

Charles University in Prague
Faculty of Education

DIPLOMA THESIS

Tackling Primary Music School Students' Practicing Issues Using
Contemporary Piano Teaching Methods
Překonávání potíží u žáků základních uměleckých škol studující hru na klavír
za použití moderních výukových metod
Beibei Hu

Department of Music Education

Supervisor: MgA. Ena Stevanović, Ph.D
Study program: Master Program, Teachers Training for Secondary Schools
Study field: Music Education and Musical Instrument

2017

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Tackling Primary Music School Students' Practicing Issues Using Contemporary Piano Teaching Methods” is an original research work carried out independently by me under the guidance and supervision of MgA. Ena Stevanović, Ph.D. All other sources and literature have been properly cited and listed in bibliography. I further declare that this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

In Prague, July 14th 2017

.....

Beibei Hu

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Ena Stevanović for her continuous support of my graduate study and research, for her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. The completion of this work could not have been possible without her help.

I would like to express my thanks to my family and fiancé for their unconditional support and constant encouragement throughout the whole study period.

ABSTRACT

Presented master thesis tackles common piano practicing issues among students at the first stage of piano learning. The main purpose of the study is to investigate the difficulties that block students' progress, and analyze proper approaches that improve students' musical capabilities. The practicing issues are scientifically categorized into three categories: technical, interpretative and general practicing and performing issues, and are further analyzed from physical, psychological, and most importantly, educational perspective. In addition, contemporary piano teaching methods from various countries are explored and various methodologies and teaching philosophies are investigated and presented. Effective approaches, suitable strategies and practicing suggestions are provided in the study for both teachers and learners. Chinese piano educators can use this study to enrich their teaching methodologies and to develop new piano teaching methods.

KEYWORDS

piano methods, teaching methodology, piano practicing issues, technical difficulties, musical interpretation, analysis of piano works, practicing strategies.

ABSTRAKT

Diplomová práce se zabývá obecnými problémy ve cvičení na základní úrovni výuky klavíru. Hlavním cílem studie je prozkoumat obtíže, které omezují pokroky žáků, a předložit vhodné a žákům přiměřené přístupy ke cvičení, které zlepšují jejich hudební schopnosti. Problémy ve cvičení byly zařazeny do třech kategorií: technické, interpretativní a obecné, a byly analyzovány z fyzického, psychologického, a vzdělávacího hlediska. Práce se navíc zabývá současnými metodami výuky na klavír, které pochází z celého světa. Účinné přístupy, vhodné strategie a praktické návrhy jsou uvedeny ve studii, jak pro učitele, tak pro studující. Čínští učitelé klavíru mohou tuto studii využít k obohacení svých výukových metod, s cílem zlepšování kvality výuky klavíru.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

klavírní školy, klavírní metodologie, metody a strategie cvičení na klavír, technické potíže při cvičení, hudební interpretace, analýza klavírních skladeb.

Table of content

1	Introduction	1
2	Theoretical background and related contemporary piano methods	3
2.1	Common piano practicing issues	4
2.2	Analysis of piano practicing issues and approaches from contemporary piano methods	7
2.2.1	Technical issues	7
2.2.1.1	Accuracy	7
2.2.1.2	Independence of the fingers	11
2.2.1.3	Position of the wrists, arms and shoulders.....	14
2.2.1.4	Articulation	16
2.2.1.5	Chords, thirds and octaves	18
2.2.1.6	Scales and arpeggios	22
2.2.1.7	Coordination of the hands	26
2.2.2	Interpretative issues	28
2.2.2.1	Dynamics	28
2.2.2.2	Fluency of playing	32
2.2.2.3	Playing polyphony	33
2.2.2.4	Remaining in tempo	36
2.2.2.5	The use of pedal	39
2.2.2.6	Aural control	44
2.2.2.7	Musical expression	47
2.2.3	General practicing and performing issues	51
2.2.3.1	Sight-reading	51
2.2.3.2	Memorizing	54
2.2.3.3	Focusing attention	56
2.2.3.4	Stage fright	61
2.2.3.5	Practicing efficiency	62
2.2.3.6	Managing and correcting mistakes	63
2.2.3.7	Motivation	65
3	Research	69
3.1	Introduction	69

3.2	Previous research on the topic.....	69
3.3	The purpose of the research and main research questions	71
3.4	Organization and methodology of the research	71
3.4.1	Timetable	71
3.4.2	Sample of the survey	72
3.4.3	Research methodology	75
3.4.4	Pilot study	77
3.4.5	Analysis of the survey.....	78
3.5	Conclusion from the research	82
4	Conclusion	84
	Bibliography	86
	List of tables, charts and figures	91
	Attachments	93

Chapter.1 Introduction

Music education has become a popular topic on a global scale, and piano education is an important part of it. For beginners, establishing good piano practicing habits and basic playing technique is of great significance in the learning process. Therefore, a great number of piano teachers devote themselves to helping the students deal with their practicing difficulties and preparing them for further musical progress.

Author Sharon Stewart believed that technique and musicality are inseparable in piano teaching process:

Take ‘finger independence’ for example, applied in the beginning as a purely technical exercise of raising and lowering each finger independently from the others. As control develops, the applications to music in order to reach musical aims are endless: voicing, playing phrases, articulation, polyphony, etc. Technical and musical developments are endlessly intertwined. If a student has technical problems solved, he or she will often have more ‘room’ left to think of and manipulate ‘musical’ details. On the other side, the more musically concrete an idea is, the easier it is to work out technically. Thus technical ease aids musicality and musicality aids technical ease.¹

The main aim of the thesis is to tackle common practicing issues that primary piano students have using contemporary piano teaching methods. As a piano teacher, I found that many of my students are facing various difficulties while practicing and sometimes they progress very little despite great efforts that are made on their side. So I decided to improve my own knowledge on the topic and implement it in my own teaching practice. In the process of doing this thesis, I realized that it is necessary to help the students resolve the problems with proper methods and strategies so they can develop their overall piano playing skills and reach their full potential. Advanced teaching approaches and practicing suggestions not only help the student achieve the

¹ STEWART, S. *Leerplan: Helping the Student Develop a Relationship with Music and the Piano at the Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced Levels*. Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht, 2002.

learning objectives in an effective way, but it also increases teaching efficiency and quality of the learning process.

In the theoretical part (Second Chapter), the study explored the common piano practicing issues from physical, psychological, and, most importantly, educational perspectives. Practicing issues were scientifically categorized into three categories: technical, interpretative and general practicing and performing aspects, and they are furtherly analyzed. In order to quest effective strategies that tackle practicing issues, piano teaching methods from various countries were explored and appropriate teaching and practicing suggestions are presented using practical examples.

The research part (Third Chapter) investigated the common practicing issues in China from teachers' perspective. A survey questionnaire was used as the method and a number of Chinese piano teachers who have different educational background and teaching experience participated in the survey. The data regarding students' practicing difficulties were collected and the results proved that the above mentioned piano practicing issues are indeed common among Chinese piano students and that they needed to be tackled.

Effective approaches, suitable strategies and practicing suggestions are provided in the study for both teachers and learners, especially for Chinese piano educators, from which they can enrich their teaching methodologies and develop new piano teaching methods.

Chapter.2 Theoretical background and related contemporary piano methods

With the development of piano methodology, there is an increasing number of piano teaching methods available for both teachers and learners. Every method has its own and very unique teaching methodology and philosophy. For example, Fritz Emonts, the author of *The European Piano Method*, believes that it is important for students to get familiar with the cultures of European countries through musical education. Therefore, in his book he introduces folk songs and pieces from various European countries. He also suggested that the most natural way to stimulate and promote children's interest for piano is to encourage them to get familiar with the keyboard and play by ear. Thereby, the method guides students to play on the whole keyboard by ear in order to establish basic foundation of musical listening and then introduces reading sheet music.

Most American piano methods start with basic music theory. The best examples are *Bastien Piano Basics* and *Piano Adventures*. Both these methods introduce the notes to the students at the very first stage of piano study. In addition, apart from the main lesson books, these two methods include various practicing books targeting different aspects of piano playing, such as technique, theory and performance.

Nikolaev's Russian School of Piano Playing and Suzuki's Japanese piano method include musical pieces of various styles in one book. The collection of the musical pieces is arranged in order to tackle different practicing issues.

Some traditional European methods also remain popular, for example the etudes composed by Carl Czerny, the etudes composed by Friedrich Burgmüller, the etudes composed by Antoine-Henry Lemoine, etc. Learners can resolve technique issues and improve fluency by practicing these etudes.

2.1 Common piano practicing issues

There are numerous piano practicing issues that can be caused by various factors. According to the research and analysis of various contemporary piano methods, issues that students encounter in practicing can be summarized into three categories:

1. Technical issues, or issues concerning the touch that is used to play the piano, aspects of body posture, hand posture, movement, speed, force and pressure on the key. Piano touch not only underpins basic technique in piano playing, but is also the route through which pianists can communicate their expressive intentions. A study by Jennifer MacRitchie has advanced understanding in the actions behind a typical keypress motion, the influence of training by examining differences between novice and expert pianists, and the various joint contributions that discern a struck versus a pressed touch. Although individual differences are widely identified, the influence of hand anthropometry, choice of technique and difference in training between experts remains understudied, as the author implies.²
2. Interpretative issues. Music interpretation is necessary to generate a musically acceptable performance. We have been taught to use music interpretation system that generates sophisticated performance from a printed music score. Many authors were researching the expressive motivations behind musical structures and the ways in which listeners and performers interpret musical works and practices. *Interpreting Music* is a comprehensive essay on understanding musical meaning and performing music meaningfully - “interpreting music” in both senses of the term. Synthesizing and advancing two decades of highly influential work, the author of the essays Lawrence Kramer fundamentally rethinks the concepts of work, score, performance, performativity, interpretation, and meaning - even the very concept of music - while breaking down conventional wisdom and received ideas. Kramer argues that music, far from being closed to interpretation, is ideally open to it, and that musical interpretation is the paradigm of interpretation in general. The book illustrates the many dimensions of interpreting music through a series of

² MACRITCHIE, J. *The Art and Science behind Piano Touch: A Review Connecting Multi-disciplinary Literature*. *Musicae Scientiae*, vol. 19, issue 2, 2015. ISSN: 1029-8649.

case studies drawn from the classical repertoire, but its methods and principles carry over to other repertoires just as they carry beyond music by working through music to wider philosophical and cultural questions.³

3. General practicing and performing issues, that include various aspects of performance, such as psychological issues that piano players might experience before or during performing in public. Such issues can have vast influence on their actual performing level and results. Author Malva S. Freymuth in her book *Mental Practice & Imagery for Musicians: A Practical Guide for Optimizing Practice Time, Enhancing Performance, & Preventing Injury*⁴, introduced practicing approaches with creative musical imagination and kinesthetic imagination that reduce the physical work and promote musical performance and attainment.

Each category mentioned above contains seven items. The category technical issues includes the following items:

- Accuracy, which refers to playing the correct notes;
- Independence of the fingers, especially the thumb, 4th and 5th finger;
- Position of the wrists, arms and shoulders that enables the performance without unnecessary movements and residual tension, the so-called economy of movement.

Noted author, composer and pedagogue Seymour Bernstein in his book, *With Your Own Two Hands - Self Discovery Through Music*⁵ advocates "controlled tension". He points out that once you consciously induce contraction in a muscle, you can begin to learn to relax it consciously. The key then is to learn how much muscle contraction is needed to master technical problems at the piano - the challenge is to translate into the real physical world the principle of economy of motion. Excess tension comes from over-contracting muscles, caused by a lack of organization of physical motion.

³ KRAMER, L. *Interpreting Music*. University of California Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780520267060.

⁴ FREYMUTH, M.S. *Mental Practice & Imagery for Musicians: A Practical Guide for Optimizing Practice Time, Enhancing Performance, & Preventing Injury*. Integrated Musician's Press, 1999. ISBN: 978-0967002712.

⁵ BERNSTEIN, S. *With Your Own Two Hands: Self-Discovery Through Music*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1981. ISBN: 978-0793557127.

Given the proper technical advice, no impediments to natural, pain free piano playing should persist. The ultimate goal of piano technique is to enable pianists to possess essential skills so that they can move from one note or chord to another with the minimal amount of effort. Hours of strenuous practice of technical exercises which many students endure often do more harm than good. Understanding the physiological basis of piano playing instead of training the nervous system through endless repetition would be a much better way. Once a pianist is physically and mentally exhausted, the possibility of injury through inappropriate movements becomes a major danger.

- Articulation, or playing legato, staccato or portamento;
- Playing chords, thirds and octaves evenly and accurately;
- Playing scales and arpeggios smoothly and fluently;
- Coordination of the hands.

In the category interpretation the following items are included:

- Dynamics (gradual or sudden changes of volume);
- Fluency of playing (feeling tempo and pulse of the selected piece);
- Playing polyphony (playing two or more simultaneous melodic lines independently);
- Remaining in tempo (with clear pulsation);
- The use of pedal (using the pedal properly and coordinating hands and pedal smoothly);
- Aural control (distinguishing timbre, accuracy and pitch);
- Musical expression (interpreting the musical style, and following the melodic lines with emotional communication).

The category general practicing and performing issues includes the following items:

- Sight reading (the ability or skill to read the sheet music without previous practice);
- Memorizing (the ability or skill to memorize the music or play without the score accurately and with consciousness);
- Focusing attention (concentrating on the music without distractions);
- Stage fright (the ability to overcome anxiety when performing in public);

- Practicing efficiency (the relation between time spent in practicing and the results);
- Managing and correcting mistakes (the ability to analyze mistakes and find adequate ways to overcome them);
- Motivation (internal or external factors that stimulate the desire and energy to be continually interested and committed to practicing).

2.2 Analysis of piano practicing issues and approaches from contemporary piano methods

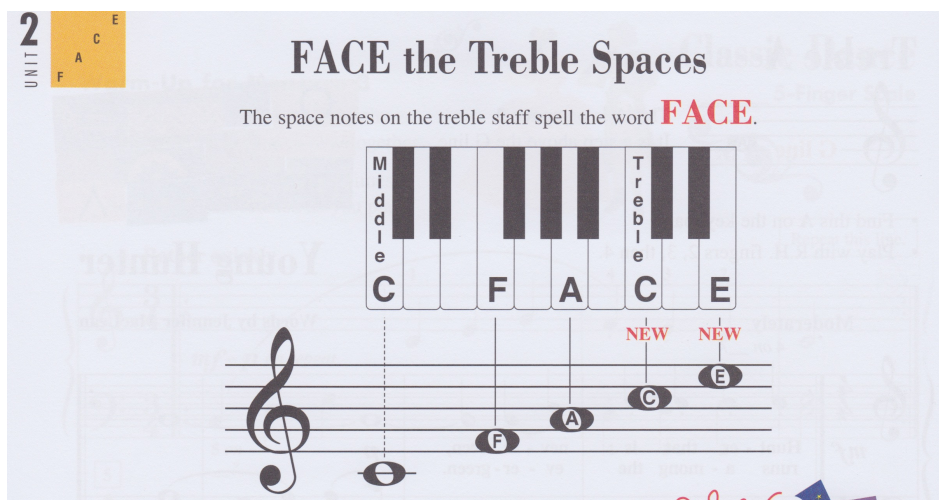
2.2.1 Technical issues

2.2.1.1 Accuracy

The key of accurate playing is reading without mistakes. For piano beginners, reading notes on staves is demanding. However, some strategies can be used to simplify the complexity of reading and improve its efficiency and accuracy. The American piano method *Piano Adventures*⁶ guides the students to read the space notes on the treble staff by spelling the word FACE. This way, students do not have to count every note one by one starting from C and so the mistakes can be greatly eliminated. The word-spelling strategy inspired many music teachers and they invented similar approaches for their students. The order of line notes on the treble staff is E-G-B-D-F, which are the first letters of the sentence: Every Good Boy Deserves Fun. On the bass clef, the space notes can be memorized as: All Cows Eat Grass and the line notes can be memorized as Grizzly Bears Don't Fear Anything. While reading a musical score, all elements should be valued, including note, rests, flats, sharps, dynamics, etc.

⁶ FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 1, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2011, p.18. ISBN: 978-1-61677-078-5.

Figure n.1 FACE the Treble Spaces⁷



Another American method *Bastien Piano Basics*⁸ introduces a stave-less note reading strategy, whereas the students play following the direction of the notes/melody. This strategy also helps the students to establish a logical connection between sheet music and the piano keyboard following the direction of the melody. As the notes go higher, the player plays on the higher register on the piano keyboard and when the notes go lower, the player plays lower register on the keyboard. This stave-less strategy is firstly introduced to play on the black keys and then on the white keys. This arrangement has three advantages:

1. The black keys are narrower and shorter than white keys, so learners who have small hands can start by playing the keys that are closer to each other.
2. In terms of degree of difficulty, the songs are arranged from easy to more difficult level, which means that the students should firstly try to visualize and play on narrower black keys. Once the student can ensure the accuracy while playing on the black keys, playing the white keys will be easier in terms of touch.
3. Except for the accuracy of reading, the familiarity of the keyboard is another factor that influences playing accuracy. Students who practice on black keys at first are more familiar with the arrangement of the keyboard. Until they

⁷ FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 1, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2011, p.18. ISBN: 978-1-61677-078-5.

⁸ BASTIEN, J. *Bastien Piano Basics*. Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1985. ISBN: 0-8497-5265-5.

progress to play pieces with sharps and flats, they can experience playing on the black keys.

4. Pentatonic scale that is played on the black keys offers various possibilities to create short melodies that are very appropriate to children's ear due to their simplicity and unselfconscious openness of expression. Many modern piano methodologies at the elementary level place a heavy emphasis on developing creativity through improvisation in children, largely through use of the pentatonic scale.

*The European Piano Method*⁹ introduces practicing on the black keys from the low to high register of the piano keyboard to establish the understanding of the arrangement of piano keyboard and improve the familiarity of playing on the black keys. In addition, several black-key exercises with interesting melodic lines are included in the book which makes the practicing more interesting for the student. It is worth mentioning that the exercises are designed to learn by ear, which benefits aural training as well.

⁹ EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1, Schott Music GmbH, 1992. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

Figure n.2 Playing on the black keys¹⁰

A Refrain
 mit der Faust spielen / play with your fist / jouer avec ton poing

B Couplet 1
 D.C.

C Couplet 2
 D.C.

D Couplet 3
 Reihenfolge / pattern / modèle: || : A :|| B - A - C - A - D - A
 D.C.

Secondo

Refrain (mit 2 Händen / with 2 hands / à deux mains)
 R 2 3 4 R R 4 3 2 R 2 2 2 2 2
 L² L L² L 2

© 1992 Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz

Generally, both the *Piano Adventures* and *The European Piano Method* are using practicing on the black keys to develop the keyboard awareness and to increase the accuracy while playing. Author Bob Hinz claimed that students' overall ability to play the piano will grow as they develop their tactile sense (the feel of the keys and

¹⁰ EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1, Schott Music GmbH, 1992, p.18. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

relationship between them) and their kinesthetic sense (sense of motion and distances that the hands do in relation to each other and player's body).¹¹

2.2.1.2 Independence of the fingers

Piano playing requires high flexibility and independence of fingers although they are physically created in different length and strength. The thumb is shorter than the other four fingers but it is also the strongest, while 4th and 5th finger are considered to be the weakest. Sometimes, the students cannot make movements independently with their 4th and 5th fingers. These two fingers are dependent on each other, for example the 4th finger is driven by the 5th finger when it is pressing the key. Studies of the deep flexor, and common extensor muscles of the fingers have revealed that there is frequently a strong synchronization between the motor neurons (nerve cells in the spinal cord that control muscles of the hand via nerves running in the arm.) controlling the different parts of the same muscle that act on different fingers.¹² With practice however, it is possible to decrease the level of synchronization, demonstrating that the influence of the central nervous system can allow a greater degree finger control to be acquired.¹³

*The Virtuoso Pianist*¹⁴ composed by Carl Hanon provides exercises to improve the finger independence. The purpose of the exercises is to develop the evenness, strength and flexibility of the fingers. Specific exercises for the thumb, 4th and 5th finger are included. For example, exercises no.32-37 are used for thumb practicing, and they include turning and moving the thumb under other fingers with fluency and accuracy.

¹¹ HINZ, B. *Improving Accuracy by Developing Keyboard Awareness*. Creative Keyboard, Mel Bay's Online Webzine, August 2009.

¹² REILLY, K.T., NORDSTROM, M.A. and SCHIEBER, M.H. *Short-term Synchronization between Motor Units in Different Functional Subdivisions of the Human Flexor Digitorum Profundus Muscle*. American Physiological Society, Journal of Neurophysiology, vol. 92(2), 2004, p.734-742.

¹³ WATSON, A.H.D. *What Studying Musicians Tell Us about Motor Control of the Hand?* Journal of Anatomy, vol. 208(4), 2006, p.527-542.

¹⁴ HANON, C.L. *The Virtuoso Pianist*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1993. ISBN: 978-0-7935-2544-7.

Figure n.3¹⁵ Hanon finger exercise n.35

Turning the thumb under the 5th finger. This exercise is of the highest importance.

M. M. ♩ = 40 to 72.

35. Repeat this measure 10 times.

The “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” Variations in the *Suzuki Piano School*¹⁶ is another suitable practicing material for finger independence. The Variations are in different rhythmical patterns and different articulations in each hand separately. Each finger should repeat the same note several times and the independence can be developed through this movement with time and patience.

¹⁵ HANON, C.L. *The Virtuoso Pianist*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1993, p.47. ISBN: 978-0-7935-2544-7.

¹⁶ SUZUKI, S. *Suzuki Piano School*, vol.1, New International Edition. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 2008. ISBN: 978-0-7390-5447-5.

Figure n.4¹⁷ “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” Variations

9

1

“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” Variations

Variations sur « Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman »
Variationen über „Leuchte, Leuchte kleiner Stern“
Variaciones de “Estrellita”

Shinichi Suzuki
(1898–1998)

Right hand

1

3 *simile*

5

7

9

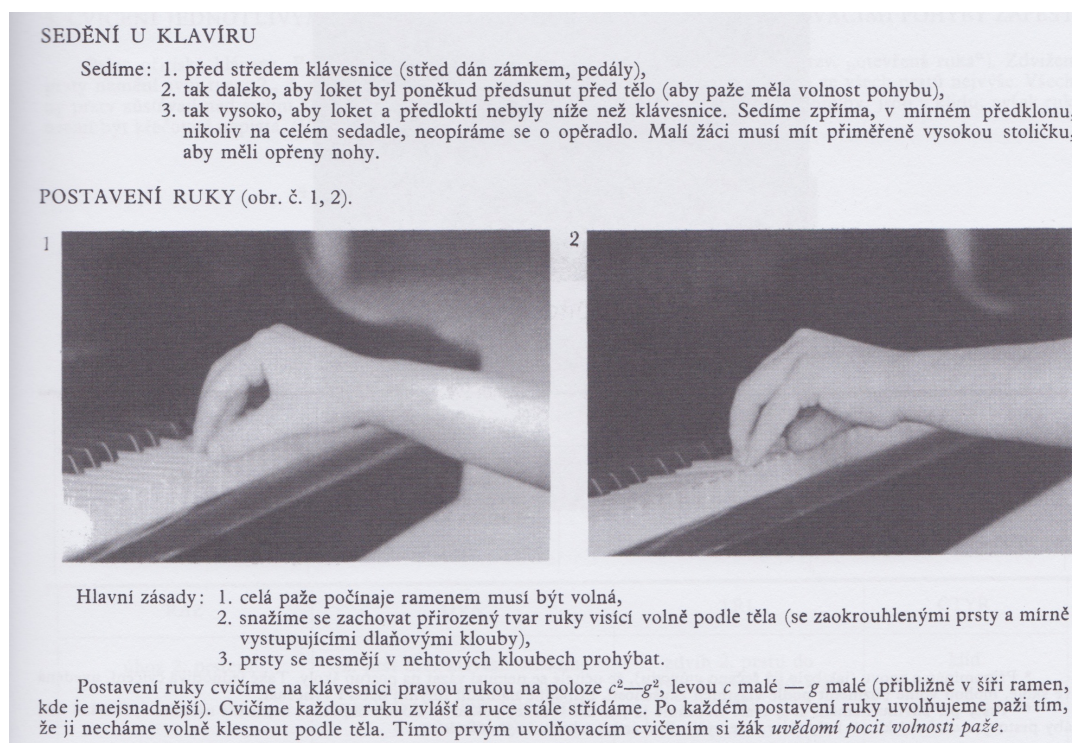
11

¹⁷ SUZUKI, S. *Suzuki Piano School*, vol.1, New International Edition. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 2008, p.9. ISBN: 978-0-7390-5447-5.

2.2.1.3 Position of the wrists, arms and shoulders

Some piano methods from 19th and 20th century claimed that the shape of the hands should remain steady as if holding an egg in them. With the development of piano methodology and new research findings in the field of neurobiology, most contemporary authors believe that having a relaxed and natural hand and body position is a much better and healthier physical state for all piano players. There are several traditional piano methods that introduce the position of the hands at the first class of piano playing. For example, Czech piano method *Klavírní škola pro začátečníky*¹⁸ explains how to sit at the piano and illustrates the positions of the hand with photographs. The method also emphasized the importance of relaxed wrist.

Figure n.5¹⁹ Position of the hands on the piano



Establishing good hand position for piano playing is of great importance. Incorrect hand and body position and tense movements could not only unable the student to achieve practicing goals and reduce his/her practicing efficiency, but it could also lead

¹⁸ BÖHMOVÁ, Z., GRÜNFELDOVÁ, A. and SARAUER, A. *Klavírní škola pro začátečníky*. Bärenreiter Praha, 2002. ISBN: 979-0-2601-0158-6.

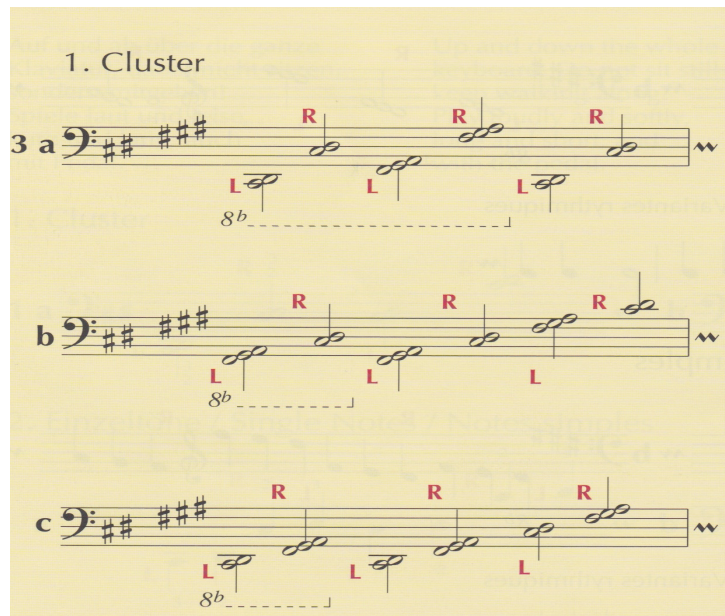
¹⁹ Ibidem p.9.

to physical injury. Authors Natalie Doughty and Scarlette Harris pointed out that muscle tension and discomfort can be caused by following positions:

- raised shoulders (engagement of shoulder elevators including upper trapezius)
- jutted arms (activation of shoulder abductors including triceps and medial deltoid)
- tight forearms (the result of simultaneous contractions of the wrist extensors and flexors)²⁰

Teachers should always be aware of students' position and remind the students to follow and correct their hand movements and release the tension during practice. The practice of "Clusters" introduced in *The European Piano Method*²¹ is always effective exercise to release the tension in the hands. When students are playing the "Clusters" from low to high register on the keyboard, they should raise their hands and arms to press the keys and this movement enables them to relax their muscles so that the hands do not get stiff.

Figure n.6²² Clusters



²⁰ DOUGHTY, N. and HARRIS, S. *Beyond the Hand Position: Teaching Principles of Injury Preventive Piano Technique To Young Students*. MTNA Collegiate Chapters Piano Pedagogy Symposium, University of North Florida, 2017.

²¹ EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1. Schott Music GmbH, 1992. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

²² Ibidem p.10.

2.2.1.4 Articulation

Author Sandra Rosenblum claimed that:

Articulation in performance is the delineation of motives or musical ideas by grouping, separating and related accenting of notes. Whether indicated by the composer or determined by the performer, it is a principal element in the internal shaping of the phrases and in alliance with harmonic and rhythmic activity in the clarification of melodic segments and phrase lengths. Through this clarification music gains shape and meaning analogous to that provided for language by punctuation and accentuation.²³

The difference among the articulations is mostly based on the touch of the keys. With different articulations, different sound effects can be produced. Articulations that beginners at the primary stages of piano study should master include portamento, staccato and finally legato. Portamento or non-legato refers to a non-continuous sound effect in which the notes in a phrase are produced successively. This is the most basic articulation, the player should firstly raise the hand and visualize the key or position that is going to be pressed, and then drop the hand and touch the key with the top of the finger. The movement should be natural and with relaxed wrist and arm. This articulation is introduced in the first lesson of almost all piano methods. As an example we will take an exercise called *The Train* from *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*²⁴. Students should press each key with a free and relaxed hand movement. The sound effect imitates the train slowly moving forward.

²³ ROSENBLUM, S.P. *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications*. Indiana University Press, 1988, p.144. ISBN: 9780253343147.

²⁴ THOMPSON, J. *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*, Part 1. The Willis Music Company, 1955. ISBN: 978-1423489344

Figure n.7²⁵ The Train

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "The Train". On the left, there is a black and white illustration of a steam locomotive pulling a passenger car, with a small figure standing on the platform. To the right of the illustration, the title "The Train" is written in a bold, serif font. Above the title, a small musical notation shows a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and two notes: a quarter note on G4 and a quarter note on A4, with the label "New Note" and numbers 1 and 2 below them. The main score consists of two systems of piano notation. The first system has a treble and bass clef, a 4/4 time signature, and four measures. The first measure has a whole note on G4 in the treble and a whole note on G2 in the bass. The second measure has a half note on G4 in the treble and a half note on G2 in the bass, with a small figure of a person running between the notes. The third and fourth measures each have a half note on G4 in the treble and a half note on G2 in the bass. The second system consists of two staves (treble and bass) with a 4/4 time signature and four measures, each containing a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5 in the treble, and G2, F2, E2, D2 in the bass.

Legato and staccato are usually introduced when the student has mastered the portamento articulation. The *Piano Time*²⁶ explains legato and staccato in an understandable way and provides exercises for young learners.

²⁵ THOMPSON, J. *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*, Part 1. The Willis Music Company, 1955, p.13. ISBN: 978-1423489344

²⁶ HALL, P. *Piano Time*. Book 1, New Edition. Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-19-372784-7.

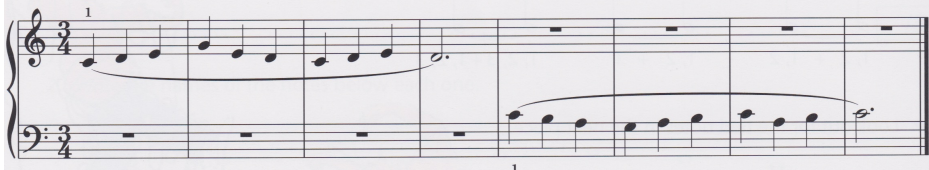
Figure n.8²⁷ Legato and staccato exercises

Legato and staccato

Legato



- ◆ Legato means 'smoothly'. Play the notes grouped by the curved line without any gaps in between them.


Swing tune



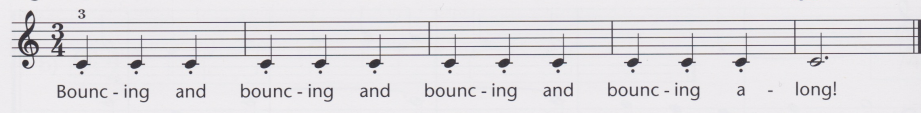
- ◆ These curved lines also indicate a 'phrase mark'. The notes grouped together over or under the curved line belong together in a musical sentence.

Staccato

- ◆ A dot placed over or under a note like this  or this  makes it short and jumpy.
- ◆ Your wrist must feel quite loose, so that your hand can spring back after each note. Pretend that you are bouncing a ball.




Right hand:

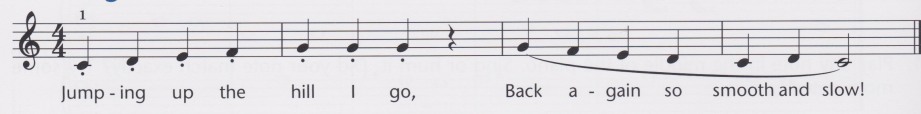


Bounc - ing and bounc - ing and bounc - ing and bounc - ing a - long!

Left hand:

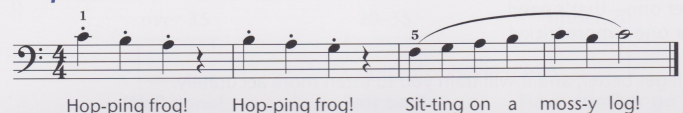


The frog



Jump - ing up the hill I go, Back a - gain so smooth and slow!

Hop it!



Hop-ping frog! Hop-ping frog! Sit-ting on a moss-y log!

14

2.2.1.5 Chords, thirds and octaves

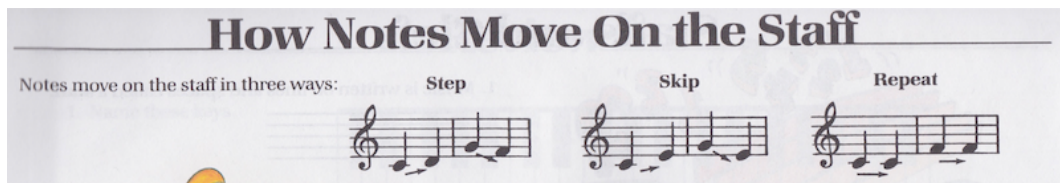
Chords, thirds and octaves require two or more than two fingers to be pressed at the same time to obtain harmonic sound effect. In order to get neat sound effect of chords,

²⁷ HALL, P. *Piano Time*. Book 1, New Edition. Oxford University Press, 2004, p.14. ISBN: 978-0-19-372784-7.

players should keep the finger tops on a parallel horizon and press the keys at the same time with same speed. Accuracy is of great importance when playing chords, therefore reading the notes correctly and putting the hand on the precise position on the keyboard is crucial. According to the modern piano methods, an effective solution is to analyze the relationship of the notes in chords. Once the student can distinguish different types of chords, he/she can play them quickly and accurately.

The *Bastien Piano Basics*²⁸ introduces three ways how the notes move on the staff, which are *Step*, *Skip* and *Repeat*. This can help the students to distinguish the relationship of two neighboring notes quite fast.

Figure n.9²⁹ How Notes Move On the Staff



After analyzing these existing ways of note moves, I derived another one that I named “Jump”.

Figure n.10³⁰ Jump upwards and downwards



Once these two notes are combined together, they form the chord. The following figure illustrates several different types of chords, which are the combinations of two and three notes. Memorizing visually the shapes of the chords and practicing them can effectively improve learners’ chords reading skills.

²⁸ BASTIEN, J. *Bastien Piano Basics*, Primer Level. Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1985. ISBN: 0-8497-5265-5.

²⁹ Ibidem p.26.

³⁰ Illustrated by Beibei Hu.

Figure n.11³¹ Chord shapes



It is worth mentioning that chords practicing should start from two note combinations, whereupon we can add more notes. Playing chords requires independence of the fingers, therefore practicing should proceed step by step. The *Piano Adventures*³², for example, firstly introduces the three basic positions of the chords: root position, 1st inversion and 2nd inversion and then arranges practice of broken chords and blocked chords. Thus learners can gain theoretical knowledge and practice gradually.

³¹ Illustrated by Beibei Hu.

³² FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 3B, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-61677-180-5.

Figure n.12³³ Chord inversions: Three positions for triads

6 UNIT

Chord Inversions: Three Positions for Triads

The notes of a triad can be rearranged, or *inverted*. The letter names stay the same. Every triad has 3 positions: **root position**, **1st inversion**, and **2nd inversion**.

- Play these 3 positions for the C major triad. *Listen* to the sound!

Root Position

5th
3rd
root

The **root** is the lowest note.

1st Inversion

root
5th
3rd

The **3rd** is the lowest note.

2nd Inversion

3rd
root
5th

The **5th** is the lowest note.

The chord name (root) is the upper note of the interval of a **4th**.

- Watch as your teacher demonstrates.
- Your turn! Play slowly and memorize.

1. C Major Chord Inversions

Broken chords

R.H.

Blocked chords

Broken chords

L.H.

Blocked chords

The key issue of playing octaves is that the hands can easily get tense, because the fingers have to stretch to reach the keys. In that sense, pianist Alfred Cortot believed that:

The utility of suppleness in the movements of the wrist, for the execution of octaves, is a fact so obvious that we feel no need to insist upon it. But we should like to try and establish the factors by which the mechanism of this movement, comparatively simple in the case of detached octaves, differs and becomes complicated when it is associated with the action of the fingers; an action which practically non-existent in the execution of

³³ FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 3B, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2015, p.48. ISBN: 978-1-61677-180-5.

detached octaves is on the contrary, of extreme importance in the case of octaves executed legato.³⁴

Therefore, the following exercises were designed to relieve the tension while practicing octaves. When practicing exercise No.1a, the fingers should remain on the keyboard and the wrist should move up and down as marked $1/2 \setminus 1/2$ for relaxation. With the movement of the wrist, the hand tension problem can be solved. The purpose of the exercise No.1b is to practice the independence of 1st and 5th fingers and to relax the wrist meanwhile. Exercise No. 1c requires high flexibility of the wrist since the hand should move between 2 octaves. However, the hand should support the movement and the finger tops should seize the keys accurately.

Figure n.13³⁵ Octave exercises

EXERCISE No 1a

EXERCISE No 1b.

EXERCISE No 1c.

2.2.1.6 Scales and arpeggios

Scales and arpeggios are basic techniques in piano playing that every learner should master. Good scale and arpeggio playing goes a long way in establishing a firm foundation for technique. When students master scales and arpeggios they are well on

³⁴ CORTOT.A, *Rational Principles of Pianoforte Technique*. Editions Maurice Senart, 1928, p.88.

³⁵ Ibidem p.88-89.

the way to a solid technique.³⁶ For the following reasons that scales and arpeggios are important in piano study. First of all, scales and arpeggios are basic elements of musical passages in piano works and they are widely used by composers since baroque era. There are different combinations of scales and the arpeggios in various works. Secondly, practicing scales and arpeggios improves the flexibility, strength and speed of the fingers, which enables the fingers to play more smoothly. It also increases the finger's familiarity with the arrangement of the keyboard and the distances among the keys. Besides, players can hear and feel the characteristics of different tonalities and the changes of intervals and harmonies.

Almost every piano method introduces scales and arpeggios and provides etudes or songs for practices. The *Piano Adventures*³⁷ guides the students to start with 5-finger scales that are simpler and easier for beginners to practice. The method also introduces the formula of scales so that the students can understand the structure of the scales and learn all scales by analogy. Followed by the 5-finger scales are chords exercises and songs in the same key, which are preparation for arpeggios.

³⁶ MAYDWELL, F. *Piano Teaching, A Guide for Nurturing Musical Independence*. New Arts Press of Perth, 2006, p.40. ISBN: 978-0-9577027-2-1.

³⁷ FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 2A, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-61677-081-5.

Figure n.14³⁸ “Secret” scale formula

5 UNIT 5

“Secret” Scale Formula

You already know C and G 5-finger scales. They use the whole and half step pattern:
Whole step – Whole step – Half step – Whole step

C Chord

Say: Tonic Whole Whole Half Whole I V7 I

- Play and say the words above aloud. W=Whole Step H=Half Step
- Now try the “secret” formula using the G 5-finger scale.

The D 5-Finger Scale

To find the D 5-finger scale, play and say the whole - whole - half - whole pattern. Notice finger 3 rests comfortably on the black key.

D Chord

Say: Tonic Whole Whole Half Whole I V7 I

D Chord

Say: Tonic Whole Whole Half Whole I V7 I

DISCOVERY Which fingers play a black key? ____ What is the name of the black key? ____ #.

34 24 F

*The Virtuoso Pianist*³⁹ is one of the most popular methods that is used by piano teachers and learners for decades in China. This method is suitable for systematic scale study. It includes scales and arpeggios of 24 major and minor keys with fingerings, including harmonic and melodic minor scales, chromatic scales in octaves, thirds and sixths, arpeggios of diminished seventh chords and dominant seventh chords. Instead of practicing them one by one in the order presented in the book, teachers should arrange the learning process reasonably and effectively according to their students’ current needs and issues. For example, the teacher can ask the students to practice B major scale first. Although B major is usually thought of as a remote key

³⁸ FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 2A, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2012, p.34. ISBN: 978-1-61677-081-5.

³⁹ HANON, C.L. *The Virtuoso Pianist*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1993. ISBN: 978-0-7935-2544-7.

(due to its distance from C major in the circle of fifths and its fairly large number of sharps), Frédéric Chopin regarded this scale as the easiest of all to play, as its black keys fit the natural positions of the fingers well; as a consequence he often assigned it first to beginning piano students, leaving the scale of C major last because he considered it the hardest of all scales to play completely evenly (because of its lack of black keys).⁴⁰ However, playing C major scale in contrary motion is recommended, because the fingering and the movement of both hands are equal and therefore the students can coordinate and control their hands easily.

Teachers should ask the student to practice scales in one octave in order to clarify the fingering, key signature and coordinate the hands. Fingering change is demanding and can cause confusion, especially when playing both hands together in parallel and contrary motions. If the fingering is incorrect, the student could hardly complete the scale. When practicing scales, fingers and wrists should be relaxed and flexible and the arm should lead the hand in desired direction; every note should be pressed with equal strength; hands and eyes should prepare ahead to ensure accuracy and fluency. Arpeggio is built on the basis of the chords. Student should firstly ensure the position of the chords, and then practice broken chords and column chords, and at the end practice the arpeggios. Since the distance between each note in arpeggios is wide, the hands should stretch as much as possible so that the fingers could reach the keys. The practicing tips for scales work for arpeggios as well and the student should try to play them melodically in legato.

In addition, it is suggested that the students practice scales and arpeggios in various rhythmical patterns to improve finger flexibility. Take F major as an example. F major scale contains one flat, and the fingering in the right hand is demanding, because the flat should be pressed by the 4th finger. Flexibility and speed of fingers can be improved though rhythmical practice.

⁴⁰ EIGELDINGER, J. *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher: As Seen by His Pupils*. Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.34. ISBN: 978-0521367097.

Figure n.15⁴¹ Rhythmical finger exercises



2.2.1.7 Coordination of the hands

Piano playing requires flexibility of both hands in order to achieve good coordination. However, the left hand for most people is physically weaker than the right hand (except for left-handed). Therefore, the practice of the left hand should be emphasized and not neglected during practice. *Twenty-Four Piano Studies for the Left Hand*⁴², Op. 718, composed by Carl Czerny could be used for these purposes. The purpose of the method is to improve the flexibility of the left hand. The exercises include various elements, such as scales, arpeggios, chords, octaves, repeated notes, turns, leaps, etc. This method is suitable for learners who need to strengthen their technique of the left hand.

In order to improve the technique of both hands and at the same time establish good coordination of hands, almost all piano methods introduce practice for both hands at the beginning stages. Take as an example the *Michael Aaron Piano Course*⁴³. The method guides the students to play with both hands from the first lesson. The pieces in this book are offering balanced technical practice for both hands and are arranged in logical order so that the students can make progress gradually.

⁴¹ Illustrated by Beibei Hu.

⁴² CZERNY, C. *Twenty-Four Piano Studies for the Left Hand*, Op. 718. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1986. ISBN: 978-1-61774-100-5.

⁴³ AARON, M. *Michael Aaron Piano Course*, Grade One. Warner Bros. Publications Inc., Renewed 1973. ISBN: 978-0-89898-855-0.

Figure n.16⁴⁴ Coordination exercises

The image displays two musical exercises from a piano method book. The first exercise, titled "First Lesson", is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef with notes for "Do re do ti do do" and a bass clef with notes for "Part of scale you know,". Fingerings are indicated as 1 2, 1, 1 2, 1. The second system has a treble clef with notes for "C D C B C C" and a bass clef with notes for "For - ward march we go." The second exercise, titled "Up and Down", is also in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef with notes for "C D C D C C" and a bass clef with notes for "C B C B C". Fingerings are indicated as 1 2, 1 2. The second system has a treble clef with notes for "Up and down we trav - el," and a bass clef with notes for "Hap - py as can be." Fingerings are indicated as 1 2.

*The European Piano Method*⁴⁵ also starts with both hands. The exercises are written in contrary motions, which means that one hand imitates the motion of the other as looking into the mirror. The author also composed pieces targeting coordination. Take the *Hopping Along* as an example. This piece can be divided into two phrases and each phrase has 8 measures. In the first phrase, the left hand plays long dotted half notes continuously to obtain a legato sound effect while the right hand plays two quarter notes followed by a quarter rest to achieve a flexible and bouncing sound effect. And the articulation of the hands in the second phrase switches. Students should practice the hands separately and master the different articulations in both hands. Before coordinating both hands together on the piano, students can practice the movements of the hands without the instrument. Finally combine both hands together slowly.

⁴⁴ AARON, M. *Michael Aaron Piano Course*, Grade One. Warner Bros. Publications Inc., Renewed 1973, p.7. ISBN: 978-0-89898-855-0.

⁴⁵ EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1. Schott Music GmbH, 1992. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

Figure n.17⁴⁶ Hopping Along

Nachhüpfen Hopping Along Bonds successifs F. E.

© 1992 Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz

The process of coordination is related to the consciousness of the brain, which includes subjective consciousness and subconscious. From neurobiological perspective, subjective consciousness cannot focus on two targets at the same time. Therefore, the brain operates subjective consciousness and subconscious when two tasks need to be controlled. When players practice one hand, the subjective consciousness only focuses on one musical line and when players need to cooperate both hands together, the subconscious should control the second musical line while the subjective consciousness is controlling the first musical line. Thus, players should practice hands separately to establish both subjective consciousness and subconscious before coordinating.

2.2.2 Interpretative issues

2.2.2.1 Dynamics

In music, dynamics refers to the strength and volume of the sound. It is an important element that influences musical expression and sound effect when performing musical works. L. v. Beethoven used various dynamic terms to express the dramatic musical changes in his compositions, for example the 3rd movement of the *Piano Sonata n.18* in E flat major, Op 31 N0.3:

⁴⁶ EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1. Schott Music GmbH, 1992, p.43. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

- *ff*: fortissimo, play very loud;
- *sf*: subito forte, play loud suddenly;
- *p*: piano, play soft;
- *fp*: forte piano, play loud and then immediately soft.

Figure n.18⁴⁷ Excerpt from Beethoven piano sonata n.18 in E flat major

Author Bruno H. Repp claimed that:

Performers must decide on the basis of what "feels right" to them how strongly to play tones marked as accented, how to shape the dynamic progression of a *crescendo* or *decrescendo*, how to give expressive melodic gestures appropriate dynamic shapes, and how to give repetitive rhythmic figures a characteristic dynamic profile. These are aspects of "horizontal" dynamics, applied to successive notes. In addition, there are aspects of "vertical" dynamics to consider, which apply to simultaneous notes. Particularly important here are the emphases of the principal melody over less important voices and the proper "voicing" of chords to make them sound rich and balanced. Consequently, the intricate dynamic

⁴⁷ BEETHOVEN, L.V. *Klaviersonate Nr. 18 Es-dur*, Opus 31 No.3. Urtext. G. Henle Verlag, 2004. ISMN: 979-0-2018-0755-3.

microstructure of a performance reveals far more about the performer's skill, taste, and grasp of the musical structure than about his or her observance of prescriptions in the score.⁴⁸

Author Alan Fraser in the book *The Craft of Piano Playing* noted: *A New Approach to Piano Technique* that piano players should make great effort on the differentiation of dynamics to achieve orchestral sound effects with contrasting timbres.⁴⁹

Piano learners should be guided to improve the control and strength of the fingers and listen to the sound effect and distinguish the quality of the sound they have played. Author Lillie. H. Philipp suggested that substantial proportion of scales practicing is an effective approach to improve the strength of fingers and develop the control of dynamics.⁵⁰ *The European Piano Method*⁵¹ introduces the musical dynamics at the very beginning stage of piano study, including piano, forte, crescendo and decrescendo.

⁴⁸ REPP, B.H. *The Dynamics of Expressive Piano Performance: Schumann's "Traumerei" Revisited*. The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, vol. 100, issue 1, 1996.

⁴⁹ FRASER, A. *The Craft of Piano Playing: A New Approach to Piano Technique*. Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003, p.17. ISBN 0-8108-4591-1.

⁵⁰ PHILIPP, L.H. *Piano Technique: Tone, Touch, Phrasing and Dynamics*. Dover Publications, Inc., 1982, p.7. ISBN: 0-486-24272-2.

⁵¹ EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1. Schott Music GmbH, 1992. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

Figure n.19⁵² Dynamics exercise in Puzzle

Rätsel No. 1 Puzzle No. 1 Devinette No. 1

Die linke Hand antwortet
in der Gegenbewegung.

The left hand answers
in contrary motion.

La main gauche répond
en mouvement contraire.

f = forte
p = piano

F. E.

The score consists of two systems of piano music in 4/4 time. The first system has three measures. The first measure is marked *f* (forte) and the second *p* (piano). The second measure contains a question mark, indicating a 'puzzle' where the student must determine the correct dynamics for the notes. The third measure is marked *f*. The second system has three measures. The first is marked *f*, the second *p*, and the third *f*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

Figure n.20⁵³ Crescendo and Decrescendo exercise

Crescendo – Decrescendo

F. E.

The score consists of two systems of piano music in 3/4 time. The first system starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a crescendo hairpin. It contains six measures with fingerings 3, 5, 2, 4, 1, and 2 indicated above the notes. The second system starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes a decrescendo hairpin. It contains six measures with fingerings 1, 4, 2, 4, 3, and 2 indicated below the notes.

Teachers should clarify to the students that the concept and effect of dynamics is relative, for example, adults are stronger than children because their body and physical features are fully developed. Therefore the piano teachers can interpret the fortissimo with huge volume while young aged learners are not able to achieve such great sound effect at the moment. However, this does not mean that students' physical capability limits them to use dynamics while playing. Learners should interpret dynamic signs according to their current strength. The space and volume of forte or

⁵² EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1. Schott Music GmbH, 1992, p.22. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

⁵³ Ibidem p.45.

crescendo should be prepared and created. As long as piano dynamics is soft and tender enough, forte can be presented with the powerful touch on the keys, using the force of fingers, arms and the entire body.

2.2.2.2 Fluency of playing

There are several factors that reduce fluency in piano playing:

- Incorrect or inappropriate fingering;
- Technical problems;
- Unfamiliarity of the score;
- Playing in a too fast tempo;
- Lack of hands separate practice;
- Lack of understanding of the structure of the musical piece.

In order to achieve fluent playing, teachers should help the students to establish good practicing habits and arrange their practicing schedule. Take the *Arabesque* from F. Burgmüller's *Twenty-five Easy and Progressive Studies for the Piano*⁵⁴ as an example:

1. Analyze the piece and divide it into several sections. The piece is composed in ternary form with a small coda and the structure is A+B+A+ Coda.
2. Practice each section step by step in a slow tempo, hands separately, especially the chords and the sixteenth notes.
3. Clarify the fingerings, especially the fingering change in the left hand in section B.
4. Coordinate hands in a slow tempo until each hand can play fluently.
5. Increase the tempo gradually.

⁵⁴ BURGMÜLLER, F. *Twenty-five Easy and Progressive Studies for the Piano*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1852.

Figure n.21⁵⁵ Arabesque by F. Bürgmüller

L'ARABESQUE

3

Allegro scherzando (♩ = 152)

2^e ÉTUDE

p

p legg.

cresc.

1^o 2^o

sf

f

dimin. e poco rall.

In tempo

p

cresc.

p dolce

1^o 2^o

cresc.

risoluto

2.2.2.3 Playing polyphony

When playing homophonic music, the objective consciousness of the brain controls the melodic line which is more important and the subconscious controls the accompaniment that supports the melody. However, polyphonic music is a

⁵⁵ BÜRGMÜLLER, F. *Twenty-five Easy and Progressive Studies for the Piano*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1852, p.3.

complicated musical texture that widely used in baroque time period, which is consisted of two or more independent melodic lines simultaneously.

The analysis of polyphonic music should include two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension refers to the processing of voices, which should be well balanced. Each voice should remain its clear melodic line and fluency. The vertical dimension refers to counterpoint, which means the relationship between voices that are harmonically interdependent (polyphony) yet independent in rhythm and contour.⁵⁶ The key point of practicing polyphonic music is aural control. Generally, players should focus on the following four principles:

1. Listen and distinguish every independent melodic line. Learners should analyze the voices of the piece and practice them separately. Marking the voices with different color markers may be helpful to distinguish them.
2. Ensure the continuity and completeness. Each melodic line should be played and heard until it ends, which cannot be interrupted by counterpoints.
3. Pay attention to the conversation between the voices, for example the subject and countersubject. The layers and tendencies of the voices should be expressed.

The *Mikrokosmos*⁵⁷ composed by Béla Bartók contains several counterpoint and canon exercises that learners can practice as polyphonic musical pieces.

⁵⁶ LAITZ, S.G. *The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening*. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press, 2008, p.96. ISBN: 978-0-19-530108-3.

⁵⁷ BARTÓK, B. *Mikrokosmos, 153 Progressive Piano Pieces*. Boosey & Hawkes, 2004. ISBN: 978-1-4234-9304-4.

Figure n.22⁵⁸ Exercise n.22 from the Mikrokosmos by B. Bartók

Figure n.23⁵⁹ Exercise n.30 from the Mikrokosmos by B. Bartók

The game “Carrot Fever”⁶⁰ can be beneficial to understanding the polyphonic texture. The teacher starts to sing a melodic line or simply says a sentence and then the student repeats. The teacher needs to keep singing or saying something and the student should repeat continuously his phrase without pause.

⁵⁸ BARTÓK, B. *Mikrokosmos, 153 Progressive Piano Pieces*. Boosey & Hawkes, 2004, p.22. ISBN: 978-1-4234-9304-4.

⁵⁹ Ibidem p.27.

⁶⁰ Game: Carrot Fever, titled by Beibei Hu.

2.2.2.4 Remaining in tempo

Author Alan Belkin stated that:

A good musician must be able to maintain a stable tempo, but this does not mean playing mechanically. There is a good deal of misconception around this point, so it is worth clarifying. Many great musicians have insisted that tempo must be fluid – e.g. Beethoven’s “elastic beat”, or Chopin’s description of “tempo rubato”. This means that around a basic, stable, pulsation, there will be very slight anticipations and hesitations, according to the musical character and structure. For both technical and musical reasons, the pianist needs to breathe at cadences, and even at various smaller articulations within a phrase. This requires adding very small amounts of time.

He also claimed that the changes of tempo should not be recognized by audience, otherwise, the player has taken too much time.⁶¹

For beginners, practicing with a metronome is an effective way that helps the students to remain in stable tempo. Take the *Andantino* from *Klavierschule: 12 Handstücke zum Gebrauche beim Unterrichten*⁶² as an example. Practicing suggestions are as following:

1. Check the time signature (4/4) and the standard tempo (andantino: ♩=78-83).
2. Analyze rhythmic patterns of the piece, which includes dotted quarter notes, continuous eighth notes, continuous sixteenth notes, triplets and grace notes.
3. Start practicing all parts with the correct rhythmic patterns in a very slow tempo (e.g. ♩ around 40) with the metronome.
4. Increase the tempo a little (e.g. ♩ from 40 to 50) when the student can play the rhythmic patterns fluently in stable tempo.
5. Try to play the whole piece in a slow tempo and speed up gradually.

⁶¹ BELKIN, A. *General Principles of Piano Technique*. [online, accessed on October 29th 2016]. Available at: <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/site/en/index.php/technique/>

⁶² TÜRK, D.G. *Klavierschule:12 Handstücke zum Gebrauche beim Unterrichten*. Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2008.

Figure n.24⁶³ Andantino from Klavierschule: 12 Handstücke zum Gebrauche beim Unterrichten by Türk

3. Andantino

The musical score for '3. Andantino' is written in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It consists of 14 measures across five systems. The first system (measures 1-3) starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a tenuto (*ten.*) marking. The second system (measures 4-6) features a forte (*f*) dynamic and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The third system (measures 7-9) includes a piano (*p*) dynamic and a forte-piano (*fp*) dynamic. The fourth system (measures 10-12) features a forte-piano (*fp*) dynamic and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The fifth system (measures 13-14) features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a trill (*tr*) marking.

Another strategy is to clap the rhythm of the musical piece before practicing on the piano. It is suggested to clap different beats with various gestures or movements so that the students can distinguish the notes and rests more precisely. Finally, when the students practice on the piano, they will have better control of the tempo.

⁶³ TÜRK, D.G. *Klavierschule:12 Handstücke zum Gebrauche beim Unterrichten*. Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2008, p.5.

Figure n.25⁶⁴ Gestures for beats 1-4 and Gestures for rests 1-4



⁶⁴ Photographed by Beibei Hu.

2.2.2.5 The use of pedal

Pedal is an important part of piano playing. Proper use of pedal can greatly influence the overall sound effect of the performance. Noted pianist, composer and conductor Anton Rubinstein believed that the pedal is the soul of the piano. Therefore, guiding students to use the pedal appropriately is an essential part of piano teaching.

There are three pedals on the piano including una corda or soft pedal, sostenuto pedal and damper or sustain pedal (from left to right), and each of them has its unique function. The sustain pedal is the most widely used pedal in piano performance. Author Alan Belkin describes the use of sustain pedal as follows:

- Gauging the loudness of successive notes/chords within one harmony, according to the remaining pedal resonance, sometimes called "playing on the overtones";
- Using short washes of pedal to suggest subtle background planes of tone, adding depth and richness to the sound at key moments in a phrase;
- Using the pedal progressively within a phrase, to create a resonant crescendo;
- Opening the dampers completely before playing, sometimes to pick up resonance from other instruments before starting to play, e.g. in chamber music.⁶⁵

The *Alfred's Basic Piano Library*⁶⁶ introduces the sign and basic use of sustain pedal in an understandable way and includes pieces for further practice. The first exercise teaches the student to listen and feel the resonance and vibration of the sound when holding the pedal. Teachers can ask the students to keep the pedal until the sound completely fades away, so that students focus on listening. The *Harp Song* gives the students an opportunity to enrich the harmonic sound with a sustain pedal. As the suggestions noted, students should play the piece in different registers of the keyboard, in order to encourage them to listen to the pitches and layers of the sound. Teachers should ask the students to practice this musical piece without the pedal before

⁶⁵ BELKIN, A. *General Principles of Piano Technique*. [online, accessed on October 29th 2016]. Available at: <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/site/en/index.php/technique/>

⁶⁶ PALMER, W.A., MANUS, M. and LETHCO, A.V. *Alfred's Basic Piano Library*, Lesson Book, Complete Level 1, 3rd Edition. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc. ISBN: 0-88284-817-8.

coordinating hands and foot together, or practice pedaling separately to train the movements of the foot and ankle.

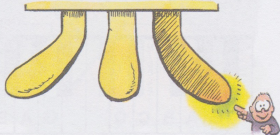
Figure n.26⁶⁷ Exercise for Damper Pedal


The Damper Pedal

The **RIGHT PEDAL** is called the **DAMPER PEDAL**.

When you hold the damper pedal down, any tone you sound continues after you release the key.

The **RIGHT FOOT** is used on the damper pedal. Always keep your heel on the floor; use your ankle like a hinge.



This sign shows when the damper pedal is to be used: 

The sign means: **PEDAL DOWN**

↓ ————— HOLD PEDAL ————— ↑

PEDAL UP

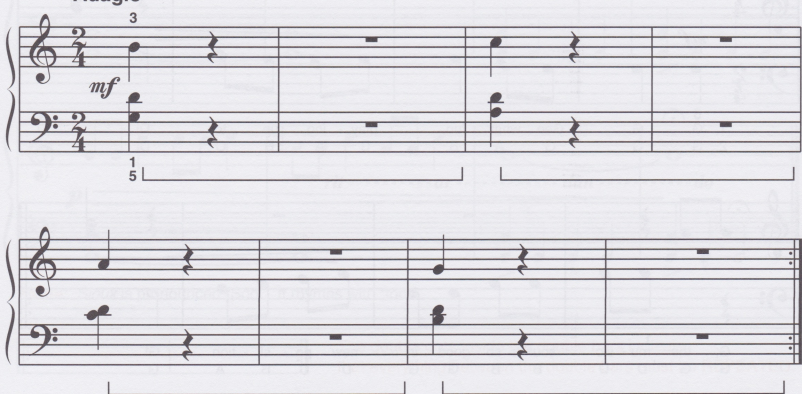
Pedal Play

This easy **PEDAL STUDY** will show you how the damper pedal causes the tones to continue to sound, **EVEN AFTER YOUR HANDS HAVE RELEASED THE KEYS**.

Press the pedal down as you play each group of notes. Hold it down through the rests.

Play **VERY SLOWLY** and **LISTEN**.

Adagio



⁶⁷ PALMER, W.A., MANUS, M. and LETHCO, A.V. *Alfred's Basic Piano Library*, Lesson Book, Complete Level 1, 3rd Edition. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., p.52. ISBN: 0-88284-817-8.

Figure n.27⁶⁸ Harp Song



Harp Song

Moderately slow

mf-p (1st time *mf*, 2nd time *p*)

5₁

4₁

2₁

VERY IMPORTANT!

Also play *HARP SONG* in the following ways:

1. Play the 3rd and 4th measures of each line one octave higher than written.
2. Play the 1st and 2nd measures of each line one octave lower than written.
3. Any combination of the above two ways.

It is worth motioning that the practice suggestions in this method pointed out that students should practice very slowly and listen to themselves. Players should always pay attention to the sound, especially when adding the pedal. Author Joseph

⁶⁸ PALMER, W.A., MANUS, M. and LETHCO, A.V. *Alfred's Basic Piano Library*, Lesson Book, Complete Level 1, 3rd Edition. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., p.53. ISBN: 0-88284-817-8.

Banowets in the book *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling*⁶⁹ claims that: "The ear alone, rather than a set of printed directions, must always be the final guide for an artistic performance." On one hand, the sustain pedal can make the sound and texture richer, on the other hand, it can cause chaotic and blurry sound. In order to obtain neat sound, players should press and release the pedal in time following their critical musical ear.

For students who have already learned how to use the damper pedal well, syncopated pedal can be introduced. Suitable instructions are provided in the method *The Music Tree*⁷⁰:

⁶⁹ BANOWETS, J. *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling*. Indiana University Press, 1992. ISBN: 978-0253207320.

⁷⁰ CLARK, F., GOSS, L. and HOLLAND, S. *The Music Tree: A Plan for Musical Growth at the Piano*, Part 3. Summy-Birchard Music, 2001. ISBN: 1-58951-000-3.

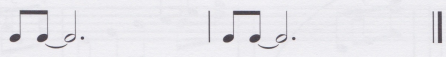
Figure n.28⁷¹ Exercise for Syncopated Pedal

Syncopated Pedal

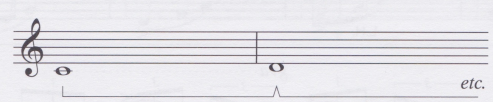
The damper pedal can be used to connect one tone or chord to the next without any break in the sound. This is called SYNCOPATED PEDAL.

To practice syncopated pedal, play the C Major scale with one finger, listening to be sure that each tone blends smoothly into the next. These steps will help:

Say: Up-down Hold 3- 4- Up-down Hold 3- 4-


Rhythm: 

Pedal: Up-Down Up-Down

Play: 

Play *Quiet Prayer* using the damper pedal to connect the tones of each chord.

Quiet Prayer



For young aged students who cannot reach the pedal, adjustable piano pedal extender can be used, which also benefits to correct sitting posture.

⁷¹ CLARK, F., GOSS, L. and HOLLAND, S. *The Music Tree: A Plan for Musical Growth at the Piano*, Part 3. Summy-Birchard Music, 2001, p.61. ISBN: 1-58951-000-3.

Figure n.29⁷² Picture of adjustable piano pedal extender



2.2.2.6 Aural control

Aural training is a significant part of musical education, and it includes learning to identify intervals, chord progressions, pitch, timbre, melody, and rhythm. In fact, the great aural ability of excellent musicians is not only inborn, but also resulting from long-term training. For piano learners, training for critical ears should start from the beginning of their study. The *Klavíni školička*⁷³ guides students to play and listen to the sound that imitates different animals, which is actually an introduction of piano pitch and timbre.

⁷² Adjustable Piano Pedal. [online, accessed on June 2th 2017] Available at: <https://detail.tmall.com/item.htm?spm=a230r.1.14.34.ebb2eb2dVDz7y&id=43450293149&ns=1&abucket=18>

⁷³ JANŽUROVÁ, Z. and BOROVÁ, M. *Klavíni školička*. Schott Muisce, 1981. ISBN: 979-0-2050-0648-8.

Figure n.30⁷⁴ Song Hra na zvířátka a děti

Hra na zvířátka a děti

Dítě si s pomocí učitele, který mu lehce a volně vede ruku, vyhledává na klavíru tóny, které se podobají jeho představě o medvědovi, kočičce atd., poslouchá učitelovu hru a snaží se uhodnout, zda zpívají děti, štěká pejsek atd. Děti si mohou pojmenovat tóny v různých oktávách i podle své představy, nejen jak je níže uvedeno.

skřivánek zpívá
vrabec čimčará
kočička mňouká
děti zpívají
pesek štěká
kravička bučí
medvěd bručí

*The European Piano Method*⁷⁵ encourages students to play all melodies they know on the piano ever since the students have obtained basic understanding of piano keyboard. The purpose of this methodology is to help the students to establish the basic familiarity and sensibility of the melodic line. The method also provides a collection of popular tunes of different countries, from which students can get inspiration. The student should firstly recall the melody and try to play it correctly by listening. When the melody sounds different from the original one, they need to try others keys to obtain correct pitch. In addition, teachers can teach the student three basic chords and ask him/her to accompany the melody himself/herself, which not only trains the coordination of the hands, but also improves the aural ability of harmonic sound effect.

Aural ability can be trained and improved in the process of learning new musical pieces. The exercises in the *Mikrokosmos*⁷⁶ are very suitable materials for beginners to learn by ear. The first 9 exercises are written in 5-finger positions, and the motions of both hands are parallel, therefore the melody and rhythm are easy to follow and students can play them by listening and memorizing the melodic lines. Transposition can be practiced as ear training advances, when students should start playing the same melody in different keys. In this process, students learn to find the correct notes with

⁷⁴ JANŽUROVÁ, Z. and BOROVÁ, M. *Klavíni školička*. Schott Music, 1981, p.14. ISBN: 979-0-2050-0648-8.

⁷⁵ EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1. Schott Music GmbH, 1992. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.

⁷⁶ BARTÓK, B. *Mikrokosmos, 153 Progressive Piano Pieces*. Boosey & Hawkes, 2004. ISBN: 978-1-4234-9304-4.

their critical listening, which increases their sensitivity to tones and intervals. For students with basic playing technique, learning new pieces by ear is feasible and effective. Take the *Trällerliedchen* (*Humming song*) from the *Album für die Jugend*⁷⁷, Op.68 composed by Robert Schumann as an example.

Figure n.31⁷⁸ Humming Song by R. Schumann

Trällerliedchen
Album für die Jugend, Op. 68 N° 3

Robert SCHUMANN
(1810-1856)

Nicht schnell ♩ = 138

This is a typical homophonic song in ternary form. The learning process can be arranged as follows:

⁷⁷ SCHUMANN, R. *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68. Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2006.

⁷⁸ Ibidem p.4.

1. Listening to the whole piece demonstrated by the teacher and analyzing the form of the piece;
2. Learning the melodic lines of sections A and B respectively;
3. Combining the melodies of section A and B, and then playing the melodic line of the whole piece according to the musical structure (A-B-A);
4. Learning the accompaniment of sections A and B respectively and finding the inner melodic line;
5. Comparing the melodic line to the inner melodic line in the accompaniment and finding their relation;
6. Coordinating both hands.

Undoubtedly, learning new pieces by ear is more demanding than learning by notes. However, the aural control can be improved significantly.

Sometimes, we found that students focus too much on their hands and ignore the quality of the sound they produce. This may happen due to the fact that students are often not aware of the importance of sound effect. Effective strategies are to record the student's performance and ask him/her to evaluate the sound and improve; or compare the student's recording to professional musician's recording and find the differences and improve. These two strategies are based on the pursuit of good sound effect. Good sound effect can be obtained in two ways:

1. Analyze the music and imagine how the ideal sound effect should be, then practice by touching the keys in several different ways and distinguish the timbres. Repeat practice until the beautiful sound effect is produced.
2. Listen to good recordings and live performances (from teachers and professional musicians).

2.2.2.7 Musical expression

Musical expression refers to how a player interprets the connotation and characteristic of a musical work with his/her own understanding and emotional communication. There are many factors that can influence the sound effect. When a musician performs a piece of notated music, the performed music typically shows large variations in

expressive parameters like tempo, dynamics, articulation, and depending on the nature of the instrument, further dimensions such as timbre and note attack.⁷⁹ The interpretation may contain emotional elements (e.g. to play a piece ‘solemnly’), and also elements that convey musical structure (e.g. to highlight a particular melodic voice, or to mark a phrase boundary).⁸⁰ The contribution of the performer to expression communication has two facets: to clarify the composer’s message by enlightening the musical structure and to add his personal interpretation of the piece. A mechanical performance of a score is perceived as lacking of musical meaning and is considered dull and inexpressive as a text read without any prosodic inflexion.⁸¹

For beginners, learning the musical terms and expressional techniques is an important part of piano study. Some piano methods not only introduce and explain the musical terms and include musical pieces for practice, but also contain a key to the musical terms at the end of the book that students can use it as a mini musical dictionary. This approach is widely used in methods from different countries, for example the American method: *Michael Aaron Piano Course*⁸², the British method: *Piano Time*⁸³ and the Czech method: *Nová klavírní škola*⁸⁴.

⁷⁹ GRACHTEN, M. and WIDMER, G. *Linear Basis Models for Prediction and Analysis of Musical Expression*. Journal of New Music Research, vol. 41, issue 4, Creativity Rethinks Science, 2012, p.311-322.

⁸⁰ PALMER, C. *Music Performance*. Annual Review of Psychology, vol. 48, 1997, p.115–138.

⁸¹ POLI, D.G. *Methodologies for Expressiveness Modeling of and for Music Performance*. Journal of New Music Research, vol. 33, issue 3, 2004, p.189-202.



⁸² AARON, M. *Michael Aaron Piano Course*, Grade One. Warner Bros. Publications Inc., Renewed 1973. ISBN: 978-0-89898-855-0.

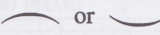

⁸³ HALL, P. *Piano Time*. Book 2, New Edition. Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-19-372786-1.

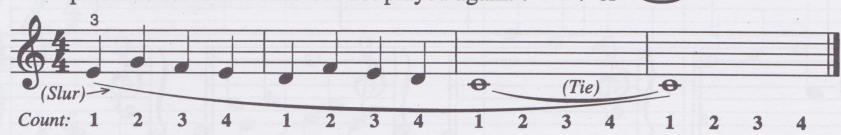
⁸⁴ JANŽUROVÁ, Z and BOROVIÁ, M. *Nová klavírní škola*, 1. díl. Schott Music Panton s.r.o. Praha, 2000. ISMN: 979-0-2050-0600-6.

Figure n.32⁸⁵ Slurs and Ties

Slurs and Ties


The SLUR is a curved line over two or more notes of different pitch indicating that the notes are played legato. Legato means to play in a smooth and connected manner.  or 

The TIE is also a curved line but connects two notes of the same pitch, indicating that the time value of the two notes is combined. The second note of the pair is counted and held but not played again.  or 



Sandman's Lullaby















Moderato (a medium rate of speed—not too fast)



**p* is the symbol for the Italian word piano, which means soft.

⁸⁵ AARON, M. *Michael Aaron Piano Course*, Grade One. Warner Bros. Publications Inc., Renewed 1973, p.15. ISBN: 978-0-89898-855-0.

Figure n.33⁸⁶ Dictionary of musical terms

DICTIONARY OF MUSICAL TERMS			
A Tempo	Resume the original tempo	Moderato	A medium rate of speed (not too fast)
Accelerando	Increase speed gradually	Natural sign.....	.....Cancels a sharp or flat
Accent mark.....	.....Play the note louder	Pianissimo	<i>pp</i> .....Very soft
Allegretto	Moderately fast tempo, lively	Piano <i>p</i>	Soft
Allegro	Fast, brisk tempo	Poco a Poco	Little by little
Andante	Slowly	Presto	Very fast
Crescendo (cresc.)	.....Gradually getting louder	Repeat signs	Repeat from the beginning
D.C. al Fine	(Da Capo al Fine) Return to the beginning and play to the word "Fine"	.....	.....Repeat section between repeat signs
Decrescendo (decresc.)	.....Gradually getting softer	Ritardando	<i>rit., ritard.</i> .....Gradually slow down
Diminuendo (dim.)	.....Gradually getting softer	Sforzando	<i>sfz</i> .....Very strong accent
Fermata	Hold the note or rest longer	Sharp sign	Raises a note one half step
Fine	The end (pronounced "Fee-nay")	Slur	A curved line that indicates notes which are to be played legato
Flat sign	Lowers a note one half step	Staccato	Detached, short tones
Forte	<i>f</i> .....Loud	Tempo	Rate of speed
Fortissimo	<i>ff</i> .....Very loud	Tie	A curved line that connects two notes of the same pitch, means to combine their rhythmic values
Half step	From one key to the very next key	Trill	To alternate a note with the next one above, playing one right after the other
Legato	Smooth and connected tones, usually indicated by a slur	Vivace	Fast and lively
Mezzo forte	<i>mf</i> .....Moderately loud		
Mezzo piano	<i>mp</i> .....Moderately soft		
Misterioso	In a mysterious manner		

Regarding the limitation of comprehension and life experience that young aged students have, titled musical pieces are a suitable learning material. Students can get inspired from the titles and interpret the music with their own emotional expression. The *Album für die Jugend*⁸⁷, Op.68 composed by Robert Schumann is tailored for young students, and each piece in the collection has a very specific title. Take *Erste Verlust* as an example. For students who do not come from German speaking countries, teacher should translate the title or ask the student to guess the meaning of the title by demonstrating the piece. According to the title "First Loss" and its melodic

⁸⁶ AARON, M. *Michael Aaron Piano Course*, Grade One. Warner Bros. Publications Inc., Renewed 1973, p.63. ISBN: 978-0-89898-855-0.

⁸⁷ SCHUMANN, R. *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68. Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2006.

line in a minor key, students can feel the sadness of the piece. Teachers can also ask the students to recall their own first loss, so that they may foster a sense of empathy, which also benefits performing with musical expression.

2.2.3 General practicing and performing issues

2.2.3.1 Sight-reading

Sight-reading is regarded as one of the most important and challenging skills for pianists. Leopold Mozart boasted of his young son's impressive sight-reading ability, and Czerny, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn were all praised for their public displays of sight-reading fluency.⁸⁸ Nowadays, sight-reading is also included in some musical examinations, for example the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) examinations⁸⁹. When doing a sight reading practice, the player has to read the sheet music with 1-2 minutes of preparation. The key point is that once the player starts to play the piece, he/she should complete it without any pause or repetition no matter whether there are mistakes. Although sight-reading skill is demanding, it can be improved through continuous practice. Training students to become familiar with the keyboard topography, engage in directional reading, chunk bits of information into recognizable patterns, and develop effective sight-reading habits may increase their chances of becoming fluent sight-readers.⁹⁰

Sight-reading skill is relevant to various musical abilities including piano technical skills, theoretical knowledge, experience and eye-hand coordination. To improve the accuracy in sight-reading, the students should read the sheet music carefully. The *Bastien Piano Basics*⁹¹ introduces an effective way that enables the learners to read music fast, easy and without mistakes. The technique mentioned in this method uses *Step, Skip and Repeat* to distinguish three different relations between the notes on the

⁸⁸ LEHMANN, A.C. and ERICSSON, K.A. *Performance Without Preparation: Structure and Acquisition of Expert Sight-Reading and Accompanying Performance*. *Psychomusicology: A Journal of Research in Music Cognition*, vol. 15(1-2), 1996, p.1-29.

⁸⁹ ABRSM. Available at: <http://cz.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/piano>

⁹⁰ DIRKSE, S. *A Survey of the Development of Sight-reading Skills in Instructional Piano Methods for Average-age Beginners and A Sample Primer-level Sight-reading Curriculum*. University of South Carolina, 2009. ISBN: 9781109125368.

⁹¹ BASTIEN, J. *Bastien Piano Basics*, Primer Level. Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1985. ISBN: 0-8497-5265-5.

stave. In my opinion, *Jump* (mentioned in 2.2.1.5 Chords, thirds and octaves) can be used to indicate one more position. Student can memorize these 4 note positions and use them to analyze the score instead of reading every note independently.

In addition, defining four special positions of the note C can also help to avoid mistakes while sight reading: upper second space and upper second ledger line on treble clef stave, the lower second space and lower second ledger line on bass clef stave.

Figure n.34⁹² Note C



1 and 2 octaves higher than the middle C and 1 and 2 octaves lower than the middle C

*Joining the Dots*⁹³ is another method that can be used for sight-reading practice. The materials in the method are arranged from simple to complicated and there are practicing suggestions provided for consultation, for example play with each hand separately and clap the rhythm several times, which teachers can use to guide the students to make progress gradually.

Except for the two methods we mentioned, here are some practicing suggestions for both teachers and learners while sight-reading. According to student's sight reading level, some steps can be omitted.

- Read through the whole piece including time signature, sharps and flats;
- Determine a slow or moderato tempo and try to clap the rhythm of the piece. Pay attention to the complicated rhythmic patterns, for example dotted notes and syncopated rhythm;
- Ensure the position of the first note and the direction of the melodic line, analyze the chords and inversions of the accompaniment and try to play above the keyboard;

⁹² Illustrated by Beibei Hu.

⁹³ BULLARD, A. *Joining the Dots: A Fresh Approach to Piano Sight-Reading*. Book 1. ABRSM Publishing, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-86096-976-8.

- Finally play the piece in one go.

The following are selected sight-reading exercises designed by Jen's Piano Studio⁹⁴, which piano learners and teachers can use for practice.

Figure n.35⁹⁵ Sight-reading exercise

The image displays three systems of musical notation for sight-reading exercises in 4/4 time. The first system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a sequence of notes: quarter notes G4, A4, B4, C5, quarter notes D5, E5, F5, G5, quarter notes A5, B5, C6, D6, quarter notes E6, F6, G6, A6, quarter notes B6, C7, D7, E7, quarter notes F7, G7, A7, B7, quarter notes C8, D8, E8, F8, quarter notes G8, A8, B8, C9. The bass staff contains a sequence of notes: quarter notes C3, D3, E3, F3, quarter notes G3, A3, B3, C4, quarter notes D4, E4, F4, G4, quarter notes A4, B4, C5, D5, quarter notes E5, F5, G5, A5, quarter notes B5, C6, D6, E6, quarter notes F6, G6, A6, B6, quarter notes C7, D7, E7, F7, quarter notes G7, A7, B7, C8. Fingerings 1 and 5 are indicated above the first and fifth notes of the treble staff. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. The second system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a sequence of notes: quarter notes C4, D4, E4, F4, quarter notes G4, A4, B4, C5, quarter notes D5, E5, F5, G5, quarter notes A5, B5, C6, D6, quarter notes E6, F6, G6, A6, quarter notes B6, C7, D7, E7, quarter notes F7, G7, A7, B7, quarter notes C8, D8, E8, F8, quarter notes G8, A8, B8, C9. The bass staff contains a sequence of notes: quarter notes C3, D3, E3, F3, quarter notes G3, A3, B3, C4, quarter notes D4, E4, F4, G4, quarter notes A4, B4, C5, D5, quarter notes E5, F5, G5, A5, quarter notes B5, C6, D6, E6, quarter notes F6, G6, A6, B6, quarter notes C7, D7, E7, F7, quarter notes G7, A7, B7, C8. Dynamics include *mp* and *f*. The third system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a sequence of notes: quarter notes C4, D4, E4, F4, quarter notes G4, A4, B4, C5, quarter notes D5, E5, F5, G5, quarter notes A5, B5, C6, D6, quarter notes E6, F6, G6, A6, quarter notes B6, C7, D7, E7, quarter notes F7, G7, A7, B7, quarter notes C8, D8, E8, F8, quarter notes G8, A8, B8, C9. The bass staff contains a sequence of notes: quarter notes C3, D3, E3, F3, quarter notes G3, A3, B3, C4, quarter notes D4, E4, F4, G4, quarter notes A4, B4, C5, D5, quarter notes E5, F5, G5, A5, quarter notes B5, C6, D6, E6, quarter notes F6, G6, A6, B6, quarter notes C7, D7, E7, F7, quarter notes G7, A7, B7, C8. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*.

Generally, sight-reading practice should start with easy and short passages, for example at the beginning the teacher can choose pieces in C major, 4 bars in one hand and then increase the difficulty gradually. Teachers should provide students sufficient time to get well prepared at the beginning stage. If a student is supposed to take sight reading examination, it would be better to practice more complicated pieces than the exam requires, so that the student feels less stressed and more confident in the exam.

⁹⁴ Jen's Piano Studio, available at: www.jenspianostudio.com/ [retrieved on July 1st 2017]

⁹⁵ Sight-reading steps, available at: www.jenspianostudio.com/ [retrieved on July 1st 2017]

In order to improve sight-reading skills, students should not only practice continuously to establish the familiarity with the keyboard and improve the eye-hand coordination, but also read and listen to as much repertoire as possible to get familiar with works of various styles from different time periods.

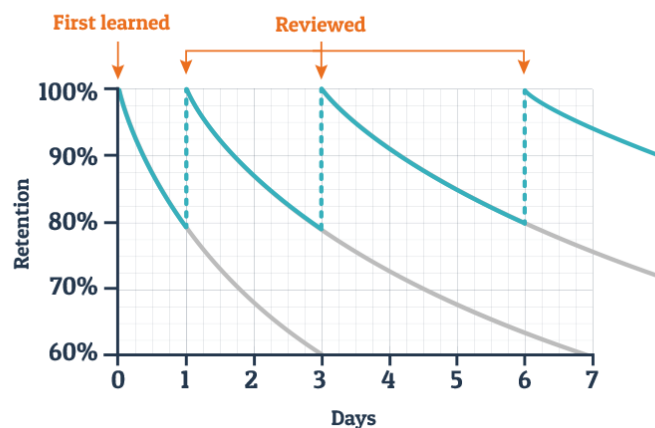
2.2.3.2 Memorizing

Memorization is an important skill for all music learners. Playing by heart does not only shows that players are able to memorize notes, but also enables players to interpret the pieces musically with emotional expression.

According to Hermann Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve⁹⁶, new learned information stored in brain will be forgotten very fast. The maintenance of stored information can be extended gradually with repeated reviews. A musical work is consisted of hundreds of notes and various rhythmical patterns. In addition, the musical connotation requires deep understanding and detailed analysis. Its complexity is self-evident. Therefore, piano players should spend a lot of time to memorize a musical work thoroughly.

Figure n.36⁹⁷ Typical forgetting curve for newly learned information

Typical Forgetting Curve for Newly Learned Information



⁹⁶ EBBINGHAUS, H. *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*, 1885. Graph that illustrates decline of memory retention in time.

⁹⁷ Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve. [online, accessed on June 12th 2017] Available at: <http://www.wranx.com/ebbinghaus-and-the-forgetting-curve/>

There are several memorizing dimensions for piano players. The basic memorizing stage is kinesthetic or muscle memory, which means players memorize only with their automatic finger movements. Aural memorization is the second memorizing stage that the musical pieces are memorized according to the melodic and harmonic sound effect. However, both kinesthetic and aural memories usually cause mistakes and memory blanks. Stable and reliable memory is based on the analysis of musical scores. The basis of memorization is analysis, a planned, systematic effort to organize the various aspects and elements of the music into distinctive patterns, images, and relationships which the mind is able to store, retain, and reconstruct better and more easily than a jumble of indistinct bits of information.⁹⁸

Author Jennifer Mishra investigated the efficiency of Holistic (Whole) and Segmented (Part) memorization strategies among 40 university students who enrolled in instrumental education majors. The result shows that:

Memorization efficiency was affected by the strategy employed. Practicing a piece from beginning to end (Holistic strategy) allowed musicians to memorize a short, technically simple piece of music faster than segmenting it. The important element of Holistic practice is playing until the end of the piece even if memory or technique is disrupted temporarily. The Serial strategy involves returning to the beginning when an error or memory slip interferes with practice, rather than pushing through to the end. This is the least efficient strategy and questions remain as to the stability of the memory obtained through this approach. Most musicians reported using an Additive strategy and while this strategy was more efficient than either the Segmented or Serial strategy, it was less efficient than the Holistic strategy.⁹⁹

The following effective memorizing strategies are suggested to both piano teachers and learners while practicing.

⁹⁸ AGAY, D. *Teaching Piano: A Comprehensive Guide and Reference Book for the Instructor*. Yorktown Music Press, 1981, p.220. ISBN: 9780825680397.

⁹⁹ MISHRA, J. *Influence of Strategy on Memorization Efficiency*. Royal Northern College of Music, Music Performance Research, vol. 4, 2011, p.60-71. ISSN: 1775-9219.

- Cooperative playing with the teacher. Firstly, both the teacher and the student should sit at the piano. Then the teacher plays one hand while the student plays the other hand by memory; they switch parts. The student should listen carefully to the teacher as he/she plays and cooperate with the teacher to complete the music. Refine all details that the student is not able to memorize well and improve and confirm memory.
- Play a “musical detective” game. This exercise also needs the cooperation of the teacher. The teacher can pick any part of the piece and play it on the piano. The student should listen carefully for any details, for example the melodic line and rhythmic pattern, that may bring a clue and then try to recognize and recall in mind where the phrase occurs in the music. Once the teacher stops playing, the student should respond and play the following phrase as soon as possible.
- Label landmarks on the sheet music. Firstly, analyze and divide the musical pieces into several sections according to the melodic line or phrase. Secondly, label the beginnings of the sections one by one with numbers as landmarks. Then practice from the beginning and stop after few measures, skip to the next landmark immediately. If the player is able to begin each section successfully, he/she can go forward to the following landmark and continue the process until the end. After that, write down the landmarks that the player cannot memorize precisely and repeat practicing them. Finally, go through all landmarks and finish memorizing the whole piece.
- Play a musical puzzle. Firstly, photocopy the sheet music and cross out or color over all measure numbers. Then cut each line of the music so that they are separate. After that, mix up the pieces. Finally, play this musical puzzle, which means put the musical pieces into right order and connect them into the original musical score.

2.2.3.3 Focusing attention

From the cognitive perspective, concentration is often defined as a mental spotlight that shines at things or objectives that we are interested in or care about. Author Aidan Moran stated:

The targets of our concentration beam can be internal (e.g., as happens when we daydream while reading the same sentence again and again in a book) as well as external (e.g., taking notes from a teacher in class). Unfortunately, it is difficult to stay focused for long because of the fragility of our “working memory” – the cognitive system that regulates the storage and manipulation of currently relevant information.¹⁰⁰

The author of *Klavírní školička*¹⁰¹ claimed that children cannot keep sitting at the instrument for long time and they need to take break for a while to re-concentrate. The method also indicates the approximate time frame in which children in different age groups can keep concentrated:

- Children aged 3-4 10 minutes
- Children aged 4-5 11-21 minutes
- Children aged 5-6 24-26 minutes

Apart from the time frame the content of piano lesson is also very important. Reading black and white musical sheet and practicing on the keyboard requires great patience and is often joy-killing for beginners. Once the student loses interest in the learning process, he/she can no longer focus on the lesson. Therefore, each piano lesson should include various activities, so that students’ attention changes from one activity to another but always remains present. Interaction between the teacher and the student in the teaching process is an effective strategy that helps students to focus their attention. For example, asking students questions, and cooperating with them to accomplish required tasks will engage them more than giving passive lectures and simply correcting mistakes. While students are practicing alone, environment is another factor that influences concentration. Players are highly likely to focus on music when practicing in a quite and neat environment without interference from others or toys.

¹⁰⁰ MORAN, A. *Helping Students to Concentrate while Studying*. National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), School Guidance Handbook, 2013. ISSN: 2009-6801.

¹⁰¹ JANŽUROVÁ, Z. and BORO VÁ, M. *Klavírní školička*. Schott Muisic, 1981. ISBN: 979-0-2050-0648-8.

Students are generally more concentrated when practicing with teacher's guidance. However, it is difficult to keep the concentration when they are practicing alone at home. The *Piano Adventures*¹⁰² provides an interesting and modern approach for students: the Piano Adventures Player App. Parents can download the App for learners as an auxiliary tool when they are practicing alone. Take the *Mozart's Five Names* as an example.

The book includes sheet music, lyrics, dynamic marks, practicing suggestions, brief introduction to the composer W. A. Mozart and the title of the original composition, so the students can not only practice the musical piece and sing it, but also obtain basic historical background.

¹⁰² FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 1, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-61677-078-5.

Figure n.37¹⁰³ Mozart's Five Names

Treble C-D-E



Mozart's Five Names*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791, Austria)
arranged

• Play and say these three notes.

Brightly 1 on __?


mf This com - pos - er's name was ver - y long.
Think: "A - lou - et - te"

5 on __?

2
Can you try it loud - ly, say it strong!
(prepare L.H.)

9
Say, "Jo - han - nes Chrys - os - to - mus **f** Wolf - gang A - ma -

15
de - us Mo - zart was his name. *p* s-l-o-w-i-n-g down
Mo - zart was his name." *wrist float-off* 2



What is your full name?

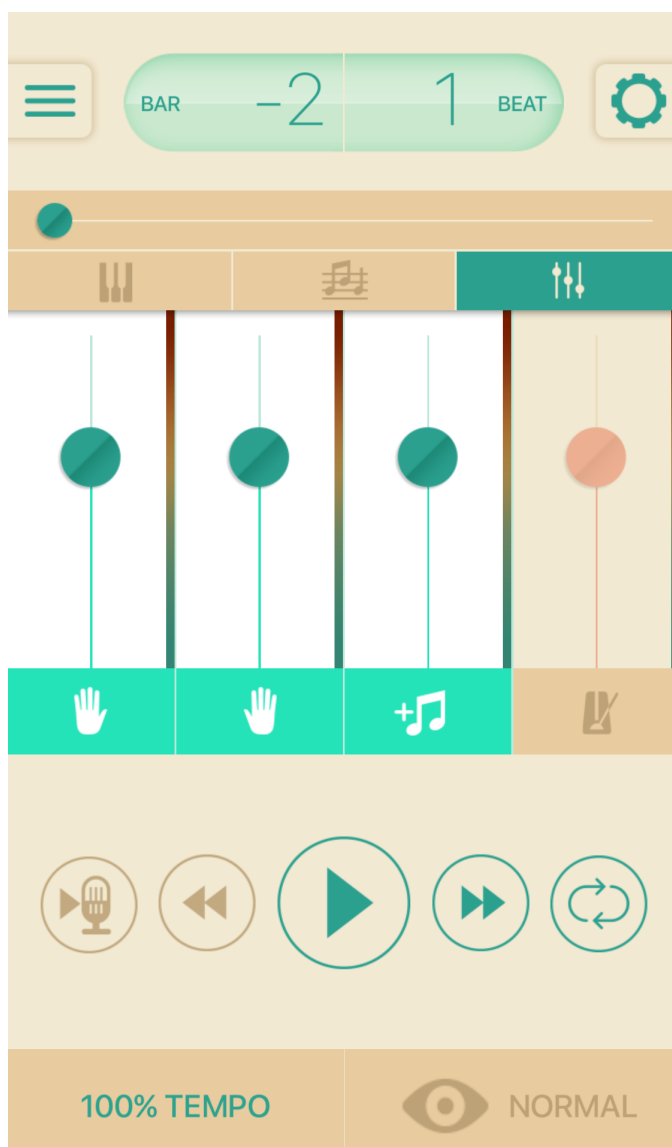
078 *From *Quartet in C, KV157* CD 28-29 15 30-33

The App also provides recording of the piece in both hands, orchestral accompaniment and metronome, with which students can check the accuracy of

¹⁰³ FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 1, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2011, p.23. ISBN: 978-1-61677-078-5.

playing, coordinate and play with the accompaniment, and listen to a richer sound effect. When the accompaniment is played, the screen shows the current bar and beat, so that students can check the rhythm. In addition, students can adjust and switch on or off the metronome according to their current practicing needs. There are many exercises and activities that students can do with this book and App, that can keep them focused and interested in the pieces they are playing.

Figure n.38¹⁰⁴ Piano Adventures Player App



¹⁰⁴ Screenshot of Piano Adventures Player App.

2.2.3.4 Stage fright

Stage fright is a common issue in piano performance, which plagues all players including the beginners. Overcoming stage fright is an important part that ensures performing success. Therefore, reducing stage fright should be a significant topic in piano teaching.

How does stage fright emerge? From biopsychosocial perspective,

Anxiety is the product of a complex and dynamic cognitive appraisal process which actively balances an individual's perceptions of resources, situational demands, and internal and external sources of feedback prior to, during, and following performances. One's appraisal of the demands of a performance situation (e.g. task difficulty, consequences of failure, others' high expectations, and the perceived importance of the outcome) are compared with one's unique individual characteristics (e.g. self-efficacy, trait anxiety, skill level, degree of preparation, and past experience), resulting in an overall assessment of the degree to which the situation poses a threat.¹⁰⁵

For piano players, performing anxiety comes from two aspects: Subjective and objective. Subjective aspect includes three factors:

1. The player is not able to master required piano technique or cannot understand the connotation of musical work, which leads to the diffidence and insecurity of the performance.
2. Players worries too much about the performing effect and the evaluation from the jury or the audience, which increases his/her psychological burden.
3. Piano performance is the result of physiological and psychological coordination and regulating. Weak physical condition can obstruct player's performance as well.

Stage fright caused by objective factors includes pressure brought from unfamiliar environment and atmosphere as well as interference by unforeseen incidents on stage.

¹⁰⁵ KAGEYAMA, N.J. *Attentional Focus as A Mediator in the Anxiety-performance Relationship: The Enhancement of Music Performance Quality under Stress*. Indiana University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007.

According to the causes of stage fright, piano players can adjust mentality and conquer the performing anxiety in three stages including preparation period, 48 hours before the performance and during performing on stage. In the preparation period, players should practice the concert repertoire in every detail, which includes resolving technical issues, deepening the understanding of the works, and consolidating memory. Players can increase self-confidence through overcoming difficulties and establish a sense of accomplishment when making progress. As the performance is being refined, player's performing desire can be improved as well. Besides that, practicing in a stage-simulated environment can enhance players' psychological endurance and concentration. For students who lack performing experience, teachers can record them and post the record online among students and parents to get positive feedback, and then encourage students to perform live on stage. Around 48 hours before the performance, players should get familiar with the performing environment and the instrument. To ensure a good physical condition at the concert, balanced diet and sufficient rest are also necessary. At the concert, players should breathe deeply and encourage themselves. In order to present the best performance on stage, focusing on the music and ignoring the results and feedbacks while performing is the most important.

2.2.3.5 Practicing efficiency

The improvement of piano performing skills requires continuous practice. However, sometimes students make little progress despite great efforts and devotion. Therefore, practicing efficiency is an important and popular topic among both teachers and learners. For teachers, assigning tasks and providing efficient practicing strategies to achieve specific goals (e.g. play a piece fluently, memorize a piece, etc.) is an important component of teaching. In other words, student should be taught how to practice.

The following practicing methods are suggested to beginners:

- Practice hands separately, especially the left hand since physically left hand is weaker than the right hand. When hands practice separately, players can focus

on all details, such as accuracy and rhythm. In addition, complicated and demanding issues can be practiced emphatically and thus tackled.

- Practice in slow tempo. It is necessary for beginners to practice slowly, so that they can play the correct notes with correct articulation. This method is especially important and effective for players who have not mastered piano techniques skillfully.
- Divide the piece into several sections and practice step by step. Students should set the schedule of practice, including the amount and the goal of daily practice. For example, review the previously practiced sections and coordinate one or two new sections every day, and memorize two sections that have been played fluently. Starting from difficult sections is an effective way to achieve one's goal faster. Once the difficult technical issues are resolved, the whole piece can be accomplished smoothly.
- Practice pieces with time gap. Learners may get bored if they keep practicing the same pieces for a long time. Students can stop practicing for two weeks or one month and then start again in order to get fresh and new inspiration. Incorporating spaced practice (or practice with time gaps) into education can be a cost-effective approach - learning becomes more durable in the same amount of time (relative to massed practice), and this can lead to future savings because less time needs to be spent on relearning content that has been forgotten, leaving more time for other productive learning activities (e.g., higher order analysis, application of knowledge).¹⁰⁶

2.2.3.6 Managing and correcting mistakes

Whenever the player starts to practice new piece of music, he/she should read the piece carefully and precisely in order to avoid initial mistakes. Teachers should help the students to establish good practicing habits to improve their accuracy, for instance practice hands separately, and start with very slow tempo. If the student practices in a correct way, mistakes will be greatly reduced. For the mistakes that have already occurred, the teacher should firstly remind the student and ask the student to repeat

¹⁰⁶ KANG, S.H.K. *Spaced Repetition Promotes Efficient and Effective Learning: Policy Implications for Instruction*. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, vol. 3, issue 1, 2016, p.12-19.

once more and check himself/herself. If the student can find the mistakes himself/herself and is able to correct them, teacher can only mark them on the score as a reminder so that the student will notice and avoid repeating them when practicing alone at home. However, some students can hardly recognize their mistakes. Under such circumstance, teachers should point out the mistakes (e.g. which phrase or measure contains the mistakes) and clarify the type of the mistakes (e.g. wrong note, rhythm or fingering) and then guide the students to find the mistake themselves.

Teachers should also encourage the students to figure out the way to manage mistakes themselves. An effective strategy is asking questions. Ask questions that stimulate students to attain higher levels of thinking. Questions are good if they can help students to apply their knowledge, analyze, synthesize and evaluate.¹⁰⁷ The questions can be raised as follows:

- How to make the sound smoother?
- Why is this melody sounding different, is it because of the rhythm or pitch/ give examples?
- Where does the phrase end?

After the mistakes have been corrected, the section should be repeated several times to establish a new playing habit. Sometimes students are used to the way they have practiced before, as a result, they are able to play the parts that have been corrected, but they still repeat the same mistakes when practicing the whole piece. Five-measure mistake correction method can be used to deal with this problem. Firstly, the student should practice the measure which has the mistake. Then add one measure before and after it and practice three measures together. After that, practice with two measures before and after the problematic measure. Finally, practice the whole piece.

Teachers' demonstration is the most direct way to show the student how to practice in a correct way. Students can follow the teachers' movements and imitate to manage mistakes. Detailed explanation also helps the student to analyze and correct mistakes. When students get stuck in problems, teachers should explain them how to resolve

¹⁰⁷ MAYDWELL, F. *Piano Teaching, A Guide for Nurturing Musical Independence*. New Arts Press of Perth, 2006, p.23. ISBN: 978-0-9577027-2-1.

them in various ways that students can understand. Some students are too shy to express their ideas or speak out their confusions. For these students, teachers should ask them to repeat the method with their own words to ensure that they have understood.

2.2.3.7 Motivation

Motivation is an important element of learning, which affects learning outcomes and efficiency. Since piano study requires an enormous amount of time and energy for practice, learner's motivation and interest for learning may reduce with time. In order to stimulate and maintain learner's desire for piano study, teachers should use suitable and positive approaches in the teaching process.

There are various methods that contain musical pieces of different styles, which teachers can assign according to students' personalities, interests, and even nationalities. For example, the C part in the *Klavírní škola pro začátečníky*¹⁰⁸ includes 55 short pieces composed by a great number of composers, which provides plenty of choices for teachers. Besides, the included songs target different expressional and technical issues which learners can resolve by practicing them. Another method titled *Chinese Style Primary Piano Method*¹⁰⁹ introduces Chinese traditional and folk songs from various regions. This method offers very suitable lyrics, illustrations and practicing suggestions that encourage the learners to understand and play the songs better. Take as an example the *Beijing Opera Mask*. This piece is written in typical Beijing Opera melodic style and the staccato articulation is used to imitate the musical voice in Beijing opera. The author also raises two questions for players for further musical thinking:

1. How does the rhythmic pattern change in the left hand in the four phrases?
2. How does the musical emotion change if we play all the “si” as “do”?

¹⁰⁸ BÖHMOVÁ, Z., GRÜNFELDOVÁ, A. and SARAUER, A. *Klavírní škola pro začátečníky*. Bärenreiter Praha, 2002. ISBN: 979-0-2601-0158-6.

¹⁰⁹ WANG, L. *Chinese Style Primary Piano Method*, Book 3. Hubei Science & Technology Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-7-5352-7030-6.

Figure n.39¹¹⁰ Beijing Opera Mask

想一想：
乐曲中四个句子的右手旋律是相同的，左手的节奏有什么不同？

知识点
乐队伴奏特色乐器
板鼓、小锣、弦乐。
(板鼓图片见第二册)

第2首 脸谱
京剧音乐片段
王磊 填词编曲

右手手位
e' f' g' a' b'

左手手位
d e f g a

p 踱着那方步 抖着衣袖， *mf* 转 一转眼珠 捋着髯口。

f 心中那得意 摇着盃头， *mp* 心中那焦急 搓着双手。

拓展练习

- 1、请根据四句歌词把四段京剧“做”功表演出来。(注：“唱、念、做、打”为戏曲的四种艺术手段，“做”是其中的一种艺术手段。)
- 2、请把乐曲中所有si音改为do音，重新弹奏。比较音乐的情绪变化。(踱方步的腿是否抬得更高了呢?)

如何培养孩子快乐的能力？

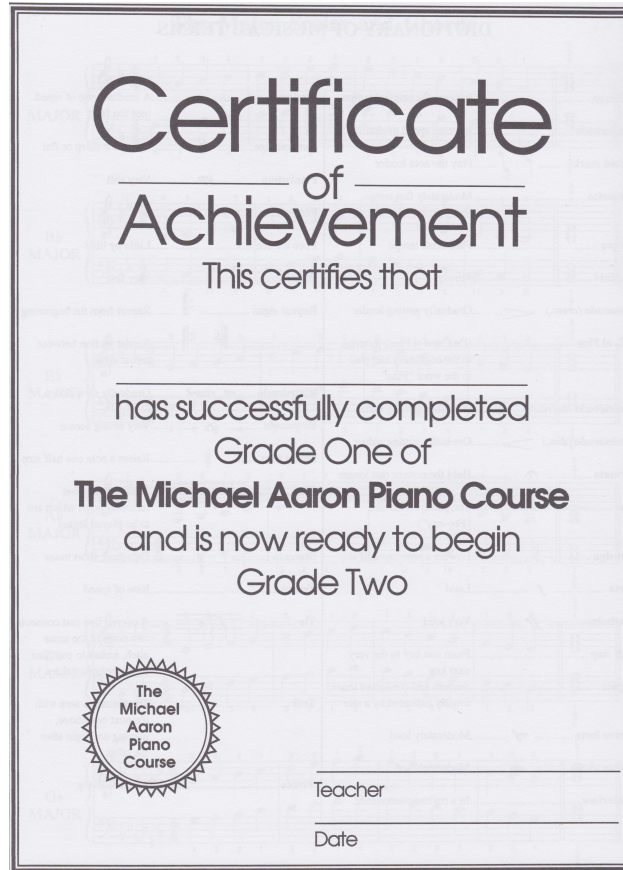
1. 要给孩子随性玩耍的时间。
2. 鼓励孩子多运动。
3. 教孩子关心别人。
4. 常和孩子一起开怀大笑。
5. 给孩子表现的机会。

Some of the motivational factors may include rewarding students for their success, appreciating them both verbally and in writing, providing them with opportunities to improve themselves and use their creativity, and allowing them to participate in the decision-making process and to assume responsibility.¹¹¹ Except for encouraging and praising students to improve their learning motivation, piano teachers can also make use of the certificate of achievement provided in the last page of the book in some methods. The teacher should ask the student to set an objective at the beginning of each learning stage, such as obtaining the certificate in two-month time. As a consequence, the student is highly likely to be more motivated and make effort to achieve the set goal.

¹¹⁰ WANG, L. *Chinese Style Primary Piano Method*, Book 3. Hubei Science & Technology Press, 2014, p.3. ISBN: 978-7-5352-7029-0. Title: Peking Opera Mask.

¹¹¹ ÇELİKÖZ, N. *Basic Factors that Affect General Academic Motivation Levels of Candidate Preschool Teachers*. Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences, vol. 1, issue 1, 2009, p.1357-1365.

Figure n.40¹¹² Certificate of Achievement



Another effective approach piano teachers can use in the class is to add a game section, which is called gamification. The definition of gamification is the application of game-design elements and game principles in non-game contexts.¹¹³ Notably, the process of gamification in an educational context does not consist of adding a game in order to teach knowledge or skills; rather, it consists of integrating characteristics of games that are engaging, and which have the potential to facilitate student learning, into an existing learning domain. Game elements are added to a learning environment in an effort to increase engagement and increase desired behavior.¹¹⁴ In other words, the essential purpose of gamification in teaching process is to promote students' learning motivation and participation. Therefore, the games that piano teachers use in

¹¹² AARON, M. *Michael Aaron Piano Course*, Grade One. Warner Bros. Publications Inc., Renewed 1973. ISBN: 978-0-89898-855-0.

¹¹³ HUOTARI, K. and HAMARI, J. *Defining Gamification: A Service Marketing Perspective*. Proceeding of the 16th International Academic MindTrek Conference, 2012, p.17-22. ISBN: 978-1-4503-1637-8.

¹¹⁴ BIRCH, H. *Motivational Effects of Gamification of Piano Instruction and Practice*. University of Toronto, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-499-22129-2.

class should be well designed. The following two games are suggested when the student is tired of practicing or repeating certain passages of the piece.

1. Dice Game

The teacher should prepare one or two dices in advance and ask the student to throw the dice, and then the student should repeat the section of the piece several times as the number on the dice indicates.

2. Musical Lots Drawing

The teacher should print the sheet music and cut it into pieces according to the melodic lines or phrases, then fold them and place the lots in the hat. The difficult parts can be copied several times so that they are more likely to be drawn. Then the teacher should ask the student to draw the musical lots and practice the passage or bars he/she has drawn.

Chapter 3. Research

3.1 Introduction

Trend of learning western musical instruments emerged in China in the nineties and it is consistently growing. Of all the instruments piano attracts the most attention among Chinese pupils, according to the data provided by Chinese Musicians' Association¹¹⁵. During these two decades of western musical education in China, both learners and teachers have realized the significance of instrumental education on the primary level, because during that period the student establishes the foundation of musical knowledge that will have important impact on his/her further piano learning as well as on the development of his/her interest in music in general.

Chinese piano teachers that took part in this survey stated several issues that can slow down students' progress and create frustration on both sides during the learning process. Defining those issues that students have during their piano practice is a significant step in order to deal with them and enrich teaching methodology.

Therefore, the aim of this research was to map the presence of piano practicing issues in the primary level targeting technical, interpretative and general learning difficulties. Teachers in China could benefit from the research in various ways. It can help them rethink their teaching approaches, improve their piano methodology and teach them how to guide their students to practice more effectively and make faster progress.

3.2 Previous research on the topic

Authors Yvonne E. Michalski and Felicity Baker from the University of Queensland explored the perceptions on teacher behaviors and music skills relevant to piano

¹¹⁵ Musical Organization Langyue [online, accessed on December 10th 2016]. Available at: <http://mt.sohu.com/20161210/n475479353.shtml>.

pedagogy of a variety of educators ranging from beginner piano teachers to experienced lecturers in Australia. The research stated:

Results indicated that most lecturers and qualified studio teachers agreed on the application and efficacy of pianistic technique as an essential component of piano teaching. Most respondents perceived a holistic approach to technique and student-centered learning techniques as vital elements of effective pedagogy practice.¹¹⁶

Author Yieng Chyi Chen researched three piano methods for piano beginners, which include *The Music Tree* (2000) by Frances Clark, Louise Goss, and Sam Holland, *Hal Leonard Student Library* series (1996) by Barbara Kreader, Fred Kern, Phillip Keveren and Mona Rejino, and *Piano Adventures* (2003) by Nancy and Randall Faber.¹¹⁷

The research investigated the advantages and disadvantages, similarities and differences of the three methods in note learning, technique, and rhythm. The author claims that *The Music Tree* presents an excellent approach to teach music reading and rhythm. Due to its slower pace, more reinforcement materials are included in the book and training of larger muscle groups is encouraged. The largest supplementary collection is provided in *Hal Leonard Student Library* series, which enables teachers to easily find certain type of music at a particular level. *Piano Adventures* includes clear suggestions and useful practicing guidance and various styles of music for learners. Its colorful illustrations also attract the students.

Author Chuan C. Chang in his book *Fundamentals of Piano Practice* presented the popular methods for piano practicing that include advice for piano practice, approaches to piano techniques, music, interpretation etc. that can be beneficial to both piano learners and teachers.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ MICHALSKI, Y. and BAKER, F. *Effective piano pedagogy: A study of teacher perceptions*. University of Queensland, 2009.

¹¹⁷ CHEN, Y.C. *A Comparison of the Music Tree, Piano Adventures and Hal Lenard Students Library for Beginning Piano Teachers*. School of Music in the Graduate School of the University of Alabama, 2013.

¹¹⁸ CHANG, C.C. *Fundamentals of Piano Practice*. 2nd Edition. Booksurge Publishing, 2009. ISBN: 978-419678592.

3.3 The purpose of the research and main research questions

Piano learning requires both effort from the learner himself and proper guidance from his/her teacher. Effective methodology and instruction can unquestionably contribute to the progress of piano study. In order to improve the effectiveness of piano teaching approaches, exploring and tackling the difficulties that students experience during practice is an important step for teachers. Therefore this research aims to describe piano practicing issues very broadly in order to gather information and describe aspects of piano practicing that were more or less common in Chinese piano teaching.

The main aim of the current research was mapping the presence and extent of various piano practicing issues among Chinese music students perceived by their teachers. The respondents' answers to the survey could reflect the piano learning situation of Chinese students. By clarifying the issues that piano learners have, practicing methods and teaching methodology targeting specific difficulties could be developed.

Main research question is: What are the common practicing issues the Chinese students have in the first stage of piano study?

3.4 Organization and methodology of the research

3.4.1 Timetable

The framework of the survey was conceived in June 2016. From July to September 2016, the questions of the survey were formulated and the sample of the survey was decided to be music teachers in China. In October 2016, the survey was translated into Chinese and applied online (URL: <http://www.sojump.com>), and five piano teachers were invited to pilot the survey. In November 2016, the survey was refined. In December 2016, the survey was published online and the data was collected until January 1st 2017.

3.4.2 Sample of the survey

Convenience sampling was used in the survey. Convenience sampling (also known as Haphazard Sampling or Accidental Sampling) is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study. Captive participants such as students in the researcher's own institution are main examples of convenience sampling.¹¹⁹ As it does not represent any group apart from itself, it does not seek to generalize about the wider population; for a convenience sample that is an irrelevance.¹²⁰

Respondents of the survey are Chinese piano teachers. The reason we choose Chinese piano teachers is because at present time music education is attracting more attention in China. There is an increasing number of piano learners and music teachers in China. According to the statistics from Chinese Musicians' Association, there are more than 30 million piano learners in China currently and two hundred thousand students enroll in music schools each year.¹²¹

In the survey, the participants were asked to provide general information including:

- Age
- Gender
- Highest obtained degree
- Current job
- Teaching experience

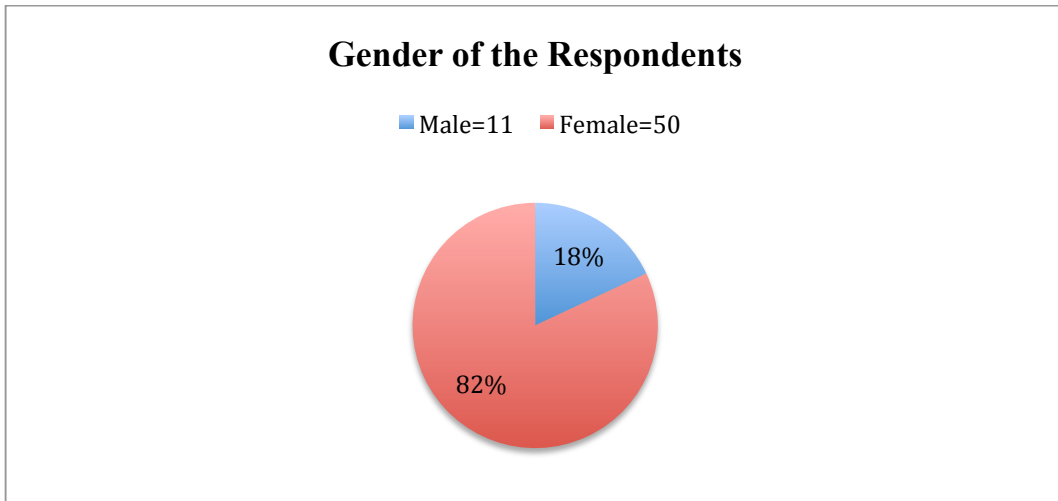
The inclusion criteria for participants was as follows: they should currently be part-time private piano teachers, full-time private piano teachers, teachers in a musical organization or professional teachers at the Conservatory or College who have obtained diploma from music high school, bachelor degree, master degree or PhD.

¹¹⁹ DÖRNYEI, Z. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹²⁰ COHEN, L., MANION, L. and MORRISON, K. *Research Methods in Education*. 6th Edition. Taylor & Francis e- Library, 2007, p. 113-114. ISBN: 0-203-02905-4.

¹²¹ Musical Organization Langyue [online, accessed on December 10th 2016]. Available at: <http://mt.sohu.com/20161210/n475479353.shtml>.

Chart n.1 Gender of the Respondents



As Chart n.1 illustrates, the number of participants that successfully completed the survey is sixty-one (N=61), out of which 50 of them are female and 11 are male. The reason for this is that more females study or work in musical and educational fields than males in China. According to the *Report of Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Development in China 2012*, the primary and secondary school teachers are mostly female and in primary school, female teachers covered proportions of 57.11%.¹²² In this regard, the author visited a number of primary and secondary schools in Beijing and found out the actual situation matches the statistical results in the report. In musical organizations, conservatories and colleges, the number of female students is far larger than the number of male students. Biao Guo, the Admissions Office Director of China Conservatory of Music stated in the interview with the reporter of Beijing Daily that the number of female students is far bigger than the number of male students. There are 800 (74.4%) female students of all students in the undergraduate school of China Conservatory of Music in 2008.¹²³

¹²² ZENG, X. *Annual Report on the Teachers in China*. Social Sciences Academic Press. China, 2012.

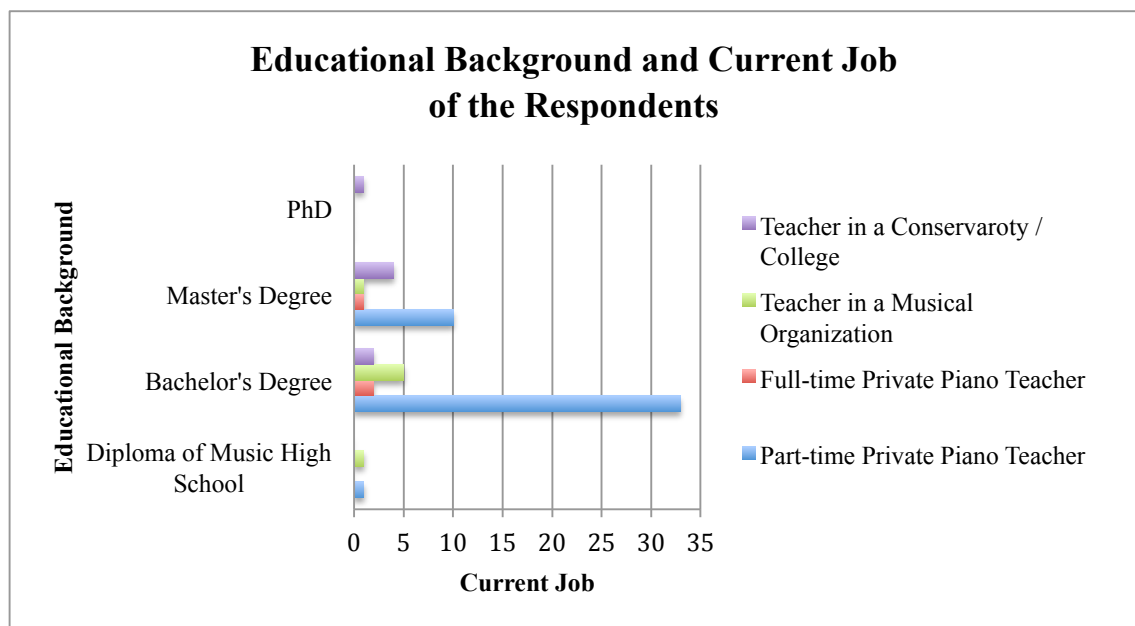
¹²³ LI, H. The Proportion of Male and Female Students in Music Colleges in China. [online, accessed on March 16th 2009]. Available at: <http://music.yule.sohu.com/20090316/n262824372.shtml>.

Table n.1 Age and Teaching Experience of the Respondents

Age and Teaching Experience of the Respondents					
Years of teaching experience					
Age	0-5	5-10	10-20	Over 20	Subtotal
18-25	34	5	0	0	39
25-30	8	6	2	0	16
31-40	0	2	2	0	4
41-50	0	0	0	1	2

As Table n.1 illustrates, 39 respondents (63.9%) are aged from 18 to 25 and 16 (26.2%), 4 (6.6%) and 2 (3.3%) respondents are aged from 26 to 30, from 31 to 40 and from 41 to 50 respectively. In total 55 participants (90.2%) that participated in the survey are under 30 years of age, while only a few elder participants took part in the survey, which covers the percentage of 9.8%. Generally, the data of teaching experience matches the age of the participants, the elder the participants are, the richer teaching experience they have.

Chart n.2 Educational Background and Current Job of the Respondents



As Chart n.2 illustrates, the highest number of the participants (44 or 72.1%) work as part-time piano teachers, out of which 10 (16.4%) obtained master's degree, 33 (54.1%) obtained bachelor's degree and 1(1.6%) obtained diploma of music high school. In total 7 participants (11.5%) are teachers in music organizations. Teachers who have higher educational degrees work at relatively more professional musical schools such as music conservatory, and teachers who have bachelor degrees or graduated from musical high schools work as private piano teachers.

It is necessary to mention that in China the Conservatory of Music is considered a degree-awarding tertiary educational institution, and not a secondary music school, which is different from similar institutions in Europe. There are ten independent professional musical institutions of higher education in China, which include:

1. Central conservatory of music
2. China conservatory of music
3. Shanghai conservatory of music
4. Tianjin conservatory of music
5. Shenyang conservatory of music
6. Wuhan conservatory of music
7. Xian conservatory of music
8. Xinghai conservatory of music
9. Sichuan conservatory of music
10. Zhejiang conservatory of music

All these ten musical conservatories offer undergraduate and graduate programs. Central Conservatory of Music, China Conservatory of Music and Shanghai Conservatory of Music also provide PhD program.

3.4.3 Research methodology

A survey questionnaire titled *Practicing Difficulties of Piano Learners at the Primary Stage* was created for the purposes of this research. This anonymous questionnaire explores the practicing issues in three categories targeting three specific aspects:

- Technical issues

- Interpretative issues
- General practicing and performing issues

Each category contains seven items. The category technical issues includes the following items:

- Accuracy (playing the correct notes)
- Independence of the fingers (especially the thumb, 4th and 5th finger)
- Position of the wrists, arms and shoulders (without unnecessary movements and residual tension)
- Articulation (playing legato, staccato, portamento, etc.)
- Chords, thirds and octaves (playing chords and intervals evenly and accurately)
- Scales and arpeggios (playing scales and arpeggios smoothly and fluently)
- Coordination of the hands (controlling the movements of the hands- the so called economy of movements)

In the category interpretation the following items are included:

- Dynamics (gradual or sudden changes of volume)
- Fluency of playing (feeling tempo and pulse of the selected piece)
- Playing polyphony (playing two or more simultaneous melodic lines independently)
- Remaining in tempo (with clear pulsation)
- Use of the Pedal (using the pedal properly and coordinating hands and pedal smoothly)
- Aural control (distinguishing timbre, accuracy, etc.)
- Musical expression (interpreting the musical style, and following the melodic lines)

The category general practicing and performing issues includes the following items:

- Sight reading (the ability or skill to read the sheet music without previous practice)
- Memorizing (the ability or skill to memorize the music or play without the score accurately and with consciousness)

- Focusing attention (concentrating on the music without distractions)
- Stage fright (the ability to overcome anxiety when performing in public)
- Practicing efficiency (the relation between time spent in practicing and the results)
- Managing and correcting mistakes (the ability to analyze mistakes)
- Motivation (internal or external factors that stimulate the desire and energy to be continually interested and committed to practicing)

All these issues are arranged in semantic differential scales. The Semantic Differential (SD) measures people's reactions to stimulus words and concepts in terms of ratings on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives at each end.¹²⁴ The participants are supposed to rate the items by marking the issue that appears not commonly at all with 1 and the issue that appears very commonly with 7 according to their own experience. For example:

	Not common at all <-----> Very common						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Dynamics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.4.4 Pilot study

A pilot study was administered on five piano teachers in order to:

1. Estimate the time necessary to complete the questionnaire, which turned out to be approximately 5 minutes;
2. Eliminate ambiguous wording or unclear statements and check the readability so that participants can understand the questions;
3. Predict the response possibilities;
4. Refine the items of the questionnaire.

¹²⁴ SUMMERS, G.F. *Attitude Measurement*. Rand McNally, 1970, p. 235.

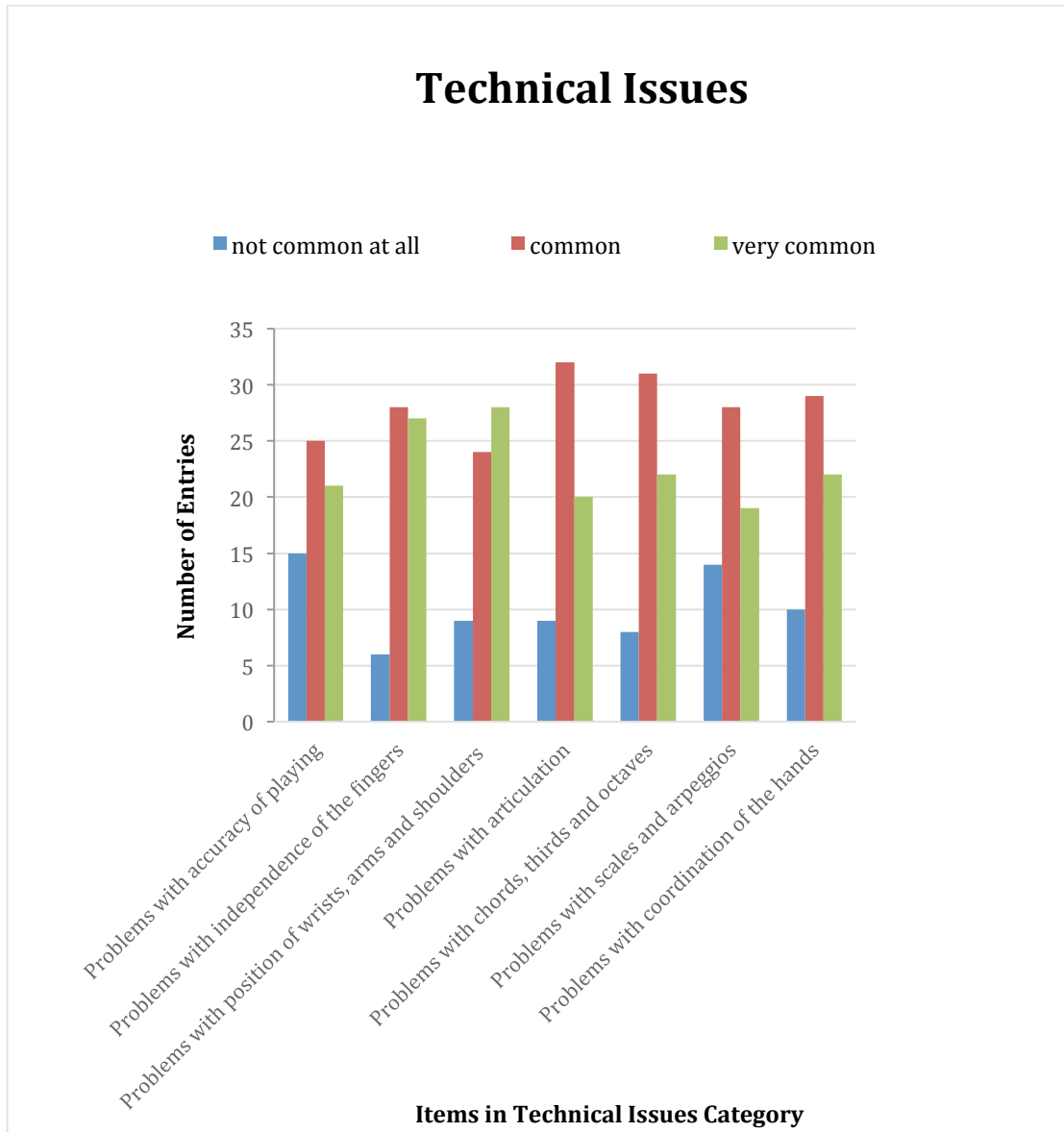
One participant of the pilot study asked why parents' opinions weren't included in the questionnaire. Since the purpose of the survey was to explore students' practicing issues from piano teachers' perspective, parents' views were not included in the research. The cooperation between piano teacher and parents is an important aspect of student's piano study, but it is not relevant for student's piano practicing issues.

Another participant suggested that arrangement of students' homework should be considered as well, such as balance between the number of etudes and songs given to the student as well as the amount and difficulty of the assignment. Homework is an important part of piano study that has great influence on practicing effects and therefore it was discussed in the previous chapter.

3.4.5 Analysis of the survey

Until January 2017, 61 valid responses of the questionnaire were collected. The arithmetic mean of the technical issues category is $M=4.07$, of the interpretation category is $M=4.49$, and of the general practicing and performing issues category is $M=4.26$. Since the difference is not statistically significant, we can conclude that piano teachers find that they appear equally commonly on their lessons and that they all need to be analyzed and dealt with.

Chart n.3 Technical Issues



In Charts n.3, 4 and 5 in the first *not common at all* category are answers 1 and 2; in the second *common* category are answers 3, 4 and 5; in the last *very common* are answers 6 and 7.

Chart n.3 illustrates the answers of the participants in technical issues category. In total 28 respondents (45.9%) stated that problems with position and of the wrists, arms and shoulders are very common in their students. Problems with independence of the fingers are also considered very common by 27 respondents (44.3%). There are respectively 32 (52.5%) and 31 (50.8%) respondents that consider problems with

articulations and chords, thirds and octaves very common issues the students have during practice. The least percentage of respondents (10%) answered that problems with independence of the fingers are not common at all in their teaching process. This might be due to a Chinese piano teaching tradition that emphasize the importance of finger independence from very early age. Therefore teachers pay additional attention to this aspect of piano instruction.

Chart n.4 Interpretative Issues

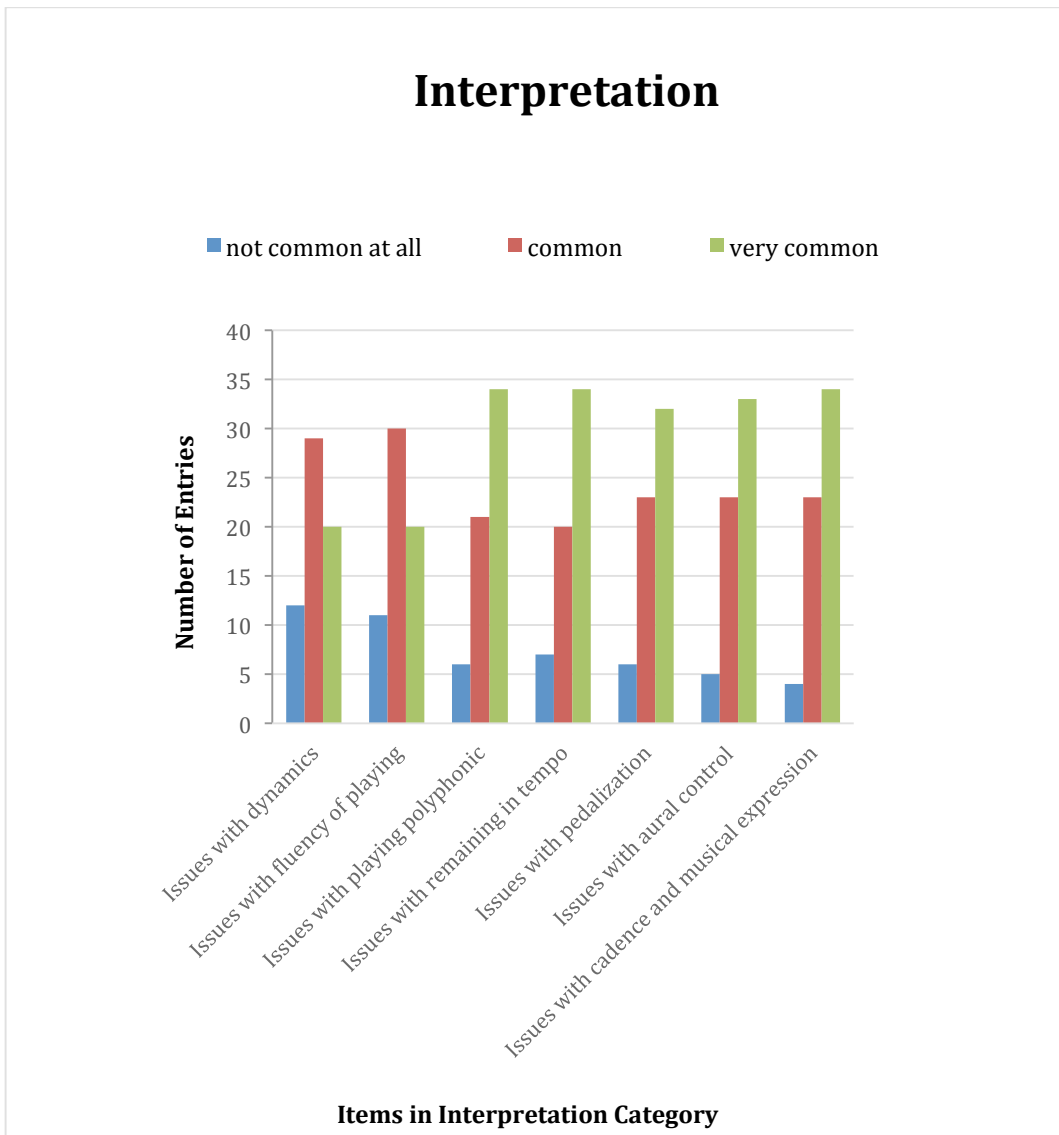


Chart n.4 illustrates the responses of the participants in interpretation category. More than half of the respondents (34 or 55.7%) believe that issues with musical expression,

remaining in tempo and playing polyphony are highly common in their students. Teachers should pay attention to these issues and help the students improve these skills during piano learning process. Similar percentage of the respondents (54% and 52.5%) considered that pedalization and aural control are very common issues the students are facing as well. 30 (49.1%) and 29 (47.5%) participants consider playing fluently and playing dynamics to be common issues in their class.

Chart n.5 General Practicing and Performing Issues

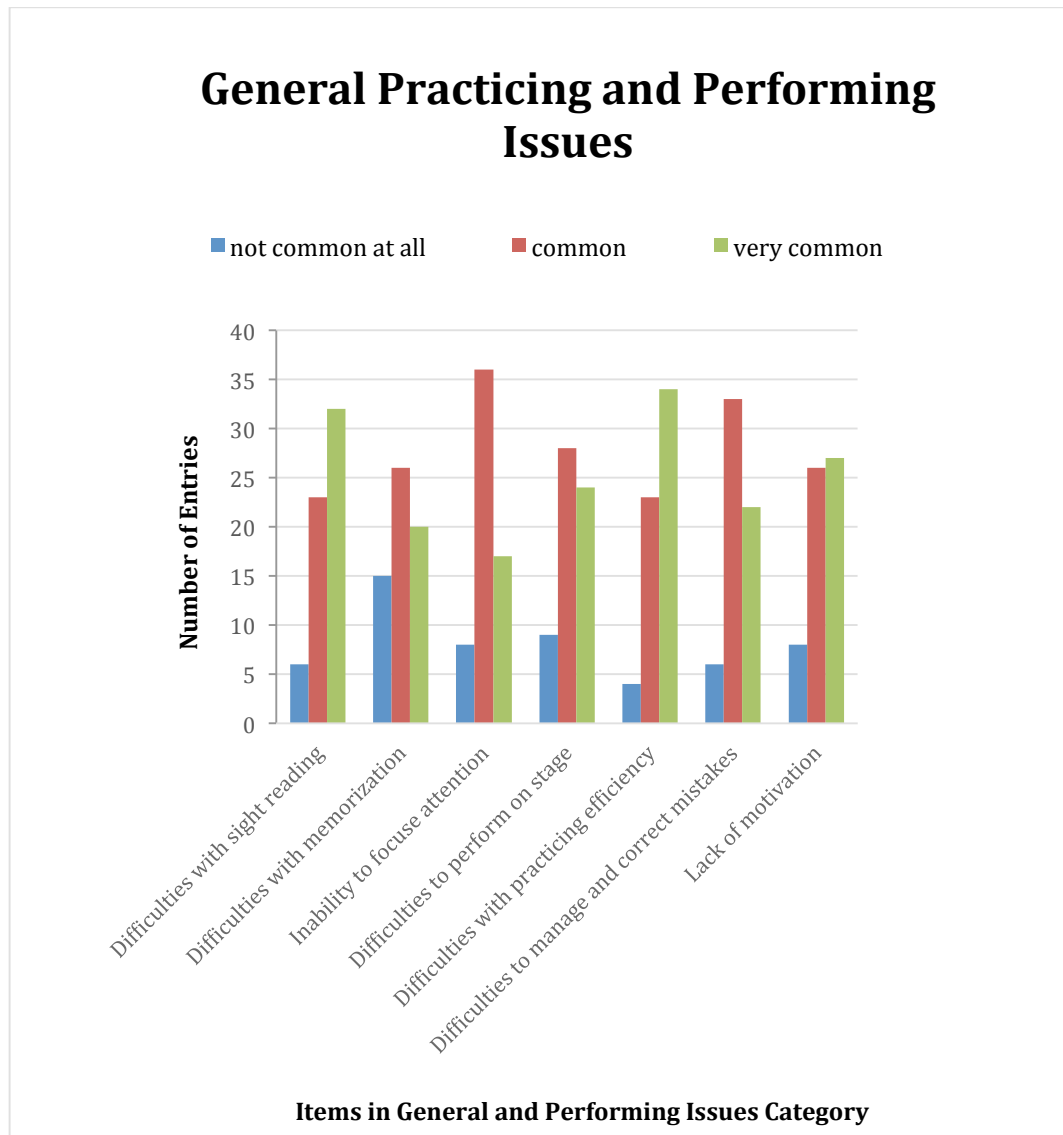


Chart n.5 illustrates how respondents answered in general practicing and performing issues category. Difficulties with practicing efficiency and sight-reading are

considered very common by 34 (55.7%) and 32 (52.5%) respondents respectively. The highest percentage of participants (59%) stated that inability to focus is a common issue that needs to be tackled. The least number of participants 4 and 6 (6.6% and 9.8%) believe that practicing efficiency and managing and correcting mistakes are issues not common at all.

3.5 Conclusion from the research

The survey explored various piano practicing issues among Chinese students. The goal of the survey was achieved since the information about piano practicing issues that appear more or less commonly in Chinese piano teaching was gathered. The results of the survey indicate that there are common piano practicing issues in technical, interpretational and general aspects. Therefore, piano teaching methods targeting each aspect should be researched in order to tackle these issues.

Generally, the results of the survey fulfilled my expectations. Each item in the survey was assumed to be a practicing issue and the results proved that without omission. For example, in the category general practicing and performing issues, item difficulties with practicing efficiency, the majority of the participants (57 or 93.4%) responded that this was a common or very common issue while only 4 (0.66%) participants responded conversely. In total 55 participants (90.2%) consider managing and correcting mistakes as a common or very common issue among students. This result confirmed my predictions that are deduced from my personal experience. As a private piano teacher, I realized that many of my students could not achieve the practicing goal when practicing at home and they have difficulties to solve problems by themselves. Developing students' aural abilities so that they can focus on the sound effect and musical expression with their critical ear was also a very important topic among piano teachers. Not only me, but almost all piano teachers in China now realize that all these issues mentioned above by both teachers and students cannot be neglected and they need to be properly tackled.

However, the results of the survey cannot generalize the situation in China. First of all, the sample size (N=61) is small for a quantitative survey. Secondly, convenience

sampling limited the generalization. The targeted respondents of the survey are a small group of piano teachers in China, which cannot reflect the piano learning situation in the entire country. For instance, 39 or 63.9% participants took part in the survey are piano teachers aged under 25 who have little teaching experience, their point of view does not represent those from other age groups.

Music learners and their teachers are continuously trying to improve instrumental performing skills with various methods. Sometimes the student might achieve little despite great effort and time that is spent in practicing. Under such circumstances, we should rethink profoundly our way of teaching and explore the origin of the problem. The result of the survey revealed the most common practicing issues of piano learners at the first stage, which could contribute to better understanding of piano study for both teachers and learners. Teachers in China could use the survey to improve instrumental methodology and guide the student to practice effectively and make more efficient progress.

Chapter.4 Conclusion

The presented thesis explored various piano practicing issues and contemporary piano methods in order to tackle the difficulties and problems that block students' progress in piano study. In conclusion, all practicing issues mentioned in this thesis can be dealt with using the combination of approaches and strategies provided in the presented contemporary piano methods and accompanied by suitable teachers' guidance and instructions.

However, each student has his/her own and unique practicing issues that are caused by different factors. Some may have problems with producing a good sound effect which can be a result of extensive muscle tension, while others may require additional training for sight-reading. Teachers should analyze the essence of the core issues and help the students to conquer their difficulties respecting their abilities, interests and weaknesses.

Each piano method presented in this thesis has its unique methodological approach and teaching philosophy that can assist the teachers in the above mentioned matters. For example, The European Piano Method arranges the first stage of piano study by listening, which means playing without a written score, while John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course teaches the student to read notes on stave at a very beginning of piano learning. Although the piano methods greatly differ from each other, the essential purpose of all of them is to guide learners to obtain musical attainment, improve piano playing techniques and enhance musical understanding. Every method could be very helpful to piano learners in their study process as long as it is used properly by instructors.

The responsibility of piano teachers is not only to take these methods as teaching materials and teach the students to play the pieces in the books, but also understand the methods comprehensively and use them wisely. Therefore, teachers should choose suitable methods and design specific learning plans for students according to their personal requirements and current learning situations, personalities and future

development. The assignments given to students have to cover various aspects of piano playing, such as etudes for technical practice, musical pieces in various styles, professional recordings to listen or recommendations for concerts to enhance music appreciation. Special attention has to be paid to certain specific issues that often block students' learning progress, such as sight reading and memorizing.

The research conducted in this thesis investigated Chinese students' practicing issues from teachers' perspective. The results reflected the current piano study conditions and requirements in China. Chinese piano teachers can use this research to enrich their approaches and methodologies in piano teaching, get inspired from the ideas in the presented methods, and thus promote them to the students.

Future research can be conducted in this area. It is necessary to make a thorough investigation of the piano education in China and explore the specific teaching methods that are suitable for Chinese piano learners and teachers.

Bibliography

- AARON, M. *Michael Aaron Piano Course, Grade One*. Warner Bros. Publications Inc., Renewed 1973. ISBN: 978-0-89898-855-0.
- AGAY, D. *Teaching Piano: A Comprehensive Guide and Reference Book for the Instructor*. Yorktown Music Press, 1981. ISBN: 9780825680397.
- BANOWETS, J. *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling*. Indiana University Press, 1992. ISBN: 978-0253207320.
- BARTÓK, B. *Mikrokosmos, 153 Progressive Piano Pieces*. Boosey & Hawkes, 2004. ISBN: 978-1-4234-9304-4.
- BASTIEN, J. *Bastien Piano Basics, Primer Level*. Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1985. ISBN: 0-8497-5265-5.
- BERNSTEIN, S. *With Your Own Two Hands: Self-Discovery Through Music*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1981. ISBN: 978-0793557127.
- BIRCH, H. *Motivational Effects of Gamification of Piano Instruction and Practice*. University of Toronto, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-499-22129-2.
- BÖHMOVÁ, Z., GRÜNFELDOVÁ, A. and SARAUER, A. *Klavíni škola pro začátečníky*. Bärenreiter Praha, 2002. ISBN: 979-0-2601-0158-6.
- BULLARD, A. *Joining the Dots: A Fresh Approach to Piano Sight-Reading*. Book 1. ABRSM Publishing, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-86096-976-8.
- BURGMÜLLER, F. *Twenty-five Easy and Progressive Studies for the Piano*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1852.
- ÇELIKÖZ, N. *Basic Factors that Affect General Academic Motivation Levels of Candidate Preschool Teachers*. Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences, vol. 1, issue 1, 2009.
- CHANG, C.C. *Fundamentals of Piano Practice*. 2nd Edition. Booksurge Publishing, 2009. ISBN: 978-419678592.
- CHEN, Y.C. *A Comparison of the Music Tree, Piano Adventures and Hal Lenard Students Library for Beginning Piano Teachers*. School of Music in the Graduate School of the University of Alabama, 2013.
- CLARK, F., GOSS, L. and HOLLAND, S. *The Music Tree: A Plan for Musical Growth at the Piano, Part 3*. Summy-Birchard Music, 2001. ISBN: 1-58951-000-3.

- COHEN, L., MANION, L. and MORRISON, K. *Research Methods in Education*. 6th Edition. Taylor & Francis e- Library, 2007, p. 113-114. ISBN: 0-203-02905-4.
- CORTOT, A. *Rational Principles of Pianoforte Technique*. Editions Maurice Senart, 1928.
- CZERNY, C. *Twenty-Four Piano Studies for the Left Hand*, Op. 718. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1986. ISBN: 978-1-61774-100-5.
- DIRKSE, S. *A Survey of the Development of Sight-reading Skills in Instructional Piano Methods for Average-age Beginners and A Sample Primer-level Sight-reading Curriculum*. University of South Carolina, 2009. ISBN: 9781109125368.
- DÖRNYEI, Z. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- DOUGHTY, N. and HARRIS, S. *Beyond the Hand Position: Teaching Principles of Injury Preventive Piano Technique To Young Students*. MTNA Collegiate Chapters Piano Pedagogy Symposium, University of North Florida, 2017.
- EBBINGHAUS, H. *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*, 1885.
- EIGELDINGER, J. *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher: As Seen by His Pupils*. Cambridge University Press, 1988. ISBN: 978-0521367097.
- EMONTS, F. *The European Piano Method*, Volume 1, Schott Music GmbH, 1992. ISBN: 978-3-7957-5435-8.
- FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 1, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-61677-078-5.
- FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 2A, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-61677-081-5.
- FABER, N. and FABER, R. *Piano Adventures*. Lesson Book, Level 3B, 2nd Edition. Faber Piano Adventures, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-61677-180-5.
- FRASER, A. *The Craft of Piano Playing: A New Approach to Piano Technique*. Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003. ISBN 0-8108-4591-1.
- FREYMUTH, M.S. *Mental Practice & Imagery for Musicians: A Practical Guide for Optimizing Practice Time, Enhancing Performance, & Preventing Injury*. Integrated Musician's Press, 1999. ISBN: 978-0967002712.
- GRACHTEN, M. and WIDMER, G. *Linear Basis Models for Prediction and Analysis of Musical Expression*. Journal of New Music Research, vol. 41, issue 4, Creativity Rethinks Science, 2012.

- HALL, P. *Piano Time*. Book 1, New Edition. Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-19-372784-7.
- HALL, P. *Piano Time*. Book 2, New Edition. Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-19-372786-1.
- HANON, C.L. *The Virtuoso Pianist*. G. Schirmer, Inc., 1993. ISBN: 978-0-7935-2544-7.
- HINZ, B. *Improving Accuracy by Developing Keyboard Awareness*. Creative Keyboard, Mel Bay's Online Webzine, August 2009.
- HUOTARI, K. and HAMARI, J. *Defining Gamification: A Service Marketing Perspective*. Proceeding of the 16th International Academic MindTrek Conference, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-4503-1637-8.
- JANŽUROVÁ, Z and BOROVÁ, M. *Nová klavírní škola*, 1. díl. Schott Music Panton s.r.o. Praha, 2000. ISBN: 979-0-2050-0600-6.
- JANŽUROVÁ, Z. and BOROVÁ, M. *Klavírní školička*, 2. díl. Schott Music, 1981. ISBN: 979-0-2050-0648-8.
- KAGEYAMA, N.J. *Attentional Focus as A Mediator in the Anxiety-performance Relationship: The Enhancement of Music Performance Quality under Stress*. Indiana University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007. UMI: 3297078.
- KANG, S.H.K. *Spaced Repetition Promotes Efficient and Effective Learning: Policy Implications for Instruction*. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, vol. 3, issue 1, 2016.
- KRAMER, L. *Interpreting Music*. University of California Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780520267060.
- LAITZ, S.G. *The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening*. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-19-530108-3.
- LEHMANN, A.C. and ERICSSON, K.A. *Performance Without Preparation: Structure and Acquisition of Expert Sight-Reading and Accompanying Performance*. Psychomusicology: A Journal of Research in Music Cognition, vol. 15(1-2), 1996.
- MACRITCHIE, J. *The Art and Science behind Piano Touch: A Review Connecting Multi-disciplinary Literature*. Musicae Scientiae, vol. 19, issue 2, 2015. ISSN: 1029-8649.
- MAYDWELL, F. *Piano Teaching, A Guide for Nurturing Musical Independence*. New Arts Press of Perth, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-9577027-2-1.

- MICHALSKI, Y. and BAKER, F. *Effective piano pedagogy: A study of teacher perceptions*. University of Queensland, 2009.
- MISHRA, J. *Influence of Strategy on Memorization Efficiency*. Royal Northern College of Music, Music Performance Research, vol. 4, 2011. ISSN: 1775-9219.
- MORAN, A. *Helping Students to Concentrate while Studying*. National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), School Guidance Handbook, 2013. ISSN: 2009-6801.
- PALMER, C. *Music Performance*. Annual Review of Psychology, vol. 48, 1997.
- PALMER, W.A., MANUS, M. and LETHCO, A.V. *Alfred's Basic Piano Library, Lesson Book, Complete Level 1, 3rd Edition*. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc. ISBN: 0-88284-817-8.
- PHILIPP, L.H. *Piano Technique: Tone, Touch, Phrasing and Dynamics*. Dover Publications, Inc., 1982. ISBN: 0-486-24272-2.
- POLI, D.G. *Methodologies for Expressiveness Modeling of and for Music Performance*. Journal of New Music Research, vol. 33, issue 3, 2004.
- REILLY, K.T., NORDSTROM, M.A. and SCHIEBER, M.H. *Short-term Synchronization between Motor Units in Different Functional Subdivisions of the Human Flexor Digitorum Profundus Muscle*. American Physiological Society, Journal of Neurophysiology, vol. 92(2), 2004.
- REPP, B.H. *The Dynamics of Expressive Piano Performance: Schumann's "Traumerei" Revisited*. The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, vol. 100, issue 1, 1996.
- ROSENBLUM, S.P. *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications*. Indiana University Press, 1988. ISBN: 9780253343147.
- SCHUMANN, R. *Album für die Jugend*, Op. 68. Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2006.
- STEWART, S. *Leerplan: Helping the Student Develop a Relationship with Music and the Piano at the Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced Levels*. Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht, 2002.
- SUMMERS, G.F. *Attitude Measurement*. Rand McNally, 1970.
- SUZUKI, S. *Suzuki Piano School*, vol.1, New International Edition. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 2008. ISBN: 978-0-7390-5447-5.
- THOMPSON, J. *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course, Part 1*. The Willis Music Company, 1955. ISBN: 978-1423489344

TÜRK, D.G. *Klavierschule: 12 Handstücke zum Gebrauche beim Unterrichten*. Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2008.

WANG, L. *Chinese Style Primary Piano Method*, Book 3. Hubei Science & Technology Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-7-5352-7030-6.

WATSON, A.H.D. *What Studying Musicians Tell Us about Motor Control of the Hand?* *Journal of Anatomy*, vol. 208(4), 2006.

ZENG, X. *Annual Report on the Teachers in China*. Social Sciences Academic Press. China, 2012.

Online sources

ABRSM. Available at: <http://cz.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/piano>

BELKIN, A. *General Principles of Piano Technique*. Available at: <http://alanbelkinmusic.com/site/en/index.php/technique/>

Jen's Piano Studio, Sight-reading steps. Available at: www.jenspianostudio.com/

LI, H. The Proportion of Male and Female Students in Music Colleges in China. Available at: <http://music.yule.sohu.com/20090316/n262824372.shtml>.

Musical Organization Langyue. Available at: <http://mt.sohu.com/20161210/n475479353.shtml>.

List of figures, charts and tables

Figures

Figure n.1 FACE the Treble Spaces	8
Figure n.2 Playing on the black keys	10
Figure n.3 Hanon finger exercise n.35	12
Figure n.4 “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” Variations	13
Figure n.5 Position of the hands on the piano	14
Figure n.6 Clusters	15
Figure n.7 The Train	17
Figure n.8 Legato and staccato exercises	18
Figure n.9 How Notes Move On the Staff	19
Figure n.10 Jump upwards and downwards	19
Figure n.11 Chord shapes	20
Figure n.12 Chord inversions: Three positions for triads	21
Figure n.13 Octave exercises	22
Figure n.14 “Secret” scale formula	24
Figure n.15 Rhythmical finger exercises	26
Figure n.16 Coordination exercises	27
Figure n.17 Hopping Along	28
Figure n.18 Excerpt from Beethoven piano sonata n.18 in E flat major	29
Figure n.19 Dynamics exercise in Puzzle	31
Figure n.20 Crescendo and Decrescendo exercise	31
Figure n.21 Arabesque by F. Bürgmuller	33
Figure n.22 Exercise n.22 from the Mikrokosmos by B. Bartók	35
Figure n.23 Exercise n.30 from the Mikrokosmos by B. Bartók	35
Figure n.24 Andantino from Klavierschule: 12 Handstücke zum Gebrauche beim Unterrichten by Türk.....	37
Figure n.25 Gestures for beats 1-4 and Gestures for rests 1-4	38
Figure n.26 Exercise for Damper Pedal	40
Figure n.27 Harp Song	41
Figure n.28 Exercise for Syncopated Pedal	43
Figure n.29 Picture of adjustable piano pedal extender	44

Figure n.30 Song Hra na zvířátka a děti	45
Figure n.31 Humming Song by R. Schumann	46
Figure n.32 Slurs and Ties	49
Figure n.33 Dictionary of musical terms	50
Figure n.34 Note C	52
Figure n.35 Sight-reading exercises	53
Figure n.36 Typical forgetting curve for newly learned information	54
Figure n.37 Mozart's Five Names	59
Figure n.38 Piano Adventures Player App	60
Figure n.39 Beijing Opera Mask	66
Figure n.40 Certificate of Achievement	67

Charts

Chart n.1 Gender of the Respondents.....	73
Chart n.2 Educational Background and Current Job of the Respondents	74
Chart n.3 Technical Issues	79
Chart n.4 Interpretation Issues	80
Chart n.5 General Practicing and Performing Issues	81

Tables

Table n.1 Age and Teaching Experience of the Respondents	74
--	----

Attachments

Attachment n.1: Questionnaire Piano Practicing Difficulties of Students at the Primary Stage

Dear music teachers,
please take five minutes to answer the following questions dealing with your students' difficulties during practice. This anonymous questionnaire is a part of my master project titled "Tackling Primary Music School Students' Practicing Issues Using Contemporary Piano Teaching Methods".

Results of the study will be published in spring 2017. If you wish to know more, please don't hesitate to contact me by e-mail: beibei hu01@gmail.com.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.
Beibei Hu

Basic Information:

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

What is your highest obtained degree?

- a) Music High School/Conservatory
- b) Bachelor degree
- c) Master's degree
- d) PhD

What is your current job?

- a) part- time private piano teacher
- b) full- time private piano teacher
- c) teacher in a musical organization
- d) teacher in Conservatory/College

What is your teaching experience?

- a) 0-5 years
- b) 5-10 years
- c) 10-20 years
- d) more than 20 years

Now, please rate the following practicing issues by marking the issue that appears very rarely with 1 and the issue that appears very often with 7.

Technical issues

	Not common at all <-----> Very common						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
• Accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Independence of the fingers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Wrists, arms and shoulders position and relaxing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Articulation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Chords, thirds and octaves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Scales and arpeggios	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Coordination of the hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Interpretation

• Dynamic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Fluency of playing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Playing polyphony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Remaining in tempo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Use of Pedal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Aural control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Cadence and musical expression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

General practicing and performance issues

• Sight-reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Memorizing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Focusing attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Stage fright	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Practicing efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Managing and correcting mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Attachment n. 2 Questionnaire Piano Practicing Difficulties of Students at the Primary Stage in Chinese language

学生在钢琴学习的初级阶段常见的练习难点

各位音乐老师：

大家好！

我是布拉格查理大学教育学院音乐系的一名学生。这份匿名问卷是为了了解您的学生在练琴过程中所遇到的困难，它也是我的硕士毕业论文《用当代钢琴教材解决学生在钢琴学习的初级阶段常见的练习难点》的一部分。希望您能够抽出 5 分钟时间参与这份问卷调查。

调研的结果将于 2017 年春季发表，如果您希望了解更多，欢迎您来信交流沟通。

联系邮件：beibei01@gmail.com

非常感谢您的参与，谢谢！

胡贝贝

基本信息

年龄 [单选题] [必答题]

- 18~25
- 26~30
- 31~40
- 41~50
- 51~60
- 61~70
- 70 以上

性别 [单选题] [必答题]

- 男
- 女

最高学历 [单选题] [必答题]

- 音乐学院附中/大专
- 本科
- 硕士
- 博士

职业 [单选题] [必答题]

- 兼职钢琴老师
- 全职钢琴老师
- 音乐培训机构老师
- 专业音乐院校老师

教龄 [单选题] [必答题]

- 0-5 年
- 5-10 年
- 10-20 年
- 20 年以上

请您为以下列出的关于钢琴练习难点的项目记分。在您学生中出现的频率最低的项目记“1”分，逐次递增，频率最高的项目记“7”分。

技术、技巧问题

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
准确性	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
手指独立性	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
手腕、手臂和肩膀的位置及放松	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
弹奏法(断奏、连奏、跳音等)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
和弦、三度和八度	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
音阶和琶音	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
双手的协调性	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

艺术表达和诠释

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
强弱力度	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
流畅度	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
复调音乐	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
速度的稳定度	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
踏板运用	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
听觉敏感度	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
音乐律动及表现力	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

常见练习与演奏难点

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
视奏	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
背谱	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
注意力集中	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
怯场	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
练习效率	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
错误纠正	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
学习动力	○	○	○	○	○	○	○