

Why “More Practice” Misses the Point in Piano Study: Marian Lamoureux Makes the Case for Personal Connection

Veteran Piano Teacher Says Students Do Not Need More Practice Time, They Need Better Music



Hinsdale, Illinois May 23, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](http://www.Issuewire.com)) - Across thousands of family households, the same

chart hangs on the same refrigerator. Thirty minutes a day. Six days a week. The number is supposed to measure how seriously a child is taking piano. According to one veteran teacher, the chart is measuring almost nothing.

[Marian Lamoureux](#), B.Mus., B.Ed., a piano instructor based in Hinsdale, Illinois, has been at the bench with students for more than four decades. Across that time, she has watched the practice-minutes default produce results that range from indifferent to actively counterproductive. She has come to believe the field is asking the wrong question.

The shift she advocates is short. Stop counting minutes. Start choosing the right music.

The Problem With Practice Time as a Metric

The conversation between teachers, parents, and students has long centered on duration. A student who logs forty-five minutes a day, the thinking goes, is doing the work. A student who logs only fifteen is not.

“The number on the fridge is doing almost none of the work people imagine it is,” Lamoureux says. In her experience, time at the bench correlates only loosely with progress at the bench. The student who shows up to the piano while resenting it can spend an hour absorbing almost nothing.

“Practice time alone has never produced a real musician. The right minutes have,” [Lamoureux](#) says. The chart, in her telling, is a comfort to parents and a tax on students. It is rarely a tool for growth.

A Connection-First Mindset in a Compliance-Focused Field

The default Lamoureux pushes against is not just numerical. It is a broader assumption that piano study is a compliance exercise. The student does what the teacher assigns. The student logs what the parent expects. The student earns the next book.

She believes the model fails on a basic test. “When I see a student dragged through a Czerny exercise for forty minutes, I see a student who is going to quit at fourteen,” Lamoureux says. The compliance-first model produces students who comply for a few years and then leave the instrument behind for good.

The alternative she advocates puts personal connection at the center of every decision in the lesson. The piece has to meet the student. The student’s reaction to the piece, in turn, shapes the next assignment. The connection is the system.

A Career Built Inside the Question

[Lamoureux](#) earned the right to push back on the default the long way. She began teaching at sixteen in Ontario, Canada, after starting piano lessons at seven. She studied at the University of Western Ontario, supported by scholarships to the university and to the Banff School of Fine Arts. She earned an Honors Bachelor of Music in Music Education and a Bachelor of Education, and she received her teaching certification in 1984.

For ten years she taught in the Ontario school system while running a private piano studio out of her home. The classroom and the home studio gave her two views of the same question. In both rooms, students who were connected to the music in front of them grew. Students who were going through the motions did not.

She moved to Hinsdale, Illinois, in 1999 and stepped away from classroom teaching for a decade to focus on her three children. When she returned to her home studio full-time, she returned with the conviction the two careers had built. Practice without personal connection was a treadmill. Practice with personal connection was real work.

Why Personal Connection Matters

The shift [Lamoureux](#) argues for is not theoretical. It changes what happens during the thirty minutes a child sits at the piano on a given afternoon.

“I have had students who practiced thirty focused minutes a day outpace students who logged an hour with the television on,” Lamoureux says. The first student knew what they were trying to fix. The second student was passing time at an instrument.

In her studio, students are taught what good practice looks like before they are asked to do more of it. The hour rule, she says, is no replacement for the slow careful attention a piece demands. Lamoureux walks parents through the difference, often during the first month a new student joins the studio.

The Role of Repertoire Choice

The piece on the music stand is, in Lamoureux’s view, the lever most piano teachers underuse. The wrong piece in a given week will produce a student who resists the bench. The right piece can keep that same student playing for years.

“The right piece in the right week can keep a student playing for another year. The wrong piece can quietly close the door,” Lamoureux says. She chooses repertoire student by student, often with input from the student. Sometimes that means a sonatina. Sometimes that means a careful arrangement of a song the student already loves.

“I will assign a piece a student would not have picked, but only if I can explain why it is on the bench,” Lamoureux says. The framing changes how the student practices it. The piece has a purpose, not just a position in the book.

The Role of the Parent in the Lesson Year

Lamoureux’s argument extends to the family of the student, not only the student. The parent who tracks minutes is, in her view, often filling a role no one assigned. The work parents can do well, she says, is different.

“I tell parents to listen for short stretches of slow careful playing, not for an hour of running pieces. That is what good practice sounds like at home,” Lamoureux says. The parent who recognizes the sound of real work, in her telling, becomes a better partner to both the student and the teacher.

Discipline as Quiet Consistency

Lamoureux’s argument is not against discipline. The opposite. She believes piano study requires real discipline, and that the compliance model often substitutes for it. Compliance is loud. Discipline is quiet.

Her own discipline shows up outside the studio in the same shape. She hikes. She cycles. She cooks for her family and friends. She and her family return to a cottage in Canada when they can. None of those

are crash projects. All of them reward slow attention paid over time, which is the kind of attention she wants from her students at the bench.

A Call for Change in Piano Teaching

Lamoureux does not advocate for a wholesale rewrite of the field. She does advocate for a change in the questions parents and teachers are asking. How long did the student practice. Did they make it through the book. Did they hit the recital piece cleanly. Those questions, she says, are downstream of a more important one.

“Choosing music for a student is not about indulgence. It is about reading what they actually need that month,” Lamoureux says. The teacher who reads the student well will produce a student who keeps playing. The teacher who runs the syllabus will produce a student who quits at fourteen.

The piece has to meet the student. The default of the field still does not, in her view, take that principle seriously enough.

“If we want students at the piano in twenty years, we have to stop asking how long they practiced and start asking what they practiced,” Lamoureux says.

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