

## **"It's About Time"**

Dear colleagues,

In this issue, I hope you won't mind a short departure from our usual repertoire discussion. With the new year and holiday break so recently behind us, I know you have noticed that many newspapers and magazines have bombarded us with articles on resolutions: "Organize your life," "Commit to a new You," "Ten steps to .....whatever!" Each of us has huge obligations to ourselves and our families, as well as our students. It is a constant juggling act to keep our personal and career obligations in balance. Do we ever have enough **time** to do everything we want to do? No one can gain **more time**, but each of us wants to use it to the best advantage.

### **Lesson Time**

When my studio was filled with 30 – 50 students, my biggest struggle was not scheduling, choosing repertoire, or record-keeping. It was simply fighting the 30 minute lesson clock! Try as I might, I just could not fit all the necessary components into that short time slot.

After too many years of stress (I'm not a quick learner), I chose to teach only lessons of 45 minute duration. One semester in advance, I gave written notice to parents. I outlined reasons for my decision and noted the additional progress I believed students would make. Because the lesson cost would increase, it was critical to build support for this change. We also openly discussed the new format at individual student/parent conferences during the semester. This proved to be a successful improvement and one that parents wholeheartedly approved.

This worked for a number of years, but was still confining as my students grew older and their repertoire grew longer and more demanding. At this point in my career, I am teaching only 60 minute lessons. **Time** is one of our greatest resources and can be used in so many ways!

Independent teaching is wonderfully adaptable and flexible. Is the thirty minute time slot stressful for you because it is too short? Perhaps you will consider group or partner lessons of longer time lengths. Whichever format you choose, you will be rewarded by having **more time** with each of your students.

### **Planning Time**

My studio work is organized around three time periods - fall semester, winter/spring semester and summer term. At each break, I set aside **time** to think about each student and their needs and goals. I keep an ongoing notebook with a list of books and repertoire, technique and complete lesson plans for each student. This creates an easy review for past work, plus evaluation for the new term.

First, I jot down plans for areas of improvement. Examples could be "sight-playing" or "rhythmic" progress. I think of a variety of ways to accomplish these achievements, being specific in outlining small steps of work at each lesson and in home practice.

Additionally, I plan for each student's performance opportunities for the semester. For instance, in the current winter/spring semester, each student will perform two contrasting solos for Music Progressions and for the studio recital. In most cases, the repertoire is chosen well in advance (during planning) so that adequate preparation can be achieved, especially for memorization.

It is challenging and rewarding to know that through planning, creativity and a small amount of **time** at each lesson, appreciable progress is possible. It is **time well spent** in preparation for a win-win outcome. Happy teaching!

DeeAnn Brown, January, 2007