

"Acquisition and Development of New Skills in Piano Practice After Vision Loss"

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Sponsored by Ministry of Culture of the Buenos Aires Government, Ministerio de Cultura GCBA, Argentina

Music history has outstanding personalities within the visually impaired or blind musicians' sphere. However, there is an area that has not been very much approached so far. We refer to the area comprising studies dealing with the changes or adaptations that a musician should make at the time of losing his or her functional vision. This work introduces a case study, in which two twin sisters from Argentina, pianists and holders of a Bachelor's degree in Musical Arts, have lost their sight due to a macular dystrophy called Stargardt disease. This descriptive study aims at characterizing the beginning of piano studies of both sisters until present times, and the changes that they had to introduce, both at technical and methodological levels, as a consequence of the progressive impairment of their vision. In this respect, the work reopens three primary aspects relative to piano practice:

- Research about the technological tools related to the reading of scores that would work as audio description, due to the preponderance of the musical text in academic environments.
- Implementation of new ways to move across the keyboard coupled with an increase in spatial memory.
- Incorporation of sound resources or tactile gestures, established for the instrumental ensemble as a piano duo.

The analysis of live presentations and the recording of an audio CD account for the effectiveness of the adaptations made. From the results obtained in this study, the application of such adaptations to pianists of similar conditions would allow analysing the responses and adjusting the adaptations in terms of the experiences of each particular case.

Fabiana and Paula Chávez are identical twins, pianists, music researchers and educators. They were born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, studied music at the Instituto Santa Ana (St. Anne Institute), and graduated from the National University of Art (UNA) after earning a Bachelor's degree in Musical Arts. They participated in numerous master classes and seminars with outstanding masters like Nélida Sánchez, Elsa Púppulo, Iván Citera and Eduardo Hubert. Apart from being a four-hand piano duo, they have done important work as researchers, thus contributing to the study of new methods, so as to provide visually impaired music students with useful tools.