Janetta McStay:

A Pianist and Teacher's Legacy

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the life and legacy of pianist and teacher Janetta Mary McStay (20 May 1917–14 June 2012) as one of the foremost musicians of the twentieth century in New Zealand, exceptional in her achievements and skill. McStay was the country's first full-time lecturer in piano at the University of Auckland where she taught from 1963 to 1982. The majority of the data was gathered through primary research in a series of interviews with McStay's former students in order to find out her pedagogical methods, their impressions of McStay as a performer, how her diverse interests and life experiences informed her musicianship, and her enduring legacy on themselves as well as the author.

The first two chapters supply McStay's biographical information, from her early childhood, to studies in London, followed by years of touring for the Allied troops in the Second World War as part of the Entertainments National Service Association, post-war life, and her return to New Zealand. Interviews with McStay conducted by Catherine Mayo were a great help in constructing this narrative.

Chapter three investigates McStay's pedagogy in depth, informed by the personal stories told by her former pupils. McStay's initial years of teaching at the University of Auckland, the general atmosphere and pastoral care, and her methods of cultivating musicianship and technique, and criticisms from the students are discussed.

The last chapter details McStay's last years and reflections from the students on the legacy she left behind. The thesis culminates with a story of my own experience while getting to know McStay through the stories of others, and the legacy she imparted unto me.

Acknowledgements

Completing a DMA during a worldwide pandemic has been a strange, challenging, and grounding experience. Despite the madness of the world at large and the prevalent sense of languishing, digging into the depths of my research has been an anchor of focus, and even an unexpectedly joyous experience in the end. Of course, it was immensely helpful to investigate the legacy of someone like Janetta McStay; a fascinating, vivid personality with wonderful experiences that shaped her as a musician.

First and biggest heartfelt thanks go to my family: My loving parents Hannah Choi and Jacob Mo, my dear brother Paul and his amazing wife Sol, and my precious nephew Blake Eden. This is for all of you. 엄마, 아빠. 너무나도 힘들고 지치는 시간이었지만 끊임없는 기도와 격려와 사랑 덕분에 드디어 해냈어요. 사랑해요. 감사해요.

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Lastly, thank you, Janetta.

Soli Deo gloria

Name and terminology conventions

The author, Heewon Maria Mo, will be referred to as ‘Maria Mo’.

Janetta McStay is referred to as McStay, excepting direct quotations.

The interview participants are named in full the first time they are mentioned with subsequent mentions using last names only.

Composers are named in full the first time they are mentioned with subsequent mentions using last names only, excepting direct quotations.

The words ‘classical’ and ‘Classical’ are differentiated by the use of lower case *c* to mean the genre of music, and the capital *C* to mean the Classical period of that genre.

The words ‘west’/‘western’ and ‘West’/‘Western’ are differentiated by the use of lower case *w* to mean the cardinal direction, and the capital *W* to mean the cultural traditions originating in Europe, i.e. the West.

Citation adjustments

To differentiate between the numerous interviews McStay gave, the footnotes will also indicate the month and year.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the study

Janetta Mary McStay CBE (20 May 1917–14 June 2012) was a leading New Zealand concert pianist and the first full-time lecturer in classical piano performance at tertiary level, teaching at the Conservatorium of Music at the University of Auckland from 1963 to 1982. Throughout her career she was active in both performance and pedagogy, collaborating with numerous visiting overseas musicians and undertaking concert tours around the world, while generating a prolific studio of pupils many of whom have gone on to develop successful musical careers in their own right.

Despite her pre-eminence, Janetta McStay was not an isolated phenomenon. Throughout the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries New Zealand produced a number of fine pianists of repute, including:

- Ernest Empson OBE (9 March 1880–23 June 1970): Born in Ashburton and raised in Christchurch, Empson was initially taught by the German critic and pianist Hermann Lund. He enjoyed a flourishing concertising career in Germany where he enjoyed friendships with such musicians as violinist Joseph Joachim, composer-pianist Ferruccio Busoni, and the pianist Artur Schnabel. He also received tutelage from the renowned Polish-American virtuoso Leopold Godowsky. Empson returned to New Zealand in 1908 and was a respected teacher in Christchurch until his retirement in 1968.[1]

[1] Edmund Bohan, 'Empson, Ernest Charles', in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand* (2000), <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5e7/empson–ernest–charles> [accessed 23 March 2021].

- Lili Kraus (3 April 1093–6 November 1986): Although not born and raised in New Zealand, Austro-Hungarian pianist Lili Kraus became an important figure in the local musical sphere after adopting the country as her home. Kraus had been touring in Asia in 1942 when Japanese forces captured her and her family and imprisoned them in separate internment camps for three years. After World War II ended, Kraus and her family moved to New Zealand, where she won the hearts of audiences throughout the country with her charm and musicality. Kraus eventually settled in Fort Worth, Texas.[2]
- Colin Horsley OBE (23 April 1920–28 July 2012): Horsley was born in Whanganui and won a scholarship at the age of eighteen to study at the Royal College of Music in London. He became one of Britain's leading pianists after the Second World War and enjoyed a long and busy career, often coming back to New Zealand to tour. He was visiting professor at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester from 1964 to 1980, and the Royal School of Music from 1965 to 1990.[3]
- Tessa Birnie OAM (19 July 1924–13 March 2008)[4]: Birnie was born in Ashburton and quickly showed her pianistic talents as a young child. She debuted at the Auckland Town Hall at the age of fourteen and embarked on a tour of New Zealand before heading to Europe with her mother, where she learned from eminent teachers such as Nadia Boulanger, Yvonne Lefebure, and Karl Schnabel.[5]

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[2] Charlotte Wilson, 'Lili Kraus', *Appointment*, Radio New Zealand Concert, 23 December 2015, online sound recording, RNZ Audio Player, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/concert/programmes/lili–kraus/audio/2558511/lili–kraus> [accessed 23rd March 2021].

[3] Nancy Swarbrick, 'Creative and intellectual expatriates – Expatriation to Britain' (2014), in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/44353/colin–horsley> [accessed 25 March 2021].

[4] Although Birnie stated her birth year as 1934, it is listed as 1924 in her autobiography, *I'm Going to be a Pianist!* (Azzano Press, 1997).

[5] Olive Lawson, 'Born to Play to the World', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 April 2008, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/born-to-play-to-the-world-20080404-gds80z.html> [accessed 25 March 2021].

- Maurice Till CNZM (22 October 1926–26 March 2011): Till was born in Christchurch and took his initial lessons from Miss Clarice Bell from the age of five to seventeen. He studied Music and Mathematics at the University of Canterbury and learned the piano from Ernest Empson. He went on to teach for thirty years, dividing his time between the universities of Otago and Canterbury, and was a highly sought-after accompanist for such musicians as German soprano Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, New Zealand's own Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, and the French cellist Pierre Fournier.[6]
- Richard Farrell (30 December 1926–27 May 1958): Farrell was a brilliant rising talent whose life was cut tragically short in an automobile accident at the age of thirty-two. A Wellington native, he was invited to the United States by the conductor Eugene Ormandy when he was nineteen. In 1946 he was recommended by pianist William Kapell to study with Olga Samaroff at the Juilliard School of Music in New York on a full scholarship. From this point on his career flourished; he toured extensively throughout the US, Europe, India and Australasia, debuted at Carnegie Hall, collaborated with renowned conductors such as Sir Thomas Beecham and Sir John Barbirolli, and directed his focus towards conducting. His untimely death and unfulfilled potential to become one of the greatest musicians of the classical world was a tremendous loss.[7]

It is evident that there was a growing emergence and development of pianistic talent despite New Zealand's relatively short history in the field of classical music and geographical isolation. I consider McStay especially noteworthy even among such illustrious colleagues, as the trajectory of her career soared in her homeland after extensive overseas training and

[6] Christchurch City Council Libraries, 'Maurice Alfred Till 1926–2011', (n.d.) <https://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Music/People/T/TillMaurice/> [accessed 18 March 2021].
[7] Laurence Jenkins, 'Farrell, Thomas Richard', in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand* (2000), <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5f2/farrell–thomas–richard> [accessed 23rd March 2021].

performance experience, and led to an enrichment of the local musical scene.

On the basis of her concertising, recordings and teaching, I consider McStay's contributions to the richness and advancement of New Zealand classical piano performance and education to have been exceptional in their diversity, calibre, and pioneering spirit. This thesis investigates McStay's lasting legacy including the impact of her two decades of teaching at the University of Auckland and her performance career as one of New Zealand's most celebrated pianists. The repeated requests from leading international soloists to collaborate with McStay when they toured New Zealand is testimony to her professional reputation and skill. The fact that she managed such feats during a time when international travel and collaborations were not so frequent or easily accomplished as today makes it all the more remarkable. Outstanding as her performance credentials were, her pedagogical legacy is even more substantial, and is still being felt today. Generations of eminent New Zealand piano teachers and performers owe their professional start to McStay's mentorship, wise guidance, inspiration, and in many cases, lifelong friendship.

My interest in McStay was piqued by my own teacher and primary musical mentor, Katherine Austin. I first met Austin at the age of sixteen in 2004. I had been learning to play the piano from the age of five, but with little commitment or consistency, and had all but stopped having lessons. I was a musical child, a natural singer, quick to learn and understand new concepts and proficient at several instruments but I had not developed interest in pursuing classical music performance or teaching as a career path. In fact, I considered classical music generally dull and could not understand why anyone would devote their lives to pursue what I perceived as a boring and antiquated genre of music. I wanted to become a rockstar and play to thousands in huge arenas, not sit in a practice room all day. When I

practised I did not know what I was striving for and practice seemed an aimless chore. I knew there were notes, dynamic markings, and other instructions from the composer — but for what? To what end? They appeared to me no more than a bunch of black marks on a page. Why was it that I loved music so intensely but did not feel much affection for classical music? I did not know.

In 2004 I was a Year 13 student at Hamilton Girls' High School. I studied NCEA Level 3 Music as an undemanding subject in which I could easily gain high marks because of my classical training background and pianistic facility. In preparation for performance assessment I decided to play Ballade No. 3 in Ab major by Frédéric Chopin, a piece I had learned some time prior and kept active under my fingers. I sat down, and I played. I remember feeling quite passionate during the performance, something that only happened with pieces I immediately liked. I finished, and I looked up. I saw my teachers. They looked somewhat shocked or surprised, and they were silent. Had I played terribly? I hope I pass, I thought.

Then the Head of Music, Lynn Jamieson, spoke up. 'You're going to do piano performance at University,' she said. 'I'm going to arrange a meeting with the lecturer at the University of Waikato, and you're going to play for her.' I could not understand what she was talking about. Study classical piano performance? At University? I thought that was something that only prodigies did and I certainly had never considered it for myself. But I was in my final year of high school with no clear idea of what to do next, and I agreed to meet this lecturer.

The day I met and played for Austin I was a bundle of nerves. I had not eaten, I was shaking, and I thought I played badly. I burst into tears immediately after I finished. To my surprise,

Austin responded that she saw something in me and would like to take me on as a student, and I began taking lessons with her in order to prepare for the University entrance audition.

Austin chose the Gigue from French Suite No. 5 in G major BWV 816 by Johann Sebastian Bach for me to learn. In our first lesson I was immediately struck by the level of detail in her teaching, the likes of which I had never encountered before. I did not know about articulation, the hierarchy of beats, or indeed anything about general stylistic differences between Baroque or Classical or Romantic music. These were things not explained to me in detail by the various teachers I had over the years. Suddenly, here was a teacher who was not only explaining but singing, dancing, and encouraging me to do the same. This is crazy, I thought, but it's fun. It seemed to me that maybe there *was* a point to all this after all, a *raison d'être* as to why people pursued this seemingly dull art form and dedicated their lives to it, and I decided to find out more.

As I continued my studies with Austin during my undergraduate degree at the University of Waikato, I learned that McStay — who had been Austin's own teacher at the University of Auckland from 1981 to 1982 — had demanded the same intensity of listening, tonal detail and musical expression from Austin and had significantly influenced her own teaching style. The depths in which I was able to explore the pieces with Austin helped my own musicianship to develop and mature, and I began to learn how to listen. We would often spend an entire hour's lesson on just the first four bars of a sonata, making sure each chord was evenly voiced, each phrase was carefully thought through, taking care of the quality of tone and imbuing every note with emotion. The painstaking work we would put into these small segments would serve as fuel for the rest of the music-making process, and slowly, little by little, I began to feel the bunch of black marks on the page jump out and come to life.

I distinctly remember coming out of lessons feeling as though the sky was bluer, the grass greener, and everything was more beautiful because of music. Classical music went from being a chore to being fuel for my life.

However, there were always questions lingering in my mind. How can one find so many things to work on? Why work in such detail? Would the audience be able to tell the difference? I was not even sure that other musicians would be able to tell the difference. As much as I enjoyed this newfound love of classical music I was often frustrated with the seemingly endless preoccupation with fussy minutiae. And yet, when I did work in extreme detail, it did seem to make a difference. The music became part of me in an indelible way, to the extent that I can still remember and play pieces studied in my first year of undergraduate tuition better than some pieces I have learnt many years later.

Austin often spoke of McStay with great fondness and respect, telling me how hard she had worked to try and achieve what McStay asked of her. The more I heard about McStay, and as I myself began teaching others, the more curious I became about her approach to the teaching and interpretation of the Western classical piano literature. This developed into an interest and desire to find out more about McStay, her teaching, her pianism, and her life, thus embarking on this research project to investigate and explore her legacy. It seems meaningful to me that the two definitive moments of my musical life — the initial decision to undertake serious piano study followed by the pursuit of this project — were galvanised by two women; one my own teacher, the other her teacher, the way that they each shaped their students, and the questions they asked of me.

I never had the opportunity to meet McStay. If I had, I imagine I may have been left with

even more questions, much like the pursuit of never-ending detail to be found in the bunch of black notes on a page.

Methodologies: Narrative Inquiry, Oral History, Musical Biography

For this qualitative research project, an ethnographic approach was employed with a blended methodology of narrative inquiry, oral history, and musical biography.

The primary focus on McStay is not so much on her biography — rich and fascinating as her life was — but about McStay the musician, as teacher and performer, as these are the aspects of her life that have not previously been documented. I also found these aspects pertinent to my own interests as a teacher-pianist myself, as I am always in pursuit of further knowledge in both pedagogy and performance. This focus also serves to link the scholarly research element of this DMA project with the performance component.

McStay's varied life experiences and interests were integral to her identity as a musician. Her extensive performing career across different continents and collaborations with a wide range of ensembles informed her teaching of her own students. Her experiences performing in situations of different kinds and knowledge of what to focus on in order to deliver an engaging and communicative performance fed directly into her pedagogy. McStay's extraordinary ability to listen in depth meant she was able to instruct her students in extreme detail, always striving to help them achieve the utmost musical effect through voicing, tone, and control. She loved travel, art, and food, often combining all three interests on her trips to Europe each year where she would attend and observe festivals like the *Schubertiade* in Austria. McStay as a musician was the sum of all her lived experiences.

With this in mind, answers to the following questions were pursued:

1. What was Janetta McStay's approach to teaching at the University of Auckland?
2. What was her approach to public performance?
3. How did her approach to pedagogy and performance provide an enduring legacy?

There are a number of methodologies one can use for a qualitative study with an ethnographic basis. I examined several approaches to determine the options most fitting to support my research.

Ethnography here is understood as the study of a group of people who share a culture. O'Leary defines it as a 'classic anthropological method whose strength is in attempting to understand the world from the point of view of its participants (rather than searching for an 'objective' truth, or premising the researcher's point of view)'.[8] In principle, it is a way for researchers to place themselves into the environment of the participants in order to receive a first-hand account of their experiences, avoiding a presumed worldview or point of reference:

> The goal is to 'see' things the way group members do, and grasp the meanings they use to understand and make sense of the world. In other words, ethnographers attempt to suspend judgement and understand the symbolic world in which people live in order to interpret meaning from within a culture.[9]

The shared culture I am investigating is that of having been a student of Janetta McStay

[8] Zina O'Leary, *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project*, 3rd edn (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2017), p. 142.
[9] Ibid., p. 142.

during her tenure at the University of Auckland, 1963–1982. Throughout these twenty years, the culture experienced by both the students and McStay herself evolved, informed by the fresh intake of new students each year as well as McStay's development as a teacher with the accumulation of experience.

Every student is different in their musical aptitude and ability to receive information, digest it as their own, and execute it upon demand. Every student comes from a different background, has their own unique personality, and it may not be one that is compatible with the teacher. It is interesting to note that many students continued on the path of professional musical performance and education after their time with McStay, a number of them carving out careers overseas as well as in New Zealand. This signifies a proliferation of McStay's musical legacy, and piqued my interest as to her role and influence on her students' musical lives. Consequently, I deemed it important to examine the successful aspects of McStay's piano pedagogy and how it benefited a wide and varied range of students, but not overlooking any shortcomings or oversights that did not serve them well.

An effective ethnographic data collection method would have been *participant observation*, which is longitudinal engagement in a field setting in which 'the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes'.[10] The researcher becomes a part of the community or culture that they observe and forms a bond with the people. This would have helped me gain deeper insight as I would have been able to observe the ongoing progress of the students, the developing relationships between student and teacher, ask questions in real time, as well as witness McStay's teaching methods first hand. As this was not possible

[10] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th edn (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018), p. 90.

(McStay died in 2012), I decided that the best mode of gathering this information was to conduct semi-structured interviews, the data from which could be synthesised and analysed in order to construct an overview of McStay's teaching style, methods and its impact.

Initially, I considered *grounded theory* as a possible methodology. Grounded theory is a mode of inquiry developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Its primary purpose is to develop a new theory from the data collected, 'rather than rely on analytical constructs, categories or variables from pre-existing theories', thereby facilitating the 'development of new, contextualized theories'.[11] Glaser and Strauss themselves define grounded theory as 'how the discovery of theory from data — systematically obtained and analyzed in social research — can be furthered'.[12] As I wanted to investigate McStay's pedagogical methods, I wondered if I could come up with a theory using an inductive approach, by beginning with an area of study and 'allowing the theory to emerge',[13] by undertaking 'detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model'.[14] However, after conducting several interviews and identifying themes, it was evident that grounded theory was not an appropriate choice as I was seeking to build a narrative through memories and anecdotes, and not to establish a new theory on piano pedagogy. To write about a person and their lived experiences informing their identity as a teacher and performer through the stories of others aligned itself well with the blended methodologies of narrative inquiry, oral history, and musical biography. The method of conducting semi-structured interviews was used in these methodologies, all of which have the underlying common thread

[11] Carla Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3rd edn (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2013), p. 70.
[12] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 1.
[13] Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of qualitative research*, 2nd edn (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 1998), p. 12.
[14] David R. Thomas, 'A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data', *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27.2 (2006), 237–246 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>, p. 238.

of documenting an individual's lived experience. It was important to me to capture the essence of McStay, the human, as this facet of her identity was inextricably linked to her as a musician.

Narrative inquiry

> Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world.[15]

The narrative researcher collects stories of people's experiences, whether through personally conducted interviews, letters, notes from field work, diaries, photographs, and other archival documents; the result is 'unique and rich data that cannot be obtained from experiments, questionnaires, or observations'.[16] Interviewing McStay's former students and gathering the stories therefrom was integral to constructing the narrative from their points of view as recipients of her musical and pianistic knowledge, in contrast to the interviews McStay gave from the perspective of the educator. I was able to compare the individual accounts and draw conclusions about McStay's approach to teaching, as well as note each of their emotional responses to the lessons alongside various life events that took place which affected their education and relationships with her. McStay the human informed McStay the musician and educator, thus it was vital to examine the personal interactions between student and teacher.

Interviews conducted with McStay by others revealed her opinions on teaching and

[15] F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, 'Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry', *Educational Researcher*, 19.5 (1990), 2-14 <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X019005002>, p. 2.
[16] Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval–Maschiach and Tamar Zilber, 'Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation', *Applied Social Research Method Series*, 47 (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 1998), p. 9.

performance, as well as notable students and their capabilities. She is diplomatic and judicious in her choice of words, which I infer as telling reflections of her character and comportment. Gubrium and Holstein suggest 'narrative reality is a matter of work, of the activity of storytelling. Stories aren't simply conveyed, but they are given shape in the course of social interaction. How things are put or unfold is as important as what is said and in what circumstances.'[17] What does or does not get said by the participant is conditioned by the myriad aspects of their lives such as 'intimate relationships, local cultures, occupations, and organisations', though not entirely determined.[18] It is important for the narrative researcher to consider such aspects in order to conduct an ethnographic analysis of the collected stories.

Oral history

Oral history is one of the oldest methods of preserving information and many cultures around the world have passed down their history through the oral tradition, including the Ancient Greeks and the Māori. In an academic context, it is conducted through a thorough interview process in which the interviewer records and transcribes the content, with the written or verbal consent from the subject. The interviewer seeks an 'in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire'.[19] There are overlapping aspects with narrative inquiry in that a story is told about a past event then documented, but the main difference is that the information is drawn from sources that are not yet printed, and the objective is not to interpret but to create

[17] Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, *Analyzing Narrative Reality* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2009), p. 16.
[18] Susan E. Chase, 'Narrative Inquiry: Still a Field in the Making', *in Collecting and Interpreting Empirical Materials*, 4th edn, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2013), p. 59.
[19] Oral History Association, 'Principles and Best Practices: Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History' (2009), *Oral History Association*, <https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles–and–practices–revised–2009/> [accessed 20 April 2021].

primary material with which historians can reconstruct the past.[20] While the interviewer must remain impartial in order to record the interview factually, they should configure the interview structure with perceptive questions to elicit in-depth answers from the narrator, to recall details, clarify and make connections between recollections, challenge contradicting statements, and encourage them to evoke their own assessments: Shopes states that 'the best interviewers listen carefully between the lines of what is being said to discern what the narrator is trying to get at and have the confidence to ask the hard questions'.[21]

Although best oral history practices dictate that the research material should be available to the public, I have not chosen to incorporate the complete transcripts to the appendix of the thesis.[22] This is due to the sometimes sensitive and private nature of the interviews; the participants were provided with a complete verbatim transcript of their interview and given jurisdiction to redact any sections they did not want to be used or referred to. Given the intimate relationship between teacher and student, especially considering the one-on-one dynamic of music performance education, discussing tangential details about their personal lives was unavoidable but ultimately not always relevant to the research questions I wanted to answer in regard to McStay's teaching and performance approach and legacy. I considered trust and respect to be a fundamental part of the interviewer/interviewee relationship and wanted to respect their wishes for what they publicly wanted to reveal. The complete redacted interview transcripts — with the permission of each interviewee — will be archived at the library at the University of Waikato and available upon request for future research endeavours. Quotations in the thesis have been edited for clarity but are otherwise presented verbatim.

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[20] David E. Russell, 'Oral History Methodology, The Art of Interviewing' (n.d.), *The Art of the Oral Historian*, <https://www.library.ucsb.edu/special–collections/oral–history/oralhlec> [accessed 10 May 2021].
[21] Linda Shopes, 'Oral History' in *Methods of Collecting and Analyzing Empirical Materials*, 4th edn, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2013), p. 121.
[22] Oral History Association.

Musical biography

Although this thesis is not primarily a biographical treatise, the stories gathered about McStay's life inform the pursuit of constructing a factual account of the person, and how it contributes to answering the questions about her approaches to performance, teaching, and lasting legacy. McStay's profession as a musician was a large part of her personal identity, which naturally lends itself to being examined through the lens of musical biography. Pekacz explains the difference between biography and musical biography thus: 'biography satisfies the readers' curiosity about other people's lives and in the case of artistic lives it is supposed to provide a framework within which the creative output can somehow be related to the artist's life'.[23]

Biography as a genre became popular in the nineteenth century. Biographies of that period tended to take a hagiographic approach, making myths or heroes out of their subjects, glossing over scandalous details, and often projecting a political or sociological agenda onto the reader to the point of resembling what Pekacz describes as a

> Realistic novel — a coherent unified voice claiming to present the truth about a life; omniscient narration, repeating themes and symbols, a linear chronological presentation of events and other fictional devices provide readers with the illusion of totality and closure […] and the author a trustworthy narrator who understands the relationship between the private self and the public world.'[24]

Using the Polish composer Chopin as an example, Pekacz argues that the idea of the Polish identity and nationalism was constructed by Polish biographers in order to 'appropriate him

[23] Jolanta T. Pekacz, *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*, ed. by Jolanta K. Pekacz (England: Ashgate, 2006), p. 1.
[24] Ibid., p. 6.

exclusively as a product of Polish culture and his music as an incarnation of pure 'Polishness' […] in a specific manner to create an essentialist view of the Polishness of Chopin and his music'.[25] This is due to the political climate of the nineteenth century and the lack of Polish sovereignty and statehood at the time, which led to a push towards a nationalistic narrative about Chopin. However, this perspective all but ignores the fact of Chopin's voluntary exile to Paris at the age of twenty-one, and the extent of his immersion and assimilation into Parisian society and how it helped shape him as a musician and adult. Pekacz labels this as 'a form of cultural production […] and a powerful force in shaping and reshaping cultural memory', and states that it is now time to explore new approaches in the genre of musical biography that include factual veracity as well as an understanding of the historical context that led biographers of the past to write with bias, in order to evolve with the changing times.[26]

Primary data gathered through interviews present the issue of accuracy, as human memories are not infallible. Stories may not be correctly remembered, unable to be corroborated, told from a biased perspective, or may even be untrue. It was imperative for me to consider these factors when interpreting the data in order to employ an impartial viewpoint through these methodological frameworks. The information gathered from the participants produced different accounts of individual experiences, but also a consensus on McStay's teaching style and influence as a musical mentor, which led me to affirm the reliability of these sources.

Method of primary data collection

[25] Pekacz, p. 46.
[26] Jolanta T. Pekacz, 'Memory, History and Meaning: Musical Biography and its Discontents', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 23:1 (2004), 39–80 (p. 57) <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411890490276990> [accessed 17 June 2019].

The main source of primary data was gathered through one-on-one interviews. The interview participants were found through word of mouth, which was possible because of my relationship with former McStay pupils Bryan Sayer and Katherine Austin, who were able to give me names and contact details of other former students. I approached each interviewee via email, phone call or internet messaging, explaining who I was and that I was researching the pedagogical and performance legacy of McStay as the subject of my DMA thesis, and I proceeded to interview those that were available and willing to take part. The interviews were conducted in person save for a number which were done via video calls owing to geographical distance or social distancing rules due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I considered it important to have a face-to-face interview whenever possible as it would personalise me to the interviewee and establish a cordial and open environment for them to share their experiences in a free and honest way. Prior to the interview I sent by email a participant information sheet, consent form, and the list of ten questions around which the interviews would be structured. Upon meeting in person, I and the participant signed two copies of the consent form to keep a copy each.

Some limitations presented themselves during the recruitment process. A small number of people whom I knew to have been key figures in McStay's studio and who then went on to develop close relationships with her later in life, declined to share their experiences or resources. This was obviously disappointing as I would have liked to see what insights they would provide and whether they would be in line with any general consensus that would have arisen. It is difficult to comment on the reasons as to why they would have refused to participate; while they could have been negative in nature, any speculation would be unfounded and without clear material to support with conviction or accuracy.
In the end, I was able to successfully conduct twelve interviews upon which I concluded that

enough data had been gathered to synthesise and analyse. The interview participants are as follows, listed in chronological order of years of study or relationship with McStay:

Bryan Sayer: Sayer began his piano studies at the University of Auckland with Olwen Burton in 1962, then with McStay from 1963–1965. He pursued further training in London and Paris until he joined the faculty of the School of Music to serve as McStay's teaching assistant from 1970–1982. Sayer continued to teach at the University of Auckland as Senior Lecturer in piano until his retirement in 2004.

Christine Cuming: Cuming studied with McStay from 1963–1968 and was the winner of the inaugural Christchurch Concerto Competition in 1968. After her time with McStay, Cuming studied for four years in London and Vienna on a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council scholarship. Since her return to New Zealand, Cuming has enjoyed a busy career of performing and teaching in Auckland.

Raewyn Bailey: After studying with McStay from 1965–1973, Bailey moved to London and studied with John Lill, and took masterclasses with Kendall Taylor and Paul Badura-Skoda. A keen composer since childhood, Bailey was awarded the 2009 International Music Prize™ for Excellence in Composition, and completed her MMus in Composition at the University of Liverpool. She resides in Chester, Chestershire, where she served as Lady Mayoress from 2008–2009 alongside her late husband, Lord Mayor Brian Bailey.

David James: Born in Gisborne, James won the 1961 Auckland Junior Piano Concerto Prize at age 13. He studied with McStay at the University of Auckland from 1966–1970, followed by postgraduate studies at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and the Juilliard School of

Music in New York. In New York he maintained a prolific studio with his late wife, pianist Robelyn Schrade, and returned to New Zealand on many occasions to perform with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and undertake Chamber Music New Zealand tours.

Sheryl Clarke: Clarke studied with McStay from 1970–1974, during which time she was given opportunities to tour and record with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra as one of McStay's outstanding students. With the help of an Associated Board scholarship, Clarke studied for four years at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Gordon Green. Clarke is an active performer and teacher in Auckland, and enjoys playing jazz.

Jeffrey Grice: Grice had initially studied French, German and English at the University of Waikato from 1971 to 1972 and occasionally performed in the lunchtime concert series. In 1972, he decided to pursue his passion for classical music and joined McStay's studio at the University of Auckland. He studied with McStay until 1976, after which he moved to Paris and studied with Yvonne Loriod on a Queen Elizabeth Arts Council Grant and a French Government scholarship. Grice has enjoyed a fruitful performing career in Europe, receiving honours such as the 1984 *Prix de l'Académie du disque français* for his recording of Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Ronsard* with baritone Jacques Herbillon. In 1999, he was made an *Officier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French government in recognition of his services to music.

Catherine Riley: Riley studied with McStay between 1975–1980. Under McStay's tutelage, Riley enjoyed successes at the Auckland Star Piano Competition and Christchurch Civic Competition, and went onto pursue postgraduate studies in London with Kendall Taylor and

Peter Wallfisch. Riley continues to reside in London where she is an active teacher and chamber musician.

Meredith White: White was born in Mosgiel and studied piano at the University of Otago from 1976–1978. She met McStay at the Cambridge School of Music summer course, and decided to transfer to the University of Auckland where she studied with McStay from 1978 to 1980. Afterwards White studied at the Royal Academy of Music on an Associated Board scholarship, and has since switched her focus to jazz piano. White is a Senior Lecturer of Music at the University of Kingston, and performs regularly with her jazz ensemble, the Meredith White Trio.

Ann Weber: Weber was raised in Auckland, where she studied with McStay from 1978–1982. Afterwards she relocated to Vienna, Austria, where she received postgraduate training at the University of Music and Performing Arts with Paul Badura-Skoda. Weber continues to reside in Austria where she runs a private piano studio and enjoys playing violin-piano chamber music repertoire with her duo partner.

John Williams: Williams met McStay at the Cambridge Summer School course in 1978, by which point he had already completed a degree in Economics at the University of Canterbury. He decided to pursue his musical training seriously and studied with McStay from 1979–1981, after which he moved to London and studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Peter Wallfisch for two years. Williams returned to New Zealand and to his original career in economics, but has continued to play the piano throughout his life.

Katherine Austin: Austin began her formal training at the Wellington Polytechnic with Bruce Greenfield and Gillian Bibby in 1980, after which she transferred to the University of Auckland to study with McStay. Under McStay's tutelage, Austin went on to win both the TVNZ/NZSO Young Musician of the Year award and the Young Performer of the Year (PACANZ) in 1982. After six years of postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music in London with Irina Zaritskaya, Austin returned to New Zealand where she completed a Master of Music with First Class Honours at the University of Auckland with Bryan Sayer. Austin is Head of Piano Studies at the Conservatorium of Music at the University of Waikato and enjoys an active performing career as pianist for the New Zealand Chamber Soloists.

Mary O'Brien (former Senior Lecturer in violin and colleague of McStay, University of Auckland, 1976–2007): O'Brien was born in Ireland and pursued her violin studies in Paris and London. After working with the Halle Orchestra, O'Brien joined the faculty at the School of Music at the University of Auckland where she collaborated with McStay for many years as chamber music colleagues, recording, performing and teaching together. O'Brien retired from the University of Auckland in 2007 and has continued to teach privately, a vocation to which she has dedicated herself for over forty years.

I was not able to meet or get acquainted with McStay personally during her life, so all my knowledge of her is through the words of others. I consider this an advantage as I am in a position of neutrality and thus able to analyse the stories told without personal bias.

Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato in order to carry out the interviews.

Literature Review

Currently there are no published books or theses about Janetta McStay, but Auckland author and McStay's stepdaughter Catherine Mayo is in the process of writing a biography, for which she conducted a large number of interviews with McStay. Mayo generously allowed me access to these transcripts as well as the draft of her book, *From the World's End: A Memoir of Janetta McStay*, alongside archives of letters, personal photos, and transcripts of interviews with the Auckland Chamber Society. This has been a wonderful treasure trove of information about McStay's earlier years, memories of travels, concertising, and teaching, in her own words — the biographical focus of this book helps to contextualise McStay, the person, within her life as a musician. This thesis will serve to complement the body of knowledge about McStay with its focus on her teaching and performance, and lasting legacy and impact on those whom she taught.

A number of short articles and interviews were published on McStay during her lifetime. Peter Mechen conducted an interview with McStay in 2007 for RNZ Concert, in which she talks about her childhood and initial piano education in Invercargill, further studies in London, subsequent years of performing with the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) during World War 2, and her return to New Zealand.[27] McStay discusses what it was like to perform with illustrious colleagues such as violinist Szymon Goldberg and the Borodin quartet, and giving the New Zealand premieres to many pieces in the repertoire as well as championing the works of New Zealand composers. This interview was recapitulated on *Upbeat* by Eva Radich and Peter Mechen in June 2012, after McStay's

[27] Peter Mechen, 'Janetta McStay 1912-2012', *Appointment*, Radio New Zealand Concert, 21 September 2015, online sound recording, RNZ Audio Player, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/concert/programmes/appointment/audio/2525496/janetta–mcstay–1917–2012> [accessed 20 March 2019].

death earlier that month.[28]

In an interview with former student and close friend David Guerin for Issue 40 of *Music in New Zealand*, McStay shares details about teaching and its demands and how she balanced a busy performance career while teaching.[29] She also speaks about her earlier life and years in the UK and Europe, her love of travel and food, and how she would host post-concert parties and befriend the visiting overseas artists such as Alicia de Larrocha: 'that was part of the chamber music scene then, we took turns at entertaining people in different homes, but it doesn't happen now'.[30]

Charles Nalden's *A History of the Conservatorium of Music: University of Auckland 1888–1981* details the process of developing a performance stream in the Department of Music at the University, which had only offered an academic course until 1956. While there were private local teachers and part-time instrumental teachers at the University, there was a growing need for a programme that would train young musicians for a career in performance: 'at this time New Zealand was unique, in that she was the only country in the world [with] a Western cultural tradition, yet having no conservatorium of music. It followed that many of the students who enrolled for academic courses at this time did so neither from choice nor from conviction, but simply because there were no practical courses offering.'[31] A four-year degree called the Executant Diploma Course was established, the first of its kind in New Zealand, with teaching undertaken by Janetta McStay (piano), Michael Wieck (violin),

[28] Peter Mechen and Eva Radich, 'Janetta McStay Obituary', *Upbeat*, 20 June 2012, Radio New Zealand Concert, online sound recording, RNZ Audio Player, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/concert/programmes/upbeat/audio/2522459/janetta–mcstay–obituary> [accessed 18 July 2019].
[29] David Guerin, 'An Unexpectedly Vivid Life', *Music in New Zealand*, 40 (2001-02), <http://www.musicinnz.com/Issues/mcstay.htm> [accessed 10 June 2018].
[30] Guerin.
[31] Charles Nalden, *A History of the Conservatorium of Music: University of Auckland 1888–1981* (Auckland: Faculty of Music, University of Auckland, 1981), p. 58.

Winifred Stiles (viola) and Marie Vandewart (cello). Together they were 'employed on a teacher-performer basis, with the condition that they also gave a limited number of public performances within the University.[32]

Archives from *Papers Past* and the *Te Puna Mātauranga O Aotearoa* National Library of New Zealand contain newspaper scans of McStay's scholarship win in March 1935, as well as interviews she gave over the years. The Auckland Museum holds a number of programmes from McStay's concerts that detail the dates, performers and the repertoire performed. A small collection of recordings of McStay's chamber music and concerto performances are available via the Alexander Turnbull Library and *Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision.*

A personal notebook was loaned to me by former student Catherine Riley, which details the repertoire taught and the instructions given by McStay for practice. I was also able to consult a score of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E major, Op. 109 from student Meredith White, in which McStay wrote instructional comments herself.

A copy of McStay's leave report of her sabbatical in 1978, as well as a list of students and their achievements and repertoire, was donated by Bryan Sayer. Sayer is also in possession of McStay's score of Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major — McStay first read of the piece's existence in an English periodical and wrote to the Russian State Music Agency in pursuit of the score, as well as Shostakovich directly, in December 1957. In April 1958 she received the full score in the mail, signed by the composer himself, and gave the New

[32] Nalden, p. 59.

Zealand premiere of the piece.[33]

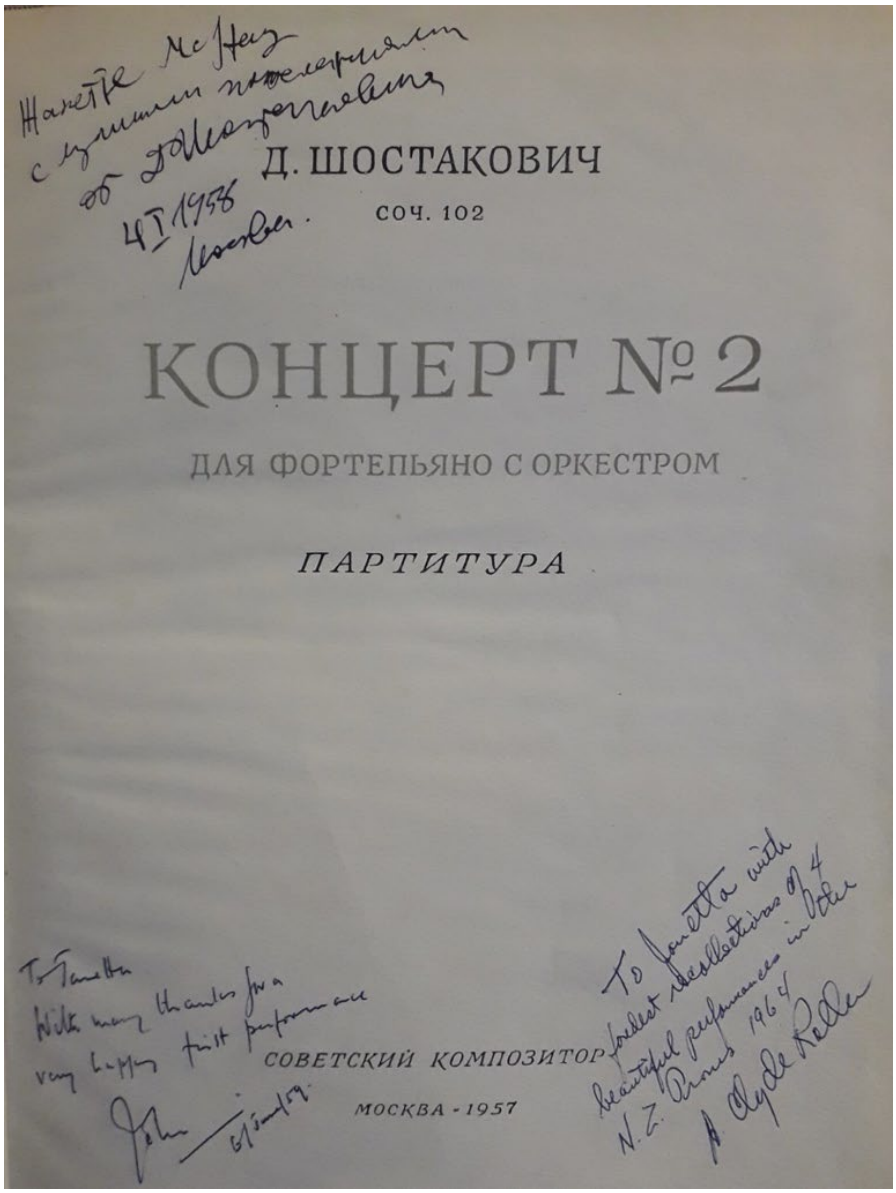

Figure 1: Cover page of the Shostakovich Piano Concerto, No. 2, signed by the composer (used with permission from Bryan Sayer).

Note: The Cyrillic translation reads: 'To Janetta McStay, with best wishes, D. Shostakovich. 4 January 1958, Moscow.' McStay received two more meaningful signatures on this cover page.
From conductor John Hopkins, with whom McStay gave the New Zealand premiere of the concerto, left: 'To Janetta, with many thanks for a very happy first performance, John. 6/June/59'.
From conductor Clyde Roller, right: 'To Janetta with fondest recollections of 4 beautiful performances in the N.Z. Proms 1964. A Clyde Roller'.

[33] Author unavailable, 'Russian Composer Sends N.Z. Pianist Score of Concerto', *Upper Hutt Leader*, 15.14, 17 April 1958, <https://newspaperarchives.uhcc.govt.nz/cgi-bin/upperhutt?a=d&d=UpperHuttLeader19580417.2.50> [accessed 12 February 2020]. The score is currently in the possession of Bryan Sayer, and will be donated to the Auckland Public Library.

Chapter 2: The Early Years

Initial introduction to music

It is believed that the first piano in New Zealand arrived on the shores of Paihia in 1827, brought by newlyweds Gilbert and Elizabeth Mair, a square piano made by renowned makers John Broadwood & Sons of London.[34] During the ensuing years of British colonisation the piano became a quintessential entertainment staple in households across the country, used in the parlour for solo performances and to accompany people singing songs of the 'Old Country' steeped in colonial nostalgia.[35] An active and busy concert culture was established.

In 1917, Janetta Mary McStay was born in Invercargill, New Zealand, to Hugh and Mary (née Auld) McStay, who were an 'extremely musical' but untrained pair determined to give their six children the education they themselves had missed.[36] Hugh had great natural talent which enabled him to pick up any instrument and become proficient, and Mary was a keen singer who often sang old Scottish songs. McStay began learning the piano at the age of five with local teachers Mona Rankin then May Jones (née O'Byrne), who made a lasting impression on the young student:

> When I began to learn the piano at the age of five, I had a marvellous teacher, an inspiration. I think it is so important that your first teacher should be someone who captures your imagination. When she moved away to be married I felt quite betrayed, but along came May O'Byrne (May

[34] Kirstine Moffat, *Piano Forte: Stories and Soundscapes from Colonial New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011), p. 19.
[35] John Macgibbon, *Piano in the Parlour: When the Piano was New Zealand's Home Entertainment Centre* (Wellington: Ngaio Press, 2007), p. 28.
[36] Guerin.

> Jones as she later became), also an incredibly good teacher. These two have remained for me the illustration that you don't have to go to the other side of the world to find a great teacher.[37]

McStay and her two sisters Kath and Eileen all played the piano, and the young McStay would get up at five thirty in the morning to secure her spot at the piano from six to eight a.m., then cycle off to school.[38] Among her contemporaries was the violinist Alex Lindsay, who, like McStay, went on to study in London. Lindsay returned to New Zealand, and founded the Alex Lindsay Orchestra in 1948.[39] They were both members of a local orchestra led by Lindsay, and McStay would play from the piano-conductor score to fill in for various instruments that were lacking. She was also active in the local chamber music scene, performing in various house concerts and rural concerts, which she described as 'invaluable training' — a precursor to the touring experiences she would go on to have as part of Entertainment National Services Association during World War II.[40] McStay sat a grade examination every year, as did many young people at the time, and expected to stay on in Invercargill teaching music.

[37] Guerin.
[38] Michael Fallow, 'Humble Beginnings to the World Stage' (2012), *Southland Times*, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland–times/culture/7253304/Humble–beginnings–to–the–world–stage> [accessed 20 June 2018>
[39] Adrienne Simpson, 'Lindsay, Alex Sylvester' (2000), in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5l10/lindsay–alex–sylvester> [accessed 26 May 2021].
[40] Guerin.

Figure 2: Miss May O'Byrne's Pianoforte Diploma Candidates, 1931-32 (McStay back left. Used with permission from Catherine Mayo.).

Scholarship to London

In 1934, the seventeen-year-old McStay was awarded the highest marks in the South Island for her Licentiate , and was recommended for an Associated Board Scholarship to further her studies in London. McStay's father had passed away when she was fourteen leaving her mother Mary to be the sole carer and head of the household. A great-uncle had recently passed away leaving Mary an inheritance of £250, which she gave to McStay. J. J. W. Pollard, editor of the *Southland Times*, opened a subscription fund through the paper to raise money. With these proceeds and further funds raised from a farewell benefit concert, McStay set off to London by sea on the *Mongolia* in 1935. She was accompanied by her teacher, May O'Byrne, and reminisced about her excitement at fulfilling her lifelong dreams of travel and the memories she made while aboard:

> I'd never been north of Dunedin and my teacher and I sailed off from Wellington to Australia and had that fabulous journey all-round the coast of Australia and right through the Suez Canal and all the romance of that, going to places like Marseille […] I remember arriving in London and feeling completely at home. I never thought, oh this is overpowering. I took to it like a duck to water.

Also on board the *Mongolia* was Peter Fraser, then-cabinet minister, and later Prime Minister of New Zealand. Fraser was a friend of May O'Byrne's father — the Honourable Thomas O'Byrne, a member of the Labour Party — and the young McStay became acquainted with Fraser and his wife, Janet, who took her ashore with them to receive VIP treatment at every port. McStay remembered fondly how Fraser took an active interest in young New Zealand students overseas, even keeping in contact post-voyage:

> Subsequently whenever he visited England he would invite me to tea at the Savoy … and in Paris too where I happened to be once, at the Crillon Hotel. I think these events are worth remembering in this day and age — that politicians used to take such interest in the arts.[41]

With the excitement of the journey behind her, McStay arrived in London, ready to commence a new chapter of her life.

The Royal Academy of Music

McStay settled in the area of Hampstead and began her studies at the Royal College of Music under the tutelage of Frederick Moore. She was surrounded by cultural activities and

[41] Janetta McStay, interview by Anne Bonning for Auckland Chamber Music Society, Auckland, 19 April 1995. Transcript held by Catherine Mayo.

opportunities that had not been accessible previously, and took advantage of them to the best her circumstances would allow:

> Sometimes we could go to rehearsals at the Queen's Hall, and so I heard Bruno Walter, Toscanini, and Furtwangler. And amongst the pianists were Backhaus, Kempff, Gieseking, Rachmaninoff, Moiseiwitsch, Alfred Cortot and the young Horowitz. I couldn't afford opera, but I remember scraping up the money for a seat in the gods at Covent Garden for the *Ring* Cycle conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. And then there was London itself. Can you imagine its impact? I had never been north of Dunedin, but London seemed immediately familiar and I loved it all, the streets, the parks, the galleries, and the lovely old London theatres when one could afford it.[42]

Other noteworthy experiences included seeing Sergei Rachmaninov perform his own Piano Concerto No. 2 for the students at the Academy, and being soloist herself in a performance of the Grieg piano concerto with the Academy Orchestra under the baton of Sir Henry Wood. McStay, ever self-effacing, recalled playing 'probably very badly'. She formed an acquaintance with Wood's daughter, Avril, who was then Head of Music for the British Council, and the two forged a deep friendship which lasted until Wood's death.[43] This may seem like a simple slice-of-life anecdote but it is telling of McStay and her character; rarely was she sufficiently satisfied with her own performances to speak of them favourably, but she had a genuine interest in people and maintained many close friendships throughout her ninety-five years of life. One also sees clearly that she relished life in London and endeavoured to absorb as much as she could, an attitude she retained throughout her subsequent travels and interactions with people, always maintaining an appreciation and respect for different cultures and new experiences.

[42] Guerin.
[43] Ibid.

Life in London was not always easy, however. The scholarship awarded only covered the tuition fees at the Academy, and McStay struggled to make ends meet. To earn extra income she played piano accompaniment for movement classes held by the London County Council who were often in arrears with their payment, which meant she was behind with her own rent. She described these years as 'very tough times. […] We didn't eat well, I mean we ate very unhealthy food. Lots of tinned things, tinned beans, tinned pilchards, hardly any vitamins […] I realised that I was getting terribly run down. My skin was a frightful mess, one was just not eating properly.'[44] Amusingly, she states that if it came down to choosing between eating well or going to a play or a concert, she 'probably would have gone to the play or the concert', which is a telling statement of her adoration of the cultural experiences on offer.[45]

McStay initially felt out of place at the Royal Academy. She had traversed the world to London, a great, bustling capital city, and found herself surrounded by many promising students from various countries.

> I have to say I was overawed by the Academy when I went because I had nothing to measure myself by and I've spent a good deal of my life thinking, what on earth am I doing here? Now I can look back on it and think how wonderfully fortunate I was but a lot of the time I thought it was the wrong person in the wrong place.[46]

She had been led to her teacher Frederick Moore because of a connection he had with New Zealand rather than a personal preference or prior research, which is an advantage accessible

[44] Janetta McStay, interview by Catherine Mayo, Auckland, 8 September 2009. Recording and transcript held by the author.
[45] McStay, 8 September 2009.
[46] Mechen.

to modern students not available back then.[47] While Moore treated McStay well, he was not a particularly well-suited teacher in terms of providing her with the kind of fundamental repertoire a student needed. She remarked:

> As far as the repertoire was concerned, I mean, after all, I was only seventeen, eighteen. I should have been studying standard works, the Bach Preludes and Fugues, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven sonatas. […] It wasn't a diet of music that I would have [been] able to nourish myself on for the rest of my life. He liked to pick extraordinary things and he liked to promote composers of the day, like […] Arnold Bax, [and other] teaching fraternity at the Academy. And I mean, one mostly hasn't heard of them since.[48]

McStay persevered. Alongside her solo studies, she began playing for a class of violin students of Rowsby Woof, a noted pedagogue and professor at the Academy: 'he was a person to frighten one. […] He really could be very irascible, but he always seemed to find me reasonably acceptable for his students. We got on very well, in fact.'[49] This gave McStay a chance to play chamber music which was not organised as part of the Academy's piano programme at the time. It also served as a learning opportunity in the art of ensemble playing: 'He told me once, 'never be behind'. [I'd] come to develop a tremendous sense of anticipation.'[50] This experience would have laid the groundwork for McStay's extensive chamber music career in later years, which included a large number of the main works in the violin and piano repertoire.

Success eventually came her way. After two years of study at the Academy, McStay went on

[47] McStay, 8 September 2009.
[48] McStay, interview by Catherine Mayo, Auckland, 12 November 2009. Recording and transcript held by the author.
[49] McStay, 8 September 2009.
[50] Ibid.

to win a list of prizes and awards, including the Challen gold medal[51] awarded to the best student in the third year,[52] the Walter McFarren gold medal[53] awarded to the best student in the fourth year,[54] and the Janet Duff Greet Prize for performance in contemporary music.[55] The prizes were symbolic acknowledgements rather than monetary honorariums, and McStay, in her impoverished state, chose to have the gold medals valued and pawned.[56] When asked how she felt about having to make such a choice, she replied 'I don't feel anything in particular about it. […] They were an honour, but the fact that I've got a medal in a drawer doesn't really matter [very much]'.[57] Statements such as these, however casually expressed, reveal McStay's pragmatic attitude and humility; quite simply, these achievements bolstered her confidence, and she was able to finish her studies at the Academy feeling 'well, perhaps I wasn't so bad'.[58]

St. Swithun's School

McStay finished her studies at the Academy in July 1939. The political climate in Europe had been getting increasingly volatile with Hitler at the helm of the Nazi Party, which culminated in the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Two days later, on September 3, the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun.

By the time war broke out, McStay had accepted a full-time position as a piano teacher at St.

[51] Author unavailable, 'Honour for Pianist', *Otago Daily Times*, 5 August 1938, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/ODT19380805.2.47> [accessed 30 March 2021].
[52] McStay, 8 September 2009.
[53] Author unavailable, 'New Zealand Students', *Otago Daily Times*, 22 August 1938, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/ODT19390822.2.36> [accessed 30 March 2021].
[54] McStay 8 September 2009.
[55] Author unavailable, 'Invitation Recital', *Otago Daily Times*, 13 July 1939, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/imageserver/newspapers/P29pZD1PRFQxOTM5MDcxMyZnZXRwZGY9dHJ1ZQ> [accessed 30 March 2021].
[56] McStay, 8 September 2009.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Swithun's School, a day and boarding school for girls situated in the cathedral city of Winchester. She spoke fondly of the experience:

> I finished my studentship at the Academy in July 1939 and war was obviously imminent then. The Principal of the Royal Academy at that time was Sir Stanley Marchant — always a very kind man. He said to me that everything was folding up but that he could get me a job in Winchester at a girls' school called St Swithun's. This turned out to be a most happy time for me. A friend — a great friend whom I still have, Lorna Wilson — was on the staff at St Swithun's at that time. Winchester was a lovely place and really enabled me to indulge my love of the English countryside — we had bicycles and used to cycle around or go for walks and go and listen to the nightingales in the woods in the evenings. At that time there was very little in the way of activity in the war, although when France fell of course we in England felt ourselves greatly threatened. But we survived that and I stayed at St Swithun's for two or three years I think, until about 1942. I had a most happy time there, it was a lovely school and the staff were lovely and the girls charming. Some of them I kept in touch with for many years.[59]

It was serendipitous that such a position should become available to coincide with the end of McStay's time at the Academy, one that would utilise her musical training, in a beautiful and relatively safe environment away from the maelstrom of the war. McStay had completed a diploma of teaching alongside her solo piano studies — 'I don't think the teaching diploma taught me very much about teaching', she later remarked — but she was inexperienced as a teacher, having taken up the St. Swithun's position almost immediately after leaving the Academy.[60] She appreciated the 'uniformly polite, courteous and cooperative' students as well as the supportive environment of the school itself, and kept herself busy teaching,

[59] McStay, 15 April 1995.
[60] McStay, 23 September 2009.

occasionally performing two-piano works with the other full-time piano teacher and enjoying the English countryside.[61] All the while, the ongoing drills, the sounds of sirens, and the sight of planes flying overhead served as a reminder of the horrors unfolding outside of this bucolic bubble.[62]

Entertainments National Service Association

While McStay felt fulfilled with her life at St. Swithun's, it was suggested that she audition for the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) so she would have more performance opportunities.[63] ENSA had been founded in 1939 by actors Basil Dean and Leslie Henson to provide entertainment and relief to the British armed forces personnel during the War. McStay was hesitant at first; ENSA was 'a bit of a dirty word, embracing everything from the most vulgar music hall concerts to classical music'.[64] Some critics would go as far as to say the initials stood for *Every Night Something Awful*, due to its inconsistent quality of performances in its pursuit of widespread geographical outreach.[65]

The music division of ENSA was led by Walter Legge — later founder of the Philharmonia Orchestra and husband to the celebrated soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf — and focused on providing classical music concerts to the troops. One foggy winter's afternoon in 1942, McStay travelled to the ENSA headquarters at Drury Lane to audition, and was immediately accepted by Legge. He had assembled a group of young musicians and performers including a Spanish dancer, most of them fresh graduates from their studies, talented, enthusiastic and

[61] McStay, 23 September 2009. The teacher's name was Freda Ravenhill.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Hereby referred to as ENSA.
[64] McStay, 15 April 1995.
[65] Trueman, C. N., 'ENSA', The History Learning Site (2015), <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-two/world-war-two-in-western-europe/britains-home-front-in-world-war-two/ensa/> [accessed 2 March 2021].

ready to tour.[66] Although Legge had not received formal musical training, he had 'a wonderful ear […] and a great eye for what would be effective' in performance'.[67] He would often join the touring parties and lead them in rehearsals, which McStay greatly enjoyed.[68]

With ENSA, McStay embarked on an extensive tour throughout the British Isles and Europe:

> We played everything — Schubert trios, *Dumky*, etc. I would play some solos, accompany a singer and that sort of thing. It was really a most marvellous training for which we were very grateful. We were really fortunate — yes, the troops were wonderful appreciative audiences — limited numbers, but those who did come were the ones who missed classical music. We were chosen to go to particular camps where there was a demand for classical music. We went to units who had specially asked for us. We weren't just thrown in to give concerts anywhere. I mean, we'd have got 'the bird' if we'd gone to some of them!'[69]

Figure 3: McStay in ENSA uniform (used with permission from Catherine Mayo).

[66] Pepita Sarazena, with whom McStay toured Spain after the War.
[67] McStay, 23 September 2009.
[68] Ibid.
[69] McStay, 23 October 2009. 'The bird', as McStay later clarified, was a kind of cat–call sound the audience made if they did not like what the performers were delivering

The group Legge had selected were well–trained, enthusiastic, gifted. They were mostly women, as most of the men had been drafted into service. They were also young, capable of withstanding the gruelling schedules and travel conditions, as well as the 'absolutely appalling' state of some of the venues, with some proving more palatable than others:[70]

> I remember another side of this experience when we went to the most beautiful little theatres in Germany where their wonderful pianos had been preserved somehow. I mean, in France, we had to use any kind of old piano we could and some of them were absolutely ghastly. But in Germany, we would often give our concerts in some of these lovely little residents' theatres — darling little baroque theatres — where there would be a wonderful Steinway. Such a treat after enduring the other awful instruments, made one rather nervous to come upon a decent one and afraid one couldn't do justice to it! However, it was good training and helped me to make do with whatever was available.[71]

McStay knew she was in a privileged position during the war. She was in steady employment with ENSA, able to fulfil her dreams of travel, performing music with a high calibre of colleagues; these were certainly better and more interesting conditions than being drafted into factories or clerical work, as so many women had been. She and her colleagues even had perks such as being allowed to choose glamorous evening gowns for performances, and enjoy post-concert festivities at 'the officers' mess and have a gin or two'.[72] But the devastation of war was never far from sight as they travelled:

[70] Mechen.
[71] McStay, 15 April 1995.
[72] McStay, 15 April 1995.

> We went to various stations in France and Belgium, Holland — Holland was the first place we went to. Of course the Dutch had experienced the most ghastly privations — I remember that. And whilst we were having our bullybeef and all the tinned food we had brought with us, poor little children in Holland would have their noses to the window watching us eat whilst they had been surviving only on roots and things. The Dutch really had a shocking time. They were known to be eating tulip bulbs and that sort of thing. I suppose all this did make a profound impression on us.[73]

These were extraordinary times. McStay was acutely aware of her fortunate circumstances, and memories of the cities reduced to rubble would remain with her even as she visited them again in later years.[74] McStay continued with ENSA until the end of the War in 1945, as they continued to give concerts for the British troops occupying Germany: 'We were sent into Germany at a time when a lot of it had been absolutely devastated, which I'll never forget. The first time I went to Cologne, it was just the most ghastly mess. It was really […] unforgettably hideous.'[75]

Post-war activities

In 1947, Pepita Sarazena, a Spanish dancer who toured with ENSA, invited McStay to play for a small dance company she had formed. McStay was delighted to realise her dream of going to Spain — she had always felt an affinity for Spanish music and had felt 'immensely drawn to Spain as a child, looking at maps and things like that.'[76] She joined the team of dancers and musicians on a three-month tour travelling down to the south of Spain, where she was immersed in the art of flamenco music:

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[73] Ibid.
[74] Mechen.
[75] Janetta McStay, interview by Catherine Mayo, Auckland, 9 October 2009. Recording and transcript held by the author.
[76] McStay, 9 October 2009.

> There were about five people altogether in the group with Pepita and her partner. There was a guitar player who played for their flamenco dances. This was wonderful and extended my knowledge of flamenco music enormously. I had always loved flamenco and actually became quite knowledgeable about flamenco guitar playing at this time. […] When we went down South, we took a train from Madrid down to Cordoba. [We] arrived at 3 o'clock in the morning, on this very, very slow train. […] I opened the train door and I could smell the orange blossom, […] there was a full moon and a little boy in a donkey cart and he was singing flamenco and I thought, well, I could just listen to him forever. It sounds like stage effect, but it was in fact so very real. So we spent quite a lot of time in the South of Spain at that time which was a wonderful experience.[77]

This was a collaboration which led to many more visits and tours in Spain. McStay relished the opportunities to see the art at the Prado Museum each time they rehearsed in Madrid, and felt a great affinity for the south of Spain and its people, the sights, and the music, describing it as 'just magical'.[78] All the memories made during these times led to a special connection with the piece *Nights in the Garden of Spain* by Manuel de Falla, which she performed throughout her concertising career.[79]

[77] Mechen.
[78] Ibid.
[79] McStay, 9 October 2009.

Figure 4: Pepita Sarazena (used with permission from Catherine Mayo).

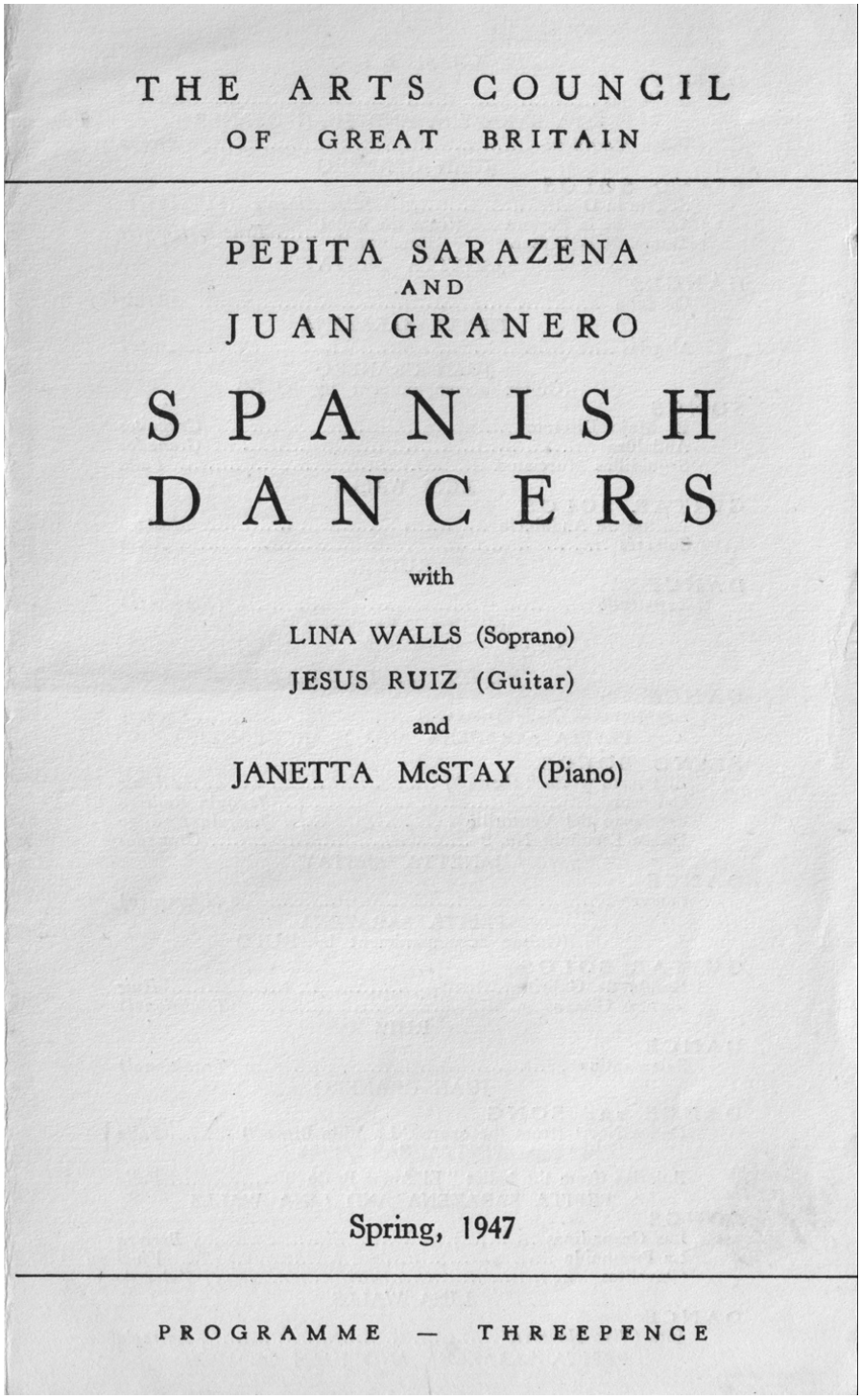

Figure 5: Concert programme.

In 1952 McStay was residing in London, doing freelance work for the BBC or touring for the Arts Council of Great Britain in a similar format as the ENSA concerts of the War, playing solo and chamber music, accompanying different instrumentalists and singers, 'scratching

along, all rather precarious,' she recalled.[80] She had not been back to New Zealand since her departure in 1934 and wanted to see her ageing mother with whom she had regular correspondence but had not seen in person for eighteen years. Encouraged by her sister Kath, McStay decided to return for a six-month visit, in the beginning of 1954.
Life, however, would prove to unfold in an unexpected direction.

A change in plans

McStay had not intended to stay in New Zealand for longer than six months, as her desire to be in Europe remained strong in her heart. She decided to base herself in Wellington as it was a convenient location to work and visit her mother who had relocated to Christchurch. She rented a room and hired a piano, intending to do some freelancing, save some money, and return to London.

The arts scene in New Zealand had flourished during her time away. The National Orchestra and the Alex Lindsay String Orchestra had established themselves as the country's leading orchestras, also based in the capital city, as well as The New Zealand Ballet Company and the New Zealand Opera Company. McStay found herself in high demand; opportunities from the Broadcasting Corporation and the Chamber Music Federation led to many collaborations with both local and visiting musicians, and she realised that she had a 'far richer musical life, as well as a much more interesting life' in New Zealand, than if she had returned to her precarious life in London.[81] She was able to perform more as well as immerse herself in the vibrant artistic community of Wellington and acquaint herself with its members, recalling:

[80] Guerin.
[81] Mechen.

> I think in Wellington altogether one lived very excitingly because it was, and still is, a very vibrant place artistically, not only in music but in all the arts, painters and writers and people like that. I mean it was all going on in Wellington, as it still is, and so I think I felt, although feeling impermanent, very conscious of the fact that there was an enormous stimulus from living there.[82]

Unexpected as it was, it is understandable that McStay was so sought after. While New Zealand had produced fine pianists throughout the first half of the twentieth century, many of them went overseas for further training and carved out their careers there. Not only had McStay been educated at the Royal College in London, but she had extensive and varied performance and touring experiences during her years in ENSA and Spain. A pianist of her calibre back on home soil was welcomed into the community as a valuable contributing member and promoted throughout the country.

Concert tours and more

In September 1954, the violinist Maurice Clare approached McStay with an invitation to join him on a three-month tour of Japan. It was an extraordinary undertaking, not only because of its lengthy duration, but also because she was faced with the daunting task of learning six different programmes consisting of the major works in the violin repertoire with mere weeks to prepare:

> I had given a concert in 1954 in Auckland with the visiting violinist Maurice Clare whose name will be very familiar to my generation. He invited me to join him on a three-month tour of Japan which I was foolhardy enough to accept. Foolhardy because it was all at very short notice and at

[82] McStay, 15 April 1995,

> that time I knew so much less of the violin repertoire. There were four, perhaps five programmes, and the schedule was punishing. I remember that in Osaka for instance, we gave twenty-seven consecutive concerts in three weeks, and we travelled the length and breadth of the country, always playing to packed halls. But the pluses were enormous. It opened up for me the diversity of Japanese culture, the Kabuki theatre, the fine arts, the temples and gardens, the exquisite presentation of their food, and the wonderful inns in the less populated areas. So, despite the tremendous pressures, the rewards have been great. […] All that based in Wellington, and very different from what might have happened had I returned to London![83]

The successful Japanese tour was followed by invitations to Indonesia and South Korea with the French cellist, Guy Fallot. In 1960, McStay had the unique opportunity to visit the People's Republic of China as part of the New Zealand delegation for the Society for Cultural Relations, courtesy of the United Nations. There, she liaised with local artists and musicians, observed the students in training for the Peking Opera, and even met with the leader of the Community Party, Mao Tse-Tung; she relished the new and different sights, unknown and inaccessible to the average New Zealander of this era:

> When I got to China it was in October, and so exciting. We were there for the October 1 celebrations. The weather was glorious, the autumn colours so wonderful, the sky was clear and all those processions outside — always so colourful — processions from all the regions of China. And in our hotel, because the Chinese authorities knew what I was going on to do on my return — to do a tour with Paul Robeson in Australia — […] they had installed a piano in my bedroom so that I could practise. I had a suite of rooms, huge rooms, with lovely polished floors. Everything was plain but very comfortable. Can you imagine New Zealand hotels doing that voluntarily at that

[83] Guerin.

time?[84]

In New Zealand, McStay gave many premieres of works by New Zealand and international composers, including the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3, as well as the Shostakovich Piano Concerto No.2:

> Another first performance was Shostakovich No. 2. I had played No. 1 with Albert McKinnon who was such a beautiful trumpet player. Then I read that the Shostakovich second concerto had just appeared so I wrote away to the Moscow State Music Publishers. For a long time I heard nothing, but then one day I arrived home to find a brown paper parcel at my front door. No note, no message, but when I opened it, there was the concerto with a message inside inscribed by Shostakovich himself. So I did it several times with John Hopkins, and it was a very good Prom work.[85]

McStay formed ongoing partnerships with eminent violinists, such as Ruggiero Ricci and Henryk Szering, both of whom would request her to accompany them on Australian tours as well as the New Zealand concerts. She recalls:

> Trepidation played a big part. I can still remember that sinking feeling before meeting a new colleague, especially a famous one. […] Henryk Szering had a big tour of Australia, and his pianist fell ill. John Hopkins was then with the ABC and asked me to come over.[86] [He] rang me in the early hours one morning and said 'Janetta, I think you'll have to come'. Well, I arranged to go, but it was a most hair-raising tour, crossing backwards and forwards across the Tasman every time Henryk had a concerto engagement […].[87]

[84] McStay, 15 April 1995.
[85] Guerin.
[86] Australian Broadcasting Company.
[87] Guerin.

Working with Szering presented some peculiar inconveniences which took adjusting to, and McStay had to keep constant vigilance to stay on form:

> Henryk had been accustomed to bringing his own pianist and he enjoyed the social aspect of his life, engagements with Lady So-and-So or Sir Something Else, and finding time to rehearse with a strange pianist didn't really fit into his agenda. He also had some quirks like wanting to board the planes long before anyone else, which meant my sitting there fretting about the time I could have spent practising all those many different programmes. Finally the ABC arranged for me to go to the airport in a separate car. And he liked to arrive for the concert with just enough time to unpack his violin and walk out onto the platform, whereas I often needed time to discuss matters with the page turner. These are aspects the public doesn't know about, and why should they? But it was all very nerve-wracking. Nevertheless he was really very charming and, indeed, flattering, and he was a wonderful violinist. I could appreciate the beauty of his playing, but in the circumstances, fitting with him needed all my nerve and concentration.

[88]

Figure 6: An autographed picture of violinist Henryk Szering which reads: 'To Janetta McStay, with many thanks for her outstanding artistic co-operation! Fondly, Henryk Szering October 1968' (used with permission from Catherine Mayo).

Here, McStay describes one of her most treasured collaborations:

> One of the most beautiful collaborations I ever had was with the violinist Szymon Goldberg. I had heard him at the Festival Hall in London playing all the Mozart Violin Sonatas with a pianist I revere, Radu Lupu; I never could have expected to be associated with him. I was really in awe of Szymon Goldberg, but he turned out to be one of the greatest, most considerate musicians one could work with. He didn't have a big sound but his musicianship was exquisite and he made the

[88] Guerin.

most beautiful *pianissimos* you could imagine, *pianissimos* of real quality. […] With him I felt musically airborne.[89]

Figure 7: Violinist Szymon Goldberg with McStay (used with permission from Catherine Mayo).

[89] Guerin.

Despite her initial plan to stay only six months before returning to London, eight years had already passed; McStay was well settled with her busy and diverse artistic life in Wellington, surrounded by friends, colleagues, and culture.

University of Auckland

In 1963, an event took place that proved to be a turning point for McStay's life, and which also wrote a new chapter in the piano pedagogy history of New Zealand.[90]

Up to this point there had not been a degree programme that specialised in instrumental performance at any tertiary institution, and Music as a subject was only offered as a *Theory of Music* stream at the Colleges of Canterbury and Auckland.[91] Thus, students wishing for higher performance education had no choice but to learn privately from local teachers and earn their credentials via the examination system adopted from the United Kingdom, after which many would venture overseas or even abandon the idea of tertiary music study altogether owing to the lack of a performance stream. The Chancellor of New Zealand University, Sir Robert Stout, stated:[92]

> As yet no University College has been able to start a fully equipped musical conservatorium. I do not think it is possible for every University College in the Colony to have such an institution, but from communications I have received from a musical expert he thinks efforts might be made to have at least one thoroughly equipped music school. […] It has been pointed out that a very large sum of money indeed goes annually from New Zealand to two examining institutions in London,

[90] McStay, 15 April 1995.
[91] Nalden, p. 38.
[92] The New Zealand University was an umbrella institution which comprised several different colleges throughout New Zealand, established in 1870 and dissolved in 1971 when the former colleges were granted degree–conferring statuses as independent universities.

> namely, the Associated Board, and Trinity College of Music, and it has been stated to me that the amount of fees paid for examination by these two institutions, coupled with the fees that students would be prepared to pay at such a conservatorium, would go a long way towards having at least four thoroughly-equipped musical teachers engaged in the higher tuition of music. The musical school might undertake the examinations now held by the two or more musical experts from London who yearly visit New Zealand. I believe that both these examining institutions would, if we had an efficient and popular system of examination, discontinue their examinations in New Zealand.[93]

Clearly, there was a need for higher performance education in a formalised institutional setting. Motions were being put in place by Professor Horace Hollinrake as the Head of the Music Department of the University of Auckland to establish a performance stream when he fell ill and died in 1955. Charles Nalden, as his successor, set about realising this vision. The Executant Diploma Course commenced in 1956 with staff members Winifred Stiles (viola and cello), Molly Wright (cello), George Hopkins (woodwind), Ernest Drake (singing) and Winifred Carter (harp), with the addition of Roger Hollinrake (organ) in 1957, and Olwen Burton and Mary Nathan for piano in 1958.[94] The staff were hired on a part-time basis and salaries were low, at a rate of £40 per annum per student for a thirty-six week academic year; this led to pay discrepancies across the instruments, a lack of financial consistency for the teachers, and a difficulty in finding replacements for the University in the case of a resignation. Nalden advised the Professorial Board that 'the only certain remedy would seem to be that we admit teachers of certain of the 'core' instruments to the permanent teaching staff, and pay them salaries accordingly'.[95]

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[93] Nalden, p. 39. While the Associated Board and Trinity College Examinations have not been discontinued in New Zealand, an independent New Zealand Music Examinations Board was established in 2006, accredited by the University of Waikato.
[94] Ibid., p. 52.
[95] Ibid., p. 53.

By this point McStay was well-established back on home soil in Wellington with a busy concertising career both local and international in its reach. When Nalden wrote to her asking her to join the full-time staff at the University, her initial reaction was not one of enthusiasm:

> I was very reluctant to accept. I couldn't see myself as a teacher or as an academic type in any way. I told him I felt I was not a university person and really didn't like the idea very much at all. However friends said I was being foolish. I'd have security with such a job, a base from which I could continue playing chamber music.[96]

Eventually, with 'considerable misgivings', McStay decided to accept the offer.[97] Part of the reason was the reassurance that she would have the freedom to continue to travel and tour, which would allow her to stay active in her performing career. Nalden's vision was to create a team of full-time salaried staff who would serve as teacher-performers, given guaranteed performance opportunities within the University as the resident ensemble.

In 1963, McStay joined the staff as the first full-time lecturer in piano performance at a New Zealand university. Alongside her were Michael Wieck (violin), Winifred Stiles (viola), and Marie Vandewart (cello) — a 'full-time salaried teaching staff whose names […] would grace the Calendar of any Conservatorium of Music'.[98] This meant that students would no longer have to give up further training for lack of availability of high-level teachers, or set their sights elsewhere in the world. It was not only a turning point for McStay, but for instrumental pedagogy in New Zealand overall.

[96] McStay, 15 April 1995.
[97] Guerin.
[98] Nalden, p. 58.

Chapter 3: Years of Pedagogy

> Teaching is such a responsible and demanding profession. Trying to nurture talents, greater and lesser ones, dealing with young people on a one-to-one basis, their aspirations and problems; it's a little like being a parent.[99]
>
> — McStay

It seems obvious to state that being a teacher in any field requires knowledge. A good teacher — one who not only imparts factual information but teaches with commitment and passion, and impacts the student in a lasting, meaningful way — is difficult to be, and rarer still to find. Certain subjects are predominantly taught in a large group setting while others benefit most from being taught on a one-on-one basis.

In the case of classical instrumental performance, the one-on-one contact is essential. In many other genres it is possible to reach a professional standard of playing without years of rigorous training at an institution, as there is a freedom to break the mould of convention and experiment with technique. By contrast, classical instrument learning is firmly rooted in long historical traditions, schools of technique, and stylistic devices across different time periods for multiple instruments; there are rules to be adhered to, and centuries of them. One must learn technique safely in order to practise for prolonged hours every day as incorrect technique can and does lead to injuries. A student may have all the right physical attributes and finely tuned aural skills, but be lacking in emotional expression. Even if one shows high musical aptitude the talent must be nurtured well, and from an early age, to ensure maximum realisation of this potential. A great deal of responsibility falls upon the shoulders of any music teacher who takes their role seriously.

[99] Guerin.

McStay had not had consistent experience as a teacher before coming to the University of Auckland. She had studied pedagogy at the Royal Academy, taught at St. Swithun's in Winchester for two years, and a term in Switzerland, but these were events several years in the past. She was now expected to train and oversee talented students and guide them towards becoming self-reliant and independent musicians. She felt this pressure acutely. 'Well, she might be able to play, but how do you know she can teach?' was a question being asked by the community, as Nalden would later admit to McStay.[100]

Fortunately for McStay, she began her musical journey as a child with excellent teachers. Her developmental years with Mona Rankin and May Jones had given her a solid musical foundation, but most of all, they possessed 'an inestimable ability to make a child love music'.[101] What also worked in her favour was her exceptional musicality and sense of listening which was fine-tuned from growing up in a musical environment and many years of performing alongside different instruments; whether she realised it or not, a body of knowledge had accumulated over the years which had prepared her with the necessary skill set to be a good teacher.

Humble beginnings

McStay began teaching at the University of Auckland in 1963 with a small number of students. Their resources were modest; lectures were held in pre-fabricated buildings, with McStay's studio in an old house on Wynyard Street.[102] She was catered with only a Knight

[100] Janetta McStay, interview by Catherine Mayo, Auckland, 10 April 2010. Recording and transcript held by the author.
[101] Katherine Findlay, 'Reluctant Performer', NZ Listener, 2 September 1966. This source was accessed via photograph of the original article, and is missing a page number.
[102] Christine Cuming, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 12 September 2018. Recording and transcript held by the author.

upright piano, which 'after some years [was upgraded to] a very second-hand Steinway medium grand.'[103]

Among her first intake were Bryan Sayer and Christine Cuming. Sayer had begun at the University in 1962 with part-time tutor Olwen Burton and joined McStay's class the following year. Cuming began in 1963 at sixteen years of age, travelling up to Auckland weekly for lessons from her hometown of Hamilton.

Despite McStay's initial apprehension she was in her element as a teacher. Sayer concurs: 'my feeling is that she didn't ever have to find her way into it, she was already there'.[104] McStay approached the curriculum with gusto, saying 'it wasn't a course designed for people just to play around. Being a professional is very hard and they were students, they had a responsibility, and so did I'.[105] Sayer recalls the flexibility of tertiary education of New Zealand during a time when universities were tuition-free:

> In those days, lessons were long; they were allowed to be long, there weren't restrictions on this, that and the other. We had generous lessons. I don't recall them being an hour or thereabouts, they just happened for as long as it took.[106]

Many of McStay's students had heard her on the radio, seen her perform or had lessons from her at the Cambridge Summer School of Music prior to coming to university, which had been an incentive for them to come and study with her.[107] John Williams shares his first

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[103] Guerin.
[104] Bryan Sayer, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 12 February 2019. Recording and transcript held by the author.
[105] Guerin.
[106] Sayer.
[107] Author unavailable, 'Cambridge Summer School of Music, Cambridge, N.Z.' (n.d.) *Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa* <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22355978> [accessed 2 March 2021].

impressions of McStay:

> I first came across her at the Cambridge music school. […] It would have been the beginning of 1978, summer of '77, '78. I was very impressed with her and it was at that time I decided I wanted to learn with her. The summer music school was a sort of a fairly relaxed atmosphere, and there were fifteen or twenty pianists there. It wasn't too onerous, you only had to play two or three times really out of the whole week or ten days, but there was a lot of opportunity to do chamber music. I was just very impressed [with] her methods and her attitude and I really thought, 'she really is amazing and I want to learn from her'.[108]

Cuming had met McStay for the first time in Hamilton, acting as page-turner at a performance of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major:

> It must have been very frightening for her because I was only about fourteen and they plucked me from the audience to turn these pages, and I can remember being scared, and Janetta was lovely to this young girl, you know, who was turning the pages. And then later on when she was doing a chamber music concert, […] again she was so lovely to me. And I remember the day my mother was reading the paper and she said, 'oh that wonderful woman, Janetta McStay, is going to be teaching at Auckland University.' So from that time, I thought that would be a marvellous thing to be able to do.[109]

For Jeffrey Grice, seeing McStay in action was the confirmation he needed in choosing to pursue a path in music:

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[108] John Williams, interview by Maria Mo, Christchurch, 8 July 2020. Recording and transcript held by the author.

[109] Christine Cuming, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 12 September 2018. Recording and transcript held by the author.

> I just felt that I wanted to be a musician. It's hard to explain what happens. Music's actually calling you but you don't really know about that yet until you're a lot older. But there is this, it's an attraction. And much of that was Janetta when I watched her playing. Because I could see something that I aspired to, that I would like to attain. It was this kind of aura that she had. There was lighting obviously so we had that impression, but the sound she made was so homogenous, and so … like honey, or liquid gold. There was a sort of an aura to the sound and everything, it just made me dream. [So] I got my courage up and called her. And I remember on the telephone I said to her, 'I feel like an oyster talking to a whale.' She made lots of jokes about that for years after.[110]

McStay was undoubtedly the leading pianist in New Zealand at the time, and there was a camaraderie amongst the students which stemmed from knowing that they were part of a select group personally chosen by someone of her standing. Meredith White recalls being described in a review as 'the latest of […] Janetta McStay's stable': 'I remember thinking, 'oh, I'm one of the stable! I belong to this stable.' And I liked that because it was a sense of community.'[111]

The 'stable' knew it was a privilege to be there; their goal was to maximise the amazing opportunity that they had been given to study with McStay.[112]

A point of connection to the outside world

For many students, McStay was a larger-than-life figure. There was no one around quite like her; a pioneer who had bravely travelled across the world aged just seventeen, received training and accolades from one of the UK's top conservatories, with extensive performing

[110] Jeffrey Grice, interview by Maria Mo, Paris (France), 16 October 2018. Recording and transcript held by the author.
[111] Meredith White, interview by Maria Mo, Kingston (United Kingdom), 12 October 2018. Recording and transcript held by the author.
[112] Katherine Austin, interview by Maria Mo, Hamilton, 12 May 2020. Recording and transcription held by the author.

experience all around Europe, now a highly sought-after pianist collaborating with artists of international repute. Cuming describes her perceptions of McStay:

> She would have been one of the first people coming back to New Zealand. I mean, she was remarkable. I know that story can be told in another context: a little girl being brought up in Invercargill, she used to look out from the hills and try and imagine they were hills in Scotland. She always had that sort of yearning. And for her to be going overseas when she was seventeen, it is sort of extraordinary.[113]

Cuming continues:

> New Zealand altogether was less sophisticated. […] It wasn't just how Janetta taught that was important, it was who Janetta was. Because if you imagine a sort of a place where we didn't have anywhere near the communications now, students were going and obviously had been going on overseas travels for some years, […] but there was very little communication between those people and what was happening in New Zealand. […] For ordinary, middle-class New Zealanders who had far less material means, [it was] out of the question for them to ever travel. […] So to meet somebody like Janetta who had had so much playing experience, and was so cultured and sophisticated in that way, who had travelled, […] and of course she'd been to concerts of all sorts of people in London. She brought to us a whole cultural sophistication that was not accessible in any other way. […] [That was] of itself inspiring and wonderful and enlightening.[114]

Sayer considers that McStay brought over a 'European quality for New Zealand audiences, [a standard of playing] which was capable of supporting the greatest instrumentalists of our age'

[113] Cuming.
[114] Ibid.

which could be presented with pride on any prestigious stage in the world.[115] McStay was a point of cultural reference, connection, and exposure; a singular figure at the forefront of the piano community of New Zealand who lead the students by example with her performing career and work ethic.

The Formidable Miss McStay

'I think we all very much had her up on a pedestal', reflects Sheryl Clarke.[116] 'Miss McStay', as the students called her, was an awe-inspiring presence that commanded respect, as Williams shares:

> She had a great force of personality. For a little woman — she was small in stature — she had very powerful beady eyes, and they could … yes, a very powerful personality. And she really demanded the best. […] I think that was a great sort of reason she was successful with so many students, that she … well, she almost provoked fear. Fear to play for her, unless it was damn good.[117]

Raewyn Bailey recalls the immaculate way McStay would present herself, deeming it an aspect of her personality paralleled in her playing:

> I think my abiding memory of Janetta, I suppose, I could sum her up in one word almost, and that's 'neat'. […] 'Neat', yes. She was very neat in her appearance. She believed, I think, that if you had a neat appearance, that spills over into other aspects of what you were doing. So her

[115] Sayer.
[116] Sheryl Clarke, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 19 January 2019. Recording and transcription held by the author.
[117] Williams.

> playing, performing was very neat, very tidy. […] She was a very neat performer, in that like herself, things were very precisely adhered to.[118]

McStay's tasteful sartorial choices certainly made an impression, adding to the mythology of the fashionable, sophisticated world citizen that was 'Miss McStay':

> One thing I think about her, she loved wearing scarves. She had a huge variety of scarves. […] She was a very elegant lady. She really was. And that was part of her personality which I think also spilt over into her performance, that kind of stylishness, elegance; everything like that was part of her persona, really.[119]

This sensibility for meticulous attention to detail and precise presentation was expected from the students. Inattention or laziness was unacceptable, as Williams reminisces:

> If you came to a lesson and hadn't sorted out your fingering, she gave you a withering stare. […] I'd almost go as far as to say it was unthinkable you'd turn up to a lesson with her without having worked hard, [because of] how she made you feel if you hadn't. If you had a sloppy week of practice, she just made you feel so bad. […] Guilty. It was almost like she was going to be sick, it was just the most horrible feeling. She almost couldn't stand being there teaching you if you hadn't done your honest best. It'd be better to pretend you were sick than turn up to a lesson and not having worked.[120]

Here, an anonymous student shares their memory of a particularly tough lesson wherein McStay was driven to an unprecedented emotional response:

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[118] Raewyn Bailey, interview by Maria Mo, online, 5 August 2020. Recording and transcription held by the author.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Williams.

> I think it was the year I had been learning the Cesar Franck *Symphonic Variations*, off my own bat, to enter in the Auckland Star competition. Consequently I was not concentrating enough on the material I should have been practising: preparation towards an imminent LRSM exam. In particular I was supposed to be preparing the big Schubert Sonata in C minor, D.958, [but] I had taken my eye off the ball by practising the concerto instead. When I came to play this sonata to her, she was so upset. In fact, and this is the only time it had ever happened to me, I made her cry! I think she was so frustrated, because she had put so much work in to it with me and yet I could barely get through it. Oh, she probably thought all that hard work has gone down the drain, because I had been practising something else, and that is a very demanding sonata as you know. So she was obviously devastated, poor woman. […] I felt awful, awful, awful.[121]

McStay, however, was not giving up. It was a kind of 'almost absolute desperation for perfection' with which she taught, and she was unwavering in her pursuit of excellence from the student:[122]

> But this is the amazing thing about Janetta. I don't know, she must have had time up her sleeve, or perhaps she cancelled a few things that afternoon. She gave me a four-hour lesson on that work. And because of the extremely guilty state I was in, I just listened to everything she said, tried my hardest and tried to remember every last detail we worked on… And then she left me, and she said I could practise in her studio for that evening. It felt like the fairytale *Rumpelstiltskin*, where the girl is left to spin gold… Well, I stayed there for six hours. I think it was six hours. I don't think I took my hands off the piano very often, because every time I thought, no, I have to get this better! The next day I had it memorised, and it was a long way ahead.[123]

This clearly shows that the level of dedication was reciprocated between McStay and the students. As demanding and exacting as she was, it was all in the interest of making the

[121] Anonymous. The student did not want their identity known.
[122] Williams.
[123] Anonymous.

student a better pianist.[124] McStay fostered a sense of confidence in her students in the learning process; because they had total confidence in her musical guidance, they in turn developed confidence in themselves, and knew the hard work would pay off in the end. White reflects on her experience:

> If you didn't do practice she wasn't all, 'oh never mind love, it's all fine.' She would be cross, and she demanded a lot of us. She demanded high standards. But that was part of the sort of fostering of confidence in a way that was you had to do the work to reap the benefits. And she made that absolutely clear. […] Otherwise she wouldn't have got the responses she did from us, you know. We needed to want to do our best for her. And that's something she was very good at eliciting from us.'[125]

Altogether, the sum of McStay's musicianship, experience, presence, and high standards served as a great motivator for the students to work diligently. When the student applied themselves, McStay was a thorough, patient teacher who worked tirelessly with the student to achieve the best results.[126]

Although students may have put her on a pedestal, McStay remained ever humble and self-effacing outside of her teaching life, as Weber shares: 'I thought she was superhuman somehow. I said that to her one day and she was shocked. She said 'you wouldn't believe how little I am!'. The opposite of how I imagined her'.[127]

Pastoral care

[124] White.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Williams.
[127] Ann Weber, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 17 February 2020. Recording and transcription held by the author.

In their efforts to please McStay, there was an atmosphere of friendly competition amongst the class. At times, there were feelings of mild jealousy as students wondered if she favoured some students over others, or if someone else had been given a piece that they had wanted for themselves.[128] For many of the students who were young and freshly away from home, McStay was a kind of maternal figure in the way she took interest in their personal lives as well as musical growth. After all, she herself had been in that same position as a seventeen-year-old in London; she knew the struggles that surfaced alongside the pressures of studying and the kind of emotional support needed to navigate through them. McStay did not have children of her own, but she approached her students with the kind of care a parent would.[129] Catherine Riley shares her experience:

> She was like my piano mother. Honestly, wonderful, wonderful person. Because of course, all of us were away from home for long months, and we'd go through our trials and tribulations, things go wrong with your personal life, your boyfriend dumps you or this or that. You have your ups and downs like everyone does, and she was just so caring. And I can remember not long before my Master's recital, I just somehow got into a psychological state, I just couldn't… Nothing would go in, I was just getting really panicky, that sort of thing. I remember how absolutely sweet she was. She said, 'oh, look, if you need to just come over, I'll cook a meal for you.' You know, she really cared.[130]

Weber agrees: 'we had a very lovely relationship, almost like [a] mother-daughter, relationship. I think I loved her like a mother. […] An academic mother, like a professional mother.'[131] Austin describes how McStay had a way of being able to 'get to the heart of the

[128] White.
[129] See 93.
[130] Catherine Riley, interview by Maria Mo, London, 11 Oct 2018. Recording and transcription held by the author.
[131] Weber.

matter' in the way she would care, stating, 'I mean, I'd say she loved me'.[132] White feels similarly, although she did not consider McStay to be a typical mother figure:

> There are teachers who you feel are sort of mother figures in a way and I didn't feel that about her. […] She was prepared to be bad cop, as well as good cop sometimes. You know, she was the authoritarian parent sometimes, if you like, rather than the nurturing mother. But there was a sense that she always had our best interests at heart.[133]

Having the students' best interests at heart meant that McStay was aware of when to adjust her expectations during a time of difficulty. Bailey recalls experiencing the tragic loss of her brother in her third year of study, and how McStay accommodated to her needs:

> My brother was killed in a car crash. And in fact, he lived for a week, then died. So of course, […] because he was my only sibling, that had a huge impact on me. And then I got married six weeks later. And then I went back and sort of picked up the pieces, so that was my third year. I got my executant diploma that year but it was, shall we say, it was very chequered. But she was tremendously sympathetic then to me, I think because of the traumas I'd suffered. Stopped her being demanding in terms of what was required in your performance.[134]

Beyond the practice room, it was important for McStay that the students were well-rounded as human beings. She believed that a wide variety of life experiences fuelled one's source of inspiration, and often discussed topics outside of music in the lessons to pique the students' interest. McStay certainly embodied this in her own life; abundant with rich and fascinating experiences of performing and travelling, her interests extended far beyond music itself.

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[132] Austin.
[133] White.
[134] Bailey.

Whether it be art, food, travel, books, or entertaining guests, McStay always kept herself engaged and kept an open mind to new possibilities that informed her as a human and a musician. David James recalls how she imparted this to her students:

> I liked her a lot. If I didn't know she was a pianist, I liked the talking, the discussions we would have. [They would] range from politics to anything like that. I think she thought my experience was too narrow and that I should get out and experience the world a bit.[135]

Bailey considers:

> I think she felt that experiences in your personal life also had some bearing on your ability to interpret. The thing is, if you arrive at university as a seventeen year old […] you haven't had a huge lot of experiences in life, shall we say. I think for her, she performed from her heart, and obviously drew on life experiences.[136]

This openness of communication cultivated strong trust between McStay and the students. While her expectations were exceptionally high, she was genuinely concerned and cared about the way students managed their lives, both musical and private.

Clarke recalls:

> You certainly felt that you could talk to her about anything, and she was very caring. [As a student] I practised an awful lot, and I look back on that now and think, 'well, I *know* that a lot of it was because I *was* shy and I had very little social life and went through a couple of patches of

[135] David James, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 20 October 2019. Recording and transcription held by the author.
[136] Bailey.

> feeling quite down in the dumps'. […] [I told] Janetta how I was feeling and she said — [and this is] from somebody who at that point had never been married but, you know, knew about life — […] 'Sheryl, you just need to get some balance in your life. Go out and have some fun.' And although I can't remember how I took that advice at the time, I often think back to it and think she was spot on. She really was. She knew what was up.[137]

Opportunities

McStay was very supportive of her students gaining performance experiences. She organised regular lunchtime concerts in the Maidment Theatre of the University, a chance for the students to showcase their pieces to the public as well as fellow pupils in a formal setting. McStay also encouraged them to take part in festivals, local and national.[138] Various schemes were available for the students to shine on stage including prestigious opportunities to play with orchestra as concerto soloist, and McStay facilitated many of these connections for the advanced students.

Clarke remembers:

> I was a national artist at Radio New Zealand [as a student]. And then I did concertos, I did the Proms tour with the NZSO playing the Dohnanyi *Variations on a Nursery Theme* and toured New Zealand with Stanley Black as the conductor. [Then] I did studio recordings with the NZSO and wanted to do Prokofiev G minor No. 2 concerto, [but] unfortunately for me Ashkenazy was coming out that year and he decided to play it. So Janetta said to me, no, we'd better find something else, […] and she came up with the Samuel Barber concerto. […] Which was fiendish

[137] Clarke.
[138] Riley.

> of course. But I learnt it, and recorded it in Wellington with them, and that was thanks to Janetta.[139]

Thanks to McStay's encouragement and dedication, a number of her pupils had success with scholarships and competitions. Cuming won the inaugural National Concerto Competition in 1968, playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5. The following year's winner was Michael Redshaw with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3. Other winning pupils of McStay were Patrick O'Byrne in 1977 playing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, and Read Gainsford winning the 1983 competition with Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3.[140] O'Byrne also went on to gain first prize at the José Iturbi International Piano Competition in 1983.[141]

McStay had a discerning way of seeing and unearthing the potential in a student. Austin was particularly appreciative of the role McStay played in her development; prior to auditioning for McStay, she had left school at the end of her sixth form year (Year 12), and had completed a two-year diploma in performance at the Wellington Polytechnic, as she felt she needed more time in preparation for the rigorous demands of the full executant diploma degree at the University. Anthea Moller, who taught singing at the Polytechnic, urged the young pianist to go and study with McStay:

> She just said to me, 'you're going to Auckland, you're going to study with Janetta McStay.' […] [At the time] Judith Clark was teaching in Wellington, […] but Anthea said, 'Auckland's where you're going, you've gotta go to Auckland to Janetta McStay.' […] So I went and auditioned at

[139] Clarke.
[140] Author unavailable, 'National Concerto Past Winners', *Music Canterbury* (2020) <https://musiccanterbury.co.nz/competitions/national-concerto-competition/national-concerto-past-winners/> [accessed 27 February 2021].
[141] Joaquín Arnau, 'Patrick O'Byrne gana el concurso de piano Jose Iturbí', *El País*, 8 June 1983, <https://elpais.com/diario/1983/06/08/cultura/423871213_850215.html> [accessed 27 February 2021].

> Auckland, and I also auditioned for Vic, with Judith, and I got accepted at Auckland. And Judith didn't accept me at Vic.[142] She said 'you've been accepted at Auckland, so we're going to offer a place to someone else here.' So basically, [because] she was friends with Janetta, she was not going to put a competition in. Very interesting, very interesting.[143]

McStay took note of Austin from the start, later recalling the 'most beautiful audition' given by the young pianist.[144] Austin shares: 'she said to me, 'Katherine, I will *never* forget your audition. Not in a very long time will I forget your audition.' So, that was quite interesting really.'[145]

Austin began to flourish under McStay's careful and attentive guidance. She intensely loved music and savoured McStay's detailed approach, although it posed tremendous challenges that seemed insurmountable at times:

> She was really trying to make sure that I got it. […] I don't remember if it was week four or week five, she said the same thing she'd said for several weeks! And I just looked at her and… it's like, I didn't know what to do! She touched me under the chin and said, 'there there, it's not the end of the world,' and I was in floods of tears. Pouring down my cheeks. […] It was like, what more can I do?[146]

McStay had faith in Austin and what she saw in her audition. Austin worked diligently, running back to the practice rooms between lectures to fit in as much practice as she could.[147]

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[142] Victoria University of Wellington.
[143] Austin.
[144] Janetta McStay, interview by Catherine Mayo, Auckland, 22 April 2010. Recording and transcription held by the author.
[145] Austin.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Austin.

The hard work paid off; 'over the course of that year, the penny dropped. Something happened.'[148] Within a year of receiving McStay's tutelage, Austin won the inaugural Young Musician of the Year competition as well as the National Piano Award in 1982. 'That was Katherine's credit, not mine,' said McStay, but it is clear that McStay's level of care, both musical and personal, was a fundamental factor in leading Austin to such achievements.[149]

> I knew that she just had her finger on the pulse. It was amazing. So I suppose we had a very special relationship. […] I mean, I can't believe how I was treated at Auckland. I mean, if I was at Auckland now, I would be a mean little nothing. But Janetta, with her musicianship, I just… she looked after me, it was unbelievable. I was just, like being held in her hand, and just… encouraged to grow. Sunshine.[150]

Learning to play with others

By the time McStay began teaching at the University she had all but stopped performing solo recitals, concentrating on concertos and chamber music, wary of being a 'lonely soloist':

> To be honest, I never had the temperament for public performance. I was so nervous and fallible, especially in solo work. You might ask why I didn't give up playing altogether, but then I would have missed the rewards of all those wonderful rehearsals with such great musicians, and just every now and then there was the public performance that made it all seem worthwhile.[151]

Despite her lack of solo performances, it is fair to say that it was a source of inspiration for the students to witness McStay's work ethic in both teaching and performing, something she

[148] Ibid.
[149] McStay, 22 April 2010.
[150] Austin.
[151] Guerin.

herself agreed with. Guerin says: 'I think the students did get something from their teacher being able to get up and deliver, more or less! I may say that playing to one's students and fellow staff members was for me one of the most frightening of all experiences.'[152] McStay gave numerous performances as part of the University's resident performance staff ensemble, and students were encouraged to attend as many concerts as possible around the community:

> She was very, very keen on chamber music, because I think she felt it really, really developed your listening skills. We were very lucky, really, when I look back, we had so many wonderful groups, string quartets in particular. I loved string quartets. And we used to get [student] discounts for the whole season, and all these wonderful string quartets would come and play. And then she'd play for the […] visiting artists. There were wonderful cellists and wonderful violinists I remember hearing her play with. […] I'd say her strengths were her listening skills. I never ever saw her play a private, a solo recital. I only ever saw her play with other people, or concerto.[153]

In order to expose her students to playing with others, McStay facilitated a system where the piano students would accompany students from other instrumental disciplines, learning additional works on top of their own solo and chamber music pieces. This was an opportunity for the pianists to learn how to play with different instruments and expand their repertoire, while being able to observe the nuances of different instrumental playing and teaching, as Riley recalls:

> It was a wonderful thing to do, because it meant we had to go along to the lessons of those other students. It might be a singing teacher, it might be a viola teacher or a violin teacher, or cello. And so we had the advantage of getting experience of hearing from that point of view. […] It was a

[152] Guerin.
[153] Bailey.

> great other side to our experience and I really valued that. […] I thought that was a fascinating and individual approach. I've not seen or heard of anything quite similar elsewhere.[154]

The University of Auckland was keenly aware of her status and supported McStay's performance endeavours, which often took her away from the rigours of teaching. David James speaks of the regard in which she was held:

> [The] university gave her time off to tour, [because] it was in the University's interests, really, to do that. She was very highly regarded by musicians right throughout the country. You couldn't find anybody that could speak ill of Janetta at all. […] She accompanied the Borodin string quartet from the Soviet Union when they came out here, and she did the Shostakovich quintet and trio with them. I mean, you don't get much better than that worldwide. And Borodin and their Russian works were unsurpassed.[155]

[154] Riley.
[155] David James, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 20 September 2019. Recording and transcript held by the author.

Figure 8: McStay pictured with the Borodin quartet (used with permission from Catherine Mayo).

However, McStay struggled with her increasing workload. It was not in her nature to allow sub-standard work from her students or herself. She often had to jet back and forth from tours, rushing from the airport to her studio to make up for missed lessons, while fitting in personal practice for her concerts. 'That was an almost constant conflict trying to do justice to both. It's an almost impossible balancing act, and many don't attempt both.'[156]

A balancing act shared

In 1970, McStay reached out to Sayer asking for assistance. He recalls how he was appointed:

[156] Guerin.

> She found that she couldn't manage on her own to maintain both a teaching and playing career. She played a lot of recital tours in Australia with violinists like Ruggiero Ricci, Henryk Szering, Ladislav Jasek, Sylvia Rosenberg, Wanda Wilkomirska. I can remember having lessons when she wore dark glasses because she had just stepped off the plane from Sydney and was going back that night to play a recital. Lessons didn't stop because she was away. She flew backwards and forwards. She had to. She couldn't arrange the concert tours around the university timetable. […] So she apparently said to Charles Nalden, who was Head of School, that she needed an assistant. And they asked me. It wasn't advertised; I came back by way of an invitation.[157]

Having had first-hand experience with McStay's unwavering standards, Sayer proceeded with thorough preparation for his new role:

> I had no personal experience of how she was with others, but I had met up with her again in London when I was studying there, and she obviously thought it was the right time. So I came back and we started together. We each taught each student, but we didn't teach the other's repertoire. She continued to teach all the Classical repertoire, all the sonatas and so on. She said to me, 'Dear, you're good at Bach, you will teach all the Bach'. […] As an inexperienced teacher, I had a lot of work to do. I had to study the Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues. So the first thing I did was to get the Associated Board Tovey score and analyse all the Preludes and Fugues. […] And then I had to look at the Partitas, the French Suites, the English Suites, the Inventions and the Toccatas.[158]

The arrangement was harmonious; Riley describes it as a 'perfect partnership'.[159] Sayer

[157] Sayer.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Riley.

shared McStay's love of detail and reverence for the score, and the students found it a complementary relationship which enhanced their learning experience as the vast amount of repertoire was now divided between the two teachers. Whereas McStay was fastidious about the details, Sayer had a more methodical, intellectual approach.[160] Riley recalls:

> When I think about it, the contrast with Bryan is that often he'd go for the sweep, or the phrase, and then get the details. So I think that's why they complemented so well, because one was focusing slightly more on that way. And so you'd get the two things you need.
>
> It was a way of being able to cover a wider spread of repertoire, and I think it even had benefits in other ways too, because although Bryan had studied with Janetta, and I think they dovetailed beautifully actually. They never seemed to contradict each other. They did have their individual approaches, and I think it was a good mix. It gave us a good variety of approach, and also carefully they arranged between them what repertoire we would study so it wasn't a clash of interest. Primarily Bryan seemed to focus on Baroque repertoire and French repertoire, because he had studied with Perlemuter in Paris, and that was obviously his particular strengths and interests, not to say he couldn't cover a lot of other things as well.[161] Janetta was particularly good as a Classicist. I think that was her particular strength although, again, she had a very wide range of interest. So between the two of them, they covered quite well a good width of repertoire for us. [162]

Apart from the two separate lessons, McStay and Sayer would hear the students in the weekly piano class which allowed them to observe and give feedback about works the other teacher

[160] Austin.
[161] Lithuanian-French pianist Vlado Perlemuter, who specialised in the music of Chopin, Ravel, Beethoven, and Schumann. 'Vlado Perlemuter', *The Guardian*, 6 September 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/sep/06/guardianobituaries.arts> [accessed 5 April 2021].
[162] Riley.

had taught. Sayer was delegated to teaching the scales and arpeggios required for the technical exams. Meeting McStay's standards proved an ongoing challenge:

> I also had to teach the scales and arpeggios, and we had actual scale exams. She would look at me and say 'Those double thirds! They're not legato!'. And I thought, 'dear Janetta, you try and teach double thirds legato to everybody and see how you get on.' Yes, she was never happy, and she would raise her eyebrows at all of those. She didn't like choppy thirds — who does? — and she thought very often that they were too measured, that they needed to be more fleet. Those scale exams were not a great success. They went on for years.[163]

McStay and Sayer would often perform together, presenting a variety of works from the two-piano and four-hand canon:

> We did a two-piano recital of the Mozart Duo Sonata, Debussy *En Blanc et Noir*, and played the Schubert F minor', the *Lebenstürme*, the A major *Rondo*, the G major Variations by Mozart. French pieces like Debussy's *Petite Suite*, Faure's *Dolly Suite*, Ravel's *Mother Goose*.[164]

Considering McStay's depth of listening and rigorous demands, it is evident that McStay had confidence in Sayer's capabilities to match and support her in performance as well as teaching. Sayer reflects on his experience of their artistic collaboration and the trust involved in the creative process:

> When you play duets with somebody, it requires very close contact. It's very intimate. It's very dependent, interdependent. I always had to play the bass part because Janetta said 'dear, you're good at pedalling.' And then, of course when you pedal duets, sometimes you have to pedal when

[163] Sayer.
[164] Ibid.

> you're not playing, especially upbeats. I can recall her saying 'I'm dry! Wet me!' — things of that kind. 'Can't you just give me a little pedal here,' she would say. But we didn't discuss at length — she wasn't super critical.[165]

The results of this musical partnership left a lasting impression on the students. In particular, a performance of the Schubert Fantasie in F minor, D.940, remains imbedded in their minds. White recalls, 'when they played it it was just *magical*. It was just magic. Sublime. And two minds thinking as one, that's what was extraordinary about it.'[166]

Riley agrees: 'it was wonderful. It was as good as you would want it to be.'[167]

Mary O'Brien, former lecturer in violin and McStay's colleague at the University of Auckland, shares an especially personal and touching insight:

> One performance that actually stands out in my mind, totally, as absolutely ... have you come across performances that you never, ever forget? […] This one was a Schubert duo. I will never forget that. The two of them at that, playing that in the Maidment in the early days. […] You know when Schubert can just be pure magic? Well, it was pure magic. […] They just caught everything. Music doesn't sit on the ground, it's like a wonderful bird. It just floats in the air; it stays in the air. It's just one with nature; it's just there. And getting sound to do that to your soul; it's just what it's about. And that's what they did.[168]

Master and apprentice

Sayer taught alongside McStay at the University of Auckland until her retirement in 1982, after which he took on the role of senior lecturer in piano and head of performance studies.

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[165] Sayer.
[166] White.
[167] Riley.
[168] Mary O'Brien, interview by Maria Mo, Auckland, 19 June 2019. Recording and transcription held by the author.

Theirs was a special and fruitful partnership, aligned in musical views but also in their sense of care for the students' well-being. Riley comments: 'They were just people, you know. Far beyond teachers. Just lovely, lovely people. […] Really amazing.'[169]
Grice speaks appreciatively of their dedication and sense of responsibility towards each student:

> They had a commitment […] to the individual students that they had. They felt that they needed to guide them, but also illuminate them at the same time, to guide them in a direction but to give them inspiration as well. And they were fantastic.[170]

Williams recalls feeling that 'Janetta, and Bryan for that matter, were at a completely different level of expertise and experience. […] The demands they put on you, the knowledge they had, it was a little like going from school to university.'[171]

For Sayer, the experience of teaching alongside McStay was a learning opportunity, a relationship akin to that of master and apprentice, one that served to inform his enquiring mind and develop a sense of critical thinking in his music-making process.

> Teaching with Janetta was like having an apprenticeship, and having the licence to learn, because I had to learn, to research. And as a result of that I have quite a library of books, because the things, the questions that occur to me, occur to other thinking pianists around the world. I want to know what they've said about everything. We have to do that, in order to be more sure of what we're saying. We have to compare what we're thinking to others, because we are not in isolation.[172]

[169] Riley.
[170] Grice.
[171] Williams.
[172] Sayer.

Sayer describes McStay's lasting influence as 'how to achieve your best understanding of a composer's written music, in order to bring it to the kind of life which you believe is true for them.'[173] This was a valuable lesson imparted from master to apprentice on the importance of always remaining receptive to learning, refining, listening: 'Simple, but a lifetime's work.'[174]

The Art of Listening

> We all listen differently, don't we? I'm not aware of anything special! I just listen.[175]
>
> — McStay

If McStay's approach to the music-making process could be summed up in one word, it would be 'listening'.

Given that music is an aural art form, it may sound redundant to state that listening plays a large part in a musician's creative process, and yet the words 'I just listen' were how McStay chose to describe hers. I pondered for a long time about what she meant. Surely we listen already, quite naturally for those of us who are able? Sound is a constant presence in our everyday lives. We can barely avoid it a lot of the time.

McStay's statement has generated considerable reflection and thought in my own mind as a listener and performer. Making music is more than making sound. Whereas we *passively hear* the sounds in our environment as they pass by us, when playing music, one must *actively listen*. As musicians in performance, one must always be listening to one's own sounds, to the other players, to the acoustics of the venue. We learn to react and adjust our

[173] Sayer.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Guerin.

sounds in real-time, depending on the need at that precise moment: do I need to use more pedal, seeing as the acoustics are dry? Am I being too loud for my cellist? Was that *fortissimo* too harsh in tone?

These are just some of the kinds of questions that tend to race through my mind during performances. While contemplating the meaning of McStay's words, I realised that these are also the kinds of questions I did not ask when I was a teenager who hated practice and did not understand the appeal of classical music, because I simply did not know *what* to listen for.[176] It was not until I was actually taught *how* to listen, that I learned *what* sound to pursue, that I then grew to love classical music.

Listening, I decided, was a facet of technique on its own. Just as one practises the physical act of playing, one must also practise the art of listening, and this is what I deem to be the meaning behind McStay's words. One practises listening in the lessons, the rehearsal space, and one continues to practise it in live performance. In live performance, the art of listening applies to the musician and the audience member alike. The more practised one is in this art, the more attuned one is to the sound being produced; the musician continues to practise the listening to refine their sounds as they play, and the listener is able to receive more from knowing what to listen for, creating a symbiotic experience between the two. Artur Schnabel, one of the foremost pianists of the twentieth century, declared: 'It should be taken for granted that the performer is in the service of music, and that the listener is in the service of music; then if both are sufficiently in the service of music, they will meet somehow, vibrate together.'[177]

[176] See Chapter 1: Introduction.
[177] Artur Schnabel, *My Life and Music* (New York: Dover, 1988), p. 188.

McStay knew this well, and this was what she endeavoured to impart onto her students.

Every note in its place

For McStay, the score was the starting point which informed her choices in the search for the right sound. Every marking from the composer — 'shorter, longer, slur, don't slur, pedal, rest, *piano*, *subito*, *forte*, accent, *sforzando*, *rinforzando*'— was to be meticulously observed from the beginning, after which the search for a deeper connection with the music would follow.[178] Williams describes McStay's attention to the score:

> Janetta was a strict, dominant disciplinarian in many ways, but she cared about music so much that she didn't want it spoiled in any way. . She viewed a performance like an artwork, and you don't want to have blemishes on the artwork. It spoils the whole thing. She really cared about the result. […] She just really wanted you to take care with everything you did. The composer needed to be honoured.[179]

McStay would go through the score in painstaking detail; it was normal to spend several weeks on just a few bars to make sure that 'there wasn't one note on the page that didn't go under the microscope and how it related to the previous note and the one following'.[180] White describes it as a 'rigorous, detailed, nuanced approach that Janetta encapsulated and applied to all of her students', but always found it enthralling, saying 'I never remember thinking, 'oh my god, we've spent forty–five minutes on two bars', which sometimes we did, I think.' [181]

Being an experienced, active performer herself, McStay was keenly aware of the impact of a live performance. Austin recalls the way every lesson was a practice in the art of listening as

[178] Sayer.
[179] Williams.
[180] Clarke.
[181] White.

McStay pushed for her students to recreate the magic of being on stage as a vehicle for the music, beyond the scope of merely playing for one's teacher to receive feedback:

> She was so demanding of your listening […] and every detail of what you were doing, that for me I was just […] trying to take it all in. I mean, I was used to playing, and loving it, and practising, and getting on stage and something extra happening on stage. And here she was, asking something extra in every moment of every lesson. [What she expected] seemed like extra to me, like the sort of things I'd come up with in performance. And I [would think] 'I would do this in performance but I don't do it now!' But no, she wanted it now, every time. [the] fine detailed listening and making it happen. And I mean, I went on for weeks, it seemed like forever, […] four weeks on the same four bars.[182]

To ensure the students would remember the lessons, McStay would write instructions in the scores. The margins would be covered with reminders like 'balance between parts, rhythm, sense of pulse, colour and tone'.[183] She liked to use analogies: 'She'd talk about squeezing the sound out […] like toothpaste. She would talk about something being light like a soufflé or […] walking in fudge'.[184] Williams corroborates, sharing an amusing anecdote: 'she loved food analogies. I can recall, she would say something like 'that chord sounds like an egg without the yolk'. She once said some phrase I played was horrible; 'it wasn't worth a tin of fish'. […] We used to have a lot of laughs'.[185]

Other points of focus were 'projection of sound, line, direction, structure, phrasing, and shaping'.[186] Of particular importance was articulation: 'she was absolutely fastidious about

[182] Austin.
[183] Riley.
[184] Cuming.
[185] Williams.
[186] Riley.

clear articulation, precision where needed, evenness of rhythm, evenness of tone, consistency'.[187] When asked to elaborate on the sort of detail that would require spending forty–five minutes on such a small section, White explains:

> [This score has] her markings all over it. And even just the fact that there were so many markings, actually that might be quite revealing. […] How can you spend forty–five minutes on two bars? It was all about shaping the music. Shaping the music, thinking about the shape of the phrase, where you're going with the phrase, and how the hands are balanced, are there any counter melodies that need to contribute? — just the detail about everything. It's that really. Of every note. Every note is considered. I think that's the thing. Every note is considered.[188]

Grice recalls his experience he examines his score of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A-flat Major, Op. 110:

> Janetta saw the work as a whole each time. And if there were details that were not functioning, that were not musical, she would go in there and tear it open with a knife. […] [While I was playing] she wrote 'poor Beethoven!' with a great exclamation mark on my score. See, that's Janetta — 'dynamic line, tempo', that's all Janetta. 'Continuity. Left hand links'. You know these things she would write, all details that she would see, but she never neglected anything. 'Prepare *crescendo* at your *legato*'. 'Left hand gradations'. I mean, this was not one lesson; this was several lessons that we had with all these things. […] [Here] she writes, 'what a wasted opportunity', a way of reminding you that this is a moment that has to be the modulation. Now see, this is quite funny too. She'd obviously said 'make these meaningful' already. So then she said '*please'* make these

[187] Riley.
[188] White.

> meaningful. […] There would be this: 'there was a tendency to hurry.' She'd just write that, you know, as she was listening.[189]

It is evident that the students were required to deliver a complete performance of a piece in the lessons, all the while recalling the fine detailed aspects that they had been working on. McStay would listen and write as they played, then the ensuing feedback would serve as the rest of the lesson:

> You know what this proves, is that this is what she would do to us, that we would play the whole thing through in memory, […] and then she'd be writing all these things here. We weren't stopping and starting necessarily all the time. When we'd finished, we would have the lesson, which sort of began.[190]

The result of this detailed approach was that the students got to know the pieces intimately and the music became ingrained in their psyche. By giving full attention to score and honouring the composer's intentions, one had a purpose for every note.[191] From repeated concentration on just a few bars, one learned about aspects of listening that could be applied to the rest of the piece or any other piece, as Riley explains: 'all of those aspects built, and she built up the playing through detail. […] So often she might spend time on a whole phrase and just go into lots and lots of levels, and then you have your finished idea of that phrase.'[192] White supports this notion: 'I was always aware that all of this could be applied throughout a piece. […] It was all transferable.'[193]

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[189] Grice.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Clarke.
[192] Riley.
[193] White.

Additionally, it ensured that the student was thoroughly prepared for the pressures of live performance. There was no room for any distractions other than concentrating on delivering all the myriad musical elements they had practised as well as they could, as Riley elaborates:

> I think it helps to focus students to have detail to work on [because] for performers it can be, at times, quite a business for people in terms of confidence. It can be quite terrifying in certain situations. But if you have a lot of focused detail, things to think about, it just keeps you busy.[194]

In essence, it is as simple as McStay stated. It all goes back to honouring the composer's intentions in the score, and continuing to listen in depth in the moment of practice to find deeper, personal meaning for every phrase, so all this and more can be communicated to the audience; this was the art of listening. 'It's amazing how much there is if you draw it out. It's interesting, when I reflect on those lessons, what she really taught me was how to listen. Not just listening itself, but what to listen for.'[195]

Repertoire: it does a musician good

As a student in London, McStay had experienced a lack of education in the fundamental composers of the canon.[196] She made up for this omission in the following years while touring with ENSA and Sarazena, performing a wide range of solo and chamber works in different ensemble formats.[197] On many occasions she had to prepare large volumes of unlearned repertoire on short notice before tours which proved to be hectic but educational and which provided the opportunity to learn efficient practice techniques. These valuable

[194] Riley.
[195] Williams.
[196] See Chapter 2: The Royal Academy of Music.
[197] See Chapter 2: Entertainments National Service Association.

experiences combined with the exposure to a variety of composers across the periods served to intensify McStay's love of music and depth of understanding. She was determined for her students to receive a thorough training in this regard:

> I realised too that there was quite a lot of the vast literature for the piano that I didn't know, and [the students] knew even less, so I began a piano repertoire class which is really a subject on its own, as you know. Choosing repertoire for the students always worried me — seeing that they had a balanced diet.[198]

The repertoire classes were held in McStay's studio on Grafton Road; a weekly opportunity to perform, give each other feedback, and discuss different works in a relaxed environment.[199] McStay also ensured the students were aware of the evolution of the keyboard, and encouraged the students to play on the clavichord and harpsichord in the studio to understand the mechanics of these period instruments in comparison to the modern piano.[200] Grice describes the atmosphere as collegial and encouraging:

> We came with music and classes were spent discussing interpretation. […] We would play the [Bach] inventions altogether, all the class. We would play them two hands. And Janetta would organise each of us to give little sort of seminars on the subjects to do with piano literature […] to each other, which would encourage us to sort of do a bit of research and learn about [certain] pieces that we were playing that [were] sort of tied up with that to broaden the thing. It would happen in that studio, […] we would all be just sitting round there on the floor, yeah. It was great.[201]

[198] Guerin.
[199] Riley.
[200] Grice.
[201] Ibid.

The choice of repertoire was primarily McStay's decision, and she was careful to not let the student extend past their capabilities. Some, such as Williams, were content with what they were given: 'I trusted her to choose good works, and appropriate works, works that would make me a better pianist. And equally, I didn't ask to play particular things either. I just left it in her hands and that was that.'[202] Others would request to learn certain pieces, or discuss them with McStay, but the final decision was hers. Here, Clarke shares an amusing anecdote about the students using McStay's 1978 sabbatical leave to explore a previously denied opportunity:

> In that first year I must say I was a bit disappointed [because] I wanted to play the larger E-flat Haydn sonata, and Janetta felt that I wasn't quite ready for it yet. And she was only around for the first semester I think it was, or term, and then she did a tour with a violinist through Australia and disappeared. And in her place an American teacher/concert pianist Joseph Bloch came from Juilliard and he taught us.[203] And he was a bit naughty I guess. […] I said to him that I really wanted to do this larger Haydn sonata. And he said, 'well, why not, Sheryl?' He said if you really love the work, you're halfway there. So I thought 'oh well, this is good.' So I started on that then when Janetta came back she very kindly let me carry on with that, yes. She said with great amusement that several of her students had sort of deviated.[204]

This is not to say McStay was set in her ways; her playing repertoire was diverse, and her teaching repertoire reflected this aspect. Riley supports this notion:

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[202] Williams.

[203] Joseph Bloch was an American pianist who taught at the Juilliard School of Music in Manhattan, New York. Jane Rubinsky, 'Joseph Bloch 1917-2009', *The Juilliard Journal* (2009). <http://journal.juilliard.edu/journal/joseph-bloch-1917-2009> [accessed 19 February 2020].

[204] Clarke.

> She certainly didn't shy away from [contemporary music]. She was quite happy if you wanted to get inside the piano to pluck strings or whatever, she was right there. There was something that, you know, she was not old fashioned at all, in her approach. […] I think she did have a lot of width to her. That's what made her the teacher she was.[205]

Grice observes that McStay considered the innate potential of each individual student and their unique attributes, and assigned pieces that she knew would aid in developing the musician within:

> It was immensely creative because she […] chose pieces, I would say, not for the person that she saw, but for the person she wanted them to become. She could see qualities in people that, by studying perhaps this Schumann *Novelette* — the last Schumann *Novelette*, a great thing I did with Janetta — it would help you to develop into a broader musician, so that you could therefore […] ingurgitate [*sic*] loads of music on your own.[206]

Once Sayer joined as her assistant, McStay was able to focus her energies in teaching the works by major composers from the Classical period: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. These were the composers whose works she truly loved to play, as Cuming observes:

> I suppose at heart she was a great Classicist. […] Over the period of time she would have taught an enormously wide repertoire, but I expect because of her own love of [the Classical repertoire], she would have expected everyone to be able to play Mozart, and Schubert — which is understandable, reflecting her own particular love of those composers.'[207]

[205] Riley.
[206] Grice.
[207] Cuming.

Furthermore, it was McStay's belief that the physical control and depth of listening required to play the Classical repertoire was the foundation for the development of musicianship and technique. To some, this music may initially seem an unlikely choice for such a purpose, having been composed for smaller, lighter instruments, and being therefore more limited in range of registers and dynamics, as well as being smaller in form. One may argue that it is more beneficial to learn large-scale Romantic works which display the level of virtuosity which was enabled by the production of bigger, more sonorous instruments; after all, études by composers such as Chopin, Liszt and Rachmaninoff are still widely practised around the world today, and are staple conservatory and music school audition requirements.

To McStay, however, virtuosity for the sake of virtuosity was never the goal; good technique was the ability to control the sounds one made in order to serve the music with integrity.[208] The style is unforgiving; deceptively simple scales and arpeggios can expose any unevenness of rhythm and sound, and the use of the sustained pedal is much less prevalent so mistakes or inconsistencies cannot be obscured. One must be able to achieve all these technical aspects while imbuing the music with emotion and communicate it to the audience; to do so requires enormous finesse. The Austrian pianist Alfred Brendel, renowned interpreter of the Classical repertoire, uses the compositions of Mozart as an example of such challenges:

> In Mozart's keyboard works everything is exposed. There are relatively few notes and each of them counts. Not only that you find the right key, but that you give each key the right nuance, the right inflection. If you are not careful you fall into a trap. This is also why these pieces are relatively rarely performed. I think that most players shy away from them. They either don't see

[208] Weber.

> the complications and think the pieces are too easy, or they do see the complications and find them too difficult.[209]

These 'complications' are precisely the tools which McStay used to refine the students' depth of listening; by pointing out the stylistic conventions and drawing attention to their own sound by comparison, the students had a clear goal to strive to achieve. Sayer points out that McStay's thorough and meticulous approach lent itself well to the detailed demands of this repertoire:

> The whole focus of Janetta was that you began not so much with Bach, as with Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert. And that if you can play that music, you can play any music. Its requirements, its demands, its exposure to the ear are such that you can get away with nothing. So you have to know what you're doing, and how to do it.[210]

As Schnabel said, one must 'first hear, then play'; this was the fundamental ethos of McStay's teaching.[211]

Technique through repertoire

In his book, *The Art of Piano Playing*, the renowned Russian pedagogue Heinrich Neuhaus defines the term 'technique' in the context of music:

> A few words about technique. The clearer the goal (the content, the music, the perfection of performance), the clearer the means of attaining it. […] The *what* determines the *how*. […] My

[209] Fred Child, 'Alfred Brendel: A Pianist 'Thinker'', *NPR Music Interviews* (2005). <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4845085> [accessed 9 January 2021].
[210] Sayer.
[211] Schnabel, p. xiii.

> method of teaching […] ensures that the player should as early as possible (after a preliminary acquaintance with the composition and mastering it, if only roughly) grasp what we call 'the artistic image', that is: the content (or artistic image, or poetic substance, the essence of the music), and be able to understand thoroughly in terms of theory of music (naming it, explaining it), what he is dealing with. A clear understanding of this goal enables the player to strive for it, to attain it and embody it in his performance; and that is what 'technique' is about.[212]

Although McStay did not specifically refer to Neuhaus as a direct influence, there is a clear parallel in their approach to technique; one must be well informed of the theoretical aspects of stylistic convention and the intentions of the composer in the score, and the pursuit of perfection is a learning process which enables the performer to communicate with deep artistic expression beyond a merely faithful reproduction of the notes. Neuhaus elaborates:

> I often tell my pupils that the word 'technique' comes from the Greek word *τέχνη* and that *τέχνη* means art.[213] Any improvement of technique is an improvement on art itself. […] The trouble is that many who play the piano take the word 'technique' to mean only velocity, evenness, bravura — in other words, separate elements of technique and not *technique as a whole*, as it was understood by the Greeks and as any artist understands it. Technique = τέχνη is something infinitely more complex and difficult. Such qualities as velocity, precision and even faultless reading of the notes do not in themselves ensure an artistic performance which is achieved only by real, thorough, and inspired work.[214]

[212] Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing* (Prager Publishers: New York, 1973), pp. 2-3.
[213] From the Ancient Greek word 't*echnê',* meaning 'craft' or 'art': Richard Parry, 'Episteme and Techne', *Stanford Encyclopedia of* Philosophy (2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-techne/> [accessed 12 June 2020].
[214] Neuhaus, p. 3.

From this one can ascertain that, for Neuhaus, truly artistic technique encompasses the whole range of one's facilities; it is a means to an end; the notes being played must be imbued with meaning rather than be standalone displays of virtuosity. McStay shared this point of view and chose to approach technique by way of repertoire. As Weber explains, this meant the student was able to practise from the very beginning of the learning process in an organic manner, taking on technical challenges as they surfaced within the music, with no separation of musicianship and the physical execution:

> [It was] not letting us play mechanically, but always having a musical idea in her mind that was what we were trying to produce. Like the sound we were trying to produce for the music, and then to approach it like that, rather than just from a technical aspect. It was always from the musical aspect, […] never, *ever*, just mechanically playing. Always with the sound, with the result in mind that you're trying to achieve. Not just, 'oh, I'll just do the technique today and then I'll stick the music on it tomorrow.' It was always, *always* from the musical side, right from the start.[215]

Subsequently, the students found that that practising was not a rote activity; with the musical intentions in place, embedded in the text from the beginning, practice became a meaningful act of study and interest. Weber recalls, 'I didn't feel I was studying études all day. And she wasn't giving me masses of Czerny exercises or anything. It was always passages in a Mozart concerto or sonata or whatever.'[216]

Back to basics

McStay would employ the same approach of incorporating repertoire into addressing aspects of physical setup at the piano. While Sayer was in charge of supervising scales and arpeggios

[215] Weber.
[216] Ibid.

required for the technical exams, McStay would take the students back to basics with simple, small-scale pieces such as the two-part inventions by Bach or the *Gnossiennes* by Eric Satie; she would observe various aspects of fundamental technique such as hand shape, use of fingers, support of the knuckles, and use of the fifth finger.[217] This way, the student was able to concentrate on developing and correcting their technique without the difficulty of playing too many notes at the same time.[218] Riley recalls learning Stravinsky's *Les Cinq Doigts*:

> One of the very first pieces she introduced to us — and this is to our whole year group — was *Les Cinq Doigts*, by Stravinsky. […] It was an interesting project, because in that same year the University orchestra performed the [work]. So our year group, we all learnt these pieces. And one of us — I think it turned out to be me actually — had to perform the piano version and it was performed alongside the orchestral version later in the year. But if you have a look at these pieces, you'll see that they make ideal fodder for very much essential, simple, but quite clear fingerwork.[219]

Riley appreciated the scope of potential that the writing contained with its interesting harmonies, full of character and colour, and the additional advantage of exposure to the orchestral version for further inspiration. 'It was a cunning choice, actually. […] And of course, we can argue as pianists, anything can be a challenge to do well. So it doesn't matter how simple to start with.'[220]

To Weber, McStay assigned *The Seasons* by Tchaikovsky: 'you come in on your first day at university and you think you're going to play this great big repertoire, and you get these tiny little 'easy' pieces. Then you suddenly realise, oh my gosh, how much is in just those few

[217] Sayer.
[218] White.
[219] Riley.
[220] Ibid.

lines, of making a sound she wanted you to make.'[221] Even with such small pieces, McStay demanded the same level of fastidiousness as she would from a Beethoven sonata. Students were to listen for balance, pedalling, the direction of the phrase, voicing, and tempo; McStay had a great sense of rhythm which allowed for zero sloppiness. Williams reflects that 'if you wavered in your tempo, even by a minute amount, she jumped on it'.[222] Here, he recounts an example of how meticulous McStay could be even with these simple, introductory pieces:

> I still remember the very first lesson I had with her, and I was at a reasonably good level when I started with her. She gave me this very basic, I mean, I'd almost say it was a grade two or three piece. It had a *crescendo* in the first line over four bars on just one note in the right hand. I got louder over the four bars, and she said, 'you're not listening.' She made me play all sixteen-odd notes where the *crescendo* was an exactly even increase through the sixteen. She wouldn't put up with the third and the fourth one being the same, […] and you couldn't increase the sound more between the fifth and the sixth, than the sixth and the seventh. It had to be even all the way. She forced you to listen to that *crescendo*. […] Boy! We spent about fifteen or twenty minutes just mastering this *crescendo*, and the control of making it do that, and forcing you to listen. Gosh. It was a revelation. […] I was thinking, you can't get away with anything here, you've got to play it right. If it's a *crescendo* over four bars, it's a *crescendo* over four bars. It's not ninety per cent of a *crescendo* over one bar and a 110 per cent over the next bar, it's an even *crescendo* over the four bars, please.[223]

It is evident from these statements that McStay possessed an extraordinary depth of listening which demanded the utmost effort from her students. Austin observes that McStay wanted to hear all the detail: 'the articulation, the brilliance, and the spark, and clarity'.[224] McStay made

[221] Weber.
[222] Williams.
[223] Riley.
[224] Austin.

sure to emphasise listening to the end of every phrase to take care of the sound before going on to the next phrase, to 'fill out the bars with the semiquavers. Not to just rush through but filling out the bars, so that things don't just zoom off. It gives breadth and meaning.'[225]

Those who can teach, do

Being a performer meant McStay had the advantage of being able to demonstrate the kinds of sounds she wanted. She was known for her beautiful sound which shone especially in the lyrical works of Mozart. Riley explains how McStay used demonstration as a useful tool to convey her ideas in a direct way:

> She was such a beautiful Mozart player. She used to get a certain shaping. She'd sometimes show you physically, [how] circular shaping in the way you play something would just get an extra beautiful shape. And ease of flow. So she was also very good at demonstrating. I mean, she was quite shy about it but you know, she'd only have to play a few notes and that sound - for a start, that gorgeous tone — would just hit you. 'I want that. I can have that please.'[226]

Clarke considers McStay's playing of Mozart as 'sublime':

> Her magic word for Mozart was 'sparkle', and that's what she did with it. Because every note made sense in the line of the phrase, every note had its place. And that's what added up to such fine musical clarity, really.[227]

[225] Austin.
[226] Riley.
[227] Clarke.

Austin describes the quality of McStay's sound as 'articulative sparkle and bubble', echoing Clarke's sentiments.[228] McStay's demonstrations were a valuable resource in addition to her detailed verbal and written instructions, which aided Austin in detailed and focused practice:

> She did a lot of demonstrating at the top of the piano, of the kind of sound, and so you had to find that sound. […] She would be going over very small bits to get that right, so I would go over and practise very small bits. So it was very specific, my practice, because she […] demonstrated it to me.'[229]

White recalls McStay's ability to 'make a real *cantabile* sound. That's something that I find a lot of people just don't do. Janetta really taught us, she really demanded a real singing quality, real *legato*.'[230] Cuming drew comparisons with McStay and the Polish composer Frédéric Chopin:

> I was reading the other day about what Chopin talked about when he was teaching. […] He didn't really believe in technical exercises except students playing, say, his Nocturnes to get beautiful sound, and learning the technique from through the music. And I think Janetta did that very much.[231]

In the case of Mozart, clarity of articulation was of the utmost importance. 'How to do a two-note slur with your wrist down and up and down and up, those were the basics in the first year,' recalls Weber.[232] Freedom of wrist movement was essential in achieving a Mozartian two-note slur, with the degradation of sound in the second note matching the significance of

[228] Austin.
[229] Ibid.
[230] White.
[231] Cuming.
[232] Weber.

the first note.[233] As the student progressed to Romantic works, McStay would talk about using more arm weight and making bigger sounds directed from the back muscles.[234] McStay had small but well-supported hands with an easy facility, and had learned of ways to compensate for size throughout her years of playing.[235] James refers to her 'small hand':

> She had to use it in a slightly different way than a larger hand. With Mozart, for example, she could phrase each individual note. I remember one student saying 'oh, you're lucky, you've got a small hand to play Mozart.' But the motion across the keys was always very even.

Despite her large repertoire, McStay tended to forgo the bigger Romantic composers, such as Brahms and Rachmaninoff, on account of her small hands, and delegated teaching of such pieces to Sayer. Cuming suspects that 'she didn't like playing the big Romantic works'.[236]

McStay was always helpful with her suggestions when the students were faced with an issue, suggesting tips such as dividing the notes from one hand into the other.[237] She learned to maximise her small hands to her benefit, keeping them close to the keys and avoiding large, excessive movements which did not aid in the expression of music. Cuming explains: 'Because she had a small hand, she had learnt to move in an economical way. She didn't sort of flap her hands around, you know, sort of grappling at darts.'[238]

McStay was equally economical and efficient in her practice. Time was a precious

[233] Weber.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Sayer.
[236] Cuming.
[237] Clarke.
[238] Cuming.

commodity. Cuming explains how McStay would snatch the brief intermissions between pupils to prepare for upcoming concerts:

> She knew how to practise very well. She often used to amaze me when she did start teaching at the University. [She] might have been quite agitated by a pupil and then, [in the] ten minute space [between lessons], she could take out the next work she was going to be performing, and practise in detail the bars that were important. So she was able to pinpoint technical difficulties.[239]

For McStay, being a performer was inextricably linked to her teaching; it was an asset, a point of reference, and lived experiences from which to draw inspiration. Austin considers the importance of the two elements merging: 'It was essential, it was completely essential. […] Because she was a musician. So meticulous, such a musician. Such a fine musician.'[240]

Criticisms and feedback

Although the students greatly admired McStay and were eager to please, there were moments of discontent throughout her twenty years of teaching at the University of Auckland. The interviews presented three negative aspects of McStay's pedagogical approach:

- A lack of awareness in dealing with stage fright
- A lack of a systemic approach in technique
- Hypercritical and uncompromising

It is important to acknowledge that despite these issues, the students were appreciative and

[239] Cuming.
[240] Austin.

aware of McStay's intentions; these criticisms were not major points of focus, but a by-product of a strongly forged relationship between teacher and student. As Williams states: 'the overlay of all this is that she really wanted the best result.'[241]

Another point I have I considered is that McStay's teaching, while musically superior and informative, lacked a clear system which could have been beneficial for the students' learning process. McStay's musicianship was developed largely through her experiences of touring and collaborating with other highly skilled musicians – she did not employ a cerebral approach of referring to pedagogical texts to corroborate her knowledge. Given that McStay emphasised the importance of adhering to stylistic conventions of the Classical repertoire, a more thorough examination of the academic treatises about these traditions would have enriched her teaching and help clarify her instructions for students to make musical decisions which are informed by research as well as instinct.

Performance anxiety woes

Due to her own strict standards, McStay suffered from terrible nerves prior to performances, and was rarely happy with her playing. Weber remembers McStay's stage presence as humble, with an attitude of 'just getting on with it': 'I think she felt blessed to be able to play the music, but she was a bit like me — she loved rehearsing and preparing, but didn't really enjoy having to present it at the end.'[242] Williams recalls:

> I remember going round to her house once, and she'd been practising something, and she said […] she didn't really like performing, but practising was so therapeutic. She loved practising. I think

[241] Williams.
[242] Weber.

she felt nervous and uncomfortable performing, and that's probably because she had such high standards. In some ways she couldn't reach the standards she felt was necessary.[243]

McStay had stopped playing solo repertoire by the time she came to the University and had directed her focus onto ensemble playing. This meant she would have the peace of mind of using the score, thus alleviating the pressure of memorising works amidst her busy schedule. Clarke shares her insights:

Oh, [she was] marvellous. Marvellous. World class. Absolutely world class. She didn't perform a heck of a lot of solo in my day, by then I think she'd cut back. I know she used to mention to me that she'd get terribly nervous. Her main thing that she loved the most, and she told me this, was chamber music. That was her big thing that she just adored doing. And therefore she'd have the music. and I think if she did concertos in her later years, I never saw her in the flesh doing one, but I think she'd usually have the music up.[244]

Grice remembers observing backstage as he waited to turn pages for McStay, childlike in her vulnerability, a stark contrast to her intimidating presence as a teacher:

See, musicians, we are kind of like children when we're just before a concert. There's something very fragile about us. […] She would be nervous and then she would be like a little child […] but once she got on stage, everything was always [there]. I never saw a thing [missed]. I never saw a single note, a single accent, anything.[245]

[243] Williams.
[244] Clarke.
[245] Grice.

McStay's commitment to teaching was such that she would sometimes be teaching right up to the moments before performance, which proved to be a nerve-racking experience for a student already fraught with anticipation. Weber considers: 'Maybe she made us nervous, because she was nervous. I mean, some people obviously were able to cope. I probably was not one of them.'[246]

Sayer shares an example:

> I can recall Patrick O'Byrne, already a very accomplished pianist who had just been in the finals of the Tokyo International Piano Competition, preparing for an examination in the old University Hall, for which Maurice Till was the examiner. Maurice walked to the Hall with me. When we got there, Janetta was still giving Patrick a lesson on the *Waldstein*. And I thought, 'What?! But he's got to play it in fifteen seconds!'[247]

While McStay's fastidious approach proved overbearing on occasions, it was also her way of ensuring a successful performance. She did not give advice or encourage them to explore relaxation techniques;[248] for McStay, the thorough preparation and awareness of the score was the safety net which helped to overcome her performance anxiety. With this understanding, the reasons for McStay's immovable standards are made clear. Grice recalls:

> She put the bar very high and you had to own the notes, she would encourage that. You had to own the music, you had to be behind it a hundred per cent. And I think that was what saved her, I think that's what she thought should save everyone

[246] Weber.
[247] Sayer.
[248] Grice.

When the result was to her satisfaction, McStay let it be known, showering Williams with unusually high praise on one occasion:

> She was very, very happy when you did well in an exam or competition, or you played particularly well on those few occasions. She was stoked. […] The few moments, the few times where you really felt you'd [got it], she was almost speechless if she really loved what you were doing. […] I remember I played some Chopin once, and […] I was happy with it. And she just sort of... she just waited afterwards, and she said something like, 'I felt close to God.' […] Or 'you know there's a God when we can share that.' That sort of sentiment.[249]

The problem remained, however: 'It's just not easy to get to that level!'[250]

Experiencing technical difficulties

McStay viewed technique as the ability to control sound by listening, and preferred to teach technique by way of repertoire.[251] 'She didn't use books or resources, she used her ears,' Sayer observes.[252] In terms of pedagogical texts, the students made use of *Pianoforte Technique an Hour a Day* by Eric Harrison and Jeffrey Tankard, but the supervision of technical exercises and exam requirements were Sayer's responsibility.[253]

McStay's was an effective method for developing and refining one's sensibility for sound and phrasing; but the lack of a systemic method had its downsides when issues with tension or speed arose. Bailey shares:

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[249] Grice.
[250] Ibid.
[251] See: Chapter 3: Technique through repertoire.
[252] Sayer.
[253] Eric Harrison and Jeffrey Tankard, *Pianoforte Technique an Hour a Day* (Novello, 2003).

> Whilst [Janetta] was very good, teaching technique wasn't her strong point. […] I know for myself, I had a problem when I was using my thumb. […] I was always playing with a slight dip, like you see thousands of kids doing when they start. […] So that wasn't her forte, I'd say, actually helping you with pinpointing what was wrong with your technique.[254]

McStay's natural pianistic facility meant that she was able to demonstrate and explain what her own process was when the student was faced with technical obstacles, but she was lacking in the specificity of a school of technique. 'She would utilise whatever she knew worked,' shares James.[255]

Austin recalls grappling with the difficulties of a challenging passage in Schumann's Piano concerto in A minor, aided by McStay's instructions to keep her wrists free, but not being aware of the exact physical movements that needed to happen:

> I got there because I loved it, but I had no idea how I was using my arms or what. Obviously Janetta managed to get that contact thing in my finger ends, and keeping some freedom in my wrists and arms. […] No one had explained to me, I never understood consciously that the arms are loose and free and the wrists are weightless. Janetta obviously had weightless wrists, and she got me playing like that.[256]

O'Brien shares her affinity for McStay's instinctive and explorative approach in her own teaching, and extols the process of self-discovery along the way:

[254] Bailey.
[255] James.
[256] Austin.

> [My teaching] comes from what I hear, what I see. It doesn't come from someone else working it out and me taking it. I'm not saying that that's a bad way, it's just not how I do it. Because I never went through that. […] I don't actually agree with intense pedagogical teaching. I think the best way, if you have the gut, and the balls to do it, [is to] just go for it, and just find out yourself how you want to [do it].[257]

O'Brien considers that the element of musical exploration is vital in the teacher-student relationship, because there is no one-size-fits-all method; the teacher must be able to cater to students of varying dispositions and talent, and the process will indubitably involve trial and error. With reciprocal dedication, the end result is a personal, involved relationship between the two:

> Each individual student *is* an individual student. They're not a bunch of carrots, you know? They all have different needs, they all have different aspects, they all have different aspirations, they come from different backgrounds… And they all have different sounds.[258]

Without compromise

McStay's relentless quest for perfection often led to a clash of personalities with those who were unwilling to apply themselves. O'Brien recalls witnessing moments of conflict, sharing her perspective as a teacher:

> Some students really came against with Janetta. But then, *every* teacher has that, I came up against it with people. You're just not fitting into their ability, you're not fitting into what they want to

[257] O'Brien.
[258] Ibid.

> hear. What they're able to hear, what you're saying, isn't right for them. There's no teacher in the world, however good, gets on with every student.[259]

White considers: 'For some people, that very detailed approach would drive them mad. I remember one person who had maybe quite a difficult relationship with her.'[260] While she attended to all students, she especially valued the ones who — like herself — 'attended to everything, all the time, without compromise', as Sayer shares:

> But nobody has a studio full of those students. They do it as best they can, most of the time. But if that best is not good enough, then you have to let it go. [She would not], so there was friction. But for those who would bother, there was no limit to how much she would bother. And so the more you bothered, the more you got. The less you bothered, probably the less you got. But it didn't stop.[261]

McStay was accepting of each student's limitations and acknowledged when their best work was presented, but her feedback was always critical.[262]

Austin recalls overhearing another student's lesson while waiting for her own: 'I just remember being outside the room and thinking, 'gosh, that's really tough!' [about] whatever it was I was hearing through the door.'[263]

White would often find herself fearing what awaited her on the other side of the door: 'There were times when I'd be waiting outside her room when I was studying with her to have a lesson, and I'd be nervous and full of trepidation.'[264]

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[259] O'Brien.
[260] White.
[261] Sayer.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Austin.
[264] White.

Weber once faced the ire of McStay after making the mistake of erasing some markings:

> She would write comments all over the place in small handwriting, and after about a few months I dared to rub some out, because I couldn't see, I just wanted to clear it up a little bit. And she was so furious. How could I dare, you know? As if that was sort of sacred, what she'd written was like the Bible or something. She was very upset. So I never did that again.[265]

One could indeed describe the way McStay regarded the score as sacrosanct. Reverence for the composer's intentions was paramount, akin to the act of worship; McStay was the preacher who lead by example, and the students were her faithful congregation. Clarke agrees: 'you just took what she said as gospel, really. And you could hear it in her playing.'[266]

In some instances the criticisms could be downright brutal, as Bailey reveals a distressing incident:

> At the end of my second year, I was playing Bach. I don't remember what I did, but she was cross with me. It was the week before my exam, so I worked and worked and worked at getting it right, and I had it right, and then we had to go and play in one of the lecture rooms in front of a number of students. […] I was so nervous about getting it wrong, that I got it wrong. She tore strips off me in front of everyone else. That was our low point, put it that way.[267]

Despite this setback Bailey continued on with her practice and performed a successful exam, winning the approval of McStay:

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[265] Weber.
[266] Clarke.
[267] Bailey.

> Afterwards she came to see me especially and said '[the examiner] was very impressed with your Bach.' So she made a special effort to come and tell me that. So she regarded that as being quite an achievement. So I'm saying, although she'd been pretty cruel — brutal, I would say — to me just before the exam, she was prepared to give me some very nice feedback.[268]

It was an overwhelming sense of responsibility which compelled McStay to be so stringent with the students: 'I cared about them, and cared about their progress.'[269] This was not always received favourably and resulted in some students severing their ties with her, explains Clarke:

> There were one or two students who she used to talk to me about in later years, who she didn't get on so well with. I have no idea why because I didn't ask, but I think she always felt bad about them. I can't tell you the reasons why they parted company. I've spoken to one or two several years ago who found her quite difficult to relate to, and get on with.[270]

Clarke reveals that McStay's exacting demands even extended to her colleagues, as far as music-making was concerned: 'I've actually spoken to fellow teachers at University who collaborated chamber music with her, who said when you practised with Janetta, you did it Janetta's way.'[271]

Fundamentally, there was no reason to disagree with 'Janetta's way'; for the student who truly wanted to learn, McStay's years of experience, knowledge and insight were undeniable,

[268] Bailey.
[269] McStay,
[270] Clarke.
[271] Ibid.

and her rigid benchmark of excellence worthy of effort. Sayer reflects on the makings of McStay's exceptional musicianship:

> This was a musical mind such as we had never met. Her sense of judgment about a score was as fine as I have ever met. She had played with many different artists around Europe and Australasia, and I don't know about you, but you learn something from everybody you play with, about music and yourself. And you do so with hundreds of people, there's a lot of things to learn. All sorts of things have been said, and they stay with you forever.[272]

Cuming considers that McStay's demands felt prescriptive at times, leading to a sense of being musically debilitated.[273] However, the strength of detail in McStay's teaching meant that students were equipped with the knowledge to be able to play in the appropriate stylistic conventions, at a minimum:

> She was totally conscientious in teaching in this detail to everybody. [Sadly], sometimes people either have 'it', or not. And that's the most important [thing] you actually can't teach. Janetta would still try and teach it so every pupil of hers played in a meticulous manner. I would say you wouldn't hear them getting up and performing in a careless way. She just wouldn't let that happen. But in some ways if a person doesn't have it, they're still not going to have it even if they play in a meticulous manner. But they will at least have the right stylistic thing.[274]

For the discerning student, the stylistic training helped to develop their own voice and musical identity. Cuming reflects on her experience:

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[272] Sayer.
[273] Cuming.
[274] Ibid.

> With that sort of discipline, you can be free to express yourself. […] A great musician is somebody who [can nurture] the seeds of that perception. If they haven't got the seeds of that perception, it's hard to plant those. Janetta certainly would have planted a perception of the greatness for all this music for people.[275]

For Grice, even McStay's moments of anger served as inspiration, because he knew it was in the spirit of serving the music:

> When it was musical things, that anger was not directed at you. It was at something else. You felt like you had to listen to every word she said. It was urgent. And so the anger that she had would be because it was urgent that you understood this now. So there was an intensity that would transfix, you couldn't move. When Janetta started on one of her — what some people thought — tirades, I just sat and listened and waited for the penny to drop. I knew that it was something that I had to understand, right, so it was...it never bothered me. [You could] accept the anger that was because of the music that we weren't getting through. We respected her completely for everything [because] she needed to do that, to actually become like a prize fighter with the student, [because] she wanted us to be in the best of shape.[276]

In her later years, McStay remarked that she had been prone to over-teaching. Sayer recalls:

> When she got much older, she looked at me and said, 'dear, don't do what I did, will you.' She couldn't help it; we could all be like that, but you just have to say 'stop now'. She never really stopped and it would have driven some people crazy. Completely crazy.[277]

For the students who were open, aware, and receptive, McStay's uncompromising standards

[275] Cuming.
[276] Grice.
[277] Sayer.

were an essential and formative part of their musical training.

White reflects: 'I don't remember ever thinking 'oh, if only I'd done that with Janetta,' or 'oh, she left out this.' I don't ever remember thinking that. It felt like a very comprehensive musical education, especially with the two teachers.'[278]

Clarke shares:

> [Janetta] would often would say to me, 'I think I used to over-teach.' And I would say to that, 'no way did you ever over-teach. It was difficult at the time, but had you not done that, I don't think I would be able to play the way I do today.'
>
> I remember when I first went to the Royal Academy and played to some of the professors there. One in particular said to me, 'my word, you've had some fantastic lessons, fantastic teaching.' And that was a huge thrill to hear, of course.[279] 'I just don't think I would play like I do without Janetta's input,' adds Clarke. 'I credit her with *everything*.'[280]

Retirement

In 1983, McStay retired from her post as associate professor in piano performance at the University of Auckland. It had been on her mind for some time; now sixty-six years of age, McStay was ready for a calmer pace of life:

> I was ready to get out of the whole thing. And I felt that the students themselves were changing. It's not a criticism, there were changing, and I felt that I was becoming out of touch with them as people. It was partly, I suppose, my wish to be removed from it by then.[281]

[278] White.
[279] Clarke.
[280] Ibid.
[281] McStay, 22 April 2010.

In tribute to her retirement and contribution over the years, the Janetta McStay Prize for Pianists was established by the School of Music of the University of Auckland, funded by the generosity of her former pupils, members of the staff and the general public., as well as a fundraising concert in Maidment theatre on 27 November 1982.[282] It is awarded annually to the most deserving undergraduate student in piano performance.[283]

McStay was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to music in the 1989 New Year Honours.[284] In 1991, the University of Auckland awarded McStay with an honorary doctorate in acknowledgement of her services to music:

[282] 'The Janetta McStay Prize for Pianists', *University of Auckland*, (n.d.) <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/study/scholarships-and-awards/find-a-scholarship/janetta-mcstay-prize-for-pianists-p700-cai.html> [accessed 14 February 2020].
[283] It is a monetary prize of $1,000.
[284] 'New Year Honours 1989', *New Zealand Gazette,* 30 January 1990, <http://www.nzlii.org/nz/other/nz_gazette/1989/13.pdf> [accessed 20 October 2021]

Figure 9: McStay receives her honorary doctorate.

> Looking back on the procession of students in those twenty years, it was a richly rewarding time for me, but I can honestly say that right until my retirement I worried greatly. […] I still feel apprehension when after all these years one of them says to me, 'I remember you saying so and so.'. I often think I taught too hard, but there seemed to be so much to get through. […] But I also realised before long that if a student showed a passion for a work, even if you thought it beyond their present stage, they could achieve miracles.[285]

[285] Guerin.

Chapter 4: The Legacy of Janetta McStay

Along with her retirement from teaching, McStay stopped giving public performances. She enjoyed her new freedom by pursuing other interests and spending time with her husband Frank, whom she had married in 1975 at the age of fifty-eight:[286]

> We had seven years together whilst I was still working. How I valued his most wonderful support — truly his wonderful support and encouragement. All our gorgeous travelling, and such happy times at home too. Yes, we are terribly conscious of this, aren't we, Frank? And I do say to myself every now and then how fortunate we are — it isn't going to last forever, but it is so great now.[287]

Cuming recalls McStay's transition away from an active performance career: 'As she aged, she didn't even have a piano in her house. She often used to say in the very last years of her life that she'd gone off the piano as such.'[288] This did not indicate that McStay was no longer interested in music, but rather, a change of direction in the way she appreciated its intricacies. McStay had spent a lifetime of performing, analysing, dissecting, and teaching music; now, she was happy to hang up her hat, and immerse herself in the enjoyment of it:

> Towards the end of her life she didn't really want to play. She did want to more do things like go and experience lieder, she adored Schubert lieder. […] I don't think she liked anything of a touch of virtuosity in her last years. So you could say her musical interests in a way lay beyond the piano as a virtuoso instrument.[289]

[286] Professor Frank Newhook, OBE., was Head of the School of Plant Pathology at the University of Auckland, and the President for the Auckland Chamber Music Society.
[287] McStay, 15 April 1995.
[288] Cuming.
[289] Ibid.

Lifelong friendships

A change in dynamics took place between McStay and her former pupils. She had kept in touch with many of them over the years after they graduated, after which she would regard them as equals; whereas she used to be 'Miss McStay', she was now simply 'Janetta', as White shares:

> When I was about to leave, I remember I was on the phone [with her] and she said 'well, now that you're graduated, you can call me Janetta.' I remember just thinking, 'I couldn't possibly do that!' So that's an indication of how we regarded her. She became 'Janetta' to me.[290]

McStay invested greatly into her friendships. In a time of no internet or social media, McStay kept in touch with former students in studying in Europe on her trips to the continent, staying with them, attending concerts together, and continuing to take an active interest in their lives. Weber reminisces:

> Once I left the university, it just continued to [being] very close friends and [having] a very personal [relationship]. She came and stayed with us [in Austria], and I went and visited her in Switzerland. [It was a] very, very, very lovely personal relationship. She was like that with many of her students, I think. She genuinely actually did care about you for the rest of your life, it seemed.[291]

White shares these sentiments:

> I think, because of the intervening years, I remember her first and foremost as a *person.* Once I had

[290] White.
[291] Weber.

> come to London, […] I only went back [to New Zealand] every four or five years, it wasn't frequent in any way. So I probably saw her four times in twenty years. But I would always make a point of going to Auckland and she would always have time to see me.[292]

The students openly shared new and exciting developments in their lives as they got older, such as introducing their spouses and children to McStay. McStay even took on the role of godmother to Bailey's first child:

> I asked her — because I had huge respect for her — if she'd be [godmother to] Andrew, my son, who celebrated his 50th birthday [recently]! He was born while I was still at University. And in fact, she was very sweet. She opened up an Auckland savings account for him. She was very kind, she was lovely. She really was.[293]

White recalls McStay meeting her daughter, Madeleine:

> I took Madeleine to see her one time when she was small and she was *intrigued* to meet Madeleine, just totally interested in what I was doing. She really, really wanted to know. She genuinely wanted to know, it wasn't that she was being polite. She genuinely wanted to know, and I know that she was like that with all of us, it wasn't that I was special or anything. But she'd make you feel special.[294]

An inner life

McStay had a tremendous capacity to embrace and appreciate life. During her teaching years, her house was the centre of post-concert entertainment; students, audience members and

[292] White.
[293] Bailey.
[294] White.

visiting artists alike filled up her small cottage in Parnell, eating, drinking, and socialising. Cuming describes McStay's seemingly inexhaustible zest for life:

> She'd be cooking and [organising] things for that while teaching, and while probably practising for another concert. She was remarkable in being able to do that. Because she absolutely enjoyed life. [When] you remember how much teaching she did, and how much playing she did, it was incredible that within that context she was able to also be social. I think she'd learnt to be from the early years when she played with ENSA, because she often talked about those concerts when [they'd play] to the troops and then be entertained afterwards. I think from the very beginning that she was able to do that.
>
> You see, she was a person who was able to take great enjoyment in things. To the point where you'd say it was a gift, that she was able to do that. […] How to live like that and take that real enjoyment from things.[295]

Students witnessed how McStay's enthusiasm and diverse experiences informed her music-making, White explains:

> She had an inner life. She definitely had an inner life that was… I didn't know her well enough to know what went on in her inner life, but it's clear that there was. She was a person of depth, and that she brought that to her music and she brought that to her teaching.[296]

[295] Cuming.
[296] White.

Independence through love and integrity

It was important to McStay that students learned how to think for themselves and discover their own, unique musical identities. Riley shares:

> I think that she had the humility to want to foster. Despite her thoroughness in her teaching and wanting to get everything so precise, she wanted for us to find our own voice. [She] was always delighted if we were able to achieve that.[297]

The reason was simple: McStay loved music. All her assiduous, detailed teaching stemmed from her love of music, not from a place of ego of being on stage as the centre of attention. Austin reflects:

> She was going by what came from inside, so it wasn't about, 'oh yes, I'm good at this', or 'I'm going to do that,' or anything like that. She was just guided by what she needed to hear. What needed to happen. Completely authentic. Nothing to do with ego. No affectation, nothing. She was just herself.[298]

Sayer speaks of 'the cult of personality' — a quality he disdains, which he perceives to be prevalent in today's musical spheres: '[It's about] setting oneself up on stage in a spotlight so as to be continuously noticed.'[299] McStay, he considers, did precisely the opposite; she centred the music at the forefront, and viewed herself as the vehicle which delivered the intentions of the composer to the listener:

[297] White.
[298] Austin.
[299] Sayer.

> It's nothing to do with the performer, [and] everything to do with the composer. Which, of course, is kind of the opposite of today's world; and that's never going to change. We're never going to go back, we're only going to move forward. I tell my students that I'm not teaching them for the present day. I say, 'if you want lessons to develop the kind of playing that now fills the concert halls, go and learn from somebody else. Because I can't do it.'
>
> I think that the world has long since moved on from, if you like, the great performer with a gorgeous sound and a quiet but commanding presence. I have heard Richter, and Gilels, and Katchen, and Serkin, and Myra Hess, and Clifford Curzon, Wilhelm Kempff, Claudio Arrau, Artur Rubinstein, Zimmerman, Perahia, Barenboim and many more. They all presented something representative of forces beyond themselves. Not confined to pianism. That's exactly what she did. And I scarcely know anybody who does that any longer.[300]

The students observed how McStay embodied the process of getting intimately familiar with the music in her playing and teaching, directly demonstrating the fruits of hard work and the joy one derived therefrom. White recalls:

> The main thing that I got from her was a complete love of music. It was just that love of music that she had. And the detail was in service of the music. So I think the main thing is that she brought music to life, and she'd teach us to bring music to life.[301]

It was through the way McStay taught how to read and interpret the score, that the students were able to bring the music to life. Grice explains how McStay's approach left a lifelong impression:

[300] Sayer.
[301] White.

> It was really by exposing myself to other people, that I realised the value of what I had had in New Zealand. The value of this teaching that was you, and the score, and how do I go about getting the sound out of this, what I'm looking at. Learning to read music in the way I do now probably was the way that Janetta did then, but I didn't understand it then.
>
> To see the music as value, to see the notes as values, and values being weight, and therefore making your music, sightreading, a lot more engaging than it is, [more than] just to be able to read the names of the notes and so forth and know where they are. […] She never really put it into words but she was playing like that. And I think she influenced me, I look for that sound. I just look for that sound. And I recognise it, whenever I hear it I recognise it, with whomever is playing it. Not everyone does it all the time because it's not part of your gift, it's your part of your attitude to the music; the way you read the music.[302]

Cuming ruminates on the abiding impact of McStay's integrity in reading the score:

> Her greatest strength, and the thing that [I think has] stayed as a really integral influence for all her pupils, was utter integrity towards the music, of the score. The utter integrity. There wasn't in her own playing or in her teaching, the slightest hint of glossing over things, or making something affected. It always had to be true to the music, and this would be her greatest influence, that she did that. […] You knew always that you could be honest with the music.

This sense of openness and honesty in the music was reflective of McStay's character, diverse interests, and sense of adventure:

> She was wildly interested in things like politics.[…] I suppose you could say she was a romantic with travel. She would see the beautiful things in every place. And I don't mean they weren't

[302] Grice.

> beautiful, wonderful, fabulous things to see, but she would automatically see the wonderful things. And she was automatically attracted to the exotic, and the different. So I think she had that ability with people of all nationalities, to actually engage with them, in spite of not speaking their languages. It was just a natural ability she had.[303]

McStay was a world citizen, a pioneer who had lived an 'unexpectedly vivid life'; her experiences of playing with different artists and the sights she saw on her world travels were the influences which informed her knowledge and identity as a musician.[304] To her students, McStay was a conduit to the world outside of New Zealand who brought its wonders closer to them, and an example of what one could achieve if their hearts were open to the unknown potential of life:

> She could talk to us about paintings and art galleries, and [brought] this world to [us]. […] We didn't know it first hand, [but] Janetta made it more [tangible] […] She was a person who always absorbed things. She was always alive to everything, so she would be alive to any influences that were around. […]
>
> Mozart, if he could have seen into the future, he would have heard of countries like China, but imagine New Zealand! [When I went to Vienna], I was excited about being where all the composers wrote. But when I was there I realised it was sort of natural, the Mozart and Beethoven and Schubert being played there. How much more fantastic [is it] that they're being played in some remote New Zealand town? That just goes to show the aliveness in the music. Janetta was sharing a universal love of somebody like Mozart.[305]

[303] Cuming.
[304] Guerin.
[305] Cuming.

For James, independent musical thinking was the biggest lesson imparted by McStay:

> I heard her say a couple of times, 'in the end, you teach yourself how to play the piano.' […] You sit there thinking, 'well now, how would [Janetta] have done this? What is the solution to this?' But in the end, it's left to you to figure out how the thing works. You can't be with a teacher all your life. […] In the end, you end up teaching yourself to play the piano. Yeah, that one stayed with me, it really did.[306]

Austin considers McStay to have been an invaluable influence in her life during her formative years. She credits the teaching of McStay with her successes which helped her own career as an active chamber musician with the New Zealand Chamber Soloists, and as lecturer in piano at the University of Waikato, which mirrors McStay's own trajectory in her life in music:

> [I won] the Young Musician of the Year [and the] Young Performer of the Year [in 1982]. I won them because of her, and her teaching. And afterwards I felt a fraud, which is quite normal apparently when people win things. […] I felt guilty, for years. And then I finally realised that it set me on my life's course. I went to England, and no one knew who I was and it took a long time for me to get noticed, and I was [starting to get] noticed when I left […] but I came back to New Zealand, and immediately I was taken seriously. And that was simply to do with having won those things, I think.
>
> I was just so lucky I went to Janetta. She was just all spirit, as far as I was concerned. Just pure music, gorgeous, so lucky. And Bryan was amazing. And Bryan became more and more amazing.[307]

[306] James.
[307] Austin.

White expresses appreciation towards the independence McStay instilled, which applied to White's transition to a career in jazz piano, as well as personal growth:

> She gave me a confidence in my artistic integrity that I was able to carry into the jazz. […] there's something about just having a sense of your worth in your creative process, that I think she engendered, that then carries into any music you do, or perhaps anything you do.[308]

Even in her last years of life, McStay remained lucid, inquisitive, and open minded. White recalls her last memory with McStay:

> When I saw her last, probably in her early nineties, she was still totally switched on to what was happening in the world. She was interested in what was happening in the world, just like a young person. She didn't seem old at all, she just didn't seem old. […] I remember talking to her on the phone when I was in Dunedin one time and I was about to go up to Auckland to see her. We were arranging when we were going to meet, and I was trying to explain something, it might have been to do with the jazz thing. And I thought, she's not going to understand this, I don't know how to explain it. [But] she totally got it. She just got it, and she said something that just showed this [incredible perception], she just showed that she understood. I didn't have to have to have a lengthy explanation, She just understood.
>
> That was really remarkable. [The] sort of person she was. She touched so many lives.[309]

For Sayer, the legacy and influence of McStay is immeasurable. As teacher, colleague, and friend, she was a fundamental part of his personal and professional life to the end of her days:

[308] White.
[309] Ibid.

I think I would say, as most of the students would say, that she represented the beginning of the rest of my life. I can't imagine that life without her. And that's not just piano playing, and music-making. It's to do with curiosity, it's to do with antennae, it's to do with looking, listening, tasting — Janetta was a very good cook, and one night at dinner, she produced a mousse, and said we had to guess what was the main ingredient. We couldn't, and she was quite shocked that we couldn't recognise the taste of this mousse. Do you know what it was? — Pomegranate! Well there you go — she was quite shocked that we didn't know the taste of pomegranate. How many people do you know like that?

I remember when she was dying, and I went to see her for the last time. She just looked at me, put her hand on mine, and said, 'oh it's been a journey, hasn't it?' Those were her last words to me. But that's it, it's true, it's a journey. And I would make another comment, that her journey at one stage was worldwide. And then it shrunk when she didn't travel to Europe any longer. Then only within New Zealand, then only to concerts in Auckland, then only her living room, then the bedroom, and finally the rest home. I saw that world shrink, little by little by little, and she never appeared to resent it. Quite remarkable![310]

Death

Janetta Mary McStay died on 14 June 2012. Her obituary reads: NEWHOOK, Janetta Mary (nee McStay).

On 14th June 2012 peacefully at Ventnor Home aged 95 after a short illness. Her last days were wonderfully supported by friends, family and staff — thank you all so much for your love and care. Deeply loved second wife of the late Frank. Dearly loved aunt of Judy and Dwight, Hugh (deceased) and Marie, loved great aunt of John and Bobbie, Kathleen and Glenn, Sandra and Matthew, Anthony and Suzi, and great-great aunt of Halie, Syd, Jake, James, Kirsten, Alex, Fenna

[310] Sayer.

and Beau. Much loved stepmother of Laurie and Judy, Denis and Anouk, Cath and Alan, treasured step grandmother of Kate and Bevan, Ollie and Grace. By Janetta's request no funeral service has been held. There will be a memorial service at a later date to celebrate her truly remarkable life and musical talent.[311]

Figure 10: McStay in her element.

When asked, 'what gives you the most pleasure, when you look back? A single-most thing that gives you the most pleasure about your career?', McStay answered:

> I suppose the fact that it was never planned, and that I took the opportunities that came. […] When I went to England and going through the Suez Canal, the cabin was very hot so we slept on the

[311] 'Janetta Mary Newhook', *The New Zealand Herald*, 20–23 June 2012, <https://notices.nzherald.co.nz/obituaries/nzherald-nz/obituary.aspx?n=janetta-mary-newhook&pid=158115305&referrer=2865> [accessed 20 August 2021].

deck. And it was a moonlit night and there were camels; you could see them gliding along the bank. Well, isn't it wonderful to be able to remember those things? I think I've had so many opportunities to do things and I'm so glad I did them. And the outcome is topsy-turvy at times, but it's all part of being alive.[312]

McStay's legacy to the author

In July 2021, I was invited to adjudicate the instrumental division of the annual Christchurch Competitions. It consisted of a five-day schedule, each day spanning twelve hours, and listening to and writing feedback reports for approximately three hundred competitors ranging from four to eighteen years in age. It was an extremely gruelling undertaking, but illuminating and educational; it was during this process that I began to realise what it was that McStay had imparted to me through conducting this research.

This was my first experience of adjudicating any competition, and I had no clear expectations. The standard of playing was naturally varied; some were exceptionally good, others made me despondent. As I listened to the different classes of children in rotation, I began to notice the kind of playing that I was gravitating towards: one that faithfully observed the markings in the score, with steady rhythm, an understanding of balance between the hands, good projection of melody, and an innate sense of musicianship and communication with the audience. In essence, everything the student needed to do was already in the score. In many cases the deciding factor between placing the prize winners came down to their skills in listening and observing the score; I would award the first prize to the person who did this the most successfully, even if their pieces were not as technically demanding.

[312] Mechen.

I noticed myself giving the same feedback repeatedly: projection of melody, singing line, balance between the hands, paying careful attention to the score, and conveying emotion. I realised that my comments were in the spirit of how McStay had taught, not from a conscious effort to emulate, but from a natural process of osmosis while conducting my research; through constant reflections on her words, her principles, by speaking at length to her students, and trying to apply these concepts in my own practice, I had been deepening my listening skills along the way.

The words ‘keep listening’ featured on almost every report. At times I wondered if I was being too demanding; they were only schoolchildren, after all. Yet, I felt unwilling to waver in my standards, because clearly there were children who were able to achieve these things. They knew to read the score carefully, and they knew to listen. None of them were particularly prodigious, but they knew how to do it, because they had been taught to listen. If these children can be taught to listen, logic dictates that other children can also be taught to listen. In fact, everyone who is able to hear should be able to be taught to listen, regardless of talent or age. People may possess different levels of musical aptitude; however, much like how one does not have to be a professional athlete to enjoy a run, one does not have to be a remarkable talent to enjoy music.

I asked myself if I had been successful in conveying this idea to my own students. Listening was something I practised consciously every time I was at the piano, a familiar concept in my artistic life. Were my students aware of the art of listening, or were they lost at sea — much like my younger self — because they did not know what to listen for?

With these questions in my mind, I returned to my everyday life of teaching, practising and studying, but with a sense of renewal in my vocation as a teacher. I had always considered it an important aspect of learning for students to be aware of the history of the pieces they were playing, and tried to impart a sense of stylistic convention. In addition to this, I began asking questions to the students to evaluate their own playing. Whereas I used to give instructions and be frustrated with the results, I was now engaging the students in discussion, and training them to listen to the quality of their sounds.

The result was tangible; I witnessed the students slowly becoming aware of their playing, taking care of the sound, and grasping concepts quicker than before. This was a development in my teaching that was activated through my research on the legacy of McStay, and I consider this to be her legacy unto me.

Schnabel wrote, 'I consider everybody to be musical. In the primitive sense this is obviously true'.[313] I thought of this as I heard the students. Although some rushed through flurries of notes with scant regard to any musical content, they were still able to *play*, to go through the mechanics of pressing the keys to make sound. It was not that they could not play, they simply had not been taught *how* to play, through the art of listening.

I consider Schnabel's use of the word 'primitive' to mean that of an untouched musical mind; humans are one of the few animals who have an innate sense of rhythm. Small children and babies respond to singing, love to dance, and vocalise at the top of their lungs to their hearts' content while making a great deal of noise on pots and pans. After all, what is rhythm, if not the driving force behind music?

[313] Schnabel, p. 232.

I, like Schnabel, consider everybody to be musical. It is latent within us, and it is the duty and responsibility of teachers to discover and nurture what lies inside an untapped musical mind. We must teach the art of listening, and keep practising it throughout our lives.

The work continues.

Conclusion

Janetta McStay was an exceptional figure in the history of piano performance and pedagogy in New Zealand. She was a pioneer; as one of the first generation to pursue study overseas, then as the first full-time lecturer of piano studies at a New Zealand university, her wealth of experience and insight contributed greatly to the enrichment and development of the country's classical music community.

In this thesis I endeavoured to answer the following three questions:

1. What was Janetta McStay's approach to teaching at the University of Auckland?
2. What was her approach to public performance?
3. How did her approach to pedagogy and performance provide an enduring legacy?

The process of this research proved to be an enjoyable task, providing me with a snapshot of the musical atmosphere of the time with every person I interviewed. Each was a deeply personal account of their time with McStay, filled with details about McStay the pianist, McStay the teacher, and McStay, the person. These insights, supported cross-referencing to obtain corroboration of details and find consensus, together helped me come to an understanding of McStay in each role.

McStay's playing was unsurpassed in New Zealand during her lifetime; the depth of her musicianship and technique was such that she was the chosen pianist for many a visiting artist of high repute, enjoying many fruitful collaborations with the great musicians of the twentieth century which spanned the world. Her convivial nature and affinity for socialising led to genuine connections beyond the stage; she hosted numerous post-concert parties, opening her home to students, audience members and artists. She enjoyed friendships with

eminent pianists Alicia de Larrocha and Shura Churkassky, who were frequent visitors to her home when they would visit New Zealand. McStay recalls a poignant memory of one soirée, wherein the members of the esteemed Borodin Quartet were present:

> That was part of the chamber music scene then, we took turns at entertaining people in different homes, but it doesn't happen now. [We had] the Borodin Quartet on their last night in New Zealand, and it was a wonderful evening. The cellist, Berlinsky had a most beautiful voice, speaking and singing. He sang some Tchaikovsky songs at [the] party, it was just wonderful. You know that lovely song, *After the Ball*? I can remember I was playing and the tears of emotion were pouring down, partly because they were leaving the next day. I think he cried a little, too.[314]

McStay's appointment at the University of Auckland was a turning point for her life and the development of pianistic talent in New Zealand. She continued to lead a busy concertising career alongside her teaching, allowing them to witness in action how she exemplified her ethos in her own playing. Her ability to demonstrate was an asset, a benchmark of the finest playing; she was strict, but cared deeply about the well-being of her students. With McStay at the helm, students were able to receive a thorough training in stylistic conventions, but her greatest impact was how she taught her students to listen; the demands she would make of her students were tough, but it was out of a respect for the composer, and to ensure the students would learn to develop their own musical voice, and fly the nest as independent thinkers.

Many of her students have continued in the path of music as performers, teachers, or like McStay herself, both. Those who chose a different direction were grateful for the depth of

[314] Guerin.

training which enriched their enjoyment of music. Through her students during her twenty years at the University of Auckland, McStay leaves behind a legacy, that of the pursuit of excellence.[315]

McStay's unfettered zest for life was an inspiration to many; her inquisitive mind, sense of adventure, love of food, art, and travel, all fed into her creative-performance process. Her biggest influences were rich, diverse life experiences and interests. Sayer supports this notion:

> I think that all of these experiences add up to rather more than we achieve on a one to one basis with one teacher or another. […] I think all these different experiences came through great musicians and collaborators rather than from a teacher. Quite apart from which, she was besotted with things European — food, views, language, people, music — and I think that had a very big influence on her, and what she thought we needed to know.[316]

Preliminary research revealed that the information about McStay available to the public was focused on her biographical details. This thesis aims to provide additional insight, with its focus on McStay's life as a teacher, told through both perspectives of teacher and student. There is scope for further research, namely in restoring any privately owned audio and video recordings of McStay to add to the Ngā Taonga archives.

[315] Williams.
[316] Sayer.

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Unpublished interviews with McStay

Owing to the large number of unpublished interviews conducted with McStay, the choice was made to list them together in chronological order in a separate section.

Mcstay, Janetta, interviewed by Anne Bonning for Auckland Chamber Music Society, Auckland, 19 April 1995. Transcript held by Catherine Mayo.

McStay, Janetta, interviewed by Catherine Mayo, Auckland:

23 August, 8 September, 23 September, 9 October, 24 October, 12 November, 26 November, 17 December 2009; 5 February, 10 April, 22 April, 5 May, 22 June 2010. Recordings and transcripts held by Catherine Mayo.

Unpublished interviews with former McStay pupils

All interviews were conducted by the author and listed in alphabetical order of the interview participant names.

Austin, Katherine, Hamilton, 12 May 2020

Bailey, Raewyn, interviewed online, 15 August 2020

Clarke, Sheryl, Auckland, 19 January 2019

Cuming, Christine, Auckland, 12 September 2018

Grice, Jeffrey, Paris (France), 16 October 2018

James, David, Auckland, 20 October 2019

O'Brien, Mary, Auckland, 19 June 2019

Riley, Catherine, London (United Kingdom), 11 October 2018

Sayer, Bryan, Auckland, 12 February 2019

Weber, Ann, Auckland, 17 February 2020

White, Meredith, Kingston (United Kingdom), 12 October 2018

Williams, John, Christchurch, 8 July 2020

Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Title: Janetta McStay: A Teacher and Performer's Legacy to New Zealand Pianists

Researcher: Heewon (Maria) Mo

Degree**:** Doctor of Musical Arts, Conservatorium of Music, University of Waikato

Researcher introduction: My name is Maria Mo and I am a Doctor of Musical Arts student at the University of Waikato, majoring in piano performance. My supervisors are Prof. Martin Lodge and Katherine Austin. For my thesis, I am researching the pedagogical and performance approach of Janetta McStay, lecturer in piano at the University of Auckland 1963 – 1982, and her legacy to the subsequent generation of pianists. It is my hope that I will find out valuable information and insight into her pedagogical methods and approach to performance as a pianist.

You are invited to participate in this research as a former pupil of Janetta for one or more years during the years of 1963 – 1982 at the University of Auckland. My goal is to find out how Janetta taught and advised her students in regards to interpretation, technique and performance of the Classical piano literature, and how her own background as an active concert pianist informed these teachings. The information shared in these interviews will be added to the body of work about Janetta and her life as a celebrated teacher and performer. This qualitative research project will involve a group of participants in a one-on-one semi-structured interview setting. There will be a list of questions for your perusal prior to the interview. The interview will be sound recorded, and in some cases, also video recorded. These interviews will be transcribed verbatim. You will receive transcripts of your recording which will be yours. The sound and video recordings will belong to the researcher.

You will be able to refuse to answer any questions or retract any text data if you feel uncomfortable about any aspect of it. In such cases you should approach the researcher and discuss the part you wish not to be included in the research no later than four weeks after receiving your transcript. You also may withdraw from participation in the research at any

time up to four weeks after receiving the transcript of your interview, or discuss concerns you may have with the researcher and/or the research supervisors (see contact details).

All raw recorded data and electronic written data will be stored on a private password-protected hard drive and destroyed by data trashing after 5 years. All hard copies of interview transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet at the University of Waikato for a period of 5 years upon which time it will be destroyed by shredding. Some data, with the agreement of the individual participants concerned, may be stored in archives such as the Alexander Turnbull Library, the Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision archives, or the SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music Kohinga a Toi te Arapūoru collection.

Wherever possible, real names and identities will be used in the final report, but participants may choose to use a pseudonym for some or all of their interview. The information shared in the one-on-one interviews will not be shared across the participants, but the final report will contain data from some or all of the interviews and will be able to be accessed by anyone from any location via the world wide web.

If you wish to participate in this research project, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you have any concerns about the ethical considerations or questions about this research, please feel free contact my supervisors, or the ethics committee below. Any issues raised will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and the outcome clearly communicated. You may ask about the purpose and content of the research and the risks, the benefits and your rights as a volunteer, or anything else about the research or this form that is not clear to you. Please keep this letter for your future reference.

Thank you for taking the time to take part in this study. Your participation is appreciated and will contribute to a developing and necessary documentation of the legacy of Janetta McStay.

Heewon (Maria) Mo

Researcher

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

Appendix 2: Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Consent Form

Title: Janetta McStay: A Teacher and Performer's Legacy to New Zealand Pianists

Researcher: Heewon (Maria) Mo

Degree: Doctor of Musical Arts, Conservatorium of Music, University of Waikato

This form will be held for a period of five years.

- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the aims and nature of the research.
- I have had opportunities to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that comments I make will remain confidential across participants and pseudonyms can be used upon request.
- I understand that I am free to retract portions of text data or withdraw from the research for up to four weeks upon receiving my portion of the interview transcript but no later.
- I understand that digital sound recordings and video recordings will be made and will be the property of the researcher.
- I understand that my interviews will be transcribed verbatim.
- I understand that digital recordings and transcribed data will be kept for 5 years after which they will be destroyed, or archived with my written agreement as interviewee.
- I understand that the final report will be accessible to anyone via the world wide web.
- I agree to take part in this research.

Name of participant:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Name of researcher:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social

Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

Appendix 3: Leave Report 1978

Below is the report written by McStay about her experiences during her sabbatical in 1978.

Leave Report Term III 1978

- Associate-Professor J. McStay (Music)

For those of us involved in music in these South Pacific islands the privilege of leave is one greatly to be cherished. When it is granted, the problem is not so much where to choose to go as what to renounce. In this, not only with fresh places but with fresh emphases in teaching, especially as greatly enriched by all I was able to experience in the time available, not only in the directly musical sense but in all the complementary and peripheral influences to which one cannot fail to be exposed in Europe.

My leave began in the European late summer amidst the golden harvests and flower-filled window boxes of West Germany and it ended in the depths of this last exceptionally cruel Northern Hemisphere winter. Except for rather widely scattered Festivals and Summer Schools, the month of August is generally one of reduced musical activity in Europe and indeed my first week was spent with my husband at an international conference of foresters and my first musical experience, and a very moving one, was that of listening to the folk songs of many lands around a camp fire in a woodland near Kassel. Kassel, while it would not be rated as one of the most beautiful of German towns nevertheless in its reconstruction exemplifies modern German urbanism with its extensive pedestrian area, its fine theatre and the splendid Wilhelmstraße with its lovely park enclosing the impressive Art Gallery. If Kassel is the prototype of an orderly, prosperous smaller German city, Munich with twice the population of Auckland combines with its industry, commerce and beer an impressive cultural tradition in its theatre, opera, musical training and art galleries. Of these, the Alte Pinakothek is one of the great galleries of Europe and visits there were a potent stimulus. I mention this because I believe that for many musicians exposure to the diverse forms of European culture is as important a part of the leave situation as the more obvious musical objectives and I take no apology for the fact that such exposure in retrospect has provided enrichment and inspiration every degree as great as the many and varied musical experiences I was fortunate enough to enjoy.

The first concerts took place in Munich and Salzburg – an open air concert in the Residenz courtyard and adjoining the lovely Cuvillies theatre in Munich and in the concert room adjoining the Mirabell Gardens in Salzburg. The first music school was also in Salzburg at the Mozarteum where I listened to the piano classes of teachers from Russia and Portugal. A train journey through the Austrian mountains took me south to Klagenfurt in Carinthia where my next objective was the annual summer school conducted this year by Max Rostal (violin), Andre Navarra (cello) and Gunther Ludwig (piano) who tutored an international group of students. Amongst these, one of our Conservatorium graduates, Alison Lander, was taking a very active part and this was the first of many former students widely scattered throughout Europe. This report does not allow space to elaborate but I believe this contact with our past students, many of the adapting and surviving remarkably well in the international situation, to be a very important aspect of our leave.

It is many years since I was in a position to attend a European Music Festival and by good fortune, arrived in time for the last ten days at Edinburgh where it was Peter Diamand's final year as Director. His personal influence made it possible to enjoy many additional favours but even without these the programme was impressive in its variety, ranging from the now famous production of Carmen, the controversial presentations of Monteverdi from Zurich and the Frankfurt company's Katya Kabanova, to memorable symphonic programmes from the Dresden Staatskapelle and the Chicago Symphony with many other smaller-scale events contributing to the rich fare. In sharp contrast to all this variety in the Edinburgh setting was the following week in Leeds, spent listening to the second, third and final rounds of the Piano Competition, an event which illustrated once more that the aspirations of true music-making are often ill-served by international competitions.

In mid-September I arrived in London which became my base for the remainder of my leave. By mid-September the year's musical activity was well launched and there was always more to do than time in which to do it. I attended concerts of every type and period too numerous to mention, and frequent rewarding rehearsals on the South Bank. Naturally there were also numerous visits to musical institutions, the Royal Academy, the Royal College and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as well as many contacts with individual teachers and performers. At the Academy, in addition to several attendances at the piano classes of Gordon Green and the chamber music sessions of Sidney Griller, I sat in on a number of piano repertoire and teacher training sessions. Some of these were simply a regurgitation of

the old familiar material, some I found stimulating. Similar visits took place to the Royal College of Music where the notable library is always a pleasure to see once more. Both these institutions have changed little in aspect since my own student days but the new Guildhall School of Music and Drama is another matter and the whole concept of the Barbican and of the development of an artistic centre within the City of London will be watched with great interest. The buildings, impressive as it is, appears to be undergoing some teething troubles and personally I would find it difficult to derive much inspiration from the design of some of the teaching rooms where it is the fate of staff to spend so much of their working lives. My reaction to the teaching accommodation at the still-new buildings of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester is even less favourable. Nevertheless the Royal Northern College has become a vital training centre for young musicians who can, under one roof, enjoy a variety of musical involvement ranging from their own lessons, lectures and master classes to international orchestral and recital fare presented in their fine concert hall. I spent almost a week in Manchester on this occasion and met several of our ex-New Zealand students who find the advantages of studying to balance well against the greater hassle and expense of London.

In both Manchester and London I gained some insight into the musical training of young people. Cheethams in Manchester is a residential school where, alongside a good general education, special talents are nurtured in a well balanced musical training, with specialist lessons from Royal Northern College staff. Pimlico School is administered by the Inner London Council and every Saturday it is seething with activity as young musicians from about eight years upwards take part in a full day of music, from individual lessons to choirs, orchestras, etc. For me it was a particular pleasure to watch the lively participation and remarkably high standard of children from many races involved in imaginatively presented musical appreciation and aural training classes. Similarly at Trent Park Training College on the outskirts of London I was much impressed by the teaching initiative of staff and students in their relationship to small children.

In teaching as well as in performing I have become increasingly aware that anxiety, nervous tension and faulty co-ordination are often related to bad postural habits. Not only did I derive great benefit from a series of “lessons” in the Alexander Method which I attended at the Constructive Teaching Centre in Holland Park, but I was also most interested to observe the training of students who are involved not only in correcting bad posture in anyone from

musicians and ballet dancers to sportsmen and office workers, but also in preventive treatment which develops habits of good posture from an early age. The scope of this work is very great and it is regrettable that in New Zealand we have no counterpart.

Although I was based in London, the Eurail system allowed me to return to Europe for further visits, to see former students in Brussels and in Paris, where I was able to spend an afternoon at the fabulous Pompidou Centre, and to visit institutions in Spain, Germany and Hungary. Well constructed as it is and endowed with an enviable concert-hall, the Conservatoire at Barcelona would not normally have been included in the space of a short leave were it not for the fact that as part of the Barcelona Festival Rosalyn Tureck had been engaged to present a series of lectures there on the interpretation of Bach. The frustrations of trying to enrol from London were considerable, but nothing compared with the frustrations attendant upon the course itself. Not only did Miss Tureck adopt the Spanish trait of unpunctuality in full measure and not only did she completely ignore the aspect of each lecture as advertised, but she dispensed with the services of an excellent interpreter in favour of delivering her discourse in a mixture of almost non-existent Spanish, less-than-adequate French and some English, interspersed with countless 'vous comprenez's. It must be said, however, that the frustrations of these sessions melted away in the animated atmosphere of Barcelona as a city, with frequent visits to the Picasso Museum and the exciting discovery of the superbly situated new Miró Foundation. When at Miss Tureck's penultimate session the announcement was made that she was indisposed, I gratefully used the ensuing three days of unexpired Eurail and of golden sunshine to visit Venice. For several centuries Venice has provided a source of inspiration to many of the great figures in musical history – as also to countless lesser mortals – and the memory of this visit is one of the glories of all my travelling experience.

In Germany I renewed acquaintance for several days with the Köln Hochschule für Musik where Alison Lander, a former student there, has been appointed pianist to one of the two senior violin teachers, Professor Igor Ozim. The excellent Inter-City train service enabled me to travel easily to Essen and Hanover from Cologne. I visited Essen for the classes of Paul Badura-Skoda who, like many performer-teachers in Europe divides his time amongst several appointments, delegating much of his teaching to an assistant. This has certain disadvantages for students; and classes, when he is present, tend to become prolonged affairs requiring great stamina from teacher and pupil alike. Typical of the post-war refurbishment of Germany is

Essen, capital of the Ruhr and no longer the grim town of one's imagination, possessing now many cultural amenities including a beautiful Art Gallery notable for its French and German collections. The Hochschule, in contrast with the contemporary designs at Cologne and Hanover, is a former Baroque Residenz situated amongst wooded hills at Werden on the outskirts of Essen. At Hanover another renowned European teacher Hans Leyraf, spends part of his time. Like Cologne, the Hanover Hochschule is colourfully decorated and realistically proportioned. The prosperity of Germany is evident in the splendid equipment throughout – allowing, for instance, a regular replacement of excellent pianos.

Stimulating and enlightening as these classes were in Germany, the most profound impression of musical training awaited me when I paid my first visit to Budapest and spent several days at the famous Franz Liszt Academy. Arrangements for the visit to Hungary were fraught with delays and difficulties despite help from the British Council in London and from Hungarian musicians. However, once there a tightly-packed programme of concerts, opera and visits to the Academy was arranged and the ensuing human contacts, the wealth of talent and the splendid teaching all made the strongest impact. All aspects of musical training, including early exposure to the Kodaly Method are insisted upon with the result that by a comparable age to that of University Entrance in this country, music students are well-grounded musicians. Amongst the many classes I attended were those of the doyen of piano teacher, Pal Kodosa, who has carried the tradition of Bartok and Dohnanyi down to today's brilliant young Hungarian pianists.

Before I left New Zealand I had agreed to choose a new Bosendorfer piano for the Maidment Theatre, the qualities of that particular make seeming, on our past experience, to be particularly suited to the acoustics of the hall. It was both a pleasure and a responsibility to visit the Bosendorfer factory outside Vienna for this purpose. After a morning spent in making a final choice from five instruments, the deal was sealed most agreeably in a splendid Austrian lunch with the artistic director of the firm of Bosendorfer. The visit to Vienna coincided with the traditional New Year's Eve performance of Die Fledermaus at the Staatsoper, followed three evenings later by a memorable Cosi fan tutte conducted by the veteran Karl Böhm. Within those three days the temperature had dropped from +7° to -22°C and the whole of Europe was in the thrall of a bitter winter which lasted long after my departure from London for New Zealand in the second week of February.

Despite the best “cleaning up” of which one is capable before departure, the granting of leave imposes an extra burden on one’s colleagues and I cannot end this report without a special acknowledgement to Bryan Sayer. Not only did he handle the extra teaching and examination commitment with the ability and thoroughness so characteristic of him but he was scrupulous in keeping me informed of student progress and other matters where distance does not sever involvement. In thanking the University for the enrichment of my leave I cannot sufficiently thank him for keeping my mind at ease during these altogether remarkable months.

Janetta McStay
(music)

Appendix 4: Programme notes for Maria Mo final recital, 30 September 2021

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)
Piano Sonatas Op. 109, 110, 111

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109
i. Vivace ma non troppo — Adagio espressivo
ii. Prestissimo
iii. Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung. Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo

Piano Sonata No. 31 in Ab major, Op. 110
i. Moderato cantabile molto espressivo
ii. Allegro molto
iii. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro ma non troppo

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111
i. Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato
ii. Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

The last three piano sonatas of Beethoven were written between 1820 and 1822. Sketches show that the composer worked on them at the same time, and they serve as a kind of musical triptych, certainly the Holy Grail of challenges for any serious pianist.

By this point Beethoven had already been completely deaf for many years, which makes these works all the more remarkable in their scope of colours, textures, structure, and profundity; gone are the neatly balanced conventions of the Classical era as he ushers in a new world of expression and sound, an introduction to the Romantic era.

I began working on these sonatas six months after suffering a profound loss. During those six months I was an empty shell; I was grieving, burnt out, and uninspired. The final recital and submission dates for my DMA were looming closer and I had nothing concrete planned – I only knew I wanted to end with something meaningful and personal, something that would push my limits as a musician. It was also important for me to pay homage to Janetta McStay, the teacher and pianist whose legacy I have been exploring for the last three years for my

thesis. Then one day, as obvious as the sun, it came to me: I would begin learning the last three Beethoven sonatas.

I use the words ‘begin learning’, as I do not believe one ever finishes learning these works. It is never enough simply to play what is written on the score, of which there is plenty; one must strive to make Beethoven’s instructions their own, to find personal meaning and forge a deep connection to the music, and tell a story to the audience. As I explored its depths and details, I found myself slowly coming back to life. I had to push and pull everything out from within myself and question everything I knew to make sense of what was on the page. The scope of discovery with these sonatas is such that one will always be able to find new truths and meanings over time – so indeed, in this sense, I have begun learning them, and will continue to do so. They have become lifelong companions, whom I will visit time and time again, as I continue on my path as an artist.
What a joy it is to have made such friends.

It has been healing to have had this focus, particularly during a time of such turbulence and anxiety – to be reminded of my purpose in this world, which is to serve others through music. I am immensely thankful to have found my way back.

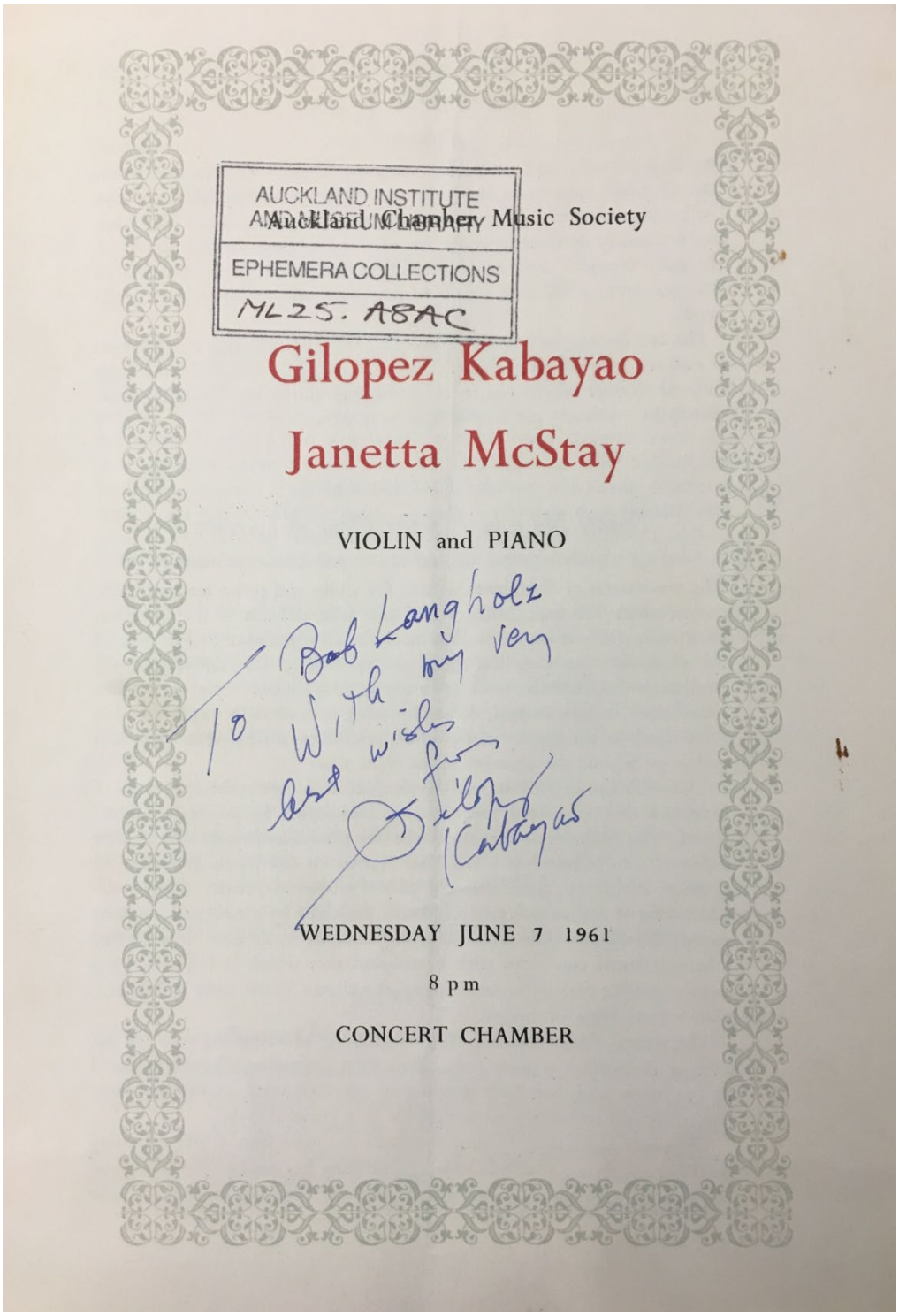
Ngā mihi nui ki a koe,

Maria

Appendix 5: Concert programmes and newspaper articles

The below images have been scanned from physical items held at the Auckland Institute and Museum Library, Ephemera Collections, ML25.A8AC.

(http://aucklandmuseum.com/discover/library)



Auckland Chamber Music Society Inc

RUGGIERO RICCI and JANETTA McSTAY

TOWN HALL

SATURDAY 18 AUGUST 1962 AT 8 PM

1963

The

AUCKLAND CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

Inc.

Guy FALLOT

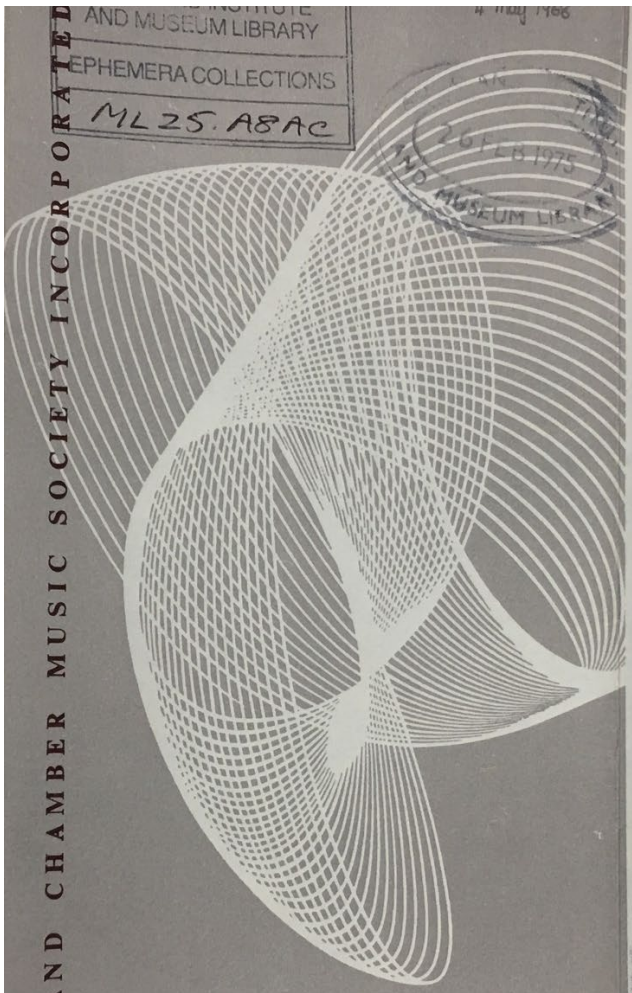
Janetta McSTAY

CONCERT CHAMBER

JULY 6

1963

THE AUCKLAND CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY INCORPORATED



The Borodin Quartet and Janetta McStay

THE BORODIN QUARTET

ROSTISLAV DUBINSKY
FIRST VIOLIN

YAROSLAV ALEXANDROV
SECOND VIOLIN

DMITRI SHEBALIN
VIOLA

VALENTIN BERLINSKY
CELLO

We warmly welcome the return of the Borodin Quartet who on its previous visit three years ago proved itself to be not only the foremost string quartet of the U.S.S.R. but also one of the world's *élite*.

Formed originally in 1944 when its members were students at the Moscow Conservatoire (since when there have been two changes of personnel—the second violin and the viola) the quartet was recognised professionally in 1955 and since then has travelled widely. It has won consistent acclaim for its performance of works from the classical repertoire of Western Europe as well as for its presentation of music by Russian composers.

JANETTA McSTAY

Janetta McStay needs no introduction to Auckland audiences. Tutor in Piano at the University of Auckland, she has recently returned from an overseas tour embracing solo recitals in Southeast Asia, Iran, Turkey and Greece, in addition to visits to music schools in Europe, England and America.

She has an extensive reputation as a chamber music pianist, and the Borodin Quartet has expressed its delight in performing with her on this tour.

CONCERT CHAMBER 4 MAY 1968

This tour is under the auspices of the Chamber Music Federation of New Zealand, with the support of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, and in conjunction with the N Z Broadcasting Corporation.

LADISLAV JASEK

presents

A RECITAL OF CHAMBER MUSIC

in association with

Janetta McStay *piano*
Robert Issell *violin*
Glynne Adams *viola*
Pamela de Almeida *cello*
Waldemar de Almeida *cello*

Auckland Grammar School Centennial Theatre
Sunday 11 March 1973

1950

Alfredo Campoli

(violin)

Janetta McStay

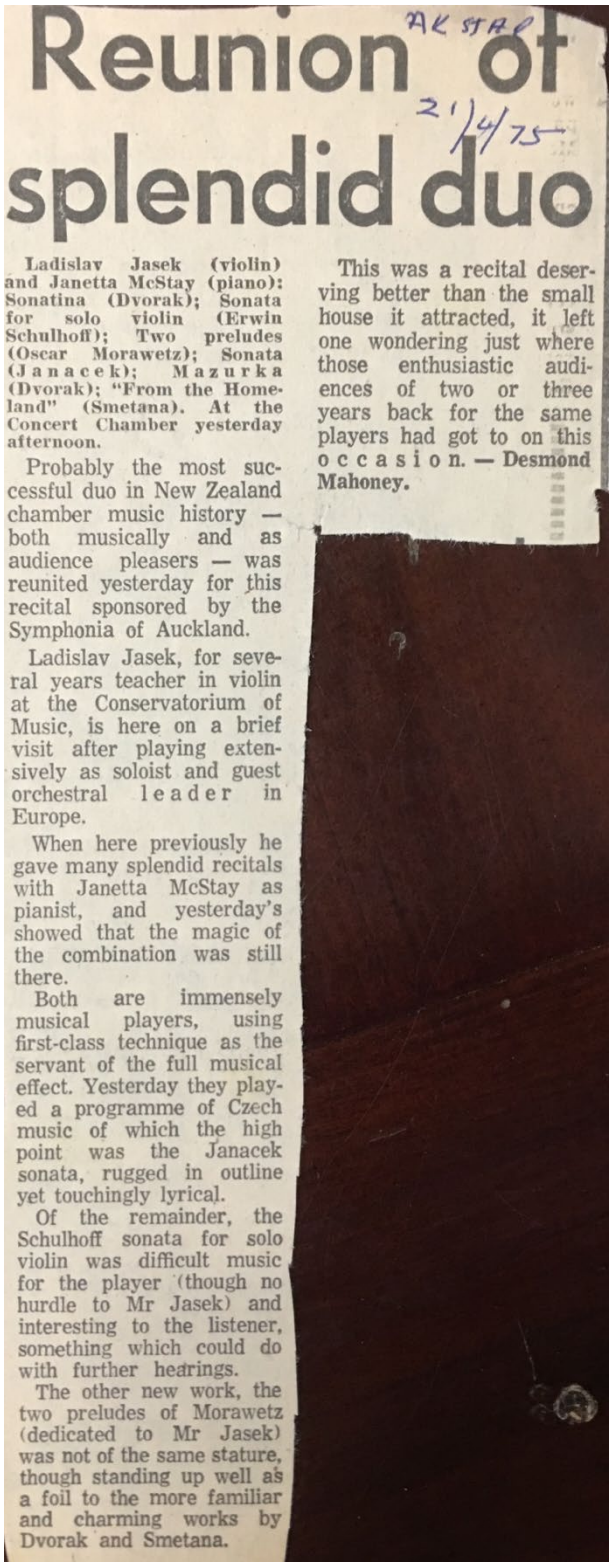
(piano)

Concert Chamber

20 cents

Thursday, 8th April

8.15 p.m.



Reunion of splendid duo

AK STAR
21/4/75

Ladislav Jasek (violin) and Janetta McStay (piano): Sonatina (Dvorak); Sonata for solo violin (Erwin Schulhoff); Two preludes (Oscar Morawetz); Sonata (Janacek); Mazurka (Dvorak); "From the Homeland" (Smetana). At the Concert Chamber yesterday afternoon.

Probably the most successful duo in New Zealand chamber music history — both musically and as audience pleasers — was reunited yesterday for this recital sponsored by the Symphonia of Auckland.

Ladislav Jasek, for several years teacher in violin at the Conservatorium of Music, is here on a brief visit after playing extensively as soloist and guest orchestral leader in Europe.

When here previously he gave many splendid recitals with Janetta McStay as pianist, and yesterday's showed that the magic of the combination was still there.

Both are immensely musical players, using first-class technique as the servant of the full musical effect. Yesterday they played a programme of Czech music of which the high point was the Janacek sonata, rugged in outline yet touchingly lyrical.

Of the remainder, the Schulhoff sonata for solo violin was difficult music for the player (though no hurdle to Mr Jasek) and interesting to the listener, something which could do with further hearings.

The other new work, the two preludes of Morawetz (dedicated to Mr Jasek) was not of the same stature, though standing up well as a foil to the more familiar and charming works by Dvorak and Smetana.

This was a recital deserving better than the small house it attracted, it left one wondering just where those enthusiastic audiences of two or three years back for the same players had got to on this occasion. — **Desmond Mahoney.**

'Reunion of Splendid Duo'. *The Auckland Star*, 21 April 1975.

Eminent New Zealand Pianist

IT was perhaps the lack of musical activity rather than its availability which gave impetus to the enthusiasm and early training of one of New Zealand's most highly-regarded pianists. Originally from Roxburgh, Central Otago, Janetta McStay came to Invercargill —in those days not a town remarkable for its interest in cultural matters—at the age of five to begin her schooling. Here she was lucky to find two remarkable music teachers Mona Rankin and May O'Byrne, who both had, as Miss McStay puts it, "the inestimable ability to make a child love music."

During the years of her musical training, concerts by world-famous artists were a rarity to be savoured for months afterwards. She remembers being excited and inspired by a visit of the violinist Joseph Szigeti. Musical people of Invercargill were obliged therefore, to make their own entertainment and at 15, Janetta McStay had the opportunity to start her chamber music training in local trios and quartets.

After gaining her LRSM, she was recommended for a scholarship to the Royal Academy, and so at the age of 17 she found herself in London. "It was overwhelming. Imagine my delight at being swamped with music after the dearth at home." Her two-year bursary was extended to four years, but just as she was due to return to New Zealand war was declared and she was unable to take a ship home. After two years as a music teacher at St Swithin's School for Girls, Winchester, she joined the music division of ENSA, the entertainment branch of the Services, which was then organized by Walter Legge, now head of a large recording company and husband of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf.

The years with ENSA provided valuable experience for Janetta McStay. She gave hundreds of concerts, either solo or as accompanist, all over England and later in France, Holland and Belgium, playing on anything from dilapidated bar-room uprights to carefully preserved Steinways in Germany at the end of the war. After her years in ENSA, she returned to Britain, where she toured as a soloist and accompanist for the British Arts Council. She also did some broadcasting for the BBC. At this time she took some lessons from the well-known piano tutor Kendall Taylor, who has toured New Zealand. Then followed a tour of Europe, where she made a special study of Spanish piano music.

On her return to New Zealand in 1954, after an absence of 18 years, Janetta McStay began to take part in this country's musical life with recording and studio concert engagements for the NZBS. Her first engagement as accompanist for a visiting artist was with the noted English violinist Maurice Clare, with whom she later toured Japan. She renewed her interest in chamber music work, giving broadcasts and touring the Auckland Province for the Community Arts Service.

In the following decade, Janetta McStay did work for the New Zealand Federation of Chamber Music Societies as accompanist for such international artists as Ruggiero Ricci and the French cellist Guy Fallot, whom she describes as "a wonderful person, a dedicated artist". It was as accompanist to Guy Fallot that she made another trip to Japan, as well as Korea in 1964.

Her Asian tours, including Indonesia in 1957, mainland China in 1960, have given her a taste for oriental objets d'art. On the shelves and tables of her small, but attractive flat in Parnell, Auckland, are souvenirs of her travels: a valuable ancient ivory box from Japan, painting, shells and fabrics from Indonesia and Korean china.

From performing to teaching—Janetta McStay joined the staff of Auckland University Music School in 1963. For her it meant a change in her approach to music, but she enjoys teaching students of university age very much. "By then they have reached a pretty high standard, they know what they want to do and are keen. It's stimulating also because no two students can be treated alike."

Although she has, by now, become well known as a soloist and concerto player, Janetta McStay's first love is chamber music. She has noticed a marked improvement in New Zealand music lately. "Some young performers reach a very high standard and organizations like the Chamber Music Federation do marvellous work to bring out internationally-famous artists. There is no lack of outside stimulus, although there could be a more evenly spread interest in music in schools," she says.

Just fresh from a national tour as accompanist to Ruggiero Ricci—she is able to adapt her teaching to her touring schedule—Janetta McStay hopes to give a series of concerts in Russia early next year, followed by a tour of teaching institutions in Western Europe and Britain.

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 2, 1966.

'Eminent New Zealand Pianist'. *N.Z. Listener*, 2 September, 1966.