

Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory Newsletter

Up Close and Personal

On February 15, the University of Ottawa welcomed internationally-acclaimed pianist Jon Kimura Parker and Mrs. Aline Chrétien, spouse of the former Canadian Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, to our downtown campus. As honorary co-chairs of the Friends of the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory campaign, they visited the Lab to learn about the latest activities being conducted.

The first of its kind in Canada, the Piano Lab is a fascinating and exciting research facility. Both co-chairs were eager to talk about the research being conducted at the lab and about the lab itself. "The first thing that hits you when you walk in this lab is how inviting and colourful and friendly it is here," commented Mr. Parker. "Because of how everything is set up: camera on tracks, pianos, tv screens, you really get the impression that incredible things are happening here."



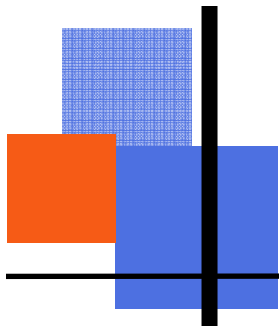
Madame Aline Chrétien, seated in the centre, surrounded by Nisreen Jardaneh (master student), Jon Kimura Parker, Catherine Lemay (master student) and Gilles Comeau

The piano lab has received rave reviews since it opened its doors in 2005 and both co-chairs talked about the importance of the research being conducted at the lab. Mrs. Chrétien has been following the work at the lab with great interest. "Learning music is not always easy, and this lab is discovering things about learning to play the piano that are astonishing."

"Piano Pedagogy hasn't really changed in a long time..." remarked Mr. Parker. "...here at the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory they're actually finding new information, bringing new data to teachers, pianists and teaching us new techniques. This is extraordinary."

Mrs. Chrétien and Mr. Parker praised the innovative and compelling research conducted at the lab especially its distance piano teaching and technologies program calling it an extraordinary use of the technology to share knowledge and information.

To enable the Laboratory to continue building upon its world-class research program, the University of Ottawa is committed to raising a \$2 million endowment.



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What's New

Director Gilles Comeau was invited to participate in the 2007 Collaborative Conference in Toronto from March 23 to 27 at the Sheraton Centre. It was the first joint effort of the Music Teachers National Association, the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Associations and the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Dr. Comeau delivered a comprehensive presentation on the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory, outlining the principle pillars of its research.

After the conference, the Piano Lab received praise on the Pno-Ped-L, an Internet mailing list devoted to the discussion of issues in the field of piano pedagogy, from an individual who attended Dr. Comeau's presentation: "...the presentation was particularly inspiring. I suspect that in the future we will be hearing a great deal from this project, particularly in the areas of research. They have the latest medical and educational technology, a full library of published method books, and are collaborating with experts from many scientific disciplines. This is exciting stuff, long overdue in my opinion!"

Creating the Difference

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada recently donated \$118,890 for a research initiative that will examine the development of music reading skills in young piano students. Three specific aspects of music reading skills will be studied: mastery of musical symbols, eye-hand coordination and control over movements at the keyboard while expressing the musical codes.

The data from this research program will make it possible to identify the factors that cause difficulty for students when they are learning to read music and recognize the precursors of the individual differences that are observed in this learning. This work will pave the way for establishing a theoretical model for the development of music reading skills in young students.

Gilles Comeau will be the principal researcher on this project, collaborating with co-researchers Alain Desrochers, School of Psychology and Ramesh Balsubramaniam, School of Human Kinetics.

If you are interested in the activities of the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory, do not hesitate to contact us for more details.

www.piano.uOttawa.ca

