

# Addendum to Fundamentals of Piano Practice, Third Edition

June 25, 2016

## 1. Book Reviews

Cienniwa, Paul, *By Heart: THE ART OF MEMORIZING MUSIC*, 2014, 93 pages, index, no references.

This is a somewhat useful book; however, for a book written in 2014, there are no references, indicating a lack of sufficient research, as there are already plenty of publications on memorizing that are more extensively researched. As a result, the material often comes close to final product, but is not quite there, is missing some major components, and contains a lot of material not related to memorizing. However, writing a book solely on memorizing is impossible because memorizing impacts so many aspects of learning and performing piano.

His method consists of dividing the piece to be memorized into short sections identified by “landmarks”. These sections are memorized at slow play with the metronome, both by playing and by using mental play (away from the piano). Meditation is recommended for combating nervousness. He divides the memorizing process into three stages, but there is really nothing new at each stage; they are basically the same procedures conducted at higher levels of perfection.

Good advice: (1) relying on tactile memory is a bad idea, can create problems; to get away from tactile memory, use slow practice, (2) memorize first, then learn (practice) it, (3) mental play is essential for memorizing and performing, and is an integral part of the memorizing process (4) over-practicing leads to numerous problems, (5) honesty and morality are very relevant to learning piano, (6) don't learn new pieces just before a performance, (7) repeat performances are very difficult, so don't play your heart out just before performing, (8) don't put the music stand up with sheet music on it because you will not be able to hear your playing, etc.

Bad advice: (1) listening to performances and recordings is bad for learning and memory, (2) too much use of the metronome (3) too many errors, poor logic and inconsistencies, (4) nothing about performance preparation routines, etc.

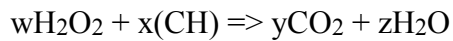
This is not a textbook on memorizing, but one pianist's biography of his experience starting as a harpsichordist (no memorizing), transitioning to a pianist having to perform from memory. Thus, to get the most out of this book, you must be able to distinguish the good advice from the wrong ones.

## 2. Hearing Loss & Ear Wax, Vertigo

(draft)

**(1) Ear wax can cause hearing loss;** therefore, everybody should see an ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) doctor to have the ear examined and get a hearing test, and learn how to remove ear wax by themselves. Doctors always frown on use of q-tips or ear wax removal tools because the part of the ear wax that affects hearing is generally way inside the ear canal close to the ear drum. Any effort to dislodge this ear wax can push it further in and aggravate the situation.

The most popular safe way to clean the ear canal is to use a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution. Lie down horizontally so that one ear is pointing up. Take an eye dropper and put about 1cc of the peroxide into that ear. You can usually hear a bubbling sound as the peroxide reacts with the ear wax and creates bubbles:



where (CH) represents ear wax. This is an innocuous reaction that does no harm, but the peroxide will react with the wax to dislodge it. After about 5 minutes place some tissue paper against the ear and stand up, letting the solution pour out and be trapped by the tissue. Wipe off as much of the liquid as possible and note if any wax has come out. You can also rinse the ear with warm water (right after the peroxide treatment) using the ear rinsing bulb that can be obtained from a pharmacy. Close the sink drain so that all the rinse water is trapped in the sink. If any large particles of wax are dislodged in this way, you will be able to see it in the sink. As a final step, dry the ear canal with a q-tip by tilting the ear down and inserting the q-tip about one-quarter inch (0.5 cm) into the ear.

Those with ear wax problems will experience an immediate improvement in hearing. Especially if you rinse with water, you may feel a bit dizzy or nauseated after cleaning, so be careful about your balance until you are sure that your balance has not been affected. For those with tinnitus, improved hearing can reduce the tinnitus because when all sounds become louder, the brain automatically turns down its amplification.

**(2) Almost everybody experiences vertigo** at least once in a lifetime. Because it can be such a debilitating and traumatic experience that can result in unnecessary emergency visits to the hospital, etc., it is helpful to know what vertigo is before it happens.

Vertigo is a malfunction of the balance mechanism in the ear that causes the visual field to spin around, causing nausea, vomiting and loss of balance. It is very rarely fatal. The only immediate remedy is to close the eyes and lie down in a position which results in minimal symptoms. You may be able to only drink small amounts of liquids without vomiting. It is usually caused by an infection that displaces the otoliths from their normal positions. Colds, etc., can cause vertigo and it can last from a day to several weeks. Once you experience a severe case, your chances of getting it again are greatly reduced because the initial infection immunizes you against that particular infectious agent. If you do experience another incident, it is usually much milder.

In severe cases, the doctor may prescribe medications to ease the discomfort from nausea and to deal with any infections or inflammations. There are numerous articles on vertigo such as:

<http://www.webmd.com/brain/vertigo-symptoms-causes-treatment>

so search the internet if you need more information. There are home remedies for some types of vertigo:

<http://www.dizziness-and-balance.com/disorders/bppv/home/home-pc.html>

again, search the internet for the latest info.

### **3. Why Do We Enjoy Music?**

(DRAFT)

Why we enjoy music is not a mystery. We enjoy music because it is a language we use to communicate; therefore, we can enjoy or not enjoy it. It is no different, in principle, from the spoken language or visual inputs. Thus asking why we enjoy music is analogous to asking why we enjoy conversations or reading a book, or viewing a beautiful sunrise. We have auditory, visual and tactile inputs that we can enjoy. However, trying to answer why we enjoy a specific piece of, say, a piano

sonata is a more difficult task that needs further investigation, and is the subject of this section.

First, let's consider general principles that contribute to the enjoyment of music. Because music is a language and we evolved to acquire the spoken language from before birth, the urge to communicate using music starts before birth. Thus babies produce many different sounds that contain elements of music such as pleasant or unpleasant. Every spoken language has rhythm and babies pick up these rhythms from before birth because the auditory system is functional at that stage and the baby can hear the mother speaking. Evolution has conditioned us to enjoy exercising all our abilities in order to develop them; this is why children play, and we enjoy sports and games. Thus the first general principle of music enjoyment is that we enjoy exercising our auditory abilities because it helps us to develop them.

Before considering more detailed explanations of why we enjoy music, it is useful to understand the complexity of the real world. Every time we encounter a very important, very good, or very useful, etc. principle, we find that there is not one reason why it is so "very" – we always find that there are many reasons, which is one of the reasons for the "very". Thus, as we dig deeper into details of what makes music enjoyable, we will find more and more reasons. We can only hope to pick off the general and major explanations, with the awareness that any such list will be incomplete, and which one is more important than another will be subjective. For example, different persons may have different reasons for enjoying music, and one person may enjoy music that the other dislikes.

We must also identify specific reasons. For example, the answer to the question, "Why do we enjoy reading books?" is also simple, because it is a language. But there are also specific reasons, such as, the book may contain tragedies, exciting episodes or useful information. In order to be able to identify these reasons, they must first be defined. In music such definitions are more difficult than in spoken or visual inputs because they have not been adequately analyzed and defined historically. This situation was a natural consequence of the fact that you can enjoy most music without such definitions because most of the abilities to enjoy music are inborn.

Most music is composed of rhythm and melody, that operate in the spaces of time, volume and pitch. We now examine how these are used to create a language that is basically inborn.

(not yet finished)