

# PIANO

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE STUDIO OF DR. JOVANNI-REY DE PEDRO  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO'S LIONEL HAMPTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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## Silver in Seattle



On February 10, **Lynnsean Young** (who just celebrated his 13th birthday last month) was awarded a Silver Medal at the 2018 Northwest Chopin Festival near Seattle.

This year's adjudicator, Dr. Robert Roux from Houston's Rice University, complimented Lynnsean on his "intelligent overall plan" and "mature and disciplined" performance of Chopin's *Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 31*.

Lynnsean, who has studied with me for the past 3 years, is an 8th grade student at Moscow (Idaho) Middle School where he runs cross country. His family own *Young's Alley*, the hot spot for tasty homemade Chinese food on the Palouse!

## Classical Creativity

Last summer, I was able to reconnect with a very good friend of mine and fellow piano teacher at the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy in Chicago. Although I haven't seen him for a few years, Facebook had made it very easy to keep up with him! Through Facebook, I learned that he had been making a niche teaching pop music and enabling teachers to teach modern piano styles and improvisation.

However, his pitch that classical music/teaching wasn't "creative" irked me a bit. He argued that the "old way" of piano teaching (which he defined as the "sit-down, get out your books, learn this piece, here are the corrections, off you go, approach") just "won't have meaning in a future where creativity, innovation, and exploration rule."

First, I agree that there are instances where the above scenario is played out (poor child!). And for those of you who know me well, I am **TOTALLY** for expanding a student's knowledge of piano styles. However, to pin it on an entire genre of teaching was unfair. So I decided to ask him about it.

In our brief conversation, he argued that, since everything in classical music was predetermined - notes, rhythm, and dynamics (for the most part) - the extent of my creativity as a classical musician was limited to only interpretation, which wasn't "creative" in his mind. I didn't see that as a valid argument, but rather, a misunderstanding (or lack of understanding) of what exactly classical musicians - *excellent* classical musicians - do. After all, are actors who read from a script, artists who draw from models, and dancers who choreograph their movements ahead of

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## UI Guest Artists

**EMILIO PERONI**

February 27

**DEBORAH RAMBO SINN**

March 26

**STEVEN SPOONER**

April 9

## Looking ahead...

**February 23, 7pm:** Solo Recital.  
United Methodist Church.  
Lewiston, Idaho.

**February 25, 2pm:** Solo Recital.  
Englewood Church. Yakima,  
Washington

**February 26-March 1:** Visiting  
Artist. Ellensburg/Yakima Music  
Teachers Association.

**March 5-9:** Visiting Artist.  
Spokane Music Teachers  
Association.

**March 18-21:** MTNA National  
Conference. Orlando, Florida.

time not creative? Is the creativity in our field really limited to improvisors and composers?

Of course not.

Classical musicians go through years of playing scales, building technique, sharpening listening skills, learning about theory and history, and performing dead composers' works, not to avoid creativity, but to acquire the tools to be creative.

In my philosophy for teaching and performing, I focus on the cultivation of four areas: Discipline, Intelligence, Creativity, and Freedom. I believe that each of these areas must be built upon the previous one in order to ensure maximum success. This basically means that in order to be creative (or communicate creative ideas) convincingly, one must possess the discipline and intelligence to do so.

In my experience, the issue that plagues many young pianists is gathering the courage to break past the Discipline or Intelligence stage. They are far too obsessed with presenting a "correct" interpretation, or playing "musically," or counting how many notes they miss, that they are unable to communicate anything meaningful or creative.

When deciding on how to perform a piece of music, I always ask myself two questions: Why? And why not?

"Why?" helps me understand what the composer's intentions were, his or her reasons for taking the time to write down this valuable information. This information helps me put the composer and composition in context with history and the development of music. "Why not?" allows me to dream big and take risks. Because for me, while certain things in classical music *are* predetermined, creative performance is showing what's *not* on the page. My goal is for people to hear the music in different and new ways.

I believe asking these questions is the reason why one audience member present in a recent recital of mine was able to enthusiastically remark:

"The way you stretched, moulded, and colored the Haydn...it was like you were improvising!"