

Assessment of Students Taking the Piano Proficiency Exam

Of forty-three students taking the piano proficiency examination forty-one students passed, thus demonstrating well their competence in playing the piano. They completed the piano requirement. The other students were asked to study another semester to gain more proficiency in their weak areas before taking the exam again.

All students completed four levels of piano curriculum and progressed from little background in keyboard theory, sight reading, transposition, harmonization, improvisation, playing by ear, and music technology to a solid understanding and sufficient piano skill. These piano skills are important for use in their music careers.

Assessment forms rated concepts of understanding of key signatures, ear for harmony, sensitivity to interpretation, consistent use of good technique/fingering, accuracy of rhythm and notes, and continuity of pulse. Students were especially capable this year. The ratings for students follow:

33 students scored between 26 to 30 out of a possible 30 points.

8 students scored 22 to 25 with weaknesses noted in accuracy, harmony and key understanding.

2 students related below 19 (one is not a music major.) These students rated average to below average in all areas.

The piano class faculty and graduate teaching assistants are doing an excellent job of preparing students for the proficiency exam. Faculty will be alerted to planning lessons that help students focus on harmony, key understanding, and accuracy, the weaknesses noted above for some of the students.

A new Yamaha Clavinova Piano Laboratory was installed during spring break. Students and faculty received this state-of-the-art technology with enthusiasm. One part of the exam requires the student to play an accompaniment with a soloist, which was played by a jury member on a second piano with a flute setting. The musical sound contributed the students performing better on this skill of sight reading an accompaniment than they had in the past.

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Professor of Piano Pedagogy and Class Piano

May 17, 2007



Wichita State University Music Jury Performance Assessment Rubric

Fall/Spring: Spring

Year: 2007

Inst./Voice : Piano
Proficiency

Mus. Ed./Mus.

Perf.: _____

Course #
MusA116P

myWSU

ID: _____

Student: _____

Instructor: _____

	<i>Outstanding</i>	<i>Above Average</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Below Average</i>	<i>Not Acceptable</i>	<i>Score</i>
Scale	5	4	3	2	1	
	Excellent knowledge and skill with key signatures	Good knowledge and skill with a few mistakes	Inconsistent knowledge and skill	Poor understanding and skill with key signatures	Key understanding is not evident	
Harmony	5	4	3	2	1	
	Excellent ear for harmony	Good ear for harmony with a few incorrect choices	Some difficulty with harmonic choices	Much difficulty with harmonic choices	Lacks harmonic understanding	
Interpretation	5	4	3	2	1	
	Musical, sensitive, artistic use of style, tempo, phrasing & dynamics	Consistent use of expressive elements	Inconsistent use of expressive elements	Lacks meaningful expression much of the time	Notes are performed with little meaningful expression	
Technique/Fingering	5	4	3	2	1	
	Technique elements are consistent throughout the performance	Strong use of technique with some occasional inconsistencies	Inconsistent technique that obviously detracts from the performance	Minimal evidence of technical proficiency	Technique is clearly inadequate for this performance	
Rhythms/Notes	5	4	3	2	1	
	Rhythms and/or notes are performed correctly	Most rhythms and/or notes are performed correctly	Inconsistent rhythmic and/or note accuracy	Many rhythms and/or notes are performed incorrectly	Rhythm and/or note accuracy is clearly inadequate	
Continuity	5	4	3	2	1	
	Pulse is consistent throughout	Pulse is fairly consistent even with a few mistakes	Pulse is inconsistent	Pulse stops often to correct inaccuracies	Pulse is clearly inadequate	

Pass 80%,
24 points

Signature of Adjudicator

**TOTAL
SCORE**

ADJUDICATOR COMMENTS:

VOICE AREA ASSESSMENT – SPRING 2007

Out of 103 juries 5 students took an incomplete due to illness. The freshman class rated better than average in talent, average in stage presence and interpretation. Sophomores and Juniors rated above average in stage performance. Performance majors in the Sophomore and Junior classes rated excellent/above average in tonal production and linguistic ability.

Senior Music Education students rated above average in tone production while Senior Performance majors rated outstanding or above average in all areas.

Graduate vocal students were rated excellent or above average in all areas.

All students who sang a jury passed.

Assessment of the Organ Jury Performances

Seven students met in Wiedemann Recital Hall at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 10, 2007, to play their organ juries for their teacher, Ms. Lynne Davis, and four piano faculty: Coats, Fear, Reed, and Trechak. The evening time was all that was left after the hall had been used for voice, string and woodwind juries during the daytime. The organ juries were performed as a recital and all of the students heard each other.

Of the seven students, two were advanced piano majors taking secondary organ study, two were graduate level non-music majors, and three were upper-division organ majors (one of these is attempting a double-major with composition, the other two are double-majoring with piano performance).

The literature that was performed was well-graduated in difficulty fitting the abilities and experience of the students. Because of the centennial year of the birth of French organist Jean Langlais, four students played compositions by him. Three students played Bach preludes; two students played movements of Mendelssohn organ sonatas; Bruhns, Schumann, Boellman and Alain were also represented. All of the literature chosen was of excellent didactic quality for developing technique, musical phrasing and choice of registration.

Ms. Davis, the organ teacher, having lived, studied and taught in France for thirty-five years, brings a rich heritage of literature to our school. In fact, she had studied with the sister of the composer Jehan Alain.

The organ jury-recital was very well received by the non-organ piano faculty. The students were very well prepared. It is obvious that they have a high respect for their teacher, the literature and the instrument. On the other side, the teacher has high regard for the students, appreciates their strong piano background, and has a well-knit collegiality built up among her students.

The positiveness of the current organ program is a drastically improved change from recent years. With the extreme usage of Wiedemann Recital Hall, it is very difficult for the students to practice and have lessons on the great instrument – as well as to expect the teacher, a world-class organist, to prepare programs for recitals, concert tours, demonstrations, etc.

Respectfully submitted by

Paul Reed

Director of Keyboard Studies

Assessment of the Piano Jury Performances

The Keyboard Area maintains the policy of requiring performance juries (examinations) for all students enrolling in studio applied piano. The secondary students of the Graduate Assistants, Adjunct Teacher and regular Faculty play for full-time faculty, perform on a jury-recital, or take the piano proficiency test administered by the Class Piano teachers. The few students excused from juries were for reasons of having performed a public required degree recital during the semester, already having a Master's degree, personal dire circumstances, being out of town with an athletic team at the set time of a jury, or being enrolled as an audit student.

The four graduate assistant students taught a total of thirty-six students. These were heard in Mid-Term and Final examinations by Reed and Trechak, adding to their over-load of teaching. The Graduate Teaching Assistants did an excellent job in preparing these students whose abilities ranged from absolute beginners to having about ten years of training.

Mrs. Fear organized the jury-recital for about nine non-music major and secondary music majors. The students were heard and graded by Mrs. Fear and one Graduate Teaching Assistant. The jury grade, as averaged from the different teachers, counts as one-third of the final grade; the rest of the grade is given by the studio teacher. Mrs. Fear reported that this was one of the best presented recitals in recent semesters.

Of the sixteen piano students enrolled as graduate students, nine played a jury. As a group they were very well prepared and the jury functions as a recital for the jurors to hear and grade. Reed, Trechak and Coats heard all of them and were joined by Mrs. Fear to hear her one graduate student. The group of graduate students is quite diverse: 8 are full-time piano major students, 1 was a composition major, 2 were public school teachers, 2 are college teachers, 1 is a private piano teacher with an MME degree, retired from the public schools, 1 works in a pharmacy, 1 is a secretary taking piano for audit. This year there were two students as piano pedagogy majors who played graduate degree recitals and 1 student, a pedagogy major, opted to do the three-hour public workshop on a piano pedagogy topic.

The undergraduate students were divided between the following programs: Bachelor of Music with emphasis in Piano Performance, Piano Pedagogy, with a minor in Business, Bachelor of Music Education, and Bachelor of Arts (with few hours of required applied music counting towards the degree and no required senior recital). A few students are trying to work towards getting a double major with another instrument or voice. This is not a recommended option. This past December after the Fall 2006 juries, we had to advise two students out of trying to do double majors in piano performance and music education. They simply did not use the time to practice in order to build technique and repertoire.

The quality of practice instruments are better than they used to be in that now we have some old grand pianos with which the piano majors can work. However, there never seems to be the budget or time for the technician to keep them in top playing condition. There are so many performances for which the technician must prepare the pianos in the concert halls that he can never catch up with maintenance of the work-a-day instruments. And the condition of the up-right pianos for non-piano majors in the practice rooms is horrible. It is a wonder that we attract any students to our university at all. As long as there is no budgeting plan for replacing and maintaining the instruments, there will always be a situation of going “down hill”.

I will list five general weaknesses of our faculty and students that need to be corrected by more careful planning by teachers in cooperation with the students:

1. Students do not perform enough, or soon enough, in each semester. We have Master Classes, Piano Repertoire Classes and Studio Recitals on which our students do not make use of the performance opportunities. The students indicate that they want to be performance majors, or preparing degree recitals, but they do not work towards playing. Probably they are not practicing enough.
2. The repertoire is too confined to the classical and romantic literature. Especially lacking is the usage of literature from the Post-Impressionistic era. True, this music is more difficult to understand and to learn, takes longer to prepare, etc., but to be educated musicians, we must be better rounded in our knowledge of performance practices.
3. We, as teachers, must be guiding our students in systematically building their playing technique and sight-reading abilities. The instrumentalists in other areas are doing this all of the time so that their students can pass orchestra-band auditions. Of course, they practically refuse to memorize much music. But the pianists are drawing a blank in this area.
4. Recital and competition preparation take away from the time a student has for learning new literature. The degree requirements must come first, but they are not incompatible.
5. With the new emphasis of chamber music in our school, there is too much involvement in collaborative performance at the expense of precision, exactitude, solo polish and learning new solo literature. We had six pianists enter the Nafztger Auditions this year (Congratulations!). But none of them reached the finals because they have been too involved with too many other performances, including accompanying other pianists in the Nafztger Auditions. This does not impress a judge who feels that the event is not important enough of a priority to produce the student’s best efforts.

Comments from the faculty sitting on juries included: clarity, facility, improved control and memory security, concentration, excellent jury preparation, rhythmic vitality, good dynamic contrast, expressive playing, improved tone production, sense of style, articulation, etc. While these comments were stated in a positive way for a majority of

students, they were stated as being lacking for the other students. Repeatedly I found students not using their understanding of harmonic analysis as an aid for memory security. Sometimes the concentration on a technical passage destroys the musical phrasing. Again, the students do not practice enough and in the right way. If a student plans what he will achieve in a practice session before he begins, the goal will be reached. In a Wichita State University catalog some years ago, I read that if a student is enrolled for four hours credit, then he must practice a minimum of four hours every day.

In order for a piano major to graduate the student must attain the Proficiency Level of 400. This has nothing to do with the Class Piano Proficiency Test. These are levels of ability and attainment. Of the fifteen undergraduate students playing juries: two advanced to the 400 level, one moved to 300, four moved to the 200 level (by passing the Class Piano Proficiency Exams), one student will stay at 400 (this is the highest level), four students will stay at 300 (one must finish the Junior Recital), two stay at the 200 level (one has not completed his concerto assignment and did not pass the Junior barrier test), and one student stays at 100 (he has not completed the Class Piano Proficiency Exam). In the past there has been a “slip-shod” attitude to let students through when they should not be passed on to the next level.

The undergraduates produced one senior recital and one junior recital this year. Both were very well performed.

Respectfully submitted by

Paul Reed

Director of Keyboard Studies