

# **The correlation between technique and interpretation in piano learning**

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The terms “interpretation and technique” are probably two of the most difficult parts in music and especially piano. A number of piano teachers and pianists overestimate interpretation and ignore technique whilst others overvalue technique and vice versa.

For a start, we should point that interpretation and technique are two music and in particular piano terms which are both significant. No teacher can neglect either of these two since you can not perform well if your technique is bad and vice versa.

We could also say that interpretation can not be taught; however this is not the case for technique. This is because interpretation is entogenous and as a result a pianist may have a good technique but lack behind in interpretation. There are of course interpretation elements which can be taught by an experienced piano teacher. These elements can be identified by the teacher depending on the piece he/she will perform firstly based on the century it was composed (if for example was composed in baroque, classical, romantic or contemporary era). Secondly, it is based on the composer and thirdly on its type (if it is a sonata, rondo, concert, suite, etc). An experienced teacher can detect these elements which are helpful when performing the particular piece properly. In this way for example a student can be taught how to play the music ornaments, based on the century and composer. Moreover, its style can be taught; that means whether it is joyful, mournful, march, dance or waltz. However, the essence of interpretation, that is how a piece it performed, can never be taught because it is personal and it only concerns the performer.

A student can of course get some ideas by listening to different performances of the same piece by prominent pianists. He/She can study how the pianist performs each piece. It is known that each pianist has his/her own personal style in each piece he/she performs and it is wise that students study their styles so as to gather information on the way different pianists perform the same piece. There are as many different performances as the pianists. The student will gradually possess his/her own

unique style when performing. However the student should firstly study the specific piece before listening to different plays, because otherwise he/she will exactly reproduce the pianist he/she is listening to. Moreover, the student should learn to play not by listening to the CD but by looking at the score. A lot of students listen many times to the pieces they will learn so as to be easier even though they will never learn to see and read. There are unfortunately famous music schools which make their students listen to the piece before taught it.

Quite a long time ago, I attended masterclasses at the Royal Academy of Music with the famous pianist Tamas Vasary, who told us the following story. He had once attended a concert and when it had finished, he met the pianist so as to congratulate him. The pianist wanted to know whether he liked his performance. Tamas Vasary sincerely replied that he did not and the pianist was astonished as he had adopted all the elements from Vasary's recording. He Tamas Vasary then realized that he did not like his own performance either. That is why it is important for a pianist to adopt to his/her own personal style after he studies other pianists performances.

As for technique, we could say that there are different types of techniques from different schools and pianists. There are as many techniques as pianists and each pianist has his/her own personal technique as well as interpretation. Pianists follow some basic principles which define a school but it is actually the pianist who shapes his /her own technique.

That is why we should not underestimate neither interpretation nor technique. Although there are different exercises in many books through which the right technique can be obtained, the student can be taught the right technique and interpretation by an experienced piano teacher. Also, an important part of interpretation is the good quality of sound which should be produced by the pianist related to the room he/she is because the sound will be different if the pianist is inside a small room, a small concert hall or in a big concert hall.

When both, piano teacher and the student learn a piece, should get into the composer's head when he/she was composing. When composing, the artist wants to send some messages to listeners. Sometimes the piece is romantic, that is same feelings are expressed towards a person or a situation. It can also be descriptive

(programme music). In other cases the composer wants to emphasize on some ideas and ideals which are everlasting. For that reason it is important for the pianist to study in depth the composer's feelings when he/she was writing music. If the pianist can not analyse the feelings in depth, he will never be able to accurately interpret it but he/she will only play notes.

I therefore believe that students and piano teachers should try as much as they can to accurately interpret the piece after they study it, so as the audience to grok the piece. If the pianist does not manage to structure a particular interpretation, then neither will the audience manage to comprehend what both the composer and interpreter try to communicate. The pianist will only play notes with no content. This is why the audience is discontent when listening to a bad performance.

To conclude, I would like to point out that both the composer and interpreter are important since the composer should be able to express his/her feelings and the performer should interpret what the composer has recorder.