

*Merriam School of Music*  
Welcomes  
*University of Ottawa*

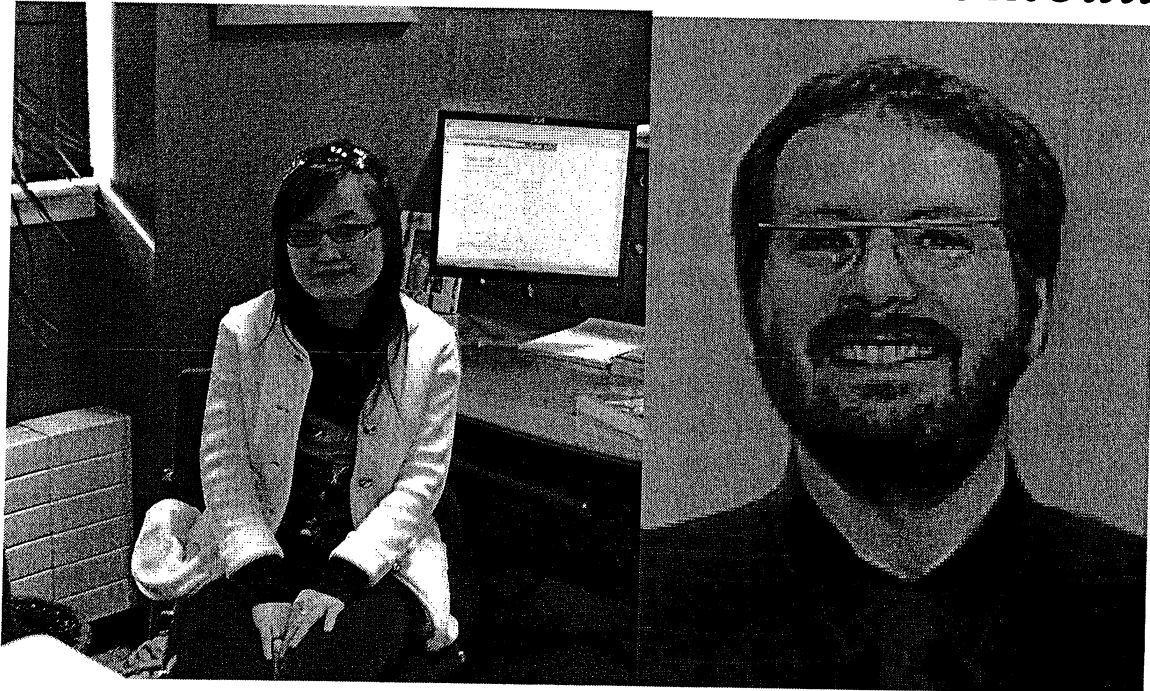
*Study of Musical Interests and  
Motivation in Piano Students*

*April 15-18*

*Conducted by:*

*YiFei Lu*

*Gilles Comeau*



# About the Study...

One of music education's major concerns is the challenge of motivating students to continue learning the piano. A high percentage of young students stop piano lessons within the first 18 months, before they begin to master the instrument (Sloboda and Howe, 1991). A likely correlate of this dropout rate is insufficient motivation. To provide better support for children's piano learning, this research project will measure young piano students' degree of motivation and their interest in piano-related activities by using the Survey of Musical Interest questionnaire developed by the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory at the University of Ottawa (Desrochers, Comeau, Jardaneh, & Green-Demers, 2006). Part I of the questionnaire measures the degree of motivation; it is based on Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (2000), which differentiates between five distinct types of mechanisms for regulating motivation. The questionnaire will include items intended to measure the degree of involvement of each of these regulation mechanisms. Part II measures the interest in piano-related activities, such as group lessons, improvisation and composing.

## **Background information**

Initially begun in 2005, this research project was conducted by researchers at the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory, University of Ottawa. From 2005 to 2006, the Survey of Musical Interest was used to collect data from 100 North American private piano students. Data was analyzed by SPSS V16.0, a data mining, statistical analysis software. Between 2006 and 2007, the Survey of Musical Interest was translated into Chinese and 50 Chinese students living in the People's Republic of China were interviewed by researchers from Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory (Liu, Y., 2005). Data from the Chinese group were compared with the North American group. Statistical results have been presented at various academic conferences, such as the Neuroscience and Music III conference at McGill University (Jardaneh, Comeau, & Liu, 2008). In the fall of 2008, researchers from the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory presented our preliminary findings on 100 young North American piano students to the Merriam School of Music in Oakville, Ontario. The curriculum planners and teachers showed great interest in this research project. The Merriam School has about 3000 music students from age 5 to adult, and almost half of them are piano students. The Director of the Merriam School of Music has agreed to invite all suitable piano students to participate in this research project. The director of Merriam School of Music will suggest some changes and add some questions to the survey that would better reflect the context of the Merriam School situation. Researchers from Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory will consider these changes and revise the questionnaire so that it could contain the specific characters of the Merriam School of Music. Once all permissions have been granted from the parents and school, the researcher will go to the Merriam School of Music to conduct the interviews with the piano students.