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**Contents**

4 President’s Message
5 Hello from the Editor
5 Our New Secretary - Mary Hawn
6 Important Dates for 2014
7 To the Editor
8 Celebration of Life - Judith Signy Ritchie
10 Musicthon 2014
12 MRMTA Scholarship Series 2014
14 Brandon & Westman Report
15 Take Great Courses - Online - for FREE
16 Featured Teacher: Helga Anderson
18 Winnifred Sim’s Autobiography Now Available
22 The Power of Practice
24 Young Pianist Lands Juno - Welcoming Gig
25 Please support our Advertisers
Hello Everyone,
Spring is here and the final push for exams and recitals - hard to believe another great teaching year is coming to a close. What a great career we have - to spend time with our students, these amazing kids (or at least most of them are kids) to see them grow from the five year old walking into the studio for the first time, very scared and not sure what to expect, to these amazing young adults. It brings tears to my eyes each and every recital, what a gift the parents have given to us - time. Time with their kids. True, we nag, we push, we cry, we teach and we build lifelong friendships.
So here it is - another issue of Take Note - I hope you enjoy it! Lots of great information and updates.

What I would like to see in the future issues of Take Note, is more personal stories, experiences, how to deal with different issues . . .
What would you like to see in future issues . . .
What would you like me to include - this is your magazine and anything I can do to make it the best it can be for you is my goal. Help me with that!

So what do we have to celebrate?
Well, first and foremost, a very successful Musicthon at the Forks in February. Students had a great time playing and singing, parents were impressed with the location and teachers were quick to fill stage time with improvisation and a conveniently found duet book! Volunteers had ear to ear grins resulting from top notch musical performances. Most impressive were the performances that were amplified throughout Forks for all shoppers, attracting a lot of attention to our advertising magazine.
It was a beautiful day with improvisation and stage time with our students. It was a great day with improvisation and stage time with our students, these amazing kids (or at least most of them are kids) to see them grow from the five year old walking into the studio for the first time, very scared and not sure what to expect, to these amazing young adults.

Annie Wedel, who is sadly missed by all of us on the executive! Mary, our new secretary - Mary Hawn, is a charismatic and charming addition to our organization and we are thrilled to have such an innovative, passionate and demanding tasks of Treasurer and Registrar. We are very pleased member join us. Mary has already proven to be a valuable asset to our organization and we are thrilled to have such an innovative, charismatic and charming addition to our music loving farewell to Judith Ritchie Memorial Scholarship. I’d like to invite our members to pass on the word about the sale of Judy’s music on May 25, 2014. She personally organized this event before her passing as it was very important that her music be purchased by those who wanted to keep it. The sale will be held at 621 South Drive. Pre-sale to Judith’s students from 10 – 12, then from 12 – 4pm, the sale is open to all MRMTA teachers, students and the public.
We would like to sell everything so plan to come.
Sincerely,
Tiffany A. Wilson – President

Good-bye dearest, sweet Judy.
I fondly remember sitting with you at the cinema, crying our eyes out as we enjoyed the Metropolitan Opera’s live HD performances! Your musical legacy will continue with the Judith Ritchie Memorial Music Scholarship. I’d like to invite our members to pass on the word about the sale of Judy’s music on May 25, 2014. She personally organized this event before her passing as it was very important that her music be purchased by those who wanted to keep it. The sale will be held at 621 South Drive. Pre-sale to Judith’s students from 10 – 12, then from 12 – 4pm, the sale is open to all MRMTA teachers, students and the public.

Hello from the editor
Hello from the editor
I thought I would add a couple of photos from my trip this Spring Break. My husband and I drove up to the Arctic - I know, most people go south for a break - I go north. Beautiful country we live in.
Take care
Dina

Our New Secretary - Mary Hawn
It is with great enthusiasm that the MRMTA Executive would like to welcome Mary Hawn to the executive in the role of Secretary. Mary will be taking over this position from Alanna Courtney, who will continue in the very demanding tasks of Treasurer and Registrar. We are very pleased to have such a highly qualified assistant to our organization and we are thrilled to have such an innovative, passionate and demanding tasks of Treasurer and Registrar.

Tiffany A. Wilson – President
MRMTA

Note - I hope you enjoy it! Lots of great information and updates.
IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2014 - 2015

MAY 25, 2014
JUDITH RITCHIE MUSIC SALE
• (All proceeds will go directly towards the Judith Richie Memorial Music Scholarship)
• 10:00 - 12 noon by invitation only for Judith’s Students
• 12 noon - 4:00 for MRMTA members, their students and the general public
621 South Drive
CALL - Tiffany Wilson for more details
204.488.3325 or 204.960.1539

MAY 25, 2014
PRE-DIPLOMA WORKSHOP
CLINICIAN - Sydney McInnis
LOCATION - Eleanor Lwiwski - 86 Shoreview Bay
FEE - $5 for MRMTA members / $10 for non-members

JUNE 29, 2014
JUNE WINE-UP FOR ALL MRMTA MEMBERS AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS
HOST - Tiffany Wilson and the MRMTA Executive
LOCATION - 392 Campbell Street
TIME - 3 pm - 5 pm

AUGUST 1, 2014
Deadline for Take Note Fall issue

SEPTEMBER 28, 2014
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
LOCATION - St. Charles Country Club, 100 Country Club Blvd, Winnipeg, MB
TIME - TBA
(please note the change from June to September, according to the MRMTA and CFMTA by-laws)

NOVEMBER 4, 2014
WORKSHOP
TOPIC - Bringing Yoga into the Studio
CLINICIAN - Mary Hawn
DATE - November 4, 2014 - 10:00 am
LOCATION - 8 Miami Place (Fl. Richmond)
FEE - $5 for MRMTA members / $10 for non-members

NOVEMBER 17 - 22, 2014
Canada Music Week®

DECEMBER 1, 2014
Deadline for Take Note Winter issue

FEBRUARY 6 - 8, 2015
MUSICTHON - mark your calendars

To the Editor:

Dear Members,

Please send me any feedback, ideas or . . . . .

As they say - we are all in this together

Thanks

Dina

Yes, Fugue VIII has the greatest variations of the subject... “a big nightmare for me”. With 3 voices there are redundant entries. Sometimes the subject in stretto is not completely developed. Then the subject is synecopated, in dotted rhythm “a la francaise” (making fun of Lully). It is inverted, augmented and there is an inverted floritura (fl. Flourishes, flowerings; in singing known as coloratura). The first stretto reminds me of “Confusion Corner” in Winnipeg at rush hour, but Bach knew exactly what he did. Thank God for the episodes. He knew we needed a break in between. As always, Bach has the most exquisite cadences, E minor to D minor are rare keys in any repertoire. Prelude and Fugue VIII gives me a chance to be intimate with these keys and above all Bach’s genius.

Thank you Dr. Foley, I will practise, practice, practise till I tame the BEAST! Thank God for the 5 easy steps. As I read on, they are not easy at all. Dr. Foley described the “frustration”, “sheer complexity”, “a sizable mountain to climb for young pianists?” May I add for older and senior pianists as well?

“It is important to have a clear order of battle when learning one of the BEASTS...” and that is only the introduction to his article. My thought was, “How can a BEAST be learned in 5 easy steps?”

My past and current “BEAST” is Prelude and Fugue VIII. I have “crawled away from the piano”, at least three times through two decades. In my 70’s, I feel that I am living on borrowed time. I have not one minute to waste and I am beginning to re-tackle the “Beast”. As Dr. Foley suggested, I played through the entire fugue at first sitting, but it took more than an hour to write in some fingerings.

Luckily, my teacher introduced me to the Edwin Hughes Edition, in which he did the splendid work of dividing the parts between the hands with logical fingerings. I also stumbled upon a manuscript in which all 3 parts were written in 3 staves. Previously, I used coloured pencils to delineate the voices. I feel that I am living on borrowed time. “Inshallah”, God willing. I was bequeathed a set of 48 Preludes & Fugues by a friend, played by our proudest pianist, Angela Hewitt. The 48 Preludes & Fugues are a demonstration of Bach’s unsurpassed genius.

Isn’t it amazing that one brain could listen and decipher 3, 4, 5 voices or more in stretti. We hear in Glenn Gould’s performances that he hummed along as he played. He could sing only one melody at a time, but his brain heard the other parts. Awe-inspiring to know that we have that capacity as well!

Submitted by Solange Liang

Solang Liang has been a member of MRMTA for over 30 years and upon retiring from her Studio Teaching was given Honorary Membership a few years back. Although “living on borrowed time” she says she is alive and doing well, keeping up her practicing and researching. She says that when she visits Toronto next, she would love to have a lesson with Dr. Foley, “money being no object” or even just a handshake would suffice.

To the Editor:
On Friday, March 7 Judy took her last breath after a 13 year gallant battle with breast cancer. Deeply missing her laughter and her kindness, her beauty and her song, are her beloved husband of 44 years, the Rev. Harold (Harry) W. Ritchie, her children, Matthew (Alison), Dr. Valdine Ritchie Mishkin (Jonathan) and Erik, and her sister, Pamela (whom Judy and Harry raised from age 7) and Greg Scheske, her in-laws Grant and Judy Ritchie, Delle and Ralph Wood, and many other family members. She is predeceased by her parents, Vala and Ad Scheske, aunts and uncles, Agnes and Rudy Scheske, Helga and Ken Porter, and Siga Sigmar.

She was well-known in the Winnipeg music community as a joyful and loving teacher of piano, voice and theory, and of Music for Young Children, Kindermusic and Music Pups. She was a sought-after adjudicator for music festivals in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. Her beautiful lyric coloratura soprano voice was valued for her solo work, and her involvement in many church choirs. She was fiercely proud of the accomplishments of her children, her grandchildren, and the hundreds of students she taught through the years. Teaching was her joy and her life -- she taught her last lesson less than a month before she passed away.

Judy was the consummate host, thoroughly enjoying the many family gatherings in our home and at our cottage. Her constant smile endeared her to everyone she met. She lived life to the fullest. She was a wonderful wife, mother, Amma and sister. Judy wanted the family to especially thank Deanne Berger and Tiffany Wilson for their help. The family would like to thank Dr. C. Ogaranko, Dr. Ian Maxwell, and the staff of the Buhler Cancer Centre for their wonderful care. Also the staff of Grace Hospital for their care in her final days. A celebration of Judith's life was held at 2 PM Wednesday, April 2, 2014 at Sturgeon Creek United Church, 207 Thompson Dr.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Judith Ritchie Memorial Music Scholarship c/o The Winnipeg Foundation at: https://wpgfdn.tng-secure.com/?moduleid=donations

I Touch the Limb of an Apple Tree

I touch the limb of an apple tree.
It claims the spiritual part of me.
It roots my being to the earth,
And reminds me of my primal worth.
I too am a creature, says the tree.
And bear the same responsibility;
To live in harmony with all that lives
And respect what the apple tree gives.
Perfume and beauty it gives in its bloom,
And nectar for the honeycomb.
It gives shade from the sun for us to rest,
And its branches give Robins a place to nest.
Its fruit, in due season, it gives to us all,
And in tasting the apple we remember our call.
We too must be fruitful in our spiritual role,
And give nurture and care to everyone's soul.
Harry Ritchie June 2010
2014 Musicthon Results are in!

MRMTA's 24th Musicthon was held at The Forks Market. It was a great venue to showcase the MRMTA with thousands of people walking through and enjoying the music. A total of $6354.30 was raised for Variety's Children programs. There were 18 teachers involved and 134 students.

Congratulations to the following students and teachers for bringing in the most money for Variety!

- Eric Peterson $290 (Miriam Duckworth - teacher)
- Rachel Wojcik $270 (Elsie Machovec - teacher)
- Eric Ogarank $192 (Leanne Hiebert, teacher)
- Tristan Barnet $191 (Rita Bergen, teacher)
- Felleon Villedo $185 (Miriam Ducksworth, teacher)
- Brian Nider $150 (Rita Bergen, teacher)
- Matthew Carlson $150 (Rita Bergen, teacher)
- Kathy Plett $120 (Eleanore McLeod, teacher)

Teachers can pick up the prizes from 410 Niagara St. (or send your students). Please call 204-284-8806 to set up a time.

Congratulations again on a very successful Musicthon!

A huge thank you to:
- Shirley Rayner for organizing volunteers
- the teachers that volunteered
- Annette Hay for finding sponsors and prizes
- Forks market for the great venue.

To our sponsors:
- St. John's Music for providing the piano
- Flying Eagle Transport for providing brochures
- The Women's Musical Club, The Keg and Long and McQuade for providing gift cards and tickets for the students who brought in the most money in pledges.

Feedback on this year’s musicthon has been positive, especially regarding the venue. The hope is that next year, for our 25th, we can make it an even bigger event. The dates have already been set for February 6-8th, 2015...

Mark your calendars and we’ll see you there!

I look forward to the next one!
Congratulations to the winners, competitors, and their wonderful teachers of the 2014 scholarship competition series held March 31 to April 3. The Executive would like to thank the volunteers who helped make this event a success.

They are:

• Convenors: Louisa Ryz, Laurel Howard, David Clark
• Repertoire Rules: Jacqueline Ryz, Donna Fletcher, Laurel Howard
• Scholarship Applications: Nadia Orlov
• Venue: Peter Fyne
• Paper Scholarships: Eleanor Lwiwski

Many thanks to our wonderful adjudicators:

• Jane Duerksen - Piano
• Kelly Robinson - Vocal
• Desiree Abbey - Instrumental.

The Gala Scholarship concert was held Sunday April 6, 2014 at Westworth United Church. The concert comprised of performances of the winners in each category. The evening was wonderfully entertaining, highlighting our Manitoba talent. Our President, Tiffany Wilson, was on hand to give out the scholarships.

THE COMPETITION RESULTS ARE:

JUNIOR
Vocal Sarah Luby
Piano Julian Liu

INTEMEDATE
Instrumental Liana Fonseca
Vocal Elliot Lazar
Piano Amy Kong

SENIOR
Instrumental Guadalupe Santos
Vocal Katherine Mayba
Piano Naomi Tran

ADVANCED
Instrumental Sara Wang
Vocal Jessica Kos-Whicher
Piano Ryan Wang

GRACE RICH-BASTIN MEMORIAL AWARD
Christina Hutton (Piano)

MADELEINE GAUVIN SCHOLARSHIPS
Maria Guenther (Cello)

NITA EAMER MEMORIAL
Justin Lin (Piano)

EDITH MOTLEY VOCAL AWARD
Kathryn Patrick (Voice)

HARRY REGINALD ROWLIN MEMORIAL
STRINGS AWARD
Guadalupe Santos (Violin)

The MRMTA Scholarship Competition Series continues to provide a wonderful opportunity to students and their teachers. Well done Manitoba!

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This year, The Brandon and Westman Registered Music Teachers’ Association celebrated and honoured the life of longtime member, Gerrie Kroeker, who sadly, passed away early in 2013. The following tribute is by Lara Mason, a good friend and colleague of Gerrie’s: “Gerrie was a student here at Brandon University when we first met. She was here to complete her Bachelor of Music Degree. Gerrie was always smiling, helpful and friendly to everyone. She had a very curious mind and was always eagerly learning to do new things.” After graduating with her Bachelor of Music degree, Gerrie joined the Brandon Branch of The Registered Music Teachers’ Association. It was through this group that she renewed acquaintances with five other registered teachers living in Melita, Souris, Margaret, Boissevain and Deloraine. At Gerrie’s invitation, the five of us began to travel to Gerrie’s home in Deloraine for monthly meetings on Friday mornings where we would discuss music in the Westman area, explore new materials, drink coffee and laugh a lot. Gerrie’s husband, Ben, would tease the group, that “not much work was getting done!”. Known as “The Music Teachers of Southwest Manitoba”, this group went on to plan recitals in Deloraine and Boissevain, Composer & Kids events through the Canadian National Conservatory of Music, and Fall Tune-Up Piano Teacher workshops in Souris. It was a fun and productive time that came to an end as each of the teachers took on new roles and made it impossible to find a common meeting time.

As a result, Gerrie became more involved with The Brandon Branch of the RMTA. Eventually, she became president of The Brandon Branch. Gerrie was an organized, hardworking, classy leader. She had great strength and courage to speak out when she felt strongly about an issue. She suggested that the name of The Brandon Branch be changed to better reflect the area that its members came from, and so we became, “The Brandon & Westman Registered Music Teachers’ Association”. A new logo was designed by artist Stephen Groves at this time.

Gerrie encouraged the idea of holding our events not only in Brandon, but in surrounding areas as well. A lovely, well-attended recital was held in Deloraine one May and an informative summer teachers’ workshop was held in Souris as a result of her suggestion.

Gerrie was a busy examiner for the Royal Conservatory of Music and regular festival adjudicator. She always had many students enrolled in her studio and kept them hopping with all sorts of contests, concerts, prizes and workshops. She bribed students with food, as good teachers do, and went above and beyond the ordinary to keep things fun and interesting for them. She was active in every aspect of her community in Deloraine, helping with her church, the Chamber of Commerce, musicals, the restoration of the Prairie Skills Centre, and I’m sure, many other things we don’t even know about.

Gerrie loved teaching young people and when she retired to Kitchener, Ontario to be near her son, we were not surprised to hear that she had picked up a few students and was heading out to examine for the Royal Conservatory shortly after. She and Ben enjoyed many concerts together in the city, as well.

Gerrie was a mentor to her students and other teachers. Her retirement and then sudden passing has left a huge hole in the musical life of Southwestern Manitoba. We miss seeing her students perform, and her joy in their progress. We miss her energy and never-ending ideas. We miss working alongside her in the kitchen as she prepared the food used as a tribute to get our students to perform! Rest in Peace, Gerrie. Your spirit and hard work here was appreciated and you will not be forgotten.

The following report is a summary of the activities of the Brandon & Westman Branch of the MRMTA during the 2013-2014 teaching year.
“Oh, let’s see how this goes today!” are the familiar words of Helga Anderson, a member of the Manitoba Registered Music Teachers Association for 60 years. Many of Anderson’s students began their lessons with her cheery voice and positive attitude regardless of the time they had practiced before the lesson. Helga often encouraged her students by telling them perfection is not everything and that she would rather they play with emotion than with accuracy.

Having earned her A.R.C.T. (Associate of Royal Conservatory of Toronto) in voice and piano, her A.M.M and having a Bachelor of Education, Helga Anderson is a renowned music teacher who currently teaches five students; and continues to inspire both young and old with her years of experience. She directed many choirs throughout her career, including the Winnipeg Boys Choir which evolved into the Bass Clef Chorus (with some of the members forming the Easy “T’s”), the Better Half Singers, and the Joie de Vivre.

Helga brought her senior choir to Iceland to explore her roots while enjoying the culture. Being of Icelandic descent, she encouraged the choir to explore the folk music of many generations past. The senior choir not only toured Iceland twice under the care of Anderson, but they were also invited to Israel to sing in Bethlehem during Christmas, alongside the Israeli Symphony. There they performed “Sacred Music from Jerusalem.”

When asked what her expectations for students are, Helga replied, “to acquire a good foundation by training, participation in festivals and examinations and community involvement.” Anderson, nearing the end of her career, hopes she has shared her passion for music, and says that she has accomplished teaching people to not only appreciate music, but to love it as well.

Helga Anderson refuses to admit she had any struggles while teaching, saying, “I had very, very, good instructors... when I went to teacher’s college, they showed us how to work with teachers and pupils, and I’ve always had a good relationship with my students.”

A good relationship seems an understatement since Helga shared her story about teaching grade nine boys during the last class of the day. Everyday Anderson would bring in a 45 vinyl record to win over the students and coax them into participation from 3:00 to 3:30. After class, the boys would gather around the record player and listen to a popular song, and eventually one of those boys would speak the words that Helga Anderson vividly remembers to this day. He would turn to her and say: “you’re not so square.”

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» Bachelor of Music Therapy
Winnifred Sim’s Autobiography Now Available!

Winnifred Sim’s Autobiography “A Candid Coda: Reflections on the Life and Music of Winnifred Sim” is now available at McNally Robinson Booksellers (Winnipeg) or through Internet order at Amazon or Friesen Press. The book has 28 chapters (divided into three sections) and over 200 photos.

Winnifred never auditioned for a job and yet she became a nationally recognized organist, accompanist, adjudicator and teacher. In 1997 she was awarded Honourary Life Membership in the Manitoba Registered Music Teachers’ Association. Winnifred enjoyed a 44-year professional career as a piano and organ soloist and accompanist on CBC radio and television. Referred to as a “trailblazer” by the Winnipeg Free Press, she is also a published composer of choral anthems and chaired the committee that founded the National Youth Choir. She was the Musical Director of CBC Television’s hit show, “Hymn Sing”, which was broadcast weekly for 30 years.

Winnifred persevered through the challenges of being successful in fields dominated by men, at a time when being a working mother of four was not a popular choice. Now approaching the age of 84, she is able to look back on the joys and struggles of the music industry and the enrichment that comes from family, faith, and a love of music. “A Candid Coda” not only glimpses her personal life, but also behind the scenes of one of the longest running shows in Canadian television history. Winnifred is a recipient of the YM-YWCA “Woman of Distinction” award and is listed in the Encyclopedia of Music in Canada and the International Who’s Who in Music. All proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to the Winnipeg Music Festival.

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Submission of proposals to the conference committee: proposals@cfmtavancouver2015.com

Only word or PDF submissions will be accepted

• Conference sessions are available in 45 or 60 minute lengths, and are to include introductory and closing remarks plus Q & A.
• Membership in CFMTA/FCAPM is not a requirement to submit a proposal or present a session.
• Presentations should reflect the themes of Performance, Collaboration and Wellness as closely as possible without being commercial in nature.
• Opportunities for commercial presentations are available through the Trade Show link at www.cfmtavancouver2015.com
• Selected presenters may present only for ‘no charge’. Presenters that plan to attend any other part of the conference will be required to pay fees commensurate with their level of participation.
• Proposal title and equipment needs should not be part of the 250-word proposal or 35-word description.
• Resumes / Biographies should include presentation experience if possible.

Please include the following information in your submission:

• Contact mailing address and e-mail.
• 250-word proposal (full description of the proposal).
• 35-word session description (description that will appear in the program book).
• One-page resume for each presenter as well as a 35-word biography.
• Color photograph of each presenter.
• Total time length of your workshop (45 or 60 minutes).
• List of audio/visual equipment needed.

If you have any questions about the conference proposal process contact us at proposals@cfmtavancouver2015.com
The Power of Practice
by Wendy Dyck - reprinted with permission

There is something magical about the piano—maybe it’s the beautiful curves of a baby grand, the complexity of sound it can produce, or the wonder of fingers moving with speed and accuracy across the keyboard. And while it’s certainly not portable and can cost a small fortune to move or maintain, the romance continues. Parents spend hundreds of dollars on lessons, hoping that their son or daughter will make the dream come alive, but the results are mixed. Every year I watch bright, music-loving, musically-gifted children slouch their way through the year making minimal progress despite my best efforts during our lesson time and I humbly reminded that I am not central to their success—you are.

Success at the piano exists in direct relation to practice at home, and with children, parents play the most obvious role in making sure this happens. Very few children are self-directed enough to pursue music on their own, but many more who love music also need the full support of a parent to practice. How?

You will notice waves of interest in practicing—surf them! These are critical times for students because the intensity they bring to practicing can help them expand their skills. As students struggle to recall skills that were only recently acquired. And any time at the instrument is good time, messing around is better than not being there at all and sometimes it’s all you can ask.

It’s great when the piano is centrally located. It’s easier to monitor what’s going on during the practice session and to offer lots of praise for a good performance. Resist the urge to correct—unless you’ve established a successful way of doing this with your child, it can be counter-productive. Practicing can be the time when your child is taking ownership of acquiring a skill, so leave the corrections to the teacher. The proviso here is that if there is a wrong note that is making the music sound terrible, an intervention can make everyone feel better.

At our house, practicing is linked to other activities—no screen time until practicing has been done. One child loves to practice first thing in the morning so he’s “done” and can use all of his after school time to play. The other child prefers playing in the evening when he’s more likely to have an audience. Is your child a morning person? Does she prefer a quiet household when playing in the evening when he’s “done” and sometimes it’s all you can ask.

And although parents are key to success for young musicians, the goal must always be to move children towards ownership. Playing piano is their skill and at some point, they must make the commitment. This doesn’t happen in one day, it’s a process whereby parents need to be constantly assessing how much they need to intervene, when they can back off and see what happens. It’s a function of maturity, of skill, of interest and lots of things we don’t see. Be patient, but encourage those moments when a child takes on something difficult without being told, or practices longer than is required. Remember that music-making is a joyful experience and part of that joy springs from knowing that you’ve worked hard and the beauty you have to share is your own.

Rewards for practicing should be intrinsic—playing piano better is the best reward for time spent at the instrument. But sometimes an exterior motivator can be helpful. Knowing someone else is listening can be a strong motivator for some children (“I really like that song you play in a minor key. Can you play that one for me?”), as can praise (“That is the best I’ve ever heard you play that!”). Children can be encouraged to develop their own external rewards as part of taking ownership for learning their music, maybe taking time for a snack midway through practicing when they’ve finally mastered a difficult bit, or as a reward for using correct fingering in a scale.

Accompany your child. If your piano is in a side room, consider taking a book or some work and sitting in the room while your child practices. For many children, one of the hardest things about practicing is being alone.

And if the piano is in the same room as a stereo, computer or television—not a preferred situation—make sure there is a policy with regard to how these different media interact. What gets priority? Will there be resentment on the part of other family members when the practicing commences?

Be consistent. If you have a routine, tag practicing on to another task. Leave flexibility for weekends and accept that a day away from the piano can be helpful. One day, that is—more than one day away from playing can make the return an uphill slog.

It’s great when the piano is centrally located. It’s easier to monitor what’s going on during the practice session and to offer lots of praise for a good performance. Resist the urge to correct—unless you’ve established a successful way of doing this with your child, it can be counter-productive. Practicing can be the time when your child is taking ownership of acquiring a skill, so leave the corrections to the teacher. The proviso here is that if there is a wrong note that is making the music sound terrible, an intervention can make everyone feel better.

Accompany your child. If your piano is in a side room, consider taking a book or some work and sitting in the room while your child practices. For many children, one of the hardest things about practicing is being alone.

And if the piano is in the same room as a stereo, computer or television—not a preferred situation—make sure there is a policy with regard to how these different media interact. What gets priority? Will there be resentment on the part of other family members when the practicing commences?

Be consistent. If you have a routine, tag practicing on to another task. Leave flexibility for weekends and accept that a day away from the piano can be helpful. One day, that is—more than one day away from playing can make the return an uphill slog.
Young pianist lands Juno - welcoming gig

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Remember the name Raymond Guerard. You may well see it on a marquee one day.

The 12-year-old solo pianist was chosen to play as part of the We Speak Music performance series at the airport, which will see Guerard welcome Juno attendees to Winnipeg on March 27 and 28, along with the St. John Brebeuf Boys Choir, Richer School Chamber Choir (grades 3-8), Bruce Middle School Concert Choir, Garden City Groove Vocal Jazz, Garden City Chamber Choir, Lakewood School Elementary Choir (grades 3-5), Churchill High School Junior Singers (grades 7-9), Sargent Park Grade 9 Choir, Sistema Winnipeg and the Dirty Catfish Brass Band. The event is free and open to the public.

Guerard, who is in Grade 7 in school and Grade 6 piano, is one of the only performers who will perform both days. “I’m pretty excited about it. When I found out, I almost jumped out of my seat,” he says during an interview at the home of his piano teacher, Jacqueline Ryz.

Guerard will be performing a mixed repertoire he helped curate with Ryz, who has been his piano instructor since 2010. There’s a strong focus on Canadian composers: he’ll be performing works by modern composers such as Martha Hill Duncan, Violet Archer and Nancy Telfer, along with the famous Lullaby of Birdland by British jazz pianist George Shearing and a piece by West Side Story composer Leonard Bernstein. (He’ll also do some Chopin and Kuhlau for good measure.)

“Raymond is one of those innate musicians. Things come quite naturally to him. He has a highly developed sense of rhythm. He has very good musical instincts,” she says. As a senior examiner for Royal Conservatory Examinations, she knows talent when she sees it. So when an email from the 2014 Juno Awards Host Committee landed in her inbox seeking performers, she immediately thought of Raymond.

“He’s such an extroverted kid that I thought he’d be perfect,” she says. “I’m what you’d call an opportunity seeker. When this came up, I thought, ‘Grab it.’”

Thanks to his high performance marks at the Winnipeg Music Festival earlier this month and stellar exam scores in school, Ryz believes Guerard has a bright future no matter where his studies take him.

For Raymond’s part, he’s at home behind the keyboard. He’s already establishing a style, favouring Romantic-era character pieces, preferably with an allegro tempo: fast, quick and bright.

“It’s just fun,” he says of playing piano. “I love the moods of the pieces.”

For now, he plans to see where his lessons take him. He’s practising 45 minutes to an hour a day, and is excited about future opportunities.

Ryz has been teaching piano for more than 30 years. Students like Raymond make it a joy.

“When you get three or four students in a row who haven’t practised carefully, it’s not a good day,” she says with a laugh. “Then you get someone as enthusiastic as Raymond, and the musical dialogue can be really rewarding.”
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JEREMIAH BROWN
Olympic Rower
2012 Silver Medal Winner
Royal Conservatory alumnus

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