

INTERVIEW OF WALTER COSAND FOR INTERNATIONAL PIANO KOREA

* How did you start the piano? Please tell us your childhood related to music including your family background...

I had my first piano lessons from my father when I was four years old. I believe that I wanted the lessons because my older brother was seven and he had a piano teacher, so I was trying to be like him, or maybe trying to do better!

* Your teaching style & performance style:

I try to teach every student in a way that will help that student, so lessons vary greatly. Some students need a more nurturing style of teaching. Some students need a more severe approach. Some students need to have their technique analyzed and changed; some only need to learn about musical or stylistic things.

I perform a great variety of repertoire and in a variety of situations.

* Your personality:

I try to respect students. I try to start instruction on time and I try to avoid changing lesson times without warning. I enjoy my students and I don't think they find me harsh. Some of my students laugh a great deal at lessons. Of course there have been some who wept at times as well, but not many.

* Who is your favorite composer and why?

I try to treat the composer of the music I am playing at the moment as though that one is the most important composer. It sounds like a cop-out, but it is really the truth.

* Please compare two composers who you want to talk about, and tell me your lesson style.

I think that the harmony is the key element in making the phrase structure in Chopin's music. Modulations are drastically important etc. I feel that ornamentation and improvisation are important in Mozart's music and I try to introduce freedom to depart from the printed page in certain situations.

* Why don't you introduce your school of music? What is the benefit for the students if they enter?

Arizona State University is still a big bargain when compared to some of the music schools with similar reputations. We have an outstanding faculty, especially in the keyboard area.

* Who was your most effective musician during your life and why?

I was greatly changed by my teachers, especially Mrs. Genhart, who would often try to prepare her students to be teachers themselves.

Here at ASU I was influenced a lot by Rayna Barroll Aschaffenburg, who still lives here, and by the late Steven DeGroot, who taught here in the 1980's. He was always capable of doing whatever he wanted with a score, which is something I always admire.

More recently my colleague Ja-Hyang Lim has had a big effect on my life, as a friend and as a two-piano performing partner, especially when I was able to visit her in Korea several times. I have learned a lot about teaching and about Asian culture from her.

* What do you think about yourself as a teacher and musician?

I try to serve God and I try to serve other people. I know that the reality often is failure at both.

* How do you spend your valuable time except for the musician's life?

I read, I like to look at ancient coins, and I take lots of walks with our dogs Mindy and Suzie. I love to travel.

* Would you recommend the good way to practice in order to make the better techniques and strong fingers? (This question is chosen from one of the readers of the magazine.)

I have lots of practice advice on my website. Look for the "Teaching" section.
www.waltercosand.com