

# Keyboard Reflections



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**F**or me, as a pianist and music teacher, Spring Bulbs become the metaphor for digging up the old and “planting new colors” of music from my library — both classical and jazz.

My students actually “teach” me in this process as we re-learn, review, and dig out old favorites.

What motivates us as music teachers to do what we do? Maybe it’s that we just love music. We enjoy coaching our students and witness the feeling of accomplishment that brings new life to both of us. We love those poignant moments when a musical performance — whether by a six year old kid or an experienced older student — comes from the heart, springs to spontaneous life, and everyone can sense it.

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*M*y early “spring has sprung!” New energy as a teacher emerges. In this issue we’ll explore both contemporary pianists and writers/publishers of patterns for improvisation.

On Page 2 you’ll discover how “jazz” pianists connect the dots between classical and jazz idioms.

Then on Page 3, enjoy some insightful quotes from Mozart and Chopin on how to free your playing from boring and predictable performance:

*How to develop a “singing right hand.”*

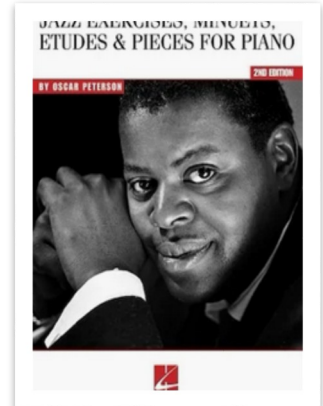


**Spring is  
in the Air:**  
Keep it moving  
forward with refreshed learning!



Especially for classically-trained pianists who say they can't improvise, I recommend Oscar Peterson's ***Jazz Exercises, Minuets, Etudes & Pieces for Piano***.

We all know Oscar Peterson as one of truly amazing "Jazz pianists" on planet earth. But what's the back story here? Oscar Peterson (1925–2007) was a legendary Canadian jazz pianist whose virtuosity was rooted in classical training. Studying under Hungarian pianist Paul de Marky—a student of a Liszt pupil—from a young age, Peterson developed immense technical precision. This classical foundation, combined with daily 4-6 hour practice sessions, enabled his signature, rapid, and complex jazz patterns to emerge. When asked how he developed such keyboard prowess he answered, "Etudes, etudes, etudes."



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"Age of Content or Discontent?" session slated for presentation by Siskind and others.



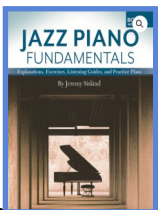
Jeremy Siskind

My American Music Teacher (AMT) magazine has arrived for February / March. This issue previews 'presenters' for the Music Teachers National Association's Convention set for Chicago March 21-25 at the Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile Convention Center.

I first met Jeremy in 2015 when he appeared on stage at Classic Pianos of Portland when I was Founder and Artistic Director of its "**Classics & Croissants Concert and Master Class Series.**"

Over the years I've maintained contact with Jeremy, and have purchased most of his more-than-fifteen books on jazz and classical improvisation. Since making his professional debut juxtaposing Debussy's *Etudes* with jazz standards at Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall, he has established himself as one of the nation's most innovative and virtuosic modern pianists.

MTNA's Tuesday's presentation titled "**Exploring the Future of Content Creation for Music Education,**" will include Kate Boyd, Ben Laude, Adam Maness, John J. Mortensen, and Jeremy Siskind.



**B**y attending past MTNA national conventions in Chicago, Las Vegas, Anaheim, and San Antonio, I've been privileged to attend concerts, master classes, and pedagogy sessions from some of the world's most respected pianists and master teachers:

(Partial list) Byron Janis, Leon Fleisher, Menahem Pressler, Sara Davis Buechner, Eric Himy, Scott Mc Bride Smith, Christopher Norton, Valentina Lisitsa, Marc-André Hamlin, Andreas Klein, Peter Mack, Jon Nakamatsu, Emanuel Ax, Shelton Berg, Hans Boepple, Inna Faliks, Seymour Bernstein, and Jeremy Denk.

**M**ozart described his technique for playing *tempo rubato* in an *Adagio* as keeping the left-hand accompaniment in strict time while the right-hand melody plays with freedom, defying the belief that both hands must follow the same rhythmic flexibility.

By all accounts, young Mozart was a bit of a smarty-pants. In a letter to his father in October of 1777, at age 21, he bragged that others couldn't play as well as he.

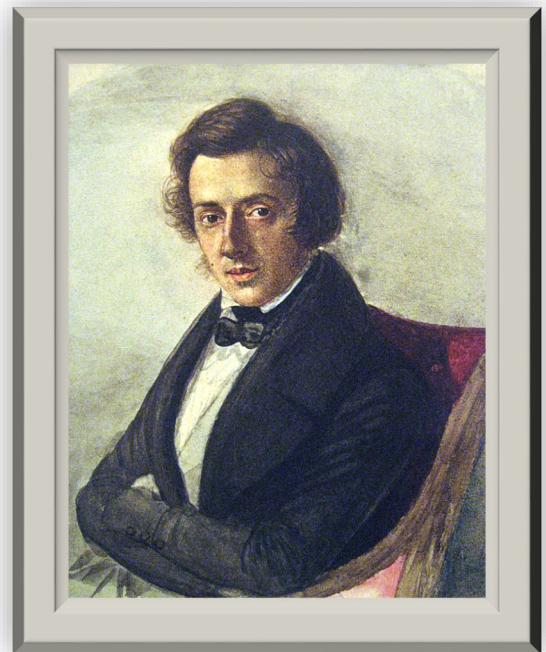


*“Everyone is amazed that I can always keep strict time. What these people cannot grasp is that in tempo rubato in an Adagio, the left hand should go on playing in strict time. With them the right hand always follows suit.”*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
1756–1791

**C**hopin taught his students that the **RIGHT HAND** was their “singing hand,” free of rigid metronomic keeping of strict time. The purpose of *rubato* is to add a sense of improvisatory freedom to the performance.

In keeping tempo Chopin was inflexible. It will surprise many to learn that the metronome never left his piano. His **LEFT HAND** [accompanying hand] always played in strict tempo, while his **RIGHT HAND** [singing hand] either hesitated or entered ahead of the beat. This created what could be called “passionate speech,” freeing the musical expression from all rhythmic bonds.



Frédéric Chopin  
(1810–1849)

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# A Big Umbrella for Music Education



MTNA



Oregon Music Teachers Association



National Association for Music Education

**I**n January 2026, NAMM joined the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) for their annual Hill Day, where more than 300 educators, college students and Music Education Policy Roundtable member organizations held 160 meetings with Members of Congress to ask that they support vital legislation in support of music education:



■ Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Funding Fiscal Year 2026 Title I, Part A (Supporting Access to Music Education for the Most Disadvantaged Students): \$20.5 billion ■ Title II, Part A (Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, or Other School Leaders): \$3 billion ■ Title IV, Part A (Supporting Access to Music Education as Part of a Well-Rounded Education): \$1.6 billion Reimagining Inclusive Arts Education Act—Seeks to increase access to and quality of arts education for students with disabilities. Provides funding to promote curricula, best practices and professional development for arts educators working with students with disabilities. An umbrella business affiliation can refer to a corporate umbrella, an umbrella LLC, or an umbrella company:

**Music educators, college music faculty, and other professionals in the music industry are eligible for individual membership. Jim Walls of Art Images Music Studios (Art Images, LLC) has been admitted for NAMM membership.**