

NEPTA Speaker Series minutes
Date of meeting: September 28, 2015

Vice-President elected: Ranko Konishi Houston

Gerald Klickstein *Teaching Performance Skills*

Gerald Klickstein is the author of *The Musician's Way* (Oxford, 2009) and manages the companion website MusiciansWay.com. He started his presentation by asking the audience to write down what their performance challenges are and the strategies they use.

What are performance skills? There is no performance without high stake conditions. Therefore the performer needs to cultivate various skills including awareness, technical control, handling errors appropriately, concert know-how, and stage presence. A growth mindset is essential in the learning process.

Mr. Klickstein insisted on the role of music teachers in teaching performance skills to students. By not teaching those skills, we might actually teach them performance anxiety instead. Teachers shouldn't praise students for their talent, but instead for their hard work.

Before the performance: Encourage run-through, mock performances, and attending performance development groups.

During the performance: The three Cs

- Center
- Connect
- Count

He advised to focus on spontaneity, conviction and positivity.
Treat errors as information, not failures!

The second part of the meeting was a mock performance with two NEPTA teachers impersonating students. Tong Liu performed the first movement of Mozart Sonata in D (K284) and Kathryn Rosenbach performed *Les Oiseaux Tristes* by Ravel.

Strategies used by Mr. Klickstein to avoid mistakes and memory slips:

- 1) Play intentionally with mistakes, but correct them immediately
- 2) Think ahead on difficult passages
- 3) Play the right hand part on the left hand, and vice-versa
- 4) Play "air piano" on 4 notes alternatively
- 5) For fast passages, rather than practicing slowing, try to keep the same tempo and stay on the same chunk several times. Then go on the next one, and repeat the whole phrase multiple times.

Those strategies are called **reconstruction** as they allow students to analyse and have full control over their playing. They are also very powerful memorization strategies.