

Red Leaf News

Piano music of Martha Hill Duncan, Beverly Porter, Susan Griesdale, Janet Gieck, Rebekah Maxner, Christine Donkin



Red Leaf Pianoworks

www.redleafpianoworks.com

Newsletter no. 2 - June 2010

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Conventions!

We're getting ready to mingle with our fellow music instructors at the following events:

- ♦ Summer Sizzle
(Mount Forest, ON)
- ♦ ORMTA convention
(London, ON)
- ♦ APTA convention
(Red Deer, AB)
- ♦ SRMTA convention
(Saskatoon, SK)

Janet Gieck will be teaching composition classes at Summer Sizzle.

What's New at Red Leaf



We'd love to see you!
Come and say hello at one of these upcoming conventions.

Interview with this issue's Featured Composer,

Martha Hill Duncan



Martha basks in the approving gaze of Mr. Mozart.

When did you realize that music was going to be important in your life?

Growing up, my mother sang all the time, with different songs for different moods, and I suppose I copied her, making up my own words and tunes. I also remember "tearing up" whenever I heard a beautiful voice or instrument played. Fortunately, I've learned to show a little more self-control, but even now, music still has the power to capture my imagination and catch my emotions off guard.

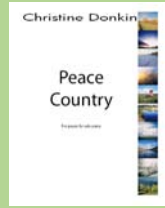
How and when did you discover this voice?

I was the "difficult" piano student who altered rhythms, tempos and dynamics of pieces, swung Bach and rewrote endings. At the age of 9, my "very clever" piano teacher gave me a little manuscript book and told me that I could use it to write my own pieces. Imagine my surprise when I brought back the first piece (4 lines long) and her performance matched mine. I was hooked. My mother passed away several years ago, but just this year, my oldest sister found my first little manuscript book tucked in amongst my mother's things and sent it to me.
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Susan Griesdale at the NYCO Music Festival

Susan spent the last weekend in April at the NYCO Music Festival in Toronto as she was the Featured Composer for the Junior Piano Classes this year. The music came to life under the encouraging words of adjudicator Edward Janus. What fun it was for the participants and their families being in the company of Wizards, Heroes, Faeries, and Firemen, or doing the Tribal Dance, Climbing Rocks, sneaking around after cookies, being 'lulled' by gentle Celtic Lullabies, being Invisible, taking exciting Ferry Boat Rides, and more! The students really let their imaginations take over! The last class was the trio class where we got to meet Cool Cat and groove with the finger snapping beat of 'O Yeah'. A really magical 'make-believe' day!

Now available...



Peace Country

by Christine Donkin

Five advanced piano pieces inspired by the composer's place of birth. Includes the energetic *Trees dancing in the wind*, the pensive *Rain on the Window*, the lazy *In Summer*, the expressive *Orange Lullaby*, and the fast, fun, furious *Snowstorm*.



Old MacDonald Had the Blues

by Rebekah Maxner

12 of your favorite traditional tunes re-mixed with today's popular music styles. Try your hand at Jazz, Blues, Soft Rock, Ragtime, Latin, and more, with titles like "London Bridge is Gettin' Down." Late elementary to early intermediate, Grades 1-4.



Outside my Window

by Janet Gieck

Explore the colors in modes, the vitality of rhythms, and the richness of polychords. The two volumes of *Outside My Window* contain both reflective works and show-pieces for late intermediate to advanced levels.

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Where have you been putting your creative energies in the last few years?

I've just recorded and released my first piano solo CD, **Images in Sound**. It contains my 4 collections, *Cottage Days*, *Angular Measures*, *Precipitations* and *Isla Vista Suite*. When I play these works for my own students, they definitely find them easier to learn. So, it seemed only natural to record them for other students and teachers who wanted to study these pieces.

Tell us about the pieces that you recorded. One of them is printed in this newsletter [last page]. Can you give us some information about it?

"Drizzle" is the first piece of seven from *Precipitations*. I hope all of you enjoy it. *Precipitations* is all about the weather, but also implies the start of something - hopefully hooking and inspiring students to venture into uncharted but accessible and exciting new piano territory. I like to play and write pieces that make me feel and sound virtuosic, even if it's only an illusion! So, these are for grades 6 - 9 (late intermediate/advanced) but are still for a smaller hand. They can be played singly or all together as a set and sound a lot harder than they are.

And the other collections?

Cottage Days is a collection of 10 summer soundscapes for elementary/intermediate or Gr. 1 - 5 levels. *Angular Measures*, for grades 6 - 9 (intermediate/advanced), explores joyous reverberant sound and rhythm within opposing black and white keys between the hands. *Isla Vista Suite* came about after my family lived in Isla Vista California where the Monarchs over-winter and The Eucalyptus Groves cover the area. These pieces are for late elementary to advanced players and are my most romantic, with generous use of rubato and pedal. ♦

To learn more about Martha Hill Duncan's piano music, visit www.redleafpianoworks.com.

Why Should I Teach Composition?

by Janet Gieck

1. *Composition helps students understand how music is put together.* They learn about form, melody, and harmony. It is a chance to apply theoretical concepts and study them in a new way. There is opportunity for discussion on what makes each style of music sound the way it does. Students learn to appreciate the complexity that has gone into the creation of the music they play and listen to.
2. *Composition helps develop ear and dictation skills.* Students must figure out intervals and remember them in order to notate them accurately.
3. *Composition helps to improve sight reading* as students learn to recognize patterns to notate.
4. *Composition helps to advance the useful skill of improvisation* as students try out new ideas and attempt to develop them.
5. *Composition helps students realize that not all composers are dead!* Students learn that studying composition doesn't remain an ancient craft, but it is an exciting way of validating one's thoughts.
6. *Composition helps students play with passion.* Many students perform at their finest when playing pieces they have composed. A completed work is a reason to be proud!
7. *Composition helps students become well-rounded musicians.* The combination of the many different skills necessary for composition helps students to function at a higher level on individual tasks.
8. *Composition fosters a spirit of lifelong learning and creativity.* The spark of inspiration found in composition is a wonderful tool for self-expression. As students imagine new ideas, they will want to find new musical ways to communicate.

