



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PIANO INSTRUCTORS

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APPI NEWSLETTER

The Case for PD—Professional Development for Everyone!

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by Sue Ruby,
APPI President

- 1 We declare this year the year of Professional Development for APPI Newsletter:
- 2 What is it? Why is it important? Where do I start?
- 2 Professional development is about growth—personal, musical, professional. It can be defined as any activity, experience or skill that you as a teacher can learn or apply to improve yourself as a teacher, as a musician, as a businessperson. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.”
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What kinds of professional development are there for piano teachers? Here’s a list to start you thinking of

new ways to expand your professional world. And check out each article in this APPI Newsletter to see how fellow APPI members are attaining professional development in other creative ways.

Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.
—Will Rogers

Teaching

- Observe other teachers, group classes, a musical therapist, an early childhood teacher.
- Be observed by others. Trade observations with a colleague and talk about the experience.

Artistry/Musicianship

- Take some lessons. Set a performance goal at church, at an

- assisted living home, your studio recital.
- Study a different instrument. Join a chamber group or an ensemble.
- Take lessons on improvisation and/or composition.
- Sign up for that watercolor class. Take your first tap dance class! Try a class on improv acting. All of these activities will affect your artistry.

Professional

- Network with other teachers. Become a regular attendee—and participant—in APPI monthly meetings. Join MMTA. Join a professional Face Book group.
- Attend local workshops, Schmitt EXPO, the MMTA Convention (you

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by Rebecca Hass, NCTM
APPI EFT Co-Chair

I recently completed projects for MTNA's certification program and just received my certification in late October. For certification, you complete 5 different projects:

1. Write your teaching philosophy, including your educational goals and covering at least one of the other topics on the list.
2. Analyze 4 teaching pieces, 1 from each historical period:

Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern. This project took me the longest to write as there are 6 questions for each piece.

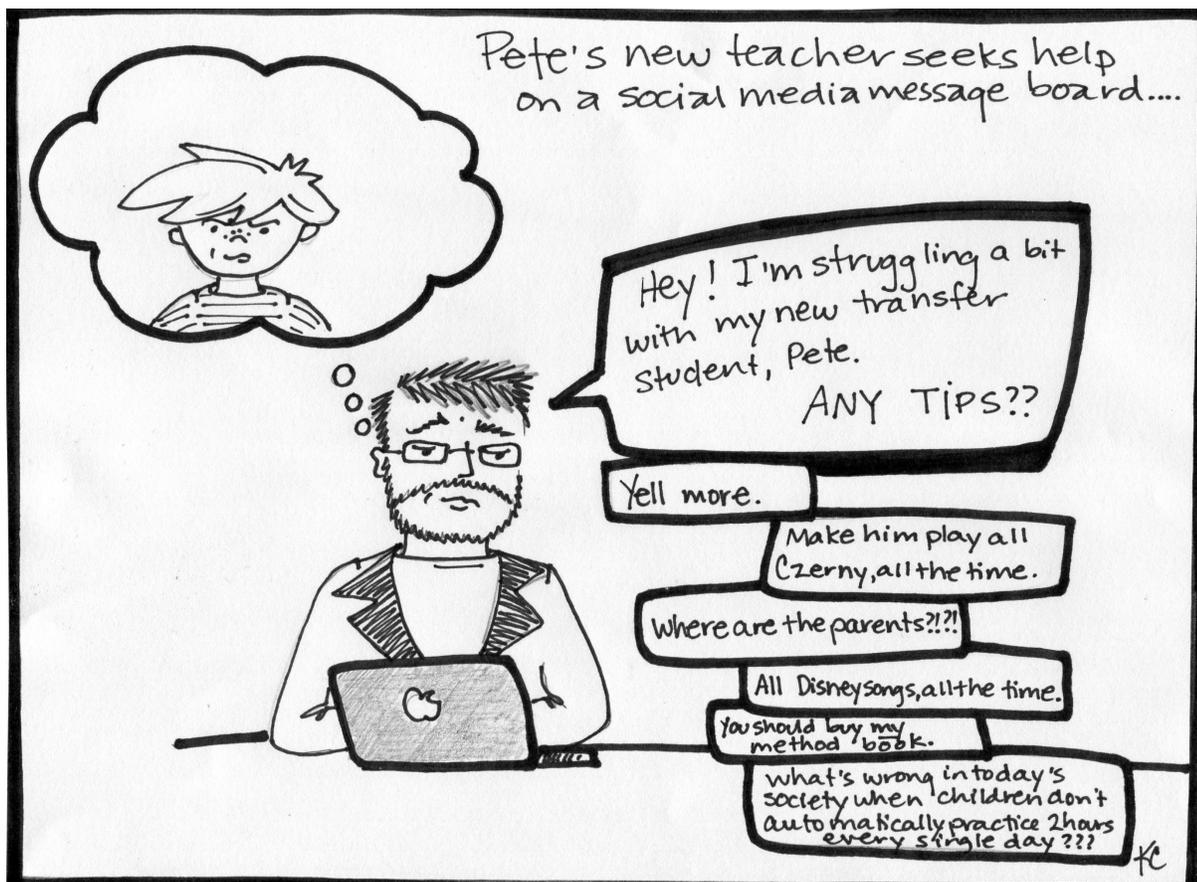
3. Present your teaching, which includes making 3 videos representing different phases of a student learning a piece, then evaluating yourself. Also, you must include a video of yourself performing a piece, Level 7 or above (see Jane McGrath's *Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*).

4. Share information about your teaching environment, documenting resources that you use to create a positive learning environment.
5. Discuss your studio business ethics and policies in which you outline your policies, studio budget, interview procedure, and how you would respond to a few given ethical situations.

This was a big process, (which included a \$200 fee) but was very helpful in clarifying my ideas about how and why I teach. I highly recommend it!



by Katie Condon





by Cathy Smetana
APPI Secretary

I am, first and foremost, a teacher. I do not have a church job, or play for weddings, or do a lot of accompanying. I do not currently have a significant other with whom to share expenses and chores; in spite of my best efforts, my cat Pablo simply blinks imperiously at me when I suggest he could use his big fluffy tail to help with the dusting. I love to teach, and teaching pays the bills, so . . . I teach. A lot. Six days a week during the school year and four-to-five days in the summer, until the middle of August, forty-plus private students, the occasional group class, and as many as four summer camps.

Are you tired yet? I am. I love what I do and can't imagine doing anything else, but I can easily imagine doing less of it. A lot of things fall away on a schedule like this – important things like a social life, the freedom to take time off that isn't a major holiday, and the ability to keep up with friends who work more "normal" hours. Unfortunately, personal hobbies and artistic development often take a back seat too.

Because I love teaching, my closest friends are excellent teachers, and I work in an environment that values excellence in teaching, I'm always very active in professional development activities that directly impact my students. In a typical

Finding Time to Play

year I attend (and present at) APPI monthly teacher meetings. I also hold leadership positions at MacPhail and within APPI; attend and/or lead MacPhail professional development sessions; take a few online seminars; listen to podcasts about teaching; read books about teaching; watch masterclasses on YouTube; and biennially attend the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy.

But . . . for about 10 years, I barely practiced myself. At first I didn't even miss it. Then suddenly I did, and it was time to do something about it.

The first sign of my creative renaissance was my desire to buy a decent piano for my home. Because I have two grand pianos in my office at MacPhail, I always told myself I could go practice there. The problem was, I didn't. The Casio Privia digital piano I had at home "for emergencies" certainly didn't inspire me to practice. So, in February 2016, on an almost-whim, I bought a Kawai CN-35 digital piano. I have never regretted this purchase! It sounds wonderful and feels fantastic to play. If you think that digital pianos are worthless, I encourage you try playing the new Kawai digitals; you'll be pleasantly surprised! Suddenly, I went from not practicing at all to consistently practicing a few hours a week.

With my enthusiasm for playing rekindled, I started to fantasize about going on a retreat – a piano camp for grownups. I used to

teach at such a camp in Vermont, but I didn't want to go there as a student – that just seemed too weird. I Googled "piano camps for adults" and found Rocky Ridge Adult Piano Seminar in Estes Park, Colorado. It sounded perfect: five days in the mountains, sleeping and practicing in rustic cabins, food provided, no need for a car, just me and the mountains and pianos.



Two lessons, daily masterclasses, and a recital. All solo repertoire; no duets or chamber music. I have always loved the solo piano literature and wanted to play what I wanted to play. I was awarded a James E. Ericksen Grant from MacPhail which covered the costs of the camp, so I didn't even need to worry about money; I was able to just show up and soak it all in like a very thirsty sponge.

The experience was everything I hoped it would be and more. A typical day at Rocky Ridge would see me waking up around 6:00 am. With no commitments or responsibilities, I'd be in the practice room by 6:30 am to practice before

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APPI Spring 2017 Education Field Trip (EFT) Recapitulation: Jeremy Denk with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra

by Monica Allen,
APPI Member

On Sunday, April 2, 2017, approximately 65 APPI students, parents, and teachers attended the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) Concert at the Ordway Concert Hall in St. Paul featuring renowned pianist and musical essayist, Jeremy Denk.

The repertoire of the day was:

- 1) Beethoven: *Quintet in E-flat for Piano, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn and Bassoon, Op. 16*
- 2) Bartók: *Divertimento for String Orchestra*
- 3) Brahms: *Trio in E-flat for Piano, Violin and Horn, Op. 40.*

After the concert, Mr. Denk generously shared his time and insights during a Meet 'n' Greet, set up by the SPCO for the APPI EFT visitors. He charmed the crowd with his advice for young pianists and absolute enthusiasm for music and piano performance.



Pianist, Jeremy Denk. 2017

Jeremy Denk "Takeaways:"

- Denk started performing in concerts at the age of 27, which means almost 20 years of performance experience. He added that he's been busier in the past 10 years than he was in the first 10 years. He plays nearly 100 concerts per year!
- His advice on being expressive with sound: "Be the music." "Be the phrase." "Act out the music." "Breathe while you play."
- Mr. Denk performs both by memory and with musical scores. He enjoys looking at his fellow musicians during chamber music. He enjoys both solo performance and collaborative piano work.
- His advice to young pianists: keep music fun, improvise, try new things, and make sure you like your own musical sounds.

- Finally, Jeremy Denk does have a life outside of music, even though he practices several hours each day. His other interests include: exercising, meeting with friends, and cooking.

This year, on January 7, 2018, APPI will offer its third annual Educational Field Trip to see the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, featuring Jeremy Denk. Don't miss this opportunity to hear one of "America's foremost pianists" live with world-class orchestral musicians at the Ordway Concert Hall in St. Paul.

For more information on this, or other upcoming concerts, visit the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra website: www.thespco.org. For more about Jeremy Denk, his musical events and blog, visit: www.jeremydenk.net.

THE SAINT PAUL
CHAMBER
ORCHESTRA



by **Kate Niemisto**
APPI Member

I love podcasts—I listen to them while cleaning, cooking, driving, exercising. I love comedy shows, storytelling shows, and shows that make me think. Adding a piano teaching podcast to my weekly rotation listening sessions was a no-brainer.

My current favorite is Tim Topham's *Creative Piano Teaching* podcast. Hailing from Australia, Tim interviews piano pedagogues from around the world

Praise for Podcasts!

whose ideas about teaching are all refreshing and innovative. There are over 100 episodes now, each about 45 minutes long. Two of my favorite episodes that have influenced my own teaching include “Forrest Kinney on the 4 Arts of Music” and “Paul Harris on Simultaneous Learning”.

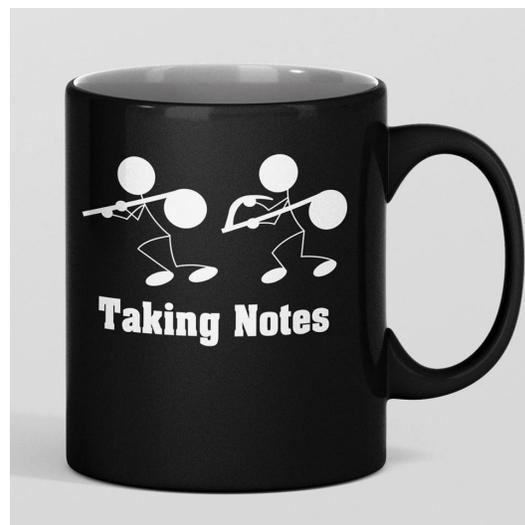
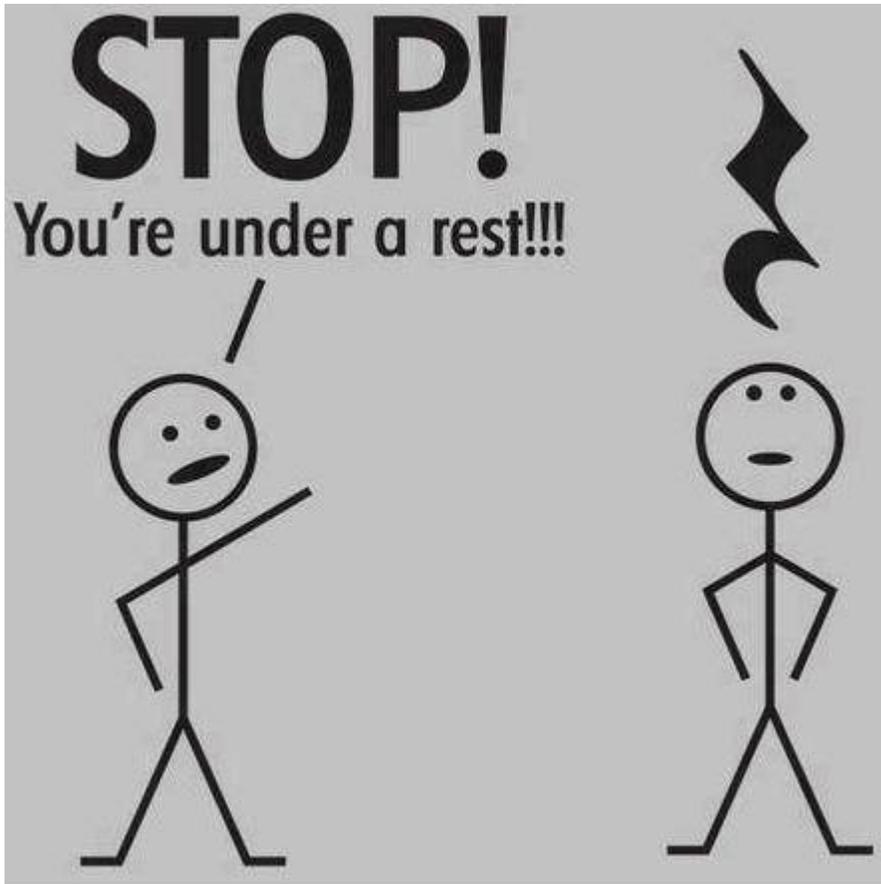
Tim's philosophy is making modern piano teaching creative and relevant to today's students. In addition to the podcast, his website and blog offer countless ideas and opportunities as ex-

tensions from the podcast conversations, as well as techniques he has tried in his own teaching studio.

I have also attended two free webinars that Tim has helped produce which have both been excellently done.

While there are so many ways to explore new teaching ideas, having a new podcast each week to listen to spreads out new information in a way that I find easy to manage, and makes it more likely that I'll implement these ideas into my own teaching.

I would love to know: What podcasts have you found relevant to your piano teaching?



These comedic gems courtesy of Jim Lansing. APPI Newsletter welcomes all such submissions!

Professional Development continued...

don't have to be a member!), NCKP (National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy). If you don't want to go alone, post on the APPI Facebook page. APPI almost always boasts multiple members in attendance. It's great to spend whole days soaking up wisdom and then debriefing with fellow teachers post-conference!

Business

- Write (or rewrite) your business plan. Create a mission statement. Build your mar-



by **Jim Lansing**

APPI Past President

My children are nearly grown now—one is a HS senior and the other is a college sophomore. For many years, we hosted family birthday party gatherings at our house. Although they provided us two more guaranteed times that everyone would see one another during the year, we learned they became the reason things got done around the house. We were fortunate that one's birthday is mid-May and the other's is mid-September; that timing coincided with spring cleaning the house and many spring/fall outdoor chores. Basically, having guests over became a built-in deadline to guarantee these things were done in a timely manner.

I always intend, and perhaps "resolve" each year, to practice

keting calendar. Take an accounting course. Revisit your studio policy. No website yet? This is your year!

- Resources for all of these are available online and in person, often free. For starters, check out SCORE at <https://www.score.org/>

Lead and Mentor

- Share your unique teaching ideas and experiences at APPI Sharing Sessions. Offer to facilitate a Sharing Session or give your own APPI presentation. Submit an article for the APPI Newsletter.

Standing still is the fastest way of moving backwards in a rapidly changing world.

— *Lauren Bacall*

- Attend the APPI planning retreat. Suggest meeting topics, EFT ideas, presenters and more. Take on a co-chair position. It's the best way to learn about APPI events!

“Drop-Dead-Lines”

There are now many convenient and affordable ways to stay at the top of our game—from our own homes!

more. I have purchased new books to entice me to the bench—who doesn't love breaking in a fresh binding and making that first pencil mark on a fresh score? I have tried blocking out time on my calendar for practice, but that seems to be the first thing to go when something else needs the time. The one thing that does make practice happen is a performance date. One of my college professors used the term “drop-dead-line.”

My work as a performer has been almost exclusively as an accompanist. I've played for choir concerts, musicals, dance recitals, studio recitals, senior recitals, solo/ensemble competitions, musical theatre auditions, senior voice recitals, weddings, funerals, and worship ser-

vices. Each one of these has a drop-dead-line which forces me to plan practice time in advance of rehearsals and performance dates. Guess how many of these practice sessions get cancelled on my calendar? Yep, zero.

The content of each gig may not always be under my control; however, jobs like substitute worship musician do allow me some flexibility in repertoire choice. I've learned to keep a file of “pieces to learn.” When a church gig comes around I can often work one of these selections into the mix and *voila* practice happens!

So, do you need to find time to practice a new piece? Perhaps you should set a “drop-dead-line” of your own!

Finding Time to Play continued...

breakfast at 8:00. Then there was more practice time until a master-class at 11:00 am. The faculty (Sergio Gallo from Georgia State University and Laurie Simms from Western Michigan University) were very good, supportive, and kind. The other students were warm, intelligent, and passionate about music. While they were not professional musicians, they played at a high level; I heard Rachmaninoff Preludes, Beethoven Sonatas, Brahms Intermezzos, Debussy Preludes, and Chopin Preludes. After lunch there was more practicing and lessons, and I usually took an hour to hike around the beautiful mountainside campus. Happy hour was at 5:30, dinner at 6:00, and an informal lecture/performance at 8:00. Once it got dark, we all headed to our cabins to sleep. I was terrified for my first lesson with Sergio; I hadn't had a lesson in 20 years! But it ended up being an invigorating creative exchange which helped shed new light on pieces I'd been playing for awhile. By the end of camp, I'd made new friends and regained a lot of confidence in my playing.

After the camp I wrote a thank-you email to my teacher Sergio. He wrote back, "Dear Cathy, We were all so impressed by your beautiful playing, and warm personality: your students are lucky! I am happy to hear that you feel rejuvenated and already started on your new pieces. Please let me know if you need to exchange ideas anytime soon, I am always happy to help!" This email is printed out, laminated, and hang-

ing where I see it every day. Pictures of Rocky Ridge are printed out and posted both on my office door and in the front of the 3-ring binder full of music I want to learn.



Feeling more confident about my playing than I have in years, it was easy to say "Let's do it!" when Sue Ruby asked Jeremy Hanson and me to perform a 4-hand concert for the Fridays in the Valley chamber music series. It is so wonderful to play this delightful music with a musician like Jeremy! You are all invited to hear us February 9, 2018 at 7:00 pm at Valley Community Presbyterian Church in Golden Valley – we're playing selections from Bach's *Orchestral Suites* (4hand arr); Mozart's *Sonata in D, K. 381*; Schubert's *F Minor Fantasy, op. 103*; and Ravel's *Ma Mere l'Oye*. The concert is **free** – invite your students, too!

Feeling like an artist again has changed my teaching as well. I have more energy . . . more attention to detail . . . and both more

patience with the process and less tolerance for excuses. Based on my own increased practice time, I've written new practice guidelines for my students, including ideas for

keeping a practice journal. I am not "making" them keep a practice journal, but I do expect them to come up with concrete goals and a plan for achieving those goals.

I can't wait to return to Rocky Ridge. I hope to stay for the 10-

day version of the camp this time. I'd love to sign up for regular lessons with a teacher in Minneapolis, but I can't realistically fit a consistent lesson time into my schedule. Four lessons and two master-classes at Rocky Ridge is the perfect alternative. It's also great to have a solo performance opportunity that is away from MacPhail. At Rocky Ridge, I'm just another student – so I'm more likely to take a chance performing a new piece or playing by memory than I would at a recital here.

I have to admit: I don't want a lot of people from Minnesota to join me at Rocky Ridge . . . I really like feeling that it's "away" from all the work I do here! But I do hope you'll find something to refresh and continue to develop your own artistry at your instrument. There are so many great options these days!

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We're on the web!

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Upcoming APPI Events

DECEMBER

Fri., Dec. 8, 2017

APPI-tizer & Teacher Sharing Session Meeting

Topic: Favorite Ensemble Pieces, facilitated by Miriam Jensen

Where: Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music

Time:

- APPI-tizer 11:00-11:45 am
- Meeting: 12:00-1:30 pm

JANUARY

Sun., Jan. 7, 2018—EFT: St. Paul Chamber Orchestra with Pianist Jeremy Denk

Where: Ordway Concert Hall

Time: 2:00 pm

Cost: Students-FREE! Adults-\$12

Fri., Jan. 12, 2018—Teacher Meeting

Topic: Got Game? 2.0

APPI Member Presenter: Sue Ruby

Where: Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music

Time: 12:00-1:30 pm

FEBRUARY

Fri., Feb. 9, 2018

APPIcer Meeting & Teacher Meeting

Topic: Spotlight on African-American Composers

Guest Speaker: Herb Johnson

Where: Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music

Time:

- APPIcer Mtg: 11:00-11:45 am
- Teacher Mtg: 12:00-1:30 pm

Fri., Feb. 9, 2018—EFT: Four-Hand Concert at "Fridays in the Valley" Chamber Music Series featuring Jeremy Hanson & Cathy Smetana

Where: Valley Community Presbyterian Church, Golden Valley

Time: 7:00-8:00 pm

Meet-and-greet the musicians and stay for the free reception!

MARCH

Fri., Mar. 9, 2018

Teacher Meeting

Topic: Theory Triage—Panel Discussion, facilitated by Jim Lansing

Where: Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music

Time: 12:00-1:30 pm

APRIL

Fri., Apr. 13, 2018

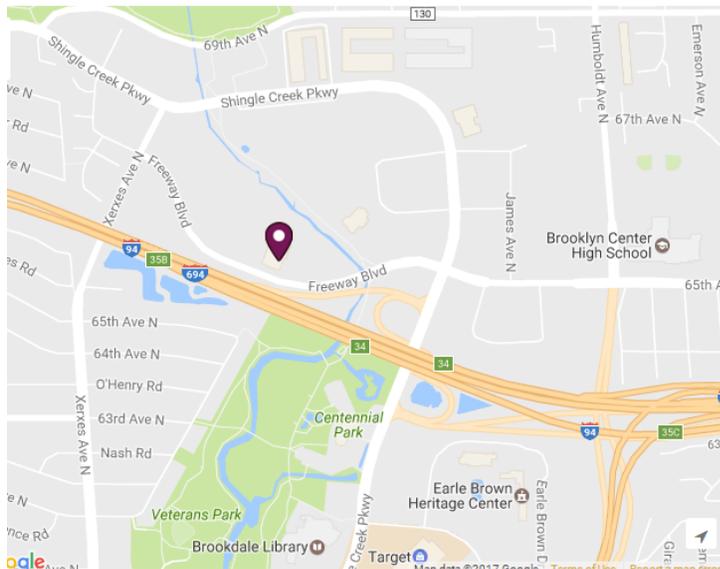
Teacher Sharing Session Meeting

Topic: Summer Planning, facilitated by Susan Hareland

Where: Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music

Time: 12:00-1:30 pm

Founded in 2001, APPI enables piano instructors of all levels and abilities to network with others to energize and enhance the art of teaching piano. In addition to professional development and networking opportunities for teachers, APPI offers a variety of educational activities for students. Meetings are held the second Friday of every month at Schmitt Music in Brooklyn Center. We have so much to learn from each other—come join us!



Sat., Apr. 21, 2018—APP Piano Festival & Composition Festival

Where: Valley Community Presbyterian Church, Golden Valley

Time: 8:30 am—5:00 pm

MAY

Fri., May. 11, 2018

Teacher Meeting

Topic: Different Strokes: Approaching Standard Teaching Pieces

APPI Member Presenters: Sue Ruby & Cathy Smetana

Where: Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music

Time: 12:00-1:30 pm

JUNE

Fri., June 8, 2018

APPI-tizer & Teacher Meeting

Topic: What We Can Learn from Sports Psychology

Guest Speaker: Vanessa Cornett-Murtada

Where: Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music

Time:

- APPI-tizer 11:00-11:45 am
- Meeting: 12:00-1:30 pm

Sun., June 10, 2018

APPI Planning Retreat

Where: Miriam Jensen's home

Time: 6:00-9:00 pm