

SPECIFIC PREPARATION ISSUES FOR PERFORMANCE

- 1) Choice of appropriate repertoire.
 - A) Must be within personal (or student's) abilities.
 - i) Technical – capable of full tempos and full dynamic range.
 - ii) Musicianship – balance, shaping, counting, pedaling, score accuracy, style.
 - iii) Artistic – express character, beauty, affective impact of the music.
 - B) Wonderful Mozart is far preferable to mediocre Liszt.
- 2) Amount of time to fully prepare – assuming an appropriate piece.
Early: 3 months Intermediate: 6 months Advanced: 9-12 months (with break)
- 3) Quality level of performance – assuming appropriate piece and time to prepare.
 - A) Practice time – no right or wrong – depends on purpose/aim/goals.
 - B) To develop advanced playing, study how advanced players got that way.
 - C) Better playing needs greater immersion, including studying performance practice.
 - D) “Student playing” or “artist playing”?
- 4) Security in performance – assuming 1), 2) above.
 - A) Detailed knowledge: separate hands; repeat segments. B) Thirty play-throughs.
 - C) Plenty of performance rehearsals. D) Perspective: it's not about ME.

SOME COMMON PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS (in no particular order):

- 1) Playing too many wrong notes to ignore.
 - A) Could be 1) A) i), or 2), or 3) A), or any of 4).
 - B) Careless practicing – perfect practice makes perfect – turn into games.
- 2) Memory problems: could be 2), or 3) A) or C), or any of 4).
- 3) Notation inaccuracies: tempos, dynamics, rests, pedals, notes, etc.
 - A) Poor teaching. B) Careless practicing. C) Unaware of performance practice.
- 4) Disorganized rhythm: a basic musicianship issue.
 - A) Metronome. B) Counting. C) Counting takes charge, becomes conductor.
 - D) Rubato: establish pulse, slow down, return to pulse, never exceed Tempo I.
- 5) Unmusical playing: flat, uninteresting, dull, two-dimensional.
 - A) Balancing texture (melody more prominent than accompaniment)
 - B) Shaping melody (the next note is louder/quieter than the note just played)
- 6) Unstylistic playing: Bach played like Schumann, Bartok played like Haydn, etc.
 - A) Problematic teaching. B) Not enough listening to music well played.
- 7) Inartistic playing: correct, but lifeless - little imagination, spark, emotional content.
Artistry – from practicing imagination, finding moods/feelings in the music.

COMPETITION POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

- + Energizes the lesson/practice/lesson/practice/etc. routine.
- + Can be uniquely strong motivation to prepare for best playing.
- + Results can be affirming . . . or a reality check.
- + Judges' comments/feedback can be helpful.
- Judging a mixture of objectivity, personal taste. Other judges, other results?
- Judges there to do an often difficult job, not to enjoy; creates a tense atmosphere.
- Students must take any decision in stride, not overly seriously.