



## REVIEWS Books



Kookhee Hong  
The Piano Teaching Legacy  
of Solomon Mikowsky



### **The Piano Teaching Legacy of Solomon Mikowsky**

**By Kookhee Hong**

Lambert Academic Publishing

216 pages, £27

Mikowsky, a mainstay at the Manhattan School of Music, recounts his life and musical views in this transcribed conversation (available online gratis at [www.internationalpianofestivals.org](http://www.internationalpianofestivals.org)).

Born in 1936 in Cuba, Mikowsky worked with César Pérez Sentenat, a student of Joaquín Nin who mentored Horacio Gutiérrez, among other pianists. Mikowsky next studied at the Juilliard School with Sascha Gorodnitzki, pupil of Josef Lhévinne. His literal-minded teacher Gorodnitzki 'emphasized the pianistic control of the instrument... He did not go deeply into the music... the results were beautiful but rather impersonal'. In reaction, Mikowsky's own teaching method became a 'rebellion against the system of "sit down at the piano and play it like me"'. In retrospect he was 'shocked by the aggressiveness and lack of ethics demonstrated by some [Juilliard] teachers when trying to attract a student from another class'.

A pinched nerve affected Mikowsky's playing early on, so he dedicated himself to teaching. Among his useful didactic maxims: 'Hearing the teacher play the piece beforehand can compromise the mental process of assembling its disparate elements into a whole. If the teacher makes a habit of premature demonstration, it can also sabotage the development of good reading habits.' Or 'students are like patients. They all have to be "cured" of one malady or another! [...] I feel that a teacher is like a doctor who must know the right medicine. Selection of repertoire is the fundamental priority'. Mikowsky's pupils, including Kirill Gerstein, Maxim Anikushin, and Ren Zhang, have benefited from this good sense. B|