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A STUDY OF PIANO PEDAGOGY

ITS HISTORY, THEORY, PSYCHOLOGY

AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

DISSERTATION

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PREFACE

A discourse concerning the importance of piano teaching method, followed by a study of piano pedagogy; its history and general aspects of piano technique; a fully comprehensive method of piano teaching from the very earliest stages to the advanced; a discussion of various important selected concepts incorporated in the method which require particular emphasis; the application of certain concepts in the various style periods, such as dynamics, tempo, tempo rubato, pedalling, ornamentation, to the teaching of a piece; a discussion of the psychology of piano teaching and practising. All of these various branches of study are imperative in the training of the prospective piano teacher.

INTRODUCTION

Personal experiences with regard to a comprehensive knowledge of all the branches of piano teaching method, draw attention to the fact that the majority of music students at University level are generally so disinterested and ignorant of any facet of these branches (even so far as teaching the beginner at the piano the elements of piano playing in a logical, coherent manner), that time and time again one is drawn to the conclusion that although most students leave the University with a competence of piano playing, varying from fair to excellent, they are not only ill-equipped to teach the piano, but frequently entirely lacking in any knowledge whatsoever to do with this most important study. 'Why should there be an emphasis upon teaching?', they are often heard to say. And one student went so far as to say that she would not 'prostitute' her art, or lower herself to teach. The reply to this is, that very few music students indeed ever become concert pianists, or are able to make a living concertizing, the majority being obliged to turn to teaching, and because they have neglected or ignored this part of their training, their work of a life-time - their teaching, falls abysmally short of anything near competence and for years many struggle to master an art, which should have been one of the most highly regarded and important in their years of study. The result of this poor study of teaching method is responsible for a low standard of teaching at schools and elsewhere, and this state will not be remedied until the detailed study of piano teaching method is restored to its proper status, ie. as one of the most important facets of a student's curriculum. Why should the training of our future young pianists, artists and teachers be regarded as lowly work -

something to be looked down upon; why should it be regarded as the 'Cinderella of piano playing'? A more realistic approach and attitude to the eventual occupation of the majority of piano students, would bring them to the realisation of what their future work will be, and how extremely, if not wholly, important this branch of study is. The student should be made more aware of the creativity of teaching the piano - that he holds within himself an ability to develop a skill and an art not only for the gifted child, which is a wonderful experience for both teacher and pupil, but also an ability to lay the foundation of an appreciation of music for the not-so-talented pupil - an appreciation which can last long, into the later years of his life.

Principally the same problem is discussed by Professor Michael Whiteman, from a different angle in an article in the SASMT journal, September 1981, no. 99, entitled Professional Standards in the Teacher's Diploma Course. He refers to the high standard of study, the wide syllabus and the ability required to pass the various Teachers' Diplomas of the Trinity College of London, Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, and the University of South Africa. He reveals that due to low categorization, the holders of these Diplomas receive much lower salaries than B Mus graduates, who may have studied no teaching method during the course of their studies, or very little. Basically the argument bears directly upon the one previously put forward:

"Very many of the wider public, including educationists, seem to be under the impression that for professional musicians, a teacher's diploma course is distinctly inferior to a degree course and can even be dispensed with by those who possess a diploma or degree for performance. There seems to be, in consequence, a tendency to treat those who work for a teacher's

diploma instead of a degree, as 'weaker brethren', who could not attempt the stricter regimen for a degree. But many of those who have obtained a degree meet with bitter disillusionment when they find how difficult it is to obtain a diploma."<sup>1</sup>

If more attention were paid to teaching method, by students in the Universities, no such situation would arise, or at least the student or graduate would be better equipped to face the passing of a piano teacher's diploma.

Naturally, the basis of a teacher's method is the equipment of a correct piano technique in his own piano playing, and an ability to express himself musically at the keyboard. But apart from this practical aspect, there are many other branches of piano pedagogy which should be carefully studied before a piano student can be considered a trained teacher. It is the purpose of this thesis to deal with the most important of these aspects in detail.

#### THE HISTORY OF PIANO TECHNIQUE AND PIANO PEDAGOGY

The study of this topic enlightens the student as to the growth of piano technique through the years, and it enables him to realise why we play as we do today. It also reveals that no one method is necessarily the perfect one, and that from the study of all methods of past and present, some gems of truth and enlightened knowledge are

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<sup>1</sup> The Editor (Dr M Whiteman), The South African Music Teacher, No. 99, September, 1981, p 23.

derived which will assist him in the understanding of his method of piano teaching and in the imparting of technical knowledge.

#### GENERAL ASPECTS OF PIANO TECHNIQUE

This is absolutely vital to the prospective teacher, as without absorption of the solid basic fundamentals of piano technique, there would be an inability to impart technical knowledge, and correction of technical faults would not be coherently and easily executed. It should be studied separately and prior to the method of teaching, as these fundamentals of technique are an inherent part of the method and should be well understood before the method can be imparted. The terminology and description of technical procedures should be kept simple, uncluttered and clear, so that they can readily be applied to practical teaching.

#### METHOD OF PIANO TEACHING

A step-by-step method or system from the beginning stages to the advanced. The student-teacher should be presented with a logical, workable scheme, dealing with the first few lessons in detail, proceeding to a pattern to be followed, where the concepts of Technique, Pitch, Rhythm and Aural, in that order, represent the main branches of tuition, and some portion of which should be dealt with in each lesson. In this way he will know exactly what concept should follow upon another, and by dividing the work into the above sections: Technique, Pitch, Rhythm and Aural, and into the amount of work that

an average pupil can cope with per school term, the beginner teacher will have a positive method to work upon. The student-teacher should be clearly informed as to the rate of progress of a beginner, ie. that all beginners, like all graded pupils, proceed at their own speed, according to their age, ability and aptitude.

#### SELECTED CONCEPTS TAKEN FROM THE METHOD OF TEACHING

There should be discussion and emphasis of particular vital concepts of piano teaching, such as sight-reading, aural, rhythm, scales, arpeggios, tone production, phrasing and progression, repertoire, theoretical aspects and their application, and correct methods of practicing, so that advice is proffered to the prospective teacher as to why these concepts are so important and as to how to develop them.

#### THE TEACHING OF ELEMENTARY TO MODERATELY DIFFICULT PIECES FROM THE VARIOUS STYLE PERIODS

The direct practical application of stylistic concepts to the teaching of elementary pieces from the various style periods reveals to the student-teacher the correct artistic and musical approach to teaching.

#### THE PRINCIPLES AND PSYCHOLOGY OF TEACHING

This section presents guide-lines to the piano teacher as to the correct principles and approach to piano teaching and advice with regard to the handling of the beginner, teenager, student and adult pupil.

CHAPTER ONE

A HISTORY OF PIANO TECHNIQUE AND PEDAGOGY

As the piano developed from the earlier clavichord and harpsichord, composers and performers searched for the best ways to deal technically with the changing instrument. Concurrently great keyboard teachers, many who were celebrated virtuosos, passed their knowledge, insight, experiences, theories and methods on to their pupils. Thus we see an inevitable and parallel development in the history of the science of piano technique and pedagogy. An appreciation and knowledge of this fascinating development "will help guide present-day pianists into a broader perspective of piano technique, and into a sound recognition and understanding of its fundamental 'natural' principles."<sup>1</sup> There is also a distinct revelation, that whether delving into methods of the old masters, or into present-day highly analytical and technical treatise on piano technique, we derive some enlightened, valuable information from each one of them, thus shedding light upon our way to the understanding of piano technique, and to the imparting of this knowledge in our piano teaching.

The details of this vast subject are many, and here it is preferable to mention the composers, pianists and teachers who left a lasting effect upon the history of piano technique and teaching, and to draw upon facts which directly affect our knowledge and understanding of

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1. R G Gerig, Famous pianists and their Technique, Washington-New York : R B Luce, 1974, p 3.

piano technique and methods of teaching today - the lesser-known gems of intrinsic knowledge from far gone eras, which suddenly strike us as being incredibly like our own, or just as we would have thought the solution to a problem in piano technique or teaching would be.

By studying the writings of the early clavier writers, we see their great influences upon the historical birth of piano technique. The careful finger articulation necessary for fine execution upon the harpsichord, and the possibility of obtaining delicate, sensitive nuances on the clavichord, called for intense discipline and very careful listening, and it is interesting to note that early writers advised that harpsichordists should perfect their technique at the clavichord (although it reached its greatest popularity a century earlier than the harpsichord) and that the sensitive shadings and colorations of the clavichord would benefit their musicianship. It would improve the listening perception and finger articulation of a present-day pianist to practise at both the harpsichord and clavichord.

From the very earliest clavier method of any note, Il Transilvano, by Girolano Diruta from approximately 1600, we see advice on,

"The rule of how to play with dignity and grace is based on certain main points ... The first thing is that the organist should sit with his body exactly before the middle of the keyboard, the second that he must not make gestures or movements with his body, but hold himself chest and head erect and poised. The third thing is to know that the arm leads the hand, and the hand must be held strictly on the same level as the arm, neither higher nor lower."<sup>2</sup>

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2. A J Hipkins, A Description and History of the Pianoforte and of the Older Keyboard Stringed Instruments, London : Novello, Ewer Co. 1896, p 103.

Here, as early as 1600, Diruta draws attention to style, and attention to the avoidance of unnecessary mannerisms in performance, as we endeavour to do, so often in our teaching today. Diruta, referring to both organists and harpsichordists, had good reason to do so; as the Italian harpsichord was used to accompany dancing frequently at that time, and in order to produce more tone, the plectra of these instruments were of heavy construction requiring the keys to be struck more roughly. This was totally unlike the delicate, gentle manner of key depression customary of the age of early English keyboard musicians, such as William Byrd, John Bull and Orlando Gibbons, who excelled not only in the wealth and quality of their early keyboard literature, but in the superiority of their fingering.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, as the harpsichord was reaching the peak of development, the most important clavier books are to be found in France. By far the most important publication, in fact the musical world's first pianoforte tutor or method, was Couperin's L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin (1668 - 1733). Couperin's treatise is well-worth the acquisition of every student of the piano, as although not written in an orderly manner, it makes fascinating reading, and its value is inestimable in the study of piano pedagogy. See what Couperin states with regard to the seating posture of the beginner and realise that in 1716, he advocates as we do today, that,

"It will be necessary to place some additional support under the feet of young people, varying in height as they grow, so that their feet, not dangling in the air, may keep the body properly balanced."<sup>3</sup>

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3. F Couperin, The Art of Playing the Harpsichord, Wiesbaden : Breitkopf and Hartel, 1933, p 10-11.

He advocated that "delicacy of touch depends also on holding the fingers as close to the keys as possible".<sup>4</sup> Basically it is evident that he was concerned with achieving musicality above all else, but he includes technical exercises in his treatise, and eight delightful preludes for loosening the fingers. It is noteworthy that a large measure of the book is concerned with fingering, indicating that in this treatise, as in some other early methods, there is more involvement with the mental side of technique than the mechanical, and that keyboard knowledge and a feeling for harmony were considered essential in training. The treatise also makes a notable contribution to the ornamentation practices of French keyboard music of this era.

Rameau (1683 - 1764) followed with his Méthode sur la Mécanique des doigts sur le Clavessin (Paris 1724) and in 1760 with Code de Musique Pratique demanding in these treatise, the security of a true harpsichord touch, advocating a flexible finger, but economy of movement.

"The ability to walk or run derives from the flexibility of the knee-joint; the ability to play the harpsichord from the flexibility of the fingers at their roots. A larger movement is only advisable when a smaller is not sufficient ..."<sup>5</sup>

Notice his sound advice here, as we give today to our pupils, on economy of movement.

We must remember that the great J S Bach (1685 - 1750) was a contemporary of Couperin and Rameau, and that he was organist supreme

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4. Couperin, op cit, p 12.  
5. Gerig, op cit, p 17.

of his day, and an excellent harpsichordist. Except for the preface to his inventions of 1722, Bach regretfully left little information upon matters of teaching and performance. We rely therefore upon the commentary of his son C P E Bach with regard to his technique and musicianship in performance, and those of Forkel, his first biographer, with regard to his teaching. Apart from the obvious virtuosity and improvisatory skills of the great Bach, what is prominent as one of the most outstanding developments which he handed down to posterity in performance, is his system of fingering. Both J S Bach and C P E Bach accomplished more to instigate the function of the thumb as a pivot in our modern scale and arpeggio fingering than any other early musician.

"My late father told me about having heard great men in his youth who did not use the thumb except when it was necessary for large stretches ... he was obliged to think out a much more complete use of the fingers, and especially to use the thumb (which apart from other uses is quite indispensable especially in the difficult keys) in such a manner, as Nature, as it were, wishes to see it used."<sup>6</sup>

From J N Forkel (1749 - 1818) who was acquainted with Bach's sons, Wilhelm Friedeman, and Carl Philipp Emanuel, came the first significant biography of J S Bach in 1802. One must take into consideration that much of what Forkel wrote must have stemmed from his acquaintance with Bach's two sons, and that he was writing this biography fifty-two years after Bach's death, and that consequently there may have been some distortion of finer points, but nevertheless it remains the earliest information on the great master, and the

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6. H T David and A Mendel, The Bach Reader, New York : Norton & Co, 1945, p 223.

chapters on, 'Bach the Clavier Player', and 'Bach the Teacher', are particularly valuable. Forkel's description of Bach's finger technique is one of the most helpful guides to the clear articulation and non-legato touch of the keyboard music of the Baroque era.

"In the transition from one key to another, this gliding off causes the quantity of force or pressure with which the first tone has been kept up to be transferred with the greatest rapidity to the next finger, so that the two tones are neither disjoined from each other nor blended together."<sup>7</sup>

With regard to his teaching, Bach's own words which preface his Inventions (1722), show us more truly than any other what he wished to impart.

"An honest guide, wherewith lovers of the clavier, and especially those anxious to learn, are shown a clear method not only how to learn to play neatly in two parts, but further to play correctly and well in three obbligate parts; and at the same time not only to acquire good inventions (ideas) but to work them out well; but above all to attain a cantabile style of playing, and in addition to get a strong taste for composition."<sup>8</sup>

Forkel relates in his chapter on 'Bach the Teacher', that Bach gave great consideration to finger technique and clarity of touch in his teaching and that from assiduous technical practice, he would allow his pupils to graduate to the playing of pieces such as Six Little Preludes for Beginners and the fifteen two-part Inventions, which he composed as he taught, afterwards moulding them into exquisite small works.

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7. David and Mendel, op cit, p 307 - 308.

8. J S Bach, Two and Three-Part Inventions, London : Associated Board, 1956, p 4.

By far the most influential and organized method book of the next generation was the Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen (Essay on the true art of playing keyboard instruments). It is not only the most important treatise of the entire harpsichord era (outclassing other method books of the period by Marpurg and Quantz), but had lasting influence upon Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Czerny, Clementi, Cramer and Hummel. Today we can learn a great deal from the Versuch, and can only marvel that C P E Bach foretells so much of what we consider to be good taste and style in sensitive keyboard performance. The Versuch should be studied carefully by every serious student of piano playing and teaching. Mozart is quoted as having said of this treatise,

"He is the father, we are the children. Those of us who do anything right learned it from him. Whoever does not own to this is a scoundrel."<sup>9</sup>

Noteworthy is the reference Bach makes to keyboardists whose

"Playing lacks roundness, clarity, forthrightness, and in their stead one hears only hacking, thumping and stumbling. All other instruments learned how to sing. The keyboard alone has been left behind, its sustained style obliged to make way for countless elaborate figures."<sup>10</sup>

Here is one of the first fuller references in a method book to a cantabile style of playing. The method abounds in good advice, including a description of a satisfactory posture at the keyboard, the relationship of harpsichordist and clavichordist, admonitions to use the thumb, and in the well-known section on ornamentation, suggestions

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9. C P E Bach, Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments, New York : Norton, 1949, p 4.

10. C P E Bach, op cit, p 30.

for the execution of the trill. Bach's emphasis upon the worthlessness of technique without musicianship, tells of a mind thinking far beyond his time; "Most technicians do nothing more than play the notes. And how the continuity and flow of the melody suffer, even when the harmony remains unmolested! ..."11 Again he exhorts us to achieve cantabile. "Above all, lose no opportunity to hear artistic singing. In so doing, the keyboardist will learn to think in terms of song."12

It is important to realise that at this stage in the history of keyboard technique, the harpsichord, clavichord and early piano were in use. The clavier touch consisted of a close finger action, with minimal arm activity, the articulation being a combination of both legato and staccato; in an allegro piece, non-legato and staccato playing were more likely to be used, and in an adagio a more legato style of playing prevailed.

It was Mozart himself who was the first of the great piano players. The early piano was light in action, and it was likely that Mozart used a technique very much akin to his harpsichord and clavichord technique. We are fortunate to be able to learn most closely, from Mozart's own letters, what the great musician desired with regard to such matters as legato, tempo, mannerisms and tempo rubato in the playing of his works; and within these interesting and often amusing letters, we find the epitome of the Viennese piano style clearly defined; a style which embodied lightness and clarity in execution,

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11. C P E Bach, op cit, p 149.

12. C P E Bach, op cit, p 172.

nobility, elegance and a smooth-flowing cantabile in melodic passages. In 1777 he wrote to his father:

"That reminds me, now for his little daughter. Anyone who sees and hears her play and can keep from laughing, must like her father, be made of stone, for instead of sitting in the middle of the clavier, she sits right opposite the treble, as it gives her more chance of flopping about and making grimaces. She rolls her eyes and smirks ... But the best joke of all is that when she comes to a passage which should flow like oil and which necessitates a change of finger, she does not bother her head about it, but when the moment arrives, she just leaves out the notes, raises her hand, and starts off again quite comfortably..."<sup>13</sup>

It is important to point out here, that Mozart inherited a basic non-legato style of playing from the harpsichord. He does desire a legato for certain melodic passages, and these he indicates, but he almost always requires virtuoso passage work to be played non-legato.

In the same letter to his father, Mozart states clearly, how he played his melodic rubato. "Everyone is amazed that I can always keep strict time. What these people cannot grasp is that in tempo rubato in an Adagio, the left hand should go on playing in strict time. With them the left hand follows suit."<sup>14</sup>

How many times do we not advise our pupils not to take Mozart's works at too great a speed? Here we have proof that Mozart himself had the same complaint.

"I should mention that before dinner he had scrambled through my concerto at sight ... He took the first movement prestissimo, the Andante allegro, and the Rondo, believe it

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13. Mozart : The letters of Mozart and his family, edited by E Anderson, New York : St Martin's Press, 1966, p 339.  
14. Mozart, op cit, p 339-340.

or not, prestissimo ... At the same time I could not bring myself to say to him, Far too quick! Besides, it is much easier to play a thing quickly than slowly ..."<sup>15</sup>

The next great pianist to follow was Muzio Clementi. He and Mozart were acquainted with one another, played to one another, and although Mozart's comments about Clementi were scathing, "apart from this, he has not a farthing's worth of taste or feeling; he is a mere mechanic"<sup>16</sup>, nevertheless Clementi was certainly the forerunner of Beethoven, pointing a way to a new path, with performances of virtuosity and brilliance. Moreover, he outlived both Mozart and Beethoven, and as a teacher he achieved great success, his pupils including John Field, (the forerunner of Chopin, in his pianistic style,) Cramer and Hummel. Clementi composed prodigiously and became involved in his own publishing business, and in the manufacturing of pianos, by his own firm, Clementi and Co., which was responsible for improvements in the English piano. Clementi's greatest legacy was to the early beginnings of the authentic piano style. Passage work is now truly legato. "When the composer leaves the staccato and legato to the performer's taste, the best rule is to adhere chiefly to the legato, reserving the staccato to give spirit occasionally to certain passages, and to set off the higher beauty of the legato."<sup>17</sup> Clementi's two method books, 'Introduction to the Art of Playing the Pianoforte' (1803) and his 'Gradus ad Parnassum' (1817-1827), are interesting and valuable, the former for the inclusion of one of the first collections of moderately easy piano pieces, either original or transcribed, by composers such as Rameau, Corelli, Haydn, Beethoven

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15. Mozart, op cit, p 448-449.

16. Mozart, op cit, p 793.

17. M Clementi, Introduction to the Art of Playing the Pianoforte, New York : Da Capo Press, 1973, p 14-15.

and Mozart. The latter, his *Gradus* contained one hundred works of various types, such as études, sonatas, canons, fugues and rondos, and is noteworthy for the fact that Carl Tausig in the mid-1800's, lowered Clementi's reputation by publishing his own version of the *Gradus*, including a selection of études which were by no means as musical as Clementi's. Therefore it was really not the true Clementi who has been widely known for the last one hundred years. J B Cramer, a pupil of Clementi was highly regarded by Beethoven as was his piano playing. "Amongst the pianoforte players he (Beethoven) had praise for one as being distinguished - John Cramer. All others were but little to him."<sup>18</sup> Clementi and Cramer lived on into their eighties, untouched by the progressing art of Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt, but both having contributed much to early piano technique and its teaching.

The last of the great pianists of the Viennese school was J N Hummel, who in some field or another during his life had connections with all the great composers, pianists and teachers of that period. He learned with Mozart, was under the tutelage of Albrechtsberger, Salieri and Haydn for theory and composition, was acquainted with Beethoven and a rival of his in performing, and even inspired Czerny with his brilliant execution at the keyboard. Czerny's comments on the comparison of Hummel's and Beethoven's piano playing are valuable as they reveal that Beethoven was already leading the way to a new breadth in performance.

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18. A W Thayer, The life of Ludwig von Beethoven, New York : Vol 1, Schirmer, 1921, p 291.

"While Beethoven's playing was remarkable for his enormous power, characteristic expression, and his unheard of virtuosity and passage work, Hummel's performance was a model of cleanness, clarity, and of the most graceful elegance and tenderness ..."<sup>19</sup>

What did Hummel leave us, that is of value, besides the reports of his obvious immaculate virtuosity at the keyboard? He was a renowned teacher, and his vast 'Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instruction on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte commencing with the Simplest Elementary Principles and including every information requisite to the Most Finished Style of Performance' (1828)<sup>20</sup>, vast enough in its title alone, although outdated in its embroidered theories of the high finger school, does tell us most interestingly about the study practices of that period. In his preface to parents and teachers of music, Hummel advises an hour a day instruction for the beginner for the first six months and even a year, and the following list of "chief qualities that a good master should possess"<sup>21</sup> are values which the dedicated teacher of today would do well to consider.

- "1) That the master should feel the most zealous interest in all that relates to his pupil's progress in the art.
- 2) That he must not allow him to contract any bad habits.
- 3) That as soon as the pupil has acquired the preliminary knowledge absolutely necessary, he should not exclusively occupy him with merely dry examples, but should occasionally intermingle with these, short and pleasing pieces ..."<sup>22</sup>

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19. R Gerig, Famous Pianists and their Technique, Washington-New York : R B Luce, 1974, p 69.

20. J N Hummel, A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instructions, London : Boosey & Co, 1829.

21. R Gerig, op cit, p 70.

22. R Gerig, op cit, p 70.

But yet even with all Hummel's writings there is no advance into the realms of a true science of piano technique, and it is with the genius of one of musical history's most fascinating composers, Beethoven, that the way was paved.

The structure of society was beginning to change at this time, and it was not only Beethoven's individual independent personality which enabled him to forge a new path in music's history, but the surroundings of a revolutionary spirit with a new attitude towards society and the world, which fostered it. "(Beethoven) placed himself no longer in the service of aristocracy; instead he placed the aristocracy in his own service."<sup>23</sup> He confronted the world as an individual now, following the "art for art's sake" principle, his compositions not being simply written for entertainment purposes, but as the fruits of his self-expression. To express himself deeply sincerely and emotionally at the keyboard, he transgressed any former norms of piano technique, allowing his inner expressions to lead him where and how they wished. There are a number of documentary references to Beethoven's piano performances. The evidences of his immense personal and individual expression as a prophet of the future, are what are most relevant in our study of the development of piano technique. An early account of Beethoven's intensity and his forceful and almost unearthly powers at the piano, couched in typical Romantic vein by von Seyfried in 1799, are recorded.

"When once he began to revel in the infinite world of tones, he was transported also above all earthly things; his spirit had burst all restricting bonds, shaken off the bonds

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23. A Einstein, Music in the Romantic Era, London : Dent, 1947, p 14.

of servitude, and soared triumphantly and jubilantly into the luminous spaces of the higher aether. Now his playing tore along like a wildly foaming cataract, and the conjurer constrained his instrument to an utterance so forceful that the stoutest structure was scarcely able to withstand it; and anon he sank down, exhausted, exhaling gentle plaints, dissolving in melancholy."<sup>24</sup>

We have conflicting evidence from his pupils Ries and Czerny, that on one hand he played his works with abandonment and exaggeration, yet adhering mainly to the tempo, and on the other hand portraying serenity and nobility in certain of his moods. Czerny with foresight, realized that Beethoven was composing and performing in a manner that belonged to an era of the future.<sup>25</sup>

And what of Beethoven the Teacher? Czerny, his famous pupil, has left us some valuable information. Beethoven ordered Czerny to immediately purchase a copy of C P E Bach's treatise, and then to proceed to a strenuous program of technical development.

"He then went through the various keyboard studies in Bach's book, and especially insisted on legato technique, which was one of the unforgettable features of his playing; at that time all other pianists considered that kind of legato unattainable, since the hammered, detached, staccato technique of Mozart's time was still fashionable."<sup>26</sup>

So we see that Beethoven was working towards not only legato playing, but from later references, to generating tone, towards roundness and fullness of tone; and was preoccupied with the fact that the power of the arm should back up the fingers. It is recorded that he approved of C P E Bach's Versuch, and Clementi's method books, but was not in

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24. A Thayer, op cit, p 216.

25. A Thayer, op cit, p 90, 91.

26. R Gerig, op cit, p 90.

favour of Hummel's great volumes. Like most great pianists, he wished to write a method book himself but had little time to do so, the nearest to which he came, being his sketch-books, now preserved in the British Museum.

We come as close as is possible to Beethoven as teacher, in his famous letter to Czerny with regard to his teaching of Beethoven's nephew, Karl. He gives some very sound advice, which most teachers of today would be interested in, as how to deal with an average pupil. After exhorting Czerny to be affectionate with him, yet firm, he advises him to check his fingering, accuracy of notes, and interpretation "and when he has reached that point don't let him stop playing for the sake of minor mistakes, but point them out to him when he has finished playing the piece. Although I have done very little teaching, yet I have always followed this method. It soon produces musicians, which after all is one of the chief aims of the art, and it is less tiring for both master and pupil."<sup>27</sup> <sup>28</sup>

Beethoven's dynamic piano playing naturally engendered a restless impatience within him of the Viennese pianos of that time, and with his French Erard pianoforte dated 1803. He eagerly awaited his famous Broadwood piano, which arrived in Vienna in 1818, and it pleased him with its greater tone and strength. Yet even this was not enough for

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27. L v Beethoven, The letters of Beethoven, ed by E Anderson, New York : St Martin's Press, 1961, p 742-43.

28. We should incorporate these wise teaching principles of the great master in our own teaching, with detail and accuracy emphasized in the early stages of learning a piece, and nearing the stages of performance, to encourage the playing of the work as an artistic whole with the interpretational characteristics correctly shaped. His advice is invaluable.

him in his efforts to achieve more and more power and tone, driving onwards into his vision of the future.<sup>29</sup> It is tragic that the genius who foretold the sonority of the piano could not enjoy the strength and volume which were to emerge from instruments of a later date.

Beethoven was Czerny's teacher, and Czerny was the teacher of Liszt, Lechetizsky and Kullak, and thus the links and chains between great musicians and great teachers were forged over the passing years. Czerny is certainly a somewhat puzzling figure in the history of piano technique. Having been a pupil of Beethoven's, he was obviously influenced and impressed by his genius, but at first glance he seems to have concentrated solely upon the development of finger technique, with regard to his piano pedagogy. From his vast compositional output, only works such as his Toccata, Op 92, Variation on a theme by Rode, Op 33 and his piano studies, survive, most opinions being that he had a musical gift producing works both worthy and worthless, with the latter predominating. But as a teacher Czerny left lasting impact upon 19th century piano pedagogy. His treatise on piano teaching, very lengthy, but valuable, and not easily procurable today, gives us an inner, fleeting glance of a teacher and a musician who was not merely a dry technician. His Piano Forte School<sup>30</sup> composed of three volumes, presents the pinnacle of the era of the finger school; marking its close. Fielden suggested that Czerny did not contribute to a science of piano technique, since constant repetition of finger exercises and studies is not the sole road to success! "One must

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29. On his death this very instrument was found to be in a bad state of disrepair.

30. C Czerny, Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School, 3 Vols, Op 500 : London, R Cocks & Co, 1839.

suppose that they went on till their hands ached and hoped for the best, and that the fittest survived."<sup>31</sup> Yet with careful reading of Czerny's treatise one can find references, although submerged in a mass of detail, on a piano technique which is to come - references to style, tone production, weight and expression, all portending towards a deeper-thinking mind than the early finger schools. How could Czerny, who recognized Beethoven's greatness, not have been in some ways influenced by him?

While emphasizing freedom of movement, Czerny advises a quiet, controlled keyboard approach, declaring that freedom and quietness are imperative to a smooth, even touch. He often refers to 'striking' the key, but the high percussive finger action, characteristic of the later Stuttgart School, worries him, and he states,

"As each finger, previous to it's being used, must be held very near to its key (without however touching it); so, after the stroke, it must again return to its previous situation."<sup>32</sup>

Notice in his treatise a distinct reference to 'weight', anticipating the 'weight' schools which were to develop.

"Before anything else, it must be observed that the crescendo should never be produced by a visible exertion of the hands, or by lifting up the fingers higher than usual, when we are playing legato; but only by an increased internal action of the nerves, and by a greater degree of weight ..." <sup>33</sup>

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31. T Fielden, The History of the Evolution of Pianoforte Technique, London : MacMillan & Co, 1933, p 47.

32. R Gerig, op cit, p 111.

33. R Gerig, op cit, p 112.

His last remarks in volume one, are perhaps the most sincere and helpful to us in our teaching today, giving us a picture of a kindly human teacher whose advice and psychological approach can be well applied.

"We shall gain nothing by torturing the young Pupil with Compositions which must appear to him as old fashioned, unintelligible, and tasteless, or as too difficult and troublesome ... Nothing is more important for the Teacher than to form and develop as soon as possible the taste of his Pupil. This cannot be accomplished in any way better than by a good choice of pieces ... Useful as may be the practice of the numerous Exercises of Studies, now published: still the Teacher must not overload his Pupils with them."<sup>34</sup>

Throughout his treatise, Czerny frequently emphasized careful listening and attention to tone, and the chapter on expression, stands as evidence of Czerny's deep musical knowledge and appreciation, and his long-lasting influence.

Along the path of history of piano technique are many lesser-known figures who published their methods and even invented mechanical aids to improve keyboard technique, to the detriment of the hands of many students of the piano. But in this survey, we are searching for creative contributors to the development of piano technique, and therefore we will not discuss those who made no lasting effects upon our subject.

From the outset of Chopin's career it was his individual genius, and originality that caught the imagination of the public. As with the

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34. R Gerig, op cit, p 115.

other greatest figures of performing, composing and teaching in musical history, it was those very characteristics within them, which differed from their predecessors and colleagues, which set them apart and wholly supreme. In 1829, after giving two concerts in Vienna, during which he played his Variations, Op 2, it is recorded,

"His touch, although neat and sure, has little of that brilliance by which our virtuosos announce themselves as such in the first bars ... He plays very quietly, without the daring elan which generally at once distinguishes the artist from the amateur. Nevertheless, our fine-feeling and acute-judging public recognized at once in this youth, who is a stranger and as yet unknown to fame, a true artist ..."<sup>35</sup>

Already the delicacy of his approach to the keyboard, as opposed to an extrovert virtuoso approach, with its pianistic poetry tinged often with melancholy, and its subtle tone colours and rubati appealing to the musicianship and artistry of his listeners, was making itself felt, singling him out from other performers of the day, such as Kalkbrenner<sup>36</sup> and Thalberg. His approach to the keyboard was due to many influences. He was a shy musician, playing in public only on a few occasions, and admitting that he disliked public performance a great deal.

"I am not fitted to give concerts, the public frightens me. I feel suffocated by its panting breath, paralyzed by its curious glance, mute before those unknown faces ..."<sup>37</sup>

He was delicate in health, lack of physical strength being a perpetual drain to his well-being, and he was forever struck by homesickness for

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35. F Niecks, Frederic Chopin as Man and Musician, London, Novello Ewer & Co, 1888, p 99-100.

36. Who tried to influence Chopin on his arrival in Paris, by offering him lessons for three years.

37. R Gerig, op cit, p 151.

his family and country of birth. Mendelssohn, Schumann and Liszt all recognized his genius. We will not attempt to relate well-known incidences of their meetings, but will continue to find evidence of his style of performing, his innovations and his technique of piano playing. It is interesting to notice in the following excerpt the references to his unassuming introvert character, and his style of playing, being more suitable for a small, intimate salon audience than a large concert hall.

"Were he not the most retiring and unambitious of all living musicians, he would before this time have been celebrated as the inventor of a new style, or school of pianoforte composition ... He is, perhaps, par excellence the most delightful of pianists in the drawing-room."<sup>38</sup>

Liszt reported on one of his recitals in the Gazette musicale, May 2nd 1841,

"Addressing himself to a society rather than to a public he could show himself with impunity as he is, an elegiac poet, profound, chaste, and dreamy."<sup>39</sup>

What stands out strikingly in these descriptions of his performances, are the evidences of a truthful performer of his own works, displaying their inner meaning with honesty and idealism and without outward display of meaningless technique. More realistically, we can say that he created in his works a greater legato, cantabile melodic line in piano playing than had ever appeared before, and now the body must in some measure, be responsive to the feeling of the music. The fingers alone are no longer the sole executors. Chopin took great care to

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38. F Niecks, op cit, p 312.

39. F Niecks, op cit, p 90-91.

stress the cantabile, melodic line in his teaching, advising his pupils to study singing and Italian opera, in order to comprehend its conception more easily. The melodic rubato so necessary in the interpretation of Chopin's works, is here well described by his pupil, Mikuli:

"While the singing hand, either irresolutely lingering, or as in passionate speech eagerly anticipating with a certain impatient vehemence, freed the truth of the musical expression, from all rhythmic fetters, the other, the accompanying hand, continued to play strictly in time."<sup>40</sup>

And, as the Nocturnes called for cantabile, the Etudes called for large stretches of the hand, of at least a tenth or more, Chopin reportedly having a very large stretch himself. The famous Etudes explore every technical demand of the piano, yet what works of art they are: never is technique displayed for technique's sake, but is entirely the master of the music.

Before leaving the discussion of the innovations of his pianistic style, we must mention developments of fingering and pedalling in his playing. He made use of both pedals more than any other pianist had done, using the damper pedal for ultra sonority of the cantabile, melodic right hand, and to render the widely arpeggiated left hand accompaniment more legato. He used the una corda pedal for soft, subtle tonal effects. In his teaching he constantly referred to the correct use of pedalling, remarking repeatedly, "The correct employment of it remains a study for life."<sup>41</sup> He began to use the thumb on black keys and the passing of certain fingers over others, in

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40. F Niecks, op cit, p 102.

41. F Niecks, op cit, p 341.

a way not considered before; in fact fingering the way that suited him best. "In the notation of fingering, especially of that peculiar to himself, Chopin was not sparing. Here, pianoforte-playing owes him great innovations, which on account of their expedience, were soon adopted ..."<sup>42</sup>

Chopin was reputedly an excellent teacher, yet he did not produce one outstanding pianist from his ranks of pupils, whilst Liszt produced many. Possibly it was the introvert, shy and physically frail Chopin, as opposed to a Liszt with all his outgoing, extrovert characteristics, which was one of the deciding factors. One must also take into consideration that Liszt's teaching career was longer than Chopin's, and occurred at a time when the popularity of the piano had assumed larger proportions. In spite of his ill-health he showed a disciplinary approach in his teaching and was respected by his pupils for his perfectionism.

"Feeble, pale coughing much, he often took opium drops on sugar and gum-water, rubbed his forehead with Eau de Cologne, and nevertheless he taught with a patience, perseverance and zeal which were admirable."<sup>43</sup>

With regard to his choice of piano, Chopin stated that when he was indisposed he liked to play an Erard piano where the tone was easily produced, but when he was in better health he preferred to play his Pleyel piano. Much of what Chopin instructed his pupils in, we pass on to our pupils today; concerning relaxation, elimination of stiffness, cultivation of independence of fingers, and of fine legato

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42. F Niecks, op cit, p 186.

43. R Gerig, op cit, p 164.

and easy passing under of the thumb and of fingers over the thumb with a lateral movement of the hand. One of his most valuable approaches to the keyboard, was to start preparatory scale exercises with an exercise built upon the first four notes of B Major scale, and to even start scale playing with B Major scale, not C Major, because the former is a more natural position for the hand, with fingers resting upon black notes, rather than, as in C Major with all fingers resting upon white notes. The famed 'Chopin position' of fingers lying upon the keys E, F#, G#, A#, B is one of naturalness and ease, as opposed to a more bent position of fingers when lying upon the white keys.

As the history of piano technique evolves, we come upon the epoch-making and renowned pianist and teacher, Franz Liszt. The main influences upon the young Liszt were Berlioz, Paganini and Chopin. Berlioz' enlarged orchestra and his innovations of orchestral writing together with his historical developments in the realm of the programme symphony, all impressed Liszt, leading him to write a piano arrangement of the *Symphonie Fantastique* in 1833. Paganini's dynamic virtuosity technique on the violin inspired virtuosity within his own playing and composing and led finally to the creation of his Transcendental Etudes and Chopin's delicate yet sonorous playing and his works which were never dominated by technique for technique's sake, inspired in him sincere, true, intrinsic value in piano composition. Much indeed has been written on Liszt's dynamic temperament and the hold which he had over his audiences, almost mesmerising them with his dazzling technique and virtuosity. Schumann's description of a Liszt concert of 1840, is extremely apt.

"And now the daemon began to stir in him; first he played with the public as if to try it, then gave it something more profound, until he had unmeshed every member of the audience with his art and did with them as he willed ... Within a few seconds tenderness, boldness, exquisiteness, wildness succeed one another; the instrument glows and flashes under the master's hands."<sup>44</sup>

But, more important to us than the reports of his playing, is his legacy to piano technique. He based much of his manner of playing upon Chopin's relaxed, easy approach, but now he went beyond these boundaries, and, unfettered by Chopin's introversion and frailness, Liszt's arms and whole body became absorbed into his pianistic execution, and his dynamic range was extended beyond that ever heard before. And to amalgamate all these characteristics, there was Liszt's dynamic, extrovert, dramatic personality which drew him ever closer to his audience. By examining his compositions of different periods, his development as a piano teacher and as a pianist can be traced. This is particularly apparent in his three editions of Etudes (1826, 1837 and 1852), the latter version called Etudes d'execution transcendante. In the first edition of the Etudes (1826), traditional technical ideas are evident. In the second edition (1837) the Etudes are transformed into dazzling virtuoso works, and in the last edition (1852) technique is subordinated to convey supreme poetic and musical expression. In illustration of his first period concern for technique in the traditional manner, some of his ideas at this time are recorded in 'Liszt as Pedagogue', written by Mme August Boissier, mother of Valerie Boissier, to whom Liszt gave lessons in 1832 in Paris. In an extract from this book notice the early preoccupation with technical matters.

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44. R Schumann, On Music and Musicians, New York : Pantheon Books Inc, 1946, p 155-56.

"The first lesson was devoted to posture, hand position, and two etudes by Bertini. Liszt wants the body held straight, with the head bent slightly backward rather than forward. There must be nothing suggestive of tension in the way the hands are held, but they can move with grace when the musical text warrants it. However, one must never play from the arms and shoulders. He insists very much on these points."<sup>45</sup>

Most of Liszt's teaching career, following his years of concertizing, when he settled in Weimar, differed greatly in its approach to these early years. Although he gave technical advice when he felt that it was needed, and was progressive in every aspect of technique, such as the use of the thumb passing over the fingers as well as under, his pupils were advanced competent pianists and, as Amy Fay, a famous American student of Liszt's, stated,

"He leaves you your own conception. Now and then he will make a criticism or play a passage, and with a few words give you enough to think of all the rest of your life."<sup>46</sup>

Liszt's approach to teaching at this stage, was that it was musical content and imagination inherent in a work, which guided the pupil to the technical procedure required for its execution. He concluded that all technique could be dealt with in piano music, from certain basic formulas, the first being that a musician must learn to listen, proceeding to the concept that the pupils were to work over their own technical adaptations for each piece, by themselves. Now with the changing piano<sup>47</sup>, and with Liszt's developing symphonic treatment of the instrument, the muscles of the entire arm and shoulder were

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45. R Gerig, op cit, p 181.

46. G Kochevitsky, The art of piano playing, Evanston, Illinois : Summy-Birchard Co, 1967, p 7.

47. Liszt favouring the Steinway, Erard and Bösendorfer.

utilized. William Mason, an American, one of Liszt's earliest Weimar students, said of his lessons with Liszt,

"What I had heard in regard to Liszt's method of teaching proved to be exactly correct. He never taught in the ordinary sense of the word. During the entire time I was with him I did not see him give a regular lesson in the pedagogical sense ... While I was playing to him for the first time, he said on one of the occasions when he pushed me from the chair, 'Don't play it that way. Play it like this.'"<sup>48</sup>

Liszt was certainly no professor of the piano in the normal way. While his number of pupils grew, and his master classes which he developed, included such pianists as Carl Tausig, Eugene d'Albert, Hans von Bülow, Moritz Rosenthal, Emil Sauer, A Siloti, Stephan Thomas, M Moskowski, R Joseffey, the great artist-teacher became the supreme pianistic figure of the nineteenth century, and because he was master pianist and master teacher of his time, he could with the material he collected, function as an 'instinctive teacher' allowing the musical dictates of the work in hand to lead the pupil to the correct technique required to play the piece.<sup>49</sup>

Schumann, although not active as a teacher of the piano, contributed much to musical history by successfully writing about music and musicians. Although he considered exercises, scales and studies as being useful to the pianist, he preferred the studying of a complex musical work with its inherent difficulty for the improving and developing of technique. He highly advised that a pianist should

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48. R Gerig, op cit, p 187.

49. Were we all Liszts, there would be no need for 'methods' and discussion on the principles of teaching and piano technique; we would also be able to teach by example and instinct.

listen to himself critically, as he played, and to study a musical work away from the keyboard at first - to hear it inwardly and then to execute it with musical intelligence. All his advice is based upon solid musicianship, and can well be applied to our own teaching of the advanced, talented pupil.

His wife, Clara Schumann, has been rated as one of the most scholarly pianists of the 19th century - a true classicist and a sincere musician, disliking the display of technique for technique's sake. With her honest musical qualities, she added her own contribution to the circle of pianists such as Beethoven and Chopin, who played not necessarily in the current technical fashion, but as the inner content of the music itself dictated.

We have now reached a crucial stage in our history of piano technique. Retracing our steps for a moment to the harpsichord, clavichord and early piano periods, we see that a close finger technique with very little use of the arms and body was utilized; and in fact this was the obviously applicable technique on instruments both light in action and in sound. As the piano began to develop in the early nineteenth century both in touch and sonority, its technique did not develop concurrently, and many pianists continued to apply a finger technique of a high finger action, the fixation of joints, and an approach which was shallow both musically and expressively. The great keyboard composers and pianists, such as Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt and Clara Schumann, with an originality and naturalness born of genius, expanded their pianistic technical abilities to meet the demands of the changing instrument and its literature, but they were in the minority.

The Lebert-Stark school at Stuttgart, characterized by the percussive, stiff-arm technique, was typical of many of the European conservatoires at this time. The strengthening of the fingers, both away from and at the piano, by mechanical means and by gymnastic exercises, was paramount. But at the same time, a glimmer of a technique to come, which foresaw a more comprehensive physical approach, was propounded by an important figure in the history of piano technique and teaching, Ludwig Deppe (1825-1890). The principles of his technique were as follows. He was against the high finger-lifting, because "it produces the effect of a blow upon the key, and the tone is more a sharp, quick tone; whereas by letting the finger just fall - it is fuller, less loud, but more penetrating."<sup>50</sup> He stated that high finger action was the cause of an imperfect legato. At last, it was Deppe who wished to publish a volume of piano studies, including not only finger exercises, but also those for strengthening the shoulder and arm muscles. It was Deppe who delivered the first blow to the finger school. But Deppe died before he was able to bring any study of piano-playing into fruition. One short essay of his remains. In this he points out, "My tone production does not develop through striking, but solely through the weight of the hand, through simple movements of lifting and falling, with quiet, relaxed fingers."<sup>51</sup> It is through the writings of his pupils that we are able to study his further theory and principles:- Amy Fay, Hermann Close, C A Ehrenfacter and Elizabeth Caland, especially the latter. What we discover, is a sincere musician

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50. A Fay, Music-Study in Germany, New York : Dover Publications, 1965, p 288.

51. R Gerig, op cit, p 253.

preoccupied with the production of sensitive tone, and awake to the idea that now the whole body is involved in tone production. Deppe is concerned with the functioning of the upper arm and shoulder muscles, these being involved in the exercising of free falling arm weight and with its control, together with the perfect combination of the muscles of the finger, hand and forearm, all of which function together. Here we can see a direct departure from the finger school. Elizabeth Caland, Deppe's most ardent protagonist, in 'Artistic Playing as taught by Deppe'<sup>52</sup>, called this co-operation of all the elements of piano playing, 'muscular synergy'. "Your elbow must be lead and your wrist a feather."<sup>53</sup> The high hand should be supported by the arm and shoulder muscles and Deppe advised physical exercises to be executed away from the piano to cultivate and strengthen these muscles. Deppe's advocated hand position was important in his teaching - the hand to be turned slightly inwards at the wrist. This enabled a definite connection between hand and arm, without a break, and the fingers are able in this position to attain equality of power and total independence. Deppe was an adviser of slow practice to increase greater control of technical and musical detail, and he emphasized the necessity of extreme sensitivity in the finger tips. He maintained also, that the lateral movement encountered in scale playing should be controlled by the upper arm. In chord playing the weight should rest in the fingers, and he applied the term 'controlled freefall' to dropping an individual finger or the whole arm in chord playing.<sup>54</sup> He

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52. E Caland, Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe, Authorised translation of 1893 German edition by E S Stevenson, Nashville Tenn : Olympian Publishing Co, 1903.

53. R Gerig, op cit, p 256.

54. R Gerig, op cit, p 263.

advised a combination of beauty of tone and of movement, the fusion of grace of movement and good tone production being essential in the perfect rendering of musical art.

In every one of the theories and principles of Deppe's teaching, is to be seen, a sensible approach to technique: the closest yet of any 'method' that we have yet discussed, to the type of technique that we use today. It is more intelligent and reasonable than some of the 'weight' schools of thought which are to follow, with their excesses of movement and relaxation. What Deppe gave us was a realization of the role of the arm in piano playing, that weight should be controlled, and that complete relaxation is not possible. He desired a close finger technique, with a certain amount of tension in arm and hand, and moreover he was a musician of the highest ideals, advocating that beauty of movement should accompany the performance of music. We should study with great care and interest the theories of this teacher, and absorb his thoughtful, musical ways, realising that he was the pioneer of a technique both reliable, sensible and perfectly applicable to our teaching today.

Quite different in his approach to piano teaching was another famous teacher, Theodor Lechetizsky, who was teaching in Vienna at about the time that Deppe was bringing forth his new principles of arm participation in piano technique in Berlin. His pupils were many and famous numbering among their ranks, Paderewski, Schnabel, Hambourg, Friedman, Essipov, Brailowsky and Moisewitch. This group of famous pianists is similar in its preponderance of concert artists to the one which Liszt attracted to his teaching classes, and in fact these two

teachers were very similar in their approaches to teaching. Both were dramatic, vibrant, magnetic personalities, and were fine pianists, and both were not concerned by any 'methods' of teaching, but by matters of musicianship and interpretation. Lechetizsky declared himself, "I have no method and I will have no method. Go to concerts and be sharpwitted, and if you are observing you will learn tremendously from the ways that are successful, and also from those that are not."<sup>55</sup> Mainly he endeavoured to encourage his pupils to appreciate the musical values of their playing, to achieve a fine tone when playing, and to make their instrument 'sing'. Again, as with Liszt, the student's personality dictated the approach to and interpretation of a work. He left us very little evidence of any system of technique, except the fact, stated by one pupil, Eleanor Spence, of a description of his hand position - the hand often being quite flat upon the keys, with the first joints of the fingers curved so firmly for so long that they stayed that way even "if he only passes his fingers through his hair".<sup>56</sup> There are also evidences in his teaching of the position of a low wrist at the keyboard, and a somewhat percussive finger action. Arm weight is not mentioned and there is no explanation of muscular co-ordination, although there is reference to the existence of free movement in wrist and hand. It was obvious, that "although Theodor Leschetizsky was one of the most successful representatives of the old school, he still realised its many deficiencies and tried to overcome them by adding new concepts."<sup>57</sup> Although he objected strongly to writing a 'method', his assistant Malwine Bree published a technical

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55. R Gerig, op cit, p 273.

56. R Gerig, op cit, p 277.

57. G Kochevitsky, The Art of piano playing, Evanston, Illinois : Summy-Birchard, 1967, p 7.

volume in 1902, entitled, 'The Groundwork of the Leschetizsky Method, issued with his approval by his assistant, Malwine Bree<sup>58</sup>, the conception of which pleased him, as is seen in the dedication of the book; and yet, within it's one hundred pages, and twenty-eight sections, nothing really definite comes through, and there are many incorrect and vague statements in its contents. In comparison with the principles and theories which Deppe had left, Lechetizsky contributed little of real value to the science of piano technique. It was his own personality as a teacher, and the large number of concert pianists whom he attracted, which are his surviving memories. "He stood at the meeting point of the old and the new, but belonged to the past."<sup>59</sup>

Conservatoires of music began to spring up throughout Europe, the most notable being those in Russia and France. It has been chiefly among the German pianists and teachers that piano technique has thus far been discussed, the rather rigid technique of the Stuttgart school, somewhat personifying a mechanical, neat, Teutonic approach. The school of Russian pianists which developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, eclipsed all other schools when it emerged. There was not anything particularly Russian about the technique displayed by these pianists - nothing characterized their technique as being different from any other nationality. It was present rather in national characteristics such as passion, power, force, vitality and above all, prodigious technique. Madam Levinskaya, a pupil of

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58. M Bree, The Groundwork of the Leschetizsky Method, New York : Schirmer, 1902.

59. G Kochevitsky, op cit, p 7.

Safonov, in 1930, published The Levinskaya System of Piano Technique and Tone-Colour through Mental and Muscular Control<sup>60</sup>, amalgamating the best features of the old finger school, and the weight school of Breithaupt. The interest of the method lies in the presentation of two circular charts, in which she states the advantages and disadvantages of conflicting methods and stresses the advantages of her own method. It would hardly be practical to apply such a scheme of technique, but her plan of setting out such a comparison, is unique.

The list of great Russian pianists includes Josef Lhevinne, Hofman, Rachmaninoff, Prokofieff, Horowitz and Ashkenazy, with each displaying phenomenal and outstanding technical ability. In the training of the Russian piano student, a tremendous stress has always been laid upon technique. Technique came first in all examinations. If a student failed to pass his technical examinations, he was not even asked to perform his pieces. The mechanical side of technique has been particularly stressed - the exercises, scales, and arpeggios. Courses for the training of pianists were eight or nine years in duration, five years of which were devoted to technique, and the last three or four years only, to the playing of master works. Only pupils showing the greatest talent have been allowed to remain during the last year. Even today in Russia, the rigorous, disciplined training for talented young pianists still exists. There are five hundred schools alone for the beginner, and talent is quickly recognized and carefully

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60. M Levinskaya, The Levinskaya System of Piano Technique and Tone-Colour through Mental and Muscular Control, London and Toronto : Dent, 1930.

cultivated from a young age. As with all the arts in Russia, the great emphasis laid upon disciplined technique, leads to immense capability in one direction, but unless there is a truly inherent, artistic and individual spirit within the performer, the musical spontaneity can be stifled and stereotyped to a large degree.

From twentieth-century French piano teaching one must single out Cortot, Philipp and Marguerite Long as representing the best. Cortot's important publication in this field was his Rational Principles of Piano Technique, 1928,<sup>61</sup> where he combined a more reasoning approach to piano technique and technical training than earlier repeated and mechanical repetitions of a difficult passage, introducing exercises which are short, comprehensive and relevant to standard concert literature. Philipp as early as 1890, wrote exercise material based upon the idea of transposition. M Long was the most influential teacher of French 20th century music. Having known Faure, Debussy and Ravel personally, she knew how they wished their works to be performed. Her important piano method, Le Piano<sup>62</sup>, is used throughout the world particularly in Russia, and naturally is most valuable for its clear typification of the very essence of the style and interpretation in French piano music. Finger training, with clear articulation, so vital to the performance of French music, is one of the dominant features of the method. Of all French composers of the 20th century, none has left such an indelible mark upon it, as Claude Debussy. Leon Vallas said of him,

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61. A Cortot, Rational Principles of Piano Technique, New York : Editions Salabert, 1928.

62. M Long, Le Piano, Paris : Editions Salabert, 1959.

"an original virtuoso, remarkable for the mellowness of his touch. He made one forget that the piano has hammers - an effect which he used to request his interpreters to aim at - and he achieved particularly characteristic effects of timbres, by the use of both pedals."<sup>63</sup>

Marguerite Long who knew Debussy's piano playing more intimately than anyone else, said,

"Debussy was an incomparable pianist. How could you forget the suppleness, the caress, the depth of touch! As he glided with such a penetrating softness over the keyboard, he kept close to it, and obtained from it tones of extraordinary expressive power. There we find the secret, the pianistic enigma of his music."<sup>64</sup>

We know that Debussy created a new colour and sonority in his piano works with his harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic innovations, and his impressionistic images were painted in a pianistic style, hitherto unexploited. But here we are interested in his actual execution at the piano, and in his distinctive technical characteristics and idiosyncracies. Maurice Dumesnil speaks of Debussy's hand position,

"I noticed at times the position of his fingers, particularly in soft chord passages, was almost flat. He seemed to caress the keys by rubbing them gently downward in an oblique motion, instead of pushing them down in a straight line."<sup>65</sup>

He called for extreme sensitivity in the fingertips, and in the obtaining of the subtle, delicate pianissimo which is so much a part

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63. O Thompson, Debussy Man & Artist, New York : Dodd Mead Co, 1947, p 250.

64. R Gerig, op cit, p 323.

65. M Dumesnil, How to Play and Teach Debussy, New York : Schroder and Gunther, 1932, p 3.

of the texture of his works, the flat finger and supple wrist is best used to obtain the desired effect, but it must be combined with a certain amount of tension and firmness. Debussy stated that fingering of a passage should be decided upon by the pianist himself, and that it was very much a personal matter. It is important to remember that Debussy did not want his impressionist music to be thought of as a blurred, indistinct hazy sound - he desired logic and perfection to be present at all times within his creations. He wrote out very few pedal indications in his works, as the pedal varies so much from piano to piano and from room to room. How heedless and tasteless then for any student of the piano to use the pedal without thought and without listening when playing Debussy's works, just because 'Debussy needs a lot of pedalling!'.

Following Deppe's death in 1890, there was a great increase in the publication of methods and treatise, with an emphasis upon physiology, especially concerning the arm. The most significant of these methods in Germany, from where the majority came, was written by Rudolf Maria Breithaupt, (1873 - 1945). It is in fact a great pity that Breithaupt was responsible for the publication of so much material concerning piano technique at this time. Concurrently, with Breithaupt, Godowsky of all pianists, was better technically, and interpretatively equipped to write a treatise on the 'weight' method. Godowsky's technical theories which we have access to, are sensible and balanced and were tested by his intense musical and technical resources. But it was Breithaupt who came to be the exponent of the 'weight' era. Now there was a definite break away from the finger school, and arm activity, free-falling weight and relaxation were emphasized to the exclusion

of practically any other movements or levers. Breithaupt published some considerable amount of work concerning the theories of weight and relaxation; in 1905, publishing, Die natürliche Klaviertechnik (The Natural Piano Technique), Volume I<sup>66</sup>, followed two years later by, Die Grundlagen der Klaviertechnik (School of Weight-Touch) and between 1916 and 1921, five volumes of Praktische Übungen (Practical Studies). Much criticism is levelled at Breithaupt, which is not unfounded, and by delving into the text of some of his writings, his theories are proved to be sometimes vague, sometimes over-involved in contradictory explanation and frequently not at all valid. In his 'School of Weight-Touch', divided into two parts, he refers at the start to his preference for a low seat for the pianist because he wants to make

"the joints supple, of maintaining relaxation of the muscles of the arm, of accustoming the arm itself to assume and retain a position of passive suspension and of developing the shoulder muscles."<sup>67</sup>

How can a low seat increase relaxation and develop shoulder muscles, if the hands because of the low seat will naturally have to be held higher at the keyboard, thereby increasing the likelihood of causing tension in the muscles of the arm and shoulder? And later he states, in contradiction to the above, that sitting height at the keyboard can be suited to the physical size and individuality of the player.<sup>68</sup> Breithaupt desires a hand-position which he describes as 'arch-set

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66. R M Breithaupt, Die natürliche Klaviertechnik : 2 vols, Leipzig: C F Kahnt Nachfolger, 1905.  
67. R Gerig, Famous Pianists and their technique, Washington-New York : Luce, 1974, p 338.  
68. R Gerig, op cit, p 339.

hand', 'umbrella hand', 'ball-shaped hand' and 'shape of a claw'. These do not bring to mind relaxed or natural hand positions and yet he does not wish them to be regarded as stiff and rigid, but "intended to assist in developing an energetically rounded form of the hand supported on firmly set fingers and knuckles".<sup>69</sup> His extreme preoccupation with arm-weight; - this occurring throughout his writings is seen here.

"The full utilization of the massive weight of the arm (which differs as to quantity and quality with each individual) when combined with the elastic muscular tension of the whole physical apparatus set in motion (shoulder, upper- and forearm, hand, fingers) constitutes the fundamental elements of piano technic. The essential condition of its employment is a clear conception of the various degrees of energy needed - the mental control of the heavy, loose free oscillating arm, or realisation of the weight."<sup>70</sup>

Breithaupt appears to think that merely by moving the arm up and down, it will become relaxed, and he states that he desires "every joint, muscle and sinew of the limb"<sup>71</sup> to be completely relaxed, and every movement to be absolutely free from muscular contraction. We know very well that we are incapable of movement without some tension and exertion. In his third important action or touch, Breithaupt describes 'Rollung'<sup>72</sup>. Even here he is not correct. Movement alone from the forearm, with thumb relaxed and passive in rotary movement is just not possible. Throughout the volumes the theories of the all-encompassing arm weight, and complete relaxation, with no tension whatsoever, pervade; the whole concept amounting to a somewhat

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69. R Gerig, op cit, p 339.

70. R Gerig, op cit, p 338.

71. R Gerig, op cit, p 339.

72. Rotary or rolling action, emanating from the rotary joints of the elbow and with the forearm turning naturally on its own axis, the hand passively following the movement.

persistent, clumsy rolling about the keyboard. In moving away from the finger school, Breithaupt has gone to the other extreme, and the vague, ambiguous statements, with little true perception to back them fall short of any real contribution to a useful piano technique. One must remember, however, that Breithaupt was very influential at the time of writing these volumes, and basically he was leading the way to more arm participation in piano playing, which in its turn, when more clearly perceived with a deeper understanding, led to the procuring of more sonority in piano playing, with less strain.

In England, piano teaching was chiefly influenced by foreign-born musicians during the close of the 19th century and early 20th century. W Townsend, in Scotland, wrote the first excellent treatise on technique, Balance of Arm in Piano Technique<sup>73</sup>, in which it is apparent that he envisaged the whole technical problem more realistically than Breithaupt and expressed himself more concisely than Matthay. But it was Tobias Matthay (1858-1945) who became the great figure of the English 'weight' school. The influence of his theories, deductions and writings have been so instilled into the English piano-teaching school, that anyone brought up in any way whatsoever upon Matthay's system still unconsciously uses his terminology, many of his axioms, and some of his theories.<sup>74</sup>

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73. W Townsend, Balance of Arm in Piano Technique, London : Bosworth and Co Ltd, 1890.

74. I for one, was brought up in a Matthay world of piano technique, but through the years and with giving of much thought to his written works, and delving into every statement and theory of his, endeavouring to realise what was really sensible in his piano technique, and what was not, I have used much of his terminology, some of his theories, and in many cases, alteration of his basic ideas.

The conclusion that one arrives at is that he had made great strides forward in the realm of piano technique, and certainly he was very influential - affecting not only his many pupils around him, but generations of their pupils to come. What is most likeable about his whole approach is the evidence of a musical, listening mind - exhorting his pupils and future pupils to listen sensitively and keenly to the sounds which they made, allying them to the physical feeling of fine tone production. He had advanced piano technique in so far as endeavouring to explain invisible conditions of good muscular co-ordination and relaxation, encouraging the use of the arm, and yet encouraging finger exertion. Obviously Matthay was misunderstood in many ways. What he was intending to be invisible movements, were often misinterpreted to mean visible movements. This resulted in exaggerated movements, with a preponderance of arm weight, entirely contradictory to Matthay's original intentions. Such misinterpretations were possibly caused by the verbosity of his style.<sup>75</sup>

In 'What Matthay Meant', by A Coviello, the whole question regarding the Matthay technique has been well dealt with.<sup>76</sup> The introduction to the book commences as follows:

"The need for this book has been suggested to me many times. It arises from the fact that Matthay, although a great teacher, was a confusing writer - so confusing that students, eager to learn what an obviously fine teacher had to impart, despairingly gave up the attempt to get it from his writings. Who is to blame them? The interminable repetitions, recapitulations, summaries, footnotes, all with

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75. T Matthay, The Visible and Invisible in Pianoforte Technique, London : Oxford University Press, 1932.

76. I refer to this book during the course of my discussion on the theory of piano technique in Chapter Two.

a change of emphasis and as often as not with new names for the same thing, led enquirers into a maze from which only the clearest brain equipped with dogged perseverance, could extricate itself. Style did not help. What is the reader to make of such sentences as: "We are hence forced to the conclusion that all Touch, including Staccatissimo, must contain this element of Resting, or else its correlative (or substitutionary-parallelism) - the resumption of 'key-contact' (the resumption of the sense of resistance) as a preliminary to each tone-production" - followed by a footnote three times as long, including "staccato, may therefore be said to 'contain' the element of Legato!"<sup>77</sup>

However, although Matthay did not always succeed in passing on his theories, and although some of them were unworkable, the English pianistic world was never to be the same again, and every writer on piano technique was in some way or another influenced by him. Some were pro-Matthay, such as Lilius Mackinnon, Hetty Bolton and Joan Last, with Victor Booth and Gerald d'Abreu rather more individual; Coviello, Thomas Fielden and James Ching somewhat anti-Matthay, and Frank Merrick and Sidney Harrison showing but little of the Matthay influence. Our libraries of books on piano teaching method, being more English-orientated than not, contain in the majority those from this period of English piano technique and pedagogy. Yet we should look farther ahead, and open our eyes to what has occurred in the development of piano technique after this period. Matthay should not be the end of the road for any student or teacher of the piano.

The centre of piano studying now became America, with the Americans, Gottschalk, Mason, Sherwood and Amy Fay who had all studied in Europe during the 19th century, returning to America and spreading the influences of their European tutelage in their home-country. After

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77. A Coviello, What Matthay Meant, London : Bosworth & Co (no date), p 1.

World War I, there was a definite immigration of continental pianistic talent to America, New York becoming their Mecca. Music schools such as the Julliard School of Music and the Curtis Institute were established, with celebrated pianists such as Rosina and Josef Lhevinne, A Siloti, J Friskin, Ernest Hucheson and Rudolf Serkin teaching there.

In 1925 Otto Ortmann published a very important book upon piano technique, entitled, The Physical Basis of Piano Touch and Tone<sup>78</sup>, which made a total breakaway from any other piano technical treatise which had preceded it. Four years later he followed this with, The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique.<sup>79</sup> The latter was radically different from previous 'methods', in so far that Ortmann approached the whole matter of piano technique scientifically now, with no attitudes of mind beforehand of how the piano should be played. He studied in detail the scientific subjects of physiology, anatomy, physics and acoustics. His approach was criticized for being too scientific, mechanical, unmusical and unspontaneous. Yet Ortmann felt that this was not applicable, as Volume III of the three-volumed series was devoted to psychological and emotional aspects of piano playing, and throughout his writings the dictates of the music are kept in mind, and practical application of principles are mentioned frequently. Basically speaking the Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique supplies information of the functioning of the pianist's body in accord with the principles of physics and physiology. For the

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78. O Ortmann, The Physical Basis of Piano Touch and Tone, London : Kegan Paul, 1925.

79. O Ortmann, The Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique, London : Kegan Paul, 1929.

first time there is scientific research carried out, based on laboratory experimentation, which is then applied to the study of physiological organism, and aspects of its movement at the keyboard. Thereby a store of technical truth is established.

"Knowing the location of a muscle and its various angles of pull will readily prevent the assignment of impossible mechanical conditions; it will make possible correct muscular drill; it will aid in distinguishing normal muscular fatigue from the fatigue of inco-ordination; and it will economize in practice time and method."<sup>80</sup>

Ortmann ruled out extremes of the opposing historical schools, of technical thought, finding a solution upon a higher level.

"In piano pedagogy attention should be directed to both finger-action and arm-movement. Finger-action with quiet hand is just as necessary for the perfect execution of certain passages, as the addition of hand- and arm- movement to this action is necessary for other passages. The older school of pedagogy did not countenance the latter at all; the modern relaxation and weight schools have failed to give the non-weighted finger- and hand- technique its proper important place."<sup>81</sup>

The volumes require patience and willingness to understand the scientific vocabulary and sometimes complicated explanations of technical matters, but it is a treatise of great importance in the history of piano technique, and should be studied carefully.

Seven years after Ortmann's publications. Arnold Schultz in The Riddle of the Pianist's Finger, inspired by Ortmann's scientific and theoretical deductions wrote in similar vein. Absorbing and verifying the facts of joint fixation and relative relaxation in fine piano

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80. O Ortmann, op cit, p 377.

81. O Ortmann, op cit, p 294, 296.

playing, which Ortmann had favoured, Schultz went on to explore aspects which Ortmann had not dwelt upon. Firstly upon the tabulation and evaluation of the various movement-types in piano playing, and secondly upon the study of the various muscular co-ordinations possible in finger technique.<sup>82</sup> He stipulated the importance of a fine legato, and beautiful tone quality, devoting the four last chapters to a thorough, critical analysis of the works of Matthey, Breihaupt, Leschetizsky and Ortmann, stating that his own method is an amalgam of Matthey's formulation and Ortmann's research.<sup>83</sup>

Teachers of piano technique and pedagogy should use the works of Ortmann and Schultz far more in the groundwork of their studies. We should broaden our own knowledge and those of our students, and up-date our approach to piano technique, by bringing into discussion and analysis, the works of Ortmann and Schultz, and if they are found to be too complicated initially, then a study of W S Newman's The Pianist's Problems (1949)<sup>84</sup>, is an excellent introductory book, where a summary of technique built upon Ortmann and Schultz is found. We should not be bound by one method, nor should we be bound entirely by examination requirements of piano technique and teaching. Once the basics of a sound technique and principles have been absorbed, we should expand our horizons somewhat further, to encompass other ideas and thoughts on the subject. And whatever methods, theories and treatise we do base our studies on, should be evaluated, appraised and examined for utmost authenticity and validity, applying our own minds, experiences and deductions to every single theory.

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82. A Schultz, The Riddle of the Pianist's Finger, New York : Carl Fischer, 1936, p 32-35.

83. A Schultz, op cit, p 218-311.

84. W S Newman, The Pianist's Problems, New York : Harper & Brothers, 1956.

Carrying on after Ortmann and Schultz, there were further developments in piano technique. Growing from the latter part of the 19th century, there was a trend towards the fuller comprehension of the mental and nervous processes as they are related to physical movement. It is from Europe that this branch of study initiates. Emil Du Bois-Raymond (1818-1896) and F A Steinhauser (1859-1910) made a study with an emphasis upon the central nervous system controlling the complicated movements of piano playing. Oscar Raif carried out experiments to establish the physiological and scientific limitations of individual finger action. In 1953, L Bonspierre spoke of Idio-Kinetics, which require an intense concentration upon the musical end-result, which must be strongly willed, and indicate complete unconcern about physical execution. One has to "imagine the act as if already performed - and lo! it is done."<sup>85</sup> Never think of your music in terms of execution (of what your hands and fingers are going to do) but in terms of interpretative rendering, "what you would expect it to sound like if a performer from heaven were executing it for you."<sup>86</sup> Now no physical analysis of technique is necessary, the mind will lead you to execute what is necessary! This is indeed carrying the trend of Ideo-Kinetics to an absurd degree. It may be possible to apply these theories to a highly talented pianist who plays with no difficulty, but the average pupil, who is no genius, needs the help of easy technical analysis combined with the dictates of the music. Kochevitsky, in The Art of Piano Playing : A scientific approach (1967), traces the history of piano technique briefly, and then explores the structure and function of the central nervous system, and its application in piano playing, producing a book both useful and

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85. G Kochevitsky, The Art of Piano Playing, Evanston, Illinois : Summy-Birchard, 1967, p 17.

86. G Kochevitsky, op cit, p 17.

valuable, with its historical summary of piano technique, and with a far more sensible, practically applicable study of the central nervous system and piano playing.

The years continued to produce new teachers, with different approaches to piano teaching, such as Abbey Whiteside, Ernst Bacon, Guy Maier, W S Newman, Ruth Slencznskaya, from America, and from Europe, Bela Bartok, von Dohnanyi, Jozef Gat, Gyorgy Sandor. Moreover, there are further drastic developments and adjustments to the piano itself in the music of Charles Ives, Cowell, John Cage, Stockhausen and Boulez.

We should endeavour to evaluate this multiplicity of approaches to piano technique and teaching in the late 19th and 20th centuries. It was easy enough to understand why and how the 'weight' and 'relaxation' era developed, and how it was overstressed, and then more realistically approached by Matthay. But then there is a return to a far more scientific approach in the writings of Ortmann and Schultz, and then another trend following that to a psycho-technical school where little or no thought is given to technique, but the mind dictates to the fingers how they should play. First of all we should realise that art will always progress, just as life does, and whether it be the history of art, the performance of art or the technique of art, changes from day to day will take place under our very gaze, and thus will the technique and teaching of the piano also progress. Secondly, just as the history of music of the 20th century produces reactionary trends of music, so does the history of piano technique. We have neo-classicism reacting against neo-romanticism, neo-romanticism reacting against serialism, aleatoric music reacting

against serialism. And in piano technique the weight school reacts against the finger school, the anatomic-physiological school reacts against the weight school, the psycho-technical school reacts against the anatomic-physiological school. Thirdly, we should remember that to evaluate new trends in any field of art, time should pass. We stand too much on top of all these new reactions in piano technique to be able to judge them in proper perspective - only posterity can do this.

And from this vast unfolding of methods and treatise across the centuries, which are we to draw upon? My advice is: to the knowledge of sound musical and technical concepts add that which is most helpful, valuable, natural and sensible, blending the technical and musical elements from the methods of past and present, into a pleasing and artistic whole, remembering that not only one method is necessarily the correct one.

CHAPTER TWO

GENERAL ASPECTS OF PIANO TECHNIQUE

Any piano teacher of commonsense realises that without technical development, the pupil will have inadequate means of expressing his musical intentions. "It is clear that no perfect interpretation of any musical work is possible without a smoothly functioning, well-oiled technical equipment."<sup>1</sup>

The following sections represent the fundamentals and basics of piano technique, a knowledge of which are essential to the piano teacher, so that correct technical understanding and mastery of basic technical procedures may be conveyed to the pupil. It is a faulty belief that a knowledge of piano technique is not necessary for a piano teacher, believing that it will obscure musical dictates and artistry. "It is a ludicrous oversimplification of the whole interpretative problem to imagine that emotional sensitiveness can be either heightened or conserved by curtailing the sphere of the reasoning processes."<sup>2</sup>

Matthay's terminology and some of his axioms and theories of piano technique will be used in this discussion. His contributions to the understanding of piano technique were inestimable and should not be minimized. But not in every aspect or detail should his deductions

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1. A Foldes, Keys to the Keyboard, London : Oxford University Press, 1950, p 13.
  2. A Schultz, The Riddle of the Pianist's Finger, New York : Carl Fischer, 1936, p viii.

and theories be regarded as practical and applicable to the study of piano technique for the student of today. We should read later methods and treatise, such as those of Ortmann and Schultz, opening our eyes to new approaches and theories, and expansion of older theories. Moreover, we must use our minds and apply our own experience to every single theory of technique, no matter from which great teacher or pianist's method they may originate. To be exact, direct, clear, yet free-thinking, broadminded, original, incorporating the best of all methods, and allying those to our own deductions, - these should be our guide-lines in passing on our theories to the student of today.

#### 1. SIMPLE PHYSIOLOGY AS A BASIS OF PIANO TECHNIQUE

It is not absolutely essential that the student of piano teaching should possess a very detailed anatomical or physiological knowledge of the human body, in the belief that this will aid him in the understanding of piano technique.<sup>3</sup> But a knowledge of basic physiology is not only a necessity, but the corner-stone in the building of a knowledge of piano technique.

This section includes an outline of physiology for piano playing and a discussion of the fingers: the point of contact with the

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3. Would the following for instance, really help the student to come to an easier understanding of an already complex subject? "The lumbricales flex the first phalanges of the fingers, and the flexors (flexor profundis digitorum) flex the 2nd and 3rd phalanges. In extension the reverse takes place, the extensors (extensor communis digitorum) extending the 1st phalanges, and the interossei the 2nd and 3rd. (T Fielden, The Science of Pianoforte Technique : London, Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1934, p 27,28).

piano, singling out the thumb, and fourth finger for special emphasis.

## 1.1 THE HUMAN PLAYING MECHANISM

"The human playing mechanism consists of muscles, tendons, nerves, levers and fulcrums."<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1.1 MUSCLES

The muscles are fibrous tissues, and when they are contracted they exert the forces which start the levers moving. Attached to every lever is a muscle, and when a stimulus is sent by the brain through the nerves to the muscles, they contract or relax in accordance with the order. The simple joint, the fulcrum is similar to a hinge which connects two bones. The muscles control the joints, and cover them as if they were a piece of elastic with an end attached to each bone.

Muscles work chiefly in pairs, one on top and one beneath. The large muscles in the forearm activate the up and down movement of the hand and fingers. The muscles on the upper and lower sides of the forearm (the extensor and flexor muscles) are similar to pieces of elastic, starting at the elbow and are

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4. C B Ahrens and G D Atkinson, For all Piano Teachers : Ontario, Frederick Harris, 1955, p 20.

attached to cords or tendons which pass over and under the palm of the hand, and fasten to the finger ends. When a message from the brain passes through the motor nerves, these muscles will contract or relax as desired, thus raising or lowering the fingers. In the same way the large frontal muscle, the biceps, flexes the forearm, drawing the hand and forearm up to the shoulder. The large muscle, the triceps, at the back of the upper arm extends the forearm.

#### 1.1.2 TENDONS

The tendons connect the muscles with the bones and other parts. A tendon is like a string, connecting the object to be moved with the force which moves it, ie. it connects the lever to the muscle.

#### 1.1.3 NERVES

The nerves are lines of communication. The brain sends a message through the nerves, to the muscles. The nerves which carry sensations from the surface of the body to the brain are called sensory nerves, and those which transmit the commands of the brain to the muscles are called motor nerves.

#### 1.1.4 LEVERS

The levers are the means with which one plays, ie. the fingers, each moving in three sections: the hands, working from the wrist joints; the forearms between elbow and wrist, working from the elbow and the upper arm, between elbow and shoulder, working or levering from the shoulder.

#### 1.1.5 FULCRUMS

The fulcrums are the joints which join the levers to each other. There are six joints: the shoulder, elbow, wrist, knuckles and two finger joints. The knuckle joints (metacarpal joints, where the fingers are joined to the hand) are the fulcrums from which the fingers move. The wrist joint is the fulcrum of the hand; the elbow is the fulcrum of the forearm; and the shoulder is the fulcrum of the upper arm.

#### 1.2 THE FINGERS

The fingers should be lifted well and freely, and should assume the function of small hammers as they develop. They should be held close to the keys, with production of tone starting from the surface of the key. This must become a constant habit, otherwise high speed will not be achieved. Key-bedding in finger work should be avoided, and all downward effort should cease as soon

as sound has been made. "No two fingers are alike in strength, independence, length, leverage or angle."<sup>5</sup> The most individual and separate is the thumb, and following it in these respects is the little finger.<sup>6</sup> The index finger is next in freedom and dexterity while the strongest of all is the middle finger.

The keyboard is precisely regular, the hand being totally irregular, and control of the keyboard by the fingers need the most subtle adjustments to do so. "Weakness and strength much be equalized or else utilized for unequal ends."<sup>7</sup> There is no point in attempting to equalize the fingers, eg. in trying to make the fourth finger as strong as the third, or as independent as the second. There should be a balance between the fingers, and the hand should move enough to help the fingers, but not hinder their close contact. The appropriate degree of movement will be determined apart from the hand's adjustment, in accordance with impulses from the mind. The hand and arm come into use in proportion and natural adjustment, as the musical pattern is opened and extended.

#### 1.2.1 THE THUMB

The thumb is different from the fingers in shape, in its position on the hand, and in its potential use in piano

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5. E Bacon, Notes on the Piano, Seattle & London : University of Washington Press, 1963, p 37.

6. The index finger and the little finger have tendons of their own.

7. E Bacon, *op cit*, p 37.

playing. One plays on the tips of the fingers, but on the side of the thumb. The fingers move vertically, and the thumb moves vertically and laterally. The thumb is joined lower on the hand than the other fingers, and operates contrarily to them.<sup>8</sup>

The muscles which control the up and down movement of the thumb are far less effective than the muscles which control its lateral movement, and consequently the vertical movement of the thumb alone is ineffective in piano playing. But in two other ways with impetus and energy from other sources, its use can be fortified.

- (i) As part of the rotary movement of the forearm and hand, when a slight rotary movement towards the thumb provides the necessary energy which the thumb is unable to supply in its vertical movement.
  
- (ii) As a support for falling arm weight. In playing with whole-arm weight, the initial lifting of the arm allows the hand to hang loosely from the wrist with the thumb in its natural position, and when it is lowered, the weight is transferred to the key through the side of the thumb, the first joint of the thumb thus providing reliable support for the arm weight.<sup>9</sup>

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8. It would almost be appropriate to state that we play with four fingers and a thumb.

9. Y Bowen, The Simplicity of Piano Technique, London : Augener, 1961, p 9.

### 1.2.2 THE FOURTH FINGER

The fourth finger has cross ligaments on either side of its tendons, which serve to support the metacarpal bones of the hand. If these tendons were not there, it is likely that the muscles of the palm of the hand would be weakened. This cross tendon formation is also necessary to join up with the separate tendon of the little finger. "The supposed weakness of this (4th) finger is thought to be due to this apparent irregularity."<sup>10</sup> If the recognition of this peculiarity of structure is taken into consideration, and the necessity for special treatment in developing the strength of this finger is realised, the weakness can be remedied.

## 2. MOVEMENTS possible at the piano.

The anatomical arrangement of the human playing mechanism is capable of producing the following movements at the piano.

2.1 VERTICAL or PERPENDICULAR movement, ie. the up and down movements of the fingers, hand and arm; and a BACKWARD and FORWARD movement of the fingers and arm, ie. the movement from white to black keys, and vice versa.

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10. T Fielden, The Science of Pianoforte Technique, London : Macmillan & Co, 1934, p 28.

Vertical movements are cultivated from the start of piano lessons, first with the vertical movements of the forearm, followed by the more difficult vertical or perpendicular movements of the individual fingers. Vertical or perpendicular movement is the most frequently and commonly used type of movement at the keyboard, and consequently may be considered as the basic movement with which to activate the mechanism of the keyboard.

The backward and forward movement is a natural one, and the young pianist is encouraged in any case, to hold his hands well over the keys, almost 'into' the keys, in order to eliminate unnecessary backward and forward movements from white to black keys, and vice versa. A combination of vertical and perpendicular movement, with a backward and forward movement, is utilised in certain circumstances.

Vertical and perpendicular movements are used to produce the following durations and lengths of sound, and the following touches and styles of playing at the keyboard.

#### 2.1.1 THE PRODUCTION OF A SINGLE TENUTO NOTE, AND A LEGATO PASSAGE

It should be made quite clear at the start of the discussion, that one note which is not staccato, is a tenuto note, and that a succession of tenuto notes is a legato passage. The steps of how one tenuto note and a legato passage are produced are as follows:

- (i) The finger should be placed upon the surface of the key, (note that tone production starts on the surface of the key, not an inch or more above) and the pianist should know in his mind whether he wishes to play a loud or soft note, or a long or short one.
- (ii) Sufficient energy or weight must be produced to depress the key, at whatever dynamic level or for any length of sound that the player wishes, and as the key is being depressed, its resistance will be felt.
- (iii) As soon as the sound is heard (ie. the 'sound-spot' has been reached), the player should relax, leaving only enough resting weight on the bed of the key to keep it down, and when playing a legato passage that amount only should be passed on to the next finger.
- (iv) Exerting weight beyond this moment of sound, is unnecessary and of no value, as nothing beyond this crucial moment can affect it. If a pianist does so, he is "key-bedding".<sup>11</sup>

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11. A Coviello, What Matthay Meant, London : Bosworth (no date), p 29.

### 2.1.2 THE TEACHING OF LEGATO

Legato should be approached in the early lessons of a beginner pupil, preferably in the fifth or sixth lesson.<sup>12</sup>

- (i) When introducing legato, the pupil should be told that legato is like walking. He can be taken walking around the room with the teacher, and told to notice how he passes the weight from one foot to another as he walks, and that he does not lift the initial foot that he has down until the next one is on the floor. In just such a way, fingers 'walk' upon the piano keys, passing weight from one to another, the first one not lifting until the next one is down. In this way a smooth, joined succession of sounds can be obtained.
  
- (ii) The child's first legato exercises should be executed away from the piano, on a table where there is no resistance of the key, thus facilitating the initial process. The numbering of the fingers has already been explained to him, and now he should begin to 'walk' in pairs of fingers, slowly, with a slight rotary movement, which will help him not to stiffen. He commences then to walk between fingers 1 and 2 in the right hand, and when that is easily executed, he progresses to the next pair of fingers, and so on. He must not hop from finger to

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12. The reason for this is discussed in Chapter Three, 3.1, in the Method of Teaching.

finger, and if he does he should be reminded of the walking experience. On the other hand, he must not hold either finger down too long - legatissimo not being permissible at this stage. Another concept which helps the beginner with legato playing is likening it to that of two people on a see-saw - when one is up, the other is down, but they go up and down slowly and smoothly. The same exercise must be executed in the left hand in contrary motion, starting with the fingers 1 and 2, proceeding to 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, so that the same muscles of each hand are utilized in the same order. One or two pairs of right hand fingers should be worked at and then similarly with the left hand. It is important to alternate between the hands and to remember that piano playing is an art of playing with two hands.

(iii) From these first legato exercises at a table, the child may then graduate to executing them slowly and carefully on the piano.

### 2.1.3 LEGATISSIMO

The slight overlap of finger legato causing legatissimo when two fingers are momentarily down at the same time, is permissible in the playing of a piece or passage when an ultra or extremely legato effect is required. An appropriate example is in a Chopin Nocturne, as in the following example. This is

an advanced technique, and is suitable only at the appropriate moments, for the advanced pupil. Certainly it should not be encouraged in the early stages, when the aim should be clear, clean legato work.

Ex. 1 Chopin, Nocturne, No 8

8.

Lento sostenuto  $\text{♩} = 50$

Komponiert Herbst 1835

Opus 27 Nr. 2 · BI 96

*p*

*dolce*

21 2 3

4 5

2.1.4 THE PRODUCTION AND TEACHING OF CANTABILE AND BRILLIANT STYLES  
IN PIANO PLAYING

These two basic styles of piano playing should be kept distinctly clear and separate from the discussion on touches. It is preferable to discuss the production and teaching of these two styles in tabular form, to encourage order and coherence in their explanation and teaching.

### 2.1.4.1 CANTABILE STYLE

There is frequently a great muddle and use of incorrect, vague terminology in the explanation of what cantabile or 'sympathetic'<sup>13</sup> style is, and how to teach it, and in not one book dealing with piano technique do we find suitable and to-the-point explanations and teaching steps of this important, if not most important concept of piano playing. The procedure of production and the teaching of cantabile style is as follows:

- (i) Play the pupil a passage in cantabile style - preferably a slow passage which illustrates it effectively, so that before an explanation follows, the pupil hears what cantabile is.

#### Ex. 2 Beethoven Sonata, Op 13, 2nd movement

**Adagio cantabile**

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The time signature is 2/4. The tempo/mood is 'Adagio cantabile'. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The treble staff contains a melodic line with slurs and fingerings: 5, 4, 3, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3. The bass staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes with slurs and fingerings: 3, 2, 1, 4, 2, 1, 4.

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13. A Coviello, What Matthey Meant, London : Bosworth (no date) p 53.

Explain to the pupil that the word cantabile (derived from the Italian word meaning song-like, songful) in connection with piano playing, means a singing style of playing, where we obtain with a legato succession of tones, a smooth connected line of sounds. The words 'sing', 'legato', 'connected' and 'line' should decidedly be used in an explanation of cantabile style, as correct and aptly descriptive terminology is of paramount importance.

- (ii) Explain that cantabile is an arm-weight touch, and that in order for the pupil to feel most easily the ideal condition of the arm, hand and fingers when playing in this style, he should stand up, drop from the waist, and allow his arms to swing loosely, relaxed, and like pendulums, feeling the weight travelling or dropping down to the finger-tips, which are heavy with the weight.
- (iii) The pupil returns to the piano, and weighs down a single note with the third finger of, first his right hand, then with the left hand (the third finger being preferable because it maintains a stable balance of the hand). As he does so, he should feel the resistance of the key, and should endeavour to keep his arm in the same condition as before, allowing and feeling the weight drop to the finger tips.

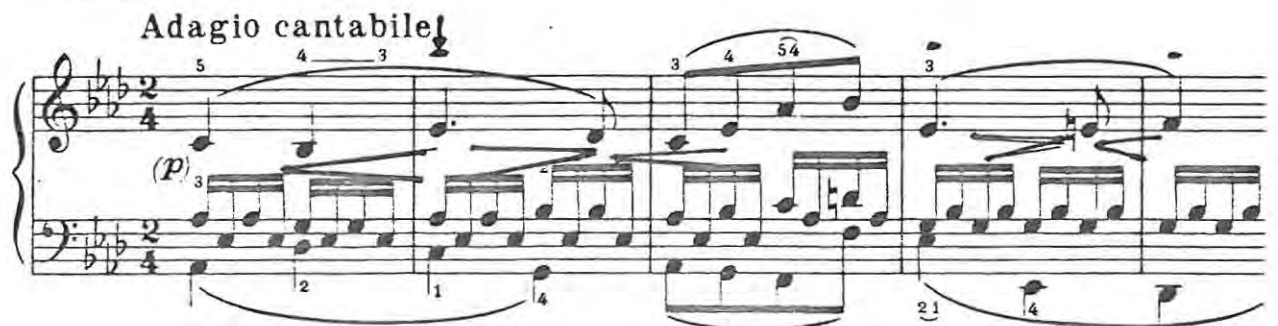
- (iv) Explain to the pupil that in cantabile style of piano playing, we use a slightly flattened finger for three reasons:
- a. The weight may travel or drop down the arm to the finger, unhindered, without a break, more easily. On no account should the wrist be dropped, as immediately then, the line of travelling weight is broken. The wrist must remain firm, but flexible.
  - b. The arm, forearm, hand and fingers may be used as one lever more effectively with the flattened finger.
  - c. More control of key-movement is possible. A tremendous controversy was aroused by Matthey's theory that in singing or 'sympathetic' style or quality, the tone is obtained by setting the string into gradual motion, and this theory was disputed by Coviello<sup>14</sup> and others.
- (v) After the playing of a loud, stressed tone in a cantabile passage, in order to obtain a smooth, connected line of sounds, the faded ending of the loud, stressed tone should match the start or beginning of the next tone, otherwise the legato line will be

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14. A Coviello, What Matthey Meant, London : Bosworth (no date), p 53.

destroyed by accentuated notes which jut out and do not blend into the phrase as a whole. This matter of the 'matching of the ends of tone' is one of the most difficult to procure in piano playing if not properly understood and listened for. The difficulty lies in the fact that the piano is a percussive instrument where the action consists of a hammer striking a string, the tone being momentarily sustained, then fading. If these fading tones are not carefully matched in the following notes, we obtain a 'bumpy' legato line. Note in the following excerpt from the same Beethoven Sonata Op 13, a good illustration of the foregoing concept of the 'matching of the ends of tone'. The exact place of the fading tone, and its matching with a soft following note is indicated.

Ex. 3 Beethoven Sonata, Op 13, 2nd movement



We are trying in much of our piano playing, to convert the percussive instrument, into a lyrical one, and here

lies the crux of the matter - how to do this with understanding, careful judgement, disciplined listening and utmost musical taste.

- (vi) If a pianist wishes the upper note of a chord to 'sing out' in a cantabile passage, he should 'exert' towards the 'little finger side' of the hand. Likewise, he should exert toward the 'thumb-side' of the hand if he wishes the lower note of a chord to sing out. If he wishes to bring out the middle note of a chord, he plays that particular note more firmly, ie. exerts the finger more.

"And how," asks the pupil, "do you know which notes to stress, or which notes to build up to, and where to match the tones and where to fade?" And the answer is a simple one: "From singing". If a pupil sings his phrases naturally and hears where the stressed notes fall, he has found guide lines which provide him with the correct answer to his question: all natural phrasing comes from our natural instrument, the voice.

In cultivating cantabile in the young beginner, the teacher should use the words 'sing out', or 'sink into the notes', 'lean into the notes', rather than 'play more loudly', which may cause tension and harshness

of tone, and which encourage him away from the very concept of 'cantabile'.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, it is important to stress to the pupil and student that cantabile is not only applicable to slow passages or movements, but also to many fast movements, which require a singing style of playing. Frequently the student is under the mistaken impression that only slow passages and movements are played in a cantabile style. The first phrase of the third movement of the same Sonata of Beethoven, Op 13, will clearly illustrate this point.

Ex. 4 Beethoven Sonata, Op 13, 3rd movement

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15. Correction of faulty tone production and the avoidance of producing harsh tone, and on the other hand producing tone which is too light, is discussed in Chapter Four.

#### 2.1.4.2 BRILLIANT STYLE

Here we have a direct contrast to cantabile style.

- (i) Play the pupil a passage in brilliant or 'energy' style<sup>16</sup>, so that he hears before he analyses.

Ex. 5 Beethoven Sonata, Op 13, 1st movement

The image shows a musical score for a piano sonata. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The music is written in a brilliant style, characterized by rapid sixteenth-note passages. A large slur covers the entire passage, indicating a single breath or a continuous flow. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. A circled number '10' is at the beginning of the passage. The passage ends with a fermata and a dynamic marking 'sf' (sforzando). Below the bass staff, the instruction 'attacca subito il Allegro' is written.

- (ii) Explain that this is a finger touch where a bent finger muscularly exerts.
- (iii) The key descends at a fast speed, and a brilliant tone is produced.
- (iv) As the bent finger exerts, so an upthrust of the key is felt against the knuckles of the finger.
- (v) Unnecessary arm movement and key-bedding should be avoided at all costs in the production of brilliant

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16. A Coviello, What Matthey Meant, London : Bosworth (no date), p 22.

style, and the condition of the arm should be self-supported, light and poised. The teacher should frequently feel the pupil's arm as to whether he is producing excessive weight, ie. key-bedding. The arm should come away from the keyboard easily if this is not the case. Speed, brilliance and virtuosity will not be attained if unnecessary arm weight is allowed to lapse in passages which require a brilliant style of playing. It can be explained to the pupil that key-bedding is similar to digging his heels in at every step when he is trying to run at great speed: he will be hampered considerably if he does so, and in endeavouring to play fast and brilliantly on the piano, he should avoid this.

#### 2.1.5 THE TEACHING AND EXPLANATION OF TOUCHES

From the outset it must be understood that the word 'touch' means the lever that is moving, ie. that if we see the finger moving as the pianist plays, he is using some sort of finger touch; if we see the hand moving, it is a hand touch of some description, and if we see the forearm moving it is a forearm touch.<sup>17</sup>

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17. Frequently the very word 'touch' is not interpreted as the lever that is moving. This stems from vague references to touch such as - 'what a lovely touch he has!' - this meaning anything and everything from his ability to express musicality, to his virtuosity at the keyboard. Matthay's 'species of touch' whereby he was referring to the condition of the arms, hands and fingers that accompany the movements of the levers, further complicated the meaning of the word 'touch'.

Choice of touch for a passage or movement is governed by its speed. The quicker the movement or passage, so the shorter the lever should be; and the slower the movement or passage, so the larger the lever can be.

### 2.1.5.1 LEGATO TOUCHES

- (i) Pure finger legato is possible only for use in the execution of light, quick ornaments. It is incapable of tone inflection because only the exertion of the finger is employed.

#### Ex. 6 Couperin, Rondo

The musical score for Ex. 6, Couperin, Rondo, is presented in two staves. The treble staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *simile* instruction. The bass staff also includes a *simile* instruction. The piece is characterized by delicate ornaments and fingerings, with a *rit. una corda pp* marking in the final section.

The delicate ornaments in the above example are played with finger touch.

- (ii) Finger touch backed by the hand will enable the achievement of some tone gradation, but tone will generally be of a delicate, silvery, brilliant quality in rapid passages.

Ex. 7 Debussy, Bruyeres

The musical score for Ex. 7 is written for piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of two flats. The tempo and mood are indicated as *pp doux et léger*. The score shows a series of demisemiquaver notes in the treble clef, with arrows pointing to specific notes. The bass clef contains a few notes and rests.

The above passage from the Prelude 'Bruyeres' illustrates this touch. The demisemiquaver notes at the start of the Lyric Piece, 'Little Bird' by Grieg, provide another example.

Ex. 8 Grieg, Little Bird

The musical score for Ex. 8 is written for piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of two flats. The tempo is indicated as *Allegro leggiero. (M.M. ♩ = 88.)*. The score shows a series of demisemiquaver notes in the treble clef, with arrows pointing to specific notes. The bass clef contains a few notes and rests. The score includes fingerings (e.g., 2, 4, 2, 5) and pedal markings (Ped.).

(iii) Finger touch backed by invisible arm weight is the most generally used touch in piano playing, and is suitable for all cantabile playing, whether fast or slow. The use of this touch does not mean that movements of the arm accompany finger exertion throughout the use of this touch. So often the student of piano technique does not realise this. Nearly all piano playing is finger touch backed by invisible arm weight. It must be realised that the weight of the fingers alone, or even the hand alone is insufficient to keep the keys down, and that to play with a variety of tone colour in fast and slow passages, there must be transference of arm weight, but it is mostly invisible. During the playing of slow passages more movement of the arm is visible, but the faster the passage, so the movement of the arm is less.

#### 2.1.6 PRODUCTION OF A SINGLE STACCATO NOTE

Initially in the teaching of the production of a single staccato note, it should be clearly explained to the pupil that the difference between a tenuto note and a staccato note is one of duration. They are played in exactly the same way, the staccato note merely being a sound of shorter duration than the tenuto note. The steps of how a single staccato note is produced are as follows:

- (i) Start the production of the staccato note upon the surface of the key.
- (ii) Produce enough weight to depress the key and in doing so, feel the resistance of the key.
- (iii) As soon as the sound is heard (ie. the 'sound-spot' has been reached), allow the key to kick the finger up.
- (iv) The resting weight will now be on the surface of the key.
- (v) On no account should the finger be snatched up from the key and tone production should commence upon the surface of the key. Hitting at a staccato note and snatching the finger away are common faults.

From the above explanation, it is seen that the resting weight for the tenuto note is on the bed of the key and for the staccato note is on the surface of the key.

#### 2.1.7 THE TEACHING OF STACCATO

It has been found very helpful to illustrate and explain

staccato with its resting weight on the surface of the key in the following ways:

- (i) With a long pencil, depress the key, and then allow the key to push the pencil up, and show the pupil that the pencil is still on the surface of the key and that it has not been jerked off. It is easier for the pupil to see with this long lever other than the finger, the principle underlying the production of staccato.
- (ii) Explain to the pupil that if we wish to operate an electric door-bell, we go up to the bell, place a finger upon the surface, press it down, and then we allow the bell to push the finger up, and the finger remains upon the surface of the bell. We do not go to the door, jab at the bell from an inch or two away and then snatch the finger away.

The 'pencil' and the 'door-bell' concepts are of great help in the understanding and teaching of the production of staccato.

- (iii) The pupil should have it explained to him that a staccato note is written thus  $\overset{\cdot}{\int}$  with a dot above or below it, and he should be encouraged to play one staccato note with the teacher observing that he does not hit at the key, nor jerk his finger off. The commands of a piano teacher to a pupil when playing staccato to play a 'short' note, or to 'jump', without proper explanation,

often lead to the 'hit' and 'snatch' actions of the young pupil. The correct explanation of the production of staccato and the analogy of staccato to that of 'bouncing a ball' produce a much better result.

In these early lessons on staccato in the first term, an easy forearm-staccato touch should be used.<sup>18</sup> As the pupil develops technically and prepares for Grade I - possibly at the end of the first year, or the start of the second year according to his rate of ability and progress - hand staccato touch should begin to be developed in the following way.

- (i) Away from the piano, allow the pupil's forearm to rest upon a book of suitable thickness, so that the hand itself is not supported, and using the third finger, let the hand drop loosely from the wrist. The hand should then be raised to the height from which it is dropped. On no account should it be pulled back further from the point from which it dropped. This is the most common fault in the playing of hand staccato. Allow the pupil to exercise this movement until it is quite easy and fluent, and then proceed to the following step.
  
- (ii) Using the third finger, and the same dropping movement of the hand, let the pupil play the following exercises, hands separately.

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18. It is a natural, easy movement to cultivate, and one that the pupil is already used to in the finding of his first notes, and the playing of the piece by rote. See Chapter Three, 1.7.

Ex. 9 Preliminary hand staccato exercises

first

Slowly  
*give*


and then


Slowly  
*give*


Ascertain that the hand is held high enough to drop with the same movement as in the preliminary exercise. If it is held too close to the keys, a pulling-back movement will result.

During the child's progress through the grades, it must be observed that passages in pieces, and technical exercises which require the application of hand staccato, are well-executed with the falling hand movement. Hand staccato will be encountered in the faster staccato passages of pieces and studies. Longer valued staccato notes are more successfully played with a forearm staccato touch.

2.1.8 VARIOUS LENGTHS OF STACCATO

(i) The shortest staccato length is indicated with the wedge, thus , when each note is given approximately a quarter of its value. This is staccatissimo.

(ii) The most commonly encountered staccato sign, , represents a staccato where each note is approximately half its value.

(iii) Mezzo-staccato or portato, refers to the staccato commonly found in slow movements, written thus , where a singing quality of tone is applied to each note, and where the separation between the notes is very slight, the value of each staccato note being approximately three-quarters of its value.

Ex. 10 Beethoven Sonata, Op 10, No 3, 2nd movement

**Largo e mesto**



The musical score is in 6/8 time and consists of two systems of piano and bass staves. The first system shows a piano introduction with a wedge above the first note. The second system shows a melodic line with various dynamics including *p*, *cresc.*, *sf*, *(p)*, and *pp*, and includes fingering numbers like 4, 5, 2, 3, 4, 5, 2, 3, 4, 5.

(iv) Marcato is written thus  $\overset{\cdot}{\downarrow}$  or  $\overset{\cdot}{\downarrow}$  (the latter being somewhat shorter in sound). The sounds are slightly separated, each being given an emotional emphasis. These two signs are usually used for short passages, while longer passages of the same type are indicated by the term 'non-legato'.

### 2.1.9 STACCATO TOUCHES

(i) Pure finger staccato, ie. the exertion of the finger alone, is only really possible for one or two isolated staccato notes. The moment that pure finger staccato is endeavoured to be used in a longer passage or for the playing of a whole piece, the finger staccato will be backed by the hand or the forearm, and the touch used is then not pure finger staccato. Compare the playing of the staccato notes in Scherzino by Arthur Benjamin and the opening bars of Le Petit Ane Blanc (The Little White Donkey) by Jacques Ibert.

Ex. 11 A Benjamin, Scherzino

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Scherzino' by Arthur Benjamin. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'pp' (pianissimo). The score is divided into two measures. The first measure shows a melodic line in the treble staff and a supporting line in the bass staff. The second measure features a series of staccato notes in the treble staff, indicated by downward-pointing arrows above each note and a staccato symbol (a vertical line with a dot) below each note. The bass staff continues with a similar melodic line.

Ex. 12 Ibert, Little White Donkey

The musical score for Ex. 12, Ibert's 'Little White Donkey', is presented in two staves. The tempo is marked 'Avec une tranquille bonne humeur' and 'Très léger'. The dynamics are marked 'pp' and 'p Lointain'. The music consists of a series of chords and single notes, demonstrating hand staccato technique.

In the playing of the second excerpt it will be realised that a pure finger staccato is not being used but a forearm staccato, as opposed to the use of the finger staccato as in the first excerpt.<sup>19</sup>

- (ii) Hand Staccato is used for fairly rapid staccato passages, frequently in chordal passages of staccato thirds, sixths and octaves, and for bright, brilliant percussive effects of staccato in twentieth-century music. The hand and fingers should be firmly locked in one unit from the wrist joint. This provides a really strong lever capable of a wide range of tonal colour - from delicate tone to forte. The arm must be kept light. When using this touch at a fast yet playable speed, the natural springy bounce from one key seems to rebound naturally and freely on to the next; the impetus from the first note, carrying the hand into position for the playing of the second note. The following excerpts are three examples of varying difficulty which require hand staccato for their execution.

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19. A rather sharp distinction used to be drawn between hand and finger staccato, but latterly more emphasis is laid upon hand staccato with or without some action of the fingers as well.

Ex. 13 Bartok, Study for Left Hand

Béla Bartók

Allegro,  $\text{♩} = 144$

*f* *sempre staccato* *f molto marcato*

1/5

Ex. 14 Stamaty, Study in C

12

Deciso  $\text{♩} = 96$

*f* STAMATY

1/5

Ex. 15 Beethoven, Sonata Op 13, 1st movement

Allegro di molto e con brio

*p* *cresc.*

21

(iii) Forearm Staccato is associated with a longer staccato sound than the staccati executed by hand touch. It is frequently and stylistically encountered in the playing of the longer-valued notes in Baroque keyboard music. The separation of the longer-valued notes in Baroque music is in keeping with the non-legato tones of the harpsichord and clavichord.

Two examples of pieces which require forearm staccato touch follow, the first showing separated crotchets in a quaver context, and the second showing separated quavers in a semi-quaver context.

Ex. 16 Handel, Gavotte

G. F. Händel

**Allegro**

*mf*

The score for Handel's Gavotte is written in treble and bass clefs. The treble clef part features a series of eighth notes with fingerings: 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 1, 1. The bass clef part has fingerings: 1, 1, 3, 2, 1, 2, 5. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the dynamics 'mf'.

Ex. 17 Bach, 2-part Invention in F

**(Vivace)**

8

The score for Bach's 2-part Invention in F is written in two staves. The first staff has fingerings: (1 3 2 5), 1, 4, 1. The second staff has fingerings: 5, 3, 2, 1, 1, 2. The tempo is marked '(Vivace)' and the number '8' is written to the left of the staves.

(iv) Arm Staccato This is a staccato touch where the whole arm is the lever that is used, such as in the heavy, staccato chords of the last bars of the Beethoven Sonata, Op 2, No 1, first movement. Generally arm staccato will be used for one or two chords, or in a short passage during the course of a piece or a movement.

Ex. 18 Beethoven, Sonata Op 2, No 1, 1st movement

The musical score for Ex. 18 is a piano exercise in G major, 2/4 time. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is not explicitly marked, but the notation suggests a moderate pace. The piece begins with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The first measure has a 7-measure rest in the treble staff and a 3-measure rest in the bass staff. The second measure has a 7-measure rest in the treble staff and a 3-measure rest in the bass staff. The third measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The fourth measure has a sforzando (sf) dynamic. The fifth measure has a sforzando (sf) dynamic. The sixth measure has a sforzando (sf) dynamic. The seventh measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The eighth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The ninth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The tenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The eleventh measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The twelfth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The thirteenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The fourteenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The fifteenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The sixteenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The seventeenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The eighteenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The nineteenth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The twentieth measure has a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The piece ends with a double bar line.

2.2 ROTARY MOVEMENT

2.2.1 THE ORIGINS OF "THIS ROTARY BUSINESS"<sup>20</sup>

Matthay's theory was that the natural position of the hand was as when we walk, ie. the fingers lying next to our sides with thumbs uppermost. "To play the piano at all, we had to rotate the hand, wrist and forearm a full 90° towards the thumb."<sup>21</sup> This so-called unnatural position of the hand was carefully negotiated by myriads of rotary exercises, first on the lid of the piano, with clenched fists, followed by the playing of a note with the side of the hand in the unnatural position and then in the natural position, followed by a procedure of a great number of 'see-saw' exercises, for teaching the beginner:

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20. C Whitemore, Commonsense in Piano Playing, London : Augener, 1926, p 13.

21. C B Ahrens and G D Atkinson, For all piano teachers, London, Ontario : Frederick Harris, p 59.

- a. to transfer weight from one side of the hand to the other, and
- b. to transfer weight from finger to finger.

These were not only difficult for the beginner to execute, but tremendously time-consuming in the early lessons, and now, although we recognize that rotary movement is definitely a part of piano-playing, we do not put such immense emphasis upon it in the early stages and when it does occur in piano or technical exercises, we cultivate an easy rotary adjustment without excess movement.

#### 2.2.2 EXPLANATION OF ROTARY MOVEMENT

Rotary movement is simply the rotation of the two bones of the forearm, in the same movement of that as opening a door. Matthay's technical explanation is: the pronation and supination of the radius and ulna in the forearm.<sup>22</sup> The base, fulcrum or pivot, from which we rotate, or from where the rotary movement activates, is the elbow; hand and forearm working as a single unit.

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22. A Coviello, What Matthay Meant, London : Bosworth, (no date), p 26.

### 2.2.3 FAULTS OF ROTARY MOVEMENT

- (i) An exaggerated rotary movement which is not only unseemly to see, but a waste of energy and movement which is totally unnecessary.
  
- (ii) Stiffness, caused by contrary exertions of muscles between the thumb-side of the hand, and the little finger side of the hand, causing a 'tug-of-war' between the muscles of either side.<sup>23</sup> We should 'think' loosely as we play with a rotary movement, keeping the wrist free, stiffening neither side of the hand (especially the thumb), nor flopping from side to side unnecessarily.
  
- (iii) In certain passages such as a rapid tremolando passage, when the same fingers are used throughout the passage, and where the use of rotary movement is necessary to execute it, the fingers will move less than usual, but they must always be in a firm condition as flabby fingers cannot support the rotary movements of the forearm. Such would be the case in the following example, in the left hand.

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23. C Whitmore, Commonsense in Piano Playing, London : Augener, 1926, p 14.

Ex. 19 Beethoven, Sonata, Op 13, 1st movement

**Allegro di molto e con brio**

But in passages of broken sixths and broken thirds, where rotary movement comes into play, much trouble will be caused if fingers are not exerted enough, leaving the rotary movement to take complete control. So often lack of finger exertion in such passages creates clumsy, awkward movements, which deter speed and effective execution of the passage.

Ex. 20 Beethoven Sonata, Op 10, No 3

2.2.4 USES OF ROTARY MOVEMENTS

- (i) Passages of broken octaves, broken thirds, broken sixths, tremolando passages and Alberti Bass passages require the

use of rotary movement, but it must be used in the correct way, without excessive movement, without stiffening, and when necessary, exerting the fingers.

(ii) Rotary movement can be used when trills are executed between the thumb and the third finger.

(iii) Rotary movement, or a rotary flick, can be used in the playing of a mordent.

(iv) The group of demisemiquaver notes in pieces such as Little Joke by Kabalevsky or Puck by Colin Taylor, can be played with a swift rotary flick towards the thumb, without articulation of the fingers.

Ex. 21 C Taylor, Puck

*Allegro giocoso* ♩ = circa 152

COLIN TAYLOR.

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Puck' by Colin Taylor. It is a piano part in 2/4 time, marked 'Allegro giocoso' with a tempo of approximately 152 beats per minute. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The music features a trill on the right hand, indicated by a bracket and a 'trill' marking. Below the trill, there are demisemiquaver notes. The score is marked 'f Brillante'. There are three arrows pointing to the right, indicating the direction of the rotary movement described in the text. The composer's name 'COLIN TAYLOR.' is written in the top right corner.

(v) Rotating towards thumb and fifth fingers helps these shorter levers to function with greater ease and they are brought into a more correct playing position with a slight rotary movement than if the hand were held firm. The rotary adjustment must be made in the direction which

the fingers are leading. These adjustments are slight; there should never be unnecessary and exaggerated movements at any time.

- (vi) In groups of notes which ascend by step, 2,3,4,5, the hand turns gradually from left to right, but if the thumb follows, immediately after the fifth finger, a sudden twist of the forearm is necessary. In descending scale passages it is necessary for the fifth finger to follow the thumb.<sup>24</sup>

#### 2.2.5 SUSTAINED ROTARY FREEDOM <sup>25</sup>

- (i) This is achieved when there is rotary exertion to the little finger side of the hand in order to bring out the upper note of a chord in a cantabile passage, as was explained in the discussion of cantabile style. In this case we would exert towards the little finger, and stay 'rotarily fixed' in that position for the duration of the phrase. A similar continuous rotary exertion would be made if we wished to bring out the lowest note of a chordal passage in cantabile style with the thumb. The opening of the slow movement of Beethoven's Sonata Op 13 (see Ex. 3) provides a good example of sustained rotary freedom to the upper side of the hand.

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24. Y Bowen, The Simplicity of Piano Technique, London : Augener, 1961, p 20-22.

25. It is essential to realise the fundamental difference between sustained rotary freedom and rotary movement, the latter being a visible movement and the former a condition of the forearm.

- (ii) For the playing of broken chords and arpeggios natural rotary freedom is required, with hand and forearm slightly tilting towards thumb or fifth finger.

#### 2.2.6 THE TEACHING OF ROTARY MOVEMENT

- (i) Drop from the waist as in the preliminary cantabile exercise and arm-relaxing exercise, and in this position rotate arms slowly.
- (ii) In standing position raise forearm and rotate slowly as if opening a door.
- (iii) With loosely clenched fists rotate on lid of piano slowly, and then on the black notes of the piano do the same.
- (iv) In the beginner's first 'walking' exercises or 'see-saw' exercises on the table and then on the piano, encourage a slight rotary movement.
- (v) When the pupil encounters his first rotary movement exercise, such as in the following example, encourage him to apply the rotary movement which has been cultivated. An exaggerated movement should not be permitted not even at this stage. An easy, slight 'rolling' movement in the direction of the thumb, in the first phrase of the

exercise, and in the second phrase towards the little finger, is all that is called for.

Ex. 22 E M Burnam Dozen-a-Day, Bk I

### 7. Round And Round In A Swing

The image shows a musical score for a piano exercise. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system is labeled 'Winding' and 'Slow'. The treble staff has a sequence of notes with arrows pointing to them, and the bass staff has a sequence of notes with a '3' (triple) above each. The second system is labeled 'Unwinding' and 'Faster'. The treble staff has a sequence of notes with arrows pointing to them, and the bass staff has a sequence of notes with a '3' (triple) above each. To the right of the music is a cartoon illustration of a person sitting on a tree branch, swinging. The person is a simple stick figure with a circular head. The tree has a thick trunk and several branches. A dashed line indicates the path of the swing.

#### 2.3 LATERAL MOVEMENT

As rotary movement was the rolling over of the two bones in the forearm, lateral movement is a sideways movement of the arm and elbow which carry the thumb under the hand.

In arpeggio playing the right hand shifts the thumb from its normal position to a new one an octave higher. This change of

position is controlled by a gentle, lateral movement of the arm and elbow, which carries the thumb around until the next octave is reached. This is a slight lateral movement of the whole arm moving in the same direction as the passage. When the thumb has reached its new note at the next octave, the hand will be pointing to the left, and the hand must be swung laterally over the thumb in order to attain its correct position for the next few notes, and then will be pointing to the right. We get then two lateral movements which should follow one another in an easy, smooth manner without jerking. In descending passages these movements are reversed. The same movements occur in the scale on a smaller level. The wrist must remain free in lateral movement, as it must in rotary.<sup>26</sup>

In arpeggio playing it is essential to tell the pupil to set his elbow out, before he plays the arpeggio, in order to avoid the ugly elbow movements caused by an incorrect arm position close to the body. He therefore makes a lateral adjustment before he starts to play the arpeggio. In scale playing the arm must also be held away from the body, and the development of the 'travelling thumb' movement and instruction to slant the hand slightly across the keys, will facilitate a smooth, easy lateral movement. The detailed teaching of scales and arpeggios will be dealt with later in Chapter Four.

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26. Y Bowen, The Simplicity of Piano Technique, London : Augener, 1961, p 27.

2.4 A CIRCULAR MOVEMENT of the finger, forearm or whole arm. This movement can be developed later in the pupil's training at the keyboard, leaving the basic fundamental movements of vertical and perpendicular and forward and backward to be developed initially, and rotary movement secondly.

The development of circular arm movement in the playing of a slow passage of notes which require a cantabile style of playing, encourages relaxation and weight release after key depression, and is an aid to the pupil who tends to stiffen or 'key-bed'. In faster passage work, where thumb and little finger or little finger and thumb, succeed one another, the development of a subtle circular movement facilitates the adjustment of the hand and forearm in the execution of the passage.

Ex. 23 Shostakovitch, Piano Concerto No 2

The image shows a musical score for an exercise. It consists of four staves. The top staff is a single melodic line in bass clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It features a series of eighth notes with handwritten arrows above them indicating circular arm movement. The second and third staves are piano accompaniment, with the second staff in bass clef and the third in treble clef. The bottom staff is a bass line with chords in bass clef. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'ff' and 'f'. A circled number '23' is in the top left corner.

### 3. THE PRODUCTION OF LOUD AND SOFT TONES

All the aforementioned movements available at the piano incorporate loudness or softness of tone. The loudness or softness of a note - its tone amount - is governed by the speed of key descent, and the faster the key is depressed the louder the tone will be, and the slower the key is depressed the softer the tone will be. This basic fact should be made clear to even the beginner in his first lessons, and it should be illustrated for him.

Every key has a resistance. In the high registers of the piano it is from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 ozs, and in the low registers it is greater - from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 ozs. More energy and weight is needed to depress the key at a fast rate, ie. in the production of loud tone; and the key resistance in this instance will be greater than in depressing a key at a slower rate in the production of a soft tone. But, in actual fact, key resistance seems to be greater when depressing the key slowly in the tone production of a soft note, because here we have more time in the slow weighing down of the key to feel its resistance.

### 4. FINGERING

There are many books which deal with the numerous rules of fingering so well that here in this section, certain broad, musical and commonsense factors which govern the choice of fingering and

which are not always mentioned with all the rules will be dealt with. Consider the following points with regard to fingering:

- (i) The size of the hand of the player must be taken into account when fingering. Hands differ so much in size and proportion that what is considered good fingering by one, is not the best for another.
- (ii) The tempo of the music must be considered - what is comfortable at a slow speed may be impossible at a fast speed.
- (iii) Consider the phrasing of the passage carefully, and never mar the correct phrasing with poor fingering. Breaks in the phrasing should occur with breaks in the fingering.
- (iv) Consider the style period of a piece: contrapuntal music, for example, may need changes of finger upon some notes to enable legato part-playing. This fingering would be totally differently conceived from that of a Beethoven Sonata or a Debussy Prelude.
- (v) Consider the touch that will be used: staccato, or legato, cantabile or brilliant. This will have a big bearing upon choice of fingering.
- (vi) Fingering is conditioned by what is to come, not by what has been before, ie. prepare before for the group of notes which is to succeed.

- (vii) Fingering must be thought of as a succession of complete physical groups, not as a succession of single fingers.
- (viii) Maintain a five-finger position whenever possible.
- (ix) If there is a choice between an extended or contracted hand position, use the latter.
- (x) Use strong fingers in preference to weak fingers.
- (xi) Use scale fingering as a principle.
- (xii) Normally as the hand moves about the piano, the hand position should be changed relative to the keyboard. Pivot on the thumb whenever possible.
- (xiii) Where there is a gap in the notes, try to let it lie between thumb and fingers, rather than between the fingers.
- (xiv) In a sequence, whether rhythmic or not, use similar patterns of fingering. Look out for any patterns in music, particularly ones that begin on the off-beat and try to match the fingering pattern.
- (xv) If the fingering is especially difficult, work backwards through a passage or a segment of the passage.
- (xvi) Reduce broken chord patterns to their unbroken forms, as this indicates the places for natural hand-shifts.

- (xvii) It is important to try initially for a good fingering, for after practising it is difficult to alter, especially for those who rely upon muscular memory in performance.
- (xviii) When the details of fingering have been worked out, only the outlines should be written into the score, and unnecessary fingerings should be omitted. The copy should be kept as clear and uncluttered as possible.

## 5. PEDALLING

Pedalling should be approached at all stages from the musical aspect. It should not be regarded as a tool for joining sounds, or for 'playing louder' or 'playing softly', without thought as to the reason for pedalling at any given moment, or without musical discretion as to the style period of the piece or without acute listening to the resultant sounds.

### 5.1 PEDAL ACTION

Make sure initially that the following facts with regard to pedal mechanism are known.

- (i) That when the damper pedal is depressed, the dampers are lifted from the strings, allowing certain other strings to vibrate in sympathy with various segments of string

originally struck. These are called the overtones, upper partials or harmonics, and are responsible for the enriched tone when the damper pedal is depressed.

- (ii) When the una corda pedal is depressed on the upright piano, the hammers are brought closer to the strings, resulting in the production of a softer tone.

When the una corda pedal is depressed on the grand piano, the keys and action are shifted to the right, so that if there are three strings to a note, only two are struck; if there are two strings, one is struck; if there is one string, the string is struck by the softer side of the hammer. This makes it obvious that the depression of the una corda pedal on the grand piano allows more variation of colour than on the upright.

- (iii) Depression of the sostenuto pedal holds the dampers away from the string or strings which have been struck.

## 5.2 USES AND ABUSES OF THE DAMPER PEDAL

- (i) "To connect, sustain, prolong and augment tones."<sup>27</sup>
- (ii) It is used much too frequently with resultant blurring and smudging of tones, and is often used indiscriminately

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27. C B Ahrens and G D Atkinson, For all piano teachers, London : Frederick Harris, 1955, p 33.

and stylistically incorrectly, without careful musical judgement, and careful listening.

- (iii) Occasionally it is hardly used at all. This is also incorrect for pieces which really do need tonal colour, and joined legato effects, but it is certainly preferable to the over-use of the damper pedal.

#### 5.2.1 USE AND ABUSE OF THE UNA CORDA PEDAL

- (i) To obtain a wider variety of soft tonal colours.
- (ii) It is used at every moment that p or pp appears in the score, thus obscuring its primary function of an ability to introduce a range of soft tonal colours to the pianists's palette, and not merely used 'to play softly'.

#### 5.2.2 USE OF THE SOSTENUTO PEDAL (THE MIDDLE PEDAL OF THE GRAND PIANO)

It enables the sustaining of any note or notes which may be down when that pedal is depressed, while changing harmonies are played in other parts of the keyboard. It can be used with either or both of the other two pedals.

5.3 When these basic facts about pedalling have been absorbed, discuss the various types of pedalling, illustrating each with examples from piano literature.

- (i) In DIRECT PEDALLING or RHYTHMIC PEDALLING the pedal is depressed on the beat (usually upon the first beat of the bar) in order to lend sonority and tone colour to a beat which needs stressing. The Grieg: Valse, Op. 12, below, is an apt illustration of where to use direct pedalling.

Ex. 24 Grieg, Valse

*Allegro moderato*

The image shows a musical score for Grieg's Valse, Op. 12, marked 'Allegro moderato'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The bass staff begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The music is in 3/4 time. The bass line features a series of chords, each marked with a bracket underneath. A 'Ped' marking is placed under the first chord, and a 'b)' marking is placed under the fifth chord, indicating where the damper pedal should be depressed and released. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various intervals and rests.

- (ii) In LEGATO OR SYNCOPATED PEDALLING the damper pedal is depressed after the melody note or chord has been played, and released with the next melody note or chord for which a pedal change is required, this ensuring a legato effect. It aids in creating a legato effect for chords or notes which are not possible to be joined by the fingers.

Ex. 25 Chopin, Nocturne

Lento

Opus 32 Nr. 2 · Mi

*sempre piano e legato*

Ped.\*Ped.\* Ped.\*Ped.\*Ped.\*Ped.\* Ped.\*Ped.\*

(iii) HALF-PEDALLING utilizes the bottom half of the pedal action in a quick pedal change, which enables the sustaining of notes or chords in the lower part of the piano, at the same time as damping off the upper notes. It is a substitute for the sostenuto pedal, and is therefore more commonly used in upright pianos, where there is no sostenuto pedal. Half-pedalling is effective in the following example, where the initial chords should be retained throughout the bar.

Ex. 26 Debussy, La cathédrale engloutie

Profondément calme ( Dans une brume doucement sonore)

pp

- (ii) HALF-DAMPING utilizes the top half of the pedal action, where in a suitable piece, it creates a harpsichord or clavichord-like effect on the piano when full resonance would be too great, and no pedalling at all would produce too dry an effect.

Ex. 27 Handel, Aria con Variazoni

Thema. G. F. Händel  
Andante. (♩ = 100)

- (v) PEDAL TREMOLO OR VIBRATO PEDALLING is a rapid half-damping, which enables the cutting down of a mass of tone by gradual degrees, where an abrupt pedal change would be too sudden.

Ex. 28 Chopin, Prelude, Op 28, No 15

The prospective teacher should be able to illustrate these various types of pedalling, with examples from piano literature. Explanation of pedalling without practical use and understanding is of no value. If the student-teacher cannot recall an example of a certain type of pedalling from piano literature, he should learn to improvise an example which illustrates all the foregoing types of pedalling, musically and effectively.

#### 5.4 THE TEACHING OF PEDALLING

Pedalling can generally be introduced to the pupil in the third term. It should be ascertained, that he is tall enough to reach the pedal comfortably, and if not, its introduction can be delayed until he reaches it with comparative ease. The pedal should always be taught musically, well-before it appears in pieces. It is quite incorrect to leave the teaching of such an inherent part of piano playing until it appears in a piece.<sup>28</sup>

- (i) Introduce the pedal aurally. Choose a piece which decidedly needs pedalling for joining sounds and for sonority, such as the Chopin Prelude Op 28 in C Minor, and play it first without pedal, and then with the pedal, and ask the pupil whether he hears any difference.

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28. How many times do we not struggle with a pupil in Grades VI, VII and VIII who has not even been taught the elements of pedalling, and who desparately needs the effect of legato pedalling for smooth, joined sounds, and at this stage we have to go back to teach him pedalling from the very start.

Encourage him to tell you that he hears richer, more joined sounds and a more singing or beautiful tone.

- (ii) Show him what happens inside the piano when the damper pedal is depressed; how the dampers lift off the strings, allowing sympathetic vibrations of other strings to vibrate, and explain that this makes the sound richer and more sonorous.
- (iii) Show him the exact position that the foot should take upon the pedal, ie. with the ball of the foot in contact with the pedal constantly and the heel placed firmly upon the floor. Let him manipulate the pedal solely, before he does it in conjunction with any piano playing. Make sure that he does not tap upon the surface of the pedal, ie. that the ball of the foot does remain upon the pedal, and that he does not jerk his foot off after he has depressed the pedal.
- (iv) Now he may start with a little direct pedalling depressing his foot on the beat, at the end of a little piece which he is playing at the present time. Frequently the young pupil delights in the sound which is produced, and has the feeling that he has taken a big step forward.
- (v) During the course of the third term, the pupil should begin his first legato pedalling exercise. It should be

introduced at this early stage, so that legato pedalling becomes a natural, subconscious action when the pupil begins to use it in his pieces.

Make sure that your pupil understands why he is learning this quite complicated exercise. Tell him that the pedal when changed after a new note, will enable sounds to be joined, and that if we put the pedal down with each new sound this would not be possible. Our hands and feet have to learn to work at different times.

Using the index fingers of both hands, and starting on the two C's below middle C, play the following exercise slowly and with counting aloud.

Ex. 29 Legato pedalling exercise



The following facts should be noted:

- a. The exercise must be commenced with the pedal down.
- b. The pupil must count aloud, and play the first note on the count of 1.

- c. The hands must be raised on counts 3,4.
- d. On the following count of 1, the next note must be played, and the pedal must come up.
- e. On the count of 2 the pedal must be depressed.

Index fingers are used, because the pedal is required to join the sounds, not the fingers; and bottom C's are played as commencing notes of the exercise because the sonority is greater in the lower part of the piano.

The exercise should be illustrated and explained to the pupil, and then he should play it.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### 1. METHOD OF TEACHING

Concerning the method of teaching it is important to realise that there is not only one method of teaching the beginner, but numerous ways. The enthusiastic, stimulating teacher should keep her mind open to new methods and advances, not unreservedly accepting any innovations, without thought or trial, but on the other hand, not adhering to one method all her teaching career. She should steer upon an open-minded course, realising that like every other aspect of art, changes will appear as time passes, and that far from being afraid of innovation, she should experiment with it, and broaden her pupil's early foundation of piano training to incorporate not only the bare essentials of learning, but to expand to a broader curriculum of music, which can include, among other concepts, the elements of keyboard harmony, improvisation and creative work.

Nevertheless, no matter what method the teacher uses, and although elasticity and open-mindedness are to be heartily encouraged and applauded, this does not mean that organisation and systematic, methodical presentation of musical elements and concepts should be dispensed with, particularly in the initial stages of training the beginner.

The following system or method is flexible and adjustable and deals with the training of the young child step by step from the crucial

beginner stages to the Preliminary stage through to Grade I, from where a well-trained beginner, will be able to stride forward through the next grades with far more ease than a badly trained pupil.<sup>1</sup> How many times do we not hear the following statement: "Oh, she's not very good, but she'll be able to cope with the beginners." What a faulty conception, showing no knowledge whatsoever of the responsibility and importance of the initial training of the young pianist. The teacher of the beginner needs to be just as well trained, as a teacher who deals only with advanced pupils of quality. She should be even more qualified to deal with those aspects specific to the beginner. One feels sorry indeed for the teacher who takes on a teaching post consisting mostly of beginners, thinking that she will have an easy time, and realising soon after, that because she has no logical system or method, she is in dire trouble, and then states that she would far rather have taught the advanced ones. Besides the fact that the unprepared teacher of the young child will be miserable for a lengthy time until she has learned to sort out a system or method, what irrevocable harm does she not do to:

- (i) the talented beginner who could progress at an exceptionally fast rate under the tutelage of a well-trained teacher,

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1. The pupil will be referred to as 'he' and the teacher as 'she' for the purposes of convenience and consistency.

(ii) the average beginner who can with steady, careful teaching along the right lines, become a tolerable pianist in later years, and

(iii) the not-so-talented beginner, who will not necessarily reach the higher grades, but for whom the teacher is laying a correct basic foundation of the elements of music, which will be of immense value to him one day, in the love and appreciation of an art.

We must conclude, therefore, that from every point of view, there is every reason for the piano teacher to have a logical, sensible method for the training of the beginner. It is the aim of this thesis, to adhere to methods which are simple, direct, clear, uncluttered with unnecessary detail, and which deal comprehensively with all the elements that are required to start the beginner in a thoroughly balanced way, yet still allowing for the inclusion of new and progressive ideas of the individual teacher.

Before commencing with the first lesson, the teacher should consider the following preliminary aspects in her dealing with the beginner.

Evaluation tests should be given to the prospective beginner to determine whether he has some basic musical talent, to determine which tests he most readily responds to, and to ascertain other factors which will bear upon his future lessons. Principally,

the tests will reveal whether the pupil is ready and mature enough to start lessons, and they will afford the teacher an opportunity to get to know her prospective pupil. Whether the pupil responds successfully to all the tests or not, a trial period of six months of piano lessons will determine his potential at the keyboard.

### 1.1 EVALUATION TESTS FOR THE BEGINNER

- (i) Interview the prospective pupil and ascertain -
  - (a) whether he is keen to learn the piano;
  - (b) whether he has suitable practicing facilities either at home or at school;
  - (c) whether he has a musical background, and whether class music is part of his curriculum at school;
  - (d) whether he progresses adequately with his school work.
  
- (ii) To test his sense of pitch -
  - (a) play single notes of high or low pitch, and ask him to say whether they are high or low;
  - (b) play single notes within a child's pitch range, and ask him to hum or sing them;
  - (c) play a short melodic phrase and ask him to imitate it;
  - (d) ask him to sing a few bars of a well-known nursery rhyme, and listen to the child's ability to hold the melody, and to his intonation.

- (iii) To test his sense of rhythm -
  - (a) play a march, and encourage him to march to it, and see whether he keeps in time;
  - (b) quicken the pace of the march, and see whether he responds to the increase in speed;
  - (c) play a short rhythmic pattern, and allow the pupil to clap it.
  
- (iv) To ascertain the pupil's physical pianistic suitability -
  - (a) look at his hands and note the size of the hand;
  - (b) strength of the fingers;
  - (c) stretch of the hand;
  - (d) stretch between the fingers.

#### 1.1.1 THE AGE OF THE BEGINNER

The pupil should be between the ages of six and nine years old. A child of younger than six should be gifted and intelligent, preferably with a parent who is able to help and supervise him at home.<sup>2</sup> Even with a six-year-old beginner, the teacher should be certain that she has evaluated his capability of starting at this age. It may be that he is too young and immature, and should wait another year before starting lessons.

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2. I have had success with a few beginners of five years old, but they have been of the calibre just stated - very intelligent, gifted and with a knowledgeable, pianistic parent.

A beginner older than nine years of age may make for some difficulties, but not invariably so. In some cases he may tend to be physically stiff, tense and inhibited, and may suffer from feelings of inferiority in comparison with the pupil who started his lessons at a younger age. But, in the case of the older gifted, musical beginner who for some reason or another was unable to start lessons earlier, this pupil makes great strides forward in his piano lessons, and 'catches up' very quickly, soon to be on a par with the pupil who started to learn at an earlier age.

#### 1.1.2 LENGTH AND NUMBER OF LESSONS PER WEEK

The young beginner of six or seven years old should have two or three twenty-minute lessons per week. These lessons are less likely to tax the young child than lessons of thirty minutes duration. Later, after a term or two, teaching may proceed to two thirty-minute lessons per week. The older beginner of eight or nine years, may start with lessons of longer duration. The teacher should remember that learning the piano is a complex process particularly at the start, and the young child is unable to concentrate for long periods and thus becomes easily tired.

### 1.1.3 SUPERVISION BY THE PARENT

All beginners should have the attention of a caring parent to supervise their early lessons. Very little will otherwise be achieved. The teacher should write down in a note-book exactly what the beginner is to practise at home and the parent should be requested by the teacher to see that this is carried out, until the pupil is able to cope on his own.

It is sometimes advisable that the mother should attend a few lessons at the start of a young beginner's training, but this should not continue for long, as both the child and the teacher can be distracted by the mother, and the pupil must learn in the early lessons to cope as an individual.

### 1.1.4 BOOKS TO BRING

- (i) A notebook
- (ii) A manuscript book
- (iii) A set of flashcards<sup>3</sup>
- (iv) Mrs Curwen's Pianoforte Method, Step I
- (v) Mini-Dozen-a-Day by Edna-Mae Burnam
- (vi) A suitable book of beginner's pieces, such as Easiest Piano Course, Book I; or Teaching Little Fingers to Play, by John Thompson; or Mini-Steps to Music by Edna-Mae Burnam.

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3. These should be provided by the teacher, as they should conform to a certain size and regularity. The use of teaching notation by use of flashcards is discussed in Chapter Three, 13.

1.1.5 HOW TO DEAL WITH THE YOUNG CHILD

The teacher should show interest, enthusiasm, cheerfulness and friendliness from the start, but from the very onset of lessons she should be firm and positive. Children respect discipline and quickly recognize it. They are equally quick to recognize weakness and lack of purpose, and will respond with alacrity, by progressing to the minimum of their ability.

The teacher should also recognize the human element in teaching the young child, and realise that every child is different both in mentality and personality, and that consequently the rate of progress will differ according to his ability and talent. The successful teacher of the young child should draw upon her imagination frequently in the early lessons, to stimulate and to develop musical creativity from the start.

Too much should not be expected in the initial stages, and the lessons should not proceed at too fast a rate. It is preferable to proceed more slowly at first and to build upon a solid foundation, than to progress quickly and without certainty. The following concepts of teaching should be used as guides:

- (i) Teach one concept at a time.
- (ii) Teach from the known to the unknown.
- (iii) Teach from the easier concept to the more difficult.

- (iv) Do not tell the pupil anything that he might know; draw from him that which he does know.
- (v) Teach systematically, with one step leading to the next.
- (vi) Teach the sound before the symbol.
- (vii) Allow the first impressions to be the correct ones.
- (viii) Teach the elemental before the compound.
- (ix) Teach the concrete before the abstract.

#### 1.1.6 SCHEME OF LESSONS

The first six lessons will be discussed and planned individually.<sup>4</sup> The first lesson stands alone as the starting point for the pupil's entire training at the piano. The second lesson proceeds to a table of work arranged in the following pattern of concepts:

- (i) Technique
- (ii) Pitch
- (iii) Rhythm
- (iv) Aural

The lessons continue to be arranged in this pattern during the first second, third and fourth terms of the year, the first term culminating in a summary grouped in the same manner.

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4. Each of the first six lessons will be individually summarized, framed and set upon a single page for purposes of clarity and convenience, as is the summary of work to be done in the first term of the year.

Technique is placed first because the pupil fundamentally wants to play the piano, and this should be the initial goal. Pitch is placed second as pitch is the cornerstone of reading. Rhythm comes next, as it is an inherent part of reading. Aural must be developed from the earliest lessons, as music is an art of listening.

## 1.2 THE FIRST LESSON

- (i) The teacher should put the pupil at ease, and with a friendly manner, welcome him to his first lesson. She will already have become a little acquainted with him if she evaluated him with the short tests stated in 1.1.
  
- (ii) Next she should introduce the piano, and give a short, easy explanation of the mechanism of the piano. This can be explained in the following way:

### Instruction by the teacher

### Response of the pupil

- a. This is the keyboard and these are the keys. The white keys lie next to one another and the

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

black keys lie in groups of two's and three's.

b. The pupil points out the groups of two and three black notes.

c. When we depress a key, let us see what happens inside the piano. (The teacher opens the piano, depresses a key and shows him inside.)

d. The pupil looks to see what happens when the key is depressed.

e. See now: a hammer strikes against a string, and a sound is made. Feel the vibrations of the string when the hammer strikes it.

f. The pupil places his finger upon the appropriate group of strings and feels the vibrations.

g. Notice the dampers which come away from the strings when the hammer strikes the strings, and when we allow the key to come up the dampers fall back upon the strings and stop the sound.

h. The pupil watches the action of the dampers.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

i. Notice that the strings on the left hand side of the piano are long and thick, becoming shorter and thinner towards the right hand side. Some are in groups of three, some are in groups of two, while the very thick ones stand alone.

j. The pupil absorbs the arrangement of the strings.

k. Now listen. When the hammer strikes a long, thick string we hear a low sound. (The teacher plays a low note.)

l. The pupil follows and plays a low note.

m. When the hammer strikes a short, thin string we hear a high sound. Let us play a high note. (The teacher plays a high note.)

n. The pupil follows and plays a high note.

o. We call these notes of high pitch, low pitch and the notes in the middle of the piano, notes of medium pitch. (The teacher asks the pupil to play notes of high pitch, low pitch and medium pitch.)

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

q. (The teacher should repeatedly correlate sounds of low pitch with the bottom and left hand side of the piano, and reversely, the sounds of high pitch with the top and right hand side of the piano, and should subsequently ask the pupil to play notes of low, high and medium pitch.)

p. The pupil responds with notes played in the correct range called for by the teacher.

s. (The teacher should explain that when we depress a key fast the sound produced is loud, and when we depress it slowly the sound produced is soft. This should be demonstrated for him.)

r. The pupil responds by playing notes of high pitch, low pitch and medium pitch as called for by the teacher.

t. The pupil should play a loud note and a soft note, and explain how it is that he obtains a loud and a soft sound.

(iii) The correct posture of the pupil at the keyboard must be attained.

a. The seat must be firm and solid, and if possible adjustable, so that its height can be varied. If the seat is not adjustable its height should be varied on a solid base (eg. with strips of wood) but never with soft cushions, which afford no bodily support.

b. The pupil should be seated in the centre of the keyboard at the correct height, so that the arm from the elbow to the wrist slopes neither up nor down. The arm must be lightly poised. It should support the hand, not drag it downwards. The arms should be held away from the body, and not clenched to the sides. The hand itself forms a slight uphill slope to the knuckles, curving away to the finger-tips. The pupil should be seated at the correct distance away from the keyboard - neither too near nor too far.

"The distance from the piano can be judged by the pupil placing the hand over a complete five-finger group with the left hand at a higher octave, and with the right hand at a lower octave. If this cannot be done without leaning backwards, the pupil is too close."<sup>6</sup>

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6. J Last, The Young Pianist, London: OUP, 1954, p 8.

- c. If the pupil's feet do not reach the floor, a footstool can be used with advantage, and those whose feet can reach the floor, should sit slightly forward on the stool so that the weight of the legs rests upon the feet, with the right foot a little in front of the left to form a stable base for the movement of the body from side to side.
  
- d. The pupil's back should incline slightly forwards towards the keys. A straight back increases tension and a withdrawing of weight from the keys, and an inclination towards the keys induces the falling of weight into the keys.
  
- e. The pupil's shoulders should be relaxed. Hunched shoulders increase tension.
  
- f. Now the pupil's correct hand position should be obtained. Allow him to place his hand over his knee and from there to place it over a five-finger group of notes, seeing that the second and third fingers fall nearer the black keys, and fifth nearer the edge of the keys. The thumb falls into a natural position on its side and should have contact with the key a little beyond the length of the nail. The hand position should be clearly established, as beginners frequently play far too near the edge of the keys. Explain to him that the hand position is as if he were holding a

ball - it is a hollow, scooped-out formation of the hand, with fingers not straight, nor yet claw-shaped, but gently bent as when his hand was placed over his knee.

(iv) A piece by rote

The pupil usually has a great desire to show his parents and friends what he has learned at his first piano lesson, and here is the ideal place to teach him a piece by rote. Suitable books to be used for rote-teaching are Off we go, by Diller-Quaile, and Puck's Pieces of Joan Last.

The piece should be played by the teacher for the pupil in the way which she wishes him to imitate her, ie. with the third finger of the right hand and left hand (the third finger maintaining a stable balance of the hand), backed by the thumb, to act as a wedge and added support for the third finger. The thumb should be placed approximately behind the first joint of the third finger. A loose forearm movement should be used as the teacher illustrates to him and the words should be sung as the piece is played, as musically as possible, with a slight emphasis upon the important notes and words. The pupil should imitate the teacher by singing the words as he plays. Both hands should be used alternately, as written.

Ex. 1 Diller & Quaile, Off we go

1. Buy a broom



1.2.1 SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE DONE AT A FIRST LESSON

- (i) Get to know your pupil and put him at his ease.
- (ii) Introduce the piano by briefly discussing the easy mechanism of the piano.
- (iii) Secure the correct seating posture and hand position of the pupil at the piano.
- (iv) Teach a piece by rote.

### 1.3 EXERCISES FOR RELAXATION AND MUSCULAR CONTROL

Before any further lessons are discussed, certain preparatory exercises for the contracting and relaxing of arm muscles, ie. for the control of muscle action must be introduced, explained and tabulated. Remember that technical training is started from the larger arm and forearm movements, proceeding to the smaller, more difficult movements of the individual fingers. The succeeding exercises aid the beginner in the developing of muscular control, and are particularly beneficial for the beginner who is innately stiff, tense and inhibited. Give only a few of the exercises at the start of the early lessons as part of the technical procedure of the lesson, because giving too many will absorb too much of a short lesson time.

All the exercises should be executed rhythmically, with attention to long enough breaks in between each, to ascertain that the correct physical position was maintained throughout the carrying out of the exercise, and also to ascertain that a correct initial posture for the ensuing exercise is attained. The exercises may be executed (i) away from the piano, (ii) at a table (with or without self support) and (iii) at the piano (with or without self support).

#### (i) Away from the piano

- a. Standing, drop the body from the waist, allowing the arms to hang loosely and freely. Rotate the arms slowly.

- b. In a standing position, raise arms to shoulder level, count 1,2,3,4 and then drop the arms, allowing them to drop loosely, freely and completely relaxed.
- c. Raise forearms to waist level, count 1,2,3,4 and then drop loosely.
- d. Raise wrist, count 1,2,3,4 and drop loosely.

(ii) At a table

These exercises should be executed first with the teacher supporting the pupil's arm and hand at pivot points, and then without the teacher's support. Make certain that the table is the same height as that of the piano, and that the seat is the same height as the piano stool.

- a. Raise the arm to shoulder height, count 1,2,3,4 and drop.
- b. Raise forearm (teacher supports at elbow), count 1,2,3,4 and drop loosely.
- c. Raise hand (teacher supports at wrist), count 1,2,3,4 and drop.

- d. Place hand in piano playing position (teacher supports at wrist) and raise each finger in turn, count 1,2,3,4, then drop.
- e. Preparatory exercises for using arms in piano playing: lift the arm to shoulder height, relax, and drop with open palm on to table. Pull the fingers in until the first two joints stand perpendicularly on the table. The thumb and wrist remain on the surface of the table. Now lift the wrist to the height of the knuckles. Part of the arm weight is now transferred to the fingers, the arm being supported between shoulder and finger-tips.

(iii) At the piano

- a. Raise arm to shoulder height, and drop loosely onto a cluster of notes at the keyboard.
- b. Raise forearm and drop loosely onto a cluster of notes at the keyboard.
- c. Raise hand and drop loosely.
- d. Raise each finger and drop loosely.
- e. Allow the pupil to play a chord and to deliberately tense his arm and hand, and to feel this condition

with his other hand, and then to relax and feel the difference between tension and relaxation.

## 2. THE SECOND LESSON

The work given to the pupil at his first lesson should be tested. He must be asked where the bottom range of the piano is, and requested to play a note of low pitch; and also to indicate the top range of the piano, and to play a note of high pitch, and a note of medium pitch. It should be ascertained that his posture and hand position at the piano are correct, and he should play his piece by rote for the teacher. If he is a quick learner, and can play it perfectly correctly and musically, another piece may be given to him. The lessons may now be formulated into the branches of:

- (i) Technique
- (ii) Pitch
- (iii) Rhythm
- (iv) Aural

### (i) TECHNIQUE

- a. Give a few of the relaxing exercises stated above.
- b. Explain the numbering of the fingers, drawing attention to the left hand fingering of the thumb as number 1.

Test whether the pupil really understands the fingering, by allowing him to place his hands in a piano-playing position on the lid of the piano (where there is no resistance of the key), and call out various finger numbers, which he must respond to, by raising and lowering the appropriate finger.

(ii) PITCH

The teaching of the letter names of notes should now commence. Explain to the pupil that we use the first seven letters of the alphabet A B C D E F G, for the naming of the notes on the piano. Ask him to point out the middle letter - D. Explain that we start with D because it is easy to find on the piano, in between each group of two black notes. The pupil, now using index fingers of both hands and using a loose forearm touch, finds all the D's on the piano, playing the lower notes with the left hand, and the upper notes with the right hand. It depends on the age and the ability of the child as to how many letter names of notes are taught in this lesson. The very young child, or the slightly slower child may cope only with D or D and E, and the quicker child will cope with more. The teacher must proceed at the rate at which the intelligence and capability of the pupil leads her.

(iii) RHYTHM

Now we must approach the concept of rhythm.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

a. March around the room in time to the music. (The teacher plays a march.)

b. The pupil marches around the room.

c. Listen carefully. If I change the pace of the march you must follow. (The teacher quickens the pace of the march.)

d. The pupil responds to the quickened pace.

e. What makes soldiers march, dancers dance?

f. (If the pupil does not have an answer, tell him that music has a pulse which throbs through it, just like our own.)

g. The pupil feels his own pulse with fingers 2,3,4 placed around the wrist of his other hand.

h. It is the pulse or beat of the music which give it life and makes us march or dance to it.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

i. Listen to the strong pulses or beats as I play. We call these accents. (The teacher plays a piece with firm accents.)

j. The pupil counts 1,2 or 1,2,3 as the teacher plays the piece again, stressing the accents.

k. Music is measured in bars. The bars measure 2 beats, 3 beats or 4 beats in a bar, and the beat immediately after the bar is the strongest beat.

l. (The teacher should write examples of 2 beats in a bar, 3 beats in a bar and 4 beats in a bar on the board, or in his notebook. The exercises can be written thus:

s w / s w / s w (strong, weak, strong, weak), as yet he has learned no time symbols.)

m. The pupil looks at the board, and claps the beats in the bar, counting aloud strong, weak, strong, weak, and then 1, 2, 1, 2 stressing the first beat of the bar.

Establishing the concepts of pulse, accent and bar, should precede the teaching of the one-pulse note. The teacher should make certain that the pupil understands these basic foundations of rhythm before proceeding, and the teaching of these concepts should be spread over two, or even three lessons. A new step should never be introduced until the previous one has been well absorbed.

(iv) AURAL OR LISTENING TESTS

Play notes of high, low or medium pitch and ask the pupil to describe them. Play notes of loud and soft tones and ask him to distinguish between them. Play notes which are close together or far apart and ask him to describe the distance between them. At this stage the aural tests given must be very simple and basic. Only a few ear tests should be given at these early lessons.

2.1 SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE DONE AT THE SECOND LESSON

- (i) Technique. Give a few relaxing exercises. Number the fingers, and test the numbering.
- (ii) Pitch. Start teaching the letter-names of the notes. Start with D, and proceed according to the rate which the pupil dictates.
- (iii) Rhythm. Play a march, and ask the pupil to walk in time to it. Quicken the pace and see whether the pupil responds. Begin to establish the meaning of Pulse, Accent and Bar.
- (iv) Aural. Give a few basic aural or listening tests comprised of stating whether notes are high or low in pitch, loud or soft in dynamics and near or far from each other in distance.

### 3. THE THIRD LESSON

#### (i) TECHNIQUE

Give a few relaxation exercises from those stated in 1.3. Alternate from lesson to lesson, by giving some exercises away from the piano, some at a table, and some at the piano, in rotation.

The pupil should now begin legato exercises in preparation for legato playing. The whole concept of legato should be approached and taught as in Chapter Two, General Aspects of Piano Technique, 2.1, The teaching of legato. Summarizing briefly, the principle of legato is presented to the pupil through the actions of walking and see-sawing, and from here he progresses to 'walk' between pairs of fingers (1-2; 2-3; 3-4; 4-5) slowly, hands separately, with the left hand in contrary motion because the same muscles and the same fingers are then used in both hands. The exercises must be executed initially at a table, where there is no resistance of the key.

#### (ii) PITCH

Continue with letter-names as in the second lesson. Add a few or as many as the ability of the pupil leads the teacher

so to do, remembering that individual children differ greatly with regard to rate of progress. The pupil must continue to use index fingers of both hands, and a loose forearm touch in the finding of notes, and he must use the left hand to play the lower notes and the right hand to play the upper notes. Test him in two ways to find out whether he knows his letter-names well; by calling out letter-names of notes which he must play, and by playing notes which he must name. There must be no proceeding to the next step of teaching the Great Staff until the letter-names are thoroughly known.

The teacher should now explain what the word interval means, i.e. the distance between two notes. The interval of a second is made up of 'next-door' notes - notes next to one another, and is played with 'next-door' fingers. Allow the pupil to finger intervals with pairs of fingers; at first looking at the keys, and then looking away and feeling the seconds and their close proximity. Following this, tell him that intervals of a third leave out one note, and therefore also one finger. Allow him to play thirds with different sets of fingers - 1-3; 2-4; 3-5 - first looking at the keys, and then looking away from the keys and feeling the thirds. Before starting the teaching of the Great Staff, it is imperative that the pupil understands clearly what seconds and thirds are, both technically and physically.

(iii) RHYTHM

Test the pupil's understanding of Pulse, Accent and Bar thoroughly. Do not proceed to the teaching of the one-pulse note until he has grasped it well.

Listen to the pupil's piece by rote, and if it has been well learned, give another.

(iv) AURAL

Continue with the same listening tests as in the second lesson.

3.1 SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE DONE AT THE THIRD LESSON

(i) Technique. Give a few relaxing exercises. Start preparatory legato exercises at a table, in pairs of fingers.

(ii) Pitch. Continue with letter-names of notes. Test the pupil's knowledge of letter-names thoroughly. Teach the technical meaning and physical feeling of the intervals of a second and a third.

(iii) Rhythm. Continue to establish the concepts of Pulse, Accent, Bar.

Listen to the pupil's piece by rote.

(iv) Aural. Give listening tests in describing notes of high pitch, low pitch, and medium pitch; loud and soft tones; and tones which are close or far in distance.

4. THE FOURTH LESSON

(i) TECHNIQUE

a. Give some relaxation exercises.

b. Continue with 'walking' exercises on a table, with left hand executing them in contrary motion to the right hand.

(ii) PITCH

When the pupil knows his letter-names thoroughly and has grasped the technical and physical meaning of the intervals of a second and third, start the teaching of the Great Staff.

Explain to the pupil that musicians long ago chose a line to represent musical sounds, like this ——— . The Great Staff is made up of eleven such lines. These lines should be drawn upon the board for the pupil to see clearly. It should be explained to him that the Great Staff can be described as a ladder of eleven lines going up in thirds.

Establishing carefully that all lines are a third apart from each other, it is imperative for the teacher to ascertain that the pupil has absorbed the realisation of correct direction upon the Great Staff, ie. that he understands what

going up and down represent on the ladder. In order to test the pupil's understanding of these two basic facts, the teacher should position the pupil's finger upon any note on the keyboard and should subsequently point to a line higher or lower, or two lines higher or lower on the Great Staff, making certain that the pupil responds correctly.

Carrying on in the explanation of the Great Staff, the teacher should explain that early musicians found the eleven lines confusing to read from and that consequently they shortened the middle line. The teacher should illustrate this with the shortening of the line on the board. A note should now be written on this line, the teacher explaining to the pupil that this note is called middle C because it is in the middle of the Great Staff and in the middle of the keyboard. The teacher should also explain that middle C can be played by either hand, and should point to it on the chart, the pupil responding and playing it with the index finger of either the right or the left hand.

The pupil should now play middle C with the index finger of his left hand, and with the index finger of his right hand while looking at the Great Staff, he should hop up the

ladder to its highest line. The teacher should write a note upon the line and ask the pupil to name it. The pupil answers "F", and the teacher explains that this, being the highest note on the ladder, is called high F.

The pupil now places the index finger of his right hand upon middle C, and with the index finger of his left hand while looking at the Great Staff, he should hop down the ladder to the lowest line. The teacher should write a note upon the line, and ask the pupil to name it. The pupil answers "G", and the teacher explains that this, being the lowest note on the ladder, is called low G.

These three anchor notes - the first notes to be established on the Great Staff should be thoroughly tested by the teacher, to ascertain that the pupil is sure of their position on the Great Staff. The teacher should point repeatedly to any of the three notes, and the pupil should respond by playing the high F with the right hand, the low G with the left hand, and middle C with either hand. The pupil should name the notes as he plays them, and he should be encouraged to look at the chart, as even at this early stage, good habits of sight-reading should be cultivated.

(iii) RHYTHM

The one pulse note should now be introduced. Teach rhythm from the sound concept and proceed to the symbol.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

a. Count the beats of this piece aloud as I play. (The teacher plays a firmly accented piece.)

b. Pupil counts 1,2 or 1,2,3.

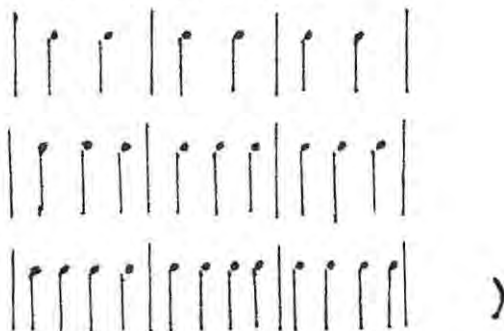
c. These are one pulse notes and they are called taa. They are written like this,

↑ - taa.

d. As I play the piece again, count taa to each one-pulse note.

e. The pupil now counts taa aloud to each one-pulse note as the teacher plays it.

f. We can have two taas in a bar, or three, or four. (The teacher should write out exercises with two taas in a bar or 3 or 4, in his notebook, thus:



g. With pupil's eyes on the book using his index finger of the right hand and playing the C above middle C, he counts taas aloud, as the teacher points to each note. He must stress the first beat of each bar.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

h. (The teacher should insist on the pupil's eyes being on the book, to cultivate even here, correct reading habits.)

i. The counting of the pulse measures is important, as we must know what beats of the bar we are playing. (When the taa counting proceeds fluently, the teacher counts the pulse measures.)

j. The pupil counts taas while the teacher counts the pulse measures.


k. (Teacher and pupil now exchange counting.)

l. The pupil counts the pulse measures while the teacher taas.

(iv) AURAL

Continue with listening tests. Expand gradually to the singing of single pitch sounds.

4.1 SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE DONE AT THE FOURTH LESSON

- (i) Technique. Continue with preparatory legato exercises on a table.
- (ii) Pitch. Teach the Great Staff, and the anchor notes, middle C, high F and low G.
- (iii) Rhythm. Teach the one-pulse note, taa - , and at the same time introduce the counting of the pulse measures.
- (iv) Aural. Continue as before and expand to the singing of single pitch sounds.


5. THE FIFTH LESSON

(i) TECHNIQUE

Continue with 'walking' exercises on a table. Precede this with some of the relaxation exercises.

(ii) PITCH

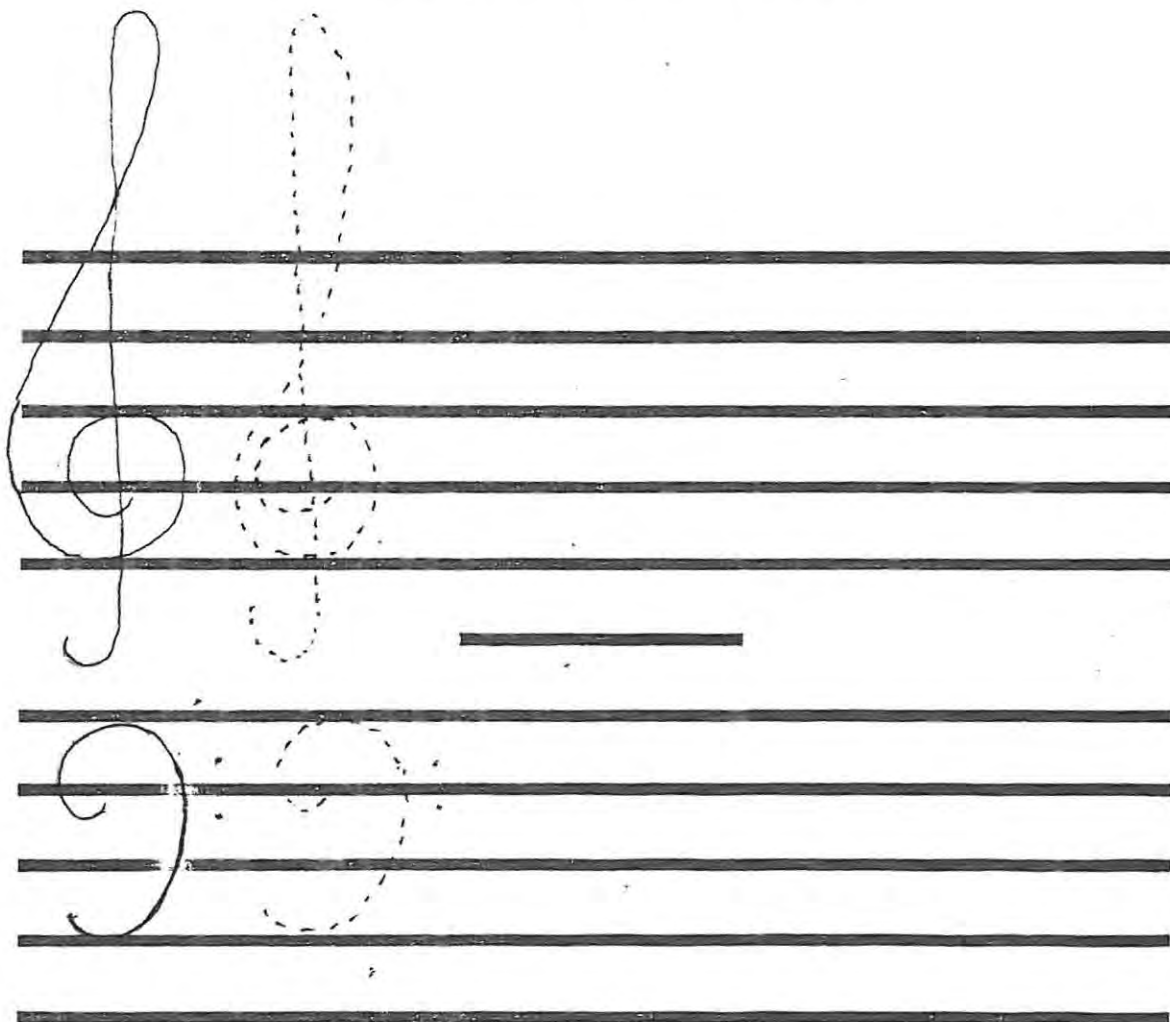
Having taught the Great Staff, and having established the anchor notes, high F, low G and middle C, the clefs should now be taught.

It should be explained to the pupil that we must know where the lines of the Great Staff are on the piano. They could be at the bottom, or at the top, or in the middle of the piano, but we must be certain. The clefs will show us exactly where they are. The clefs are the keys to the position of the lines on the piano. The teacher should point to the G line, two lines above middle C, and the pupil should find it and name it. The teacher explains that originally, composers wrote an old-fashioned G upon that line, but it has come to look like this now -  . We call this the Treble Clef or G Clef, because 'treble' means 'high', and the treble clef shows us where the high notes are; and it is also called the G clef because it is written


on the G line. The pupil should be shown exactly how the treble clef is written preferably on a large chart with widely spaced lines, so that it can be clearly seen. This is especially important for the young beginner, who finds the reading of the smaller symbols in a manuscript book far more difficult.

Ex. 2 The Great Staff

## THE GREAT STAFF



The pupil should draw the treble clef on the large staff with the teacher supervising. It must be carefully observed that the pupil commences the drawing of the clef around the G line. With a younger beginner the teacher should gently hold the pupil's hand as he draws the clef. The younger beginner also benefits from drawing over a dotted outline of the treble clef in the initial stages, as shown in Exercise 2. The pupil should draw a line of treble clefs on the large lines of the Great Staff for homework.

The teacher should now point to the F line, two lines below middle C, and the pupil should find it and name it. The teacher explains that the old composers wrote an F upon that line, but it has come to look like this now -  . It is called the Bass Clef or F Clef. Bass clef because 'bass' means 'low' and the bass clef shows us where the low notes are, and F clef because it is written upon the F line. The pupil should be shown exactly how the bass clef is written on the large chart, and it should be explained that the dots on either side of the F line, indicate exactly where the clef is. The pupil should write a line of bass clefs on the large staff for homework.

The pupil should be presented with an easy exercise for the finding of the clef lines. He should place both thumbs upon middle C, and stretch a fifth higher to G with the right hand, and a fifth lower to F with the left hand.

To ascertain that the pupil has absorbed the teaching of the clefs thoroughly, the teacher, pointing to the respective clefs on the chart, should repeatedly enquire what the names of the clefs are, why they are so named, and how to draw them. She should also enquire where they are situated on the stave and on the piano, at all times associating the treble clef with the playing of right hand notes, and the bass clef with the playing of left hand notes.

It is imperative that the clefs are well assimilated by the pupil before the teacher starts the next step - the lines and spaces. Take two or three lessons to establish the clefs satisfactorily.

(iii) RHYTHM

When the one-pulse note has been well absorbed, teach the two-pulse note.

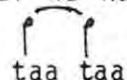
Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

a. Are any notes longer than others in this march which I shall play to you?

b. Yes, some are longer.

c. If we have two one-pulse notes

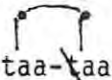


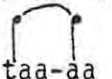
and we tie them, the

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

tie is like a rope which ties the two together, and now we do not play the second taa, because it is tied to the first one. But it is still there and we have to count it; therefore


now we count  The t

comes away from the second taa and we count  (The

teacher should write an exercise in the pupil's notebook which incorporates the separate taas and the tied taas. Thus:

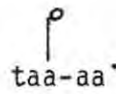


d. The pupil claps the exercise and counts aloud (in taas) as he does so. Then using the index finger of the right hand he plays C above middle C, and looking at the book, counts aloud (in taas). The teacher points to each note as he plays.

e. There is a shorter way of writing , and that is

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

 This is the two-pulse note. (The teacher should write an exercise out incorporating the one-pulse note, the tied one-pulse note and the two-pulse note.)



g. (When the counting progresses fluently, the teacher counts the pulse measures as the pupil taas.)

i. The figures written after the clef signs tell us how to count. At the moment we need only to read the top figure. It shows us how many counts to each bar. If we have  $\frac{2}{4}$  next to the clef signs, how many beats will there be in a bar?

f. The pupil claps the exercise and taas aloud. Then using the index finger of the right hand he plays C above middle C, and looking at the book, taas aloud. The teacher points to each note as he does so.

h. The pupil now counts the pulse measures as the teacher taas.

j. Two.

(iv) AURAL

Play single notes of pitch which the pupil must imitate by singing or humming and gradually develop towards the singing of the interval of a second.

Play short rhythmic patterns incorporating the one and two-pulse notes which the pupil must clap.

5.1 SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE DONE AT THE FIFTH LESSON

(i) Technique. Continue with some relaxation exercises and continue 'walking' exercises at a table.

(ii) Pitch. Teach the clefs.

(iii) Rhythm. Teach the two-pulse note and the time-signature of  $\frac{2}{4}$ .

(iv) Aural. The singing of single notes of pitch, developing towards the singing of the interval of a second. The clapping of short rhythmic patterns, incorporating the one and two-pulse notes.

Listen to the piece by rote.

6. THE SIXTH LESSON

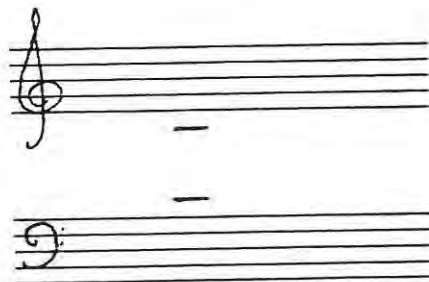
(i) TECHNIQUE

Commence legato or 'walking' exercises now at the piano in pairs of fingers slowly, with a slight rotary movement. The left hand executes these exercises in contrary motion to the right hand.

(ii) PITCH

Having established the Great Staff, anchor notes middle C, high F and low G, treble and bass clefs, explain to the pupil that in piano music we treat each hand as a separate part, and we divide the Great Staff into two smaller ones. Middle C is left out and written in when needed.

Ex. 3 The Divided Staff



The teaching of the lines and spaces now commences. Explain to the pupil that the lines are thirds apart and that the spaces are between the lines and they are also thirds

apart. It is an aid to use the everlasting, every good boy deserves fruit, in the remembering of the lines of the treble, but it is far better to adopt a logical presentation of the lines and spaces for the beginner. The child of today is a discerning, scientific being, and will quickly absorb logical, systematic steps of knowledge. In any case what has "every good boy deserves fruit", and "face" got to do with the lines and spaces of the Great Staff? There is no analogy between the two.

There are two ways in which the teaching of the lines and spaces can be approached.

1. In a manuscript book, starting with middle C and D in the treble, write a line of C's and D's which the pupil plays with the second finger of the right hand, and names as he plays. Gradually add one more line and space as the lessons progress, giving exercises where the notes jump from the lines to the spaces. The pupil must continue to use the index finger to point out the notes, and must name each note that he plays. In the left hand, he must do the same, starting with middle C and B, proceeding downwards, as the beginner pieces are largely written around these notes at the start.

2. Some years ago I <sup>7</sup> devised a quicker way of teaching the lines and spaces, because this step in the learning scheme of reading at the piano, was more difficult than any other to impart to the child. Moreover it seemed to take a great length of time before the pupil absorbed the lines and spaces and learned to jump fluently from one isolated note to another. I made a set of flashcards, ie. a card for every line and space on the Great Staff. The advantages of teaching the lines and spaces with the card system are as follows:

- a. One is able to deal with one line or space at a time, and attention is focussed then upon a single new item to learn.
- b. The bigger size of the notes and the lines are easier to read, especially for the younger beginner.
- c. The principle of finding the lines in thirds and spaces in thirds works equally well as in the manuscript book.

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7. This is a personal invention of 1965. Long after I found the same system commercialized in a flashcard system by Mr Alan Solomon of Johannesburg, and following that a reference to the use of flashcards in 'How to teach piano successfully', by J W Bastien, California: Kjos West 1977, thus I use the personal pronoun 'I'.

e. The cards can simply be shuffled, and a different order can be obtained constantly. This saves laborious writing out of note-finding exercises.

The flashcard system was immediately successful. Beginners within a term could find their isolated notes on the stave with ease, and it has been used successfully by other teachers.

(iii) RHYTHM

The three-pulse note can now be established. Always teach from the sound to the symbol when teaching rhythm and, as in all teaching, from the known to the unknown.

Instruction by the teacher

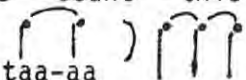
Response of the pupil

a. Are any notes longer than others in this piece which I shall play to you? (The teacher plays a piece incorporating one-pulse, two-pulse and three-pulse notes.)

b. Yes.

c. This is the three-pulse note.



How would we count this?

(Remind him of )

d. Taa-aa-aa

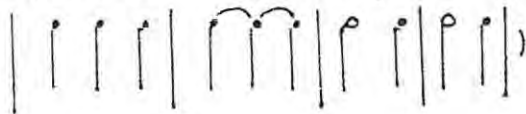
Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil



e. Yes. Now there is a shorter way of writing  and that is . Taa this for me.

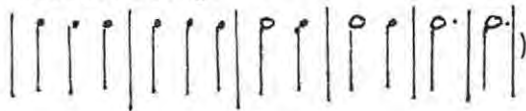
f. Taa-aa-aa

g. (The teacher should write an exercise incorporating:



h. The pupil plays the exercise with his eyes on the book, counting aloud, using index fingers to play C above middle C. The teacher points to each note as the pupil plays.

i. There is a shorter way of writing  and that is , where a dot takes the place of the tied note. (The teacher should write an exercise incorporating:



j. (When the exercise proceeds with fluency, the teacher counts the pulse measures as the pupil counts taas.)

k. The pupil exchanges with the teacher and counts the pulse measures as the pupil taas.

Instruction by the teacher



Response of the pupil

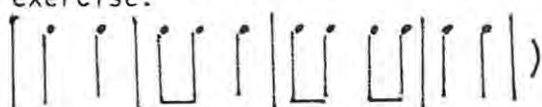
l. (The teaching of the four-pulse note proceeds in the same way, from the sound of the new pulse note, to the teaching of - taa-aa-aa-aa, to o. Write an exercise out incorporating:



m. The pupil looks at the book, uses the index finger of the right hand to play the C above middle C, and counts aloud, while the teacher points to each note.

n. (The same exchange of French time names and pulse measures occurs as in the teaching of the other pulse notes.)

o. (The teaching of the half-pulse note or divided pulse takes place in the first term. Explain that if taa, , were to be equally divided into two, we would have . They are like identical twins, or two halves of an orange. (Give an exercise:



Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

q. (The teacher should observe carefully that the quaver beats are not hurried in any way. Frequently the pupil tends to hurry the ta-tes. Demonstrate that they fit exactly into the time of one taa.)

(Exercises for all pulse notes,  $\uparrow$   $\uparrow$   $\uparrow$   $\circ$ , are found in Curwen Step I. The theoretical names of crotchet, minim, semibreve and quaver must be taught before the end of the first term.)

(The time signature of  $\frac{2}{4}$  and should be taught, with the pupil

p. The pupil should clap this and count aloud, as the teacher counts first in taas, then in pulse measures. The pupil then proceeds to play the exercise with the index finger of the right hand on C above middle C, with his eyes on the book as the teacher counts.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

understanding at this stage that  
the top figure shows us how many  
counts in each bar.)

(iv) AURAL

Continue as in the last lesson and expand interval-singing  
to those of a second and a third.

6.1 SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE DONE AT THE SIXTH LESSON

- (i) Technique. Legato or 'walking' exercises on the piano, in pairs of fingers.
- (ii) Pitch. The teaching of the lines and spaces.
- (iii) Rhythm. The teaching of the three-pulse note.
- (iv) Aural. As for the fifth lesson, with the addition of the singing of the intervals of a second and a third.

The learning of the first piece and the introduction of phrasing and progression.

## 6.2 THE LEARNING OF THE FIRST PIECE - PHRASING AND PROGRESSION

The pupil is quite ready at this stage to start learning his first piece from an easy book of pieces. It is preferable to choose a piece which is written on middle C or around middle C, as now the pupil will be reading the piece from the book, with his eyes on the book, counting aloud as he plays, and holding his hands in the correct piano-playing position. Therefore, the easier the notes, the better. To complicate the issue here by giving a piece which goes up and down, with more to think about, will make the learning of the piece an even more difficult process, instead of an exciting hurdle to have reached. An additional duet accompaniment for the first pieces, lends interest, excitement and rhythmic stability to the playing of them.

It is here that the teacher draws upon her imagination and conjures up a little story or picture around the title of the first pieces, to stimulate the young pupil and to aid him in the realisation that he is depicting a scene, story, feeling or emotion, and that he is not merely playing a succession of notes. This will not be so very applicable to the very first pieces which usually consist of a repetition of middle C's, but soon after, as the titles of the pieces become more descriptive, the teacher must begin to develop the expressive possibilities of the young child.

It is of paramount importance that at this first stage of learning a piece, the pupil learns about phrasing and

progression. Not even a succession of middle C's which go to make up the pupil's first piece, should be played without meaning. We are merely teaching notes, if we do not teach progression from the very start. Explain to the pupil that just as commas and full-stops allow sentences to breathe, so music has breathing places. Tell him that we do not say, "I saw a man walking down the street" in one breath. We say, "I saw a man (comma), walking down the street" (full-stop). The comma allows a breathing space, and the full-stop shows us that we have reached the end of the sentence. Music is just like this - it also has breathing places. Play and sing a simple nursery rhyme such as 'Baa Baa Black Sheep', first without phrasing and then with phrasing to illustrate this. Explain to him that some words are more important than others. We don't say, "I saw a man walking down the street", emphasizing every word. We say it like this, so that the sentence has meaning, "I saw a man, walking down the street!" The more important words are stressed, and the less important words progress towards them.

It is a great aid in the teaching of phrasing and progression to use first pieces which incorporate the use of words or rhymes with the music, for the beginner is then able to realise that important words coincide with important notes, and that the slight emphasis given to the most meaningful word in a sentence corresponds with the most meaningful note in a phrase, which he must consequently stress as musically as possible. The teacher should draw lines of progressions in the piece, and indicate the important notes with stress marks above or below them. Even at

this stage, the pupil should be encouraged to feel progression towards the important notes in each phrase, and to lean with a slight emphasis into these notes. He should also be urged to 'take a breath', or 'breathe' both physically and musically, at the start of each new phrase. This physical breathing helps him to understand and feel the analogy between the music and the words.

Ex. 4 E M Burnam, Ministeps to Music

**HOP and STOP**

Hop and stop. Hop and stop. Hop and hop and stop.

Frequently it is to be noted that beginner's pieces are not editorially phrased, and here it is essential that the teacher inserts such phrasing carefully, and instils and develops this life-giving dimension to the music from the very onset of the learning of the new piece.

6.3 A very important concept which should be taught towards the end of the first term, and which is incorporated into the lessons on Pitch, is the building of the scale.

The teaching of the building of the scale, should be approached in the following steps:

- (i) Initially the theoretical meaning and recognition of the flat and sharp should be established. It should be explained that a sharp sign is written thus:  $\sharp$ , and when the sign is placed before a note, the nearest black note or white note to the right of it should be played. A flat is written thus:  $b$ . When a flat is placed before a note, the nearest black note or white notes to the left of it should be played. Exercises for the recognition and naming of sharps and flats should be given to the pupil.
- (ii) The teaching of tones and semitones (big steps and little steps) should follow the teaching of the flat and sharp. It should be explained to the pupil that notes which are next to one another, without any other notes between them, are called semitones, or 'little steps', and notes which have another note between them are tones or 'big steps'. Semitones may fall between white notes, or between black and white notes. Tones may fall between two black notes or two white notes, or between a white and a black note. All these possibilities of tones and semitones should be illustrated for the pupil.
- (iii) The teaching of the building of the scale may now commence. It should be explained to the pupil that a

scale is a ladder of eight notes which ascend and descend. A scale is made up of tones and semitones. In all the major scales which will be the first to be learned, the semitones fall between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth degrees of the scale. The first major scale with which we start scale-building is C major. It commences upon C and ascends to the following C. The pupil should be encouraged to play C major scale with the index finger of his right hand, counting the steps of the scale aloud as he does so, noticing and stating where the semitones fall.

(iv) The teacher should play a few short pieces to the pupil, alerting him to the fact that they all begin and end on the first and eighth degrees of the scale, ie. the tonic of the scale. It should be stressed that the tonic is the most important degree of the scale, the second most important note being the fifth degree or dominant. It should also be mentioned that the seventh degree of the scale or the leading note must always rise to the tonic.

(v) It should now be established that each major scale is comprised of two tetrachords. Each tetrachord (a chord of four notes) is made up of three tones and a semitone. With his thumbs drawn lightly to the palms of his hands, the pupil should play the two tetrachords of C major, using the four fingers of his left hand (5,4,3,2) to play

the first tetrachord, and the four fingers of his right hand (2,3,4,5) to play the second tetrachord. Explain to the pupil that the second tetrachord of the first scale is the first tetrachord of the following scale to be built. Encourage the pupil to play the second tetrachord of C major (GABC) with his left hand, briefly drawing attention to the starting note of this tetrachord, ie. that it is G the dominant of C major.

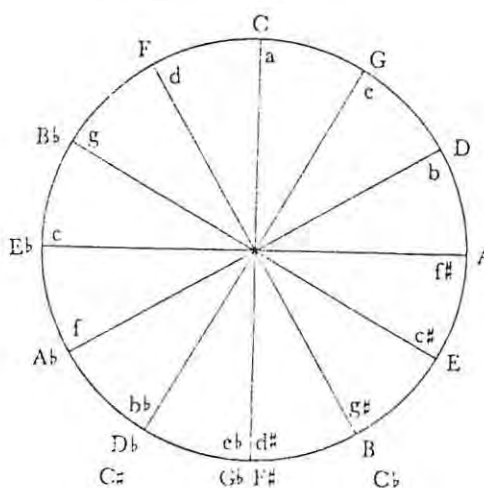
Continuing to build the scale, the pupil must now play the second tetrachord of G major, with his right hand (fingers 2,3,4,5). Frequently the pupil tends to play DEFG, and if this occurs, the teacher should ask him to observe carefully whether he has the correct construction of tone, tone, semitone within the tetrachord. The pupil realises that the F should become F#, and the teacher establishes that this is correct, and that G major has an F#. In order to correlate the building of the scale of G with the key and key-signature of G major, the pupil should learn his first piece in this key at this stage.

The pupil should continue to build his sharp scales ascending in tetrachords, increasing the number of sharps by one, as he proceeds. The age and ability of the pupil will determine how many he should build.

- (vi) The teacher should point out to the pupil that he has been building sharp scales by ascending in fifths, but

flat scales have also to be considered. By returning to C and descending five notes, we find the tonic of our first flat scale. This is the appropriate moment to introduce and explain the circle of fifths scheme of key presentation.

Ex. 5 The circle of fifths



The circle of fifths indicates clearly the natural order of all the keys. Travelling clockwise we find the sharp scales built a fifth apart, increasing the number of sharps by one as they proceed. Travelling anticlockwise we find the flats in a pattern of descending fifths, increasing the number of flats by one as they proceed.

The pupil should be encouraged to build F major scale in descending tetrachords, the teacher reminding him that the tetrachords must still read:- tone, tone, semitone, from the bottom range of the piano, upwards. The pupil, in a descending direction, plays FEDC with fingers

5,4,3,2 of the right hand, and BAGF with fingers 2,3,4,5 of the left hand. The pupil should observe whether his second tetrachord is correctly constructed, and upon adjusting the B to B<sup>b</sup>, the teacher should establish that this is correct, and that F major has a key signature of B<sup>b</sup>. Ideally, the pupil should learn a piece in F major at this stage, so that there is natural correlation between the building of the scale and the key.

The pupil continues to build his flat scales in descending tetrachords.

#### 6.4 THE ARM SLUR

During the first term when the arm slur is encountered in the pupil's technical exercises and pieces, its correct execution must be ensured. It must be explained to the pupil that a slur consists of two notes, the first note of which is more stressed than the second. It is written thus, the arrows above the notes indicating the downward and upward movement of the slur:

#### Ex. 6 The arm slur



The arm slur should now be demonstrated to the pupil. Using the thumb and second finger of the right hand for the execution of the slur, drop into the first note with arm weight, and on the upward movement of the slur, so take the second note of the slur up softly. The two notes of the slur are thus executed in one continuous movement - down and up. The upward movement evolves into a slight rolling motion of the hand towards the black keys. The second finger should not exert to play the soft note of the slur, but should be held firmly, forming part of the hand as a whole, enabling the slur to be executed in one arm movement. The following two exercises for the right hand and the left hand, are excellent initial exercises for the arm slur.

Ex. 7 The arm slur : right hand

Ex. 8 The arm slur : left hand

7. SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE DONE IN THE FIRST TERM

Having discussed a scheme or method for the first six lessons, including a method of teaching the building of the scale, the plan of steps for the whole of the first term will be stated. The sections will continue to be:

- (i) Technique
- (ii) Pitch
- (iii) Rhythm
- (iv) Aural

The steps within each section will be numbered, so that at a glance the teacher will be able to follow the progression of each concept. Each lesson of the pupil should consist of some part of the four main concepts, in order to maintain a correct balance of development. To reveal the scheme or method of the whole of each section, the steps will now be retraced to the first lesson, so that the complete programme may be reviewed, from the very first steps to the last, immediately, at sight.

It must be remembered that the method or plan of work to be accomplished in a term is flexible. It may take exactly a term to accomplish, but it may take two or even three terms for another pupil to absorb the same amount.

7.1 TECHNIQUE

- (i) Easy mechanism of the piano.
- (ii) Posture, sitting position and hand position.
- (iii) Numbering of the fingers and testing.
- (iv) Relaxing exercises and exercises for muscular control.
- (v) Preparatory legato exercises at a table, hands separately and in contrary motion, in pairs of fingers.
- (vi) Legato exercises now at the keyboard, hands separately and in contrary motion, in pairs of fingers.
- (vii) Five-finger exercises, legato, first hands separately then hands together in similar motion.

(viii) Start a book of technical exercises such as Mini-Dozen by E M Burnam, or Freedom Technique by Joan Last.

(ix) Teach staccato in the first term.

(x) Teach the arm slur in the first term.

## 7.2 PITCH

(i) Teach a piece by rote.

(ii) Teach the letter-names of the notes.

(iii) Teach the intervals of a second and a third.

(iv) Teach the Great Staff and anchor notes, middle C, high F and low G.

(v) Teach the clefs - the treble clef and the bass clef.

(vi) Teach the lines and spaces.

(vii) Start the interval reading of seconds, using Curwen Step I.

(viii) Teach the first piece with phrasing and progression.

(ix) Teach the building of the scale.

(x) Teach the key signatures of G major and F major.

### 7.3 RHYTHM

(i) Marching to rhythms and changing with a quickened or slackened pace.

(ii) Establish the meaning of Pulse, Accent and Bar.

(iii) Teach the one-pulse note.

(iv) Teach the two-pulse note.

(v) Teach the three-pulse note.

(vi) Teach the four-pulse note.

(vii) Teach the quaver.

Use the French time names for teaching the various note values, and combine these with the counting of the pulse measures.

(viii) Teach the technical names of the note values before the term ends; the crotchet, minim, semibreve and quaver.

(ix) Teach the time signatures of  $\frac{2}{4}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

#### 7.4 AURAL

(i) Recognition of high, low and medium pitch sounds.

(ii) Recognition of loud and soft tones.

(iii) Recognition of sounds which are close together or far apart.

(iv) The pitching of single notes.

(v) Marching to rhythms and responding to changes of speed.

(vi) The clapping of short rhythmic patterns, incorporating note values learned in the first term.

(vii) The singing of a few easy intervals of a second and a third.

7.5 There are particular concepts to be developed in the first term some of which require greater attention. These will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

- (i) The importance of sight-reading, from the very start, and how to develop it.
- (ii) The importance of aural training, and the development of the ear from the earliest stages.
- (iii) The teaching of rhythm, and the use of the French time names.
- (iv) The teaching of scales, and later broken chords and arpeggios; why we teach them and the benefits derived from their correct teaching.
- (v) The importance of phrasing and progression, as discussed in lesson six.
- (vi) The correct execution of the arm slur.
- (vii) The teaching of legato and staccato, as in Chapter Two, 2.1.2 and 2.1.7.
- (viii) The teaching of cantabile as in Chapter Two, 2.1.4.
- (ix) The correction of faulty tone production, and the elimination of stiffness and tension in piano playing.

7.6 BOOKS WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE FIRST TERM

(i) BOOKS FOR TECHNIQUE

At the keyboard by Joan Last (OUP)

Mini-Dozen by E M Burnam (Chapell & Co Ltd)

Merry Fingers by Carol Bottle (Weekes)

Nimble Fingers by Carol Bottle (Weekes)

Freedom Technique by Joan Last (OUP)

(ii) BOOKS FOR SIGHT-READING

Mrs Curwen's Pianoforte Method, Step I (Faber Music Ltd)

Sight-reading for the Very Young Pianist by J Last  
(Bosworth & Co)

(iii) BOOKS OF PIECES

Easiest Piano Course, Part One by John Thompson (Chapell  
& Co Ltd)

Teaching Little Fingers to Play by John Thompson (Chapell  
& Co Ltd)

Mini-Steps to Music by Edna-Mae Burnam (Chappell & Co  
Ltd)

First Piano Book by Walter Rolfe (Thompson)

Making Music by Jessie Blake and Hilda Capp (Boosey & Hawkes)

Approach to Music by Matthay, Craxton and Swinstead (Boosey & Hawkes)

First Year Piano Lessons by Fanny Waterman and Marion Harewood (Faber Music Co)

First Solo Book by Diller and Quaile (Chapell & Co Ltd)

## 8. THE SECOND TERM

### 8.1 TECHNIQUE

During the first term the pupil plays in a five-finger hand position. During the second term this position must be extended to encompass an octave range, and later a two-octave range. It must be explained to the pupil that the extension of the limited hand position will be accomplished in three ways:

- (i) by expansion exercises, where an interval of a third will be played with adjacent fingers, so that by stretching out the hand position, it will be extended.
- (ii) by contraction exercises, which are preparatory exercises for the shifting of the hand position.
- (iii) by thumb-under exercises or finger-over exercises, where the thumb turns under the hand, when ascending, introducing a new hand position either ascending or descending. These exercises are preparatory steps for the playing of scales. The teacher should play a scale of two octaves, ascending and descending, illustrating the technique of 'thumb-under' and 'finger-over'.

(i) Expansion exercises

The pupil should oscillate between any two notes which are a third apart, with each pair of adjacent fingers. The notes should preferably be an octave above middle C, so that the most natural position of the arm is obtained.

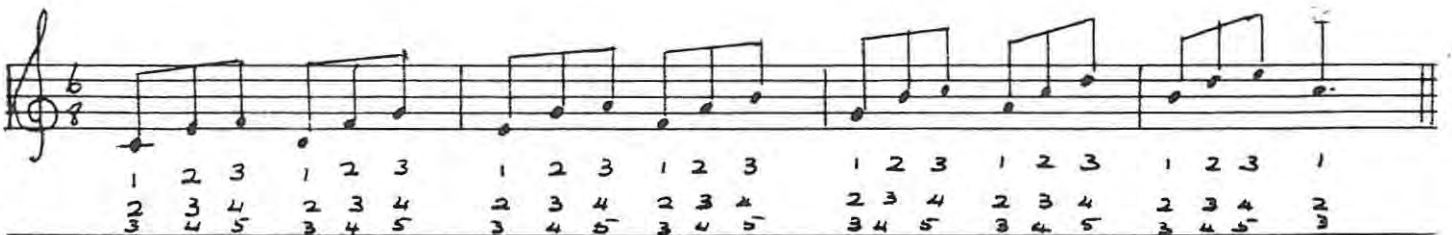
Ex. 9 Expansion exercise



The exercise should be played with a slight rotary movement in order to eliminate stiffness of the hand and forearm.

This preliminary expansion exercise should proceed to the following exercise.

Ex. 10 Expansion exercise



Different sets of fingers should be used for the playing of the exercise, as shown above. Attention must also be drawn to the important fact that all exercises should be played rhythmically and musically. In this particular exercise, the pupil should count ta-te-ti, or 1,2,3 as he plays each note, and he should feel the progression of the notes from the first note towards the final note of the exercise. Starting the exercise softly and incorporating a slight crescendo towards the last note, will aid in the pupil's feeling for progression.

In the left hand, the exercise must be played in contrary motion to the right hand, starting on middle C, and descending so that the same muscles of each hand are utilized.

The previous expansion exercise should proceed to the following:

Ex. 11 Expansion exercise

The image shows two staves of musical notation for an expansion exercise. Both staves are in 4/4 time and use a treble clef. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes with the following fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2. The second staff continues the exercise with the same rhythmic pattern and fingerings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. The exercise concludes with a final whole note on the second staff.

The previous exercise must be played by the left hand in contrary motion to the right hand, starting on middle C and descending. Again, in order to infuse rhythm and musicality into the exercise, the pupil should count, ta-te, ta-te, as he plays and he should progress towards the last note in the exercise, starting softly and gently swelling into the final note.

This expansion exercise can be transposed into other keys, and thus it is, besides being a technical exercise, an aid in the developing of keyboard harmony. It may be played in each new key in the circle of fifths scheme of presentation.<sup>8</sup>

The exercise can be altered so that the extended finger position appears in different places, thus:

Ex. 12 Expansion exercise

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Exercise 12. Both staves are in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains three measures of music. The first measure starts with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note on middle C (C4), with a '1' below it. The second measure contains a descending eighth-note pair (B4-A4), with '2' below the first note. The third measure contains a descending eighth-note pair (G4-F4), with '3' below the first note. This pattern repeats for the next two measures, with '4' and '5' below the first notes of the eighth-note pairs. The final measure of the first staff contains a descending eighth-note pair (E4-D4), with '4' below the first note, followed by a quarter rest with a '2' below it. The second staff follows the same pattern, with the final measure ending on a whole rest with a '1' below it.

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8. The circle of fifths is discussed in Chapter Three, 6.2.



(iii) Thumb-under exercises

- a. With each finger in turn resting lightly upon the C above middle C, the pupil should slowly and alternately play the notes B and D with his thumb. It should be carefully noted that the thumb is used as a separate lever, and that no unnecessary arm movements accompany the exertion of the thumb. Encourage an easy lateral swing of the thumb under the fingers at this early stage.
  
- b. With the thumb resting lightly upon the C above middle C, each finger in turn alternately plays B and D. Again it should be observed that no arm movements accompany the playing of the notes on either side of the thumb.
  
- c. The following exercise should be played with the various fingerings as indicated. It can also be played upon any set of white keys, preferably an octave above middle C.

Ex. 15 Thumb-under exercise

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 15. The notation is on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of two measures of quarter notes: Bb, A, G, F# in the first measure, and Bb, A, G, F in the second. Below the staff, fingerings are indicated for each note: 2, 3, 4, 5 for the first measure and 1, 3, 4, 5 for the second measure.

Again it is imperative that the exercises should be played with finger exertion, with no unnecessary arm movements. All the previous thumb-under exercises should be played by the left hand at an octave below middle C.

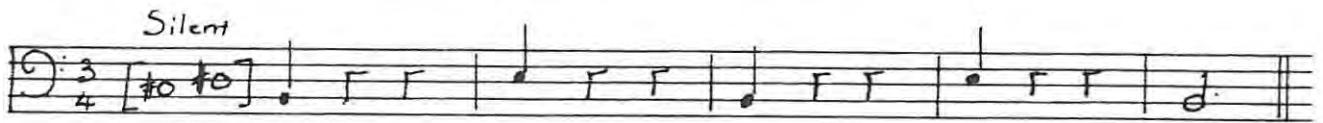
- d. The foregoing thumb-under exercises were, except for example 15, played solely upon the white keys. The following thumb-under exercises are played upon B, C#, D#, E, the first four notes of the B major scale.<sup>9</sup> This scale with its formation of white and black notes, provides a slightly extended position for the fingers, and consequently a more natural one than the more bent finger-position assumed when playing an all-white scale such as C major. It is thus a satisfactory scale to use for a preliminary thumb-under scale exercise, and from the physical point of view, with its natural hand position, an ideal scale with which to initiate scale playing.

Silently holding down C# and D# with fingers 2 and 3 of the right hand, the pupil should play B and E on either side, counting 1,2,3 as he plays. This exercise is executed at an octave below middle C, so that the sloping hand position thus attained aids in the lateral passing under of the thumb.

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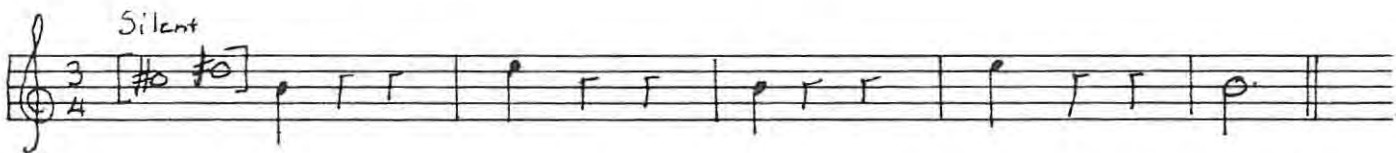
9. The Chopin position of fingers lying upon E, F#,G#,A#, B and Chopin's preference for commencing scale teaching with B major because of its natural hand position, is commented on in Chapter One: The History of Piano Technique.

Ex. 16 Thumb-under exercise for right hand



The left hand follows suit at an octave above middle C. Played in this position it aids an easy lateral movement of the thumb under the fingers.

Ex. 17 Thumb-under exercise for left hand



e. The same exercise is now played by the right hand an octave higher than in its original position, and following that, two octaves higher.

The left hand executes the exercise an octave lower than the original exercise, and then two octaves lower.

The arm should be set away from the body at the start of the execution of the above exercises, and an easy lateral passing of the thumb under the fingers should be cultivated, with the wrist free and flexible.

f. This initial B major thumb-under exercise is followed by the succeeding exercise, where the first four notes

of B major scale are played in sequence, first with the right hand, and then with the left hand.

Ex. 18 Thumb-under exercise for the right hand



Ex. 19 Thumb-under exercise for the left hand



g. The same exercise is now played by the right hand an octave higher, and then two octaves higher, than in its original position.

The left hand plays the exercise an octave lower, and then two octaves lower, than in its original position.

The foregoing thumb-under preparatory scale exercises are ideal for the cultivation of the correct 'travelling thumb' movement for the playing of scales.

It should be explained to the pupil that as soon as the first note of the exercise has been played by the thumb, it should begin to move or 'travel' under the fingers, so that when the succeeding note for the

thumb to play has been reached, it is in its appropriate position to do so.

The cause of an uneven, 'bumpy' scale, with the notes played by the thumb clumsily accented, marring the smooth passage-work of the scale as a whole, is the incorrect action of the thumb, when it is suddenly jerked into position, instead of travelling smoothly and immediately after its playing of the first note. A slight slope of the hand across the keys in the direction in which the arm is leading, will aid the easy lateral passage of the thumb.

#### 8.1.1 THE PLAYING OF THE FIRST SCALE

It should be explained to the pupil that scales are fingered in groups, and to ensure that he understands the principle of fingering scales, and that he feels the grouping of the fingers, he should play a group of two black notes, C# and D# with fingers 2,3, followed by the playing of E with the thumb, and subsequently a group of three black notes, F#, G#, A# with fingers 2,3,4, followed by the playing of B with the thumb, continuing to 'walk' up the piano in this manner. This should be executed by each hand separately, both ascending and descending.

Following this preliminary exercise, the pupil may now proceed

with the playing of B major scale with the right hand, and then with the left hand. It should be carefully noted that the pupil holds his arm away from his body, and his hand well over the keys, with a slight slope of the hand across the keys in the direction in which he is moving. The correct 'travelling thumb—under' movement should be encouraged, and the pupil should count aloud as he plays each note of the scale, listening carefully as he plays to the even matching of one note to the other. The fingers should exert as he plays the scale and should not be accompanied by unnecessary arm movements.

In order to correlate theoretical principles with the practical playing of scales, the pupil should return to the 'circle of fifths' scheme of key presentation, and should now proceed to play the scales of C, G and F major, hands separately for one octave, with the teacher carefully cultivating the correct technical and rhythmical approach to the playing of these first scales. At the culmination of the playing of each scale, the pupil should play the tonic and dominant chords in each key. This will later be formulated into the playing of a smoothly-progressing cadence, which is the initial step in the development of keyboard harmony.

## 8.2 PITCH AND READING

In the second term the pupil combines reading at the interval of a second, with reading at the interval of a third. Reading

exercises which combine these two intervals are found in Mrs Curwen's Pianoforte Method, Step II. The same book also introduces the learning and reading of leger lines. It is important that these are correctly introduced to the pupil at this stage. They are frequently a sadly neglected part of the reading concept.

A distinction should be made between the added leger lines above and below the Great Staff, and the borrowed leger lines between the staves. The added and borrowed lines should be introduced one at a time.

The teacher should constantly observe that the pupil's eyes are on the book as he reads, and that he feels the intervals between the notes without looking down at his hands. He should count aloud slowly and steadily as he plays. The development of good sight-reading stems from the cultivation of these habits in the early lessons.

### 8.3 RHYTHM

In the second term, the pupil continues to learn important rhythmic patterns:

- (i) The dotted crotchet followed by the quaver.
- (ii) Compound time.
- (iii) The one pulse, two pulse, three pulse and four pulse rests.

(iv) Syncopation.

(i) The dotted crotchet followed by the quaver

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

a. Taa the following pattern

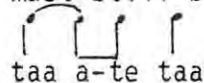
aloud: 

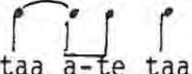
b. Taa ta-te taa.

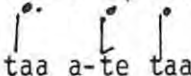
c. How do we count this pattern,  
when the taa is tied to the  
first quaver of the group?

d. Taa a-te taa.

e. Yes; because the crotchet is  
tied to the first quaver of the  
group, the t falls away, but it  
must still be counted thus:



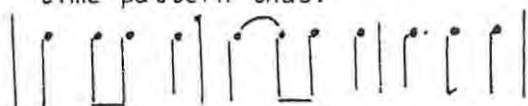
f. Now there is a shorter way of  
writing  and that

is by replacing the tied quaver  
with a dot, thus: 

Taa this aloud.

g. Taa a-te taa.

h. (The teacher writes out an  
exercise incorporating all the  
steps in the teaching of the  
time pattern thus:



Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

Taa this aloud.

i. The pupil responds by playing the exercise with his index finger on the C above middle C, counts aloud, as the teacher points to each note, and counts the pulse measures.

j. (The teacher now taas as the pupil counts the pulse measures.)

(ii) Compound Time

This important concept of rhythm should not be left to be taught any later in the method. Many beginner's pieces are written in compound time, and the pupil should understand it thoroughly before he plays pieces incorporating the compound beat.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

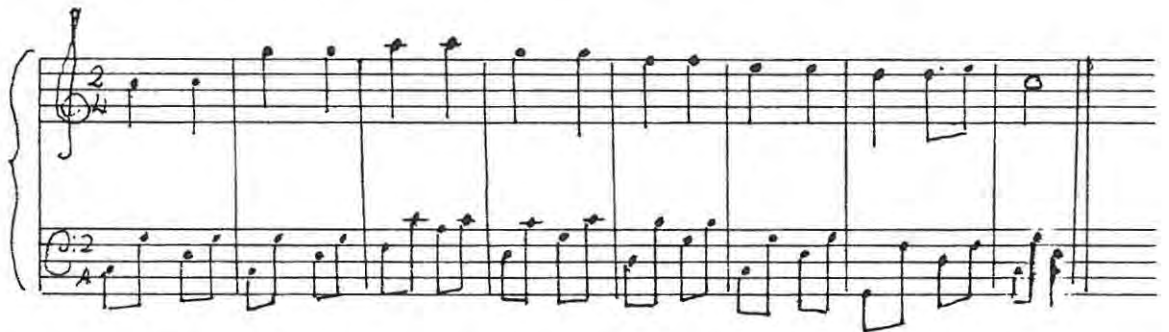
a. All the time patterns which you have learned up to now have been in simple time. You are now going to learn what compound time is and how to count it. (The teacher plays a

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

simple melody such as the following, from Mozart's Theme with Variations, with quaver accompaniment in the left hand, and asks the pupil to 'taa' the right hand, and then the left hand.)

Ex. 20 Theme from Mozart's Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman



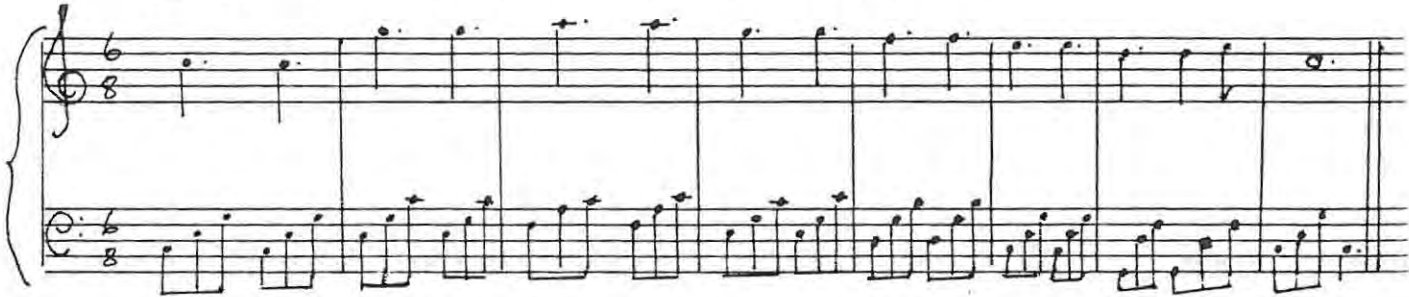
b. The pupil responds by counting taas to the right hand melody, and then ta-tes to the left hand accompaniment.

c. Do you hear anything different this time? (The teacher plays the same melody with dotted crotchets in the right hand, and with three quavers to each beat in the left hand, thus:

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

Ex. 21 Theme from Mozart's Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman



d. Yes, instead of two quavers or ta-tes in the left hand, there are now three.

e. These three quavers we call ta-te-ti. They are written like this, in one group,  $\overbrace{\text{ta-te-ti}}$ .

In compound time there are two groups of ta-te-ti in each bar. Each group forms one beat. In the previous example, then, how many beats in each bar are there?



f. Two beats in a bar.

g. Yes. I shall play the melody again in compound time, and I want you to count ta-te-ti to the left hand accompaniment.

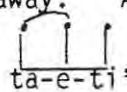
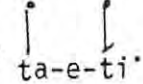
h. The pupil responds by counting ta-te-ti to the accompaniment of the melody as the teacher plays.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

i. If we have  and we tie the first two quavers, thus , what will we count?


j. Ta-e-ti

k. Yes, because of the tied second quaver, the t falls away. A shorter way of writing , is .

l. (The teacher writes out an exercise which incorporates all the steps learned thus far:

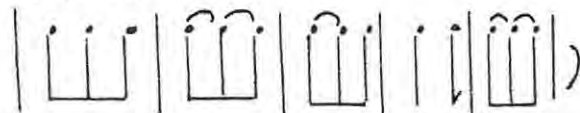


m. The pupil taas aloud as the teacher points and counts the pulse measures.

n. How do we count this? 

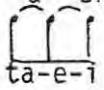
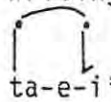
o. Ta-e-i

p. Yes, because the three quavers are tied, all except the first t fall away. (The teacher writes out an exercise incorporating all the steps thus far learned:

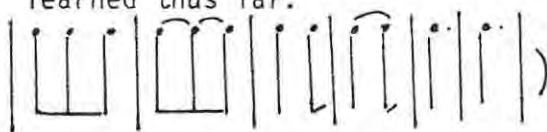


Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

r. There is a shorter way of writing , and that is , where a crotchet is tied to a quaver, and there is an even shorter way of writing this, ie. with a dot replacing the tied quaver note. (The teacher writes out an exercise incorporating all the steps

learned thus far:



q. The pupil taas aloud as the teacher points and counts the pulse measures.

s. The pupil counts aloud, while the teacher points and counts the pulse measures.

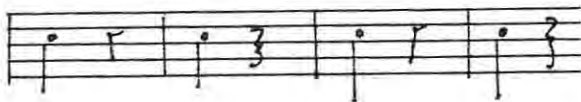
t. (The teacher taas while the pupil counts the pulse measures.) (Exercises incorporating compound time are to be found in Curwen Step IV.)

- (iii) The one pulse, two pulse, three pulse and four pulse rests.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

a. In music silence is as important as sound. We would become very tired of sound if we had no moments of rest. For these moments of silence or rests, we take away the t's from the time names and replace them with s's. Therefore instead of taa | , the one pulse note, we have saa, as a one pulse rest. There are two ways of writing the one pulse rest: } or | . (The teacher writes out an exercise incorporating one pulse notes, and rests:



b. The pupil responds by counting aloud, with the teacher pointing out the notes and counting the pulse measures.

c. Do you hear anything different? (The teacher plays a piece

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

incorporating one pulse and two pulse rests.)

d. Yes, some rests are longer than others.



e. This longer rest is the two pulse rest, written and named saa-aa.



f. (The teacher writes out an exercise incorporating one pulse notes and rests, and two pulse notes and rests, thus:



g. The pupil responds by counting aloud, while the teacher points and counts the pulse measures.

h. (The three pulse rest  $\Gamma$ , or , and the four pulse rest , saa-aa-aa, must be presented exactly as above, ie. by sound before symbol, and from the known to the unknown. The teacher should always point out the notes and rests when teaching rhythm, and she should count the pulse measures as the

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

pupil taas and then exchange  
and count taas as the pupil  
counts the pulse measures.)

(Exercises incorporating one  
pulse, two pulse, three pulse and  
four pulse rests are to be found  
in Curwen Step IV.)

(iv) Syncopation.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

a. Count this pattern aloud:



b. Ta-te, ta-te

c. Yes, now count this aloud:



d. Ta-te-a-te

e. Yes, the second quaver of the  
first group is tied to the  
first quaver of the second  
group, and therefore the t of  
the tied quaver falls away.

Instruction by the teacher

Response of the pupil

f. There is a shorter way of writing this pattern,



Count it aloud.

g. Ta-te-a-te

h. This rhythm which emphasises the weaker beat of the bar is called syncopation.

i. Now count this pattern aloud:



j. Ta-te, ta-te, ta-te

k. Yes. Now count this:



l. Ta te-a te-a te

m. Yes. The second of each of the tied quavers, drops its t. There is a shorter way of writing this:



Count this.

n. Ta te-a, te-a, te

o. Yes.

p. (There are exercises in both syncopation patterns, the short and the long, in Curwen Step II.)

#### 8.4 AURAL

- (i) The clapping of simple, short rhythmic patterns, incorporating time values learned in the second term.
- (ii) The pitching of single notes.
- (iii) The singing of intervals of a second, third and fourth.
- (iv) The recognition of two beats in a bar, and the beating of time to two beats in a bar.

#### 8.5 THEORY

The pupil should now commence with theoretical work. For the younger beginner the choice of book should be as imaginative, picturesque and colourful as possible. The following books are suggested for the younger beginner:

John Thompson Theory Drill Games (Chapell)

Schaum Note Speller (Bellwin - Mills)

The Fletcher Theory Papers (Fletcher, Boston)

The older beginner may start his theoretical work in a more formal theory book, such as:

Success Theory of Music Workbook - Primo Book (Contemporary Publications, Benoni)

For Young Musicians - Workbook I, by Bray and Snell (Waterloo Music Co Ltd, Canada)

Musical Mems by Dagmar Foster (Pitman Hart, London)

## 8.6 BOOKS WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE SECOND TERM

These, apart from Mrs Curwen's Pianoforte Method Step II, will be the same as those suggested for the first term, as the pupil who progresses at the average rate will still have a great deal of material to assimilate from these books.

## 9. THE THIRD TERM

### 9.1 TECHNIQUE

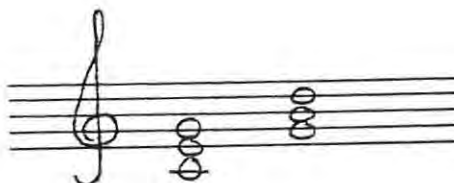
- (i) Scale playing may now be expanded to the playing of C, G and F major for two octaves, hands separately, and the playing of D, A E and B majors for one octave, hands separately. The pulse of the scale should now quicken a little, from the crotchet pulse to the quaver pulse, and the pupil should count as he plays each note of the scale. As in the first term, the following points should be carefully cultivated by the teacher:
  - a. The correct arm condition and hand position.
  - b. Finger exertion with no unnecessary arm movement.
  - c. The correct 'travelling thumb' movement.
  - d. Listening carefully to the matching of each note to the other during the progression of the scale.
  - e. Counting to each note of the scale as the pupil plays it, thus developing a rhythmically conceived scale.

f. Scale-playing with shape should be cultivated. Encourage the pupil to start the scale softly, to crescendo slightly as he ascends, and to decrescendo as he descends.

(ii) After the playing of each scale, the pupil should expand the playing of the tonic and dominant chords of the key into a simple perfect cadence. This is a further aid in the development of keyboard harmony, a vital branch of music training which is frequently neglected.

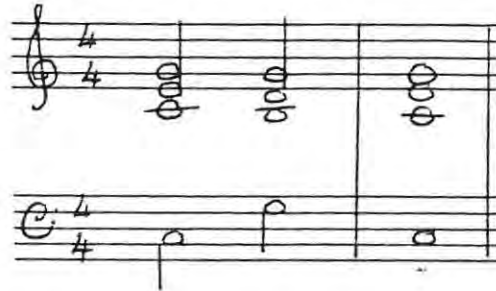
Explain to the pupil, that the tonic and dominant chords, as written,

Ex. 22 Tonic and dominant chord



will now be rearranged by placing the B and D of the dominant chord below the G, to produce a smooth progression of chords which form a perfect cadence, or ending, in the required key. The bass notes of tonic, dominant, tonic, are played by the left hand together with the right hand chords, to complete the cadence as a whole.

Ex. 23 Perfect cadence



The cadence should be played rhythmically and with progression towards the final chord. The execution of the cadence must follow the playing of each scale in C, G and F majors initially, later progressing to the keys of D, A, E and B majors, as they are learned by the pupil.

(iii) Preparation for the playing of broken chords

The teacher should write out the root position, first inversion and second inversion of the tonic chord in the five finger position, with the fingering of each chord inserted. The formation of the positions of the chord should now be explained, and the pupil should be encouraged, initially, to play the root position followed by the first inversion repeatedly, until he plays them correctly, feeling the shape of the chords as he does so. This may proceed to the playing of the three positions of the triad. When the playing of the three block chords is developing fluently, the teacher should explain that now the chords will be broken, and each note of the chord will be played in sequence. The pupil should count ta-te-ti as he plays each note, feeling the progression of the quavers into the dotted crotchets, in

order to infuse rhythmicity and musicality into the playing of the broken chord.

Ex. 24 The broken chord of C major

(i)

R.H. 1 3 5 1 2 5 1 3 5 3 5 3 1 5 2 1 5 3 1 5

L.H. 5 3 1 5 3 1 5 2 1 2 1 2 5 1 3 5 1 3 5 1

one octave lower

The broken chords of G and F majors should be taught in the same way.

- (iv) The correct technique of pedalling, both direct pedalling and legato pedalling, should be introduced at this stage, provided that the pupil is tall enough to reach the pedals. The teaching of pedalling is discussed in Chapter Two, 5.4.

9.2 PITCH, READING AND ELEMENTARY MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE

- (i) The pupil now reads by interval in seconds, thirds and fourths, using exercises from Curwen Step III.
- (ii) The building of the minor scale.

The teacher should play a short piece, first in a major key, and then in a minor key, and she should ask the pupil whether he hears any difference in the sound of these two renderings. The pupil should be encouraged to hear that the second piece has a sadder sound than the first. It must be explained to him that the second piece

is in a minor key, the difference in sound resulting from the semitones in the minor scale being positioned in different places from the semitones in the major scale. The explanation should continue that every major scale has a minor scale which belongs to it, or is related to it, which is located three semitones down from the tonic of the major scale. The pupil should now find the tonic notes of the relative minor scales of C, G and F majors by counting three descending semitones.

The semitones in the harmonic minor scale, which is the first type of minor scale to be taught, fall between the second and third, fifth and sixth and seventh and eighth degrees of the scale, and the formation of the scale, with the semitones thus positioned render it impossible to construct the minor scale in tetrachords as the major scale was constructed. It will be found more logical to teach the building of the minor scale as a ladder of eight notes, with observation of where the semitones fall.

The pupil should now play an harmonic minor, ascending, with the index finger of his right hand, counting from one to eight as he plays, noticing and calling out the semitones as he does so. He is very likely to play A B C D E F G A, omitting the G#, and if this occurs it should be drawn to his attention that the semitones should appear between the second and third, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth degrees of the scale and that he must

rectify his notes in order to obtain the final semitone. The teacher should explain that every minor scale has the same key signature as its relative major scale but that the raised seventh is not written in as part of the key-signature of a piece, but is written next to every seventh note which appears as an accidental. The learning of an easy piece in the key of A minor should coincide with the teaching of the minor scale at this stage, so that the pupil fully understands the concept of the minor key. The teacher should return to the circle of fifths key presentation, indicating to the pupil that the minor scales are written on the inside of the circle in small letters, the sharp minor scales continuing to ascend in the circle of fifths, starting from A minor, and that the minors related to the flat scales are built in descending fifths, commencing with D Minor. The pupil should now start the building of E Minor and D Minor scales.

### 9.3 RHYTHM

During the third term, the following rhythmic patterns should be taught:

- (i) The quaver rest
- (ii) The semiquaver
- (iii) Various semiquaver groupings
- (iv) The dotted quaver, semiquaver

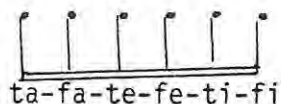
- (v) Compound time: the semiquaver subdivisions of the divided beat.

The teaching of these rhythmic patterns should be approached as in the previous terms - from the known to the unknown, and from the sound to the symbol. As the pupil counts the French time names, the teacher should count the pulse measures, and from time to time pupil and teacher should exchange the counting.

The teaching of the semiquaver should be dealt with from the division of the crotchet:  $\int$  - taa, into two equal halves,  $\int\int$  - ta-te, which are each subdivided into two semiquavers, producing a group of four semiquavers  $\int\int\int\int$  - ta-fa-te-fe.

The teaching of the dotted quaver, semiquaver should be carefully approached as this rhythmic pattern is frequently badly taught. The rhythmic unit should always be succeeded by a crotchet so that musical progression from the semiquaver proceeds to the crotchet. It should also be carefully observed that the pupil does not accent the semiquaver or lengthen its time value, but rather that he plays it lightly and of short duration and allows it to follow through to the crotchet, which should be emphasized. The teaching steps should initiate from  $\int\int\int\int$  ta-te-fe taa', to  $\int\int\int\int$  ta-e-fe-taa' to  $\int\int\int\int$  ta-e-fe taa'. The progression of the rhythmic unit can be indicated with an arrow pointing towards the crotchet with a stress mark above it, thus:  $\int\int\int\int$  ta-e-fe taa'

In the teaching of the semiquaver subdivisions of the divided beat in compound time, the pupil should be reminded of  $\overset{\cdot}{\text{ta}}-\overset{\cdot}{\text{te}}-\overset{\cdot}{\text{ti}}$ , and following this it should be explained that any further semiquaver divisions will retain these time names, thus:



#### 9.4 AURAL

- (i) The clapping of short, rhythmic patterns, incorporating time values learned in the term.
- (ii) The pitching of single notes.
- (iii) Interval singing of seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths.
- (iv) Recognition and beating time to two beats and three beats in a bar.

#### 9.5 THEORY

Continue in the theory workbook as for the second term. The older beginner should relate some of the aspects of his practical work to his theoretical work, such as the writing of the first scales of C, G and F majors, and the key-signatures of G and F majors, and the time signatures of two, three and four crotchets in a bar.

## 9.6 BOOKS WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE THIRD TERM

The pupil may now, if ready, proceed to a book of a slightly more difficult standard.

(i) Books for technique:

Dozen-a-day, Book I by E-M Burnam (Chapell)

(ii) Books for sight-reading:

Curwen Step III (Faber Music Ltd)

(iii) Books of pieces:

Easiest Piano Course, Part Two by John Thompson (Chapell)

Mini-Steps to Music, Part Two by John Thompson (Chapell)

## 10. THE FOURTH TERM

The well-trained pupil will now have reached the Preliminary or pre-Grade I stage of work. The fourth term is a period of consolidation of the foundation of the pupil's training laid down in the first three terms, and is the beginning of the preparation for the Grade I examination.

### 10.1 TECHNIQUE

(i) Major scales of C,G,F,D,A for two octaves, hands

separately, and major scales of E and B for one octave, hands separately.

The major scale of C in contrary motion, for one octave, beginning and ending on the tonic.

Minor scales of A,E and D for one octave, hands separately.

Broken chords of C,G,F majors as for the third term and gradually approaching A minor broken chord.

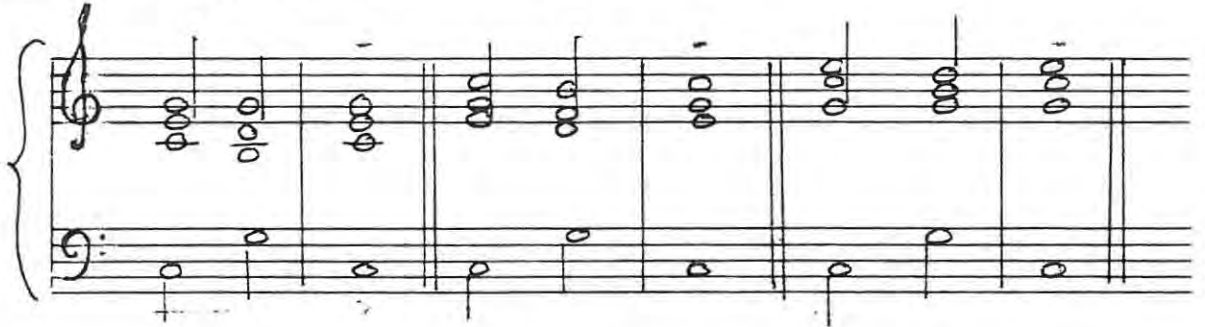
Scales may be practised in various time patterns in order to develop finger control, dexterity and rhythm. Suggested rhythmic patterns are the dotted quaver, semiquaver pattern, and the following rhythmic pattern:

Ex. 25 Scale in rhythmic pattern



- (ii) The playing of the perfect cadence at the finish of each scale, may now extend to the playing of the tonic chord in the three positions of root position, the first inversion and the second inversion in the right hand with left hand accompaniment.

Ex. 26 Perfect cadence in three positions



The pupil will already have a knowledge of the building of the root position, first inversion and second inversion of the chord, when he learned of the building and playing of the broken chord in the third term, and here, in the playing of the cadence in three positions in the right hand, he must be reminded of it.

The cadence in three positions should be played at the finish of the playing of each scale in the major keys, progressing towards the playing of the tonic chord in root position in A minor.

- (iii) The pupil should continue to progress systematically and methodically through his book of technical studies or exercises, such as Dozen-a-day by E-M Burnam or Freedom Technique by Joan Last.

10.2 READING

- (i) When the reading exercises in seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths, combined with the rhythmic patterns learned

in the third term, have been successfully completed, the pupil should progress to a suitable book of sight-reading exercises. The concept of reading must be conscientiously cultivated as one of the most important, if not the most important aspect of the training of the young pianist. It should never lapse to be considered as a branch of piano tuition that must hurriedly be practised just before an exam; for without the cultivation of the art of reading, we would produce illiterate pianists.

From this stage onwards, the teacher should assign a few exercises of sight-reading as part of the pupil's homework at every lesson; and the first part of each lesson should be taken up by the sight-reading of one or two other exercises, appropriate to the pupil's grade. The teacher should encourage the pupil's eyes to be on the book as he reads, to feel the intervals between the fingers as he reads, without looking down at his hands, and to count aloud as he plays in order to bring rhythm and progression to his reading.

The enthusiastic teacher should build up a library of sight-reading books of all the grades, from which each pupil may select a book of suitable pieces to read at home. The standard of reading should always be of at least one or two grades lower than the standard of the pieces which the pupil is learning.

In preparation for the Grade I exam, the pupil must begin to read pieces not only in C major, but G major and F major, and at this pre-Grade I stage, the reading is played with separate hands.

In order to cultivate good reading habits, the teacher should proceed in the following way. Encourage the pupil to:

- a. Observe what key the piece is in.
- b. Point out the flats and sharps in the piece before he plays it.
- c. Clap the rhythm of the piece before he begins to play it.
- d. Place each hand over the five-finger position of the key he is in before he begins to play, placing both thumbs upon the key note with hands in contrary motion to one another. In this way he will feel the sharp of G major and the flat of F major before he plays it.
- e. Place each hand on the correct starting note, with the correct finger before he plays.
- f. Commence playing the exercise slowly and counting aloud, with his eyes on the book.

(ii) Books which can be used for early sight-reading

Sight-reading for the Very Young Pianist by Joan Last  
(Oxford)

Rhythmic Reading, Book I by Joan Last (Bosworth)

The Stars Come Out, Book I by Mungo Park (Forsyth)

Read and Play Series, Book I edited by T A Johnson  
(Peters)

Mrs Curwen's Pianoforte Method, Step IV (Faber Music Ltd)

Step by Step Sight-Reading, Book I edited by Swinstead  
(Banks & Son)

Graded Sight Tests, Book I edited by Markham Lee (Harris)

Play at Sight by Christine Brown, Part I (Freeman)

Specimen Sight-reading Tests, Grade I for the Trinity  
College of London (Trinity College of London)

Specimen Sight-reading Tests, Grade I for the Royal  
Schools of Music (Associated Board)

Playing at Sight, Grades I-IV (University of South  
Africa)

### 10.3 RHYTHM

When Curwen Step III has been successfully completed, all time patterns learned during the year should be consolidated by giving exercises to be clapped and counted aloud as they are played, in any rhythmic patterns presented during the year. Rhythm is an integral part of reading, and the pupil should count aloud in all

reading exercises as he plays. In order to cultivate his sense of rhythm, he must also count aloud as he plays his pieces. Without this vital aspect of rhythm most carefully developed, the pupil's practical work, whether it be scales, sight-reading, or the playing of his pieces, will be merely a succession of notes. For rhythm incorporates not only time values, but progression and musical meaning.

If the rhythmic patterns have been taught methodically and systematically throughout the year, the pupil will have the basis of an excellent training in this branch of his early tuition.

#### 10.4 AURAL

- (i) The clapping of short rhythmic patterns, incorporating time values learned during the year.
- (ii) The pitching of single notes.
- (iii) Interval singing of seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths.
- (iv) Recognition and beating time to two and three beats in a bar.

### 10.5 THEORY

The pupil should continue in his theory book and at this stage even the younger beginner should graduate from the colourful picture work-book, to a more formal theory book.

### 10.6 BOOKS WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE FOURTH TERM

- (i) This intermediary period between the beginner's stage and Grade I, demands a wise choice of piece. Starting with the learning of a few easy preliminary pieces, the teacher should steer upon a course of selection, which incorporates the learning of easy pieces from the various style periods, gradually accustoming the pupil to the styles of playing in the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Twentieth century eras. There are a wealth of pieces for the teacher to choose from at this stage, in order to bridge the gap between the beginner's stage and Grade I.

Classics to Modern, Book I edited by Denes Agay (Yorktown Press)

More Classics to Modern, Book I, edited by Denes Agay (Yorktown Press)

Work and Play by Felix Swinstead (Associated Board)

First Year Pieces by Thomas Dunhill (Associated Board)

For the Young Pianist by Ian Lake (Chapell)

The Open Road by Joan Last (Curwen)

Rooftops by Joan Last (Forsyth)  
In a Garden City by Joan Last (OUP)  
Scenes at a Farm by Walter Carroll (Forsyth)  
First Solo Book by Diller Quaile (Schirmer)  
First Solo Book by Barbara Kirkby-Mason (Bosworth)  
Five by Ten edited by Alec Rowley, Book I (Lengnick)  
Over the Hills by Marjorie Helyer (Freeman)  
Down a Country Lane by Marjorie Helyer (Freeman)  
Highdays and Holidays by Marjorie Helyer (Freeman)  
Spring Pageant by Marjorie Helyer (Freeman)  
Classics for Beginners edited by Thomas Dunhill (OUP)  
First Classics edited by D Bradley (Ricordi)  
First Classics edited by Donald Gray (Boosey and Hawkes)  
For Talented Beginners, Books I and II by Anthony Hopkins  
(OUP)

(ii) Duets

This is an ideal stage to introduce two young pupils of approximately the same age and ability to duet-playing. This will enhance the feeling of sharing and companionship in music-making, and moreover will teach the partners to listen to one another with regard to matters of timing, rhythm, balance, synchronization, phrasing and dynamics. Appropriate duets for this stage are:

First Duet Book by Diller Quaile (Shirmer)  
First Duet Book by Barbara Kirkby-Mason (Bosworth)

Two and a Piano by Joan Last (OUP)

Two's Company by Marjorie Helyer (Novello)

Melodic Studies Op 149 by Diabelli (Peters)

The Green Duet Book by Angela Diller (Shirmer)

### 10.7 CREATIVE WORK

Time should be given here to encourage the pupil towards the beginning of a little creative work. Initially the pupil's interest can be directed to the playing of short melodies, composed by himself. These at first need not be written down, but played by ear, and at a later stage, as the pupil's theory and written work progress, he may be encouraged to write the melodies out in his manuscript book, and still later, to write an accompanying left hand to the melodies.

10.8 The lesson of thirty minutes duration should now take the following form:

- (i) Theory. At the start of each lesson, the pupil's written work should be corrected and new work for homework must be set.
- (ii) Sight-reading. At each lesson the pupil should sight-read one or two exercises, and sight-reading exercises should be set for homework.

- (iii) Scales. A few scales and broken chords should be played at each lesson, and new scales or revised ones should be given for homework.
- (iv) Technique. One or two technical exercises should be played at each lesson.
- (v) Pieces. The pieces should at this stage progress towards the playing of three varying pieces from different style-periods, preferable an easy, Preliminary grade Baroque piece, an easy Classical piece, and a short, simple Romantic piece, or a contemporary piece. The foregoing list of books gives ample opportunity for a wide variety of choice. There is no need for a pupil to be given, for instance, three pieces by Marjorie Helyer, or three pieces by Thomas Dunhill.
- (vi) Aural. Ear tests or listening tests should be incorporated into each lesson. There may not be time to give many, but it is imperative that even a few should be included before the conclusion of each lesson.

Should the inclusion of both technical exercises and scales and broken chords be too lengthy for a thirty-minute lesson, the technical exercises and scales and broken chords may be alternated from lesson to lesson.

## 11. THE FIRST YEAR

The first year of piano teaching is the most crucial and important, for it is in this year that the foundation of music and of piano playing is laid. If this year in the beginner's training is incorrectly or poorly approached by the teacher, the pupil will be irrevocably harmed in his basic grounding, even to the extent that in some cases he will never recover sufficiently enough to progress steadily and satisfactorily through the grades, and in other cases poor teaching may even deter him from wanting to carry on with his piano lessons.

As explained in the foregoing method or scheme of teaching, the elements of piano playing in the fields of Technique, Pitch, Rhythm and Aural are presented in a systematic order. If the steps within these various branches are well absorbed and established by the year's end, the pupil will not only have a good basic foundation from which to advance further, but the vital concepts of looking and listening, ie. the reading and aural concepts which are the very corner-stones of a solid foundation in piano playing and musical training, will have been established.

Moreover, the vitality, pulse of the music and musically-creative feeling will be established with the cultivation of phrasing, progression, rhythm and the stimulation of imagination; and with the learning of suitably chosen pieces towards the end of the year, the pupil will be directed towards the appreciation of appropriate styles of keyboard interpretation within the various style periods.

The building and the playing of the scales, together with a start of the development of keyboard harmony, are the initial steps in the pupil's training in tonality, and each and every stage in the building of every concept, will be further consolidated by its gradual inclusion into the theoretical and written work.

Through the steps of a correct posture at the piano and the correct hand position at the keyboard, and the careful establishing of legato and staccato, the beginner's technique is guided towards the development of finger independence and agility and to a fine production of tone.

## 12. THE SECOND YEAR

The second year will be considered as a whole, and will not be divided into terms as was done in the first year. It is a period of preparation for its final goal, the Grade I examination. The same dictum will apply to each stage of the pupil's training, ie. that the pupil's age, ability and talent will dictate the rate of progress at the lessons.

### 12.1 TECHNIQUE

- (i) The major scales of C,G,D,A,E,B and F for two octaves, hands separately, and the major scales of C, G and F for one octave, hands together. The time-value of each note of the scale should now be increased to that of a semiquaver.
- (ii) C major in contrary motion, beginning and ending on the tonic, in unison, for one octave, gradually working towards G major in contrary motion.
- (iii) The minor scale of A for two octaves, hands separately, and the minor scales of E and D, one octave, hands separately.
- (iv) The perfect cadence in three positions in the right hand should be played at the finish of every major and minor

scale. A cadence formed now, upon the tonic and subdominant chords, may be executed in the first few major keys, in root position, of C,G and F, thus:

Ex. 27 Cadence on tonic and subdominant chords



- (v) The broken chords of C,G and F majors and A, E and D minors, played as in the third and fourth terms.
- (vi) Scales may be practised in different rhythms as in the fourth term; also legato and staccato, and with dynamic variation from piano to forte.
- (vii) Hand staccato should begin to be developed with the exercises described in Chapter Two, 2.1.7, The Teaching of Staccato.
- (viii) Exercises for development in various technical areas should be given.

Ex. 28

a. For alternation of sound and silence, with each hand separately.



Ex. 29

b. For the developing of finger independence and control, and for even articulation of the fingers, hands separately.



Ex. 30

c. For the development of synchronization of the hands, in contrary motion.



Ex. 31

d. For the development of synchronisation of the hands in similar motion



Ex. 32

e. For the development of weaker fingers



The above exercise is to be played in contrary motion with the left hand, starting on middle C.

f. For the development of tone control, by the playing of one note loudly in the right hand, followed by the playing of one note softly in the left hand, with the third fingers of each hand. These notes should be widely spaced in time at the start, and gradually brought closer together, so that finally they are played simultaneously. The exercise should then be reversed with the left hand playing the loud note, and the right hand the soft note. The exercises may then proceed to the playing of chords in the place of single notes.

g. For the development of melody and accompaniment, by the playing of the following bars of a well-known piece which incorporates melody and accompaniment; first with the right hand, with the teacher encouraging a singing cantabile with well-phrased notes, and then with the left hand, with the teacher encouraging a soft accompaniment, with slight emphasis upon the fifth finger and not upon the thumb. The pupil should then proceed to the playing of the few bars hands together, with the teacher advising the pupil to listen carefully to the balance between his hands.

Ex. 33 Schumann, Melody

1.

Nicht schnell (*Allegretto*)

*p* *legatissimo*

The musical score for Schumann's 'Melody' (Op. 10, No. 4) is shown. It consists of two staves. The right hand part is a melody of eighth notes, and the left hand part is a accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo is 'Nicht schnell (Allegretto)' and the dynamics are 'p legatissimo'. The score includes fingerings and a trill at the end.

Ex. 34

h. For the development of tone control in the playing of a chord, with the execution of the following exercise. Exertion must be directed towards the little finger side of the hand.

The musical exercise for tone control in the right hand is shown. It consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The exercise is a sequence of chords: a D major triad (D, F#, A), an E major triad (E, G#, B), and a C major triad (C, E, G). The chords are played in a descending sequence, with the right hand moving from the thumb side towards the little finger side.

Ex. 35

In the following reverse exercise of the above, exertion should be made towards the thumb-side of the hand.



The same two exercises may be played by the left hand an octave lower, in which case reverse fingers will be emphasized.

12.2 READING

Sight-reading in the keys of C, G and F major must proceed, gradually extending towards the reading of more difficult exercises, and incorporating the use of sight-reading tests of Grade I for the Trinity College of London, Royal Schools of Music and the University of South Africa.

12.3 RHYTHM

Rhythm now becomes an integral part of all piano-playing: in the sight-reading exercises, in the playing of the pieces, and even in the playing of the scales and broken chords.

#### 12.4 AURAL

- (i) The pitching of single notes.
- (ii) The singing and recognition of intervals of a second, third, fourth and fifth.
- (iii) The clapping of a short rhythmic pattern.
- (iv) The recognition and beating of time to two beats and three beats in a bar.
- (v) The recognition in the playing of two renderings of a melodic phrase, as to whether the phrase is loud or soft, high or low, slow or fast, happy or sad, legato or staccato.

#### 12.5 THEORY

The pupil should now progress to the Success workbook, I, and the theory should begin to cover the following areas:

##### (i) Notation

The letternames of the notes in the treble and bass clefs and a few leger lines should become established. The value of the following notes and rests must be learned: the semibreve, minim, crotchet and quaver, and the dotted semibreve, minim and crotchet.

(ii) Time-signature

The correct grouping of notes and rests, and the time-signatures of  $\frac{2}{4}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{4}{4}$  should be well absorbed by the pupil.

(iii) Key-signatures and scales

The writing of the major scales of C,G,F,D proceeding towards the writing of A,E and B major, and the writing of the key-signatures of the above scales in the treble and bass clefs, should be carefully taught.

(iv) Preparation for harmony

The pupil should learn the technical names and recognition of the first, fourth and fifth notes in C,G and F major, and the writing of the tonic chords of C,G and F major.

(v) The meanings of the most commonly used Italian terms should be approached.

12.6 BOOKS WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE SECOND YEAR

Books may now include collections of the easier pieces of the great masters, either by one composer or by selected composers.

There are also useful anthologies of studies, technical exercises and contemporary pieces. For reasons of easy reference, it is preferable to arrange the books under the headings of technical books, studies, and books belonging to the various style periods. Piece-selection should continue upon a broad and comprehensive basis.

(i) Books for technique

Dozen-a-day, Books I & II by Edna-Mae Burnam (Chapell)

Freedom Technique, Books I & II by Joan Last (OUP)

Hanon Preliminary Exercises for the Piano, edited by John  
Thompson (Willis)

(ii) Studies

Tuneful Graded Studies, Grade I, edited by Dorothy  
Bradley (Bosworth)

The Wheel of Progress, Book I, by Thomas Dunhill  
(Associated Board)

Graded Studies, Grade I, published by the Associated  
Board (Two Series)

The New Czerny, Book I, edited by A Rowley and M Haywood  
(Lengnick)

Melodic and Rhythmic Studies Op 42 and 43 by Alec Rowley  
(Lengnick)

(iii) The Baroque Period

Anna Magdalena edited by V Langrish (Associated Board)

The Children's Bach edited by Harold Davies (OUP)

Handel: Beringer's School of Easy Classics (Augener)

(iv) The Classical Period

Haydn: Beringer's School of Easy Classics (Augener)

Mozart: Beringer's School of Easy Classics (Augener)

Beethoven: Beringer's School of Easy Classics (Augener)

(v) The Romantic Period

Schumann Album for the Young Op 68 (Augener)

Tchaikowsky Album for the Young Op 39 (Ashdown)

(vi) Contemporary Music

Bartok, For Children, Books I & II (Boosey & Hawkes)

Kabalevsky, Fifteen Children's Pieces (Boosey & Hawkes)

Kabalevsky, Twenty-four Little Pieces (Boosey & Hawkes)

Khatchachurian, Pictures from Childhood (Boosey & Hawkes)

Prokofieff - Musique d'une enfant (Boosey & Hawkes)

Stravinsky - Les Cinq Doigts (Chester)

Skostakovitch - Six Children's Pieces (Boosey & Hawkes)

Richard Rodney Bennett - Seven days a week (Universal)

Ian Lake, For the Young Pianist, Books I & II (Chapell)

The Chester Educational Series edited by J Dunhill  
(Chester)

(vii) Anthologies of master composers

Hours with the Masters edited by Dorothy Bradley, Book I  
(Bosworth)

Step by Step to the Classics, Book I edited by Swinstead  
(Banks & Son)

Classics to Moderns, edited by Denes Agay, Book I  
(Yorktown Press)

More Classics to Modern edited by Denes Agay, Book I  
(Yorktown Press)

A Keyboard Anthology, Book I edited by H Ferguson  
(3 Series) (Associated Board)

(viii) Contemporary Anthologies

Five by Ten edited by Alec Rowley, Book I (Lengnick)

Original Pianoforte Pieces, Associated Board, Book I  
(Associated Board)

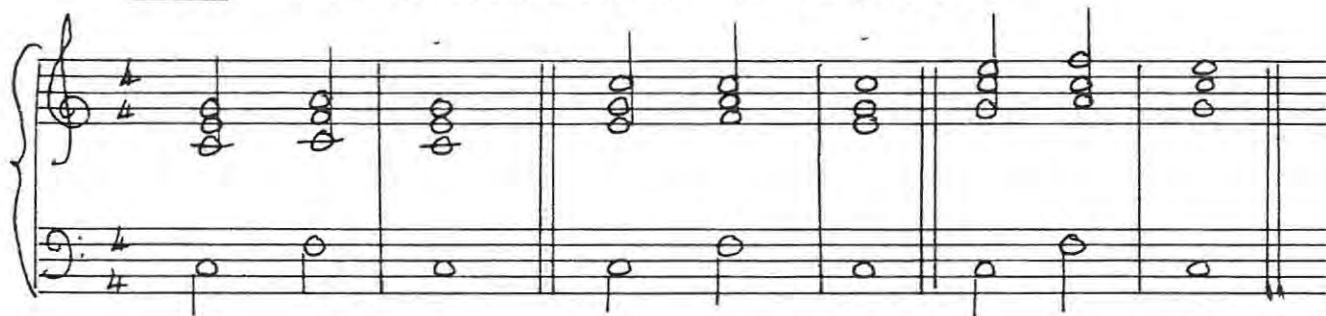
### 13. THE THIRD YEAR

The third year is a period of working towards the Grade II examination.

#### 13.1 TECHNIQUE

- (i) The major scales of C,G,D,A,E,B and F, for two octaves hands separately, and for one octave hands together, working towards the playing of B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, F<sup>#</sup> and C<sup>#</sup> Majors for one octave hands separately.
- (ii) C and G major in contrary motion, working towards the playing of D and A major in contrary motion for one octave.
- (iii) The minor scales of A,E and D minor for two octaves, hands separately, and one octave hands together, working towards the playing of G and C minor scales, one octave, hands separately.
- (iv) The cadence formed on tonic, and subdominant chords, should now be played in root position, first inversion, and second inversion in the right hand at the finish of every major scale, thus:

Ex. 36 Tonic, subdominant cadence in three positions



(v) Chromatic scales, starting on A<sup>b</sup> and D with each hand separately, for one octave.

(vi) The broken chords of C,G and F major and A,E and D minor, now in octave position, hands separately, as in the example below.

Ex. 37 Broken chord in octave position



(vii) The following exercise must be played with hand staccato in sixths with the first and fifth fingers, with the same movement as stated in the hand staccato exercise for the second year.

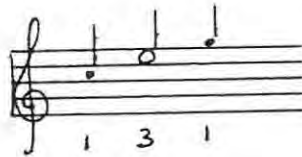
Ex. 38 Hand staccato in sixths



(viii) Thumb-under preparatory arpeggio exercises, in preparation for the playing of arpeggios in Grade III, should be given at this stage.

a. Resting on the surface of E, weigh down C and G with the thumb.

Ex. 39 Thumb-under exercise



The arm must be set away from the body at the start of the exercise, and an easy lateral swing of the thumb under the hand must be encouraged.

b. In order to exercise the thumb-under movement in the arpeggio, the following exercise should be executed.

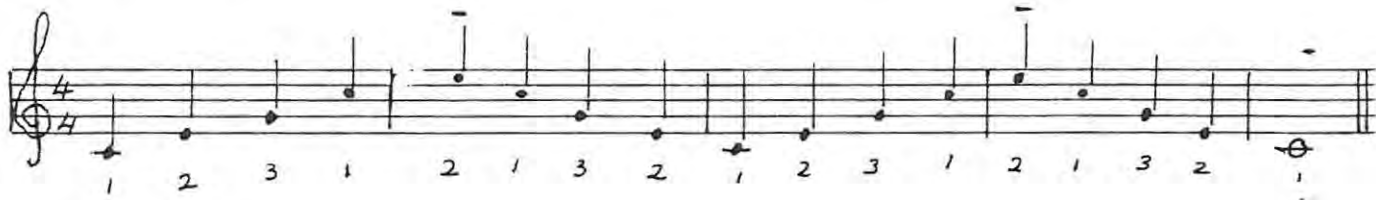
Ex. 40 Thumb-under exercise



c. In order to exercise the thumb-under movement and finger-over movement of the arpeggio, the following exercise should be carried out. It should be noticed that the note after the gap between the third finger

and thumb is accented, so that there is no accentuation of the thumb, but rather of the ensuing finger.

Ex. 41 Thumb-under exercise



13.2 READING

Sight-reading now progresses to the playing of short pieces in C, G and F major, hands together. The pupil must be continuously encouraged to keep his eyes upon the book and to count aloud as he plays. The suggested books for sight-reading at this stage are the same as those stated for the Fourth Term 12.2 (ii), except that the Grade II books of each series should now be consulted.

13.3 RHYTHM

Rhythm becomes an integral part of the sight-reading and the playing of the pieces, and even the playing of scales and broken chords. The pupil should count aloud in all his piano playing to develop and establish a good sense of rhythm. The teaching of

two against three, and three against four should be approached at this stage. Although it will hardly be likely to occur in a piece of Grade II level, it should be carefully taught beforehand, so that it becomes a natural process when it does occur in a piece at a later stage.

The pupil should be taken away from the piano and seated at a table where he can tap the rhythm. The following pattern should be carefully written upon the board, so that the pupil can easily read how the two groups fit together, thus:

Ex. 42 Two against three



Allow the pupil to tap the top line of notes counting 1,2,3,1, or ta-te-ti taa. Then let him tap and count the bottom line of the notes: 1,2,1, or ta-te, taa. It must be pointed out that all exercises must be executed rhythmically and musically progressive, and that even this short pattern should flow towards the final crotchet. It should now be explained and shown to the pupil that when we wish to play these two groups of notes simultaneously, they should fit together as written, ie. with the second quaver of the group of two notes coming in after the second quaver of the group of three notes. Allow the pupil now

to tap the pattern hands together, counting aloud, 1,2,3,1, or ta-te-ti taa, noticing that the second quaver of the group of two quavers comes directly after the second quaver of the group of three quavers. Words which fit the rhythmic pattern often help the pupil to feel the rhythm and the fitting in of the groups, thus:

Ex. 43 Rhymes to two against three



This is the way home  
Now it's OK see  
Old rat-tle trap goes

The same method of teaching can be used for teaching three against four, writing it out clearly for the pupil, and allowing him to tap and count the top line aloud, and then the bottom line aloud, then encouraging him to tap them simultaneously, fitting one in with the other, counting aloud, and repeating word patterns which suit the time pattern.

Ex. 44 Rhymes to three against four



When will he come today when?

In the teaching of both two against three, and three against four, the groups of notes may be exchanged so that either hand plays the large or smaller group of notes.

#### 13.4 AURAL

- (i) To recognise and describe intervals of a second, third, fourth or fifth, and to sing them.
- (ii) To clap a short rhythmical passage.
- (iii) To distinguish between a major scale and a minor scale.
- (iv) To recognise in a passage whether it was loud or soft, high or low, slow or fast, happy or sad, legato or staccato.
- (v) To introduce visualisation tests by the pupil's playing of a simple melodic phrase of four bars, after his studying of it for three minutes away from the piano.

#### 13.5 THEORY

Continue in the pupil's workbook and in addition to the theory assimilated in Grade I, increase the knowledge in the following areas:

- (i) The use of the terms F and G clefs for bass and treble clefs.
- (ii) Increase the knowledge of a few more leger lines.
- (iii) Add the knowledge of the value of the semiquaver, and the dotted quaver, with their corresponding rests.
- (iv) All simple time signatures, as well as compound time, and the correct grouping of notes.
- (v) Gradually increase the writing of major scales of both sharp and flat scales, and minor scales of A,E,D,G,C and their key-signatures in both clefs.
- (vi) The technical names of all the degrees of the major and minor scale must be taught, and the writing and recognition of all intervals that occur in the major and minor scales.
- (vii) The writing and recognition of the major and minor triads on the first, fourth and fifth degrees of the easier major and minor scales must be presented.
- (viii) Additional terms, both Italian and German, to those learned in Grade I, must be given.

### 13.6 BOOKS WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE THIRD YEAR

The books suggested for this stage will be the same as those stated for the second year. In the cases where a series of books are graded, the pupil will now progress to Grade II or Book II of the series. In the books which are not graded, the pupil should progress to learning the more difficult pieces in each book at this stage.

14. The Grades from III to VIII follow one upon the other with a continuation of work in the same branches of piano playing as suggested in the foregoing method, ie. technical work; scales; arpeggios; technical exercises and studies; sight-reading; the learning of pieces from a variety of style periods; aural training and theoretical work; with each passing year incorporating an increase in the number of scales and arpeggios learned; the learning of more advanced pieces in the various style periods; the development of aural tests; and a continuation in more advanced theory books. Keyboard harmony should continue to be developed and time should be allotted for the pupil's own creative work. The syllabus for the particular examination which the pupil is working for should be carefully consulted. Each of the schools of music, ie. the Trinity College of London, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and the University of South Africa, have varying syllabuses. It is not imperative that the pupil should play an examination every year, but even when he does not, the curriculum of a syllabus is extremely helpful in the comprehensive motivation of the pupil, for without a goal to work for, the pupil has little to strive for and generally progresses to the minimum of his ability.

15. RECENT APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF THE BEGINNER

The foregoing original method relates basically to the traditional 'middle C method' of teaching beginners, but includes the development of concepts such as; - the early inclusion of compound time, leger lines, the development of keyboard harmony, transposition, creative work, the development of sight-reading by intervallic relationships, the early inclusion of theoretical work, use of flashcards in the teaching of notation, early instruction in the introduction of all keys in the circle of fifths scheme of key presentation, and development of the most important facets of piano technique in the first term of piano lessons. Many of these concepts were omitted or badly neglected in the earlier decades of piano teaching.

A more recent approach to the teaching of beginners which has developed within the past ten years is the 'multiple key method'. The procedure of the 'multiple key method' is to learn all twelve major five-finger positions within the first months of instruction. The twelve major positions are most easily learned by dividing keys into groups, according to those which are related by both sight and touch; e.g. group I keys C, G, F have all -white tonic chords; group II keys D, A, E have a white, black, white composition in their tonic chords; group III keys, D<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup> have a black, white, black composition in their tonic chords, and group IV keys G<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, B are not related because each is different.<sup>10</sup>

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10. J. Bastien, How to Teach Piano Successfully, California: Kjos West, 1977, p 65, 66.

Reading is developed by establishing the intervallic relationships of seconds, thirds, and repeated notes, later developing to include all the intervals within an octave.

Tonic and dominant chords are used to harmonise melodies from the onset of lessons.

The elements of theory which are stressed throughout the multi-key course are; intervals, chords (tonic, subdominant, dominant, major, minor, augmented and diminished), the order of sharps and flats, key-signatures, transposition and harmonisation.<sup>11</sup>

Books which pioneered the development of the multi-key approach are, The Young Explorer at the Piano by Raymond Burrows,<sup>12</sup> and Music for Piano by Robert Pace.<sup>13</sup>

Advantages of using the multi-key approach are as follows:-

- (i) The use of all twelve major five-finger positions at an early stage of instruction.

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11. J.W. Bastien, How to Teach Piano Successfully, California: Kjos West, 1977, p 67, 70.  
12. R. Burrows, The Young Explorer at the Piano, Kentucky: Willis Music Co., 1941.  
13. R. Pace, Music for Piano, New York: Lee Roberts Music Publications Inc., 1961.

- (ii) Use of the four-octave range of the piano including all white and black keys (sharps and flats) and leger lines above, below and in between the staff.
- (iii) Use of all major, minor, diminished and augmented chords in block or broken form.
- (iv) The pupil is able to experience a greater variety of material using the 'multiple-key method' than in using the 'middle C method'.

An alternative to learning all twelve keys at once, is a gradual multi-key approach, in which each key is presented in depth before proceeding to the next one. This is applicable to those pupils who may have difficulty in absorbing all keys simultaneously. The gradual multi-key approach is used in the Bastien Piano Library by James Bastien and Jane Smisor Bastien,<sup>14</sup> and in Music Pathways by Olson, Bianchi and Blickenstaff.<sup>15</sup>

An alternative to either the middle C or multiple key approach, is reading by landmarks, introduced originally by Frances Clark in Library for Piano Students,<sup>16</sup> in which directional reading is

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- 14. J.W. Bastien and J.S. Bastien, The Bastien Piano Library, California, Kjos West, 1976.
  - 15. L. Olsen, L. Bianchi, M. Blickenstaff, Music Pathways, New York: Carl Fischer, 1974.
  - 16. F. Clark, Library for Piano Students, Illinois: Summy-Birchard, 1955.

developed from given landmarks, which are the bass clef F, middle C, and treble clef G. The student reads directionally by intervals up and down from these landmarks. Landmark reading is also used in Creating Music at the Piano, by Willard Palmer and Amanda Vick Lethco.<sup>17</sup>

The following table of newer and better-known method books is grouped into those based upon:-

- (i) the traditional middle C approach
- (ii) the multi-key approach
- (iii) the gradual multi-key approach
- (iv) the landmark reading approach
- (v) a combination approach

For the most part they are American publications.

(i) Middle C Approaches

Brimhall, John, Piano Method, Florida: Hansen Publications Inc. (1967-1976).

Burnam, Edna Mae, Piano Course, Kentucky: Willis Music Co., (1950-1976).

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17. W. Palmer and A.V. Lethco, Creating Music at the Piano, California: Alfred Music Co. Ltd. 1971-1972.

Ezell, Helen Ingle, Small Fry (easy solos), New York, Sam Fox (no date).

Fletcher, Leila, Piano Course, New York: Montgomery Music Inc., (1943-1956).

Glover, David Carr and Louise Garrow, Piano Library, New York: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp. (1967-1975).

Schaum, John W. Piano Course, New York: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp. (1945-1952).

Making Music at the Piano, New York: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp. (1962-1971).

Thompson, John, Piano Course, Kentucky: Willis Music Co. (1936-1973).

Weybright, June, Belwin Piano Method, New York: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp. (1947-1965).

(ii) Multi-key Approaches

Noona, Walter and Carol Noona, Mainstreams in Music, Ohio, Heritage Music Press. (1973-1976).

Oxford Piano Course by E. Schelling, G.M. Haake, C.J. Haake, O. McConathy, London: Oxford University Press Inc. (1928-1971).

Pace, Robert, Music for Piano, New York: Lee Roberts Publications Inc. (1961-1971).

(iii) Gradual Multi-key Approaches

Bastien, James and Jane Smisor Bastien, Music Through the Piano, California: General Words Music Co., (1963-1971).

The Bastien Piano Library, California: Kjos West, (1976-1977).

(iv) Landmark Approaches

Clark, Frances, Frances Clark Library, The Music Tree (New Course, 1973), Illinois: Summy-Bichard, 1973-1976.

Palmer, Willard A. and Amanda Vick Lethco, Creating Music at the Piano, California: Alfred Publishing Co. (1971-1976).

(v) Combination Approach (Multiple-key and Landmark Approach)

Olson, Lynn, Louise Bianchi and Marvin Blickenstaff, Music Pathways, New York: Carl Fischer (1974-1975).

## 16. THE APPLICATION OF THE GRADUAL MULTI-KEY APPROACH

The gradual multi-key approach is found to be easily absorbed by the pupil of average ability and the very young pupil. The following fundamentals of this approach may be applied in the first year of tuition.

The method is divided into the following basic categories, a portion of which should be included in each lesson.

- (i) Reading
- (ii) Rhythm
- (iii) Technique
- (iv) Elementary theory

### 16.1 READING

Reading may be introduced initially, with the application of the following steps.

#### (i) Pre-reading

The playing of pre-notated melodies enables the pupil to play the piano from the onset of lessons, without the encumbrance of learning notation at the same time. It establishes finger number and finger co-ordination. Moreover it develops a feeling for the topography of the piano, and the very necessary element of direction upon the keyboard.

Ex. 45 Pre-notated melody.

**Pre-notated melody**

(Position: three black keys)  
R.H. 3 2 1 3 2 1 1 1 1 2 2 2 2 3 2 1  
Hot Cross Buns. Hot Cross Buns. One a pen-ny, Two a pen-ny, Hot Cross Buns!

This may be followed by the playing of pre-notated melodies, where finger numbers and notational symbols are combined.

Ex. 46 March Along, J.W. Bastien.

**March Along**  
Finger Numbers

Right Hand

The notation shows a sequence of notes with finger numbers written below them. The notes are: 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1. A vertical bar line is at the end.

The pupil may now proceed to the playing of five-finger positions, chords and pieces in the keys of C, G and F Major, which prepare him for reading notation.

Ex. 47 Autumn, J.W. Bastien.

**Autumn**

Position: G (Transpose to C)

R.H. Au - tumn paints bright col - ors oh so bold, Leaves all are flam - ing with red and gold.

L.H. 5 4 3 1 2 3 4 5 4 5

G A B D C B A G A

D G B A B G 1 2 3 2 3 1

Before the pupil begins to read directionally on the staff, he should experience this feeling for direction by playing 'skips' and 'steps' on the keyboard. It should be explained to him that 'skips' skip a finger, and thus a letter in the musical alphabet, and that a 'step' plays the next finger, and is the next letter in the musical alphabet.

Ex. 48 Skip and Step drill.

**Skip and step drill**

**Directions:**

Find the position. Keep eyes on the book. Play the following skips and steps answering each question ALOUD. If you disagree with the answer given at the end of the exercise, repeat the exercise and correct your mistake.

Key of C

1. Play C
2. Up a skip?
3. Up a step?
4. Down a skip?
5. Up a step?

E

This exercise may also be taught without a book. The pupil should be encouraged to watch the teacher or close his eyes while carrying it out. On no account should he look at his hands.

(ii) Directional reading

The establishing of shapes and patterns is an important aspect in the developing of the pupil's reading skill. The directions and concepts of up, down and repetition in the reading of equidistance in the tonic chord, and irregular distribution in the dominant seventh chord in first inversion, should be developed in the early stages of tuition. Subsequently it is imperative that the pupil develops a quick reaction to the printed symbols upon the written page, together with the correct adjustment of his fingers to what he sees. The following initial exercise for the development of directional reading deals solely at the start, with seconds, thirds and repeated notes.

Ex. 49 Steps, skips and repeated notes.

Steps, skips, and repeated notes.

Steps




From a line to a space or a space to a line is a STEP.

Skips



From a space to a space or a line to a line is a SKIP

Repeated notes



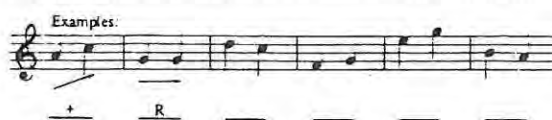
REPEATED notes may be either of both line or both space notes.

The teacher may write her own exercises which deal with direction only, such as in the following example.

Ex. 50 Skip and step practice.

Skip and step practice.

Directions: Write + for SKIP, o for STEP, and R for REPEATED NOTES.  
Draw arrows to show whether the notes move UP or DOWN.



(iii) Notation

The teaching of individual note names may be established by the application of various learning aids.

- a) Flashcards
- b) Singing and naming note names
- c) Writing note names
- d) Numbering the lines and spaces of both clefs

a) The teaching of notation by means of flashcards, with its advantages, has already been discussed in Chapter Three, 6 (ii), The sixth lesson.

b) The singing or naming of the notes in combination with the

playing of the notes, is a natural step in the learning of the individual note names. The correct finding of the notes is valueless without the correct naming or singing of them, as the converse is also true.

- c) Writing note names is necessary for a thorough knowledge and absorption of all the notes of the staff. There are many available note drills and note spellers which provide individual note recognition<sup>18</sup>. The teacher may provide her own exercises if a book is not used.
  
- d) An added aid to the learning of individual notes, is the numbering of the lines and spaces, so that the exact positioning of notes can be recognised instantly. It can be explained to the pupil that the five fingers of the hand correspond to the five lines of the staff. The hand held in a horizontal position illustrates the five lines with four spaces in between. The physical and theoretical connection is of further assistance in the learning of pitch locations.

## 16.2 RHYTHM

The introduction and detailed teaching of various note values and pulse measures has been dealt with in the foregoing original

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18. J.W. Bastien and J.S. Bastien, Note Speller, Level I, from the Bastien Piano Library, California: Kjos West, 1976.

method, Chapter Three, 1-14, in the sections entitled, Rhythm.

The note values of many American methods are represented as follows:-

A semibreve is a whole note.

A minim is a half note.

A crotchet is a quarter note.

A quaver is an eighth note.

Rhythmic perception can be developed by the pupil clapping and counting note names, thus:-

Ex. 51 Counting and clapping note names.

Counting and clapping note names.

Count: quar-ter, quar-ter, half note      two eighths, two eighths, half note  
Clap: clap, clap, clap-shake      clap clap, clap clap, clap-shake

This may be followed by the pupil stepping and counting note names.

Ex. 52 Counting and stepping note names.

Counting and stepping note names.

The musical notation consists of two measures. The first measure contains three notes: a quarter note, another quarter note, and a half note. The second measure contains four notes: two eighth notes beamed together, another two eighth notes beamed together, and a half note. Below the notes, the counting and stepping patterns are listed.

Count:	quar-ter.	quar-ter.	half note	two eighths.	two eighths.	half note	
Step:	step.	step.	step-slide	step	step.	step.	step-slide

In the discussion of the earlier method, Chapter Three, 1 - 14, the French time names in conjunction with the counting of the pulse measures, initiated the introduction and naming of note values. Either method may be used. The French time names have the added advantage of being a musically-conceived aural concept, which is easily absorbed by the younger beginner. If they are taught in conjunction with the counting of the pulse measures, and if the teacher and pupil exchange the counting from time to time, the pupil derives a double advantage from this approach.

16.3 TECHNIQUE

The following concepts of technique should be presented to the pupil within the first year of tuition.

- (i) Posture and hand position.
- (ii) Large muscular movements.
- (iii) Legato.

- (iv) Staccato.
- (v) Balance of melody and accompaniment.
- (vi) The arm slur.
- (vii) Thumb-under and finger-over technique.
- (viii) The chromatic scale.
- (ix) The playing of double-note passages.

All except the last two technical procedures have been dealt with in detail in the preceding method of teaching, Chapter Three, 1 - 14, in the sections entitled Technique.

The instruction of the chromatic scale in the first year of the pupil's tuition, further extends his technical capability. It requires a contracted hand position for its execution, thus providing a contrast to the five-finger position, and it also exercises the reading of accidentals. Chromatic exercises similar to the following example, may be composed by the teacher.

Ex. 53 Chromatic exercise

Chromatic exercise.

Directions:

Practice first hands separately, then together. Watch the fingering! Say the finger numbers aloud.

Double-note exercises such as the following example, may be given to develop technical facility in this direction, during the first year of the pupil's tuition.

Ex. 54 Double-note exercise.

Double note exercise

Directions:

Curve fingers. Play legato. Change from one third to another as smoothly as possible.



16.4 ELEMENTARY THEORY

Theoretical concepts should keep abreast of technical and musical developments during the first year of tuition. A suggested outline of theoretical work to be covered in the first year, is as follows.

- (i) Major five-finger positions and major tonic chords.
- (ii) Dominant seventh chords (inverted positions).
- (iii) Intervals (unaltered scale tone intervals).
- (iv) The order of sharps and flats.
- (v) Major key signatures.
- (vi) Minor five-finger positions and tonic chords.
- (vii) Subdominant chords (inverted position).

Theory books which cover these concepts are, Theory Lessons (Primer Level to Level 4) from the Bastien Piano Library, by J.W. Bastien and J.S. Bastien, California: Kjos West, 1976.

CHAPTER FOUR

Particular concepts have been selected from the method of teaching for individual discussion, not only because of their importance and correct presentation within the method, but because they are the very basics of good, sound piano teaching.

1. SIGHT-READING

Time and time again throughout the foregoing method of teaching, it has been stipulated that sight-reading should be considered of prime importance. It will now be discussed as to why this is so.

Without conscientious and deliberate cultivation of sound sight-reading habits from the start of the beginner's lessons, the piano teacher very easily slips into teaching by rote. This is facilitated by the young beginner who, with a musical ear, is readily able and, in fact, prefers to imitate the teacher. Such an insidious method of teaching in the early stages of learning, when pieces are easy, may seem perfectly satisfactory to both teacher and pupil. But, after a while, as the pupil develops and the pieces become more difficult, the teacher should begin to realise that the pupil is merely copying her. This is not only irritating and illogical but leads in fact to the creation of yet another 'illiterate' pianist.

Frequently the pupil with a good ear reads less well than his fellow-pupils. The wise teacher realises that all the more then, she should cultivate his reading. However, it is positively proved that all pupils of any grade, and of any ability, whether blessed with a good ear or not, improve remarkably with assiduous and conscientious practice of sight-reading. It is not merely a knack or gift to be able to sight-read - every pupil is able to, to the best of his ability - and if the end result produces a fair to moderate standard of reading, this is certainly better than a weak, unpractised result. But the improvement will not take place without encouragement, help and constant inclusion of sight-reading in all practice times and in every lesson.

So vital is the reading element of piano playing, that it is not an overstatement to say that it is the most important concept for the teacher to cultivate, overriding that of any other requirement, except the training of the ear. If it is considered that the majority of piano pupils do not reach advanced grades, and do not take music professionally, and that they will have only one recourse to the piano in their later years - and that through their ability to read - then surely this assumption is correct. For those who do reach the later grades or who do take music professionally, the ability to read makes or mars the pupil's progress, inflicting a heavy load upon the pupil who reads with difficulty.

Establishing good habits of sight-reading from the commencement of lessons has been discussed throughout the Method of Teaching in Chapter Two. If these early steps in the development of sight-reading are dealt with systematically and conscientiously, the pathway to good reading will have been laid for the fortunate pupil. But if these steps are not taken, at the correct time, it will be a difficult task to reconstruct the reading faculty of the pupil later. This can only be carried out by returning to the first basic steps of reading, no matter how irksome this is for the teacher or for the pupil. If the pupil is in the early grades, the teacher should test him in order to find out whether he knows his lines and spaces thoroughly, and whether he can read by interval, by feeling the intervals between the notes as he plays, without glancing from the book to his hands. If he fails in this test, as is so often the case, the basic steps of reading will have to be returned to so that progress can be established upon a solid foundation.

If the pupil is at a more advanced level, and his reading is weak, the teacher will have no option other than to resort to giving sight-reading tests of a level that is several grades easier than the grade he is on and from this vantage point to encourage habits of good reading. These can be cultivated in the following ways:

- (i) The pupil should observe the title of the piece, the key-signature, time-signature and the tempo of the piece; noting the fingering patterns, rhythmic patterns, the accidentals, technical difficulties, phrasing and dynamics and viewing the piece as a whole before he begins to play it.

- (ii) The pupil should decide upon taking a steady pace for the reading of the piece before he commences to play, as by reading it more slowly he will be able to progress forward more fluently without hesitation, than by taking it at a faster pace and stumbling frequently.
  
- (iii) The pupil should be encouraged to look at the book constantly as he plays, feeling the intervals between the notes physically, and not glancing from the book to his hands. If this has already become a habit, the teacher should cover the pupil's hands with a book, so that he is obliged to look at the page from which he is reading.
  
- (iv) The pupil should count aloud as he plays, as a rhythmic pulse will aid fluency and progression, and mere notes without rhythm are meaningless.
  
- (v) There should be cultivation of a 'looking ahead' process as the pupil reads. This can be developed by the pupil playing only the first beat of a bar at his first attempt of reading a piece at sight, leaving the subsequent beats out, and while resting, he should be looking ahead and feeling for the first beat of the following bar. At the second attempt he should play the first and second beats of the bar, gradually filling in the rest. As the pupil's reading becomes more fluent, he must be encouraged to look ahead with eyes in advance of hands, and see notes in groups and patterns, not in isolated symbols.

- (vi) In order to develop the pupil's visual or ocular memory, which is essential in the developing of sight-reading, practising sessions can be given away from the piano in the memorizing of a few notes initially, proceeding to the memorizing of short and later longer phrases.
  
- (vii) The practise of keyboard harmony, is stated earlier. This develops the pupil's grasp of tonality and key-sense and his harmonic feeling for the keyboard, and will enable him to read with more intelligence as to the grouping and natural progression of notes.
  
- (viii) Sight-reading homework should be regularly assigned to the pupil at every lesson.
  
- (ix) At each lesson the pupil should read a new exercise or piece, with observation of all the foregoing factors. Gradually the sight-reading exercises or pieces may advance in difficulty to eventually meet the requirements of the grade of the pupil.
  
- (x) As the sight-reading develops in fluency and accuracy, the progression forward must not be broken by hesitations and slips, and gradually the process of reading by sight should become as effortless and subconscious as possible.

## 2. AURAL

Training the pupil's ear or listening faculty from the very first lesson is absolutely essential, as music is basically an art of

listening. But training the ear does not mean the last-minute hurried inclusion of ear tests immediately before the pupil's examination, so that he obtains a better mark. Aural development is not a separate branch of music training. It is, like the reading concept, the very heart of music.

The ear is not only trained by giving ear tests from the early lessons, but by training the pupil to listen to every aspect of his piano playing. In his first exercises and in the playing of his first piece, the pupil must be encouraged to listen to the sounds that he makes, and to judge whether they are exactly correct - neither too harsh or loud, or too soft and light in quality, for the very moment that they are required. He should listen for his 'breathing places' or phrases, to hear whether they are precisely well-timed. He should listen to his rhythm and count aloud at first so that he can hear and feel the pulse of the music, and listen to whether he is playing in time.

As he advances in the playing of more difficult pieces, he must listen for finer points, such as those of subtle tempo rubato, pedalling, ornamentation, the balance between the hands, and in passages of melody and accompaniment, to the cantabile tone of the melody, and the matching of the ends of tone in the melodic line. He should listen to whether the texture of the piece as a whole is appropriate for its style period, and finally to his rhythm, which at this stage incorporates not only playing in time, but many other elements of music. In short, aural training in its true sense of the word, is the training of the pupil in the finest discernment of his own music-making.

Undoubtedly, the ear tests which are started in the first lesson and applied throughout each grade, do train the ear in the specific branches of melody, rhythm, pitch, tonality, dynamics, harmony and modulation, and with the gradual development of these tests combined with attention to all the musical facets of the pupil's performance at the keyboard, his listening and aural perception will become more comprehensive and at the same time sharper and more well-defined.

An important aspect of aural training which is frequently neglected, is the cultivation of tonal vision - the development of the ability of the student to receive a definite mental conception of a piece of music by looking at the printed symbols, in the same way that he can assimilate the meaning of the contents of a printed page by reading it silently. The pupil should begin by looking at a well-known melody or popular song, and while glancing at it, hear it mentally. This should develop towards the mental hearing of less familiar melodies, and later to a few bars of short easy graded pieces, progressing towards more advanced pieces, with the eventual assimilation of a whole piece.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. RHYTHM

Time is the arithmetic of music, the division of each bar into two, three or four beats. Rhythm in music incorporates far more than merely playing in time. Rhythm is the pulse of the music, the throb of the beat, the progression of each phrase to its

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1. W. Gieseking and K. Leimer, Piano Technique, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972, p 11.

natural climax, and the progression of each phrase towards the climax of the piece. Rhythm incorporates the tone colour, dynamics, tempo rubato, accents, the ritardandos and accelerandos of each phrase: rhythm in fact incorporates all the interpretational elements of music. A pupil who plays in time is not necessarily equipped with an infallible sense of rhythm. It will help and develop his sense of rhythm to play in time, but to play essentially rhythmically he must incorporate all the aforementioned elements into his piano playing. From the learning of the first piece, the pupil's sense of phrasing and progression is developed, and gradually the finer details of the more complicated elements become part of his musical interpretative equipment. Concurrently his sense of time should be developed by his counting aloud in the early stages, and also with the aid of the metronome. Gradually, as his playing becomes steady, he may cease to count aloud or use the metronome, but frequent returns to both are advisable. Side by side with the gradual development of time go the development of all the musical elements of rhythm, contributing to the cultivation of this life-giving dimension of music.

Not all pupils are endowed with a good sense of rhythm and it is for the teacher to constantly check the pupil's work to ensure that this vital element of music is present, and to improve and develop it if it is not present. Setting a metronome speed for the practising of a piece is highly advisable for the pupil who practises too fast. This is especially necessary in the early stages, when the young pupil is apt to rush through his pieces as

quickly as possible, marring the rhythm and all its many facets, and at the same time losing technical control of the piece. Control of rhythm and technique are inevitably tied to one another in all stages of the pupil's training.

#### 4.1 SCALES

Scales are not mere successions of notes upon the keyboard, nor are they merely exercises for fingers, even the weaker fingers. Scales inherently teach and develop many facets of piano playing besides: as the unthinking student of the piano replies when he is asked why we teach scales - "technique".

- (i) The obvious, most valuable contribution of scale playing is the establishing of tonality. The whole system of key structure and playing in all the keys, both major and minor, sharps and flats, are presented in the learning of scales.
- (ii) Scales teach the 'thumb-under', 'finger-over' technique in conjunction with a smooth 'travelling thumb-under' movement.
- (iii) Scales teach the basic fingering common to all piano playing.
- (iv) Scales develop evenness between consecutive notes. With careful listening, the pupil, from the playing of his first scale, should listen to the even matching of one note of the

scale to the other. Counting as he plays, and with the use of the metronome, he will be guided in the production of an even scale. Not only are consecutive notes to be evenly matched, but each hand should synchronize exactly with the other, and at no time should one hand dominate the other, particularly in the frequent case of a strong right hand overriding a weak left hand. Scales should be practised hands separately, so that the left hand can be heard clearly on its own and if it tends to be weaker than the right hand, it should be strengthened with extra practise and exercising.

- (v) Scale-playing develops rhythm, a well-played scale displaying well-defined rhythm, both ascending and descending. This can be attained by the pupil's counting aloud, and with the use of the metronome, first with a steady pace, and then with a gradual increase in speed.
- (vi) Scales can be practised in various rhythms, with various dynamics, with various touches, both legato and staccato, thereby developing these elements of piano playing besides that of rhythm. It should be ascertained that the legato scale is a perfectly smooth and joined succession of notes.
- (vii) Scales teach the geography of the keyboard. The encompassing of a large stretch of the piano in the execution of a scale of two, three or four octaves, results in the pupil's acquaintance with the feel of the instrument and the spacing of the black and white keys.

- (viii) A well-conceived scale has subtle shape, ranging from a soft start, swelling in tone as it ascends, and decreasing in tone as it descends. Thus scale-playing also develops phrasing and progression.
- (ix) Scales require the light-carrying of the arm during their execution, with articulated, exerting fingers working, as it were, 'from' the knuckles and 'off' the light arm. The playing of scales also develops fluent finger-work.

#### 4.2 ARPEGGIOS

Arpeggios develop the same technical and musical facets as scale playing, with some additional values.

- (i) Arpeggios and broken chords in root position, first inversion and second inversion, teach the basic chordal fingering common to piano playing.
- (ii) Arpeggios, being composed of notes which are not adjacent to one another, teach the 'thumb-under', 'finger-over' technique over a wider gap than the scale. The lateral adjustment of the whole arm and the 'travelling thumb' movement must be consequently carefully cultivated.
- (iii) Arpeggios need even greater attention to the light-carrying of the arm and articulation of the fingers than scales,

because the wider extension between the fingers creates more difficulty in the execution of the notes, and the pupil tends to back the playing of each note with unnecessary arm movement, not articulating his fingers sufficiently.

## 5. TONE PRODUCTION

From the earliest lessons the beginner should be trained towards the correct production of tone. This can be developed in the following ways:

- (i) Initially it should be ascertained that the pupil understands that the faster the key is depressed as he plays, the louder the tone will be, and that the slower the key is depressed, the softer the tone will be.
- (ii) The pupil should be acquainted with the sound of good tone, from his first lessons, by encouraging him to 'sing' out the tone or 'lean' into the keys, or 'play to the bottom of the keys', if his tone is too light and thin, and to relax and to try and achieve a round singing tone, and not to play too harshly and loudly if his tone is forced.
- (iii) The pupil should be encouraged to listen acutely to the sounds that he makes at all times, feeling the resistance of the key during key depression, as he plays, and learning to adjust his tone production if it is not exactly what is required at a given time.

- (iv) The pupil's appreciation of good tone, and his careful listening to the sounds that he produces, should now be allied to the correct physical conditions necessary to produce these tones.
  
- (v) It must be explained to him that the condition of his arms should be balanced and poised - not entirely relaxed, nor yet stiff and tense, for it is with controlled relaxation and tension that fine tone is produced.
  
- (vi) The pupil who is stiff and tense and who produces a harsh, hard tone, must have it explained to him that unnecessary tension of muscles when playing, produces this tone, and that he must learn to relax more, and listen carefully to the sounds that he produces. Some of the relaxation exercises described in Chapter Three may be apportioned to him, and these should be executed at the start of lessons, in order to improve his physical condition for the production of a better tone. The position of his shoulders should be down, as hunched shoulders increase tension, and the amount of weight which the pupil is producing should be constantly checked, by the teacher feeling the pupil's arm as he plays: that it is balanced, poised and light. Frequently, the personality of the teacher comes into play in this matter of tone production. The correct terminology and an appropriate tone of voice is required to induce relaxation and good tone production. Strict, stern commands, and an approach which engenders anxiety, will not help a tense, nervous pupil to produce a relaxed, round,

singing tone. Encouragement and praise for endeavouring to produce a good sound will achieve more than constant grumbling and fearsome threats.

- (vi) The pupil who plays too lightly on the 'top' of the keys, must be encouraged to 'sing' out the tone, 'lean' into the keys, and 'play to the bottom of the keys'. He may be taken through the steps as found in Chapter Two, and be encouraged to feel the transference of weight travelling down the arm, to the finger-tips. The young pupil who has not yet grasped the feeling of a firm tone production responds well to the sensation of fingers pressed into the upper part of the leg. This describes to him better than words, the actual feeling of the weighing down of the keys.

## 6. PHRASING AND PROGRESSION

Phrasing and progression should continue as a vital and inherent part of the teaching of all the pieces, from the learning of the very first piece as described in Chapter Three. Scales, arpeggios, exercises and studies should all be carefully phrased and should progress musically to points of climax. As the pupil advances to grades I and II and subsequent grades, the phrasing and progression will incorporate concepts such as tempo rubato, dynamics, texture, pedalling, ornamentation, tempi and accentuation, with careful regard for the characteristics of the style periods to which the works belong.

Without the careful attention to phrasing and progression from the start of lessons, mere successions of notes will be meaningless and unmusical, and as such will not be the expression of an art form.

## 7. REPERTOIRE

The teacher should continue to select appropriate technical exercises, studies and pieces from a variety of style periods, appropriate to the pupil's grade, from the books suggested for use during the first three years of piano tuition.

The following excellent list of reference books, will supply a fully comprehensive range of keyboard works, from the easiest to the most advanced.

The Literature of the Piano, by Ernest Hucheson (Hutchinson & Co, 1964)

Keyboard Music, edited by Denis Matthews (David & Charles, 1981)

Five Centuries of Keyboard Music by John Gillespie (Dover Publications, 1965)

Music for the Piano: A Handbook of Concert and Teaching Material from 1850-1952, by James Friskin and Irwin Freundlich (Dover Publications, 1973)

How to Teach Piano Successfully, by James W Bastien (Kjos West, 1977)

Nieuwe Leergang Voor het Piano-onderwijs, samengesteld door Drs W Chr M Kloppenburg (Broekmans & van Poppel, Amsterdam, 1979)

For a thoroughly comprehensive survey of contemporary piano music, the following reference book is to be highly recommended:

Teaching and Understanding Contemporary Piano Music, by Ellen Thompson (Kjos West, 1976)

#### 8. THEORETICAL ASPECTS AND THEIR APPLICATION

Very seldom is the study of theory of music introduced to the pupil in a meaningful manner. He is merely presented with a theory book and told to 'do theory'. A comparison of music theory to the study of our language will help him understand the true meaning of the theory of music.

It should be explained to him that we are able to communicate our ideas to other people by listening or talking to them, and yet we need a more permanent means of communication so that literature, newspapers, magazines and writings of the past and present are available to us. Thus we learn reading and writing. In order to do this we endeavour to absorb a basic knowledge of spelling, grammar, structure and style, so that we can transfer speech patterns that we hear, to paper.

It is the same in music. In order to establish our reading process more firmly, we have to absorb the basics of spelling, grammar, structure and style in music, and the theory of music is the study of music sounds as they are written on paper. Thus we are able to explore the world of music, both past and present.

Theoretical concepts should always be directly allied to the practical work which is being carried out at the time that the pupil begins his theoretical work. There is little sense in a young pupil's advancing theoretically far beyond the realms of his practical work. For instance, there will be no point in his learning the key signatures of all the major scales, sharps and flats, until he has played most of those scales. Nor would there be any sense in his learning all the compound time signatures until he has learned pieces in some of the compound times.

#### 9. PRACTISING

All the aspects of aural training and the cultivation of careful listening habits should be applied to practising. Moreover, the merits of daily, meaningful practice should be discussed with pupils of all stages. Attention should be drawn to the following points:

- (i) That it is worthless to simply play through a piece haphazardly once or twice, imagining this to be genuine practising. Certain phrases or sections of a piece which are troublesome either musically or technically, should be singled out for repetition.
- (ii) With each repetition of the phrase or passage, the pupil should have a goal in mind - a striving with concentration and careful listening towards the improvement of some aspect of the passage or phrase.

(iii) These aspects may consist of the following musical and technical concepts:

- a. correct tone production
- b. phrasing and progression
- c. rhythmic control
- d. appropriate dynamics
- e. correct stylistic interpretation
- f. careful attention to pedalling
- g. attention to correct technical procedures

(iv) The repetitions of the phrases or passages should never become meaningless and mechanical.

(v) The younger pupil should not practise at speeds which are too fast. This is apt to ruin technical control and musical detail. It is found helpful if the teacher gives the young pupil metronome speeds for the practising of his pieces, and later as his piece nears completion, the addition of performance speed. This control of practising speeds with the metronome, is of utmost necessity in the training of the young pupil.

The technically well-equipped older pupil may not need to practise frequently at slow speeds, but occasional slower practices will be found to be extremely beneficial, both technically and musically. The more advanced pupil should constantly check that he is complying with the requirements

of the composer upon the written page and that he is not, in the repetitions of playing a phrase, interpreting it the way he feels that it should be rendered and consequently distorting it either musically or technically.

(vi) The practice periods should not extend for too lengthy a time, especially for the younger pupil, when concentration and listening faculties become dulled if the allotted practice time is too long. Frequent shorter periods are found to be more beneficial than longer extended periods. The practice periods at all stages should include a variety of work:

- a. Sight reading
- b. Technical exercises
- c. Scales and arpeggios
- d. Pieces from various style periods

## 10. MEMORISING

The source of the reliable cultivation of memorising lies in the pupil's concentration while practising, i.e. his learning of the piece properly from the start. Five aspects of memorising should be developed concurrently in order to develop this indispensable ability of the piano performer.

- (i) The Aural memory is the most important, involving the mental hearing of melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, tempo rubato and in fact, every facet or element of music. Thus conscientious aural training as suggested in the discussion of this subject, will aid in the cultivation of memorising.
  
- (ii) Visual memory develops the ability to form an exact mental image of the music on a printed page. The development of visual memory as stated in the section on sight-reading, will assist in the development of this aspect of memorising.
  
- (iii) The Tactual memory develops the sense of contact or 'feel' of the keyboard as it lies under the fingers: the pattern of set fingering and the physical shape of the texture of the music as absorbed by the sub-conscious memory. It is a useful aid in memorising, but not the most dependable, and it should be used in conjunction with the aural and visual memory.
  
- (iv) The Kinesthetic sense is the sense of movement or progression, and of direction of effort of the performer upon the keyboard. This ability to move with ease and naturalness, is an extremely necessary sense to develop in the cultivation of memorising.

- (v) The Analytical memory incorporates the performer's sense of form and structure of the piece. This entails the correct understanding and feeling for progression of individual phrases in the initial stages of learning a piece, and an understanding of the structure of the piece as a whole.

The pupil of any stage should be encouraged to develop each of the senses which constitute the true art of memorising, and in order to test his ability to memorise, he should be given ample opportunity to perform to an audience, for frequently, what appears to be a failure of memory, is merely the lack of practice in performing.

CHAPTER FIVE

Pianists no longer play all keyboard music as if it were written in the later 19th century, and currently everyone recognizes that each period has its own style which must be taken into account if the work is to be correctly performed.

Naturally, problems arise when works written for earlier keyboard instruments are played upon the modern piano, but with full understanding of the stylistic requirements that existed during earlier epochs, the pianist of today is able to interpret the works of these eras with taste and verity.

The following suggested steps for the teaching of elementary to moderately difficult pieces ranging from the Baroque era to the 20th century, incorporate the application of stylistic concepts such as dynamics, tempo, tempo rubato, texture and pedalling. These provide the prospective teacher of the young pupil with guide-lines for the correct artistic and aesthetic approach to the teaching of pieces from various style periods.

1. THE TEACHING OF A BAROQUE PIECE

(i) This grade I piece, Gavotte by G F Händel, should be played to the pupil and suggested by the teacher as being a representative piece of the Baroque era for him to learn.

Ex. 1 G F Händel, Gavotte

G.F. Händel

The musical score is for a Gavotte by G.F. Händel, marked **Allegro** and *mf*. It is in 3/4 time and G major. The score consists of four systems of two staves each (treble and bass). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*. The piece concludes with a repeat sign.

**Allegro**

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

(ii) He should be told that G F Händel (1685-1759) was a German composer who spent much of his life in London. The great composer J S Bach was a famous contemporary of Händel.

(iii) The title of the piece, Gavotte, is the name of a French dance in  $\frac{2}{2}$  time, of moderately lively character. It generally begins on the second or fourth beat of a bar. It is written in two sections, each of which is repeated, and the first section usually ends in the dominant key. A Gavotte is often one of the dances included in the Baroque Suite.

(iv) Händel was a Baroque composer, and this fact will have a bearing upon:

- a. the dynamics of the piece
- b. the speed of the piece
- c. the texture of the piece - its horizontal or vertical aspect

- a. It should be explained to the pupil that because Händel wrote this piece for the harpsichord, which was a softly-toned instrument, the dynamic level of the piece should not be too loud, and the sections marked mf and f should be slightly undertoned. It should be pointed out that in this piece, terrace dynamics are encountered, ie. proceeding directly from mf, then to p and from mf to f.

This is the direct result of the harpsichord having manuals, thus making it possible to proceed immediately from one tonal plane to another. It would not be stylistically tasteful to have frequent crescendi and diminuendi in this piece, because this was not possible on the harpsichord.

- b. The speed direction of the piece is marked allegro, which literally means merry, lively and fast. But it must be remembered that on the whole, the pace of life and among other things, the tempo of music, was slower in Händel's days, and that stylistically it is incorrect to play Baroque pieces at too fast a pace. Therefore the pace of this piece should be merry and lively but not too fast. Allegretto would be a more appropriate speed than allegro.
  
- c. The texture of the piece is linear with horizontal interest. Both parts are equally important, and because of this they should be played hands separately at the start, so that it can be realised that the left hand is as important as the right hand. The two parts can be likened to two singers who each have an equally important line to sing.

- (v) The key, time-signature, the terms and signs written into the piece, should be discussed with the pupil, and at this point it should be pointed out that use of the pedal would be stylistically incorrect as the harpsichord had no sustaining pedal.
  
- (vi) The form of the piece is binary, consisting of two sections, the first section ending in the dominant. Each section is repeated.
  
- (vii) The first section consists of a phrase of 8 bars, and the second section consists of an 8-bar phrase followed by a 4-bar phrase. The climax is in the last 4-bar phrase of the piece.
  
- (viii) The technical difficulties of the piece lie in the careful part-playing of each hand. The left hand staccato notes should be played with a forearm staccato of long duration, more in the nature of non-legato tones than short 'picking' staccato notes. This is in keeping with the separate non-legato tones of the harpsichord and clavichord. The right hand should be played with clearly articulated notes, also in keeping with the articulated finger touch of the early keyboard instruments. The slurs should not be snatched up, and the hands should be kept close to the keys.

2. THE TEACHING OF A CLASSICAL PIECE

- (i) This simple Minuet in F, by W A Mozart, should be played to the pupil, so that he may hear the easy classical piece as a whole.

Ex. 2 Mozart, Minuet in F

Moderato. K. 2

PIANO. *p* *cresc.*

The musical score is written for piano in F major, 3/4 time. It consists of 24 measures. The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The first system (measures 1-4) includes fingerings (1-2, 2-3, 2-4, 1-4) and a crescendo (*cresc.*). The second system (measures 5-8) features a forte (*sf*) dynamic and a repeat sign. The third system (measures 9-12) includes a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*). The fourth system (measures 13-16) includes a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*). The fifth system (measures 17-24) includes a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*). Fingerings and articulation marks are present throughout the piece.

(ii) The pupil should be told that Mozart (1756 - 1791) was an Austrian composer, a well-known contemporary of his being the composer Haydn.

(iii) The title of the piece, Minuet, is the name of a French dance, in moderately animated  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. It sometimes appeared in the suite, and was the only dance form retained in the sonata and symphony.

(iv) Mozart was a classical composer, and this has a bearing on:

- a. the dynamics of the piece
- b. the speed of the piece
- c. the texture of the piece - its horizontal or vertical aspect.

a. It should be explained to the pupil that because Mozart wrote this piece for the fortepiano, the tone of which was still very much like that of a harpsichord, the loudest dynamic peaks should not be too robust - a little under a normal f range of tone. The sf markings should be taken in context - not too loud or forced. The crescendi and diminuendi are stylistically correct as the early fortepiano made this a possibility. Although the loudest dynamic peaks should be undertoned, there should be the incorporation of a large variety of tonal colours between pp and f, as the fortepiano was an instrument of many overtones and nuances.

- b. The speed indication is moderato, and a moderate allegretto pace should be adhered to throughout the piece. Hurrying the pace, or choosing too fast an initial speed, would not aid in capturing the stately dance character of the minuet.
  
  - c. The texture of the piece is vertical, with a cantabile, singing melody, supported by a softer left hand accompaniment, which is chordal in character.
- (v) The key, time-signature, terms and signs written into the piece should be discussed with the pupil, and at this point it should be pointed out that use of the pedal may be confined to cadence points in bars 4, 8, 12, 16, 20 and 24, where a little direct pedalling on the beat in these bars, creates extra sonority. Too great a sonority by over-use of the damper pedal would create an effect not comparable to the tone produced on the fortepiano.
- (vi) The form of the piece is ternary, consisting of three sections: bars 1-8, 9-16 and 17-24.
- (vii) The phrases are all four-bar phrases, ending in defined cadence points. The climax of the piece is in the second-last phrase, and forms an interrupted cadence.

(viii) The technical difficulties of the piece lie in the careful balance between the hands, with the cantabile right hand melody singing out over a softer left hand accompaniment. Each phrase end should be executed with a well-judged arm slur; the pupil being carefully guided as to the correct playing of the arm slur. The staccato notes should be fairly long forearm staccatos. The first note of each bar should be slightly stressed in order to characterize the nature of the minuet, and beats 2 and 3 of each bar should be light.

### 3. THE TEACHING OF A ROMANTIC PIECE

(i) This Romantic piece, Melodie or Air by R Schumann, should be played to the pupil musically and expressively.

Ex. 3 Schumann, Melodie

## MELODIE MÉLODIE / AIR

Rob. Schumann, Op 68  
(1810-1856)

1. Nicht schnell (*Allegretto*)  
*p* *legatissimo*

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system begins with the tempo marking 'Nicht schnell (Allegretto)' and the dynamic 'p legatissimo'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, phrasing slurs, and fingerings. There are several 'Red. \*' markings below the bass staff, indicating reductions for teaching purposes. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the fourth system.

- (ii) It should be discussed with the pupil that Schumann (1810 - 1856) was a German composer, and his contemporaries were Brahms, Chopin and Mendelssohn.
  
- (iii) The piece, Melodie, comes from a collection of pieces, The Album for the Young, Op 68. All the pieces from this collection have descriptive titles and each piece conjures up the mood or description of a picture or image. In this piece the composer suggests the tranquil singing of a song or melody. The right hand sings out over a softer left hand accompaniment.
  
- (iv) Schumann was a Romantic composer, and this has a strong bearing upon:
  - a. the dynamics of the piece
  - b. the speed of the piece
  - c. the texture of the piece - its vertical or horizontal texture.
  
- a. It should be explained to the pupil, that because Schumann wrote for an instrument much like our piano of today, that the dynamic range may extend from p to f. In this small piece the loudest dynamic peaks should not be greater than mf to f, and the accented notes should not be too harsh, but in keeping with the context of the passages in which they occur. The p dynamic markings must be soft yet sonorous. Sonority is a characteristic

of the Romantic piano piece analagous with the dynamic possibilities of the changing instrument.

- b. The tempo instruction is nicht schnell (allegretto) and to capture the mood of the lyrical, leisurely, calm, song-like atmosphere of the piece, this tempo indication must be adhered to, and the piece should not be hurried in any way whatsoever.
  - c. This piece has vertical interest, with a sonorous, singing right hand, predominating over a soft left hand accompaniment. It should be drawn to the pupil's attention that the left hand, although seemingly a simple Alberti-bass type accompaniment at first glance, has an inner melody and accompaniment of its own, with the quaver notes of the weaker portion of each beat requiring soft execution, especially when played by the thumb, while the quaver notes which fall upon the stronger portion of the beat require a slight emphasis.
- (v) The key, time-signature, terms, signs and pedalling indications written into the piece should be discussed with the pupil. It is stylistically correct for the pedal to be used in this Romantic piece, in order to create more sonority in certain places, and to achieve a greater legato effect where so desired.

- (vi) The piece is in one-part form, the whole being conceived from a descending crotchet pattern followed by an ascending broken third quaver pattern (bars 1, 2). One mood is suggested throughout and there are no dramatic contrasts.
  
- (vii) The phases are all four-bar phrases, ending in well-defined cadence points. The climax points are on the ascending high melodic peaks in bars 7 and 15.
  
- (viii) The technical difficulties lie in the achieving of a sonorous, cantabile melodic right hand with the correct matching of the ends of tone in order to achieve a smooth, connected legato line of sounds. If the pupil has difficulty in producing a sonorous cantabile, the teacher should return to The Teaching of Cantabile in Chapter Two. The balance between the hands should be well-judged, the left hand providing a soft accompaniment for the right hand, but at the same time achieving the interesting melody and accompaniment element which is inherent in it. the pupil should be rotarily free in order to execute the left hand accompaniment with ease. He should be encouraged to feel musical progression towards the most meaningful note in each phrase.

4. THE TEACHING OF AN IMPRESSIONIST PIECE

- (i) The Impressionist piece, The Little Shepherd from the Children's Corner Suite by Debussy, should be played for the pupil as imaginatively as possible.

Ex. 4 Debussy, The Little Shepherd

V THE LITTLE SHEPHERD

The musical score for 'The Little Shepherd' is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a piano (PIANO) dynamic marking. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4.

- System 1:** Tempo marking: *Très modéré*. Dynamics: *p très doux et délicatement expressif*, *mf*, *p*. Features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure.
- System 2:** Tempo marking: *Plus mouvementé*. Dynamics: *p*, *p*, *p poco*. Features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure.
- System 3:** Tempo marking: *Au Mouvt.*. Dynamics: *p*, *più p*, *pp*. Includes the instruction *Cédez* above the staff.
- System 4:** Tempo marking: *Au Mouvt.*. Dynamics: *p*, *p*.

Cédez - - - - - / Au Mouvt.

Un poco più forte

ppp

più p

pp

ppp

This system shows the beginning of a musical phrase. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur and a fermata. The left hand has a bass line with a slur and a fermata. Dynamics include ppp, più p, pp, and ppp.

Plus mouvementé

Poco animato

cre - - - - - scen -

p

This system continues the phrase with a change in tempo and dynamics. The right hand has a more active melodic line with triplets. The left hand has a steady bass line. Dynamics include p.

- do

mf

p

p

più p

This system features a vocal line with the syllable "do" and a piano accompaniment. Dynamics include mf, p, and più p.

Un peu retenu  
(en conservant le rythme)

pp

pp

p

This system is marked "Un peu retenu" and includes a tempo change. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur and a fermata. The left hand has a bass line with a slur and a fermata. Dynamics include pp, pp, and p.

Cédez - - - - - /

pp

ppp

This system concludes the phrase with a final "Cédez" marking. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur and a fermata. The left hand has a bass line with a slur and a fermata. Dynamics include pp and ppp.

(ii) It should be discussed with the pupil that Debussy (1862 - 1918) was a French composer. A contemporary French composer of Debussy was Ravel.

(iii) All the pieces from the Children's Corner Suite are fine examples of Impressionism. They create and evoke the image of a mood, emotion or scene. In these pieces there are no definite outlines of harmonic and melodic contours, but a blurred, hazy suggestion of a scene or mood. A fleeting impression of reflections is traced. Although Debussy, it is known, was inspired initially by the French symbolist poets Mallarmee, Rimbaud and Verlaine, and that he preferred to have his works likened to the Impressionist writers, and not to the painters, choosing that his works should be allied to the suggestion of an impression or feeling, rather than an actual picture<sup>1</sup>, it is nevertheless helpful to the young pupil to understand what Impressionism in music is, more easily, with the displaying of an Impressionist painting together with an explanation that the hazy, blurred, dream-like character of the painting is similar to the Impressionist piece which Debussy created for the

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1. So keen was he that his works should not be regarded as realistic descriptions of scenes or moods, and that they were to be regarded as impressions, that the titles of the Piano Preludes are to be found at the end of each prelude, so that the performer would not start out with a defined picture in his mind.

piano. In The Little Shepherd an impression or image of the little shepherd playing his flute in a shimmering, delicate, improvisatory, languid manner is evoked. Irregular bar lengths, irregular and varied rhythms, use of the whole tone scale and copious speed and mood indications, together with the use of both pedals, all aid in the production of the total effect of an Impressionist piece.

(iv) The fact that Debussy was an Impressionist composer has a bearing upon:

a. the dynamics of the piece

b. the tempo of the piece

c. the vertical or horizontal aspect of the piece

a. The dynamic range should incorporate a palette of soft tonal colours, from ppp to a controlled mf tone for the dynamic climactic peak. The tonal colour of the whole piece is delicate in character, and the imaginative achievement of tonal colour and nuance is essential in the interpretation of the image of the fluid, lyrical flute-playing of the little shepherd.

b. Exact tempo indications are frequent, and should be precisely followed, as should the indications of rubati.

- c. On the whole, the piece has vertical interest, with a melodic, cantabile right hand, singing over a softer left hand accompaniment of chordal character. Nevertheless, the left hand has important harmonic colourings, and requires separate delineation. In bars 9, 16 and 29 the left hand has distinct horizontal interest in the execution of a demisemiquaver motive.
- (v) The key, time-signature, terms, signs, use of the whole-tone scale and careful, discriminating use of both pedals should be discussed with the pupil. The meaning of the French terms should be explained with clarity.
- (vi) The form of the piece is rounded binary; consisting of three sections - bars 1-11, 12-26 and 27-31.
- (vii) The irregular phrases consist of a lyrical introduction, unaccompanied, of four bars, and a second phrase of seven bars, divisible into two smaller phrases. The middle section consists of four phrases of two, five, two and six bars each, and the final section consists of a phrase of five bars. The climax of the piece is in bar 24.
- (viii) The technical difficulties of the piece lie in the imaginative achievement of delicate nuance and tone colour, the correct use of both pedals, and the procuring of a flowing sense of progression, a delicate yet sonorous cantabile in the right hand, a subtle sense of rubato, and

yet exact rhythmic precision. Attention should be given to the many agogic and rhythmic accents marked thus  $\overset{\sim}{|}$  in the piece, with discussion as to their musical meaning and technical production. Notes marked with these accents require slight stress and emotional emphasis, but attention must be given as to whether the context of the passage in which they appear is mf, p, pp, or ppp.

5. THE TEACHING OF A 20TH CENTURY PIECE

- (i) The piece Play from For Children, volume one, by Bartok, should be played to the pupil with rhythmic drive and with a full range of dynamic colour.

Ex. 5 Bartok, Play

The musical score for Bartok's 'Play' is presented in five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is marked 'Allegretto,  $\text{♩} = 108$ ' and includes dynamics *mf, dolce* and *mp*. The second system is marked 'poco rit. . . Più mosso,  $\text{♩} = 130$ ' and includes dynamics *p*, *mf*, *p*, and *f*. The third system includes dynamics *f* and *p*. The fourth system is marked 'Tempo I.' and includes the dynamic *mp, dolce*. The fifth system is marked 'tranquillo' and 'rit.' and includes dynamics *p* and *pp*. The score includes various fingering numbers (1-5) and articulation marks.

- (ii) It should be discussed with the pupil that Bartok (1881 - 1945) was an Hungarian composer, and Kodaly was a well-known Hungarian contemporary composer of Bartok.
  
- (iii) Bartok was greatly influenced by the rhythms of Hungarian folk music and in all his music the rhythmic element is strong. In this children's piece, Play, where the title conjures up the simple playing of children, at first quietly and sweetly, and then more excitedly, returning to calmness and tranquillity finally, the folk-song influence is strong, with decisive rhythm, accentuation, sharp dynamic contrasts, tonic pedal points, and a narrow melodic range.
  
- (iv) Bartok is a twentieth century composer and this has a bearing upon:
  - a. the dynamics of the piece
  - b. the tempo of the piece
  - c. the vertical or horizontal aspect of the piece.  
  - a. Bartok was writing for the piano of today and dynamics range from pp to a full forte tone. In the middle section, the increased dynamic level correlates with the pulsating quaver pattern and stressed crotchet beats, this demonstrating clearly Bartok's use of the percussive qualities of the piano. Changes in the dynamic indications should be closely adhered to, and the exact

effects required by the composer should be striven for. Subtle differences between mf, mp, p, f and pp should be obtained.

- b. The tempo indications are specifically stated with metronome speeds, so that there is no doubt whatsoever as to what tempo is required in the correct performance of the piece. Bartok also marks the ritardando passages carefully.
  - c. The piece has vertical interest on the whole, with a melodic, cantabile right hand singing over a softer left hand accompaniment which is largely chordal in character. In the middle section, at the climax point, bars 19-26, the left hand has horizontal interest, with linear character, and should have equal sonority to the right hand.
- (v) The key-signature, time-signature, terms, signs and use of pedal in specific places for extra sonority or for legato effects should be discussed with the pupil.
- (vi) The form of the piece is ternary, consisting of three sections: bars 1-18, 19-32, 33-51.

- (vii) The first section consists of three phrases of four bars each, followed by a six-bar phrase. The middle section consists of two phrases of four bars each, followed by a repeated six-bar phrase. The final section consists of three phrases of four bars each, ending with an eight-bar phrase, extended by augmentation of the last two bars of the first section. The climax of the piece is in bars 19-26.
- (viii) The technical difficulties of the piece lie in the correct execution of the arm slur, with attention directed to the playing of a soft chord on the second beat of the first eight bars in the left hand: this being the soft note of the slur and the weaker beat of the bar. The piece should be played with rhythmic precision and exactness, and with clear dynamic contrasts. The forte tone achieved should be full and sonorous, and even the softest tones should have singing quality. Notes marked  $\overset{\sim}{f}$  or  $\underset{\sim}{f}$  should be given extra singing tone or weight, and should not be accented sharply. There should be musical progression within each phrase, and the cultivation of a sweet, quiet mood at the start, rising to a climax of excitement, subsiding eventually to a soft, tranquil close.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRINCIPLES AND PSYCHOLOGY OF PIANO TEACHING

1. THE PRINCIPLES OF PIANO TEACHING

In order to base piano teaching upon a solid foundation, it is necessary to recognise and understand its fundamental principles and to classify the aims and ideals of teaching.

- (i) The piano teacher should understand that she is imparting to her pupil an art and a skill, and in so doing there should be the correct fusion of a musical and an analytical approach.

"The spiritual and physical interweave; even interfuse. There cannot be a truly great performance without a masterful physical technique. It becomes the great liberating force for the pianist ..... All technique ought to be a means of expression. It is perfectly possible to accumulate a technique that is next to useless."<sup>1</sup>

The teacher should realise that musical dictates and technique go hand in hand, and that musical feeling is not adequate if there is insufficient technique to express this musicality, and that technique alone is meaningless without musical understanding and emotion.

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1. R Gerig, Famous Pianists and their Technique, Washington - New York : Luce, 1974, p 1,2.

- (ii) To teach by example alone is not true teaching. For the teacher to say to the pupil that he is performing incorrectly and that he should, "Do it like this", with no explanation of what is wrong and why it is wrong, is of little value. The pupil must know why and what is wrong, and therefore analysis of his fault, followed by an example of how he should improve it, is far more constructive.

"The mistake is to rely entirely upon Example. This can lead to subsequent disappointment, and with many pupils even to disaster, for the tendency here again is to turn the pupil into an automatic machine, totally wanting in initiative and the where-with-all to acquire self-reliance."<sup>2</sup>

- (iii) One of the highest ideals towards which a teacher should aim, is the encouraging of the pupil to think for himself and to help himself. From the start of lessons the teacher should elicit knowledge from the pupil, drawing from him his personal ideas and thoughts upon matters both musical and technical.
- (iv) The reading and listening aspects of piano playing should be of prime importance from the start of piano lessons. Not only should the looking and listening faculties of the pupil be stimulated and sharpened from the onset of his training, but

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2. T Matthey, Musical Interpretation, Westport Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1913, p 12,13.

the teacher should endeavour to lead the pupil towards the correct imagining of what sounds and what style he is wishing to interpret; the ability to prehear or see outside himself.

- (v) The teacher should be enthusiastic. If the pupil feels that the teacher does not really care about him, she cannot expect him to respond with good work. The truly successful teacher is the one who really does care about her pupil and who imparts this attitude to him. Only true enthusiasm and dedication on the part of the teacher will inspire the pupil to work assiduously.
  
- (vi) Without organisation at every level of teaching and within every facet or branch of the pupil's training, progress will be haphazard; and steady, forward development will be hampered. At every stage of piano lessons, presentation of all elements of music should be organised and methodically presented. A suggested scheme for the training of the beginner has been previously presented. As the pupil advances to the higher grades, his programme of examination pieces, and other pieces should be planned well in advance, so that he knows exactly what is expected of him at a given time. Vagueness on the part of the teacher, and last-minute changes will not aid him to work steadily.
  
- (vii) A good teacher is by necessity somewhat of a perfectionist, for without the teacher's desire to achieve the very best

results which each individual pupil is able to offer, however much this may vary, the pupil on his own will not be motivated to do so. By 'perfection' is meant the nearest to the most musical rendering of a work, coupled with the most natural and fitting technique to do so.

- (viii) The measure of a teacher's success should be gauged by her ability to improve a weak pupil to a moderate or fair standard of performance. This requires far more skill than perfecting or polishing the performance of an already competent pupil.

## 2. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PIANO TEACHING

In discussing the psychology of piano teaching, it is not intended to produce a treatise on the science of psychology. The word 'psychology' used in this context, is as Percy Buck defines it: "Organised Commonsense about Human Nature"<sup>3</sup>, and by this is meant as Joan Last expresses it so aptly: "If I could take a census of a thousand pupils, I could honestly say that no two have been alike, or have presented the same problems. It is an alertness to these problems and an appreciation of human nature that make the successful teacher."<sup>4</sup> Indeed it becomes increasingly apparent as the teacher gains in experience, that correct summing up and handling of the individual pupil, ie. the successful relating to the human element, is one of the most important insights into the satisfactory imparting of knowledge. Learning to analyse the personality of the individual pupil, be he child, teenager or adult, and to hold his interest and

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3. P Buck, Psychology for Musicians, London : OUP, 1944, p 1.

4. J Last, The Young Pianist, London : OUP, 1954, p 155.

respect, is a basic necessity for a piano teacher. Although it can be truthfully stated that experience develops the teacher's art, there are some guide-lines and useful aids which can be passed on to the inexperienced teacher, which will most certainly help her in her early years of teaching.

The beginner and early grade pupil will be regarded in three different categories or types of pupil, and although it is obvious that sharply distinct lines cannot be drawn in actuality with relation to personalities or talents - there always being some characteristics intermingled with others - it is nevertheless more helpful to the uninitiated teacher to classify them thus.

(i) The gifted beginner and early grade pupil.

The gifted intelligent beginner, with a musical background, is the piano teacher's dream of perfection, engendering thoughts of pleasant, easy progress with excellent results in the days to come. But these pupils require as much correct handling and careful thought given to their progress as the slower child.

The gifted child will dictate his own progress and it will be at a fast rate. At all times it should be channelled along the correct lines, and all the facets of a good musical training should be included in a comprehensive scheme of work.

a. His sight-reading should be maintained as one of the dominant features of his training. He will undoubtedly

be a quick reader, but he must read accurately. The intelligent pupil at any age, tends to be quick and careless in many aspects of his work.

- b. Aural training should be part of the gifted pupil's curriculum from the start. It is often evident that the quick reader is not aurally sound, and the teacher should ascertain that this branch of training is kept on a par with his other work.
  
- c. The gifted pupil will be able to learn a number of pieces; very frequently double the number that an average child is able to learn. This should be encouraged, because at all costs he should not become bored with playing, for instance, three examination pieces all the year round. But all musical and technical detail within these pieces should be carefully observed and achieved. All too often the quick pupil is keen on assuming that he has finished and perfected a piece, when in fact it is very far from this condition, and is certainly not ready for performance. He should be encouraged and motivated towards the polishing and perfection of his work, by performing at school concerts, festivals and examination, with high ideals of musicianship and technical skill as his goals.
  
- d. The talented young pupil who possesses a natural, easy piano technique, is at times apt to neglect the musical

aspects of his pieces. The teacher should guide him to the development of musical feeling and expression concurrently with technical development, never allowing technical aptitude and ability to override the inner musical meaning or artistic aspect of pieces.

(ii) The average beginner and grade pupil

The average beginner and grade pupil will naturally advance at a more moderate pace than the intelligent, gifted child. A pupil of average ability should not be forced to progress at a faster pace than is normal or natural for him. This forcing of progress inevitably hinders the solid foundation of learning, and uncertainty, hesitation and gaps in the step-by-step progress of concepts such as sight-reading, aural, technique and style and interpretation will become evident. It has frequently been noted that if the average pupil is pressurized to advance at too fast a rate, he eventually, through lack of basic pianistic skills and proficiencies, shows no desire to continue with his piano lessons. The unfortunate pupil suffers particularly in the areas of sight-reading and technique, and is unable to cope with the reading or technicalities of the pieces which he is expected to play. A year of learning pieces which are well within his ability to play easily, and with very gradual technical development, without the pressure of an examination, is frequently found to be most beneficial to the average pupil. Examinations do motivate the young pupil towards a

definite goal, but they are not a necessity for every pupil in each school year, and for the years when the average pupil is not playing an examination, he may be encouraged to play in an occasional school concert, festival or Eisteddfod.

(iii) The slower beginner and grade pupil

The slow yet musical pupil if dealt with patiently and understandingly, may become a gratifying pleasure to the dedicated teacher. He will progress at a slower rate than the average pupil, and should not be expected to accomplish as much, but with assiduous attention to the sight-reading aspect of his lessons, so that he is able to help himself in the learning of new pieces, which are never too difficult for him, and which are imaginative and colourful, and with gradual increase of technical procedures, he may become a great pleasure and reward to the teacher, because of the very fact that extra patience and attention have been given to him. An occasional easy examination which presents no difficulties for him, will establish a sense of achievement in his progress.

In connection with the discussion on the teaching of various types of young pupil, there is one frequently encountered circumstance which must be mentioned. This is an unfortunate element of human nature which is apt to rear its ugly head at Eisteddfod and examination times : that of jealousy. The pupil, backed by the ambitious mother, is so keen to 'come first' that any other aspect of healthy competition, love of

the art of music and piano-playing, is simply thrown to the winds, and all that remains is the burning ambition of the mother and the unfortunate pupil, who frequently becomes a tool for her ambition - 'to win'. It remains for the teacher to draw to the attention of both pupil and mother, that it is not the 'coming first' that really matters, but that he has had an opportunity to perform his music to an audience or an examiner and to receive constructive criticism. It should be explained to him that if he performs well and receives a high mark or award, that this is fortunate for him and beneficial to everyone concerned. But if through nervousness and a consequent marring of the piece or through a disagreement of interpretation between the pupil's rendering of the piece and the adjudicator's or examiner's idea of its interpretation, he does not obtain a high mark or award, this should not be regarded as a great catastrophe. A firm rein should be kept by the teacher, however difficult, upon the true perspective of Eisteddfods and examinations.

(iv) The Teenager

The teenager tends to be, in some cases, a difficult pupil to handle. He is developing towards adulthood, but is as yet, not mature. Frequently he wishes to voice his own opinion as to what pieces he wishes to learn, and as to how they should be interpreted. The resulting situation should be diplomatically handled by the intelligent teacher, in so far as she should allow him some choice of piece, provided that it

conforms to his technical ability and aptitude, and that it suits him musically. She should also allow him to have his own opinion with regard to certain aspects of interpretation of pieces, but at the same time should be in control of the situation, and be the final decision-maker in matters of ideal choice of piece and with regard to its interpretation. It will amount, in fact, to the encouragement of the self-thinking of of the teenage pupil, and of developing a more adult approach with regard to his piano tuition, but the teacher must be, without aggression or over-assertiveness, totally in command and both the prime decider and adviser.

The slower yet musical teenage pupil, who has struggled both technically and with reading, tends at this stage to want to give up his piano lessons, not only for reasons of finding it difficult, but because of pressures of school work and other activities. The encouraging teacher who realises that she has a musical pupil, who will eventually enjoy his music-making when he is older, may persuade him to continue with the playing of easier pieces, and with pieces of his own choice, incurring no pressure of examinations. Sometimes a change of instrument is advisable, in order to sustain his interest in music. The teenage years are in many cases the years when the slower pupil will drop his music entirely if not encouraged with sympathetic understanding.

(vi) The student and adult pupil

The student and adult pupil may also prove to be a difficult proposition for the piano teacher. If the student or adult pupil has been well-trained, musically, technically and in sight-reading, further extension of his technical prowess, his piano repertoire, and his eventual goal towards a teacher's or performer's diploma, or the practical branch of a degree, should prove to be a pleasant, exciting and natural development. But very frequently, this is not the case. The pupil, although musical, has had scant attention paid to areas of reading, technique, interpretation and aural training.

It is the teacher's unfortunate task to return to the basic elements of piano playing, which have been neglected, before proceeding further. Depending upon the personal character of the pupil, this may prove at times, to be a difficult task, as the older pupil is frequently set in his ways, and does not take kindly to the correction of basic faults and innovation. Tact, patience, careful analysis and understanding of the individual pupil, with a command of his respect in an unassertive yet firm manner, will have to be called upon by the teacher. It is also necessary for the disorganised, lazily-inclined older pupil to be informed of the correct habits of daily practice, and this can at times evolve into an awkward situation for the teacher. If the teacher recognises that the older pupil requires the same encouragement, the same firm handling and orderly, methodical approach as in the teaching of the younger pupil, his difficulties in handling the older pupil will be eased.

## CONCLUSION

If the foregoing branches of the study of piano pedagogy were to be logically and practically presented to the piano student at South African universities, and if they were thoroughly and interestedly absorbed by the student, the standard of teaching in our schools, and the training of our musicians of future would be improved, enhanced and revitalized. It is not easily understandable why the problem of the imparting of piano teaching method and its absorption exists. It is to be advised that there should be closer collaboration between the experienced teacher and the music faculties of the various universities. Students should be made more aware of what their life-long occupation will be; with the realisation that acquisition of this knowledge should be prized and valued as their most precious possession. If this thesis leads to an improvement in the quality of piano teaching of the newly-graduated student, then the purpose of this thesis will have been fulfilled.

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