

TOWARDS A NEW TECHNIQUE:

THE APPROACH OF PETER FEUCHTWANGER
AND MARIAN FRIEDMAN TO PIANO TECHNIQUE
DOCUMENTED IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Presented in partial fulfilment of the degree

BMus(Hons)(Performing Art)

University of Pretoria

Promoter: Prof. J. Stanford

December 1990

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank IDASA and Kerry and Verne Harris for giving me access to computer facilities. I would also like to thank Kerry Harris and my mother for proof reading the manuscript, and my family and friends for their support. Thank you also to Hugo Schreuder for giving me access to the Hofmann and Lhevinne books as well as other source material, and thanks to Helena Barnard for translating the said source material from the original French for me. My sincere gratitude to Marian Friedman for her provision of the bulk of the information on the Feuchtwanger approach. Last but not least, many thanks to my extremely patient promoter, Prof. Joseph Stanford.

To Marian Friedman.
a true Master.

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Foreword: About This Thesis

The technique documented in this thesis is being recorded for the first time. I am indebted to Prof. G. van der Geest for allowing me to conduct original research for my Honours Degree. Owing to the nature of this research very few sources are available dealing specifically with the technical aspect of this method. The only printed sources currently available are two magazine articles, both interviews with the developer, Peter Feuchtwanger. Further source materials, besides the standard reference works used for comparative purposes, consist of comprehensive notes to a lecture written by Peter Feuchtwanger's close friend, some time assistant and pupil, Marian Friedman. Two in-depth personal interviews were conducted with Ms Friedman and have been duly noted in the bibliography.

About Peter Feuchtwanger

Peter Feuchtwanger is not only a world-renowned piano teacher with such famous pupils as Shura Cherkassky, Marc Raubenheimer and Martha Argerich, but has also taught winners of international competitions such as the Rubinstein International

Competition in Israel. Apart from teaching privately. Feuchtwanger also presents master classes in Germany, the USA, Israel, Japan and other countries, including his annual classes in interpretation in Switzerland (in Lutry, Sion and Rapperswil Castle) (Burkhalter 1980:310).

Feuchtwanger notes his most influential teachers as being his first teacher, Gertie Rainer (a pupil of Emil von Sauer), and Dr Hans Heimler (a pupil of Schenker, Weingartner and Alban Berg). Other notable pianistic influences were Cortot, Backhaus, Schnabel and other "Golden Age" pianists such as Hoffman, Lhevinne and de Pachmann. Other musical influences include Kreisler, Sarasate and Casals, but most especially the great singers of the Italian *Bel Canto* such as Tetrizzini, Destinn, Gluck, Melba and Patti (Feuchtwanger 1988:80). Kathleen Ferrier and Bruno Walter also influenced his musical approach and thinking, but it was the great musicianship and humility of the pianist Clara Haskil which had the greatest influence on his pianism and approach to music as a whole (Feuchtwanger 1988:82).

Feuchtwanger is also a noted composer with a distinct Eastern influence. One of his works was performed by Yehudi Menuhin and Ravi Shankar at the Festival of Bath in 1966. He is also a judge at various international piano competitions, especially at the "Concours Clara Haskil" in Switzerland (Burkhalter 1980:310).

Peter Feuchtwanger's Pianistic Development

Feuchtwanger states (1988:80) that he had his first piano lesson at the age of thirteen, and that before that he learnt everything from gramophone records. He could "...play at once from memory anything I had heard on these records", and states that he learnt all the Chopin Etudes and most of the Beethoven Sonatas in this way. He must have been an astonishingly accomplished pianist even at this early stage of his development. He reports that he learnt to play naturally, spontaneously and therefore without any extraneous physical tension, and that this "uncomplicated and natural way of playing was the key" to his later work, especially as a teacher (1988:80). Owing to the advanced nature of the repertoire he had studied by the time he started formal lessons, one may assume that his technique must already have been quite far advanced

and developed. I will attempt to show which of his ideas are original. It should be borne in mind that most of his ideas on technique have been through his own discovery at the piano, rather than through assimilation of others' ideas.

About Marian Friedman

Marian Friedman is a well-known South African pianist and teacher. She was the winner of the SABC Music Prize in 1975, and studied for her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Performance which she attained *cum laude* in 1977 from Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. She was assistant to Menachem Pressler of the Beaux Arts Trio at the time. Her real musical studies, she claims, began with the well-known South African teacher Adolf Hallis, and only continued and blossomed under the tutelage of Peter Feuchtwanger in London, under whom she has studied since 1978. From 1979 onwards she concertised regularly in Europe and the UK and in 1983 returned to South Africa, taking up a lectureship in Piano at Pretoria University in 1984. In 1988 she was invited to return to Europe and gave a highly successful concert in Vienna. She has cut two discs and made various recordings for European radio and television.

Friedman claims she owes most of her musical and pianistic development to her studies with Peter Feuchtwanger, whose musical philosophy and pianistic technique she has now made her own. She regularly returns to London for lessons and advice, as does another of Feuchtwanger's friends, the famous pianist Shura Cherkassky. Ms Friedman has been of great help in providing source material for this thesis. It is also through her that I have become acquainted with this original, spontaneous and inspiring technique: one which is based upon, and leads to, the highly meaningful and expressive performance of, for me, the most transitory and elusive of the arts - the art of music-making.

CHAPTER 1: THE BASES OF THIS TECHNIQUE

1.1 The Philosophical Base

"The [artist], the art, the work. it is all one." (Herrigel 1985:65).

In answer to the question whether there is a philosophy in which one could recognise a guideline for his work, Peter Feuchtwanger answered, "In order to answer this question. I refer...to Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* because in it you will find all there is to know concerning the teacher-pupil relationship and their approach to their craft...the fundamental thought of Zen philosophy forms the basis of my attitude towards teaching and art, and life in general." (Feuchtwanger 1988:96).

Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* is regarded as a classic relating the difficult path towards understanding Zen philosophy. The path to Zen is through one of the arts such as painting, dancing, swordsmanship or archery. In the East the Martial Arts are considered to be on the same level as the

creative arts. Through the art of archery Herrigel describes the learning of Zen.

In his Foreword, D. T. Suzuki explains the fundamental concept of Zen as related to archery: "In the case of archery, the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality. The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's-eye which confronts him. This state of unconsciousness is realized only when, completely rid of the self, he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill..." (Herrigel 1985:6). On the way to this perfection, there are certain things the apprentice has to learn. Firstly, the Master (teacher) explains: "[Let] go of yourself, leaving yourself and everything yours behind you so decisively that nothing more is left of you but a purposeless tension." (Herrigel 1985:47). He goes on to explain that the spirit only, is present, an awareness of a kind which is utterly egoless, and because of this "...ranges without limit through all the distances and depths, with 'eyes that hear and with ears that see'." (Herrigel 1985:64).

It is in this state of mind, unperturbed by ulterior motives, that the artist, wholly centred on his art, must practise it. "But if he is to fit himself self-effacingly into the creative process, the practice of the art must have the way smoothed for it." (Herrigel 1985:55). Thus the pupil understands why the physical, technical side of the art must be practiced until it becomes so natural that it is an unconscious part of him (Herrigel 1985:57). We are furthermore told that the correct frame of mind for the artist is only reached "when the preparing and the creating, the technical and the artistic, the material and the spiritual, the project and the object, flow together without a break." (Herrigel 1985:63).

Finally, after many years of practise and study, the pupil arrives at the crux of Zen in the art of archery: "Is it 'I' who draws the bow, or is it the bow that draws me into the state of highest tension? ...Bow, arrow, goal and ego, all melt into one another, so that I can no longer separate them...as soon as I take the bow and shoot everything becomes so clear and straightforward and so ridiculously simple..." (Herrigel 1985:86).

In short. "performers" must forget themselves. their technique. their goal. so that all fuses into one reality. one experience.

But what does all this mean in terms of music and especially the performer's art? Firstly and most importantly. it means utter humility in the face of our art. If any trace of egotism remains. performers cannot concentrate all their attention on the music and its realization. They should forget themselves and think only of the music. Secondly. they must forget their technique so that their musical soul "has the way smoothed for it" (Herrigel 1985:55): their concentration remaining solely on the music. and not tied down with technical detail.

This is not an original notion in music: the great teacher Louis Köhler (1820–1886) said. "Content and technique must form a unity: the content is the soul. the technique the body." (Kloppenburger 1951:228). Thalberg (1812–1871). the famous piano virtuoso. took this further by saying that one should rather play with the spirit than with the fingers (Kloppenburger 1951:235). However it was Louis Adam (1758–1848)

who came closer to the Feuchtwanger approach when he stated, "If the fingers are no longer led by a direct impulse from the soul, one should rather stop playing." (Kloppenburg 1951:135).

With this quote we come to the final step in Zen philosophy as applied to music performance: one must forget, not only oneself and one's technique, but also one's goal i.e. the perfect performance. In this way one achieves perfect unity with the music, not worrying about the past (mistakes, wrong notes) or about the future (memory lapses, difficult parts ahead), but being completely immersed in the present, concentrating solely on the reality, vitality and expressiveness of the musical moment.

Other important Zen concepts include the importance of preparation and "purposelessness". Preparation is regarded as part of the ceremony of performance - it is central to its success. The artist must prepare him or herself mentally and spiritually so that he or she enters into the correct state of mind before the performance commences - actually the performer cannot perform unless prepared. The application to music is obvious. The concept of "purposelessness" is important in

gaining the desired mental attitude, namely one of complete unity with the music. It means that one must not consciously think, "I've got to get this right now" or "I must concentrate because this passage is difficult". One must be in such union with the music that instead of thinking about it, one simply does it. Conscious thought must not retard musical expression. Of course, one has to practice one's technique "to the point of repletion" (Herrigel 1985:57) in order to reach this state of absolute unity.

Thus "The [artist], the art, the work - it is all one." (Herrigel 1985:65).

1.2 The Practical Base

In answer to the question whether it was his aim to free his pupils as far as possible from their physical habits, so they could achieve spiritual freedom which would shape their interpretation far more spontaneously, Peter Feuchtwanger answered, "Yes. Although this doesn't mean to say I favour anarchy! Quite the contrary. A much greater discipline is required to

achieve this freedom - but many musicians are afraid of freedom, as are most human beings." (Feuchtwanger 1988:84).

Friedman (1989:5) speaks on a more practical level when she says that wasting energy through either body or arm movement is comparable to "...wasting precious water at an oasis." She goes on to state that all the tension and energy wasted on unnecessary movements can be "...transformed into vital energy and placed in the fingers where it is needed most." (Friedman 1989:5). She sums up the basis of this technique by saying that the more relaxed one plays, the more comfortable one is, the more easily one is able to express what one wants to say. Technique is the conduit of the musical soul, and to allow unimpeded flow, one's technique must be as tension-free as possible (Friedman 1990).

Beautiful sound is an important aim of this technique as sound is, after all, the basis of music. To this end Friedman notes that a forced or strained technique results in a metallic sound, whilst a relaxed technique produces beautiful sounds even in rapid passage work. She explains that harsh sounds are usually the result of too much tension (Friedman 1989:1).

Many writers agree on a relaxed technique. Rudolf Breithaupt (1873–1945) asserts. "The essence of technique is not exertion but relaxation of nerves and muscles and the automation of the means to the point of unconsciousness." (Kloppenburg 1960:37). Leimer and Giesecking (Kloppenburg 1960:102) add the point that all unnecessary movements must be avoided at all costs and that all muscles not being used at that moment must be kept relaxed. Both Feuchtwanger (1988:83) and Friedman (1990) agree on this point – it may be said that this is one of the most important principles of the Feuchtwanger approach.

Another important point is the mental aspect of the Feuchtwanger approach. Friedman notes. "The mental controls the physical. One plays the piano with one's brain, not one's fingers!" (1990). Luigi Bonpensiere (d. 1944) has written extensively on this subject and states that one's mind, and not one's fingers, should be used as the creative origin (Kloppenburg 1960:121). This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter "The Mental Aspect".

In conclusion, "Technique is the conduit of the musical soul and to allow unimpeded flow, one's technique should be as tension-free as possible." (Friedman 1990).

CHAPTER 2: FINGERWORK AND THE USE OF THE ARM

The ideal movement at the piano is described by Feuchtwanger as being the initial movement of the arm bringing the fingers to the keys, whereafter all movements as far as possible should come from the fingers whilst the arm follows them as part of the whole body. The keys must be seen as extensions of the fingers, the fingers always remaining as close to the keys as possible (Feuchtwanger 1988:83). This is summarised by a quote from Josef Hofmann (1876–1957), one of the greatest "Golden Age" pianists, when he said simply, "Always play with the fingers." (Hofmann 1976:27). Martienssen (Kloppenburg 1960:128) agrees and states that the best pupils come from teachers who teach fingerwork as the basis of a good technique.

Friedman (1989:2) expands on the question of finger action and points out how little exertion is actually needed to depress a key. Only the action of the finger from the knuckle down is needed in order to depress the key. No movement from the arm is required at all. She comments further by saying, "We all use more tension than we really need." (Friedman 1989:2). It

is interesting to note that no less a person than Chopin agrees with her: according to Hipkins. "Chopin kept his elbows close to his sides and played only with the finger touch, no weight from the arms." (Eigeldinger 1986:30).

But how does one incorporate this type of finger technique into one's everyday playing, so that one always plays with just enough tension to activate the key, and not waste energy nor cause unnecessary strain? The answer to this question forms the basic starting point for the practical application and understanding of this technique.

2.1 The Perfect Balance at the Piano

Before reaching the point where the finger action comes in, one must first discuss the achievement of "The perfect balance between tension and relaxation at the piano" (Friedman 1990). The achievement of this balance is necessary so as to find just the right amount of tension needed to hold the fingers, hand, wrist and arm as relaxed as possible, without the whole playing mechanism collapsing.

Friedman describes the achievement of this balance through a particular exercise advocated by Peter Feuchtwanger: one starts with the right hand and arm completely relaxed and hanging freely next to the body. The right hand is then picked up at the wrist by the left hand and thrown onto the keyboard, the right arm, wrist and hand all remain completely relaxed during this action. The wrist and arm then hang freely from the keyboard, both completely relaxed. The fingers lie completely relaxed on the keys; the notes they have depressed are entirely arbitrary. The concentration must be focused entirely on the relaxation of the playing mechanism. The absolute relaxation of the playing mechanism (fingers, hand wrist and arm) is tested by the left hand pushing the right forearm slightly and then letting go; only if the forearm swings freely are all muscles completely relaxed. The left hand then raises the right hand wrist to keyboard level, the right hand fingers still depressing the keys. The left hand then raises the right hand fingers individually, placing them in a five-finger pattern closest to their previous positions. The fingers are placed on the surface of the keys. The left hand is now removed - just enough tension must now remain in order to keep the fingers from depressing the keys.

and the rest of the playing mechanism from collapsing. One has now achieved the perfect balance between tension and relaxation, and is utilising the exact amount of tension needed for balance at the piano; no more and no less. One should remember to keep the whole playing mechanism as relaxed as possible throughout the action. Tension should only be felt at the top of the upper arm just at the shoulder, while the whole arm remains relaxed.

Although this action has often been described in piano literature, its application in this context is quite new. Dr F. A. Steinhausen, of the Breithaupt weight-technique school describes this state of correct tension at the piano in his description of the various types of touch at the piano: he speaks of the so-called neutral touch where the fingers lie on the key surfaces, not depressing them. He agrees that the weight or tension is felt in the shoulder (Kloppenburger 1960: 44). The great pianist of the last century J. N. Hummel (1778-1837) also notes in his Piano Method. "The muscles of the arms and hands must have just enough tension so that they can carry the fingers without slackness." (Kloppenburger 1951: 146).

The movement itself (or parts of it) have been described by various writers, including the French pianist and teacher Blanche Selva, who in the earlier part of this century spoke of the teacher lifting the pupil's relaxed arm and dropping it suddenly onto the keyboard, the keys thus depressed being arbitrary (Kloppenburger 1960:70). She advocated this as a relaxation exercise. Breithaupt himself describes this type of movement as one of the movements providing the pianist with playing power. He clearly discusses this "throwing action" in terms of a playing movement, but not as an exercise (Kloppenburger 1960:23). Breithaupt also speaks of the "passive position" where the weight of the passive arm is felt in the fingertips and the arm is then in a state of equilibrium. However, the keys are depressed. This is notated by him as being a muscle relaxing exercise (Kloppenburger 1960:27).

Apart from ridding oneself of extraneous tension, one may also determine the least amount of tension needed to activate a key, thereby learning to play with much less tension and much more freedom (Friedman 1990).

How then, does the abovementioned exercise lead to playing with less tension? Friedman answers that an extension of the exercise is needed to arrive at the playing aspect of it (Friedman 1990).

Firstly, she explains, one assumes the position reached at the end of the "balance" exercise. The fingers are almost flat against the keys, but without tension. The playing mechanism is relaxed, the fingers resting on the key surfaces, the tension being felt (albeit slightly) at the top of the upper arm near the shoulder. The left hand then depresses the right hand second finger in staccato fashion while the finger remains relaxed. When the left hand is removed, the key rises bringing the relaxed and tensionless finger with it, the finger still in contact with the surface of the key. One may speak of the key "throwing up" the finger. For this to happen one must make sure that there is no tension in the finger. Through this action one feels the genuine weight and resistance of the key. Keeping the right hand in position with the fingers on the surface of the keys, the left hand restrikes the key with the same staccato touch. If the right hand finger remains relaxed, it will follow the key naturally. The fin-

gers are therefore seen as extensions of the keys. One then repeats the first step exactly.

The final and most important step in this exercise follows: the right hand finger is raised slightly as a small and natural extension of the previous movement. The arm should not be used. the only movement taking place at the knuckle. It is very important that there be no jerking of the forearm muscle as this would mean that the arm muscle is being used and this would be contrary to the object of the exercise. The key is depressed quickly by the falling of the finger. and as the finger relaxes at the bed of the key it is thrown up by the key. The finger lands once more on the surface of the key. It is important to remember to lighten or relax one's finger when at the bed of the key and especially so for pianists with larger. heavier hands.

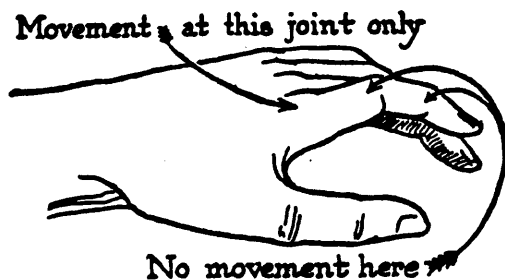
Although this exercise is new to finger technique. the notion of using finger action alone is not. The 19th Century pianist and teacher Carl Czerny (1791-1857) stated that the action should occur only from the fingers. and that the hand and arm are not to make any unnecessary movements (Kloppenburg 1951:

171). The action is more closely notated by Adolph Kullak (1823-1862) who asserts that the correct finger action consists of: "1. The lightning-fast raising and letting fall of the finger; and 2. The most complete rest and relaxation at the moment of depression." He further states that "The power flows from the movement of the knuckle joints and the pressure of the fingertips. Any other tension in the arm, wrist etc., is a waste of energy." (Kloppenburg 1951:238). The most interesting predecessor of this finger movement exercise is that given by C. D. Schuster in his method book, published in 1799. He claims the fingers should rest on the key surfaces, not depressing them; and when the finger depresses the key the arm may not be held stiff, and that neither arm nor hand may be raised when the key is depressed. None of the unused fingers may move in sympathy with the active one (Kloppenburg 1951:118).

However it is in the specifics involved in this exercise that one finds the most interesting correlations with famous composers and performers, such as Chopin and Lhevinne. According to Franchomme, Chopin (speaking about octaves and simple repeated notes) said, "...don't leave the key, but simply let

the finger be softly pushed back up by the key itself." (Eigeldinger 1986:41). Josef Lhevinne, the great "Golden Age" pianist in his book *Basic Principles in Pianoforte Playing*, states that this type of finger action gives elasticity, beauty of tone colour and richness of tone (Lhevinne 1972:13). He illustrates the action by an example.

Example 1:



(Lhevinne 1972:13)

2.2 Fingerwork

The action used for fingerwork is generally described as the most important step of the exercise to incorporate the correct balance between tension and relaxation into our playing (see above). For finger-staccato and rapid non-legato playing it is the speed of the activation of the key which counts, not the height from which the finger "attacks" the key, according to Friedman (1990). She explains by saying that first of all, only a finger action from the knuckle down is required, no

other. The finger starts from and lands on the surface of the key, also in staccato playing. As she puts it. "When the key is back in position, the staccato is finished and our fingers therefore have no need to be higher than the key surface. Further, the action is the same as above, remembering to let the key throw the finger up after depression. The most important thing is not to waste energy - keep the fingers in contact with the keys using no arm and always keeping the wrist relaxed. The last is most important. Also think of the upward rather than the downward motion of the key - this will help the fingers to let the keys throw them up, and reduce the likelihood of the wrist tensing up and locking." (Friedman 1990).

This action for finger staccato and rapid non-legato playing is not new - it was first properly documented by Adolph Kullak (1823-1862) in his book on piano method in 1860. He stated that the finger staccato occurs from the knuckle (Kloppenburg 1951:240). The English pianist and teacher Thobias Matthay (1858-1945) also wrote of the finger staccato. He agrees that the fingers must remain in contact with the keys (Kloppenburg 1960:111) and that the keys must be allowed to spring back

into place (Kloppenburger 1960:113). Most importantly, he recognises the importance of the key lifting the finger, especially to avoid stiffness when playing repetitions with the same finger (Kloppenburger 1960: 114). Feuchtwanger of course applies this principle of key lifting to all finger staccato and rapid non-legato playing. Matthay's disciple, Joan Last, applies this principle to all finger technique when she says, "In stead of using the standard old expression 'Pick the finger up', we should rather say 'Let the key come up'." (Kloppenburger 1960:140). It is interesting also to recall the comment of Chopin. "...simply let the finger be softly pushed back up by the key itself." (Eigeldinger 1986:41).

A word on security in playing finger staccato passages: "Keep a relaxed wrist and think of each finger and note as it is being played. Make sure the fingers do their work properly, coming up and depressing the keys with enough energy." (Friedman 1990).

Problems encountered in legato fingerwork passages such as unevenness of touch and the resulting rhythmic inaccuracy will be fully discussed in the chapter "Tension and Relaxation".

2.3 Specific Uses of the Arm

In answering the question whether there is any use for the arm Friedman replies. "Yes. there are certain specific circumstances which require the use of the arm. but generally the arm is to hang free. loose and relaxed. the fingers doing the work. The arm stays out of most playing actions." (Friedman 1990). Feuchtwanger (1988:83) states that the arm "...follows [the fingers] freely as part of the whole body."

Friedman notes the specific uses for the arm as being in the areas of chord and octave playing (Friedman 1990).

Playing Chords Using the Feuchtwanger Approach

There are two general movements associated with chord playing in the Feuchtwanger approach. Friedman (1990) explains: both are used in powerful passages with chords. where the dead weight of the arm is utilised. The arm must be completely relaxed with no tension and no stoppage of movement must occur. It is very important that the wrist remains completely relaxed. thus acting as a shock absorber for the hand and fingers. This not only reduces tension and prevents locking of the wrist. but most importantly a beautiful round sound is

created and the metallic edge so evident in the performance of many pianists is avoided. The fingers must work to make sure all the notes are played - the arm must not do all the work.

The playing power originates from the muscles of the lower back. In order to create this power one must do a type of isometric exercise where one presses against an imaginary wall. The force created by the back pressing against the unyielding "wall" will provide the energy needed to play powerful chords with a beautifully round, full tone. To transform this force into positive energy, one must think of the energy travelling from the base of the back, up through the relaxed shoulders, down through the relaxed arms, wrist and hands and into the fingers. The fingers relax immediately upon activating the keys, thus allowing the energy and momentum to flow through to the strings, producing in this way the overtone-rich sounds needed for powerful but not harsh playing (Friedman 1990).

The two types of actions used are apparent in the different positions of the forearm and the different actions of the wrist. In the first type the forearm is held in a natural

position i.e. neither high nor low. As the energy is projected through the relaxed arm, the forearm is moved forward towards the keys, the relaxed wrist rising correspondingly to accommodate the follow-through action so that no stoppage of the movement occurs. In the second type the forearm and wrist are held below the level of the keys, the fingers as close to the keys as possible. As the fingers depress the keys, the wrist rises vertically bringing the forearm with it. The wrist must remain relaxed to ensure a round sound. The following is an excellent illustration of the type of passage which calls for the use of the first type of chord technique.

Example 2: Schumann/Liszt. "Liebeslied". bars 57-58



(from F. Liszt. *Liederbearbeitungen*. Peters. p. 124)

The origins of these chord techniques once more lie in the protagonists of the "Golden Age" of piano playing. The famous teacher Leschetitzky speaks of a chord being played by an up

or down movement of the wrist (Kloppenburger 1960:61). while Hofmann. in *Piano Questions Answered* (1976:12) considers playing chords with a "loose arm" all-important. Lhevinne (1972:29) tells of Anton Rubinstein playing chords with the weight of his body and shoulders. He goes on to speak about Rubinstein's gloriously full, though never harsh sound. According to him. Rubinstein achieved this by playing with completely relaxed wrists which then acted as shock absorbers. Lhevinne agrees completely with this technique and advocates it (Lhevinne 1972:31).

Feuchtwanger has assimilated the principles of chord playing with the relaxed weight technique as advised by Ludwig Deppe (1828-1890) and his disciples. On playing chords and accents his pupil Elisabeth Caland (1862-1929) indicates that "...you depress the hand suddenly and powerfully through use of the back muscles...the whole arm, from the shoulder down, must be seen as one, as if without joints." (Kloppenburger 1960:13). She later acknowledges the part of the lower back muscles: "The energy originates in the lower back muscles and is in a certain sense thrown into the finger tips." (Kloppenburger 1960:15).

The last word, however, must be given to the outstanding 20th century artist Artur Schnabel, himself a pupil of Leschetitzky and a musical model of Peter Feuchtwanger (Feuchtwanger 1988: 80). According to Schnabel's pupil Konrad Wolff, "While the side of his back could swing freely, its central axis remained in place. When his hands, in this body position, touched the keys from close by...a tremendously full and effortless sound went forward and upward from the sounding board of the piano...the finger stroke is completely *followed through* [original italics]. The elbow stretches: the upper arm moves forward: the upper part of the finger becomes almost perpendicular." (Wolff 1972:25). Interestingly, this movement seems to be an amalgamation of both Feuchtwanger types: "...this is not an independent arm or shoulder action but rather the completion of the motion engendered by the down-stroke of the finger tip." Thus we conclude our discussion of chord playing à la Feuchtwanger.

Playing Octaves with the Feuchtwanger Approach

The action for octaves is the same as that for chords. The playing of rapid octaves however reveals quite a revolutionary approach.

According to Friedman (1990) Feuchtwanger has developed an innovative movement to minimise tension and wrist locking in the playing of rapid octaves, thereby ensuring an effortless, rich sound.

The movement starts as a controlled fall of the arm, exactly as illustrated in the beginning of the "balance" exercise. As the relaxed wrist falls onto the keyboard the fingers take the desired notes. As the first octave is sounded, the wrist and forearm continue their fall. The fingers take the second octave by moving themselves along the surface of the keyboard with as little participation of any other part of the playing mechanism as possible. At the same time the wrist starts its natural ascent. This ascent is seen as natural as it is a direct reaction to the aforementioned fall of the wrist and forearm. The momentum created by this fall is followed through by the gradual rising of the wrist as the octave pattern nears its completion. At the end of the pattern the wrist has returned to the high position it had just before the beginning of the fall. Octaves involving black keys need slight wrist adjustments according to the context.

This whole movement is aptly described by Friedman as being the "pebble movement" as it must resemble and be experienced as the movement which a pebble makes when skimming along the surface of the water (Friedman 1990). The movement can serve two octaves as well as a whole phrase or scale. Each phrase, group or pattern contained in a pebble movement must be thought of as a whole or else the mental perception will not agree with the physical experience and physical tension will occur which will cause a breakdown.

For more powerful octaves the power source of the back muscles is used in exactly the same way as it is in powerful chords (see above) but of course now in connection with the "pebble" movement. Caland also talks of rapid octaves being played from the back muscles with the "free fall" (Kloppenburger 1960: 15). Breithaupt (Kloppenburger 1960:28) lists various types of octaves including the "throw octave" utilising his "throwing action" which could be seen as a predecessor of Feuchtwanger's "pebble" movement.

To facilitate the use of this movement Feuchtwanger has composed an exercise illustrating the movement very simply. The

exercise starts with two conjunct octaves eg C4/C5-D4/D5 taken by the right hand. The playing mechanism then performs the complete movement as set out above. It then takes a phrase of three conjunct octaves, then four conjunct octaves and so on, with each phrase still describing the correct movement, each time extended by one more octave. Eventually, whole octave scales may be played in this way. The same exercise applies conversely for right hand descending octaves and ascending left hand octaves.

This movement may be applied to the following example from the Bartók Piano Sonata (1926):

Example 3: Bartók. Sonata (1926). I. 31-34



(From B. Bartók. *Sonata* (1926). Universal. p. 4)

In conclusion of this chapter on Feuchtwanger's ideas on fingerwork and the use of the arm, I quote Chopin in the words of one of his pupils, Mme de Courty: "The arms should be the

slaves (original italics) of the fingers...one should keep one's mind off the arms and just use them as naturally as possible..." (Eigeldinger 1986:30). These words of Chopin's pupil aptly sum up the Feuchtwanger approach: let the fingers do the work. let the arm follow and always be relaxed.

CHAPTER 3: USE OF THE WRIST

According to Friedman, the wrist is to remain relaxed and supple at all times. It is used to get the fingers around the keyboard with the minimum of effort - "The wrist leads and the fingers follow." (Friedman 1990).

As far as wrist relaxation is concerned, Friedman is backed up by many writers including Lhevinne and Chopin. Chopin's pupil Streicher states that the master found fault with her stiff wrist (Eigeldinger 1986:30). Lhevinne, on the other hand, writes quite extensively on how important it is that the wrist remain relaxed in order to create a beautiful sound (1972:19). He most fittingly uses the analogy of a car ride without shock absorbers, and its adverse effects on the passengers. The wrists are the shock absorbers of the piano, and it is "...next to impossible to produce a good singing tone with a stiff wrist." (Lhevinne 1972:19).

However it is Friedman's comment about the wrist leading with the fingers following, which is the most intriguing. When probed this point (1990), Friedman answers in the form of an

example. She speaks of the turn of a scale: if one is playing a right hand scale ascending, the wrist must be turned slightly in the direction of the movement. As the scale reaches the turn the wrist describes a diagonal half circle, then the wrist rises and turns to commence the journey down and is now closer to the body of the piano. The right wrist always describes an anti-clockwise circle, the left a clockwise one.

These horizontal or diagonal circles were first advocated by Deppe (Kloppenburger 1960:10) and Feuchtwanger uses them in the same way as Deppe does, although without the unnecessary "free fall" of the arm. Chopin also tilted his wrists almost imperceptibly in the direction of a run, thereby, Eigeldinger asserts, ensuring the famed evenness of his playing (1986:106).

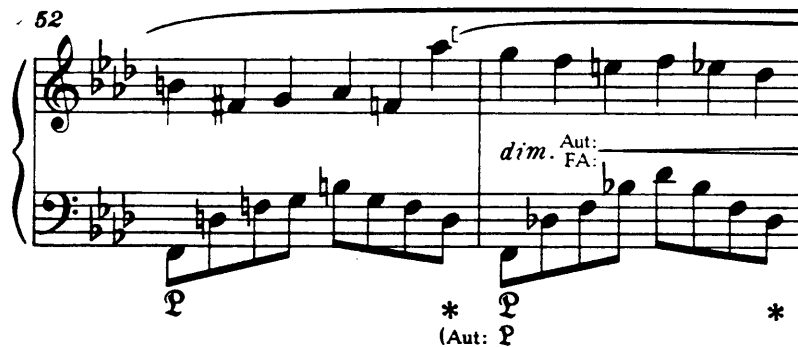
The circle movements as such are only used in certain circumstances as the wrist must stay as quiet and relaxed as much as possible. However, any distances to be covered at the keyboard are best performed utilising these circular wrist movements (Friedman 1990).

In the case of leaps these circular motions are utilised by Feuchtwanger in an original manner: e.g. when the right hand is used to execute a wide leap involving single notes. Having played the first note of the leap, the wrist leads once more, leaning slightly in the direction of the second note. The hand, wrist and fingers must be completely relaxed. As the note is reached the fingers are flicked out from under the wrist. The wrist remains completely relaxed as the particular finger activates the key. At this point the wrist is slightly off-centre i.e. not above the note being played: it is already returning to the point of origin leaving just enough time for the finger to activate the key. The forearm is to remain totally relaxed at all times in this movement, or else the exercise will be pointless. The circles the wrists describe are horizontal and all movement must occur as closely to the key surface as possible. The fingers almost stroke the key surfaces as they glide over them (Friedman 1990).

This technique of wrist "flicking" is entirely original - no other writer, to my knowledge, has written of this action before. The following is a good example of the application of

this technique. except that here the wrist stays at the top, resuming its natural position.

Example 4: Chopin. Etude op. posth. no. 1. bars 52-53



(from F. Chopin. Trois Nouvelles Etudes. Schott. p. 67)

Another extremely original application of this idea is the use of wrist flicking in order to move around the keyboard rapidly without tension where there is no break in the contour of the music. In other words, the swift changing of hand positions without an audible break in the musical flow.

Friedman explains this movement by way of example (Friedman 1990). She uses the Chopin Etude op. 25 no. 12 as an excellent illustration of the application of this technique. The first two bars serve as case models for the entire work.

Example 5: Chopin. Etude op. 25 no. 12. bars 1-2



(from F. Chopin. *Etudes op. 25*. Schott, p. 59)

Friedman (1990) proposes that only the wrist is to be used: there is to be no arm intervention. She uses the right hand as illustration: one presumes that the fifth finger will be used on the first E flat. As the fifth finger plays the E flat the whole playing mechanism relaxes and the wrist starts to move out, turning sideways in the direction of the musical line. As the wrist continues on its journey the fifth remains on the E flat, the relaxed hand and fingers following the wrist. It is very important that the thumb be consciously relaxed as it has just played, and needs to be brought with the hand and wrist in a relaxed fashion. As the wrist arrives at its destination, so the relaxed thumb arrives just next to the E flat it is to play, due to the fact that the wrist has turned almost completely sideways in order to facilitate this. The relaxed fifth finger is now raised sufficiently by the

wrist to allow the thumb to reactivate the key. As this happens, so the other fingers are flicked out from under the wrist towards the body of the instrument, with no interference from the arm or tension in the wrist or fingers. In Friedman's own words. "Almost as if they were given an invisible shove." (1990). The whole movement then starts again, the wrist having "collapsed" on the playing of the second E flat by the thumb. The whole Etude calls for the use of this technique and if it is employed the work can be performed effortlessly (Friedman 1990).

The "flicking" motion and its extensions are new in the art of piano playing. It affords great mobility around the keyboard with the minimum of tension. No other pianist or teacher has yet notated anything like this. Although quotes emanating from the Chopin circle are not specific on this subject, one or two indicate that Chopin may have used a technique similar to this. Witness the account of Mikuli: "He could play *legato* [original italics] in the most difficult arpeggios...since it was his wrist and not his arm that was in constant motion." (Eigeldinger 1986:29). It could be that Chopin had a similar idea to Feuchtwanger's when composing this Etude. What does

seem apparent. though. is that these two pianists share a common approach to certain aspects of piano playing.

CHAPTER 4: USE OF THE THUMB

Due to his self-training Feuchtwanger has developed an individualistic use of the thumb. He explains. "Since no-one had ever pointed out to me that one's thumb should be passed under one's fingers. I frequently played an ascending scale over two octaves with the fingering 12345-12345 etc.: Finding the fourth finger awkward after the fifth when descending the same scale. I replaced it with my thumb: therefore I played 51321: or I preferred to start a phrase or a scale with my second finger (also in C Major) playing 234-12345 and back 51321-432. My thumb was like the joker in the pack of cards as it would take the place of any finger. It served as a pivot and because I used it so much, it never became tense. (an affliction which affects so many pianists)." (Feuchtwanger 1988:81).

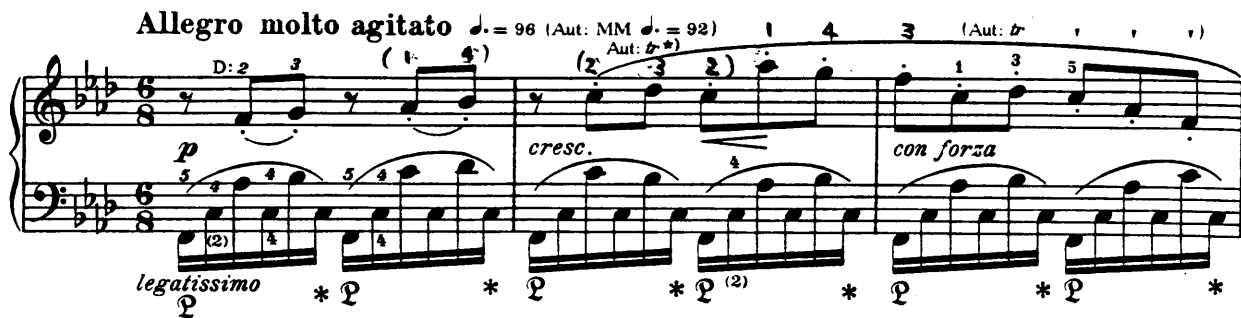
Friedman (1990) also discusses the thumb as pivot, commenting that it has two functions: firstly, it often replaces a weak finger (eg. 51321 instead of 54321 in a descending scale): and secondly, it keeps the thumb and hand relaxed, as unorthodox fingering has been used. This stops the mind from anticipat-

ing the movement and preparing for it. Usually, the mind will do this, causing tension in the hand and fingers.

In the following example Feuchtwanger replaces the fourth finger - suggested by the editor - with the thumb, followed by the fourth and third respectively (right hand).

Example 6: Chopin. Etude op. 10 no. 9. bars 1-3

Allegro molto agitato $\text{♩} = 96$ (Aut: $\text{MM} \text{♩} = 92$)



legalissimo * *p* * *p* * *p* * *p* * *p* * *p* *

(from F. Chopin. *Etudes op. 10* ed. P. Badura-Skoda. Schott. p. 42)

The hand now remains relaxed as the fourth finger no longer plays the A flat as an isolated note, but plays the following G with the hand in closed position to support it. Both the third and thumb are in natural position. The thumb is relaxed as part of the hand and not extended - which it most likely would have been, had the editorial fingering been used.

Feuchtwanger declares that he often uses the thumb on black keys, seeing it basically as a middle finger: a pivot over which the other fingers can move (Feuchtwanger 1988:84). He takes this further by saying that in this way, "we arrive at an elliptical motion - a motion which is nearly always clockwise with the left hand and anti-clockwise with the right hand. Therefore the fifth finger usually plays with an inward motion, toward the keyboard." (Feuchtwanger 1988:84). Here we arrive at the origin of the circular motions discussed in the last chapter. Their application to the above example is exact: it is only in combination with their use that this fingering can be used in a relaxed and natural fashion.

Friedman expands on the uses and rôle of the thumb in her *Notes to a Lecture* (1989:4). She starts off by saying that the thumb is naturally a lazy finger which is often tense, thus directly affecting the working ability of the rest of the hand. She makes a few more interesting observations which bear further investigation.

She states that the thumb must always follow the hand in order to remain light and free of tension. When asked to expound on

this point. she replies. "The thumb must never be left in a set position. For example, in a stretch don't leave the thumb stretched out, but bring it in to the hand to its natural position as soon as possible after use. The same applies to the fifth finger." (Friedman 1990). In this example from the Stravinsky Sonata the right hand has to move to a new position in order to accommodate the beginning of a new phrase (bar 144 below).

Example 7: Stravinsky, Piano Sonata (1924). I. 143-144



(from I. Stravinsky, *Sonate pour piano* (1924). Boosey and Hawkes, p. 8)

The fifth stretches out to reach the new note with the hand following. As the thumb plays the G it must relax and move with the hand to the new position, or else it will remain tense, causing the fifth to miss the A flat altogether or at least, to play it harshly. This idea of the thumb following the hand to accommodate position changes also seems to be a

new idea - no writers have written specifically enough on this point for its originality to be judged completely. The same may be said of Feuchtwanger's original use of the thumb as a "joker", which can replace any finger at will.

Friedman asserts further (1989:4) that the thumb should always be used at a slant across a black key so that the first joint actually activates the key, rather than the side of the finger. Expanding on this point (1990) Friedman discusses the thumb as a starting finger on a black note. She uses the Rakhmaninov Prelude Op. 23 no. 4 (right hand) to illustrate this.

Example 8: Rakhmaninov. Prelude op. 23 no. 4. bars 1-3



(from S. Rakhmaninov. *Preludes for Piano*. Boosey and Hawkes. p. 22)

One starts without strain in any part of the playing mechanism. the wrist always being relaxed when using the thumb. The

One starts without strain in any part of the playing mechanism. the wrist always being relaxed when using the thumb. The right arm hangs relaxed next to the body. One then performs the controlled relaxed fall as described in the beginning of the "balance" exercise. The relaxed thumb acts as carrier and communicator of the momentum created by the "throwing" of the dead weight of the arm. This produces an extremely rich, full sound as long as the wrist and fingers remain as relaxed as possible. The thumb must land positioned diagonally across the key, almost caressing it into action from the surface. The finger continues to move down the key after it is activated in order not to stop the momentum. This is very important to ensure a good sound.

In answer to the question why the thumb is used specifically on a black key as starting note and not on a white one. Friedman answers (1990) that the thumb often feels awkward on a white key because of the thumb's peculiar shape and size, but that on a black note these peculiarities don't matter due to the elevated position of these keys. Because of this the thumb can be used without fear on black melodic starting notes.

The thumb also gives a particularly consistent sound, not only on black keys. Friedman notes (1989:4). "Consecutive thumbs are used to achieve a uniform sound especially in Chopin." (Friedman 1989:4). It is evident that Friedman is thinking of these consecutive thumbs in a legato context, as Chopin was well-known for his love of legato (Eigeldinger 1986:31).

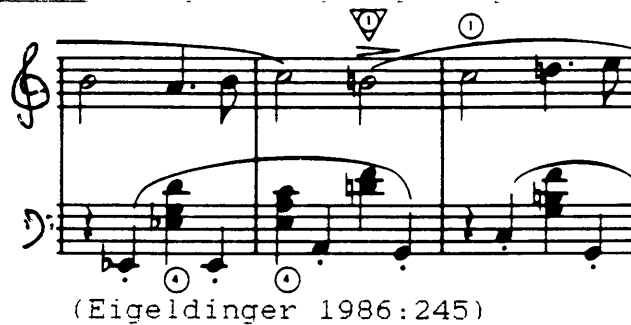
Friedman goes on to explain the movement taught her by Feuchtwanger by noting that the thumb consists of two phalanxes: the first forms the thumb tip, the second connects it to the hand. The two are connected by a joint. Presume two adjacent white notes in a descending pattern have to be played by the right hand thumb. The thumb depresses the first note with the first phalanx. Immediately the joint takes the weight of the hand as the first phalanx is lifted. The key is raised just enough so that the sound will be held as the first phalanx is turned towards the adjacent note. It "climbs over" as it were onto the adjacent note, as the joint and second phalanx leave the original note. The tip of the thumb then depresses the second key, the tip acting as pivot for the rest of the finger and hand, as the first phalanx turns to form a ninety degree angle with the end of the key. As it does this, so the rest of the

thumb and hand move into their respective natural positions behind the new note. As can be gleaned from the explanation, the wrist rises slightly to accommodate the pivotal rôle of the thumb tip. On white keys Feuchtwanger and Friedman advocate the generally accepted positioning of the thumb (ie. thumb to be played just under the side of the nail) (Friedman 1989:4).

This technique of thumb legato is conversely used in the left hand and is also employed in ascending patterns in the right hand. The first phalanx turns in whichever direction called for, and vice versa in the left hand.

The use of thumb legato is a new invention in piano technique. Whole scales can be played in this way and it produces a beautifully consistent, round sound. Although Chopin used consecutive thumbs in fingering (see example below) we have no way of knowing whether he produced the legato with the help of the pedal or only with his fingers.

Example 9: Chopin, Impromptu op. 29. bars 37-39



These are authentic fingerings of Chopin: it is interesting to note the consecutive legato thumbs in the right hand, bars 38-39. This would be the ideal place to apply this technique. The thumb can also "climb" from a white to a black note, but usually just slides down from a black to a white note.

Feuchtwanger's approach to the use of the thumb in piano technique is both original and innovative.

CHAPTER 5: FINGERING

"Once when I asked Clara Haskil which fingering she used in a certain passage, she looked at me quite taken aback and replied 'whatever comes!' I had a similar answer from Shura Cherkassky, one of the most spontaneous of pianists." So relates Peter Feuchtwanger in his discussions on fingering with famous pianists of the same musical and technical opinions as he (1988:84).

While he is not entirely of the same persuasion when it comes to complete spontaneity in fingering, Feuchtwanger does have some unusual ideas on the subject. He is of the opinion, for instance, that fingerings are exchangeable at any given moment. His pupils are often asked to play a melody with one finger to free them as much as possible from finger memory, which is often not reliable according to Feuchtwanger (1988:84). The famous virtuoso Alfred Cortot also let his pupils play scales and arpeggios with one finger - apparently the only other teacher to have specifically advised this (Kloppenburg 1960:81).

Feuchtwanger elucidates on the use of spontaneous fingering by declaring that he has encountered many musicians to whom the realisation had not yet occurred that fingerings could be highly creative. since "...each fingering calls forth a different movement and each such a movement a different fingering. therefore creating each time a new musical experience." (Feuchtwanger 1988:84). Breithaupt agrees with Feuchtwanger that, amongst other things, fingering should be the result of natural movement and that it should be led by intuition and the subconscious feeling for rhythm and dynamics (Kloppenburger 1951:333).

Feuchtwanger concurs that fingerings should be there in the first place to express the musical content, and that there are many conventional fingerings which do not express this content as well as less conventional fingerings would (1988:83). Friedman agrees with Feuchtwanger on this point and by way of illustration notes that "Weaker fingers are mostly used to play the especially sensitive notes. for example high points or ends of phrases to achieve a naturally soft sound with less strain involved." (Friedman 1989:8).

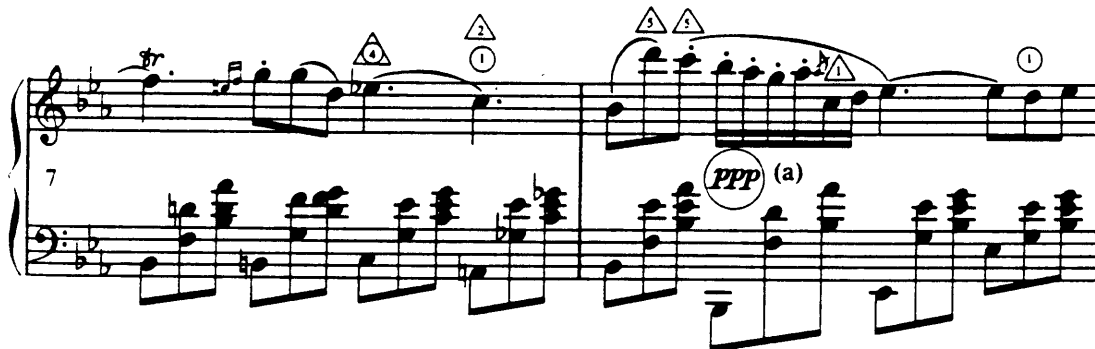
As far as spontaneity is concerned Feuchtwanger concedes, however, that in certain un pianistic passages it is advisable to work out the best fingering and to stick to it (1988:84).

Friedman claims that on a more practical level she also does not favour conventional fingering, as it stifles musical creativity and causes physical tension resulting in technical problems (1989:8). She bases this hypothesis on the fact that "...if random fingerings are chosen, the mind has no other option but to relax as anticipation and expectation of a fingering cannot take place." (Friedman 1989:8). In this way weak fingers are in constant use and are thus strengthened, as well as the hand being freed of tension (Friedman 1989:8).

Friedman uses a particular fingering principle to achieve this goal, namely that of using fingers from opposite sides of the hand, often bypassing adjacent fingers (1989:8). Schnabel, according to Wolff (1972:178) also used this technique, especially for neighbouring notes. Chopin also seems to have favoured the use of fingers from opposite sides of the hand, where closer fingers would have been more conventional. In the following example, the Chopin Nocturne op. 9 no. 2, in bar

seven in the right hand. Chopin has indicated the fingering 4-1 or alternatively 4-2 for the interval of the third (E flat to C). A conventional fingering may well have been 3-1 for the same notes due to the fact that the third would be the closest to follow on from the previous figure, and the thumb would fall naturally on the C as it would be lying just above it due to the position of the hand. Chopin has, however, chosen a less conventional fingering with fingers from both sides of the hand, thereby ensuring a good balance of weight and a consistent sound.

Example 10: Chopin. Nocturne op. 9 no. 2. bars 7-8



(Eigeldinger 1986:257)

Friedman gives her own reasons for advocating her principles of fingering by saying that if the stronger fingers are used predominantly as in conventional fingering, the weaker fingers compensate by tensing up and negatively affecting the rest of

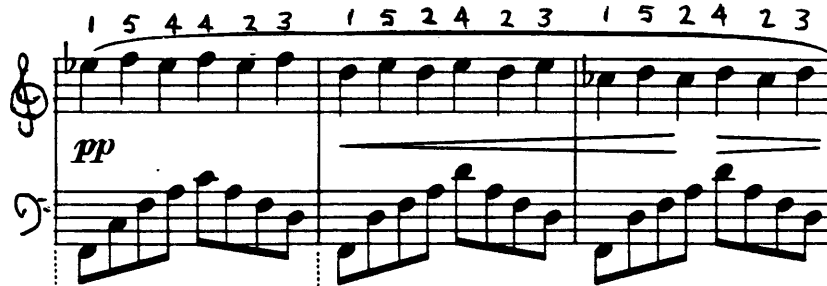
the hand. She goes on to recommend the constant use of the thumb, fourth and fifth fingers, thereby "keeping them out of trouble" and so keeping the hand relaxed (Friedman 1989:8).

Friedman further expands the principle of bypassing fingers to include the concept of combination fingerings i.e. the use of weaker and stronger fingers in combination with one another (1989:8). The thumb and second finger of each hand are the strongest, the third finger is moderately strong whilst the fourth and fifth fingers are the weakest. There is thus an imbalance of weight and strength in the hand. To equalise the distribution of weight and strength fingers from both the strong and weak parts of the hand must be used together or alternately (Friedman 1990). For example, take the interval of a third in tremolo (C4/E4) played by the right hand. One starts with the traditional 1-3 fingering, but can later change to the more unconventional but better balanced 1-4 to release tension (Friedman 1990).

A good example of the use of combination fingering in alternation is the Chopin Etude op. posth. no. 1 where the fingering

for the right hand shown below is advised by Feuchtwanger (Friedman 1990).

Example 11: Chopin. Etude op. posth. no. 1. bars 58-60



(from F. Chopin. *Trois Nouvelles Etudes*. Schott. p. 67)

In the case of a trill (often one of the most strenuous of pianistic actions) Friedman has an unusual suggestion: the use of four fingers to alleviate tension. Take for example the trill C4/D4 played by the right hand: traditionally this would be performed with 1-3, 2-4 or 2-3 as fingerings. Friedman suggests the use of 1-4-2-3 whereby fingers from both sides of the hand are used. The use of the weak fourth finger guarantees the distribution of weight. If only strong fingers are used, there is too much tension concentrated in the strong part of the hand causing it to tense up. The use of combination fingering promises an even and relaxed trill (Friedman 1990). The four-fingered trill in performance is a novelty in

piano playing. The only other reference to a four-fingered trill in the literature is that made by Chopin in his *Projet de methode* where he mentions it in connection with practising, advising the use of three fingers in actual trill performance (Eigeldinger 1986:41). The preparatory exercise for this trill will be discussed in the chapter "Tension and Relaxation".

Another very interesting comment of Friedman's is that often "...fingering backwards is used especially when a large interval leap appears..." (Friedman 1989:8). Her answer to a question requesting more clarification of this rather mysterious observation is revealing (1990).

Concerning the use of "backwards fingering" other than in leaps. Friedman has in mind a particular exercise for finger independence invented by Feuchtwanger in which the fingering 54321 is used by the right hand in an ascending conjunct five-note pattern. Fingers and wrist must be relaxed. the fingers flat against the key surfaces. The connections between the notes must be as legato as possible. the action used is that of the "flick" as described in Chapter Three. The movement is

now obviously on a much smaller scale but the principle of the movement stays the same. It is imperative arm, wrist and fingers remain as relaxed as possible.

The action must now be repeated at a faster tempo utilising the pebble principle described in Chapter Two. The dead weight of the arm is "thrown" onto the keyboard and lands with a high wrist which falls due to the follow-through action after key activation. The momentum caused by the "throwing" action is transferred through each finger respectively through the flicking motion as the wrist gradually rises towards the end of the pattern. For more detailed information on the pebble and flicking motions, refer to the relevant chapters. The overall feeling and effect of this exercise is similar to that of a pebble skimming across the surface of the water, effortlessly and lightly travelling the required distance. The exercise is conversely valid for descending patterns in the right hand, as well as for both directions in the left hand.

The term "fingering backwards" may also mean the utilisation of fingers from opposite sides of the hand employed in posi-

tions directly opposed to those they would naturally hold. considering the hand positions which would naturally be adopted in those circumstances (Friedman 1990). The best explanation is by way of example with Feuchtwanger's own fingering (Friedman 1990).

Example 12: Chopin. Etude op. posth. no. 1. bars 61-63



(from F. Chopin. *Trois Nouvelles Etudes*. Schott. p. 67)

A possible conventional fingering for bar 62-63 right hand would be 132 431-232 431 where the hand stays in its natural hand position. Feuchtwanger's fingering through its forced changing of hand positions gives the perfect rubato: the time needed to change providing just the correct delay between the notes to afford a natural ritardando (the excerpt is from the end of the piece). In this way the fingering and movement answers the musical need exactly and in a most ingenious way. There is no precedent for this type of fingering.

As regards fingering backwards in large leaps Feuchtwanger has evolved just as ingenious an idea (Friedman 1990). Again this utilises the flicking motion. With the wrist relaxed, the right hand moves in anti-clockwise motion, the left clockwise. An example serves as the best explanation.

Example 13: Hummel, Sonata op. 20. III. 36-38



(from J. N. Hummel, *Sonatas* vol. 1. Musica Rara. p. 53)

Friedman points out that if the traditional fingering of 1-5 were to be used here in the right hand leap, the fifth finger would most likely become tense in anticipation, it would almost certainly miss the note, and if it did reach, would probably be too tense to play further (eg. bar 37). However if one applies backward fingering such as 2-1 instead of 1-5, the hand cannot stiffen up in anticipation of the leap as it has to change position and gets there just in time to play the note. In this way the tension of anticipation is avoided. The whole leap is thus performed in a relaxed and natural way.

the sound also being rounder and clearer due to the lack of strain involved. The first leap in the example is fingered 1-5 due to a long run in the previous bar ending on the second finger on an adjacent note to the first note of the leap in bar 36 (Friedman 1990).

The fingering given here is completely alien to contemporary and historic piano methods. It is a highly imaginative way of overcoming an age-old pianistic problem: that of relaxed playing in the most trying of circumstances. The speed of the particular movement here examined (a typical Classical/Romantic Presto) increases the possibilities of strained and nervous playing, making the leaps even more stressful.

As far as the actual movement is concerned (i.e. fingers travelling along the surface of the keys instead of in an arc above them [Friedman 1990]) Feuchtwanger does have predecessors: Riemann (Kloppenburg 1951:271) and Leschetitzky (Kloppenburg 1960:62) both agree that the fingers must move along the key surfaces rather than in the air. Apart from this aspect, Feuchtwanger's approach to leaps is quite new.

In conclusion, a succinct summation of Feuchtwanger's approach to fingering: "Tension is bound to occur with conventional or set fingering when the mind has foreknowledge of what is to come next. Arbitrary fingering frees that part of the brain that is responsible for such undesirable tension associated with expectancy." (Friedman 1989:8).

CHAPTER 6: LEGATO AND SOUND

6.1 Legato

Feuchtwanger regards the attaining of a true expressive "singing" legato as the ideal in piano playing (Burkhalter 1980: 311). He believes it is the only way to imitate the singers of the past who inspired the composers of their time, including Chopin. Earlier composers were also inspired by the art of singing, especially Bach and Mozart.

The securing of an outstanding legato touch is of paramount importance in the Feuchtwanger approach. To this end, Friedman has discussed at some length the acquisition of such a touch in her *Notes to a Lecture* (1989).

She begins by stating that most grand pianos have the so-called double action which assists greatly in achieving an outstanding legato. To understand the practical implications of this double action, one must discover its manifestation on the keyboard. One does this by pressing a key down very lightly until it gives a certain resistance. This point in

the key's journey downward is named "first action" by Friedman. If the key is depressed further by exerting slight pressure on the finger tip, one will arrive at the base of the key. This distance between the point of first resistance and the base of the key is "second or double action" in Friedman terminology. It is the existence of this second action which affords one excellent continuity of sound between notes in legato, and also makes possible a seemingly seamless legatissimo.

This second action is the key to perfect legato with the minimum of tension, the reason being that one is able to let the key rise to almost three-quarters of the way up to its natural position before the dampers are returned to the strings, ending the sound. One can thus keep the sound while decreasing three-quarters of the tension on the key. Upright pianos lose sound before the keys are half-way up, according to Friedman.

To achieve a good legato the previous key must not be lifted completely until the next note is sounded. All keys must be held at that point where the sound would die were the key

allowed to rise further. In this way one gains a sustained legato with the minimum of effort and tension (Friedman 1989: 2).

Often whole phrases or parts of passages can be played using only the second action, if the notes are in the same area. The performer also feels more secure and in control if the distance the keys have to travel to reach key bottom is shorter and therefore more controllable. The performer is also more likely to experience the feeling of playing on the strings as against playing on the keys if second action is employed.

Close-Key Technique for an Outstanding Legato

Feuchtwanger regards the use of a close-key technique as essential for a true legato touch (Burkhalter 1980:311). He comments further. "The fingers don't leave the keys with which they are in constant contact." (Burkhalter 1980:311). Friedman agrees that the fingers should remain in constant contact with the keys (1989:7).

This view of the perfect legato through close-key technique derives from the "Golden Age" pianists, Hofmann having written of it most extensively. In his book *Piano Questions Answered* he discusses the question of the high finger stroke in relation to legato playing. He notes that playing "in the air" is lost energy, and not helpful in achieving a successful legato. "The most beautiful tone in legato style is ever produced by a 'clinging and singing' gliding of the fingers over the keys." (Hofmann 1976:23). Supplementarily he declares that the high finger stroke should be used as a special effect and not as a general rule. Accordingly, he is in complete agreement with Feuchtwanger and Friedman.

Leimer and Gieseking also lament the under-utilisation of this technique, which they call the "Legatissimo Touch" (Kloppen- burg 1960:103). The action is characterised by a very soft pressure on the key combined with the fingers remaining on the keys. According to Wolff (1972:179) Schnabel used this technique extensively. "The keys seemed to emit a magnetic attraction for his fingertips, no matter in which way the hand was being held." He comments further that it looked as if the

keys were completely protected and covered by Schnabel's hands.

Close-Key Technique For Increasing Speed

Friedman also discusses close-key technique in relation to speed (1989:7). She asserts that speed must be achieved with the minimum expenditure of energy as the more energy expended, the less energy one has to obtain speed. The logical solution would be to play from the key surfaces thus saving the energy otherwise expended in reaching the key surfaces. The energy thus saved can be concentrated in the finger tips, making play faster and lighter. The sound is also "pearl-like and beautiful" and not metallic. The wrist remains light, simply following the fingers.

Hofmann also comments on the necessity of a close-key touch in a good finger technique. "I am convinced that the degree of perfection of finger [technique] is exactly proportionate to the development of the legato touch." (1976:34). He goes on to explain that by keeping the fingers on the key surfaces, both exertion and time is saved, and this allows for extra speed.

Legato Between Repeated Notes

Feuchtwanger has devised a special technique for playing legato between slow or medium tempo repeated notes. This is another innovation which has no precedent. Friedman (1990) explains the movement, taking the third finger as the sample fingering.

One starts off having depressed the first note with a flat finger which is positioned nearer to the body of the piano than to the edge of the key. The wrist is then moved towards the player, bringing the relaxed finger with (the finger still depressing the key). As the wrist moves backward it rises, bringing the finger tip closer to the edge of the key. As the finger moves toward the player, the key is gradually allowed to rise as far as possible without the sound dying - this point is reached at the point of turn-around. The finger virtually becomes perpendicular to the key. The finger then bends and moves forward once more as it straightens out and travels the length of the key to the point of origin. The wrist lowers correspondingly. As the finger is just about to reach full extension it flicks out the last phalanx, thus

being in a position to start the process once more. the key having been allowed to rise in the same manner as before.

The turn itself must be done almost impulsively - the finger must hold on until the last minute before reactivation. This causes a clinging sensation which heightens the physical experiencing of the musical moment. This is especially effective when the score calls for *tenuti* to be played on successive repeated notes. as in the following example.

Example 14: Bartók. Sonata (1926). II. 1-5

Sostenuto e pesante, $\text{♩} = 84$




(from B. Bartók. *Sonata* (1926). Universal. p. 14)

The same technique may also apply to tenuto chords including repeated notes. as in the Messiaen below.

Example 15: Messiaen. "Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus". bars 1-3

Très lent, calme ($\text{♩} = 88$)
 (Le sommeil)



(Thème de Dieu en berceuse) **ppp**

(from O. Messiaen. *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*. Durand p.

108)

The action is exactly the same except that multiple fingers are now taking part.

This innovative new technique of playing legato repeated notes in slow or medium tempi closes the discussion of Feuchtwanger's approach to legato playing.

6.2 Sound

"To play very expressively, a complete control of the fingers is of primary importance. The fingers must be in a position to make every wished nuance. One must have an extremely fine feeling for touch in one's whole finger, even into the finger tip." - J. N. Hummel (Kloppenburger 1951:156).

This quote is a good starting point for the study of beautiful sound production following the Feuchtwanger approach as most of Feuchtwanger's techniques for producing beautiful sound involve the fingers only. This is in keeping with his ideal of minimal movement.

Apart from individual movements for particular effects, there is one basic rule to be kept in mind in the Feuchtwanger

approach to sound. This is dealt with extensively by one of his "Golden Age" heroes. Lhevinne, when he discusses the rôle of the wrist in securing a beautiful sound. He puts it in a nutshell: "The wrist must always be flexible. The more spring the less bump; and it is bumps that make for bad tone on the piano." (Lhevinne 1972:19).

Specifically speaking, Friedman (1990) discusses certain techniques which provide certain musical effects. The first, and possibly the most important, is that of using the full key length for a good sound. On a technical level this is done merely through the finger, wrist or arm (whichever has taken part in the action) not stopping the movement on key activation, but continuing it as a follow-through. This usually takes the form of the finger moving along the length of the key towards the body of the piano, the wrist and arm following naturally.

But it is at an interpretative level that this action has value, besides producing a beautiful sound. Through the movement of the finger along the key, the body can experience in physical terms the temporal length of the note, thus the

physical action becomes the manifestation of the musical experience. Only in this way can the pianist "feel" the tone for its duration (or at least the most part of it) almost in the same way a singer or cellist would. By dint of further explanation, if a passage in Scarlatti imitating guitars is played, the physical action used would be akin to guitar plucking, ie. a short, sharp action resulting in a short, sharp sound. The same goes for long, sustained notes - it is actually impossible to produce them physically for their full length on the keyboard, one only creates that illusion. A long, sustained-type action will, however, help one to achieve the desired affect in the same way the plucking action does. This physical manifestation of a musical experience also helps to provide the correct timing and space and therefore helps people to listen - both the performer and the audience.

Although the follow-through is a well-known pianistic principle of movement - especially used by Schnabel (Wolff 1972: 25) - its specific application in this sense deserves some praise. It goes at least some way in helping to solve the greatest problem in piano playing: How does the pianist experience sound, that he or she can no longer control, in such

a way that they make the seamless transition to the next note. even though they know it is impossible for them to physically make it? The solution lies partly in the above action.

The rest of the answer to this question lies in the answer to the following: "How does one control the connection between the two notes in a 'Seuftzer' motive, especially in a slow tempo?" The quintessential example of a highly expressive, exposed "Seuftzer" motive is that which comprises the final bar of Beethoven's Sonata op. 109 (right hand). Any lack of control here would ruin completely all that has gone before: it is the final moment of exquisite beauty in an highly spiritual and great work.

Example 16: Beethoven. Sonata op. 109. III. 202-203



(from L. van Beethoven, Sämtliche Klaviersonaten Band II.

Henle, p. 290)

Friedman's answer to the question of control at this crucial point is simple: Relax! Think, concentrate on, and listen to the present note. There must be total relaxation and freedom as the note is being listened to while subconsciously conceptualising the next one. The most important thing is to trust that one will play the next note correctly if one has done this. What one thinks will automatically become a realisation - one must therefore make a mental contact between the notes or else all will fail. In singing and other melody-line disciplines, the absolutely crucial and telling moment is the moment of connection between two notes - this connection determines the meaning of the musical moment. So it must be in the art of piano playing - except that in piano playing this occurs only in the mind. one cannot really connect two notes. one merely creates that illusion. Thus the key to a meaningful performance of this figure is by: making the correct mental connection between the two notes, combined with the absolute belief that the notes will be played with the perfect affinity: completely forgetting the playing mechanism by relaxing it as completely as possible and concentrating solely on the sound. If these directions are followed the pianist cannot fail under any circumstances to play most

expressively. remembering that absolute concentration is required (Friedman 1990).

Another tip given by Friedman (1989:3) for good sound is playing the note on the tip of the fingernail. When questioned further on this point, she replies (1990) that this is used for very soft passages to obtain a ringing sound. The fingernail is used because it requires the least amount of tension to be able to activate a key.

It is often used in combination with the so-called "finger flick", invented by Feuchtwanger to draw a bell-like sonority from the piano (Friedman 1990). This is an entirely new action which has not been documented before. A good example of the context within which this sonority is often called for is the Sonata K99 by Scarlatti in which the left hand crosses the right to play bell-like notes in the top register.

Example 17: Scarlatti. Sonata K99. bars 32-35

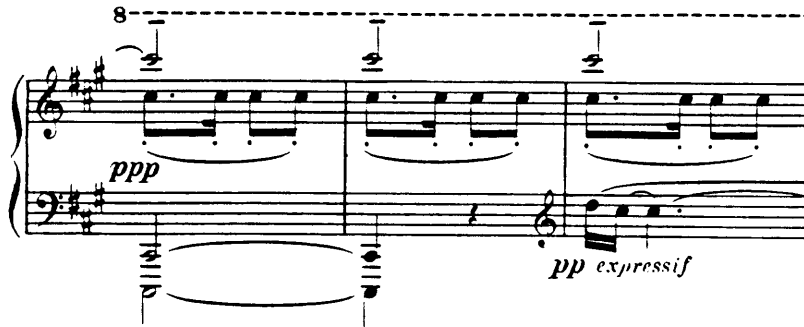


(from D. Scarlatti. *Sonates* Vol. 2. Heugel. p. 169)

Friedman (1990) explains: To start with one must feel the independence of the finger. in other words feel the finger as an entity apart from the hand. The action itself consists of a fast flick of the finger towards the body of the piano. One must think from the knuckle down towards the finger tip - all the action takes place there. One starts with the finger curled inwards towards the palm of the hand. the finger slightly above the surface of the key. One then flicks the finger towards the body of the piano using the finger from the knuckle down only. the nail activating the key as it passes over it. The nail is used to activate the key as it requires the minimum of tension to do so compared to other parts of the playing mechanism. If the finger cushion was used it would create too loud a sound as it requires too much tension in order to play. The automatic follow-through of this technique causes the strings to vibrate differently. creating a different timbre: a ringing. clear. bell-like sound.

This technique can be used in different ways. for example in an octave context. Here the fifth finger plays the bell sonority while the thumb continues with another figure an octave below.

Example 18: Debussy. "La Soirée dans Grenade". bars 5-7



(from C. Debussy. *Estampes*. United Music. p. 9)

In the right hand the fingering would most likely be 1-5. In order to execute this action, one needs support from the other fingers, according to Friedman (1990). The support must come from the unused fingers - think under the knuckles in order to achieve this (the concept of support and what it is will be discussed in the next chapter). The thumb must be positioned sideways on the black note, the fifth curled and in position to do the "flick". The fifth then flicks forward as explained above, the thumb remaining in its place to do its work. This technique can also be applied to octaves when both notes are given the bell sonority - here the flick is achieved with the help of a slight downward movement of the wrist as the fingers are flicked out (the wrist starts a little higher than level with the key surfaces) (Friedman 1990). This "flicking" action has not been documented by any other writer to my

knowledge, and is entirely new and quite different to any other techniques discussed thus far.

An old idea renewed by Peter Feuchtwanger and Marian Friedman is the use of *jeu perlé*, literally, "pearl-like playing" i.e. playing (especially of runs) which could be visualised as strings of pearls, so exquisite is the beauty and delicacy of the sound.

This is a well-known technique well documented by previous writers including Breithaupt and especially Lhevinne. Breithaupt (Kloppenburg 1960:30) describes *jeu perlé* as being a so-called "covered *leggiero* form" where the fingers do not leave the keys, the arm and hand remaining quite still. Lhevinne (1972:27) examines the matter at length, arriving at three criteria for delicacy in performance: 1. The arm must "float in the air" - it must be relaxed and feel light (a mental rather than a physical attitude). Delicacy is inconceivable without a light and relaxed arm 2.. Each key must be struck securely, but lightly 3. The fingers must be kept on the surface of the keys. In this way one will achieve a secure

lightness comparable to lace: delicacy with regularity of design - no structural weaknesses due to insecurities.

Friedman and Feuchtwanger often employ *jeu perlé*. raising the forearm, elbow and wrist. thereby removing all weight from the fingers and keys. This affords the beauty of sound associated with *jeu perlé*. both pianists agreeing with Lhevinne on the specifics of the technique (Friedman 1990). According to Friedman a fitting illustration of the type of passage which calls for the use of *jeu perlé* is the opening of the Schubert Impromptu D899 no. 2 (right hand).

Example 19: Schubert. Impromptu D899 no. 2. bars 1-3



(from F. Schubert. *Four Impromptus* op. 90. D899. Associated Board. p. 17)

The last type of sound to be discussed will be the rich cantabile sonority of a broad melody. For this. we return to

the free fall of the arm as described in the beginning of the "balance" exercise. when applied to the use of the thumb as a starting finger on a black note (see Chapter Four). The action is exactly the same as notated in Chapter Four. the momentum of the dead weight of the arm falling on the keyboard is channelled through the relaxed thumb. and then released onto the strings. The rest of the melody is played with completely relaxed arm. the fingers always following through to the base of the key. but not digging down after it has been struck. Pressure from the fingers also contributes to the richness of sound as all tension is released at the moment of activation. The use of follow-through and a relaxed wrist are the keys to a beautiful. sonorous tone (Friedman 1990).

An interesting example of the use of the "free fall" for good tone is the slow section from the Shostakovitch First Sonata (1926). Here the right hand does not have enough time to drop completely before playing the melody note: and has to relax in mid-air before dropping in the required way onto it. This is also an ideal place to use the thumb as starting finger in order to produce a rich. full sound.

Example 20: Shostakovitch. Sonata op. 12 (1926). bars 210-211

The musical score shows two staves. The top staff (treble clef) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a tempo marking of *Lento* ($\text{♩} = 92$). The bottom staff (bass clef) also starts with *pp* and includes the marking *dolce ma marc.* with a circled asterisk. Both staves have a fermata over the final notes of the phrase. Below the staves, there are two instances of the marking "8.....:".

(from D. Shostakovitch. *Klaviersonate nr. 1* (1926).

Peters. p. 14)

The predecessors of this free fall movement as applied to actual practice in performance are numerous. Matthay (Klop-
penburg 1960:110) speaks of the "weight touch" where the weight of the arm is used in the manner of the Deppe "con-
trolled fall". It is spoken of as a touch, and not discussed in detail with regard to particular uses. Deppe's disciple Emil Söchting takes this further by discussing the "controlled fall" in terms of the weight of the arm working on the key through the agency of the finger. Söchting speaks of making a sound with the finger on the key, the "controlled fall" up to now having been used as an exercise to demonstrate the principle of a certain movement, rather than being used directly in conjunction with producing a particular sound.

Hofmann also discusses the playing of cantabile passages and says. "As a general principle. I believe in the free-hanging, limp arm and recommend using its weight in cantabile playing." (1976:8).

This concludes the discussion on Feuchtwanger's ideas on legato and sound, and we now move to one of the most interesting and original aspects of the Feuchtwanger approach, that of tension and relaxation.

CHAPTER 7: TENSION AND RELAXATION

7.1 Tension and relaxation

Some of Feuchtwanger's and Friedman's most interesting comments are to be found in this chapter on tension and relaxation - two of the most difficult and important concepts in pianism. Posture at the piano will be discussed, then the concepts tension and relaxation as relevant to piano playing, along with such ideas as right and wrong tension, and the all-important concept of support (a new idea in piano technique - especially as far as the application of this is concerned).

Posture at the Piano

"Posture combined with both the stability and correct height of the piano stool are the *sine qua non* for correct playing ...Even while executing the most difficult passages, the pianist's body should remain still, without being rigid, and should not be any exaggerated facial expression." (Feuchtwanger 1988:83). Burkhalter confirms that Feuchtwanger prefers his students to "...sit rather low before the piano and to adopt an immobility that is relaxed and without stiffness." (1980:311).

A number of writers agree with Feuchtwanger on the posture at the instrument. Deppe (Kloppenburger 1960:21) and Breithaupt (Kloppenburger 1960:27) both recognise the value of sitting low at the keyboard, while Breithaupt (Kloppenburger 1960:24) specifically warns against stiff posture, as does Feuchtwanger. Agreeing, Riemann (Kloppenburger 1951:268) asserts that the posture of the player must be unforced, yet supple. Schnabel also sat low at the piano (Wolff 1972:25).

The Dutch pianist and teacher Paul Roës (d. 1955) states that one should sit with one's upper torso slightly backwards, the better to gain a little distance from one's work (Kloppenburger 1960:141). Friedman is in agreement with Roës on this point (Friedman 1989:9). She discusses the importance of muscular support from the lower back muscles through the concept of a particular isometric exercise (see the discussion of chord playing in Chapter Three for more detail) The use of this exercise forces the back to be straight or bent slightly backwards.

Although he did not agree with sitting low at the piano, Leschetitzky, through the words of one of his pupils Malwine

Bree. has the last word on posture at the piano. This quote succinctly summarises Feuchtwanger's idea of posture: One sits at the piano "...as a good rider on his horse, unforcedly erect." (Kloppenburg 1960:60).

Tension

"In many pianists, the mere thought of a chord will cause an unnecessary change or a contraction of the muscles - the neck stiffens, shoulders are pulled up or thighs tightened. All of this is totally unnecessary for the coming action and furthermore, hampers it." (Feuchtwanger 1988:83). Thus Feuchtwanger reinforces on his principle of only the necessary movements being made towards a goal. Anything else is wasted energy.

He concedes, however, that "A certain amount of tension is always present...is indeed absolutely essential. However one must not confuse the right tension with strain. We need tension in order to walk upright..to hold a cup or play the piano: without it our bodies would collapse helplessly as in a faint." (Feuchtwanger 1988:85). Feuchtwanger expands on this when he says he does not like the expression "relax", as one cannot play the piano without tension, but that "...only the

muscles and tendons needed at that moment should be used whilst the rest of the body remains free of unnecessary strain." (Feuchtwanger 1988:83).

Riemann agrees with Feuchtwanger on this point, saying that everything which is strained is wrong as it impairs the free use of the hands (Kloppenburger 1951:268). Matthay accedes that relaxation is important, and that the release of all extraneous tension is central to this concept (Kloppenburger 1960:113). Leimer and Giesecking go further by stating, "Piano playing must happen with the least possible exertion..." (Kloppenburger 1960:103). while the Dutch pianist and teacher Dirk Schäfer (1874-1931) sums it up concisely when he says, "The basis of technical control is *rest without stiffness*." [original italics] (Kloppenburger 1960:146).

Right and Wrong Tension

Friedman expounds on this subject, having developed various theories on tension and its acceptable derivative, support.

Wrong tension is seen as tension which is detrimental to a performance - too much tension, or incorrect placement of

support. Friedman (1989:1) considers the problem of too much tension: "In most students tension starts accumulating in the neck. stomach. shoulders. wrists. elbows. forearms. everywhere except in the fingers. and this is undesirable strain." She also mentions locking of the wrist as a classic example of too much tension.

Schnabel concurs with Feuchtwanger and Friedman that relaxation (especially of the neck and shoulders) is of the utmost importance. He further accedes that a "concentration on relaxation" is most essential. stating that "Tension should be in the head only." (Wolff 1972:24).

This last comment is of special interest to us as Friedman points out that tension can be shifted from a place where it is detrimental to a place where it can be used.

Shifting Tension

How does one shift tension. for example. from the forearm to the fingers? Friedman (1990) relates the process: Before one starts the process the hand must be in neutral position. One then relaxes the playing mechanism. so doing already shifting

some tension. One then concentrates on the spot where the tension is to be, thinking of that place only while remaining relaxed. The tension will then move to the place of concentration: tension has now successfully been shifted from one area to another. This tension, now placed in the correct area, is experienced and used positively as support.

7.2 Support

Support is the correct amount of tension distributed correctly in the hand. As was pointed out previously, one needs a certain amount of tension in order to play - in fact one cannot play without it. This tension must be used in the correct quantities in the correct places, or else wasted or wrong tension occurs, leading to strain and sometimes paralysation of the playing mechanism.

The hand has a naturally unequally distributed strength due to the difference in strength between the various fingers. One therefore needs to equalise the distribution to play. All fingers need to work together in order to do this (Friedman 1990).

How Support Works

Friedman (1990) continues to expound on the subject of support and illustrates how it works. When one is playing with the fourth or fifth fingers one must think of the first, as thinking on the opposite side of the hand to that which you are using automatically distributes the weight equally.

One may also need to strengthen the finger being used by thinking of it, especially in the case of the fifth where one must think the fifth from the bottom of the palm at the wrist through the side muscle and down to the finger tip. One must think similarly in terms of the thumb to be able to control it (Friedman 1989:1).

The general rule for thinking support, however, is to think under the hand (in other words the palm) so that "...the correct amount of tension can be distributed and proportioned correctly." (Friedman 1989:1).

How To Get Support

According to Friedman, the first thing one needs to remember is that one always needs support to play (1990). The first

step in getting support is to relax. letting extraneous tension disappear. One usually needs to decrease tension in order to get the correct amount for support. The second step is to relax and concentrate on the place where the support is needed. If the hand has remained relaxed in concentration, the correct amount of support will appear at the place upon which the concentration was directed. "Do not do anything physically to achieve the right amount of tension. concentrate and relax, and it will appear." (Friedman 1990).

Refer to the following chapter for an excellent exercise which equips the mind for the mental isolation and control of the parts of the playing mechanism.

The only direct reference to support found in the literature is a small paragraph in Josef Hofmann's book *Piano Questions Answered* where he says. "...by concentrated thinking you should endeavour to transfer the display of force to the finger tips instead of holding the tension in your arm. For this produces fatigue. while the way I suggest will lead you to develop considerable force through the hand and fingers alone and leave the arm practically limp and loose." (Hofmann 1976:9).

Others have hinted at the use of support, but usually too vaguely under the guise of terms such as "finger pressure". One of the few clearer quotes comes once again from one of Chopin's most talented pupils, Princess Czartoryska when she speaks of "...concentrating the sensorial power in the extreme tips of the fingers." (Eigeldinger 1986:30). She refers specifically to a mental process by speaking of concentrating not in the abstract sense, but in consciously placing the power in a specific place. Seen in this context, Chopin probably used support consciously to achieve the same goal, if not utilising the same mental means as Feuchtwanger.

Practical Application of the Support Theory

Let us presume that one has a problem in a particular finger-work-type run and that the fourth finger is not working. One sets to work solving the problem through finding the correct place to apportion support.

1. One finds that the adjacent fingers are tense, taking energy away from the fourth. Relax the third and fifth by concentrating on them and think the fourth finger from the knuckle down. The support will then be concentrated on the

fourth finger and will no longer exist as wasted tension in the third and fifth fingers.

2. One could then find that the fault lies elsewhere, discovering the thumb and second to be tense. To relax these one thinks of the fourth and makes sure it does its work. It is also very important to remember the principle of thinking on the opposite side of the hand. One must thus think of the thumb, relaxing it when playing the fourth. The relaxation of the thumb is very important. One can also think of the muscle between the thumb and second finger, and use that as a point of support. There are no fixed rules, one must be creative in one's thinking if one of the more usual solutions does not work.

3. If none of the above works, relax the wrist, elbow, shoulders and neck and then replay the run with the least exertion possible (Friedman 1990).

This concept avoids the spirit-breaking, mind-numbing practising of runs in endless rhythms in order to acquire evenness.

An Exercise for Fast Relaxation in Fast Tempi

This exercise is intended for fast relaxation as well as for obtaining power through speed of attack, rather than force of weight. Friedman (1990) relates the sequence of events: one starts with the hand neutral on the surface of the keys, completely relaxed. The hand rests, for example, roughly between D4/E4 and A4/B4 (right hand). Suddenly, with absolutely no preparation, the fingers jump to the octave (in this case C4/C5) and back as soon as possible, relaxing immediately. The octave must be taken absolutely cleanly and securely. The fingers then take the next octave in the same manner, the lack of rhythm or metre in the exercise providing the all-important element of surprise.

The mental aspect of this exercise is also very important – there must be no preparation in the mind for the following octave or else the exercise is pointless. The absence of preparation, mental or otherwise, ensures the absolute relaxation of the playing mechanism and the mind despite the difficulties which are to follow. In this way one prepares one's mind and body to cope with the most difficult and exhausting of passages. A piece in which this technique can be directly

exploited is Moszkovski's *Etincelles*. Apart from this piece there is no reference in the literature to any technique of this kind to my knowledge, even though it fulfils such an important purpose.

All of the techniques and concepts in this chapter are either different applications of old ideas or are completely new. The mental approach to achieving the correct support is new, certainly in the precise and specific way in which it is practised. The concept of thinking of various parts of the hand in order to apportion tension correctly, thereby achieving evenness, is quite revolutionary as it has no precedence in piano methods past or present. These are further proofs of Feuchtwanger's innovative approach to the art of piano playing.

CHAPTER 8: THE MENTAL ASPECT

"How you think will automatically become a realisation."
(Friedman 1989:2). This provides the key to the essence of the Feuchtwanger approach: controlling of the mind so that it has perfect control over the physical being and especially supreme control over itself. This last aspect is at the same time the most important and the most difficult. The control over the physical must be practised until the point of repletion while the control over the mental must reach such a stage that it is no longer a goal, but a state of mind through which the musical soul has the simplest and most unrestricted path towards expression. Towards this end one must practise and refine one's powers of concentration not only through daily practising of exercises especially created for this purpose, but most importantly, through intense concentration on the musical moment every time one plays or practises. This concentration must always be centred only on that moment and on nothing else (Friedman 1990).

The mental aspect of Feuchtwanger's approach embraces more than control over the physical and mental - it also addresses

the attitude of the performer towards his or her art and their relationship to it. Here the influence of Zen philosophy on Feuchtwanger's approach is the most evident: complete selflessness and humility before one's art. This translates into more practical terms when discussed in relation to concentration and the need to control the mind and the will.

Control Over the Physical

In the previous chapter we examined the rôle of the mind in relation to support. It was found that support is an indispensable part of piano playing, and is used at all times. It was also shown that support is controlled and directed solely by the mind. Thus the mind is used at a very practical level in the Feuchtwanger approach, engaged in the note-by-note execution of a work. This level of concentration is used especially in solving technical problems while learning to master a piece. By the time the work is performed this level has been transcended as the mind now automatically and subconsciously goes through the correct thought processes for the motoric side of the performance.

In answer to the question whether concentration can be practised or not. Friedman (1990) answers that it not only can, but must be practised. She goes as far as saying that the manner and content of one's concentration in the practice room will be exactly the same on stage. If one's concentration is lacking in practice, so will it also be in performance. One thus not only practices physical patterns of action, but also mental patterns of concentration (Friedman 1990).

She goes on to state that one must consciously decide where to direct one's musical and technical attentions with regard to every note. One does this according to the guidelines of support as outlined in Chapter Seven and according to one's own solutions to the various problems present in a work. Once decided upon, the concentration pattern should be set so that it becomes a conditioned response, thus freeing the mind to concentrate on other aspects of the music.

How does one secure such mental control over one's hands and fingers so that one can mentally isolate each part in order to control it? Friedman has developed a completely unique exercise to help develop this faculty to the highest degree. No

references are made in the literature to any exercises of this sort. The control of tension and support is synonymous with this exercise.

An Exercise For Developing Concentration

Friedman (1990) explains the exercise: "Start with the hand in the position described as being the perfect balance between tension and relaxation at the piano. fingers resting on the key surfaces (see Chapter Two). Close your eyes in order to concentrate more deeply. shutting out all extraneous thoughts and stimuli. Think of the thumb. concentrating only on it - nothing else exists. All awareness of the other fingers must disappear. Concentrate on the various parts of the thumb. isolating them. Test the intensity of your concentration by making sure that you actually feel a sensation in the particular place of concentration. If no sensation is felt. intensify your concentration until you do. You will then be "feeling" and isolating the particular area successfully.

Returning to the thumb. think of the first phalanx. then the second. feeling them both separately. Isolate the muscle under the thumb. feeling it separately to the other muscles.

Then feel the thumb as a whole, from the base of the muscle under the thumb through to the finger tip. You may also isolate the finger tip if you wish.

Move on to the other fingers, doing the same with each one. Each finger must be isolated properly for this exercise to be of any worth. The fifth must also be felt from the base of the muscle to which it is connected. Lastly, concentrate and isolate the palm of the hand, the wrist, and the area under the knuckles, respectively. The reason for this is that tension is often shifted from the wrist to these other areas when the wrist locks with tension in performance. This exercise develops a highly focused concentration which is able to place and transfer tension and support at will. In this way the fingers really do become the slaves of the mind." (Friedman 1990).

One also needs, according to Friedman (1990), to predict the technical problems most likely to occur on stage, as these are likely to differ from those in the practice room due to the added ingredient of stress in a performance situation. One can predict these problems by making oneself nervous in the

practice room and thereby discovering weak spots which can be strengthened.

Another area in which the mind can exercise control is that of controlling nerves in a performance situation. It is the only way to control nerves in performance according to Friedman (1990). She asserts that concentration centres one's attention on the music, allowing no space for fear thoughts to be transmitted from the subconscious. In order to do this one must occupy one's mind fully with the music. It is therefore of the utmost importance that one knows and has practised what to think, and when to think it.

The American pianist and teacher George Kochevitsky agrees with Friedman on these points in his book *The Art of Piano Playing - A Scientific Approach*. He states, "The student has to be taught not only how to play but also how to think..." (1967:51). By this he means not only in playing but in the choice of the student's repertoire, the organisation of his or her practice time and so on. Kochevitsky does not make references to the solving of technical problems through specific

direction of the powers of concentration on the physical, as Friedman does.

Her understanding of the concept "support" seems to be entirely original. Kochevitsky does discuss the rôle concentration plays in controlling nerves, stating that "Strong concentration on concrete artistic problems, on the musical image, inductively suppresses the harmful influence of any irrelevant stimulations." (1967:53). He thus agrees with Friedman on the subject of concentration controlling nervousness in performance.

Another concept of Friedman's concerning the use of the mind in controlling the physical is that of "leading". This is a concept invented by her to solve the problem of hand co-ordination and rhythmical alignment (1989:7). Expanding on this idea (1990) she explains that it means concentrating on one hand only, ignoring the other. For example, in a scale one would concentrate on the left hand ascending, the right descending. "Leading" means that the hand being concentrated on is the hand that sets the pace, the other adjusting itself accordingly.

Controlling the Mental

Friedman discusses this extensively in her *Notes to a Lecture* under the heading of "Anticipation". She states that many musical and technical problems occur because pianists think ahead while they are playing, instead of concentrating entirely on the musical moment. She notes, "To a large extent piano playing is a battle with the subconscious mind. The underlying fear must be determined and eradicated." (1989:3).

Regarding fear for a large leap ahead, Friedman has an ingenious solution: "...[imagine] that you are going in the opposite direction and at the last minute reverse course." (1989:3). In this way the mind is tricked and doesn't have time to anticipate the leap: it is forced to execute the leap without preparation. Friedman states further that mental anticipation of problem areas ahead not only affects those areas when they are reached, but affects the rest of the performance as well - the wrist and other parts of the playing mechanism stiffen up in anticipation of the problem, and worst of all, the mind reaches a state of overriding anxiety.

The solution is to concentrate solely on the musical moment (Friedman 1989:3) and on nothing else, past or present. Here we return to the Zen concept of "purposelessness". One must be purposeless in that one must forget one's goal i.e. a perfect performance. One must forget one's mistakes past and difficulties to come. If one concentrates exclusively on the present, one's mind has no time to worry about anything else. Problematic parts appear in their integral positions in the music and the mind negotiates them in a relaxed manner because no anticipation has taken place. Music exists solely in the present, the past a point of reference, the future nonexistent. Only with this understanding can the pianist overcome all.

Finally, Friedman notes (1990), one must see the whole performance as a work of art. Mental preparation begins from the moment of arrival at the hall. Acclimatising slowly to the physical circumstances one prepares oneself mentally by concentrating on the music about to be played. This concentration must be as deep as possible so as to fill the mind, not allowing fear thoughts to enter. One steps onto the stage already having reached a level of concentration and mental

oneness with the music. Taking one's seat before the piano, one must gather one's thoughts finally, forgetting oneself, one's technique and the goal ahead. One should sit as relaxed as possible, yet erect, the arms hanging loosely down at the sides. One immerses oneself completely in the music before lifting one's hands to the keyboard in the manner of the "balance" exercise. The fingers hang relaxed from the wrists and brush the edge of the keys before striking the opening notes. "Only then can the pianist achieve unity with the instrument and begin the work without preparation and tension." (Friedman 1989:6).

Sviatoslav Richter outlined the ideal: "The music subjugates you and does not leave place for idle thoughts. Now one forgets everything - not only the public but himself as well." (Kochevitsky 1967:53).

And so the artist becomes one with the elusive art, the spiritual art, the selfless art - the art of music.

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