

UP-SIDE DOWN PRACTICE

The Rule of Opposites

1. TEMPO

Practice Fast piece Slowly, Possibly do a very slow piece fast? This helps the continuity and flow. You feel less vertically and more horizontally (i.e. Chopin's C# Min, Any big octave pieces)

2. DYNAMICS

f to *p*, *p* to *f*, etc. (in tempo only). Just seeing the *f* can make you tense. You want to be relaxed. "*p*" doesn't stand for "puny", it stands for "project"!

Chopin Nocturne--LH can be *pp* ; RH can be *mf* or *f* but together they equal a "*mp*" or "*p*" as written. It's always easier to go beyond, then bring them down than to keep asking for more.

3. ARTICULATION

Staccato to legato , legato to staccato, etc. You need to be able to "sing" in staccato.

4. REGISTER

Bring very low section up 8va or 15va so you can hear it without the mud.

5. BALANCE

RH louder, LH louder} To develop ear awareness and "Memory security" You need to listen to the "co-dependence" of each other.

6. REVERSE DIRECTION

Do a *Cresc.* as a *Dim.* and visa versa. Take wherever the climax is and start there. Say, " Okay, that's at a *ff*. Now back up a measure and play it just slightly softer, back up one more measure and play it softer, maybe *f* or *mf*. Each time you back up a measure, listen to the volume. Is it softer than the one you just played? Basically, you are playing a crescendo backwards, stopping at each measure to compare the dynamic level. This works best with long *cresc.* or *decresc.* passages.

7. RHYTHMIC EMPHASIS

Don't just accent beat 1. Put accents of everything that isn't suppose to be accented. Again, this trains you ear to hear "everything" Also, it works out fingering difficulties.

8. SPOT PRACTICE ON TROUBLE SPOTS

"Isolate and Attack". But it doesn't stop there. After you have worked out the trouble spot, gradually add context around it. Play the trouble spot, then play the measure before plus it, then add the measure after, then two measures before, then two measures after, etc. Always adding more music around that spot so it is still the center spot but it is played in context.

ICE-CREAM EXERCISE

Good for Scale practice, 16th note runs, Hanon, etc. Reinforces fingering and muscle memory.
Example: C Major Scale

Single Single, Double Double, Single Single, Double Double, Single Single, Double Double, etc.
C D EF EF G A BC BC B A GF GF

DOUBLE TROUBLE: Double everything

Ex: CDCD, EFEF, GAGA, BCBC, BABA, GFGF, EDED, C.

TAP-HOLD

Play First note and while you're holding it, "tap" the next note. This makes you memorize the pattern and the fingering.

Warning: There should be no tension in the fingers or it is possible to hurt yourself. You must be totally relaxed to do this. Do it *slow* and *deliberate*.

IMPULSE PRACTICE

Stop at the spot where you normally wouldn't (mid-measure). Expand one measure at a time, always stopping at a spot that you normally wouldn't (2nd or 3rd beat of the measure). Gradually increase the length of the impulse. This can be done slowly as well as completely up to tempo.

MISC. TIPS

"Jazz up" Hanon. Use various syncopated rhythms. (q. e q. e q. e) or (q qsr q qsr q) or create you own.

Start your scales at the top instead of always at the bottom. You'll be suprised how different it feels and sounds. Again, this makes you stop and think, achieving a greater awareness of your playing.

Memory Work

"STAGE" MEMORY SLIPS

This is particularly helpful with Baroque pieces (esp. BACH). The idea is to create certain starting points throughout the piece. Mark them and memorize them. Then as you practice the piece from memory, have your teacher, parent or coach sporadically yell out "**MEMORY SLIP**". When you hear this you must "fake" a memory slip at that point then immediately skip to the next starting point. Always move ahead, never go back to start a piece over unless it is unavoidable.

PRACTICE WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED

Pretend you are someone else. Really feel the music.

"PLAY A PHRASE" "THINK A PHRASE"

Like the "B-I-N-G-O" song, you should play a phrase, then think the next phrase, then play the next, think the next, etc. Music can and should go on in your head even when you aren't playing.

AWAY FROM PIANO PRACTICE

Example of the "Un-Master Class" in Houston. Large group of professional pianists in circle. Played music in the background. Given a red rubber ball. The ball was bounced randomly to someone and they had to physically feel the music. Swing in circles to the beat, dance, move, conduct, sing it, etc. The point being that the more time you spend learning the piece away from the piano the more ingrained it becomes. You must "Know" the piece not just with your fingers. You need to "know" it with your whole body and soul.

Approach everything with the attitude of achieving a greater awareness. Like building a home, you need to build it from the ground up. First the foundation, then walls, windows, roof, etc. By themselves, they aren't much, but when put in the right order and completed with care, you have a beautiful home. Music is the same. Always have in mind that beautiful home you are creating.