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MANUAL OF PIANO PEDAGOGY

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My sincere appreciation is extended to Dr. Chappell White for his assistance. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Robert Steinbauer, my major professor, whose positive encouragement gave me the desire to complete this endeavor.

I want to encourage every teacher who reads this manual to believe in himself, to trust his judgment, and to keep studying. My desire is that no teacher ever loses the joy found in learning and helping others find the best in themselves.

INTRODUCTION

The art of teaching piano utilizes a teacher's abilities both musically and humanistically. It demands that he analyze his role in relationship to each student's learning process. A good teacher will help each student obtain the skills and understanding necessary to reach his full potential. Although some children are more gifted than others, all should be able to achieve some kind of progress with the proper guidance. Pedagogy, the art of teaching, will be dealt with specifically as it pertains to teaching music in a one-to-one or small group situation.

Philosophy of Teaching

The philosophy involved in teaching piano in an independent studio, whether on a one-to-one basis or in a class situation, should be formulated in the teacher's mind before he begins teaching. A healthy philosophy will foster in students the fundamentals of self-study, self-evaluation, and self-motivation regardless of the quantity of natural musical talent endowed to a given student.

The piano is an instrument through which a teacher can help students explore all facets of music. Beginning teachers who believe that every student who enters the studio desires to become an accomplished pianist either end up teaching very few students or become extremely frustrated. Proper guidance in helping a student discover within himself a means of self-evaluation often fosters the desire to pursue music through the study of a specific instrument, other creative endeavors, or as a supportive patron of the arts. These self-evaluations will not only affect music

performances, but will also help the student make realistic evaluations concerning his day to day life.

The fundamentals of piano study can provide years of motivation for students. In order to accomplish this, a course of study must be properly outlined. The fundamental effort should be aimed at developing the concepts of musical organization, methods of timbre production, understanding basic stylistic performance practices, and developing sight-reading skills.

Learning through the exploration of musical concepts is the most productive approach to teaching fundamental piano skills. It encourages the development of an individual capable of independent thought. Lessons which involve only the mastering of one piece after another fail to establish needed goals with which a student can measure his level of achievement. The successful lesson has been achieved when the students "can experience music as an outlet for their feelings as well as a source of aesthetic enjoyment for themselves and others."¹

Age Group Sub-Divisions

The age levels in the following discussions are sub-divided into: preschool, four to six year olds; the young beginner, seven to ten year olds; teenagers, eleven to sixteen year olds; and the adult. Although the age grouping is approximate, it allows individual teachers a recognizable category in which to begin placing students, and functions as an aid in organizing further discussions.

¹Sister Cecillia Schmitt, O.S.B., Rapport and Success: Human Relations in Music Education (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1976), p. 195.

Care should be taken when assigning students to a particular group. A six year old may be precocious; however, this does not imply that his motor skills have developed enough to place him in the young beginner category. Similarly, a young beginner may have highly developed motor skills while being psychologically immature. The teacher must realize that he does not have the skills of a trained psychologist, and some incorrect evaluations will be made. Adjusting the course of study as needed to coincide with the student's ability is the mark of a mature pedagogue.

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE FIRST LESSON

The independent music teacher is a businessman. However, he often approaches teaching from a musical background without exploring the requirements and expenses of operating his own business. To start a business in a community the following considerations need to be examined: the demand for a teacher, the number of possible students available, the rates of other teachers in the area, the cost of operating a studio, and the teacher's ability to sell himself and his service.

Physical Equipment

Before the business of teaching may begin the teacher must consider the physical equipment he will use. Most teachers find that the best aid to good teaching is an excellent piano. A grand and one upright piano create an ideal situation. A good, well-tuned studio or 50" upright piano is a must as most grands are discouraging for young beginners due to the heavier key action.² Pianos utilizing a drop-action are not considered suitable for an instructional instrument.³

If the teacher can not afford a piano several options exist. He may teach in a school, in a church, in a music store, or at each student's

²If the teacher is using electronic pianos in a lab situation, the acoustical instrument is necessary for making comparisons and playing exercises in sound production.

³Carl D. Schmeckel, The Piano Owner's Guide: How to Buy and Care for a Piano (Rev. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), pp. 26-27.

home. Such arrangements often allow the teacher little control over distractions and are subject to careful evaluation. Another alternative would be to seek the use of a student's home for teaching all lessons. This arrangement might be in exchange for that student's lesson fees and piano maintenance. An alternate solution is to rent a piano, often with option to buy. The time-purchase plan is better as it allows a selection of pianos, and the depreciation is tax-deductible.

The ideal location of the piano is a room near an outside door. It is preferable to have a solid door which may be shut in order to close out unwanted distractions. This is particularly important in the early stages of piano lessons where concentration is essential to developing good aural concept. If the family of the teacher is in the house during lessons, a clear understanding of courtesy and quiet are necessary.

In addition to a piano, several other items are necessary for teaching efficiently. These include a good metronome (preferably electric or transistor), a blackboard, a small wooden platform (for students with short legs), a music library with loan materials, a record player, a cassette deck, a small desk located beside the piano, a phone close at hand or an answering device, and a good record-keeping facility. It is also desirable to have a restroom near so that young students may wash their hands, get a drink of water, etc. When teaching in groups, piano or preschool classes, the list of equipment becomes more extensive. Further information may be obtained from A Business Manual for the Independent Music Teacher or How to Teach Piano Successfully.⁴

⁴Patricia Taylor Lee, A Business Manual for the Independent Music Teacher (Chicago: National Piano Foundation, 1980), pp. 42-45; James W. Bastien, How to Teach Piano Successfully (Park Ridge: General Words and Music Co., 1973), pp. 22-26.

Policy and Business Procedures

A policy statement and planned business procedures are essential when preparing to teach. The teacher who is constantly improvising a policy after difficult situations have arisen, or planning business procedures as problems develop, communicates to the parent and student a lack of confidence and maturity.

Although the teacher will never please everyone, a student will seldom express an unwillingness to take lessons due to a firmly defined policy. The parent who will not enroll his child because the teacher charges by the month is the same parent who lets two weeks go by without paying and then decides to terminate the lessons. A teacher cannot afford this type of parent/student and the frustration which accompanies efforts to collect fees.

The policy should include the following information:

1. How the charges are made.
2. What services are included in the fee.
3. Lesson cancellation procedures:
 - a. What constitutes an acceptable cancellation;
 - b. How make-up lessons are arranged.
4. Practice expectations:
 - a. Time
 - b. Location
 - c. The instrument and its condition.
5. Termination of lessons.
6. What the student can expect from the teacher.⁵

⁵ A sample policy statement may be found in Appendix I.

Parent and student questions should be anticipated prior to the first lesson. Basic information should be included in a written letter. Typical questions deal with how much you charge for the lessons, how many lessons the fee includes, and what type of lessons are available (one to one, class, partner). If you have several options, the inexperienced parent or student will usually choose the cheapest one with the minimum number of trips to the studio, when in fact this student frequently is one who needs the most attention to insure the solid foundation on which to succeed. Under these circumstances the most successful procedure is to set minimums, and as the student progresses the parent can often be convinced of the need for more instruction.

It is wise to include in your written letter the days you will not be teaching throughout the quarter or semester. Other announcements may include special projects the student will be participating in, such as auditions, recitals, special performances, master classes, etc.

Finally, it is important to establish a regular routine. One method of accomplishing this is to have the student fill out a form confirming his desire to take lessons. This type of response requires that the piano lesson be given advance consideration and planning and tends to minimize the number of last minute drop-outs. In the event that the form has not been returned by the specified deadline, a follow-up phone call can be used to identify any problems. A sample form is found in Appendix II. This form can be used as a tear-off section on the bottom of the information letter.

Obtaining Students

"Piano teacher with music degree has openings. Call 452-9999."

Does this sound familiar? This particular method of advertisement should generally be avoided, as it tends to indicate desperation rather than credibility. Professional teachers must employ professional procedures for obtaining students. Once the beginning teacher adopts this philosophy, the how and where becomes as important as the end results. One needs to develop community awareness and establish good relations with other teachers and music dealers. Community participation is essential!

A prospective teacher may find the opportunity to inherit an entire class of students provided he has not predetermined his exact studio location. Often this class will be the result of a teacher who is either moving or retiring. Smaller communities or areas within a large city can also be found which have a large student population but lack professional teachers within a reasonable commuting distance.

The situations mentioned above are not always available, and one must often resort to other methods. One alternative is a referral. Although seeking referrals may take considerable time, the end results are usually gratifying. Established teaching studios, teacher organizations, and music dealers will be a lucrative source of referrals.

New teachers should make an appointment to visit with notable piano teachers in the community. This is often a challenge, but well worth the pursuit. In the initial phone call, state your name and ask, "Are you teaching?" Remember, the busy teacher will be teaching at all hours, and to interrupt a lesson with business will not "win friends and influence people."

Once an appointment time has been established the prospective teacher should arrive promptly. This should be treated as a job interview;

dress neatly. Ask the teacher for his professional help in the community. Questions concerning areas within the city that need teachers, the use of substitute teachers or aids in established studios, and reputable music dealers should be asked at this time. It is then advantageous for the new teacher to present a copy of his philosophy of teaching, a studio policy, a sample course of study for a beginning student, and a resume, including his educational background, teaching experiences, and organizational affiliations.

The prospective teacher should also be prepared to play. A Bach Two-Part Invention played well is a more desirable selection than, for example, the Beethoven Hammerklavier. Remember that the interview is designed to establish a teacher's ability to work with beginning and intermediate students. As soon as the new teacher's credibility and qualifications are established, teachers with an abundance of students will be a great source of referrals. These teachers are usually sympathetic and helpful because they remember their own difficulties in setting up a studio.

In addition to visiting with teachers, one should check with music stores selling quality instruments. Dealers recognize the need for competent teachers capable of demonstrating the instrument's full potential. If he is unable to judge your qualifications, the dealer will often seek the opinion of a respected teacher.

As previously mentioned, advertising must be approached in a professional manner. It must be adapted to fit the needs of the community. In a small town, this may be in the form of an article in a social column. In a large city, it would probably be an advertisement in the music/art section of the paper. In some cities, the opening of a studio is considered

an announcement in the business section. A sample ad may be found in James Bastien's book, How to Teach Piano Successfully.⁶ Additional information concerning promotional endeavors may be found in the publication entitled: A Business Manual for the Independent Music Teacher.⁷

Becoming well known in the community aids in building a teacher's reputation. The best way to attain this is through community participation. Involvement will put the teacher in direct contact with parents and prospective adult students. Involvement in local art organizations, church work, and accompanying offer needed exposure. It is also important to become acquainted with elementary school teachers, music teachers in the school systems, music-related organizations, and the music faculty at universities located in the vicinity.

Since time is required to build a class, careful thought must be given to the possibility of working at another job until one becomes established in the community. Jobs which focus on the teacher's musical ability or provide contact with parents are especially appropriate. Possible opportunities could include work as a church musician, an accompanist, a teacher's aid, or work in a music store.

Interviews

The significant information important in a teacher's relationship with the parent and student is best obtained in an interview. Reactions of the student, to his parents and to the new teacher, must be observed

⁶Bastien, p. 33.

⁷Lee, pp. 4-8, 49-51.

by the teacher. In addition, information needed to outline the first six weeks of study will be collected at this time.

There are two contrasting opinions regarding how to handle the financial charge for an interview. One consideration is that time is valuable, and therefore some remuneration is essential. Another opinion is that interviews are a form of advertising and goodwill outreach and should therefore be free. It is a time to establish a mutual understanding between professional teaching standards and cooperative learning habits.

During the parents' initial contact, a time can be arranged for an interview. All questions concerning fees, type of lessons, length of lesson, etc. should be answered in the interview. If the student has previously studied piano, ask him to bring his music. Both parents should be encouraged to attend. It is often helpful to determine the parents' marital status, whether or not another language is spoken in the family, and how frequently members of the family go out of town. This information will help alleviate embarrassing questions which might arise later.

Interviews need to be as well planned as the first lesson. The teacher must have his written policy, an updated letter of information, schedule of fees, and contract agreement. While the parents are reading this material, the teacher may begin working with the student. Watching the student fill out an interview form⁸ avails the teacher an opportunity to observe the student's eye-hand coordination and his ability to follow directions as well as to note if the student reads and writes from left to right.

⁸The interview form should include the student's name, address, zip code, phone number, birthdate, school, grade, age, and previous study.

Other information the teacher could include in the interview may be the first name of both parents and their phone numbers at work. If the student has previously studied piano, determine with whom he studied, for how long, and the books used. The teacher can obtain additional information by inquiring about other instruments played by the student, number of brothers and sisters, frequency of concert attendance, and the type of records most frequently listened to at home.

Finally, the teacher needs to inquire about the type of piano used for practice, when it was last tuned, and where it is located. A discussion concerning the necessity of a good, well-tuned piano should follow. More information can be handed to the parents in the form of a brochure. Two brochures currently available are: Your Piano and Its Proper Care and Consumer's Guide to Buying a Piano.⁹

Interviews should include time allotted to measure the student's skills in pitch perception, rhythm, visual orientation to the keyboard, and basic motor coordination. Each of these general concepts must be adapted to the individual student. When working with young children, this may be in the form of games. An informal oral quiz can be used in dealing with the older beginner and transfer students. Accomplishments should not be assumed until they are observed. Concepts can be checked in the following way:

Visual - Have the student play a high note and then a low note. Have him locate keys to his left and right. Finally, have him find three black keys and then two black keys.

⁹Your Piano and Its Proper Care (Form 15C 878) and Consumer's Guide to Buying a Piano (Form 10C 878) National Piano Manufacturers Association, Inc., 1979. These brochures may be purchased for \$.06 to \$.12 each by writing to: National Piano Foundation, 435 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Pitch - Play two different pitch patterns and ask the student, "Are they the same or different?"

Rhythm - The teacher should clap a rhythm pattern to be copied by the student. Begin with a simple steady beat and gradually progress to more complex rhythms.

Coordination - Finger dexterity can be checked by playing the game of "Spider on the Mirror."¹⁰

The interview should last approximately forty-five minutes. After the parents' questions have been answered, allow the student and parents to go home and consider the implications of this endeavor. During this evaluation, the student will consider his commitment to practice, to attend all lessons, and to pursue other musical facets. This also gives the parents time to realize their commitment in this pursuit.

Parents

A student's parents can be the greatest asset or the greatest liability to successful piano study. Parents should attend the lessons frequently. Parental involvement in lessons is directly related to the success of many young students up to approximately age eleven. This does not imply that the parents will teach the student at home, but rather that the parents develop an understanding of what the student is doing, why the teacher approaches a concept differently than the parent did, and what is expected of the student. It is the teacher who must judge the occasional situation in which a parent is a hindrance to learning. In this case, the parent and teacher should visit frequently without the student rather than requiring the parent's presence at all lessons.

¹⁰"Spider on the Mirror" is a game played by putting the fingertips of one hand on the fingertips of the other hand. When one finger moves on one hand the opposite finger on the other hand must follow.

When teaching in group situations, the teacher should realize that every parent may not be able to attend. The logical approach here is to have parents attend on alternate weeks. Another alternative would be to conduct parent education meetings.

Many teachers feel that the parents should arrive only to pay the bill. They feel inhibited by the parents. Remember, teaching is like acting; one must be able to project an idea or concept across to an audience regardless of their age.

Observation of the lessons is the only way for the parent to know what really goes on in the lesson. A child's imagination in relaying a situation can work to the disadvantage of a teacher. One teacher had a student who really did not want to be at a piano lesson, but the parents were determined that she study piano. The little girl's lesson was the hour just before the dinner break, and so she told her mother that the teacher cooked dinner while she took her lesson. A parent would have grounds to cease lessons in this situation. The parents, who trusted the child, never would believe that the teacher had an automatic timer on the oven which turned it on every evening, and the aroma always let the little girl know the dinner was cooking every week during her lesson. All that was really needed to alleviate the problem was parent participation.

Parent observations throughout the week can be very helpful to the teacher, as they watch the student progress each day, while the teacher often only has once or twice a week to check the student's understanding. Parents who call during the week to say that the student does not understand a particular concept are doing the teacher a great service. Although the concept will be explained and reviewed in future lessons, this knowledge

enables the teacher to give special attention to the problem in his next lesson plan.

The teaching method used should be question oriented. Instruct the parents to restate questions asked during lessons. This instruction for the parent is the awareness of self-discovery and how to nurture it in the student. The practice is best established by sending specific questions home with the parents the first few weeks. Very attentive parents will often bring along a notebook to write down the teacher's questions.

To help clarify this method, imagine that a student is working out a new piece at home. He comes to a measure in which he cannot figure out the note he should play. Rather than telling the student what the note is or avoiding the problem altogether, the trained parent will direct questions to the student, such as: "Let us find your nearest pivot note."¹¹ Does this note go up or down from the pivot note? How far up or down?" etc. This method allows the student to figure out the answer by himself. Not only does it help build his confidence, but it is a study habit which will affect all aspects of his day-to-day life.

¹¹See Chapter II, p. 37.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNERS AGE 4 TO 84

The first stage of piano lessons begins with the teacher's initial meeting of the parent and student and continues until the introductory concepts are familiar to the student. During the first lessons the teacher must outline a course of study. This will form the basis on which to build future skills. Aural sensitivity, technical concepts, pitch discrimination, rhythm, "geography" of the keyboard and printed musical page, and self-discipline should be included in the course.¹² The lessons must then be presented in a logical and coherent sequence. The sequence will vary from teacher to teacher; however, there should always be a logical progression of events. The following discussion is approached from a pedagogical standpoint with the understanding that it is not necessarily presented in a progressive sequence.

Technique

Technical concepts must be designed to establish a firm foundation for future skills. The concepts should develop both physical and aural discrimination. Aural sensitivity must be learned by listening to the sound produced by a given physical motion.

The first technical skills should involve large motor motions. Freedom of the arms and shoulders is essential. The student needs to

¹²When working with a very young child or a student with little self-discipline, it will be the parent's responsibility to practice with the student in order to establish patterns necessary to achieve self-discipline.

develop a relaxed arm before he is ready for finger technique. The best test for arm relaxation is to support the student's arm straight out from his body. When his arms are released, they should fall freely and slap the sides of his hips. Any hesitation in the fall, or a forced drop of the arms, indicates tension and the need for continued pursuit of relaxation. Continued attention to such freedom is a concern for as long as one plays the piano.

After the free-fall arm exercise is mastered, finger dexterity, independence, and basic control may commence. Establishing a good hand position is one of the first goals. Many students are trained in the consecutive five-finger manner, especially in the pre-reading courses.¹³ These methods use the visual image of holding a ball, egg, or orange to establish an "acceptable" hand position. This forces the hand position to become fixed, while trying to move individual fingers, and results in a hand shape which is frequently both uncomfortable and unnatural. It also produces finger inequality by reinforcing the strong fingers rather than the weak ones. A more successful approach is obtained by using the "cluster" technique, as this helps to establish a good hand shape and a flexible wrist.¹⁴ In this method, the fingers on one hand are held together with the thumb placed against the side of the second finger, so the finger tips can simultaneously strike a cluster of approximately three notes at one

¹³An example of a piece which progresses in a finger pattern of 1-2-3-4-5-5-4-3-2-1 is "Up and Down." See Robert Pace, Music for Piano (New York: Lee Roberts Music Pub., Inc., 1979), p. 2.

¹⁴Lynn Freeman Olson, Louise Bianchi, and Marvin Blickenstaff, Music Pathways: Discovery, 1A (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1974), p. 5.

time. Using this approach the student feels the arch in his hand. It also keeps the weak fingers from buckling under as they are braced in the correct position. Now the student may play clusters all over the keyboard with a free arm and wrist.

After a good hand arch has been established, the student can progress to exercising alternating fingers. In evaluating beginning materials for students, it is of paramount importance to find pieces which use alternating fingers, primarily 1 and 3 or 2 and 4. This keeps the hands over the keyboard and forces the fingers to work independently. One of the most effective alternating finger exercises is called "See Saw" and may be found in Joan Last's book At the Keyboard.¹⁵ The success of the approach depends upon: slow legato practice with the transfer of the hand weight back and forth on the fingers in use, the teacher's ability to demonstrate the exercise, flexibility of the student's arm and wrist, and the teacher's and parent's conviction towards developing finger independence.¹⁶

To avoid the middle C approach in the exercise mentioned above, the left hand fifth finger should be placed on the tonic. Example 1 shows the placement of the original exercise, as well as an alternative position.

The fifth finger should first be used in an arm drop on open fifths. An example of this may be found in Music Pathways 1A.¹⁷ Students with large hands may be more comfortable using the interval of a sixth.

¹⁵Joan Last, At the Keyboard: A Piano Course for the Young Pianist, Book I. (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 2.

¹⁶See also Joan Last, "Balanced Hand and Rotary Freedom," Freedom Technique, Book I. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 2.

¹⁷Olson, Music Pathways, Book 1A, p. 10-15.

Example 1



Following this, finger independence exercises involving a wrist rotation using the 1-5 finger pattern should be utilized. The student should be reminded to slightly rotate his wrist and to always contact the key with the tip of the fifth finger. Variations of this exercise should be continued for months after the student has gained elementary finger independence.¹⁸

At this point in the student's development, he should know the white key pentascales, such as C-G-a-e and may progress to pentascales using a black key under the third finger, such as D-A-g-c. Older students may start the same exercise using the five notes d-f#-g#-a#-c, as recommended by Chopin, to allow more space for larger hands. The exercise should be continued through all major, minor, and modal pentascales. The overall success is dependent on the patience and persistence of all involved.

Teachers often feel compelled to introduce scales because tradition has established them as being necessary in developing a good technique. Unquestionably, scale practice can teach students principles in major and minor key construction. A keen aural awareness and sensitivity to touch

¹⁸See also Joan Last, "The 1st Year," Clavier IV (1965), 15-16.

Aural discrimination begins with the first lesson. The teacher may ask the student to play a cluster, use his fist, or use his middle finger. A beginning teacher needs a lengthy list of questions to ask the student over a period of weeks. Various types of questions designed to stimulate his learning process could include:

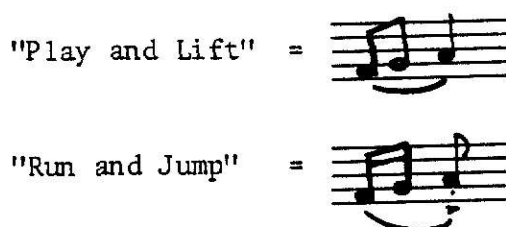
1. What do you hear when you drop your arm from very high above the keys?
2. What do you hear when you drop your arm very slowly?
-- very fast?
3. What do you hear when you drop your arm at opposite ends of the keyboard?
4. How long does the sound last when you drop your arm very slowly? -- very fast?
5. What happens if you hold some keys down silently and then strike the wood of the piano with your other hand?
6. What happens when you release the keys?

As a student's fingers develop, he will experiment with various touches, tonalities, and rhythms. Every exercise, therefore, becomes an aural experience. Exercises exclusively on white keys should be used sparingly except for initial explanations, understanding, and coordination.

Another technical area to be developed involves wrist flexibility. This is necessary in order to play a slur or a phrase. Joan Last's exercises for slurs are excellent. Descriptive terminology is essential in helping students correlate their physical motions with the aural sound produced. "Play and Lift" is one such word combination which accurately describes the execution of a slur. With very young students, the teacher can be even more descriptive by saying "Alligator" (Al-li-ga-tor). The student should be instructed to lift his wrist up concurrently with the last syllable, "so the

alligator can swim under us in the water." By using words which contain four syllables, the finger remains down on the first half of the note's value and is lifted on the second half. The teacher should avoid using the word combination "Run and Jump" found in Joan Last's book. These words are misleading, since "Run" suggests that the student must hurry, and "Jump" will produce a clipped sound. This can best be illustrated in Example 4.

Example 4



Developing arm weight, finger strength and independence, wrist flexibility, and a sensitive ear is a time consuming process. The previous discussion is a mere starting point in the study of technical problems. The beginning teacher must think in terms of the most fundamental goals.¹⁹ Years of private study for the teacher will offer solutions to his own specific problems. In areas where the teacher has a natural ability, he must work to develop a teaching approach designed to help students not equally gifted. A teacher's technical knowledge is acquired through constant reading, workshop attendance, and studying with various teachers to learn methods for solving problems.

Pitch and Aural Perception

Timbre and pitch discrimination are essential aural concepts in studying piano. Without these skills, playing the piano would be no

¹⁹ Joan Last, The Young Pianist: An Approach for Teachers and Students (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 11-32.

different than typing, as the performance would be entirely visual and tactile.

Teachers must have quality pianos capable of producing variations in tone colors. Students, on the other hand, often practice on pianos which will not respond to different touches needed to vary the timbre. The teacher will want to encourage the parents' awareness of timbre, touch control, and quality construction concerning their piano.

It is impossible to separate timbre (tone color) and technique in a piano lesson. The teacher must be able to verbalize and demonstrate the quality and intensity of a given sound. Verbalizations such as: "Your tone is harsh," should be avoided. This type of statement relies on the teacher's judgment rather than the student's. After the teacher has demonstrated a sound, the student should be asked to verbalize what he has heard. Variations in intensity are an important concept, but there is also an equal need to stress timbre qualities. The student should also be able to distinguish differences in the movements of the arms, hands, and fingers needed to produce the sound.

In the previous discussion on technique, ways of incorporating technique and timbre discrimination were explored. Beginning with the first lesson, the student has had to describe the effects of different touches on sound production. With young students it is helpful to equate different sounds with concrete objects encountered in their life, such as a bouncing ball, rain, thunder, etc. Older students may benefit by relating various timbres to orchestral instruments. Teachers should refer to R. Murray Schafer's book, Ear Cleaning, for stimulating ideas.²⁰

²⁰R. Murray Schafer, Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc., 1967).

Pitch discrimination, an often neglected musical discipline, may be studied separately from timbre; however, it must be related to the student's music to ensure an understanding of the concept presented. One way to correlate these skills is to suddenly stop a student's performance and ask him to identify the last interval he played. This should be done without allowing him to look at the music or touch the keyboard. Procedures such as this force the student to listen to the sounds he is producing. Eventually, this can be converted to a vocal realization of pitches that follow the point from which he stopped.

Although keyboard geography and pitch are fixed, students should be encouraged to aurally verify specific notes. Helping the student match a pitch with his voice is the first step in developing an aural awareness in music. Student participation in choirs or voice classes will further reinforce this skill.

Thirty-minute piano lessons do not always allow sufficient time for intensive study in ear-training. One way to accommodate for this problem is to have one student work with a more advanced one another fifteen to thirty minutes prior to his lesson. This can be done in another room equipped with tapes and a tape machine. An excellent series of tapes and materials is entitled Now Hear This, Level I to IV, by Mary Elizabeth Clark.²¹ It can also be used as an independent study; however, working in group situations is often more desirable as it helps enforce self-discipline and a regular schedule.

A final area of exploration in aural perception deals with developing an awareness to sounds not produced by the student. When a class situation

²¹Mary Elizabeth Clark, Now Hear This, Vol. I-IV (Boulder: Myklas Press, 1972).

is not possible, students may benefit by listening to recordings and writing short reports. The reports allow the teacher to check the student's understanding in a relatively short amount of time. Live concerts are also an excellent source for developing an aural awareness.

An outline form will help direct the student in his listening. The form should include space for the title of the work, composer, performer and instrumentation. As the student develops, the teacher can add more musical aspects to listen for, until the student is able to identify many different elements on the first hearing. A sample record report outline may be found in Appendix III.

Rhythm

Rhythm, the feeling of movement in music, perplexes many students and teachers. Many near-perfect performances are spoiled by a lack of pulse, or conversely, too much pulse. "Psychologists have proven that up to sixty distinct mental operations may be required in one second of piano performance."²² With these statistics in mind, is it possible that rhythmic skills have become items fifty-five through sixty in the sequence of sixty thought processes? Attention should be given to rhythmic preparation, study, and practice methods to help prevent major problems in this area.

The introduction of rhythmic concepts begins with the interview. Teachers must outline the rhythmic goals to be achieved. Clap-back games with younger students will help the teacher define and evaluate their listening and coordination skills. A progression of rhythmic concepts

²²Sister Madeline Weil, O.S.B., "Spiraling Musicianship," reprinted from *Musart by Music and Education Department* (DeKalb, Ill.: The Wurlitzer Company) F 2019.

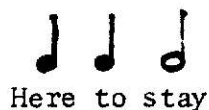
should then proceed from an aural sound, to movement, to the printed musical page, and then return to the aural sound.

In the early stages of rhythmic development, parents can give the student guidance by helping him explore body motions. Ask the student to sway like a tree, march, or imitate a dancer on TV. This will help the student develop a feeling of his own body as it moves to the music. The rhythmic movement will develop in relationship to his coordination abilities. Older students, although somewhat inhibited, should be asked to experience rhythm in the form of dance.

The teacher's primary goal should be for the student to be able to establish a steady pulse and to multiply or sub-divide the beat (♩ to ♪ to ♫). Whether the teacher introduces quarter, eighth, or half notes first is a matter of semantics. The teacher may begin by clapping word patterns. The written musical notation of ♪♪♪ ♪♪ and ♪|, can be represented by word combinations, such as short, short, long; Bet-ty Jones; Teach-er's pet; Pret-ty bird; Tah-tah-tah-ah; and Tah-tay-tah. The words are helpful to the younger student in relating a known speech pattern to similar pattern in music notation. The rhythmic pattern should be repeated until the student consistently produces the same response.

Once the above mentioned rhythmic pattern has been mastered, the student is ready to read its multiplication (♪♪♪ to ♪♪♪ or ♪♪♪ to ♪♪). Although there are several method books designed to teach transposition by printing a piece in one key and then printing it again in another key, there are no rhythm methods which use a similar device. The following example could be one solution.

Example 5



Clapping new rhythm patterns is essential in developing rhythmic concepts. A teacher cannot expect a student to feel this practice step is important at home unless the teacher claps with the student at every lesson on every new piece. It is further reinforced by writing in the student's notebook to clap and count each piece out loud. The habit is learned even faster when the parents see that the steps are followed at home. As soon as this practice habit is established, the teacher may be able to avoid clapping before and after every new piece is prepared.

Finally, it should be mentioned that rests are often a neglected area of study. Clapping beats with an exaggerated opening of the hands is a valuable tool in establishing a feel for silence. Removing a word in a poem or speech chant is also helpful in stressing the feeling of a rest. An example of this use may be found in Music Pathways, 1A.²³

Geography

For the convenience of this discussion, the lay-out and structure of the keyboard and the printed page will be referred to as "geography."

²³Olson, p. 48.

Included in the geography of the piano should be right and left, the groupings of the black keys, the key names, and some sound potentials of the piano. Among notational concepts to be considered are the direction notes can move, line and space notes, intervals, clef signs, and a method of teaching note reading.

The initial teaching of the geography of the piano and musical notation can be taught in a variety of situations. Richard Chronister advocates such concepts be taught by the parent prior to formal lessons.²⁴ Many teachers believe that geography should be learned before the student attempts to play the piano. The proponents of this method of teaching use paper keyboards, workbooks, staff paper, and a blackboard.

R. Murray Schafer conducted a word-association test of junior high school students in which the students were to write down the first word they thought of when they heard the word "music." One-third of the students responded with words such as "notes, staff, or music paper." According to Schafer, the implication is that the term "music" has lost its meaning. "Music is something which sounds. If it doesn't it isn't music."²⁵ Therefore, the approach a teacher uses in teaching the geography of the piano and notation must include the organization of sound and silence. Without sound the students will not be introduced to music.

The teaching of geography should be a happy compromise of self-discovery, use of workbooks, and rote learning. This combination would

²⁴Richard Chronister, "In the Beginning . . . Before Things Go Wrong," Keyboard Arts, Autumn, 1974, p. 5.

²⁵R. Murray Schafer, The Rhinoceros in the Classroom (Canada: Universal Edition, 1975), p. 31.

encourage creativity. The use of workbooks will reinforce concepts, and rote learning is necessary to satisfy the parent and the student. With this approach, he really is playing the piano with sound and silence.

Geography can be taught in one lesson to an adult, but it may take many months, with at least two meetings a week, for the preschool student. For the young student the teacher will need many experiences and sources to reinforce one concept. These can be singing games, stories, exploration of sound, and use of other pitched instruments. Preschool piano teachers need to supplement their pedagogical skill with a wide variety of reading, concerning methods of teaching preschool students.

A note of caution should be taken when encountering writings such as the following:

However, you must have certain equipment such as I have devised on the basic principles of Montessori training. You must understand the mental processes of that age . . . realize that they make no effort to learn, like school children have been taught to do. They merely absorb it and give it back to you later, but you have to know how to induce that process in an organized manner that is just play to the child.²⁶

This statement is a fragmented concept in which the teacher has found a place for rote learning in the child's play. More recent writings on the learning process of the two to five-year-old has revealed the following findings.

One of the most significant ways in which the child learns is through imitation, but imitation without understanding merely promotes a conditioned response that may fool observers into believing that true learning has taken place.

The child who is introduced to symbols before being involved in such comparable hands-on experiences as

²⁶ Ruth Stevenson Alling, How to Make Money Teaching Piano to Beginners (Corpus Christi: Lo Kno Pla Music Institute, 1969), p. 92.

manipulating, sorting, and sequencing usually resorts to rote learning. While able to echo words, count to ten, or read a rhythm pattern, the child too often fails to understand the meaning of the response. Through environmental play, the child encounters and manipulates objects representing specific ideas; later, the symbols are applied.²⁷

Theories of Montessori, Piaget, and Bruner should be studied in their entirety to understand the cognitive development of the young child, and therefore aid the teacher in developing his own philosophy.

Keyboard geography is facilitated if the parents have introduced right and left to the older child. The teaching of right and left to the preschool child is more easily accomplished using games and songs about his right leg, right hip, and right elbow. Another aid to the student may be an object in the studio located to his right. For those students who have learned to distinguish high and low sounds at the keyboard, teaching right and left becomes easier. The association may be made that as the sounds get higher the movement is to the right. In class lessons students can help each other by saying, "O.K., I will always stand next to your right hand." Jame Bastien relates a story about one kindergarten class where a student simply could not remember her right hand until an exasperated classmate yanked off her hair ribbon and suggested she tie it on her right wrist to remember.²⁸ Music Pathways 1A suggests that you hold up your left hand and the second finger and thumb form the letter "L" for the left hand.²⁹ However, a student may easily confuse the hands by

²⁷ Barbara Andress, Music Experiences in Early Childhood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), p. 3.

²⁸ Jane Smisor Bastien, "In the Beginning . . . When Things Go Wrong," Keyboard Arts, Autumn, 1974, p. 6.

²⁹ Olson, p. 4.

forming a reverse L with the right hand, J.

Teachers with the patience to instruct this age group will find their efforts gratifying. Obviously, there is an increase in the available teaching hours during the day time. The prime importance is the chance to play a positive role in the child's most impressionable years.³⁰

The introduction of the three-black key groups should be the first step, followed later by the two-black key groups. Through the eyes of a four to six-year-old, playing two black keys that are "side by side" is simple; just ignore the third adjacent key. Therefore, the teacher must work with the three black keys until the child understands the concept of grouping. Also, if the student starts with the high pitches (to the right), the three-black key group comes first on the standard keyboard.

The beginning teacher with a restless class will find that the vocabulary used for the young child is extremely important. The choice of words must be planned in advance and practiced so that one does not find himself speaking to four-year-olds with vocabulary that is understood only by the older child. Pictures of three black keys in a group helps, as does circling the three black keys on paper. Using the three black keys in a rote song will also make sure that the concept is an aural and tactile experience.

Years of experience have convinced this writer that the mature seven-year-old beginner who quickly grasps the concept of the black-key groups should start with the names of keys out of order. Students should begin by identifying D as always between the two black keys, C to the left,

³⁰Gail Gilbert and Margaret Talcott, "Why Teach Preschoolers?" Clavier, XVII (1978), p. 37.

below, and E to the right, above. This is probably all the key names a student may be able to comprehend in one lesson, but one may introduce other concepts with these three notes. The following step is to find F to the left and B to the right of the three black keys. Eventually G and A are found in the middle of the three black keys. In this manner, the teacher avoids counting off of the alphabet, A-B-C-D, to find the note D. A careful introduction of the notes on the keyboard will produce a student who rarely falters in finding a note quickly, because he is oriented to the keyboard.

Preschool children in a group may learn their letters from the lowest note on the keyboard, because with this age the teacher must also reinforce the musical alphabet. In that many children learn the "A-B-C Song," experience has shown that the most difficult task with an average child is to get him to stop the alphabet on G. Children enjoy simply playing and saying letter names of the keys from left to right.

Example 6



A B C D E F G etc. A B C

A creative teacher can use a variety of rhythms to create an accompanimental pattern to the music alphabet. A suggested chord pattern in half notes could be an a_7 a_3^4 d_7 G_5^6 etc., ending with d_7 G_7 C. A class teacher will have some students singing, others stepping off the notes on the floor staff, while others are using drums and marching. Those students playing A-B-C-D-E-F-G up the keyboard should always be using a braced second or third finger to produce the arch of the hand and a curved finger. The finger may be braced by putting the tip of the thumb and finger together. A preschool class teacher must use this approach to prepare for future technical training.

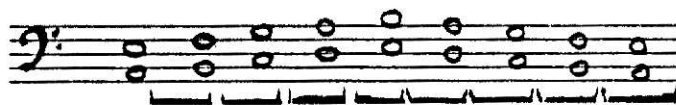
While the students are learning the note names, they have also been exploring the sounds of the keyboard. High sounds and low sounds have become part of the students' vocabulary. The students can not only identify which sounds are high and which are low, but by now they can probably play back simple rhythm patterns in the appropriate registers. When working with the preschool and kindergarten classes, it will be surprising to most new teachers the number of students that can match pitches. The "clusters" can be played going higher or up the keyboard and played going lower or down the keyboard. By carefully planning the vocabulary with the actions, the students will soon interchange the words, up and high, and down and low. With preschool children, a story can have birds fly high in a tree and a cat climb up the tree to try to catch the bird. With small children, the question would be asked, "Is the cat climbing up the tree or down the tree to get the bird?" The responses will not always meet the expectations of the new teacher, but they will furnish an evaluation of the learning. The teacher's next lesson plan may include the need to pretend to climb up into a tree house to be next to the birds (high sounds). The teacher has evaluated the first response and repeated the concept with different stories and games. If one uses the same story, the student can produce a rote response, and the teacher is not aware that the child still has not included that word as part of his vocabulary. Care should be exercised in making up stories to be sure that one is teaching music concepts and not that a high sound will represent a bird.

Teachers are often puzzled by the response of children if one is trying to reinforce high and low while introducing the concepts of forte and piano. The timbre of the piano will confuse a listener in the contrast of

forte and piano unless the work is done in the same register until the student has mastered how it feels to play loud. Forte has meant loud, but the beginning teacher may wish to consider translating piano to the word "quiet." Quiet means a quality of sound in the English language, but soft is usually associated with a quality of touch. This could be a reason why so many piano (quiet) passages are never played to the bottom of the keys and lack vitality. A carefully chosen pedagogical vocabulary is an invaluable asset for the promotion of a student's growth.

It is important that the student understand the mechanism of a piano. However, introduction to the damper pedal in this initial exploration of the piano and the variations in sounds depends upon the age of the students involved at any given time. A student's age determines how detailed this explanation becomes. A student usually experiments with the pedal if he is big enough to reach it, so it is prudent to give the pedal attention. The adult or older student can master the action to play a scale passage with one finger and a legato pedal (syncopated pedal) as he is trying to master finger independence and note reading. This can be done with a single note, but a chord or interval will assure that the pedal is used to make the legato connections.

Example 7



Notation can be introduced in limited form almost immediately. It is especially important in early lessons for those children who have parents who play an instrument or an older sibling who studies music. Children often find the role models in the family, and if there is a musician model, the teacher must be aware.

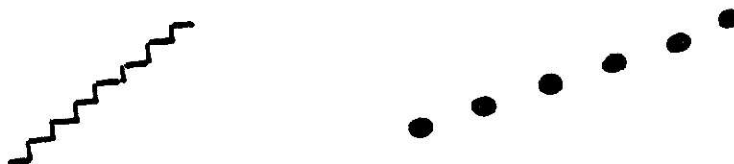
An evaluation of a students' reading ability is necessary. With preschool children, the teacher must use a line of pictures to discover if they read from left to right on the page.

Example 8



If the child can identify example 8 as a rabbit, a house, a man, a tree, and a butterfly, the teacher may proceed to pictures such as found in Example 9.

Example 9



These steps or note heads only move up if the child reads from left to right. This concept is one of the reasons that many teachers want a student to have attended school before he begins piano lessons. However, school attendance does not assure a teacher that the student will have correct reading habits. Reading is such a significant element of piano teaching that the experienced teacher may discover reading problems that have not been detected in the classroom.

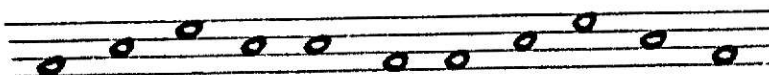
The concern of many teachers is that traditional notation is too difficult for the preschool beginner. The symbols on the page do not have to be traditional musical notation. Acquaintance with notation such as found in Stephen Covello's Piano Method, The Little Avant-Garde is important.³¹

³¹Stephen Covello, The Little Avant-Garde: A Piano Method for Pre-Schoolers (New York: Schroeder and Gunther, Inc., 1971); see also Nathan Bergenfeld, The Very Young Beginner: A Piano Course and Repertory Book for Individual and Class Instruction, Book I. (New York: Acorn Music Press, 1977).

Small children can quickly learn the difference between space and line notes if only note heads are used. Children enjoy putting their arms on either side of their head and becoming a space note or one arm in the middle of their face and becoming a line note. A staff on the floor large enough for walking and standing on spaces and lines is a valuable aid. With adult students the concept of line and space notes must be presented and reviewed, but the teacher can immediately include the reading of intervals.

Space, direction, and pattern relationships are the primary concern of the excellent sight reader. Experience has proven that sight reading is significantly improved in the student who reads by intervals rather than note names. It is found that with numerous adults who say, "I could just never learn to read" (or those who cannot read), they always recite e-g-b-d-f for the line notes or f-a-c-e for the treble clef space notes. The teacher should first remove part of the staff and read line-to-line or space-to-space as skips; a key and a letter are skipped. Adults can immediately understand the interval of a third. With any age from 4 to 84, if the student will read Example 10 as up a skip, up a skip, down a skip, stay the same, down a skip, and so on, the reading habits will begin to improve.³²

Example 10



Then the teacher introduces the interval of a step, line to the next space or space to the next line. From this point on, an adult needs to understand that all odd numbered intervals, thirds, fifths, and sevenths, will always

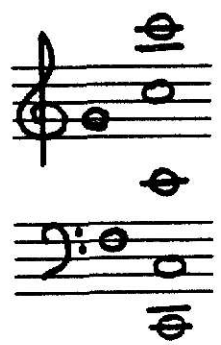
³²The use of a limited staff forces the reader to use intervals and avoid naming the lines and spaces.

be space-to-space or line-to-line. Conversely, all line-to-space or space-to-line notes will be a second, fourth, sixth, and octaves. With the young beginner, the learning of this concept will take place over several months and be reinforced for several years. Additional aids for the less skilled reader include a revision of questioning techniques used by the teacher. Instead of asking the name of the note, ask, "How far and which direction is this note from here?" (Always point to a note that the student knows.) Depending on the age and the number of times the question is asked, the student may begin asking the same question of himself during his practice. This practice will retrain a note-reader to an interval- and direction-reader.

If the student can identify a step or skip (second or third), the student only has to learn five pivot notes, treble (G) clef and bass (F) clef, and the student can read the grand staff in one lesson. It has been this writer's experience during the last twenty years of teaching that the easiest pivot notes to learn are all the C's, provided the student counts from middle C up the treble staff and down in the bass staff as in

Example 11.

Example 11



	Second Added Line C
	Third Space C
	Middle C
	Third Space C
	Second Added Line C

By knowing the G-clef line and the F-clef line, all notes may be read in an interval of a second or third from the pivot points, except for the F and G

between third space C and second added line C in both clefs. Reading taught intervallically from the C's is invaluable in later years if the student needs to use the C clefs.

In the areas of geography, the teacher must persist with a concept until the student has it as part of his vocabulary. Teachers need to constantly be alert to the plight of the four-year-old who has successfully mastered the numbers of all his fingers, the thumb as one and then two-three-four-five. The student goes to his next lesson and the teacher says, "Now that we all know our finger numbers, let us use our second and third finger . . . ," and the little boy becomes very confused. He has just learned that those fingers were "two and three." Vocabulary is an area in music where beginning teachers are lacking, as they usually know too many words for the four-year-old. For this reason, a teacher must constantly check the student's understanding of each concept before the teacher assumes the child is ready to proceed.

CHAPTER III

THE CRUCIAL STEPS

A foundation in the principles of practice, memorization, performance, and sight-reading are imperative to the development of a student's musical pursuits. Other skills necessary in acquiring an understanding of the underlying principles in music, such as improvisation, transposition, theory, ear training, history, stylistic performance practices, and participation in ensembles should be covered in musicianship classes as they are greatly facilitated in group situations.

Practice

Practice is the most misunderstood and over-worked word in a teacher's and student's vocabulary. "Practice this section again." "You need to practice the fingering." "What do I practice now?" "I practiced an hour a day," ad infinitum. Books and magazine articles discuss this subject until it would seem that the music profession would have found all the answers, but the problems still exist. Definitions of practice include, "to perform or work at repeatedly so as to become proficient," "to do or perform often, customarily, or habitually,"³³ "habit," or "a doing."³⁴ Practice in music is an action (a doing), be it aural, visual, or tactile. Practice is for the purpose of establishing a reliable consistency.

³³Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (7th ed.; Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1974), pp. 902-3.

³⁴Webster's Scholastic Dictionary (New York: Airmont Publishing Co., Inc., 1966), p. 284.

The most difficult practice in music is that of unlearning a bad habit and replacing it with a good one. For this reason, the beginning teacher needs to understand his role in establishing successful practice habits. George Kochevitsky's scientific approach to learning for the student states simply, "the shortest reliable path leads through understanding and conscious working out of those motor elements which are open to our understanding."³⁵ He further states that, "Successful practicing depends on the clarity of our mental conception of a musical purpose or the ability to concentrate attention and direct energy toward the attainment of the goal."³⁶ To practice successfully, the student needs an understanding of the "musical purpose," the shortest route to this purpose, the motor elements involved, and ideas to help in concentration and guiding energies to these purposes. For clarification each of these steps will be discussed separately.

Musical purpose is a concept that is difficult for students to grasp. This difficulty results in their limited understanding of the piece as a whole. Therefore, in a lesson the teacher must ask the questions for the student's discovery, such as:

1. What is the form of this piece?
2. How do the sections relate?
3. What keys are involved?
 - a. Where does the piece seem to modulate?

³⁵George Kochevitsky, The Art of Piano Playing: A Scientific Approach (Evanston: Summy-Birchard Company, 1967), p. 18.

³⁶Kochevitsky, p. 16.

- b. Find the modulating chord.
 - c. Where are the cadences? What types?
- 4. How many phrases in this section?
 - a. The first phrase ends where? Second phrase?
 - b. What are the important harmonies or notes in this phrase?
- 5. What stylistic practices would you expect to use?

This type of questioning can be adapted to the lesson time and the student's capacity. For example, questions number one and two will be answered immediately upon exposure to the material. Questions three and four will need several weeks of study as well as discussion at future lessons. One will revise the questions for each piece. Polyphonic music may require a slightly altered set of questions, but the important factor is to lead the student toward an understanding of the musical content. The younger student will also need a similar set of questions. Questions leading to a student's discovery could be:

- 1. Which measures are alike?
- 2. Where would you stop if you only wanted to practice a small part? (phrase)
- 3. Where will your hands be on the keys?
 - a. Do they stay in that position?
 - b. Is this finger position related to the key signature? Right hand? Left hand? (Identify keys)
- 4. Does the music move up or down?
 - a. Does it move by steps? (scales)
 - b. Does it move by skips? (chords)

This type of questioning asked in the beginning gradually leads to the questions for more advanced literature. There is no sacred order for

this procedure, only an established habit to begin mental activity before the physical activity of practicing. It is also effective in class lessons. There the students begin to help each other discover important structured characteristics in the new piece before it is ever taken home to practice.

Even technical exercises must have a musical purpose in practice. The purpose for scales one week could be matching of tones (even sound) and the next week could be a crescendo and decrescendo similar to a musical phrase. The teacher eventually can ask the student to write down the musical purpose for the exercises he practiced each day. The ultimate goal is to establish a habit, so when the student leaves the studio the teacher knows that concentration and understanding are being utilized. However, until the teacher knows this is happening at home, the questions must be asked and answered during the lesson. To reinforce the student's self-questioning process at home, the questions should be in writing.

Question techniques are only one way to develop the student's musical understanding. Although some teachers disagree, experience shows that student interest is stimulated through hearing the literature. Only the child prodigy can look at a page of music and aurally realize it.³⁷ But many students can be taught to perceive the musical shape of a piece, sing the melodic line, and hear the progression of harmonies (or play the harmonic sequence without reference to rhythm). After these steps have occurred, the student should hear the piece performed, as the hearing can shorten the route to musical understanding.

³⁷Lorin Hollander, "Have You Heard Hollander?" Noteworthy, Spring, 1980, p. 3.

The student may hear the piece from a recording or by the teacher's performance. In one hearing most students are not capable of an exact repetition of the work, but do gain an overall view of the selection. This one hearing can sustain him through hours of practice hands alone, establishing correct fingerings, analyzing the score, and all of the other tedious efforts that must take place in the first few weeks.

A digression here: many teachers are afraid to play for the student for fear of an error. Students need to see that everyone makes mistakes. As the student watches a teacher's reaction to his mistake, many types of unspoken learning occurs. Does the teacher go on? Is the teacher visibly shaken by committing an error? The teacher, after the performance, might make a comment such as, "I chose the wrong fingering and it made it impossible to play evenly." This learning can stimulate a student's future pursuits, as it lets the student realize that he is not the only one that has to work out fingering. The important factor is that he has an idea of what the piece might sound like in a few weeks.

The record or the playing may be postponed until the second or third lesson if the visual study is taking place at home. To send a record home with a student in order to learn a piece is an aural crutch. After the piece is analyzed and can be played, one can then criticize several recordings of the same composition. This leads to information and discussion concerning possible variations in interpretation.

Motor elements are very important in practice, but often assume primary significance in the student's mind. "Dexterity develops through musical awareness."³⁸ The elements of visual and aural awareness should

³⁸Kochevitsky, p. 16.

precede development of motor skills. Students must learn that any movement made before careful study is usually a procedure that must be unlearned and re-learned. Only through previous correct experiences will a student eliminate the necessity for conscious thought process before action.

"The pianist Ignaz Moscheles said that the mind should be practiced more than the fingers."³⁹ Herein lies the weakness of many teachers. It is difficult for some teachers to verbalize and help the student discover what must go on in the mind before the motor action begins. Some motor actions are not instinctive and therefore require deliberate mental analysis to build upon those motions previously learned. Verbalization is a requirement for effective teaching.

With students at all levels, the teacher must be alert to the new challenges of each piece. This does not mean the teacher must practice each mechanical motion with the student. However, a working knowledge of the areas encompassing each new challenge will be a time-saver in each student's practice. When practice time is spent more efficiently, the student will be motivated by his accelerated progress.

Lack of concentration is a fundamental cause of bad practice habits, but it can not be corrected by comments such as "You must concentrate." This statement is as ambiguous as "You must practice more," and is little help for the student. Concentration habits are established in the very first lessons. Many bright young students can play simple tunes with very little concentration. The untrained teacher will not notice this pattern, and it may continue for a year or more. There will be no noticeable lag in

³⁹Kochevitsky, p. 15.

the child's progress, but a bad habit has been established. This teacher, in allowing the student to just play through the pieces, has not set up a pattern of self-discipline (concentration) that is needed in practice. The perceptive teacher will establish concentration and practice procedures that will be the foundation for future endeavors.

Concentration is a very elusive skill. A four-year-old will only concentrate or play with a toy for a few minutes. The same concentration pattern applies to practice; therefore, the teacher must enlist the parent's help. Due to the preschooler's short attention span, the concepts are learned by the parent, and then the parent works with the child in segments of one or two minutes many times each day.

For the beginning student, a notebook with a detailed outline of how each piece is to be practiced is valuable. A teacher who requires a piece to be practiced three times is correct in doing so if the assignment includes three different ways to practice the piece. The young beginner will learn more effectively if the parent sits down with him during every practice period and helps him read through the lesson plan and follow each direction. These practice sessions could easily be divided into approximately ten to fifteen minute sessions two or three times a day. A teacher may encounter an overly-ambitious parent who is determined that the child will spend extra time at the piano. This parent needs to be with the child at the piano to discuss what is happening during the practice. The result of parental support is usually a happier, more productive child. This will aid the parent's acknowledgment of more realistic goals. Practicing is a lonely art, and very few children enjoy isolation.

After the child has studied for at least one year or attained the age of nine to eleven, daily practice patterns have been established. It

remains the parents' responsibility to see that this time is reserved for practice only. In cases of students with an undirected thought pattern, it remains the teacher's responsibility to structure a lesson plan that will insure productive practice rather than bench-warming time. If the teacher outlines a practice routine for the student, the results will be a longer, more concentrated practice session.

A teacher may assist a student who lacks sufficient concentration by frequent alterations of practice outlines. Such changes demand the student's attention, resulting in more effective practice.

An example of a lesson plan on J. S. Bach's first Two-Part Invention in C Major might be as follows:

1. Trace the motif throughout and mark each entrance.
2. Play only the motif in rhythm as it appears in the piece.
3. Play only the counter-motif in the same manner.
4. Each day reinforce the correct fingering by playing hands alone, practicing the piece in sections with different dynamics and touches. (staccato, legato, forte, piano)
5. Find the sections as they are divided by the cadences.
6. Play all the cadences with the right hand, left hand, and then both hands.
7. Play G major, A minor, and C major scales.
8. Play scales in contrary motion once, then parallel motion, varying the touch patterns, dynamics, and rhythms.
9. Play the cadences in the same keys as above with both hands: I IV I V I and inversions. Every other day play only the root of the chord in the left hand. The next week change the cadence to I ii6 V I.
10. Improvise a two measure piece using one of the motifs found in the Invention.

11. Play only one section from beginning to end with both hands together at an extremely slow tempo, ♪ = 60 with every detail perfect. If it is perfect, gradually move the metronome up to ♪ = 80. Eventually switch to a ♪ = 40 to 80 and then ♪ = 40 and up.
12. Play the motif backwards (retrograde) in three keys. Did Bach invert the motif?

The discussion of these steps is time-consuming at a lesson, but the time spent will soon show great results in future practice. After a teacher has constructed practice suggestions for one or two pieces, the student should construct the next one. Eventually a verbal outline will be sufficient. When there is evidence that the student's practice follows an orderly plan, a question or two will reinforce continued results. The teacher never ceases to ask these questions about practice procedures. From this continued questioning the teacher may also benefit from imaginative students, who develop new approaches to learning. In group lessons, these questions will lead to discussion in which the students will help each other in methods of practicing.

The weeks in which the student was unable to practice are excellent times to practice in the lesson, asking questions such as, "What are you going to do next? Why? What did you hear? Would a different tempo help? Why did you choose that fingering? How did you use your fingers to obtain that sound?" The teacher's job is to make the student aware of any unconscious acts of memory, whether it be aural, visual, or tactile.

Innovative teachers will find many ideas for guiding a student's energies. The principle of concentration in practicing constantly needs attention, by adapting to each student and his problems. "To concentrate

you must learn to direct your thoughts, and to prevent them from wandering away from a thing, you must train them instead to wander round it."⁴⁰ In severe cases of unorganized practice and mind-wandering with an older student, the teacher may wish to suggest Hatha Yoga, bio-feedback, or other disciplines developing a student's relaxation and mental control. Many theories are being developed that can be related to musical performance and practice.

All these procedures are time-consuming and may seem irrelevant when the student is learning. It is during periods of little progress, often termed learning plateaus, that such procedures may prove especially helpful. Good practice habits will direct the energies toward attaining his goals, and the student will maintain a high level of accomplishment.

Memorization

Good memorization, like all other skills, is the result of detailed, organized study. The intentional learning process is facilitated by an awareness of the types of memory. The aural, tactile, and visual senses must be deliberately employed with an intellectual approach for successful memorization.

The aural sense is often overlooked in the memory process. The cause of this oversight is that children tend to memorize short melodies very easily. Consequently, when the pieces become more complicated, the child uses only the aural memory to distinguish a wrong note. Ideally, the student should hear each note prior to its attack. Aural memory may be strengthened by stopping a student and asking him to sing the next few notes. Aural memory also develops with attention to ear-training skills.

⁴⁰Lilias MacKinnon, Music Secrets (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 1.

Tactile memory, also illustrated early, requires hours of repetition with the same fingering. This type of memory is unreliable if one changes a fingering to facilitate a difficult passage, or inconsistent fingerings are allowed. In spite of successful tactile memorization, it is inadequate by itself. Under the pressure of a performance, minor tension from any source can cause the muscles to expand or contract, resulting in misgauged muscle movement. Memory relying on only the tactile sense may be accurate, but may prove insufficient under stress.

Visual memory is involved both at the keyboard and on the printed page. Although the student may not possess a photographic recall, he may visually memorize other relations. Examples of this are: memorizing that the development section begins on the third page or that the thumb starts each phrase a sixth apart. These examples utilize the sense of sight, but the basis of all successful memorization is the intellect.

The intellectual memory is directly related to good practice habits (study skills). This memory starts with the first exploration of the piece before playing and continues with each new discovery. Vast repertoire of memorized pieces are available to those students who develop the skills of analysis through a strong theory background so they may outline each piece, and concentrate on a different musical concept on each repetition. This type of memory also allows a piece to be put away and re-memorized quickly.

The beginning student finds memory very easy because aural and tactile skills are sufficient. For many students, memorizing is easier than reading the printed page; therefore, the teacher must help the young student discover the use of his visual and intellectual skills. The student

who is shown how to combine all four methods of memory early in his studies facilitates his early eagerness to memorize.

To complete the study of memorization and strengthen the visual and intellectual elements, a teacher must work with a piece that can be systematically broken down and analyzed. Although it is not essential to commit every piece to memory, the steps in analysis for the purpose of memory employ the identical approach used in preparing a piece for sight reading or practice. The following elementary piece, Example 12, can be used for memory training.⁴¹

Example 12


What Am I?

C. Cox

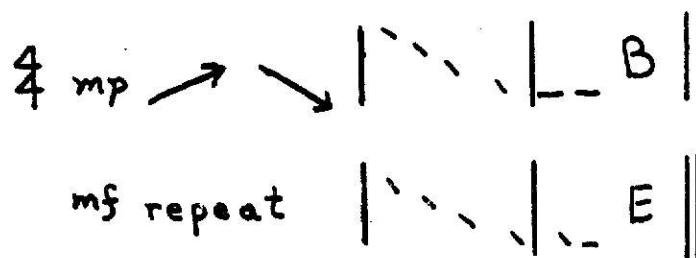


⁴¹ See also Paul Sheftel, Interludes: Mood Studies for Piano (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1974).

The questions asked to initiate the analysis and outline of the piece for memory might be as follows:

1. How many times do you see the rhythm pattern  ?
2. How many times does this pattern go up? Go down?
3. What finger patterns are used in measures one and two or five and six?
4. Clap the rhythm in measures one and two, now five and six.
5. Are these measures exactly the same? What about dynamics?
6. Clap measures three and four and seven and eight.
7. Are the note values alike or different?
8. Are the first three notes of measures three and seven alike or different? What is a sequence? Is there a sequence in this piece?
9. What is in the key signature?
10. What does the time signature indicate?
11. On what note does this piece begin? On what note does it end?
12. What note ends the first line? What is the interval (distance) from the first note to that B?
13. What finger is used to play the F#? Is the same finger used on each F#?

This initial study has included most memory skills. After all these discoveries have taken place, the student might take another sheet of paper and draw a visual outline of the piece such as the following example:



The rhythmic patterns are: 

This outline of the piece should always be done by the student. In a class lesson the students and the teacher can do one piece together to see how to "make a road map."⁴² The teacher can then ask the student to reduce the outline to:

A *mp* / \ ³ \ - V |
 A *mf* / \ ³ , I ||

This outline will visually reinforce the aural and tactile skills. The process leads to an understanding of two A sections, one ending on V and the other on the key-note, I. Now the memory work can begin from a conscious pattern because of exposure to repetition, sequence, direction of sound, and now the student can develop tactile and aural memory.

In subsequent lessons, the teacher may ask the student to play the last measure, or start at the second A section. The student begins to develop confidence in his ability to begin at any point. This process must take place in advanced lessons, but more complex pieces may have many more sections to begin.

While proceeding through the steps of memorization, caution is given to avoid practicing distractions. There are teachers who believe that quizzing a student during the performance of a memorized piece will help memorization. It can only help if the student is concentrating so hard that he does not hear the teacher or the teacher is reinforcing exactly what the

⁴²Paul Pollei, "Memorizing," Lecture, Manhattan, KS, June, 1978.

student is thinking at that point. Requiring a student to answer a question during a performance is only developing a strong tactile memory and will give the student's mind time for worry in a public performance.

Many students have difficulty when the fingers move ahead of the thought process. The only sure remedy for this action is to practice playing by memory with a slow tempo, using the metronome, so that thinking and playing are synchronized. As the metronome speed is gradually increased, the muscular and mental process and thought process remain coordinated. A student may insist that he can not play by memory at a slow tempo. This may be true because the memory has been only tactile and not intellectual. It is very easy for the student to find the sections that need to be re-memorized by using the metronome at a slow tempo.

Poor memory is generally the result of poor analysis and approach during the first week of study. William Newman states it perfectly in his book, The Pianist's Problems.

. . . the pianist who makes mistakes in his practice learns them whether he means to or not. The viciousness of this fact may not be immediately apparent. To state it fully, the pianist who makes a slip, chalks it up to carelessness or to human error, or he merely calls it an accident. But the learning process does not distinguish between accidents and conscious efforts. Whatever is done is learned and becomes a muscular coordination. Mistakes become learned and stick just as correct procedures do. In fact, old mistakes, even when they are corrected subsequently with great care, have a demonic way of turning up in public performance.⁴³

Those who wish to memorize with security must first learn to practice with concentration. The questions used in developing memory skill are the same

⁴³William S. Newman, The Pianist's Problems: A Modern Approach to Efficient Practice and Musiciansly Performance (3rd ed.; New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1974), pp. 125-26.

questions used to direct concentration in practicing. Newman's suggestions for developing greater security in recall are excellent. Anyone who removes the music from his immediate sight so that he must get up in order to see the page will develop a skill for greater recall. The body is usually lazier than the mind.⁴⁴

There are students who insist, "I cannot memorize," or that "It is memorized at home, but I get so worried, I forget." Worry is usually brought about by fear.⁴⁵ This can be corrected by a sympathetic teacher who first has the student memorize in the lesson. "Worry is just a sign of an uncontrolled mind."⁴⁶ Worry must be dealt with by filling the mind with directions for the entire piece. Once a student has been successful with thought control at the lesson, he only needs to be gently encouraged to try his new-found skills. The class lesson is the ideal, non-threatening, supportive situation in which to test these skills. Only when the student has a good relationship with his teacher and a "staunch belief in self" will successful memorization take place.⁴⁷

Performances

A performance is the "evil" necessary to share music. In the usual context of the word, a performance is a public presentation involving an audience of more than one person. The following discussion divides

⁴⁴Newman, pp. 135-36.

⁴⁵Schmitt, p. 163.

⁴⁶MacKinnon, p. 4.

⁴⁷Schmitt, p. 163.

performance opportunities into several categories, including small groups, recitals, auditions, and competitions.

Although some students are terrified of solo performances, most young students perform with ease. This is primarily because students at this stage in their life demand attention. They want people to watch them. Dr. Glenn Gabbard, of the Menninger Foundation, conducted a study on stage fright, in which he determined that young children are uninhibited. As the student gets older, the fear of being ridiculed becomes more apparent.⁴⁸ The teacher's first concern, then, is to help each student realize his own sense of self-worth.

As the student develops self-confidence in his abilities, the teacher must prepare him to perform. Class lessons and musicianship (performance) classes provide the ideal atmosphere for beginning performances. Ideally, these classes should meet at least once every five to eight weeks. All students should perform for the class, and at no time should the student feel threatened. The new student may observe the first time, perform in the second class with the music, and, at the third class, the teacher must insist on a performance from memory.

In these class situations, the students will learn to listen to and evaluate one another. It is essential that the students give honest critiques. When opinions are openly expressed, the student does not have to wonder what his peers think about his performance. One student telling another student that a metronome would be helpful in controlling a section is often more valuable than any teacher's critique.

⁴⁸Glen Gabbard, "Stage Fright," Lecture, Topeka, KS, January, 1980.

After several successful class performances, the student is ready for a performance on a recital. The performance of a duet (using the music) is another way to establish a student's confidence in public. After her first performance on a spring recital, an adult student remarked, "I just realized I had played for all of the students at one time or another for the last two years. Since the students are more aware of what is required in a performance than the parents, I wasn't as nervous."

Frequently, auditions in which only an adjudicator is present are easier for students than a recital. Auditions should not be a problem provided that the student has performed a memorized piece once every six weeks throughout the course of the year. The teacher should keep a list of these memorized pieces. One way to establish this list may be found in Jane Smisor Bastien's Music Notebook.⁴⁹

Mini-lessons provide an alternative to auditions. The lessons should be held with the parents, teacher, and student present. This atmosphere enables the adjudicator-teacher the opportunity to work and talk with the student.

Another viable outlet for performance is competition. These differ from auditions in that student ratings are publicized. An awareness of the rules and the nature of the contest is the teacher's responsibility. No student wants to perform a Bach Minuet when the other students are playing more advanced literature.

Competitions are for the chosen few who can withstand the emotional strain. Bartok was quoted as having said, "Competitions are for horses,

⁴⁹ Jane Smisor Bastien, Music Through the Piano: Music Notebook - A Personal Piano Study Profile (Park Ridge: General Words and Music Co., 1973), p. 29.

not artists."⁵⁰ The teacher must make sure that the student is well prepared before he is allowed to enter the competition. He must be willing to hold back the eager, unprepared student, while encouraging the shy, well-prepared performer.

Many teachers feel that competitions motivate students to work hard. In fact, some students will actually perform beyond their normal level of achievement in a contest situation. While this is the wish of every teacher, he must be aware that not every student will perform the same on any given day. The teacher should also realize that the adjudicator's evaluation functions as another opinion; it is not the word of God! Although a teacher's professional career may be enhanced by having a winning student, this is a poor reason for entering students.

Sight Reading

Sight reading is not just a gift for a chosen few; it is a skill to be studied as carefully as one does in learning to read music. The problem is that most students find this skill elusive. In fact, for those who can play by ear, sight reading is extremely difficult. Teachers have an obligation to help students learn to sight read accurately and quickly. Advantages, techniques for learning, and research in the area of sight reading shall be discussed.

There are advantages to be gained by learning to sight read quickly and accurately. First, if one takes the time to become an accurate sight reader, the amount of literature learned will be multiplied. Secondly, if

⁵⁰ Gordon B. Terwilliger, Piano Teacher's Professional Handbook (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 115.

a student plays reasonably well, he will be asked to accompany. This could reduce the hours spent on piano repertoire and technique. Therefore, if the student first becomes a proficient sight reader, the time spent accompanying is reduced to the joy of rehearsals and performances and not to hours of practicing the piano part alone. Sight reading opens a world of pleasure in ensemble work. Students can enjoy their music with other student musicians, which permits comradeship. Ensemble skills are necessary if a student ever aspires to play a concerto.

To become an excellent sight reader, the student must set aside a time and read everyday. "Be sure to assign sight reading as a part of your students' daily practice routine."⁵¹ Secondly, rhythmic combinations must be recognized quickly. This can be practiced away from the keyboard by using rhythmic drills found in sight reading books such as You Can Sight Read⁵² or Keyboard Proficiency.⁵³ The teacher should send a new set of rhythm patterns home each week. These rhythm drills can be applied to scales or used with Hanon Exercises.⁵⁴

According to Dr. Jean Barr, who teaches accompanying and sight reading, the sight reading skills can be learned by following this outline:

When he first looks at a new piece, he should check the following before playing a single note:

⁵¹ Gloria Hooper, Successful Group Piano Teaching (B.C., Canada: Hooper Publishing, 1977), p. 53.

⁵² Lorina Havill, You Can Sight Read, Book One (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Theodore Presser Co., 1967), pp. 60-62.

⁵³ Louise Guhl, Keyboard Proficiency (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1979), pp. 26-27.

⁵⁴ Orville Lindquist, Technical Variants on Hanon's Exercises for Pianoforte (Evanston, Ill.: Summy-Birchard Company, 1929).

1. Key signature
2. Meter
3. Clefs used
4. Tempo indications such as Allegro--(insist that he look up all unknown terms in the music dictionary).
5. Dynamics
6. Fingering suggestions
7. Accidentals

Then as he begins to play the pieces through for the first time, he should:

1. Go very slowly, trying to get as much correct as he can.
2. Even at a slow tempo, pay attention to giving rests their proper values, to phrasing, and to correct rhythm.
3. Realize that speed is usually not too difficult to achieve--but correcting those mistakes, grooved by hours of careless practice, can be hard.⁵⁵

"The aim of the sight-reader is to see essentials, therefore you must practice looking for essentials, and, furthermore, you must learn to see them long before you play them."⁵⁶ According to Liliias MacKinnon, one way to build this skill is to start with a piece in triple time. As the student counts, he plays the notes only on the down beat. Beats two and three are counted correctly but the hands immediately move to the next down beat. When beat one arrives, play it immediately and shift to the next notes on the first beat and wait for this beat before playing. After step one is mastered, play beats one and three throughout the piece. The third time he fills in beat two and finally fills in the skeleton with all the notes on the page. In common time the student merely plays beats one and three the first time through.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Jean Barr, "Preparing a Young Student to be an Accompanist," Lecture, North Newton, KS, November, 1979.

⁵⁶ MacKinnon, p. 17.

⁵⁷ MacKinnon, pp. 17-18.

Dr. Barr feels that the student should set a metronome so slow that he can play every note accurately the first time. This includes all fingering, rests, phrasing, and touch patterns.⁵⁸ The MacKinnon approach would teach the eyes to move ahead while Dr. Barr's approach would develop more musicality and greater accuracy of fingering. Some students will need a combination of both viewpoints. Therefore, the teacher must recognize the individual student's problems.

Research done on sight reading has shown the greatest fault is gross eye movement.⁵⁹ This habit can be corrected if the student always practices sight reading with his hands covered. This is an approach which becomes necessary for students with severe problems. The student with the habit of looking at the keys can be helped in class if the students take turns counting the number of times the eyes look down. It is an instructive and enjoyable exercise. The student must know the geography of the keyboard so well that he never has to look down except for large leaps.

A teacher should give the students many opportunities to sight read ensembles. For greater security the teacher should select sight-reading music that is at least two levels below the student's level of study. Only when the student finds that the teacher thinks that sight reading is important enough to be included in every lesson will the skill be practiced at home and developed to everyone's advantage and pleasure. It is the teacher's responsibility to develop each student's sight-reading

⁵⁸Barr.

⁵⁹Rita Fuszek, "Sight-Reading at the College Level: The Ignored Skill (Part II)," Keyboard Arts, Spring, 1977, p. 6.

ability as this skill is of primary importance throughout all musical activities.

Musicianship Class

There are certain areas of basic skills where learning is accelerated in groups.⁶⁰ The musicianship classes make available the opportunity for group instruction, whereas lessons are regularly one-to-one. The concepts which lend themselves to musicianship classes are improvisation, transposition, theory, ear-training, ensemble work, history, the discussion of stylistic performance practices, and performance experiences.

The grouping of these classes can be handled in a variety of ways. With an innovative teacher, the classes can consist of a variety of ages and performance levels. The determining factors will depend on the particular subject emphasis of the class and the physical equipment. For example, if the emphasis is on improvisation the students will need the same theoretical and technical background. However, when working with ensembles, the selection of materials can compensate for various technical skills. Due to the importance of age in preschool groupings, these students will not be dealt with in this discussion.

Improvisation. Creativity in music is most easily manifested through improvisation. This activity relates closely to the young beginner who has just explored the sound potentials of the piano and enjoys the

⁶⁰William Forrest Rogers, Jr., "The Effect of Group and Individual Piano Instruction on Select Aspects of Musical Achievement," Ed.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1974, Dissertation Abstracts International, Vol. 35/4A (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974).

freedom from the printed page. For more inhibited students, the teacher should plan to use an accompaniment pattern during improvisation to augment the sound produced. The teacher can use an accompanimental pattern from another piece, create his own, or use a class piano text that includes improvisation patterns.⁶¹

Once improvisation has become a part of the student's vocabulary, ability, and general practice habits, the next step is notation. This is begun when the teacher hears, "I had this neat piece yesterday but I forgot it." First, the use of contemporary notation devices are easier.⁶² Ellen Thompson's book, Teaching and Understanding Contemporary Piano Music, has a chapter devoted to new notational devices with charts.⁶³ It becomes necessary to use traditional notation when a student wants another student to play his composition. Notating his own composition enables the student to discover and understand traditional notation.

The use of question and answer phrases (antecedent and consequent) and their construction is another way of structuring a student's improvisational responses. Excellent texts for this type of composition can be found in the Music Pathways Series⁶⁴ or Skills and Drills.⁶⁵ The books that encourage the student to compose to verbal phrases serve a purpose,

⁶¹James Lyke, Ron Elliston, and Elisabeth Hartline, Keyboard Musicianship, Book One (Champaign, Stipes Publishing Company, 1979).

⁶²Covello.

⁶³Ellen Thompson, Teaching and Understanding Contemporary Piano Music (San Diego: Kjos West, 1976).

⁶⁴Olson.

⁶⁵Robert Pace, Skills and Drills (G. Schirmer/Lee Roberts Music Pub., Inc., 1961).

but do not leave a student as much creative flexibility. Other devices which are helpful to the inhibited student are the use of pieces with two or three measures omitted in the right hand, then a couple of measures omitted in the left hand, and finally two or three measures in which he is to complete both hands.⁶⁶ Creativity is sparked if the structure is defined. "Go home and compose eight measures for next week" is a very frustrating assignment. A student needs a chord pattern and time signature to insure that he can begin. The assignment could be to compose a melody using only chord tones and then embellish this with neighboring and passing tones (non-chord tones).⁶⁷ This theoretical knowledge is integrated into the skills after he has worked with a melody for a week. The teacher will find the very creative student sensitive to the inherent character of different keys, and may express a preference for one key as opposed to another. This student may eventually change the time signature, the number of measures, and add an accompanimental pattern, in lieu of blocked chords. The use of an accompanimental pattern may stimulate the other students to experiment in this area. For the teacher, the cardinal rule is that no improvisation is ever wrong or incorrect.⁶⁸

Transposition. Transposition can be introduced with any piece using a five-finger pattern. The teacher must begin by having the student

⁶⁶ Guhl.

⁶⁷ Walter Noona, The Improviser, Book A-C (Dayton: The Heritage Music Press, 1975).

⁶⁸ "The day I knew I had to teach composition (improvisation) was the day my piano student got an F in a high school composition class. Her assignment was to set a poem to music. She did this using a minor key and mixed meter. She fulfilled the assignment. She was given the grade of F because the class had not studied minor keys and mixed meter."

be aware of how the music moves. Does the melody move up or down? Does it move by skips or steps? Similar questions will establish the outline for transposition. In addition, one must be aware of intervallic movement, directional movement, chord progressions or outlines, and distance from the previous key. Equipped with these guidelines, the student is prepared for his encounter with transposition.

One student must start by saying on which scale tone the pattern begins, another student names the original key, another student names the new key, and two more students can play the transposed pattern in different octaves on one piano. The creative teacher may choose teams for a contest and present the winning team a certificate after a certain number of classes.

Another way to introduce beginning transposition is from a staff without clefs. In this manner, the first note can be any note except what one would expect to find in the treble or bass clef. In Example 13, the notes that may not begin this example are A and F. The students should first verbalize this example by stating that it starts on a triad outline, moves in a stepwise motion, and ends with the interval of the fourth. A teacher may also write parts that could be played in an ensemble by three students at one piano. Keep the examples very short so the class work progresses and no one gets bored, and always do two or three examples in every class.

Example 13



Another practical suggestion is to find some simple music for transposed instrument. The students can play the instrumental part by transposing it while a more advanced student or the teacher sight reads

the accompaniment. When practicing transposition in ensembles, encourage the student to keep reading.

Transposition skills are not only necessary to build the ability to transpose, but are also helpful to the student playing a sonata form. If he can easily transpose a fifth, theme two in the recapitulation becomes no problem in memory work, as the student only need look to see if there are any variations. Transposition also improves sight reading because the student must read intervals and direction. Sequential patterns are more easily identified by the student who can transpose.

Transposition can be taught in a one-to-one lesson, but class lessons provide the student more class stimulation. The class teacher should always include transposition in his lesson plan. One does not always have to label it as transposition, but simply incorporate the principles of this skill in another area. Lesson plans may be varied if one is extremely organized and plans his work over several weeks.

Theory. Theory must be included in every lesson plan and presented in relation to every new concept. The theoretical knowledge that must be employed in a piece, such as transposition, key signature, chord patterns, and intervals should be explained. The greatest problems in teaching theory are created when it is isolated from its practical application. Through applying the theory in his weekly practice, the student will retain his newly acquired knowledge. The "hows" of applying theory are as varied as there are teachers. This writer believes the only mistake that can be made in regard to theory in a piano lesson is never to mention it.

Some instructors introduce theory concepts in class by the use of drill procedures on paper, blackboards, and games. These are excellent

ideas as long as they are discussed in relation to the student's literature. Theory concepts are best reinforced in improvisation. Once the student has used a concept in his composition, he retains it longer.

Theory books are an excellent tool for evaluating the understanding of the concepts. Teachers will find for grading purposes that those books with a separate answer sheet for the teacher are a valuable time-saving device.⁶⁹ If the book does not have an answer sheet, the teacher's time is well spent working out the correct answers in a book. This allows an older student to come to a lesson early and grade his own papers. The discussion of the concept that he does not understand in that theory lesson can be more effective if it is done while he wants the answer rather than waiting a week.

Ear Training. The introduction of ear-training actually begins in the interview. The teacher may have had the student clap a rhythmic pattern after the teacher has clapped it (echo-clapping or clap-backs). Or the teacher, in one of the first class lessons, may have asked the students to come in, sit down, and list every sound they hear.⁷⁰ Ear-training starts as an awareness to every sound surrounding the student.

Because the pitch of the piano is fixed, the students soon learn that if they skip a note they get a major or minor third. The teacher must start a definite ear-training plan in his lessons or the student will not be able to distinguish a third from a fourth except by feel.

⁶⁹David Carr Glover and Louise Carr Garrow, Piano Theory, Primer-VI (Melville, N.Y.: Belwin Mills, 1968).

⁷⁰Schafer, Ear Cleaning, p. 8.

The teacher must keep students aware of pitch, distance, and direction. This can be done by a series of questions from the teacher to the class. The list of questions can be designed so that the students are continually aware of what they are hearing. Example questions might be as follows:

1. Were those two patterns just alike?
2. Did the sound go up or down?
3. Was this composition in a major or minor key?
4. What chords did you hear in the left hand in this composition?
5. Can you clap the rhythm of the last measure of that piece?
6. What was the beginning rhythmic pattern?

The Now Hear This series is a time-saver for the one-to-one teacher and can be used for remedial work in the class situation.⁷¹ This course is designed to train a student to hear and see intervals, take rhythmic dictation, melodic dictation, identify chord qualities and inversions, identify different types of scales, and identify chord progressions. These concepts may also be reinforced through many of the games found in A Galaxy of Games for the Music Class.⁷² A student should be able to see an interval on the page, know how it will feel on the keyboard, and most importantly, how it will sound. This skill is a definite aid to sight reading and memory.

Other class assignments can include playing back short melodies that the teacher just played or picking out familiar melodies by ear. A

⁷¹Clark.

⁷²Margaret Athey and Gwen Hotchkiss, A Galaxy of Games for the Music Class (West Nyack: Parker Publishing Company, Inc., 1975).

teacher should be aware that familiar melodies to a child may be television commercials. These skills can be further developed by the teacher playing a simple melody and having the students fill in only the tonic chord, then the tonic and dominant, etc.

The ability to hear accurately is probably the one skill that is the most vital to the musician and the most used by the hobbyist. It is the one skill most ignored in a piano lesson, because most teachers were never made aware of ear training in their lessons. Ear training should be given proper attention in piano teaching.

Ensemble Work. Ensemble work is another area in which great progress can be made in musicianship classes. Ensembles can actively involve more students at one time with more repertoire now available for multiple pianos (up to six pianos). There is also literature available for three performers of varying sight reading and technical abilities at one piano.⁷³ Physical equipment is the boundary for activities in the ensemble work.

A teacher can also involve many students by using rhythm instruments with the piano ensembles.⁷⁴ These instruments may be primitive, such as coffee can drums, beans in a can for rattles, and paper towel tubes for rhythm sticks. As a teacher becomes more established, he should consider tone bells, tambourines, triangles, wood sticks, finger cymbals, and drums as basic equipment. With the addition of these instruments, a teacher may write ostinato parts and other rhythm accompaniments.

⁷³For ensemble works where parts are of varying difficulty, see Myklas Press, P. O. Box 929, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

⁷⁴Ruth Perdue, Celebration Promenade with Optional Rhythm Instruments (Boulder: Myklas Press, 1975).

A good accompanist is one who has spent many hours in ensembles. He must know all the standard fingerings and be able to work out the exceptions. The work with rhythmic patterns, games, and rhythm instruments over the years has developed the ability to read a complex rhythm pattern. During class the other students aid in choices of dynamics, balance, voicing, and phrasing. Discussions can be held on the proper attack with an instrumentalist, a vocalist, or another pianist. These subjects lend themselves appropriately to class participation.

History and Style. History and stylistic performance practices must be combined in a performance class for any retention of the discussion. A teacher who has a library, either his own or a public library, of art books has a visual approach to what the student is hearing. The blending of colors in an impressionistic painting with the blending of sounds of a Debussy performance is easily recognized by even a very young student. With a little knowledge of artists and their works, a teacher can relate musical form to the structure found in a painting. For example, the classical style of a painting by Jacques Louis David and the form of a classical sonata could be a topic for discussion for more advanced students.

If the teacher is not versed in art works, a trip to the local art gallery or a visit by an artist to the class lesson makes a lasting impression on students. The independent teacher may wish to invest in at least one book in which the visual and musical art forms are related for further exploration.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Leon Dallin, Listener's Guide to Musical Understanding (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1972).

Performance. Performance classes are held by many teachers. These classes can become vital to developing a critical ear in one's own performance. One has to be able to criticize another's performance before he can truly evaluate his own playing. The classes also allow the student to become familiar with how his music will sound when others are watching. In these classes, the students have the opportunity to help each other. An honest critique with a helpful suggestion by another student can be very valuable. One student may comment that the tempo did not seem steady and offer a helpful suggestion such as a fingering, or explain how to practice with the metronome for greater security. Most of all, this is another moment that support from a fellow performer, who has conquered those problems, can be of more assistance than anything said by the teacher.

Small children can start watching the music to develop the ear and eye skill. Eventually all students will know when it is time to turn the page. Young children must be asked if they hear slurs, staccatos, and dynamic changes to direct their listening. This is also the time that the students can see and hear the difference correct posture makes in the total sound. Older students will learn to discuss variations in balance and stylistic practices. The advanced students, with encouragement, will discuss the different interpretations of the same piece. Discussion may also evolve around ornaments and their different execution in Mozart compared to Chopin. The students will now be directly applying their previous discussions in history.

Implementation. Experienced teachers will argue the value of having both one-to-one lessons and group lessons. Some teachers will agree that the musicianship classes are valuable, but they still fail to implement

the class. Arguments heard most are, "My students cannot come at the same time," or "My parents cannot make two trips per week." Solutions to these problems are possible. Two suggestions are to hold the musicianship class one week instead of a private lesson, and to have musicianship classes regularly and let the private lesson be extra. Teachers have found that once they are convinced of the advantages, they can sell the parents on the idea, because the parents sense their enthusiasm.

Teachers may arrange a convenient time for a compatible group by sending out a questionnaire at the beginning of the year asking when it is impossible (never when it is possible) for the student to participate in class. If the parents know they have paid for this time, the minor scheduling conflicts that arise can usually be worked out at home. For the unavoidable conflict, most teachers allow the students to come to another class as long as they are notified in advance. Other teachers tape the lesson for the student or send him a lesson plan so he will not be behind at the next meeting. Challenges will always exist in teaching, but with careful thought most problems can be resolved.

Each method of teaching piano has its value. Every teacher will use his own discretion in teaching musicianship skills to his students, but those who try the class approach find it is advantageous.

CONCLUSION

The professional piano teacher should be an inspiration for the student's lifetime of music. The key factors in a successful teaching career are musical knowledge, an organized approach, and a loving attitude.

With specific knowledge, such as a sound business operation, identifying the early musical concepts, development of essential practice skills, and group teaching techniques, the teacher has a strong foundation. A career teacher is constantly expanding his own learning. The constant discovery of new music and learning techniques produces an air of excitement that is contagious. This teacher is a living example of self-study, self-evaluation, and self-motivation.

All concepts must be presented in an organized manner which could be described in the four steps in teaching. The steps are to identify one's goals, to decide on the approach or materials to reach these goals, and to evaluate the attainment of the goals. The final step is either to set new goals or repeat the second step. If the student did not understand the concept, one must repeat the concept with a different approach and materials and re-evaluate his understanding again. This circle must be pursued constantly by the teacher.⁷⁶ Only in this organized manner will the student be able to rely on his own knowledge in his practice. Only when the student completely understands what he is doing will the teacher be satisfied with the practice.

⁷⁶ Marguerite Miller, "Long-range Student Goals: Planning, Implementing and Evaluating," Lecture, Provo, Utah, June, 1979.

The final quality for a successful teacher is one who has a sense of self-worth and respect for those around him. He knows when to be dogmatic, when to question, when to be flexible, and how to share the love for life and music that motivates a student. He will never allow his students to settle for less than their best. This teacher has the knowledge and the self-awareness to work to be his very best.

The teacher described above will always be worth more to humanity than he will ever receive monetarily. His teaching will be so absorbed by his students that his personal guidance will be no longer needed; however, he will never have a vacant time in his schedule. This person will find meaning in a life of teaching music and its rewards.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

Studio Policy of Charlene W. Cox

Lessons are considered as tuition to a private music school; therefore, lessons are billed by the semester.

Lessons that are cancelled can not be made up. If cancellations can be made twenty-four hours in advance, it is sometimes possible that a missed lesson can be made up in another student's cancelled time. Social conflicts or lack of preparation are not valid reasons for lesson cancellations.

The parents, child, and the teacher should agree upon practice time, where practice is done, the condition of the instrument, and any matters which will insure that each student reaches his potential in music.

Should either party feel the contract must be terminated, a minimum number of four weeks notice must be given, and both parties must agree upon the termination.

I am a certified teacher in the Kansas and National Music Teachers Association. I also am a Faculty Member of the National Guild of Piano Teachers. I belong to and participate in these organizations to insure the student every musical experience possible. I will appreciate the cooperation of the parents in using these organizations for the enrichment of the student.

Charlene W. Cox

913-272-1008

6112 W. Smith Place

Topeka, KS 66614

APPENDIX II

I, _____, will enroll for _____
(minute or type) piano lesson(s) this fall. I have enclosed \$ _____
for the first payment.

Parent's Signature

A similar form for the summer might be altered to read:

I, _____, will take lessons for _____
number of weeks out of the eight week summer schedule. I will be out
of town the weeks of _____. I have enclosed
\$ _____ as a reservation for my summer lessons.

Parent's Signature

APPENDIX III

Record Report Outline

- I. Title of Composition
- II. Composer
- III. Performed (Instrument, Voice, Orchestra)
- IV. Performed by Whom
- V. Description of Composition
 1. General mood or spirit of composition
 2. Tempo (Adagio, Moderato, Allegro)
 3. Meter (Duple or Triple)
 4. Key (Major, Minor, Modal)
 5. Dynamics (Forte, Piano, Mezzo-forte or Mezzo-piano,
or frequently changing)
 6. Form (Binary, Ternary, Rondo, Other)
 7. Texture (Monophonic, Homophonic, Polyphonic)
 8. Harmony (Clusters, Triads, Quartal or Quintal)
 9. Articulation Heard (Staccato, Legato, Accents, etc.)
 10. Stylistic Period (Baroque, Classic, Romantic,
Contemporary, or Other)

MANUAL OF PIANO PEDAGOGY

by

CHARLENE WESS COX

B.M., Kansas State University, 1957

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

Department of Music

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1980

This manual introduces the beginning piano teacher to the music profession of independent teaching. Pedagogy, the art of teaching, is dealt with specifically as it pertains to teaching piano in small groups or in one-to-one situations.

The first discussion covers the requirements for operating a business. These include such topics as physical equipment, business procedures, obtaining students, interviews, and relationships with parents.

Musical concepts to be dealt with in the first six months are outlined. These concepts include the basics of technic, aural and pitch perception, the approach used to establishing good rhythmic sense, and the exploration of the keyboard and printed musical page.

A sound beginning must include the approach to practice, memorization, sight reading, and performance skills. The subjects are adapted to meet the needs of the various student age groups. Musicianship classes further augment the student's learning and are designed to use the teacher as a guide in the student's exploration of various skills. Areas of study include improvisation, transposition, theory, ear training, performance, history, stylistic performance practices, and participation in ensembles.

This paper includes practical references and fundamental pedagogical principles. The bibliography is designed to further assist the musician in preparation for his teaching career.