

## MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AND TEACHING STYLES

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In 1752 Quantz wrote, "It is true that innate ability and inclination are the primary foundations upon which solid understanding must be built. But thorough instruction, and, on the part of the student, much industry and reflection, are absolutely necessary to erect the entire structure."<sup>1</sup> This paper surveys the various teaching approaches and principles concerning the development of the highest level of instrumental musicianship. Several different teacher/student relationships are examined involving some of the most eminent 20<sup>th</sup> century artists of violin, piano, voice, and flute. One principle stands out in spite of the differing pedagogical approaches: the teacher's belief in the student is paramount. As Claudio Arrau stated in *Great Pianists Speak for Themselves*, "Intuition is important, so is talent. But, a teacher, a guide who helps you unfold and develop is absolutely necessary. Also, that teacher has to be the right teacher for you because the teacher-pupil relationship is a two-sided affair involving mutual responses. In a sense I worshipped Krause; I ate up everything he tried to put in front of me..."<sup>2</sup> This statement by Arrau exemplifies not only the growth of Arrau and the positive relationship with his mentor, Krause, but also the influence the teacher has on the artistic and creative life of the student. The over-riding principle of mutual trust and the teacher's firm belief in the student is most important. Indeed a teacher may influence a student in many ways not always realized during the student's formal period of private study. Arrau states that when he teaches he purposely tries to reinforce and stimulate the young artist's development in reading, theatre, art, classical literature, and psychology. His goal is to help develop a "cultured personality" that enables the performer to draw from many artistic sources.<sup>3</sup> This well of culture, beauty, and art can serve as a back-up and source of creative energy during the many different stages of an artistic career.

The "old school authoritarian" is how the great violin studio of Ivan Galamian was described by Barbara Sand in *Teaching Genius*.<sup>4</sup> Galamian's wife's nickname for his teaching studio was the "torture chamber".<sup>5</sup> Galamian taught tirelessly for ten hours each day and gave a thorough and autocratic grounding in technique and interpretation. Yet, his students knew that he wanted the best for them, and that they would become great players as a result of this rigor. Steinhardt, who studied with Galamian for many years, said, "He never threatened or cajoled - he had enormous presence. His basic feeling was that anybody could become a fine violinist. The stage was already set in his studio with all those photographs of Vieuxtemps and Corelli looking down at you..."<sup>6</sup> James Buswell, another student of Galamian said that he was "a man with an analytical mind who held a profound philosophy of order that he tried to instill in his students".<sup>7</sup> Buswell also spoke of the deep awe he felt for his teacher and how it inspired and colored his own work.<sup>8</sup> Itzhak Perlman, who studied with Galamian said, "With Galamian, there was almost no room for give and take, because he had a particular system that actually he applied to everybody. Some of his greatness lies in the fact that he could teach anybody, no matter how talented or untalented they were, how to play the violin very well. Some would be more inspired, some would be better, obviously, but they would be proficient at what they did when they studied with him. But he did apply the same method with almost no variations for everybody."<sup>9</sup> The flutist of my pre-college years, the renowned teacher, Harold Bennett, former Principal Flutist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, reminds me of this rather strict approach. He taught extensively by example and imitation and he insisted that students interpret

the masterpieces as he did, at least during the lesson period. Although as a relatively independent student, I challenged this approach at times, I did realize and genuinely appreciate the fact that it gave me a solid footing and understanding of flute technique and literature. Actually, Harold Bennett remarked that students could play the works as they saw fit in performance but that they had to learn them first *his way* so that he could impart a thorough technical and musical/interpretive foundation. Although a teacher of this stern and authoritarian manner may at first be intimidating to a student, the student realizes the depth of knowledge of the artist/mentor and understands the level of trust and support that exists between the teacher and himself. This trust and inspired example helps the student to practice well according to clear direction and to eventually develop his own sense of confidence and artistic personality.

A second type of pedagogical style involves having the student learn to think and analyze problems and solutions for himself rather than through strict adherence to an instructor's directions. The violin pedagogue, Dorothy Delay is a prime example of this type of teaching approach. In discussing her work with students, Delay said, "most of the time, I am sitting here thinking of things to say and then stopping myself from saying them."<sup>10</sup> She wanted to teach her students how to think and how to trust their ability to succeed. The essence of her approach consisted in asking the student to look for their own answers. For example, instead of criticizing a student's intonation and saying that a note such as F sharp is definitely out of tune, she would ask, "Sugarplum, what is your concept of F sharp?"<sup>11</sup> The student is thus put more at ease through the endearment of "sugarplum", and also through thinking of the pitch and its placement for himself. In discussing this method, Sand wrote, "Delay focuses on finding the roots of a problem, be it technical or interpretive, rather than in promoting its repetition. She had an extraordinary intuition for pinpointing what a student needs, and helping him in the course of time to discover it for himself. One benefit of this strategy is that the student, not incidentally, gained conviction and an individual style in the process of learning."<sup>12</sup> Delay also recognized the importance of being a supportive mentor. In speaking of the importance of the level of trust between a student and mentor, she said, "you have to know that you have been terribly important to one person at least—maybe more—but very important to one person who gives you tremendous support."<sup>13</sup> Delay believed that you get more from giving praise first and then asking for more in a spirit of encouragement and support. The teaching of the eminent flutist, Geoffrey Gilbert, has been described in the same way by Angeleita Floyd. She wrote, "Gilbert often began by offering a positive comment, which made his students more receptive to any critical comments that followed."<sup>14</sup> He also stimulated the students to analyze and resolve their own problems by asking questions that would enable them to think about their difficulties and to come up with their own solutions.<sup>15</sup> My teacher at the Eastman School of Music, Joseph Mariano, had a similar approach. He would often say that you are your own best teacher and that his ultimate goal was to make his students able to teach themselves. He wanted students to be aware of the learning process and to solve problems not through imitation alone, but through their intellectual and creative abilities. When his students practiced and strived to improve, they knew that their teacher's confidence and support were with them. It gave tremendous optimism and energy for the daily tasks of the conservatory. Even more importantly, those highest ideals of learning and musicianship remained intact, beyond the specific time of formal study, through memory and reflection. Both Gilbert and Mariano encouraged students to have a deep-seated trust in the teacher and to have confidence in their own abilities. These feelings of both confidence and support can carry a student over the many rough patches that so commonly occur not only during the years of intense

musical study at school but also during the entire life of artistic development.

Another approach incorporating many elements of the questioning style above is exemplified in the excellent and informative book, *With Your Own Two Hands*, by Seymour Bernstein.<sup>16</sup> Bernstein discusses an approach based upon mutual respect that encourages both **teacher and student**. He wrote, "Just as your teacher encourages your best self, you in turn strive to do the same for him...All relationships flourish in reciprocity...The most effective way in which you can encourage your teacher is by practicing."<sup>17</sup> Teachers find the most satisfaction and creativity when working with students at any level who care deeply and practice with desire and commitment. The sense of shared purpose, creative problem solving, and mutual respect are what cement the relationship between teacher and student. Bernstein believes that artistic endeavors extend beyond the teacher/student relationship to all creative and talented people who care about their art. He writes, "The degree to which you take your practicing seriously affects the others in this circle."<sup>18</sup> This author has indeed found this to be true. A committed and dedicated student can pull up the level of the entire studio through a committed example. At Eastman School of Music, Mariano taught that the students could learn best from each other. There was a spirit of collaboration and sharing among the students. Although, of course, jealousies did exist, we basically shared each others' achievements and tried to live up to our best selves. Mariano taught the students to hear and study excellence and then to reach for it each in our own way. Students were thus able to develop a personal style that expressed their unique personality. Masterclass instruction can also be useful in guiding students to complete a circle of shared practicing and development. Bernstein writes concerning the class format, "As a member of this musical family, each pupil felt motivated to perform his best, not only to present his own integrity, but also to benefit the others. This led the class as a whole to draw inspiration from the progress of its individual members. Thus, trying one's best became the solo criterion for such progress."<sup>19</sup> The summer flute class of Rampal attended by this author in 1972 had the same ambience. There was a sense of shared purpose and of the enjoyment of music and literature much more than an atmosphere of competition or judgement. After studying and observing Rampal's classes over many years, Sheryl Cohen wrote that in spite of honest critiques of each student's strengths and weaknesses, Marion and Rampal would routinely kiss each student on both cheeks at the start and conclusion of a lesson or class. In this physical way, they expressed the bond and caring that transcended the formal instructional time. Cohen wrote, "This love of music and people was the primary motivation behind the Rampal School."<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of which overall pedagogical approach is employed, a bond with a mentor is crucial to the overall growth of the student both in the defined field of musical performance and also in the larger sphere of continued creative and artistic development. Students at the university and conservatory level need the discipline and structure of an organized teacher but also need the connection and support of a true mentor: one who is involved in a personal way with their growth as a performer and artist. This bond often goes beyond the years at school and remains a source of internal inspiration and support throughout the creative life.

## ENDNOTES

Quantz, Johann Joachim, *On Playing the Flute* (NYC: Schimer, 1875) p. 18.

- <sup>2</sup> Mach, Elyse, *Great Pianists Speak for Themselves* (Mineola: Dover, 1991) p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Mach, p. 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Sand, Barbara Lourie, *Teaching Genius* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000) p. 48.
- <sup>5</sup> Sand, p. 48.
- <sup>6</sup> Sand, p. 49.
- <sup>7</sup> Sand, p. 50.
- <sup>8</sup> Sand, p. 50.
- <sup>9</sup> Sand, p. 57.
- <sup>10</sup> Sand, p. 71.
- <sup>11</sup> Sand, p. 58.
- <sup>12</sup> Sand, p. 64.
- <sup>13</sup> Sand, p. 69.
- <sup>14</sup> Floyd, Angeleita, *The Gilbert Legacy* (Cedar Falls: Winzer Press, 1990) p. 20.
- <sup>15</sup> Floyd, p. 20.
- <sup>16</sup> Bernstein, Seymour, *With Your Own Two Hands* (NYC: Schirmer, 1981)
- <sup>17</sup> Bernstein, p. 15.
- <sup>18</sup> Bernstein, p. 15.
- <sup>19</sup> Bernstein, p. 16-17.
- <sup>20</sup> Cohen, Sheryl, *Bel Canto Flute: The Rampal School* (Cedar Falls: Winzer Press, 2003) p. 6.

### *About the Author*

Andrea Kapell Loewy is Professor of Flute and Graduate Coordinator at the School of Music of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Principal Flute of the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra, directed by Mariusz Smolij. She is a frequent soloist with the orchestra and has performed and given master classes twice in China as a musical ambassador from the symphony. She holds the BM from the Eastman School of Music, the MM from Emporia State University, and DMA from the University of Memphis. Her teachers have included Joseph Mariano, Samuel Baron, Harold Bennett, John Heiss, and Bruce Erskine. Loewy played with the Mid-America Woodwind Quintet and was Co-Principal of the Orchestra of the State of Mexico. A faculty member at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette since 1985, she has held an Endowed Professorship since 1996 and in 1993 she received the Distinguished Professor Award. An extensive recitalist, Loewy recently was honored with an Artist Fellowship from the Louisiana Division of the Arts that provides funds for creative development. She has published many articles concerning flute pedagogy and technique and is currently Chair of the Newly Published Music Competition of the National Flute Association.