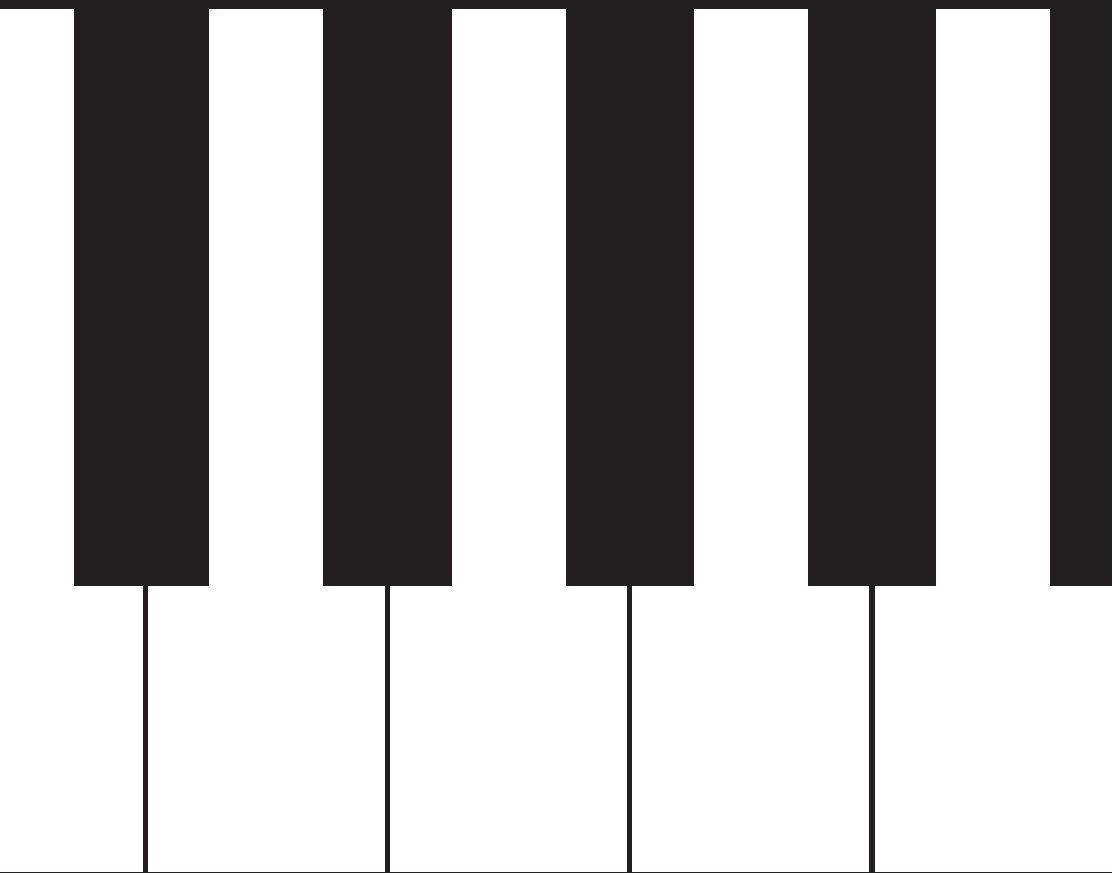


# Caterina Vivarelli

# THE RIGHT KEY



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## **Introduction**

This short recapitulation of my considerations in the didactic field doesn't aim to become a scientific essay, rather it rises from my need to deepen the study of neurological interactions of pianistic practice.

Nowadays it is not difficult to access learning materials, through the ease of finding videos and lessons on-line; however, during my long teaching career, I have come to the conclusion that any training, to be effective, must start from observing the students, finding their peculiarity.

The latest research from neuroscientists is focused on the almost infinite possibilities of our brain to create synapses, i.e. connections, and this outstanding power is the starting point of my research, in order to improve my teaching.

## Breathing

In my teaching I start from a fundamental function not only of our body but also of the execution and study of piano, vital function and yet too often involuntarily neglected, which is breathing.

It underlies most of the problems that arise during the study, even when he is not “crazy and desperate” (but often, unfortunately, that of pianists is!). Indeed, the wrong use of the muscles for movement and poor perception of your body make execution tiring and sometimes even painful.

That is why I believe that the most important approach to the resolution of many muscle problems and especially for prevention of the same, must start right from the breath. Sitting at the piano, we'll always have to make sure the shoulders are relaxed and the chest is not contracted. Although they are rather obvious concepts, often the most hard to get is just what seems the simplest and most immediate, that is the control of respiration during the execution: it is not at all obvious that while you are playing you can breathe normally and consciously. It is therefore worth reiterating concepts that belong to all disciplines both sports and “philosophical” or linked to a search for well-being that concerns basically the whole of humanity.

So I start right from breathing, focusing on some simple and basic notions: when I speak of “breathing controls” I mean that a pianist should always be able to monitor his breath, while it is playing, and should feel the muscle relaxation that takes place at the end of the exhalation.

During the execution there are usually various peaks of difficulty technique alternating with moments of relaxation: a conscious breathing before the “tensive” apex almost always helps both the mind and the body to face them with greater concentration and fluency.

I advise always to my students to start to breathe consciously starting from simple technical exercises, based on the repetition of modules identical and do not engage too much attention, which must be placed mainly on our lungs.

Breathe, therefore, always consciously and never play in apnea, or, if just in the most difficult passages we can not concentrate other than on the notes, avoid stiffening the muscles of the chest and trunk. If in spite of everything we feel a

soreness in the muscles forearm (which are often the antechamber of joint pain more serious), we immediately interrupt the study of the song and begin to play with extreme lightness a very simple exercise on the 5 notes (C-D-E-F-G-F-E-D-C, for example), until the muscles will be relaxed and rested again.

I recommend not to stop immediately, but to “dissolve” the contracture using an elementary technique, as if we should return to full speed an overheated engine without “engulf”.

## The posture

If we can control our breath, which should do without too much difficulty in the initial phase of the study, our piano posture will benefit immediately.

We'll sit in the middle of the stool, so we can unload the weight on the legs, we will straighten the back and relax the shoulders. It can be help a rotating movement of the same, to obtain more easily the state of relaxation, together with small lateral bends of the head that will help to stretch the cervical vertebrae <sup>(1)</sup>.

Once a satisfactory muscular looseness has been achieved, we can begin the study phase proper, supporting the hands on the keyboard, elbows at the height of the latter.

We should often remember to monitor the state of softness either arms and shoulders, because when our attention is absorbed from the score, it takes some time before it becomes automatic playing with maximum relaxation allowed.

Obviously, to be able to play the piano we must continuously contract numerous muscles, but it is essential to activate a kind of "savings energy", so as to avoid unnecessary and harmful muscle tension, which adversely affect the execution.

Almost a century ago Attilio Brugnoli, in the justly famous treatise "The piano dynamics", meticulously analyzed the necessary movements to play with the various types of touch and a conspicuous section of his method is dedicated to the study of the anatomy of the arm and of the hand.

I believe, however, that a pianist does not necessarily have to know the name and number of the muscles of your body, how much rather learn to optimize the use, playing without movements opposition and without rigidity.

The great pianist Claudio Arrau said that have found inspiration in the book "Zen and archery" by Eugen Herrigel, regarding the state of relaxation and concentration indispensable for a good performance. The phrases «You must learn to leave constantly relaxed the arms and muscles of the shoulders, as if they were insensitive» and «Don't think about what you have to do and how you must do it... do not be confused by the presence of the spectators, but brings to an end the

*1) In this regard, I consider the study of Alexander's Technique, the which I approached during my master's degree at the S.F.C.M.*

rite as if I were alone» were illuminating and helped him to find that spiritual dimension without which every execution becomes mere gymnastics. That's why emotion or anxiety from performance should never affect muscle relaxation nor prevent us from breathing deeply even during the execution.

I'm never tired of telling students to check that the state tensive is reduced to the minimum necessary, so that the natural weight works for us, not against us.

## Studying with separate hands

In order to optimize our practice time, we can certainly read the piece first of all with both hands (actually, it's hard to resist to our curiosity... our desire is stronger than any precept!), but soon after, we'll study with separate hands, facing with patience even the easiest passages.

This will enable us to limit the damages due to a hasty and superficial reading. Our brain is not a board that we can delete, but it looks rather like a film, on which are impressed right and wrong notions: that's why it's much more fast and secure learning with separate hands, otherwise we will hardly be able to avoid mistakes.

Besides, I suggest to take one hand apart to simplify the timber separation, practicing different touches among the fingers, as required in polyphonic repertoire. I use different types of touch between the five fingers, to apply the weight to the thematic notes, without burdening them with the compressive ones.

If we consider that not only Bach, but almost all of the piano music of medium-high difficulty is polyphonic, we will understand that we cannot ignore this practice. In the section "Weight distribution" I will explain in detail how to improve finger independence in a short time.

Finally, to optimize the learning during the study with separate hands, I recommend to lean the inactive arm along the body, to increase the relaxed shoulder and consequently the chest. Even the muscles of the face should not be contracted, at least during the study: during the execution, however, sometimes the musical expressiveness is spontaneously reflected in our face and it can be counterproductive to try to inhibit it, although they are still to avoid excessive grimaces.

When the study of the piece is well under way, another trick to refine its preparation consists in playing it with one hand while the other mimes the movements on the keys, barely touching them, or, if it is easier, "performs" the song on the music stand.

In this way we will be able to listen to a part as if we had the speakers of a stereo, but our attention will be that of the execution with both hands and the technical and timbral gaps will be more evident.



## Resetting mistakes

However, if we discover that we have read and studied one or more wrong notes, even if the error is now rooted, we can “reset” our brain by re-hearing the passage with separate hands, controlling the fingering ( and if possible, changing it, which favors the correction), then analyzing it harmoniously and finally breaking it down into cells or micro-cells (see next paragraph).

I consider useless to passively repeat the correct passage many times, while it is certainly more effective to reconsider it both technically and musically, as if we wanted to give it back a form of “virginity”.

In fact it is important to “displace” the brain, removing the mistakes learned and the most effective way is to re-hear the wrong passage starting from an always different note, so as to create new synapses that will overlap with the previous ones. Remember that the central nervous system continues to change throughout life and that in our brain new synapses are continuously formed, while those that are no longer used degenerate.

This sophisticated process is known as “neuroplasticity”<sup>(2)</sup> and plays a crucial role in learning processes. Another certainly effective way to “recondition” the brain, is to play the passages in question very slowly, in “slow motion”. We will thus be able to assimilate notes and fingerings, also for the purpose of memorization, and to fix, almost sculpting in the mind the right movements.

The many experiences with students of different levels and attitudes convinced me of its validity both in the initial phase of the study, when the piece is still only sketched, and in the final, to finish and consolidate the song.

After all, self-observation is always a guarantee of improvement and slowness favors the correction of errors and muscular relaxation.

2) “Plasticity means the property that the brain has to change function and structure in relation to experience” – “The praise of the slowness”  
of Lamberto Maffei - Ed. Il Mulino

## **The micro cell - The sequence**

When we believe we have achieved a good muscular and respiratory control, we can face the most difficult steps by applying the principle of “simplification”, enunciated by the great pianist Alfred Cortot in his method<sup>(3)</sup>: “Any difficulty, reduced to its elementary cell, will dissolve”.

Five, four, even three notes (which I will call cells or micro-cells), extrapolated from the passage analyzed and executed first slowly and then quickly, are a goal within everyone’s reach. In addition to the simple repetition of the fragment, it is useful to study it by diversifying the rhythm and the proportion of musical values: this mental gymnastics, which accustoms the brain to give motor impulses always different in a few tenths of a second, allows you to master in a short time even the most difficult passage.

The link between one micro-cell and the other is also fundamental, since the consequentiality of the gesture is the essential condition for a fast and safe learning. We will then study decomposing and recomposing, like the Lego constructions, so amusing children ( and not a few adults). There are many examples of the cell study method.

Let’s consider one of the most common problems for pianists, namely precision and speed in the arpeggios: what we need to focus on is the change of position, which must be quick and safe.

Let’s analyze for example Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations, seventh variation, measure 4 and following: the difficulty occurs between the first and second triplet, when the right hand leaves the position of octave G-G, with second finger on the C, to take E-G , with second finger on E.

To consolidate the new position, we play G-C-G as written and E-G as bicordo, until the brain disposes automatically fingers in the right position.

This approach should be extended to all similar steps. The cell that we will have to work will therefore C-G-E-G, this time not in simultaneity but as we read it. If we want, we can widen it by a note, but I do not recommend to study beyond the five consecutive notes:

I found that the learning of the passage is much faster if it does not exceed this number of notes.



## **The handover**

When we face a passage that requires the “legato assoluto”, it’s better to forget that we are playing a percussion instrument and let’s entrust ourselves to the inner song: evoke in the mind the theme will help us to get the required touch.

Then we focus on the natural weight of our arm, discharged and supported by the hand, which will transfer it from finger to finger. I call this procedure “the handover”, because it is analogous to the passage of witness in athletic competitions (as in the relay races).

If contraction and consequently weight do not remain constant between one finger and the other, the perception of the tied sound is interrupted and the “witness” falls, if we want to continue with our sport metaphor.

To handle this technique with confidence, better start with simple exercises using the four fingers, excluding the thumb, which, because of its shape, makes more difficult the weight conveyance without interruption.

C-D-E-F and return (with fingering 2-3-4-5) is a good starting point. When we have assimilated the perception of “weight constant”, we can practice including the thumb and the consequent “turned around”.

The last advice again concerns the self-monitoring of relaxed state, obtainable controlling the mobility of the elbows, like flapping the wings.

The exercise E of p. 30 was designed precisely to increase looseness of arms.

## **We are musicians!**

Another suggestion I give to my students is to face a difficult passage evaluating it from the musical point of view, instead of technically: very often the greatest composers reveal with phrasing and sound signs not only the desired interpretation but also the technical way to solve it.

If we look at many of Chopin works, for example (but this is true for many other classical and romantic musicians), we'll see that slurs, staccato, accents show exactly the kind of gestures and phrasing he wants. By following his fingerings, although sometimes they don't seem the most comfortable to us, we will soon get the right touch.

Actually, Chopin devoted a large part of his life to teaching and his Studies are still our technical Bible.

Another suggestion that I give to my students is to face a difficult passage considering it first from the musical point of view: very often the great composers suggest through the indications of phrasing and timbre not only the desired interpretation but also the way to technical resolution.

Analyzing several works by Chopin, for example (but this principle is valid for many other classical and romantic authors), we see that the ligature, the "staccato", the accents indicate exactly the type of approach to the key to use and the phrasing desired; following his original fingerings, although sometimes we do not seem the most comfortable, we will effortlessly get the right sound; moreover, Chopin devoted a substantial part of his life to teaching and his studies remain our technical Guide.

He refused after just a meeting the Kalkbrenner method, which adopted the "Handguide", a device on which the students leaned their forearms to be able to concentrate on mere digital exercise.

Chopin, on the contrary, preferred the so-called "armed hand" position with more extended fingers, flat phalanges, forearm and elbow furniture.

The "transversal" hand was the great innovation that gave to posterity, in addition of course to his piano masterpieces.

The approach not perpendicular to the key improves the sound quality, allowing a softer percussion, but presupposes in each case acquisition of a more

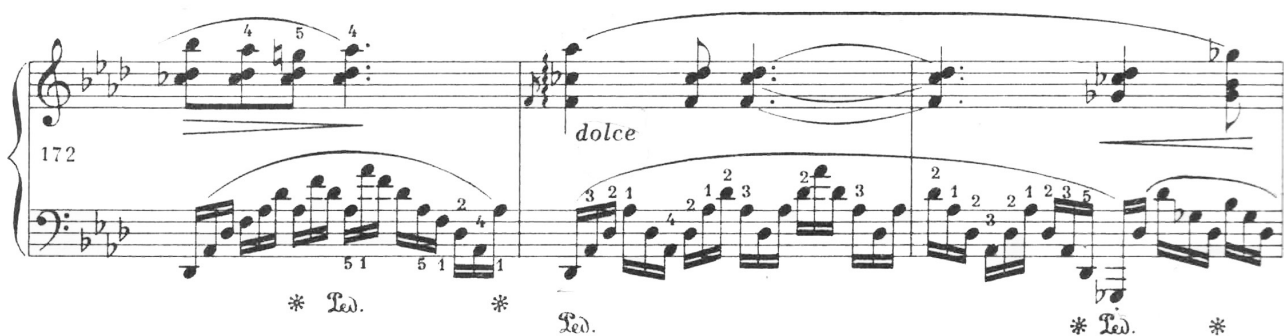
than solid “finger” technique, indispensable for maximum speed and sharpness in execution.

Some examples, again from the Ballad Op. 52, at bar 62, tying two + four on the first sestina of semiquavers is preparatory to the fingering, that it will privilege the change of position on the second eighth and the fifth eighth, instead of the fourth, as it would be more logical in a time of six eighths;



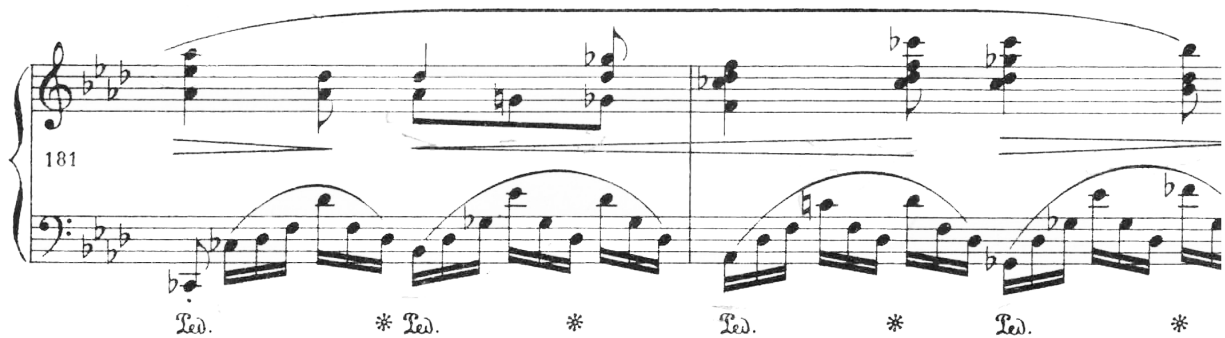
At bar 174, in the left hand, the great leap of twelfth G flat - D flat is broken by the two ligatures, the first ends in fact on the G, the second begins on D: Chopin thus suggests the fingering more comfortable, that is 5-5, that although it may seem first illogical grip, for such a wide range, actually simplifies the execution because we mentally separate the two harmonic blocks.

The point placed on the flat G flat allows us to an ideal “push” to the D, just like a trampoline.





Same suggestion at bar 181, always in the left hand, the jump is only octave, but 5-5 fingering promotes safety of the next position, C flat-D flat-D, inducing us to a very small breath between the two C-flat.



In the *Studio Op. 10 n. 4*, in the third bar, Chopin, on the second note of each quarter in the right hand, adds the "tail" of the chrome: this is because, holding down the second finger, we can pivot on it, so as to facilitate horizontal rotation, indispensable to be able to play in speed such an arduous passage.



In the *Kreisleriana Op. 16* Schumann writes the ligatures between the first note of the work, a "A" semiquaver on upbeat, and the next, a "B flat" on downbeat in the second measure.

This phrasing continues for the whole song, four times each bar, and induces us to use the natural weight as a thruster on the accentuated notes, the ones in beat.



Always in the first piece, in the middle part in B flat major, Schumann writes two ligatures to the left only when he wants emphasize the notes (third page): the ties have a value here expressive.

The gesture we make, therefore, becomes preparatory the musical interpretation of the opera, scattered with similar examples



In *Intermezzo N. 1* of the second piece, however, both the right and the left will lean on the quaver chord on upbeat in the beginning rise: the first, on the initial quaver (B flat), the second unloading the weight, so you can play the detached notes that follow in “souplesse”.

Intermezzo I  
Sehr lebhaft

A musical score for 'Intermezzo I, Sehr lebhaft'. It consists of two systems of a treble and a bass staff. The first system starts at measure 38 and ends at measure 41. The second system starts at measure 42 and ends at measure 45. The key signature is two flats and the time signature is 2/4. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, fingerings, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano). A 'Pedal' marking is present in the first system. The tempo is indicated as 'Sehr lebhaft'.



## **The inner song**

Before starting to perform a song, it is essential to be able to focus on the “inner song”, which consists in anticipating what my hands are about to play.

It’s usually the “incipit”, but it can also be a melodic fragment or even a passage in fast figurations, which will act as metronome, suggesting the right execution speed.

Singing in the mind also helps to “revise” the phrasing and empathize immediately in the interpretation. Writes the great neurologist Oliver Sacks in his book *Musicophilia*: «Imagining music stimulates the motor cortex and, vice versa, imagining the act of playing stimulates the auditory cortex. [...]

The combination of mental exercise and physical exercise leads to an improved performance most marked of what would be obtained only with the second». Closing your eyes can increase concentration, of course if the difficulty allows it: “see” the keyboard in the mind is a capacity that you can develop just in this way and I have seen on several occasions how this allows us to listen with the utmost attention. And this consideration leads us to the next paragraph.

## Self-listening

One of the most difficult skills to acquire is undoubtedly that of listen to himself. For a non musician it seems a nonsense, but we know knows that being able to focus simultaneously on the executive difficulties and on a constant listening in real time of the result is not at all obvious.

For pianists it is a “stereophonic” listening, so I highlight the importance of separate-hand study, which allows for control more careful and punctual.

I also encourage my students to register, so as to obtain an objectivity impossible to achieve during the execution. I consider it is useful to specify that listening to the sound result of our performance implies a good knowledge of the passage and that at the beginning of study is very difficult to be able to divide the attention between the difficulties implicit in the sound and the exact perception of the sound result.

However, it is not at all contraindicated to keep an ear alert from the beginning, indeed, it is a habit to encourage: I know that it is difficult, but it’s very useful, so it’s better to practice it right away.

From the first lessons with a new student, at the end of the execution, I always ask him how he thinks he played and what he can improve. I found that in this way students develop from immediately a capacity of self-listening and consequently self-criticism, which facilitates the resolution of the most obvious problems even when they study alone.

As time goes by, they hardly need my suggestions anymore, but “ they walk with their legs”. This is a huge satisfaction for me.

## The change of perspective

Sometimes in dealing with a problem, a radical change of perspective can help

We have seen that, when a passage is difficult, despite we have studied for a while and with different techniques, the first thing to do is try to change fingering: often during the first reading, you choose a functional fingering at a certain speed (usually low) and with a dynamic not yet perfected.

As soon as you try to speed up the piece and perfect the colors, the initial fingering often proves all its limitations. So, never trust only your instincts, but always use your reasoning or, better yet, the teacher's, in case of doubt.

As a second step, I suggest examining the passage by subdividing it in a different way, that is, privileging executive comfort compared to the musical logic.

In fact, if we forget for a moment the expressive needs of composer, we can focus our attention on the technical part, and increased concentration will help us identify the problem and to solve it by reducing it to the minimum terms.

I know that this mode of study is opposite to that stated in the paragraph *We are musicians*, but this is precisely the change of perspective, an overturning of the usual way to face the difficulties.

When we can master the passage in question, it won't be difficult to give him the right musical perspective.

Finally, the third step provides to study thoroughly the other hand, worth to say that one with the simplest passage, and consequently usually overlooked.

A safe execution requires the perfect operation of each "gear", and often, perfecting a part, magically also system the other; this is because, shifting our attention at the other hand, we decrease performance anxiety, too often responsible of many technical problems. In fact, I think our main enemy is sometimes ourselves, conditioned by the fear of error, which ends up undermining our security and jeopardize the execution. But here we enter into a field more psychological than practical, which I do not intend to deal with in this context.

There are countless books dedicated to this topic, some certainly valid, some else completely useless: during the my lessons I address the subject from time to time, always starting from the assumption that music is able to cure the soul better than any word.

## The distribution of weight

After the first years of study, the pianist is mostly faced with polyphonic pieces. By “polyphonic” I mean pieces whose writing is to three or more voices, even not necessarily thematic.

The fastest and safest way to learn the difference in tone inside each hand is to play tied the thematic part, leaning on the keys with the natural weight, and simultaneously detach the supporting notes. This study will allow us in very short time to calibrate the sound of each finger without stiffening or tone imbalances. While we study this way, we must always remind us to control the breath and the resulting muscular fluency, since, when our brain is focused on a task arduous, it tends to contract the musculature.

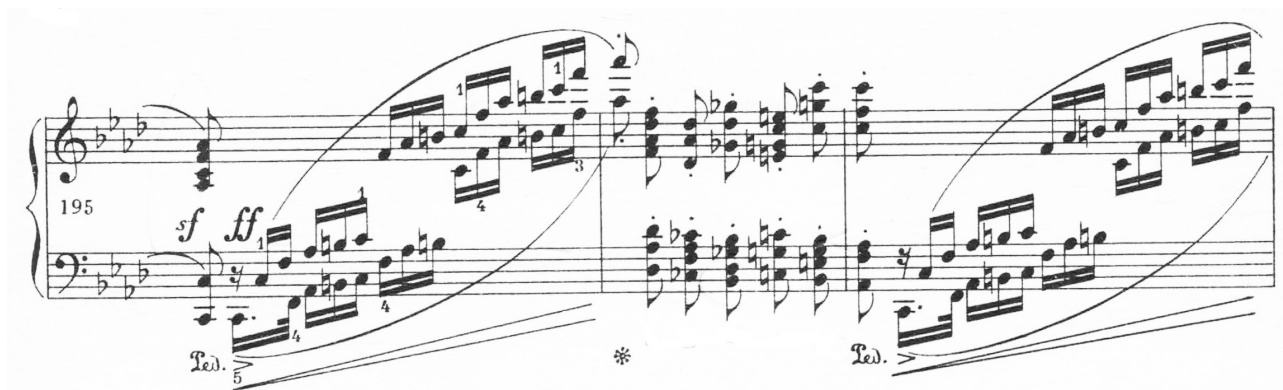
It is a reflection of atavistic self-defense in the human being, but harmful for the pianists, that at most must defend themselves from false notes. Example: Chopin, Fourth ballad, bar 112: the right hand will study tied the upper notes (F-G flat-F- E flat-G flat...) and simultaneously play the notes of the central register (A flat-B flat -A flat-G flat...). On the fifth and sixth eighth of the measure the difficulty increases for the change of position of right and left trill simultaneously: we will therefore focus on those micro-cells, working one eighth at a time. Once consolidated, we will connect the fourth eighth, then the third and so on, first with separate hands and then with joined hands.



Always in this piece, at bar 195 the right will study the arpeggio “preparing” the thumb, that is to say folding it under the palm when the third finger is on the A flat: in this way also in speed the passage will be fluid.

Soon after, we will study the cell from the A flat to F, because the second finger involves a change of position of the hand, which we will still have to go along

with moving the arm with small rotations counterclockwise.



Pianists are used to dealing with complex scores, often with agreements also of 4 or 5 notes per hand. In these cases it is important to select notes that must be heard more and exercise by removing the others, but still holding the hand in the same position of the full agreement.

By doing so, the brain will automatically distribute the right weight to the notes, highlighting those thematic. Example: Debussy, Prelude No. 3 of the second volume (La Puerta del vino), bars 35 and 36, the right hand should be exercised first with the chord without the thumb and forefinger, but with extended hands.

This study will strengthen the fourth and fifth fingers, generally more weak but also more important in the determination of the theme.

Then we will add the second finger and finally the thumb, which gives stability to the hand.

After having assimilated this mode of study, it will seem very easier the jump with full agreement.



As an exercise in pure technique, I recommend practicing on the magnificent 51 exercises of Brahms, in particular on the numbers 26 and 29 of the edition Ricordi, to study first as written (all bound) and then tying the upper notes (semi-minimum in 26 and chroma in 29) and detaching the semiquavers.

## The consequentiality of sounds

We saw how the weight “handover” helps us to maintain constant support.

Another indispensable condition for obtaining an absolute “legato” is the consequentiality of the sounds, that is to say the tonal continuity between of them. It is essential to learn to grow and decrease the sound with a constant excursion to increase the perception of “legato”.

Very often we find the adjective “cantabile”, which is inspired by the ability of the voice to switch from one sound to the next in a way fluid and coherent and we must always be inspired by it as pianists.

Arrau said “I never play two notes with the same dynamic. Only in this way can one imitate the human voice. The notes must move like waves”<sup>(4)</sup>.

To get a complete tone palette easier, we can help us by accompanying our fingers with rotary elbow movements and forearm, which facilitate the looseness of the wrist and result in better sound quality.

Peter Feuchtwanger, in the introduction to his fantastic technical exercises<sup>(5)</sup> (and the adjective “fantastic” perfectly reflects the character innovative, almost revolutionary of its teaching), emphasizes the importance of the total freedom of movement that the arms, in order to obtain a soft and “round” sound.

Needless to add that the search for a perfect amalgam of sound should never fail, even in technically passages more challenging.

4) Joseph Horowitz: *Conversation with Arrau*

5) Peter Feuchtwanger: *Klavierübungen*

## The memorization

I will not dwell on the techniques of memorization because much has already been written; the most known and effective methods are essentially three:

- Patiently repeat fragment by fragment to acquire a memory of the “gesture”;
- exploit visual memory, both on the score and on the keyboard (the so-called “photographic memory”);
- finally, to analyze the piece harmoniously so as to assimilate it the musical coordinates.

Generally the last method is considered the safest, over that the most complex, since it involves a deep concentration and a good knowledge of harmony.

I wish only to add that recent neurobiological studies have highlighted as a good memory depends on the ability to represent music in shape of groupings and structures familiar to us, such as scales, arpeggios, cadences or even identical fingerings <sup>(6)</sup>.

We could define this memory “associative” and learn to use it starting from the structural analysis of each bar and then continue by widening the radius up to the whole sentence.

Relying therefore on both the knowledge of harmony and those about the shape, we should be able to memorize almost any passage. Of course the speech gets complicated when we find ourselves in front of contemporary music, but luckily today we are helped by technology: it is not uncommon to see great interpreters do use of tablets as a valid substitute for score...

6) *John Sloboda: The Musical Mind*



## Interpretation

Once reached a good technical mastery of the piece, it begins the most interesting and stimulating part of the teacher's work, namely the interpretation.

Each pupil is a world of its own: each hand is different, each mind, each character defines from the beginning the personality of the future musician.

It follows that the teaching method must take account of the different parameters and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each. But the trait that identifies my "school" is certainly the total respect of agogic indications of composers, the constant search for the union perfect between your own soul and the author's intention.

The study of composition has brought me to this work of meticulous analysis of the page: in fact, when I found myself writing the first works, however absolutely scholastic and elementary, I discovered that the only way I could really make my thought understandable was related to the precision in the use of the agogic and realized the importance of its scrupulous observance for the purpose of correct interpretation.

Notes alone are not enough to define a page of music: the timbre, the power, the speed restore to the sounds the dignity of a work.

Finally, the advice I always give to my students is to "live the moment," "during the execution, that is to say, to concentrate at the maximum on music, forgetting the technical pitfalls and tensions, as it is possible: keeping to the Latin maxim «hic et nunc», we will be able to play enjoying the beauty of the song, which allows us to abstain and to overcome difficulties with the heart and ear turned solely to the music.



## Teaching

Musicians often rely on instinct, to deal with spontaneity the pieces they interpret. Every professional worthy of this name knows what I'm talking about: the fingers "feel" the keys, the heart guides the hands without uncertainty or fear.

Unfortunately, however, instinct is not a good remedy for the difficult job of the teacher. Without reasoning it is impossible to solve problems that afflict the students, all different and all in their own way justly demanding.

The professor who to the classical question of the student "How do I to master this passage?" is limited to answer "Study it many hours", is the emblem of failure, in my opinion.

Teaching means taking on the role of the student and search together the road for him passable. Whatever the path, it is discovered day after day: the important thing is to clearly convey your thought and do not take anything for granted. Finally, the hardest thing that a teacher must be able to do is respect the personality of the student, even by agreeing to some compromises.

Shaping students on their own personality means too often make bad copies of themselves. I think the most important teaching is that of respect for the text and that if you keep faith with this dogma can and should be accepted different interpretations, of course within the limits of their own teaching principles.

I've always held to this principle, or at least tried to do so, and I am convinced that I have also learned even by the most modest students.

I hope to be able in the future to keep faith to this purpose.

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- Peter Feuchtwanger, *Klavierubungen*

## **Practical exercises**

Since both for teaching and for my practice I base myself mainly on the exercise books of Brahms and Dohnany, I will limit myself to illustrate some exercises to complete the technical study, taking for granted the daily practice of scales.

The first two are exercises of muscle reinforcement of the carpus and are intended for novice students.

### **A**

On the triad of C major perform the so-called exercise of “the spider”: raise and lower the arch of the hand without leaving the keys and without moving the wrist, so as to strengthen the muscles of the carpus and metacarpal.

### **B**

On a white key drop one finger at a time, excluding the thumb, with the palm in contact with the wood and the vertical side of the keys; slowly return the hand to normal height and in “armed” position (that is arched) without the aid of the wrist and forearm. The only propulsive force must be the thrust exerted by the muscle of the finger.

Between one finger and the other relax the arm muscles.

# C

## Technical exercises

Fingering: quavers right hand 1-2, left hand 2-1; semiquavers triplets right hand 4-5, left hand 4-5

NOTA per la diteggiatura : per le crome mano dx 1-2 mano sx 2-1 mentre

per le terzine semi crome mano dx 4-5-4 5-4-5 mano sx 5-4-5-4-5-4.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for technical exercises, each in a different key signature (B-flat major, D major, and B-flat major). Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The right hand plays eighth notes in a 1-2 fingering pattern, while the left hand plays eighth notes in a 2-1 fingering pattern. Semiquaver triplets are marked with a '3' above the notes. The exercises are repeated twice in each system, followed by a final chromatic scale run.

Continue the exercise on the entire chromatic range

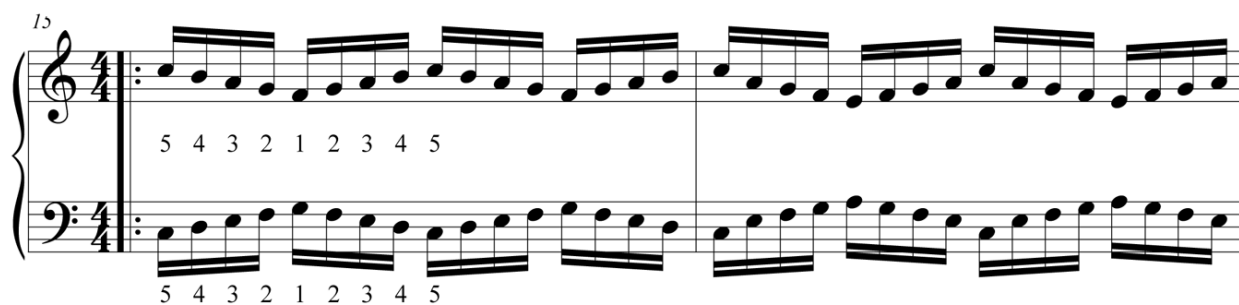
# D

The image displays a musical score for a piano exercise, labeled 'D'. It consists of four systems of music, each containing two staves (treble and bass clef) joined by a brace. The exercise is written in 4/4 time. Measures 7 through 16 are shown. Measures 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, and 13-14 each feature a four-measure phrase. In each phrase, the first two measures contain eighth-note triplets in both hands, while the last two measures contain quarter-note triplets. The key signature changes from C major to D minor at measure 11, indicated by a single flat (Bb) in the bass staff. The exercise concludes at measure 16 with a double bar line and repeat dots. The final measure (16) is marked with a 4/4 time signature.

PROSEGUIRE L'ESERCIZIO SU TUTTA LA GAMMA CROMATICA

Continue the exercise on the entire chromatic range

# E



Continue the exercise on the entire chromatic range keeping the same fingering. The exercise should be performed by moving the elbows away to the chest, trying to keep the maximum looseness of the arms and of the fingers, in particular the 5," and the 4," fingers.

## F

### Arpeggios

A musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. It features a piano introduction in 3/4 time, marked '8vb' (octave below). The score is written for voice and piano. The piano part consists of two staves: a right-hand staff with a treble clef and a left-hand staff with a bass clef. The melody is written in the right-hand staff, and the accompaniment is in the left-hand staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes a piano introduction, a verse, and a chorus. The piano introduction is marked '8vb' and consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The verse and chorus are marked with repeat signs. The piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment for the vocal melody.

3

8vb

5

8<sup>vb</sup>

7

8vb

8vb

9

8vb

11

8vb

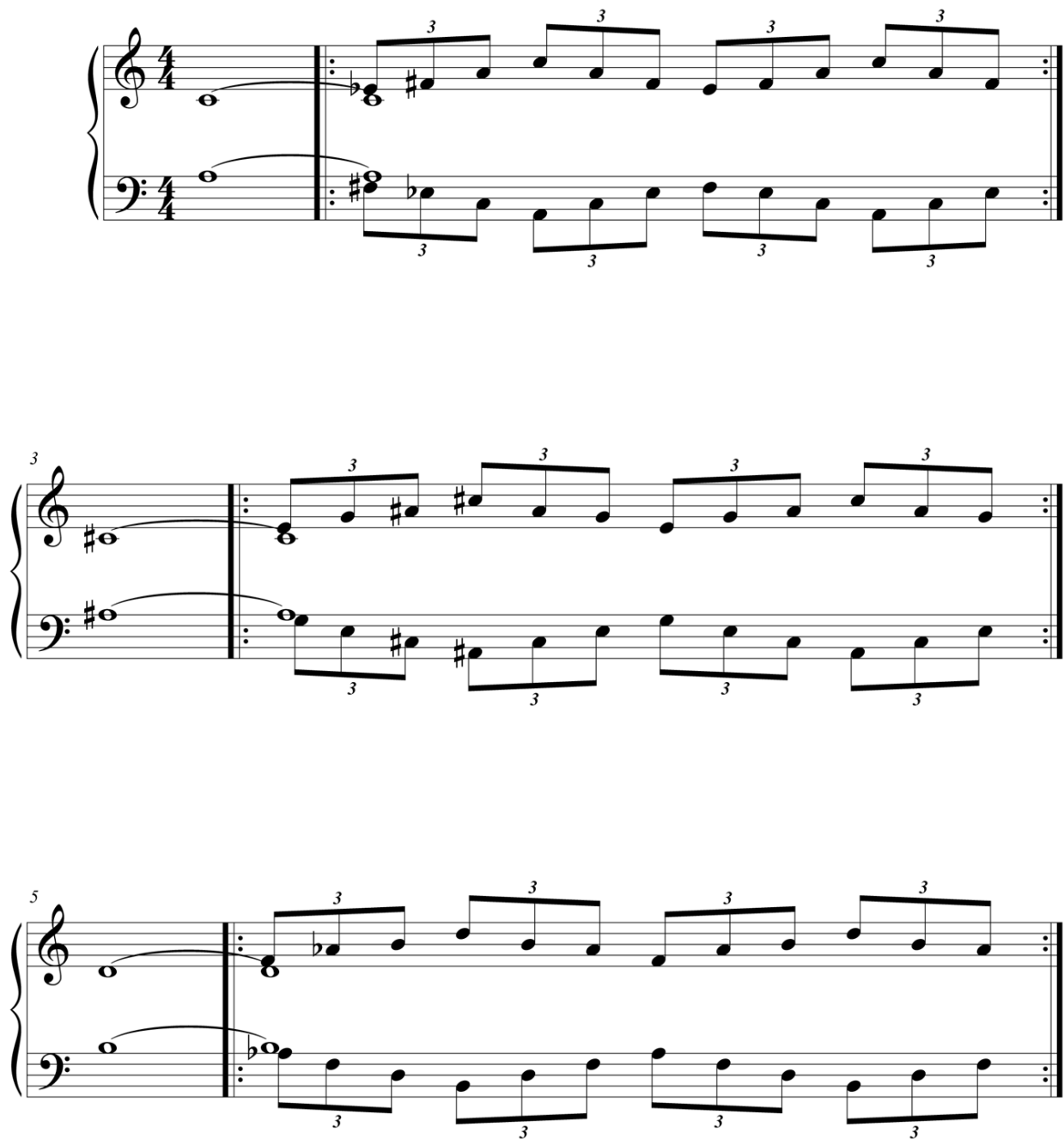
Continue the sequence on the 12 semitones, adopting conventional fingerings.

The arpeggios are to be performed, as always, with the maximum elasticity and smoothness, first slowly, then increasing gradually the speed.



# G

## Arpeggios with steady hand



Continue the sequence on the 12 semitones, repeating each bar 4 times and articulating as much as possible the 4 years and 5 years finger.

# H

## Arpeggios on seventh chords

13

8<sup>vb</sup> -----

8<sup>vb</sup> -----

Detailed description: This system contains measures 13 and 14. The music is in 4/4 time. The right hand uses a treble clef and the left hand uses a bass clef. Both hands play eighth-note arpeggios. Measure 13 starts with a D major 7th chord (D, F#, A, C#) and measure 14 starts with an E major 7th chord (E, G#, B, D#). The arpeggios are played in a descending pattern. The first measure of each system has a '8<sup>vb</sup> -----' marking below the bass staff.

15

-1 8<sup>vb</sup> -----

8<sup>vb</sup> -----

Detailed description: This system contains measures 15 and 16. The music is in 4/4 time. The right hand uses a treble clef and the left hand uses a bass clef. Both hands play eighth-note arpeggios. Measure 15 starts with a D minor 7th chord (D, F, A, Bb) and measure 16 starts with an E minor 7th chord (E, G, Bb, D). The arpeggios are played in a descending pattern. The first measure of each system has a '-1 8<sup>vb</sup> -----' marking below the bass staff.

17

8<sup>vb</sup> -----

8<sup>vb</sup> -----

Detailed description: This system contains measures 17 and 18. The music is in 4/4 time. The right hand uses a treble clef and the left hand uses a bass clef. Both hands play eighth-note arpeggios. Measure 17 starts with a D minor 7th chord (D, F, A, Bb) and measure 18 starts with an E minor 7th chord (E, G, Bb, D). The arpeggios are played in a descending pattern. The first measure of each system has an '8<sup>vb</sup> -----' marking below the bass staff.

19

8<sup>vb</sup> -----

8<sup>vb</sup> -----

Detailed description: This system contains measures 19 and 20. The music is in 4/4 time. The right hand uses a treble clef and the left hand uses a bass clef. Both hands play eighth-note arpeggios. Measure 19 starts with a D major 7th chord (D, F#, A, C#) and measure 20 starts with an E major 7th chord (E, G#, B, D#). The arpeggios are played in a descending pattern. The first measure of each system has an '8<sup>vb</sup> -----' marking below the bass staff.



Continue chromatically for the 11 upper semitones, with the same harmonic formula and same fingering.

Always perform “legato” and as fast as possible, when a good technical control has acquired.

To optimize the study, I recommend practicing sectioning the succession arpeggios within a tritone (first from A to E flat - then from E flat to A”).