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A Comparative Analysis of the Writings and Technical Approach of Ludwig Deppe and His Contemporaries in Piano Pedagogy

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WRITINGS AND TECHNICAL APPROACH OF
LUDWIG DEPPE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES IN PIANO PEDAGOGY

by

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B.M. Illinois Wesleyan University, 2002

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Music Degree

Department of Music
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

by

Thomas Jay Novara

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

THOMAS NOVARA, for the Master of Music degree in PIANO PEDAGOGY, presented on 4/12/2014, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WRITINGS AND TECHNICAL APPROACH OF LUDWIG DEPPE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES IN PIANO PEDAGOGY.

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Cully Bell

The focus of this research paper is to examine the relatively unknown but pioneering teaching principles and technical approach of 19th century piano pedagogue Ludwig Deppe (1828-1890). A contemporary of Franz Liszt, Deppe maintained a well-respected private piano studio in Berlin for nearly a half-century and developed specific and refined playing techniques in numerous significant pianists of the era (including several of Liszt's students—both *before* and *after* their study with Liszt). The argument can easily be made that Ludwig Deppe is one of a handful of truly great 19th century piano pedagogues that are responsible for the cultivation and evolution of a modern piano technique (coinciding with the evolution of the instrument itself) and succeeded in inspiring many great pianists to fully exploit the vast sonic capabilities of the grand piano as we know it today.

The writings left by Ludwig Deppe himself are relatively modest in length, and consist mainly of a few journal articles, and some shorter works (as well as several musical compositions). However, several of his students have authored detailed and lengthy descriptions of their lessons with him and have written teaching treatises based on his teaching methods that also include observations from numerous master classes. Deppe intended to publish a large volume of his teaching ideology, but upon his death in 1890 the volume remained uncompleted. It was later finished and published as one of his final requests by Ms. Elisabeth Caland (one of his most dedicated students) in 1903. The difficulty with many of these sources today remains

the ability to find them. Many have not been reprinted since their original publication which was most often a small run and by an obscure publisher. Others (including most of Deppe's articles) were printed in short-lived musical journals which are long defunct today, and very difficult sources to find. However, the obscurity of these sources has nothing whatsoever to do with their quality of content and relevance to musical (specifically piano) history. Comparing and contrasting the keyboard and physiological concepts within them can be extremely beneficial for any pianist, either amateur or professional. Deppe's ideas directly led the way to most (if not all) concepts in our modern 20th century piano technique. They have remained invaluable to teachers and pianists alike, which successive generations of pedagogues have expounded and built upon to fill-out virtually all the mental and physiological concepts comprising modern piano technique.

This research paper seeks to examine Ludwig Deppe's teaching, performing, writing and its relevancy alongside other dominant technical theories developed in the 20th century that coalesce in currently accepted playing practice today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Deppe was born in 1828 in Alverdissen, Lippe-Detmold, Germany. He grew up basically in poverty, but as a young man remarkably managed to attend concerts and operatic performances at the local opera house by either saving his money for a ticket or being allowed to sneak in via a sympathetic usher. As a result, he gained great respect for all good singers and would hold them in high regard throughout his life. For a short time he studied with an amateur piano teacher, but would remain largely self-taught. This allowed him the freedom to begin developing his anatomical and physiological approach to the piano, for which he would become known as one of the finest teachers of piano and piano technique in Europe. After attaining a solid adolescent musical education, he soon left Alverdissen Lippe-Detmold to dedicate himself to formal music study in Hamburg. It was in Hamburg he began his lifelong teaching career. In 1862 he founded a well-respected vocal academy in Hamburg, and worked tirelessly as a distinguished performer, orchestra leader, composer, and conductor. His compositions (most notably a *Symphony in F major*, an *Overture to Zriny*, and an *Overture to Don Carlos*) were always well received in many major cities.

He also became well known and highly respected as a conductor for the Silesian Music Festivals held in Hamburg. Later, moving from Hamburg to Berlin, Deppe founded the private piano teaching studio that he is still lauded for today. Working with some of the finest piano students in Europe at the time, he formulated many of the pioneering principles of piano technique that are still applicable for modern pianists. His successful teaching is evident in the abilities and celebrated careers his students would go on to as performers and teachers in their own right. Long after his death, his students continued to exalt him in both their writings and

through numerous anecdotes they imparted to their students from the time they spent in his teaching studio.

In 1887, he was appointed Royal Kappellmeister and directed the Royal Opera in Berlin for three years until his death in 1890. He accepted this position so that he “might aid in the accomplishment, personal wishes, and artistic designs of Count Hochberg”¹ (in whose artistic ideals he saw much in common). Deppe was known throughout his life as being a first-rate conductor, yet it remains primarily his remarkable piano instruction for which he is highly regarded today.

Being a sought-after conductor made enormous demands of his time, but Deppe remained passionately committed to developing and maintaining the highest levels of artistic performance in his private piano studio pupils. His students were of the highest caliber, and he instilled in them a devotion to attain a supremely diverse tonal palette and reliable solid technical command of the keyboard—all, for the sake of the music alone. None other was acceptable. After four years of piano study abroad in Europe, Amy Fay (a student of no less than Franz Liszt, Carl Tausig, Theodore Kullak and Ludwig Deppe) writes²:

This season with Deppe has been of such immense importance to me that I don't know what sum of money I would take in exchange for it. By practicing in his method the tone has an entirely different sound, being round, soft and yet penetrating, while the execution of passages is infinitely facilitated and perfected. In fact, it seems to me that in time one could attain anything by it, but time it will have.

Amy Fay was introduced to Deppe in December of 1873³ at a musical party by another important American piano pedagogue William Sherwood (1854-1911) who, like Fay, had also

¹ *Zwei Jahre Capellmeister*, Ludwig Deppe.

² *Music Study in Germany, from the Home Correspondence of Amy Fay*. Edited by Fay Pierce, p. 12-16.

³ *Famous Pianists & Their Technique*, Reginald R. Gerig, p. 141

studied with a “who’s who” of great pianists of the era including Franz Liszt (1811-1886), Adolph Kullak (1832-1862), and Ludwig Deppe. He returned to America in 1876, and founded the Sherwood Music School in Chicago in 1897. Both Fay and Sherwood had observed Kapellmeister Deppe as a conductor on several occasions, and were aware of Deppe’s own piano study with the acclaimed teacher Adolph Marx (1795-1866) during a regular conducting engagement in Hamburg. Marx was a well-respected teacher who produced many fine students, the most notable of whom were Ludwig Deppe and Adolph Kullak. Both were exceptional musicians and had inherited from Marx a physical approach to the piano that emphasized melodic playing through use of the forearm and a flexible wrist combined with engagement of the whole body. Deppe took the concepts from his fruitful studies with Marx and developed them over several years into his own total physical and technical approach to playing the piano.

Deppe died in Berlin in September of 1890 and left behind a significant number of students who were eager and dedicated to carry on his work as a teacher. Two of the most notable were Fraulein Elisabeth Caland, and Charles Allen Ehrenfechter. Ehrenfechter was an English student (and absolute disciple) of Deppe, who published his own piano treatise *Technical Study in the Art of Pianoforte Playing (Ludwig Deppe’s Principles)* in 1891. In it, he demonstrates his near-religious commitment to teaching by building on many of the principles first brought together by Deppe. Elisabeth Caland (1862-1929) was also a student of Deppe who (according to Evelyn Sutherland Stevenson) was “endowed with a double-portion of her master’s spirit”.⁴ As one of Deppe’s final wishes, Ms. Caland was given approval by his widow to complete the comprehensive treatise on piano playing he left unfinished upon his death. It contains much valuable insight into his teaching style, and devotes at least one chapter (similar to Ehrenfechter’s treatise) to all of the individual physical elements that work together to comprise

⁴ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, (Forward)

a solid and complete (“Deppean” technique) approach to the keyboard able to accomplish any musical demands intended by the composer.

Several notable teachers of the era such as William Mason (1829-1908), Adolph Marx, Adolph Kullak, and even as early as Friedrich Wieck (1785-1873)—father/teacher of Clara Schumann—were early proponents of the same physiological principles that Deppe taught, but they were also known to have included various antiquated, irrelevant, and even physically damaging concepts as well. Poorer approaches to building technical ability (as could be observed in students of the so-called “Stuttgart” school founded by Sigismund Lebert (1822-1884) and Ludwig Stark (1831-1884) in the mid-1850s⁵) were counterintuitive to a free and relaxed synergy of all parts of the body which Deppe promoted strongly. The outdated and physically dangerous principles of the Lebert-Stark School would continue to pervade nineteenth century piano playing and teaching for many years to come. These relics, once prominent, were left over from an earlier era of keyboard playing when keyboard instruments were very different than the modern piano, and technique needed to evolve as well.

⁵ *Famous Pianists & Their Technique*, Reginald R. Gerig, p. 172

CHAPTER 2

THE ARGUMENT FOR A PRESSURE-BASED TECHNIQUE

It is worth noting what Amy Fay writes of her study under Ehlert at Tausig's Conservatory in Berlin (before she was introduced to Deppe):

You have no idea how hard they make Cramer's Studies here. Ehlert makes me play them tremendously *forte*, and as fast as I can go. My hand gets so tired that it is ready to break, and then I say that I cannot go on. "But you *must* go on," he will say. It is the same with the scales. It seems to me that I play them so loud that I make the welkin ring, and he will say "but you always play *piano*." And with all this rapidity he does not allow a note to be missed, and if you happen to strike a wrong note he looks so shocked that you feel ready to sink into the floor.⁶

The Lebert-Stark school at Stuttgart (typical of finger-based technique schools) became a self-perpetuating business phenomenon that thrived in part due to its own inadequacies. Students often found themselves lacking the physical abilities to do the (virtually impossible) gymnastics at the keyboard which were required of them. The school perpetuated itself with the idea that if what was being taught was too physically difficult or demanding to maintain (which undoubtedly it was), one just needed *more* of it to get into better shape—which is completely false and basically charlatanism.

A former pupil of the Royal Conservatory at Stuttgart, Charles J. Haake pointed out a few years after leaving that academy:

...a percussion touch was, as an entity, of more definite substance and form than a vague pressure playing, and method will always thrive on that that can be definitely projected

⁶ *Music Study in Germany, from the Home Correspondance of Amy Fay*. Edited by Mrs. Fay Pierce, p. 49

and prescribed. Also, the touch was easily developed: when more force was required, as to play sixths or octaves, the hand moved at the wrist as a hinge; for bravura effects the elbow became the hinge, whereby we had a complete hinge method that used the arm to the elbow, but did not recognize the free arm as a fundamental condition for a good technique.⁷

Indicative of the numerous technical fallacies promoted by Lebert and Stark, they produced a “method book”⁸ in 1856 that guaranteed success by progressing students in thirty-three degrees through etudes of Kullak, Brahms, Moscheles, Liszt, and Hiller among others. The four epically titled volumes were so well promoted that by 1870 no fewer than nineteen endorsements comprised the introduction to the first book.⁹ These commendations are from none other than Franz Liszt, Antoine Francois Marmontel from the Paris Conservatory, Ferdinand Hiller from the Cologne Conservatory, and Ignaz Moscheles from the Leipzig Conservatory. It is an interesting footnote in history that several of these endorsements came from great teachers who were not proponents of the poor teaching methods these volumes contain. To be clear, this series of books *does* share the musical ideals of all good teachers and musicians, but the methods prescribed to arrive at those ideals are highly questionable, and often ridiculous. For instance:

At first, play every piece slowly and forte throughout; in the beginning observe only the principal shadings, the *legato* and *staccato* in their different forms, and not until the piece can be executed without a mistake notice the lesser signs of expression. By a study of this kind a firm style of playing will be obtained.¹⁰

⁷ *A History of the Pianoforte and Pianoforte Players*, Oscar Bie, p. 22

⁸ *Grosse Klavierschule* (Grand Theoretical and Practical Piano School for Systematic Instruction in all Branches of Piano Playing from the First Elements to the Highest Perfection) 4 vols. 1856

⁹ *Famous Pianists & Their Technique*, Reginald R. Gerig, p. 131

¹⁰ *Grosse Klavierschule* (Grand Theoretical and Practical Piano School for Systematic Instruction in all Branches of Piano Playing from the First Elements to the Highest Perfection) 4 volumes, 1856

Instruction in this manner would likely lead to a cold, stiff, and probably boring playing technique. While in the short-term it may produce slight results, in the long run it would construct a barrier against expression and artistic goals. Ideas like this were predominant throughout much of the 19th century and were the type of playing that Deppe struggled against with many students.

A rigid, high-finger technique has more recently been debunked by several pianists and teachers in the 20th century such as Maria Levinskaya who writes of the Lebert-Stark school of playing:

From such teaching little more than a parody on correct finger work could arise, the essence of which was endless finger grinding, striking with force, stiffening the wrist, producing a jar of the hand, the tone getting sharp and hard, without any possibility of the true binding or any mellow sound connection.¹¹

Outdated technical approaches left-over from the characteristically lighter classical fortepianos may also be added to the list of complications that faced many 19th century pianists. As the design and sonic capabilities of the piano progressed, so too did the demands composers placed on performers. An antiquated approach to piano technique could possibly both physically harm a pianist, and undoubtedly arrive at an incorrect sound characteristic appropriate for the music being performed. Deppe worked tirelessly with students to awaken a keen sense of tonal beauty to all their work. As Ms. Caland writes, “Tone was to Deppe the guiding star whose vilifying rays must illuminate all technique, and no technique measured up to his standard unless it

¹¹ *The Levinskaya System of Pianoforte Technique and Tone-Color through Mental and Muscular Control*, Maria Levinskaya 1930, p.99

worked for—not against—the production of a broad, pure, and noble tone.”¹² Similar ideas were promoted by great Russian teacher Heinrich Neuhaus to students a generation later:

I urge pupils when studying a work and in order to master its most important aspects, the rhythmic structure, or the ordering of the time process, to do just what a conductor does with the score: to place music on the desk and to conduct the work from beginning to end as if it were played by someone else, an imaginary pianist with the conductor trying to impress him with his will, his tempo first of all, plus all the details of his performance.¹³

Deppe, similar to Neuhaus, believed in far more than just beautiful tonal production. To aid in comprehension of a complete work, Deppe recommended similar score study in the same manner suggested by Neuhaus.

Ludwig Deppe was among the first great teachers in history to examine what was necessary for beautiful sound production at the piano and pointed out what was wrong with the prevalent practices. He tirelessly worked with students to discover an individual solution capable of bridging the gap between the two. C. A. Ehrenfechter writes:

Talent is a gift. The mechanism is an acquirement. A wearisome task it is, this acquiring a good mechanism, this climbing up that steep Mount Parnassus, the top of which so few are destined to reach. The pianoforte has, in the short period of about fifty years been vastly improved, its dimensions enlarged, and the whole caliber is far stronger and more solid, the action is constructed on improved principles, the tone in consequence increased in power, rendered more massive, sonorous, and above all is now capable of gradations

¹² *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 10

¹³ *The Art of Piano Playing*, Heinrich Neuhaus, p. 64

formerly altogether unknown. What would have been thought of a composer in Mozart or Beethoven's time, who expected a performer to produce gradations from *ppp* to *fff*?¹⁴

In the preface to the *Inventionen*¹⁵, J. S. Bach (referring to the harpsichord and clavichord) desired the student “above all to obtain a cantabile style of playing.” When one is at the modern piano, this is equally important—if not more so. A singing tone at the piano is highly prized because it is only gained through the constant meticulous attention required to bring it about. A singing tone at the piano is also difficult because it is not brought about through the same physical means as a singer or violinist, etc., and is actually quite an unnatural process to make happen. The action of the piano has evolved remarkably since its invention circa 1700-1720 by Bartolomeo Christofori. To this day, this remarkably complicated instrument remains classified in the Hornbostel-Sachs system as a percussion instrument because it remains essentially a hammer striking a string. It is only with much dedicated relentless work will a student be able to control this aspect of the piano. Pianists (unlike vocalists or violinists, etc.) seemingly find their notes “ready-made” and the keys lying directly below their hand. This leads to the idea that tone (of some sort) is easily produced, with deceptive ease. Deppe was often quoted: “for piano playing alone, there remains something *more* to be done.”¹⁶ He regarded the piano as better adapted than any other instrument to eventually render a true artist. Ernest Hutcheson and Rudolph Ganz write:

Instead of being ashamed of the fact [percussiveness], it should be one of our aims to take the greatest possible advantage of it whenever proper occasion presents itself. It is

¹⁴ *Technical Study in the Art of Pianoforte Playing (Deppe's Principles)*, 1891, p. 19

¹⁵ *Inventionen Und Sinfonien*, p. 1 (Edition Peters, Nr. 4201)

¹⁶ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland. p. 14

precisely the extraordinary variety of effect possible between extremes of tone and quality that gives the piano its peculiar character and value.¹⁷

Deppe believed that when the hand and fingers are sustained and reinforced by free movements of the arm and by the cooperative working of the muscles of the upper arm and back, then not only will the tone quality be rendered far more intense and vital, but playing in this manner will propagate a wholesome distribution of effort over every part of the playing apparatus from shoulder to fingertip. The idea of properly “carrying the hand by the arm” is the basic premise of many of Deppe’s concepts. Using this premise (enabled horizontal curvilinear movements) aids in ultimately arriving at a beautiful singing tone by the pianist, instead of an uncontrolled series of unlovely jerks, incoherent playing, blurred chord structure, potential wrong notes, and faulty rhythm or tempo due to unrelaxed movement from the pianist. Failure to “carry the hand by the arm” will, in short, restrict freedom of movement. This may lead to unnecessary movement, which has the potential to develop bad playing habits in a student.

¹⁷ *The Elements of Piano Technique*. Ernest Hutcheson and Rudolph Ganz, 1907, p. 107

CHAPTER 3

DEPPIAN TECHNIQUE

Deppe believed a good technique was one which greatly reduced fatigue, and promoted endurance physically—as well as displayed artistic beauty. One of his favorite mottos was this phrase: “When it *looks* pretty, then it is right.” Certainly, it should be stated that he did not believe art should obtrude its purpose, or look pretty for its own sake. His definition of *pretty* meant simply making use of just those movements which are absolutely necessary to the clear setting forth of a musical idea (known today as “economy of movement”). This would include elimination of all incoherent or doubled (“simultaneous”) movements as well. Friedrich Wieck wrote “pure, genuine beauty is always synonymous with simplicity,” and is equally true of music and musicians today. A Deppian technique could be said to include all that is necessary to allow a pianist to fully exploit the sonoric capabilities of the instrument—including the elimination of all that does not. A pianist with a properly trained technique can easily give prominence to any voice within a chord at will—which is essential to any good performance of music from Bach to Brahms and beyond.

In 1885, Deppe published *Armleiden des Klaverspielers* (“Ailments of the Arm among Pianists”)¹⁸. This article (originally published in 1855) explained how the lack of good piano instruction was responsible for the strains and tensions that developed in many pianists. Deppe explains in this article his intention to publish a large volume of piano studies (which was later completed by Elisabeth Caland after his death) that would not only include finger exercises, but also exercises for “strengthening the shoulder and arm muscles.”

¹⁸ *Neue Zeitschrift für Music* Vol. 70, p. 315 (reprinted from 1855)

Deppe believed the wrist should be “as light as a feather.”¹⁹ Numerous students have recounted how he would shake their hand before a lesson, and if the wrist was not supple and loose, he would ask that they leave the room and re-enter until it was, and only then would they begin work at the piano. Deppe writes that “the “feather-light hand, freely supported and carried by the arm; correct and logical hand-and-arm positions; the production of tone through a seeming “free-fall” of arm, hand, or finger; the curvilinear movement in tone-production and tone-uniting; and the mentally-controlled contraction of the hand, always demanding an instant, elastic, lateral movement of the wrist”²⁰ are all required for properly playing any type of music at the piano.

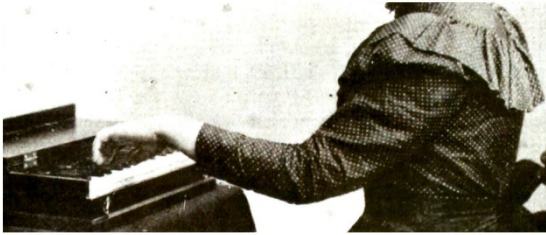
Deppe had an illuminating exercise to aid in becoming hyper-aware of the muscles that are used in playing the piano which Ms. Caland describes in her (/his) book. He would suggest that new students studying with him sit comfortably and relaxed at the keyboard. Then, raise their left or right arm and hand as high as they comfortably could in the air with the shoulder and wrist remaining relaxed. Holding this position for a brief moment, he would ask the student to become acutely aware of the muscles in the fingers, wrist, forearm, shoulder, and back. He would then have the student lower the shoulder, arm, and hand very slowly to the position it would comfortably sit on the keyboard. The goal of this exercise is to make the student acutely aware of all muscles and how they come into play on the entire distance down to the keyboard, and it also aided in understanding Deppe’s “controlled free fall” concept. Ms. Caland summarizes the exercise:

¹⁹ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 21

²⁰ *Armleiden des Klavierspielers*. Reprinted in *Neue Zeitschrift für Music* Vol. 70, p. 315. Ludwig Deppe.

During the whole course of this exercise, concentrate the entire attention on the action of the muscles of the back and shoulder, in order to gain a vivid and conscious perception of the truth that these muscles do work conjointly in the task of carrying and sustaining the arm.²¹

She explains that unless this exercise is undertaken seriously and done deliberately and regularly it will be of little value in highlighting the sensation which proves the cooperative working of the muscles considered. Ms. Caland demonstrates the exercise:



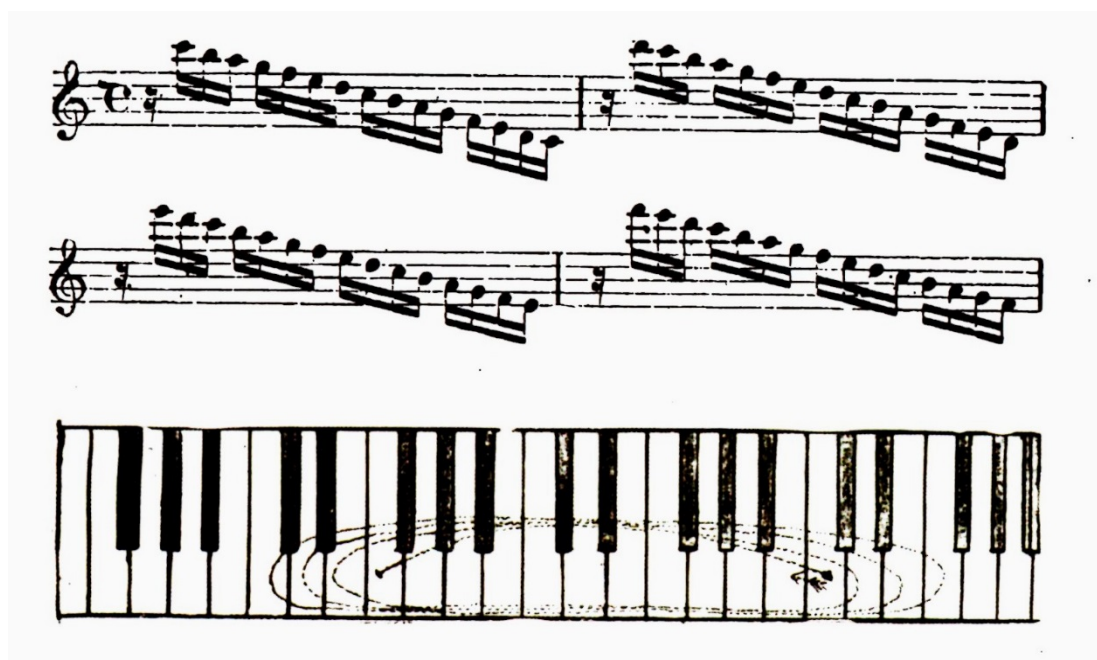
(reprinted from: *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 39)

Figure 1

²¹ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 20

After completing this exercise several times, Ms. Caland then recommends lifting the arm and shoulder once more and leaving them suspended in the air again with a loose and supple wrist. She then suggests “by a conscious use of the shoulder and back muscles, describe slow circular movements with the entire arm, moving it freely in the shoulder socket, and allowing the hand to hang loosely from the wrist.”²²

While doing this exercise, one should mentally imagine playing the passage below, to impart the proper motion:



(reprinted from: *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 39)

Figure 2

Ms. Caland also indicates Deppe’s suggestion to practice these exercises in front of a mirror occasionally to gain a sense of what they look like in action and feel like to perform. She writes that “in like manner, each curvilinear movement should create the impression that it is involuntary—that it is the natural outgrowth of the music, and not something forced or

²² *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 21

extraneous.” The French philosopher Paul Souriau best known for his work in aesthetics writes “it often happens that what one takes to be a single curve is, in reality, a series of different curves.”²³ Indeed this is true of the exercise above. Whether performing the motions suspended in the air or playing at a keyboard, Deppe wanted students to realize *all* the series of curves that should be present in any pianist’s playing. Being aware of these simultaneous movements is intrinsic to any music-making and is critical to judging weight and counterweight; how they occur to the body, and how the body affects them. This is no more critical than when one is playing a legato passage. Ms. Caland quotes Deppe: “The binding of tones should be in *the hand itself*.”—that is, there must be a conscious realization of the fact that real tone-producing power resides in the alternate movements of expansion and contraction of the hand. Amy Fay explains:

Deppe’s playing method avoids throwing the hand out of position, and the smoothness and rapidity of the scale is much greater. The direction of the hand in running passages is always a little oblique. When Deppe was explaining this to me, I suddenly remembered that when Liszt was playing scales or passagework, his fingers seemed to lie across the keys in a slanting sort of way, and he executed these rapid passages almost without any perceptible motion.²⁴

Deppe had several general exercises he prescribed to every student (such as the arm lift, etc.) but, like Leschetizsky, he never claimed to have a “method” and believed that his ideas about piano pedagogy should be applied to students individually depending on their specific physical apparatus and level of advancement. George Kochevitsky, in his book *The Art of Piano Playing* writes:

²³ *L’Esthetique du mouvement*, Paul Souriau, 1889

²⁴ *Music Study In Germany*, Amy Fay, p. 291

Certainly, every piano teacher should have his method, for absence of method in pedagogy means chaos. But the use of some definite method in piano pedagogy by no means excludes an individual approach to each student. Such an approach, which requires a certain flexibility, appears to be just one of the features of any true method in piano pedagogy.

While not a general “method” per se, Ms. Caland explains several “Deppian exercises” in her book that were prescribed to all of Deppe’s students. These exercises are still relevant for students today—though the language is somewhat antiquated.

“First place the hand upon the keyboard in the manner of the preliminary exercise, and with the fingers on the same keys. Then raise the fifth finger a very little from its key (*the other fingers remaining poised lightly on their respective keys*), but be careful not to raise it too high, else there will result a “crack” in the muscles, and, according to Deppe, there will be a consequent interruption of the connection between hand and arm. By a direct effort of the will maintain the finger in its elevated position for a moment; then, by a single, quick, decisive movement bring it onto the key below. The finger should not be thrown onto the key, nor should the tone be the result of a push or blow thereon; on the contrary, the movement should be so direct, so rapid, *so devoid of all outward appearance of effort*, as to give the impression that the finger has simply been allowed to fall of its own weight upon the key. Deppe always repeated: *DO NOT STRIKE, let the fingers fall.*” Ms. Caland goes on to explain: “Each separate finger, quite unaffected by the task which its neighbor has to perform, must carry out with perfect independence the commands transmitted to it from the brain. In this manner one may, by watchful observation,

obtain an exact idea of the extent to which his fingers actually work under the *conscious* direction of the will.”²⁵

Ms. Caland also explicates another exercise Deppe required all students to study: “The next step is to use two fingers simultaneously—under precisely the same conditions as the first—in producing the thirds B-D; B-D; A-C; A-C; G-B; G-B, etc., this preparing the hand for binding together, as smoothly as if they were single tones, the thirds B-D, A-C; A-C, G-B, etc. The left hand goes through the same exercises, two octaves lower on the keyboard, except that the fifth finger, instead of the thumb, rests on the key G. It will be found that the effect of the work performed is, in a measure, communicated from one hand to the other, with beneficial result; and, since the hands go through the same exercises, under identical conditions, it follows that they are finally brought under absolutely equal control. These finger exercises—*the only ones Deppe prescribed*—form the daily bread of the Deppean pupil, and even a very advanced player will prove that they constitute, when practiced with deliberation and accuracy, an unrivaled means of discipline for hands and fingers.”²⁶

The great London pianist and educator Max Pauer (1866-1945)—whose father studied with Mozart’s son, and whose mother was a member of the renown Streicher piano manufacturing family of Vienna—writes: “The smallest technical exercise must have its own direction, its own aim. Nothing should be done without some definite purpose in view.”²⁷ Pauer elaborates, “The old idea of attempting to play every single study written by Czerny, Cramer, or other prolific writers of studies is a huge mistake. They are at best only the material with which one must work for a certain aim, and that aim should be high artistic results [...] It should be realized by all students and teachers that study material, even excellent in itself, may actually produce bad

²⁵ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 29

²⁶ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 20

²⁷ *Great Pianists on Piano Playing*, James Francis Cooke, p. 203

habits if not properly practiced. I have repeatedly watched students practicing industriously, but becoming worse and actually cultivating faults rather than approaching perfection. It is, of course, desirable that the young student pass through a certain period of strict discipline, but if this discipline succeeds in making an automaton, of what earthly use is it?”²⁸

While Deppe did not reject any Czerny or Hanon style exercises altogether, he also did not believe in playing them only in the manner which they are written either. According to Ms. Caland, Deppe was in favor of using such “exercises” as a supplement to a lesson for a few weeks. He did not believe in their regular use, but certainly would integrate them as a tool in lessons—if they might be beneficial. Ms. Caland also describes how Deppe would have suggested use of these types of exercises or scales to help a student move from one technique to another for sound characteristics. He would require a student to play a combination of staccato, legato, slurred, or any other pattern within the same exercise. He never suggested students use these as mere finger gymnastics, and would only prescribe them assuming they would be given as much careful attention as any composition a pupil would be studying otherwise.

Deppe and (to an even greater extent) Leschetizsky were two great 19th century teachers who were often burdened by lesser pianists trying to cash in on their “methods” by studying a handful of lessons with either man, then publishing a book which purported to offer the secrets to the success of these two great teachers. Amy Fay—having studied with both men—recalled their disappointment and anger upon learning how many charlatans purporting to be experts in teaching the Leschetizsky or Deppe “method”, especially as neither teacher had any such prescribed method, and actually found it to be counterproductive²⁹. It should be noted that Amy Fay, Elizabeth Caland and Charles Allen Ehrenfechter all wrote several books describing

²⁸ *Great Pianists on Piano Playing*, James Francis Cooke, p. 203

²⁹ *Music Study in Germany, from the Home Correspondence of Amy Fay*. Edited by Mrs. Fay Pierce.

Deppe's teaching and describing their own lessons with him. However, it was only to explain his teaching philosophies and why they also believed them to be critically important. These texts were not written to cash in on their master's ideas as much it was to distill and promote them for a larger public who would never have the good fortune to study with Deppe himself.

“To play good music, and at the same time study the piano very badly—such is the fate of the average pianist” wrote Friedrich Wieck.³⁰

Deppe believed that even the shortest and simplest piece of music might—and should—be played with such artistic grace and finish as to turn it into a masterpiece. Ms. Caland explains Deppe's belief:

In view of the all-too-prevalent virtuosity, which, taking technique as its main object, effectually removes it from its true sphere as a servant of art. The majority of modern pianists concentrate their attention in large measure upon the exterior means of execution, the result being that rapidity and brilliancy, dash and *bravura*, have been developed and elaborated to an extraordinary degree. On the other hand, the cultivation of a thoughtful, sincere, and reflective style of playing—so essential if one would render the imperishable works of the old masters in their original integrity and purity—has suffered from proportionate neglect.³¹

She further makes the accurate prediction that “this state of affairs brings to mind the words of Hans Von Bulow, quoted by Pfeiffer: Mozart is terribly difficult; a time will come—perhaps very soon—when a Mozart sonata will find more favor in the concert hall than Liszt's Rigoletto Fantasia.”³²

³⁰ *Piano and Song: How to teach, how to learn, and how to form a judgment of musical performances*, Friedrich Wieck, p. 6

³¹ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 13

³² *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 13

Students recalled Deppe saying “when it looks pretty [meaning natural], then it is right.” This simple statement would appear to be unassuming on the surface, but actually describes much of what is at the root of Deppe’s teaching. In early stages, students may situate themselves at the piano naturally and prepare themselves to play their first notes. From that point on in piano study, what occurs is that students encounter a problem of pianistic movement. They will depart from that fundamental position in an effort to overcome a musical issue. Many teachers will let a student lapse in keeping a natural poise at the keyboard to navigate a passage so long as it provides a workable outcome. Unfortunately it may suffice in the short-term, but often these (even slight) habits grow into much larger ones. Students will later have to overcome these difficulties if they are to be successful when performing more complicated passages, or if they desire finer control of their playing. Deppe’s student Hermann Klose writes regarding a masterclass with Deppe:

The concentration of musical sensitiveness in the fingertips is a faculty which only thoughtful practice can develop. This sensation may be compared, in some degree, to that experienced by a performer on a stringed instrument; that is to say, a similarly close and intimate connection should exist between the fingers of a pianist and the keys of the piano. As a helpful exercise in this direction, Deppe required his pupils frequently to hold a rubber ball in the hand, lightly pressing it meanwhile with the fingertips, thus arousing and strengthening a delicate touch perception, and developing “consciousness” (*bewusstsein*) in the extremities of the fingers. This exercise served at the same time another purpose, for the muscles of the palm, being called into play to hold the ball firmly in the hollow of the hand, gained thereby an added power. Little by little, this sensibility will reach higher development, and the “mutual discipline of hands and brain,” as Deppe

termed it, will gradually receive more thorough understanding; then the bud will unfold into the beautiful and consummate flower.³³

Klose then goes on to quote poet and philosopher Friderich Schiller: “It should never be forgotten that apparently insignificant trifles may have great results, seeing that the materials for the most marvelous building must first be accumulated grain by grain.”³⁴

Deppe taught students to release all tension in the upper body, and to keep a quiet hand while playing. While the upper body should be free of tension, it should also remain sensitive and acutely aware of the muscles of the torso, back, shoulders, and upper arm to freely “carry” the rest of the playing apparatus as quickly as necessary, and therefore gracefully as possible. He believed that the hand must be freed from the hampering weight of the arm. The lightness and freedom imparted to the hand occurs through the use of the shoulder and arm muscles that support and carry the hand. Deppe expressed that the elbow should be “like lead”—that is it should always be held as if a weight were adherent to its underside. Ms. Caland writes: “As for the unnecessary movements referred to, they may be totally avoided by the use of a low piano chair, and, as this also ensures the cooperation of the essential muscles in the back and shoulder, the student is able to give all his attention to preventing hand or forearm from leaving the proper pose.”³⁵ Movement comprehensively controlled in this manner will allow a pianist the maximum physical possibilities and least likelihood of an uncontrolled mistake through eliminating unnecessary movement: leaping radically, or otherwise posture adjustment during playing.

³³ Die Deppe'sche Lehre des Klavierspiels, dargestellt, Hermann Klose, p. 18

³⁴ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 31

³⁵ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 40

Once the torso and upper body are trained well enough that it is second nature to remain in steady but relaxed control, complete attention can be given to the rest of the physical playing apparatus (forearm, wrist, hand, fingers) that will actually touch and act upon the instrument. This is a complex subject because there are many different types of “touch” that have developed over many years coinciding with the evolution of the piano itself. The endless formal “methods” of the era lacked the ability (previously discussed) to account for the characteristics of different individuals, and to understand how the entire body (should) act upon the piano.

Even a pianist as late as the great Artur Schnabel could recall an early teacher placing coins upon his wrists before he would begin to play scales. If he played them very rigidly and rapidly so that the coins did not fall, they were given to him as a reward.³⁶ This type of useless tactic was left over from the early classical era technique and was not only ridiculous and defunct by the mid-19th century, but probably caused much physical damage, and was absurd to still be promoting past the manufacturing of late-period fortepianos.

Those persons who were fortunate enough to hear Deppe himself play, were impressed by his humble lack of showmanship, and his strong dedication to faithfully following the score and the composers intentions. His technique appeared *not* effortless, but controlled, relaxed, and natural. (The same was said of his conducting technique, which implies that he approached both with the same pious desire to adhere to his artistic objectives.)

There are various routes pianists can take to achieve an ideal tone color and sound required for the repertoire which they are playing. Deppe believed the ideal musician should have a complete command of any and all of them rather than trying to focus on just one type to accomplish all styles of music. As George Kochevitsky succinctly writes: “technical perfection should be measured not by the degree of a pianist’s mastery over this or that technique, but by

³⁶ *My Life and Music*, Artur Schnabel, p. 161

the correspondence between his artistic intentions and the means of their realization.”³⁷ Very few of even the best teachers at the time were promoting use of a mélange of several different technical methods. (Frederick Wieck, Clara Schumann’s father, was among the very first.)

We read numerous testimonials from students like Amy Fay regarding Deppe’s ability to work out and solve complicated technique issues which other teachers left students to linger with indefinitely. This was assuredly due to his ability to look at the problem rationally and solve it with the most common sense approach. Schopenhauer writes in *Das Objekt der Kunst* that “grace consists in this, that each movement, each change of position, shall be effected in the easiest, best-adapted, and least constraining manner.” These words from a great philosopher are as equally true of the sciences, especially physics, as they are of proper piano technique.

The great teacher Maria Levinskaya also promoted diverse and varied use of many technical approaches. She describes in the chart below the pros and cons of the older “finger school” and the more modern weight methods such as those taught by Breithaupt, Deppe, or Matthay. Both systems have merit, but comprehension of when and how to employ any variation of the two is critical to allowing a pianist full sonoric possibilities and capabilities.

³⁷ *The Art of Piano Playing*, George Kochevitsky, p. 22

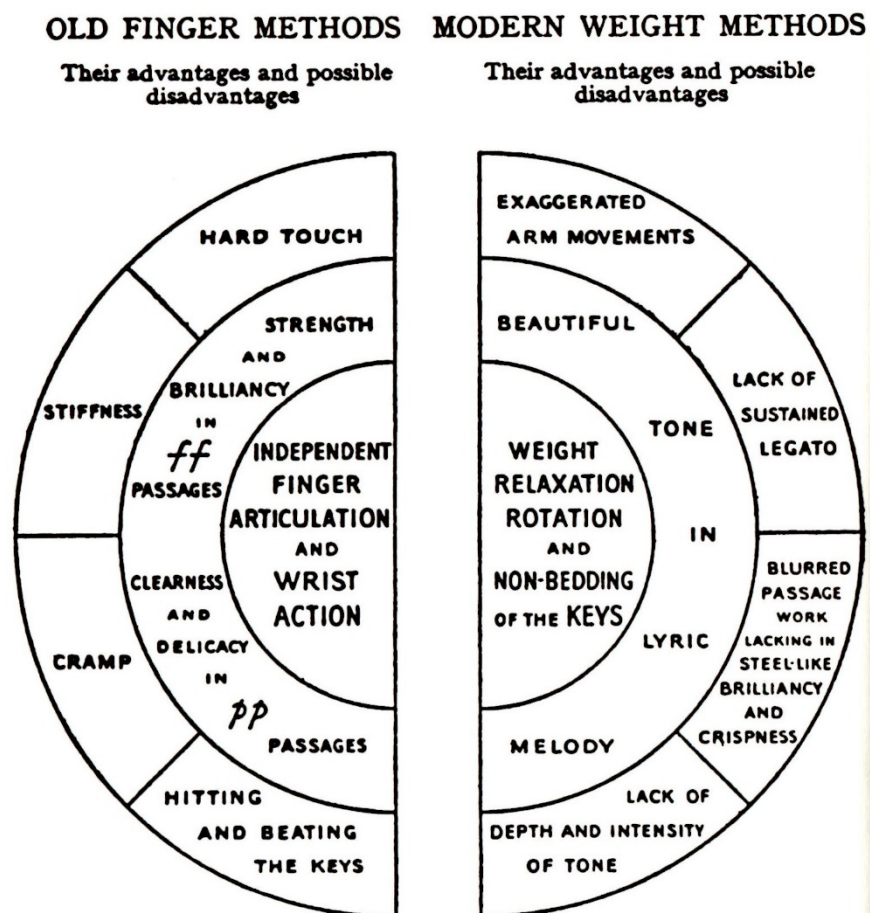


FIG. I.—DESCRIPTION OF THE DIAGRAM

THE SEMI-CIRCLES are intended to represent the two halves (the old and the new) of the complete Art of Piano Playing.

INSET—The leading principles on which each is based.

INNER BAND—The outstanding qualities of each.

OUTER BAND—The frequent failings through lack of scientific knowledge.

(reprinted from *The Levinskaya System of Pianoforte Technique and Tone-Colour through Mental and Muscular*

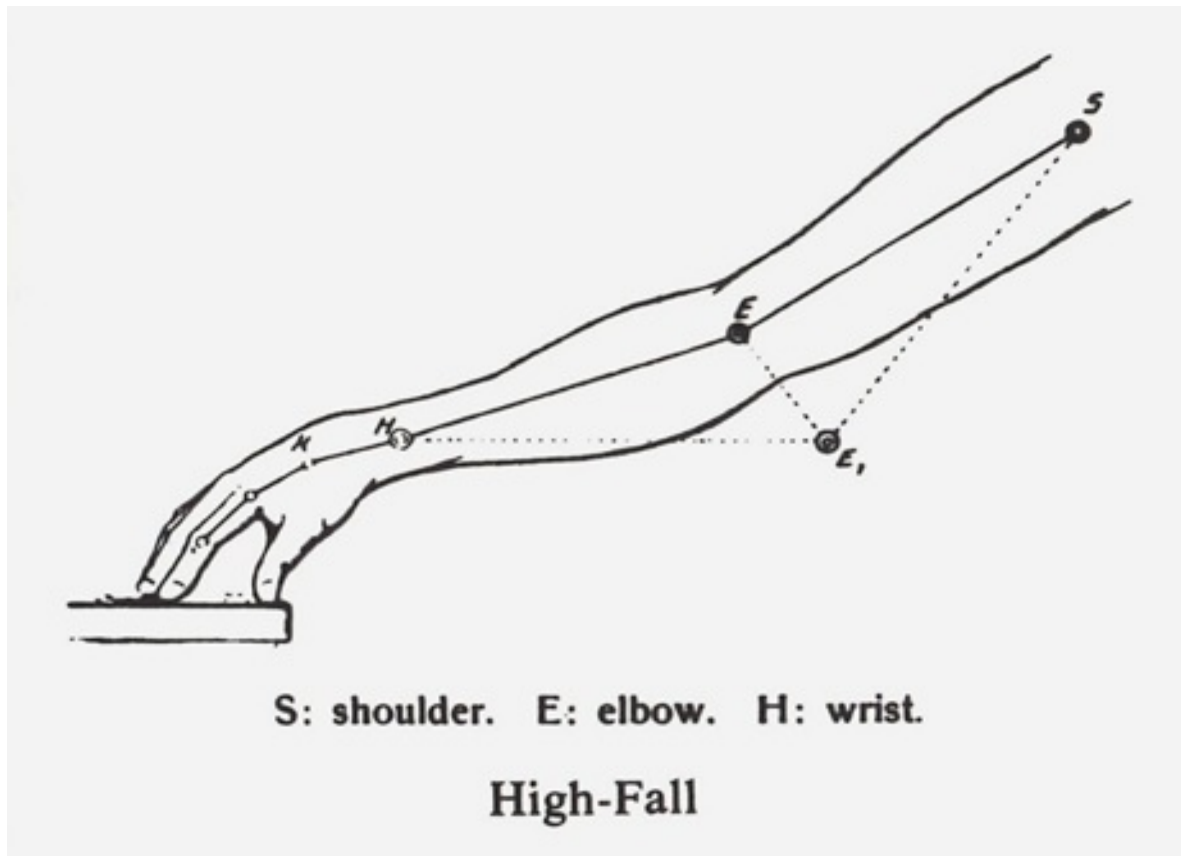
Control by Maria Levinskaya, 1930)

Figure 3

Another seemingly inconsequential but crucial issue raised by Deppe (and still rigorously debated today) is the position of the seat at the piano. Ms. Caland recounts that Deppe believed that “a low chair for use at the piano is an indispensable requirement: its height should be so regulated that, when the hand rests in the proper position on the keys, the line formed by the forearm is an *ascending* one, and the level of the white keys is seen to be somewhat above that of the elbow.”³⁸ Deppe considered a low seat at the piano to be critically important because it facilitates the necessary proper cooperation of the back and shoulder muscles along with those of the arms.

Carl Maria Breithaupt, whose excellent graphics have been used throughout this paper, also believed in employing a low seat at the piano after observing many pianists in performance himself. He had the unique ability to observe what worked best for various pianists due to their personal physical attributes, and wrote extensively about how the anatomy of the human body physically operated. His easily understood line drawings lack a formal education of anatomy and physiology, but are easy to understand and clearly communicate his theories.

³⁸ *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 21-22



(reprinted from *Natural Piano Technique, School of Weight-Touch, II* p. 19, Rudolph M. Breithaupt)

Figure 4

When a performer sits high, it is inevitable that at least part of the weight of the arm must be borne by the fingers. In these circumstances, the hand at once becomes heavy and it is logical Deppe insisted that only a low seat should be employed at the piano.

Deppe believed that carrying of the wrist was the preferable mechanism for foundation of good technique. However, he also believed that it could also easily become a burden as well if used poorly. Deppe believed the wrist should guide the hand but remain sturdy enough and not be overlooked or allowed to become uncontrolled. The antithesis of this thinking was taught by the “Stuttgart school” where it was believed the wrist should be basically a hinge at the end of a stiff upper body and arm. It is remarkable that any good artist or teacher would actually believe

this poor technique to be all that is required for the power necessary to play bravura effects, and when lacking—as it certainly would be—one needed simply to sufficiently strengthen it. This is almost always untrue and an easy way to cause physical ailments to a pianist. Deppe thought of the wrist as an “orbital hinge” but not merely in its own right. It was only beneficial combined with proper use of the entire upper body to bring about a complete and unfailing technique. This *complete* physical technique will conquer any single passage, and/or artistic desires when developed properly and regularly each and every time a pianist touches the instrument.

The position of the seat at the piano greatly affects the proper use of the wrist, and is why Deppe (and his students) concentrated on and wrote so strongly about it. In 1885 Deppe published a short essay titled *Armleiden des Klavierspielers* in a music journal. He makes his case for the low seat:

In my opinion the principal reason for the frequently occurring arm strain in pianists is the seat at the instrument being too high. The pianist should sit so that the forearm from the elbow to the wrist will be slightly raised—in this way the hand will remain free from any oppressive influence of the elbow and the horizontal scale movements can be easily accomplished.

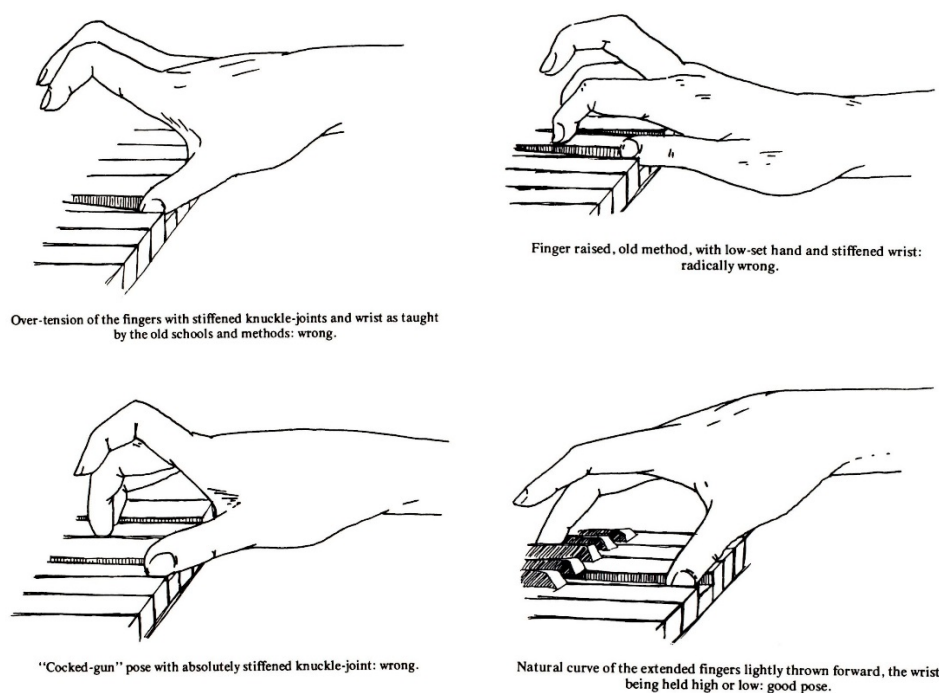
In response to this statement, most pianists will immediately raise the question: “How then, when one is sitting so low, can fullness of tone be brought out? One cannot properly strike the keys in this manner.”

He goes on to say:

My tone production does not develop through striking, but solely through the weight of the hand, through simple movements of lifting and falling, with quiet, relaxed fingers. The tone produced in this manner is not only more refined but also more intense in

character, resulting in a more penetrating sound than the one which is struck. The former tone does not come about through more or less forced, nerve-irritating muscle action; it forms itself much more in complete response, without an inner or outer excitement—so to speak—with conscious unconsciousness.³⁹

The low seat Deppe is advocating for opposes the finger-hitting and tensions of the Lebert-Stark school and advocates a free and relaxed production of tone. Several of those incorrect hand positions are shown below.



(reprinted from *Natural Piano Technique, School of Weight-Touch, II* p. 49, Rudolph M. Breithaupt)

Figure 5

The argument for a low seat at the piano is one of the most well-explained points made by Deppe in the relatively small amount of writing he left us. His examples, which would later be expounded on by both his students and the future great teachers of piano are absolutely indispensable, and have paved the way for many pianists to solve many of their incorrect playing

³⁹ *Neue Zeitschrift für Music* [Google Translate] Vol. 70, 315.

issues by carefully considering this single issue alone. They are a critical first step in conquering the many other technical playing issues that pianists face today in our struggle to achieve the ideal synergy which is absolutely crucial for great piano playing, and rendering the true intent of the composer on the printed page.

CHAPTER 4

DEPPE'S LEGACY

Ludwig Deppe demonstrated an outstanding ability to *solve* technique problems in students, and to propagate the elements of a total and complete piano technique through careful consideration of how the human body works. He was one of the first pioneering teachers seriously to consider how the human body works and acts itself. If we were to similarly consider the act of running previous teachers had, even in the best cases, repeatedly concerned themselves with strengthening the legs alone. Deppe, using this analogy, thought of not just the legs, but how the entire body comes into play: endurance, proper shoes, general physical health, mental preparation, various types of running (sprints, distance, etc.). Up to that point in the history of the piano, almost nobody had considered much about keyboard technique beyond the strength of just fingers alone. This was a strange anomaly in musical history, as every other instrument (strings, voice, etc.) had long developed proper and complete consideration of all the elements that should come into play to form a “proper technique” capable of performing any type of music that might be required. One possible explanation may be the relatively fast manufacturing developments of the instrument itself. In little more than 80 years, the piano went from barely a pianoforte, to basically the concert grand piano we know today. Previously, there existed harpsichord, clavichord, and organ techniques (the earliest of which excluded use of the thumb altogether). In slightly over two generations, keyboards and keyboard technique would change immensely. All considering, it is probably not so enigmatic that it took a while for old ways to die out, and new ones to develop and become standard performance practice.

Deppe's ideas were certainly pioneering and fundamental to piano technique and pedagogy. After his death, several great teachers (even scientists) would take up many of the principles of

piano playing he first brought to the forefront, and expand and build upon them further. In terms of technique alone, an abundance of technical methods emphasizing arm function and physiology appeared after Deppe's death in 1890.

Several Deppe pupils along with Friedrich Adolf Steinhausen, Tony Bandmann, Alexander Ritschl, Eugen Tetzl, and Rudolf Maria Breithaupt were active in Germany, while the students of Leschetizsky were busy in Vienna, and Tobias Matthay and William Townsend in England. Even in the United States, William Mason and Theresa Careno were building upon much of the groundwork which Deppe laid.

In Germany, the giant (a dubious one) of the subject was Rudolf Maria Breithaupt. He was a significant pianist, but mostly concerned himself with writing and observing other pianists. His two major theoretical volumes comprising *The Natural Piano Technic I & II* were published in 1905, and between 1916 and 1921 he published *Practical Studies*. Breithaupt's writing was translated into several languages which significantly increased their popularity. They almost exclusively describe the benefits of a "weight-touch" (as described by Deppe), for which he seems highly reluctant to credit Deppe directly—even going so far as to refer to him as "that much-despised Hofkapellmeister Deppe"⁴⁰ in a personal letter. Breithaupt had very few original ideas, but instead compiled some of the better ones from several great pianists of the era such as Theresa Careno (who supposedly coined the term "weight-touch" after discussions with Ferruccio Busoni). Breithaupt often is reluctant to give credit when it is due, and the first to take credit for the ideas of others by being the first to formally publish them. However, Breithaupt's work displays good diagrams and examples of the technical matters his writing examines (several have been reproduced here), although they often suffer from lacking formal knowledge of anatomy and physiology. All considered however, it can be concluded that much of what Breithaupt

⁴⁰ *Famous Pianists & Their Technique*, Reginald R. Gerig, p. 334

distills and emphasizes about weight-touch, is directly taken from the ideas put forth by Deppe who was the first teacher concerned with the role of weight in piano playing.

Another teacher and innovator (of the so-called “Russian” school) who expounded and built on the groundwork Deppe laid was Maria Levinskaya. Her work was inclusive of many of the ideas of Deppe and Breithaupt—who was writing slightly before her—and in 1930 she published *The Levinskaya System of Pianoforte Technique and Tone-Colour through Mental and Muscular Control*. Her unfortunately often-overlooked volume is remarkable in that it seeks to combine the best of many technical theories—including a sturdy examination of the concepts originally introduced by Ludwig Deppe. In this book, she is religiously unbiased and makes common-sense unadorned arguments for application of the ideas she puts forth (or refutes).

Her writing regarding the work of others in pedagogy is refreshingly blunt, candid, and unopinionated. The examples and explanations in her treatise are easy to understand and make perfect sense. Like Deppe, she argues for using the simplest and most obvious common sense approach to any technique issue and is the champion of striving to reduce any unnecessary variable or movements in pianists’ technique. She embraces any and all possibilities but is discerning about which is the best solution and why. Her work was highly regarded by Josef and Rosina Lhevinne, as well as Vasily Safonov—with whom she studied at the famed Moscow Conservatory, along with a who’s who of great twentieth century pianists. Pianists who have lauded her book include Josef and Rosina Lhevinne, Abram Chasins, Adele Marcus, Sascha Gorodnitzski, Josef Raieff, John Browning and Van Cliburn. Below is a page from her book explaining the preference for combining the best of several sound production methods as well as why others should be eliminated as undesirable possibilities.

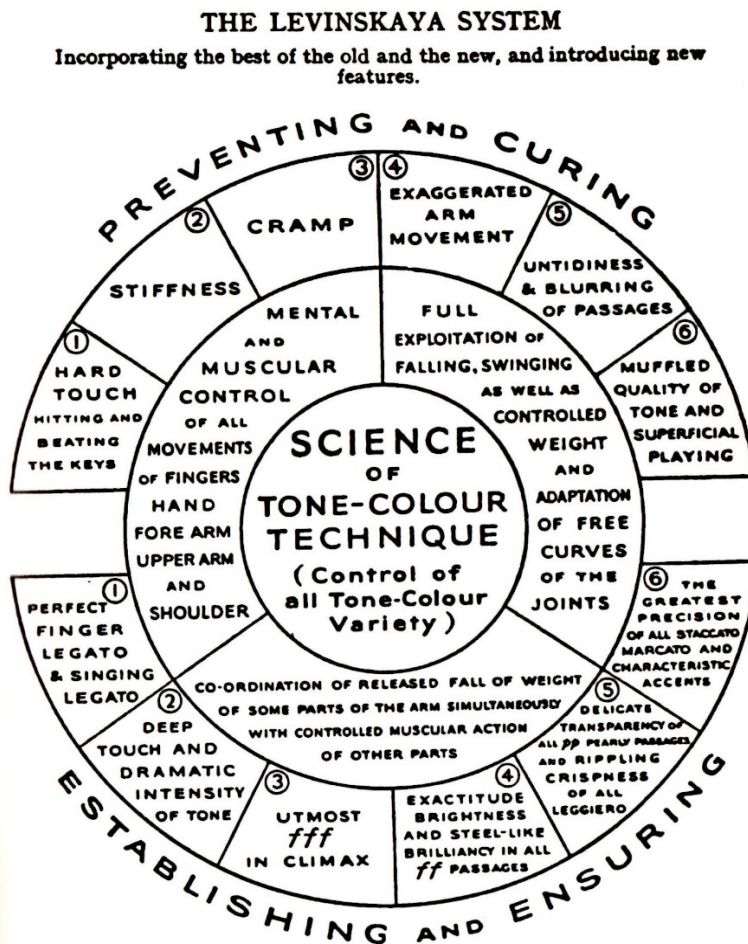


FIG. 2.—DESCRIPTION OF THE DIAGRAM

THE COMPLETE CIRCLE embodies the art and science of pianoforte playing as a whole as presented in the LEVINSKAYA SYSTEM.
 INSET—Its rock-bottom basis—aesthetic discrimination of any tone colour through which vista the whole art of pianoforte playing is analysed and synthesised.
 INNER BAND—The leading principles on which the system is based.
 OUTER BAND—The upper half shows faults eliminated, the lower half shows the artistic qualities acquired.

(reprinted from *The Levinskaya System of Pianoforte Technique and Tone-Colour through Mental and Muscular Control*, p. 42)

Figure 6

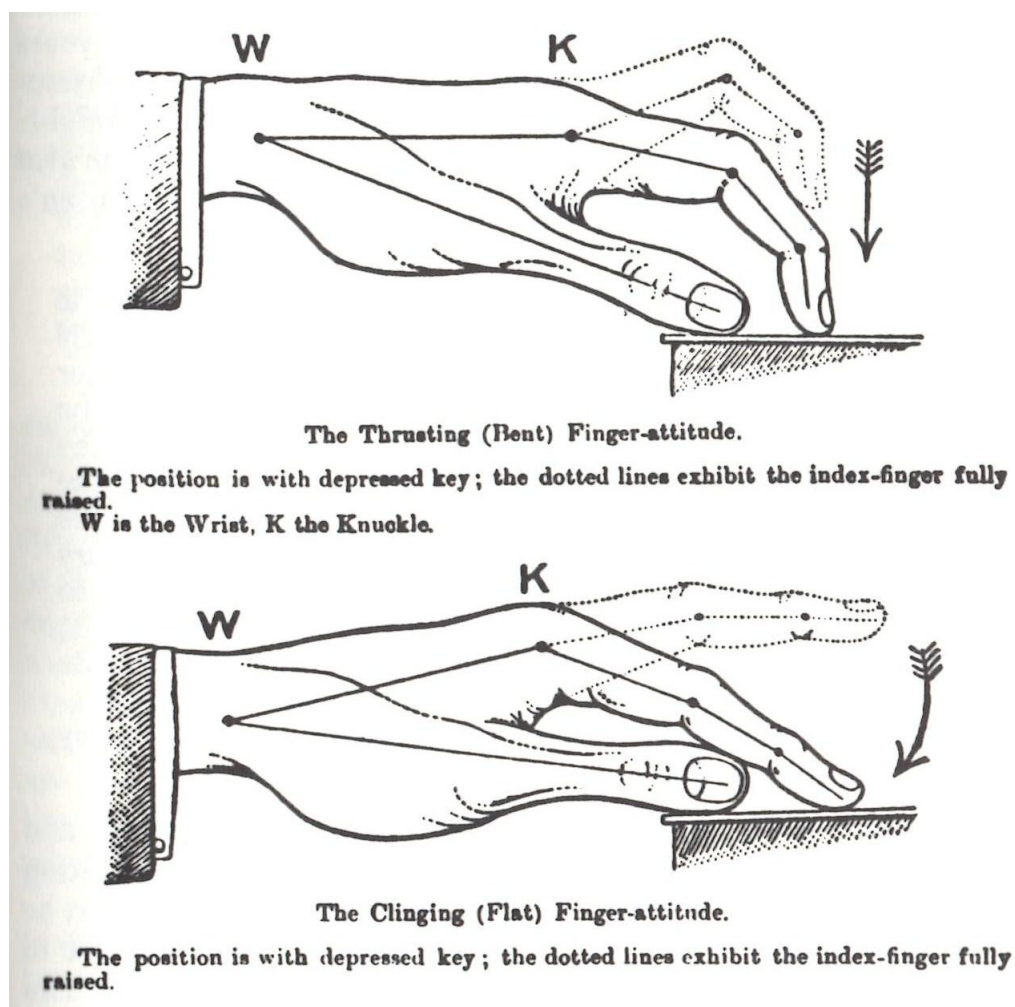
In England, Donald F. Tovey (1875-1940) the great pianist, musicologist, and Beethoven scholar was greatly influenced by the teaching of Deppe, although the two had only met and not studied formally together. Also in England working slightly before Tovey was Tobias Matthay (1858-1945). Matthay, like Tovey, was trained at the Royal Academy of Music, but soon grew

frustrated with the typically dull and uninteresting plight of pianists with nothing inspiring to say with their playing. He had taught piano since his teen years and was later appointed as assistant professor at the Royal Academy of Music. He spent his time as a professor with many modestly talented students, but he did not regard it as time wasted. He took full advantage of their lessons to address technique issues, and slowly began to develop his own ideas for remedying many of the bad habits that trouble young pianists. Much of his students' training was left over from the old German finger school, and he frequently faced the same issues Deppe had also struggled against with students. By 1893 he compiled enough of his theories on piano pedagogy and technique to publish a book—*The Act of Touch* in 1903. Curiously, this publication was printed just one year before Breithaupt's *The Natural Piano Technique*, where several examples are almost identically replicated. The volume is lengthy, poorly edited, and exemplifies rather grandiose grammar. Nevertheless, it contains much valuable knowledge.

Interestingly, one of Matthey's colleagues at the Royal Academy of Music wrote a short companion to the book titled "*What Matthey Meant*" in a (sincere) effort to make Matthey's book more accessible and realistic for pianists, and to help navigate the poor layout.

Despite the difficulty in understanding Matthey's written explanations, he was very much an original thinker about piano technique as Deppe had been. He comes to many of the same conclusions through a simple and logical problem-solving approach, similarly of all great teachers. Matthey's masterful teaching and gift for analysis of subject material certainly ranks him along with Deppe in the annals of great piano pedagogues. The page below is reprinted from his book, and demonstrates his careful analysis of some of the elements of "touch" in piano playing. Matthey does not make a case per se for either type of physical playing, but rather

prefers all good musicians decide which is most appropriate for the type of music being performed (Bach, Liszt, etc.).



(reprinted from *The Act of Touch*, Tobias Matthay, p. 151)

Figure 7

Otto Ortmann (1889-1979) is another figure who we cannot leave out of the technique discussion beginning with Ludwig Deppe. Ortmann was a pianist trained at the Peabody Conservatory by foreign concert pianists, which included teachers as influential as Rudolph Ganz. Later, he served as faculty at Peabody and eventually became its director until 1942. He taught piano extensively, but in 1925 founded a comprehensive research department at Peabody

devoted to “scientific investigation of musical talent, instrumental and vocal problems and their effects on music pedagogy.”⁴¹

Ortmann had long been aware of the so-called “Paderewski Technique”, “Liszt Technique”, “Deppian Technique”, and “Leschetizsky Technique.” With his research department Ortmann endeavored to scientifically discover what some of these anatomical and physiological principles actually were. He approached every aspect of the research with a completely objective attitude, and let no preconceived notions factor into his research. All the great theorists of the past had only written subjectively and come to their own conclusions, but Ortmann preferred finding exacting scientific conclusions about these theories—observed and measured in a laboratory setting.

He studied extensively with the doctors and anatomists at Johns Hopkins University, and gained much scientific research advice from engineers at Western Electric and the United States Bureau of Standards. All of these resources together made Ortmann a major pioneer in the field of technical research into piano playing. He published his classic *The Physical Basis of Piano Touch and Tone* in 1925, and *Physiological Mechanics of Piano Technique* in 1929. These two major works are in-depth scientific and anatomical texts that are, needless to say, quite involved reading. At many times they may go beyond what the average reader may be able to usefully digest, but they are landmark publications and probably the zenith of scientific research into the anatomical and physiological aspects of piano technique—even today. This scientific and in depth study of piano technique began with the grandfather of piano technique Ludwig Deppe. His careful consideration of piano technique laid the groundwork for these great music educators to later build upon his ideas and thoughts about how to physically play the piano using the best, simplest and most economical approaches.

⁴¹ Letter to Arnold Schultz, April 9, 1962

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Ludwig Deppe was one of the first great teachers to fully and logically consider the physical aspects of piano technique in tone production. The principles he developed for teaching were analogous in his own conducting technique, piano technique, and even violin technique⁴². His abundant success with the greatest students of the era demonstrates that his ideas were original and that he was a free-thinking and insightful musical mind who was interested only in those issues that would allow a performer to more faithfully execute music from the printed page and bring it to life per the composer's wishes. His ideas refrain from any superficial or extraneous elements, and seek only to render faithfully the intentions of the composer. Though he only left a small output of pedagogical writings, they have absolutely succeeded in directly inspiring several generations of pianists to begin seriously comparing and contrasting these ideas for themselves and applying them to their own students. Some would eventually expound upon them and research them scientifically to discover that they were absolutely correct. Even so, this research would hardly have been necessary as Deppe's success with students was proof enough that he had been on the right track to developing what was the forerunner of modern piano technique that we use today. His work was indispensable in inspiring the many generations of pedagogues that came after him, and would build so importantly on his ideas.

Deppe clearly did not believe the body to be merely a human machine for reproducing music, but rather as a natural and graceful specimen that was an integral part of bringing the intentions of a composition to life. He believed the performer's own finely tuned and well-adjusted physical playing apparatus was the only means to this end. He had seen the difficulties many pianists had due to unnecessary barriers they either constructed themselves, or that their

⁴² *Artistic Piano Playing as taught by Ludwig Deppe*, Elisabeth Caland, p. 10

education had engrained. His teaching simply sought to remove all that was unnecessary, and to exploit the anatomical capabilities of individual pianists through individual means. His theories and manner of teaching were remarkably successful and we have numerous testimonials from students proclaiming the heights they achieved under his guidance and direction, as well as a careful study of his written works.

Even students who studied under other major figures of 19th century music such as Carl Tausig, Theodore Leschetizsky, Theresa Careno, Theodore Kullak, Ignaz Moscheles, Ferruccio Busoni, Adolph Marx, Frederick Kalkbrenner and Carl Czerny all hailed the theories and philosophy of Ludwig Deppe's approach to piano playing. His unique teaching and small body of written work is considered to be among the earliest foundations of modern technical methods and is indispensable. Any erudite student will find his writing and philosophy (as relayed mostly through his students) advantageous to study.

Deppe's students eventually built upon his groundbreaking theories and became pioneering researchers in the field of piano technique themselves. These include Elisabeth Caland, Amy Fay, Charles Allen Ehrenfechter, William Mason, Carl Tausig, Theodore Leschetizsky, Theresa Careno, Theodore Kullak, Ignaz Moscheles, Ferruccio Busoni, Adolph Marx, Frederick Kalkbrenner, Carl Czerny, Charles J. Haake, Sir Donald Francis Tovey, Karl Maria Breithaupt, Otto Ortmann, Josef and Rosina Lhevinne, Abram Chasins, Adele Marcus, Sascha Gorodnitzki, Josef Raieff, John Browning and Van Cliburn.

There could not be a more fitting tribute to a man who worked tirelessly throughout his life not just to propagate *piano players*, but to diligently serve this art form by genuinely improving piano technique, thereby crafting true musicians.

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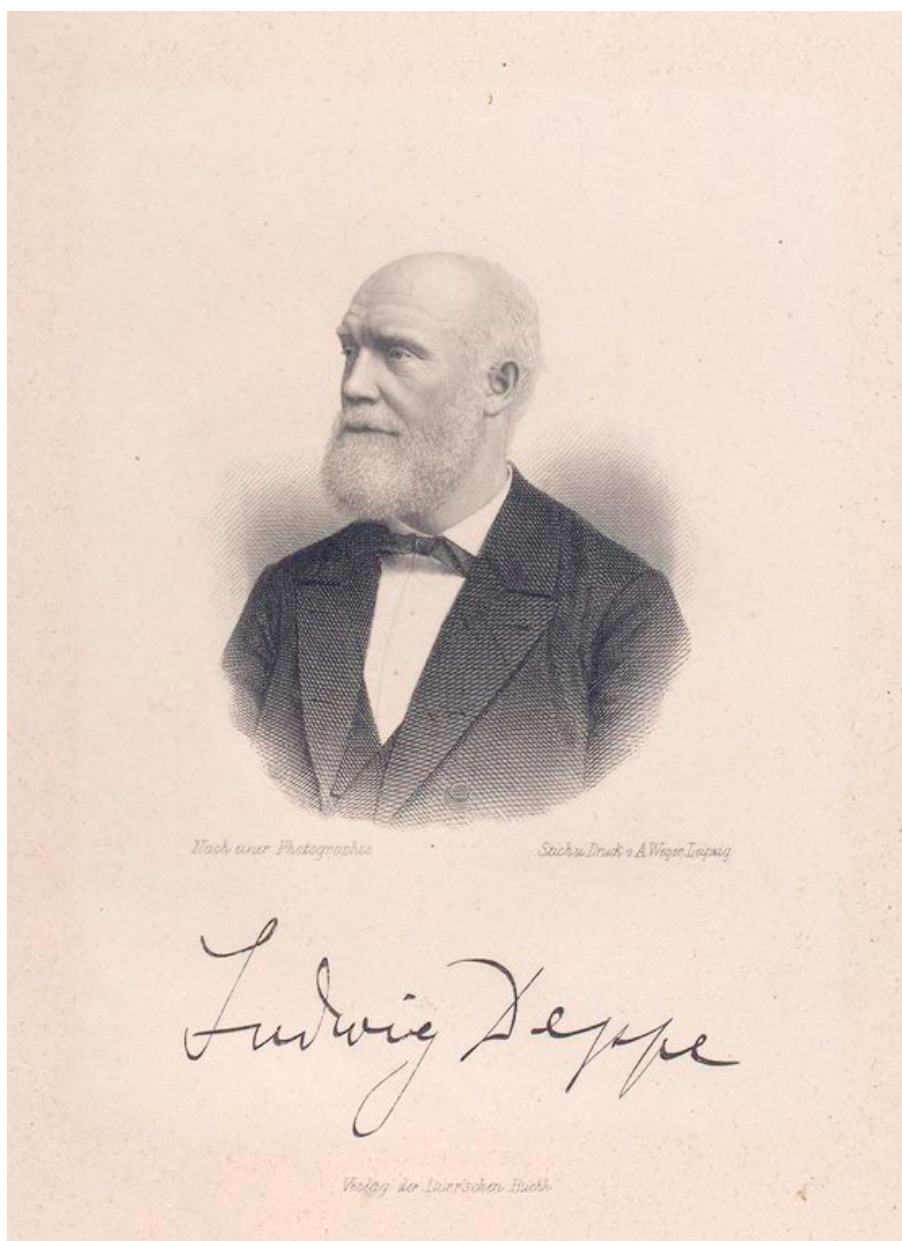
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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

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Ludwig Deppe



Elisabeth Caland during the publication of *Artistic Piano Playing*



Amy Fay during her study with Deppe, and later distinguished teacher and author



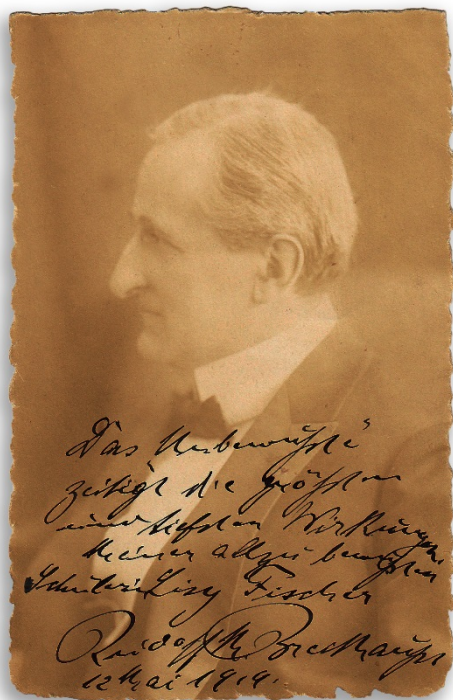
Theresa Carreno at the height of her concert career



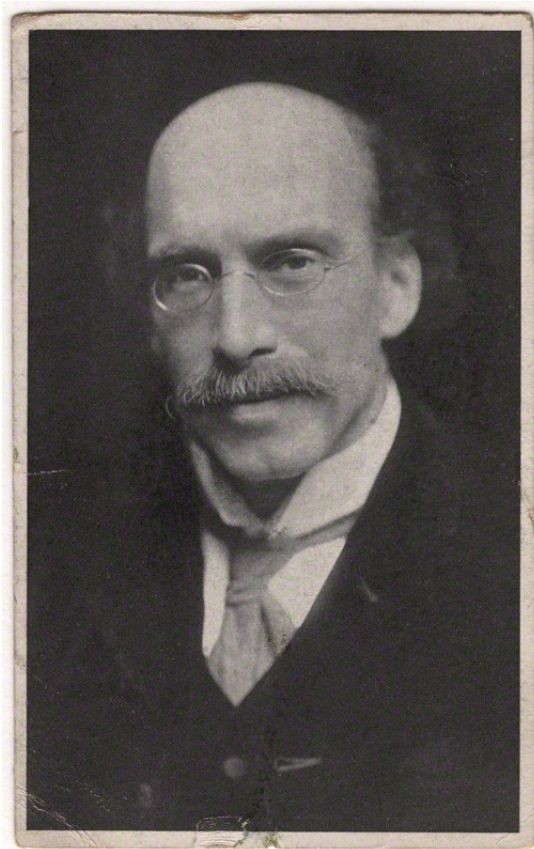
Theodor Leschetizsky in his teaching studio.



Artur Schnabel at the height of his concert career



Rudolf Breithaupt



Tobias Matthay as professor at the Royal Academy of Music



Otto Ortmann during his time as director of the Peabody Conservatory

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WRITINGS AND TECHNICAL APPROACH OF
LUDWIG DEPPE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES IN PIANO PEDAGOGY.

Major Professor: Dr. Cully Bell