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MARK ANDERS AND CARL J. DANIELSEN / PHOTO BY TIM FULLER

2 pianos, 4 HANDS

Mar. 27 - Apr. 26 • The Stage Theatre

There's nothing worse than a brilliant beginning.
—Pablo Picasso

The piano is an incredibly versatile instrument, a wonder of design in both form and function. This witty two-man show captures the agony and ecstasy, the frustration and drudgery and mystery involved in learning to play the piano and eventually rising to the level of accomplished musician. And unlike many other plays about music in which not a single note is “live,” the pair of actors frequently sit down to play everything from Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and snatches of Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Schumann and more, to that indestructible and utterly familiar “Heart and Soul.”

The play follows two piano students through the gauntlet of their music education. From the simple tune of “Chopsticks” to the posture demands of tyrannical teachers and to the final decision that every student in every discipline must make, *2 Pianos, 4 Hands* has keen perceptions about life. It is a tale of talent and commitment that is both sweet and bitter.

Since music has so much to do with the molding of character, it is necessary that we teach it to our children.

—Aristotle

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The PLAYWRIGHTS

Richard Greenblatt was born in Montreal, Quebec in 1953. He began taking piano lessons at the age of seven with Dorothy Morton of McGill Conservatory. At 19, he left to study theatre at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London and returned to Canada in 1975. Since his return, Richard has co-created several award-winning shows such as *The Theory of Relatives*, *Sibs*, *Soft Pedaling* as well as *2 Pianos, 4 Hands*. Acting credits include The Fool in *King Lear*, Puck in the opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Creon in *Antigone* and the title role in *Spinoza*. He is a member of Tarragon Theatre's Playwright Unit and is currently writing a new play, *The Year I Didn't Become a Man*. In addition he has directed more than 65 productions, mostly in Canada. During the course of Richard's 27-year career as a writer, director and actor, he has been the recipient of four Dora Mavor Moore Awards, two Chalmers Awards and countless other nominations. He has acted extensively in theatre, film, television and radio as well as taught both acting and directing at most of Canada's leading theatre schools. He lives in Toronto with his wife and three children.

Ted Dykstra celebrated his 25th year in professional theatre this January. Born in Chatham, Ontario in 1961, he has played leading roles in every major theatre in Canada and in dozens of movies and TV shows. Last spring, Toronto theatre-goers saw him in the title role of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* at the Crow's Theatre, a performance that earned him nightly standing ovations. He is currently working on the new cartoon series, *Roboroach*, which will feature his voice and the voices of children. He has performed in *2 Pianos, 4 Hands* 701 times across Canada, in New York, Washington, DC and London's West End; he also has directed the production in San Francisco and Australia. His work has earned him the Dora Mavor Moore Award for acting and the Chalmers Award for writing. An avid composer/musician, he has composed music for theatres across the country and has three musicals in development. Ted is a founding member of Toronto's Soulpepper Theatre Company. He is married to singer/songwriter Melanie Doane and they have one son, Theo.

Musical SELECTIONS *and* Terms

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

<i>D Minor Piano Concerto</i>	J.S. Bach
<i>Heart and Soul</i>	Frank Loesser and Hoagy Carmichael
<i>My Little Birch Canoe</i>	Leila Fletcher
<i>By the Stream</i>	Richard Greenblatt
<i>Our Band Goes to Town</i>	Arrangement by J.B. Duvernoy
<i>Sonatina No. 6 in F Major</i>	Beethoven
<i>Sonata Facile</i>	Mozart
<i>Duet in D Major</i>	Mozart
<i>Leyenda</i>	Albeniz
<i>A Medley of Classical Hits</i>	
<i>Rondo for Two Pianos, Four Hands in C Major</i>	Chopin
<i>Fantasiestucke No. 2</i>	Schumann
<i>Pathetique Sonata No. 8</i>	Beethoven
<i>Prelude in D-Flat</i>	Chopin
<i>Mephisto Waltz No. 1</i>	Liszt
<i>Ballade No. 2 in F Major</i>	Chopin
<i>A Medley of Pop Tunes</i>	
<i>Impromptu in A Flat</i>	Schubert
<i>My Funny Valentine</i>	Rodgers and Hart
<i>Piano Man</i>	Billy Joel
<i>Mephisto Waltz (Vladimir Horowitz)</i>	Liszt
<i>D Minor Concerto—First Movement (“Allegro”)</i>	J. S. Bach

MUSICAL TERMS

Andante: a moderately slow, “walking” pace
Arpeggio: notes of a chord played individually one after another
Cantabile: “singable,” a direction to play the melody as if the instrument were singing
Con fuoco: with fire
Crescendo: growing louder
Dolce or dolcemente: literally “sweet” or “sweetly”
Etude: a musical exercise designed to build techniques on an instrument
Forte: loud
Fortissimo: very loud
Piano: softly
Pianissimo: very softly
Presto: fast
Sonata: a three- or four-part piece of music composed for an instrument, with each part having a different mood or tempo
Con spirito: with spirit
Staccato: quick, detached notes
Tempo: the speed at which music is to be played
Adjudicator: a judge who critiques a musical event
Chops: slang for talent or skill
Conservatory: a school dedicated to the study of a performing art

TEACHERS *and* Mentors

Great talents are the most lovely and often the most dangerous fruits on the tree of humanity. They hang upon the most slender twigs that are easily snapped off.

—Carl Jung

If a great talent is to be developed, it first needs a great teacher. In 1955 the aim of teaching music, according to Cora B. Ahrens and G. D. Atkinson, was “to teach the pupil to listen appreciatively and to perform artistically.”¹ For these authors, good teachers need exact knowledge of the subject matter and skill and a study of child development and psychology. The bulk of their book, however, is devoted to correct posture, hand positions, finger exercises, theories of interpretation and repertoire.

Wilma Machover and Marie Uszler in their book, *Sound Choices*, point out that many changes have taken place in music pedagogy in the last 25 years. Unlike Sister Layola who engages in mnemonics to teach key signatures or Mr. Berkoff who uses pies and money to teach time signatures, well-trained music teachers have gone through rigorous training. Teacher certification is now part of the necessary credentials, along with increased specialization in such areas as preschool music, children with special needs and gifted students. Group instruction offers new learning possibilities because music curriculum goes beyond just successful playing. As a result, fees for music teachers have risen to reflect the increased training and status of music teachers and are not affordable for some families.

For Machover and Uszler, the well-qualified music teacher must have specific qualifications. These include: “a love of teaching; a degree in music; experience in performance; experience in teaching; interpersonal skills; diagnostic skills; knowledge of learning theory and varied learning

styles; a well-equipped studio; an acquaintance with a wide variety of music literature; membership in local or national professional societies; certification by a professional society; additional training in pedagogy or a combination performance/pedagogy degree and a possible affiliation with a community arts school.”²

Perhaps what playwright/performers Richard and Ted need is a mentor. A mentor is defined as “a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” (In the ancient Greek epic, *The Odyssey*, Mentor was the friend and advisor to the hero Odysseus.) When someone engages in a new pursuit and strives to improve or when a child with a special talent needs instruction and guidance, a mentor is a wonderful asset; a teacher who can become as close to a student as a family member.

In the play Ted and Richard each have several teachers, but none qualifies as a mentor. The instructors all have a knowledge and skill they can teach, but they cannot communicate and encourage in the way that true mentorship requires.

The luck of having talent is not enough; one must also have a talent for luck.

—Hector Berlioz

Virtuosity *OR* SOMETHING Else?

Performance is a Herculean endeavor that demands too much of mere human beings.

—Glenn Gould

In her book *Virtue or Virtuosity*, Jane O’Dea agrees with Gould in his characterization of the performing artist—or the virtuoso. In Italian “*virtu* means not only the propensity of the soul which makes us agreeable to God, but also the superiority of talent, skill or ability which makes us excel, be it in the theory or be it in the practice of the Fine Arts. It is from this word that the Italians have formed the word *virtuoso* to name or praise those to whom Providence has granted this excellence or superiority.”¹

O’Dea also discusses the character traits needed to become a successful performing artist. Her first qualification is courage—the courage to go out on stage and perform in front of people. Musical performance is a risky, tricky business that requires bravery to tap your resources, open yourself up and rely on your senses to make the minute physical or mental adjustments that spell the difference between success or failure. Patience and tenacity are two other requirements, for certain physical and mental skills must be mastered. Some physical abilities depend on maturation and one must wait for them to develop, while tenacity is necessary for the practice of technical and interpretive skills. *Virtuosos* must have humility toward tradition and the great artists of the past, but also enormous self-confidence—an unshakeable faith in one’s talent and a belief in the power of one’s interpretive ideas. Diligence and concentration are needed in practice and in searching out interpretive clues, while deliberation is necessary to evaluate suggestions on performance and interpretation. But perhaps the most important character trait is the ability to be honest with oneself—“the ability to see for yourself or to listen to what you are told about your own inadequacies and to make corrections accordingly.”²

The 19th century saw the ideal of virtuosity emerge when the violinist Niccolò Paganini appeared on the scene. He possessed extraordinary technical abilities and expressive powers that aroused public enthusiasm to levels never before reached. Inspired by his example, composers for the piano sought to do for the keyboard what Paganini had done for the violin. Robert Schumann and Frederic Chopin created works that allowed the pianist to explore the possibilities of “virtuosity, rhythmic splendor and melodic brilliance—sounding sonorities that no one before had even imagined.”³ But it was Franz Liszt who embodied the image of *virtuoso* at his best. Though his behavior was flamboyant and excessive (exaggerated hand gestures, breaking hammers and strings with the force of his playing, impassioned facial expressions), his technique was exemplary and his interpretations exquisite. The legends of Liszt and Paganini have given us the modern concept of *virtuoso* and the 20th century has produced its share—Pablo Casals on cello, James Galway on flute, Glenn Gould, Vladimir Horowitz and Arthur Rubenstein on piano and Luciano Pavarotti and Joan Sutherland, singers—all attest to the continued popularity of *virtuoso* performers.

But what if you can’t be a *virtuoso* in your field? In the movie/play *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer, Antonio Salieri, the composer in the court of Austrian Emperor Joseph II, is faced with the prospect of Mozart, the rude and rambunctious genius. Salieri recognized Mozart’s talent and brilliance; for all his labor and diligence, Salieri is just a “mediocrity.” He feels betrayed by God who, he thinks, has given the gift of genius to the wrong man. Though his appointment as court composer is not threatened, he becomes obsessed with quietly destroying his rival.

In *2 Pianos, 4 Hands*, Ted realizes he is not mediocre but neither is he a *virtuoso*—or so he is told when he is rejected by the conservatory. The adjudicator acknowledges his talent, but doubts his discipline and tenacity. According to O’Dea, institutions can err or allow prejudice and favoritism to enter into the judging and people may not receive

Virtuosity *OR* SOMETHING ELSE?

the evaluation they deserve. If Ted did indeed gain entrance to the school, could he withstand the anxiety and competitive spirit of students in the piano performance degree? Noah Adams in his book *Piano Lessons* tells the razor blade story: “single edge blades being inserted between the keys of practice room pianos [which would result] in an unsuspecting fellow student [being] cut and unable to perform.”⁴

This legend comes from Juilliard, probably the most prominent performing arts school in the United States. In a recent *American Masters* program on PBS (Jan. 29, 2003), the series focused on Juilliard, its student body, alumni and its successes and failures. One disappointed entrant was disturbed at the auditioning process—especially the instrumental ones. “How do they know how good you are in 15 minutes?” she asked. Bradley Whitford, actor on *The West Wing*, agreed that the auditions are nerve-wracking and compared them to a meat market. Marvin Hamlisch, composer/pianist, said that Juilliard can be the wrong school for some people because of the enormous pressure. As for the instruction, the faculty possesses the rarest talent—the ability to teach. Rosina Lhevine, pianist and instructor, said that talent doesn’t mean anything unless one has the proper teaching. She added, “Not everyone will become famous because there isn’t room enough.”

Tough discipline is a hallmark of the school because “everything works better with discipline and you work better.” Some found the discipline helpful; actress Laura Linney said that she had faith and trust in her instructors and if they were critical, it was for the right reasons. On the other hand, Patti Lu Pone, actress/singer, believes the discipline can break one’s spirit and that more than talent is necessary to weather the experience. Actor Kevin Spacey found the instruction and discipline “nurturing” in that the teachers “can see the thing that stops you from getting through.”

Juilliard has a special interest in prodigies and their development. Itzak Perlman, a violinist, child prodigy and scholarship student, commented that child musicians can be brilliant at 12 and mediocre at 17 or vice versa. Nadia Salerno-Sonnenberg, also a violinist, believes most prodigies don’t make it because they don’t have the discipline to survive the crashes that come from criticism.

Perhaps singer/actress Audra MacDonald echoed Ted and Richard’s problem when she asked, “What’s left for me if I can’t do this?” Should she or anyone with performance aspirations have something else to fall back on if they don’t make it? Ted says he won’t consider teaching or accompanying because he knows he has the right stuff. He finds that he doesn’t, but both he and Richard have found alternate careers and are content to be “the best players in the neighborhood.”⁵

Quotations *on* Performance *and* MUSIC

Children just receive music instruction as naturally as food, with as much pleasure as they derive from a ball game, and this must happen from the beginning of their lives.

—Leonard Bernstein

What I might have become if I didn't play an instrument—I never stopped to think about that. Judging from the neighborhood I lived in, if it hadn't been for the clarinet, I might just as easily have been a gangster.

—Benny Goodman

Music is everything. Music is the oldest entity. The scope of music is immense and infinite. Without music I feel blind, atrophied, incomplete, inexistent...

—Duke Ellington

From *Sound Choices: Guiding Your Child's Musical Experiences*. Wilma Machover and Marianne Uszler. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996

I was born with music inside me. Like my blood. And from the moment I learned that there were keys to be mashed, I started mashing 'em, trying to make sounds out of feelings.

—Ray Charles

From the beginning I could play a melody I'd heard only once and make up pieces on the piano by just doodling.

—Judy Collins.

I understand that [playing the piano] is like Spaghetti-Os. I understand that it is a yummy feeling, that you crawl up and make friends with the sound.

—Tori Amos

From *Piano Lessons*
Noah Adams. New York:
Delacorte Press, 1996

At first I thought I should be a second Beethoven, presently I found that to be another Schubert would be good; then, gradually satisfied with less and less, I was resigned to be a Humperdinck.

—Englebert Humperdinck, composer

I had nothing to lose, but something to gain. If I made an album for me and it was to my satisfaction, then I succeeded.

—Eminem, on his *Slim Shady* album

My daddy had seen a lot of people who played the guitar and stuff and didn't work, so he said, 'You should make up your mind either about being an electrician or playing a guitar. I never saw a guitar player worth a damn.'

—Elvis Presley

Though I left the classical music world when I was in high school for a new love—the theatre—the principles and concepts in the music I studied, and the discipline that music required, have continued to influence me in my adult life.

—Bruce Sevy, director
2 Pianos, 4 Hands

ACTIVITIES

Heroes, Mentors, Dreams and Goals

What is the definition of hero?
Do you have a hero in your life?
Chart a lifeline of your hero pointing out significant events.
What is the definition of mentor?
Do you have a mentor in your life?
Make a list of your dreams.
Do you think your dreams are attainable?
Do you have goals in your life?
Make a list of your goals.
What is the difference between a dream and a goal?

STEPS FOR SETTING AND ACHIEVING GOALS

Whether you're a student, a mother, a businessman or career person, you have your own set of goals you want to achieve. However, there are times that you might feel overwhelmed by obstacles or become preoccupied with other things that you tend to give up on doing things leading toward your goals. You become unsuccessful and don't achieve your goals simply because you have lost focus on them. Ask yourself these five questions and turn them into your personal focus steps. You'll soon get right back on track to achieving your goals and ultimately, success!

1. Are your goals achievable?

By achievable, we mean realistic and attainable. You might unconsciously have set a goal that anyone will have a hard time achieving, even if they had the means and the time to do so. One thing you can do is break down your goals into small, realistic goals, set against reasonable timeframes. Oftentimes, you'll be able to achieve your bigger goals if you work on achieving the smaller goals leading to those. The important thing is to make your goals as realistic and achievable as you can.

2. Do you really believe in your abilities?

It is true that the only person whom your success hugely depends on is yourself. So, do you believe enough in yourself and in what you can do to achieve your goals? Self-doubt is your biggest adversary and the biggest obstacle you will come up against on your way to your success. Could it be that you have lost focus of your goals because

you unconsciously set aside having to deal with your self-doubts?

3. Do you have a feasible plan for achieving your goals?

Yes, you know what you want, but do you know how you can get what you want? Would you need a special kind of technical or artistic training to achieve your goals? Or maybe further educational studies? Do you have a set plan of action that will lead to the achievement of your goals? What things, both tangible and intangible, do you need that will aid you in reaching your goals? Take a moment and list the things you would need to make a plan of action. Break them down into small, realistic goals and take them on one day at a time.

4. Are you spreading yourself too thin?

Sometimes it's better to work on one goal at a time, rather than working on several at the same time. For one thing, working on too many goals at once may hinder you from achieving each one faster, and for another thing, you will not be able to focus your full energy on one goal. Prioritize your goals and then start with either your top priority or the most realistic goal. You'll discover for yourself that you are able to do more and achieve more by using this approach.

5. Do you give up easily?

Aside from asking if you believe in your ability to achieve your goals, this is the second most important question to ask yourself. Yes, you do the steps necessary to achieve your goals, but after one or two failures, do you give up and not try again? Persistence and patience are the keys to achieving your goals and eventual success. Always remember that it is very rare that a person achieves total success or attains his or her goals on the first try. If people did, there would be no need to build self-confidence, patience and persistence in oneself.

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