

# Education & Engagement Philosophy - Duo BoMi

Duo BoMi believes that music is a powerful bridge between cultures and an essential tool for fostering connection, understanding, and joy across all segments of society. Our philosophy centers on making high-quality musical experiences accessible, engaging, and personally resonant for diverse audiences, regardless of age, background, or prior musical exposure. We are committed to demystifying classical and global music traditions, inviting listeners into a shared journey of discovery and appreciation.

## **Our Approach to Educational/Outreach Activities:**

Our commitment to education and outreach stems from a deep belief in the transformative power of music. We are genuinely **open and adept at working with a diverse range of audiences** and in varied settings, including schools, universities, senior residences, rural communities and other groups. Our approach is highly adaptive and interactive, tailoring content to suit specific age groups, developmental stages, and institutional needs.

Central to this adaptability is the extensive and complementary experience of our duo members:

- **Michel-Alexandre Broekaert** brings a wealth of expertise as an **artist-mediator with Opéra de Montréal**, a role that has honed his ability to make complex artistic narratives accessible and engaging for wide audiences. His profound dedication to community engagement is further demonstrated through his participation in numerous workshops with children, children with special needs, and seniors. As an artist with [La SAMS](#), he has also performed countless concerts in hospitals and senior residences, in-person and online, understanding firsthand how music can provide comfort, stimulation, and connection in sensitive environments. Furthermore, Michel-Alexandre is a faculty member of piano and accompaniment at the Conservatoire de musique de Rimouski, where he teaches students aged 12 to 25, giving him direct, current experience in pedagogical settings with developing musicians.
- **Boran Zaza** has taught piano, music theory and introduction to music to children and adults in Iraq, Lebanon and Canada, bringing a diverse experience that can help foster a sense of belonging for many community groups, including new Canadians.

Our workshops, exemplified by our "Four Hands, One Piano, A World of Sound" program (attached at the end), are designed to be highly interactive and flexible. We use live performance, storytelling, and direct dialogue to illuminate musical concepts and cultural contexts, adapting our language and examples to resonate with each specific group. By demonstrating the unique collaborative artistry of piano four-hand playing and isolating specific musical elements from diverse traditions, we aim to spark curiosity and encourage active listening, enabling participants to directly experience the rich tapestry of global sounds.

## **Our Approach to Audience Engagement in the Concert Setting:**

In our concert performances, we strive to create an immersive and welcoming atmosphere that transcends the traditional formality of classical music. Our "Orient Express" program is crafted as a narrative journey, where each piece is presented not just as music, but as a story, a landscape, or a cultural insight.

- We enrich our concerts with personal anecdotes, historical context, and cultural explanations for each selection, making unfamiliar repertoire relatable and familiar works newly vibrant.
- The use of traditional costumes further enhances the storytelling, visually transporting the audience to the diverse regions explored in our program.
- Our dual backgrounds allow us to illuminate the connections between different musical traditions, fostering a sense of shared humanity and breaking down perceived barriers between cultures and genres. We actively engage with the audience, inviting them into a conversation and a collective experience, ensuring that every listener feels a part of the journey.

## **Our Experience with Digital Events & Social Media:**

In the contemporary landscape, digital platforms are indispensable for extending our reach and fostering vibrant connections with current and future audiences. Duo BoMi is adept at leveraging social media and digital content to amplify our mission.

- Boran Zaza is not only an expert in social media for musicians who has given numerous workshops on the subject at universities and summer academies in Canada and in Europe, but has also formally taught Music Marketing at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University. This expertise provides Duo BoMi with a strategic and effective approach to online presence, content creation, and audience development.
- Our success with digital events is exemplified by our acclaimed video series, "[100 Years of Piazzolla](#)," which garnered significant global recognition. This experience demonstrates our proven ability to produce high-quality, engaging digital content that resonates with broad audiences, transcends geographical boundaries, and effectively introduces new listeners to our artistry and repertoire. In fact, we have another video series (currently in post-prod) coming out soon, which will be used to promote the Orient Express program. We utilize social media to share behind-the-scenes glimpses, educational snippets, and interactive content, cultivating an active online community that complements and extends the impact of our live performances.

Through our comprehensive and integrated approach to education, concert engagement, and digital outreach, Duo BoMi is dedicated to building new audiences, fostering cultural dialogue, and ensuring that the transformative power of music is accessible to all.

# Proposed educational workshop activity - Duo BoMi

## Four Hands, One Piano, A World of Sound

**Target Audience:** Adaptable for elementary school students (ages 8+), middle/high school music classes, and general university audiences. No prior musical training is required.

**Duration:** 45-60 minutes (flexible to suit different schedules)

### **Workshop Objectives**

- To discover the fascinating, collaborative art form of piano four-hand playing, exploring its unique techniques and sonic possibilities.
- To demonstrate how musical traditions from diverse cultures come alive and connect through the piano.
- To explore extended piano technique (when an acoustic piano is available).
- To engage participants in active listening and cultural comparison, making abstract musical concepts concrete and relatable.
- To inspire curiosity and foster a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of global music and the power of musical collaboration.
- To demystify classical performance and encourage a shared, accessible understanding of music.

### **Workshop Description & Activities:**

Duo BoMi invites students on an interactive "Orient Express" journey, delving into the extraordinary world of four-hand piano playing as a vehicle for cultural exploration. Through captivating live performances, engaging demonstrations, and personal storytelling, this workshop is divided into three sections:

#### **1. The Magic of Four Hands (10-15 min):**

- Introduction: We introduce ourselves, highlighting our diverse origins and our shared mission to explore music together.
- What is Four-Hand Piano? An immediate, fun demonstration. We introduce the piano as an instrument, its different components and possibilities. We play a simple, familiar melody first with just two hands (one person), then add the other two hands to show the dramatic increase in richness, complexity, and power, explaining how we share the keyboard.
- The Challenge & The Joy: We will briefly discuss the unique challenges and rewards of playing four-hands: how we coordinate and communicate without words to create a unified sound.
- Interactive Element: Visually demonstrate how we navigate the keyboard, showing specific hand positions (e.g., crossing hands, playing in close proximity, who plays the pedal, who turns the pages) that are unique to four-hand playing.

## 2. Musical Performance: From Paris to the Levant (25-30 min):

- We will perform 3-4 carefully selected, short excerpts from our "Orient Express" program, chosen specifically to highlight both four-hand techniques and cultural contrasts/connections. Each piece is accompanied by a brief, engaging story or cultural context, personally connecting the music to its origins (e.g., the inspiration behind the piece, traditional events it might accompany).
  - Piece 1 (Le jardin féerique by Maurice Ravel): Discussing the fairy tale behind it, the French musical tradition. Explain how the four-hand arrangement allows for rich, impressionistic textures.
  - Piece 2 (Bay of Rainbows by Christine Donkin): Discussing how contemporary Canadian voices contribute to the musical landscape. How does the four-hand format lend itself to these new sounds?
  - Piece 3 (Winter Morning in Istanbul by Fazil Say): After playing, we will isolate and demonstrate specific musical elements from this Middle Eastern piece. Such as the extended technique mimicking Oud sound, and the Hijaz maqam/mode.
  - Piece 4 (Dance from the Levant Lands by Maurice Ghanem): After playing, we will isolate and demonstrate specific rhythms from this piece, and teach the participants a simple traditional group dance (Dabké) that goes with that rhythm.

## 3. Your Turn: Q&A (10-15 min):

- An open & interactive Q&A session. Students are invited to ask anything about the music, the cultures, the challenges of playing four-hands, or the pianists' personal experiences.
- We aim to leave students with a sense of connection to these diverse musical worlds and an understanding of collaboration.

### Why Duo BoMi for this Workshop:

Our unique blend of cultural backgrounds and our specialized focus on piano four-hand performance position us perfectly to deliver an unparalleled educational experience. We offer a direct, engaging, and personal journey into the heart of musical collaboration and global cultural dialogue, demonstrating how two musicians and one instrument can bridge continents and inspire new perspectives.

### Technical Requirements for Workshop:

- Piano: One well-tuned acoustic piano (grand piano strongly preferred for optimal four-hand sound and visual impact, but a quality upright piano is acceptable for smaller classroom settings). Duo BoMi can provide a Digital Piano if needed.
- Space: A classroom, library, or small performance space with seating for the students, allowing good visibility of the piano and pianists.
- Microphones (Optional but Recommended): Two vocal microphones with stands for clear communication, especially in larger settings.