

CON BRIO



Oregon Music Teachers Association, Inc.

Eugene District

Affiliated with the Music Teachers' National Association, Inc.



Opus 218

February 2011

page 1

Eugene District Meeting

Please join us on Monday, February 14th. Our district meeting will take place at *Mary Elma Shott's* home: 2235 Turnberry Court, Eugene. We will meet at 9:00 AM with a social time and refreshments provided by *Marti Csonka* and *Jean Wilson*.

After our business meeting we will be treated to a lecture and recital by one of our district members and a UO doctoral student, **Alexander Schwarzkoph**. He will be discussing and performing *17 Choreographical Etudes* by a contemporary German composer Falko Steinbach.

Delores Tiktin

Eugene District Vice-President & Program Chair

Spring Theme Recital

The Spring Theme Recital will take place on Sunday, April 10th at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Recitals will begin on the hour at 1:15 PM. The theme for this year is "Picture This." Repertoire may be chosen from any genre or time period. Memorization, as always, is encouraged but not required. Students are asked to create an original piece of artwork to complement the piece of music they will play. Artwork will be displayed during the recitals, and can be a drawing, painting, collage, comic strip, or other type of media, as long as it can be affixed to a piece of paper. Creativity is very much encouraged! Each piece of artwork should include the title of the student's piece, the student's first and last name, and age. The size of the artwork is not limited, but must be small enough to be delivered, along with entry forms, to myself. **The deadline for all forms, fees and artwork is Friday, March 25th. No late entries will be accepted.** Completed forms, fees and artwork should be sent to

Sarah Burch
586 Archie Street
Eugene, OR 97402

Sarah Burch

Eugene District Spring Theme Recital Chair

Oregon Junior Bach Festival - Regional Recitals

Sunday, February 20, 2011, Beall Hall, University of Oregon School of Music

Early Piano Actions

An understanding of the characteristics of early pianos is important to piano students, even if they only perform on a modern piano. An understanding of the instrument for which the composition was written helps them interpret the music more completely. Students and their families can also benefit from having a basic knowledge of the early pianos they may hear when they attend a recital. Unless there are program notes or the performer explains the characteristics of the early piano, the audiences can be distracted by the unfamiliar sound. A performance on an early piano can be enhanced when the listener is given some background on the instrument and how it affects performance of the repertoire.

When piano students understand the nature of early actions, the dynamic markings of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven make much more sense. Tempos are also influenced by the responsiveness of the different actions.

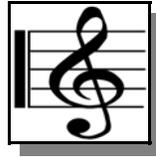
The earliest action of 1726 by Cristofori was a somewhat more complicated mechanism than the early English square piano of 1765. Cristofori had developed an action with a double lever, check and escapement, which solved the problem of controlling the hammer after it had struck the string. The hammer was made of rolled parchment topped with a thick single leather piece. A wooden hammer core proved to be more satisfactory by 1760, and is still used today. Felt was not used as a hammer covering until the middle of the 19th century.

The 1765 English square piano and the 1774 Viennese classic piano both had two strings per note, and used small wooden mallets with thin buckskin covers. The early English square piano by Johann Zumpe had no escapement control or check, while the Viennese classic piano by Andreas Stein had a check and a highly sensitive escapement.

Many of the Viennese pianos were not even as loud as the 18th century French harpsichords. The dynamic scope and volume of the English grands of 1800 was far greater than its Viennese predecessor, and it produced a somewhat more resonant bass and middle register. This instrument had a more sturdy wooden frame than the Viennese piano, producing an entirely different sound. It also had three strings per note which were struck by a broad, soft hammer covered with leather.

—continued on page 3

The deadline for submitting articles and announcements for the March 2011 issue of *Con Brio* is Saturday, March, 2011.



Con Brio

February 2011

Con Brio is the newsletter of the Eugene Chapter of OMTA, published and distributed monthly, except July and August.

President: Carolyn McHan

Corresponding Sec: David Cragun

Vice-President: Delores Tiktin

Recording Sec: Neil Patton

Treasurer: Wyatt Burger

Past President: Claire Wachter

Con Brio founder and first publisher: Lea Mirabella

All materials for publication are due on the Saturday preceding the first Monday of each month.

Con Brio is posted on the Eugene District website on the Wednesday prior to the monthly meeting.

Wyatt L. Burger, editor

Oregon Junior Bach Festival - State Recital

Sunday, March 6 in Hood River, Oregon

Announcing the second annual Beverly Soule Award Competition

Eugene District OMTA

This competition, to be held in May 2011, is open to high school seniors studying with Eugene District members. Its aim is "to encourage and reward deserving high school students...whether or not the applicant intends to continue his music studies after graduation." (Beverly Soule)

Contestants are to play three memorized pieces, each representing a different style period, for an adjudicator who will provide written comments on their performances. One winner will be named to receive the award of \$250. The winner will be invited to play his/her entire program at the June OMTA meeting. Any honorable mentions named will be invited to play one selection from their program.

The deadline for entries is April 10, 2011. It will be of help in scheduling if you can let me know in advance how many of your students are likely to participate. Date and time will be announced in early May.

Ellen McQuilkin

Competition Chair

Early Piano Actions—*continued from page 2*

Both the English and Viennese grands had responsive key actions, although the Viennese key dip was somewhat shallower and offered less key resistance. Both had fairly good escapement and control of the hammer after it produced the sound. Neither action was as completely reliable as that of a modern piano. The English action was more adjustable for evenness of control than the Viennese action; adjusting devices that allowed the technician to regulate the escapement and hammer were added to the Viennese piano years later.



Cristofori piano - 1726



English square piano built by Johann Zumpe

A pianist trained on a modern piano must adjust his touch when playing an early piano. For the early square piano a precise and articulate finger action with little or no arm weight is needed; the touch is the same as the one needed for the harpsichord. The action of the Viennese pianoforte also necessitates articulate finger movement, with some arm weight added for dynamic nuance. The finger movement is much more limited than a harpsichord touch, with the fingers closer to the keys. On an English grand the action requires a technique closer to that used on a modern piano. As with all early pianos, the release of the key must be concise and clean due to the single escapement of the hammer.

When using a modern piano to play music that was originally written for an early piano, it is helpful to envision the type of instrument for which the music was written. For example, Mozart and Haydn both preferred Viennese pianos (Mozart used a Stein piano, while Haydn liked pianos built by Schanz), so a pianist should remember to use a clean, well-articulated technique with a modest amount of dynamics. Beethoven, who owned pianos by Viennese, French, English, and German makers at various times, alternately expressed preferences for one instrument over another, but he proved to prefer whatever instrument functioned best for him at the time. He expressed delight with his Broadwood grand of 1817 but complained later about its mechanical condition.



Viennese piano by Andreas Stein

While it is possible for a pianist to achieve a good performance without knowledge of the internal workings of the keyboard, any performance will be better if the performer has some background about the instrument for which the composer wrote the music, and an understanding of the function of the actions of the early pianos.



Beethoven's Broadwood piano



Viennese fortepiano