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Organização da paginação: topo da página, entre parêntesis retos.

Notas de rodapé numeradas sequencialmente e no final do texto.

[7]

CHAPTER I - The Artistic Image of a Musical Composition

I confess that this title arouses some doubt in my mind, in spite of the fact that the conception it expresses is generally accepted and that everyone takes these words to signify something completely reasonable, understandable and real. But what is "the artistic image of a musical composition" but music itself, the living fabric of sound, musical language with its rules, its component parts, which we call melody, harmony, polyphony, etc., a specific formal structure, an emotional and poetic content? How many times have I heard pupils who have had no real musical or artistic schooling, i.e., no aesthetic education, who are musically insufficiently developed, attempt to render the compositions of great composers! Musical language was not clear to them; instead of speech, they achieved only some sort of muttering; instead of a clear idea - only some meagre fragments of thought; instead of a strong emotion - some abortive pangs; instead of profound logic - "effect without cause", and instead of a poetic image - a prosaic shadow. And, of course, so-called technique was consequently also inadequate. [Nota 1](#)

[8]

This is the kind of playing you get if the artistic image is distorted, or is not at the core of the rendering, or is altogether absent.

Diametrically opposed, for instance, is the performance of Sviatoslav Richter. When sight-reading a piece for the first time - whether a piano composition, an opera, a symphony, anything - he immediately gives an almost perfect rendering, both from the point of view of content and from the point of view of technical skill (in this case, one and the same thing).

What is the point of this comparison? First, everything that has been said and written on the subject of the "image" (with the exception of certain things said by some very great men) has been mainly tailored to some general idea of an imaginary average learner, whereas we know from experience that those who study music (i.e. who have to work on the "artistic image") are real, flesh-and-blood people, representing every degree of talent from the mediocre to the genius, with hundreds and even thousands of variations and deviations one way or the other, depending on their personal ability. The conclusion is clear: in each particular case, work on the musical image will be different.

Secondly, the greater the musician, the greater his capacity to approach music like an open book, the less the problem which working on the image represents for him. For such as Richter, it is practically nil; in his case all the "work" amounts merely to "learning the piece". But, this is precisely the starting point of that tremendous work, the profound, passionate labour which in the lives of great artists is known as "the agony of creation". If the painter Vrubel [Nota 2](#) painted the head of his "Demon" forty times, it was precisely because he was a genius and not because he was ungifted.

I shall, of course, be asked why I speak of Richter, whose gift is unique, for we teachers, "methodologists", should have in mind the average, or even below average, person; we should not concern ourselves with such as Richter; his is the spontaneous, natural, gift. I emphatically reject such a point of view.

In so thinking, in lulling ourselves with words such as: talent, genius, natural gift, etc., we are avoiding the most burning problem of all, the problem which should be the primary concern of the searcher and teacher.

[9]

I am convinced that a dialectically designed method and school must encompass all degrees of talent - from the musically deficient (since such, too, must study music, for music is a vehicle of culture just as any other) to the natural genius. If methodological thinking is concentrated on a small segment of reality ("the average"), then it is defective, it is impaired, undialectic, and consequently not valid. If one is a methodologist (and a methodologist must probe reality), then one has to be a methodologist to the end, encompassing the whole horizon, and not keep on running around in the vicious circle of some narrow system. Of course this is difficult; very difficult. Every great pianist-artist is, for the research-minded, something akin to an unsplit atom for the physicist. A lot of spiritual energy is needed, a lot of intelligence, sensitivity, talent and knowledge in order to fathom this complex nature. But that is precisely what methodology should deal with; then it will emerge from the nursery and finally stop arousing boredom in every true pianist and musician. All artistic methodology should be interesting and educational both for the teacher and the pupil, for the beginner and the accomplished performer otherwise it can hardly be justified.

For the sake of convenience, I agree temporarily to ignore my doubts concerning the appropriateness of the expression "work on the artistic image" and accept it at its face value. Then let us agree on the following: work on the artistic image begins in the very first stages of studying music and learning to play an instrument. The best teachers in our music schools for children know full well that in teaching a child to read notes they must use the signs just learned by the pupil to make up a melody (not just a dry exercise), preferably a familiar one (this is a more convenient way of combining sight with hearing - the ear with the eye), and teach him to reproduce this melody on his instrument. Such elementary "music-making" is, of course, accompanied by the first simple exercise, the purpose of which is technical - to make the acquaintance of the piano; these are the first steps on the long road of getting to know an instrument and mastering it. I insist on the following dialectic triad: thesis, antithesis, synthesis: music is the thesis, the instrument is the antithesis and the synthesis is the performance.

Music lives within us, in our brain, in our consciousness, our emotions, our imagination; its "domicile" can be accurately established: it is our hearing.

[10]

The instrument exists without us; it is a particle of the objective outside world and as such must be studied, must be mastered and made to comply with our inner world, and obey our creative will.

Work on the artistic image should begin at the very first stage of learning the piano and note reading. [Nota 3](#) By this I mean that if a child is able to reproduce some very simple melody, it is essential to make this first "performance" expressive, in other words, that the nature of the performance should correspond to the nature (the "content") of the melody; for this purpose, it is especially advisable to use folk tunes in which the emotional and poetic element is much more apparent than even in the best educational compositions for children. The child should be made, at the earliest possible stage, to play a sad melody sadly, a gay melody gaily, a solemn melody solemnly, etc. and should make his musical and artistic intention completely clear. Experienced teachers of children's schools report that children of average talent are much more enthusiastic in rendering folk tunes than the educational children's literature which is concerned with purely technical or "intellectual" problems (for instance: the playing of minims, crotchets, etc., rests, staccato, legato, etc.); such problems, which help to develop a child's fingers and brain, his effective "working" energy, and are consequently *absolutely essential and irreplaceable*, leave his feelings and imagination completely unaffected. [Nota 4](#)

Everything that I am saying here is as old as music and the study of music; it is known to all. I merely wish to highlight some of the aspects of this problem, and to dot the "i"s.

We all know that the development of the whole wealth and variety of pianistic skills, their accuracy and fineness, which are essential to a pianist for rendering the tremendously varied and immeasurably rich piano literature can be achieved only by studying that same literature, that is, by means of real, living, specific works. [Nota 5](#)

[11]

When a child plays an exercise or study, a piece which is purely instructive and devoid of artistic content, he may, at will, play faster or slower, louder or more softly, with or without nuances; in other words, there is in his performance an inevitable element of uncertainty, an arbitrary quality; it will be "just playing" without any clear aim (playing for the sake of playing and not playing for the sake of music); it will be "playing as it comes" (and very often it doesn't "come"). In order that it should "come", in order to derive real use from this technical instrumental work (I mean work aimed at mastering the instrument and the player's movements), it is essential to set the pupil very clear aims and tasks and not to depart from them until they are fully met; for instance: to play the study or exercise at a given speed and none other; with given strength, and neither louder nor softer. If the aim of the study is to develop an even sound, then not a single accidental accent should be tolerated; similarly, not a single acceleration or slowing down. If they happen, they should be corrected

immediately, etc. (It is assumed that an intelligent teacher will not set his pupil an impossible task.)

What happens when, instead of an educational exercise or study, the child plays a real musical composition, even though a very simple one? First (and that is the decisive moment in this work), his emotional state will be quite different; it will be heightened compared to when he is practising "useful" exercises or dry-as-dust studies. Secondly, it will be much easier to show him - since his own intuition will tend that way - the tone quality, the tempo, nuances, acceleration, etc. (if justified by the piece) and consequently the ways of playing that are required for performing the composition so as to make it clear, meaningful and expressive, i.e. in a manner *adequate to its content*.

[12]

This work, the work of the child on the musical-poetic content of a composition (i.e. on the artistic image and its embodiment in sounds produced on a piano) will be the embryonic form of that type of work which I mentioned earlier in speaking of the work of a mature pianist - rich, determined, unwavering, directed at a specific aim and accurate and varied in its methods of approach.

I think that it is easy to guess my intention in repeating these well-known and perhaps even worn-out statements. I want to appeal to teachers to make unswervingly and directly for their goal, without delaying too much on the way. And that goal is the musical performance of musical literature, the embodiment in sound of the soundless printed note.

Here I should like to say a few words about Leopold Godowsky, the famous pianist.

Godowsky, my incomparable teacher and one of the great virtuoso pianists of the post-Rubinstein era once told us in class that he never practised scales (and, of course, that was so). Yet, he played them with a brilliance, evenness, speed and beauty of tone which I believe I have never heard excelled. He played the scales he encountered in musical compositions in the best possible manner and in this way learned to play ideally "scales as such". [Nota 6](#) A small, but significant detail.

What was Godowsky's method of teaching? As everybody knows, he was reported to be "a wizard of technique" (*ein Hexenmeister der Technik*, as he was dubbed unanimously by the German and indeed the world press). For this reason numerous young pianists from all over the world flocked to him, mainly in the hope of getting his recipe for attaining "virtuoso technique". Alas for them! Godowsky hardly ever said a word about technique in the sense in which these youngsters understood it; all his comments during a lesson were aimed exclusively at music, at correcting musical defects in a performance, at achieving maximum logic, accurate hearing, clarity, plasticity, through a scrupulous observance and a broad interpretation of the written score. In his class, he valued above all the real musician and approached with obvious irony those pianists whose fingers were fast and agile while their brains were slow and dull (and there were several such in my time).

[13]

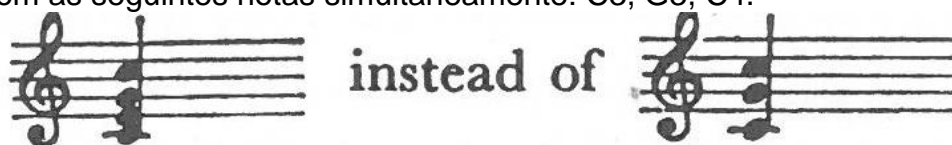
He would immediately lose all interest in a pupil whose hearing was inaccurate, who memorized wrong notes or showed bad taste. Thus, he once "failed" at the very first lesson a lady who was already a concert pianist merely because, in the penultimate bar of Chopin's Etude op. 10 in C major, she introduced a superfluous note (a major third) in a chord of the left hand:

Nota de revisor: a seguir apresenta-se uma imagem com duas partituras musicais.

Descrição da primeira partitura: Clave de sol; sem referência de compasso, acorde Dó Maior utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: C3, E3, G3 e C4.

Texto intermediário: "instead of".

Descrição da segunda partitura: Clave de sol; sem referência de compasso, acorde de Dó Maior faltando a terça maior, utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: C3, G3, C4.



At Godowsky's repeated requests to play the right chord, she couldn't understand what he wanted of her, shrugged her shoulders and assured him that she was playing the chord "without smudges". After the lesson in the corridor, Godowsky asked me, with a devastatingly ironic smile what I thought of "the famous pianist, Miss X". (As was to be expected, Miss X turned out to be a rather feeble pianist, though with a very great gift for hysteria.)

Godowsky's comments on the method of playing the piano were usually a few bare words on *Gewichtsspiel* (weighty playing) and *Vollständige Freiheit* (complete freedom). What need was there of words? *Sapienti sap.* But two or three times he did recommend some of his pupils to work at Clementi's Eighth Etude (F major, edited by Tausig) in thirty-three different ways, which he demonstrated briefly. Obviously, he assumed that pupils who were interested not only in virtuoso technique in general, but in his own (unheard of) achievement, would be bound to know his arrangements, particularly his 50 *Chopin- Studien*, his fifty arrangements of Chopin Etudes (some of which are absolutely transcendental in their difficulty and incomparable for musical humour and inventiveness), arrangements in which not only the musical score, but also the accompanying comments amount to an exhaustive school of modern virtuoso technique - of course in the style of Godowsky. [Nota 7](#)

[14]

I repeat, that during the lesson Godowsky was not a teacher of piano, but first and foremost a *teacher of music*, or exactly what any real artist, musician, pianist, becomes the moment he begins to teach.

I think that everyone will understand why, in this context, I give a brief idea of Godowsky's method of teaching.

I hope I may not be accused of lack of modesty if I now say a few things about myself. After all, for each thinking individual, the self is not only the subject, but also one of the objects of his comprehension of the world around him, true, a somewhat particular object, which it is sometimes more difficult to

approach "objectively" than any other object. But I should like to say a few words about myself in connection with the "work on the artistic image".

I was contaminated by music in my earliest years; the musical bacillus raged through both my father's and mother's families (both were music teachers, i.e. piano teachers in the provincial town of Elizavetgrad, now Kirovograd).

From childhood, earlier than I can remember, I heard music; and I heard an incredible amount of the worst possible music thanks to my parents' lessons (nine-tenths of their pupils were the most ordinary, musically ungifted children who studied music as they would any grammar book), whereas really good, first-class music I hardly heard at all. The "nutrient medium" for my abilities was more than meagre.

The greatest musical and family events were the visits of my uncle, Felix Blumenfeld, my mother's brother, who lived in Petersburg. I shall never forget how, as quite a small child, I would listen for whole evenings on end, late into the night (during his visits, we were allowed to go to bed very late) to his magnificent playing. He played a tremendous number of piano compositions, especially Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, his own compositions, Glazunov, Balakirev, Liadov; but most of all I was impressed at the time by some of the Wagner operas: *The Mastersingers*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *Siegfried*, which, to our great delight, he would sometimes play in their entirety in one evening.

Thanks to him, I heard for the first time *The Queen of Spades*, *Boris Godunov* and the operas of Rimsky-Korsakov. Of course, my sister and I had to play to him and we listened reverently to his observations.

[15]

Happy, unforgettable days! Life seemed a holiday, and the feeling of happiness and joy did not leave us from morning till night.

But, alas, this happened no more than once every three or four years and lasted no more than two to three weeks. Then life went back to its everyday pattern and we had to fill the days and brighten them by our own efforts.

When I was eight or nine, I began to improvise on the piano, at first a little, then more and more, getting more and more worked up. Sometimes (this was somewhat later) I would be like one possessed: I was hardly awake when I would hear music inside me, *my own music*, and almost all day. But, for some reason, I concealed this (particularly from my father) and improvised on the piano only when my parents were out (later, they took pity on my sister and myself and we heard the pupils' tinkering less frequently, but we ourselves began practising more).

I remember as if it were yesterday that when I went for a lesson to my Uncle and Aunt Przyzykhowsky (who taught me mathematics, history, geography and French) I would sometimes literally choke with the music which filled my head: when I heard in my head some solemn "adagio", I would walk slowly and with an important air; when it changed to "allegro con fuoco" or "presto furioso", I rushed at a gallop through the empty streets while multi-coloured mongrels shot out of their yards like cannon balls and rushed after me barking fiercely. It was an unforgettably happy, exciting time which lasted, with all sorts of vicissitudes, of course, with unprecedented ups and downs (*himmelhoch jauchzend, zu Tode betrübt* [Nota 8](#)) till the age of about sixteen or

seventeen, when I finally "locked the chest and threw the key into the sea", gave up my own music and devoted myself exclusively to that of others. There began a terrible crisis which lasted several years; a hard, aching period. It was as if I had fallen from heaven to earth and almost killed myself. I was very slow in recovering. Subsequently I took a complete course of theory and composition with Professor Paul F. Juon in Berlin. [Nota 9](#) He considered me gifted and insistently tried to persuade me to devote myself to composition, but I was true to my decision the reasons for which I do not want to discuss here.

[16]

It is amusing that when after a few lessons I brought him some of my compositions - complicated canons and fugues in contemporary style, a sonatina in classical style (well constructed from the point of view of form, but otherwise characterless, for I wrote rather as an exercise and not "on inspiration") and two or three songs and some small things for the piano, in addition to my school work, Juon listened to all this and said: "In actual fact, you know everything I could teach you. But if you like we could, by way of mental gymnastics, do some strict counterpoint; it is always useful." I agreed and for ten months without interruption I wrote, in addition to exercises, motets, madrigals, even a piece for twelve vocal parts in strict counterpoint on a Latin text.

As for the piano, I was left to my own devices practically from the age of twelve. As is frequently the case in teachers' families, our parents were so busy with their pupils (literally from morning until late at night) that they hardly had any time for their own children. And that in spite of the fact that with the favourable prejudice common to all parents, they had a very high opinion of my gifts. (I myself had a much more sober attitude. I was always aware of a great many faults although at times I felt that I had in me something "not quite usual".) But I won't speak of this. As a pianist, I am known. My good and bad points are known and nobody can be interested in my "prehistoric period". I will only say that because of this early "independence" I did a lot of silly things which I could have easily avoided if I had been under the vigilant eye of an experienced and intelligent teacher for another three or four years. [Nota 10](#) I lacked what is known as a "school". I lacked discipline. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good; my enforced independence compelled me, though sometimes by very devious ways, to achieve a great deal on my own and even my failures and errors subsequently proved more than once to be useful and educational, and in an occupation such as learning to master an art, where if not all, then almost all depends on individuality, the only sound foundation will always be the knowledge gained as the result of personal effort and personal experience.

[17]

I wanted to give this autobiographic information - for which I hope the reader will forgive me! - precisely here, in the chapter dealing with the artistic image. I think that it will explain to the reader why I find it difficult to speak about working on the artistic image outside the general context of music and the pianist's work. Of course, as a professional, I frequently made this difference, particularly when I grew older and more conscious of what I was doing; as many

another, I sometimes repeated for a long time not only some particularly difficult technical bits, but sometimes even the simplest phrase (for instance, out of a Chopin mazurka, or a Mozart sonata) in order to render its musical intent as clearly and eloquently as possible.

I described earlier the manner in which a truly great musician "acquaints himself" with a work. There, apparently, an instantaneous and subconscious process of "work at the artistic image" takes place; this is clearly shown by his performance. (To avoid confusion of concepts I should perhaps mention that one may frequently come across a pianist who is a "past master", who can sight-read without a single mistake or wrong note the most complicated composition, but his performance is apt to be of the most ordinary kind, even rotten. Such pianists should not be confused with Richter, whose most striking feature is precisely the excellence of his performance.) We have heard of Liszt's achievements; once, for instance, he played at sight (and played magnificently) Schumann's *Carnava*[Nota 11](#) before an audience.

I give this instance of an "instant" mastery of music (and consequently of the artistic image) and could give many more, at will, from reliable reports about many great musicians, not in order to mention yet again their genius which is well known to all, but to ask a question: what, in actual fact, happens?

[18]

What lesson from the point of view of method, can we draw, from these real-life cases that might help the average pupil, and indeed all learners?

I believe that, in spite of the mysterious nature of the gift of "genius", it is possible not only to describe it, but also to study and analyse it. There is a widespread belief among the teachers of our profession that the average pupil should on no account imitate a great talent: *quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi*. Imitation, and particularly blind, unreasoned imitation (a fairly widespread phenomenon) is of course only harmful; but to *learn*[Nota 12](#) from someone who knows more is always useful. I think this is clear. Every teacher knows from experience that the stronger pupils "haul up" the weaker ones; this is a form of competition which comes about quietly and spontaneously but also - because of pride - consciously. Our methodological reasoning should help this process and not hamper it. And I consequently believe that from the point of view of teaching, not only is it not harmful (even in the case of a most mediocre pupil) but, on the contrary, it is extremely useful not to lose sight for a single moment of the summit to which musical talent attains and which - whether we want it or not - determines the development of music and musical life, including our own everyday educational efforts. In short, I believe (and I hope I may not be accused of unfounded optimism) that by attempting to the best of our ability to fathom the "mechanics" of the highest musical gift we shall always extract something useful that can be applied even to the most average pupil. And on the strength of this conviction which, incidentally, is purely intuitive I have never, in my teaching career, adapted a composition to the pupil, but always attempted to adapt the pupil to the composition, whatever efforts it may have cost the pupil, and also myself.

There lives in my mind, in my heart, a certain image of, let us say, Beethoven; I love him, I worship him, I experience him as a most significant event in my life. I feel and I know that he expressed something, that he created

something which had never existed before him; I know within the limits of my ability that it has to be rendered in a certain way.

[19]

Can I abandon this perfectly clear, perfectly real image? Can I agree to any kind of compromise, any concession to satisfy a weak pupil? Never. It would mean a lack of respect for myself and for the pupil. More than once my colleagues, hearing me teach, have hinted to me that I was being quixotic, that all the same it will never "come out" the way I want it. I replied to them: "My dear businessmen, you want 100% profits, whereas I shall be overjoyed if I get 10%". [Nota 13](#)

Such is the inevitable "optimistic scepticism" of an experienced teacher. The sense and the usefulness of such work lies in the fact that, as anyone can see, the pupil is given a very clear, lofty and difficult objective (in the light of his possibilities and understanding) which in turn determines the direction and intensity of the work - the only way of achieving *development* and *growth*. And I am perfectly aware that these 10% sometimes yield a much richer crop than the 100 % of "grammatical gloss" which, in spite of Mayakovsky [Nota 14](#) and myself, poor sinner, some people still value above all else.

And so, the lower the musical and artistic level of a pupil, i.e. the lower his intellect, imagination, ear (!), temperament, etc., as well as his purely technical abilities, the greater, the more complex the problem which work on the "artistic image" sets both him and his teacher; in other words, the harder it will be, even if he has a good technique, to get him to give a performance that satisfies musically, that is interesting, emotional, that holds the attention and carries away the listener, an interpretation that provides food for heart and intellect. And if that is lacking then to perform, to play for someone, is pointless. And this, incidentally, is what led Anton Rubinstein to lament: "Everyone knows how to play!" meaning: "Everyone knows how to play but only a few know how to perform." I am not speaking of such pianists as Rachmaninov. Even I, poor sinner, can grasp the substance of any composition at a first reading and the difference between this first acquaintance and a real performance after learning the piece is merely that "the spirit is clothed in flesh", that the image conjured up by imagination, emotion, inner hearing and aesthetic and intellectual understanding becomes a performance.

[20]

I do not mean by this that work on a composition does not add anything to one's initial perception and intent; far from it. The relationship between these two events is the same as between a law and its implementation or between willing and carrying out. I only want to say that if there is no "law", no "will", there is no reality, no implementation. This is the crux, the nerve centre which the teacher, guide and educationist must try to influence; obviously, if the pupil is filled with this creative will the role of the teacher is merely that of counsellor, a sort of elder colleague. Sometimes it is even advisable to refrain entirely from interfering and to maintain a friendly neutrality.

The conclusion to be drawn from all these considerations is obvious: "work on the artistic image" can be successful only if it is the result of the pupil's

continuous development musically, intellectually and artistically and consequently also pianistically; without this there can be no "implementation", no "embodiment". And that means developing his ear, giving him a broad knowledge of musical literature, making him live with one composer for a long time at a stretch, until he has thoroughly assimilated him (the pupil who knows five Beethoven sonatas is not the same man as the one who knows twenty-five sonatas; here quantity turns into quality); it means making him memorize music by reading the score without touching the piano, in order to develop his imagination and his ear; teaching him from childhood to distinguish the form, the thematic material and the harmonic and polyphonic structure of the composition he is performing (my own unwavering rule is that if a talented pupil, nine or ten years old, can play a Mozart or Beethoven sonata well, he should be able to tell, in words, a great deal that is substantive about what goes on in that sonata from the point of view of musical and theoretical analysis). It means using every means to arouse (if necessary, i.e. if this quality is not inherent to the pupil) his professional ambition: to be equal to the best; developing his imagination by the use of apt metaphor, poetic similes, by analogy with natural phenomena or events in life, particularly spiritual, emotional life. It means supplementing and interpreting musical language (but without, God forbid!, falling into banal "Illustrations"); using every means to develop in him a love of other forms of art, particularly poetry, painting and architecture, and, most important of all - making him feel (and the earlier the better) the ethical dignity of the artist, his obligations, his responsibilities and his rights.

[21]

Having read this chapter so far, the reader might perhaps ask: "Well, he hasn't said anything specific about working on the image after all". My reply is "Come to my class, sit with us a month or two and you will get such a helping of the 'specific' that it will last you a long time". In order to give these notes the desired specific quality, I should supplement them with numberless musical examples, detailed descriptions of the work done with the pupil or pupils on any particular composition (for sometimes I can sit with a pupil for one and a half to two hours over a single page of score; this usually happens at the beginning of my work with a pupil), but then this chapter would grow to the size of a thick volume. I cannot quote here even a small portion of the advice I give a pupil for learning and mastering a composition; such advice naturally comes before the artistic image. But I will mention two or three things I tell my pupils.

I suggest to the pupil that he should study a piano composition, i.e. the notes, as a conductor studies a score, that is, not only as a whole (this should be done first of all, otherwise there can be no complete idea of the composition, no complete image) but also in detail, taking the composition apart to see its component elements, the harmonic structure, the polyphonic structure; taking separately the main elements - for instance, the melodic line, the "secondary" elements - for instance, the accompaniment; to dwell particularly on the decisive "turnings" of a composition - such as (in the case of a sonata) the transition to the second subject or to the recapitulation or coda, in other words *on the main landmarks of the formal structure*, etc. Working in this way, the pupil discovers amazing things; there stands revealed to him a beauty not recognized at first but which abounds in the works of great composers. Moreover, he begins to

understand that a composition that is beautiful as a whole is beautiful in every detail, that each such detail has a sense a logic, an expressiveness, for it is an organic part of a whole.

[22]

I recommend that much more effort should be devoted to such work than to the usual practising of the left and right hands separately, which I admit in certain special cases; (it is necessary just as "emergency exits" in a building are necessary in case of fire or some other trouble.)[Nota 15](#) If a composition has been learned, mastered, memorized, in fact if, as pupils call it, it "comes off", what is the particular work which remains to be done to give the performance a true artistic value? What must be done to make the performance emotionally moving, interesting, to make it reach the hearer? (I would remind the reader for the third or fourth time that some people can achieve this immediately, while others have to work hard to achieve it within the limits of their ability.) I know the answer will be: "it is a question of talent; some can and others can't, that's all there is to it". So long as I go on teaching I shall stop my ears so as not to hear this reply.

So what is it that the performer needs in order to "burn the hearts of men by his speech", to quote Pushkin's "Prophet", or if not to burn, at least to warm and move them somewhat?

Some say: patience and work; others - suffering and privations; others still - self-sacrifice and a great many other things besides. Everybody knows the importance for young artists of success - accidental or deserved recognition. All this is true, all this is inevitably part of the biography of a man who has something to say to others, but at this moment I am not looking so far ahead and I do not want to discuss "psychological problems".

Our purpose is modest, and at the same time vast; it is to play our amazing, our magnificent piano literature in such a way as to make the hearer like it, to make him love life still more, make his feelings more intense, his longings more acute and give greater depth to his understanding...

Of course, everyone knows that teaching which sets itself such an objective ceases to be mere teaching and becomes education. Yet it is not always the kind of teaching one finds even among outstanding teachers. Amazing and inimitable as was Godowsky, yet with some pupils (particularly private pupils who paid in inverse ratio to their talent) he worked in a completely formal, not to say, formalistic manner.

[23]

Frequently in the course of such a lesson Godowsky only wrote a few dynamic and tempo indications on the music, or indicated the fingering in a couple of cases, made a few comments that resembled prescriptions and set the work to be done for the next time. All this in a dispassionate, cold, businesslike manner. There was no attempt to see deeper into the heart and mind of the pupil, to alter him, to shake his tedious guts, to set before him some difficult emotional or musical problem; none of this. He showed neither joy, nor grief, neither anger nor approval; only at times when a pupil's playing was really too uninteresting or unintelligent, he would let fall a sarcastic remark or make a joke not devoid of

venom. But his prestige and authority were such that the pupils accepted even such a lesson as something significant and precious. "He was great today!" exclaimed a delighted American after Godowsky had indicated the fingering on two notes and seen him to the door with a pleasant jocular remark.

True, at the *Meisterschule* lessons which were attended by many people, including really talented pupils (eight to nine "players", i.e. real *Meisterschüler* and about twenty *Hospitanten* who were only entitled to be present but not to play), he was quite different. But I never noticed him attempting to "liberate the atomic energy" of a pupil or anything of the kind; apparently in his heart of hearts he did not greatly believe (and here we must admit a certain degree of wisdom) in the almightiness of teaching. And in spite of my boundless admiration for Godowsky, that great master, I believe that to teach as he sometimes did is no longer possible in our country nowadays. (I have in mind, of course, the teacher who is a great master musician, one who has received the gift of knowing.)[Nota 16](#)

I believe that the task of consolidating and developing the talent of a pupil, and not merely of teaching him to "play well", in other words, of making him more intelligent, more sensitive, more honest, more equitable, more steadfast (I won't go on!) is a real task which, if not fully attainable, is none the less dictated by the times we live in and by art itself, and is at all times dialectically justified.

[24]

In actual fact, I had already said all this when I spoke of the "10% profit" which I was willing to accept, but I wanted to make my meaning clearer. But, to come back to my question: is it possible (and, if so, how?) to make a pupil who "plays well" play like an artist, that is, make his playing infectious, make it reach his audience, make it "outstanding" (meaning, different from the average), etc.? I would reply: yes, it is possible; it is possible to a certain extent, it is possible at times to make him achieve exceptional results; let us recall Stanislavsky's excellent comment on actors who can be geniuses once in a blue moon - "surely better once in a blue moon than never at all!" How? By aiming not only at his intellectual but also at his emotional reactions.

Talent is passion plus intellect. The main error made by the majority of pedagogues, "methodologists in art" is that they understand only the intellectual aspect of artistic activity, or rather the process of reasoning which is part of it, and their reasoning and intellectual advice is aimed at influencing that side alone, while completely forgetting the other side, this inconvenient X, which they simply discard, not knowing what to do with it. That is why all methodology is (or at any rate, was, up to now) so empty, that is why it inevitably brings an ironic smile to the lips of the really well informed, those who are actively engaged in art.

One of the main demands I make for achieving beauty in a performance is for *simplicity* and *naturalness* in expression. These two small words, so well known and apparently so obvious, I ought to decode, for they are complex and their meaning is manifold. But this would again take up several pages, so I shall refrain in the hope that the reader will disentangle them himself and will feel their tremendous and decisive importance when they are put into effect.

All the work that is done in my class is centred, to the utmost of our ability, on music and its embodiment in piano playing, in other words, on the artistic

image and on piano technique. That teacher is worthless - however clever he be - who is content to talk about "image", "content", "mood", "idea", "poetry" and fails to insist on the concrete, material embodiment of his sayings in tone, in phrase, nuance, and perfection of piano technique. Similarly worthless is the teacher who sees only the piano playing, piano technique, and has but a vague idea of the music, its sense and its structure.

[25]

To give at least some specific example of our work in class on the "artistic image" plus music, plus piano technique, I shall describe how I worked with a pupil studying Beethoven's Sonata quasi una Fantasia op. 27 in C sharp minor. One short page of Beethoven is amply sufficient to give the reader a clear picture of similar work in connection with any piano composition.

And so the pupil is playing the so-called "Moonlight" sonata.

Usually it is the second movement, Allegretto in D flat major, which gives rise to specially different views and the reason is obvious: the first movement, which is an expression of utmost sorrow, and the third, which is an expression of despair (*disperato*) are more clearly defined, stronger in their shattering expression than the fleeting, "modest", refined and at the same time terribly simple, almost weightless Allegretto. In the rendering of insufficiently sensitive pupils the "comforting" (in the sense of consolation) mood of the second movement easily turns into a jolly scherzando, which is radically opposed to the sense of the composition. The cause of this is an excessively dry staccato: (and the same in similar places) and also excessively fast tempo.

Nota de revisor: a seguir apresenta-se a imagem da partitura musical correspondente ao exemplo 1.

Descrição da partitura: Clave de sol e de Fá (Fá na quarta linha); Compasso 3/4. Tonalidade: Db. Quantidade de compassos: 03. Quantidade de Vozes: 04.

Compasso 1 [Anacruse]: Utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: Clave de Fá - D2, [B2 - stacatto]. Clave de Sol - [F3 - stacatto] e D4.

Compasso 2: Utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: Clave de Fá - E2, [E3 - stacatto]. Clave de sol - A3 e [C4 - stacatto]. Segundo tempo apresenta pausa de semínima nas 4 vozes. No Terceiro tempo do compasso, utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: E2 e [D3 - stacatto]. Clave de Sol: [G3 - stacatto e bequadro] e B3.

Compasso 3: Utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: Clave de Fá - A2, [C3 - stacatto]. Clave de sol - [A3 - stacatto].



Ex. I

[26]

I have heard such an interpretation dozens, if not hundreds, of times. In such cases I usually remind the pupil of Liszt's apt description, now famous, of this Allegretto: *une fleur entre deux abîmes* and attempt to show him that this image is not accidental, [Nota 17](#) that it renders with amazing accuracy not only the spirit, but also the form of the composition since the first bars of the melody: recall the opening of a flower, and the following bars (see mus. ex. 1) the leaves drooping on the stem.

Nota de revisor: a seguir apresenta-se a imagem da partitura musical correspondente ao exemplo 2.

Descrição da partitura: Clave de sol e de Fá (Fá na quarta linha); Compasso 3/4. Tonalidade: Db. Quantidade de compassos: 03. Quantidade de Vozes: 04.

Compasso 1 [Anacruse]: Utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: Clave de Fá - F3. Clave de Sol - A3 e D4.

Compasso 2: Utilizando a figura musical mínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: Clave de Fá - E3. Clave de sol - A3 e C4. Terceiro tempo apresenta figura musical de semínima nas 4 vozes sendo simultaneamente: Clave de Fá - D3. Clave de Sol: [G3 - bequadro] e B3.

Compasso 3: Utilizando a figura musical semínima com as seguintes notas simultaneamente: Clave de Fá - [C3 - stacatto]. Clave de sol - A3 e E4.

Articulação: Ligadura de expressão no início do primeiro compasso na voz soprano [clave de sol], nota D4 até à última nota do soprano, nota E4.

Ligadura de expressão no início do primeiro compasso na voz baixo [clave de fá], nota F3 até à última nota do baixo, nota C3.



Ex. 2

Please remember that I never "illustrate" music, i.e. in the case in point I do not say that the music represents the flower; I say that it can create the spiritual and visual impression given by a flower, it can symbolize it, and call forth in imagination the image of a flower. Any music is that particular music only, A = A, by virtue of the fact that music is a complete language, a clear expression, that it has a definite immanent meaning and hence its perception and understanding do not need any additional explanations or interpretations in word or picture. Our understanding can be helped by a number of disciplines: theory of music, harmony, counterpoint, form analysis, and these disciplines are constantly developing and their ramifications increase as is the case for every type of knowledge which increases with every new matter learned. But we have in our brains a "photocell" (I think that everyone knows this miracle gadget) which can translate the phenomena of a given world of perception into another. After all, the curve traced on a film produces a sound! Surely the human spirit is not poorer or duller than the apparatus it has created! That is why for people who have the gift of creative imagination all music in its entirety is programme music (even the so-called pure music devoid of programme) and at the same time does not need any programme, since it expresses in its own language the whole of its content.

Such are the antinomies of our art.

Let us go back to the lesson. Sometimes Liszt's words - *une fleur entre deux abîmes* - would make me ponder over the role of the flower in art.

[27]

I would give pupils examples from architecture, sculpture and painting. I would show them musical phrases and melodies in which the image of the flower could be perceived through the nature of the music, as in the Beethoven Allegretto. For the flower lives also in music as in other arts, since it is not only the "experience" of the flower, its fragrance, its enchanting poetic quality, but its whole form, its structure, the flower as an image, as a phenomenon that cannot fail to be expressed also in the tonal art, since that art gives expression without exception to everything that man can experience, live through, think and feel.

Many regard it as a paradox and even smile contemptuously when I, as a musician, express my attitude to knowledge by saying that everything that can be learned is musical. [Nota 18](#)

They argue: can it be said that Mendeleev's [Nota 19](#) periodical tables are musical? Of course, the periodical tables are a law of chemistry, whereas a Beethoven sonata is music, the expression of musical signs, $A = A$. But surely it is clear that the periodical tables as a discovery, as a tremendous achievement of the human mind, as a method of knowing nature (to which artists are sometimes more closely bound than the scientists who probe it) go far beyond the strict limits of chemistry and the musician who has mastered them if he has an inclination for "associative relationships", for thinking in broad analogies (without yielding to the temptation of thoughtless amateur comparisons - which is as identical with "illustration") - such a musician will more than once remember them, while probing the boundless laws of his art (such, too, was my case when I was sixteen or seventeen).

But this is not all! The power of music over the human mind, its omnipresence, would be unexplainable if it were not rooted in the very nature of man. For everything that we do or think, whether the most insignificant action or the most portentous, whether it is buying potatoes in the market or studying philosophy - everything is tinted by the colours of a subconscious spectrum, everything without exception is endowed with emotional overtones which may even be undiscernible to the protagonist but are unfailingly present and easily identified when such actions come under the scrutiny of a psychologist.

[28]

This emotional quality (let us agree to call it the subconscious state of the spirit) is not absent even in the most reasoned, to all appearances unemotional, actions or thoughts. All the greater then, the emotional content, for any thinking musician, of any knowledge - whether philosophy, moral and political problems, pure science, natural science, etc., etc. It is not by accident that all outstanding musicians, composers and performers, have always been noted for their broad spiritual outlook, and have shown a very lively interest in all questions affecting the spiritual life of humanity. It is true that many great musicians have been so obsessed by their art that they had hardly the possibility (or the time!) to acquire a profound knowledge in other domains of spiritual life, but the potentials for acquiring such knowledge have always been within them. I recall the remarkable saying of Rachmaninov: "I am 85 % a musician; there is only 15 % man in me." (We shall come back to this later.) What the musician acquires in knowledge, he expresses in his compositions or his performance. And hence I am entitled to express the following paradox: all knowledge is musical (for a musician, of course). Or, more accurately (and more boringly), all knowledge is at the same time an experience. Consequently, like every experience, it belongs to the sphere of music and inevitably enters its orbit. The absence of such experience, and still more of any experience whatsoever, results in soulless, formalistic music and an empty, uninteresting performance.

Everything that is "indissoluble", inexpressible, untranslatable that lives in a man's soul, everything "subconscious" (frequently it is "supraconscious") is the domain of music. This is its source. (I cannot refrain from recalling Pasternak's wonderful words: "hearing is an organ of the soul"). That is why we

can speak of the philosophical content of many compositions, particularly of Bach, Beethoven and others (I would recall Chopin's conversation with Delacroix about the possibilities of expressing philosophical thought in music).

More than once I had such conversations with my pupils in an attempt to penetrate as deeply as possible into the content of a composition and the natural desire to probe the limits of musical *expressivity*, and of everything within its reach.

[29]

But if I were to confine myself to these "pleasant conversations" in connection with some musical composition and with the pupils' faulty playing, then I think my proper place would be at the gatherings of the "Free Aesthetics" groups [Nota 20](#) and not in Class 29 of the Moscow Conservatoire where I teach. After such, or similar, conversations we begin our meticulous work on the composition, to overcome its technical difficulties, until we have achieved the desired result.

It goes without saying that the less developed the pupil, the more numerous the conversations and explanations of every sort and the more thorough and insistent the pianistic work. There were pupils to whom I would say two or three words about this Allegretto. But there was a case - and I remember it perfectly - when I spent three exhausting hours with a pupil on the Beethoven page described above. And even then we only managed to get beyond the front door, take off our raincoats and rubber shoes and put the wet umbrella in the stand.

I think this is sufficient to give the reader an idea of the way we work on the "artistic image" and on solving the pianistic problem in the laboratory which goes by the name of "Professor Neuhaus' class".

In conclusion I would say this: whoever is moved by music to the depths of his soul, and works on his instrument like one possessed, who loves music and his instrument with passion, will acquire virtuoso technique; he will be able to recreate the artistic image of the composition; he will be a performer.

Notas de Rodapé:

Nota1 On one occasion in my class, a pupil (who subsequently gave up music and became an excellent engineer) played the last two shattering "outcries" in Chopin's First Ballade in such a way that I could not help saying to him: "This sounds just like a guard on an underground station shouting 'Mind the doors!'". [Voltar Nota 1](#)

Nota 2 Russian painter 1856-1910, ed. [Voltar Nota 2](#)

Nota 3 Naturally, I do not mean that this should happen at the first lesson. An intelligent teacher will find the appropriate moment in each individual case.

What is important is that it should happen as early as possible. [Voltar Nota 3](#)

Nota 4 Of course, besides folk tunes one should also use the simple melodies of Haydn, Mozart, Weber, Tchaikovsky, Glinka and others, to say nothing of the marvellous volumes of Schumann and Tchaikovsky specially meant for children and young persons who have reached a higher level of development; their content is purely artistic. [Voltar Nota 4](#)

Nota 5 Of course, any intelligent pianist, as he goes along, will evolve for himself special technical exercises to master the particular difficulties of the style, composer, or piece, he may be learning; this is the result of proper deductive thinking.[Voltar Nota 5](#)

Nota 6 Please note: this is a case of deduction instead of the more usual and generally accepted - though much less reliable - induction consisting of first learning "the scale as such" and then playing it in a piece.[Voltar Nota 6](#)

Nota 7 Obviously the famous arrangements of the Chopin Etudes are on a much lower artistic level than the originals. The original works of genius, these pianistic poems, these vehicles for learning music and piano by every single means which their author modestly called "études", Godowsky transformed into real studies, mere studies thus depriving the term "étude" of the high poetic and artistic content bestowed on it first by Chopin, then by Liszt, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Debussy. But just try playing Godowsky's studies [Voltar Nota 7](#)

Nota 8 Quote from Goethe's drama *Egmont* (3rd Act, 2nd Scene), ED.[Voltar Nota 8](#)

Nota 9 A pupil of Taneyev and brother of the painter K. F. Juon.[Voltar Nota 9](#)

Nota 10 How much better off are modern children who study in children's music schools, particularly in the Central Music School! I could tell a long story on the subject! (Central Music Schools are affiliated to conservatoires; particularly gifted children, aged seven to eighteen, can receive there an integrated education in music and general subjects, ED.)[Voltar Nota 10](#)

Nota 11 There is no rose without a thorn. Clara Schumann says that Liszt played her husband's Quintet in their home so abominably that only her good manners prevented her from leaving the room in disgust. But we shouldn't forget that Clara was far from objective on the subject of the great Franz.[Voltar Nota 11](#)

Nota 12 And this concept includes compliance, adaptability and hence a certain degree of imitation.[Voltar Nota 12](#)

Nota 13 There is no contradiction with what I have said above. I can in no case lower my requirements - although I know full well that the results are sometimes vastly different.[Voltar Nota 13](#)

Nota 14 Russian poet 1893-1930; Neuhaus refers to his poem "100%" written in 1925, ED.[Voltar Nota 14](#)

Nota 15 Of course, there are pupils whom I strongly urge to practise each hand separately - an "emergency exit" is there to be used - but only in addition to the work I have described above.[Voltar Nota 15](#)

Nota 16 May my incomparable late teacher forgive me for criticizing him; the criticism is prompted not by me, but by our times.[Voltar Nota 16](#)

Nota 17 After all, he could have said: a smile amidst a flood of tears or something similar.[Voltar Nota 17](#)

Nota 18 Of course only in the case of people with a musical ear; this does not apply to the rest.[Voltar Nota 18](#)

Nota 19 Russian chemist (1834-1907) who discovered the Periodic Law, ED.[Voltar Nota 19](#)

Nota 20 This was the name, before the Revolution, of an association which devoted its meetings to airing philosophical opinions on the arts.[Voltar Nota 20](#)