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THE BEST METHOD IS ECLECTIC.

An interview secured expressly for the Etude Music Magazine, with the eminent virtuoso, composer, and pedagogue.

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY.

Leopold Godowsky, one of the most distinguished pianists of history, is unusual in his methods of teaching, because his own training was quite different from that of his contemporaries. He was born in Wilna, Russian Poland, in 1870. In the period of 1881 to 1884 he spent about one year of study in the Royal High School of Music at Berlin; although, after two years of study in Wilna, he previously made an extensive tour at the age of nine. He toured America in 1884-85, with Clara Louise Kellogg and Emma Thursby, and later with the violinist Ovide Musin. In 1886 he went to Paris, where Camille Saint-Saens supervised his education in 1890 he returned to America to devote himself to the concert field. On coming of age, in 1891, Mr. Godowsky became a naturalized citizen of the United States. Then, in 1894 he became head piano teacher of Combs Conservatory in Philadelphia; and in 1895 he went to head the piano department of the Chicago Conservatory. In 1900 he settled in Berlin as a teacher; till in 1909 he became director of the "Klaviermeisterschule" of the Vienna Conservatory and was made a Royal Professor. Since then he has lived and toured in various parts of the world. His delightful melodic compositions, largely for piano, have brought him wide renown. His mastery of involved contrapuntal problems has startled musicians in all countries. This is more surprising since he insists that he has never studied counter-point.

Editor's Note.

Method Nausea.

The Musical educational world is heartily sick of musical homepaths, musical allopaths, and all others who for private reason or gain boast that they have the one and only method. That is why the leading teachers of the world invariably employ eclectic methods, that is, methods literally made for the special needs of each pupil.

What does this mean? It means that as methods come to be crystallized or fixed, they are likely to become all too soon ossified; and when a piano method reaches that point it is time to bury it. Why do not teachers see this vital point? The

public has been educated to know that it must pay more for an artistically tailor-made suit of clothes than for a store suit, because all other things equal, the tailor-made suit has the marks of the master hand of a master cutter who does not turn out suits for the thousands but for the individual purchaser.

This does not mean that the student should not pursue a fine course of studies. A good course of studies is the background of any well organized musical education. Teachers lose a great deal by following a haphazard course. First get the best course procurable, and then adjust that course to the needs of each pupil, through the employment of collateral material selected from the universal reservoirs of music, as that material best suits the mentality and physical needs of the pupil. Do not forget, however, that in all education good vertebrae are essential, and that vertebrae constitute a well organized study course.

### A New Created World.

The World has been passing through a period of chaos—possibly the most difficult period in all history. In the olden days each land was to a certain extent self-sufficient; and, while there might be famine in some one part of the world, in other spots the people were feasting. Transportation and communication, plus an enormous increase in population, have changed all this, and the result is that the young people, brought up in the last two decades, have a radically different outlook on life and present entirely different problems to the teacher and the parent. Many teachers have become so petrified by traditions that they find it impossible to adjust themselves to the times. They make no attempt to understand the young man or the young woman of today but spend their time in pathetic wails about the good old times.

What were the good old times? If these teachers were transported to the halcyon days of gas light, carpets, horse-cars, bowl and pitcher, and so on, they would clamor to get right back into nineteen hundred and now. Be pleased with what we have. It is the best we possess. More than this, be ready to adjust yourself to the new world that is all about us. Since nineteen hundred and eighteen I have invariably travelled by aeroplane, when I could secure one that promised safety. I never go by any other mode of transportation, unless it is absolutely necessary. Of course I enjoy a leisurely motor ride, when I have time, in the same way that I enjoy a boat trip. But life is too short not to take the fastest mode of travel when one merely wants to get from one place to another. The world is gradually getting to be air-minded.

I am happy that I found this out fifteen years ago, as it has enabled me to save time and to do a great many things I other-

wise would have missed. In similar manner I have endeavored to adjust myself to all modern changes. Re-focus yourself, as well as you are able, to the great changes we are now going through. The whole world seems like a seething whirl pool, and everywhere people are doing amazing and unaccountable things. But something good something very wonderful is going to come out of all this. Hold tight to your standards, and do not mistake conventions for ideals. We are not degenerating. We are going ahead the fermenting present is all a natural reaction from the great and terrible war. Believe in your God. Shut your ears to all thoughts of Atheis. There is a mighty power that is responsible for all that we are, do and experience, inexplicable as it sometimes seems. Scientists were once the worst of sceptics. Now, the more they penetrate into the great mysteries of existence, the more religious they become.

In Tune With the Times.

In the Readjustment of values it is highly desirable that we keep our mental equilibrium, that we are not pushed over into extremes. The objectional in ultra modern music and art is a natural product of individuals, often sincere and even highly trained technically, who have lost their equilibrium. There are values that are permanent, perhaps eternal. How can we discover them? Let us say that they are the things with the power or the beauty that leads to exaltation. They exalt the individual. Erohen is the expressive German verb. Time submerges everything but it does not submerge the really beautiful. Even though it is a palace of some long forgotten civilization, buried in a jungle, the sheer power of its beauty will make men go to dig it out, as they have done in Thebes, in Ankor, or in the land of the Mayas. Will the music of the eccentric modernists take the place of the classics? Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms and Wagner will be played as long as the piano lasts; and that certainly will be for some centuries to come. The musical immortals! The piano will survive, because it is the best vehicle yet devised, with which to explore the vast and magnificent realms of music. This, entirely apart from the great literature of the instrument itself, provides man with a means of gratifying his inborn musical curiosity. That is to say, if one plays the violin, the cello, the flute, the French horn, or any other non-keyboard instrument (save such as the more or less limited harp, guitar, accordion, xylophone and zither), one is confined, for the most part, to a single melodic line. With the piano one has both a melodic and a harmonic line of expression. Each of the ten digits, if necessary, may be employed.

The March of Years.

When I was Born, the music of the great masters, down to Wagner and Liszt, had touched the pinnacles of the art. Yet

musical art was in much the same position as was all knowledge prior to the rather modern introduction of the printing press (about 1454) by Gutenberg. Through this great epoch-making event the knowledge of the world was disseminated; and before long every civilized land was flooded with information upon all kinds of fascinating and interesting subjects, which only the learned few had known up to that time. Since my birth the phonograph and the radio have come in and have been developed to an amazing degree. The musical knowledge and the musical appetites of the general public have been multiplied thousands of times. No one can afford to remain musically ignorant in these days when music is one of the foremost subjects of the hour; and few are willing to do so.

The piano, which as an instrument, has changed but very little in a century and therefore may be said to be stabilized, is the normal means of approach to the understanding of the beauties of the great treasure houses of music; and thus it becomes a necessary part of practical modern life. I am told that, with the first return of prosperity in the United States, piano dealers of some cities report that they have difficulty in getting instruments rapidly enough to be able to fill their orders. You may suggest that the organ also is a keyboard instrument. True, but a sizable organ can be possessed only in the home of people of considerable means. Even then it is cumbersome in comparison with the piano. Then large organs, while susceptible of delicate effects are for the most part mastodontic.

#### The Piano and the Modernistic.

Some have a feeling that the piano is limited in its capability for the interpreting of the most modern music. In other words they candidly admit that such works are dependent upon the color of groups of instruments, such as violin, trumpet, flute, and so on, rather than upon the innate value of the music itself. Somehow I have a feeling that music, which must depend on color rather than its real musical content, does not rise to the height of the great masterpieces.

I dare not believe in musical anarchy. These anarchists strive for the greatest possible liberty and often are led to excesses which they themselves never intended. The great French Revolution aimed at much greater liberty than it achieved. Therefore it is possible that the extravagant outbursts of the modernist musicians are merely pioneer manifestations of a revolutionary spirit from which the more sane followers will benefit and create masterpieces of permanent value to mankind.

Once I was in Berlin when "Salome" was being given one of its earliest performances. Richard Strauss was conducting. At my side was the great Norwegian composer, Edvard Grieg. Asked for his



opinion, his reply was, "I can't tell. This is to me a foreign language." "Salome" is still a "foreign language" to millions. To me, certain parts are very dramatic and genuinely progressive but by no means is all of it so.

Pedagogic Progress.

Methods of Teaching music have changed immensely through the labours of two great pedagogues, Joachim for the violin and Von Bulow for the piano, because of their efforts to get rules and reasons for esthetic interpretation. Up to their time practically all performance was intuitive. The artist was scarcely expected to use his mentality but rather respond only to his feelings. Liszt and Chopin played largely by this means. That is, they played almost entirely "as the spirit moved them." Being marvelous individuals, the results at most times were marvelous. As both were composers, they played "creatively." In this way the artistic values of the constructive and interpretative sides of their works were preserved. This, however, is no safe plan for the student, who at first has the great problem of studying the laws of interpretation, such as have been established by the esthetics of Adolf Kallak and, in more practical detail, in Christiani's "Principles of Expression in Pianoforte Playing," and then applying these to his playing, so that it will not sound "studied" to the listener.

Today all performers are vastly better informed than they were before the time of Von Bulow. The idea that knowledge kills intuitive appreciation of values is all nonsense, usually put forth by those who are too lazy to do the requisite amount of study. In art, intuition must be always the guide. But there is a great difference between intuition guiding an ignorant and its guiding of a man of wide knowledge. Henri Bergson, the great French philosopher, made clear that in our civilization and culture we would be more advanced if, after acquiring knowledge, we had allowed our intuition to guide us more. Most teachers will complain that the greatest difficulty is in finding pupils who have intuition and imagination. In these days the student has a thousand stimuli to the imagination as compared with the few known to many of our ancestors. Through books, magazines, newspapers, transportation, radio, the theater and talking pictures, his imagination is fairly glutted with ideas; so that the average boy or girl of today is likely to have brain indigestion. The youthful mind has so much that it has nothing. It becomes a kind of intellectual garbage pail from which not very much may be expected, unless our young folks can be induced to get themselves apart and do a little creative dreaming of their own. One really worthwhile book is worth a hundred indifferent "talkies."

Have Them Stop to Think.

Let the Teacher, who would be really a kind of musical physician, prescribe a little contemplation for the pupil. In

this jazz age get him to "unjazz" a little. Set some simple problem, and get the pupil interested in its quiet and logical solution.

Take, for instance, tempo rubato. This is always an interesting subject for the student. Give him Chopin's explanation. Chopin compared tempo rubato to the swaying of the leaves of a tree in the wind. The trunk of the tree is firmly rooted and does not move, but the branches bend with every breeze. Give the pupil a few passages upon which to practice the tempo rubato, and watch his interest quicken. He will soon discover that the player who plays everything in strict time, never introducing this tempo rubato, or flexible rhythm, may be insufferably dry.

I have been misquoted by some who have got the idea that I do not approve of mechanical exercises. Quite the opposite is true. Up to a certain point in a student's career, his muscles and nerves must be trained for endurance, accuracy, rapidity and the sense of touch. I have always made a distinction between technic and mechanism. Mechanism concerns itself with the tools of the player, and technic with that which operates the tools. These tools are, in the case of the piano:

1. The fingers,
2. The knuckles,
3. The wrist,
4. The elbows,
5. The shoulders,

and the muscles, sinews and nerves operating them. These, in the player, correspond to the mechanism in the piano itself—the levers, springs, leather tapes, hammers, and so on. It requires these two mechanisms to carry the thought of the player to the wire. Both mechanisms should be as perfect as possible. These mechanisms concern themselves with such things as speed, endurance, strength, accuracy and evenness. There is also a mechanism which has to do with the operation of the pedal.

#### The Other and Better Part.

Mechanism is only a part of the far larger subject of technic. Technic deals with the discriminate use of mechanism. Here reflection enters and interpretation commences. It might be compared, roughly, with driving an automobile. One might have the best mechanism possible and might be a perfect mechanical chauffeur: yet a superior intelligence is required to determine where the automobile is to go and how to appreciate and understand the wonders and beauties of the country that is being traversed. One might develop a wonderful mechanism, but it will be applied very differently in passing through the country of Bach, of Beethoven,

of Chopin, or of Liszt. In the matter of mechanism eclectic methods must be employed. That is, one must be acquainted with many different phases of operating the keyboard and must then be able to determine which is best.

Weight and Relaxation.

I Have Been Credited with the discovery of what is now known as the weight and relaxation method. Naturally others have unconsciously employed this method, at least in part; but I believe that I was the first to identify the general principles and to apply them regularly as a part of my own playing. Deppe, Kullak and others advocated relaxation; but the means of producing this relaxation and of applying it did not seem to be clear to them.

This knowledge came to me some forty two years ago, when I was practicing for a repertoire. I was planning a long tour and found that I would have to have a very large number of compositions, including concertos, sonatas, and the smaller forms. This necessitated intensive practice for months, at ten or twelve hours a day. The strain of such work is so severe that only those who have endured it know how exhausting it may become. It was then that I noticed that after a heavy day's work, followed by dinner and a rest of an hour and a half, everything seemed to sound better and appeared much easier when I returned to the piano that evening. This experience was repeated many times, and the reason for it perplexed me enormously. I pondered upon it for weeks; and then suddenly I realized that I was too tired in the evening to hold the playing apparatus in suspense as had been my custom during the day. This absence of tension was combined weight and relaxation.

Some thirty-eight years ago (about 1895) I taught these principles to Otto Pfefferkorn of Gainesville, Georgia. Such pianistic doctrines were unknown at that time. These principles, based upon weight and relaxation, demand that one must actually lean against the keyboard, but without pressure—that is, without conscious muscular pressure. Unfortunately every opinion announced by any fallacious statements, contradictions and misunderstandings, by those who jump at conclusions without comprehending the fundamental principles. People inferred that I proposed to do away with all other phases of mechanical training. This is by no means the case. I believe firmly in five-finger exercises, scales and arpeggios, practiced through raising the fingers high, through staccato effects and even through pressure. My Miniatures for piano (four hands) are built on the five figure position. All these things add to one's efficiency in mechanism, when one comprehends the general principles of weight and relaxation. That is, the principles of Deppe, Kullak, Erlich, Mason, Lebert and Stark and others, do not become less valuable, but all become a part of a great preparatory mosaic

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which is embraced in weight and relaxation.

For instance, the pressure exercises, as advocated in the Stuttgart method of Lebert and Stark, fell into great disrepute, because many felt that they called for an unnatural position of the hand, with no curve at the metacarpal joints. In my opinion there is great value, at times, in the pressure touch and even in this unnatural position of the hand as illustrated here.



Through finger action in this position, one is able to achieve a positive fullness of tone by pressure, without which many nuances would be impossible. Of course the normal position of the hand, for general playing, is expressed in the following:



You see that the only broad artistic principle in piano playing is that of embracing every legitimate means for acquiring a desired result. In the end economy of motion should be the great aim; and weight and relaxation unquestionably lead to this acquisition. Practically all of the foremost virtuosos of the last decades have adopted this means of playing. The days when the pianist allowed his hands and arms to dance around the keyboard, like a circus horse, are long since past. Now effects are achieved with so little effort that the attention of the audience is not distracted by any display of that so-called "showmanship" which in other days made it sometimes literally impossible for the auditor to listen attentively to the music itself.