

Professor of piano strikes a lucrative note with CFI funding for teaching laboratory

OTTAWA, October 18, 2002 — People have taught piano for over four centuries. Now, thanks to a \$494,657 award from the Canada Foundation for Innovation New Opportunities program, the University of Ottawa will have the first research laboratory focussed on the teaching of piano. The total project is for \$1.2 million with other funds provided by the provincial government and industry.

"This impressive funding is concrete proof that the University of Ottawa's research focus extends beyond technology and medicine research to the humanities and social sciences," says the University's Rector Gilles Patry.

This funding will allow Professor Gilles Comeau of the Department of Music to make a major step forward in his research using an interdisciplinary approach bringing together music, psychology, reading, neuro-acoustics and ergonomics.

This grant is truly excellent news for Professor Comeau: "For the study of how piano is taught, this lab's infrastructure will allow researchers to measure the effectiveness of various teaching methods used in piano teaching, as well as provide important empirical data that will allow us to understand the very complex process of learning to play piano. The lab will also make our department a true national leader in the study of piano teaching."

The study of music instruction has been a neglected field to this point. But with the new facilities in Perez Hall, researchers around the world will have access to several new tools in a resource centre, as well as two "intelligent" pianos. These pianos with integrated computers can measure numerous parameters, including the pressure of the fingers on the keys, the force of the pianist's attack, the moment of release, and the swiftness of muscle action.