

Red Leaf News



Red Leaf Pianoworks
a composers' collective

www.redleafpianoworks.com

Newsletter no.9 – April 2013

Come and say hello ...

You can find us at these events:

Presentation at the Bradford Academy of Music jointly with The Student Music Organizer (www.studentmusicorganizer.com) in Bradford, Ontario May 24, 2013 at 10:30 AM

Presentation at Cosmo Music also jointly with The Student Music Organizer in Richmond Hill, Ontario June 18, 2013, 9 AM to 12 noon.

CFMTA Convention in Halifax, Nova Scotia July 3 – 6, 2013

Summer Sizzle in Mount Forest, Ontario July 21 – 23, 2013

National Conference of Keyboard Pedagogy (NCKP) in Lombard, Illinois July 24 – 27, 2013

Martha Hill Duncan
Susan Griesdale
Beverly Porter
Rebekah Maxner
Janet Gieck
Joanne Bender
Teresa Richert

New in this issue: *Behind the Curtain* – What happens “behind the scenes” in the life of a Red Leaf Pianoworks Composer? See page 2



An Interview with Joanne Bender

Tell us about yourself - where you grew up, what your interests are and so on.

I was born in Stratford, Ontario and grew up on a farm nearby. I was the oldest of three children in the Elligsen family. My mom and dad both loved music but never had the opportunity to take lessons, having lived during the Depression, so they both learned to play on their own. Dad used to play fiddle tunes while my mom would chord on the piano by ear. Both mom and dad and their extended families loved singing and dancing and making music at family gatherings. They valued music and made sure to give me and my sister and brother piano lessons. I remember when I was 7 years old and my dad asked me if I would like to start piano lessons. I thought for a few seconds, shrugged my shoulders and then said, “Sure, I guess I’ll give it a try”. *That was the beginning of one of the greatest things in my entire life!* Our local piano teacher charged 50 cents per lesson back in 1957. By 1968 her fees had risen to \$5 per hour. Talk about a great investment! I absolutely loved piano lessons right from the beginning. At first my mom sat with me on the piano bench to help me. Later when I got good at sight reading and playing by ear, dad asked me to play piano for him when he played at church. He and I spent many hours in our living room playing violin and piano duets. I really appreciate the encouragement my parents gave me. Often I escaped doing dishes and household chores because I was practising. My mom was concerned that I would never be a good housewife, but I reasoned that domestic skills could always be acquired later on. Playing piano was an art that engaged me and defined me as a person. I played piano for school choirs, at church, at local festivals and competitions. I was really bad at sports, but I didn’t care – I could play the piano!

(continued on p.3)



Behind the Curtain

What happens behind the scenes in the life of a Red Leaf Pianoworks composer?

Susan Griesdale

My typical week: I usually manage at least two days of composing a week. I'd prefer three or four (but then I'd have to stop teaching, which I also love!). The hard part is being disciplined enough to work on composing, and not let other people and day to day activities take up my time. Even though I tend to be night person (early mornings can be so hard!), my most productive time of day for composing has been late morning. After 3:00 PM, anything I write I'm never happy with.

What am I working on currently? Right now I'm finishing a choral piece for SATB, a piano collection of dance pieces, a string ensemble (which I've written two parts so far) and I have a spoken word with piano accompaniment story that has been waiting for a long time for me to get some more progress on!

Why Compose? I simply have to! I can't not compose. I'm quite drawn to it and I guess it's more of an obsession. But it's very exciting to create and is, simply, the best feeling in the world when a new work actually comes to fruition - a real high! Creating a work is like a puzzle that I want to immerse myself in, lay out, explore, see where it goes and solve.

A favourite quote :

"Don't play the notes. Play the meaning of the notes." Pablo Casals

Martha Hill Duncan

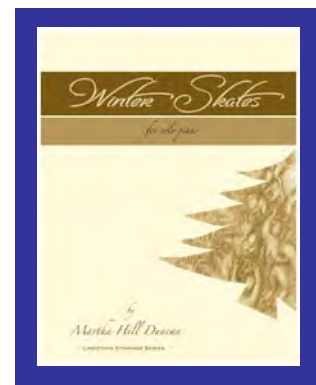
What moves you to compose? Motivation to write comes from eager performers, a deadline, an interesting or beautiful text, a specific rhythm or melodic interval, a title, a piece of art...I'm happiest when I'm writing or planning to write, so the beginning of a piece or project is often exhilarating and full of hope. The real work comes later in the development and challenges within assorted parameters of difficulty, length, form and completion. Most recently my motivation to write came from a request from one of my piano students. With him in mind, what had seemed difficult turned into a joyful race against time.

My most recent creation for piano is a two-movement work entitled **Winter Skates** and was written with a former piano student in mind. Brianna had studied with me for years and was not only a beautiful young musician, but was also a competitive figure skater. **On the Pond**, the first of the two part set, came fairly easily. I had decided to transform a long forgotten and failed vocal work into a shimmering morning skate on a frozen pond. Long glides, leaps and spins jumped out of my mind onto the page. The second one, **At City Hall** was proving more challenging. Performance deadlines for my students were approaching and one of my students said he'd like to play one of my pieces. I remembered the unfinished work. I showed him what I had so far and he said he loved it. I then described how the piece represented a day at the local outdoor skating rink. It featured beginners, couples and some "larger than life" teenaged boys with their hockey sticks and attitudes. He said, "I like that part the best. Can you write more of that?" So the jagged and percussive rhythms took over, creating a perfect contrast to the lyrical and expressive **On the Pond**. He was brilliant and I was off and running, finishing the piece in record time!

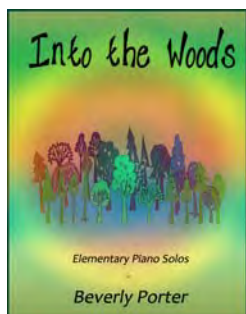
Winter Skates

for Late intermediate/Early advanced (Gr. 9)

1. On the Pond
2. At City Hall



NEW from Beverly Porter



Look for this new collection of Elementary Piano Solos by Beverly Porter this Spring!

(An Interview with **Joanne Bender**, continued from page 1)

What about your formal training?

Although I loved music, I never thought of studying it at university. Because I did well in math and science, I chose to do B. Sc. and M. Sc. degrees at University of Waterloo. There I accompanied the choir and did some piano recitals while continuing private piano studies with Erhard Schlenker. I completed my ARCT in Piano Performance in 1974. It was then that I realized I wanted to follow my love of music, so I arranged to study with an excellent teacher in Vienna, Austria, named Dieter Weber. My Europe experience began and I immersed myself in music in the world's most musical city. It was a highlight of my life! Years later, after marrying my sweetheart and best friend, John Bender, and raising 4 children, I went back to school to do my B. Mus. in composition at Wilfrid Laurier and M. Mus. at U. of Toronto. Teachers Glenn Buhr, Gary Kulesha, Chan Ka Nin and Christos Hatzis inspired me to compose and create music. I was challenged and thrilled to be in this stimulating environment.



Joanne Bender's latest books: Creatures Great and Small (Elementary Piano Solos), Things Bright and Beautiful (Intermediate Piano Solos) & Alive and Growing (Intermediate to Advanced Piano Solos).

When did you start to compose?

I played by ear from an early age. When I heard a piece on the radio, I would go to the piano and try to figure it out. I found that I always had music going on in my head. I would spend a lot of time "fooling around" at the piano making things up. Whenever there was a need for a new composition, whether for a school show or for the Muskoka summer camp, Tawingo, where I was music director for 5 summers, I would write some music. Later when our church wanted to perform an original composition, I was inspired and loved the creative process. As a teacher, I was motivated by my students to write music specifically for them. I love composing music for people whom I love, and for events that are important to me.

How has your career evolved?

I found being a wife and mother very engaging and rewarding, and spent about 15 years focused on our family. Teaching piano privately in my studio at home worked well for us. I enjoyed contact with my students and was able to express my love of music through teaching. Once our children were grown up, I started to teach piano full time and I love it! I teach over 60 students, which takes about 42 hours every week. My summers are free so that I can compose. I have many great piano students, some of whom also work on composition with me. I like the steady income which teaching provides, and I like the contact with people, which is so stimulating for me. I love composing, especially when I am at our cottage on Lake Huron during the summer. Nature and people provide me with inspiration to create.

Joanne's website will be linked to the Red Leaf Pianoworks website in the very near future. In the meantime, you can find her at www.joannebender.com

Springtime on the Grand (piano solo attached)

Right now we are in the midst of winter with lots of snow here in Kitchener-Waterloo. Several years ago in March when the snow was starting to disappear and it looked as though winter was finally coming to an end, I wrote Springtime on the Grand in hopeful anticipation of spring. The Grand River is a large river that runs right through our area. I hope you enjoy playing it, or teaching it to a Grade 5 student. May it remind you that spring is coming!



Springtime on the Grand

Gently, with feeling ♩-104-112

Joanne Bender

mp *espressivo* *simile*

p *poco rit.* *a tempo* *mp* *rit.* *a tempo*

mf *mp* *cantabile* *poco rit.* *p* *a tempo*

pp *p* *molto rit.* *mp* *pp*