

An Article on New Age Piano Playing
by Pianist/Composer Edward Weiss

Interview with New Age Pianist Peter Kater

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Multi-Platinum selling pianist-composer, [Peter Kater](#), just received a Grammy nomination for his FACES OF THE SUN recording on SilverWave Records for BEST NEW AGE ALBUM. This is his 4th nomination in the last 5 years.

Edward: How Did You Get Started Playing New Age Piano?

Peter: My mother insisted I start taking classical lessons when I was 7 years old. I hated it. Not because I didn't like playing the piano, because I hated having to play everything exactly the way it was written on the page. Even at 7 I liked to reinterpret music my own way.

But this was really discouraged and I went thru 3 teachers in my first year because I was such a difficult student.

Finally when I was about 12 my mother got me a teacher who taught me how to improvise, starting by learning all the chords and scales and how they related together and how you could mix them up to create different progressions. He later taught me how to take a simple lead sheet (one not melody and chord names only) and play them in a multitude of styles using different chord inversions and voicing's and rhythms to basically play them any way I wanted to at the time.

I actually got pretty good at this and this lead to my playing all the current rock and pop music of the 70's. Bill Joel, Elton John Led Zeppelin, Cat Stevens, James Taylor, Carole King, The Eagles, America, Jethro Tull etc. etc. etc. From there I started playing my own "improvisations" and making up my own songs. My own style was already there by then. I knew what I wanted to sound like and I was then later influenced by people like Keith Jarrett, Paul Winter Consort, Oregon, Pat Metheny and Lyle Mayes etc.

Edward: What Inspires You and Informs Your Music?

Peter: Everything in my life inspires me, but particularly Nature has a very potent healing and inspiring quality that I thrive on. Personal relationships and love are always great. But in truth, inspiration comes from within, as does all our experience. It looks like it's coming from the outside but how we interpret, react and relate to our external relationships and experiences comes solely from our own inner reference points, interpretations and aspirations.

Edward: What Is Your Method for Composing a Piano Piece?

Peter: Listening. Listening is the only way to be creative. Creativity is a receptive act. It's a matter of listening deeply to what is going on inside your head or heart or body and playing it out, one note, one melody, one chord progression at a time. Listening to what's already there and not judging it. Turning off the judgmental, second guessing part of our minds is key to allowing creative flow and expression. That's the short answer.

Edward: Do you Get Blocked Creatively and if so, How do You Get Past It?

Peter: These days I rarely get blocked creatively. And when I do, I go do something else. I don't fight it, judge it, think it's wrong or anything. I leave it alone and respect it and wait until it changes. IF FOR SOME REASON that's not okay. Like, I HAVE TO WRITE THIS RIGHT NOW OTHERWISE THEY"LL TURN OFF MY ELECTRICITY, then I go ahead and allow myself to write the most predictable, uninspired thing that wants to come out. But the important thing is that something IS coming out.

Then you keep going and keep writing till you feel you're approaching "inspiration". Sometimes when you go back and listen to what you were judging earlier you might feel differently about it later. Plus it's good to keep in mind, that sometimes having space from your instrument can give you a very new and refreshed perspective and expression and appreciation when you come back to it.

Edward: What Advice Would You Give to Aspiring New Age Pianists?

Peter: Follow your heart. Follow your bliss. And learn as much theory, composition and technical stuff as you can stomach because it will aid you. But never confuse technique with inspiration. Technique will always only be just that. But inspiration can change lives and changing lives can change the world we live in!

Warmest wishes,
Edward Weiss
Quiescence Music



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