

November 2016 - November at the studio, John Williams, A Romance on Three Legs, and the Art of Accompanying



Piano Matters by www.the-piano-studio.com



November at the-piano-studio.com

It has been a busy month at the piano studio! Students are preparing for exams and recitals and settling into a routine of practising and learning. It is always a challenge to choose the right time to start preparing for recitals and exams. If you start too late, you run the risk of not being prepared when the actual date rolls around. If you start too early, you also run the risk of getting bored with the songs that you are playing. Timing is critical!

Of course, with the <much needed> Christmas break coming up, it's also fun to inject some enthusiasm into lessons by working with lead sheets,

learning new holiday music, brushing up on previous songs, improvising, and learning theory or composition.

I like to throw a variety of things at my students. It keeps them on their toes! But it also helps to be sensitive and flexible to their needs. When a student comes in and the first thing they say to me is: "I've had an awful week at school and I'm really tired. I'm sorry but I didn't get any practising done." They don't get a lecture. Instead we decide we'll have a fun, low-key lesson with some of those above choices. They leave feeling uplifted, happy, and ready to face the week.

It's nice to have that reminder that music is good for the soul!



There's a very basic human, non-verbal aspect to our need to make music and use it as part of our human expression. It doesn't have to do with body movements, it doesn't have to do with articulation of a language, but with something spiritual.

- John Williams

I have great respect for John Williams. I once read that he writes every single day...that he collects musical thoughts in notebooks and if he ever runs into a writing block, he revisits some of those notebooks and uses them for inspiration. Isn't that a neat idea?

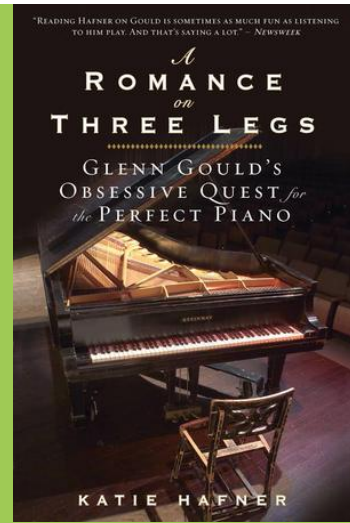
Keeping a musical journal is a valuable tool. Whether you are a performer, composer, or teacher, try to keep a notebook to jot down ideas, thoughts, and inspiration. It's fun to look back and see where you were at and how far you've come.

Book review

I love books but don't often have a lot of time to read. So when I come across a book about music, I get really excited! Two birds with one stone!

A Romance on Three Legs by Katie Hafner was hard to put down! I'm ashamed to say I didn't

know a whole lot about Glenn Gould. But the book weaves together tales about the eccentric Glenn Gould, the Steinway building process and the company's history, and Glenn Gould's go-to tuner, into an entertaining and informative story.



The Art of Accompanying

With the Christmas season approaching, you are probably getting lots of opportunities and requests to perform. One of the most rewarding, (but also sometimes the most frustrating), thing about playing piano is the opportunity to collaborate with other musicians. I'm talking about accompanying!

At University, I had the lovely opportunity to study with a well-known accompanist in the Ottawa area. Evelyn Greenberg taught me so much about what it takes to be a good accompanist. This gracious, beautiful lady was recently honoured with a Lifetime Achievement award, given by the Musicians' Association of Ottawa-Gatineau.

I took her accompanying course for two years during my university years. During this time, she used her connections to bring in many famous soloists to "experiment" on--tee hee! I learned a lot of interesting repertoire and the experience was invaluable.

She taught us to be humble. The soloist was always the star, and we were there to make them look good! That meant knowing your part. Using a page turner if necessary. Rehearsing with them in advance. Having a pencil ready to take notes. Being generous in performance. Breathing with them. Being attuned and sensitive to their choices in performance.

I'm so grateful for the things that she taught me. And they are lessons that I still carry with me today. I admire her for the legacy that she has among the musicians of Ottawa-Gatineau and the innumerable students that she has accompanied in her career of making music.

[Click the title to read the article about her in the Ottawa Citizen.](#)

Coming soon to the-piano-studio.com

Stay tuned for the launch of my next project! A study and teaching guide for favourite exam pieces for the Royal Conservatory of Music repertoire will soon be available on the website. With many students doing their exams this year, I needed a resource where I could send students to listen to reliable recordings of their songs. The first phase (Preparatory A to Level 5) will be available in the next few weeks.



Until next time!

Elena Fortin

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