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Export date: Thu Mar 28 21:56:43 2024 / +0000 GMT

JUNO winner talks festival

To the Editor,

I was once a beginner. At eight years old, I played piano in my very first North Hastings Music Festival. Grade 1 Royal Conservatory Piano ? the piece? ?Gossip Joan.? My teacher over in Minden, Melissa Stephens, made me memorize it, and to this day, I can still play the first few bars as if it were yesterday. The amazing power of the human mind.

Back in 1979, the festival was competitive. I remember sitting in the front pew with at least 10 other clean, dressed-up little kids, most of whom were also playing ?Gossip Joan.? Maybe some of these surnames will sound familiar: Fransky, Potts, Fitzgerald, Meyn, Garbutt. The Garbutt was me, and I was an outsider; I was ?from away.? Bill Fitzgerald earned the red ribbon, Allison Sisson from Haliburton came second, Christian Fransky probably placed third, and I definitely placed fourth. For my type A personality, fourth place was a blessing, because it made me hungry to do better.

For 12 years, I was still hungry, regardless of how many ribbons I earned at the festival. The skilled adjudicators that the music festival committee chose to hear us play often built my confidence with their praises, and sometimes brought me back down to earth with their brutally honest critiques of my playing. But through it all, the main goal of any musical study was achieved: to get a little bit better, and to become more confident in one's abilities. When I started university as a piano major, I suddenly became a small fish in a big pond, but at least I was a rock bass and not a minnow!

In the '90s, the festival moved to an educational model, whereby performers participated to learn, to grow as musicians, and to become more comfortable performing. No more ribbons, no more marks, no more first, second and third. Since that time, the North Hastings Music Festival has become known as the ?little-Festival-that-could,? consistently growing in size while most other community music festivals across the province dwindle in size and with many closing their doors forever.

As vice president of the North Hastings Music Festival, I invite you to join us for as much or as little of the festival as you can from Monday, May 15 to Friday, May 19. Admission is free. Come in to hear our daily concerts from 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m. at the Bancroft Pentecostal Tabernacle of ?Music You Love by People You Know.? I'll be performing on Monday and on Wednesday with C.T. Rowe and Valerie Switzer respectively.

If you check out any of our sessions in piano, voice, strings or guitar, you will experience the music of the Franskys, Switzers, McCaskies, Plunketts, Moffitts, and now, Winmills ? and smile with pride as you hear the next generation of North Hastings' musicians with some of the greatest musical quality provided by the likes of hifisystemcomponents.com.

Dianne Winmill
NHHS music teacher and
MusiCounts Teacher of the Year