



VOLUME 12 - ISSUE 2  
WINTER - DECEMBER 2015



# *Take Note . . .*



MANITOBA REGISTERED MUSIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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## Contents

4	President’s Message
5	MRMTA Executive 2014 - 2016
6	Calendar of Events
7	Celebrated Members
8	Masterclass with André Laplants
9	Important Dates and Information
10	Reviews of Workshops <i>Physicality Aspect of Playing Piano</i> <i>Mindful Movement for Musicians</i>
13	Why You Should Enter Students in the MRMTA Scholarship Competition
14	Canada Music Week®
15	Celebration of Canadian Music
19	Application for Young Artist
20	Maintaining our Boundaries, Our Health, and our Business
25	Please Support our Advertisers
25	Hello from the Editor



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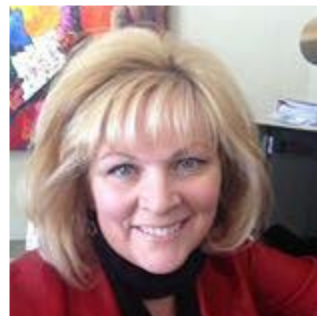
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# the President's Message



December 2015

Dear MRMTA Members,

We are deep into the new teaching year and what an exciting new season it has already proven to be! The MRMTA has already held its AGM, two workshops and our annual Canada Music Week® Concert both in Winnipeg and Brandon. A big thank you to the Committee Chairpersons for all of their hard work and dedication to making these events happen, and also to the volunteers who are coming out to help keep these programmes successfully running.

This edition of Take Note will give you a closer look at some of the events we've already held. September started with the 96<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, which means that time is flying as we get closer to our 100<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary. It's always a great occasion to congratulate colleagues on their long time membership with

this organization. We were thrilled to have Megan Dufrat performing for us and the concert was wonderful.

I'm very proud to say that the Pre-Diploma Group has been working hard to raise money and promote the upcoming Masterclass with Andre' Laplante on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016. You've seen them hard at work selling music at all of our events and this will continue throughout the year. Take advantage of cheap music for your new students or find those second copies for yourself!

Over the last year, we have seen the MRMTA work hard to eliminate the deficit. In fact, our last financial report shows that we are running our events with a surplus. This is very exciting and has come about with a lot of dedication from this executive.

With the Holiday Season already upon us and the lack of snow, student spirits seem to be high in the midst of the flurry of activities. The executive and I wish all of our colleagues a happy holiday this December and much well deserved rest over the winter break. Take some time out to peruse the website at [mrmta.org](http://mrmta.org), maybe finally set up your profile page and get those events written into your 2016 agenda from our calendar page with all of the upcoming events.

Sincerely,  
Tiffany A. Wilson (RMT, AMM, B.Mus.)  
President MRMTA

*The MRMTA 2015-16 Executive from left to right:*

*Top Row: Leanne Hiebert, Bernadette Geras, Norinne Danziger-Dueck, Kerrine Wilson, Elizabeth Rotoff, Gina Wedel, Mary Hawn*

*Front Row: Tiffany Wilson, Alanna Courtney, Betti Canning, Michele Leclerc*



## MRMTA EXECUTIVE 2014 - 2016

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VACANT

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VACANT

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[wkhamm@explornet.com](mailto:wkhamm@explornet.com)







# IMPORTANT DATES 2015/16

[www.mrmta.org](http://www.mrmta.org)

ph. 204-339-6768

[info@mrmta.org](mailto:info@mrmta.org)

(Leanne Hiebert)

DATE & TIME	EVENT & PLACE	CONTACT
Tuesday, December 1 <sup>st</sup>	Take Note Magazine <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Winter Issue submission deadline</li></ul>	Dina Pollock editor@mrmta.org
Thursday, Dec. 10 <sup>th</sup> 10:30-12:30	Winter Get Together Luncheon Viscount Gort -1670 Portage Ave \$25 per person	Kerrine Wilson by Dec 3 <sup>rd</sup> 204-489-5324 kerrinewilson@gmail.com
Tuesday, December 15 <sup>th</sup>	Deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MRMTA Scholarship Applications due</li></ul>	Margot Harding 204-416-5490 scholarships@mrmta.org
January 11	Deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Young Artist Competition</li></ul>	Virginia Heinrichs 426 Dowling E. Winnipeg, MB R2C 3M5
February 5-7 (Fri-Sun)	Musicthon The Forks Atrium	Gina Wedel 204-284-8806 registrar@mrmta.org
Sunday, Feb. 14 <sup>th</sup> 11-1pm	Pre-Diploma Masterclass with Andre Laplante Eckhardt-Gramatte Hall (U of W)	Michele Leclerc 204-253-1310 piano.mleclerc@icloud.com
Saturday, Feb. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Young Artist Concert Venue TBA	Virginia Heinrichs 204-222-5844 dongin@mts.net
April 1 <sup>st</sup>	Take Note Magazine <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spring Issue submission deadline</li></ul>	Dina Pollock editor@mrmta.org
March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Paper Scholarship Applications due</li></ul>	Eleanor Lwiwski 204-255-3403 elwiwski@shaw.ca
March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MRMTA Membership renewals due</li></ul>	Gina Wedel 204-284-8806 registrar@mrmta.org
April-5-7 (Tues-Th)	Scholarship Competition Sterling Mennonite Church (1008 Dakota)	Margot Harding 204-416-5490 scholarships@mrmta.org
Sunday, Apr 10 <sup>th</sup> Time TBA	Scholarship Gala Concert Sterling Mennonite Church (1008 Dakota)	As above- Margot Harding
April 9 <sup>th</sup>	Deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Student Composer Competition</li></ul>	Jane Duerksen 204-371-2128 janeduerksen@gmail.com
Sunday, May 1 <sup>st</sup>	MRMTA Gala Concert & Fundraiser for MRMTA's 100 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Westworth United Church (1750 Grosvenor Ave)	Elizabeth Rotoff 204-487-2190 vicepresident@mrmta.org
May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Holtby Scholarship Application</li></ul>	Tiffany Wilson 204-488-3325 president@mrmta.org
Sunday, May 15 <sup>th</sup> 2pm	Pre-Dip Workshop with Julianna Warkentin-Dick Teaching Composition & Improv 664 Nova Vista Dr.	Michele Leclerc 204-253-1310 piano.mleclerc@icloud.com
Sunday, June 26 3-5pm	President's June Wine- up 621 South Drive	Tiffany Wilson 204-488-3325 president@mrmta.org
August 1 <sup>st</sup>	Take Note Magazine <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fall Issue submission deadline</li></ul>	Dina Pollock editor@mrmta.org

# AGM - SEPTEMBER 2015

## MEGAN DUFRAT & CELEBRATED MEMBERS

At the 96<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, Megan Dufrat gave a beautiful repeat performance of her repertoire from the CFMTA/FCAPM National Piano Competition. She represented Manitoba this past summer at the Vancouver Conference and made us proud. Megan is a very sensitive artist whose gentle but firm touch on the keyboard fills the audience with a warm sensation and leaves them wanting to hear more. Brava Megan!

It was also award season at the AGM. A big applause goes to our celebrated members.

The event is importantly a celebration of members recognized for their longstanding involvement and membership with the MRMTA.

This year we recognizing the following members at the AGM on Sunday the 27th, 2015.

### 20 YEARS

Gwen Allison  
Joylynn Deeley  
Diane Hamilton  
Hilda Wagstaffe  
Jane Duerksen  
Ljiljana Farkas  
Charles Horton  
Vivian Klose  
Yvette MacDonell

### 30 YEARS

Diane Berger  
Lilian Buckler  
David Letkemann  
Heidi Peters  
Lois Watson-Lyons  
Rosalind Yeung

### 50 YEARS WOW!!

Lydia Wiebe



Megan Dufrat



Ljiljana Farkas



Joylynn Deeley



Heidi Peters



Clarence Falk (sponsor),  
Leanne Hiebert with raffle  
winner Evangeline Keeley





M.R.M.T.A.  
Pre-Diploma Group

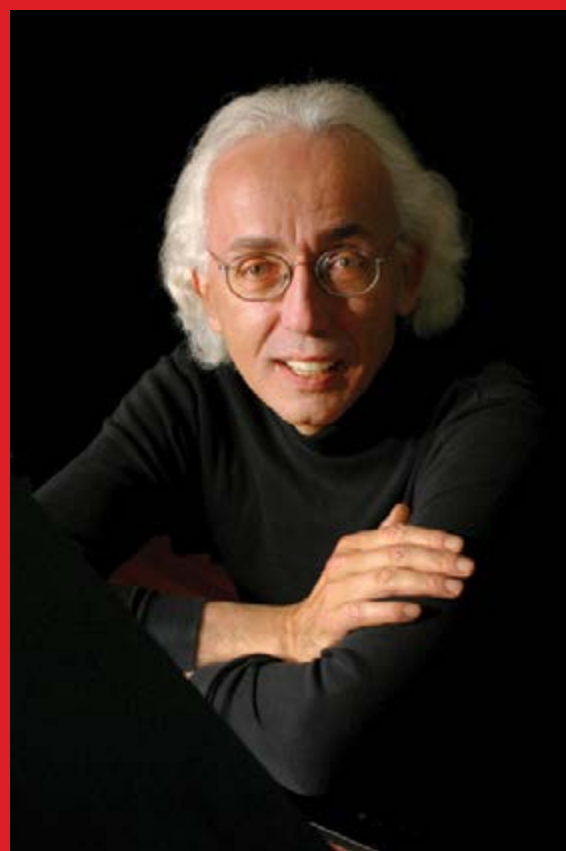


present

# MASTERCLASS

with

*André Laplante*



**Sunday, February 14th, 2016**  
**11:00 AM - 1:00 PM**  
**Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall,**  
**515 Portage Ave., Winnipeg**

**Admission:**  
**MRMTA Members \$5.00**  
**Non-Members \$15.00**  
Tickets available at the door  
or online at [www.mrmta.org](http://www.mrmta.org)

for more information:  
[www.mrmta.org](http://www.mrmta.org), or  
[piano.mleclerc@icloud.com](mailto:piano.mleclerc@icloud.com)

for information about  
André Laplante in concert  
February 13th:  
[www.virtuosi.mb.ca](http://www.virtuosi.mb.ca)

## IMPORTANT DATES AND INFORMATION

### MUSICTHON!!

See important information below. Get your spot early on Volunteer Spot!

Hello MRMTA Teachers,  
I have set up a VolunteerSpot to organize the Musicthon participation. There are three ways to sign up your students.

1) Click on the link below to sign up for a time slot,  
**OR**

2) Go to the website under Calendar - Musicthon and click on the Volunteer Spot button  
**OR**

3) Have parents of your students go to the website under Calendar - Musicthon and click on the Volunteer Spot button!

I set it up in 15 minute increments with 5 openings per time slot. This, of course, was an estimate as we know that some students will take up the entire 15 minutes. If you want to book an hour for your recital, sign up for four 15 minute increments and fill all 5 spots under the teacher's name. If you only have one student, pick a time and fill one spot... again, use the teacher name or student name.

All you have to use is your email address which is why parents can also use the Volunteer Spot button on the website.

Any questions, please feel free to contact me:

Gina Wedel, at [registrar@mrmta.org](mailto:registrar@mrmta.org).

Gina Wedel - MRMTA Registrar

Musicthon Event Organizer

We're using VolunteerSpot (the leading online Sign-up and reminder tool) to organize our upcoming Sign-ups.

Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

- 1) **Click this link** to see our Sign-Up on VolunteerSpot
- 2) Review the options listed and choose the spot(s) you like.
- 3) Sign up! It's Easy - you will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on VolunteerSpot.

Note: VolunteerSpot does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact me and I can sign you up manually.

### SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

Don't miss it! The deadline is Dec. 15th.  
All details on the website [www.mrmta.org](http://www.mrmta.org)

### PRE-DIPLOMA GROUP MASTERCLASS

with ANDRÉ LAPLANTE, OC  
February 14, 2016 (Sunday Afternoon)

Virtuosi Concerts is presenting pianist André Laplante, in concert on Saturday, February 13, 2016. MRMTA, with the collaboration of the Virtuosi Concerts, is proud to present the Pre-Diploma Group masterclass on the day following the concert, with this great master. This will be an amazing opportunity for the students of the Pre-Diploma Group to perform for him, and to receive his personal comments. Of course, as usual, all the members of MRMTA will be welcome to attend the masterclass.



**Happy Musical Holidays from the MRMTA!**

*Back Row: Liu Xueyan, Mavis Allison Green, Herb Pauls,  
Deborah Judith, Kerrine Wilson, Caron Whitlaw-Hiebert,  
Gina Wedel*

*Front Row: Elsie Machovec, Evangeline Keeley, Hilda Wagstaffe*





# REVIEWS OF WORKSHOPS

## PRE-DIPLOMA GROUP WORKSHOP: PHYSICALITY ASPECT OF PLAYING PIANO

Best regards, Michele Leclerc  
President of Pre-Diploma Group of MRMTA

On October 25th, the Pre-Diploma Group of MRMTA was hosting its first workshop of the season. The guest clinician was Caron Whitlaw-Hiebert, who did a

presentation about the physicality aspect of playing piano. Caron shared her long experience as a piano teacher with an audience of students and teachers who were invited to

participate interactively by trying different exercises at the piano. It was a learning experience for everyone, and a reminder of the importance of the action of our body, when we play piano: something we sometimes forget, as our brain focus on the music.

But most importantly, we need to transmit this physical consciousness to our students, in our everyday teaching. And Caron's workshop was very clear about that, from beginners level to advanced students. She covered so many aspects, from a better tone production to a deeper expression, using different composers, from Baroque to Contemporary repertoire.

It was a complete and detailed presentation, a practical approach, fun and informative. We all went back to our piano practice and our teaching the next day, keeping in mind that we have to be aware of our physical strength, and to use it with the right technique.

Thank you so much Caron for this wonderful workshop! Thank you to Virginia Heinrichs who kindly opened her house for that event. Caron is a member of MRMTA and you can reach her through our website, [www.mrmta.org](http://www.mrmta.org), or at the Preparatory Studies Department of the University of Manitoba, where she teaches Pedagogy. ✂

## REVIEW OF MINDFUL MOVEMENT FOR MUSICIANS WORKSHOP

Submitted by Alanna Courtney

On Sunday, November 8, clinician Mary Hawn led a workshop on yoga and qigong. In addition to teaching piano and theory, Mary Hawn is a certified yoga instructor with the Canadian Yoga Alliance and the overseas representative for the British Wheel of Yoga. In addition, having completed medical qigong certification, level one, she is continuing studies to achieve international certification in this discipline through Zen Wellness, Arizona.

For the first half of the workshop, a dozen participants were led through a flow of yoga exercises, focusing on body awareness and coordinating movements with the breath. It was a great reminder of the importance of stretching out the limbs and the spine following many hours spent at our instrument.

The second half of the workshop centered on qigong, an ancient Chinese health care system that integrates physical postures, breathing techniques and focused intention. The participants were introduced to a series of protocols, repeated physical movements accompanied by the breath, with image-evoking names such as Warrior with Fiery Eyes and Drawing the Bow and Letting the Arrow Fly.

We were introduced to the philosophy of the five elements: wood, earth, water, fire and metal, and incorporated physical movements into a series representing the interconnection between the five elements.

One particularly relaxing exercise bridged qigong and music notation. The five fingers and 4 webbings in between the fingers, analogous to the

five lines and four spaces on the staff, are used as visual and tactile markers for conscious breathing. Holding up one hand with fingers outstretched, the other hand is used to slowly trace upwards on a finger while inhaling and tracing downwards towards the webbing between the fingers on the exhale breath. After the five fingers of one hand are traced through 5 deep breaths, the other hand follows. What a practical exercise to use with students who come into their lesson frazzled from their busy day.

We were fortunate to have Mary share her knowledge, guidance and positive energy with us in this workshop. Participants left feeling both invigorated and deeply relaxed.

Thank you to Mary Hawn for leading the workshop and to Kerrine Wilson for arranging the venue. ✂





# Serata

## An Evening of Italian Delights

*Featuring teachers from the  
Manitoba Registered Music Teachers' Association*

Sunday, MAY 1, 2016

7pm at Westworth United Church

Tickets available at [www.mrmta.org](http://www.mrmta.org)

or at the door

Adults \$20.00

Students \$10.00

Fundraiser for the MRMTA 100th Year Anniversary and  
the CFMTA Convention in Winnipeg, 2019

## WHY YOU SHOULD ENTER STUDENTS IN THE MRMTA SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION!

Dates: 2016 April 5, 6 & 7<sup>th</sup> - Gala Concert on the 10<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.

Subsidized by MRMTA fees, this competition is open to students of the MRMTA teachers.

- A great experience to hone performance skills!
- Available for students from Junior (Grade 5 & 6), Intermediate (Grade 7 & 8), Senior (Grades 9 & 10), and advanced (ARCT or undergraduate level).
- Three different categories; Vocal, Instrumental and Piano.
- Constructive adjudications from a fresh set of eyes and ears!
- Low entry fees with the chance to win cash prizes.
- Voice Competition: For U of M teachers with senior or advanced vocal students interested in entering, the vocal competition date will be April 5th so as not to clash with the Zita Bernstein Lieder Competition and the Elly Ameling Masterclass!

Entry deadline is December 15th, 2015.

Application forms can be found online or for more information, look us up at [mrmta.org](http://mrmta.org)



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[elena1info@gmail.com](mailto:elena1info@gmail.com)



## Canada Music Week in Pictures!

Sunday Nov. 15, 2015

30 Performers came out to perform works by Canadian composers!!



Many students introduced themselves and their composers before performing and did a super job!



5 performances were original compositions by the performers.



There were singers and pianists and one pianist who sang (or is that 1 singer that played the piano?) Regardless, everyone had a great time; the performances were wonderful and heartfelt. 16 different teacher's studios were represented and a wide variety of music was heard. Cake of course was served to all of the deserving students, volunteers, teachers and fans!



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Bachelor of Arts (Music)

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**cmu.ca/music**





## Young Artist - For the Year 2016

NOTE TO TEACHERS OF ADVANCED STUDENTS - If you have promising young students who are considering a performance career - PLAN AHEAD.

The next Young Artist competition will be held on February 27, 2016.

An application form is available on our website.

This is a unique opportunity for young performers to test their abilities and experience the challenges of a concert artist.

Deadline for applications is January 11, 2016.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Virginia Heinrichs  
426 Dowling Avenue East  
Winnipeg, MB R2C 3M5

email: dongin@mts.net  
phone: 222-5855



## 2016 MANITOBA APPLICATION FORM

DEADLINE: JANUARY 11, 2016

ENTRY FEE: \$ 70.00



NAME OF APPLICANT (in full) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_

INSTRUMENT \_\_\_\_\_ VOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

(Soprano, Mezzo , Alto, Tenor, Baritone, Bass)

### TERMS:

1. Applicant must be a student of a member of the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Associations.
2. The minimum age will be 16 years, with the maximum age of instrumentalists being 25 and vocalist 27 years, as of December 31, 2015. (Please send a copy of birth certificate).
3. Applicant will prepare and submit to the provincial convener, a varied, balance program consisting of two major works plus a variety of shorter selections, not to exceed 45 minutes. (Minimum diploma level).
4. Successful applicant must be available for the tour, and fulfill the obligations of the contract.
5. The pianist must also be a competent accompanist, and may be required to assist a vocalist or instrumentalist in the event that another soloist is chosen for the tour.
6. Candidates should be suitably attired (not necessarily formal) for the competition.
7. The competition will be held on Saturday, February 27, 2016 in Winnipeg.
8. Time and location: TBA

### CURRENT TEACHER NAME:

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ BRANCH \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

### I, as applicant agree:

1. To comply with and to fulfill the obligations of the contract if I am selected,
2. That all information is correct,
3. That I have read the terms and conditions,
4. That my health is good.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT \_\_\_\_\_

This application along with the \$ 70.00 entry fee (non-refundable) is to be sent to the Young Artist Convener and must be received before the given deadline to:

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUE PAYABLE TO MRMTA

Virginia Heinrichs

426 Dowling Avenue East Winnipeg, MB R2C 3M5

### For the applicants under 18 years of age:

I, the parent/guardian of the above named applicant hereby acknowledge that I have read the above application and abide by the conditions.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN \_\_\_\_\_



# CELEBRATION OF CANADIAN MUSIC

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Composers and Kids event on Sunday, October 18, 2015 in Boissevain, Manitoba was a milestone celebration! Debra Wanless was our very first visiting composer and we were delighted to welcome her back for Year 10. Debra is a talented and enthusiastic composer, author and pedagogue from Holland Centre, Ontario. Approximately 40 students participated in this event, each performing one of the composer's pieces for her. The ensemble session was a big hit which included duets as well as a trio. Debra graciously posed for pictures, signed autographs and answered questions.



Many of Debra's piano compositions for students are published in the Northern Lights Canadian Piano series. For students, parents, grandparents and teachers it was an exciting day of sharing ideas and their love of music with Debra - wonderful musical memories that will last a lifetime!

Composers & Kids is a CNCM [Canadian National Conservatory of Music] event which promotes connecting Canadian composers with Canadian students across the country.

Participating teachers were: Dianna Neufeld [RMT], Dale Whetter, Jo-Anne Neufeld, Lara Mason [RMT] & Tenley Dyck [RMT].



# SILENCE IS GOLDEN

The Yamaha SILENT *Piano*™



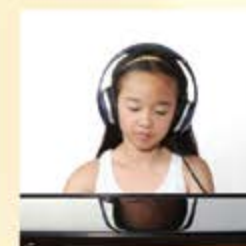
## Modern Musician

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## Home and Family

Entertain everyone with acoustic or digital performances with the ability to adjust the volume and sounds



## Study

Practising anytime, night or day, without disturbing others or being disturbed gives Silent Piano owners a huge advantage

Yamaha pianos.  
first choice of:





# MAINTAINING OUR BOUNDARIES, OUR HEALTH, AND OUR BUSINESS

by Marjory Purdy

Missed lessons  
require the  
clearest  
AND firmest  
boundaries . . .

One of the joys of teaching music is the personal relationship that develops between teacher, student, and family. Conversely, that same relationship can be potentially perilous because the amount of giving and caring by the teacher can lead to “burn-out”, particularly if the teacher’s generosity is taken advantage of in any way. The nurturing nature of teaching leads to familiarity, which can make it challenging to maintain sustainable personal and business boundaries. Yet, these boundaries are essential to preserve our physical health, our emotional health, our longevity, and ultimately, our business.

One of the most effective and essential components to maintaining boundaries is to have clear and concise studio policies in place. These policies need to be in writing, and it is helpful to review them verbally in an initial meeting with prospective clients. This interaction gives the teacher the opportunity to explain their policies and the reasons behind them. After reviewing the policies, it is important to have the parents or student sign the agreement. This process sets a professional tone for the relationship between teacher and client, and it can prevent many problems from arising in the future.

## WRITTEN AGREEMENT

There are several issues that need to be covered in a written studio policy agreement.

### Financial Matters

It is important to set fees high enough, so that lessons and the teacher’s time are both valued and appreciated. Also, it is effective to pre-collect fees for the year in the form of post-dated cheques, preferably in June before the summer break. Students are less likely to stop mid-year. To ensure a firmer commitment, it can be useful to collect a non-refundable deposit or registration fee to hold the lesson time for September. Students are then unlikely to book a time in the teacher’s schedule, just in case they might return in the fall. There also needs to be a simple statement in the agreement that the student or parent/guardian of the student will be responsible for any fees incurred by NSF cheques.

### Missed or Cancelled Lessons

In the agreement, missed lessons require the clearest and firmest boundaries because it can be one of the biggest headaches for teachers. There are several possible policies to handle this issue.

1. The teacher can offer a make-up lesson, if the student gives 24-hour notice or there is a sudden illness/emergency. (Unfortunately in my experience, this policy can easily be abused.)

2. The teacher can set aside one or two scheduled weeks per year to make-up lessons missed by either the teacher or the student.
3. The teacher offers no make-ups for lessons missed by students for any reason including sickness and pre-planned trips.

I have taught in different institutions that employed each of these policies, and there are advantages and disadvantages to each. When I set up my own studio, I chose to offer no make-up lessons for any reason. This policy is aligned with other activities in which children participate. For example, my two children have never been offered a make-up class or lesson for any of their non-music activities. Additionally, students who attend private school do not receive “make up” days or classes for absences. Families do not expect this service from the schools. So, why is it expected of music teachers?

Unfortunately, this policy can sometimes result in sick children attending lessons. Therefore, it is important to communicate that ill students do not learn, and when they attend lessons, other children or the teacher may get sick.

Most teachers offer extra activities or “value-added” services for their students during the year in the form of recitals or other performance

opportunities. These activities, in essence, compensate for missed lessons. Students can also trade lesson times, but the student or parent needs to do the rearranging. Then, families realize they are doing each other a favour, not the teacher. It is essential for privacy reasons to check with students, if it is permissible to share their phone numbers or emails.

In choosing a policy, it is useful to consider your needs. If you require flexibility, the one or two scheduled make-up weeks a year is a good choice. If you choose the no make-up lesson policy, then you need to adhere to your schedule so that you model the dedication you desire from your students.

There also needs to be a policy for lessons missed by the teacher. Usually, it is a lesson credit or a make-up lesson at a mutually agreeable time.

### Lateness

Lessons, which start late due to a student’s late arrival, need to end at the scheduled time. The main reason for this policy is that other families’ schedules will be affected if the teacher is behind time. It can be difficult if it is the last student that is late; but it is still important to end the lesson punctually. It is the best “cure” for the habitually late student.

## Lesson Cancellation Policy

A lesson cancellation policy is necessary in the written agreement between teacher and student. Generally, most teachers and institutions require either 2 or 4 weeks notice for cancellation. I also communicate to parents both verbally and in the written agreement, that I will stop the lessons if there is any type of abuse, excessive rudeness, disrespect or dangerous behaviour. Therefore, it is absolutely clear that they must be respectful of my home, my family, and me.

No matter how good the teacher, he or she is not right for every student. So in the initial meeting with clients, I ask them to let me know if they are unhappy with the lessons. That way if the student needs a different teacher, I can recommend a teacher that may be a better fit. This discussion opens a road of communication for the future, and it is better for the child and my business if the relationship can end on a positive note.

Some students request to take “a break” for trips. They do not want to be charged for the weeks they are away. I explain to clients that if they do not honour our agreement by paying for these lessons, they forfeit their place in my schedule the following year because I could put another student in my timetable; one would attend and pay for the whole year. After all, it is not my responsibility to subsidize their trip.



# MAINTAINING OUR BOUNDARIES, OUR HEALTH, AND OUR BUSINESS - CONT.

## INNER BOUNDARIES AND TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

In addition to the written studio policies, there are other issues that involve inner boundaries or teaching philosophy.

### Extra Lessons

Many instructors teach extra lessons to students before performances or exams. Often, the students who need these lessons are the students who do not practice regularly, and therefore require the most patience. The extra effort to maintain patience can be draining, and it can lead to “burnout” over the course of a whole teaching year. From a pedagogical perspective,

the teacher is enabling the student. Students learn that if they procrastinate, the teacher will rescue them; therefore, the students do not fully experience the consequences of their actions. I generally offer extra lessons only to students who have worked hard and have earned the lesson.

**ALWAYS** use a professional tone and wording

## Rate of Student’s Progress

At times, teachers feel pressured by parents to advance students before they are ready. It is ethically and morally imperative that the teacher does what is right for the student. It may mean the instructor loses the student, but a teacher’s first responsibility is to take care of the child. Also from a business perspective, the teacher will not have the poor optics of students who are struggling to play in the higher grades because they do not have a solid base of learning.

## Communication

Communication is essential for adhering to policies and to maintaining a successful business relationship with clients. I find it helpful and less frustrating to view myself as an educator of the parent. It is easy to assume that the parents realize the impact or consequences of their request or action, but most often they do not.

There are different forms of communication. In-person conversations at lessons are effective for quick things or issues that require discussion. Email is effective for issues that clients need to digest or issues that are exasperating to the teacher. However, there are some guidelines for these emails.

1. Take some time, think things over, and cool down before writing the email.
2. Always use a professional tone and wording.
3. Let the email sit for at least a day, and if possible, have another person read it before sending.

For really serious issues involving a student (for example, emotional issues), an in-person meeting with parent, teacher, and student is required.

When communicating with parents, teachers sometimes worry that if they assert themselves, they may lose the student or business. It is a good idea to maintain a “buffer zone” by having a few more students than you need to

manage financially. Then, you are not forced to depend on a problematic client for monetary reasons, nor will you be in difficulty if students stop due to unforeseen circumstances. By choosing to keep a difficult client, there is less space in your schedule to accept a more stress-free family in the future.

The most difficult aspect of being assertive is balancing concern for the student verses boundaries with parents. Ultimately, your health and well-being must come first because you are **not** an effective teacher, if you are worn out or frustrated. Also, you have a responsibility to be at your best for your other students.

### Implementing a Change

When implementing a change to your studio policy, it is important to give advance notice. If you plan a change for the fall, let clients know in the spring. If they dislike it, they then have time to find another teacher. Explain the change and the reason, both verbally and in writing. For example:

*I have noticed this year that there has been an increase in missed lessons. These missed lessons are affecting the students’ progress and my ability to teach them effectively because the continuity of lessons and practice is being interrupted. Also, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fit make-up lessons into my schedule. Therefore, I am implementing the following policy: **Insert chosen policy.***

*Please understand that this change is for the benefit of the students’ progress, and it maximizes my effectiveness as a teacher.*

It is helpful to have some planned responses for unreasonable verbal requests that may come later from clients. For example:

1. “This is how I earn my living and you have a prime time spot. I need students who will consistently attend and pay for these lessons. I have a family to support.”
2. If a parent asks, “You have time on Sunday, don’t you?” You could answer, “That is my family day.” Or alternatively, “I have another commitment at that time.” (That commitment may be a cup of tea in your living room, but down time is a commitment to yourself!)
3. “Students book a time with me, and that is your time. It is not reasonable to expect me to adjust my personal life to fit your schedule changes. Would you be happy if your employer asked you to come in on your day off to work for just 45 minutes?”

Whatever the response, keep your tone pleasant and your face open. Be firm, and look the client in the eye.

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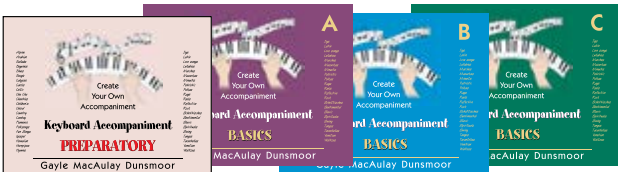


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# MAINTAINING OUR BOUNDARIES, OUR HEALTH, AND OUR BUSINESS - CONT.

## Asking a Client to Leave the Studio

Unfortunately (and thankfully only very occasionally), despite our best efforts, some clients are chronically demanding and/or unreasonable. The only option may be to ask them to leave the studio. There are some guidelines that can help you to do this difficult task in a professional manner.

1. Finish your commitment to the student.
2. Give clients lots of warning and the reason for ending the business relationship.
3. Remain non-confrontational.
4. Stay away from anything personal.
5. Use “I” statements, and avoid statements that start with “you”.

**In conclusion**, if all teachers have similar policies, then clients have little choice. They must accept them because the majority of teachers use them consistently and uniformly.

Unfortunately, the music profession is sometimes not viewed as an acceptable way to earn a living, but it should be. We share something that is unique, truly special, and life changing for our students. How many people can say that about their job? We must value ourselves and what we do, then other people will too.

Effective and well-maintained boundaries actually benefit both teachers and students. If we take care of ourselves, we are better able to take care of our students. Our

teaching is of a higher quality because we are less exhausted and less “burnt-out”. We are protecting our physical health and emotional reserves. Additionally, well-maintained boundaries equal excellent business practices. Many of us are self-employed, and it is important to protect our earning power. We have no benefits or pension plan, and there are limited “prime time” hours in which to earn our living.

Good business practices ensure higher quality teaching for our students, greater job satisfaction for us, and more respect for our profession. It is beneficial for everyone. Ultimately, it is our responsibility to create the atmosphere we desire in our workplace. We are the professionals, and we are in charge.



*Marjory Purdy (BMus, MMus) is a teacher, adjudicator, and clinician who teaches students of all ages in Coquitlam at her home studio and at Place des Arts. She also supervises several junior teachers and specializes in pedagogy for new and established teachers.*



Marjory Purdy was one of the presenters at the CFMTA/FCAPM 2015 Conference in Vancouver. Her session was well attended and I had requests to include an article in the magazine on this topic - Enjoy!!

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## HELLO FROM THE EDITOR

*Dina Pollock*

Hello Everyone,

I hope you are all well and are enjoying the holiday season with family and friends.

What would you like to see in Take Note? More articles, interviews. . . What can I do to make this magazine more of a tool for you? I am always looking for ideas of what you would like to see in the magazine, so if you have any, please send them to me.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Thanks, Dina



