

# PIANO

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE STUDIO OF DR. JOVANNI-REY DE PEDRO

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO'S LIONEL HAMPTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC

[www.jdepedro.com](http://www.jdepedro.com) | [jdepedro@uidaho.edu](mailto:jdepedro@uidaho.edu)

## UI MTNA Students “Vandal-ize” North Florida!

Congratulations to the students of the UI MTNA Collegiate Chapter for their engaging and informative presentation on living pedagogical composers at the Piano Pedagogy Symposium at the University of North Florida earlier this month!

In addition to this group presentation, undergraduate student **Tyler Sass** gave a lightning talk on the difficulties of playing with big hands. MM pedagogy and performance student **Megan Rich**, a Level 2 Kodály instructor, also gave a lightning talk about her experience using this method with college students, and senior **Morgan Kline** gave an engaging workshop, “*Kids and Counterpoint: Teaching Off the Bench*,” where she explored activities to expand the focus of young students. Go Vandals!

## Remembering Yonty



Once in a great while (or maybe once in a lifetime) someone comes into your life and changes it. This person broadens your perspective, challenges you, makes you question yourself, and at the same time, helps you see, feel, and appreciate new, wonderful things. In my artistic life, this person was Yonty Solomon.

Aside from boasting an incredible resume which included performances of all 48 Bach Preludes and Fugues, 32 Beethoven Sonatas, the complete works

of Ravel, Debussy, Janáček, and Ives, and work with Hugh Grant(!), Yonty had a reputation of producing prize-winning students. But people also spoke about his genuine kindness and innate care for his students, and his ability to make each of his students feel special. It wasn't surprising that entry into his studio at both the Royal College of Music and Trinity College of Music in London was virtually impossible! However, life took me to Vienna for the six years after my high school graduation - a decision, of course, I don't regret - and Yonty drifted further and further from my consciousness. Until our paths crossed one summer day in Manchester, England.

Coming to the end of my studies in Vienna, I was looking for a place to continue with my master's degree. I loved Europe, so England was back in the picture and my search for a teacher began. Chetham's School of Music in Manchester held a summer course which attracted every major teacher in the United Kingdom, so I applied. Even though I listed Yonty as my first choice, I was quite predictably assigned to another teacher.

I saw Yonty for the first time from a distance in the cafeteria

## UI Music Camp

The University of Idaho recently announced the Lionel Hampton Music Camp, a week-long summer course for all high school instrumentalists and vocalists. This will take place from June 18-24 on the Moscow campus. Please contact me for more information, or visit [www.uidaho.edu/class/music/events/summer-camp](http://www.uidaho.edu/class/music/events/summer-camp)

## Upcoming Events and Important Dates

**2/1:** Priority Deadline for graduate studies at the University of Idaho

**2/3:** Master Class. Steinway Gallery of Spokane. (\*\*TIME CHANGE\*\*) 3-6pm

**2/4:** Master Class. Dunkley Music in Meridian, Idaho. (\*\*Tentative\*\*) Please contact for more info

**2/11:** University of Idaho Audition Day!

**2/25:** Application Deadline for undergraduate studies at the University of Idaho

**3/7:** Guest Piano Recital: Dr. Zachary Lopes (Western Kentucky University). UI Haddock Performance Hall. 7:30pm

surrounded by numerous students and some of the biggest names in the British piano scene. Later that day, I attended his master class where afterwards, I garnered the courage to introduce myself. Although I didn't realize it at the time, this act was a turning point in my life.

"Would you like to play?" The words shocked me. Filled with excitement and fear, I started Rachmaninoff's second piano sonata with the expectation he would only listen to a few bars. I came to the end of the first movement and made the transition to the nostalgic second. By the time I knew it, I was ripping through the fiery third. As the final B-flat major chords triumphantly resonated, I realized he had heard the entire piece!

He grinned and said my favorite words ever: "Let's go for an ice cream!" (music to *my* ears!) So we spent the next few hours walking around the streets of Manchester. We went for an ice cream and spoke on a variety of subjects. He asked me a lot of questions, and listened with quiet and intense enthusiasm to my answers. There was a spiritual, Yoda-like peace to his presence, and I hung on to every word he said like it was the only truth.

However, I do have to reluctantly admit that I lied to him when he asked if I had seven piano concertos and a full recital program for a competition he'd be judging in Athens the following spring! But I returned to Vienna determined to see him again in Athens. In the months following, I practiced more than I ever had in my life (I remember a 9-hour day which I promised myself I'd never do again!). I cried through many lessons as I doubted my ability. But, armed with concertos by Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, Gershwin, and Bartok, it was Athens-or-bust for me! Even though I was eliminated in an early round, this was one of many lessons I learned from Yonty before even setting foot in his studio.

Later that year, I graduated from the Vienna Conservatory and finally entered his studio at Trinity College of Music (a place he called "inspiring"). Much like his own teacher, Dame Myra Hess, Yonty was in love with touch and sound, which he ingrained deeply in all his students. I recall one lesson where we spent the entire hour finding the right muscle/sound combination for the opening chord of Beethoven's Piano Sonata, Op. 110!

I can't believe it's been about eight years since the world suddenly lost this incredible person. In reflecting on my time with Yonty and putting it into perspective on where I am now, I'm reminded of a scene from the 1940s movie, *A Song to Remember*. In it, a young Frederic Chopin tells Józef Elsner, "What am I, but a reflection of my teacher."

Yonty has again given me something to strive for.