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Several years ago, I auditioned and accepted a talented young man whose mother had also studied piano in my studio. The mother, a pedagogue herself with a growing studio, asked to observe the lessons. I looked upon this arrangement as an opportunity for the mother to strengthen her pedagogical skills and to assist her son in accomplishing the objectives which I had set for him.

During the following two years, the son's musical technique and the mother's teaching methods improved. But there was a flaw. Such careful, albeit silent, scrutiny prevented me from developing a teacher-student rapport that is so critical in one-on-one teaching. Under observation, I was preoccupied with being a good pedagogue, and my student was pre-

occupied with being a good son. We became two robots under the watchful eye of a concerned parent. My studio-laboratory offered nothing of experimentation, discovery or human emotions so vital to the study of music.

This situation replicated itself some time later. Having remembered my first experience with this arrangement, I was challenged to find a way to offer the parent a way of observation without destroying the rapport between student and teacher.

This challenge inspired me to experiment with the numerous possibilities of video equipment in the piano studio. The Department of Music and Performing Arts was already using the video camera for student and professional recitals as well as quarterly performance examinations. Video equipment had already proven its worth in dance and opera studios. So why not use it as a permanent teaching tool in the piano studio? I began to videotape private lessons and send the tapes home with the student. Amazingly, my students became better performers, and I became a better teacher.

In a piano studio, huge blocks of time are spent helping the student overcome physical strain which often results from poor habits. Such inef-

iciencies are eventually overcome by observing the teacher play an excerpt correctly. Emphasis is placed on posture, arm position, finger coordination, to mention a few. Students, unaware of their body or arm tension, may practice to the point of physical pain. Videotaping a lesson allows the student to observe his own posture and technique and to work toward a correct, relaxed body coordination, which is especially necessary where the musical literature is so demanding of a physical response.

Furthermore, a pianist cannot ignore the visual aspect of performing music. Awkward physical movements and anxious gestures distract an audience. Videotaping lets students become the audience and helps them develop stage presence and personal style.

Under the watchful eye of the video camera, I have become a better teacher and monitor of my students' progress. I, too, peruse these recorded sessions and note successful and unsuccessful pedagogical techniques. Teachers have to be motivators, and what better motivation is there, to student and teacher, than to provide a before-and-after snapshot of piano proficiency? The videotape is an easy and practical way to keep track of a student's development.

Video technology, however, is not a substitute for the teacher or tried-and-true pedagogical methods. Great teachers, not great videos, produce great students. But the creative use of this pedagogical tool can enhance the teaching and learning process in a myriad of disciplines where physical or vocal technique is critical. ●

