

# Samford Faculty Strive to Bridge the Gap in Health Care for Performing Artists

by Ashley Smith

**Over the past year, Dana Daniel Blake and Jason Terry joined forces to research and improve the health of music students. Blake is an assistant professor and director of clinical education for the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at Samford and recently was appointed to the Alabama Board of Physical Therapy. Terry is an assistant professor of piano and director of keyboard studies in the Division of Music in the School of the Arts.**

Terry initiated the collaboration to help Samford students gain better awareness of health issues related to playing the piano. Blake has over 25 years of experience in ergonomics.

"From a health care perspective, the performing arts should be viewed through a special lens. I treat football players as a competitive athlete. I treat people that work in manufacturing as an industrial athlete. I need to treat those in

the arts as a performing arts athlete," Blake said.

Most health care for artists is a response to an already existing condition according to Terry.

"Our goal is to train our students to proactively identify and understand the physiological aspects of being a pianist and how we can prevent medical issues from happening in the first place," Terry said.

In March 2021, they hosted an information session for current and prospective Samford keyboard students that stressed the importance of stretching, breathing and body alignment while playing the piano. This work continued in November 2021 when 17 instrumentalists visited a spine class in the School of Health Professions, led by associate

professor Nick Washmuth. There, physical therapy students examined each musician and prescribed a personalized regime.

In June 2022, Blake and Terry presented their collaborative research at the Performing Arts Medicine Association's (PAMA) four-day international symposium in Chicago. PAMA is the leading organization bridging the gap between health care professions and performing artists.

They also presented at the American Physical Therapy Association Educational Leadership Conference (ELC) in Atlanta, Georgia, which led to Drs. Blake and Terry being one of four recipients of the 2021 Physical Therapy Learning Institute Innovator Award at the ELC.

On campus, they have received grant money to develop a course in ergonomics and injury prevention.

"The course will be used for Samford students as well as to help educate others via summer camps for high school teachers that come to Samford. We want to show what we are doing so others can replicate it and prevent injuries and take care of our performing arts students," said Blake.

Both see tremendous opportunities for this research on and off campus. They anticipate their collaboration will initiate other partnerships across schools and departments at Samford. ▶

