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A Study of Methods of Teaching Piano Technique in Arkansas Member Colleges of the National Association of Schools of Music

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A STUDY OF METHODS OF TEACHING PIANO TECHNIQUE IN ARKANSAS
MEMBER COLLEGES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

A Thesis
Presented to
the Division of Graduate Studies
Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
LaQuinta Barnett

August 1970

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A STUDY OF METHODS OF TEACHING PIANO TECHNIQUE IN ARKANSAS
MEMBER COLLEGES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
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The writer wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Charles Wesley, Miss Evelyn Bowden and Miss Fay Holiman, whose advice and encouragement have been invaluable in the writing of this thesis. Gratitude is also expressed to all the teachers who were interviewed, making possible the information for this paper.

Submitted to the Faculty of
Arkansas, Arkansas
August, 1970

Approved:


Major Professor


Minor Professor


Director of Graduate Studies


Committee Member

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through have developed up the subject of piano technique, and the need of the elementary teacher, piano teacher, and finger-technique with little use of the arm. Points the elementary teacher probably begin to see the value of the arm more in the execution of more work. As the study of piano technique developed beyond the elementary level, the teacher of piano and voice and the non-musical teacher appreciate.

1. THE STUDY

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this paper was to have a study of present methods of teaching piano technique in F. A. S. colleges in the state of Arizona.

Importance of the study. Because of the different schools of thought which were developed in the matter of technique, it has become a controversial subject among teachers and students. The importance of this study may be of value to piano teachers by comparing their own method with other schools in the teaching of piano technique.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Within the last two centuries several schools of thought have developed on the subject of piano technique. At the end of the eighteenth century piano teachers stressed finger technique with little use of the arm. During the nineteenth century pianists began to use the weight of the arm more in the production of piano tone. In the early 1900s a controversy developed between the advocates of freedom of arms and hands and the more conventional muscular approach.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this paper was to make a study of present methods of teaching piano technique in N. A. S. M. colleges in the state of Arkansas.

Importance of the study. Because of the different schools of thought which have developed on the subject of technique, it has remained a controversial subject among teachers and pianists. The information in this study can be of value to piano teachers by acquainting them with current trends in the teaching of piano technique.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Technique. Harvard Dictionary of Music defines "technique" as:

The mechanical skill which is the foundation of the mastery of an instrument or, in other words, the complete coordination of all the bodily movements required.¹

This definition of "technique" is the one which is used in this study.

Methods. "Methods" is defined as any procedures used by the individual teacher for the purpose of teaching piano technique. Any practice which the teacher has found to be effective is considered a "method."

N. A. S. M. colleges. This term denotes colleges in Arkansas who have membership in the National Association of Schools of Music. These colleges are: Arkansas Polytechnic College, Arkansas State University, Henderson State College, Hendrix College, Ouachita Baptist University, State College of Arkansas, and the University of Arkansas.

Consensus. The term "consensus" means a general agreement of ideas, thought and opinion.

¹Willi Apel, "Pianoforte Playing," Harvard Dictionary of Music (first edition; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 579-80.

III. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Grove's Dictionary of Music And Musicians states that pianoforte playing developed from the playing of the harpsichord and clavichord. Because the problems of playing these instruments were so different from those of playing the piano, the same technique could not be used. The depressing of the harpsichord key was a grasp, while the depressing of the piano key was more of a thrust.

During the eighteenth century finger technique was important. Cramer and Clementi tried to obtain perfect evenness of tone in the use of all ten fingers. Force was not a part of the playing. The arm was not raised to an excessive height.² Because of the differences in the Viennese and English pianos of the eighteenth century, two schools of pianoforte playing developed. Mozart's playing reflected the light touch of the Viennese piano. The English instrument had deeper key fall, more capacity for singing tone and a fuller tone. Although Beethoven, for many years, did not own an English piano, his works seem

²Eric Blom (ed.), "Pianoforte Playing," Grove's Dictionary of Music And Musicians (fifth edition; New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955), VI, pp. 744-49.

more suited to it than to the Viennese instrument.³

Beethoven's playing was of a more aggressive type than ordinarily known at that time. He was the first composer to realize the possibilities of the pedal.

Chopin gave piano playing a sense of intimacy and in his writing introduced new types of tonal colour. Chopin and Liszt carried the use of the pedal still further than Beethoven had done. Liszt, influenced by Paganini, developed pianistic virtuosity to a new height. Anton Rubinstein used what is now called the "weight tone" in which the tone is produced more by weight of the arm than use of muscular action.⁴

Ludwig Depp (1829-1890) was the first to stress the importance of arm weight in playing and Leschetizky (1830-1915) developed a methodical training in the new manner of playing. Rudolf Breithaupt taught the principles of relaxation, rotation and rolling movements, and coordination

³Percy A. Scholes, "Pianoforte Playing and Pianoforte Teaching," The Oxford Companion To Music (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 806-808.

⁴Leslie Hodgson, "Piano Playing And Piano Literature," The International Cyclopedia of Music And Musicians (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1964), p. 1627.

of finger and arm. Tobias Matthay was head of the modern school of relaxation.⁵

In the early part of this century, a controversy developed between two schools of thought, that of great freedom of arms and hands and the more conventional muscular approach. The result was a great interest in the action and interaction of the muscles.⁶

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Sources of data. The primary source of data was information⁵ obtained from interviews with piano teachers in N. A. S. M. colleges of Arkansas. Secondary sources of data were books, periodicals and studies, covering the background and teaching methods of piano technique.

Method of procedure. Each teacher interviewed was asked the same series of questions (refer to Appendix B). The answers were recorded on a tape recorder and transcribed. In the body of the paper, each answer was considered in detail.

⁵Apel, op. cit., p. 583.

⁶Hodgson, op. cit., p. 1628.

Treatment of findings. The writer compared answers given to each question and tried to discover current thinking on the teaching of piano technique. Chapter II is about general considerations. Chapter III deals with specific problems and exercises. Chapter IV is a study of relaxation. Chapter V is about technique and expressiveness. Chapter VI is a summary of the findings.

that control of the fingers and arms is of prime importance to enable the student to obtain the desired effect. Several teachers mentioned that good tone production is directly related to the pianist's control. They felt that this control is brought about by the development of accuracy, looseness, flexibility in movement, facility in fingering, ability to control playing, finger dexterity and strength, balance between relaxation and control, legible playing, correct spelling and modification of the hand.

Another aspect of technique which is considered important is the ability to work with the technical aspects of the pieces studied, to understand the whole playing mechanism and to have eyes and ears to see the fingers, the hand, the forearm or the full arm. Included in this are the development of a good hand position, correct arm action, relaxed arm weight and a relaxed wrist.

All of these factors of technique lead toward the interpretation of the music. It was also mentioned that a

CHAPTER II

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first question asked in the interview was: "What do you consider the most important aspects of piano technique?" There was a variety of answers to this question.

The general opinion expressed by the teachers was that control of the fingers and arms is of prime importance to enable the student to obtain the desired effect. Several teachers mentioned that good tone production is directly related to the pianist's control. They felt that this control is brought about by the development of accuracy, looseness, flexibility in movement, facility in fingering, ability in scale playing, finger dexterity and ability, balance between relaxation and tension, legato playing, correct pedalling and coordination of the hands.

Another aspect of technique which is considered important is the ability to cope with the technical demands of the pieces studied, to understand the whole playing mechanism and to know when and how to use the finger, the hand, the forearm or the full arm. Included in this are the development of a good hand position without excess motion, relaxed arm weight and a relaxed hand.

All of these factors of technique lead toward the interpretation of the music. It was also mentioned that a

concept of the music must come first and then the technical facility of the student will enable him to project his concept.

Because of the differences in students, technical goals must be geared to the individual and his particular needs. Mr. Chase stated:

I think that technique is really a very individual thing and that it is approached individually for each student. I would almost say that it varies with each individual. I think if I were going to mention anything in particular, it would be that which would lead toward the most natural approach to the keyboard.⁷

The second question asked in the interview was: "Is motivation important in the development of technique?" There was unanimous agreement among the teachers interviewed, that motivation is important in the development of technique. They felt that without motivation the student would not make progress in the study of technique. Some students may possess a great amount of natural technical ability and for these students motivation may not be as essential as for the student who must work very hard to achieve. The person's motivation is necessary to overcome all difficulties. The quality of a person's playing is often in proportion to his motivation. The student needs to realize that technique will help him realize his full potential as a pianist.

⁷Statement by Thomas F. Chase, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Students are motivated when they can see that they are making progress, when goals have been set and reached. It is not even necessary that the student think of technique as technique but more as a means to an end, that end being interpretation of the music. Practicing exercises may be dull if the student does not see a purpose for what he is doing. If the exercises which the student practices can be applied to the pieces that he is studying, then he will understand their purpose and they will have meaning for him.

One school uses closed circuit television with video tape, and the student observes his own performance. The student can see and even hear things which are not evident in using a tape recorder or other devices.⁸

The next question discussed was: "What do you feel the freshman piano major should have accomplished technically before entering college?"

Three-fourths of the teachers felt that freshman students should be able to play the major and minor (preferably all three forms) scales at a reasonable tempo. Several of the teachers mentioned that they had had piano majors who had very little technical study before coming to college and yet they progressed very quickly. Mr. Phillips stated:

⁸Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

If I find a student who has studied piano for a reasonable length of time and cannot play a scale and then I work with the student on the G Major scale for ten minutes and I see no results and see that he can't play both hands together, up two octaves and back down with the reasonably correct fingering, then I certainly start wondering if he should seriously engage in this business of playing the piano--if he has no more tactile ability than that.⁹

Half of the teachers considered the ability to play cadences and arpeggios to be basic technical equipment. The student is ahead who starts to college with such ability but not too many students are prepared to this extent. The student should be able to produce legato and staccato touches as well as various levels of dynamics and kinds of sounds.

Eight teachers mentioned that the student should have played some of the Bach Two-Part Inventions. Two of the teachers felt that this is not necessary. These teachers also felt that students are often given pieces which are too difficult for them causing them to develop bad habits which the college teacher must correct.

Miss Queen said:

As for the level of difficulty that doesn't bother me too much, if they are sound on these other things that I have mentioned. Now, for instance, as far as Bach is concerned, I'm just as happy if they have never had any Bach Inventions. I'm much happier if they have just had some of the short pieces, short preludes and simple movements from suites rather than

⁹Statement by Virginia Queen, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁹Statement by Leonard M. Phillips, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Inventions. I find a pretty good hatred for Bach has been established if they have been introduced to it too soon.¹⁰

Eight of the teachers felt that students should have the ability to play sonata movements of the difficulty of the Clementi and Kuhlau sonatinas and preferably of the difficulty of Haydn sonatas or the easier sonatas of Mozart and Beethoven. Students should be acquainted with the technical styles of all periods. Freshmen piano students often have played little music by legitimate contemporary composers, although they may be well acquainted with the styles of other periods. They should have studied pieces from the Romantic and Impressionistic periods.

Three teachers mentioned exercises as part of the preparatory work. Another teacher felt that learning to listen is one technique which should be a part of the preparation for college work.¹¹

This technical preparation for college should also be evaluated according to the ultimate objective of the student. His preparation would of necessity be greater if he wants to be a concert pianist than if he plans to teach public school music. This leads directly to the next question: "Does the

¹⁰Statement by Virginia Queen, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

¹¹Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

vocational objective of the student affect the technical goal which you make for him?" Three-fourths of the teachers answered "yes" to this question, but most of these teachers qualified their answers. Goals would generally not be as high for the music education student as for the applied music major. These students are still required to play scales, though at a slower tempo than the applied major must play them. They are probably given more sight reading and are not always expected to perfect pieces for performance. For the applied major, the greatest possible proficiency in technique is his aim." The music education student has so many requirements for his degree that it is not always practical to set extremely high technical objectives. The goal for the music education student will vary with the individual according to the interest and ability of the student. It can be an advantage to the public school teacher to play the piano with proficiency. Two of the teachers interviewed felt that all students should be trained technically in the same manner up to a certain point but that the teacher would feel he should go farther with some students than with others. He must determine what is best for the individual. The student may be interested in playing the piano with proficiency even though the performance and teaching of the piano are not to be his primary objectives. Two of the teachers felt that ideally all students should be encouraged to develop their

technique to the greatest possible degree regardless of their vocational goals.

Next the teachers answered this question: "In what way have you found the technical proficiency of the student to affect his vocational objectives?" There was general agreement among the teachers that if the student is lacking in technical proficiency that he should be realistic and realize that he probably cannot become a public performer or college teacher. It is possible for the student to have a desire to be a concert pianist, but not the innate ability. It can be very frustrating for the student to make such goals when he cannot reach them. He will be under a great amount of pressure if he is not able to meet the technical demands of performance.

During the college years it is good for the student to consider his abilities realistically. He will be able to compare his performance with the performances of others. He will learn whether he can measure up to what is expected of the performer. Determination to succeed will help the person with ability to carry out his plan.

If the student does not possess the technical proficiency to become a performer he should set another goal, such as becoming a public school music teacher. In music education he may find that his lack of facility will not be such a handicap. This does not mean that the public school teacher

is not to be a sound musician. His technical ability should enable him to accompany the type of songs which he will teach his students.

Some students come to college not expecting to go into music as a career but because of technical skill which they may acquire they decide to vary their vocational choice.

The next question discussed was: "Are other factors more or less important than technical proficiency in setting vocational objectives?" The other factors are ones such as determination, extroversion and leadership ability.

Warmth of personality is especially important in teaching, though perhaps not as important in teaching privately as in the public schools, particularly in the elementary school. The teacher must have a desire to help people. He must not be too much of an introvert. The teacher should be an able performer but he should have a personality which is right for teaching. He should be able to encourage and inspire the students.

Another field which requires a certain type of personality is music therapy. The therapist must deal with people in a different way from the music educator. He will have a different purpose.

Although the concert pianist cannot succeed without a great amount of technical ability, his temperament is also important. If the student performer is too inhibited he will

not do what he is capable of doing. Piano classes, where the students meet and play for each other, are of value to this type of student. Determination is a trait which is important to the student pianist. If a person is determined to become a good pianist, he may succeed when a more talented person, with less determination, will not succeed. It is good for the musician not to be one-sided. He should have outside interests.

Regardless of the technical ability of the person, if he has serious personality problems, he will be handicapped. Regardless of how good the personality, if the person has serious technical problems, he will be handicapped.

The answers to the question, "What are the greatest weaknesses in piano technique which you find in piano majors?" were varied. These general answers were given: sloppiness, tension, rigidity, lack of control and lack of facility. More specifically, these weaknesses were mentioned: lack of coordination; the hand is not developed; the bridge is not strong and the wrist is tense; the fingers are weak and stiff; the student often does not use the arm properly; and students play too fast.

Students often do not have a knowledge of the technique required for playing music from the different periods. The student may be lacking in ability to play scales, octaves,

thirds, sixths and double notes. He may have developed poor habits of pedalling.

The development of technique depends much upon the mental attitude of the student. He must know what his weakness is and want to do something about it. He must learn to listen to himself and know when he is improving.

through the piece studied? Seventeen of the teachers stated that they do use definite technical exercises and studies for the development of technique. Mr. Cant said:

I used to make the mistake of thinking that it (technical development) could be accomplished through pieces. I found that I was wrong. I think there must be a vehicle for developing purely technical aspects.

The studies that the teachers most often use are those by Chopin, Czerny and Grener. Younger students practice the studies by Burgmüller and Streabog. The Chopin Studies are useful with advanced students. All of the teachers use scales and arpeggio exercises. Some of the teachers vary the exercises in different ways, such as variations of rhythm or touch. When the student has a particular problem the teacher may find a specific exercise to help the student solve his problem. The teacher may create his own exercises to meet the need of the student.

¹²Statement by Robert Cant, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

CHAPTER III

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND EXERCISES

The teachers were asked this question: "Do you use technical exercises and studies for the development of technique or do you feel that this can best be accomplished through the pieces studied?" Seventeen of the teachers stated that they do use definite technical exercises and studies for the development of technique. Mr. Gant said:

I used to make the mistake of thinking that it (technical development) could be accomplished through pieces. I found that I was wrong. I think there must be a vehicle for developing purely technical aspects.¹²

The studies that the teachers most often use are those by Hanon, Czerny and Cramer. Younger students practice the studies by Burgmuller and Streabbog. The Chopin Etudes are useful with advanced students. All of the teachers use scale and arpeggio routines. Some of the teachers vary the exercises in different ways, such as variations of rhythm or touch. When the student has a particular problem the teacher may find a specific exercise to help the student solve his problem. The teacher may create his own exercises to meet the need of the student.

¹²Statement by Robert Gant, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Most of the teachers who said that they use exercises for the development of technique felt that it can also be developed to a certain extent through the pieces. Dr.

Mulacek said:

If I feel the student has had an average or better than average technical background, I will reduce the exercises to a minimum and concentrate on any technique that I feel is necessary in the pieces.¹³

Three of the teachers said that they prefer to use pieces rather than exercises to teach technique because the reason for using a particular technique is evident to the student and the motivation will be greater. Pieces may be assigned which involve certain techniques in which the student is weak. Miss Bowden said:

I feel that technique can be acquired through the pieces studied and two things would be learned at the same time, but this requires more initiative and discipline than some students have so I use "ready made" technical exercises and studies to help solve problems when I feel the other is not producing results.¹⁴

This discussion led to the next question: "Do you use parts of pieces as exercises?" Seventeen teachers answered that they do use parts of pieces as exercises. If there is a difficult passage in the piece it can be dealt

¹³Statement by Dr. George Mulacek, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

¹⁴Statement by Evelyn Bowden, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

with in different ways to solve the technical problem which is involved. Sometimes all that is required is to practice an extra amount on the difficult passage. However, this will not always solve the problem. A reasonable fingering should be developed. The passage can be played in different rhythms. It can be transposed or played in sequence. Dr. Trantham said that he asks his students to reverse the hands in a difficult passage, that is if the difficult section is for the right hand, he asks the student to play it with the left hand or if it is for the left hand he asks the student to play it with the right hand.¹⁵

Miss Pilapil stated:

Whenever I tell my students to do certain devices of rhythm and strokes within those passages in the piece, I always tell them that they are accomplishing two things: they are learning the passage; they are developing their technique.¹⁶

Two of the teachers said that they do not use parts of pieces as exercises.

The next question was: "Do you feel that the use of technical exercises motivates or dampens the interest of the student?" Three-fourths of the teachers felt that this

¹⁵Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

¹⁶Statement by Beatriz Pilapil, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

depends upon the student. If the student is serious about his study then he will probably see the value of technical studies. The teacher must be prudent in using exercises and he should try to relate them to the literature being studied when possible. If the student realizes the purpose for the exercise he will be motivated. The student will remain interested if he sees that he is making progress toward a goal which he wants to reach.

Even students who are not so serious about their piano study may enjoy playing technical exercises.

Miss Swindle stated:

It depends on the student, at least as far as my experience is concerned. I've had students who enjoyed playing technical exercises, purely for the fun of running up and down the keys (or for whatever problem the exercise is designed) but it depends again on the personality.¹⁷

The older beginner may enjoy playing technical work because he does not need to be so concerned with reading notes and he can play faster.

Next the teachers answered this question: "Do you use exercises for specific problems?" Eighteen of the teachers answered "yes" to this question. Some of the teachers felt that such problems can best be dealt with by finding literature which contains these problems and creating remedial

¹⁷Statement by Dorothy Swindle, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

drills from the difficult passages. A number of the teachers stated that when they find a student with a particular weakness in his playing, they try to assign exercises that will help to correct this weakness. They use octave and relaxation studies, trills, routines involving thirds, sixths, repeated notes, and two-note phrases, and exercises for weak fingers, particularly the fourth and fifth fingers. Use of a variety of exercises will help to develop an overall technical facility.

The next question discussed in the interview was: "Some technical books give exercises for specific problems. Do you consider such books of value?" Eighteen of the teachers said that they use books of this type at various times. It is not necessary to play the whole book but isolated studies may be chosen to fit the need of the student. Study books are written for definite problems such as the development of legato or staccato touches and practice in octaves or thirds. In connection with this question several teachers mentioned the exercises by Czerny and Philipp as well as the Chopin Etudes. They felt that these books are helpful when dealing with specific problems. Some study books are so well written and melodious that the student does not feel that he is working on an exercise.

The next question was: "Do you use any technical exercises that are done either away from the keyboard or

those in which the student does not actually play the keyboard?" Half of the teachers stated that they do not use any kind of exercises away from the keyboard. The other teachers felt that some practice can be done away from the keyboard although most of them said that they do not use many drills of this type. Some calisthenics may be used for stretching the hand, for developing finger strength and facility, for flexibility of the arm and wrist, and for limbering up the fingers. Miss Pilapil said that she tells her students to hang the hand from the elbow and in this way they learn to relax. In some cases she suggests that the student take dancing lessons.¹⁸ Practice away from the piano may also help the person who does not have access to a piano very often. Exercises in clapping and walking rhythms may be done away from the piano.

In answer to the question: "Do you use scale and arpeggio fingerings other than those commonly used?" Seventeen of the teachers stated that they do not use fingerings other than those commonly used. One teacher stated that she informed her better students of alternate fingerings and two teachers stated that they do use other fingerings than those commonly used, if the student is willing to work. Two

¹⁸Statement by Beatriz Pilapil, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

teachers said that they use alternate fingerings for arpeggios; however, one of these teachers stated that this different fingering is not used with the conventional arpeggios. The other teacher uses a fingering which he has worked out for the arpeggios. Several of the teachers mentioned that although they do not use different fingerings for the scales and arpeggios, they sometimes use alternate fingerings within the context of the piece if it will help to make the particular passage less difficult. The regulation fingering may not apply in every situation where there is a scale passage. An alternate fingering may fit the hand better.

The teachers answered this question: "Do you insist on the changing of fingers on repeated notes?" Eleven of the teachers said that they do insist on the changing of fingers on repeated notes but there was some qualification of answers. Most of the teachers stated that in their own playing they do change fingers, but with their students they find that it is not always practicable. Also the type of piece indicates whether the changing of fingers is necessary. Better articulation may not be such a problem in slow pieces as in fast ones, in which use of the same finger on repeated notes usually creates tension. If the note is repeated several times it may be more necessary to change

fingers. The style of the piece may indicate whether the fingers should be changed, whether it is Classical, Romantic or Twentieth Century. For percussive sounds it may be better not to change fingers but in legato playing it is necessary. Some students seem to be able to play better when not asked to change fingers on repeated notes.

There were many different answers to the question: "How do you help the student develop velocity? volume? steadiness of beat?" If the student has a general problem with fast playing he should be given pieces which require velocity and that go up and down the keyboard. If there is a problem of tightness in the arms and hands, the student must learn to relax as much as possible in order to free his fingers. Practicing scales and basic exercises such as those by Czerny and Hanon is helpful in developing velocity. Dr. Trantham said that it is helpful to have the student play a scale as fast as possible and ask the student to notice how often his thumb plays and then to ask him to play the scale again at a fast tempo and to notice how often the second finger plays and then to do the same thing with the third finger and the rest of the fingers. By thinking of only one finger at a time the student will often play the others faster.¹⁹

¹⁹Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

In working on a fast piece it is important to work out a suitable fingering for a fast tempo. The student should begin by practicing slowly. Dr. Dunham stated:

I try to develop velocity gradually, having a student begin a piece or study with slow practice and gradually increase the speed. There is no surer way to bad playing than fast practice at the beginning.²⁰

Thirteen teachers mentioned practicing at different tempi to build speed. Dr. Yates said:

. . . a gradual increase in the speed, from a slow to a fast. I think that slow practice without pedal is, what I call dry practice, beneficial and it doesn't result in fast playing but it is very necessary as a first step toward the playing of a composition at a faster tempo.²¹

Eight teachers mentioned using the metronome and gradually increasing the tempo in daily practice. Some teachers use an alternation of fast and slow practice. Students are sometimes afraid of fast playing. When a student is afraid, the teacher must try to get him to play at a maximum speed to overcome this fear. Dr. Mulacek stated:

I tell the student that he should play it as fast as possible, as fast as he is capable of playing it, several times in a row, regardless of how many notes he is able to get and gradually through repeated

²⁰Statement by Dr. Ervin J. Dunham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²¹Statement by Dr. Hadley Yates, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

speed assaults he should see some improvement in the case of velocity.²²

One way of developing speed is to practice the composition in short sections, working on one phrase at a time to develop speed and then gradually increase the length of the passage. The speed may be developed by practicing the phrase at various tempi or gradually increasing the tempo. It is helpful to think of a phrase as a whole phrase rather than individual notes. The student may be told to speak the phrase rather than spell it out. The phrase may gradually be lengthened by adding one note at a time.

The use of rhythms is helpful in building speed. Dotted rhythms are good in developing velocity between pairs of fingers. Miss Bowden stated:

There are many aids to developing velocity. I use a system of accenting, at some time, every note in a passage in progressively long passages. Impulse playing I find good (playing several notes on one impulse). Another help is finding climax notes in a passage that are to be reached very quickly.²³

Sometimes when the student cannot play fast it is not due as much to a lack of technique as to the inability to think fast enough. However, one cannot be expected to have

²²Statement by Dr. George Mulacek, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²³Statement by Evelyn Bowden, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

virtuoso velocity who has average or below average technical ability.

Twelve teachers mentioned the use of arm and body weight for the development of volume. The student must learn to use the different units of the body, the upper arm, the forearm and the torso. He must be seated at the right height and distance from the keyboard. It may be necessary for him to make some adjustments of the body as he is playing, possibly not always sitting directly in the middle of the keyboard. The student must learn how much weight is needed to produce the forte or fortissimo which is required. This weight is projected from the shoulder to the fingers. As Dr. Patty said: "The weight of the shoulders should be felt in the fingertips."²⁴ By the right use of arm and body weight a very small person can produce a good tone which has volume. The student should learn that hitting the notes hard will produce a loud tone but not a good tone. This is especially true when the pianist becomes tense in attempting to play loud. All that he accomplishes is the production of a bad tone. Volume is related to the ability of the student to relax when he is playing. He cannot make use of arm and body weight unless he is relaxed. The big tone should be a

²⁴Statement by Dr. James Patty, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

singing tone and one that can be projected. Sometimes lack of volume is a matter of inhibition. The student may be afraid to develop the volume which he needs.

Two teachers mentioned that there is a definite relationship between the speed with which the key is depressed and the volume. Mr. Keck stated:

I feel that loudness is very involved with the speed at which you put the finger down, the faster you put the finger down, the louder the volume and so there again you have to improve the speed at which the fingers can move.²⁵

Dr. Trantham said that in order to help his students improve the speed with which they depress the keys he tells them to squeeze a chord very quickly as they would squeeze a lemon in the palm of the hand.²⁶ Other exercises for the development of volume include upward motions of the arms and body.

In the discussion about steadiness of beat fourteen teachers mentioned use of the metronome. The metronome can become a crutch if not used discriminately. It is best to alternate periods of practicing with it with periods of practicing without it and counting. Although keeping a

²⁵Statement by George Keck, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²⁶Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

steady beat is considered a rhythmic problem, inability to keep a steady beat may be caused by a technical problem. The student must first work out all technical problems which keep him from playing with a steady beat. After this is done the piece should be further analyzed rhythmically. The student must feel the beat. He must understand how the beat is divided. The metronome can be used in sub-dividing the beat.

Eight teachers mentioned that the student should count and also that the teacher may count with the student. Many students have been exposed to counting but are not in the habit of doing it. The student should learn to count aloud.

Miss Queen stated that she had had success in having her students call the notes by their values in a rhythmic manner. The students make an association between the length of time it takes to say the name of the note and the length of time to hold the note. She also mentioned taking the smallest note value which consistently appears in a piece and letting it represent one pulse. In using this method it should be made clear that there is a difference between a pulse and a beat. The beat represents the number of counts in the measure. The pulse represents the number of rhythmic sounds in the measure. In two-four time if there are eight

sixteenth notes, the sixteenth notes are counted 1-2-3-4-1-2-3-4, with four pulses representing one beat.²⁷

Dr. Trantham suggested one exercise which is helpful both in establishing a steady beat and practicing scales. The student plays the C Major scale with one hand, using one quarter note and six eighth notes. The other hand plays a tom-tom beat on C and E.²⁸

Dr. Yates said that when a student has a tendency to rush when playing a certain passage it is helpful for him to think a little ritardando. This will help to control the tempo.²⁹

A number of the teachers mentioned bodily movements as a method of establishing a steady beat. They use clapping, tapping, shouting, walking, stamping, and toe tapping.

Two teachers stated that sometimes the problem of establishing a steady beat is nearly impossible to overcome. A feeling for a steady beat seems to come naturally with many people and if the pianist does not have this feeling for

²⁷Statement by Virginia Queen, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²⁸Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

²⁹Statement by Dr. Hadley Yates, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

rhythm it can be a very serious obstacle and one which sometimes cannot be surmounted.

The next question discussed was: "How do you teach the various touches: legato, staccato and portato?" Thirteen of the teachers said that they have no systematic way of teaching these touches but develop them through the pieces which are studied. The student must have the right concept and know what sound he wants to make and then listen to see if he is making the right sound.

Several teachers stated that they teach these touches by demonstration. However, even though the student may imitate the teacher, he must find out for himself what sound he is trying to make and how he can make it. The illustration of walking can be used to explain legato playing, the weight is shifted from one finger to another. When playing legato with the right hand, going up the keyboard, the arm should lead and when playing down the keyboard, the wrist should lead. It is helpful to sing as one plays. This helps the student to feel the outline of the melody. The student can learn to connect the notes and still not have a good legato sound and good tone quality. Some students feel that staccato playing means to play the note as short as possible. This is rarely if ever true. There would be very poor tone quality if the note were played as short as possible.

Five of the teachers said that in addition to using literature which contains the various touches they use exercises and scales for the development of these touches. The scales or exercises should be of a type which can be played easily without music so that the student can concentrate on what he is trying to do and listen to the sound that he is making.

The teachers answered this question: "Do you frequently make changes in the fingering?" All of the teachers stated that they do make changes in the fingering. Twelve teachers said that they make such changes frequently. Eight teachers said that they make changes occasionally. A fingering which may have suited an editor fifty years ago may not be suited to the student of today. Changes must sometimes be made to suit the hand of the student, especially when the hand is small. One single fingering is not generally suited to all hands.

Some of the teachers stated that they make these changes themselves and others stated that they let the student decide upon the changes to be made. A trial and error process usually takes place to find the best and most comfortable fingering for the student. The markings in the score should be considered but if they are not practicable a new fingering should be found. After this has been adopted it should be written in the music and the student should stay

with it. It is important to always use the same fingering after a practicable one has been found. If the student writes this in the music he can always come back to the music to check his fingering, even if he decides to play the piece years later.

The next question discussed was: "What problems do you find in teaching use of the pedals?" Listening is the most important factor in learning to pedal. The student must know what effect he wants to produce and he must know how to use the pedals to obtain this effect. Because of the coordination required, syncopated or legato pedalling is one of the most difficult and yet most elementary types. The student must learn to use the hands and the foot in an opposite manner, the foot being raised while the hand is lowered and the pedal being pressed while the hand is raised. One way of teaching this coordination is to have the student play a scale with one finger using only the pedal to connect the tones. When the student is able to do this successfully then he can apply this technique to more complicated work. Some students find that using the pedal is too much trouble and they tend to ignore it. They would rather not use it at all. Another very common problem is over-pedalling. The student who does this may simply forget to raise his foot or he may use this device to cover up his poor technique. Other students may seem to have a natural ability to use the pedal.

A more advanced problem is the use of different kinds of pedalling. The compositions from each period in music history have a definite character, and different types of pedalling should be used for different styles. In addition to the syncopated pedal there are the direct pedal and the anticipatory pedal. Each of these has a purpose in different types of pieces and in obtaining different effects. Use of the pedal has evolved throughout music history and this evolution must be understood in order to play music from different periods correctly.

As the student progresses he must also understand the uses of the una corda and the sostenuto pedals. Teaching the pedal is often difficult because so many students practice on poor pianos. If the teacher sees the pupil for only an hour or a half hour each week it is nearly impossible at times to help the student adequately.

The last question about specific problems is: "Have you found some unusual technical problems in your teaching?" The teachers mentioned a large number but most agreed that the ones they encountered were not unusual except in certain cases involving deformities.

CHAPTER IV

RELAXATION

In the series of questions that dealt with tension and relaxation, the first question discussed was: "Do you feel that the teaching of relaxation and arm weight is important in the development of technique?" Eighteen teachers answered "yes" to this question and most of them felt that these factors are of prime importance to the development of technique.

Miss Queen said:

I can't conceive of teaching without discussing those facts because one contributes to the other. You can't teach one without the other.³⁰

Miss Pilapil stated that "The proper use of the arm in playing the piano is the whole secret of piano playing."³¹

The position of the shoulder is one indication as to whether the pianist is relaxed. Dr. Yates stated:

I think that you can tell by looking at a student whether or not he or she is relaxed. You can simply look at the shoulder. If the shoulder is lifted up then you know that the arm could not possibly be

³⁰Statement by Virginia Queen, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

³¹Statement by Beatriz Pilapil, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

relaxed and if the arm is not relaxed then the hand and fingers cannot be freely controlled.³²

There cannot be total relaxation or total tension in playing. Mr. Phillips said of this:

. . . too much of the time piano playing either means complete relaxation, which means you have no rhythmic energy or just complete tension which means you have so much that you can't do anything. So it is very important to administer this whole business of relaxation and tension, to make it a very firm part of your whole concept of playing.³³

Mr. Gant stated that he helps his students to learn about relaxation and arm weight by playing a scale in octaves for one octave at approximately a quarter note at about eighty on the metronome, "breaking" and "dropping" into each note. The "break" at the wrists is necessary or a harsh tone will be produced.³⁴

The teachers answered this question: "How important is the strength of the hand in playing?" Thirteen teachers stated that the strength of the hand and fingers is important in playing. Six teachers felt that the strength of the hand is not as important as other factors. In discussing strength

³²Statement by Hadley Yates, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

³³Statement by Leonard M. Phillips, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

³⁴Statement by Robert Gant, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

of the hand most of the teachers stressed the need for finger strength and independence. The hand needs to be well-developed with the weaker fingers being strengthened as much as possible. Chopin had well-developed hands and much of his music is very demanding. A strong hand is essential for soft playing as well as loud. Miss Beck stated: "The strength of the hand is important for proper dynamics and tone production."³⁵ Strength is also needed for endurance. Dr. Dunham stated that he feels the concert pianist must have strong fingers and hands and that most fine pianists have a remarkable grip. Without this strength, fatigue would be the result.³⁶

Several teachers mentioned other factors which they felt are more important than a strong hand: control of the hand and fingers; resiliency; use of arm and body weight; and speed in depressing the key.

The next question discussed was: "Do you find many technical problems which can be attributed to tension in the hand, wrist and arm?" All of the teachers answered "yes" to this question. When the student is tense he cannot perform

³⁵Statement by Mary Elizabeth Beck, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

³⁶Statement by Dr. Ervin J. Dunham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

to the best of his ability, whether this is on the stage or only at a lesson. When this occurs often at a lesson it may be related to the relationship of the student to the teacher. This type of student may have practiced and may be prepared for the lesson and yet not be able to perform well at the lesson.

Tension may affect the student in a number of ways. It causes the muscles to shorten. When the shoulder becomes tense this may affect the whole arm and hand and consequently affect the tone quality. When the wrist is stiff the thumb may not go under smoothly. This may cause a jerk on the part of the forearm and elbow and hinder legato playing. If the student is tense it seems that his fingers cannot move. With a stiff wrist, staccato playing becomes difficult. When there is tenseness there is a general lack of dexterity and manual skill. Sometimes the whole body is affected, sometimes only the wrist or shoulder, but when tension exists in one part of the body, it tends to spread to other parts.

As soon as the student learns to relax a large number of problems may seem to disappear. Too much tension will hinder the student regardless of his ability. Even the professional musician must control tension.

Many students have no concept of what is involved in relaxation. They do not know how it feels to relax the shoulder or arm. To learn this the student needs to have a

good position at the piano. He should sit up straight with both feet flat on the floor. He must have freedom to move. The shoulder should be lowered and the arm be allowed to hang freely. In actual playing the student can be taught to take advantage of pauses and to relax during these pauses to avoid undue tension. If the student has difficulty playing through a piece because of tension, it is helpful in practice to stop frequently, drop the arms and hands to the sides of the body and when relaxed to continue playing. If there is tension in the wrist, the wrist may be too high or too low and this may need to be corrected. In helping her students to relax, Mrs. Kiehl stated:

I think that this is the place for a separate exercise in which the student doesn't have to concentrate on anything in particular other than relaxing.³⁷ I think it (relaxing) just has to become a habit.³⁷

The student needs to know how it feels to have complete relaxation but he also needs to understand the relationship between tension and relaxation. It is necessary to have some tension as well as relaxation in playing. The student must learn how much tension as well as how much relaxation is required to produce the effect he desires.

³⁷Statement by Vicky Kiehl, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

The next question was: "To what extent do you feel state of mind affects tension?" All of the teachers felt that state of mind does affect tension.

Miss Bowden said:

I am a great believer in "mind over matter." It helps a great deal to think "looseness." The general state of mind affects everything that a person does, but some people are more inclined to be nervous than others. Because of this type of personality, these people find it difficult to relax.³⁸

In talking about state of mind, Mr. Phillips stated:

A naturally nervous person, an apprehensive person is going to combat apprehension by the only way he knows to do it and that is by becoming tense. This is apparently a natural approach, or at least it is something that is taught in our society--that we approach problems with tension. As a musician and as a pianist you have to learn that generally that is the wrong approach. You must go against what your feelings are and maintain your equilibrium and know when to be tense and when not to be tense. If you constantly tell a person to hang loose, when they come to this difficult passage, by the actual business of not thinking about the difficulty, (it) will often get them through, to their amazement. Once you build up confidence, the tension can be properly administered. I'm not one of the school that says you must be entirely relaxed to play the piano--that is impossible.³⁹

Dr. Trantham said of state of mind:

I think state of mind is very important. I think you can worry yourself into a tense muscle

³⁸Statement by Evelyn Bowden, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

³⁹Statement by Leonard M. Phillips, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

very easily. . . . You must practice controlling the state of your mind just as you practice a scale.⁴⁰

The student should practice playing in a relaxed way. This can become an unconscious habit but it must first be directed by the mind. For students whose tension is the result of emotional problems, it may be a near impossibility to learn to play in a relaxed manner.

"What are the external conditions which may produce tension in the student while playing?" One external condition which frequently causes tension in the pianist is the presence of an audience, whether this audience is in the recital hall or only in the teacher's studio. The audience may be the teacher or an informal group of friends. Simply the presence of a listener may have an effect on the pianist and may cause tension. If the student feels inadequate he may become tense. Being unprepared may cause the student to feel inadequate. Although the student is able to play a composition, if he has not practiced enough he may feel that he is not capable of playing it.

Anything which is unexpected may cause tension in the pianist. Some circumstances which may result in tension are: playing a bad or unfamiliar instrument; a bench too high or

⁴⁰Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

too low; sitting too close to or too far away from the piano; cold; distractions which disturb concentration; slips in playing; lapses in memory. High or too low may cause fatigue.

The teachers discussed this question: "Do your students experience fatigue in playing?" Most of the teachers said that their students experience fatigue at times. When fatigue does exist there is usually some underlying technical difficulty, such as tension or lack of strength. If the wrist or arm becomes tired the most probable cause is tension. If the fingers become tired it is more likely to be caused by lack of strength and development. Normal fatigue will result from playing a very long and difficult recital or practicing longer than usual. The type of fatigue caused by tension can develop very quickly after the pianist begins to play and may continue to hamper his playing throughout a piece or program. Tension may result in fatigue when the student plays very difficult technical passages.

This discussion led to the next question: "How do you feel fatigue is related to tension?" All of the teachers agreed that tension is related to fatigue. Tension is related to fatigue in anything that a person does. A tense day will cause the person to be exhausted by the end of the day.

The wrong conditions for practice or performance may bring about tension and result in fatigue. Poor posture at the piano or a bench too high or too low may cause fatigue.

In playing the piano there must be some tension. When muscles move they will become taut to some degree. The keyboard offers resistance and the result of playing will be tension. The pianist must learn to cope with this just as an athlete must. It must be counteracted by relaxation. Undue tightness will be produced when the student tries too hard. Less energy is expended when the pianist plays fast than when he plays slowly, and yet he may try to put as much effort into his playing when he plays a piece at a fast tempo as when he first began to practice it slowly. This is one reason why pieces should occasionally be played up to tempo, from the start of practice.

The teachers answered this question: "Are the physical or mental processes more important in the development of technique?" Eleven of the teachers felt that physical and mental processes are of equal importance. Seven teachers felt that mental processes are more important. First the student must have a desire to develop technically to be successful in it. The student must have an understanding of the music which he is playing. He must understand the technical problems which are involved in the music and he must have some knowledge of how to handle these problems. He must have the

ability to analyze his own technical difficulties and find solutions for them. In order to relax when relaxation is needed, his mind must direct his body. The physical ability is more likely to develop if the mind is disciplined.

The teachers who felt mental processes and physical processes are of equal importance pointed out that neither of these qualities is of value without the other. If the person is inadequate in some physical way he cannot develop technically but if he does not have the right concept of technical skills and problems he is also handicapped.

Several teachers felt that there are students who possess little technical ability but are very interested in their playing. Of this type of problem, Mary Louise said, "These students can produce a most beautiful sound, but cannot produce anything that requires much skill." This type of student is generally a beginning student who has not had the time to develop technically.

Several of the teachers felt that the student's concept of truly expressive playing is the technical control.

Dr. Lughan stated:

A student cannot play expressively unless he is in control of what he is doing. He may freely use

TECHNIQUE AND EXPRESSIVENESS

The first question asked about technique and expressiveness actually contained several related questions. The questions were: "Is there a conflict between technical prowess and expressiveness? Can one exist without the other? Do you find students who possess little technical ability but are very expressive in their playing? Are there some who are proficient technically but have little musical feeling?"

Fourteen teachers felt that there are students who possess little technical ability but are very expressive in their playing. Of this type of problem, Miss Bowden said: "Some students can produce a most beautiful sound, but cannot negotiate anything that requires much dexterity."⁴¹ This type of student is generally a beginning student who has not had the time to develop technically.

Several of the teachers felt that the student cannot be truly expressive unless he has technical control.

Dr. Dunham stated:

A pianist cannot play expressively unless he is in control of what he is doing. He may "feel" the

⁴¹Statement by Evelyn Bowden, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

expression but will be unable to convey it unless he has control. And control is related to technique.⁴²

Fifteen of the teachers felt that a pianist can be technically proficient but lack expressiveness. Some concert pianists are brilliant technicians but are lacking in musical feeling. This type of pianist is more of an exhibitionist and his playing may be entertaining for a while simply because of his technical skill. Students may develop technical ability in a mechanical way but never be able to develop the ability to play expressively. A few of the teachers stated that they have found few students who are technically proficient who are not also quite musical.

The ideal student would possess both of these qualities and be able to discern when one of them is more important. Dr. Mulacek said:

Many people think that if they achieve technical prowess, they have achieved everything in music and of course they eventually will see the error of their ways. Actually, the musical is the most important and the other is merely a servant of the music. If the audience is aware only of your technical ability, then you have failed.⁴³

Miss Swindle stated:

There should be no conflict between technical prowess and expressiveness in playing. Ideally, one

⁴²Statement by Dr. Ervin J. Dunham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁴³Statement by Dr. George Mulacek, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

exists for and with the other. Intelligent expressiveness determines the technique and technical proficiency makes expressiveness possible.⁴⁴

Mr. Gant said:

I think if a person is a master of his technique he is free to be expressive in his music. If he is not technically solid, I don't think he will ever be free to be expressive.⁴⁵

The next question was: "Can technical ability be developed in most students?" All of the teachers felt that technical ability can be developed in most students, unless the student is handicapped in some way, provided the student has the perseverance and determination and that the right approach is used by the teacher. A physical disability would prevent some students from developing technically but probably a more common problem in students is a lack of coordination. Coordination may even be developed in some students. Miss Pilapil mentioned that dancing is one means of developing coordination and a sense of rhythm in the student. The use of Dalcroze Eurythmics may be an aid to better coordination and rhythm. This system seeks to coordinate music and bodily movement.⁴⁶ The college-age student

⁴⁴Statement by Dorothy Swindle, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁴⁵Statement by Robert Gant, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁴⁶Statement by Beatriz Pilapil, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

is handicapped if he never played the piano during childhood. The fingers of this type of student may be very stiff and not agile. But even with this type of person some progress may be made if he is willing to work. He cannot hope to accomplish what might have been accomplished had he started playing earlier, but improvement can be made. The student needs to be aware of the time and effort which will be required for successful performance.

"Do some students seem to have a 'natural' technical ability?" Seventeen of the teachers answered "yes" to this question but some of the teachers qualified their answers. The teacher can often tell when he starts a beginner whether the student will be successful in playing the piano. This does not mean that the student already has a good technique but only that he has the ability to develop it, but some students seem to be more naturally adapted to playing than others, as Miss Bowden stated, "Just as some coaches say some athletes were, apparently, born knowing how to use their bodies."⁴⁷ These students seem to be better coordinated and to know how to produce a beautiful tone naturally. Some of the teachers felt that this kind of student does not necessarily have more ability than other students but simply

⁴⁷Statement by Evelyn Bowden, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

develops at a faster rate, because of natural inclination toward the piano. This inclination is of no value if the student is not willing to work hard and if he does not receive at least a minimum amount of the right kind of instruction. The teacher may sometimes see students come to college who have received very little instruction in technique and yet seem to produce good results.

The next question discussed was: "Can the student who has a good technique learn to be expressive in his playing?" Twelve teachers felt that the student who has a good technique can develop expressiveness, at least to some degree. This development depends to a great degree on the personality of the student. If the student is sensitive to sound, is responsive to musical ideas, will learn to listen and is imaginative, he can learn to be expressive.

Dr. Dunham said of this:

He can if he has the capacity to feel music expressively. If he can relate the music that he is playing to his own feelings, has a sense of taste, and has the technical capacity, he can learn to play expressively. There are students who just seem to lack the ability to make the relationship between their own emotions and the emotion intrinsic in the music. It is not that they lack warm feelings themselves but rather that they seem unable to make an emotional relationship with the music. This relationship is what gives us individual interpretations--the fact that no two persons have exactly the same feelings about anything. We may study the composer's performance of his own work on a recording, but we would not want to try to imitate exactly what he has felt and done. Rather we should interpret the written music so as to make something unique and

personal of it. Sometimes no matter how much you labor with a student trying to get him to play expressively, he is unable to do so.⁴⁸

Dr. Mulacek said:

Frequently you can carry a person just so far, the remainder of the way is impossible and the rest of the road they will never see. . . . The person whose musical ability is inborn will do things that you don't have to explain. He automatically does these things. He senses what is right. This inborn sense of balance, color and sound is, in the final analysis, something you cannot teach. You could itemize or you could analyze a thing of this sort up to a point but you will never analyze it all the way.⁴⁹

Mr. Phillips stated:

Yes, it can be applied artificially. Now whether they will ever become convincing or whether they can apply what they have learned in one situation to another situation, I am not sure. Even with experience and with just growing older this can sometimes improve, especially with experience and hearing a great deal of music and constant interest and application. A great deal of this is maturity.⁵⁰

The last question was: "Do you feel that piano tone quality can be affected by the touch of the pianist?" Eighteen teachers said that they feel the tone quality of the piano is affected by the touch of the pianist. Dr. Trantham talked about the speed at which the hammer hits the string:

⁴⁸Statement by Dr. Ervin J. Dunham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁴⁹Statement by Dr. George Mulacek, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵⁰Statement by Mr. Leonard M. Phillips, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Tone is controlled by the speed at which the hammer hits the string and the relationship of one note being sounded that way and another being sounded that way. That is how we produce tone. So technical control is extremely important in the development of what we call tone.⁵¹

At times a percussive sound is produced, and this sound is probably caused by the student hitting the keys. This percussiveness is needed in some styles of composition. A different sound is produced when the student presses the keys. Miss Pilapil said: "The attack and release of the piano key will determine the sound."⁵² Mr. Gant stated: "If you play 'into the keys' you are going to get a harsh tone. If you play 'out of the keys' your tone will be just as loud but it will not be of harsh quality."⁵³ There are a number of reasons why a person may strike the key in a different manner from another person. Mr. Keck said of this:

The difference in tone quality is not only the mental approach, but the size of the hand, the size of the arm, whether the pianist is a large or a small person, all affect the tone quality.⁵⁴

⁵¹Statement by Dr. William Trantham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵²Statement by Beatriz Pilapil, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵³Statement by Robert Gant, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵⁴Statement by George Keck, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Probably the most important of these differences is the mental approach. The person must have a concept of what good tone quality is in order to produce it. Dr. Dunham stated: "I think the tone will never be any better than the idealization of it in the pianist's mind."⁵⁵

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the piano from other keyboard instruments is that its expressive quality is partly determined by the way in which the keys are depressed. This is the nature of its mechanism. The condition of the piano being played also has a great effect on the tone quality but that is not the question being considered here. The tone must be potentially beautiful or nothing that the pianist does can make it beautiful.

The way a person acts when playing the piano has a bearing on the reaction of the audience. A person's playing often reflects his whole attitude or nature. Dr. Mulacek said of this: ". . . his sense of sound, his sense of vitality, his rhythmic drive, all these things are very definitely in the performance."⁵⁶ This attitude will be reflected in the appearance of the performer.

⁵⁵Statement by Dr. Ervin J. Dunham, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵⁶Statement by Dr. George Mulacek, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

At the end of the interview the teachers were asked to make any additional comments that they felt were important in the study of technique. Dr. Yates mentioned the fact that some students are encouraged or forced to use a certain hand position and that this is not good because different hands may require different types of hand positions, even in some cases flat fingers.⁵⁷ Miss Pilapil emphasizes to her students that they warm up each day on exercises or scales before practicing. She likes for them to spend at least thirty minutes in this manner.⁵⁸ Mr. Gant feels that it is important for a student to work on everything that he is studying every day, to get through as much material every day as can possibly be covered.⁵⁹

Dr. Trantham and Mr. Connelly both stated that technique is an important part of playing the piano but that it is not the total picture. It is a means to an end and not the end itself. It allows the pianist to have more

⁵⁷Statement by Dr. Hadley Yates, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵⁸Statement by Beatriz Pilapil, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

⁵⁹Statement by Robert Gant, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

complete expression. It should always be done for a purpose and it should be done in the service of art.⁶⁰

APPENDIX AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate current methods of teaching piano technique in U. S. U. S. colleges in America. The data in this report will be of value to piano teachers in determining steps of current trends in the teaching of piano technique. Twenty of twenty-four piano teachers in the selected schools were interviewed. The following is a summary of the findings.

1. SUMMARY

The first finding noted in this study of the reported methods of piano technique. Control, in this sense, implies the coordination, facility, accuracy and precision necessary to meet the demands of the piano.

The student needs motivation to develop their control. Students will be motivated when they see that they are making progress and reaching goals.

The teacher should, planning to work in small, should have the technical ability to play studies and exercises, the most key-point technique. Some of the studies selected from

the Classical period and pieces from the Romantic period and

⁶⁰Statements by Dr. William Trantham and Mr. Edward Connelly, personal interviews. Permission to quote secured with the characteristic styles of pieces from each period.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate current methods of teaching piano technique in N. A. S. M. colleges in Arkansas. The data in this report will be of value to piano teachers by informing them of current trends in the teaching of piano technique. Twenty of twenty-four piano teachers in the selected schools were interviewed. The following is a summary of the findings.

I. SUMMARY

The term control seems to sum up many of the important aspects of piano technique. Control, in this sense, implies the coordination, facility, accuracy and freedom necessary to meet the demands of the piece.

The student needs motivation to develop this control. Students will be motivated when they see that they are making progress and reaching goals.

The freshman student, planning to major in music, should have the technical ability to play scales and arpeggios, the Bach Two-Part Inventions, some of the easier sonatas from the Classical period and pieces from the Romantic period and from the Twentieth Century. He should have an acquaintance with the characteristic styles of pieces from each period.

The vocational objective of the student is generally considered by the teacher when projecting technical goals for the student, but ideally each student should be encouraged to develop his technique to the greatest possible degree. Students should consider their technical ability and other abilities objectively and not make vocational plans which are unrealistic.

Most teachers use exercises and studies with their students for the development of technique. Those used most often are the ones by Hanon, Czerny and Cramer. Parts of pieces are also used as exercises. If a student is serious about his study of the piano, the use of exercises will not dampen his interest. Exercises for specific problems can be helpful at certain times. Some of the books which are used in dealing with specific problems are those by Czerny and Philipp as well as the Chopin Etudes. Some exercises may be done away from the keyboard, but this practice is not prevalent.

A common method of developing velocity in playing is to have the student to practice at different speeds, usually from slow to fast or alternating slow and fast practice. The use of arm and body weight is helpful in the development of volume in playing. There is a definite relationship between the speed with which a key is depressed and the volume. Occasional use of the metronome is helpful in establishing a

steady beat. Having the student count or the teacher counting with the student may be of benefit. Use of body movements and reciting note values rhythmically are other effective methods.

Quite often changes in the fingering of a piece are necessary. When a fingering is chosen, the student should stay with this fingering. Some common problems found in teaching the use of the pedals are failure to listen to the sound being produced, lack of coordination in syncopated pedalling, failure to understand different kinds of pedalling, and poor use of una corda and sostenuto pedals.

It is essential to know how much tension and how much relaxation to allow at any given time when playing. Many problems can be attributed to tension, and the student must learn to cope with this. State of mind affects the amount of tension. When abnormal fatigue exists, tension is usually present.

The physical and mental processes are probably of equal importance in playing, but it is essential that the student have the right concept of the music so that he can use the physical apparatus properly. Some students are limited technically but seem to be expressive in their playing. They cannot be fully expressive without some degree of technical proficiency. It is not common for a student to be technically proficient and lack expressiveness. Technical

ability can be developed in most students. Some students seem to have a natural physical capacity for developing technically. The student who has a good technique can usually develop expressiveness, but expressiveness is, to some extent, an innate quality. Some students seem to know how to produce a beautiful tone without being taught. Most teachers feel that the beauty of the tone is partly due to the touch of the pianist. A person's touch is a distinguishing characteristic of his playing. Most teachers have no prescribed way of teaching the various touches, such as staccato, legato and portato, but develop these touches through the use of pieces in which they occur.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Because in this study there seemed to be general agreement among the college teachers interviewed about several areas of deficiency, some conclusions were reached which may help the teacher of preparatory students.

The student needs to develop technically but this development should be kept in the proper perspective. Artistic playing should be the goal rather than mere showmanship. There should be a purpose for the technical material assigned, the student should understand this purpose and whenever possible the technical material should be related to literature.

An individual approach is best when helping the student to find a good posture and hand position. The posture should be one which allows freedom of movement and does not cause fatigue. The hand position should be comfortable and not exaggerated.

The student should develop finger independence and control, but he should also understand the use of the different parts of the arm and body in playing. He should take advantage of opportunities to relax when playing.

The teacher should help the student to find a suitable fingering for each piece and this fingering should be used consistently.

The preparatory student needs to develop skill in syncopated pedalling and he needs to develop concepts of stylistic pedalling.

Listening should become a part of the student's technique.

The repertoire should include a wide selection of pieces from all periods of musical history so that the student will be acquainted with the characteristics and technical demands of each style.

The student should develop realistic vocational objectives, based on technical ability as well as other qualifications needed for specific vocations.

There was general agreement among the teachers interviewed about most of the questions which were discussed. There was some disagreement about the value of exercises done away from the keyboard, about the changing of fingers on repeated notes and about the importance of the strength of the hand in playing.

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APPENDICES

TEACHERS INTERVIEWED

Arkansas Polytechnic College, Morrilton, Ark.

Mr. Edward Connelly, Associate Professor of Music
Mrs. Joan Pitts Wadsworth, Associate Professor of Music
Mrs. Vicky Kiehl, Instructor in Music

Arkansas State University, Morrilton, Ark.

Dr. Paul I. Pette, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Mary Elizabeth Cook, Instructor in Music
Dr. John A. Taylor, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Susan E. Mandy, Instructor in Music

Arkansas State College, Morrilton, Ark.

Dr. James H. Moore, Associate Professor of Music

APPENDIX A

Arkansas College, Morrilton, Ark.

TEACHERS INTERVIEWED

Mr. Robert G. Moore, Professor of Music
Miss Betty Gentry, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Elizabeth Taylor, Instructor in Music

Arkansas State University, Morrilton, Ark.

Dr. William G. Moore, Professor of Music
Miss Marie Gentry, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Virginia Gentry, Associate Professor of Music
Dr. James H. Moore, Associate Professor of Music

Arkansas College of Education, Morrilton, Ark.

Dr. Robert G. Moore, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Virginia Gentry, Instructor in Music
Dr. James H. Moore, Associate Professor of Music

University of Arkansas, Morrilton, Ark.

Mr. Jerome Kappeler, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Beatrix Pyle, Associate Professor of Music

TEACHERS INTERVIEWED

Arkansas Polytechnic College, Russellville:

Mr. Edward Connelly, Associate Professor of Music
Mrs. Joan Fite Wainwright, Assistant Professor of Music
Mrs. Vicky Kiehl, Instructor in Music

Arkansas State University, Jonesboro:

Dr. James L. Patty, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Mary Elizabeth Beck, Associate Professor of Music
Dr. Ervin J. Dunham, Assistant Professor of Music
Miss Dorothy Swindle, Instructor in Music

Henderson State College, Arkadelphia:

Mr. Thomas M. Chase, Associate Professor of Music

Hendrix College, Conway:

Dr. George Mulacek, Professor of Music
Dr. Hadley Yates, Associate Professor of Music
Mrs. Jacqueline Mulacek, Assistant Professor of Music

Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia:

Dr. William Trantham, Professor of Music
Miss Evelyn Bowden, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Virginia Queen, Associate Professor of Music
Mr. George Keck, Instructor in Music

State College of Arkansas, Conway:

Mr. Leonard M. Phillips, Assistant Professor of Music
Miss Virginia Sue Evans, Instructor in Music
Mr. Robert E. Gant, Instructor in Music

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville:

Mr. Jerome Rappaport, Associate Professor of Music
Miss Beatriz Pilapil, Assistant Professor of Music

APPENDIX B THE QUESTIONNAIRE

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. What do you consider the most important aspects of piano technique?
2. Is motivation important in the development of technique?
3. What do you feel the piano has done for you since you first accomplished technique? (When entering college?)
4. Does the development of technique of the student affect the technical and artistic quality of his work?
5. In what way does your friend the technical proficiency of the student affect his artistic development?
6. Are there any other aspects of technique or technique which you feel are important in the development of the student's artistic quality?

APPENDIX B

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

II. TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY AND ARTISTIC QUALITY

1. Do you use technical exercises in your piano playing? If so, how often and for what purpose?
2. Do you use any other type of exercise in your piano playing?
3. Do you feel that the use of technical exercises is necessary in the development of the student's artistic quality?
4. Do you use any technical exercises in your piano playing?
5. Do you feel that the use of technical exercises is necessary in the development of the student's artistic quality?
6. Do you use any technical exercises in your piano playing?
7. Do you feel that the use of technical exercises is necessary in the development of the student's artistic quality?
8. Do you use any technical exercises in your piano playing?
9. Do you feel that the use of technical exercises is necessary in the development of the student's artistic quality?

do you use scales
those commonly used?

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

do you find
notes?

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. What do you consider the most important aspects of piano technique?
2. Is motivation important in the development of technique?
3. What do you feel the freshman piano major should have accomplished technically before entering college?
4. Does the vocational objective of the student affect the technical goal which you set for him?
5. In what way have you found the technical proficiency of the student to affect his vocational objectives?
6. Are other factors such as personality or leadership ability more or less important than technical proficiency in setting vocational objectives?
7. What are the greatest weaknesses in piano technique which you find in students majoring in piano?

II. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND EXERCISES

1. Do you use technical exercises and studies for the development of technique or do you feel that this development can best be accomplished through the pieces studied?
2. Do you use parts of pieces as exercises?
3. Do you feel that the use of technical exercises motivates or dampens the interest of the student?
4. Do you use exercises for specific problems?
5. Some technical books give exercises for specific problems. Do you consider such books of value?
6. Do you use any technical exercises that are done either away from the keyboard or those in which the student does not actually play the keyboard?

7. Do you use scale and arpeggio fingerings other than those commonly used?
8. Do you insist on the changing of fingers on repeated notes?
9. How do you help the student develop velocity? volume? steadiness of beat?
10. How do you teach the various touches: legato, staccato and portato?
11. Do you frequently make changes in the fingering?
12. What problems do you find in teaching use of the pedals?
13. Have you found some unusual technical problems in your teaching?

III. RELAXATION

1. Do you feel that the teachings of relaxation and arm weight are important in the development of technique?
2. How important is the strength of the hand in playing?
3. Do you find many technical problems which can be attributed to tension in the hand, wrist and arm?
4. To what extent do you feel state of mind affects tension?
5. What are the external conditions which may produce tension in the student while playing?
6. Do your students experience fatigue in playing?
7. How do you feel fatigue is related to tension?
8. Are the physical or mental processes more important in the development of technique?

IV. TECHNIQUE AND EXPRESSIVENESS

1. Is there a conflict between technical prowess and expressiveness? Can one exist without the other? Do you find students who possess little technical ability but are very expressive in their playing? Are there some who are proficient technically but have little musical feeling?
2. Can technical ability be developed in most students?
3. Do some students seem to have a natural technical ability?
4. Can the student who has a good technique learn to be expressive in his playing?
5. Do you feel that piano tone quality can be affected by the touch of the pianist?

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR FRESHMAN PIANO MAJORS

The 1969-70 Arts and Sciences Catalog states: "Prerequisite: Approval of department for concurrent enrollment in piano."¹

The 1970-71 Arts and Sciences Catalog states: "Beginning classification for all degrees is determined by departmental approval."²

The 1971-72 Arts and Sciences Catalog states:

All students are required for entrance in the Department of Music to take the entrance exam during their first semester of college. The exam is required to receive credit for piano.

APPENDIX C

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR FRESHMAN PIANO MAJORS

states:
Students entering as freshmen must have a minimum of one semester of college piano instruction and must be able to play the following pieces, plus two short pieces of choice or a recital of the same length. The exam is given during the first semester of college. The exam is required to receive credit for piano.

¹ Arts and Sciences Catalog (1969-70), p. 100.

² Arts and Sciences Catalog (1970-71), p. 100.

³ Arts and Sciences Catalog (1971-72), p. 100.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR FRESHMAN PIANO MAJORS

The 1969-70 Arkansas Polytechnic College Catalog states: "Prerequisite: Approval by instructor for concentration in piano."¹

The 1969-70 Henderson State College Catalogue states: "Beginning classifications for all applied music are to be determined by examination upon entrance."²

The 1970-71 Ouachita Baptist University General Catalogue states:

No examination is required for entrance, but freshman music majors will be examined during their first semester of study. Remedial work may be required to remove deficiencies.³

The Keyboard Handbook from the University of Arkansas states:

Each entering prospective piano major will perform an audition of comparable composition and difficulty to the following: scales, Bach-Inventions, a classic sonatina, a romantic composition from the easier pieces of Schumann or Chopin, or the easier Mendelssohn Songs Without Words. The audition will be heard by a committee of no less than three members of the piano (keyboard) faculty who will evaluate the student's

¹Catalog (Russellville: Arkansas Polytechnic College, 1969), p. 101.

²Catalogue (Arkadelphia: Henderson State College, 1969), p. 100.

³General Catalogue (Arkadelphia: Ouachita Baptist University, 1970), p. 164.

applied music level and will determine probationary conditions if any, under which a student may be admitted to a degree plan.⁴

⁴Keyboard Handbook (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1969), p. 1.

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

A STUDY OF METHODS OF TEACHING PIANO TECHNIQUE IN ARKANSAS

MEMBER COLLEGES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF

SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

by

LaQuinta Barnett

The purpose of this study was to investigate current methods of teaching piano technique in N. A. S. M. colleges in Arkansas. Twenty of twenty-four piano teachers in the selected schools were interviewed, each teacher answering the same series of questions. The discussions were recorded on a tape recorder and transcribed. The answers for each question were compared in an effort to discover areas of agreement and disagreement.

Chapter I considers the statement of the problem, the importance of the study, definition of terms used, background of the study and organization of the thesis. Chapter II deals with general questions about technique and levels of proficiency. Chapter III is about specific problems of technique and some possible exercises for solving these problems. Chapter IV is a discussion of relaxation and tension and their effect on the pianist. Chapter V explores the relationship of technique and expressiveness. Chapter VI is a summary of the findings and possible conclusions.

The following conclusions are some of those which were reached on the basis of this study:

There was general agreement among the teachers about most of the questions asked during the interview. There was some disagreement about the value of exercises done away from the keyboard, about the changing of fingers on repeated notes and about the importance of the strength of the hand in playing.

The preparatory student needs to develop technically but this development should be kept in the proper perspective. Artistic playing should be the goal rather than mere showmanship. There should be a purpose for the technical material assigned, the student should understand this purpose and whenever possible the technical material should be related to literature.

The student should develop finger independence and control, but he should also understand the use of the different parts of the arm and body in playing. He should take advantage of opportunities to relax when playing.

VITA

LaQuinta Rogers Barnett was born in Mena, Arkansas, on February 2, 1935, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Austin Rogers. She studied piano throughout her school years, was a National winner for three years and an International winner for one year in the National Piano Playing Auditions, receiving the High School Diploma in Music from that organization. After completing high school she entered Baylor University in 1952, majoring in piano. While at Baylor she studied piano with Gladys Calder Stinson and was a member of the Oratorio Chorus. In 1953 she transferred to Mary Hardin-Baylor College and there studied piano with Dr. Walter Gilewicz. In 1955 she entered Ouachita Baptist College. She studied piano with Evelyn Bowden. She received the Bachelor of Music degree, Magna Cum Laude, in 1956 and did further study in education at Ouachita Baptist College and East Texas State College in 1957. After teaching public school music in Ft. Worth, Texas, for one year, she taught private piano in Texas and Arkansas for eleven years, also teaching public school music from 1968 through 1970. In 1969 she entered graduate school at Ouachita Baptist University. She served as accompanist at Hood Village and Post Chapels at Ft. Hood, Texas, for Community Chorus and Community Arts concerts at Mena, Arkansas, and with Walter Gras, cellist, played monthly radio programs on station KENA, Mena. She is a member of the Arkansas

Education Association, Arkansas State Music Teachers Association, National Guild of Piano Teachers and the Music Teachers National Association, Inc. She is married to William J. Barnett and they have three sons, Bradley, Eric and Gregory.

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