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REFLECTION,
REINVENTION,
AND THE
FUTURE OF
PRESENCE IN
MUSIC

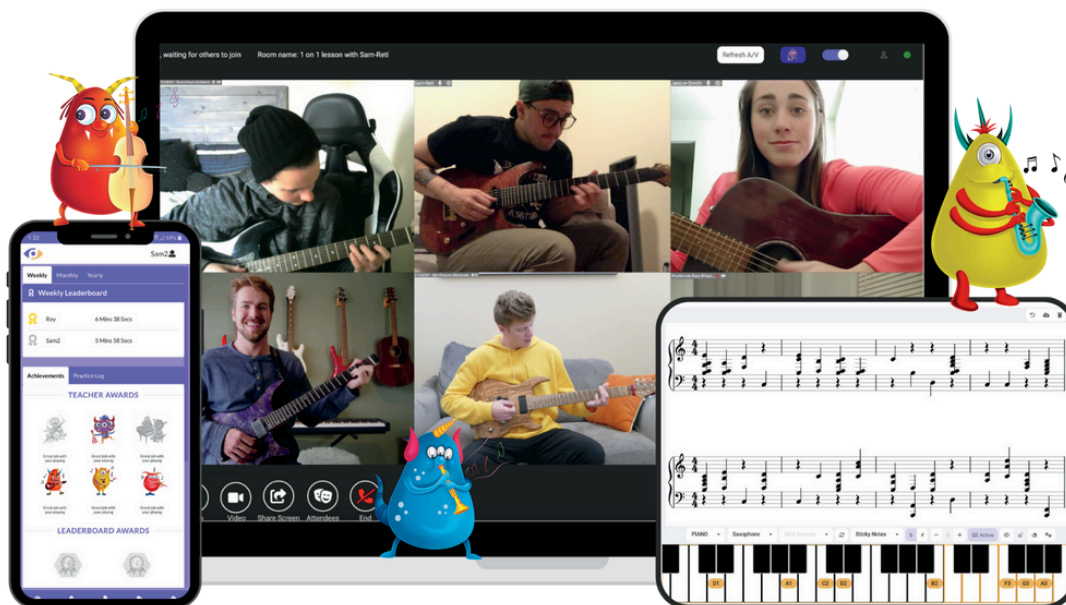


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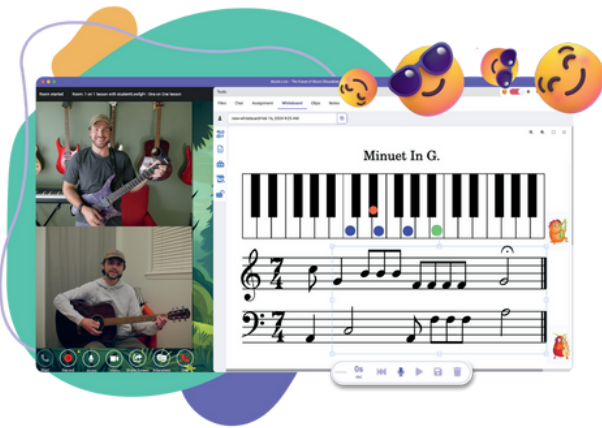


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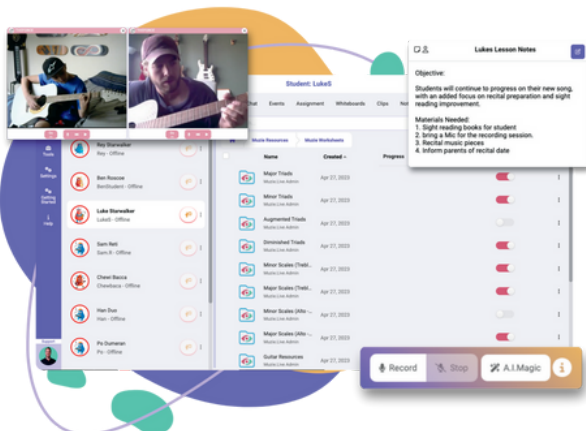


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FROM THE EDITOR

One Year of MusicalQ – Notes from the Edge of Reinvention

Dear Readers,

When I first imagined MusicalQ, it was a question more than a publication. Could we create a space where intellectual rigor, musical intuition, digital fluency, and emotional depth all had equal weight? Could a magazine hold presence the way a good performance does—not by displaying expertise alone, but by generating a shared sense of attention, curiosity, and aliveness?

One year in, the answer is no longer speculative. It's printed. MusicalQ has grown from an idea into a living field of thought—a space where performance, research, education, technology, and identity come into conversation rather than competition. What we've built isn't static. It reflects the vitality and velocity of the questions we ask.

We've published articles on AI and emotional modeling. Deep reflections on opera, audience, and voice. Interviews with composers who reprogram the boundaries of genre. Essays that question our assumptions about notation, intelligence, and the purpose of music education. And we've done it without flattening the complexity of our contributors.

This fifth issue arrives at a moment of consolidation—and transformation. As the first full year of MusicalQ completes its cycle, we ask not just what we've done, but what we're here to do next. The musical world is shifting. Our role is not to merely react—but to shape.

This issue reflects that intention. It includes research-based writing, polemics on the future of opera and artificial voice, career-building frameworks, and reflective tools for understanding your strengths—not just as a musician, but as a thinking, feeling, evolving presence in the world.



MusicalQ was never meant to be a product. It is a platform. A scaffolding. A space where ideas evolve and identities stretch. It invites not only thought but transformation—a return to our work with more precision, more presence, and more courage. It is a field for the future we want to build, collectively.

MusicalQ is not just a reflection of where music is—it's an instrument for where it could go. In a world where attention fragments and depth is often sacrificed for speed, we've chosen slowness, specificity, and resonance. We've created space for contradictions and complexity, because we believe that's where truth lives—and where new forms of artistry are born.

This past year, I've seen how this platform has become more than a publication. It's a mirror for many readers, a provocation for others, and a point of connection for those navigating the intersections of practice and theory, creation and critique. We're shaping not just content—but community.

Thank you for reading. For sharing. For continuing to ask better questions—and for daring to shape better answers. Here's to year two. May it be even bolder.



Antonella Di Giulio

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND FOUNDER

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MUSIC ANALYSIS:

OPERA AND AUDIENCES TODAY: REFRAMING THE RELATIONSHIP



Opera has always carried a certain mythology. It is the art form of grand passions and grander productions, of velvet curtains and whispered prestige. It is also, depending on who you ask, either dead, dying, or perpetually reborn. What's often missing from the conversation—particularly in think pieces about “saving” opera—is a nuanced understanding of the people who sit in the seats. Not the idealized patron. The real ones.

In this essay, I want to step away from the binaries of crisis and renaissance and instead look more closely at how modern audiences are showing up (or not) for opera—and what their behavior tells us about the evolving relationship between art and public life.

A HOUSE FULL OF GHOSTS

Walk into almost any traditional opera house today and you'll sense the presence of history—not just in the architecture, but in the expectations. The program, the etiquette, the cultural weight. For many opera institutions, the problem isn't that audiences have vanished—it's that they no longer behave as expected. They no longer subscribe seasonally. They don't necessarily recognize the canon. They scroll during intermission.

And yet, something interesting is happening in parallel: site-specific performances are selling out. Immersive productions are reaching new demographics. Pop-up operas in galleries and warehouses are drawing crowds that wouldn't be caught dead in the main hall. The ghost of tradition hasn't scared them away. They've simply chosen to haunt different spaces.

LISTENING AS PARTICIPATION

Historically, opera audiences were anything but passive. In 18th-century Naples or 19th-century Paris, people attended for spectacle, fashion, social theater. They ate, talked, argued, clapped mid-aria. Silence as reverence came later—an invention of Romantic aesthetics and modern institutionalism.

Today's audiences are again asking to participate—but in new ways. They want context, dialogue, and emotional relevance. This doesn't mean they want the opera dumbed down. It means they want it opened up.

Talkbacks, surtitles, pre-show panels, and open rehearsals are not marketing tools—they are cultural bridges. They say *A House Full of Ghosts*

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**“You belong here, even if you’ve never heard of Donizetti.”
They say: We want to hear from you, not just perform at you.**

When companies treat audiences as collaborators—not consumers—they unlock something deeper than attendance. They create affinity.

Who Is Opera For?

This is not a rhetorical question. It is the organizing question behind nearly every crisis opera faces—financial, aesthetic, or ethical. And it is not enough to say “everyone.” Programming Verdi for the tenth time may sell more tickets. But who do those tickets go to? What would it mean to curate a season around the lived experiences of the communities outside the hall, not just the tradition within it?

Audiences are not monolithic. They are fractured and hybrid, composed of loyalty, curiosity, nostalgia, and discovery. The challenge is not to rebuild an audience that once existed. It is to map—and respond to—the audiences that already do.

CASE STUDIES

Philadelphia’s “Festival O” reimagined the entire delivery model of opera: short works, experimental venues, pay-what-you-can nights, and a thematic coherence that invites binge-watching rather than formal separation.

In Berlin, the Komische Oper built an audience by programming high-art with low barriers: Turkish surtitles, immersive staging, and an emphasis on visual storytelling. Their audience got younger—and stayed.

Meanwhile, Teatro La Fenice in Venice embraced livestreaming and digital outreach not just as pandemic survival tools, but as ongoing entry points. You could attend in pajamas and still be part of the ritual. These institutions didn't "fix" opera. They redefined the terms of access.

THE RISK OF CLINGING TO PRESTIGE

One of the hardest things for a legacy art form to do is abandon prestige as its central currency. But prestige isn't connection. Prestige doesn't make people feel seen. A young person walking into an opera house for the first time is not looking for status. They're looking for meaning. For intensity. For resonance. If they can't find it, they'll seek it elsewhere—and they won't wait for permission.

Opera cannot afford to wait for relevance to come back into fashion. It must risk its own transformation. A living audience is not loyal. It is responsive. It shows up when the work speaks, when the invitation is clear, when the performance meets the moment.

If we stop asking "How do we attract audiences?" and instead ask "What kind of experiences do we want to create with them?", we begin to move beyond survival thinking. We enter into a shared creative project.



About the Author

Dr. Carl Rose is a researcher, educator, and arts consultant specializing in audience engagement and cultural strategy. With a background in musicology and a focus on performance studies, his work explores the intersections of tradition, innovation, and access in the performing arts. He has advised institutions on audience development and writes regularly about the evolving role of opera in public life.





THE ARTIST'S FRAMEWORK

BY DR. ANTONELLA DI GIULIO

10 Principles for Sustainable Creative Careers

A few months ago, a close friend of mine—brilliant, talented, and battle-tested in the trenches of the music world—found himself unraveling. His career was falling apart. His opportunities were fading.

But what was most striking wasn't the external collapse. It was the internal one. He was still operating from an outdated mental operating system: perfectionism mistaken for professionalism, scarcity masquerading as realism, and a belief that suffering equaled seriousness. His mindset, inherited from an earlier generation of artists, had not evolved with the world around him.

So I wrote this for him. And, in truth, for all of us.

Creative success doesn't just come from talent. It comes from frameworks—mental, practical, and emotional scaffolding. These principles offer a way forward: not a magic recipe, but a foundation for sustainable artistry in a rapidly shifting world.

1. CUT THE DRAMA—BUILD THE DREAM

REFRAME: DRAMA IS AN ANCHOR DRAGGING YOU DOWN; DREAMS ARE SAILS CARRYING YOU FORWARD.

Drama—whether emotional, interpersonal, or logistical—consumes the bandwidth you need to create. Many artists unconsciously use drama as a substitute for meaning: the “struggling genius” identity gives a certain permission to fail. But this pattern is neither noble nor necessary.

Building a dream, by contrast, requires intention, boundaries, and repetition. It is a slow, beautiful, and often invisible process. Don't waste that energy spiraling over gossip or rejection. Use it to sketch out the future you want—project ideas, collaborations, touring routes, teaching residencies. Every time you choose a dream over drama, you're placing a brick in the foundation of your artistic future.

AI in Action: Journaling apps like Notion AI or Reflect can help distill recurring thought patterns. You can even train a Custom GPT to flag distortive loops (“They don't care about me”) and offer reframes rooted in growth.

2. INVEST IN VISIBILITY, NOT JUST SOUND

REFRAME: TALENT WITHOUT VISIBILITY IS LIKE MUSIC IN A LOCKED ROOM.

Art is communication. If no one can find, understand, or connect with your work, it cannot fulfill its purpose. Too often, artists feel that self-promotion is vain or crass. But visibility is not vanity—it's stewardship. It is your responsibility to ensure your work has a clear, accessible presence.

This doesn't mean you must become an influencer. It means having well-crafted media, updated bios, a coherent online presence, and strategic distribution of your best work. Visibility builds trust, context, and momentum.

AI in Action: Canva's AI tools can transform a single image into an entire visual campaign. Tools like Copy.ai or Jasper can rewrite bios for different contexts in seconds.

3. CONTROL YOUR NARRATIVE

REFRAME: IF YOU DON'T WRITE YOUR STORY, OTHERS WILL—AND THEY WON'T BE KIND EDITORS.

Your artistic narrative isn't just your bio—it's the cohesive throughline of your choices, voice, and values. Audiences and institutions form impressions based on fragments: one video, one press clip, one social post. If those fragments aren't connected intentionally, they form a distorted or vague picture.

Narrative control also matters in crisis. If you make a mistake or face backlash, your ability to articulate context, growth, and self-awareness will shape your trajectory more than the mistake itself.

AI in Action: ChatGPT or Notion AI can help generate parallel narratives: artist statement, grant justification, community blurb. Treat them as a repertoire set—same theme, different voicings.

4. OWN YOUR PLATFORM

REFRAME: SCATTERED PRESENCE CREATES CONFUSION; CONSISTENT PRESENCE BUILDS CREDIBILITY.

In a noisy world, clarity is currency. Your platform—website, portfolio, content—should clearly communicate who you are, what you do, and how to engage with you. The more consistent your digital footprint, the easier it is for collaborators, funders, and fans to say yes. Owning your platform means claiming your identity with intention. You're not just "a pianist"—you're "a pianist who curates interdisciplinary programs rooted in Italian modernism." Specificity creates memorability.

AI in Action: Descript or OpusClip can turn one long-form video into short, subtitled clips. Use each project to populate a multi-platform presence. Automation tools like Buffer or Later can batch-schedule content for weeks.

5. LEARN FROM THE MASTERS—EMBODY THEM

REFRAME: IDENTITY ISN'T FOUND. IT'S BUILT THROUGH IMITATION, INTEGRATION, AND ITERATION.

Too many artists wait for confidence to appear. But confidence isn't a prerequisite—it's a byproduct of embodiment. If you admire a legendary musician, don't just listen to them. Study their routines. Observe how they speak, prepare, recover, connect. Begin to integrate what resonates.

This is not about imitation for the sake of mimicry. It's about modeling excellence until it becomes embodied. Embodying mastery invites mastery to enter.

AI in Action: Use TubeBuddy or YouTube's backend to find what audiences are already searching for. Sync your output to cultural interest—not to chase trends, but to meet curiosity with intention.

6. UPDATE YOUR STAGE, NOT JUST YOUR VOICE

REFRAME: OUTDATED DIGITAL PRESENCE UNDERMINES EVOLVING ARTISTIC IDENTITY. YOUR WEBSITE, PORTFOLIO, AND MEDIA ARE NOT RELICS—THEY'RE ACTIVE STAGES.

A disjointed or outdated platform sends an unconscious message: "I'm not ready." But when your online presence reflects your current voice, it signals coherence, commitment, and momentum.

AI in Action: Platforms like Wix AI and Durable can audit your site for outdated information or clunky design. You can automate prompts for monthly reviews to keep your materials fresh.

7. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH INTEGRITY

REFRAME: EVERY PERSON IN YOUR ORBIT IS EITHER SCAFFOLDING OR SABOTAGE. THE CREATIVE ECOSYSTEM YOU BUILD AROUND YOURSELF DETERMINES YOUR TRAJECTORY.

Mentors, collaborators, agents, friends—they reflect back to you who you are becoming. Integrity means choosing relationships that amplify growth, not drama.

Background checks, peer feedback, and gut instinct all matter. Integrity is not just moral—it's strategic.

AI in Action: Tools like Perplexity, Google Alerts, or browser-enabled GPTs can gather public information before you commit to a collaboration.

8. TRAIN YOUR MIND LIKE YOU TRAIN YOUR FINGERS

REFRAME: MENTAL FITNESS IS ARTISTIC READINESS.

Scales build dexterity. Reframes build resilience. Emotional regulation, cognitive agility, and self-anchoring are learnable skills.

Build a daily ritual for internal practice: journaling, meditation, NLP exercises, somatic grounding.

AI in Action: Roleplay difficult scenarios with GPT. Train calm responses. Treat it as mental rehearsal.

9. ANCHOR IN THE LONG GAME

REFRAME: VIRAL MOMENTS FADE. INTENTIONAL GROWTH COMPOUNDS.

The myth of the overnight success ignores the invisible architecture beneath every career: years of slow building, behind-the-scenes planning, unseen rehearsals, and thoughtful relationship cultivation.

Sustainable artistry demands a long horizon—anchored in vision but executed in small, daily choices.

Approach your career like a farmer, not a gambler. Sow strategically. Tend your network. Water your repertoire. Prune what no longer serves. Harvest will follow—but only with consistency and care.

AI in Action: Use Notion + GPT integrations to create a 3-year master plan: content calendars, grant deadlines, mentorship checkpoints, and performance themes. Link each project to clear outcomes—then let the system nudge you forward.

Reality Check: Needs configuration. Once designed, it becomes a compass you can trust.

10. NEVER ABANDON THE SCORE

REFRAME: THE DREAM IS NOT AN ESCAPE.
IT'S A RESPONSIBILITY.

In a world flooded with distractions and shifting metrics of success, your dream—however niche or ambitious—is a sacred contract. It carries cultural weight. Your vision of a role, a recording, a curriculum, a concert series isn't just yours—it's a fragment of what the future could sound like.

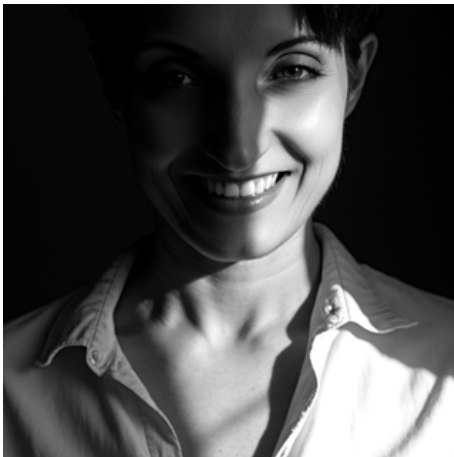
To abandon the dream is to abandon a version of the future that needs your voice. The dream is not indulgent. It is an invitation to show up, to risk being seen, and to leave a resonant imprint.

AI in Action: Use digital score readers and practice trackers to align weekly habits with long-term roles. Record self-assessments. Let AI flag tempo drift, tension spikes, or inconsistent dynamics—like a virtual masterclass.

FINAL NOTE

None of these principles exist in isolation—they interlock, support, and reflect each other. Start with the one that resonates most deeply or addresses your current blind spot. That single shift, even if small, can recalibrate your trajectory. A keystone habit, once in place, can anchor the entire framework.

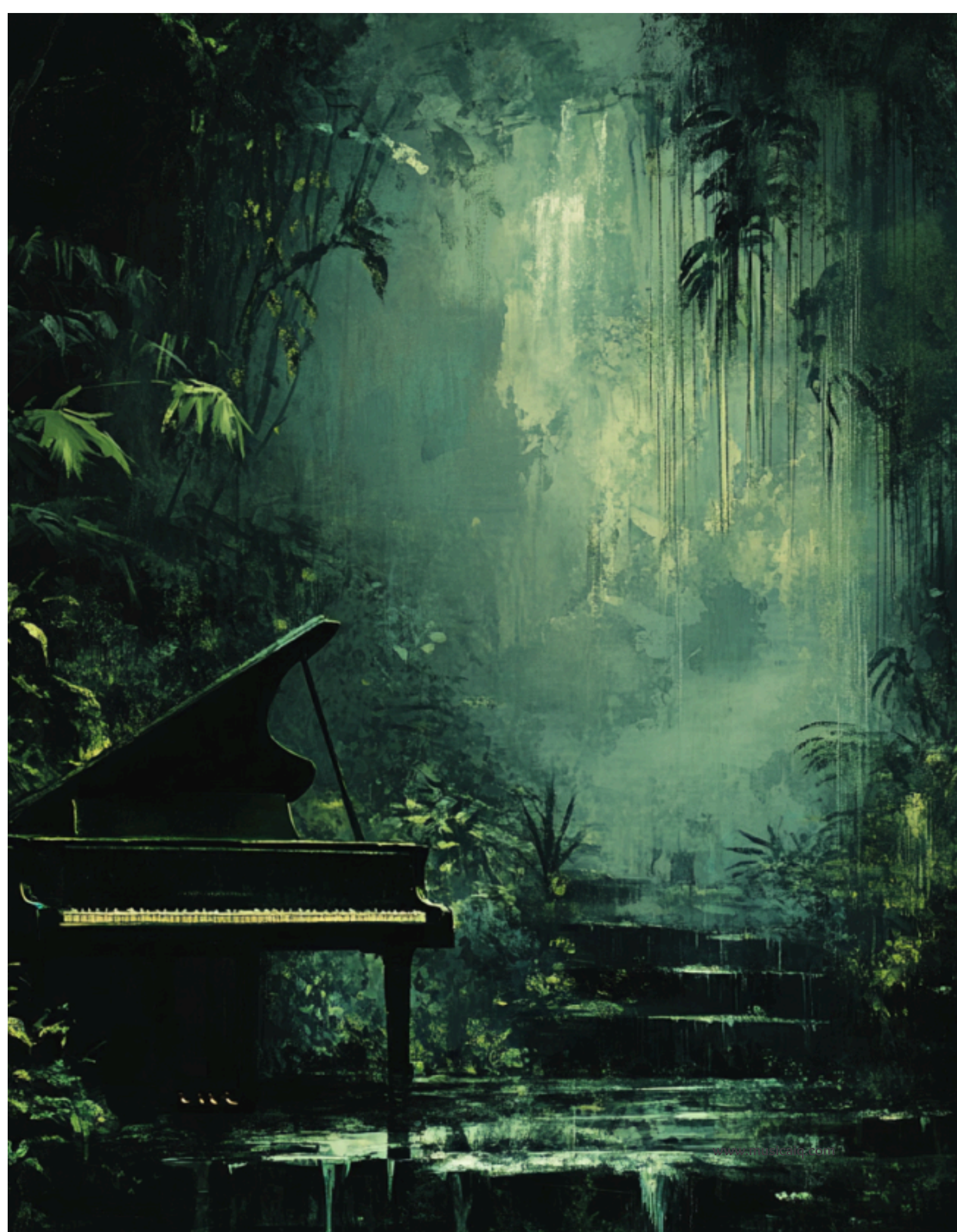
The future belongs to those who can align integrity, clarity, and visibility. You don't need permission. You need presence.



About the Author

Dr. Antonella Di Giulio is a pianist, scholar, and founder of MusicalQ, a platform exploring the intersection of music, cognition, and creative practice. She is the Program Chair for the Allegheny Chapter of the American Musicological Society, organizer of international music festivals, and a leading voice in music pedagogy, technology, and interdisciplinary innovation.







GIOVANNI MANCUSO AND ANDREA REBAUDENGO IN AN ENGAGING EXCURSION THROUGH THE CREATIVE JOURNEY OF THE BRESCIAN COMPOSER

Translated and
adapted from the
original Italian review
by Elide Bergamaschi,
[Operateatro.it](https://www.operateatro.it) (June
12, 2025).

Rossano Pinelli's entire creative universe is captured in this remarkable album—his first monographic release after several contributions to ensemble projects—published by the Stradivarius label.

A deep love for the vertiginous polyphony of the patriarchs Leoninus and Perotinus, a taste for exploring timbres and rhythms—artfully combined and deconstructed—in search of effects capable of crystallizing the moment into sonic fragments. But also a gaze toward distant cultures, often opaque to our standards, from which to steal sparks of inspiration to be embedded—not as exotic ornaments, but as elements filtered and assimilated into a unified, vibrant, composite fresco.

Nôtre-Dame de le Babenzele is a title that, in its very pronouncement, already signals and reveals a clear stance by the Brescian composer—who trained first under Giancarlo Facchinetti and Antonio Giacometti, then under absolute luminaries such as Ligeti and Donatoni, all while being simultaneously drawn to “other” languages: from Balkan folk music to the music of the Pygmies, from jazz to progressive rock.

It is difficult, therefore, to place these ten piano pieces—framed by two broad arches embracing eight exquisite miniatures—into any predefined category. Better to surrender to their listening, entrusted to the masterful hands of two first-rate musicians, Giovanni Mancuso and Andrea Rebaudengo, who shine in their devoted and precise fidelity to the composer’s intentions—under their fingers, the music becomes thought, lucid statement, but above all, captivating evocation.

It is the shifting, multiform succession of voices within this constellation that reveals—beyond the aesthetic pleasure of these short fragments—the urge to go deeper, in search of the equally fascinating complexity that animates and underlies them.

Beginning with the homage to the narrative genius of Hašek, Švejk Studio—a triptych that opens the journey—captures the kind-hearted and naïve soul of the soldier in a dense harmonic web of tetrachords and mirrored chords, while the musical narrative flows restlessly through polyrhythms and polymeters.

A butterfly in a resin case, with the inexorable machinery of war moving in its eternal, self-similar cycle, and—caught in its gears—the futile struggles of the individual to escape.

At the other end of the album lies the title track, awaiting the listener: a fresco of vibrant expressive power, drawn in broad sonic strokes beneath which reside—like specks of dust—secret worlds, chromatic shifts, perceptible tremors that reveal themselves only after repeated listening.

But above all, beneath that formidable armor, what pulses are the structural tensions of the piece—the cords binding its muscular surface to the worlds of Brahms and Ligeti, of the great European tradition, which Pinelli, in a highly personal synthesis, connects to disparate and heterodox voices, such as those of the Aka Pygmies—also known as the Babenzele—guardians of a musical complexity and richness of astounding beauty.



Between these Pillars of Hercules emerge shorter works—modest in length and breath, but certainly not in craftsmanship. Among them: Waves, a play of sonic waves and refractions seen in their tireless approach toward the shore; the stinging Zenit, a tribute—with its 840 repetitions of a four-note cell variously combined in rhythmic solutions—to the 150th anniversary of Erik Satie; the stripped-down, corrosive Tango for four hands, culminating in a genuine coup de théâtre (almost the sonic image of a casqué).

And then A—with its implicit invitation for the listener to become an active participant in the dialogue initiated by the piano—and Colours, a true whirling scene in which color becomes physical, material, and narrative presence.

Here, the attention to minimal detail, the fine craftsmanship—one of the most distinctive traits of the Brescian composer—reaches one of its most refined expressions.

Rossano Pinelli

Nôtre-Dame de le Babenzele



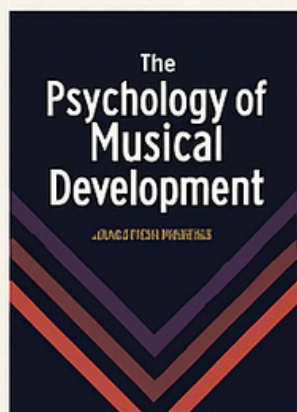
Giovanni Mancuso
Andrea Rebaudengo piano



Mastering Piano Scales and Arpeggios



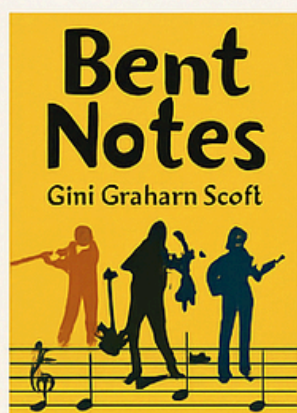
BOOKS WORTH READING



The Psychology of Musical Development

David Hargreaves - Cambridge University Press, 2016

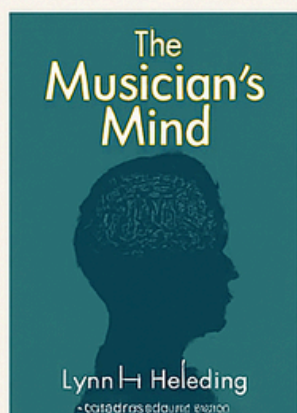
A scholarly overview of musical development from early childhood through adulthood, covering key concepts and theories.



Bent Notes

Gini Graham Scott - Four Pawns Publishing, 2024

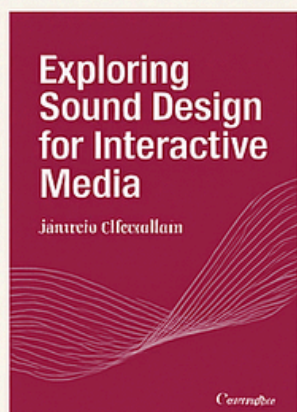
A vivid memoir that gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at the lives of jazz musicians and the culture of the jazz world.



The Musician's Mind

Lynn Holding - Rowman & Littlefield, 2020

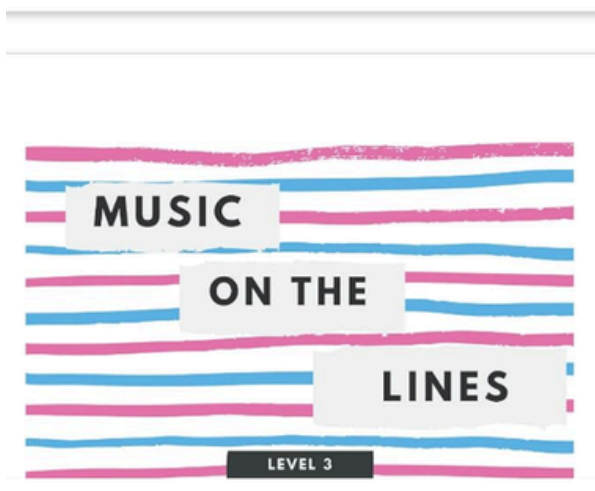
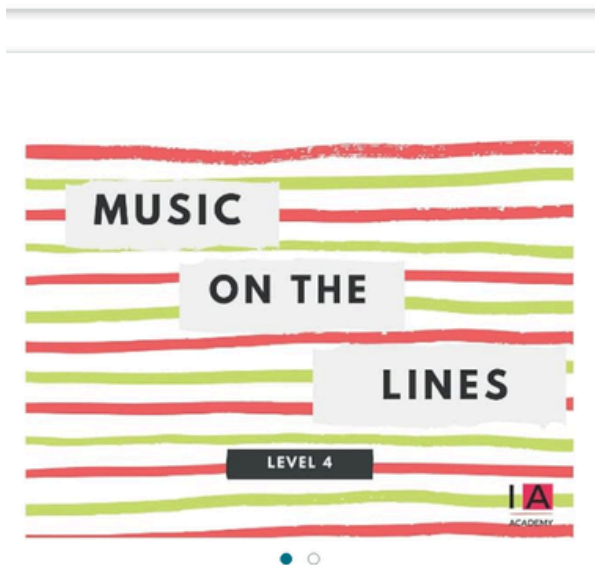
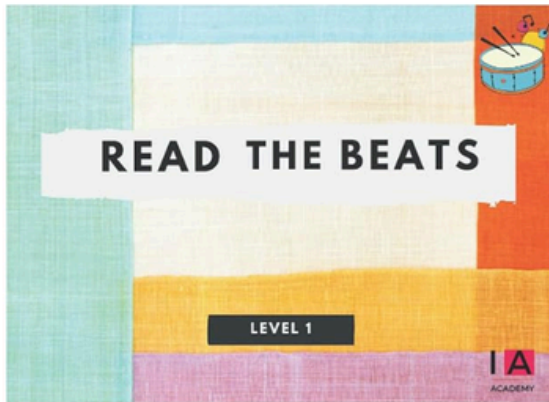
This book bridges neuropsychology and vocal pedagogy to provide a fascinating look at the connection between brain science and musical practice.



Exploring Sound Design for Interactive Media

Joseph Cancellaro - Cengage, 2006

Covering topics such as sound synthesis, mixing principles, and 3D sound design, this text offers a comprehensive introduction to sound production for interactive media.



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THE ART OF ARTIST MANAGEMENT: ALESSANDRO ARIOSI'S QUIET REVOLUTION

BY CLARA VENTURI

On a winter afternoon in Milan, Alessandro Ariosi stands at the edge of a rehearsal room, listening not with the distracted air of a businessman on his phone but with the focus of a musician. A soprano runs through a passage of Donizetti, the conductor stops, the pianist adjusts. Ariosi doesn't interrupt; he observes. When the break comes, he walks over, not to scold or push but to ask a question, the kind that seems simple but disarms: How do you want to sound in this role ten years from now? The singer laughs, then thinks. The point lands.

For Ariosi, who founded Ariosi Management in 2011, this is the essence of the job: not merely to book engagements but to frame a career. "The wrong role at the wrong time can undo years of progress," he has said. "My task is not to make the singer busy; it's to make them better."

Born in Milan in 1977, Ariosi came of age with two strong fascinations: the language of politics and the world of opera. He studied international relations, sharpening his sense of negotiation and the art of diplomacy, while simultaneously immersing himself in musical studies. This double fluency—strategic and artistic—would later prove decisive. Where many managers lean on business acumen but lack musical literacy, Ariosi understood from the outset that success in opera requires both: the contracts and the craft, the planning and the phrasing.

At twenty-four, unusually young for his profession, he began working as an artist manager. Those early years were an apprenticeship in caution. He watched singers burn themselves out with repertory unsuited to their voices, saw careers stumble after a misjudged debut, observed agencies that treated clients as interchangeable names on a roster.

The lesson was stark: talent alone wasn't enough. What singers needed was scaffolding.

In 2011, at thirty-four, he founded Ariosi Management, determined to provide exactly that. The agency began small, with a handful of singers and conductors, but quickly built a reputation for rigor and care. Unlike the impresarios of old, who trafficked in glamour and brinkmanship, Ariosi cultivated something subtler: trust. Today, his roster spans established stars and promising newcomers, and his artists appear in major houses from La Scala to the Met. Yet the ethos remains unchanged: patient growth, careful framing, and the conviction that management is a form of education.

THE LONG GAME

Opera has always been vulnerable to short-term thinking. A young tenor with an exciting high C is rushed into heavier repertory; a soprano is cast for a look rather than a voice; a conductor chases too many engagements, too quickly.

The immediate payoff may be thrilling, but the long-term damage is often irreparable. Ariosi positions himself against this cycle. His method is not to accelerate careers recklessly but to pace them—sometimes even to slow them down.

Each artist under his care receives what he calls a “narrative plan”: a sequence of roles, houses, and appearances that not only fit the voice but build an identity. For one soprano, it may mean anchoring in bel canto before venturing into Verdi; for a baritone, it might involve alternating classic roles with contemporary premieres to show versatility.

Ariosi does not dictate these plans; he co-authors them with the artist. “The career has to feel like theirs,” he explains, “but they must also trust that I see ten years ahead.”

MENTORSHIP AS MANAGEMENT

The word “manager” suggests spreadsheets and contracts. In Ariosi's practice, it also means mentor. He schedules regular check-ins not just to confirm engagements but to talk through doubts, vocal health, even personal rhythm. One singer recalls calling him in tears after a difficult review; Ariosi listened, then calmly asked,

What can we learn from this review that helps you next time?

The reframing turned a humiliation into a tool.

This kind of presence is rare. Many agencies outsource emotional support or ignore it entirely. Ariosi, by contrast, considers it central. “A singer without confidence is like a violin without strings,” he says. “You cannot play them.”

THE ARCHITECTURE OF STRATEGY

Strategic planning is the spine of Ariosi Management. Where some agencies operate opportunistically, grabbing any contract that comes along, Ariosi insists on coherence. He builds calendars with almost architectural precision: balancing geographic exposure, alternating heavy and light repertory, ensuring rest periods, plotting debut roles years in advance.

Consider the case of a mezzo-soprano who wanted to leap into Wagner. Ariosi urged patience, steering her instead toward Rossini and Verdi, where she could build stamina and reputation without strain. Five years later, when she finally took on Wagner, the debut was not a gamble but a triumph.

This patience, sometimes frustrating for artists eager for the limelight, pays dividends. It preserves voices, strengthens reputations, and signals to opera houses that Ariosi's singers arrive prepared, not overextended.

FRAMING THE NARRATIVE

Opera, more than most arts, thrives on storytelling—not just on stage but around the artist. A singer is not simply a voice but a narrative: the young tenor rising from provincial theaters, the soprano returning after a hiatus, the conductor known for reviving forgotten works. Ariosi is acutely aware of this. He works with publicists, curates interviews, and selects projects that enhance the story each artist tells.

This is not mere branding. It is a way of ensuring coherence between artistry and perception. A singer specializing in bel canto may also record lieder, but Ariosi will frame the release to emphasize continuity rather than contradiction. “If the story is fragmented, the audience is confused,” he says. “If the story is clear, the audience follows.”

INDIVIDUALIZATION

Perhaps the most striking feature of Ariosi’s method is its refusal of uniformity. Some agencies apply a template to every client: standard press kit, standard audition circuit, standard career ladder. Ariosi resists this. He tailors support to each artist’s temperament and needs.

For a naturally introverted baritone, he might arrange intimate recital appearances before larger opera roles, building comfort in stages. For a soprano with a gift for media, he might encourage interviews and recordings early, turning charisma into momentum. The aim is always the same: to let strengths define the path, so that weaknesses recede into the background.

RISK, REWARD, AND LONGEVITY

Opera is risky by nature: a voice can falter, a contract can collapse, a critic can turn hostile. Ariosi approaches risk not by avoiding it but by calibrating it. He encourages bold repertoire choices, but only when the singer is ready. He promotes international debuts, but only when the foundation at home is secure.

Longevity is the ultimate metric. “Anyone can have one season,” Ariosi says. “My question is: can they have twenty?” This orientation toward durability shapes every decision. It explains why his singers rarely flame out, why his roster grows steadily, and why houses trust him.

LESSONS BEYOND MANAGEMENT

What can others learn from Ariosi’s approach? For young managers, the lessons are clear: listen more than you speak, plan further ahead than your artist can see, and treat each career as singular. For artists managing themselves, the takeaway is to think narratively: every role, every review, every collaboration is part of a frame that either strengthens or weakens your story.

Ariosi’s model resists shortcuts. It demands patience, foresight, empathy, and integrity. Yet in a field often accused of cynicism, it offers an alternative vision: management as stewardship, artistry as partnership.

A NEW STANDARD

In the rehearsal room that winter afternoon, as the soprano packs up her score, Ariosi makes one last remark. You don't need to prove yourself in every note, he tells her. The audience is already listening. It is both practical advice and philosophy: careers are not built on urgency but on trust, on the slow accumulation of choices that add up to a life in music.

That philosophy—quiet, deliberate, deeply human—is the revolution Alessandro Ariosi has brought to opera management. And it is one the field, if it wishes to survive, would do well to heed.



About the Author

Clara Venturi is a cultural critic and essayist with a background in musicology and journalism. After studying comparative literature and music history in Florence and Berlin, she began writing for European arts journals before moving into international feature writing. Her work focuses on the intersection of artistry, identity, and the institutions that shape creative careers. For MusicalQ, she contributes in-depth profiles and long-form essays on figures who redefine the landscape of classical music today.



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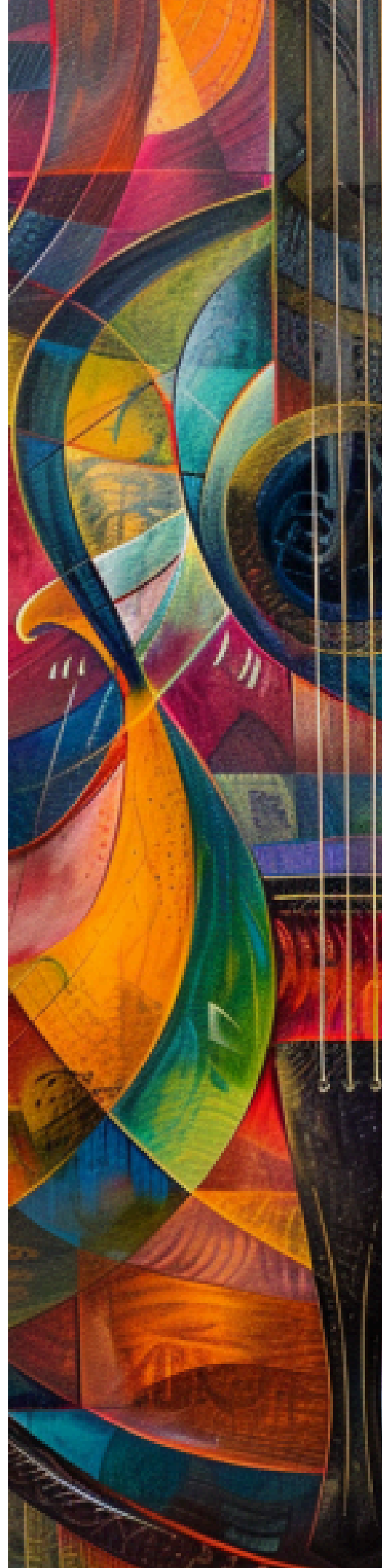
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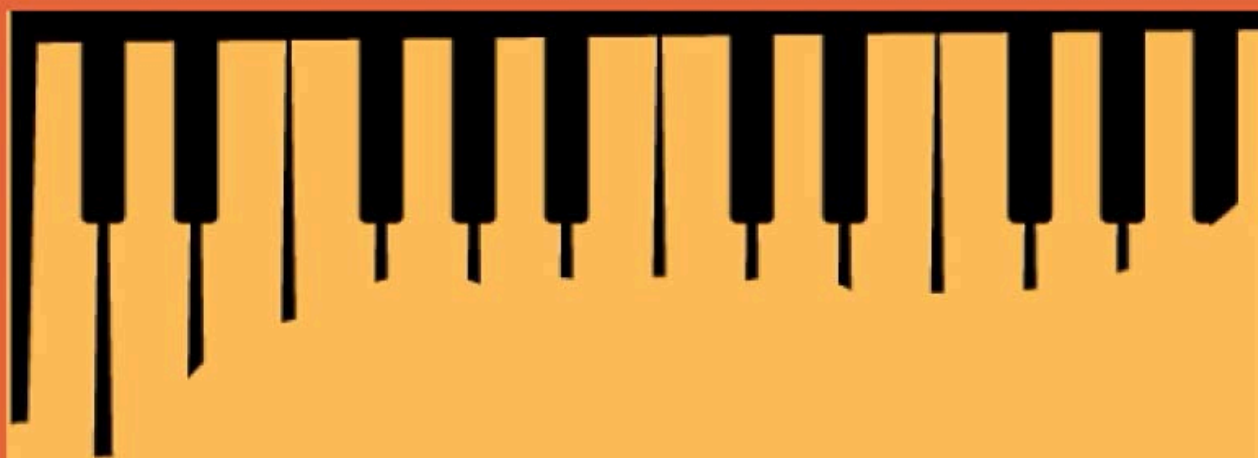
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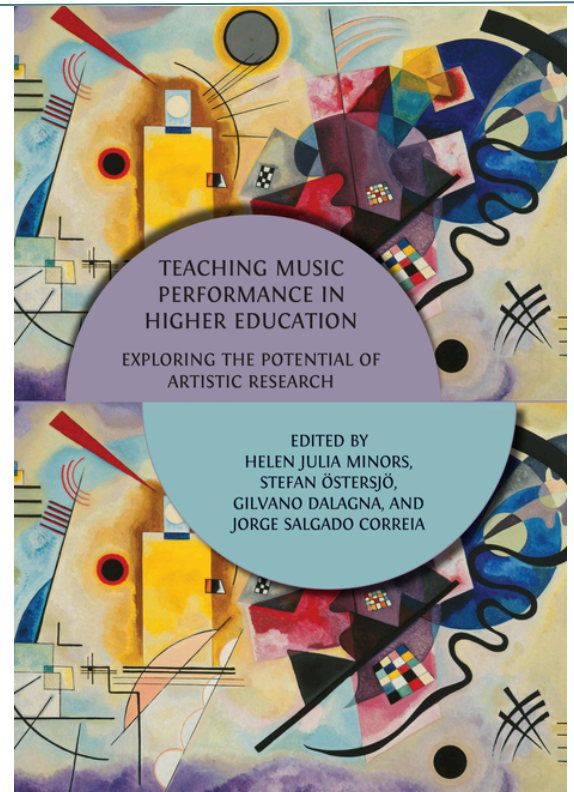
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BY DR. ANTONELLA DI GIULIO

In a time when music education is being challenged to justify its structures, costs, and relevance, *Teaching Music Performance in Higher Education: Exploring the Potential of Artistic Research* offers both critique and hope. Edited by Helen Julia Minors, Stefan Östersjö, Gilvano Dalagna, and Jorge Salgado Correia, this volume takes on one of the most complex yet urgent tasks in the conservatory world: rethinking how we teach performance.

But this is not a book of utopian dreams. Rather, it is a grounded, multi-perspective examination of what happens when institutions give students agency, when artistic research becomes more than a buzzword, and when pedagogy shifts from transmission to transformation.



Many of the essays in the volume grapple with the tension between tradition and experimentation. In institutions where centuries of performance lineage weigh heavily on the curriculum, how do you make space for critical inquiry, improvisation, intercultural collaboration, or new media? The authors do not all answer this question the same way, but they treat it as a real pedagogical problem, not a theoretical aside.

One of the strengths of the book is its diversity of case studies. Projects from Portugal, Sweden, and the UK share common struggles and different resolutions: empowering students to design performance experiences, revising assessment structures, using ensemble work as a tool for cultural dialogue. The result is a shared portrait of higher music education as a living system—one in need of oxygen, not embalming.

Where this volume shines is in how it connects artistic research with pedagogy. Too often, artistic research lives in grant proposals or doctoral programs, separate from the day-to-day studio or classroom. Here, it becomes a framework for student engagement. Artistic research becomes not an "add-on," but a lens through which practice is designed and evaluated.

Performance becomes a site of investigation. Rehearsals are not merely preparatory spaces but spaces for questioning. Student voices are not simply included; they are foundational. And failure, in these models, becomes a form of feedback rather than an institutional embarrassment.

Beyond its practical relevance, the book is an ethical mirror. Who gets to decide what counts as mastery? What musical languages are privileged, and which ones are systematically excluded? Several chapters deal with inclusion and diversity, not in generic terms, but through specific, tangible efforts—from multilingual programming to accessible concert formats. For educators and artists in the MusicalQ community, this should be a call to action. The book invites us to stop asking only what skills our students need, and to start asking: What systems are we asking them to enter? Are we preparing them for a world that no longer exists? Or are we equipping them to co-create the world that is coming?

Teaching Music Performance in Higher Education is not a manifesto, but a map. It documents the quiet revolution already happening in music pedagogy, and offers tools for those willing to listen, adapt, and innovate. It deserves a place on the shelf of anyone invested in the future of performance education—not just as a resource, but as a reminder: transformation is not only possible. It is already underway.

