



DIVERSIFYING THE REPERTOIRE:

A GUIDE TO TEACHING NEW STYLES

NOTES AND REFERENCES

The following concepts are based on the author's experience and relevant articles from academic journals, professional magazines, and online opinion sources.

Music teachers can broaden a student's understanding of music styles. It is a privilege to open doors to new sounds. Both the teacher and the student will grow musically and artistically through exploration.

Diversifying students' repertoire involves:

1. Exposing students to a wide range of styles;
2. Encouraging a high level of proficiency;
3. Utilizing instruction time.

Diversifying repertoire is important because the student:

1. Develops an appreciation of different styles;
2. Experiences an artistic rejuvenation;
3. Expands their skillset.

Why might classically-oriented music teachers avoid non-classical repertoire?

1. Classically-trained musicians are (generally) not taught non-classical pedagogy.^{1 2} It's hard to change institutions quickly.^{3 4}
2. Musicians require new skills to perform new styles.⁵
3. The human brain is molded by specific kinds of musical activities.⁶

¹ Jeannette L LoVetri and Edrie Means Weekly, "Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) Survey: Who's Teaching What in Nonclassical Music," *Journal of Voice* 17, no. 2 (June 2003): 207-15, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0892-1997\(03\)00004-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0892-1997(03)00004-3).

² Mac Randall, "Bringing Jazz Pedagogy into a Wider Focus," *Teaching Music*, February 2013.

³ Don Lebler, "Student-As-Master? Reflections on a Learning Innovation in Popular Music Pedagogy," *International Journal of Music Education* 25, no. 3 (December 2007): 205-21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761407083575>.

⁴ Bill Zuckerman, "Is Eurocentricity a Problem in Music Schools? Five Intriguing Solutions Revealed," *Music School Central*, December 17, 2014, <https://musicschoolcentral.com/eurocentricity-problem-music-schools-five-solutions-revealed>.

⁵ Karen Hall, "Music Theatre and Classical Singing: At Odds Personally and Professionally," *Journal of Singing*, May 2007.

⁶ R. Bianco et al., "Musical Genre-Dependent Behavioural and EEG Signatures of Action Planning. A Comparison between Classical and Jazz Pianists," *NeuroImage* 169 (April 2018): 383-94, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2017.12.058>.

4. It's easy to teach same things in similar styles, over and over again.

How to teach non-classical music to classically-trained musicians, specifically pianists?

1. Incremental Approach - Assign an easy selection in a specific before assigning a more complicated one.
2. Create learning "flow charts" or processes so the student can contextualize new ideas.
 - Modify the learning "flow chart" or process for any style.
 - Use the flow chart to assign when to add swing, or ornaments, etc.
3. Identify the skills and knowledge the classically-trained musician already has mastered
4. Identify gaps in skillsets, particularly in the performance of complicated rhythms which can be problematic in popular piano styles.⁷
5. Combine eye with ear.
 - Listen to a high-quality performance of the newly assigned repertoire.
 - Record a phrase or small section of the student's performance.
 - Compare the flow, style, and tempo of the two recordings.
6. Meet the student where they are.
 - The student might not be ready to receive new challenges like an unfamiliar repertoire style.
 - Not everything can be fixed or taught at once.
 - A student's tastes, interests, and moral convictions should influence repertoire selection.⁸

The ability to play confidently in many styles of music is a valuable skillset. No matter what opportunities for music making lie before a student, they will be well-equipped to take on new stylistic challenges.

⁷ "Creative Music Education - CNMN," www.newmusicnetwork.ca, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://www.newmusicnetwork.ca/resources/creative-music-education/>.

⁸ Charlotte Higgins, "Is Opera the Most Misogynistic Art Form?," *The Guardian*, February 26, 2016, sec. Music, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/26/is-opera-the-most-misogynistic-art-form>.

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AMY BOYES

B I O G R A P H Y

Amy Boyes maintains a busy teaching schedule and her students are regularly featured in events throughout Ottawa such as the Kiwanis Music Festival, Kanata Music Club, ORMTA student events, and studio recitals.

She holds Associate Diplomas in Piano Performance (ARCT) and Teaching (ARCT) from the Royal Conservatory of Music and a Licentiate Diploma from Trinity College (UK) in Piano Recital. She studied at Brandon University with Alexander Tselyakov (B Mus) and at the University of Alberta with Janet Scott Hoyt (M Mus).

A council member of the Canadian Music Festival Adjudicators' Association, Amy has adjudicated music festivals throughout Eastern Canada, both in-person and online. She is also a member of the Royal Conservatory of Music's College of Examiners for both piano and history.

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Amy's music-related articles have been published by the *American Music Teacher*, *Canadian Music Teacher*, *Piano Magazine* (formerly *Clavier Companion*), *Piano Professional*, and she has written guest blog posts on *Melanie Spanswick*, *No Dead Guys and Piano Dao*. Other writing has been published by *The Globe and Mail*, *Humber Literary Review*, *In Parentheses*, and Signature Editions.



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