



instructor corner

Mari Garza, B.A. Piano Instructor

Give life to Your Music

How can our imagination help improve our performance in music?

When I first began playing piano I never understood what my teacher meant by the phrase "bring your music to life." I realized that when I played music, I was playing like a robot. I was playing every single note right but not giving my music the story or emotion it was meant to have. Now, as a teacher, I tell my students every day to use their imagination to create a story out of their music.

Our imagination is one of the most powerful tools we can utilize as musicians. We can play the music, but can we make our audience feel and understand it? Can we put an image into their own mind and make them imagine a story to tag along with it?

One of the biggest examples I can think of is Venetian Boat Song in F# minor (Op. 30 No. 6) by Felix Mendelssohn. This piece paints a picture in your mind by creating the movement of the water on your bass line. While your left hand creates these waves of water, your right hand sounds almost like a person singing on a gondola on an evening in Venice.

So any time you begin learning a piece, do some research on what the piece is even about. Learn about the composer and the era they lived in. Search on how the composer lived his/her life and the way their music portrayed their personal life. Find a way to connect all of that information and understand why and how they came to writing the music they did. Once you do that, try to put it into your practice.

And if you're like me and sometimes don't feel like doing all of that research, learn hands separately and pay close attention to the melody and the harmony on their own. How do they relate? What connects them besides the theory? What does the melody make you feel or even imagine? What does the harmony do to connect or to add to the melody? It might sound crazy, but do you hear the picture? Do you hear a walk in the park, a heartbreak, a midnight stroll, or do you hear anger? What kind of emotion does the melody inflict on to you? If any emotion or image come to your mind, can you put it into your practice and make your audience imagine that too?

So when you begin learning a new piece, find a recording of it and listen for that story or emotion you heard throughout it. The importance of this is so that when you play it you can transpose that feeling into your own practice and therefore make your audience paint pictures with your piece.

student of the month

"George I. is a very enthusiastic student and always thrilled to learn new piano pieces. He practices consistently and shows up to his lessons with an awesome attitude; ready to learn! Keep it up, George!"

- Daniel Paquot, Piano Instructor



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