

# THE F·J·H MUSIC COMPANY INC.

## THE PIANO ADVENTURES® TEACHER

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## From the Editor

BY MARIENNE USZLER

Summer time ... and the livin' is easy". I'm not sure George (and Ira) got that quite right. Yes, we try to plan for some space in which we can escape from our usual routines and schedules. But summer is still a busy time for most piano teachers who need to generate income, as well as keep student interest and practice from shrinking—if not vanishing—while students, too, take “time out”. For teachers, summer is also quite often when they plan to catch up on any number of professional tasks that have slipped through the cracks or had to be postponed until they could arrange some breakaway hours.

“Time” is a major item in most of our lives. Everything around us conspires to convince us that saving time is a principal goal if we are to be happy, successful, and admired. The urge to beat the system and get ahead without spending “time” is captured perfectly by Caulfield, the eight-year-old in the school where Frazz is the janitor-philosopher. (I trust you read cartoons every morning, as I do.) Caulfield's complaint? “Nearly four years of school. That's seven-or-eight-hundred days. Occasional special events to attend. And countless hours of homework and reading. You'd think there'd be some sort of first class I could upgrade to!”

It is certainly one of the aims of this newsletter to help you “upgrade to first class”. But that may not always be linked with skipping steps, or getting someplace without reflection. The How-To articles offer ready-made plans for presenting a piece, in that way saving you time. But they hope to inspire a careful examination of the score, challenging you to dig deeper, think through strategies, and take a few creative risks. This is more a matter of time well spent than of taking shortcuts.

Using software to complement your teaching, as Sandra Bowen notes, stretches your time with students even though you do not directly oversee their work at the computer. They enjoy the rhythm, ear training, and notation programs because the graphics are entertaining and the learning style allows them to move at their own speeds. (You'll always have a few Caulfields who'll want to race to the finish line.) Although it may

take you a bit of extra time to check through the programs yourself and follow up on student progress, Sandra reminds you that by teaching and drilling certain concepts, software frees you to do the “human” things. Again, time well spent.

In her morality story, Barbara English Maris cautions against taking the “You're Fired” approach. The damage done by focusing only on winners devalues what is important about the *process* of reaching for goals. The non-competitors and also-rans are not wasting time—theirs or ours. Those who move slowly and, perhaps, never reach the top of the ladder have nonetheless learned to climb. They have a bigger, richer view than if they never took the first step up. The time they spend—and the time you spend with them—marks a growth as quiet and steady as that found in nature. We do need “all those trees”.

In the last issue, I suggested that Randall Faber's discussion on how to “play fast” could be compared to achieving and sustaining a sensible, healthy lifestyle. Among other things, it is a matter of balancing quick moves with parallel moments of relaxation. Now, at Level 4, the focus is on lyric playing, being expressive, shaping a melody. To give each note meaning is to be able to sing without words. Here, too, there is a life counterpart. Is there “heart” in what we do and say, or just efficiency and accuracy? Do we appreciate the small, quietly humming moments, or only the passionate outbursts? What, in fact, do we really communicate?

Even though our “livin” may not be easy this summer, George gave us a melody that unequivocally reflects a relaxing mood and tempo. May we savor a bit more “hush” and “lull” and feel a lot less “push” and “zoom”. We hope you are all having a lyrical summer!

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### Faber Piano Institute Grand Opening

Our cover tells the story. The Faber Piano Institute opened with a grand celebration! A few years ago, Nancy and Randall Faber, with daughter Vivian, moved from Nashville to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where they met and where they first developed Piano Adventures®. To give back to the local community, they purchased the former Loving Branch Library and have renovated it to top aesthetic and acoustical specifications. Although piano will be the main focus, the Institute will incorporate chamber music, teacher training, and the educational use of technology into its curriculum.

Most importantly, the Faber Institute will serve the broad community of piano teachers. As you plan your own programs, whether in North America or abroad, please let us know how we can best serve you, your school, and your students.

For video of the Grand Opening party, see [www.faberinstitute.org](http://www.faberinstitute.org) or [www.PianoTeaching.com](http://www.PianoTeaching.com).