

Frank Horvat Workshop and Recital



It was with great pleasure that ORMTA Ottawa welcomed Frank Horvat to Freiman Hall at the University of Ottawa on February 13, 2011 as part of his Green Keys Eco-Tour.

Horvat began his visit with an afternoon workshop featuring twelve students from six ORMTA member teachers. Together they followed a step-by-step approach to composition and improvisation.

Horvat led the beginner students through an eight-bar, common time melody of quarters and half notes over a quarter note repeated 5th accompaniment. He emphasized the importance of proper notation.

With the grades 1-3 students, Horvat directed the composition of a twelve-bar character piece using robots for creative inspiration. To help the students feel at ease, Horvat first asked them to draw a picture of a robot before they wrote their “Robot Waltz.” Horvat piqued their interest by presenting staccato dance ideas, speaking in a monotone voice, and discussing the natural minor scale and its possible intervals. The group decided that dissonant 2nds would be most appropriate for the melody with other intervals used sparingly for surprise.

With the grades 4-6 students, Horvat introduced changing meters. Once the group established a twelve-bar pattern using 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 meters and decided on three choices of bi-chords of fifths for the left hand, they improvised and notated a very free right hand melody.

The grades 7-9 students used Clementi’s Sonatina Op. 36 No. 1 as model for improvisation. Horvat asked them to compose a four-bar, C-major melodic theme for the right hand and then a four-bar bridge modulating to G-major by using some G’s and adding an F#. A second theme was then composed in a similar manner using contrasting material. Amazingly creative and original melodies resulted from this process. The students would be able to complete the melodic line of the development and recapitulation and add a left hand part on their own at home.

In addition to composing, some students were given the chance to work on improvisation. With the beginner students, Horvat used tangible objects or images to inspire musical ideas. For example, a waterfall was musically

achieved with quick hand crosses on the black keys while the concept of Niagara Falls was realized with faster, louder strokes. Also, birds chirping were created with grace notes. The senior students prepared a grand piano with rulers, pencils, and books placed on the strings.

The workshop was highly motivating and the participants and audience were excited at discovering new potential within themselves.



Participant Jackson hard at work on his composition

Playing dual roles of pianist and master-of-ceremonies, Horvat presented music from his latest recording “A Little Dark Music” in an evening concert. The first half of the concert featured several solos including “Great House of Riffs,” “Starsky and Hutch,” “Zee-Zoo Snaps” and an improvised piece with a theme provided by the audience. The music was in turns highly rhythmic, haunting, reflective, lyrical, humorous and always engaging. The second half of the concert featured “Earth Hour” - an uninterrupted 60 minute piano solo with aid of silent click track beating every second. Free flowing, seemingly improvised, “Earth Hour” is actually a highly structured piece with twelve, 5-minute sections. This portion of the concert was performed in near darkness to enhance the strikingly meditative aspect of the performance.

Please visit <http://www.frankhorvat.com> for more information.

Submitted by participating workshop teachers: Ann Babin, Lorraine Griffith, Betty Harris, Joy Hodgkinson, Pam Kennedy, Colin Mack.