunday and weekday services resourced by three organists, four choirs and instrumental groups. Subsequently, I took over as Artistic Director and then Director of Concerts which I combined with my other role. There were a minimum of 6 concerts a week. I left St. Martin's in 1996.

In 1992 I was appointed Adjunct Professor of Music, James Madison University, Virginia, USA and taught in London and at the Harrisonburg faculty in the US. The same year, I was appointed as an examiner by Trinity College London, at 31, the youngest ever, I believe!

### **2. How long have you been working for Trinity?**

I joined the Music Examiner Panel in 1992 and worked all over the world. When I left St. Martin's I actually averaged 9-10 months a year examining for Trinity and was the busiest examiner on the panel as I was also marking diploma theory papers.

I took up the post of Director of Music and Drama Examinations in September 1997. As the company expanded the title of the role changed several times and eventually became Director of Performing & Creative Arts in 2006.

### **3. What are your main duties in your current role with Trinity?**

This job involved managing Trinity's music and drama examinations in 60 countries around the world and also gave me responsibility for the Dance & Drama Awards (which involves the assessing of students at the UK's most prestigious drama and dance schools (e.g. Royal Ballet School, English National Ballet School, LAMDA, Mountview, Guildford School of Acting etc.) the Arts Award which we deliver in conjunction with Arts Council England and the Key Stage Programme, a UK Govt initiative to train 2000

musicians to teach in Primary Schools. Encompassed in the role was management of the PCA Dept in London and our networks around the world, responsibility for the professional and academic areas across all subject areas including syllabus development, commercial development of all markets, marketing, operations etc.

Trinity has just undergone a total restructure at its head office in London and its networks and I have now taken on two new roles: 1. as Executive Director working very closely with the CEO, deputising for her as necessary and running the London office in her absence; and, 2. Head of Academic Governance for Performing & Creative Arts. In this latter role I will continue to line manage all of the academics, have full responsibility for all QA issues and oversee syllabus renewals and make inputs into Publishing. I will also work with colleagues in the Language sector of the Company.

#### **4. What first inspired the creation of the Trinity syllabus?**

Trinity College London (which became Trinity College of Music soon afterwards) was founded in 1872 by Dr. Bonavia Hunt and he and his staff devised the concept of grade and diploma examinations in 1876. This has been copied by many boards around the world including the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (now ABRSM), the AMEB in Australia and UNISA in South Africa.

Bonavia Hunt wanted to raise musical standards throughout the world. He came up with the idea of establishing an examinations system which was not only available to internal students of the College but which could be taken externally. Originally, the examinations were offered in the UK only but, subsequently, from the 1880s, examiners travelled all over the world to conduct examinations. So, Trinity invented the external examinations, it was the first body to offer external assessments and the first board in the world to examine in overseas territories.

#### **5. To what extent has the layout of the syllabus and the structure of the examinations changed in the last 100+ years?**

Remarkably, in some respects, it has hardly changed at all. The Grade structure which Hunt and his colleagues devised is still more or less intact and still copied by other boards. The basic structure of 3 pieces which are performed plus a range of supporting tests such as technical work, sight-reading, aural tests, viva voce etc. is still the basis of the syllabus. Of course, the repertoire has changed tremendously to reflect the wealth of music composed over this time span and incorporating jazz and more contemporary styles. Trinity also offers the option for the candidate to compose a piece and we have a much freer choice of repertoire now – you don't have to do 1 Baroque or Classical piece, one Romantic and one modern. We offer the Rock School syllabus too. The marking schemes have changed and now Trinity has a much more diagnostic approach with marks for each piece being broken down into Technique, Accuracy and Fluency and Interpretation and Communication. We summarise these as Me and the Instrument, Me and the Music, Me and the Audience.

#### **6. What procedures are used when updating the syllabus?**

Generally, syllabuses are renewed on a 3 or 4 year basis. We have a Syllabus Manager who co-ordinates the renewal of syllabuses along with the Head of Publications as we publish repertoire books containing some of the prescribed pieces. We appoint consultants for each new syllabus. In the case of the piano there would be 2 for

elementary (Initial to Grade 3), 2 for intermediate (normally Grades 4, 5 & 6) and 2 for advanced (grades 7 & 8).

The consultants propose repertoire in line with parameters they are given in terms of standard, range of repertoire styles etc. There are several meetings of the consultants chaired by the Chief Examiner in Music/Syllabus Manager, Head of Publications, plus some other specialist examiners and gradually pieces are approved for inclusion in the syllabus. We normally do some piloting of the draft syllabus before going to print. We make recordings of all the pieces in the Piano syllabus and also for some other instruments.

**7. What feedback procedures do you apply when reviewing the syllabus?**

We review our syllabuses regularly in a number of ways, e.g. via feedback from teachers, representatives and examiners. The latter report back on every session of examinations they conduct and they can comment at this time if there are any issues or if they have any concerns about the standard of the repertoire and its suitability for the diverse range of candidate ages. There is also an annual conference of all the examiners where they are able to feedback on syllabuses. We sometimes monitor the choice of pieces made by candidates to find out the relative popularity of repertoire. We do this by examiners sending in the appointment slips on the back of which candidates write down their chosen pieces for the examination.

**8. What grades within the Trinity syllabus do you believe are appropriate for the intermediate student?**

It depends how one defines Intermediate. I generally think of it as Grades 4, 5, 6, so I would say those. Many people consider grades 5 and 6 to be intermediate.

**9. Within these grades, what skills/values is the syllabus designed to teach the intermediate student?**

The syllabus is not a curriculum; it's a framework for assessment. The teacher should design a curriculum into which the requirements of the examinations are built. Teachers should work with their pupils on a range of repertoire which tackles the demands of the pieces of that grade before working on the examination repertoire. That might not always happen though!

**10. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for students?**

The external examinations provide goals which evidence a student's achievement across increasing levels of mastery. They provide the student, the teacher, parent/guardian with an impartial assessment of a student's performance, marked according to set, published criteria. Trinity's marking scheme is transparent as it is broken down into three categories as well as the holistic mark for each piece. This makes the examiner highly accountable and, we are confident, more reliable as the examiner has to address the three core areas on which the candidate is assessed. The independent examiner knows nothing at all about the student, e.g. whether s/he works hard, has passed or failed examinations before and so on. In the case of Trinity's examinations, they also provide an international benchmark so that musicians can find out how their performance relates on a global scale. The qualifications also offer an 'international currency'; they are portable and can be used to demonstrate achievement when applying to institutions both in-country and abroad. The qualifications also carry UCAS points recognised by University and College Clearing systems in some countries around the world.

**11. What do you believe are the benefits of external exams for teachers?**

The fact that a great deal of expertise has gone into putting syllabuses together provides the teacher with a graded set of repertoire which can form part of a curriculum. As well as giving the student goals, the examination provides a focus for the teacher too, with a timeline and target. The comments of the examiner can give the teacher an insight into their own teaching too, e.g. if the examiner reinforces points the teacher has been making in lessons. Sometimes, an examiner will pick up on something a teacher might not have considered. I think teachers feel a great sense of achievement when their students pass examinations. They reward the hard work of the teacher as well as their pupil.

**12. Where is the Trinity music syllabus going in the near future?**

I can't give too many commercial secrets away but giving more freedom to the teacher and the candidate is key for us. So, more repertoire across more styles, more innovative supporting tests, and a wider range of music published in hard copy and more resources on-line. We want to provide more support to teachers and focus on professional development.

**13. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano? Please describe:**

**14. How would you define or describe a:**

**f) Beginner student?**

Someone starting to learn. I'd say Elementary student was from Initial to Grade 3.

**g) Intermediate student?**

As above, Grade 4-6

**h) Advanced student?**

Grade 7, 8 and beyond.

**15. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

Yes, naturally, more people give up in the earlier stages because more are learning. The drop-off rate is highest before Grade 3 for both adults and younger people. Another tranche will fall-off at Grade 5 which is a destination point and then most will try to make it through to Grade 8 which is considered a major milestone in many countries. Especially South and South East Asia. Many Asian students are forced to stop learning once they attain Grade 8.

**16. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Good quality teaching is fundamentally important. Most important of all, a good teacher will understand know a lot about how people learn. Many teachers do not know this. A teacher must always be able to connect with their students. A great teacher will also be able to take different approaches with each student and tailor their teaching techniques to suit each student. A teacher has to be inspirational and have something themselves which is worth passing on. Many teachers are demotivated themselves (sometimes with good reason!) and that is a recipe for disaster. Ideally, teachers can play the repertoire they are teaching and they can demonstrate teaching points. A student must feel confident in the ability of their teacher. Many students can sense when a teacher is not up to it for whatever reason. Sure, some students will give up for a variety of reasons, e.g. weight of schoolwork, demands of school examinations, getting hooked on the internet, getting more interested in dating and sex than practising the violin etc. Sometimes, music is rubbished as 'uncool' by their peers. (Not though if musicians can play commercial music, jazz etc so encourage them to do that too.)



Many students get bored as a result of bad teaching and bad teachers only ever working on 3 examination pieces. Sometimes, they hate all three of them (see next para re-Trinity repertoire choice.) Also, many teachers don't know how to develop a student's skills. For example, many piano teachers only teach scales for technical work. These exercises use the weaker fingers less frequently than the stronger ones. How can this develop technique? It only exaggerates the difference between weak and strong. It's outrageous! The world of music teaching could learn a lot from the world of sport and coaching.

Trinity offers a wide choice of repertoire and students don't have to do Mozart if they hate Mozart. They can do three Baroque or contemporary pieces if they want to. I don't have a problem with this. I agree that we should encourage students to familiarise themselves with a diverse range of styles. But surely it is better for someone to keep playing an instrument because they are playing music they enjoy rather than giving up because they have to do Bach or Beethoven when they hate it. Should actors only ever perform Shakespeare plays? Again, many teachers don't have the skills to teach such repertoire. They are not able to give students an insight into a composer's mind and the music itself. Some students end up learning repertoire '2<sup>nd</sup> hand'. They haven't internalised it, they don't feel like they can relate to it and own it; it's not part of them. This is one of my key themes, so I won't write any more else I will never stop....

#### **17. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Sorry, I think I covered this above. Most importantly, lacking a sense of achievement, feeling negative and then getting bored. Feeling that they don't have the necessary skills to tackle the technical challenges. Not relating to the music etc. Also important is practising and how to practise. Many teachers do not understand themselves about practising efficiently and focusing on key points rather than aimless playing pieces over and over again. Always identify and then isolate the difficulties and find strategies to overcome and master these. Practise doesn't always have to be for hours on end. I could expand on this but I have to go. You will no doubt know all about it anyway.

## **Appendix 11 – Contemporary Composers Interview Transcripts**

### **Carol Matz**

#### **1. What inspired you to become a composer?**

Simply my love of music... I honestly couldn't imagine myself doing anything else, so I pursued getting an education in music. I've always been someone who is fascinated with the "behind the scenes" – of how things work, so composition and arranging was always quite interesting to me.

#### **2. How did you learn to compose?**

When I was young, my piano teacher encouraged me to experiment with composing and with improvisation. I didn't have any formal composition class that I feel I benefited from... it was more of an organic process for me.

#### **3. How long have you been composing?**

I've composed and written pop songs since I was about 12. Professionally, I've written for publishing companies for about 16 years.

#### **4. Do you currently have a publisher you work with or do you freelance?**

I work exclusively with Alfred Music Publishing

#### **5. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

Yes, I have taught piano all along (since 1985).

#### **6. How would you define or describe a:**

##### **a. Beginner piano student?**

(These are rough approximations): note reading skills includes limited ledger lines; rhythms no more difficult than eighth notes and dotted quarters; key signature reading up to approximately 2 sharps or flats, triads, simple pedal.

##### **b. Intermediate piano student?**

Note reading includes extended ledger line reading; rhythms include triplets and sixteenth notes; playing in 6/8 and 3/8 time signatures; connected pedaling, etc.

##### **c. Advanced piano student?**

More contrapuntal reading, thicker textures in the music, extended movement around the keyboard.

#### **7. Most of your composition appears to be aimed at students in the beginner or intermediate phase; what made you choose this route?**

I think there is a great need for pieces at these levels, since most of the "classical" piano literature is appropriate for higher levels. Supplementary compositions aimed at the earlier levels can keep student interest, and I personally enjoy writing pieces that my own students would like to play.

#### **8. How would you describe your compositional style?**

I don't think I have one particular style, however I aim for my pieces to be easily learned... this includes writing with patterns and concentrating on things that fall nicely under the hands. I often think about what might be fun to play (and to hear) in a recital setting and aim for that.

#### **9. Do you consciously incorporate your own compositional style into your works for piano students? If so, how?**

My only composition IS for piano students. In the past, when I composed and arranged (in the university for example) I wrote a lot of pop and jazz because that was my emphasis, so I often like to write in these styles for students.

**10. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you aim to develop in terms of your compositions?**

I aim to develop the student playing with balance (bringing out the melody) and I often move the melody to the left hand when possible. I think that rhythmic accuracy is important at this juncture, as well as playing with a full range of dynamics.

**11. Do you test your compositions for piano students with either teachers or students before you publish them? Please describe the process you follow.**

Yes, I sometimes assign my pieces to my own students before they're published. If there are places of difficulty that stand out, I will make adjustments (often right there and then, with the student). However, most of the time I'm pretty aware of what will work and what won't.

**12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

I think drop-out rate depends more on age than level. I've personally found that students tend to get overextended in the middle school years (ages 11, 12, 13) and this is the most vulnerable time, no matter what level they're at when they're that age.

**13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

I think variety is the best motivator. Each student is unique, and some students want to learn only standard literature at this point (sonatinas, etc.), but I've found that most students like variety in their practice, so I make sure to assign pop pieces, duets, jazz and rock styles, etc. – whatever keeps their interest and keeps them at the piano is fine with me!

**14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

If a student is assigned a piece that is way too difficult for them, and they have to practice it for months (learning almost by rote) then that will lead to frustration and boredom. On the other hand, if students have a variety of level-appropriate pieces, they will maintain interest. Of course, another issue is that there are many distractions in this day and age for the intermediate student (especially middle school and high school students). It's tempting for them to have fun on the computer and with video games, etc., so it's important to make sure students are also having fun in their piano studies.

**Elissa Milne**

**1. What inspired you to become a composer?**

The very first thing that inspired me to become a composer; I'd always, from the moment I can remember, planned to be a composer. But when I was six, I found out that Mozart had started composing when he was five. I was quite irritated, because I'd always been given the impression from adults that you could leave off your accomplishments in life until you were in double figures, like 10. So at that point, I went "right I have some catching up to do." But it wasn't actually Mozart that inspired me. I have no idea what it was, I'd just always planned to be a composer.

**2. How did you learn to compose?**

By doing, by making it up. And I think part of that is it's good to have a fearless personality, so you're not afraid of making mistakes. I think once you've learned that lesson, the rest of it comes down to 'are you prepared to learn from your mistakes'? But then, I did go off and do a composition degree. By that stage, I'd already composed a full length musical, so pretty substantial stuff. To me, that was very much toning and refining what I already knew how to do.

*Did your piano teacher look over the things you did and make suggestions?*

Not really, no. I was somewhat independent of my piano teacher. There were some people I met along the way, quite interested in what I was doing that made suggestions. In retrospect, I wish people had made more suggestions when I was quite young because I could have been usefully encouraged down some interesting track which no one thought to do. But I think it's partly because people think "kids composing, that's nice." But they don't actually think too seriously what to do with directing that. My mum was a piano teacher so she was actually able to help me write up piano music when I was very little, but I would have been writing out my own compositions properly by the time I was nine or ten. I also was in an environment where I lived at a boarding college. There was high school and tertiary. So the students did a lot of music-making, just socially, middle of the country, no access to the usual city entertainments, and the college also had a policy of banning the radio (they felt it got in the way of our studies, this is back in the 70's), so if they wanted good music, they had to make it themselves. So if I made up a song, there was a ready audience of people quite interested to hear. And I think for a composer, having an audience is a really important thing to encourage them to compose more music.

**3. How long have you been composing?**

Pretty much all my life. It's hard to know, certainly I was making up music when I was six.

**4. Do you currently have a publisher you work with or do you freelance?**

I've got three different publishers I've been working with of late. Faber Music in London publish collections of my original work. Hal Leonard Australia publish compilations that I do, which are collections and I compose new music for those collections but they obviously involve a lot of other composers. And recently, I've been doing work with the AMEB.

*With the P Plate Piano?*

Indeed. I've got three different publishing relationships. And in terms of that question, I would say that even someone who does have a publisher, they still are effectively a freelancer because a publisher generally doesn't tell you what to do. You usually pitch a project to the publisher. For instance, Faber Music at the moment are preoccupied with some other things, so they're not overly interested in publishing the next project we have in mind right now. They were quite keen when I was pregnant, but it was obviously not very appropriate for me at that time, being weeks away from having a new-born. So there is an element of freelance. I don't know many composers who have a relationship with three different publishers and I certainly have more work than I can quite keep up with, but you still have to pitch the project to them at any point along the way and that same kind of relationship.

**5. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

Yes. I've been teaching the piano since I was 14 years old. Since I'm 42, that makes it an extraordinary 28 years since I started teaching the piano. But I didn't teach piano every single one of those years. There were three years where I didn't teach, so officially it's 25.

*That's one of the nice things about it, isn't it? You can leave it and come back later...*

Well, yes and no. To make it work as a business, you need that continuity. It takes a while to build up a full studio. So it really only works in that positive way if they've got other projects going on as well. As a small business model, not the best.

**6. How would you define or describe a:**

**a. Beginner piano student?**

For want of a better way of describing it, I describe a beginner as basically taking you up to about Grade 1.

**b. Intermediate piano student?**

Up to and including about Grade 5.

**c. Advanced piano student?**

Beyond, maybe Grade 5 and beyond. That's the way I tend to define it in my own mind.

**7. Most of your composition appears to be aimed at students in the beginner or intermediate phase; what made you choose this route?**

I decided to compose educational piano music at the end of 1995. I had an adult student saying to me "I want to learn from you, because I want to learn to play *like* you." And we started lessons and she said "it's fun, but you're not actually teaching me to play like you play." And we unpacked what she was meaning, and we realised that really she wanted me to give her full blown compositions that were the way I played. Because she'd heard me in informal settings, I was doing background music, and she wanted to be able to play that kind of thing. And we realised that there was no music that sounded like that and the only way we were going to get that kind of music was if I composed and wrote down pieces for her to go away and learn. And then she would be playing like me! That was the conclusion we came to at that point. I've moved on from my thinking of that quite basic interpretation of what she was asking. So I decided that Christopher Norton had his stuff out at the time, Kerin Bailey had his pieces (not all of his books, but

he had quite a few out at that point) and there were a few other people whose material was starting to float around the piano world. And I looked and thought that what they all really want to be doing is the big, flashy, showy stuff, but you really need to be grade 5 or 6. Some of them are writing at the early level, but it feels like (not all of them, but some of them) “I’ll write some easy ones, but what I really want is to write the hard ones.” And I thought, what if I actually compose some music that is in that under grade 3 standard, where no one seems to be making much of an effort. And if I do a good job of it, I’ll have that niche to myself across the whole world. And it was a really strategic decision in terms of ‘if I want to make a living as a composer, I actually have to sell books’ and where’s the best place I can position myself in the market. So that’s where it began. And at that point, I realised I was quite good at writing music for kids that was easy to play. So more and more, I focused on trying to write even easier pieces. I probably started off around about the grade 3 mark on average (there were some pieces that were much harder), but I just gradually tried to tear it right back so it was preliminary standards. But it’s really hard to write pieces at that level. So a lot of pieces you start off thinking are going to preliminary end up being grade 2. The musical ideas are too interesting and you can’t help yourself. You need to put more in. So it was a deliberate decision, both in terms of there’s not a lot of material that’s contemporary and accessible being written for young beginners and so there was a need, and therefore that would be a way to make a living because people would buy the material. So that would be the major reason for that decision.

#### **8. How would you describe your compositional style?**

Well in the music that you’re probably looking at, a lot of it is jazz-influenced. And by jazz, I don’t mean improvised, I just mean all of those cliché styles that we clump into the term jazz or jazzy. But that is a style that I’ve adopted quite consciously for this kind of composing. What then tends to happen, the plan was and it has seemed to have worked out this way, is that people think anything by me is cool, flash, jazzy. Sitting in that ‘kids will like it’ kind of dynamic. When in actual fact, there’s a lot of material I’ve written at this level, where if I hadn’t have written the jazzy stuff, people wouldn’t pay attention to it because they would think it’s just contemporary music with all those negative assumptions that people bring to contemporary music. I do use a lot of unusual devices in the kids music like 7 time and 5 time and I use unusual tonalities. So I’ve got pieces for kids at the preliminary standard that are in the Phrygian mode and Grade 2 piece that’s in a scale that’s the 7<sup>th</sup> degree of the harmonic scale, don’t even have a name for what that is. I’m really playing with tonality a lot that doesn’t necessarily fit with the conventional methods.

*It’s a nice change though because method books for that level student tend to stick to C major or G major. And it’s nice to be able to give the student something different and say, see how wonderful this sounds.*

The thing that irritates me the most about method books everywhere is there insistence that the world is major. Because most kids when they hear major, they hear the Mixolydian mode because that’s the way that music in their world, music on television, major is actually quite a daggy sound with that leading note. Same thing with the harmonic minor, most music that kids hear these days just doesn’t have that leading note

very frequently, unless it's at a concluding point. So the music they're playing at the piano has no tonal reference to the world they're living in. And that's definitely a motivation for what I'm doing. And it could be a way of describing my compositional style. I'm pushing those boundaries. The thing is that a lot of composers in the mid late 20<sup>th</sup> century thought that in order to be modern, you needed to be more or less atonal. And that's just defying all human psychology and neuro-science. And now we have the brain imaging that supports that, whereas if I said that 15 years ago people would say that's an interesting theory, but it's really great that the neuro-science is coming through showing how we process tonality as well. So all of the work I do is tonal, but none of it matches classical, diatonic harmony and theory. So I suppose I could describe my compositional style as post-diatonic. But also quite rhythmic. And one thing that's quite interesting to me, is that people who know me and then hear a piece of music go "oh my goodness, that just sounds like you." And they hear my personality in my music.

**9. Do you consciously incorporate your own compositional style into your works for piano students? If so, how?**

**10. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you aim to develop in terms of your compositions?**

We could talk for about 3 hours on this one, but I'll try and keep it brief. In my Little Pepper series, I quite deliberately tried to cover most of the ways of playing the piano that you would need to be a competent accompanist in a contemporary world. You know where a lot of the time, you're given a chord chart and you have to realise the chord chart. So I've got a lot of different ways of playing the sequence of chords in all those pieces. It kind of is a course of how to play in these contemporary styles but I don't know that anyone has actually sat down and written a textbook. It's hard to discuss without labels. But at the back of the Little Peppers book, I've got a piece called *Peas in a Pod*. There's five books in the series and this piece is just an eight bar harmonic sequence that I've done variations on. So there's eight variations at the end of each book so you end up with a total of 40 different variations and it's basically a little textbook guide of how to play that chord sequence 40 different ways. So if kids have actually learnt that and they've got appropriate teaching to go with that, which none of them probably do, and that's just because as piano teachers we're stuck in a very 19<sup>th</sup> century way of thinking about what's important but if piano teachers were actually thinking 'how do I help a student develop the ability to realise a chord chart' (in terms of rhythm, in terms of voicing). A lot of what I do is just fill in the gaps of what I think is needed.

With each piece, I do try to actually be teaching something. It's not just a nice piece, every piece has something that it's exploring so the child should be able to play that thing better. So I try to be somewhat universal with that.

**11. Do you test your compositions for piano students with either teachers or students before you publish them? Please describe the process you follow.**

Yes. I don't usually test them very widely because the publishers are very impatient and often times it's like "come on!" As soon as a piece is done, it's in being set and word proofed and I've already got feedback from the student. But having said that, that's at this point in my composing career. Before I published my first books, my pieces were road tested a little bit. But more important than that, I have a mother who is a piano teacher and she has the power of veto over any of my compositions. And she is mean!

She's really mean! And so nothing is allowed to be published that is not going to be useful. So the fact that she's mean is to my advantage, because I know that if she's allowed it to go into a book, it may not be the most genius musical expression known to man, but probably quite a few piano teachers are going to enjoy teaching it. And of course, I presume the kids are going to like it. But kids are a little more fickle and you quite often don't know what's going to tickle their fancy. There may be an advertisement in the last 6 months that has a sound really similar to something in one of your pieces so all of a sudden that piece becomes really popular. But I think it's more important to test it in terms of 'will piano teachers want to teach it'. So that's my process. Basically it's my mum. I'm really lucky to have her. I think there's actually a really inadequate process of editing and review in music generally, across the board, whether it's educational music or music for orchestras. I think music goes to the public too soon and every composer in the world would really benefit from that sort of editorial process. Somebody who really does know what they're talking about and does have your best interest at heart coming along and giving you a reality check really.

**12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

I thought this was a really interesting question. Where students drop out the way I now teach is different to where they would drop out the way I used to teach. And significantly so. In the past, the traditional way that piano teachers teach, everyone turns up for the first year and that's fine. Recently you've had students drop out after a year because the parents only intended for them to have a year of lessons anyway because they are completely ignorant of how it works and the parent thinks they've had a year of piano, now we'll go do a year of flute. And so we're just talking about really ignorant parents and there's not a lot you can do about those parents because they feel they've made a commitment to good education by spreading the children across a range of instruments. What can you do? They're just dumb. That's one kind of drop out that we didn't used to have. But then there used to be the drop outs after about three years and that might mean they even made it to the border of preliminary standard or they might have even sat one exam and they'd drop out. And that would be quite a significant number. And the you'd have another huge drop out around grade 3, grade 4 because suddenly it was really hard. Kids had been able to skate along quite easily and now suddenly it was taking them 2 terms to learn a piece of music and that would basically account for most of your kids dropping out and then the ones who were left over, maybe 5-10% of the ones who started would actually make it to grade 8 or to the end of high school, whichever came first. And that's sort of the traditional trajectory. But the way I'm teaching now, the kids learn so much more music than they used to learn. So even kids who are grade three, grade four are learning a new piece of music every week and basically we're just finding that there are very few kids who want to stop learning. So my experience of drop outs, I'm sure, is very different from other teachers. But also the numerical process through the grades is slower because the kids are actually 100% capable of playing pieces at that grade rather than being 3% capable and then they struggle all year and scrape through with a B if they're lucky. I've got a kid at the moment who's going to be sitting grade 5 in June and if she went to another teacher I wouldn't be at all surprised if they put her onto grade 6 or 7 material because she can sight read grade 5 music. So a teacher would say what are you doing mucking around on that level but I'm finding that no one wants to drop out



because they're having success every single week. And now the reasons for drop out really are because either the parent only made a commitment to do it for a year or you've got kids who get to that hormonal stage at high school and their personality type doesn't suit sitting at a piano by themselves as a teenager. And it's like I said, the fingernail length. Once you know that a girl doesn't want to cut her fingernails because she thinks it's important for the boys and boys trump piano. It's a really simple equation – if boys trump piano, they're going to stop. If piano trumps boys – they'll keep going. And with the boys, I find that I have very few drop outs with the boys at all, but they don't necessarily practice. But they don't want to necessarily stop. And they'll sort of do vaguely adequate amounts to sort of justify it in their parents eyes. The only boys I've had "drop out" have done so because they've got another instrument that they're actually really good at. So I've got a kid who's year 11 doing grade 8 oboe this year with a view to doing his AMus next year and he's stopped because he wants to focus on the oboe. So that kind of dropping out because you're now going to focus on other studies.

### **13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

I've kind of answered that I suppose in terms of I know what motivates them not to learn. The more I teach, the more I don't actually understand why people learn the piano because it's really hard work. And it's kind of a mystery to me that anyone wants to work that hard. Just from a marketing point of view, it's a really interesting thing. People are really keen spending money and time doing something that there is no end to. You're never past the goal post, you'll never give a perfect performance. It's basically a recipe for dissatisfaction in so many ways. Having said that, I think not just intermediate students, any student once they're over the age of 8, cause I think that kids do change the way that they learn. Up to about 8 they're just interested in learning any stuff because it's the world, but somewhere around 8 they start wanting to have a point to things. And I think a really important part of motivating a child to keep on learning is producing some sort of value, whether it's that they can see value because they're motivated competitively or because they're motivated by certificates or they're motivated by performance opportunities or by people praising them or whether they get value from expressing themselves to themselves and their friends through their music. And I think that last one is really under-reported in traditional piano teaching where we expect that the kids are going to be motivated from an exam either through fear or wanting to get a good mark. And it just totally ignores the fact that kids really enjoy teaching each other pop songs at school. When I do my seminars with piano teachers I get great laughs from the teachers all the time when I say "ok, it's February, you know you're going to have 3 students walk in the door and go to the piano and go I learnt this really cool piece over the holidays and I want to learn the rest of it, and they go over to the piano and play (she sings Fur Elise) and I want to learn the rest of it." The teachers just fall about laughing because they know it's true and the kids are highly motivated to learn Fur Elise and the piano teachers just groan. But there's something about knowing a piece, knowing how it goes that's really motivating.

In fact, I'm going to give you a chunk of a lecture I've been giving around the country for the last six months on how to keep kids motivated. And here's the short version of how I see it: You've got a motivation quadrant, you've got four quadrants of motivation and then you've got four quadrants of what might get in the way. So part of your motivation

thing might be that you're super motivated but if you've got all of these things that are getting in your way as well, then you're at zero again. But in terms of the motivation thing, I see it as being can you see value in it? Will it enhance your social standing? Do you like the piece? Your social standing might rise, but you've got to also like the piece. And then there's also the families response. So if you like the piece, if you see value in it, and your social standing with your peers will be enhanced, that's all good, but if your family thinks that that kind of music is from the devil for example, then you've got a motivation problem. Because you have to practice in your home. And I think piano teachers traditionally only look at one angle of the value component. They don't often look at how it's going to affect your standing amongst your peers. Sometimes they do, occasionally they ask if you enjoy playing it for your friends. Teachers generally like the student to like the music. But also a lot of time, the parents don't know what messages are coming in from the parents about the music, unless the parent comes in and says I love that one.

When you come to the intermediate side of things, that social standing is becomes more important. And that's where you connect it to your knowledge of the repertoire because part of the repertoire you choose enhances social standing amongst the peers. And if the child doesn't actually learn anything that will enhance their standing, either they'll stop learning or they don't care about their peers, they're not motivated by that. And there's not many kids who don't care what people think about them.

#### **14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

What gets in the way is what I call the familiarity side of things. So if you don't know what it sounds like, if you don't know how to technically do it on the keyboard, if you don't know the style, you've never heard music that sounds like a sonatina before, and if you are not familiar with the notation, then that's all going to get in the way and that's going to be a big impediment of you being able to learn that piece.

Music that's too hard for them to be successful after two or three weeks is very un-motivating.

## **Kerin Bailey**

### **1. What inspired you to become a composer?**

Money I suppose. Well that came into it, but I thought I could make some money out of some pieces I wrote back in the 80's, but I'd actually written them as studies for my students (that was Jazzin' Around 1) because there wasn't much on the market then. There was virtually nothing.

### **2. How did you learn to compose?**

I haven't studied composition at all. I don't know if I'd call myself a fully fledged composer. I had written some songs and stuff, so it wasn't much of a step to going up and writing piano arrangements. I've always taught modern piano so I've just hand-written stuff for students at various times.

### **3. How long have you been composing?**

Well that was about 1980 and I was 29 by then.

### **4. Do you currently have a publisher you work with or do you freelance?**

I publish myself. I do the publishing, the typing, the upsetting, even a lot of the printing now. I mean, now of the big publishers would be interested I don't think. I haven't really approached them. No one was interested back then, because I was unknown. So I publish and distribute, so it's fairly full on. Not that I publish much. I did publish Jazzin' Around No. 6 last year, but that's 10 months ago now. But I'm working on some flute pieces, some more difficult pieces.

### **5. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

I'm primarily a piano teacher.

### **6. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a. Beginner piano student?**

Beginner's are people who are just starting out.

#### **b. Intermediate piano student?**

I originally pitched my stuff at the intermediate market. I noticed one of your questions is when do the drop-outs occur, and it's probably in the late beginner, early intermediate stage which I reckon is about grade 2 (early intermediate) and then going up to about grade 5 or 6.

#### **c. Advanced piano student?**

Probably starting at grade 7.

### **7. Most of your composition appears to be aimed at students in the beginner or intermediate phase; what made you choose this route?**

The intermediate was a drop out area that I noticed back in the 80's when I started writing stuff, because my students were complaining that a diet of classical music can be daunting at that age. Kids want to have a bit of fun at that age. I'm a bit lucky, the stuff I've written is popular with kids, they can connect with it somehow. The aim of it was to sound like it was a bit improvised, a lot of my pieces are like that. It's just an introduction to jazz styles too. There's a lot of benefits to be had from it too. You can keep them ticking over, if they don't like the classical stuff, you can keep them playing rhythm music, reading music, they're acquiring the skills, just in a different style.

### **8. How would you describe your compositional style?**

Jazzy. A lot of people don't like the word jazzy, but I think it's a useful word. It's not full on jazz, that's totally improvised probably. I mean, there's that possibility with my

stuff. A lot of my pieces have the chord symbols which is rare actually. Christopher Norton and people like that don't use chord symbols. I do on pieces that are minimal to improvisation, I'll put the chord symbols in so if the student is keen, they can explore that possibility.

**9. Do you consciously incorporate your own compositional style into your works for piano students? If so, how?**

Yes. Roughly half my pieces are swung, require a swung feel, and the rest of them are straight. I mean Six Sketches for example is more classical than jazz. Maybe some jazz type harmonies there, but they require rubato and more of a classical feel.

**10. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you aim to develop in terms of your compositions?**

Well rhythm is a key factor in my pieces. To play my stuff reasonably well, you have to be able to count. My pieces, I design them to fit under the hands, so technically they're not that demanding I don't think. There's no wild leaps and awkward hand positions, so it's mainly to develop rhythm and musicality in general.

**11. Do you test your compositions for piano students with either teachers or students before you publish them? Please describe the process you follow.**

Yeah I did. That first book I wrote for my students. They all learnt them and played them, so I knew they worked. And then I published them. And I sort of do that a bit now. If I'm writing a new piece, I generally try it out on students. But mainly I go with what I think.

**12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

**13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Well students have a lot of distractions. They're maybe even learning more than one instrument. I've got one kid that's learning singing, trombone, violin, guitar and piano, so he's pretty stretched. But sporting commitments, and ballet and not to mention school work. So it requires a bit of discipline to stick with a musical instrument. That's where my style of composition can help I think. Keeps them going through a sticky period. They can always come back to the more serious classical stuff later, just keep the technique ticking over in the meantime. So that's my philosophy, roughly.

**14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

## **Sonny Chua**

### **1. What inspired you to become a composer?**

Not easy to answer this one, I think. But then again, quite simply: why not. It seemed like a naturally thing to do when I started playing the piano. It seemed like a logically thing to do after listening to so much great music and wanted to do things my way. Not quite sure why some people seem to be less afraid to make things up or why some people want to spend the time and energy to explore.

### **2. How did you learn to compose?**

Through trial & error, initially and essentially. Learned a lot by listening, watching & experimenting. Reading about it and hearing words of other about writing was fun but in the end it's the doing that allows the true learning and development.

### **3. How long have you been composing?**

One could say all my life but it was only when I started piano lessons at 10 that I got the opportunity to make it come to life.

### **4. Do you currently have a publisher you work with or do you freelance?**

Both. A lot of my piano music is with AMPD (formerly Allans Publishing) but much of my commissioned works are produced by me. I have various titles that I still currently own.

### **5. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

I have taught students of all levels since I was 18 years old.

### **6. How would you define or describe a:**

#### **a. Beginner piano student?**

Someone who have had no previous formal lessons or minimal skills

#### **b. Intermediate piano student?**

Someone who have had at least 3 years of tuition or experience in developing basic skills

#### **c. Advanced piano student?**

Someone who have had enough tuition or experience to play music at a high level.

### **7. Most of your composition appears to be aimed at students in the beginner or intermediate phase; what made you choose this route?**

The market and the students that I was personally teaching that inspired me to have fun with piano technique and musical styles.

### **8. How would you describe your compositional style?**

eclectic. But probably. basically Classical (Light Classical, Modern, Fusion, Traditional)

### **9. Do you consciously incorporate your own compositional style into your works for piano students? If so, how?**

I think that may happen, regardless. But I am sometimes conscientiously using specific musical styles to express an idea. Not sure what my own style is - but I can see elements of styles that influences me.

### **10. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you aim to develop in terms of your compositions?**

My works, as they were written for developing students aim to develop specific techniques and to express specific ideas in various musical styles.

### **11. Do you test your compositions for piano students with either teachers or students before you publish them? Please describe the process you follow.**

I generally test out all my composition for at least 6 - 12 months before releasing them onto the world! I've learnt that once they are published, it's almost too late to make changes! So I like to get as much feedback through students and teachers before they go to print.

**12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

Obviously there are more beginners than advanced students as the sale of books will inform. But one has to define what 'drop-out' is. Is that to mean that the student has stopped lessons with a particular teacher? or has given up the interest to learn (but still attend lessons) or has the child changed its mode of learning music? This would be a most interesting area to investigate deeply! Students learn in different ways and at different stages of their life. I wish to be able to recognise where they are at and still encourage them to keep learning, in any way that suits them. Perhaps there are too much emphasise on one or limited way of learning/teaching, so that the outcome looks like students 'dropping out'. I hope that makes sense.

**13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

Good music, inspiring teachers, freedom from distractions from other aspects of their life (such as outside pressure to spend time on something else).

**14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Lack of what's above.

## Appendix 12 – Literature Guide Authors Interview Transcripts

### Jane Magrath - The pianist's guide to standard teaching and performance literature

#### 1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music publishing field?

I first became acquainted with my publisher through a need that I saw in American materials. What I was interested in at that point was to ascertain that classical teaching literature of high quality was available for elementary level students. I had been teaching a children's demonstration class where a master teacher or head teacher instructs a class of about 4, 5 or 6 children. The master teacher instruction that I did during that time was observed by piano pedagogy students at the university. And my young students in a series of several demonstration classes in the 1980s were advancing quite well. The students were approximately 6 or 7 years old. Nevertheless, I was having difficulty finding strong classical literature that was readily available for purchase and not prohibitively expensive for them to move into while they were also studying from the piano methods. At that time, I was teaching from Alfred's piano methods and I compiled myself some selections for those children, very easy pieces by Turk, Gurlitt, Kabalevsky, pieces like that in a collection. After I had put together four collections, four different volumes of literature, for those students, I approached Alfred's publishing about possibly publishing those books and they accepted them. They thought the need was there. So I continued ended up working closely with the fine staff at Alfred publishing. All of this probably took place around 1984 and I continued with Alfred to this day, publishing a good many anthologies of classical teaching music. What happened after the first 7 or 8 years in this work with them was that I realized my quite strong a strong interest in the classical music teaching literature area. That was the time that I conceived the book, *The Pianist's Guide to Teaching Literature* and approached Alfred to see if they would be interested in publishing it. And they agreed. They had never published anything like that before, but they were willing to give it a try. And they were just wonderful in terms of helping me, and getting the delivery and the message out there. They supported me very, very well.

*I actually spoke to Morty Manus last year, at the end of last year for this project.*

Really? He is an amazing man. He is the man I called back in the 80's and he has supported me through this whole process. He is the person who said "yes, we'll make this happen. This sounds like it's important." He is a person of the very highest integrity, and indeed an highly inspiration individual.

#### 2. How long have you been working in this area?

Since 1984 or 1985.

#### 3. Are you currently involved in a writing or publishing project?

I am currently in the middle of a new literature series titled *Audition Repertoire for the Advancing Pianist*. At the center of the books are two audition programs of four pieces each that can be played by someone who is in high school. Alternately, they might serve as pieces for students entering college or for a college-level pianist. Some teachers have used parts of these programs as festival programs as well. So that's my current project.

#### 4. How did the pianist's guide come about?

I always had a strong love and respect for the piano literature. Then when I started teaching to a greater extent, I realised how great our classical teaching literature is. I developed a passion for this literature and I finally realized that in fact I had specialized there. I modelled the Pianist's Guide after the book called *Music for the Piano* by Friskin and Freundlich. It's written in a really fine way. The authors take the space to discuss the individual pieces and they at times provide a bit of their opinion as to whether the pieces are strong or not. They give subjective advice which I believe teachers find helpful, so in the Pianist's Guide I try to do the same thing, to give some subjective advice.

**5. What do you believe was unique about this particular literature guide?**

Perhaps it is the fact that it deals with intermediate teaching repertoire, in other words classical teaching repertoire up to the advanced level. And it includes the commentary on so many of the pieces there. My goal was to make sure that the knowledge of a lot of this literature was not lost, so that people know what Gurlitt had written, even if it was not published, or that teachers knew what Kabalevsky had written even if they do not own all the books. People also tell me that the grading system helps create a uniform system of grading for their use and very helpful for them. The grading system was something that I really wrestled with in my mind - as to whether to include it or not. And there was one point I remember when I almost erased all of it. It's so subjective and it's very difficult for some to understand. But in the United States, I've found that teachers have liked it a lot and use it frequently. Even in Australia and England, grading of literature is much more standardized than in the US. Not so much in the United States,. I was hoping that this could become standardised for the US grading system or at least one point of reference for teachers.

**6. Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in your literature guide? If yes, what did you do? Did the results affect the final product?**

I actually did not. I felt that I knew the field fairly well. I had presented a good many workshops around the country and became aware that teachers did not really know this literature and at that time were not taught this literature at the university level. And so I just decided to try it.

*I think in a way that's informal research.*

Well I see what you are saying!

*Sometimes you talk to people or you listen and you realise that there's a gap here, or there's a need for something. Obviously you had the knowledge of what you were writing about, so I don't think you needed to do any interviews or research.*

Well, I jumped in!

**7. Will the guide be updated in the future?**

Actually, yes. I am planning to take a sabbatical leave in Spring of 2011 from my university and work for that time full-time on updating the Pianist's Guide.

*Is that quite a lot of work? Obviously you've got a lot of new repertoire to look at.*



It is a lot of work! People have asked me before now when I would update it or have even encouraged me to, but I just haven't felt that I was ready to do it – nor that the need really was there. But now I do feel ready and I believe very much that it is needed at this point. I'm excited about it, I'm excited to have the time and looking forward to it very much. So I hope it comes to pass. We've had quite a few budget cuts in the US, so I hope that won't affect me taking that leave and being able to work, but I don't think it will.

*And the guide will still be published with Alfred's?*

Yes, I'm still with Alfred Publishing.

**8. What has been the most interesting feedback about the guide that you have received over the years?**

I think one thing that has surprised me is that teachers have told me that they keep the book on their piano and use it over and over. I guess that in a way has been my greatest hope. But teachers say that they use it a lot. One thing that I hope is that with the expanded section on 20<sup>th</sup> century music, teachers will find that helpful because it's so difficult to learn about new 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century music. And that research and study for me, has been rewarding. Sometimes teachers will take the book and research a composer fully, looking at everything that has been written for piano by him.

**9. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

Yes.

**10. How would you define or describe a:**

**a. Beginner piano student?**

I guess for my frame of reference, a beginner student is one who has not been introduced to playing the piano or who is just starting. This might be a student who is still playing in five finger patterns, who is learning to read music, learning to coordinate hands playing together, who might first start with the hands playing separately. I would say that a beginner student is often what I call Level 1-3 (on the Pianist's Guide grading system).

**b. Intermediate piano student?**

I would say a student from about Level 4-7.

There are so many ranges within the various names – beginner, intermediate, upper-intermediate. But the intermediate piano student, especially, was the level for which there was such a wide range of difficulty for intermediate students. In a way I hope the Pianist's Guide can help clarify especially what we call intermediate students. I guess I consider a true intermediate student to be playing standard (not the very easiest) Clementi Sonatinas, Schumann Album for the Young from Part II and that kind of thing. And also, there's that level that comes right before the advanced piano student, where the pianist can play Bach Inventions, they might play some of the Granados pieces, they're pieces that are perhaps a little more difficult than the intermediate level, but still not what we would call advanced level literature.

**c. Advanced piano student?**

Lower advanced might be 8-10 so that an advanced student might be playing Schubert Impromptu, Chopin Nocturnes, Beethoven Sonata, that kind of repertoire.

Sometimes I will joke with my piano pedagogy majors and say that “that’s probably a Level 11+!” I’m really saying that that’s advanced piano literature. And often we don’t grade it quite that far.

**11. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you believe they should develop through repertoire?**

This is the time when they begin to play really with more facility, fine agility and finesse in phrasing. this can be a good time to further develop musicality and refine phrasing and voicing within a hand and balance of melody and accompaniment. And really develop the skills to play with strong character, that is, depicting the real emotion or meaning of the music. There is so much that should be developed during the intermediate years. For example, the student should be playing Alberti bass with excellent facility, scale passages should be played with evenness and facility but also with refinement of tone. So I guess, just off the top of my head, these are the elements that should be developed with the intermediate student.

**12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

Perhaps I would say that it is fairly even between beginner and intermediate. I hear that many beginners drop out after two or three years, where they perceive that playing becomes more of a challenge. It’s such a shame, because a teacher can do so much to stimulate a student in keeping them motivated to play. At the intermediate level I believe that students at Level 6, in other words when they’re playing Clementi sonatinas and that kind of repertoire, is a stage where it is ripe for students to drop out. The music tends to be a bit harder for them after that and that is a level where they tend to drop out. my published anthology series titles Encore (in three books) is directed subtly to students that are at that level 6 and right above. it was compiled with the hope that the pieces would be highly patterned and motivating for students, and that this strong classical music that was fun to play and easy to learn due to the patterns would encourage students not to drop out. I hoped That they would enjoy the pieces, and continue to play and be motivated. But I especially do mark at least in my mind Level 6 as an area where students might start to think about dropping out of lessons.

**13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

I fully believe that it’s the music that keeps student playing. Playing pieces that they like and are of a high quality, and playing them well spurs them on to additional literature. I believe that students innately know that the music is of high quality. I think that’s the whole secret! Maybe not the whole secret, but a large part of keeping students motivated and learning. I always tell parents that I can guarantee the student’s success if they practice because I’ll find pieces that the student is proud to be playing and ensure that they play them well. The students who play well, want to play more pieces. They tend to believe that they are strong in piano if they play well, and, after all, everyone wants to continue with what they do well. So that’s such an important part of teaching. Teachers need to fit well the right pieces with the individual students. There are certain pieces that the student should be able to master relatively quickly and progress on to other pieces, and not take 1 year to learn a piece. learning more repertoire reinforces the piano

student's reading and his ability to practice and learn independently other pieces and especially if the teacher takes care to match the pieces to the student's personality, pieces that they feel the student really will enjoy. So that's my hope for students to keep them in lessons. We keep them excited about the pieces they are playing. And even now with all the years of teaching that I have, I will spend a good bit of time, even now, to choose what could be good for my own university students to play. I never want to students to become bored with the pieces they are playing.

**14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

I also believe that sometimes teachers teach the same pieces repeatedly, or the pieces that they think a student should play. If those pieces do not fit the young student, the student will lose motivation. Sometimes what happens is that a student will play well and the teacher will become excited and they will assign the student pieces that are too hard. The teacher may skip the student a level or two or three, then the student tends to lose enthusiasm because the pieces are so hard and it's so much work to learn them. The student doesn't play well these more difficult pieces and the student knows that. So I work hard to let my pedagogy students be aware of choosing pieces that are at the correct level for that student, not too hard but not too easy.

## **Reid Alexander - Intermediate piano repertoire: a guide for teaching**

### **1. Can you tell me how you came to be working in the music publishing field?**

That was a little bit osmosis. It's now been about 25 years. My two main publishers are Frederick Harris Music out of Toronto, who published the repertoire guide. The repertoire guide was my first publication with Frederick Harris, and that has since lead to a series of composer books. We have 20-something out now, about 2700 pages of music, the Celebration Series which is very well known (I was editor), we also have the teacher's handbook which I co-authored with. So how I got to know Frederick Harris was we were looking for a publisher for the repertoire guide (the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition), that would be 1989, and I knew who the president was of the company and Cathy Albergo and I met with the president at a Music Teachers National convention. We arranged it, talked with him and he became interested in the book, the project. They accepted it. The first one was published in 1996 (the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) and that lead to the fourth. Then my other publisher is Stipes publishing, which is an academic publisher. And my work with them again started over 20 years ago when I was invited to be a co-author on one of their class piano books and my colleague at that time, senior to me, James Lyke invited me to join them on the book. So that's lead to a continuing relationship.

### **2. How long have you been working in this area?**

At least 25 years now. I have many publications at this point, over 40 books of various types including several revisions of the same text.

### **3. Are you currently involved in a writing or publishing project?**

Actually right now, we are working on the fifth edition of the repertoire guide. But that's going to be at least 3 years before we have it done. I just finished Keyboard Musicianship Volume 2, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition, this is a class piano book. And that is being premiered this March at the MTNA. And it's not off the press yet, we expect it off the press in about 2 weeks. And so that project was just finished and it took about 2 years to do the revision of that book.

### **4. How did the *Intermediate Piano Repertoire – A Guide for Teaching* come about?**

I answered that.

### **5. What do you believe was unique about this particular literature guide?**

I'll speak for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition. There are some unique things about it. One of the most unique things that is in the 20<sup>th</sup> century section, we separated pedagogical composers out from mainstream 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, if you look at the mainstream 20<sup>th</sup> century, there's Bartok, Hinson, but we separated out the pedagogical composers that we might say educational composers, especially the ones that are well known in the US. I don't know if you know Robert Randall...they're extremely well known in the US so we separated them out and we have about 20 pages in the current 4<sup>th</sup> edition, just devoted to pedagogical composers. The other two main books that deal with repertoire are Maurice Hinson and Jane Magrath. Neither one of those writers deal with pedagogical composers. The other unique feature, two things about the repertoire guide, is we devoted half of it to solo music and the other half to ensemble music which I think is a nice feature. And our rating system is different, where the E is early intermediate, I is intermediate, A is advanced and so forth. But the really unique thing is that it's one of the few places that you can go and find in some detail the people who are writing educational pieces for pianists.

**6. Did you perform any preliminary interviews or research to establish the interest in your literature guide? If yes, what did you do? Did the results affect the final product?**

The first two editions were self-published. The third edition was with Frederick Harris and it had enough momentum. At the time it was published, Jane Magrath's book was not out and so there was a real need in the market for it. I don't know if they did any official surveys but the sales back in the 90's were phenomenal, for an educational book. I mean, they went through 9000 copies in just a few months in the initial sales. So it was clearly a needed book and one that didn't exist at the time, and especially one that focused on the intermediate level repertoire.

**7. Will the guide be updated in the future?**

We're working on the 5<sup>th</sup> edition now. It will be a few years though. There'll probably be a few changes, we're still talking about exactly. I'm sure we'll keep the rating scheme, in terms of E, I etc. But I think it's going to be even better and doing the bibliography is really difficult. Are we tossing things? Are things out of print? You know, bringing in new things.

**8. What has been the most interesting feedback about the guide that you have received over the years?**

It's just particular single comments that people have made over the years. I have a student who's working on her doctorate at the Peabody conservatory and she's looking for a job right now. But when she was here, she said "this is absolutely the perfect book for teaching" and I've had comments like that. Perfect because you can see the repertoire of every composer very easily, you can see the rating scheme. We also have that little double f sign which means it's a very important book to know in a composer. So if you're looking at a composer you don't know, it gives you a signal for books you might look at first to try and expand your repertoire. So the interesting feedback...there's been written comments to the publisher, and again, the sales are the confirmation that it's widely accepted.

**9. Over the years, have you been involved in teaching the piano?**

Of course. I just turned 60 last year and I've been in full time teaching since I was 24. I've worked at 3 different universities and been on 3 different faculties and for the most part my duties have been in 3 areas; teaching piano pedagogy course, teaching piano lessons to majors or minors and teaching group piano which is our secondary pianists. At the U of I right now, we're I'm at, I mainly do graduate course work and working with graduate students. We have a Masters degree and a Doctoral cognate so I spend a lot of time with our grad students preparing them as teachers. So that's an overwhelming yes to that question.

**10. How would you define or describe a:**

**a. Beginner piano student?**

I would say the average age for a beginner student is someone in second grade, 7 years old. Perhaps first grade. If they're starting younger than that, then it's preschool and that's a different set of needs. The student has a lower level of cognate, developed abilities. A 7 year old can move two or three times the pace of a five year old just because their cognate skills are so much more advanced. But a beginner piano student I just see as one who doesn't read music and has not learnt

the piano. They can also read, they can follow instructions, their attention span is there, they don't get too wiggly at 4.30 in the afternoon.

**b. Intermediate piano student?**

That's a really hard area to define. Intermediate is typically a student in middle school in age group. Middle school means ages 12-14. But in terms of levels of advancement, I'll give you a couple of examples of pieces. I think Bach Little Prelude or Beethoven Fur Elise would be good examples of intermediate level repertoire. I think we tend to define intermediate as being too easy. A true intermediate student is probably going to have 6 years of piano behind them. So if you start when you're 6, you're going to be 12. So that would be a notion of intermediate.

**c. Advanced piano student?**

Advanced student. Again, that would be a student who is highly skilled, would almost certainly be in high school or you might say a freshman in college, and they'd be playing the Bach Prelude and Fugues. That level, sonata level. Bach Prelude and Fugue is a very good example of an advanced pianist.

**11. In terms of the intermediate piano student, what specific skills or attributes do you believe they should develop through repertoire?**

Being able to play scales and arpeggios, starting to understand all of the different keys, all different major keys, so they're playing in a wide variety of keys, being able to sight-read so they can actually sit down and read easier pieces. Sight-reading is a wonderful measurement of whether one has reached intermediate skill or level. Certainly understanding harmony. I don't think it's just about playing pieces, I think you have to look at it in a broader sense of understanding the language of music and so they're really starting to understand music as a language and theory. And they're still not just playing in simple keys and it's not shallow.

**12. Do you believe there is a greater drop-out rate of students in any of the three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced?**

That's a really good question. I'd be curious to see if it's the same in Australia. I think the greatest drop-out rate is actually at the beginning level where the student doesn't continue. And sometimes that is because there is not a structure at home to really promote music and it's just taken a little too casually. You know, like we'll see if they're interested and like it, do we have to buy a piano, can we take some lessons and try it out and see if want to continue. If there is really good teaching and a well-structured environment at home, beginners will continue. Then at the intermediate level, and the advanced level, I would say that the biggest reason students drop out is because they have competing demands at school. Particularly in the United States, athletics. Where they're starting to play soccer, or they're on the basketball team, they have practices everyday and they begin to lose a bit of interest. It's the intermediate level that's vulnerable in terms of time demands. Most students when they reach the advanced levels, they have the music bug and they want to continue. I can't think of any advanced high school music students I've had that have dropped lessons. At that level, they continue. So probably the biggest drop out in my experience is the novice, the beginner, or the intermediate. And if you can get them past those two stages into the advanced levels, then you've really got something.

**13. What do you feel keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?**

To get over that hump of competing activities, you have to be somewhat flexible as a teacher. Keep it positive. If the students goes through a plateau, be patient, and don't place too many demands on them at the time when they seem to be wrestling with the family or with competing demands. If it turns into a negative lesson experience, they are surely going to drop. So you have to keep it positive. I tell my students all along, about fifth grade, that you can not ever stop learning piano. We love seeing you and this is great, so you're never going to come in and tell me you're stopping lessons. And then you tell the parents. You know in a kidding way, but doing that kind of helps because they're going to be hitting that middle school crunch time.

**14. What do you feel causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?**

Well it's the time crunch, the activities. If the lesson becomes a negative experience in any way, if they feel they can't prepare, if the teacher is too demanding on them. I'm not saying drop ones standard as a teacher, but you sometimes have to deal with that. Especially with a student that you know is not going into music and is studying for their own enjoyment.

# The Intermediate Piano Student

## 1. Getting to know you...

1. What first inspired you to become a piano teacher?

- ☐ A previous teacher
- ☐ Flexibility of the profession
- ☐ Extra income
- ☐ I was asked to teach
- ☐ Other (please specify)

2. What currently inspires you to continue teaching piano?

- ☐ Love for teaching
- ☐ The students
- ☐ Flexibility of the profession
- ☐ Extra income
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. How many years have you been teaching?

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-20 years
- ☐ 21 or more years

4. For how long do you believe you will teach piano?



# The Intermediate Piano Student

## 2. The Intermediate Piano Student

How would you define or describe:

1. A beginner student?

2. An intermediate student?

3. An advanced student?

How would you describe your teaching style for:

4. A beginner student?

5. An intermediate student?

6. An advanced student?

# The Intermediate Piano Student

## 3. Teaching the Intermediate Piano Student

1. Over the years, how many intermediate students have you taught (approximate if necessary)?

- ☐ 1-10 students
- ☐ 11-20 students
- ☐ 21-50 students
- ☐ 51 or more

2. What is the most enjoyable thing about teaching an intermediate piano student?

- ☐ The repertoire
- ☐ Watching the student mature as a person
- ☐ Watching the student become an independent learner
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. What is the most challenging thing about teaching an intermediate student?

- ☐ Finding appropriate repertoire
- ☐ Keeping up their enthusiasm
- ☐ Keeping piano and practice a priority in their lives
- ☐ Other (please specify)

# The Intermediate Piano Student

## 4. When you were an Intermediate Piano Student

Take your mind back to when you were an intermediate student...

1. Briefly describe the teaching styles you experienced.

2. What programs of learning do you recall working with?

- ☐ Method books e.g. Bastien's Intermediate Piano Course
- ☐ External exam syllabi e.g. Trinity College London
- ☐ Competition/festival/eisteddfod repertoire
- ☐ General repertoire
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. Which specific composers or works do you remember and why?

4. What did you like the most in terms of this stage of learning?

- ☐ The repertoire
- ☐ Playing for friends
- ☐ Can't remember
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5. What did you like the least in terms of this stage of learning?

- ☐ Technical difficulties
- ☐ Practicing
- ☐ Can't remember
- ☐ Other (please specify)

# The Intermediate Piano Student

## 5. Programs of Learning for the Intermediate Piano Student

1. How do you structure a learning program for your intermediate piano students? What factors do you consider?

2. When choosing repertoire for the intermediate student, do you use:

Method books? If yes, which ones  
e.g. Bastien's Intermediate Piano  
Course?

External examination syllabi? If  
yes, which syllabi e.g. Trinity  
College London?

Competitions/festivals/eisteddfods  
where repertoire is prescribed? If  
yes, which competitions/festivals?

General repertoire? If yes, which  
repertoire e.g. Bach Two-Part  
Inventions?

3. How often, if at all, do your intermediate students choose their repertoire?

☐ Always

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

☐ Other (please specify)

4. If you left an intermediate piano student to their own devices, what type of repertoire do you think they would select?

# The Intermediate Piano Student

5. What do you believe is a typical intermediate student's reaction to:

	Disdain		Ambivalence		Excitement
Baroque music e.g. Bach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classical music e.g. Beethoven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Romantic music e.g. Schumann	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20th century music e.g. Bartok	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jazz/Modern (Popular) music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Add any comments of relevance (optional):

# The Intermediate Piano Student

## 6. Motivation and Learning

1. In your experience, to what extent do students struggle with repertoire at the intermediate level?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ To a moderate extent
- ☐ To a significant extent
- ☐ Other (please specify)

2. To what extent do you believe this affects their decision(s) to continue learning?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ To a moderate extent
- ☐ To a significant extent
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. What do you believe keeps intermediate piano students motivated to learn?

- ☐ The repertoire
- ☐ Satisfaction of learning a piece
- ☐ Playing for friends
- ☐ Other (please specify)

4. What do you believe causes intermediate piano students to lose motivation?

- ☐ Technical difficulties
- ☐ Outside factors - school, family, extra-curricula activities
- ☐ Other (please specify)

## The Intermediate Piano Student

5. In your experience, is there a higher drop-out rate in intermediate students than in other levels?

☐ Yes

☐ No

(please explain)

6. If you indicated yes to question 5, which of the following do you believe could be a solution to the drop-out rate amongst intermediate piano students?

☐ Better communication between teacher, student and parents about goals, expectations of learning etc

☐ Inspire the student with suitable repertoire

☐ Other (please specify)

7. In an ideal world, what do you believe is the most effective program of learning for an intermediate piano student?

8. Please add anything else in the box below that you would like to in relation to the intermediate piano student.

# The Intermediate Piano Student

## 7. Demographic Information

1. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. To enable me to complete a demographic analysis of the survey sample, would you please complete as many of the categories below as possible.

City/Town:

State:

ZIP/Postal Code:

Country: