

To: Students of Dr. Paul Wirth
From: Jeanine Barrett, Asst. Artistic Director of WCPA
Re: Studio policy and information update – 2011-2012

MUST READING FOR ALL STUDENTS!

Congratulations! If you have been accepted by, or are a continuing student of Dr. Paul Wirth, you are obviously a talented musician with “pianistic potential” - and I’m sure you are headed for a very exciting year working with him! **Please read the following information whether you are a new student or not** -- it may well save you some “wonder” later:

Studio Philosophy

Musical: The purpose of music is to express ourselves. Music is a language of direct emotional expression which, rather than being too vague for words, is actually too precise for words as Mendelssohn said! “If a picture is worth a thousand words, a melody is worth a million!” as Dr. Wirth likes to say. In fact there is no prose, no poetry, nor even any other art form that can more directly express the deepest of our immediate feelings than can music. It is the noblest of arts. Our goal is to develop the ability to speak the amazing language of music!

Pedagogical: Dr. Wirth’s primary goal in teaching you is to give you the best information you can get to progress the most you can in the time you have allotted to practice. The presence of highly skilled players in his studio is one of the “guarantees” you are getting this kind of information at your lessons. It is also his goal to inspire you to do your best and enjoy your level of ability. Because he teaches so many levels of students, he encourages you not to compare yourself to others who are at different levels - especially in master classes and musicales. This is crucial to your happiness in his studio - and in life itself. If you find yourself falling into the “comparison pit” please tell him about it so that you can put a check on these thoughts. Comparing yourself to others is unwarranted and destructive behavior for amateurs and professionals alike. Our work is to do the best we can with what we have. Dr. Wirth is proud of every one of his students and does what he feels best for each and every one. Please be proud of yourselves and thankful for the gifts God has given you!

Ten Benefits of an Applied Music Education: Know why you do what you do!!

1. Music makes you smarter. It lights up your whole brain, simultaneously using cognitive, coordinative and aesthetic faculties - and coalescing both hemispheres.
2. Music is a discipline, requiring that we sometimes do what we don’t feel like doing at the moment. Fortunately, there are great rewards, because
3. Music is a language of direct emotional expression (above!).
4. Music is a service - especially to organizations like churches, Rotary, Kiwanas and also to assisted living centers and nursing homes.
5. Applied music develops performances skills. Whatever we do in life, if we do it well, we will be asked to do it in front of other people. In applied music study, we learn how to prepare for and deal with performance anxiety.
6. Music is a science. The circle of fifths and the overtone series are universal scientific phenomena with which we connect emotionally while making music.
7. Music is a social activity when it comes to playing in ensemble with others. We learn how to work as a team. It also fills the home with a festive atmosphere during holidays.
8. Music is an applied skill - teaching us how to learn a craft (e.g., a doctor learning surgical skills).
9. Music is fun - and a resume/CV item for college admission!
10. Music is a career - one which must be started earlier than almost any other.

About **Performance Opportunities:** From time to time, opportunities for performances are offered by

outside organizations (YPSCA, The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, conductors etc.) to Dr. Wirth who must recommend a student to fill a need. His recommendations are based on the performances alone of his students - not on their personalities or relationship with him. At times these are very significant opportunities and he must use his best musical judgment to select the right performance for the occasion. This is his responsibility and his decisions are not made lightly.

Studio Policies

Lesson Procedure: At your lesson time, enter the studio and be seated quietly. This way your lesson time will be noted. Be courteous of the next person's lesson time and leave promptly when your lesson is over. If you are late for your lesson, you will lose that time as the next lesson will begin on time. Also please remember: you are paying tuition for the overall guidance and pedagogy Dr. Wirth provides. He spends many hours working on fingerings, interpretive possibilities and other pedagogical considerations outside of your lesson that have a direct effect upon your studies. For example, while he may spend lesson time on fingering your music (many teachers spend entire lessons doing this important work), he often does this at other times, saving you lesson time. If you miss five or more minutes of lesson time for whatever reason, remember these things. Nevertheless, if you ever feel you are being shortchanged, Dr. Wirth is very sensitive about this and would like you to tell him. If you are taping a lesson for review during the week, please remember the recording is "for your ears and/or eyes only". If it is to be heard or seen by anyone else, you must ask about it.

Practicing: is the responsibility of every pianist. After discussing your goals with Dr. Wirth, the amount of practice needed to achieve them will be discussed. Once that amount is arrived at, he will expect that you are doing it. If you are not, you must tell him because you probably need to readjust your "goals"!

About **physical pain:** You are learning from Dr. Wirth the easiest possible way to play the piano. Still, overuse can cause pain in some people for various reasons. Never ever practice in pain! If you experience any abnormal pains - sharp shooting pains, deep aching pains, buzzing or cramping pains in your body while practicing, STOP IMMEDIATELY and contact Dr. Wirth.

NEVER EVER PRACTICE IN PAIN!!

Performing

Musicales: are normally held once a month. In the winter months there will be candlelight to perform by in St. Cloud! You are expected to attend at least four, whether you are performing or not. Dr. Wirth will confer with you in lessons as to what you might play. If, for any reason you are scheduled to perform and cannot be there, please contact him and leave a message as to why.

Salon se Leve: If you live in the Twin Cities area, you should attend at least two Salon se Leve concerts this year. Hearing the chosen first place winners perform in this setting is both inspiring and instructive! Please ask Dr. Wirth for the Salon se Leve schedule; you may also find it on your Studio Calendar and on the WCPA website: <http://www.wirthcenter.org/salonseleve.htm>

Recitals: ... are held at WCPA usually twice a year (the "Winter Recital," and the "Spring Gala"). Participation is not "mandatory" but these performance opportunities are a very important part of your musical education. So many valuable skills are learned by performing in recitals! Dress is semiformal and every student is expected to stay the full length of the recital. Numerous recital times are offered for your convenience so there is no reason to leave early. Anyone asking to leave early will be dismissed before the recital begins. Anyone autonomously leaving early will need to explain their why in their next lesson. About the **Young Artist World Piano Festival:** A new reality has emerged in the musical community of pre-college aged pianists in Minnesota. It is a reality that has been building, and which has a great effect upon our studio:

What is now evident is that the Young Artist World Piano Festival, which just finished its 21st anniversary, has actually become the climax of our year - the culmination of all the lessons, recitals,

musicales and competitions. In fact, because of the intensity and quality of the artistic experience at the Festival, including the world class recitals of the Guest Artist, the masterclasses with world class artists, the lessons with the Artist Faculty, the musicianship classes, the Concerto Competition and concert, the numerous performing and learning opportunities for everyone etc. etc. etc. Because of this myriad of opportunities, attending the camp is an enriching experience we estimate to be worth at least 6 months of private lessons: one that in fact is dependent upon the previous year's work and defines that work by challenging us to higher achievement.

And not only is this musical enrichment now evident, but the inspiration from the bonding with other young pianists of like mind and passion for the instrument makes this experience a virtual “motivational lightening rod” for all who attend. Pianists from near and far (the Festival is international now) gather together and inspire each other in nearly miraculous ways that teachers cannot. Friendships are made which last for years and cross the boundaries of the numerous professions which alumni campers eventually attain. This experience is far reaching in what it does!

And it is all centered upon the highest of Western Art and Culture - the great music of the masters. Each year we feature different composers, next year celebrating Beethoven July 11-21. Again this coming summer, we will be opening the camp to two divisions: Junior Division for 7-11 years of age and Senior Division for 12-18 as before. The Festival Orchestra is happily joining us in offering two concerto winners the opportunity to perform with them next summer: the Junior Division concerto will be the 2nd and 3rd movements of the Mozart Piano Concerto in D Minor, K466, and the Senior Division concerto will be the first movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Opus 37. Here in Minnesota we have something which is quite unique - a piano festival which is stunning in its scope AND quality for the low cost we have striven to maintain. And as a teacher of one of this country's leading pre-college piano studios, where leadership is expected of Dr. Wirth and his students and where a great opportunity like this is available, the responsibility to make use of it goes hand in hand. **As he is often asked to write recommendations for his students to attend the college or university of their choice, he is clear in telling you all that your leadership in attending this Festival - especially if you are an advanced pianist - will be considered and noted in his recommendations.** The reality of this climactic summer studio event and the opportunities it offers requires him to do so!

The dates for next year’s Young Artist Piano Camp are July 11-21 (or July 12-21 if you will not be entering any of the numerous non-concerto competitions). Our Guest Artist will be the world renowned pianist Alessio Bax. Please mark it down and get ready for an experience you will be grateful for in your many years to come!

About **Competitions**: The reason we enter contests is to challenge ourselves to play our best -- no more, no less! They are a developmental tool - a tool to help us sharpen our performing skills. Any other goal - especially that of “winning” is unwise. This is because contests are intrinsically subjective and unpredictable (you can play terrifically and not get anything - and play with mediocrity and win a top prize!). If you can enter with the object to play your best - and that’s all - then Dr. Wirth encourages you to take advantage of this kind of opportunity. If not, he strongly encourages you to forego contests.

All information about contests (applications, deadlines and repertoire requirements) for any competitions you may want to enter is **your own responsibility**. Normal procedure for entering is to bring the requirements to Dr. Wirth and discuss the feasibility of entering and the repertoire choices. This information has been sent to you via e-mail, and will be posted on the WCPA web site www.wirthcenter.org which is updated in mid-late summer for the following school year, and will be available shortly.

Accompaniments: Due to the teaching and performing demands on his schedule, Dr. Wirth does not

accompany any of his students in competitions. The last year he did this, he carried sixteen accompaniments - so this gives you an idea why! In the Twin Cities, Keri Lejeune is Dr. Wirth's approved accompanist. Here in St. Cloud, Dr. Jim Dennihan and Jeanine Barrett (me!) have been providing this service.

Make-up Lessons: Missed lessons are made up for sickness and emergency only. Lessons that Dr. Wirth cancels are made up, with one exception: Every teacher at WCPA is entitled to one sick day per student per year - this paid-for lesson will not be made up. It is your responsibility to honor this policy and to keep track of any valid make-ups you have due you. Also please remember that all lessons signed up for are non-refundable unless your teacher is ill and cannot honor them. It is your responsibility to make sure you receive them.

Borrowed materials: From time to time, Dr. Wirth may loan you a score or a CD or a book. PLEASE return it that day as these items are very valuable to other students as well - especially scores with fingerings in them! If you find something you have not returned for a while, it is far better to return it than keep it on your conscience! Dr. Wirth is always happy to see returned materials!

Your Instrument: ... Dr. Wirth strongly recommends that you work on a real **grand piano**. At every level of teaching, performing and practicing there is nothing that can replace the pedaling and touch of a grand piano to build real pianistic skill. Even if it is an old grand and the tone doesn't equal that of a new - say, Kawai - vertical piano, the advantage of a grand's precise pedaling and direct touch will far outweigh any discrepancies in of tone. If the "pedal is the soul of the piano" as Anton Rubinstein once said, and the touch can bring out the "smallest intentions and grandest desires of our hearts" as Sidney Foster said, we can all avoid the "If only I knew then what I know now" when later it becomes evident exactly how essential it was! He feels it's his responsibility to help you find the right instrument for you and would be delighted to help.

Dropping Procedure: In accordance with WCPA policy, one month's notice must be given if it becomes necessary for a student to drop his or her piano lessons.

Contacting Dr. Wirth: is difficult at times! The best thing to do is persistently leave messages on his cell phone (320) 420-0164, or his machine at home (320) 363-7356 (Wednesday through Saturday only) - about one per day if you really need to talk with him. Sometimes he is able to answer the phone at 11 p.m. or at 9:15 a.m.

Again - congratulations on being accepted into Dr. Wirth's studio - I look forward to seeing you all in the fall, or meeting you if I have not already! If you have not completed the registration form already, **please do so now by asking for one from the CMMS business office (320.255.0318)** -- even if you are not planning to enter contests and competitions, we need your personal information so that we can easily distribute updates to you! Feel free to e-mail Jeannine Barrett at jbarrett@wirthcenter.org

Thank you!

Jeanine Barrett

Assistant Artistic Director of Wirth Center for the Performing Arts.