

DR. ANGELA'S

JUNE 2021

BLOG

BUILD YOUR
OWN MUSIC
ENSEMBLE

**LEARNING A SECOND
MUSICAL
INSTRUMENT
THROUGH "SELF-
TEACHING"**

**EXAMINATIONS OR
COMPETITIONS?**

HELPING YOUR
CHILD BUILD A CV

**HOW TO ACE COLLEGE
APPLICATION**

**YOU SHOULD
CHECK OUT**

DEMYSTIFYING THE MUSIC EXAMINATION SYSTEM

BY DR. ANGELA CHAN PH.D.

Dr. Angela Chan Ph.D., director of Lambda School of Music and Fine Arts, retired senior examiner of Royal Conservatory of Music, shares with parents a critical analysis of the role of music exams versus competitions, while also providing tips to strength your child's cv to ace college application.

A frequent question posed by many of my students' parents after their children have studied piano for a certain number of months or years, is "should I send my kid for graded music exams?". "Well, I want my kid to have some goals, and without exams they do not seem to progress. Also, I hope that they can get some credits for their schooling in passing music exams, such as the Royal Conservatory of Music exams".

Whenever I encounter parents asking me such questions, I always want to bring them back to first principles. If your kid does not seem motivated, do you think going for exams will motivate them? Why are they un-motivated anyways? What are your expectations from exams?

Once in a while, I also hear many parents mention something like this, "I want my kid to complete all his exams before he finishes elementary school. This way, he will not be pressured when he goes to high school." In response to that, I just said, "you want him to finish all the music exams, and then drop music altogether when he goes to high school?". Often times, I either made the parents speechless, or they feel that I am just being sarcastic. The fact is that I am simply revealing to them the truth. Parents are not teachers – they do not fully understand the system, and their perspective are often based on hearsay through listening to the opinions of other uninformed parents. Many of opinions are simply unfounded.

Do you really want your kid to rush through all the lessons by just focusing on passing the exams, and then drop everything altogether after elementary school? If so, what's the point? Is it that you just want to be in the company of other parents who compete amongst themselves, racing forward to see how quickly your kid can plough through all the examination grades?

BY DR. ANGELA CHAN PH.D.

What is the purpose of learning to play an instrument? Or for that matter, taking music lessons? Is it to enrich the experiences of the child, or cultivate creativity? Or to develop discipline, reflective awareness, attention to detail, the ability to solve problems? To develop the skills to handle success and failure, as well as to learn music and enjoy the experience of being involved in music and to be able to share it with others? If that is not the reason, it is just to fulfil the criteria of finishing a series of exams? Is this a lifelong goal to inspire your child?

How often have you been to friends' homes, where you see a pristine piano, and beautiful certificates hanging on the walls. But when you ask the former pianist to play something on the piano, you often get this response "oh, I haven't touched the piano for many years already after I finished my exams". Does this sound familiar yet alarming? Do you want to get your kids to take piano lessons, accumulate all the certificates on the wall, and then quit immediately? I am aware that some kids who were forced to go through all the grade levels blatantly told their parents that when they finish all the grades, they will quit playing music.

It seems that some parents have a distorted sense of what music lessons are about. For some, the paper on the wall seems to be more important than the experience for their children. As retired senior examiner for the Royal Conservatory of music and having examined for over 2 decades, I have closely observed the development of students who followed the examination system and those who do not.

The problem with the examination system is that it is developed primarily for the general level student. The evaluations are systematic but primarily caters to the standards of the general norm. The expectation to pass a grade is quite basic. Getting a pass, or for that matter a distinction does not necessarily represent true excellence (particularly in lower grades). Many students receive high marks not particularly because they played well. But rather because they have good aural and sight-reading skills. Their playing can be sometimes just marginal, but the ear test and sight-reading serve to augment the scores significantly.

From having examined over thousands of candidates, I have come to the conclusion that candidates who passed the exam with scores of distinction, are trained to be good students who follow the requirements of the syllabus, but are not necessarily good performers. Furthermore, with over hundreds of thousands of students passing music exams annually, music exams are no longer considered a valuable credential for one's curriculum vitae.

Although I have been very close to the examination system, I do not personally recommend my own students to take exams if they aim to reach the highest levels of performance. As I find that for my students, other challenges have longer lasting effects and motivate them to achieve higher goals in the long run.



BY DR. ANGELA CHAN PH.D.



Parents often have the illusion that, in the future if their children wish to teach music privately, they would need a certificate for teaching. That is furthest from the truth. Unlike medical doctors, or lawyers who need professional training in order to practice their profession, this is not obligatory for musicians and music teachers who teach privately. This is the greatest fallacy. The best teachers do not necessarily have teaching certificates. Furthermore, the curriculum of teaching certificates focuses primarily on standard approaches of how to teach - what books to use, how to teach certain pieces, or scales, how to teach technique - all these are theoretical. When a teacher is in the situation of teaching a student - it is alive and dynamic. Most students teach the way they were taught. And with the rest comes experience, not something that they can learn from the curriculum. But it takes time to develop experience. Versatility in teaching comes from the personality of the teacher. Artistry comes from musical training, and how well a teacher communicates to the student depends on his communicative skills, understanding of psychology and diagnostic skills. To be a good teacher has more to do with the personality, musicianship, empathy, a degree of care, and the passion to teach - much more than a certificate can represent.

And again, it is true - one does not need a teaching certificate or diploma to be qualified to teach. I have a Ph.D. degree, a Masters' degree, a professional concert degree and I am a retired senior examiner of RCM and the director of a music school, and I have never taken an RCM graded exam. I have helped over 300 students win international competitions, and I have taught students who have become music professors in universities, and I also teach teachers how to teach - but I do not have a teaching certificate.

Now let's explore some pragmatic aspects of studying music. I understand that parents also look at the practical elements - such as learning music will help obtain some credits in high school. By having the credits, one can skip music classes at high school. Well, isn't this paradoxical? You want your child to take more music classes and and pass music exams so that you can skip it in the future? Why to skip it? Why does one feel that learning music at school is a waste of time?



BY DR. ANGELA CHAN PH.D.



Ok, let just suspend judgment for this argument for a brief moment. Is it really worth taking the exams?

I found this from Wikipedia about RCM exam credits: For most provinces in Canada, a Level 6 Certificate and Level 6 Theory (formerly Intermediate Rudiments) counts as Grade 10 credit, a Level 7 Certificate and Level 6 or Level 7 Theory (also formerly Intermediate Rudiments) counts as Grade 11 credit, and a Level 8 Certificate and Level 8 Theory (formerly Advanced Rudiments) counts as Grade 12 credit. One's standing in the Certificate Program also plays an important role in entrance requirements for professional music programs at many universities and colleges.

Please note that "for most provinces", that refers primarily to British Columbia and Ontario. It does not include Quebec. In Quebec, according to the education ministry, achieving Grade 2 RCM is the same as achieving Grade 6. This grants you one to two credits off. The focus is not on the results or the level from the RCM exams, but just from the fact that you have some kind of certificate to fulfil the requirement to opt out. So, if you just aim for getting credits, getting a Grade 2 level is more than enough.

And if that is the case, why bother to go through all the grades? If you wish to continue music lessons, it probably has much more to do with wanting to continue to learn and develop one's skills.

Since we are in Quebec, I will focus on the requirements in Quebec. First of all, to be eligible for CEGEP entrance, having achieved any graded exams in RCM does not make any significant difference. Unless you are aiming to major in music, which would require an audition to demonstrate your performance skills (examinations certificates do not exempt the applicant from the audition requirements). The focus is primarily on academic achievements, and other extracurricular activities that gives the admission officer a sense of personality of the student - indicating whether he is disciplined, focused, diligent, and able to handle success and failures. Having completed any musical studies at the general level is ubiquitous and this no longer makes a significant difference in one's application.

In fact, the current trend for the admission of applicants to top colleges and universities involve identifying the following qualities in candidates.





By Dr. Angela Chan Ph.D.

(1) for students who study a musical instrument, they need to demonstrate a very high level in performance. The best is that they have participated in international level competitions. This shows that they have the dedication and discipline to follow through intensive practice and performance. They are able to handle stress, and able to face the audience in a public concert. This also shows that they have the ability to focus to achieve a very high expert level. In fact, top colleges and universities do not look for a general global ability – hence a curriculum vitae showing a lot of activities are not helpful. It just demonstrates that the candidate is a "Jack of all trades". They look for a peak performance spike that differentiates the candidate from others. One also needs to maintain this level of peak performance for a number of years to show that one is able to maintain focus and dedication toward a subject matter for an extended period thereby demonstrating commitment.

You would say, "what if I participate in a competition and I don't win any prizes?". The fact is that it does not matter whether you win first prize, second prize, third prize, or even not get an award. The purpose is to show the sustained focus and devotion in your commitment. It would be very helpful to create a portfolio (preferably in form of a website), with recordings of your performances, document your experiences in preparing for the competition, as well as handling the experiences derived from each competition.

The result of the competition might be a success or a failure. That does not really matter as much. Rather, you need to document how your mindset is, and how you handle the preparation process as well as emotions related to the experience. That shows one's ability to reflect, analyze and learn from past experiences. These are important elements that one can add to one's portfolio to give strength to college application.

(2) In case if you really don't want to be a solo music performer, participating in a band regularly (for consecutive years) will also help you enrich your cv for college and university entrance. This shows that you are able to work closely in a team, in activities that require intense collaboration and participation. Again, document the ensemble work, your performances, your participation in competitions.

(3) Last but not least, learning a second instrument by yourself ("self-taught") is considered to be a highly desirable trait for college and university admission. It shows that the applicant is motivated and enthusiastic through self-teaching. Learning an instrument this way shows that one is highly driven, intrinsically motivated and is able to solve problems.

So, let's go back to the topic of music exams – after we have explored what top colleges and universities are looking at – it seems like music examinations have very little impact or value in developing a strong curriculum vitae for future academic pursuit.

MUSIC ENRICHES YOUR CHILD'S LIFE

By Dr. Angela Chan Ph.D.
Director of Lambda School
of Music and Fine Arts

If that is the case, let's revisit – why do you want to study music then?

If it is for personal development, and interest – why not study just for the sake of enjoying it, learning and perfecting the skills. Aiming for your personal best, rather than being hampered by any externally imposed curriculum. And if you wish to challenge yourself fully, why not participate in music competitions? It provides a goal and also builds character and strength. It also contributes to your cv helping you apply for college and university in the future. Rather than just giving you one to two credits at high school so that you can skip music class. And by the way, if that is the goal, getting to Grade 2 RCM already does the trick in Quebec! If you participate in competitions, you also cultivate discipline, expand your scope of learning to achieve excellence, to challenge yourself to the limit – and you also strengthen your cv along the way. Why not?

After reading through all this, as a parent – do you still want your kids to go through music examinations just to get more certificates to hang on the wall?



DR. ANGELA

JUNE 2021

博士的博客

考试还是比赛？

建立自己的音乐合奏组

BUILD YOUR
OWN MUSIC
ENSEMBLE

如何利用音乐研究
进入王牌大学

如何自学乐器

你应该
查看

揭开音乐考试制度的神秘面纱

BY DR. ANGELA CHAN PH.D.

Angela Chan 博士，Lambda 音乐与美术学院院长，皇家音乐学院退休高级考官，与家长分享对音乐考试与比赛作用的批判性分析，同时也提供提示加强您孩子的简历，以顺利通过大学申请。

我的许多学生的父母在他们的孩子学习钢琴几个月或几年后经常提出的一个问题是“我应该让我的孩子参加分级考试吗？”。“嗯，我希望我的孩子有一些目标，没有考试他们似乎没有进步。另外，我希望他们能够通过音乐考试，比如皇家音乐学院的考试，获得一些学分。”

每当我遇到父母问我这样的问题时，我总是想让他们回到第一原则。如果您的孩子看起来没有动力，您认为参加考试会激励他们吗？为什么他们总是没有动力？你对考试有什么期望？

偶尔，我也听到很多家长提到这样的话，“我希望我的孩子在小学毕业之前完成所有的考试。这样，他上高中时就不会受到压力。”对此，我只是说，“你想让他完成所有的音乐考试，然后在他上高中时就完全放弃音乐？”。很多时候，我要么让父母无语，要么他们觉得我只是在讽刺。事实是，我只是向他们揭示真相。家长不是老师——他们并不完全了解这个系统，他们的观点往往是通过听取其他不知情的家长的意见而基于道听途说的。许多意见根本没有根据。

您真的希望您的孩子只专注于通过考试，然后在小学毕业后就完全放弃所有课程，从而匆忙完成所有课程吗？如果是这样，有什么意义？难道你只是想和其他父母一起竞争，争先恐后地看看你的孩子能尽快通过所有考试成绩吗？

您学习演奏乐器的目的是什么？或者就此而言，参加音乐课？是为了丰富孩子的经历，还是培养创造力？还是培养纪律、反思意识、关注细节、解决问题的能力？培养处理成功和失败的技能，以及学习音乐和享受参与音乐的经验并能够与他人分享？如果这不是原因，只是为了完成一系列考试的标准，这是激励孩子的终生目标吗？

你多久去过一次朋友家，在那里你看到一架质朴的钢琴，墙上挂着漂亮的证书。但是当你让这位前钢琴家弹钢琴时，你经常会得到这样的回答：“哦，我考完试已经很多年没有碰过钢琴了”。

这听起来熟悉但令人震惊吗？你想让你的孩子学钢琴，把所有的证书都堆在墙上，然后立即退出吗？我知道一些被迫通过所有年级的孩子公然告诉他们的父母，当他们完成所有年级时，他们将停止演奏音乐。

似乎有些家长对音乐课的内容有一种扭曲的认识。对于一些人来说，墙上的纸似乎比他们孩子的经历更重要。作为皇家音乐学院退休的高级考官，考了20多年，我密切观察了遵循该系统和不遵循该系统的学生的发展。

BY DR. ANGELA CHAN PH.D.

我考试系统的问题在于它主要是为一般水平的学生开发的。评估是系统的，但主要迎合一般规范的标准。通过一个等级的期望是非常基本的。获得及格，或就此而言的区别并不一定代表真正的卓越（尤其是在低年级）。许多学生获得高分并不是因为他们表现出色。而是因为他们有很好的听觉和视奏能力。他们的演奏有时可能只是边缘，但听力测试和视奏有助于显着提高分数。

通过对数千名考生的检查，我得出的结论是，以优异成绩通过考试的考生，被训练为符合教学大纲要求的好学生，但不一定是优秀的学生。此外，每年有数十万学生通过音乐考试，音乐考试不再被视为个人简历的宝贵凭证。

虽然我已经非常接近考试制度，但如果他们的目标是达到最高水平，我个人不会推荐我自己的学生参加考试。我发现对我的学生来说，其他挑战会产生更持久的影响，并激励他们从长远来看更多地实现自己的目标。

家长们常常有这样的错觉，如果以后孩子想当私人教学，例如钢琴或音乐老师，就绝对需要有音乐教师文凭。那是离真相最远的。与需要专业培训才能从事职业的医生或律师不同，这对于私教的音乐家和音乐教师不是强制性的。这是最大的谬论。最好的老师不一定有教学证书。此外，教学证书课程侧重于如何教学的标准方法——使用什么书籍，如何教授某些作品，或音阶，如何教授技巧——所有这些都是理论性的。当老师处于教学生的状态时——它是充满活力和活力的。大多数学生按照他们被教授的方式进行教学。其余的来自经验，而不是他们可以从课程中学到的东西。但是积累经验需要时间。教学的多功能性来自教师的个性。艺术性来自音乐训练，老师与学生沟通的程度取决于他的沟通技巧、对心理学的理解和诊断技巧。成为一名好老师更多地与个性、音乐才能、同理心、关怀程度和教学热情有关 - 远远超过证书所能代表的。

再一次，这是真的 - 一个人不需要教学证书或文凭就有资格进行教学。我有博士学位。学位，硕士学位，专业音乐会学位，我是RCM的退休高级考官和音乐学校的主任，我从未参加过RCM等级考试。我帮助过300多名学生在国际比赛中获胜，我教过大学音乐教授的学生，我也教老师如何教学——但我没有教师资格证。

现在让我们探讨学习音乐的一些实用方面。据我所知，家长们也会看一些实用的元素——比如学习音乐有助于在高中中获得一些学分。通过获得学分，一个人可以跳过高中的音乐课。嗯，这不是很矛盾吗？您希望您的孩子参加更多的音乐课程并通过音乐考试，以便您将来可以跳过它？为什么要跳过它？为什么有人觉得在学校学习音乐是浪费时间？

好吧，让我们暂时暂缓对这个论点的判断。真的值得参加考试吗？

我从维基百科中找到了有关 RCM 考试学分的信息：

对于加拿大的大多数省份，6 级证书和 6 级理论（以前称为中级基础）计为 10 级学分，7 级证书和 6 级或 7 级理论（也称为中级基础）计为 11 级学分，以及 8 级证书和 8 级理论（以前称为高级基础）计为 12 级学分。一个人在证书课程中的地位在许多大学和学院的专业音乐课程的入学要求中也起着重要作用。



BY DR. ANGELA CHAN PH.D.



请注意，“对于大多数省份”，主要是指不列颠哥伦比亚省和安大略省。它不包括魁北克。在魁北克，根据教育部的说法，达到 RCM 2 级与达到 6 级是一样的。这会给你一到两个学分。重点不在于 RCM 考试的结果或级别，而在于您拥有某种证书来满足选择退出的要求。所以，如果你只是想获得学分，那么获得 2 级就足够了。

如果是这样的话，为什么要费心通过所有的成绩呢？如果你想继续音乐课，它可能更多地与想要继续学习和发展自己的技能有关。

由于我们在魁北克，我将重点介绍魁北克的要求。首先，要获得 CEGEP 入学资格，在 RCM 中完成任何分级考试并没有任何显着差异。除非你的目标是音乐专业，这需要试镜来证明你的表演技巧（考试证书不能免除申请人的试镜要求）。重点主要是学术成就和其他课外活动，让招生官了解学生的个性——表明他是否纪律严明、专注、勤奋，以及是否能够处理成功和失败。在一般水平上完成任何音乐学习是无处不在的，这不再对一个人的申请产生重大影响。

事实上，目前顶尖学院和大学录取申请人的趋势涉及确定候选人的以下素质。

(1)对于学习乐器的学生，需要表现出非常高的演奏水平。最好的是他们参加过国际级别的比赛。这表明他们有奉献精神 and 纪律来遵循密集的实践和表现。他们能够处理压力，并能够在公共音乐会上面对观众。这也说明他们有能力专注，达到非常高的专家水平。事实上，顶尖大学并不寻找普遍的全球能力——因此一份显示大量活动的简历没有帮助。它只是表明候选人是“万事通”。他们寻找能够将候选人与其他候选人区分开来的最佳表现高峰。一个人还需要在几年内保持这种最高水平的表现，以表明一个人能够在很长一段时间内保持对一个主题的专注和奉献，从而表现出承诺。

你会说，“如果我参加比赛但没有赢得任何奖品怎么办？”。事实上，一等奖、二等奖、三等奖，甚至没得奖都无所谓。目的是显示您对承诺的持续专注和奉献。创建一个作品集，记录你的表演，记录你准备比赛的经验，以及处理从每场比赛中获得的经验，这将是非常有帮助的。

竞争的结果可能是成功或失败。这并不重要。相反，您需要记录您的心态，以及您如何处理准备过程以及与体验相关的情绪。这显示了一个人反思、分析和从过去的经验中学习的能力。这些都是重要的元素，可以添加到自己的投资组合中，以增强大学申请的实力。



音乐能够 丰富您孩子的生命

By Dr. Angela Chan Ph.D.
Director of Lambda School
of Music and Fine Arts

(2) 如果你真的不想当独奏音乐家，定期（连续几年）参加乐队也可以帮助你丰富你的大学入学简历。这表明您能够在需要密切协作和参与的活动中在团队中紧密合作。再次记录合奏作品、您的表演、您参加比赛的情况。

(3) 最后非常重要的一点是，自学第二乐器（“自学”）被认为是大学录取的一个非常理想的特征。这表明申请人通过自学具有积极性和热情。以这种方式学习乐器表明一个人具有高度的驱动力、内在的动力并且能够解决问题。

所以，让我们回到音乐考试的话题——在我们探索了顶尖学院和大学在看什么之后——似乎音乐考试在为未来的学术追求制定强有力的简历方面几乎没有影响或价值。如果是这样的话，让我们重新审视一下——那你为什么要学习音乐？

如果是为了个人发展和兴趣——为什么不学习只是为了享受它、学习和完善技能。瞄准你的个人最好成绩，而不是被任何外部强加的课程所阻碍。如果您想全面挑战自己，何不参加音乐比赛呢？它提供了一个目标，也建立了性格和力量。它还有助于您的简历，帮助您将来申请学院和大学。而不是在高中给你一到两个学分，这样你就可以跳过音乐课。顺便说一句，如果这是目标，那么达到 2 级 RCM 就可以了！如果您参加比赛，您还可以培养纪律，扩大学习范围以实现卓越，挑战自己的极限——并且您也在此过程中加强了您的简历。为什么不？

读完这一切后，作为家长——您是否仍然希望您的孩子通过音乐考试只是为了获得更多的证书挂在墙上？



Sponsors

