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Volume 01, Number 01 (October 1883)

Theodore Presser

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THE ETUDE.

LYNCHBURG, VA., OCTOBER, 1883.

Issued Monthly in the interest of the technical study of the

Instrument. PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE.

Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents.

Extra copies will be furnished to teachers at one-half the regular

rate, when ordered in advance.

All orders should be directed to Theodore Presser, Lynchburg, Va.

Entered as second-class matter, October 3, 1883, at New York, N. Y.

There are, according to the best known re-

cord, thirty-nine journals devoted exclusively

to the interest of music in this country. They

differ principally with current events of the musical

world; their aim is to disseminate general musical

information, and they are very often published to

supply material for study of the technique of the

piano-forte; and secondly, be devoted to the

general interest of pianists and piano-teaching.

It will take the form of an instructor, or text-

book, rather than a paper which is to be read

at one sitting and they never taken up again.

The exercises which are to be studied will

form its principal feature. No distinct course

of study can well be followed; but teacher and

student are to select from the material given

those exercises that are adapted to individual

wants. How to study properly? how to practice?

how to teach? are subjects that will be

constantly before our mind. Contributions

will be solicited from the leading men of the

profession, both in this country and in Europe.

There is now enough material on hand to supply

the journal for six months or more, with the

prospects of a rich supply from the best

known sources.

We are thoroughly convinced that Piano

Technic is not receiving the attention it should

by the average teacher and student of the pi-

ano. The regular journals of music only speak

of it in a general way, and refer to it only in-

cidental.

When we consider the vast amount of subjects

—that nearly all our musical activities are con-

fined to, or connected with, the piano-forte;

that it forms the basis of all musical education;

that most of the music published is for that

instrument; that the great composers have

written some of their finest works for that in-

strument; that vocal music and all other forms

of music are greatly dependent on it; that it

has become a part of our society and civiliza-

tion, we have no further apology to offer for

the appearance of this sheet.

The task we have undertaken is to promote

the interest of this important branch of art

and education, which we believe, has not re-

ceived the consideration commensurate with

its vast influence. We present this our first

number with some caution, but with a sincere

determination to make the publication as val-

uable and practical as it lies in our power.

There will appear simultaneously with this

paper a translation, revision and enlargement

of Liszt's Piano Piano-forte School, by the

editor. This book received the prize over all

competitors in Germany. The board of judges

included the greatest living teachers. These

were Kullak of Berlin, and Carl Reinecke of

Leipzig; were among them. This work has met

with great favor by the leading teachers every-

where. Dr. F. L. Mitter of Vassar college pro-

nounces the highest eulogium on the work

when he says:—"The author is master of his

vast subject-matter, and presents the different

explanations in a thoroughly clear form. He

leads the pupil from step to step in a sure and

agreeable manner (as much as serious study

may seem agreeable to a beginner) to highly

satisfactory results. He presents, even to the

piano teacher, many intelligent remarks that

will meet the wholehearted attention. The tech-

nical exercises are based on the modern re-

quirements of piano-forte virtuosity. While

the 'pieces,' enlivened on the motive of the

concurrent exercises, or selected in accor-

dance with the respective technical task, trans-

form the mere mechanical subject-matter into

higher melo-dio-musical forms, they presenting

as the progress and understanding of the pupil

may require, deeper emotional meaning. In

the hands of the patient, piano-taking teacher,

the present method cannot fail to give the

most satisfactory artistic results, in the shortest

time that any one has the right to expect when

the study of a difficult art is in question."

The reviewer has made modifications of the

original work, to better adapt it to the Ameri-

can students. The book was overloaded with

popular German melodies (colloquial); their

merit lay in their being familiar to every Ger-

man, and not for any technical or didactical

virtue they possessed. There have been some

forty substitutions and additions made, which

were cautiously admitted, and never without

a good reason. The principles of the work

have, however, not been changed. Only the

material has been replaced, which, it is hoped,

will enhance, rather than diminish, the value

of the treatise as a primary text-book for the

piano-forte, specimens only will be mailed

free for \$2.00 by addressing the publisher of

this paper.

The directions and remarks accompanying

each exercise point out only one of the many

ways by which an exercise may be studied

with profit. It is not presumed to take the

place of any established manner any teacher

wishes to pursue.

The exercises in this publication are not in-

tended to supersede or to supplant the practice

of the regular study or exercise, but should

precede that practice. Extended studies and

Etudes have a definite artistic form, while these

exercises are merely figures, and are strictly

finger exercise—a pure and solid technic.

Teachers are requested to try these Etudes

with their pupils, and if the introduction proves

favorable, additional numbers can be supplied

at regular teachers' rates.

German fingering, in which the fingers are

designated by 1, 2, 3, 4, has not been changed

in this publication; believing that, to the great-

est number of teachers and students, this mode

will be preferred; since it is gaining in favor

among teachers and pupils, it will, in the

course of time, supplant all other modes of

fingering.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE STUDY OF THE

PIANO-FORTE.

Translated from the German by "THE ETUDE."

1.—NATURAL AND THE WORKING OF IT.

The importance of tone production in

finger exercises and scales, is generally very

much underrated; and yet these form the ma-

terial out of which piano-forte music is made.

In producing sound, the manner in which

the tone is formed can be compared, for ex-

ample, to the material used in weaving; the

scales and arpeggio practice, to the thread

used therefrom; while the music is the artist

work. If the material is poor, the thread will

consequently be rough and uneven, be it other-

wise ever so well made. But if the thread is

uneven, only an awkward piece of workman-

ship can be the result. The student should

imagine himself seated at the loom when prac-

tising and producing either silk or sack-cloth,

according to the manner of producing; for

so that depends the material produced.

2.—SETTLING IN PLAYING.

There is a certain kind of practice of pieces

which is as ruinous to the player as it is annoy-

ing to the listener: it is a fumbling, uncertain

feeling after the keys, as if first trying, and

then after the real stroke; just as the blind

that first test the ground with foot or cane

before making a firm step. The tones like-

wise are first tested before they are fully taken

in and enjoyed; and there comes forth a stam-

mering kind of music that is liable to produce

nervous prostration. The result of such prac-

tice is, that in course of time the whole

playing will become unbearable. This evil in

playing can be traced to a defective vision;

also in the lack of the proper relation between

the eyes and fingers—the eyes, namely, are

uncertain in reading, and must ask the keys if

what they read be true; the fingers are further-

more uncertain, and to make sure, try the

keys for the second time. This unsteady

standing is avoided if when practising the

hands are taken first separately and carefully

studied with a corresponding natural degree

of Tempo, that will make stammering un-

necessary. Even if this quiet measured way

of playing be continued a long while before

the right tempo can be taken; this is the only

natural condition of playing pieces, and nature

is not overcome by the snail of a finger.

3.—TECHNIC.

The Technic forms the body of the music,

but in and through this body the working of

the spirit. Who would not earnestly strive

to give this finely spirit a beautiful form?

The pure and solid technic produces the

purest and solidest effects in a purely musical

as well as in an executive sense, accord-

ing to the spiritual character of the player

and the composition performed. Technic is

not to be comprehended alone in "mechani-

sm," but it figures in the portrayal of musical

pictures and for this reason presupposes a

musical organization. Between "mechanism

and technic" there is the same difference as

between "finger-exercises" and "musical com-

positions"; Etude is the link that unites one

with the other, since it contains both mechan-

ism and technic.

(To be continued.)

MOTTO—Omne tibi punctum est minutum utile Aulo.—Horace.

He who mingles the useful with the agreeable bears away the prize.

THE ETUDE

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE TECHNICAL PART OF THE

Piano Forte.

VOL. I.]

OCTOBER, 1883.

[NO. 1.]

THEODORE PRESSER,

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR,

LYNCHBURG, VA.

(2)

THEODORE PRESSER COMPANY

Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 1900

POSITION AT THE PIANO.

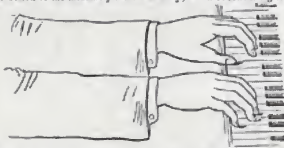
No verbal description, however exact, can ever present so satisfactory an illustration as the living example of the teacher. A graceful position while sitting at the piano enhances the attractiveness of the player, and, on the other hand, the playing is marred by an awkward and improper position. During the first year pupils need constant correction and warning in regard to their deportment and position while practising. A chair, and not a revolving stool is recommended. A dining-room chair with a straight back, and with the front legs sawed off about one-half inch, makes the most comfortable and serviceable seat. It can be raised to the required height by small boards and a cushion.

ARM AND THE HAND.

The seat should be taken directly in front of the maker's name, which is always in the middle of the key-board. The height of the chair and its distance from the instrument are determined by the size of the person. The upper arm should be brought forward a little from the body, freely and naturally, and form with the forearm an angle a little larger than a right angle. The forearm should be on a level with the key-board, and form a straight line with the wrist.

THE FINGERS.

The first or knuckle joint should be on a straight line with the upper part of the hand, the middle joint should be curved, and the last about perpendicular, but without allowing the finger nails to make a noise on the keys. The action of the thumb differs somewhat from the other fingers. It is not curved, but held out in a straight position; it strikes the keys not from the joint at the root of the fingers, but from the joint at the wrist. The root of the fingers strike from the knuckle joint. The other joints are held steady in their places. The wrist and all other joints must not assist in the motion of the fingers. Only by confining the action to the knuckle joint exclusively, can a beautiful *legato* be developed. See illustration.



- In fixing the position attend to and use first one hand, then the other, afterwards both together.
 - The correct position of all the fingers must be secured before attempting to produce a sound.
 - Observe closely the first notes.
- Press the keys down as far as they will go and hold them firmly there, but avoid all cramping of the hand. This number may be played with holding down every key throughout the exercise, and afterward should also be practised in free position with the fingers hovering lightly over the keys.

Count 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4. No. 1.



If preferred, the right hand in Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, may be taken an octave higher.

- A smooth and even connection (*legato*) of the tones is of the greatest importance in these exercises. The following hints may aid in the acquiring of the *legato* style of playing. Play very slowly, and carefully observe the following:—That you leave the correct position of arm, hand, and finger,—that the stroke of the finger is produced at the knuckle joint,—that one finger is not raised from the key until the moment of the striking of the next, that blending one tone into another,—that the wrist and arm remain perfectly quiet in an easy, unconstrained position.
- Use a moderate degree of power, repeating each number several times before going to the next.

- It is not intended that every number will be studied at each practice period. A few studies, practised with care, will be productive of more good than many played over with the mind on something else, which the mind is liable to do when similar exercises are played in too rapid succession.

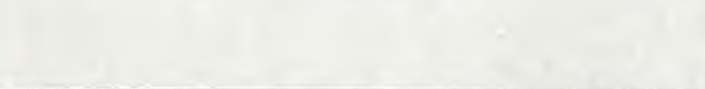
No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 4.



No. 5.



No. 6.



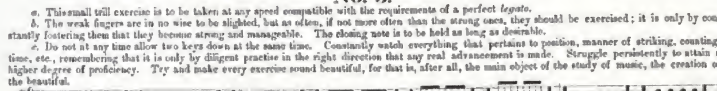
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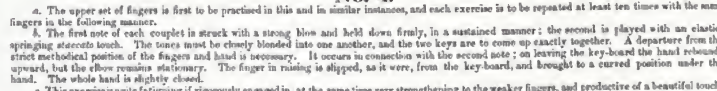
No. 8.



No. 9.



No. 12.



No. 5.

1. The hands in this exercise progress upward and downward along the key board in a quiet, gliding manner. The strictest attention to the pathological position of the fingers is here to be enforced. This exercise is admirably adapted to forming the hand, since scarcely any extension or contraction of the fingers occurs.
2. Care must be taken not to allow any break of the *legato* between the last note of the measure and the first of the next.
3. Constantly study equality of tone by listening to the sound of each note. Allow no finger to produce a tone that stands out from the rest unless that be the regular accent; and this regular recurring emphasis should form a series of an equal succession of tones, just as exact and uniform as those on the unaccented parts.
4. It cannot be too strongly urged to commit these technical exercises to memory as soon as possible, and allow the eyes to rest on the fingers to see that they do not go astray.

No. 6.

- a. This exercise differs only from the preceding in having a skip of a third between adjacent fingers, which to execute with the same smoothness as the rest will be the main object.
- b. These exercises may be played through several octaves, and transposed into all the major and minor keys.

No. 7.

- a. This exercise can also be practised in the reversed position in the treble; thus, etc.
- b. It should be played through several times before the coda is taken, if the hand is not too weary with only playing it once.
- c. Let the exercise be performed in a bold and decisive manner, the bass to be heard quite distinctly and played *non legato* and with the thumb and fifth finger throughout.

a. Practice in a measured movement, with a firm blow, separating well the fingers.
b. Gradually increase the speed until the greatest ease and fluency are attained.

c. The wrist should not move about but be held firmly in its place.
d. The movement along the key board is effected by extending a finger, and then drawing the hand toward it, with a slight movement in the upper arm in a horizontal position.

e. This exercise should also be practised in 5 time in triplets. The left hand will receive the accent with the fourth finger in ascending, and the right receives it in descending. Let the fourth finger be strongly explained, but care should be taken that the *legato* be not disturbed by it.

f. This number can serve as a preparation for the one following.



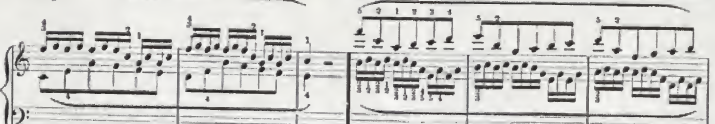
No. 9.

e. It is the purpose of this trill exercise, first, to strengthen the finger portion of the hand, second, to cultivate equality of touch. Smoothness of execution is possible only when the flexibility and the strength of the fingers are equal, and with automatic control of the prepared movement.

f. The remarks a, b, and c, of the previous number are also to be here observed.

g. Where two sets of finger-marks appear, the upper set is preferable for the first practice, and one should be thoroughly mastered before the other is attempted.

h. The figure in the left hand in ascending should sound out clear and distinct, for additional practice, it can even be made more prominent than the right hand.



THE WISDOM OF MANY.

But swerve your courage to the sliding place and we'll not fail.—*Shakespeare.*

There is not a fatter fool than that failure in a great object.

—*Alfred.*

That profound dreamer which enables a man to regard difficulties but as evils to be accounted, no matter what shape they may assume.

Of all wild boasts preserve no one by a tyrant of all time—a flatterer.—*Johnson.*

The fool and the genius are the only ones that need no teaching.

The lamp of genius, though by nature lit, is not protected, warmed, and with care, from dust or rain or waste with little glass.

Steth make all things difficult, but industry all easy.—*Franklin.*

One must suffer much to make others wise.—*Paganini.*

There is scarcely a single great master composer whose works I have not diligently studied.—*Mozart.*

Apply yourself steadily and you will be as skilful as I am.—*Bach.*

Public players seem to lose in expression and feeling in playing in exact proportion as they gain in execution.—*Schubert.*

The fundamental rules for piano students: never miss or slight a single note; give equal weight to each note.—*Audiot.*

It is quite useless to cultivate the fingers when the mind lies dormant.—*Chopin.*

Alas at perfection, which is attained by slow degrees, though in most things perfection can only be approached. However, those who aim at it and persevere, will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despatch make them give up at unattainable: "the lane and highway are left by the way."

The highest by great time needed and kept, Were not attained by sudden flight, But they, whose hearts are right, Were longers, appear to the sight.—*Longfellow.*

You may possess, in the bottom of your mind, talents that is calculated to command universal admiration, but without application and industry it will always remain where it is.

"Any fool can play fast, but it takes a musician to play slowly." Merely (but potentially) remarked as a counsel to teachers as a pupil who was trying hard to make a *deciso* out of an *Adagio*.

Nine the studies, but the study, makes the whole.

One arrives at art only by roads barred to the vulgar; by the road of prayer, of purity of heart; by confidence in the wisdom of the Eternal, and even in that which is incomprehensible.—*Chopin.*

It is the part of an indifferent and troublesome machine to care too much about fame,—about what the world says of us; so be always looking in the faces of others for approval; to be always anxious for the effect of what we do and say; to be always desiring to hear the eulogies of our own voices. If you look about you, you will see men who are wearing life away in feverish anxiety of fame; and the best will still wear less of them will be the fittest; and also tells them in their graves.—*Longfellow.*

Be what nature intended you for, and you will succeed. Be anything else, and you will be ten thousand times worse than now.—*Sophy Smith.*

The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none.—*Confucius.*

CAUTIONS FOR PIANISTS.

BY THADDEUS WIER.

I warn pianists, and others who, in playing:

1. Against any slow and unsuitable playing. Why should you wish to attract attention and to create an effect by feigningness and all sorts of pinnaces, or by curious and excessive exhibitions of "musicality"? You have only to play naturally and beautifully, and to deport yourself with modesty and propriety. Direct your whole attention to the business in hand,—that is, to your performance; and endeavor to secure for it the interest of the public, who are so easily rendered inattentive. We want no more public performances from eccentric geniuses.

2. Do not devote yourself exclusively to pieces calculated to show the skill of the performer. Why devote always to show off your power in octavo passages, your trills, your facility in skips, your unprepared stretches, or other fantastic feats? You only produce weariness, satiety, and disgust, or, at least, you make yourself ridiculous.

3. Play good music in a modest and rational manner. The public are tired of hearing Paganini, made up of scale and scale, endless Rondo, Schumann, Fantasia, without fiery, diabolical music, and endless cheap silly exercises that mean nothing. Learn to understand the age in which you live.

4. Do not pose yourselves students by new inventions in piano-playing. I mention, for example, one of the most foolish affectations of modern times. You try to imitate a note, just as violinists and solo players are too much inclined to do. Do not expose yourselves to the derision of every appreciative in piano manufacture. Have you no understanding of the construction of the piano? Have you played upon it for years, and you have not taken pains to obtain even a superficial acquaintance with its mechanism. The hammer, which by its stroke upon the string has produced the sound, falls immediately after the key has been struck, and after that you have not taken pains to obtain even a superficial acquaintance with its mechanism. The hammer, which by its stroke upon the string has produced the sound, falls immediately after the key has been struck, and after that you have not taken pains to obtain even a superficial acquaintance with its mechanism.

5. Give up the practice of extreme exercises. Widely different harmonies may sometimes produce a good effect, but not by too frequent and too eager an employment of them at every opportunity. Even the greatest beauties in art can lead to monotony, and this again to one-sidedness. Art should be many-sided, and you must never produce the impression that you are confined to make the means an end. I beg you to reflect that too much practice on very wide stretches calculates the muscles and the power of the hand and finger, endangers even, your touch, and makes the last not only play, but a doubtful acquisition. Teachers ought, therefore, to use great prudence, and only gradually to permit their pupils, especially young girls, to practice great extension and wide stretches. To learn to be able to stretch one's notes is quite enough.

6. Before you perform a piece, play a few suitable chords and a few appropriate passages or scales up and down, but play an simple scale such as I have heard from many artists, in order to try whether the condition of the instrument presents any unexpected difficulties. Try carefully, also, the unobtainable pedal, the breaking, rattling, grating pedal, is a great annoyance. I wonder if the piano of the future is to suffer from this also. Chopin's funeral march with delicate accompaniment of a rapid pedal trill, although the musician does not mistake it for the last do not ever,—also? who can describe the effect of this melancholy march?

7. Use no mechanical aids in practicing, not even the dumb key-board, although, very careful use that is

not without value. Strength will come with time; do not try to hurry nature, the table is the best "dumb key-board." The "hand guide" is also unnecessary; its value is compromised by its disadvantages.

8. Do not let your hands crowd to near while you are playing. Do not play the same piece too often. You may be tired in breaking off in the middle of a piece, if there is loud and continuous talking, etc.

"PROTECTION OF THE MUSICAL PROFESSION."

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE MUSIC TEACHERS' NATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

The lack of any national institution to fix a standard of ability on the part of teachers of music has the result of affording many incompetent persons an opportunity to assume a position for which they are often notoriously unfitted. The evil result of the lack of any standard of ability in this line are felt in the waste of time and money by students applying themselves to musical studies under incompetent instructors, as well as in showing discredit upon those who are capable of doing good work in this direction.

With a view to establish some means for overcoming, partially, the present condition of things, the following resolutions, drawn and offered by Mr. E. M. Brewster, of St. Louis, president of the national teachers' association, were adopted with enthusiasm at the annual meeting of the association at Providence:

Resolved, That in order, first, to protect the public from incompetent teachers, and, secondly, to protect the teachers who have made an adequate preparation, it is the sense of the Music Teachers' National Association, in convention assembled, that it is desirable to provide a system of examination for those desiring to practice the profession of teaching; an examination which shall fairly and impartially draw the line between the incompetent and the competent; and be it, therefore, further

Resolved, That a committee be appointed by this association, with power to add to their number such other substantial musicians as they may see fit, with instructions to require and adopt a plan of procedure looking to the establishment of a national college of teachers, who shall annually select from their number a board of examiners, subdivided into vocal and instrumental examiners, whose duties shall be to examine all candidates for teachers' certificates; and be it further

Resolved, That this committee shall be empowered, if, after due deliberation, they deem it advisable, to resolve themselves into the charter members of such National College of Teachers, and elect a board of examiners for the next annual meeting at Cleveland, and provide a suitable formula of examination, to the end that the work contemplated in this movement may be as speedily incorporated as is consistent with mature deliberation and preparation.

MEANS E. M. Brewster, of St. Louis, W. H. Sherwood, of Chicago, and E. B. Whitney, of Boston, and E. C. Stewart, were chosen as this Committee.

Never allow yourself to dream while practicing, either in your piece, or technical work. In this way you lose intellectual strength.

Students should be very careful that they know just what they are going to do each day, when they begin practice. You must not only know what to do, but how to do it; and if, in your technical practice, you do not see any progress at the end of the week, be frank with your teacher and tell him so.

Hard work will best uncertain fortune mend.

No. 10.

- a. This exercise was originally intended for a *staccato* exercise, and as such it sounds more effective. It can, however, be played *legato*.
 b. The utility of the exercise lies in this, that it passes through all the major keys and their relative minors.
 c. Uniform fingering is retained throughout. Special care must be taken to avoid hesitating too frequently.
 d. Fix each key in the mind before going to the next, and be able to tell at any moment in what key you are playing. A practical knowledge of harmony is almost indispensable in an exercise of this kind, and the practice, if perfectly done, is very fascinating.

The musical score for exercise No. 10 consists of seven systems of piano accompaniment. Each system is written for the right and left hands on a grand staff. The exercise is in common time (C) and features a variety of key signatures, including major and minor keys. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 through 5 above or below the notes. The exercise is designed to be played either staccato or legato. The first system is in C major. The second system is in D major. The third system is in E major. The fourth system is in F major. The fifth system is in G major. The sixth system is in A major. The seventh system is in B major. The exercise concludes with a final measure in B major.