

Testimonials

Introduction

These testimonials were clearly written from the hearts of passionate pianists who felt obligated to write because of individual experiences they had to report. You can't fake what you will see below. Read then for the useful, honest, insights you can't find anywhere else. Thanks for writing -- your contributions must be shared.

From Amazon book reviews

(1) Chang sets out a number of incredibly important insights about practicing and playing the piano which you will find nowhere else. He also talks about speed in arpeggios, leaps and octaves in a way that I have only heard discussed from one master teacher, Artur Schnabel's assistant, in the 1930s. If you follow what he says, it will transform your playing. There is no other source which will give this kind of practical information.

(2) Best book yet on how to practice a musical instrument . . . it has probably the best information ever assembled about how to practice and learn music efficiently. I am a published author in this field myself, and I unhesitatingly recommend Chang's book . . .

(3) I play about 20 instruments regularly, guitars, bass, mandolin, violin, celtic whistle, clarinet, cornet, piano, recorder, etc., in a host of styles. I have been playing piano literally all my life. I always loved it, but lessons or no lessons, I never made the great strides I had hoped for, though I put the work into it. Why are Bach and Beethoven the ultimate heights and not just stepping stones to things greater? Because the instructions don't work.

After reading Chang, a great deal of it made sense. Chang got these ideas from someone who worked with Claude Debussy. Following the methods of the book, I am now able to play Thelonious Monk's 'Round Midnight, which is not only one of the heights of jazz, but it is stride, meaning the left hand alternates between bass notes and chords, while the right plays a melody. I am able to play in front of people, something I found difficult before. I can improvise freely because I have confidence that I will hit the notes. 22 note runs of Chopin's Nocturne in B flat minor fly out of the fingers with ease, without effort, correctly, every time.

The finger work really becomes the easy part; my mental coordination has grown by leaps and bounds. Unlearning common wisdom is the hardest part. The open mind of a child who didn't have to unlearn so much would save years of mind numbing practice, concentrating on expression instead and still having time to pursue other interests.

This isn't a book. It's a miracle. The best bargain I have ever seen.

(4) This book is truly the missing link for students stuck at a point of fear in public recitals, passages of music they can't ever seem to master, fluidity in playing and zest in performance. Chang's strength is his clarity and ability to dissect a physical movement and/or mental process, analyze the movement and suggest a more efficient path. Chang argues that prodigies are made, not born. A million 'thank you's'.

(5) This manual should be required reading for all piano students. It represents unique techniques and insights into the methods of practicing the piano. It will surely accelerate the learning process and give you additional incentive for continuing your studies.

(6) I have read books on piano playing, from the greatest teachers and pianists; it was not until I read this book that I had the breakthrough that really opened up my abilities. Before, I was hesitant to

play in front of persons outside my own family. Through these methods, I have learned my pieces so well that I now have the confidence to play in front of complete strangers. It was the single greatest find in all my pianistic ramblings.

(7) This book radically improved my piano playing. It taught me how to practice the piano musically and in a year and half all the Mozart and Haydn sonatas are within range and I am able to play for teachers and friends without falling apart. I no longer creep through scores looking for approachable adagios; I go straight for presto and allegro con brio. It explains what's wrong with the way many students and teachers approach piano practice and tells you how to do it correctly.

From my emails

(Received prior to July, 2004) These testimonials illustrate the hopes, trials, tribulations, and triumphs, of pianists and piano teachers. I am heartened by the number of teachers who provided testimonials and by their indication that they are having more success with their students by using these types of methods. It seems inescapable that teachers who conduct research and improve their teaching methods are more successful. Numerous pianists mentioned that they were taught all wrong by previous teachers. Many, who liked their teachers, noted that these teachers used methods similar to those in this book. There is almost uniform agreement on what is right and what is wrong; therefore, when you follow the scientific approach, you don't get into the situation in which people cannot agree on what is right. I was impressed by how quickly some people picked up these methods.

The excerpts have been edited minimally, but irrelevant details have been excised so as not to waste the readers' time. I want to thank everyone who wrote; they have helped me to improve the book. I can't get over the fact that readers keep writing the book for me (i.e., I could insert their remarks in my book, and they would fit perfectly!). In the following, I have not selected just the flattering remarks; I chose material that seemed significant (educational), whether positive or critical. Entries in [...] are my comments:

1. [From a Christian Minister] This book is the Piano Bible. I have made such tremendous progress since purchasing it [1st edition book]. I continue to recommend it to others.

2. [In Jan., 2003, I received this email (with permission)] My name is Marc, and I am 17 years old. I just started playing the piano about a month ago and have been reading your book, *The Fundamentals of Piano Practice*. . . . I do not have an instructor yet, but am in the process of looking for one [followed by a series of precocious questions for a young person with so little piano experience. I answered his questions as well as I could; then in May, 2004, I received this astounding email]

I don't quite expect you to remember me, but I sent you an email a little more than a year ago. . . . I would like to let you know how piano has been coming along for me using your method. I began playing the piano about Christmas of 2002, using your method from the beginning. Mid-March of 2003, I entered my high school's concerto competition for fun and experience – not in the hopes of winning their \$500 scholarship. I unexpectedly won first place, competing against more seasoned pianists of up to 10 yrs. It did shock the judges when I told them I had been playing for 3 months. A few days ago, I won this year's competition, as well. In other words, progress has come very quickly. Such progress is one of the greatest motivators (aside from the general love of music), so I can now see myself playing – and improving in – the piano for the rest of my life. And, though I must give my teachers credit as well, your method is my foundation upon which they build, and I believe it is the main reason for my progress. However, I still consider myself a beginner My [website](#) has all of the recordings which I have made to date (18). . . . recently, I have been re-recording Chopin's "Raindrop" prelude, Scarlatti's K.466, and Bach's Invention in F major. . . . My next recording will be Bach's

Sinfonia in E minor, and I plan to have that done by the end of next week. Your book is far more than any lover of music and the piano could expect, and I cannot thank you enough for the help you have given to me and so many other aspiring pianists [Go to the website and listen to those amazing recordings!! You can even find him at the [Music Download](#) web site (search Marc McCarthy).]

3. [From a respected, experienced piano teacher.] I just skimmed your new section [on parallel set exercises] and thought I'd share my initial reaction. As the Queen Regent of Exercise-Haters, I've lobbied loud and strong for the criminalization of Hanon et al, and was at first aghast to think you may have joined the downtrodden masses of the pseudo-vooodoo-esque practitioners, hopelessly, helplessly, repeating, repeating, Anyway, to get to the point, I do see a point of merit in your approach, IF IF IF the student follows your COMPLETE directions and uses the described key combinations as a diagnostic tool – NOT to repeat each and every combination as a daily routine. As a diagnostic tool and subsequent remedy, you've succeeded marvelously! There was something familiar about your exercises, so I dug around at the studio today and found the Technische Studien by Louis Plaidy, Edition Peters, first printing ca 1850. Although Plaidy's philosophy concerning the use of his exercises is much different from yours, the actual notes printed on the page follow nearly to the letter (tee, hee, I should say to the note) what you have described in your exercise chapter. Plaidy's exercises were highly respected in Europe throughout the late 1800's and were used during that time at the Conservatory in Leipzig. Plaidy himself was quite a sought-after instructor, with several of his (students were) accepted into Liszt's inner circle and/or having some sort of success on the concert stage. You're in the company of greatness!

4. I am curious to know if you know of the work of Guy Maier. Does his approach with "impulse" practice of 5 finger patterns go along with the "parallel sets" you mention? Maier does use the principle of repeating one note with each finger as the others are held quietly at the key surface as one of the 5 finger exercises. *Thinking Fingers* was one of the books of exercises Maier wrote with Herbert Bradshaw in the early 1940s. One of his first 5 finger exercises that seems to mirror what you have said about "quads" repetitions on one note using one finger is as follows: a. Single fingers in repeated note impulses of 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, and 16. b. Practice each finger separately, depress other keys lightly or hold fingers silently at key top position. c. Using CDEFG in right hand, place 5 fingers on these notes one octave above middle C, right hand thumb on C. d. Similarly with left hand, one octave below middle C, with fifth finger on C. e. Exercise hands separately; starting with right hand thumb play one impulse C, then release, then two impulses, etc., up to 16. Repeat with each finger, then do the left hand. [See my Exercise section III.7b; it is amazing how we independently arrived at groups of "quads" (four repetitions), up to 4 quads (16 repetitions) for this exercise which is almost identical to my Exercise #1.] f. Beginners will have to do the impulses slowly, working up to full speed (and here I think your "quads" come into play – so many repetitions per second is the goal). Maier mentions 16 as his limit. He gives a great many patterns for using this approach to 5 finger impulse exercises, in Book 1 and Book 2 of *Thinking Fingers* published by Belwin Mills Inc., NY, NY in 1948. I think Maier was striving to help students get the facility they needed without the endless repetitions of Hanon, Pischna, et al.

5. Please send me your book – I've been a piano teacher for over 50 years, still eager to learn.

6. [This testimonial is an eye opener: it teaches us about one of the most frequently misdiagnosed problems that stops us from playing fast.] At a young age, I started, and then quit piano. Then as a teenager, I went to a [famous] conservatory and tried for years to acquire technique but failed miserably and ended up with an engineering career. Years later, I have returned to piano (Clavinova) and am trying to do what I failed to do years ago. One of the reasons I stopped practicing is that my wife and son would get irritated when they heard me repeat passages over and over; the Clavinova allows me to practice guiltlessly at any hour. I read your web page and was fascinated. Wish I had thought of some of your ideas years ago. I have a question and I can't seem to get an answer that makes any sense, yet it is such a basic question. I was taught that when you play piano, you support the weight

of your arm on each finger that plays. Gravity. You never push down, you must be relaxed. So I asked my teachers how to play pianissimo. The answer was that you play closer to the keys. This does not work for me. [Long discussion of various methods of trying to play pianissimo with arm weight and why they don't work. Seems he can play pianissimo only by consciously lifting his hands off the keys. Also, since everything tends to come out forte, speed is a problem.] Would you kindly answer this question for me? What does one do with one's arm weight when one plays pianissimo? I have read many books about playing the piano and have spoken with many accomplished pianists. It is one thing to know how to play anything and it is quite another to be able to teach someone how to play. [I could not have said this any better!] Your writings are brilliant and in many ways revolutionary, I knew instinctively that if anyone could help me you could. [After such a compliment, I had to do something, so I read the account of his difficulties carefully and came to the conclusion that he must, after so many years of trying, be unwittingly pushing down on the piano, almost as if he were hypnotized. I told him to find a way to see if he was actually pushing down – not an easy task. Then came this reply.] Thank you for your response. Truth is best examined through extremes. Your suggestion gave me the idea that maybe I should ALWAYS play like I play MY pianissimo – by lifting my hands off the keys. I rushed to my Hanon, and YES! I can play much faster! I quickly rushed to the Bach Prelude II that I could never play to speed (144) and I always had troubles getting the fingers to land together when playing fast, and at speeds above 120 the fingers were landing like one note together. No fumbles, no strain. Not only that, I can play piano or forte as fast as I want. It feels so incredibly EASY! Just discovered it now! I can't believe this. [Long discussion of how, through the years, he had come to equate arm weight with pushing down, mainly caused by a fear of not understanding the teacher who was a strict, arm weight disciplinarian. This is actually something I have been very suspicious of, about the arm weight method: that so much emphasis on arm weight and overly strict discipline might cause some type of neurosis or misunderstanding – perhaps even some type of hypnosis.] A huge wall just crumbled and now after so many years of thought and hours of practice (I practiced up to 10 hours a day at the conservatory and still only memorized music without ever improving my technique) and now I can see beyond. I discovered that I have the ability to play faster than I ever dreamed I could (just tried the C major scale and I was shocked that this was me playing) with full range of sound that I want WITHOUT TENSION. [A long description of all the new things he is now doing and comparing them to his previous years of struggles and criticisms from others.] I have you to thank for this. Yours was the only book I have ever read that offered enough variation from the mainline to get me to finally free my mind from a huge misconception. I was pushing down, not letting go. My arms simply don't weigh a ton, but they are free. Because I was afraid of my teacher and was obsessed with the weight of my arms, I was subconsciously bearing down. I never dared play PPP for her. I knew how, but I was certain it was the wrong technique. [I am afraid this happens frequently with youngsters; they don't understand the teacher but are afraid to ask, and end up assuming the wrong thing.] What she should have told me was DON'T EVER PUSH DOWN; instead, I fixated on the weight of my arms as being key to everything. [A youngster must push down to put any "weight" on his arms! How are you going to explain that this is wrong to a child who hasn't studied physics?] She also never allowed me to play quickly. [This is another comment I have heard from students of strict arm weight teachers – speed is a no-no until certain milestones are achieved; although we must exercise caution when practicing for speed, slowing down is not the quickest way to speed.] Because I was tense, and she said I would never play quickly if I'm tense. In your book you say that we have to play fast to discover technique. I was never allowed to! Your book and your email freed the chains in my mind that held me captive for all these years. Thank you so very much. I cannot describe how grateful I am to you and your insight. [Although my comments seem to be directed against the arm weight school, that is not the case – similar difficulties apply to any teaching based on insufficient knowledge in the hands of strict disciplinarian teachers. Unfortunately, a large number of piano teachers has historically adopted inflexible teaching methods because of a lack of a theoretical understanding and rational explanations.]

For systematic treatments of speed, see sections II.13 and especially III.7.i]

7. I found your book on the internet and consider myself very lucky. Thank you very much for making such a great effort on describing the piano technique and practice habits that make sense. I am a piano teacher. I've only started to read the book and have already applied some practice techniques with my students. They liked it and I liked it too. The practice becomes so much more interesting. Do you know the book called "The Amateur Pianist's Companion" by James Ching, published by Keith Prowse Music Publishing Co., 1956, London. This book may be out of print, but I found it second hand at: <http://dogbert.abebooks.com/abe/BookSearch> You might be interested because "the detail of correct postures, movement and conditions as outlined in this book are the result of extensive researches into the physiological-mechanics of piano technique carried out by the author in conjunction with Professor H. Hartridge, Professor of Physiology, and H. T. Jessop, Lecturer in Mechanics and Applied Mathematics, at the University of London".

8. I am so grateful that I found your web site. I am an adult piano player, that was taught all wrong, when I was young. I am still trying to unlearn my bad techniques and habits. I now take lessons from a very good teacher.

9. A few weeks ago I downloaded your book from the Internet and have been trying it out. I'm about halfway through and a long way from fully applying everything, but I'm so pleased with the results up to now that I thought I'd give some spontaneous feedback. Firstly some background. I studied piano up to an advanced level and started a music degree, which I dropped after a year to study math. After graduation I was an enthusiastic amateur, but over the last 20 years my playing has become less frequent, mainly due to my frustration at a lack of progress, convinced that I would never be able to find the hours of exercise needed to be able to play better. I was looking for some hints for buying a piano and came across your site. After reading a couple of chapters I downloaded the whole thing and started trying it out. This is not the first time I have tried to improve with a book or advice from a teacher, but I'm a sucker for punishment. Here are my experiences after three weeks. [Note how quickly people can learn and immediately make use of these methods.] I've been concentrating on studying 4 pieces which are very dear to me: - Ravel's Prelude - Chopin Prelude no. 26 in Ab major - Poulenc Novelette no. 1 - Ravel Alborada del Graziosa from Miroirs The Ravel Prelude is a small piece of no apparent technical difficulty. This is a piece that I had always played on sight, but never really well. There is a crossed hands section in the middle with some exquisite dissonance that poses some difficulties, but that's about it. I applied the practice methods in the book to this piece and it suddenly came alive with far more nuance than I had ever credited it. It's anything but the throwaway I thought it was, but without proper practice methods it will always seem that way. The Poulenc Novelette is one of the pieces that I have played at least once a week for 20 years and am very fond of. I've never really played this fully to my satisfaction, but I'd always assumed that this was due to a lack of exercise time. Using your suggestions I started analyzing what was wrong. Aside from some obvious flubs that had never really been learnt correctly the most surprising result was that it was impossible for me to keep in time to the metronome!! Some more detailed analysis revealed the cause – a lot of Poulenc's writing requires rapid and awkward shifts of hand position with melodies that need to be sustained across these shifts. The bad habit that I had learnt was to "grab" at the keys during these shifts, hence destroying the melody line and gradually speeding up the piece. The revelation to me was that the problem could not be fixed by practicing with the metronome! It could only be fixed by analyzing this problem and working out a strategy for dealing with the shifts. Now I am very satisfied with the way I play and even have a lot of time left over to consider the music. Alborada del Graziosa is a case apart. This is a fiendishly difficult piece which I had tried to learn in the past, but was unable to bring most of the passages up to the correct speed. My assumption had always been that more practice was necessary and that I could never find the time. Again – applied the methods in your book to learning this and, after three weeks, I'm not yet there but I can now play most of it up to speed and reasonably musically as well. I reckon I'll have it all in my fingers in a couple of weeks then I can concentrate on the music.

Last but not least, the Chopin prelude. I learnt this for an exam when I was 16 yrs. old, but have never really played it since. I started relearning it and made a couple of discoveries. Firstly I had never played it up to speed, even for the exam, so this was something I needed to fix. However this just didn't work – I discovered that for two reasons I couldn't speed up. Firstly I had learnt to fake the legato with the pedal – but once you speed up you just get a jumble of sound and if I try to pedal correctly I just couldn't get the legato. Secondly the middle section contains some highly stretched broken chords in the left hand that shift on each beat. Played slowly this is ok, but at speed it becomes fiendishly difficult and even painful to play. Basically I have had to relearn this piece – new fingerings, new hand positions, different pedaling etc. Now I can play this at any speed I like with no stress. I found this an interesting proof of what you say in the book – this is a very small piece that seems fairly easy, but at speed it completely changes character and will frustrate any student using the intuitive method, unless they are blessed with a span of over 1.5 octaves. In closing I'd like to thank you for writing the book and even more for making it available on the Internet. I have in the past spent enormous amounts of money on highly recommended teachers and not one of them, although I have no doubt that they understood these techniques themselves, could teach me how to practice.

10. I think your book is worth my reading although many of the “rules” (such as hands separate practice, chord attack . . .) I have learned from our teachers. In my logic even if just one rule I learned from your book works, it is worth far more than the \$15 I paid for the 1st Edition. I also like the section on how to prepare for recitals. I agree that practicing full speed before the recital is a “no no”. I discussed this with my teacher and we see several reasons why [extended discussions on why playing full speed on day of recital can lead to problems, not excerpted here because I can't understand them]. Thus practice fast before the recital is a no-win situation. Finally, I would like to see more about how to gain speed and how to put hands together more efficiently. Some music (Bach's Inventions come to mind) is easy to play hands separate but difficult hands together. Overall, I enjoy reading your book.

11. I encourage everyone to try hands separate practice as stated in your book. While studying with Robert Palmieri at Kent State University, he had me do this as part of my practice. It helped me get past the amateur stage and on to much better technique and musical playing.

12. Based on what I was able to glean from your web site, I applied one of the principles – hands separate playing at full tempo -- on a couple of difficult passages in two completely different types of songs I was playing, one a church hymn, the other a jazz tune. Interestingly, I found that when I got to church yesterday and it came time to accompany the congregation, the difficult portions I had learned by the hands separate method were among the most solid and sure of the entire hymn. It seemed that each time I came to one of those difficult spots, a mental trigger went off that alerted my brain/nervous system to execute those parts with particular care and accuracy. Same goes for the difficult spot in the jazz tune, which is now no longer a problem at all.

13. About one and a half years ago I ordered the book *Fundamentals of Piano Practice* from you. I just wanted to personally thank you for your contribution. It has helped me a great deal! I never knew how to practice before your book because I was never taught. I took lessons, mind you, but my teachers never taught me how to practice. Isn't that amazing! I suspect that it is commonplace. The most beneficial piece of advice for me is your suggestion to play at a much slower speed on the last run-through of the piece you are practicing. I must admit developing this habit has been most difficult for me. But I am trying. I find that slow practice is a big help. Also, practicing just a measure or two at a time has been valuable! I wished that memorizing music came easier; if you have any new ideas on memorizing, please let me know. [I have added considerable material on memorizing since this correspondence.]

14. Thank you for answering my piano practice questions. I must tell you that there is one particularly tricky Prelude of Chopin's – the one in C Sharp Minor. When I received your book, I mastered this Prelude more than up to its rapid speed in one day. Granted it is a short one, but many pianists wrestle with it. This experience has been very encouraging.

15. I have been playing piano for 8 years now and bought your book about a year ago. After reading this book, my 1 hour a day practice sessions are much more productive. I also learn new pieces much faster. You show insight on the following: Correct methods of practice. How to start a new piece. Slow practice (when to do it and why). When to play faster than normal. How to get ready for a performance. I don't agree with everything you write, but I read your book about every couple of months so I don't lose sight of the proper way to practice. [This is a common refrain: my book is such a dense compilation that you need to read it several times.]

16. After one week, I was very pleased with myself and the method since I thought that I had successfully MEMORIZED!!! A whole page HS. This was an absolutely unknown achievement as far as I was concerned. But problems arose when I tried to put the two hands together, which I then tried to do whilst learning the rest of the piece. I also found on trying to learn the rest of the piece that I had 'memorized' the first page wrongly, and I ended up writing notes to myself. [This probably happens more often than most of us would like to admit – when you have difficulty in getting up to speed HT, CHECK THE SCORE! The cause could be an error in reading the music. Errors in rhythm are particularly difficult to detect.] Your book HAS given me exactly what I was looking for – i.e. some basis for working out how to learn more quickly and efficiently. No teacher has ever been able to give me any clue as to how to go about learning a piece. The only suggestion I have ever had is, 'Have a look at this and see what you can make of it', and as for how to improve the accuracy and/or speed, 'Keep practicing, practicing, . . .' WHAT????? I've now got answers to these vital questions. Thanks.

17. I have been reading your book on your site and have been getting a lot out of it. You have inspired me to practice the way I have always known was the best way but never had the patience to do it. What you outline about even chords before trying to play fast lines sure has helped me a lot. I think my inability to play beyond a certain speed is due to a basic unevenness in my fingers that I have never really addressed. I always would just say, "I just can't play fast well". I have worked up a small portion of an etude using the chord attack approach and can actually play it fairly smoothly and evenly! I am curious about your theories on absolute pitch development. The camps seem very divided on that subject: genetics vs. environment. [Since this correspondence, I added the parallel set exercises for chord practice, and have written an expanded section on acquiring absolute pitch.]

18. I just wanted to let you know how much my family of musicians has been enjoying your book on piano playing. Without doubt, you set forth some innovative, unorthodox ideas in your book that really do work in spite of the fact they sound extreme by most practicing piano teachers' standards. [I agree!] The method of practicing hands separately seems to be working quite well as well as the method of not playing everything soooooo slowly! Also, putting less emphasis on the metronome has also been proving beneficial. Certainly, your methods have helped speed up the entire learning process on new pieces, and now I can't imagine how we ever managed before without knowing these "musical truths" of yours. Thank you again for writing such a marvelous JEWEL of a book!

19. I read the online sections and think every piano teacher should be required to have read this book. I'm one of the unfortunate who spent 7 years practicing scales/Hanon without any hints about relaxation or efficient practice methods. I started to pick good practice hints from internet discussion groups and various books, but your book is by far the most comprehensive and convincing source I have found yet.

20. I am a piano player at an intermediate level. A month ago I downloaded parts of your book and I must say in one word that it is fabulous! Being a scientist I appreciate the structural way the subject matter is presented and explained on a down to earth level. It changed my way of looking at piano practice. Especially the part on memorizing helped me already to reduce memorizing efforts considerably. My private teacher (a performing soloist) uses bits and pieces from your method. However this teacher is a Czerny addict and never heard of thumb over. You need to spend more attention to the thumb over, especially how to smoothly join parallel sets. I gave a copy of the book to my teacher and I recommend it to everybody. [A year later] I already wrote you once more than a year

ago about your fantastic book on the internet. The methods really work. Using your methods I was able to learn and master some pieces much faster. Your methods really work for pieces that are notoriously difficult to memorize, like some Mozart sonatas, and pieces of which my piano teacher said are difficult to memorize like the Bach Inventions or some preludes of Chopin. Piece of cake using your method. I am now tackling the Fantaisie Impromptu and this seemingly impossible piece appears to be within my reach! I also like your contribution about the subconscious mind. I wonder whether you know the book of J. D. Sarno: The Mindbody Prescription. This book treats the subconscious exactly like you do. While working on my PhD thesis, I solved many seemingly unsolvable theoretical enigmas just like you did. I fed it to my brain and some days later the solution just popped out. So what you write is dead right!

21. Your suggestions on how to memorize music by creating associations (a story, for example) sounded silly to me. But when I was practicing, I couldn't help asking what I could associate with a certain musical phrase that had a problematic F chord. "Give yourself an F for failing" popped into my mind. I thought that was not very encouraging thinking! But now every time I come to that phrase I remember the F. I've got it. Sheesh! Thanks. Your book is very useful. It mirrors my teacher's suggestions, but with more detail. When I can't play the piano nothing is more fun than reading about playing the piano In the final weeks before my last recital, my teacher suggested playing through my mistakes during practice. Then going back and working on the problem measures, much as you suggest, though that was the only time that it came up. She says most people will not even know the mistake was made unless it interrupts the music. Her point is to not interrupt the music and to correct the problem at the source by going back to the measure. I find that I do correct myself (stutter) a lot; I'm going to focus on not doing it. This advice is not intuitive, you know. One corrects mistakes naturally when they happen. But I can see that constantly doing that is actually building the mistakes in.

22. I stumbled on your online book on piano practice when I was searching for articles on absolute pitch. When I read it, I was impressed by the scientific approach used. Especially the concept of "speed wall" and how to overcome it helped me a lot. I found your book at just the right time. Many problems I encounter in playing the piano are discussed in your book. Many piano teachers don't seem to have a clear scientific concept on how to handle specific problems of intermediate piano players. So I am working through the book, section by section with good success. There are several things I am missing in your book. In some chapters, pictures would be very helpful, such as correct hand position, thumb over, parallel set exercises. Something like a chronological table for the practice routine might be useful. "Practicing cold" would be on position number one, for example. You always mention the importance of WHEN to do WHAT. Could you order the exercises you explain in a way that makes them most efficient? Anyway, I want to express my deep appreciation for your project!

23. All this winter, I continued my personal piano learning and I must say that every word in your book is true. I have been studying piano for several years and made only average progress. Because I love piano and romantic music, that makes me sometimes crazy and deeply frustrated. After application of your methods from about 1 year ago, I made tremendous progress. I am now working on several pieces at once, compositions I never thought before that I can play. It's wonderful. Today, I have a small repertoire that I can play with great satisfaction.

24. I have ordered and received your 1st Ed book and have read sections of your 2nd Ed. I have found your information to be extremely valuable. I am sending you this email because I was hoping to get some advice on my upcoming recital. I am extremely nervous but after reading your sections on recitals I understand their importance. I wish I had your notes on memorizing when I started because it has taken me an extremely long time to finally memorize it (the improper way). I am not sure how to perform the piece for the recital. On the few occasions that I played for others I would stumble on certain sections because I would forget where I was in the piece because of nerves. This is my first recital so I don't know what to expect. Any tips or advice on practice routines would be much

appreciated. [After a few exchanges about what he was playing, etc., I gave him a scenario of typical practice routines for recital preparation and what to expect during the recital. After the recital, I received the following email.] I just wanted to let you know that my recital went extremely well considering it was my first time. The advice you gave me was very helpful. I was nervous starting the piece but then I became extremely focused (just like you said would happen). I was even able to concentrate musically rather than just going through the motions. The audience was impressed at my ability to do it from memory (just like you said they would). You were right in saying that a positive experience like this would help me with my confidence. I feel great about the experience! My teacher is from [a famous Conservatory], and teaches Hanon exercises and other technique material. That is why your book was and is a gold mine for me. I want to be able to play the pieces that I enjoy without having to spend 20 years to learn them. But I also feel that I need a teacher.

25. I must say that your book is excellent Since reading C. C. Chang's Fundamentals of Piano Practice, I've been trying out his suggestions; thanks to those who recommended it and to Mr. Chang for taking the time to write it and make it available.

Testimonials received between 2004 and 2006 are in a different computer that was temporarily disconnected and have not found the time to report them here.

Testimonials received 2006 - 2008

26. Your book is extraordinary - I've had my head stuck in it for several days. Congratulations on an enormous service to music and to pianists everywhere I should explain that I have a PhD in composition (Harvard), have studied piano with some very famous teachers, and have taught theory at the college level (UCLA); despite all that your book was a revelation congratulations again on a work which, I believe, will achieve an honored place in musical history.

27. Reading your book makes me want to cry. It is probably one of the most important things that I have read. I am 21 and have played saxophone, keyboard, guitar, bass guitar, and drums and have played for years in a small band. I never got any good at any of these instruments. It was hard to keep up motivation because practicing didn't really improve my playing except after weeks and weeks of practicing more than an hour every day -- I decided that I simply was a terrible musician. It angers me that the world is such that this kind of ignorance can exist.

28. Your book helped to change my life. Reading it, I understood why I had failed over the years! The methods are simply genius; I discovered that I actually could be a "talented" musician through REWARDING hard work. This kind of work is EASY; much easier than any of the academic work which I have succeeded in.

I tested some of the methods in the book by re-analyzing a piece of toccata and fugue by Bach and was able to obtain almost unlimited speed as easy as putting one foot in front of the other within three days. What was before the most difficult part now feels ridiculously easy. I also was surprised to find that I am able to reliably sing a few notes without any reference -- I had thought that I was tone deaf. By practicing what you showed, I discovered what I could do.

29. Your book has brought me more than an "easy" path to my wildest dreams. Most of the techniques in this book can be abstracted for use in developing practically any skill. No one ever told me that I was ALLOWED to come up with my own techniques before. I have now developed my own mnemonic for memorizing the multiplication table, learning Chinese characters, etc. Thank you for redirecting my life in such an amazing and important manner.

30. I had been listening to your book on podcast, and then bought your book. I used to be a statistician, but am now a violinist aspiring to be an arranger/composer, and studying piano for music theory education and the joy of playing piano. What prompted me to purchase your book was a

comment from my music teacher - she does not know I study your book; however, I use your methods for my piano practice. Upon observing the quickness in which I have been progressing, she said, "You seem to be a musical genius." Thanks for making me a 'genius'.

31. I started playing the piano at age 39 and have been discouraged by my slow and painful progress. I heard a Bach number on the radio and said I've got to learn that one - English Suite II - and found a youtube performance by Benedetta -- it was good. A short while later, she posted a new one, and wow, the skill and technique was 10 times greater! I asked her how long she practices and she responded with "it is not how long I practice but how I study" and told me to google your name. After 4 days of reading and practicing the new methods every day, I'm so impressed at my progress. I've emailed all the 9 piano teachers I have contact with in my community.

32. The book got me from a point where I was ready to give up on learning the piano because I was making so little progress to where I enjoy playing every chance I get. I could say tons more, but will keep it simple -- thank you!

33. I'm a pianist and violinist, came across your site, and must admit I was astounded. I agree that the available literature on piano practice is incomplete - I had been searching for months for such a book on piano practice. I had read what I consider one of the finest books that covers the complete spectrum of musical playing of an instrument, Leopold Mozart's "Versuch einer grundlichen Violinschule" on violin. Reading that book, I had no doubts where his son's genius came from - like you, Leopold approached the playing of the instrument with a scientific rigor and clarity.

34. I'm enjoying your book immensely; the chapter on warm-ups inspire me to write a book of my own! In my experience, the most effective way to warm the fingers and forearms is by raising the core temperature of the body. A few minutes of martial arts or a 15-minute walk prepares me for playing music better than any amount of hot water.

35. I have recommended your book to teachers and students here in X State as I am the past president and member of the X Music Teachers Guild and also a member of the X State Music Teachers Association. I think both of these organizations should be apprised of your book and the tenets therein. I studied with a teacher who was trained in France under Margaritte Long (Y. Combe's teacher) If you come to X State, I would like to extend an invitation to lecture for the guild

36. I am a piano/keyboard teacher with a studio of approximately 90 students a week. I have just come across your book and am extremely impressed. I will certainly be providing all my students with a link to your website and information. I am looking forward to being able to pass this information on to my students, and other teacher associates.

37. I have two music degrees and have been playing the piano for over 45 years, and I must say you have done an excellent job in capturing some of the "mysteries" of learning how to play the piano. I believe your scientific approach has enabled you to capture and document many of these non-intuitive techniques. Whereas a more traditional artistic approach to learning the piano does not always recognize such concepts or allow for their documentation.

I have attached a paper I wrote entitled, "The Project Management of Music", which interestingly comes to some very similar conclusions as your publication, although you go to much greater detail in capturing how to integrate these concepts into daily practice.

38. I have been teaching piano for many years and published a book on jazz piano practice. I wish I had come across your book earlier! I have confidence in many of my concepts regarding practice, but your book has given me pause to reconsider several approaches. I'm looking forward to passing this information on to my students.

39... There are piano students at my college to whom I have emailed; I sent them a link to (your) website. People need to know about the things you cover in your book, especially piano majors. I wish I had known this stuff when I started learning to play piano as a child. I didn't know the practice methods in your book, so it took me a long time to learn my repertoire.

40. What you are providing is an invaluable service to piano teachers. I am part of a piano teacher network in my local area and am looking forward to sharing this information with teachers so we can impact the quality of lessons

41. I'm an intermediate pianist who left the conservatoire a few months ago out of frustration and the recognition that it wasn't helping my technical development. My two main problems were speed walls and blackouts during a performance. My teacher, however good and caring she was, could not give me a clear solution regarding these problems. To her, both of my problems stemmed from the same factor -- I was too self-conscious and was holding myself back. She only told me that "it's something you have to work out on your own". After a terrible year, in which my problems made me want to practice less and less (as I was getting no results!) I finally realized I needed a new teacher, so I left the conservatoire.

And then, just a month after that, I found your book. At the moment I had no piano, as my technician was regulating and restoring the action to a like-new state. So I read the whole book and while my teacher had told me several of the methods and study tips you mention, I stared at others in disbelief. Start at speed? Thumb Over? Particularly TO, I had to read that part three times and search some forums before understanding what you meant. It'd never been mentioned to me! I had suspected that playing consistent, fast arpeggios with the thumb under method was impossible, but not knowing any other way, I assumed I was just lacking in technique. How they fooled me!

Well, I got my piano back *yesterday*. I expected nothing for months, but your methods are already giving fruit. I'm able to play the first bars of Fantaisie Impromptu (HS) AT SPEED, which is unbelievable for me. I have no problems with 3-against-4 rhythms, and I was considered a very musical person when technique didn't hold me back (more so than many upper-level students); I've learnt difficult pieces such as this, but I was never able to play them at speed. I was also never able to get them up in speed so quickly! Actually, it was practically instantaneous. I only needed the parallel sets method in a couple of small sections.

What made a HUGE difference for me was the attitude of starting it at speed instead of slow, and experiment with different movements to try and get the hand to be as relaxed as possible. It's incredible how fast the brain can find the right moves to play at thrilling speed (and with good tone) with complete relaxation! The TO method was another milestone for me. You've provided the pieces of the puzzle that I wasn't given/couldn't find, and in doing so you have revolutionized my piano playing! Now I feel like studying for hours every day again. I've maximized my return-on-investment by moving every 10-20 minutes to a different part of the piece or to another technical problem, and resting every hour or so.

42. Firstly, let me say that (your method) is absolutely great and is working very well. I am a pianist of 14 years and now majoring in music performance, but never have I been taught these ideas nor even told how to practice efficiently.

I was learning a very tough arpeggiated passage that I thought I would never be able to get up to speed, seeing as there were about 21 notes per beat. I used some of your methods, though, and I already have part of it up to speed in only a day!

43. I am a piano major. The most important thing I learned (from your book) was about MP, I find that I do it all the time, but not for piano. My thoughts are all over the place and I can play entire songs in my head. It was a revelation to find out that this ability can be used for my music studies. And the idea of music as an algorithm. It makes perfect sense to me. My memory has improved since, even without a great sense of pitch. Only one teacher (the dean) seems to know of your method, and he can't teach me many reasons. The dean is already tired of all my questions!

End of Testimonials, 1998-2004 & 2006-8 (lost my emails from 2004-6); I've received similar emails every year since 2008.

