

# Companion Website, Chapter 4.

## Quick Reference Guide

### CHAPTER 4: TECHNIQUE-EXECUTION

To get at the heart of any systematic approach to technique three questions must be answered:

How does one *make* sound—approaching the instrument?

How does one *release* the sound—exiting the instrument?

How does one *communicate* with the audience—engaging the listener?

- A. Beliefs and Traditions. Developing skill and technique is attained through
  - Good instruments
  - Excellent instructors
  - Appropriate instructional materials
- B. Execution is most frequently used to describe this technical pursuit and will be used henceforth in describing the physical act of performing at the fortepiano. It is arrived at through three components.
  - Correct fingering
  - Good embellishments
  - Good performance
- C. Execution is much more than pressing a key and getting a sound. *Affekt* and expressing meaning are key.
- D. Basic Guidelines
  - Sit directly in front of middle C at an appropriate distance from the keys.

- Sit at a comfortable height for the bench.
  - A curved finger position allows for each movement up and down the keyboard.
- E. Physical roles in execution
- Execution begins with the wrist leading each musical gesture.
  - The fingers carry the majority of the work (*legato*, *detaché*, *staccato*).
  - The forearm moves the hand sideways to new locations.
  - The full arm works from the shoulder. It is used to shift the hand in to or back from the black notes and for large shifts in keyboard location.
  - The forearm and hand should lie naturally, just as it is attached to the arm.
  - The arm supports the hand; the hand the fingers.
  - The calmer the arm and hand (but not stiff), the more sure the motion of the fingers.
  - Each hand is generally responsible for specific roles.
- F. Significant role of fingers
- Fingers should be natural in shape, relaxed, compact, yet not stiff or tense.
  - Finger placement on the keys is best as when one forms a D major scale, with fingers on the outer edges of the raised sharps.
  - Fingers are curved and work with quick strokes.
  - Independence of fingers is essential.
  - Subtleties are best expressed and most effectively controlled by means of finger activity.
  - Fingers do the work on dynamics of *forte* as well as *piano*.
  - The link between fingering and musical result is unequivocal. Fingering is inseparable from interpretation. Fingering serves a musical function equally to (and to Bach, surpasses) the technical role.
  - The best effect should be the first consideration; the easiest is not always the best choice.
  - Warning! Most Urtext editions offer fingering suggestions provided by editorial staff.

## INFLUENCES APPLIED

- A. Upon initial experience at the fortepiano most modern pianists experience great difficulty.
- B. Finding a remedied approach to resolve the conflict between the fortepiano and the modern piano requires incorporating eighteenth-century technical concepts of execution.

- C. Refer to the examples in chapter 4 for suggested exercises.
- D. Don't confuse a light touch with feathery, uncommitted execution.
- Dusting the keys provides very few options for conveying varieties of *affekt*.
  - Playing on top of the keys creates unfocused, uncontrolled, and unreliable playing.
- E. Isolate gestures.
- F. Take into account the instrument on which the music is played.
- The stiffness of the action on today's pianos may require incorporation of forearm to support gestures.
  - Be careful never to overplay, force, or overpower the style.
  - When using more forearm or full arm, make an intentional, conscious decision, never deferring to the bigger (and less-easily controlled) muscle out of habit.
  - If full arm and the top of today's instrumental volume are employed the tone will be harsh, uncharacteristic, will not decay quickly enough, will be either too muddy or too choppy; certainly not the intended *affekt*.
- G. Rational solutions to the intrinsic problems of performing fortepiano music on the modern piano with historical veracity obviously demand awareness of both instruments and the execution necessary to be successful on each instrument so as to answer the questions posed at the outset of this chapter. It is a process of
- Continually listening.
  - Experimenting.
  - Adjusting to feedback from the music, the instrument, and the hall.
  - The means and energy expended to this end provides results beyond recreating old music on a new instrument, but rather, creating new music all one's own with value and reverence to the original message intended.

