

# Jon's Teaching Group Spring 2004

Written & Edited :  
Jon Grave

Volume 1, Issue 2  
28th January, 2004

## Happy New Year!!!

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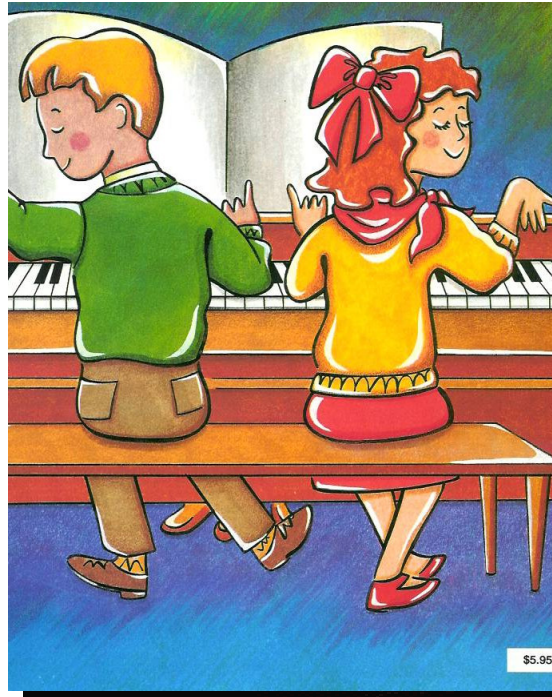
### Performance Nerves:

- Breathing deteriorates with nervousness, counteract through slow, deep breaths.
- Recreate the nervous feeling by running up and down the stairs during practice to create breathlessness and increase heartrate.
- Visualise the performance beforehand, play through in your mind.
- Never forsake an entire piece for one note/passage, mistakes will happen, let them pass.
- Warm up well beforehand, it is too late for correcting mistakes, last minute practise will only increase nerves.

Welcome to the second newsletter, and I would like to thank everybody for the positive feedback received, though there has been a certain lack of photos and topics requested!

Congratulations to last terms examination candidates all of whom achieved Merit or Distinction, and especially to Robert Millar who passed Grade 5 trumpet with an excellent 138/150. This terms 8 entrants have a lot to live up to. I would also like to thank pupils and parents once more for all the Christmas cards and presents.

The venue and date for the 1st pupils concert have been decided, this will take place on Friday 19th March at 7pm, in St Sepulchre's Church, Holborn. This is a 5 minute walk from St Paul's and Farringdon underground stations. To cover the cost of the professional accompanist and hall hire there will be a charge for performers of £7.50. Everybody is expected to participate, including adult pupils!



*Jon Grave*

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**STILL WANTED:** Photos of any practice, performance, or musical artwork. The winner will be on the front page of the next edition!

## DOES PRACTISE MAKE PERFECT?

The old adage 'practise makes perfect' sounds logical enough, but equally important as the time spent practicing is the manner and quality of application. Though it is possible not to progress despite hours of practice, this only occurs at an exceptionally high level of playing. Fortunately for most musicians, even unproductive work will lead to some improvement.

A large proportion of pupils practise by playing a piece through, then repeating this procedure a few times. With this method easier parts of the work improve more rapidly than sections of greater complexity. Sections of greater intricacy require far more additional work than other sections, thus wasting time on elements needing little work, whilst neglecting those which do.

If the only mistake in a piece happens on the last note, it would seem obvious there is little point playing from beginning to end just to work on the last bar, but many musicians do. Playing the last bar ten times by itself is a more efficient use of

time. The improved section can then be put into context by playing the piece through once or twice. This problem is magnified with pieces of varying difficulty, especially for the grades. If there are three pieces, the majority of the time is often spent on the easiest one while the more difficult pieces are left untouched. We improve far more by working at our weaknesses, not our strengths.

Another frequent problem is undertaking difficult sections too quickly. As a result of finding a speed where no mistakes are made (this may be 4 times slower than the written tempo) then gradually speeding up, most problems can be solved. On keyboard instruments it should be evident that if there is difficulty playing hands separately, there is little hope with both together. By practising intelligently progress will increase immensely.

*Next term: How to remember lessons....*

Written & Edited :  
Jon Grave

15 Selkirk Court  
Whitley Road  
London  
N17 6RF

Phone: 020 8352 0998

Mobile: 07803 620 401

Email: geordiegrave@hotmail.com



Jon Grave

Teacher & Performer of Piano,  
Singing & Trumpet

We're not on the  
web yet, but  
hopefully one day!!!

## How Relevant are Examinations?

**Originally** I had misgivings about the role of exams in teaching. They interrupted what I really wanted to teach, getting in the way of many important playing aspects which needed to be studied, but despite these shortcomings my view has been completely reversed over the past couple of years. The varied nature of the exam itself forces into focus some aspects which can be neglected in a short lesson, while the three pieces of different repertoires and periods, along with a number of scales, unprepared sight-reading, and aural tests all provide different approaches and interest.

**The sudden** frenzied practicing that commences once exams begin to approach is important. Realisation that unlike the weekly lesson there is no escape from practice as the examiner won't take into account the usual feeble excuses. There is a fear of failure and drive to achieve as well as competing with other friends who have taken the same test. Even with aspiring professional musicians at music colleges, when the exams are approaching the social life goes on hold and no amount of money will make it possible to book a room for the next month.

**The pieces** are very important, as instead of learning a piece for a couple of weeks and then wanting to move on, this provides an opportunity for really studying a work above their current standard for a concentrated time period. There is less complaining about boredom as there is a goal to achieve, and any complaints of this nature are related to the work's difficulty. Approaching these difficult pieces pushes the playing ability towards a new level, while the constant repetition removes focus away from the notes and towards musicality and tone production.

**Next issue...** *Other exam aspects and their uses*

## End of Term Concert

### EXAM RESULTS & RE-CENT PERFORMANCES

Let me know of your achievements - however small you feel they are.

#### Grade 5 Trumpet

Robert Miller (*Distinction*)

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#### Grade 3 Trumpet

Jamie Lindsay (*Merit*)

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#### Grade 3 Piano

Glynn Barwick (*Merit*)

### Good Luck to:

Robert Millar (Grade 6 Trumpet),

Jamie Lindsay (Grade 4 Trumpet),

Peter Judge (Grade 2 Trumpet),  
Felix Nugee (Grade 2 Piano),  
Hugh Judge (Grade 1 Trumpet),  
Remus Bigg, Izzy Millar,

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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#### 1st PUPILS CONCERT!!!

St Sepulchre's, High Holborn on Friday 19th March, 7.00pm.  
Tickets are free: £7.50 for performers.

This is an excellent opportunity for pupils to perform in a beautiful, intimate and friendly environment, with a professional accompanist and afterwards to meet other pupils and parents/relatives. There will be a maximum of two pieces for each performer and hopefully some ensemble music. If you would like to perform please fill in the attached form.

### NOTICES

This can include music and instruments for sale, farewells to parting pupils, advertising etc.

### Jon's Performances

**Every** Sunday morning,

11.00 - 12.15, St John's, St John's Wood, Choral Eucharist

#### Easter Services

**Maundy Thursday** 19.00 - 20.00, Thu 8th April

**Easter Vigil** 20.00 - 22.00, Sat 10th April

**Easter Sunday** 11.00 - 12.15, Sun 11th April. Puccini *Messa di Gloria*

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Tenor soloist in Handel's *Messiah* at St Sepulchre's, High Holborn, Wed 24th March, 19.00 - 21.00

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Tenor soloist in Handel's *Messiah* at Chertsey on Sat 27th March, 19.00 - 21.30



*Always dress smartly for any public performances!*

### ASSOCIATED BOARD EXAM CLOSING DATES - 2004

Spring - Friday 16 January

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Summer - Friday 30 April

Autumn - Friday 24 September