

Reviews of Marianne Ploger's Musicianship Intensives (Full-text)

“Let me express my joy in having had the wonderful opportunity to take part in the Level One and Level Two Intensives this year. I am overwhelmed with the vast amount of valuable information given in these few days. Marianne's teaching method is immensely intense and mirrors the complexity of what every serious musician confronts in their struggle to bridge music practice and music theory. With students from a variety of backgrounds and experience, Marianne quickly establishes an environment that allows each student to work at their optimal comfort and learning level. Her unique methods and approaches in rethinking music are highly challenging and radically deepen the understanding of all the elements that occur in creating music. Learning from her is a journey to the highest level of awareness.

Unexpectedly, there is also the very special and rare opportunity to contact the teachings of the legendary Nadia Boulanger. Marianne, who studied with Boulanger, is quick to place her approach within that historical context giving the students an added level of learning.

My time with Marianne and Keith, both in and out of class, will remain one of the highlights of my life.”

*Gro Sandvik,
professor of flute at the Grieg Academy, University of Bergen, Norway
member of Bergen Woodwind Quintet
solo flutist, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra (former)*

“I think I can speak for everyone who attended Marianne Ploger's Level One Workshop when I say that we wish we could go back in time. Unanimously the sentiment was - "if only we could have learned this years ago!" Marianne is nothing short of a genius. She addresses an area of music education that is undernourished in almost every professional musician - that is complete fluency and flexibility with the fundamentals of music. She is a consummate musician - pianist, conductor, composer, scientist, and pedagogue. Her knowledge of the brain as well as her understanding of the human mind's intersection with spirit is inspiring. Ultimately, what she teaches is incredibly valuable and meaningful because they are not just "Marianne Ploger's" ideas. When thanking her for this information, her response was "Thank Nature!" Marianne brilliantly, yet simply, reveals the underlying structures of music so that the "Music of the Spheres" becomes inspiring in pragmatic application in daily life as a professional musician.”

*Joel Schoenhals
professor of piano at Eastern Michigan University
guest professor of piano at Nanchang University in Nanchang, Jiangxi, People's Republic of China
piano faculty, Chautauqua Institution*

“I have long been aware of my own shortcomings with regards to aural skills, so once I found out about Marianne's intensives I signed up straight away.

Coming from so far away I decided to do both the Level 1 and Level 2 intensives, and I'm so glad that I did. For me, I found the first week very difficult as there were a lot of concepts new to me, not least of which was solfege which I had not studied before. The musical standard amongst the other participants was also much higher than I expected, which meant that I felt quite out of my depth. After weathering the first week, the second proved to be more enjoyable as I was able to relax more, participate and get more out of the course.

Marianne has to be one of the most learned people I've met. Imagine history, philosophy, mathematics, psychology and music professors all rolled together into one person, one who shares her knowledge generously and selflessly. Thanks are also due to Keith for his hospitality and kindness. I very much hope to continue studying with Marianne in the future.”

*Mark Anderson
principal timpanist, Southern Sinfonia
Dunedin, New Zealand*

“Marianne Ploger provides the most meaningful and complete musical training workshops I've ever witnessed. In my estimation, she is the foremost musical scientist of our time and her teaching methods produce astounding results in a minimal amount of time. Learning from her seems effortless. Her knowledge of musical perception is absolutely impeccable. Her demeanor is nurturing, loving and highly focused. I can only imagine that studying with her is akin to what it must have been like to study with Bach.

I owe any success that I have had as a composer and teacher to the training I've received from her during the past 15 years. At the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point we have built a Composition and Music Theory/Musicianship curriculum based upon her discoveries and teaching methods. This has one of the most exciting things I've witnessed in my career as a professor.

Run to sign up for her workshops. Taking one is the best investment in your future that you could possibly make.”

*Charles Young
professor of composition at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, WI*

“Marianne Ploger’s Intensive Level One Course in May 2008 was a marvelous investment of time and resources for me.

As a collaborative pianist-coach, I am constantly dealing with issues concerning pitch, ensemble, rhythm, not to mention sight-reading, sight-singing and general musical confidence. Within three days of completing the course I was already putting more polished skills in these areas to use, at my church job, with private vocal clients, with my own practice. I recommend Ms. Ploger’s course to any serious musician without reservation. She is a marvel of knowledge and comprehension, and so very enthusiastic and elegant as well.”

*Katheryn Goodson
collaborative-pianist coach at the University of Michigan*

“Marianne Ploger has truly changed my life. After an injury forced me to take an extended break from playing, I decided to sign up for a Summer workshop. Since then I’ve taken part in two more workshops and studied with her privately. There is no doubt in my mind that her guidance and musical insight has allowed me to understand music in a way I never thought possible.

I believe the skill of hearing the music one sees on the page before playing it on the instrument is vital for all musicians, and especially for a brass player like me. My high school and college ear training and theory courses never allowed me to truly develop this skill. Marianne’s method of teaching intervals makes a lot sense, is very accessible, and explains the relationship between musical content and emotional response. This approach was extremely helpful to me to develop this essential skill.

Aside from her groundbreaking research involving musical perception, Marianne has an uncanny ability to understand how individuals learn and tailors her teaching style accordingly. You won’t believe how much you will learn in such a short period of time during one of her Intensives!”

*Matthew Lyon
professor of tuba at Ball State University, Indiana*

“There is no way to overstate the impact the Advanced Musicianship Comprehensive had on me. I learned as much about my mind and soul in those four days as I do in a typical semester. The exercises and discussions serve as perfect models to analyze the process of performing and teaching music. The most remarkable quality is that in the face of such lofty tasks, talent is made completely irrelevant. Ms. Ploger levels the playing field so that everyone’s success in the course clearly comes from trusting your own ability to steadily focus on a challenge, which is a particularly great quality for adult learners to reintegrate into their lives. As a teacher, I channel the information into every lesson I teach with astounding success in every instance. I hope

to continue my study of the methods for life and I strongly encourage anyone interested in understanding the process of what makes a great musical performance and how the mind learns new material. Many thanks to Marianne Ploger and Keith Hill for a highly enjoyable four days and continued conversations about how to integrate the lessons into my own life."

*Aaron Hill
professor of oboe at the University of Virginia*

"After having attended Marianne Ploger's Level One Intensive, I'm still amazed at the profound change that has occurred in my awareness of music. What is so remarkable about Marianne's method is its solid grounding in human perception. There is nothing abstract about her teaching of aural skills; instead, she leads each of her students to hear aspects of musical sound that were always there, but never recognized. This is what allows Marianne to be such a caring, yet demanding teacher, because she knows through experience that we already have great ears – we just need to be taught to recognize what we're hearing.

A variety of topics were presented during the 4 days, including clefs, modes, rhythms, and intervals, and by the end of the course, these skills supported each other in a truly cohesive way, building a complete model of musicianship. Marianne's course has given me remarkable new tools to communicate through music, both as an improviser and an interpreter, as well as a clear vision of how to continue growing."

*Mark Edwards
harpsichordist and organist
winner of the 2012 Musica Antiqua Bruges International Harpsichord Competition*

"When do you come to Europe again? Please tell me! You are right, music doesn't consist of the notes which are written down, but it consists of the idea and intention. This I learned in these two days with you at Schloss Weinberg by a special way. It was so wonderful! I often think back to those moments which changed my music and my understanding of music...thanks once again and I hope to have you back soon in Europe!!"

*Carmen Gaggl
Bruchner Conservatorium
Linz, Austria*

“Marianne's intensive was extremely enlightening. She provided a new way of approaching the roots of music, which not only increased our awareness, but provided something tangible to fall back on in our everyday needs as performers, conductors, and composers. Not only is the workshop presented in an engaging and intimate environment, but Marianne's charismatic personality further supplements her knowledge and research about a variety of musical topics. I would highly recommend this workshop to all musicians who have a desire to improve their musical instincts, as well as train their ear to be aware of details in musical nuance. I thoroughly enjoyed my five days with Marianne, and am grateful for her help in developing my musicality.”

*Avi Mehta
Conductor, El-Sistema-Boston*

“I have had the privilege of knowing and working with Marianne Ploger since 2001 when I met her at Craig Kirchoff's Art of Wind Band Teaching Symposium at the University of Minnesota. Her approach to reading and perceiving music in real time was so eye and ear opening to me that I contacted her after the symposium to begin doing work with her. The skills that she has taught me and continues to teach me each time I have the opportunity to work with her have been invaluable in my own understanding and teaching of music and I know how much her teachings have benefited my own students.”

*Scott Pierson
band conductor
Washington state*

“Many of us have experienced it. We attempt to learn a new skill, or even utilize ones that we have had forever, and what happens? We make mistakes and we yell at ourselves for it. We tell ourselves we are worthless because we can't get it right the first time. Well, to some of us, this may come as no surprise. It is not WE who are yelling at ourselves, but our "Inner Coach" yelling at us.

This was one of the many incredible things I learned from Marianne Ploger at the Institute for Musical Perception. Each of us have an Inner Coach. This coach is responsible for the errors we make in our daily routine, be it performing, practicing, speaking, scanning groceries etc. When we make these errors, the Inner Coach yells at us for it. The workshop five of my colleagues and I participated in this summer helped me to control my Inner Coach, essentially teaching him to shut up while I was trying to make music.

Many of you reading this are teachers and, I would guess because I am guilty of this myself, underestimate the speed at which your students can learn. Marianne Ploger, with her husband and colleague Keith Hill, taught me that when I have the right

attitude for the job, I can learn and accomplish things MUCH faster than I ever thought imaginable and so will my students. By the end of the fourth and final day, we were able to solfege using fixed do in all six clefs, recognize different intervals (called dichords) changing once per second, and count out rhythmic patterns in 2, 3, 4 and 5 at about 200 counts per minute. But this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Should anyone choose to take this or any workshop offered at the Institute for Musical Perception, be warned, the pace is EXTREMELY rapid! Marianne Ploger, in the interest of learning as efficiently as possible, will not stop to ask if there are any questions. So if you have any, ASK THEM! This workshop was the most mind blowing four days of my life. ALL musicians should take this and any other workshop taught by Keith Hill and Marianne Ploger.”

*Justin Riley
Music Teacher
Madison, Wisconsin*

“Initially I was daunted by the prospect of 4 days of intensive ear training, but shortly after we began on Monday morning I could tell that this experience was nothing to be afraid of. Ear training with Marianne is unlike any such experience I have ever had, primarily due to the encouraging attitude that prevailed from the very beginning. Not only would the activities of this workshop help us to hear better, we would master the numerous topics presented during the course of the week. About this there was simply no doubt, and it became obvious that Marianne's utterly simple yet intensely insightful way of teaching would help us to do just that. What sets Marianne apart from any teacher I have had before is that she assumes success because she knows so well the equipment that we all share and need only master to unlock our full potential. Therefore learning with her is not so much a matter of acquiring new skills and knowledge, but using our senses to uncover the truth around us and within. I cannot recommend this experience highly enough for any serious musician.”

*Aaron Marx
Co-director and instructor at the School of Performing Arts
Wisconsin*

“It is always such a pleasure to spend time working with Marianne. Her understanding of music is truly profound and her love and thirst for knowledge is truly contagious. Her pedagogy is extremely successful because she presents music as both a language to master and a transcendent art. You will be astonished by your newly acquired skills and by the integration of Marianne's curriculum. By the end of the week everything she teaches just kind of fits together in an amazingly clear but dimensional way. Her teaching continually inspires me to bring as much meaning and competence as I can to all that I hear, perform, compose, and teach to others.”

*Aaron Marx
Co-director and instructor at the School of Performing Arts
Wisconsin*

“The workshop offered by the Institute for Musical Perception is like nothing I have ever experienced, the only one of its kind. It is an integrated approach to musicianship and musical communication that draws on areas outside the field of music. If you are someone searching for meaning in music, it is present in every aspect of this workshop. Studying with Marianne Ploger and Keith Hill is like being in a constant state of enlightenment. It is a wonderful rude wake-up call. I felt more focused after their workshop than I ever had been before. I had never experienced anything like it. Never before have I ever come away from an experience like this with such a thorough understanding of the material. Marianne Ploger takes the most basic aspects of music and makes them so integrated that you begin to see them everywhere. No stone was left unturned. Everything we covered was application based. After taking part in the four day intensive, I felt like I got way more than my money's worth. The most important idea I took from the workshop is that the only limits an individual's brain has are the ones imposed on it. If you learn to drop those limits, anything must be possible.

The information gained from Marianne Ploger and Keith Hill provides the basis for a lifetime worth of growth. Because of the immense understanding of the material and the immediate implementation of the skills that the workshop provides, I felt comfortable to begin implementing the material in my own teaching almost immediately. And lo and behold, my students, ranging from elementary to high school age, could tell the difference between all eleven dichords within two months of just minutes a week spent in lessons on ear training. This is the closest to an error-free method that I have ever seen because it is so rooted in the basics.

This workshop was the most meaningful experience that I have ever encountered in music. My musicianship, teaching and imagination are forever changed.”

*Matthew Sullenbrand
founder and instrument craftsman of Sullenbrand Harpsichords*

“For two years I have participated in the Musicianship Intensives offered by the Institute for Musical Perception. These workshops are true intensives. During the sessions you learn how music is universally perceived. And through the masterful teaching of Marianne Ploger you learn how to immediately implement the knowledge in your own work. Everything that is presented in this workshop is universal. Through hard work, the skills that Marianne teaches can be used by all musicians to gain an understanding of the language of music for the ultimate goal of developing the craft of musical communication. In the advanced session of the workshop, as you refine your musicianship skills, you are trained as well in the craft of teaching these skills to others. As you gain more understanding, your standards are also raised, thereby training you for the real world of music. Ploger and Hill aim to create musical craftspeople-musicians who clearly understand everything they are doing, who communicate to their audience and are able to get a desired effect every time. Education in this level of musical craftsmanship is not offered anywhere else.”

*Matthew Sullenbrand
founder and instrument craftsman of Sullenbrand Harpsichords*

“I attended levels one and two of the Intensives in the summer of 2006. To say the experience was enlightening and rewarding is an understatement. Marianne's methods for teaching aural skills are well developed and highly effective. Her workshops are designed with the serious musician in mind, and the pace at which each day moves is breathtaking. By the end of each week I was thinking about music at a much higher level than I had previously thought possible. What's more is that I left the workshops with a clear idea of how to continue developing my aural skills on my own. I would highly recommend the Intensives to anyone who is interested in deepening the level at which he or she perceives and conceives music in the most meaningful way possible.”

*Joseph Stillwell
award-winning composer and pianist
San Francisco*

“It is hard to explain the magnitude of learning, growth, and inspiration that I experienced through the musical fluency intensive sessions. Not only has Marianne Ploger made an astounding number of discoveries as a sort of pioneering scientist in music, she presents this materials in a methodical, highly understandable way.

During the sessions, she taught me to hear individual pitches, intervallic relationships, chords, and changing harmonies in a whole new manner--- it was the first time that I was asked to “turn off” my perfect pitch so that I could really listen to what was happening in the sound and in the music. The method programs the listener

to truly understand music, and appropriately identify what they are hearing in “real time”.

I can remember sitting through music theory courses in university, going through the motions of solfège with moveable “do”, written harmonic analysis, and hearing major and minor intervals played back over and over again, in an attempt to drill the sound of a minor third into my head. Needless to say, I never saw the applicability of any of it, and continued on learning and listening to music the same way I always had. Marianne's method instills all of this knowledge into a truly fluent musical ability that is applicable and logical every step of the way.

My performance, my listening, and my teaching have all been transformed by Marianne's method. For the first time, I have an understanding of what music is like to listen to, and learn, for people who don't have absolute pitch. I have a logical way of explaining the most basic concepts--- reading music quickly and accurately, and hearing the music based on the score in one's own ear----to all music students. I have a more efficient way to practice the piano and learn music, and have thousands of musical insights and directions through the connections that Marianne makes between affect and sound. Most importantly, I understand why music is so important as an art, and as an emotive medium.”

*Stephanie Gurga
pianist and harpsichordist
Germany*

“I attended Marianne Ploger's four day Level One Intensive class in June of 2006 expecting a refresher course in basic aural skills. The class began with interval study, and proceeded through scales, modes, rhythm, and other basics. This material is important, to be sure, but what makes study with Marianne Ploger so meaningful, is how she teaches the student to relate these basic skills to the listening and performance of music. Marianne is one of those very few teachers whose skill and passion for teaching transcends her subject matter. As a result of this four day class, I am now hearing and understanding music on a new level. This has not only helped my own performance, but I am confident I will be a more effective teacher as well. I am eagerly looking forward to continuing my study with Marianne Ploger, and am encouraging my colleagues to begin study as well.”

*Dr. John Weigand
Extra Clarinetist, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Professor of Music (Clarinet and Conducting)
West Virginia University*

“Being a participant in an intensive with Marianne Ploger is like spending four days with Pablo Casals, Pythagoras and the Dalai Lama! She not only gave me the tools to be able to master the fundamentals, and the often times elusive, elements of music, but also facilitated an appreciation of my own process of understanding and awareness, all in a warm and loving environment. These rare insights, the result of twenty-plus years of scholarship and teaching, have enabled Ms. Ploger to convey complex concepts of musical cognition into a thoroughly understandable format.

I came to the level-one intensive with an expectation of improving isolated skill deficiencies in music theory and ear training – I left with a far greater awareness of the vast landscapes of art, perception, and pedagogy - all this while gaining substantial insights into the inner workings of my brain and soul! I am quite excited about implementing Marianne’s approaches into my conducting, teaching, and personal musical growth and to build upon what I have learned in a future level-two intensive.”

Brendan Caldwell

Director of Bands at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

“The time spent with Marianne Ploger at the intensive could not have been spent more productively. Every lesson relates and enhances your knowledge of all previous lessons, which gives you a solid foundation to build new musical experiences. After spending four days with Ms. Ploger, I am convinced that is the best way to truly comprehend music. As a consequence, I have not been able to listen to music the same way since the workshop, and probably never will again.”

John Drabecki

Composer