

W-006

## **Encouraging Improvisation in Collegiate Group Piano Settings**

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### **Abstract**

With intent to improve pedagogy in collegiate group piano settings, the purpose of this workshop is to encourage improvisation. More specifically, aural approach will be emphasized in demonstrating how group piano students can effectively learn and benefit from improvisation. This workshop will include: (1) teaching demonstrations of improvisation in collegiate group piano settings; and (2) research results and interpretations of overall music achievement in collegiate group piano students.

Many music educators suggest that an aural approach to instrumental music instruction will improve student achievement (Azzara, 2002; Bluestine, 2000; Campbell, 2005; Curwen, 1901). Nevertheless, traditional approaches of instruction starting with notation still prevail in much beginning piano pedagogy. Without the musical context of tonality, meter, and style, students focus on individual notes that often result in a lack of musicianship skills. Music instruction that focuses on developing students' aural comprehension is much needed because a lack of students' understanding of tonality, meter, style, and harmonic progression will interrupt the natural transfer to piano performances (Azzara, 2002). Aural approaches incorporating improvisation have received increased attention in recent years, but are not prevalent in collegiate piano settings. Most adult private and group piano curricula focus on technical advancement in lieu of creative music making and aural skills development. Perhaps due to the nature of the instrument, piano students may simply press keys on the keyboard without comprehending what they are playing.

Participants' stabilized music aptitude was measured prior to the 14 weeks of instruction. Each student participated in two classes each week for a period of 14 weeks. This study was integrated into the pre-existing, school-wide, semester-long curriculum. Each student completed both quantitative and qualitative assessments. Quantitative results affirmed that an aural approach to improvisation in beginning collegiate group piano may have led to improved music achievement. Qualitative results revealed that an aural approach to improvisation enhanced participants' perspectives of music curricula.