

The Melodic Line and Tone Production

Ideas from *Interpretation in Piano Study and myself* (Brent Jones)

- Tone production is a large part of study for every other instrument--it is too easy to make a sound on the piano and tone production is generally not studied well.
- We must listen to every tone we produce.
- It takes considerable control to play cantabile style or to grade a crescendo.
- We don't "put in" the expression; it is already there. Our job is to discover it and bring it out.
- Although expression marks are important, no expression marks can fully convey what needs to happen musically.
- We can get away from the monotonous playing of all notes equally by singing the melodic lines.
- Read music in phrases and gestures rather than in beats and measures.
- To build sight reading skill, practice "quick memorizing" a single phrase (or other unit,) then playing it.
- Two people may play the same music—one full of life, and the other dull.
- Some are more interested in playing the right notes than the right sounds. "Piano playing is largely an art of gradation, and a teacher should teach it as carefully as he teaches legato." Joan Last
- Shorter note values should be instinctively softened, also phrase endings.
- *Music that starts with upbeats must have the flow toward the beat.*

Tchaikovsky, *Album for the Young*

Old French Melody

- If played with all notes equally, it goes nowhere.
- Avoid emphasizing each downbeat.
- Avoid emphasizing sixteenths.
- Shape melody so that there is direction in the playing, In bar 1, I would avoid the tendency to make a crescendo with a rising line in favor of playing bar one more emphasized than bar two.
- Consider one count per bar.
- Greatest challenge is system 3. Apparently very fragmented line but it needs a *sense of growth to climax.*

Italian Song

- Note marked with accent is the high point of phrase. Could be stretched slightly. Note that it is the longest value.
- Feel pulse and legato in r.h. but it must contrast with staccato l.h.
- System 3: note the high note of longer value again. Play upbeat quieter.
- Slurs in first two bars of system four create the downbeat emphasis.
- Be careful not to limp through the grace notes.

Practicing

Does success depend on being musical, being blessed with inherent musical talent? Or can everyone learn, given good instruction and careful preparation? (Some thoughts are from *The Splendor of Music* by Angela Diller; others are original or are from unknown sources.)

Elder Oaks: Not about *doing*; about *becoming*.

Elder Bednar: About *becoming* a missionary; not *going on* a mission.

Preparation

- Quiet atmosphere
- Good light
- Bench adjusted properly
- Study before you play
 - Measure twice, cut once
 - Make haste slowly
- Visually scan
 - Compare figurations, chords vs. scales, etc.
 - Find what is similar
 - Find key areas
- Listening—how?
 - Role of recordings
 - Other role models
- Read through the piece
 - Make goals for learning
 - Find the hard parts
 - Find the cadences

Start with the most difficult part

- It will more likely be ready on time
- It will save discouragement
- It increases discipline

Listening (Stewart Gordon)

- Inner Hearing—when?
- Inner Pulse—when and how?
- Harmonic implications
- Cadences

The Role of Repetition

- Repetition helps solidify difficult techniques but it can numb the mind.
- Is the goal a certain number of repetitions or amount of time spent?
- “Listening Back”: Repetition with a purpose
- Fingering
- If we didn’t get it right, how many times do we repeat the mistake in order to play it correctly?
- Variation in tempo and approach

Highlighting the musical structure

- Motives and themes
- Phrases
- Cadences
- Organize practice around these musical devices, not around what the printer or editor chose.

Singing

- "Do you sometimes sing as you play? It's a horrible habit that I highly recommend!" (Fleischer)
- Why don't we sing? How can we encourage it?

Counting

- Meter
- The smallest unit (subdivision)
- Slow rhythm
- Phrases
- Words and text

Blocking

- Look for scale fragments (TP)
- Look for chords
- Choose groupings carefully
- Consider the metric implications

Outlining

Learning from the end toward the beginning, the Hansel and Gretel theory

Five Stages of Practice: Ideas from Eda Ashby

- Playing Around
- Auto-Pilot—sight reading or a bit more
- Frustration—becoming aware of problems
- Drudgery—paying the price to conquer the difficulties
- Flow—it is fun and natural; awareness grows