

Letter from the editors

As an international journal dedicated to piano-specific research, we are pleased to receive and publish, after blind peer review, research originating from numerous countries. This issue, the second of volume 1 of the *Journal of Piano Research*, includes articles by authors from Australia, China, and the United States. Regardless of origin, we know that these topics and ideas will resonate with pianists throughout the world. Three of the articles included in this issue explore experiences of undergraduate or early-career pianists, while a fourth article discusses the discovery of a little-known performance practice exhibited by Prokofiev in his own recordings of his solo piano works.

Rachel Hahn explores how music majors adjust and adapt to the rigors of university-level training through research involving music majors in the group-piano classroom in “Adaptation processes in undergraduate group piano.” Hahn notes that students who adapt to university successfully, tend to have better academic, performance, and wellness outcomes than those who adopt maladaptive practices or who are unable to make positive adaptations early in their university careers. As an entree into exploring the topic of adaptation to music school, Hahn conducted a phenomenological study of students enrolled in group piano classes, a common first-year music experience in the United States. She reports that preparedness, value, priorities and expectations, and support systems were important themes amongst students who adapted well in her study. The ensuing discussion offers insights into how group piano study can become an important tool to help students develop transferable musical strategies and how the community of peers can provide social support, among other suggestions for researchers and educators.

Xi Chen, in “Keys to the future,” reports on how practice proficiencies and attitudes among piano majors may impact perceived career trajectories. Within the context of Chinese universities and conservatories, Chen identified various dimensions of practice quality and engagement and first explored whether those differed between first- and second-year students, and third- and fourth-year pianists. Dimensions of practice explored through a survey included aspects of practice strategy usage, self-regulation, self-efficacy, support from other pianists, teachers, and family, and attitudes about practicing the piano. In the article, Chen discusses how third- and fourth-year pianists were less enamored with practicing than peers in the first two years of tertiary piano study. Then, the author explores possible connections between the identified dimensions of practice and students’ expectations about their career goals beyond graduation. Chen highlights how self-reported responses about self-regulation, self-efficacy, perceived support, and enjoyment of performing may have influenced students’ career aspirations, such as pursuing additional advanced study, performing, school music teaching, and/or business careers in music.

Urbaniak and Mitchell's article, "Learning expert stagecraft," elucidates how two of their studies have prepared pianists for positive performance outcomes. In the first study, the authors reported that expert performers they interviewed visualized performances, choreographed entrances, developed appropriate body language, maintained what they dubbed "The King" mindset prior to and during performance, and prepared by running mock trials before performances. Using these five findings as "pedagogical tools" that undergirded a series of workshops, the second study explored how eight early career pianists practiced and improved upon performance or "stagecraft" skills. We suspect that the discussion and insights shared by Urbaniak and Mitchell will be of interest to undergraduate pianists and teachers who work with young performers. We can imagine, also, how results from these three articles might be tested by other researchers in different contexts and with larger numbers of participants to expand our understanding of the findings and possible implications for instructional practice.

In "The surge effect in Sergei Prokofiev's piano performances," Joshua McCusker analyzes how Prokofiev manipulated *tempi* of his piano works in historical recordings and explores the implications of such findings for contemporary pianists. In particular, McCusker focused on what he termed the "surge effect," or the deliberate acceleration in passages with fast-moving passagework, not indicated on the score. Through a thorough analysis of twelve of Prokofiev's solo recordings from 1932–1935, using a respected software program, the author provides specific examples of the surge effect and references beat-duration measurements (available in open datasets for further exploration and study). McCusker concludes that Prokofiev's use of the surge effect was deliberate, he indicates the purpose of employing this musical effect, and he offers reasons that today's performers may wish to consider it when interpreting Prokofiev's piano solos.

While we knew that there was a need for a publication that featured high-quality research specifically on piano-related topics, we have been heartened by the number of articles that we continue to receive since the launch of the *Journal of Piano Research*. We thank our Editorial Board and expert peer reviewers, who have provided thoughtful and thorough commentary to the authors. We encourage you to visit our website regularly to stay abreast of newly published Online First articles and explore past issues of the *Journal of Piano Research*, online or in print. Our hope is that the research in this publication enhances your performance and teaching, in addition to providing fodder for your ongoing and upcoming piano-related research projects.

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