

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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UI @ MTNA Orlando

The University of Idaho's MTNA Collegiate Chapter was on the road again! This time, six young professionals traveled to the 2018 MTNA National Conference in Orlando to present *#PostmillennialPianists: Connecting with the iGeneration*.

As one can imagine, projects like this require huge amounts of resources and support. If you are interested to donate to this and future activities of the Chapter, please contact me. Thank you in advance!

Upcoming Events

April 7: Masterclass. Steinway Gallery of Spokane. 4:30pm.

Concerto*Fest*Europa

Join me for a summer festival in the heart of Europe!

Contact me or visit www.ConcertoFestEuropa.com for more information.

March Madness



Tell me about how you started your journey in music.

How I started the cello was completely by accident! My mom was late for enrolling me in the music school when I was seven. She walked up a week or two after the deadline and said, "Oh, my daughter would really like to learn the flute."

Since flute was the most popular instrument, there were no spaces left. They said, "But hey, she can have the most *unpopular* instrument, which is the cello. She can start the flute next year." Mom said, "Yah, grand!" She did not have a breeze what a cello was...and neither did I!

I do remember going in to my first lesson. It was a Thursday afternoon. I hadn't even seen a cello...I had no idea what it looked like! I walked into the room and saw this big monstrosity of a teacher, *and* a monstrosity of an instrument and thought, "Oh, sweet mother. What is this?!" Even though I was pretty tall at seven, I still thought it was the coolest thing ever. At that point, I said, "I'm going to do this" because it was big and looked really funky! But they had no cello case for it!

You walked around with a cello!?

Oh you better believe it! So the industrious people that we were, my mom got a black plastic bag and put the cello inside it. We only had one car growing up, so when my dad took the

car to work, we rode to the music academy on a bus. We rode the bus home that day with a half-sized cello in a plastic bag which my mom carried, and I had a “Target” bag carefully wrapped around my bow! It was hilarious! The love affair just started with that, and the black plastic bag...and I just loved that everybody looked at me! I had no shame as a child - or adult! The next year came around and the conversation about the flute ever even came up. I just loved the cello. I loved the sound, and the size, and feeling the sound vibrations in my body of the cello against me – I just loved this amazing connection I had physically with the instrument.

You’ve had quite a lot of performing experience, especially with different orchestras all over Europe. But let’s fast forward to London where we met as graduate students and talk about how you first got into teaching.

I was always fascinated by teachers; I love sharing and learning. But I always found it really hard in school - classroom settings - when teachers abused the power they were given and ridiculed students. I never agreed with that. So when I went into music and had these teachers in one-on-one settings who were really about nurturing, it was a different learning world for me. I really resonated with that. I had a newfound respect for teachers because of that, and it ignited in me a feeling that I would love to also have with a student.

I started teaching the cello when I was 18... slowly, because I thought I was totally faking it! But it made me totally reassess how I’d been taught and, since I was still in a degree program, how my current teachers were teaching me. It

*“You’ve got to be inspired to be inspiring.
And you’ve got to be inspiring to be inspired.”*

made me think of how not to teach as much as how to teach. I learned a lot, but mostly from the teachers who were pretty bad and the least inspiring. I’ve always said it’s a two-way street; you’ve got to be inspired to be inspiring,. And you have to be inspiring to be inspired. It has to go both ways as a student and as a teacher. Because I was both at the same time, I felt I was in a really privileged position to be learning as a student and as a teacher.

During my third year in college, I saw an ad in *The Strad* for a cello festival at Eton College. I was attracted to it primarily because all the teachers were part of the Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, and the Royal Northern College of Music. It was an incredible superstar lineup of pedagogues! And it was cheap! So I did this course and deeply connected with a living legend teacher, Anna Shuttleworth, now 92 years young, with whom I later studied. She was my “Cello Mom”. She was the person responsible for teaching me how to practice and think. Imagine that...I was 22 and was just learning how to practice!

Your thesis, “The Cello Motorway”, received the highest mark EVER by a Trinity College of Music graduate in teaching. How did your teaching experience lead you to create “The Cello Motorway”?

“The Cello Motorway” materialized because I realized I had a wealth of knowledge of how to practice. I had 10 years of teaching experience full of students I had seen successfully go through and become fully educated minds who could tackle music on their own. That’s what I really wanted to impart. So I knew from the very first day of my masters that I was going to write this book. And I wanted to do it

all on the bow and sound production. “The Cello Motorway” is a teaching manual on the bow, sound production and understanding how to navigate the distance between the end of your fingerboard and your bridge, which I call “The Cello Motorway.” The reason it’s called “The Cello Motorway” is because when you think of a traffic light – green, orange, and red – that’s to correspond to the different speeds of bow necessary to use in the different areas of the string which then produce sound. And that’s something that’s generally neglected in teaching. And when you’re teaching kids, they love that imagery! Once they get that from the very beginning, they never lose it. The bow is the key! It is our voice.

Is “The Cello Motorway” available?

Not yet. But it’s something I teach everyday with both with my students and in masterclasses. It can be applied to any string instrument – obviously not the harp or *sarod* – but standard bowed string instruments: violin, viola, cello, and double bass. I do have a really strong passion to get it published and people can always write me about it, but I’ve had another lifetime over the past ten years.

On that note, you experienced a dramatic life event that not only changed the trajectory of your life, but also led you to expand your horizons beyond cello and performing.

The day after my masters recital and I was still on a high. I was all done and was set to continue my doctoral studies with a full scholarship and assistantship teaching undergrads at a school in New York. It was all I ever wanted – to live in New York! But then my relationship of eight years ended suddenly. It made me question what I was doing. I was following what I thought was the right path for me...following my dreams. But were they really *my* dreams? Or *his*? And I decided that the time wasn’t right to go, so I deferred my place for six months, found ashtanga yoga, packed my bag, and took off to to the Middle East and India for six months. I then decided it wasn’t my time to go to America period.

My friends kept asking me, “Do you want to be a small fish, or a big fish? And where do you want to be that fish?” And what would I do if I went back to Ireland to start over? These were all big questions for me. I didn’t have answers and I wasn’t in the right mental state to be rational because I was very much guided with my heart. But when my mother became ill, I put everything else aside, came home, and decided I was going to stay in Ireland and open up my own music academy. So I did! Munster Music Academy in Killaloe is now celebrating 9 years, and it’s been incredible to see how it’s grown. We now have 7 teachers and over 110 students that attend weekly individual and group classes. We had two cellists sit their Trinity Guildhall Grade 8 exams last year with distinction and some of our pianists are doing it this summer! I cry with pride and joy when I think about it because they’ve gone through all of the grades with us. It’s amazing to have created something so enriching and fulfilling in the community...and that it’s still living and thriving on a daily basis with the students who have been there from the very beginning. I believe it’s a real testament to the strong and committed teachers that we have, the dedication of the parents and the unique wholistic quality of student we are producing.



Killaloe, Ireland - the location of Munster Music Academy and Wicked Wholefoods

I remember visiting Munster when it first opened! It's amazing that nine years have passed and great that it's had so much success!

The Academy was a very big part of me, but I eventually felt limited - artistically, and with my schedule, among other things. I always said that if the day ever came that I didn't want to go to work, I would stop immediately. I feel that life is way too short for us not to do something that we love everyday. I felt limited and frustrated with constantly giving and not nurturing myself. And as a result, I felt that I wasn't doing the best job I could do, so I thought the time had come to either take a step back and breathe, or take another diversion for some time and follow what my heart is wanting. So I did that; I studied and became a professional whole foods chef and worked my way around the world in yoga and health centers. I went to Crete and got a job there as a chef for six months, then India and Bali, and on to Australia for a year before returning to India for eight or nine months. But no matter where I went, I always had my cello on me and played and taught wherever I could. I learned traditional Indian *Raagas* and some beautiful traditional Greek music. One of the most spectacular places I ever played was in a cave on the side of a cliff in Crete under the stars on a full moon. The rich experience informed me as a human which in turned informed my connection with my students as their teacher. It was amazing, but I missed teaching regularly a lot.



Meeting up with Tara on
Australia's Gold Coast!

So I was faced with another decision, now with my partner who is Australian. Either move to Bali and open a raw food café, or move back to Ireland to get back into teaching, and open a food company. And since he's such a wonderful, generous ole soul, he gave me the option to do what I really wanted to do. So I'm back in the Academy teaching one day a week while operating a health food company!

So you're back in Killaloe teaching and making award-winning granola (which you so kindly supplied my wedding guests!) with Wicked Wholefoods that is stocked in over 150 stores in Ireland and England. What's next for you? What are Tara-Lee's next goals?

To have a baby! Well, obviously global granola domination. I want to return to performing more. I miss playing chamber music, especially with you and Sergio, and with Tala which I miss enormously.* A long-term goal for me and my partner is to establish a health and wellness retreat center that combines all of our loves and inspiration - food, nutrition, yoga, and music. We want an integrative, holistic center that people can come to whether they're looking for solace, inspiration, or community.

Any crazy dreams left for you?

I always dreamt about gracing the cover of VOGUE magazine whilst posing naked behind my cello.

Last year, Tara-Lee was featured in VOGUE UK magazine - for her Gránola. You can read more about Tara, the Munster Music Academy, Wicked Wholefoods, and her adventures at www.munstermusicacademy.com and www.wickedwholefoods.com

* Sergio Neves is a Portuguese clarinetist who, with Tara and Jovanni, form the Tarvangio Trio. Tala Tutunji, Jordanian pianist, is Tara's duo partner. They all met as graduate students at Trinity College of Music in London.