A COMPARATIVE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BEGINNING PIANO METHODS

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Need for the Study

The field of piano methods is an active one; so it is well, from time to time, to take stock of the material at hand and attempt some sort of evaluation of it. There has been very little work done in comparative evaluation of methods. Within the past six years only two research studies dealing with piano methods have been recorded. These studies are listed in the United States Office of Education Library Bulletin.[1,2]

The wealth of available materials and methods is reasonable to expect since there is probably no one method which completely suits a teacher's needs. The logical procedure in such case is for the teacher to devise his own system. If the plan proves successful, the newly devised system has as much right to a place on the market as has any other.

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[1]Wilhelmina McLane, "Psychological and Pedagogical Procedure for Pre-School Piano Teaching," (Master's thesis, College of Music of Cincinnati, 1939). Listed by Ruth A. Gray, Bibliography of Research Studies in Education, 1938-1939, U. S. Office of Education Library Bulletin, 1940, No. 5, p. 123.

[2]Frederick E. Snyder, "An Approach to Piano Pedagogy," (Master's thesis, College of Music of Cincinnati, 1939), Ibid., p. 125.

The crucial differences among various methods may not be striking, but rather be related to the order of presentation of different features. If followed throughout, most of the methods will be found to arrive at the same point--that of an adequate musicianship and a safety minimum technique of the piano. Thus, the principal differences will be in the economy of learning and the maintenance of interest throughout the learning process, as presented in various methods.

Purpose

It has been the purpose of this study to examine representative beginning piano methods, as found available in published form, and to compare and evaluate them according to musical, psychological, physical, and educational standards.

Sources of Data

The material used in this study consists of:

1. Actual methods.
   a. Teaching material.
   b. Teachers' manuals.
      (1). Philosophy.
      (2). Procedure.
2. Readings in the historical background of the subject.
3. Recent articles from periodicals, presenting separate phases of the problem.
4. Reports of experimental studies in methods of teaching.
5. Books on piano teaching.

The methods studied are shown in Table 1. The key numbers given to each method will be used to facilitate future references to these methods. While this is not an all-inclusive list of teaching devices and materials, it is a representative one which includes various types of courses, both popular and lesser known.

TABLE 1

NAMES, AUTHORS, AND PUBLISHERS OF THE PIANO METHODS STUDIED

Key Number	Name of Course	Author	Publisher
1.	Abbott Books for Children	Moreton Graves Abbott	G. Schirmer, Inc.
2.	Bendix Music Series	Oswald B. Wilson	Bendix Music Publishing Co.
3.	Bernard Wagness Piano Course	Bernard Wagness	Oliver Ditson Co.
4.	Bilbro Music Books	Mathilde Bilbro	G. Schirmer, Inc.
5.	Carl Fischer Piano Course	Eckstein, Holt, Scarborough, and McConathy	Carl Fischer, Inc.
6.	Curtis Fundamental Series	Helen Curtis	Harris F. Roosa
7.	Diller-Quaile	Angela Diller, Elizabeth Quaile and Harold Bauer	G. Schirmer, Inc.
8.	Iltis Piano Books	Leon L. Iltis	Carl Fischer, Inc.

TABLE 1--Continued

Key Number	Name of Course	Author	Publisher
9.	Kinscella Steps for the Young Pianist	Hazel Gertrude Kinscella	G. Schirmer, Inc.
10.	Lambert's Piano Method for Beginners	Alexander Lambert	G. Schirmer, Inc.
11.	Lockhart Piano Method	Lee Lockhart	M. Witmark & Sons
12.	Mason Piano Books	Mary Bacon Mason	Oliver Ditson Co.
13.	Melody Way	Otto Miessner	Miessner Music Co.
14.	Music Land Series	Isabel Van Nort	G. Schirmer, Inc.
15.	Oxford Piano Course	Schelling, Haake, and McConathy	Carl Fischer, Inc.
16.	Piano Playthings	Mary Ruth Jesse	John Church Music Co.
17.	Robyn Piano Method	Louise Robyn	Oliver Ditson Co.
18.	Rodgers-Phillips Books	Irene Rodgers and Lila Phillips	G. Schirmer, Inc.
19.	Thompson Series	John Thompson	Willis Music Co.
20.	Trinity Principle Pedagogy	Effa Ellis Perfield	Effa Ellis Perfield
21.	World of Music Piano Course	Bess Daniels and Helen S. Leavitt	Ginn & Co.
22.	Year by Year Piano Course	John M. Williams	Theodore Presser Co.

A few methods are not available to persons who have not had specific training in the materials and presentation of the courses. These courses are rather expensive and for this reason,as well as that of desiring maximum proficiency on the part of the teacher,they remain inaccessible to the public. Examples of this type of course are the Dunning System and the Progressive Series Method.

Organization of the Study

The first chapter is introductory to the study, setting up the conditions, plan of investigation, and organization of the material. The second chapter is devoted to the historical background of the subject. Brief mention is made of four stages in the development of piano teaching. These stages are fitted into the philosophical concepts of education which have controlled the methods of teaching from time to time. The third chapter takes up the musical, psychological, pedagogical, and technical aspects of one modern method which was conceded to be representative of present methods. The fourth chapter deals with the criteria for judging and evaluating the various methods. Chapter Five makes the comparison of methods, with the criteria set up in Chapter Four as a basis of comparison. The results of the data found are described and conclusions are made in regard to the findings of this study.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PIANO TEACHING

Instruction in the playing of keyboard instruments is a subject as old as the instruments themselves. However, it is only since the beginning of the twentieth century that well-organized, educationally sound systems of instruction have been developed. In the latter part of the sixteenth century in England, we find that musicians gave private instruction as a parergon. Mention of this is found in the Act against Rogues and Vagabonds.[1] This private instruction, however, was not recorded in any form so as to be helpful to other musicians.

The first clavier and organ "school" was published in Venice about 1600 by Girolamo Diruta. In this treatise entitled "Il Transilvano, sopra il vero modo di sonare organi e stromenti di Penna" there are rules for hand position, finger movement, and for the differences between clavier and organ-playing. This "school," however, seems to have been lacking in widespread or long-lasting importance, because we find that fifty years later in Lorenzo Penna's book "Albori

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[1]Oscar Bie, A History of the Pianoforte and Pianoforte Players, p. 28.

[2]Ibid., p. 26.

musicali" there were no rules of hand position other than that the hand should be raised high. The fingering of scales without the use of the thumb was also given in this work.[3]

The earliest known collection of pieces for the instruction of beginners is that by the English organist and writer of madrigals, Thomas Tomkins (1573-1656). Entitled "Pretty Wayes: For young beginners to looke on," this group of sixteen little pieces, varying from three to sixteen bars in length, is a series of contrapuntal studies.[4] The cantus firmus (Figure 1) was probably derived from the plainsong Jam Lucis Orto Sidere.

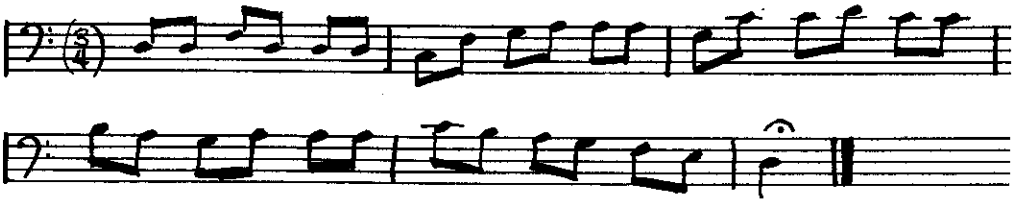

Fig. 1--Cantus firmus used in "Pretty Wayes: for young beginners to looke on."

Because of the historical significance of this collection, five representative excerpts will be included in order to show the complexities involved.

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Thomas Tomkins, "Pretty Wayes: For young beginners to looke on," British Museum manuscript Add. 29996 f 192b, 195b as found in Hugh M. Miller, "English Plainsong Compositions for Keyboard in the Sixteenth Century," Doctor's dissertation, Dept. of Music, Harvard University, 1940, p. 243. (Microfilm).

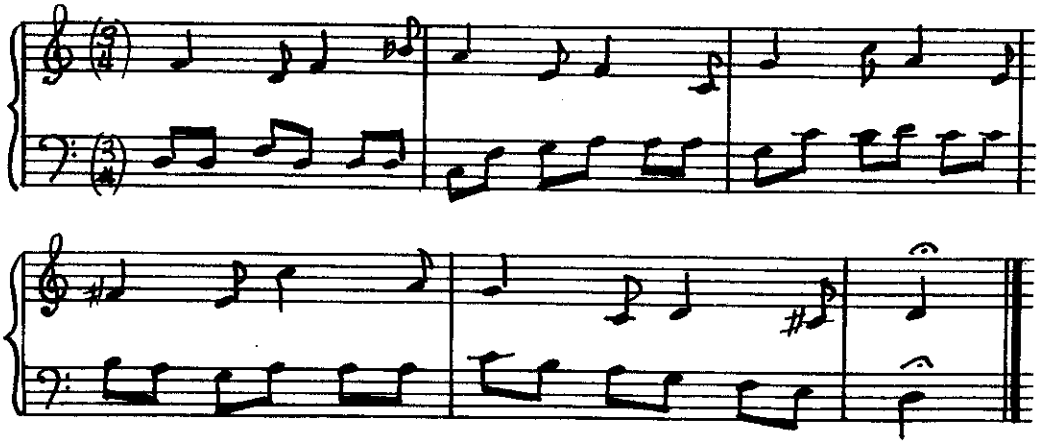

Fig. 2--"Counterpoynt: long and short."

Difficult rhythmic problems occur almost from the beginning. Figure 3 is the second piece in the series of sixteen.

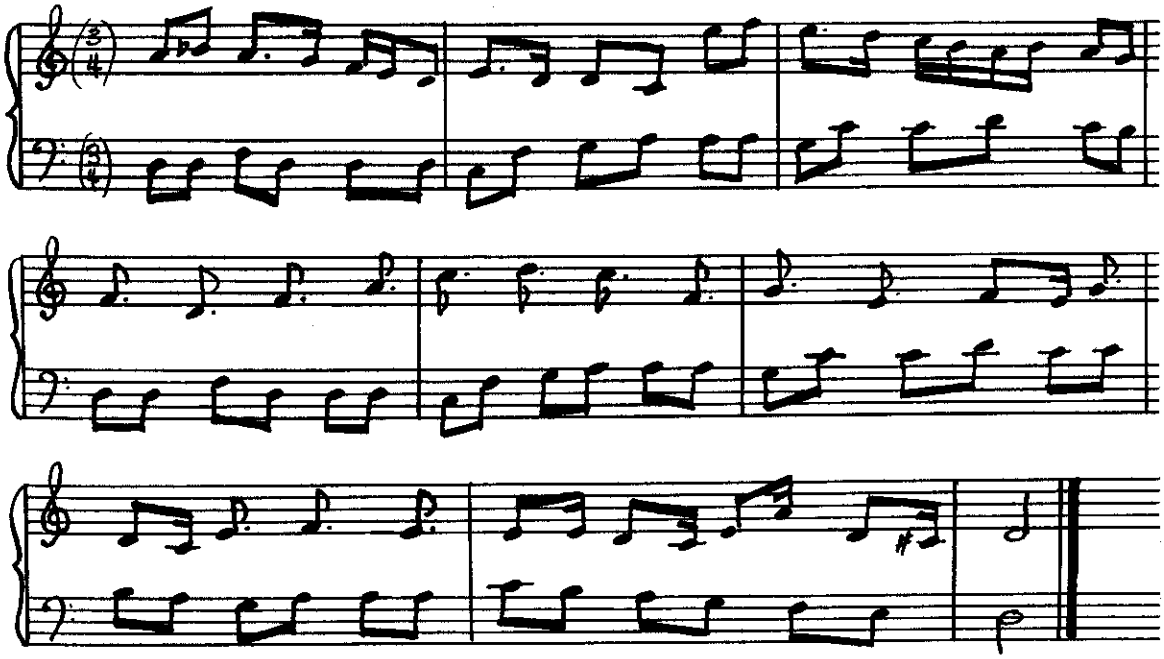

Fig. 3--"Counterpoynte and indenting counterpoynte."

The first piece in 4-4 metre (Fig. 4) seems to have been a favorite of Tomkins', bearing the comment, "This is a good one." Syncopation is introduced here and retained in the following pieces.

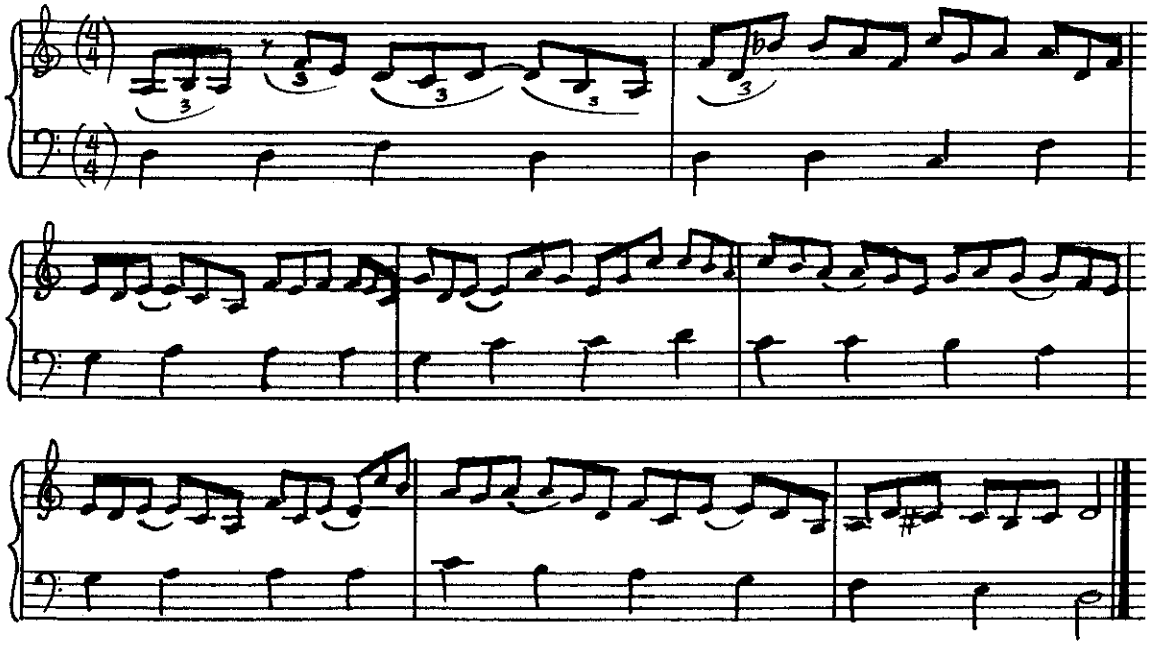

Fig. 4.--"Three to one"

Figure 5 shows the thirteenth piece of the set. This is slightly more complicated than the preceding ones and here also the cantus firmus is taken by the right hand, leaving the figuration for the left hand. Tomkins' note on this piece is, "playe the base 8 notes lower."

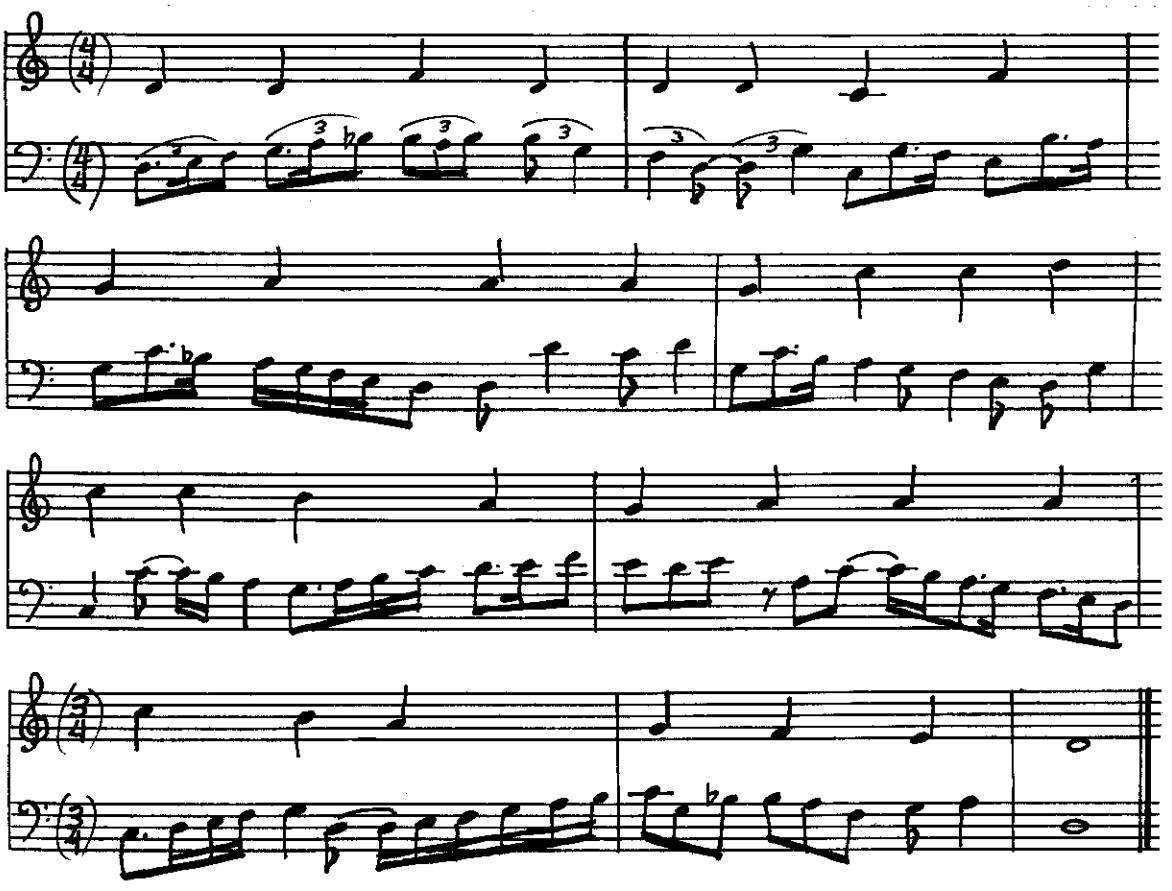

Fig. 5.--Cantus firmus in the right hand

In the last piece we find three-voiced counterpoint. With the two parts moving independently in the right hand, a great independence of fingers is required.

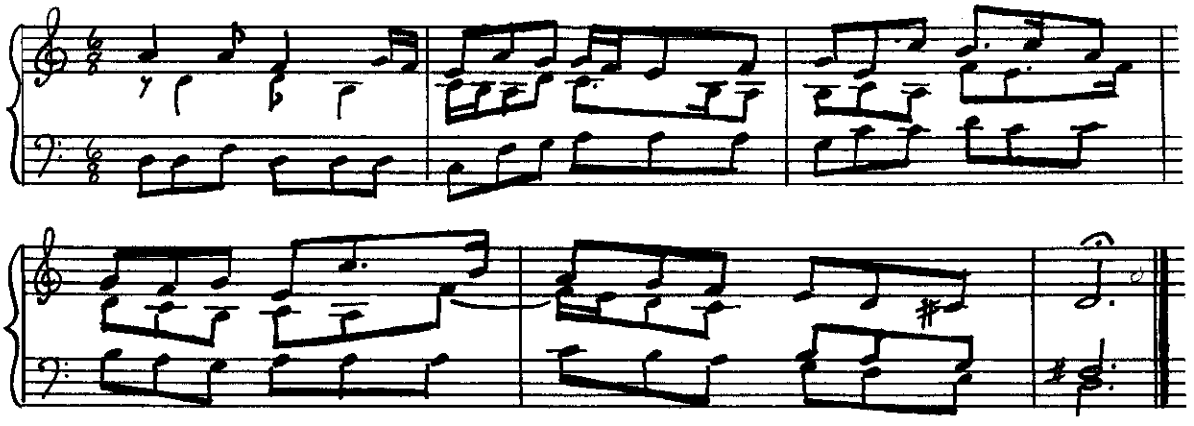

Fig. 6.--"Two parts in one" (in the 5th)

Judging from the title of these pieces, it seems probable that the "beginners" were beginners in the study of counterpoint as well as in the skill of keyboard manipulation.[5]

This point brings into focus the prevailing philosophy and practices concerning music at that time. According to educational developments in general, music was taught through the use of the actual music that was to be used professionally. Just as children were taught to read by reading the Bible, so were beginners in music taught to play by playing the church music which they would ultimately need to know. Even though the pieces in this collection by Tomkins represent the trend away from this practice, they made far greater demands on the students than we would make on our beginners in piano today. Because of the type of music students of that period, however, it was not beyond reason to expect them to be able to master these studies in contrapuntal keyboard music.

This brings out the fact that music education was not for the masses, as a cultural attainment, but was restricted to those who were studying to be musicians by profession. The term "musician" is used here in the broad sense of the person who made music: that is, by writing it, improvising, directing, and performing through various media. Thus a student was not

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[5]Hugh M. Miller, "English Plainsong Compositions for Keyboard in the Sixteenth Century" (Doctor's dissertation, Dept. of Music, Harvard University, 1940), p. 248.

merely trained to perform on an instrument, but was given a well-rounded musical education.

As an example of this type of music education we have the biography of Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672). In Köstritz, Saxony, as the son of a prosperous family, he had a thorough musical education from early childhood. His beautiful soprano voice attracted the attention of the Landgraf Maurice of Hesse-Cassel and thereafter the Landgraf was the patron of the boy's musical and academic education. Schütz became a chorister of the Landgraf's chapel when he was eleven years old and was also a student in the Gymnasio. After this he went to the University of Marburg. His extraordinary musical talent caused his patron to leave in 1609 in order to go to Italy. Here he studied music under Giovanni Gabrieli, master of counterpoint.[6]

An account of this kind sounds not too unlike the musical training of some of our more recent musicians of outstanding importance. The actual contrast lies in the fact that this was virtually the only kind of musical education which was available at that time. Persons with superior musical ability were trained thoroughly in music but others received no musical instruction.

This situation was little changed by the time of Bach (1685-1750). His earliest training is thought to have been

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[6]David Ewen, "Heinrich Schütz," Composers of Yesterday, pp. 385-386.

at the hands of his father who encouraged his musical inclination. After the father's death an elder brother, Johann Christoph, taught Sebastian to play the clavier. He entered the choir school of St. Michael's Convent where he sang until his voice changed. He was constantly listening and practicing so that he might progress further. His ability to play the violin enabled him to make a living for a time as court musician at Weimar. He held the position as organist at Arnstadt, and studied composition and organ playing simply by listening to Buxtehude. At thirty-two years of age he had mastered every branch of his art, and his art of improvisation was truly remarkable.[7] "Bach knew only one way to get on in music, the way he himself had followed,--to go to school to every true master, and to learn from his works."[8]

When Bach learned keyboard instruments, the thumb was not used in fingering except in the necessities of great stretches. It was the custom for each musician to finger pieces to suit himself. For the very legato style which Bach desired, the thumb became a necessity. Couperin discovered the same system and published it in his book L' art de toucher le clavecin (1717), but the effects of Bach's discovery and usage were more far-reaching than those of Couperin. One reason for this was a fundamental law of progress: that of retaining the best of

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[7]Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Johann Sebastian Bach, pp. 9-28.

[8]Albert Schweitzer, J. S. Bach, I, 220.

the old and adding to it the new improvements. Bach retained the passing of one finger over another as well as adding the use of the thumb. This provided many more possibilities of fingering and ease of execution than had formerly been used.[9] A part of Bach's method of playing, and consequently a part of his teaching was the use of strongly incurved and loose fingers, and loose wrists. The effect of his playing was one of great quietness and composure.[10]

As was the case with most great musicians, Bach was primarily the musician and only incidentally a teacher. His studies were all in the subject matter of music rather than in means of conveying this knowledge to others who wished to learn. "No one had ever been a worse school-master with greater talent for teaching. But to those who were willing to learn from him he was an excellent guide".[11] This reference to Bach's lack of ability as a school-master was based on his failure in conducting classes where specific class management was necessary. Because he was not a disciplinarian, he was dismissed from a teaching position of this type.

Probably the best record we have of the procedure of Bach's teaching is that given by Forkel.

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[9] Ibid., p. 206.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 214.

> The first thing Bach did was to teach his pupils his own special style of touch. To this end, for several months they had to practice nothing but separate exercises for all the fingers of both hands, with constant regard to this clear and neat touch. These exercises were prescribed to everyone for several months. Bach's conviction was that they should be continued for at least six to twelve months. If it happened, however, that any one's patience was becoming exhausted after a few months, he was pleased to write little connected pieces in which these exercises were embodied.[12]

The little pieces referred to are the Little Preludes for beginners and the Inventions which were reportedly written during the lesson hours of the pupils for whom they were intended. An example of these pieces will be included to show the type of pieces that were considered to be on the lowest level of difficulty.

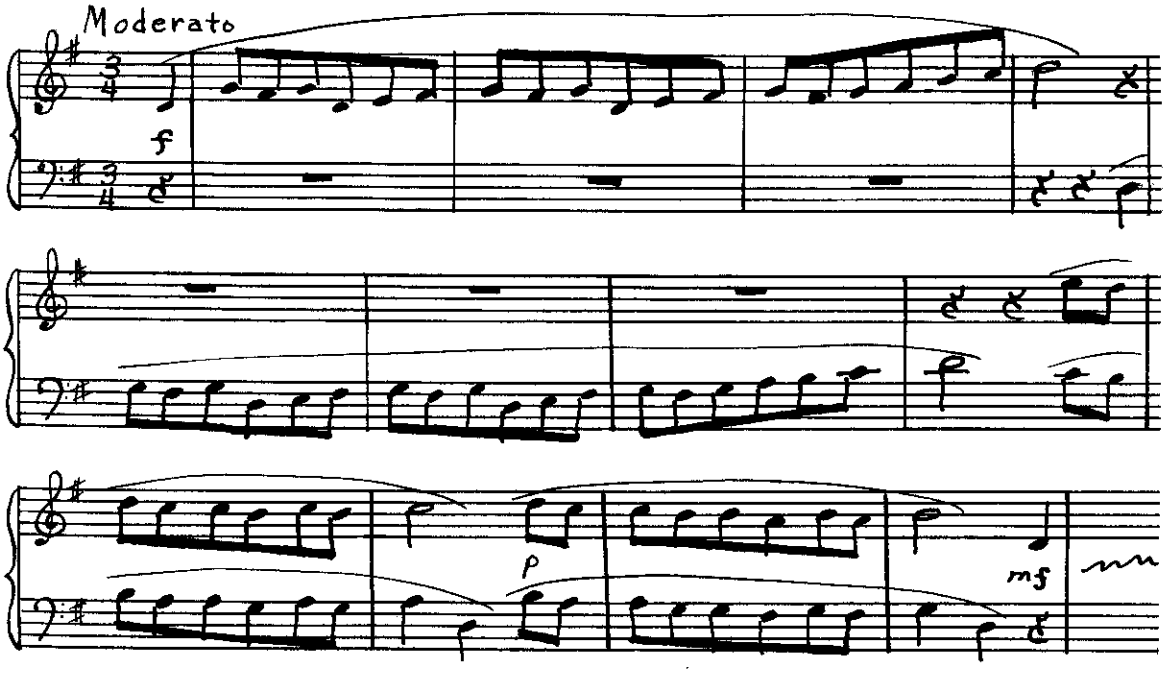

Fig. 7.--Portion of Little Prelude in G major by J. S. Bach.

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[12]Forkel, Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst, und Kunstwerke, p. 38, quoted in Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 216.

After having acquired a sense of touch, Bach's students were given exercises which were moderately difficult to begin with, but which were of rapidly increasing difficulty. Also, after having acquired this basic technique, the students began the study of composition. Bach taught both harmony and counterpoint, and taught them through a functional approach. Whatever shortcomings Bach's teaching may have had, as far as psychological aspects were concerned, it was nevertheless a unified process with general musicianship as its goal.

Coming forward almost a hundred years, we consider Chopin as a representative of his period. By this time, musicians had much greater opportunities for using their music, and music was also assuming the place of a cultural achievement among people who were not professional musicians. This different status of music naturally had its effect upon the way in which music was presented. The general spread of the romanticist movement gave opportunity for music in drawing rooms as well as in concert halls. It was to these aspects of music that Chopin contributed.[13]

We can best understand Chopin's teaching through notes left by his students. There seem to have been three phases of piano playing which he deemed most valuable: touch, scales, and studies.

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[13]Waldo Selden Pratt, The History of Music, p. 529-533.

Touch was the item of supreme importance to Chopin. He stressed the idea that everything was to be read cantabile and that all parts or voices should be made to sing. He insisted on precision in the sounding of double notes and chords together. To further his point of a singing tone, Chopin revived the old-fashioned tricks in fingering of passing 1 under 5, crossing 5 over 1, and sliding from one key to another with the same finger. His interpretation of the 'tempo rubato' was one of the most expressive devices which he contributed. As he described it, "The singing hand may deviate from strict time, but the accompanying hand must keep time."[14]

In teaching scales, Chopin's emphasis was on a legato style, with full tone, and beginning with a slow tempo, then increasing in speed as the technical facilities permitted. Keys which used many black notes were studied first, and C major was the last to be assigned.[15] From this, we see that Chopin's approach to piano teaching was essentially that of the instrument rather than the theoretical development of music and key systems.

As for the teaching material, Chopin used studies by Clementi, Cramer, and Moscheles; suites, preludes, and fugues

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[14]Edward Dannreuther, "Chopin," Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, I, 635.

[15]Ibid., p. 634.

of Bach; and some of his own etudes. This represented a significant change from the policies of Bach, since it had been Bach's idea that pupils came to teachers to study just the works of their chosen teachers. The development and progress in printing during the hundred years between these two musicians was in a large measure responsible for this difference. Printed music in Bach's time had been practically unobtainable whereas with Chopin it was less expensive, much more plentiful, and altogether practicable. The publishing of music was also a factor in the broader knowledge among musicians of the works of others. Chopin disliked exaggerated accentuation, and also strongly advised his pupils to cultivate ensemble playing.[16]

The period since 1860 is that in which there has been outstanding development in piano pedagogy. This period represents the sudden, large growth of the conservatories. The conservatory has come out of the class of a trade-school and has entered into that of an institution of general culture.[17] With the increasing number of conservatories, there has been a corresponding growth and improvement in pedagogical processes. The conservatories also exemplify the trend that civilization has taken: that of amalgamation for mass production. Instead

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[16] Ibid., p. 635.

[17] Pratt, op. cit., p. 618.

of individual teachers, we now find several teachers grouped together. This plan allows for specialization in the division of instruction for which each teacher is best suited, but at the same time, it tends to give a less unified and meaningful music education to the student.

As a foil for this weakness, class instruction has grown by leaps and bounds. Phases of music which might prove tedious for the children working alone can be more successfully motivated with groups of children. Thus a more complete musical foundation can be established without the loss of interest by the children. Although class instruction is not a new idea, it is only in recent years, perhaps since 1920, that educators have realized the advantages of class lessons for young children and beginners of all ages.

The existence of classes for adult beginners is not uncommon today. This group of people represents the generation just ahead of the present youths: those for whom piano study was not included but who feel a need for music in their lives at present. The procedure with a class of adult beginners will of necessity be different from that used with young children or even with children in the intermediate grades of school. The procedure is determined by the objectives of the class, and with most adult beginners the aim is to be able to read at sight and to have a working knowledge of chords and chord progressions. The plan of presenting operatic and

symphonic melodies in simple versions is desirable in these classes because it furthers these aims and in addition gives the students a broader basis of appreciation of the music they will hear from other sources.[18]

In general, however, the ideal piano class can be summed up as an experience wherein:

1. Listeners, performers, and composers are developed.
2. Music is both understood and felt.
3. The joy of musical participation is discovered.
4. The strength of making music as a social activity is realized.
5. Broad fundamental techniques and fine subtle appreciations are developed.
6. There is creative activity.[19]

Through the many various media of music today, some of it is going to enter the lives of our people whether they welcome and enjoy it or not. More and more this fact is coming to be realized by educators and by the people themselves. With the realization also comes more interest in learning how to appreciate it more fully.

So in regard to piano teaching at present there is a new objective for teachers to consider. For the one child

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[18]Raymond Burrows, "The Piano Class as an Agency for Developing Musicianship," Music Educators National Conference Yearbook (1937), p. 322.

[19]Ibid., p. 325.

who will make music his chief interest in life, there will be hundreds of piano students who will take music into their experiences only casually or as an avocation. To these latter pupils the teacher owes an intelligent understanding and some contribution to their musical equipment which will make it a cultural part of their lives. By sound psychological presentation of music to this majority of students, the mortality in piano study can be substantially reduced.

CHAPTER III

A REPRESENTATIVE MODERN METHOD

In order to outline the general practices and features of piano teaching at present, one method has been selected as being a good, representative system. This one course is described throughout, rather than taking material from several methods. The complete picture of a beginning procedure is given in this way. Because of the completeness of the material which was available, the Oxford Piano Course is the one which will be discussed in this chapter.

By dividing the philosophical basis of a piano method into the four phases of musical, psychological, pedagogical, and technical aspects, it is not presumed that these are separate considerations. In fact, all four points are so integrally connected that it is impossible to draw a line of separation. A good pedagogical procedure will of necessity be psychologically sound; it cannot be psychologically sound unless it is essentially musical in its purpose and nature; and it cannot be effective musically unless it is based on a good technical foundation. Thus, these elements are interrelated in many ways. They are separated here only for economy of organization in discussion.

Musical Aspects

The beginning level.--The most desirable approach to the piano lesson is a musical approach rather than one concerned with the mechanics of the instrument. Themodern trend is away from preliminary theory drill, during several lessons; and lack of acquaintance with the keyboard, during which time the child does not have the experience of making music. Instead, the modern practice is directed toward an immediate musical expression. In teaching little children, a singing approach is the one most likely to fit into previous musical experiences. Even if the child has not gained the use of his singing voice, this introduction is probably the easiest to develop, and certainly the most valuable because of the ear trainint it entails.

With correct motivation, the child learns to sing the song and now knows how his piece should sound when he plays it. The first piece will be of such simple nature that the child can easily be shown the position on the keyboard which will produce what he has learned to sing. This is, of course, a rote procedure with no concern being given to the printed music. Since music is an aural art, it is a misconception to stress the symbols of music rather than the actual sounds at first. From the very first lesson, the child has the satisfaction of having made music.

The foundation of music reading.--Music reading is not introduced with the first lessons because of a lack of reading

readiness which is present in most cases. Drawing an analogy to the language reading experience, we see how different the backgrounds have been. In the case of language, the children have been using the materials of language for about four years before coming to school. Having gained familiarity with words and the ability to express their ideas and wishes through the use of language, they are very close to a readiness for language reading.

In the case of music, however, experience has been limited to a shorter period of time, and has been much less generally used. Where a child virtually has used language during all his waking hours, he may have heard a little music at one time during the day through one medium or another. Much more rarely do we find the children who sing in their play. The qualitative difference here, in addition to the quantitative, is in the fact that the music the child hears may be as foreign to his capacity for understanding as a highly technical treatise on philosophy would be. The music which is on the child's level is indeed rare in daily experience.

So we find that the musical background of most children has been so much more limited than the language background that proportionately more time must be spent in building a foundation which will stimulate an urge for reading.

Since rote learning comprises only a small part in the whole span of learning music, however, a good foundation for reading is an important requisite early in the training of the

music student. The singing approach carries over from rote learning to the reading skill. When the first use is to be made of the printed music, the piece is learned through singing, as before; it is then learned by rote at the piano. With this background for the piece firmly fixed, the notation is then presented. The child sees the direction of the melodic line. As he sings the song or plays it, he watches the notes, seeing whether they move upward or downward as the sound goes up or down. This feeling for direction in melody is an important factor in sight-reading ability, as opposed to the single note perception.

Parallel to the perception of melodic line is the recognition of known skips and intervals. Tones of the fundamental chords are presented in succession until they can be recognized quickly and played as a chord or in broken chord form. Fluency in reading is based on the ability to visualize in increasingly large units the groups of notes which represent familiar thoughts.[1]

Key signatures are presented only as the occasion and actual situation demand them. The signatures are explained as signs indicating where the five-finger position in a new key is going to be. A key-feeling is established by sounding the tonic chord tones together. These may be taken from the melodies of most of the first simple songs. The connection

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[1]Ernest Schelling and others, Oxford Piano Course, "Teacher's First Manual," p. 43.

between the signature and the place of the tonic chord on the keyboard should be called to the children's attention each time this chord-finding exercise is practiced. The keys are introduced, one at a time in this way, and there is little cause for confusion of keys since each one was occasioned by a piece in that key. Several pieces in the same key reenforce that key-feeling before another is introduced.[2]

The recognition of rhythmic notation is preceded by various rhythmic experiences. Physical expression of rhythms is the first step as a training of the large muscles. Clapping the music is usually the second step. These two steps are ways of bringing children to recognize the differences in time values of notes. They are pleasurable activities because of the naturalness of the motions, and may be further enhanced by the use of simple games or contests in this connection. As for rhythmic notation, this may best be introduced through a rote presentation of a piece. After a rhythm has been established by rote, it will serve as an example for other pieces having the same rhythm.

Creative music.--Creative music is one of the most valuable and interesting phases of a child's musical experience. It is infinitely valuable to a child to be able to take musical ideas which he has learned and to combine them in new ways of his own. This is truly making music that belongs to him.

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[2]Ibid., p. 122.

When a child has created a little piece, he can be assisted in writing it down. As a secondary goal, then, creative music furnishes the motivation for learning and using musical notation. Writing down a child's piece serves at least three purposes: in the first place, it serves as the necessary means of recall from one lesson to another; secondly, to be able to see his piece in concrete form gives the child an even greater sense of achievement than he had in simply playing his piece; and thirdly, in written form, other children, too, may play his piece and enjoy it.

Creative practice should be a part of each home assignment. This should be a problem in connection with the lesson at hand and should be one which the child might work out in a variety of correct ways. During the lesson, a melody or portion of a melody is assigned for the next lesson. In the case of beginners in the first stages of learning, the assignment will probably be an antecedent phrase for which the children will supply the consequent. A little later, when the children have command of chords, they can decide which chords to use with a given melody and will eventually be able to create characteristic accompaniment figures. This creative practice, rather than drill work, is emphasized for the home assignment. By choosing material related to the lesson at hand, it gives practice in the desired activities without proving dull and

monotonous. Due attention should be given to these efforts of each child at the lesson period.[3]

Ensemble playing.--Ensemble playing is a means of developing sound musicianship, ready sight reading, and good musical taste and judgment. As such, it deserves an important place in the program of piano instruction. The greatest good from ensemble playing is gained when those playing are of about the same advancement and ability. This places the responsibility of the ensemble as nearly as possible on both performers.

Ensemble playing may assume a diversity of forms. When the class sings a song, the child at the piano accompanies the class. This is probably the first type of ensemble performance. Variations of this are for the child to accompany himself and to accompany another individual. The first actual ensemble playing will be that of two children playing the same assignment in different octaves of the piano. Another is that of the teacher playing an accompaniment with the child. When two or more pianos are available, there is much greater chance for variety in ensemble playing. Two duet teams may play the same music, or eight-hand arrangements may be used. Arrangements for two-pianos, four-hands are also interesting, as they require possibly a little more independence than do the duet arrangements.

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[3] Ibid., pp. 47-51.

In ensemble playing, there is an almost automatic incentive to alertness, with an increasing proficiency in sight reading. It serves also as an automatic check on unsteady tempo.

Transposition.--Transposition should be based on the principle of tones rather than on that of mechanical finger adjustments. It is a distinct advantage to be able to play a piece in several keys other than the original. This ability also indicates a knowledge of the theoretical basis of music, and an alert ear. Practice in transposition fosters the development of these skills.

Knowledge of the principal chords in various keys helps place the piece quickly, establishing the black keys that will occur. Familiarity with the I, IV, and V chords and the characteristics of these chords, indicating either movement or repose, will enable students to provide acceptable harmony for melodies the class may sing in any key. Five-finger positions are readily found and melodies which extend beyond the five-finger positions should be located chiefly by ear. If a melody lies within the white keys in one key, the first key of transposition should provide the same sort of arrangement. When the tonal pattern has been firmly fixed in this way, other keys involving black keys may be introduced. Here, of course, the emphasis is an aural recognition of the correct playing.

Scale playing is one of the fundamental practices in transposition. The ear must hear the pattern before it can be played in various keys. The occurrence of key signatures can be used as guide posts to the five-finger positions of the keys they indicate, and should be recognized quickly as such.[4]

The permanent musical value.--The permanent musical value of the material studied occurs in two sources according to this method. The selections included in the actual books are for the most part pieces of merit. They are quite often folk tunes which have a universal appeal, simple versions of compositions which are heard frequently through other media, and even small sections of thematic material from works in larger forms.

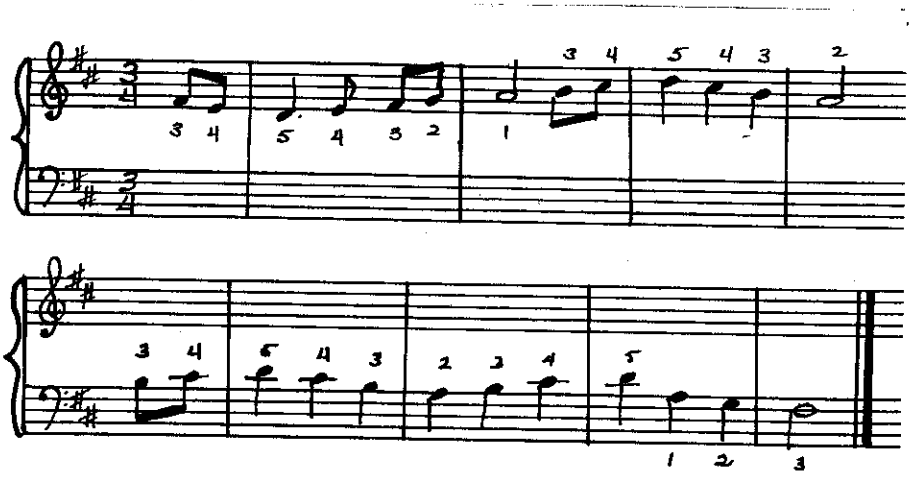

Fig. 8.--Noel, an illustration of familiar music of permanent musical value.[5]

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[4]Ibid., p. 110.

[5]"Singing and Playing," Oxford Piano Course, No. 8a, p. 11.

The pieces not in this classification are more in the nature of exercises, bringing out some needed point.

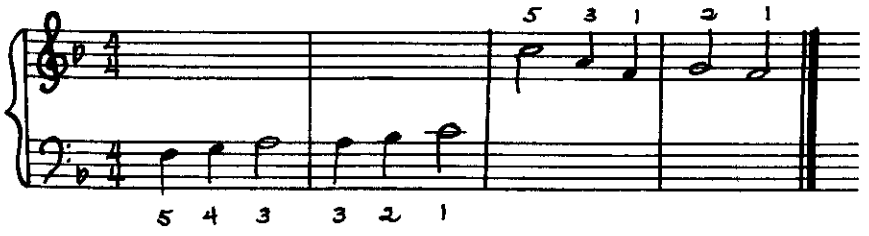

Fig. 9.--The Traffic Cop, an example of teaching pieces.[6]

However, by the use of much material of lasting importance, recognition is made of the fact that really worthwhile music can be used in teaching specific points in musical or technical development.

The lists of supplementary material furnish the other music of permanent value in this course. The suggested material is of very worthy quality and this may be augmented by selections of the teacher's choosing.

Interpretation.--Interpretation is the means by which the message of music is made understandable to the listener. The sensitiveness to music is inborn in people to various degrees, but it can be cultivated beyond the original degree. "Expressive interpretation may be described as the subtle combination of the finer variations of tempo, dynamics,

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[6]Ibid., No. 2a, p. 4.

phrasing, and tone color."[7] Actually, interpretation is more than the sum of its component parts, but these elements contribute to interpretation; and these can be taught.

The song approach gives an ideal introduction to interpretation. By singing songs with words that tell stories or set the mood of the composition, the intended interpretation is more apparent to the children. Pieces without words, but with descriptive titles serve the same purposes. In the case of absolute music, children should have opportunities of hearing the music well performed, should be conscious of the reasons for certain phases of interpretation, and then follow the indications faithfully toward securing that interpretation.

Psychological Aspects

All our ideas come first through the senses. The sense of hearing is the only means of securing direct knowledge of music. The learning act is necessarily the pupil's activity, but the teacher may guide him by seeing that the right conditions for learning are present. In part, these conditions can be stated in the Three Laws of Learning.[8]

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[7] Schelling, op. cit., "Teacher's First Manual," p. 62.

[8] These laws seem to be based on Dewey and Thorndike. Mursell disagrees with the Law of Exercise, saying, "The essence of all great skill and power is not in habituation or routine at all, but in the capacity to meet flexibly and intelligently the complex, shifting demands of real situations." James L. Mursell and Mabelle Glenn, The Psychology of School Music Teaching, p. 48.

The Three Laws of Learning.--(a) The Law of Readiness, (b) The Law of Satisfaction or Annoyance, and (c) The Law of Exercise.

The degree of desire for the activity at hand determines the readiness for learning. The desire for the activity depends upon proper motivation which will create interest in it. Proper motivation here includes a certain amount of success in each activity.

Satisfaction is a strengthening factor, while annoyance weakens the process by destroying the motivation for success. If the activity is preceded by a feeling of despair or futility, the learning will be materially hampered.

Exercise, while being an important part of the learning process, must not be used outside its rightful place. Drills are most effective when the pupils themselves see the need for such practice. This means that the problem which needs exercise should be encountered in an actual situation before the isolated drill is practiced. This is the basis of the marginal material provided in this system of teaching. Figure 10 is a reproduction of an actual page from one of the books showing the way in which the marginal material is incorporated into the study.

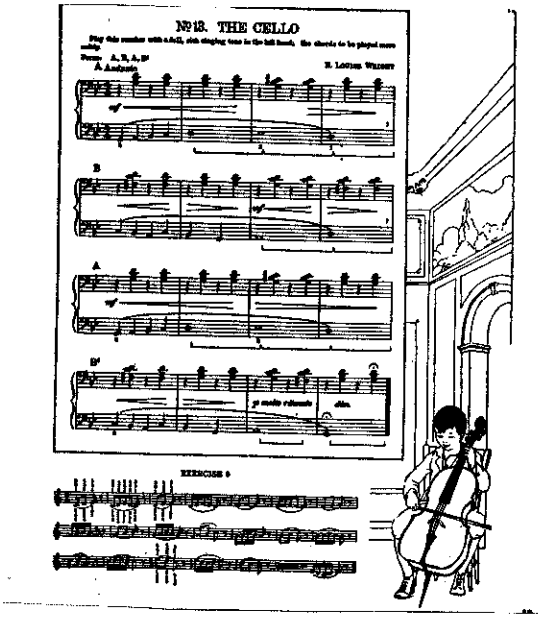

Fig. 10.--Illustration of marginal drill material

Attitude.--The attitude of the pupil is an extremely important phase of the psychological basis of learning. In most cases, the pupil's attitude toward his music lesson is one of desire, at least in the beginning. With this advantage, it is a great waste of interest to allow this good "mind-set" to change to one of disinterest, or even of disillusionment. The good attitude with which most children come to the study of piano should be fostered by allowing them to feel that they are progressing in their ability to play. Music is an art which is actually being exercised while it is being learned, so the children should recognize the fact that they are making music rather than just learning to make music.

Interest.--Interest is fundamental to the effort which is necessary for learning. It can be maintained by adapting the size and quality of each assignment to the ability or capacity of the student. The progress should be guaged so as to remain

challenging to the pupil and yet be sufficiently within his grasp to permit success in his endeavors. The type of musical material enters into this consideration again, because in order to be interesting, the playing must be enjoyable to listen to.

Attention.--Attention is dependent upon interest. We give attention to the things which interest us. One type of interest, however, is that of a disagreeable experience. Interest here is with the idea of ending the experience as quickly as possible. Obviously, the kind of attention which will be most valuable to the teaching and learning process will be that which is based on pleasurable interest.

The span of attention is very brief, particularly with young children. For this reason, the lesson must be varied. The main issue of the lesson may be interspersed or relieved with different topics, thereby accomplishing more when returning to the original goal of the lesson than through an attempted concentration on one interest. The material with which the lesson is interspersed must be sufficiently related to the primary topic to be interesting. An idea which is completely foreign to the children's background of knowledge and experience will fail to interest them.[9]

Coercion.--Coercion is a wasteful means of teaching. It involves forcing the child to learn something without a basis

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[9]Ibid., p. 27.

of readiness for the learning. Any learning under these conditions will be slower and less effective because of the fundamental lack of will to learn.[10] The alternative here is to provide suitable material for the child's interests and make it attractive to him through motivation even of extrinsic rewards. This procedure has its application also to the home practice periods. With a specific time set aside for piano practice each day, there must be a motivation strong enough to make the practice time more impelling and desirable than the usual play activities upon which the practice period is encroaching.

Habit.--Habit is a necessary part of any art or skill which requires motor reactions. Habits are established through repetitions which allow the actions to become almost automatic. For reasons of economy in time, energy, and motion, then, habits should be acquired in technic, sight reading, interpretation, and all the activities involved in piano playing. Habits of wrong activities may become fixed just as easily as those of desirable activities. The best way of avoiding wrong habits is to proceed carefully, not allowing the wrong activities to creep in. By guiding the pupil in a new activity, seeing that it is learned and practiced correctly, the necessity of changing a wrong habit will be avoided.[11]

Memory.--Memory training is concerned with the recall of impressions or ideas. The quality of memory, then, depends

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[10] Ibid., p. 28.

[11] Ibid.

upon the strength of the impressions and the ability to recall. The impressions may be made more vivid by the type of associations they are given.

Memory is used not only in playing from memory but in such activities as sight reading. An improving sight reading ability necessitates the recall of previous problems which were similar. Playing from memory entails a strong, vivid impression, the associations which tend to set up related ideas, ample repetition, and a cue for recall.[12]

People memorize by different associations, so the individual's natural tendency is the first one to be developed. As this one improves, other associations may be added which will strengthen the memory. The best memory will be the one which has the greatest number of pertinent associations to reenforce it. Thus, a memory by visual, aural, and muscular impressions, augmented perhaps by an analysis of harmony and form will be a more dependable one than when only one association is used.

The order of instruction.--The psychological order of instruction, as opposed to the logical order, is the distinguishing change which has come about in teaching procedure during the past thirty or forty years. "The psychological order is the order of experience, of discovery, and consequently of learning. The logical order is the order of arranging for subsequent use what has already been learned."[13]

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[12] Ibid., p. 29.

[13] Ibid., p. 33.

This difference is characteristically thought of in connection with the difference between teachers and artists. The musician who is primarily a teacher considers the level at which he finds the pupil and leads him step by step, as the child can follow. The artist's approach too often follows a plan of organization suitable for his own level. The material is not given in entirety, but the divisions of material are not those most readily grasped by beginners. The best situation, of course, is for the teacher to be enough of an artist to know the field thoroughly and at the same time be interested in presenting the subject in a psychologically sound manner.

This emphasis on the "teacher" is one which was lacking in the music field for a long period of time. The revision of teaching ideas is probably responsible to some degree for the increasing number of people who have been studying piano.

Pedagogical Points

Class piano instruction.--Class instruction presents the problem of dealing with individual children who have differing needs, attitudes, and personalities, in a group situation. There is also the problem of a great deal of the same teaching which will apply to all the pupils. This method takes into consideration both of these problems and distinguishes between them.

The plan of teaching in groups has very definite advantages. It is of economic importance to parents because the

price of the teacher's time is divided among as many students as are in the class. Aside from this point which will not affect the children once, they are in the class, group instruction has other advantages to the children.

Class instruction provides an excellent situation for the discovery of the new and fascinating possibilities of the piano. For beginners who have a great deal to discover, it is more interesting to be able to share these experiences with others. The class is ideal from a number of other psychological points also. The pedagogical consideration in regard to the advantages of classes, however, is that of teaching the same basic material to the whole group. The advantage in this is that it is a substantial time-saver. The problem or difficulty lies in keeping the entire group interested, attentive, and active while only one or two of the group can be at the piano at the time. It is left largely to the teacher's ingenuity to maintain interest. This can be accomplished best by considering the children at their seats as the ones needing guidance, and the one at the piano as the one who is just checking up on what he has learned away from the piano. If properly directed, the class instruction can become more thorough and more firmly impressed in direct proportion to the number of pupils in the class. Each correct repetition will serve to fix and deepen the impression of the learning.

Individual requirements.--Another aspect of class instruction which presents problems and advantages is that of the additional, individual assignments. The supplementary material should be used to encourage the children's own preferences, to give additional emphasis to practicing on their weaknesses, and to give a variety to the listening part of the lesson. This last point makes possible a more extensive background of listening experience than would be found in private lessons. If the course did not provide for individual differences, it would fall short, because no matter how many advantages there may be in class lessons, the factor of individuality is still a strong one.

Class management.--Since this is a class either in the school or outside it, class procedure is recommended. A regular plan of roll call, a seating-plan, quiet, and order should be maintained. The children have learned what to expect in regard to these matters in school classes and they will respond readily to the same procedure in piano class.

In maintaining good discipline, the most important thing is to keep everyone occupied with some work he can do successfully. Care must be taken to see that the quicker children have sufficient additional assignments to keep them busy and interested.

Because of the number of children involved in each class period, it is important not to waste time. For this reason,

a routine order of playing at the piano should be established. While one child is playing, another is standing beside him ready to take his place. If this procedure goes ahead without the teacher's direction, he has a better opportunity of helping the children at their seats.

The seating-plan should have the children grouped according to ability, with the less talented or capable children seated in the front places. The teacher should be ready to receive the children when they come in. They should know their places and find them quickly, without confusion. The children who have original pieces they particularly want to play during the period may put their names in a list on the blackboard. This gives the teacher an opportunity of seeing the amount of material to be covered. The first activity of the period may well be a review of something the children know how to play. It will not be advisable to have every child play all the assignments at the piano, but every child should certainly have opportunities to play some of the work of each lesson. New material is introduced and the drill or exercise work is done as a group. Ear training games, flash cards, and technic games may be played. An atmosphere such as this eliminates the drudgery of routine drill. The original pieces of the creative assignment are played, the assignment for the next lesson is made and demonstrated, and then the lesson should close with some piece which is especially enjoyable to the children.

Class continuity.--According to the plan of this course, the groups may be kept intact and move along together for as long a period as six years. However, it is sometimes necessary or desirable to re-group the classes. If there are a few pupils who are definitely superior to the rest of the class, they should be placed in another group where the abilities will be more nearly the same. This will give the less capable members of the original class more of a feeling of possible success. At the same time, it decreases the discipline problem of the children who were capable of more work than they were doing.

Technical Training

It is necessary for one who is proficient in piano to have an equipment which includes all phases of a well-rounded technic. The minute details of a technical program cannot effectively be set out in writing; it is necessary for the teacher to show the desired movements to the pupils, having them imitate until correct habits are formed.

Drill.--The development of piano technic has undergone a change of approach in recent years. While drill still has a place in technical training, the approach to it and the emphasis on it are different from the former practices. Mechanical drills "were designed to give control of the movements necessary to play, to increase facility in playing the various figurations found in piano music, to develop power and speed,

and to establish foundational control for dynamic and rhythmic variety in piano performances."[14]

In order to be prepared for any demand when it should arise, the drills were practiced before the music was learned. This procedure gave pupils the ability to express musical ideas without having the ideas to express.

Teaching pieces.--To correct this fault in method, "teaching pieces" have been created. These pieces embody the technical problems that were formerly stressed by the dry and uninteresting drills, and at the same time provide an experience that is more or less interesting musically.

The use of "teaching pieces" represents a compromise between the old, formalized drill, and the complete swing over to straight teaching of graded material without the use of exercises at all. "Teaching pieces" seem to incorporate the most beneficial features of both extremes of this problem. They provide a musical approach to the technical problem and at the same time prevent a lack of comprehensive technical training which might occur without the use of exercises.

General suggestions.--Consideration under the term "technic" include arm and finger movements, hand positions, correct fingering, control of dynamics, and a musical tone quality. With young children the emphasis should be on the natural tendencies, freedom, and ease in playing rather than on

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[14]Ibid., p. 52.

over-precision. The teacher's playing for the children should embody the principles of correct technic since the basis of children's early technical development is imitation.

The following suggestions set out the basic requirements for technical development as considered by this method:

> (a) Height of Chair at Piano. This should be such that when the hand is held in position on the keyboard (keys depressed), the wrist and forearm are horizontal. . . .
>
> (b) How to Sit. The player should sit somewhat forward on the chair, the body upright from the hips, poised very slightly forward, never bending over the keys. He should never rest on the back of the chair while playing, and should never indicate rigidity at the hips.
>
> (c) Distance of Player from Keyboard. The player should sit at a distance from the keyboard so that the upper arm hangs vertically from the shoulder, never with the elbow further back than such a position brings.
>
> (d) Use of Arm. The arm should be used freely from the shoulder. All movements should be as natural as possible and free from affectation. . . . When coming away from the keys let the hand hang, relaxed, at the wrist; never swing the band back at the wrist.
>
> (e) Hand Position. The standard position of rounded, arched hand with curved fingers and curved-in tip of thumb is recommended. . . . Further, the teacher must never force the child in matters of position in such a manner as to strain weak joints and muscles.
>
> (f) Use of Fingers. As no formal finger exercises are given in the work of the first year with younger children, control of the finger movements should be first approached through striving for legato in melody playing.
>
> (g) Good Tone. This means a quality of tone that expresses the message of the music to be played, such as a singing tone in a melody, a firm tone in a march, etc. . . .
>
> (h) Fingering. Fingerings are indicated with care and with a definite plan in Singing and Playing and the First Book. In five finger position, unless indicated otherwise, the next finger plays the next note in all diatonic passages. . . . .
>
> (i) Accuracy. Accurate, clean playing must earnestly be worked for at all times. The child should always aim for the middle of each key and develop thereby an accurate sense of finger spacing.

(j) Dynamics. "Louder and softer" may be attained through imitating the teacher's example, and through singing the songs and then playing them in the same spirit.[15]

Technic games.--Games employing the different phases of technical training are of value as a part of each lesson for the first, formative period of teaching. These games, based on stories, provide the exercise necessary for muscular development and control. They correct weaknesses without the child's consciousness. Self-consciousness over a fault sometimes causes tension in an effort to overcome the fault, but these pleasurable games place the main interest on the stories rather than the technical difficulty, as far as the children are concerned.

The first games will be chosen to promote free, rhythmic arm movement. Next, should come the combination of arm and finger activity. The hand position is directed and then later the finger movements are practiced in the games. Use of these games during each lesson should be only to the extent that no fatigue or tension results. The technic games are designed, as are the future drill or marginal materials, to be done in a group rather than as part of the home practice assignment. From this pleasurable beginning, pupils will wish to carry over part of the exercise into home practice periods a little later.

This method (The Oxford Course) suggests the use of technic games by other authors since there are none specifically

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[15]Ibid., pp. 57-58.

outlined within this course. An example of one of these is "The Aeroplane in Nose Dive" from the Louise Robyn books. The instructions for the presentation of this game to a group of pre-school children follow:

> The teacher introduces a toy aeroplane to explain the story element of the first technical action of the wrist and hand in attack and release of the keyboard.
>
> First, teach the children to name the principal parts of the aeroplane. Begin with the nose of the aeroplane which is compared to the third finger of the hand. The children demonstrate this principle by holding the right hand suspended, with the third finger pushed slightly toward the palm to indicate the nose of the aeroplane. The outstretched fingers represent the wings of the aeroplane.
>
> The tail piece of the aeroplane is then compared to the wrist. As the aeroplane descends toward the ground in a nose dive, the nose descends first, after which the tail piece settles gently to the ground, thus bringing the hand to normal playing position on the piano.
>
> Each child now has a turn at the piano for discipline in the nose dive on Middle C, with each hand alone.
>
> The pre-school child should receive this initial technical drill at the piano, sitting in the lap of the teacher, as the teacher must guide the hand and the wrist movements of the child as the hand is raised and lowered. The teacher's efforts in the early lessons are focused entirely upon obtaining a condition of relaxation in the wrist as the hand is carried to and from the piano.
>
> The third finger should be pushed slightly toward the palm of the hand as it descends to the keyboard. The wrist or tail piece descends to normal position after the tip of the third finger has pressed the key Middle C.[16]

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[16]Louise Robyn, "A General Survey of the Introductory Lessons Given to a Pre-School Class of Children," The Louise Robyn Graded List of Teaching Material, p. 38.

CHAPTER IV

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PIANO METHODS

In considering the criteria for judging various methods, they seem to fall into four general classifications:

1. Musical.
2. Psychological and Pedagogical.
3. Technical.
4. Physical.

Musical

Permanent musical value.--The value of the material used, from the musical point of view, is of primary importance. During the time in which music is studied, there will not be opportunities for learning all the music that has been written. It is most desirable, then, to study the best that is available. If there are two pieces which have the same technical problems involved, it will be of advantage, musically, to select the one which is most apt to be of permanent value.

Among the pieces considered to be of permanent musical value will be found folk songs, little pieces by famous composers, and other noteworthy pieces arranged so as to be suitable for children's ability, The folk songs are particularly well adapted to the children's level. They have been created by the untrained people, and represent a natural

musical expression. This type of piece fits into the singing approach, too, because of the "song" quality of the music. However, there are many more folk songs than the child can learn in the course of his music study. Here, again, there must be discriminating selection. Many of the folk songs are fairly generally known. They are the ones which will be heard frequently and recognized. Others of the same general qualifications may be practically unknown in this country or in certain sections of the country. With the idea of permanent musical value in mind, it will be most desirable to select those which will be heard often. The child should certainly feel that his study of piano is helping him to appreciate and enjoy the other musical experiences that would ordinarily come into his consciousness.

The same idea carries over into the realm of composed pieces. With a possible choice of several pieces by the same composer, it will be of most interest to the child to select those which he will have occasion to hear frequently. Even though this process may result in a rather hackneyed repertory, it will be a better basis for further additions than to have many obscure compositions which for one reason or another have failed to achieve popularity.

In judging a method on this point, we should answer these questions:

Is there a proportionately good number of familiar folk tunes used?

Are well-known compositions included, either in original or simplified form?

Immediate musical interest.--Closely allied with the permanent musical value of the material used is the immediate musical interest or appeal to the child. This point will overlap with the psychological effects and also the format of the books, but it can be considered primarily on a musical basis.

First, the melody should be of a singable character. The child's background has been built up of singing experiences. The new pieces should carry on this idea as long as it is of interest to the child. The first pieces will be based on the tonic chord and five-finger melodies; however, they may extend beyond this range through the use of two-hand melodies.

Mood may be introduced, still in this simple stage by the use of minor melodies in contrast to major, and by various tempo indications. Mood may also be substantially strengthened by the words belonging to the pieces and the pictures accompanying the music on the page. The books chosen for beginners of different ages should be viewed with this idea in mind, because supplementary devices designed to create interest are of more harm than good if they strike the wrong level of development.

Familiarity with the melodies, as discussed under permanent musical value will also be a factor for immediate interest. If the pieces are those which the child has already heard, there will be an immediate incentive to learn them.

The considerations under this point are:

Are the melodies singable?

Do the words hold interest for the children?

Are the subjects and pictures accompanying the music suited to the musical level of the children for whom the course is intended?

Transposition.--Considering transposition as one of the essentials in a music course, the criterion here should be the ease with which it is introduced, the naturalness of its practice, and its continued use until the procedure is fixed. Transposition should be introduced very early in the musical training and should have an aural basis rather than a mechanical one. The new hand and finger positions are found and then the ear guides the rest of the process. In cases where black notes occur in the transposed versions, at variance with the original, the ear should discover this problem before attention is called to the necessary finger adjustments. After the ear has discovered the necessity for a different position, the position may be emphasized before repeating the piece or exercise.

In the earliest transpositions, keys should be selected wherein the actual finger positions will be the same. This will avoid too many new ideas at once and allow transposition to be a very natural process. As the pieces studied become more difficult, emphasis on transposition will be lessened, but occasional pieces should be transposed into a number of keys in order to keep in practice and also to keep the ear alert.

The standards for a course to measure up to in this respect are:

Is the early use of transposition introduced as an easy, pleasurable variation of the piece as it is printed?

Is the basis of transposition aural?

Is the series of keys arranged with the best idea of similarity, then gradually bringing in differences in positions?

Is transposition carried on far enough to make sure that the process is well-established?

Creative music.--The opportunities for creative music are numerous and should certainly be utilized. As a criterion for a teaching method, the question is whether there is sufficient emphasis on original endeavor. Creative music may take the form of completing melodies which have been started, supplying the proper chords for given melodies, or writing both the melody and chords. A corollary of this activity is the actual writing down in musical notation of some of the children's original contributions.

Creative practice should be part of the home assignment. It is possible there to experiment and have the freedom necessary for trying different possibilities. This type of activity gives a greater sense of mastery of music than perhaps any other one phase. To be able to create something indicates that the creator is above the thing he has made.

In connection with the use of the material that has been made up, some class procedure is involved. Through hearing

some of the pieces, the children may be led to discover which ones have better balance as to phrases and which ones use the best selection of chords. To fail to use the creative efforts of children is to discourage further attempts, and is a waste of valuable possibilities.

The bases for rating various mathods on this point are:

Are the children encouraged to complete given melodies and to write their own melodies?

Are the children taught different chords and the chord characteristics so that they can fill in harmony for the pieces they sing and play?

Ensemble playing.--Class instruction provides excellent opportunities for ensemble playing, but whether the teaching is with groups or individuals, there should be ample provision made for ensemble work. Children should have the experience of playing while others sing, playing for their own singing, and playing with others. Playing with others may assume a variety of combinations such as: four-hand duets; six-hand trios; eight-hand, two-piano arrangements; unison playing on two pianos; playing the same material in different octaves of the same piano; and four-hand arrangements for two pianos.

Ensemble playing, to be of value, must be conducted so that the playing is pulled up to the most nearly correct interpretation in the group. It is a necessary phase of piano teaching because, better than any other means of teaching procedure, it eliminates stammering and faltering at the piano.

With beginners who are not prepared to play complete pieces, ensemble playing gives a much more satisfying aural experience than the individual capabilities will allow. By forging ahead in spite of mistakes, finding the place, and going on after having been lost, the true feeling for the composition is gained more quickly than by allowing individuals to blunder along by themselves.

In an experimental study comparing the results of whole, part, and combination methods of learning piano music, it was found that in the series of trials made, the whole method was most effective in two units out of three. In the third unit this method ranked second. These units of material were based on levels of difficulty for the subjects in the experiment: easy, medium difficulty, and most difficult. In all cases, the part method proved to be the lease efficient of the three.[1]

This finding may be additional proof of the idea that reading through the entire piece is the most effective way of learning.[2]

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[1]Roberta W. Brown, "A Comparison of the 'Whole', 'Part', and 'Combination' Methods of Learning Piano Music," Journal of Experimental Psychology, XI (1928), 235-247.

[2]A. I. Gates, Psychology for Students of Education, p. 293, quoted in Brown, op. cit., p. 235.

"In an inventory of methods actually used by one hundred prominent musicians, 14 reported that they employed the whole method exclusively, another 14 combined the whole and the piecemeal procedure, while the remaining 72 learned mainly bit-by-bit. These data throw little light on the merits of the methods inasmuch as highly competent performers in every field often employ uneconomical methods. Crucial investigations in the case of such functions are lacking. Theoretically, the whole method would seem to possess the same merits here as in the case of memorizing poetry or prose."

We want to know, in regard to a teaching method, then:

Is opportunity given for playing accompaniments to singing?

Do the children play together, or in the case of individual lessons, does the teacher play with the pupil?

Psychological and Pedagogical

Suitability for beginners.--Since the methods being considered are those for beginning piano students, an important consideration is whether or not the method is well adapted to the abilities and needs of beginners. With young children, this may be the first musical experience they have had, and the background of musical experience must be built up more rapidly at first than the actual piano training will be. In the case of older children who have known more music, too much preliminary material may dampen their enthusiasm because it seems to move too slowly for them.

The important point, then, is to have teaching materials to fit the level of the beginner whether he is four years old or twelve years old. This consideration is on the psychological side, and the fact remains that beginning material, even though presented in a more grown-up way, must still establish the fundamental musical and technical concepts.

We should determine these questions:

Are different materials provided for the beginners of different ages?

Is sufficient background material given for the young children?

Is the technical foundation sufficiently thorough for all grades of beginners?

Adaptability for group presentation.--According to the trends in modern piano teaching, class instruction has many advantages not found in private lessons. It is a rather generally accepted idea at present that class teaching of piano is more economical, both in time to the teacher and in money to the parents of the children, than are private lessons. Because of the growing trend in this direction, the adaptability of a method or course to group presentation should be one of the criteria.

Group instruction, of necessity, builds for independence in the children's playing. This should be one of the considerations in determining whether the method is suitable for use with classes. If no provision is made for allowing the children to work out things for themselves, to discover, and experiment, but rather makes necessary showing every point minutely and individually to each pupil, the method falls short in group presentation.

Opportunities for commenting on other children's playing form another phase of class instruction. In this way, careful discrimination is developed, and if the positive approach is encouraged, the good points will be brought out often. By

having good points in playing constantly brought to the attention of the class, improvement will be made in that direction.[3]

Is provision made for group procedure, in that there is opportunity for continuous activity of all pupils?

Is the spirit of mutual helpfulness encouraged by the plan of the course?

Does the course use the class as a means of making routine and drill matters enjoyable?

Consideration of individual variabilities.--In teaching piano classes, an important point is to remain conscious of the individual differences, just as it was important not to give too much help to the individuals in the group. There is a distinction between recognizing individual needs, and the hovering type of individual help that leads to weakness and dependence. Individual variabilities may occur in the speed with which new material is understood, the acuteness of hearing, the reaction time of the neuro-muscular system, sight-reading ability, accuracy and permanence in memorizing--in fact, in every phase of musicianship.

In evaluating the attention given to individual variabilities, it is particularly important to consider the different speeds with which children learn and grasp new material. This becomes a problem of class management and discipline because those who work more quickly than the majority of the class must

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[3]Raymond Burrows, "The Positive Approach: A Significant Opportunity in Piano Class Instruction," Music Educators National Conference Yearbook (1936), pp. 267-272.

have additional assignments which can proceed without interfering with the principal class project.

It is a mistaken idea to assume that superior individuals must be held back when placed in a group with average abilities. By planning ahead, these quicker pupils may be given an enriched program of work which will be challenging to them and at the same time be in keeping with the general class activities. Their superior ability may also serve to enrich the experiences of the others.

The following questions will determine this phase of a course:

Are additional activities provided for the quick children during class periods?

Do the home assignments recognize the interests of the individuals?

Is sufficient drill provided for those who have trouble in gaining neuro-muscular control?

Integration with the school music program.--In order to be a vitally interesting experience to children, music must have a certain amount of unity. If the music which they experience in school can be fitted into the piano music they are learning, and all of this made to coincide with some of the music they will experience in undirected fields, music will be much more alive, real, and meaningful to them. Since the school music programs are planned in advance and apply to all the pupils who will be in piano classes, the piano class should be

planned to fit into the school music program. This can be accomplished in a number of ways.

The general plan of the school music program is that it coincides with the units of work in other fields. By keeping in touch with the school program, the materials of piano teaching can be parallel to these same units or realms of study. The organization of certain methods shows this purpose of integration very definitely.

The following points should be considered in integration:

Does the method use any songs that are used in the school music books?

Is the training sufficiently practical that the children can play their school songs at the piano?

Are the children being taught enough ear training to allow them to put in the right chords with their songs?

Is the subject matter in the words of the songs in keeping with that of the songs being learned in school?

Adequacy of teachers' manuals.--Because any published piano teaching method is going to be used by teachers who may not have had actual experience in teaching before, or at least who have not had first-hand instruction in the presentation of the material by the authors of the course, it is extremely desirable to have manuals as complete and lucid as possible. The method can be no better than the form in which it reaches the pupils. No matter how good the material included in a teaching method may be, it cannot reach its full

potentialities unless the teacher is equipped to present the material as nearly according to the way the authors intended as possible.

The fact that many excellent, experienced teachers use a combination of materials from various sources, and present them in their own way does not altar the fact that in order to judge a method, it must be presented according to the original intentions of the authors. Where it is not possible to give personal, first-hand instruction in this matter, a good manual is the next best agency.

An important feature of manuals is the statement of the purposes, aims, and objectives of the course. Without a clear idea of the ultimate goal of the course, the means to achieving the end will be blurred; procedure, of course, will form a considerable part of the manual.

These questions are pertinent to judging the adequacy of manuals:

Are separate manuals available with the teaching material?

Are teaching instructions provided in the books which the children use?

Do the manuals set out the underlying principles, aims, and goals as well as teaching procedures?

Technical

Order of development of neuro-muscular control.--The neuro-muscular processes involved in playing the piano are rather

complex, and for this reason, they should be developed in the correct order. The basis of this order is the original development of muscular control in infancy. The larger the muscles, the more easily they can be controlled.

With this concept, then, the first type of control is just a bodily response to the rhythm of music. The whole body responds by walking, marching, skipping, or whatever the music suggests doing. Narrowing down this response, we use the arms, head, and trunk to reproduce the musical suggestions. The first actual response at the piano is that of the whole arm, moving as one unit. By gaining control of these large motions before smaller ones are introduced, the possibility of harmful tension is minimized. As each successive stage is mastered, the smaller response can be brought into use.

The order of neuro-muscular control from random movements to a well-controlled use of the fingers is a process of physical development which must be carefully guided. If the development is forced at a faster rate than the individual is capable of going, tension of the muscles will result, and the process will have to be started over more slowly.

The order of neuro-muscular control should be:

1. Bodily response to music.
2. Large muscles of the whole arm.
3. Forearm.
4. Hand position.
5. Fingers.

Opportunity of habit formation.--The question of drill and habit formation is one on which there is a considerable difference of opinion. It is generally acknowledged that a certain amount of automatic, technical skill is necessary for the performance of music. The question arises in the philosophical and psychological approach to the acquisition of these motor habits. If the principal aim in this matter is to acquire a battery of motor abilities for their own sake, then drill on technical problems is not a worthy practice. If, however, the need for certain technical abilities is made evident by functional musical situations, then the motor response should be perfected.[4]

As a matter of economy in learning, when the need for a technical ability is found, that ability should be acquired so that it becomes a part of the permanent technical equipment of the individual. Only in this way can a working foundation be acquired. This extra- or over-learning of a specific skill places it in the automatic or habit category where it is ready for use in future similar situations without having to be relearned.

These questions form the criterion for habit formation:

Is the ultimate aim of technical proficiency the ability to create the musical effect required?

Is sufficient time spent on a specific technical problem to allow it to become fixed?

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[4]James L. Mursell, Human Values in Music Education, p. 345.

Is material other than pieces provided for drill purposes?

Is interest maintained throughout the drill process?

Physical

Format.--The physical considerations in a method also have psychological implications. The format of the children's books often has a much more important effect upon their interest in the material than we, as adults, realize. Several considerations of format are to be judged. They have to do with the musical, supplementary, and artistic phases of the material.

Primarily, the music should be printed so that form consciousness is developed. This can be most effective by having one phrase to a line, particularly in the first book. The music notation should be of proper size so that the entire phrase lies within a single eye-span. An attempt to enlarge the staff and notation for ease in perception can be carried to the point where it is difficult to grasp. Ordinarily, children's eyesight is very good, and moderate sized notation can be perceived and then carried over into the standard size musical type with little or no difficulty. The staves provided for the children's notation, of course, should be larger in accordance with their writing skill.

The supplementary material consists of anything designed to enhance the interest of the music to the children. This may consist of words, titles, stories, poems, or pictures. As

mentioned previously, it is extremely important to have these points meet the level of psychological development of the children.

From the artistic standpoint, the form of the books also has a psychological effect. Certain colors or color combinations may either please or irritate a child. A good starting place in the consideration of design is the type of figures or illustrations that have been used in the school art classes. The representations should not be childish, however, so that the feeling of wanting to improve upon them is engendered.

The type of paper, cover, binding, and proportions of the book also deserve consideration. The factor of durability is predominant here. The construction of the book should be such that it promotes pleasure in using and handling it. The organ book type of arrangement is probably better adapted to beginners' music because the short, wide pages fit the spacing of the pieces according to phrases. This type of page also permits only one song or piece and its accompanying illustrative material so that there is no distraction of interest. An example of the kind of book referred to is shown in Figure 11.

The format of the books should measure up to these standards:

Is the music presented plainly, phrase-wise, and in proper sized notation?

Do the supplementary interest devices suit the interests of the children?

Are the artistic features appealing to children?

Is the construction of the book durable enough for children's use and enjoyment?

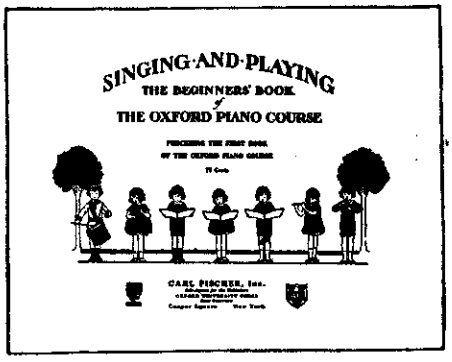

Fig. 11.--Example of the oblong, organ book type of arrangement of beginners' books.

Cost in relation to the worth of the material.--The books in some course cost considerably more than others. This cannot be determined by the actual dollars and cents price of each book because it may be that more books are used in one course than in another. One of the factors to consider, in dealing with particularly, is the length of time which is spent in the study of one book. If too much material is included in one book so that it requires a long period of time to cover it, the children may lose sight of the progress they are making and become discouraged. On the other hand, if there are just a few, very easy pieces which can quickly be mastered, that book may be an extravagance.

Another type of arrangement is to have one book of basic materials and have other pieces to supplement it. This may

seem to be the most economical course, but by the time the additional pieces have been purchased, it may actually cost more than other types of organization of material.

As a basis of comparison of costs of different methods, therefore, it is necessary to know:

What will the cost be for a period of a year's study?

Is this cost divided into portions that best fit the psychological aspects of progress?

In the event of an expensive course, is the material sufficiently superior to justify the higher price?

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Description of the Method of Comparison

The criteria set up in Chapter IV form the basis of evaluation of the methods under consideration. Table 2 gives the fourteen ratings for each of the twenty-two methods. The ratings A, B, and C are given as indications of the following: A means that the course measures up to the standards set forth, and, in respect to all the questions posed for each of the fourteen items of judgment, was found to be superior; B denotes the average that has come to be expected in piano methods; C shows that the method is either inferior or lacking in its treatment of specific phases of piano instruction. The three-point rating scale was thought to be sufficiently discriminating in view of the number of points which were rated in each method.

It is evident that all criteria will not be of equal importance in determining the true worth of a course. For this reason, the actual tabulation of rankings will not necessarily show which method is either best or least desirable. The weighting of some items, particularly in the musical and psychological aspects, will be necessary before an evaluation can be reached. For example, it will be obvious that the

TABLE 2

RATINGS OF TWENTY-TWO BEGINNING PIANO METHODS

Criterion	Method*							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Permanent musical value	B	C	B	C	A	B	A	C
2. Immediate musical interest	A	B	C	B	A	A	A	B
3. Transposition	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	B
4. Creative music	C	C	C	C	C	A	A	A
5. Ensemble playing	C	C	B	A	A	A	A	C
6. Suitability for beginners	A	B	C	B	A	A	A	A
7. Adaptability for group presentation	C	B	B	B	A	A	A	B
8. Consideration of individual variabilities	A	B	B	B	B	B	A	B
9. Integration with the school music program	C	B	C	B	B	C	B	C
10. Adequacy of teachers' manuals	C	B	A	C	B	A	B	B
11. Order of development of neuro-muscular control	A	B	A	C	A	B	B	B
12. Opportunity of habit formation	B	A	A	B	B	A	A	B
13. Format	A	B	B	B	A	B	B	A
14. Cost in relation to the worth of the material	B	A	B	A	A	B	A	B

*Numbers of the methods refer to the corresponding numbers in Table 1.

TABLE 2--Continued

9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
A	A	B	A	B	B	B	C	B	C	A	B	A	B
B	C	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	B	A	A	A	B
B	B	A	A	A	B	A	C	B	C	C	B	B	A
B	C	A	B	B	B	A	B	B	B	C	A	A	B
A	B	C	B	A	B	A	B	B	C	B	C	A	C
A	C	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	A
A	C	B	A	A	A	A	B	A	B	B	C	A	B
A	A	B	A	A	B	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	A
B	C	A	A	B	B	A	B	A	C	B	A	A	B
B	C	B	A	A	C	A	C	A	C	B	A	B	B
B	C	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	B	C	B	A
A	A	B	A	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	A	B	B
B	C	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	B	B	C
A	B	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	C	A	C	A	B

first three criteria, that is, permanent musical value, immediate musical interest, and transposition will not be of equal importance in determining the merits of a course. Because of the difficulty of obtaining an equitable means of equating these points, however, no table of weighted ratings will be included.

At present, the only means of determining the relative importance of the fourteen criteria is a subjective one. If used as a basis for further interpretation of the findings of this study, the procedure would tend to become less valid. The weighting of various phases in a course of piano instruction is a subject which would merit intensive study and research, and which would provide ample material for another thesis. The material should be obtained as nearly as possible through experimental procedure.

In a trial process, a weighted chart was made. For this purpose, C equals 1, B equals 2, and A equals 3. In assigning values to the criteria, there were three items which were thought to be several times as important as the basic scale. These were: immediate musical interest, suitability for beginners, and order of development of neuro-muscular control. To these points the value of 3 was assigned. Permanent musical value was weighted at 2. Adaptability for group presentation and consideration of individual variabilities were each given a value of $1\frac{1}{2}$.

Since no authority for such weighting could be obtained, it was deemed advisable to omit the table from this discussion.

It is interesting to note, however, that the results in ranking of methods by this procedure agreed almost completely with the ranking by tabulation of item ratings. The four methods ranking highest and the four lowest were the same in both procedures.

Table 3 is a tabulation of the fourteen ratings in each of the twenty-two methods. The results shown in this table, judged merely by the frequency of A ratings and C ratings approximated very closely the results in the trial weighted chart.

Results of the Comparative Evaluation

The writer has been interested to discover whether the methods which are "best sellers" actually measure up to standard in worthy objectives for piano methods, and by the same token, whether virtually unknown or little used methods deserve their obscurity. Very largely this premise has been answered in the affirmative. Probably the most striking examples of variations to it are in the cases of the John M. Williams "Year by Year Piano Course" and the Mary Bacon Mason books. The Williams books have been carefully organized, and this course, consisting of some fifteen books, is undoubtedly one of the best known and most popular methods available. Referring to Table 2, number 22, the reasons for its rather average rating will be apparent. In the case of the Mary

TABLE 3

FREQUENCY OF RATINGS IN THE METHODS STUDIED

Rating	Method																						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
A	6	3	4	2	9	8	10	3	8	3	8	11	11	5	13	2	9	1	7	7	9	4	143
B	3	8	6	8	4	5	4	8	6	3	6	3	3	8	1	9	5	7	5	3	5	8	118
C	5	3	4	4	1	1	..	3	..	8	..	..	..	1	..	3	..	6	2	4	..	2	47

Numbers of the methods refer to corresponding numbers in Table 1.

Bacon Mason books (Table 2, number 12) the superiority of the material and the manner of its presentation would seem to warrant wider use of these books than they now enjoy.

From the figures in the last column of Table 3, it will be observed readily that the preponderance of ratings falls in the upper two classes. This finding indicates that the authors and publishers of piano methods have closely followed the best thought in psychological and musical aspects of the field, and have produced material which conforms to these ideals.

Lambert's Piano Method for Beginners (Table 3, number 10) has the greatest frequency of C ratings. This may be partially accounted for in the fact that the date of publication of this method is 1907. While some of the other methods may have been in existence for nearly as long a period of time as this, they have been revised and kept up to date in accordance with changing standards in music, education, and psychology.

The books by Mary Ruth Jesse, Piano Playthings (Table 3, number 16) have the greatest number of B ratings. This would indicate a moderately good course, with few points either outstandingly superior or inferior.

The Oxford-Piano Course (Table 3, number 15) has the highest number of A ratings. In the writer's estimation which is based on the best criteria available, this method probably deserves the first rank among the methods studied. The one item which received a B rating (permanent musical

value) is an important one, however, and according to some musicians and teachers, this lack of superiority might give first place to the next ranking method. This decision depends upon the importance attached to the various standards.

Of the fourteen criteria, nine were predominantly rated A and five were rated B, while none had a controlling number of C's (Table 4). This indicates that the criteria and general practices among authors of piano methods are largely in agreement. The two items which had the largest number of C ratings (Creative music and Ensemble playing) are those which have only recently been deemed important in beginning methods. Creative music has too often been reserved for the time when the student knows all about music before he creates any of his own. This mistaken concept would be analogous to the insistence on a child's knowing all the rules of grammar before allowing him to make up stories. Ensemble playing, too, has been delayed until the students were able to play along acceptably. Actually, ensemble playing is one of the means by which children learn to play acceptably either together or alone. The most recent methods are taking this fact into consideration and are utilizing more opportunities for ensemble playing.

Great variety in the permanent musical value of the materials was found. Too often, original pieces by the authors were used when it would have been more desirable to find excerpts from some familiar works, either folk tunes or

TABLE 4

FREQUENCY OF RATINGS ACCORDING TO THE CRITERIA

Criterion	Rating			Median
	A	B	C	
1. Permanent musical value	7	10	5	B
2. Immediate musical interest	12	8	2	A
3. Transposition	11	8	3	A
4. Creative music	7	8	7	B
5. Ensemble playing	8	7	7	A
6. Suitability for beginners	17	3	2	A
7. Adaptability for group presentation	10	9	3	A
8. Consideration of individual variabilities	13	9	...	A
9. Integration with the school music program	6	10	6	B
10. Adequacy of teachers' manuals	7	9	6	B
11. Order of development of neuro-muscular control	9	10	3	B
12. Opportunity of habit formation	12	10	...	A
13. Format	11	9	2	A
14. Cost in relation to the worth of the material	13	7	2	A

compositions. The method which was outstandingly good on this point was the Carl Fischer Piano Course. Integration with the school music program was another item which received varied attention among the methods. This is a unifying

feature which should have had more consideration in the majority of cases. The method which made exceptionally good use of this point was the World of Music Piano Course. It was designed by the publishers to coincide with the World of Music school music series, and therefore, had a high degree of correlation with the school music program.

The highest number of A ratings was in number 6(Suitability for beginners). Most of the courses for beginners were found to be suitable musically, psychologically, and technically for the ability and preparation of beginning students.

The two items which were ranked exclusively within the upper two brackets were "Consideration of individual variabilities" and "Order of development of neuro-muscular control." The individual difference factor is not a problem in methods which are designed for individual instruction, but sometimes a group method will lose sight of this feature. None of the methods considered in this study were found to be inferior in this respect although there was some difference in the degree of desirability of various treatments. The technical feature of neuro-muscular control is a subject which has received much study and experimentation over a period of many years. It is not surprising, then, that all the courses were rated average or superior on this criterion.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The foregoing summary of the findings of this study in regard to the comparative evaluation of various beginning piano methods would seem to lead to the recommendation of certain methods as the ones which should be adopted in preference to all others. This is not at all the purpose of the study. The plan has been to procure for examination and study as many of the existing piano methods as possible and to determine the principal trends. Through a critical analysis of these methods certain weaknesses and strong points have been disclosed. To a beginning teacher of piano, this type of survey is valuable for discovering the possibilities that can be expected in teaching equipment.

The factor of the teacher has not been considered to any appreciable extent in this study, and because of the very great differences found among teachers, it would be extremely unwise to attempt to prescribe any one method as the most desirable. It is not presumed that the findings of this study will revolutionize any teacher's ideas or change the teaching material he has been accustomed to using. It is entirely possible for a fine teacher to use a course of instruction that fails to meet the highest standards and still obtain better results than a poor teacher using the best materials. Other factors being equal, however, the most desirable courses, including material and procedure, will provide the best learning situations.

This study has opened up to the writer new fields of research and experimentation which seem to be virtually unexplored. It is felt that the listing of these subjects may be helpful in directing further study in this realm. The lack of available data in these matters has of necessity made the present thesis a preliminary survey rather than a conclusive, scientific evaluation.

A comprehensive bibliography of teaching courses.--A preliminary to the evaluation of piano instruction courses would be a comprehensive bibliography of the available methods. This would entail painstaking care because some valuable methods are published by private companies, and due to the organization of these courses, the materials are not widely advertised. Another feature of this subject would be the classification of the data according to the extent of the course, that is, the number of books used, the stage of development to which the course progresses, the use or non-use of supplementary material, etc.

Establishment of a standardized set of criteria for beginning piano methods.--The existence of such a basis of evaluation will be necessary to the further critical analysis of beginning piano methods. In order to be valid, these criteria should be established through controlled experiments which will determine the value of the respective bases of judgment. Experiments of this kind will involve large numbers of teachers and pupils, and a period of several years' time.

A basis for weighting the criteria established.--As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, a means of equating different phases of a course of instruction is necessary for a true evaluation. This process could be partially accomplished in connection with the establishment of the criteria. By means of a pre-determined set of measurements, the importance of different criteria could be decided. Verification of the weighting of the criteria should be obtained through the consensus of opinion of large numbers of qualified teachers of piano.

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