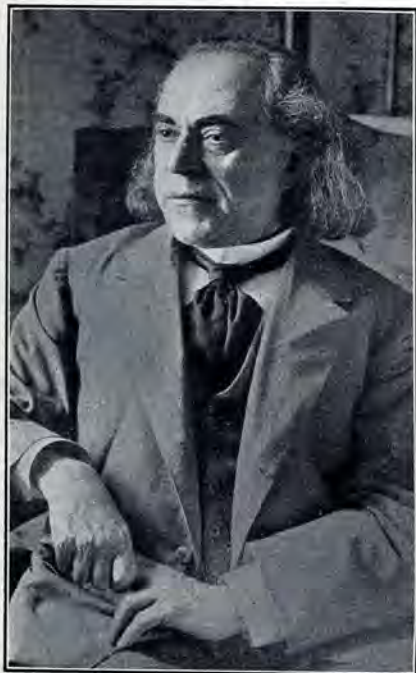


VITAL POINTS IN PIANO PLAYING

Authoritative Views on Rhythm and Tone Color

By HARRIETTE BROWER

HOW shall two such opposites as rhythm and tone color be connected, even in name, some will ask. One belongs to the mechanical side of piano playing, while the other appertains to the ideal, the poetic, the soulful. The two subjects, however, are not so wide apart as might at first appear; for the beauty and variety of the second depends largely upon the mastery of the first.



Vladimir de Pachmann—He uses certain fingers to create certain effects in tone color

You must play rhythmically before you can play soulfully; you must first be able to keep time before you can attempt to express color and emotion, or permit fluctuation of rhythm. One depends on the other, therefore time and rhythm come first; when these are well under control, but not before, we can go further and enter the wider field of tonal variety.

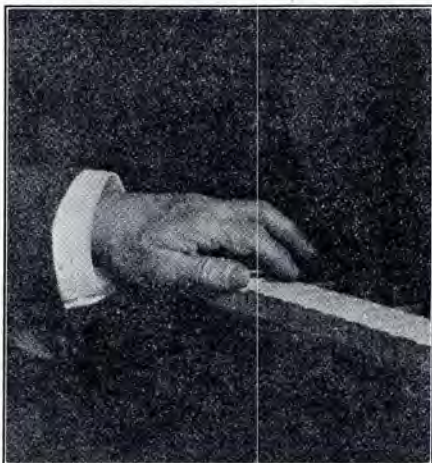
Rhythm is one of the pianist's most important assets, something he cannot do without. It might be said that a well-developed rhythmic sense is one point in which the artist differs from the amateur. The latter thinks nothing of breaking the rhythm at any time and place that suits his fancy; while the artist is usually conscientious about such matters, because his time sense is more

highly cultivated. A perfect time-sense is probably inherent in the artist, a part of the natural gift which he has cultivated to such a high state of achievement. It may be he has never had any difficulty with this particular point in piano playing, where the amateur has constantly to struggle with problems of time and rhythm.

METRONOME.—When the subject of using a mechanical device, such as the metronome, as an aid in cultivating the rhythmic sense, is broached to the executive artist, it does not always meet with a sympathetic response. With such breeding in the bone sense of time as the artist commands, it is little wonder that he takes no great interest in mechanical time beating. Josef Hofmann's censure of the metronome was probably the result of his inborn artistic, rhythmic sense; yet his words have doubtless had their effect on many students, who, lacking his sense of rhythm, would have been greatly benefited by its use. A little incident, apropos of this point, happened at one of the Hofmann recitals last season. The rhythm of a Beethoven sonata he was playing was so greatly varied at times, that a musician sitting next me remarked, "those passages need a dose of the metronome." That applied to Hofmann!

Aiding Rhythmically Deficient

Godowsky, when asked his opinion of the metronome, replied: "I assuredly approve of its use, I have even devoted a chapter to the metronome in my work on piano playing, the Progressive Series." Edwin Hughes remarks: "If pupils have



Side View of Left Hand of Vladimir de Pachmann, Showing Muscular Development

naturally a poor sense of rhythm, there is no remedy like practicing with the metronome, using this daily until results

are evident, when there can be a judicious slowing down of its use. The mechanical sense of rhythm, the ability to count and to group the notes of a piece correctly, can be taught to any person, if one has the patience; but for those delicate rhythmic nuances required by a Chopin Mazurka or a Viennese waltz, one must possess a special rhythmic gift."

Artists and teachers who have come

touch, by all the subtleties of nuance, is a great art, and only the most gifted ever master it in its perfection. These are the things which enchant us in Paderewski's performance. Hofmann's playing is a marvel of atmosphere and color; such playing is an object lesson to students, a lesson in variety of light and shade, of exquisite tonal tints.

The sensitive musician is highly susceptible to color effects in nature, in art or in objects about him. Certain colors attract him, for he sees an affinity between them and the effects he strives to produce in his playing. Other colors repel, perhaps for the opposite reason. Brilliant red is a warlike color, and finds analogous expression in such pieces as Chopin's Polonaise "Militaire," and MacDowell's Polonaise. We cannot help seeing, feeling the color red, when playing such music. Soft pink and rose for love music, tender blues and shades of gray for nocturnes and night pieces are some

Secrets of Rhythm and Tone Color

Josef Hofmann censures use of metronome.

Godowsky declares: "I assuredly approve of its use. I have even devoted a chapter to the metronome in my work on piano playing, the Progressive Series."

De Pachmann states that he uses certain fingers when he wishes to create certain effects.

Thuel Burnham calls the fifth finger the "cold finger." He would use the third, a "warm finger," to give out a soulful melody.

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under Leschetizky's influence, who use his principles, are generally in favor of the metronome, according to their own testimony. The fact is, they as teachers often find such deficiency in their pupils on the subject of time sense and accuracy in counting, that they are forced to institute strict measures to counteract this lack of rhythmic comprehension.

Granting then, that the correct use, not the abuse, of the metronome is of great assistance in establishing the rhythmic sense, let us turn our thought to a more fascinating subject, that of

TOE COLOR.—When De Pachmann states that he uses certain fingers when he wishes to create certain effects, the idea was thought to be only one of the eccentric pianist's peculiar fancies. Other players, however, have had the same thought, and have worked along the same line, the thought that on the fingering used depends the quality of tone. For instance, you would never play a melody with a consecutive use of the fifth finger, which is called a "cold finger" by Thuel Burnham. He would use instead the third, a "warm finger," to give out a soulful melody.

Variety in Tone Coloring

The pianist who would play effectively, must continually strive for variety of tone, for tonal coloring. These can be studied in scales, chords, arpeggios and other technical forms. The singer seeks to make a tone of resonant color, not a straight, flat tone; the pianist, on his part, endeavors to give color and variety to his playing in the same way. Harold Bauer thinks variety must be secured by the contrast of one tone with another. Even a very harsh tone may be beautiful in its right place, owing to its relation to other tones, and its ability to express an idea. To render the playing expressive by the contrast of light and shade, by tonal gradations, by all varieties of

of the affinities of tone and color. Warm shades of yellow and golden brown suggest an atmosphere of early autumn, while delicate or vivid green give thoughts of spring and luscious summers. Certain pieces of Mozart seem to bring before us the rich greens of a summer landscape, the Fantaisie in C Minor and the Pastorale Varié are of this type.

Arthur Hochmann says: "Colors mean so much to me; some are so beautiful, the various shades of red for instance, then the golden yellows, rich warm browns, and soft liquid blues. We can make as wonderful combinations in tone color as ever painter put upon the canvas. To me dark red speaks of something tender, heart-searching, mysterious. On the other hand, the shades of yellow express gaiety and brightness."

It has been said a pianist needs to study color effects, in order to express them in his music. He can do this to especial advantage at the theatre or the opera, for here he can see unrolled before him the greatest possible variety in light and shade, in colors, and in the constantly changing panorama of action and emotion.

The pianist can receive many ideas of tone color in listening to a great emotional singer, and watching the infinite tonal gradations produced on the "greatest of all instruments," the human voice.

In short the pianist draws from many sources the experience, the feeling, the emotion with which he strives to inspire the tones he evokes from his instrument. The keener his perceptions, the more he labors, suffers and lives, the more he will be able to express through his chosen medium—the piano!

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