



PIANO-YOGA

GÉNIA

£21.21 (£14.99 FOR E-VERSION) FROM PIANO.YOGA.COM

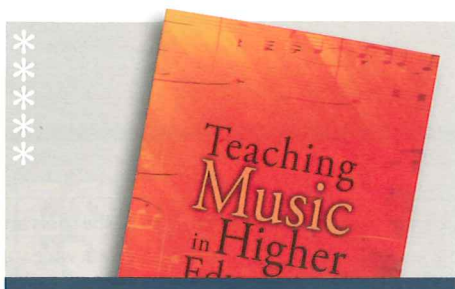
“Beginners have enjoyed the preliminary exercises and I believe they have become more hand-aware”

This rather unconventional approach to piano technique is a ten-week course of exercises. Influenced by yoga practises, it aims to increase hand muscle strength and develop finger flexibility and control, while improving hand span.

The book is split into four sections. The preliminary stage provides exercises that can be used at all levels – a five-minute warm-up routine where hand and sitting position are correctly established and wrists are loosened. Stage one is more advanced, with small- and large-hand exercises. These studies warm up and strengthen the fingers, using what enigmatic author GéNIA refers to as ‘flat-finger technique with engaged knuckles’. Stage two focuses on increasing flexibility and stretch of the hand, while stage three concentrates on the wrist. The recommended repertoire at the end of each section covers a range of standards.

Having tested out Piano-Yoga with students aged seven to 70, I can’t help but be impressed by it. My students have developed greater finger control and the wrist exercises have really improved their phrasing. Beginners have enjoyed the preliminary exercises and I believe they have become more hand-aware. My adult elementary students, who struggle with flexibility, enjoyed being able to read detailed explanations of the exercises – not included in many study books – and also valued the photographic illustrations of the hand and finger positions. However, some advanced students found the explanations too technical and the exercises a little repetitive. The only serious difficulties were with reading the exercises, mainly because students were focusing on getting the technique right, but this was overcome by rote learning. Overall, this is a good resource.

Reviewed by Karen Marshall



TEACHING MUSIC IN HIGHER EDUCATION

COLLEEN M. CONWAY AND THOMAS M. HODGMAN

OUP, £19.99, ISBN 978-0-19-536935-9

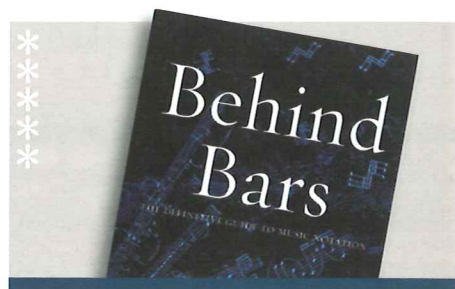
“You will frequently read sentences which set out to both instruct and reassure”

‘Designed for faculty and graduate assistants working with undergraduate music majors as well as non-majors in colleges and universities,’ this book represents a relatively uncommon excursion into the pedagogy of higher education music teaching. While the context is North American, the contents provide a principled account of working competently and with purpose in higher education music programmes across the world. The 13 chapters includes topics such as course design; assessment; creating a learning culture; the employment of active learning strategies; the use of technology; and professional development.

Each chapter is bounding with valuable information, clarifications and straightforward good advice. For example, Chapter 5 (Creating a Culture for Learning) deals with some 24 items, all of a highly practical nature, and includes an intriguing exploration of ‘potentially difficult situations’ where issues of attendance, tardiness, difficult students, attention-seeking students who dominate discussions, plagiarism and so on are discussed. You will frequently read sentences beginning ‘try to...’ and ‘you will find that...’ which set out to both instruct and reassure.

The book provides a comprehensive programme of support for those new to the role of teaching music in higher education, and is at the same time a valuable refreshment for those more established. There are exemplary syllabuses, student vignettes, self-evaluation inventories, checklists, items for discussion and debate, and further reading with the potential to extend the mastery of the art of teaching in higher education.

Reviewed by John Finney



BEHIND BARS: THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO MUSIC NOTATION

ELAINE GOULD

FABER MUSIC, ISBN 978-0-571-51456-4, £65

“It’s not only a useful book, it’s also a fascinating one”

If books, like hotels, had a star-rating system then this book would be off the top of the scale! Among technical reference books it’s a colossus. It’s a book for composers, arrangers, copyists, typesetters, and anyone who interacts in any way with music notation. If you want to know how to write it clearly and unambiguously, this book will tell you.

With this book by your side any chance of inaccurate, lazy or impractical notation becomes quite impossible. But it’s not only a useful book, it’s also a fascinating one, and it’s going to become my bedside reading for many months to come.

I couldn’t begin to list the areas that it covers: there are far too many of them. As a clarinettist I headed straight for the woodwind techniques section and learned lots on multiphonics, harmonics and how to notate unusual modern performance practice ideas. Each area is accompanied by appropriate and generous musical examples from the widest of repertoires – there are evidently over 1,500 examples.

Simon Rattle, in his munificent introduction, rightly calls this a reference for musicians for decades to come. He also describes the book as part of the living texture of music itself rather than a book of dry rules. He’s right. It’s quite expensive at £65 – though you do get 676 information-packed pages – but I believe it’s worth it.

See *Letters for your chance to win a copy of this book.*

Reviewed by Paul Harris