



The Gorin School of Music –A Unique and Comprehensive Music Student Educational Experience

by Rufina Gorin, MA, NCMT, Musical Director, The Gorin School of Music

Over the years of my experience in musical education, I have observed that many parents who are not themselves musicians do not fully understand the importance of Musicianship study, or the critical interrelationships among Music Theory, Solfeggio, Music Literature/Analyses and study of the instrument. Let me offer an explanation to help those who are not clear about how we structure our program at The Gorin School of Music and why.

To train students as complete musicians, we have to focus on their intellectual development in musical understanding. Some vital areas pertaining to the development of a student include an understanding of formal structure, harmonic and intervallic relationships, performance directions and musical terms, and the historical background of composers representative of different styles and periods. We like to have our teachers provide this knowledge to their students during the early stages of learning. This will give students a valuable foundation enriching subsequent education.

Creating the "comprehensive musician" has been discussed by music educators for many years and is widely regarded as the goal of a quality musical education. While its definition varies, essentially comprehensive musicianship is a means of engaging students in musical learning with the purpose of creating greater independence. Much of this can be accomplished in a group setting where students learn music concepts through a variety of learning experiences. At The Gorin School of Music we incorporate the subject of Theory into the individual instrumental lessons so that we can focus on each student's ability to comprehend the somewhat abstract material in Theory. However, the other subjects of Musicianship-Ear Training/Solfeggio and Music Literature-are provided in small groups, enabling students to sing, listen, and enjoy the environment of learning together. The presentations and activities of these lessons touch on many essential elements of musicianship such as intervals and related singing exercises, rhythm exercises and games, major triads, listening skills, and learning musical terms.

The group lessons are a collaborative effort of students and definitely incorporate an element of fun throughout learning. I have observed these classes many times and have always seen excitement and joy on the faces of the students, yet their answers to the instructors' questions demonstrate how much they have learned in this friendly, low-pressure environment. Without the knowledge of musicianship the student cannot comprehend music as a whole: to understand, to hear, and ultimately to perform all the intricate details of music expression and to fully appreciate our vast musical heritage. I think this is the key: the knowledge brings joy, not the other way around.

I also would like to share with you some excerpts from an important article "From child to musician: skill development during the beginning stages of learning an instrument" by Gary E. McPherson, University of New South Wales, Sydney (Psychology of Music 33.1, 2005). This article reports on a three-year longitudinal study with 157 children in school grades 3 and 4 (aged between 7 and 9 years), who commenced learning an instrument in one of eight school music programs. The children were administered tests at the end of each school year to assess their abilities to perform rehearsed music, sight-read, play from memory, play by ear and improvise. Interviews were conducted with the children's mothers in order to calculate how much practice they had accumulated on their instrument.

Data were also obtained to help clarify the quality of mental strategies the children adopted when performing. The findings extended previous research on skill acquisition by showing that conceptions based on the amount of practice undertaken or that focus exclusively on children's ability to reproduce

rehearsed literature from notation are inadequate to understanding the early stages of instrumental development.

It is proposed that a more coherent explanation comes from understanding the range of strategies children employ when performing and that the sophistication of children's mental strategies provides an important means for understanding why some progress effortlessly in contrast to others who struggle and fail. The study's conclusions highlight the importance of helping students to develop a repertoire of task-appropriate strategies that will enable them to "think musically" when performing challenging tasks on their instrument. These strategies are the outcome of comprehensive musicianship programs such as the one we have developed and refined at The Gorin School of Music.

About the Author

Mrs. Rufina Gorin, Musical Director, The Gorin School of Music is Nationally Certified Music Teacher (NCMT). In addition, she holds a M.A. in Piano Performance and Pedagogy, Nezin Gogol Music Teachers' Training Institute, Ukraine and a B.A. in Piano Performance and Pedagogy, Music College, Kiev, Ukraine. Currently, Gorin is a faculty member at National Guild Performance Auditions, an adjudicator of CM and National Guild Performance Auditions, Sound of Music Festival, U.S. Open Piano Competition, and others. She has been an active member of the Music Teachers' Association of California (MTAC) since 1981, serving on the Board of Palo Alto Branch since 1988 and as branch president 1993-1995. In 1996, Gorin was elected to the State Board of MTAC and served for four years, completing her tenure there as a Vice President. Previously, she was piano faculty chair and piano teacher at Special Children's Music School, Kiev, Ukraine; Accompanist for Children's Ballet Group, Kiev Ballet Company, Ukraine; and a piano teacher at Junior Music Academy and Conejo Valley Conservatory, Thousand Oaks, CA.

The Gorin School of Music

As the only local school of music accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), Gorin School of Music located in Mountain View, California, also makes learning music and individual music lessons fun for the student. We offer lessons in **all musical instruments** including **piano, violin, viola, cello, guitar, flute, clarinet, saxophone**, and **voice**. Our goal is to foster a love for music while training the music student comprehensively on the skills required for their chosen musical instrument with each music lesson. A warm and nurturing environment for learning music coupled with a personalized approach and individual pace of music study allows all Gorin School of Music students to reach their full potential.

We recognize that every student is different, so depending on the music student's age, personality, musical ability and availability, The Gorin School of Music offers a choice of enrolling students in Music Program Track A or Music Program Track B. The rigorous and comprehensive curriculum coupled with qualified, supportive and experienced teachers make the music education learning experience meaningful and exciting for Gorin School of Music students of all ages.

To learn more about The Gorin School of music, visit www.gsm-music.com, call (650)-961-4910, or email us at mmgorin@aol.com.