

EMPOWERING MUSICIANS SYMPOSIUM 2008

"Let's assume that each person has an equal opportunity, not to become equal, but to become different. To realize whatever unique potential of body, mind and spirit he or she possesses." John Fischer

The "Empowering Musicians-Mind Body and Spirit" Wellness Symposium was an amazing and inspirational opportunity. Not only were we able to gain expert knowledge from three gifted clinicians, we were able to do it in one of the most amazing cities in the world! MTNA and CFTMA are too congratulated on a wonderful professional development experience; your hard work is much appreciated.

The Symposium opened with Louise Montello addressing the issue of performance stress. She discussed the causes and effects, and had many useful tools to use to put the performer in the right mind space. Techniques such as meditation, breathing and visualization were suggested as a way to promote positive thinking and to avoid the pitfall of polarized perfection. Louise encouraged us to trust ourselves and our knowledge which in turn will make communication easier –with our audience, our students and our teachers.

The next session was with Alan Fraser, who discussed how the body is just as important as the mind in performing. Freedom of movement was one of the key topics, and we had hands on exercises to promote relaxation in the body. Alan is certified in the Feldenkrais method, and demonstrated the method on one of his students.

After only a few minutes of body manipulation, the difference in her tone quality because of her more relaxed arm and body movement was truly amazing. Demonstrations were also given in Alan's video *"The Craft of Piano Playing."*

The final presenter in the three-day symposium was Carol Montparker, who addressed the spiritual aspect of performing. She defined music as literature; it has the same message, it is just more abstract. In keeping with this theme, she discussed finding meaning in music through the proper use of language. For example, forte is better described as strong or bold, rather than loud, which suggests harsh or strident. As teachers or performers, showing the meaning – the true spirit- of the music is key to truly understanding a piece, which in turn contributes to a successful performance.

Carol was very inspiring, and her book "The Anatomy of a New York Debut Recital" is wonderful.

As part of the Symposium, we were treated to a champagne reception at Steinway Hall. We all enjoyed the guided tour in the beautiful historic building, and seeing the stunning instruments.

Another way our minds, bodies and spirits were stimulated wasn't through the symposium; it was through the city itself! The mind-boggling array of things for the mind – the amazing architecture, the art at the Metropolitan Museum, the bus tours; things for the body- walking through

Central Park and Times Square, the fabulous restaurants; and things for the spirit- the shows, The Lion King and Spamalot are must sees- were just as educational and uplifting as the symposium was.

We were all lucky to have this opportunity, to keep striving to our full potential as teachers and performers, and to have such wonderful clinicians to help us on that journey. I'm sure that all of us came away different, from this incredible event.

Kim Sundell

Kim Sundell holds an ARCT Piano Teacher Degree as well as a BGS/BED. Kim is also a Registered Music Teacher and an AMAF festival adjudicator.

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