

## **Graduate Student Symposium, University of Western Ontario**

### **Developing a Theoretical Framework for the Critical Analysis of Beginner Piano Methods**

The majority of piano teachers in North America utilize piano method books as an integral part of lessons for beginning students, forming the basis of a pianist's musical education and the link to their future success. The literature to date concerning method books has been extensive, including reviews of content, comparative studies, and historical perspectives. While the criteria they propose are useful, there are some problems that need to be addressed. One of the primary difficulties is that the elaboration of the criteria used to date acts more as a guideline to the order, rate, or speed that concepts are introduced to the beginning piano student, tending to be of a descriptive nature rather than a critical review of pedagogical elements. Another is that while these criteria can be aligned with some success to most North American style piano method books, they fall short in their useful application to systems that are not similarly constructed. There is a need to develop a more complete, inclusive, theoretical framework that will provide a tool to conduct a critical analysis of elements which are essential to the education of the preparatory piano student. It should not be restrictive to the concept of the North American piano method, and it should expand the components and scope thus far addressed. Most importantly, it should be based on existing theories and scientific data on music learning.